

## **In therapy... with Breukers and Godrie**

**“You are so brave to be here!”, Walter Breukers compliments the audience. “Jaap Godrie and I are going to give you an experimental therapy that we’ve never tried on people before.” Without giving away much more, Breukers and Godrie started their afternoon session at the Pathways to Sustainability Conference Day.**

What does ‘infinity’ mean to you? Metal music, chaos, fire, garbage, warmth, screaming, a man falling from an electric lawn mower. The workshop participants - or therapy clients – had various shared associations. Therapists-for-a-day Breukers and Godrie analysed: “It is clear that you guys are suffering, or have a fear of suffering. That’s a good motivation for therapy.”

What do the clients, mainly scientists, have to be cleared from? Desires for endless self-development, infinite discoveries, endless growth were often mentioned. Do these desires prevent change from happening? “Infinite desires are pointed inwards”, said Walter Breukers. “But a lot happens when you go outside and talk to people. Let’s make science move from inwards to outwards.” With this diagnosis the therapy exercises could start. “Because as therapists, we know that it’s crucial that clients and therapist agree on the diagnosis.”

### **Sustainable change**

Breukers and Godrie immediately started off with the first exercise: write down the name of a person in your personal network that is able to make a sustainable change, but is not doing that right now. While enjoying a nostalgic video with relaxing music, pens were going wild in the audience. Next, what would our professional advice to this person be for changing this unsustainable behaviour?

### **Inspiration from Florence**

For some inspiration, Jaap Godrie shared the story of a problem from 15<sup>th</sup> century Italy that long seemed impossible. “Walking through the streets of Florence, Cosimo de’ Medici, the city’s ruler, saw the cathedral without a dome. At the time, this was a huge problem for the city, as a big dome was a sign of status. Apart from that, it was inconvenient to have a big hole in the roof. However, there was not a single architect that was able to build the dome. Cosimo decided to create a design competition for which everyone could apply, not only architects. Yet, it had to be solved within a month. As a result, the dome was finally done after 17 years.”



## **First step towards change**

Change was happening in Florence, that's what happens when you move your vision outside, broaden your view and learn from other disciplines. Let's try that in science too! In role plays in small groups, the participants impersonated the person who had to change and the person suggesting the change. Ranging from people who should fly less to persons addicted to Formula One. By sharing and helping each other to change mindsets and unsustainable behaviour, the clients set the first step towards change.

As a final good advice, Breukers and Godrie had some wise words: "Alternating between being inward and outward oriented is like inhaling and exhaling. If it breathes well, science is able to make good choices. These exercises have set the first step. The next time you meet the person you want to change, you say: 'I've talked about you for an hour and a half' and you do the exercise. If it doesn't work, at least something unexpected has happened. Thank you for undergoing this experimental therapy with us and see you here same time next week!"