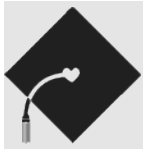


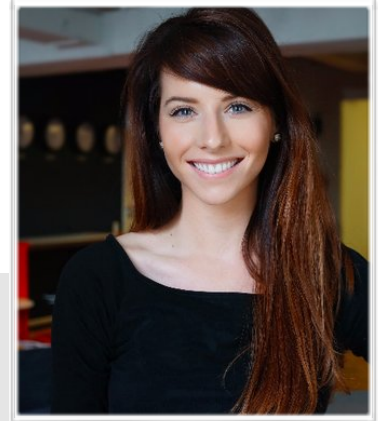
Entrepreneur

Founder of Metta and Awaken Your Chakras



Kelly Behrend

The University of Richmond, Class of 2010



Describe your current position and the journey that led you here.

I have founded a sustainability consulting agency and a spiritual coaching practice. My consulting firm, Metta, means "loving kindness" in Sanskrit and is focused on supporting non-profits, startups, companies, and entrepreneurs to define their sustainability and social impact strategy. My spiritual coaching practice, Awaken Your Chakras, features an eight-week online course, quarterly retreats around the world, and private one to one offerings support people in becoming their own healer using alternative therapies like yoga, meditation, reiki, nutrition, and plant medicine.

During my time at the University of Richmond, I studied social justice and served refugee and immigrant communities. I soon realized that refugee and immigrant rights will become even more complex if we do not take care of our planet. If we do not take care of our planet, this will cause massive climate change and forced migration, which essentially makes sustainability a matter of human security. My interest in sustainability has stemmed from this realization.

My interests in sustainability moved through the nonprofit and then the private sector, transitioning to working in sustainability in the mobile technology industry by working with a start-up called Ride.com, a ride-sharing company. My job as the Director of Strategy and Sustainability was to conduct sustainability forecasting in trying to reduce carbon emissions through on-demand carpooling. Eventually, I realized that the noise and intensity of the city, as well as the nine-to-five workday were not for me. I ended up getting burnt out and needing mental and physical healing. I had to check back in with myself. From there, I discovered healing work and how powerful it really is.

What does an average work day and year look like for you?

There is no average work day. I have created a life where I try to be in a "flow state", where I follow the natural flow of my body. I know that my best writing happens in the middle of the night so I have created my work schedule to align with this. As you can see, I enjoy working for myself because I am able to dictate my own hours and choose projects that align with my values, which makes my work meaningful.

Every day is completely different for me. Some days I am focusing on corporate clients and other days, I am focusing on spiritual clients. This past week, I have been focusing on a branding project with a Philadelphia real estate company focused on housing happiness, but starting Friday, I am leading an eight-day spiritual retreat in Costa Rica on Chakras and energy healing.



What are the best and worst things about working in your current role or sectors?

In sustainability, the best thing is that I believe that I am supporting new systems for change. We will change the way that money is exchanged, the way that businesses are run, and the way supply chains are handled because sustainability is systemic. The worst thing is that there is a lot of "lip service". A lot of companies say that they are sustainable or want to be more sustainable, but do not want to implement sustainable practices especially when it takes extra time and money.

The best thing in the field of spirituality is that I am helping people become their own healers and that is the most powerful thing that there is. There really isn't a worst thing about working in spirituality, but one thing that has been challenging is unpacking my whiteness and privilege in the realm of spirituality. It's important to me to unpack what my ancestors did to create the injustice that there is today in order for me to better support others in their spiritual journey from a place of integrity.

Do you feel like you have to financially sacrifice to be in your field? Are you happy with the pay?

Because I work for myself and I can decide which clients to take on, I don't feel that I need to financially sacrifice – I just have to work smart. At this point, I cannot yet live off of only my spiritual practice. People all want the power of healing, but they often do not want to pay for it. Even then, I'm really fulfilled to be working in sustainability and don't see myself giving that up anyway!

What do you wish you knew as a recent Bonner graduate preparing for this field?

When I graduated, I was the fiery activist type. I really rejected the private sector because I thought that it did not contribute to any societal good and that the non-profit sector was the only sector to go into if you wanted to make an impact. However, I've learned that change will not happen unless there are Bonners in all three sectors: private, non-profit, and government/public. I wish that someone had encouraged me to consider the private or government sector.

How would you recommend interested students or individuals get involved in this field?

A lot of young people who want to go into the private sector want jobs focusing on sustainability and social impact – it's a competitive market. If you're looking to get started, I recommend trying to work with a local business and help them green their office or create a social impact strategy. Furthermore, networking is extremely important and just to go out there and genuinely meet people and talk about your passions.

