

If you only have a minute: Rooted and unwavering is all about connecting deeply with ourselves, others and our service in the world. Read on to find out how thinking small might actually help us fulfill our life's purpose.

Think Small

By Esther Groves and Hylke Faber

One piece of advice you don't expect to hear from Erica Schaper, Chair of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, is to "think small." In light of her many accomplishments, those words of wisdom come as a surprise - until you hear how her life experiences brought her there.

"When I was younger," Erica says, "even as a kid, I had an idea that if it would be possible to bring peace to the world, I would do it immediately. But seeing how the world develops, especially at this moment, the complexity is growing. Or maybe I see it more. We're far from peace in the world. And you can do two things: you can get very depressed that maybe the world is not getting better every day, but maybe worse every day. But you can also make your own contribution a bit smaller and a bit closer."

She continues, "The COVID period helped me with that, to bring you back to the essence of life, your spouse, your family, the place you're living, the community you're in. And maybe you cannot save the whole world, but maybe you can contribute to a few people, and maybe you can make it a bit smaller."

For Erica, how does thinking small guide her day? She tells us it means connecting to her purpose and connecting to the greater whole without getting lost in it. She smiles when she says, "I really enjoy when I ... enter the campus. And I can feel the energy of all those young people doing all kinds of things, sitting, laying down, having funny, funny parties. I really love that energy. And what I really like is if we can bring them a broader perspective, give them tools to cope with the diversity, in all forms, they will meet in their lives."

Summing up her advice, she says, "Some problems can't be solved, not by me. I thought that peace in the world was my mission. That was maybe a bit too big. So make it smaller. Find out where your passion is, where your heart lies, and contribute. Try to pursue a mission in life that's doable."

"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." Desmond Tutu