

The Power of Personal Connection: An Experiential Workshop

By ChristiElla Merrick

The invitation to participate in this August workshop came to me by my dear friend Connie Humiston. Even though we did not partner up during the workshop, our personal connection was deepened by sharing this experience. I am ever so grateful for that.

The workshop was conducted by Dr. Laurel Clark of the School of Metaphysics. She presented the material in a clear, concise and straight-forward manner. We were given a course handout of reference sheets, outline of the course, written exercises, etc. This has been a valuable tool for me since.

After each lectured segment, Dr. Clark encouraged questions or insights that we might have. Then the next step was to utilize a dynamic tool to integrate the teachings on another level. It was in this step that I personally learned the most.

These tools are very effective and simple techniques that you can use in your daily life.

One simple and revealing exercise was to write a list of 10 different people who have inspired you and the quality that you saw in them. This list could be friends, celebrities, athletes, etc. After we created the list we rated ourselves from 1-10; where we felt we were with these qualities. This process was very interesting. I found myself giving low to medium numbers on them. This tool is a good reference point on what qualities matter in your life, where you are with them and where you may want to improve.

Another exercise seemed simple enough; yet, I had a lot of difficulty with it.

This was a group exercise with everyone at the table. Each person wrote a sentence that was a story. The person read it first and the person sitting next to him/her would repeat exactly what the sentence was, and it would go around the table until everyone repeated it correctly. Sound simple? Give it a try and see what happens. It was amazing to hear what other people thought they heard and actually what was said, and some of things that were repeated created a lot of laughter.

When it came to my turn to listen and repeat the sentence, I noticed how tense I got and I tried really hard to get it right the first time.

That did not happen.

I needed to have the sentence repeated many times before I got it right. My ego was getting a real lesson on how to listen. I noticed how much my own mind-chatter interferes when someone else is speaking.

The teaching of this exercise was about my attention span on focusing on the details. I understood the concept of the sentence; yet, I did not remember some of the details. This can lead to a lot of misunderstandings.

Throughout the day, we partnered into groups of two, then four or more, and during lunch we all gathered at large tables in groups of at least 10 people. This exercise was very relaxing, informal and profound. We all shared why we came to the workshop and all agreed that communication is the key to any fulfilling relationship with others and ourselves. This was a fascinating and enlightening exercise where I became more aware how people's communication skills become developed through their life experiences.

Even though these exercises were structured to be done with others and to deepen our connection with people, I found that I made a much deeper connection within myself and a new sense of freedom has emerged since.

Results and Reflection

The results that I am finding are being more present with others, listening deeper and speaking more clearly what I have to share. I tend to ask more questions now so I can get a clearer picture of what is being communicated. My friends have noticed a change and shift in how I communicate since the class, and with the results they have noticed with me, they are expressing a desire to attend this seminar.

I highly recommend when you are in the process of forming a partnership, team, group or any project that you participate in this class. This course is a wonderful opportunity to learn and expand on basic communication skills and develop them into an art.

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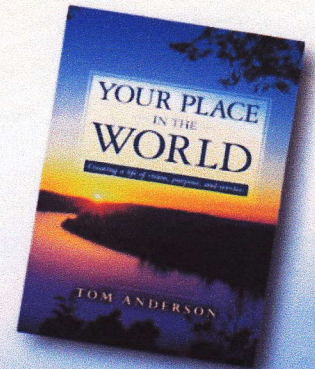
Sherree Ross, CHHC, AADP

...at the place where
our greatest sorrow
meets our deepest joy...

"...taps into the soul of
journey...and calls the reader to
delve into their interior being to
remember, remember,
remember who they truly are."

Rev. Toni Boehm, Ph.D. Dean, Unity School of
Religious Studies, retired

Upcoming retreats with the author:
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