

Getting and Staying Connected

by Janet Christensen

In today's fast-paced world of business and personal life we have a number of ways in which we can get and stay connected with each other. Through the wonders of technology we can connect across the globe instantaneously through satellite, e-mail, telephone and cell phones. We can precisely know the location of a person or vehicle anywhere in the world with the aid of a GPS system. We have PC's, laptops, Blackberries, palm pilots and other electronic devices that allow us to connect, schedule, read e-mail remotely and be as up-to-date as possible. With so many ways to get and stay connected, 24/7 connectivity is becoming a way of life and an expectation.

The irony is that with all of the technology that enables us to do things faster and better, rather than giving us more time, we now expect ourselves to do more and be reachable and accessible virtually all of the time. Instead of having more time, we seem to have less. Instead of feeling more in control, we are feeling more pressured and stressed. We are busy getting and staying connected. We are busy thinking about what is next, what may happen, our to-do list, making the next appointment, planning the meeting, and on and on.

The last time you were in a meeting how many people were really there – not just in body, but really present? Were they flipping through notes, checking their e-mail or palm pilot or just mentally somewhere else?

What about our connectivity with ourselves? Are we making and taking the time to know and be who we are?

We are not our jobs. We are not the labels that get ascribed to us. We are not our roles. We are not our past – that is just the story of our lives so far. Somewhere beneath these various layers of descriptors that come to define who we are, there is a unique essence that is you that is longing for connection that I call *the essential you*.

Several years ago my husband and I benefited from taking some Marriage Encounter courses. One of the core teachings was "God does not make junk". The *essential you* is that part of you that is unique, whole and complete, and has infinite wisdom. It is you in perfection, has deep knowing and it longs to be known to you. It is longing for connection.

The *essential you* is more than your brain and more than your mind. It is your mind, body and spirit and it has four aspects to its intelligence – mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. Young children are very connected to their essential selves. They are spontaneous, very much in the moment and able to respond to and express what they are experiencing. As we grow up and become "socialized", we are encouraged to develop our mental intelligence and ignore the other aspects of our intelligence. As a result, paying attention to gut feelings or instinct can be considered as foolish. Displays of emotion or even feeling emotion may be deemed inappropriate. Our spontaneity gets dampened and we learn to respond to what others expect of us, or what we think is expected of us. We become outwardly very well connected and the connection to *the essential you* is diminished.

Think about what you were doing when you took your last shower. Were you relaxing and enjoying the feel of the water on your skin, or were you busy being mentally somewhere else? When do you take time to just be, without any agenda, and be fully present with yourself?

I recently heard Jon Kabat-zinn Ph.D., speak. Jon Kabat-zinn is internationally known for his work as a scientist, writer and meditation teacher engaged in bringing mindfulness into the mainstream of medicine and society. The 1200 people who packed the Ryerson Theatre in Toronto to hear this man speak came from all walks of life, and many were from the medical profession. By a show of hands, it became apparent that many people in the audience already practice some form of meditation. One thing that we all shared was the longing to connect with ourselves.

Jon Kabat-zinn's says that getting connected is really a matter of "awarenessing" and this involves being bigger than your thoughts. It involves being aware of what you are doing, and being present with what you are experiencing. In his words, "The real meditation practice is your life – either you are here for it, or you're not." It is about living your whole life as if it really matters – living by design and not by default.

You may already be busy saying to yourself "but I don't have time". Whose life are you spending time living?

Connecting with yourself does not require becoming a recluse or sitting on a mountain top. A few minutes at a time will get you there. Just as there are many roads to Rome, there are many ways to connect. There is an abundance and variety of courses, workshops, books and audio material to sample from and discover what fits for you. See what is available and choose one or two to try that appeal to you. Talk a walk in nature. Sit quietly and just be. Follow your gut instinct to choose one to try. And remember that like anything else, it takes practice. Be patient and have fun with it. The joy is in the journey.

This is an invitation to slow down and be where you are. Be aware. Be connected to all aspects of you. Hear all of your wisdom. When you connect to *the essential you*, you may find your true soul mate, a kindred spirit and someone you genuinely like and love. Now there's a connection worth making and keeping!

"Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart (he) who looks outside, dreams; (he) who looks inside, awakens."

Carl Jung

Janet Christensen, Retirement & Power Coaching®, Presentations
Dynamic Awareness Inc.
(519)434-5397 janet@dynamicawareness.com www.dynamicawareness.com