

## COLLABORATIVE LIFE COACHING

January 2010 Newsletter

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### *Discernment- Getting clear*

Discernment has been defined as “the act or process of exhibiting keen insight and good judgment.” (Wikipedia, 2009) It has also been described using these words: clarity, savvy, perception of what is obscure, discretion, and shrewdness. Discernment is simultaneously an emotional, intellectual, and spiritual act that involves our heart, mind, and soul. Those with keen discernment are often highly valued.

The spiritual traditions have added depth to these definitions. Christianity describes discernment as the process of knowing God’s will for your life. As part of Christian discernment, one must avoid disturbances of imagination, and errors of sensibility that can pervert the will to veer away from grace and good. (Wikipedia, 2009) Deepak Chopra has described Buddhist discernment partly as learning *sukkha*, *anicca*, and *anatta*. These principles teach that pleasure is transient, nothing is permanent or perfectly clear, and trying to view our selves as separate from our life is an illusion. Joy is found in serenity and acceptance. (Buddha, Deepak Chopra, 2007) In New Age philosophy, clarity is thought to occur when one is fully present in the moment, without ego, free from negative thoughts, and connected to the source of universal energy. (The Power of Now, Eckhart Tolle, 1999)

I have spent the past thirty years coaching and counseling clients to seek and find clarity. It is important enough to cultivate in my own life that I spend three days at a time, twice a year, in retreat. I meditate, do yoga, and seek clarity in the isolation of Oklahoma spiritual retreat. Paradoxically, both serenity and action always emerge from this increased focus on discernment.

How could you spend time cultivating discernment? I would be happy to refer you to this retreat format, or speaking your thoughts out loud in wellness coaching may work for you. Each of you can claim the power of inner truth and use it to propel your life forward. To taste the first fruits of this act, I would suggest you take these beginning steps:

- 1) Stop noise outside and inside your head. Find time today or tomorrow to sit still in a quiet place with no TV, no radio, no internet, no other input. You might have to sit in your car at a park to find this kind of solitude if your home is a busy place. Let your mind relax and be still. Stop the negative self-talk that evaluates and criticizes you and others. Enjoy sitting for about ten minutes, letting your mind focus on small details like the temperature, scents, the tick of a clock, and the birds chirping outside.
- 2) When your mind is relaxed and calm, ask yourself this question. In the past two weeks, what has been meaningful and joyful in my life? In what moments was I savvy, or discriminating, or perceptive? What has worked can be a road map for future growth. Read your map.

How do we model this vital asset of discernment to our children? I certainly do not claim to have all the answers in our culture of “information overload”. These are my suggestions, however. Within your own faith tradition, teach your child that there are outside sources of clarity to whom/which he or she can turn. When she is confused

about what to do in life, don’t make a suggestion, but instead ask her hard questions like “if you do that, what might happen?” or “What talents to you have that could solve this problem?” Praise him for acts of clarity when he expresses an opinion or stands up for his beliefs.

I wish both you and your family an increase in discernment for the coming year. With it will come wellness and more serenity.

To your wellness,

Jeanne Erikson, PhD, PCC