

One in a series of articles by

Rachelle

Connecting With Others:

## FROM ME TO WE

I think it's pretty safe to say that most of us are familiar with the expression *What's in it for me?* Certainly it's a valid question and concern. We have needs and we want to do what we can to fulfill them. So often though, that question goes unexamined and runs on automatic pilot. Without giving awareness to it, it can easily run havoc in our lives.

It is my belief that as we evolve as a human species, we are being called to shift our focal point from ME to WE ... not merely at the intellectual level but at the level of our consciousness. What would it be like for example if you told someone you really didn't think they were valuing your input and instead of hearing back ... *That's not true. I'm hearing everything you're saying. I can even repeat everything you just said verbatim ... you heard instead ... Thank you for telling me what's going on for you. I'd like very much for you to have a different experience. I'd like you to feel that your input is highly valuable. What might I do in this moment to shift things?* No defending, no resisting, no explaining, no correcting, no advising ... simply a pure and compassionate reflection of your experience and an invitation to explore and enhance your experience. Would that not make a big difference in the quality of your interactions and your relationship?

Would it not draw you out? Stimulate you? Help build trust? The ability to listen and engage in this way is developed with practice. We need to strengthen our *"Empathy Muscle"* and make it more than a mental exercise. We must engage with our *whole being*. To do so also requires the ability to resist our ego's desire to push it's agenda which is what ego loves to do ... and by agenda I simply mean *being right, standing separate and apart, dividing and conquering*. Ego is great for survival but when it comes to *connection, partnership* and moving a conflict into a genuine *win-win*, our ego does not consider the whole or the greater good. It's not the function of the ego to do so. We are so well practiced at attending to ego's agenda however that we often overlook the greater possibility. Who would you hire to initiate peace talks ... the Dalai Lama or Rambo?

I have been a teacher and student of NVC for 10 years now. I continue to marvel at the opportunity it offers ... the gift of transcending the egoic agenda to arrive at a place of rich and authentic connection whether we're talking about who should pick up Johnny after school, empty the dishwasher, chair the next meeting or discuss less than optimal work performance. I marvel too at how threatening it is to the ego to move into *We Consciousness*. The moment we begin to give our attention fully to another person's needs ... for instance to be heard and acknowledged as in the scenario above, we might hear a voice inside our head screaming *Hey what about me? I can't give in so easily. What (s)he's saying is not even true! I have to prove them wrong so I can be right*. The good news is that after a while of practicing NVC, that voice holds increasingly less sway ... fading until it's but a shadow of what it was. The ego eventually comes to recognize that in fact it will not die. It is well and healthy. But it won't be taking over anymore. There is nothing



Rachelle Lamb

wrong with having an ego. A healthy ego is necessary for us to function and survive. But when we want to resolve differences and work collaboratively, the ego must be held in check so that our deeper compassionate nature can step forward.

NVC is the most powerful tool I know of to help address the ego battle that takes place within us at a relational level. Mediation and other contemplate practices are also beneficial. When it comes to actual *relating* however, NVC is quick to show us where our thinking and speaking is in service to *ME* and how we can make the shift in order to be in service to *WE*.

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