

LEARNING THE TRUTH WITHIN

by Dianne E. Conner

NaturalNetworker October / November 1999

A watershed in my healing journey came a year ago when my physical therapist asked my body (through a specialized kinesiology, a type of muscle testing process) what I needed most to know to heal myself. One word came: **Integrity**. The word holistic originates from the root hol or hal, which means whole and holy. We cannot be whole without an underlying base of holiness or sacredness in our lives and nothing is more sacred than our integrity or truthfulness.

I knew immediately that my body was telling the truth. The words truth and integrity had been coming up over and over from all directions and I knew they were an issue for me. I had a problem naming the name and speaking my truth because I could not tell people how I really felt – when or if I even knew myself. I had been working on this problem for quite a while, but it was difficult because I didn't know the root causes.

My therapist suggested I take an upcoming workshop with Solihm Thom, which I fortunately did, because one of his key points was integrity. "Integrity causes you to stand tall... It is wholeness, honesty, truth, power, innate authority and living your truth... When you have it you do not sway, even to good arguments." Thom also likened it to the staff of the caduceus and to a stake anchored in the ground that allows our bodies to access our roots, to nurture us and to bring us to the light. (I prefer the great-tree metaphor that is also a symbol of the divine feminine.) Thom noted that people without integrity have no backbone.

He asked his audience if we were trying to carry too much on our shoulders or if our bodies were twisted from something we did not want to see. I answered yes to both questions. I had actually been becoming more and more round shouldered and I needed a back support for low back pain and to keep my spine straight when sitting. I was amazed to discover that I was a physical example of the loss of integrity! (The good news is that for those of us who do not have integrity, we can mimic or practice it until we become it.)

Why is it that many of us do not have integrity and where can we get it? Lack or loss of truth comes mainly from low self-esteem. For women, the core issue is the marginalization of our role in history - spiritual or otherwise – that was continued and spread by the major religions of Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam to the societies that accepted the implied or explicit belief system that women are not equal to men. (In fact, even before the Bible was written women were considered property and/or commodities of their fathers and spouses. (Read Riane Eisler's *The Chalice and the Blade* for the history of the destruction of women's equality thousands of years ago.) Like most people, I was totally ignorant of any of this. My awareness came from many sources in my classes at the Hartford Seminary and its Women's Leadership Institute.

In my classes I found that the majority of women had the same problems. Fear of criticism, fear of failure and/or fear of abandonment – or worse – by their families, friends or society. Why? As female children we were taught to be good girls, to keep silent, to agree and not make waves. Women who did speak out were chastised for being aggressive and/or pushy. We were also taught to be selfless and always put the needs of others first. For those of us with no strong role model, the loss of integrity and lack of

Self was the result and we strove to get approval from our parents, our families, our peers and our elders or teachers. In the Seminary classes, I finally learned that I needed to put my Self first because it is not possible to love anyone else unselfishly or completely without first loving the Self and the Divine essence that is this higher Self.

Although I have not quite broken the pattern of agreeing too soon, saying yes too soon or putting someone else's welfare before my own, I have come a long way. I think about what I am asked or told to do or even volunteer to do, before I decide whether to do it. And I evaluate what I read, hear, or see before accepting it as truth. This includes health practices, diet, food and food supplements, politics, history, religion, etc. Just because something has a long tradition behind it does not make it correct or true. Facts may be true, but that does not necessarily make them truth because facts are too easily manipulated and/or viewed differently. Truth can be different for everyone.

Anything that we learn, however, is applicable to our highest good if we take it within, embrace the part that speaks to our hearts and release that which does not. It is when we take things in and they become a dogma, a teaching that we must do a certain way, that they can be detrimental to our health, our work, and our purpose. We can learn from many sources, but the ultimate teacher must always be that which is within us, that which is Truth. How do I find what rings true for me? When I am not sure about something, I now I wait, go slowly and keep asking how it feels. I also ask for guidance through my dreams and my daily meditation practice, reminding myself that God is Truth and the truth is within.

Dianne Conner is a graduate of the Women's Leadership Institute at the Hartford Seminary and secretary of the Greater Hartford Holistic Health Association.