

The Journey...

from Our Heads to Our Hearts

What's happening in the world today? Our government leaders, motivated by power, scheme behind closed doors in order to influence our decisions. Our industries, motivated by greed, inundate us with images designed to manipulate what we purchase. Our media is the vehicle used by government and industry to influence us and to control our reactions.

What does the world scene have to do with the journey from our head to our heart? This world simply reflects how the majority of us live—from our heads. As long as we live from the head, we live with a feeling there is something missing in our lives—happiness seems just beyond reach. It is our innermost desire to live from our hearts. As we learn to live from our hearts, we find the happiness we search for.

In 1997, when Princess Diana died, people all over the world genuinely mourned her passing. Her life generated an outpouring of love. Several days after her death, as the world watched on television, one broadcaster wondered why so many were paying tribute to her memory. He was puzzled as he viewed her as simplistic and not particularly intelligent. Diana had successfully made the journey from her head to her heart ... and she'd done it in public, for all of us to see ... touching the hearts of so many.

Are you willing to take the never-ending journey to live from your heart? The most difficult step on this journey involves facing ourselves with complete honesty. This can be painful but the rewards are worth the effort.

Opening Our Hearts at Home and at Work

Friends comment on the love my daughter and I share as we are best friends and co-workers. Our relationship has not always been so. As two strong individuals, our relationship was often a tug-of-war for control. Hurt feelings, anger, and resentment built a wall between us. As adults, while we often enjoyed being together, the wall of bitter feelings still stood between us. When my daughter was struggling to recover from chronic fatigue syndrome, she knew she had to embrace all the painful feelings she had inside. Many of these feelings involved me. For the first time in our relationship, she didn't want to speak to me. That hurt. The break forced me to be honest with myself—to face my fears, my feelings of inadequacy

and my need to dominate. Because we were both willing to feel the emotions and because we both wanted a better relationship, a healing process began.

Today we have earned our relationship because these past few years we have been willing—sometimes amidst shouting matches—to help each other learn how to have an awesome relationship. Unknowingly, this journey is teaching us to live from our hearts. Love has a way of doing this.

Are you willing to live from your heart in every aspect of your life?

At work, we often accept the belief we should hide our feelings. To do otherwise is considered a sign of weakness. This is the environment we've created with our heads. What would the heart do? The heart is willing to face all situations with complete honesty. One individual was hired by a company as a cook. He had training as a chef but his talents and passion were in sales and marketing. As a result, the company owners were disappointed with his performance. If the head had ruled, he would have been fired leaving both parties with bitter feelings. The company owners embarked on a process that allowed both parties to feel honored. The process wasn't easy. It took six months and involved a screaming match, tears and several discussions to allow each party to express their feelings without blame or judgment. In the end, the individual wasn't fired but he recognized he was not in a job that opened his heart. Shortly after he found a position in sales and marketing that suited his talents and passion. He left the company on good terms.

The Heart of One Woman ... and a Farmer's Cows

In the early 1980s, the war in Bosnia taught one woman how to live from her heart. Amid the intense hatred between the Serbs and Bosnians, life created an experience that could have fueled more hatred. The Serbs captured her husband. She knew wherever he was, he would be in grave danger. Despite her fears, she followed her heart. She decided to treat the enemy as she hoped the enemy would treat her husband. Every day she took food and magazines to the jail where Serbian prisoners were held. She acted with love not expecting anything in return. "The word about her astonishing initiative spread."¹ The Serbs spared her husband. He was eventually released.



When we choose to live from our heart, we act as a beacon of light in the world.

When we learn to live from our heart, we learn to respect all life. The way animals are raised to feed us provides an example. Many owners of smaller ranches and farms treat animals humanely. They realize the way animals are raised not only makes a difference to the life the animal lives, it also makes a difference in the nutrition they provide us. The eggs from chickens, for example, that are allowed to range and eat grasses and bugs have been tested to show they store more light than eggs from chickens confined to small cages. The eggs that store more light means more nutrients are released when we eat the eggs.² Farmers that raise their cattle on grass or hay, avoiding the feedlots that fatten them quickly with grains, provide us with beef that has a healthier balance of fatty acids. Again the animals are raised more humanely and we benefit from the balanced fatty acids that are so important to our health—especially our brains.

A farmer treated his cows kindly, named them, talked to them and truly cared for them. Each cow felt that love. One day while driving his small tractor in the field to check on a new calf, the neighbor's prize bull charged, tipped over the tractor and gored the farmer. As the crazed bull prepared to charge again, the farmer's cows moved in and formed a protective circle around him. The bull continued to charge with the cows taking the blows. The cows stayed their ground—not wavering in their role as protectors. Some of the cows died from internal bleeding. They gave their life for him.³ Cows, as well as farmers, are capable of living from their hearts.

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we act as a beacon of light in the world.***

A Process for Justice

When enough of us are willing to take the journey from our heads to our hearts, our world will change. In 1994, when apartheid came to an end in South Africa, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, the first black President, the country established the "Truth and Reconciliation" process. Under the guidance of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the purpose of the meetings was to end the violence and hatred generated by apartheid so a healing process could begin both for individuals and the country. Individuals who had committed crimes and perpetuated abuses were given the chance to confess, take responsibility for their actions, and be forgiven. Those who had been harmed had the opportunity to confront their abusers and ask why they had acted as they did. Individuals were given the opportunity to forgive and so move on to better live their lives.

The "Truth and Reconciliation" process is a system of justice traditionally used by native cultures. It differs from our court system of adversarial or retributive justice, as the goal is

restorative justice. Instead of finding fault and punishing, the primary goal of restorative justice is to allow the relationship between the offenders and offended to heal as well as determining consequences. The fact that South Africa “didn’t descend into a spiral of bloodshed and revenge” with the end of apartheid and after the hearings ended in 1998, is testament to the success of the process.⁴

A Time to Risk

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

*To weep is to risk
appearing sentimental.*

*To reach out for another
is to risk involvement.*

*To expose feelings is to risk
exposing your true self.*

*To place your ideas, your dreams before
the crowd, is to risk loss.*

*To love is to risk
not being loved in return.*

To live is to risk dying.

To hope is to risk despair.

To try at all is to risk failure.

But try we must.

*The greatest risk of all
is to risk nothing.*

The person who risks nothing

*Does nothing, has nothing,
shares nothing.*

*We may avoid suffering, but we will not
Learn nor grow, live nor love.*

*Only the person who risks
Can be called a free man.*

Anonymous

In 2008, a “Truth and Reconciliation” system was established in Canada centered on past abuses of native children in church residential schools. The intent is to give those who suffered as children an opportunity to share their experiences in a safe environment to allow greater healing and also to reconcile aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians.⁵

In 2006, “Facing the Truth,” a BBC television series brought together individuals who had been on opposing sides in the long-standing conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Ronnie, while a member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), took part in a bombing plot in England in 1974. While he and others waited for their orders, the British police discovered their hiding place. When fleeing the scene, Ronnie shot and wounded Malcolm, a British police officer. Ronnie was later arrested and spent 21 years in prison. Archbishop Desmond Tutu opened a dialogue between the two men. First, Malcolm shared his story of the raid and being shot. A journalist, who observed the proceedings writes: “When he describes being hit, then falling to the ground, his voice breaks and he stops. Head lowered, he weeps. It’s the first time in 30 years he has talked about it.”

Ronnie then explains the discrimination by the government against Catholics that motivated him to become an IRA volunteer at 16 years

of age. A traumatic event shortly after he joined made him more determined than ever to

engage in armed conflict. While walking along the street with a fellow IRA volunteer who was a friend, she was shot dead by the British army.

The journalist, observing Ronnie, writes:

He makes it clear he has no regrets about his involvement in the IRA; in fact, he says he's proud of it.

While he tells his story, he seems determined not to falter under pressure or admit remorse for what he'd done. His body language sends the message, "Don't take me where I will not go." His face is stern and unyielding—jaw tight and eyes wide with conviction. ...

Malcolm looks at Ronnie and says, "What I realize now after listening to your story is how difficult it must have been growing up. And I believe that if I had grown up under the same circumstances that I would have done the same thing."

Ronnie appears stunned. He takes a deep breath, puts his elbows on the table and leans toward Malcolm. His face softens and his shoulders drop. That steely resolve disappears as he awaits Malcolm's next words. Malcolm goes on to say that if he'd seen someone close to him killed, he knows he would have been enraged. He says, "Yes, I feel I could kill. I make no bones about that."

Something happens in those moments that creates an opening between the two men.

The reconciliation that came about between Ronnie and Malcolm that afternoon continues to have a profound impact on me. Their experiences can contribute to our understanding of what it takes to put the past to rest when we've suffered in our relationships.⁶

The process for "Truth and Reconciliation" is a process to heal ... a process to open hearts.

Open Hearts ...

How would living from our hearts change the world? Our government leaders, motivated by service, would make honest efforts to listen and to inform us so decisions are for the good of all. Our industries would provide products that sustain the environment and are built to last. They would make a positive contribution to our communities and world by setting an example for integrity in business. The main focus for our media would be reporting events honestly rather than with a deliberate bias. News stories would be based on people who make heroic and positive contributions to society. In schools our children would be taught to question ... and most importantly to listen to their hearts.

Are you willing to take the never-ending journey to live from your heart and do your part to change this world?

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