

Community

By Lucia Massarella, CPT, BCT

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There is an old saying that says, "It takes a tribe to raise a child." There is a good reason for this. Human beings have been living in community for as long as there have been human beings! There is the community which is our family and close friends, the work place, a peer group or a religious group, just to name a few. Then there is the World community, of which we are all members.



They say that a redwood tree needs to grow in groves, or community, because the trees interconnect their roots in such a way as to help hold each other up.

First, lets define the word *community*. It means "a unified body of individuals." And, *unified*, means to form a single unit or entity. Who and/or what do you feel unified to? When put like that, it might be hard to find a community that you really want to belong to! Each individual in a group *is* truly unique, with their own ideas, and lifestyles. Can we really find a group of people that we can feel truly unified to? Won't there always be the black sheep

in the family and the dissidents in the workplace, church or political group? I suspect that it will always be this way, and this is a good thing. Different ideas invite us to think, and thinking really is a good thing.

With this in mind, how *do* we create healthy community? One way can be by finding common ground. Instead of looking at all the ways we are different, we can look at all the ways we are the same. We can see that there probably is not a single person on the planet that doesn't want the following: health; enough to eat; a comfortable and safe home; to be deeply heard. It would be hard for me to imagine that anyone reading this would not want these things for themselves and their loved ones. Can this be the common ground that can help us build community - both locally and globally?

Thinking of a healthy community brings to mind the need for what I call "The Round Table" approach. In the mythological story of King Arthur, we can see that even when there might be a need for some rules, or in the case of Arthur, rulership, there is still a need to listen to all parties equally. More important still, is to honor each contribution to the function and evolution of

the group. This is true for every level of community whether that community is our family, our personal interest group, our layers of government, or our place in the world community itself. Knowing that each individual has an equal say in the governance of the group, and that they are an important piece of the wholeness of the group.

In the days when it was common for kings and queens to rule a kingdom, the sovereign would sit at the head of a table with his or her most trusted advisers seated at the sides. It was clear who was the ruler. In the legend of King Arthur and the Round Table, there was no "head" to the table, and therefore, none of the knights that sat at it, including Arthur, could claim a more important role than any other. The Round Table, then, became a symbol of equality. Now, researchers believe that the Arthurian round table did not just seat the most favored knights of Camelot, but most likely seated a thousand or more. In other words, the Round Table approach is not just for the elite minority.

Try to imagine community, at all levels, based on equality and inclusion, not exclusion. A community where the members are connected by their desire to be healthy, creative, and prosperous individuals, while having a strong desire to help others to be the same. Health, of mind/body/spirit, and creativity are not religious or political. They are our birthright. A healthy community is one that helps encourage this without asking any individual to give up their uniqueness. It is this very uniqueness and diversity that can keep us curious, bring us joy and help us thrive. Without this, we are simply stuck in a very mediocre, everyday-is-the-same, kind of life.

Sometimes we may choose this kind of mediocrity because of fear. But, where does this fear come from? For the most part, this is the fear that is caused by survival stress. The more stress chemistry we have on an ongoing basis, the less the frontal lobes of our brains will work. Without this part of our brain, we tend to see things in black or white - that is, good or bad, right or wrong. In other words, if I meet a new person or have a new experience, my healthy frontal lobes will help me to be curious, as opposed to uncomfortable or even afraid of someone or something new and different. My curiosity might inspire me to start a conversation with that person, or explore a new place or idea - and that might lead to new insights and a change in my worldview. A healthy, unstressed frontal lobe will help me to be willing to take in new ideas and concepts, evaluate them, and even make some shifts in personal beliefs when facts and intuitions support this.

A lack of community can, and usually does, add to our stress in life. There is, after all, safety in numbers. Stress can also prevent us from creating healthy community. The more stress we experience, the easier it is to become

isolated or to think in black and white terms. This kind of thinking helps support the idea that we are different, and by default, better than others. If we do not have to think in the grey areas, it is easier to function if we have a stress related, shut down frontal lobe. Life becomes this or that, with nothing in between.

However, the world really isn't black and white, nor is it just grey areas in-between. It is full of color and aliveness - a vast range between the black and the white areas of life. A healthy community is a colorful place where every hue knows that they are accepted, appreciated, heard and valued. It is a place where each member is honored and encouraged for their uniqueness and individual contribution to the local community, as well as the world community of which we all belong. By embracing a Round Table approach in creating community and, I should add, developing our intuition, we open to possibilities of healing our world that is far greater than the sum of our individual parts - or beliefs.

Why is intuition important? When we can let go, even for a moment, our personal agendas and can listen to our intuition, there and only there, can we see what is for the highest good for the whole. This is the place where we can find solutions without causing harm globally.

Can we do this? I think we can - if our fears don't get in the way. It might not even be so hard if we start small, applying acceptance, appreciation, truthfulness, deep listening and intuition in the groups we are already a part of. And then - just expand it out!

*Namaste,
Lucia*

NAMASTE - I honor the place in you where the entire Universe resides. I honor the place in you of Love, of Light, of Truth, of Peace. I honor the place in you where, if you are in that place in you and I am in that place in me, there is only one of us. - NAMASTE

Lucia Massarella, CPT, BCT is an Ordained Minister of Ancient Ways and is certified in Polarity Therapy; Body Centered Therapy; Radiance Breathwork; Somatic Emotional Clearing; Ayurvedic Bodywork of India and Tibet; and Craniosacral Therapy.

Lucia is also the founder and administrator of EarthingTheSpirit.com, an on-line holistic community, and the owner/designer of ETS Web Designs. Lucia currently works and teaches in Redding, CA.

For more information about Lucia and her work, visit her website at www.luciamassarella.com or phone **(530) 223-1260**