

June 1997

Keys for Living

This month the key is: *Commitment*

Last month I wrote about passion. Often, when we have a passion about something, we can ride the wake of its energy-filled wave in accomplishing our goals. Other times, commitment is needed to get us to our goal.

An author I read years ago described commitment as "**maintaining one's integrity in the moment of choice.**" I've always loved that description! When the feelings aren't there in the moment, we often need to call on our *belief in* something valuable. We can be aware of our feelings and also be aware of our consciously chosen priorities. Then we make a choice.

Making commitments means having an awareness of our priorities. Try listing all the roles, relationships, values, and demands you see in your life. Start with number one, and compare it to each one on the list, putting a tally mark by the bigger priority of each pair choice. (Yes, you have to choose one or the other each time!) Now do the same with number two, comparing 2 & 1, 2 & 3, 2 & 4, etc. Now do the same with number 3, then four, and on through the list. When you are done going through your list comparing every item to the rest of the list, rearrange them from most marks to least. Do the resulting priorities match your day-to-day life? Reality can sometimes surprise us!

I have **a great respect for the many clients I work with who show enormous amounts of commitment at various points along their path.** Calling for an initial appointment can feel very scary, and doing so takes a genuine commitment of caring about yourself or your child. In fact, research has indicated it is *often the healthiest member of a family who initiates counseling.* Years ago, I read excerpts from a book entitled *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway.* Often commitment is a part of that "anyway."

When our conscious commitments are difficult to translate into behaviors, we may discover a wealth of clues about underlying wounds or feelings that are making themselves known "indirectly," by showing their power to influence our behavior in those "moments of choice." Sometimes not wanting to come to a scheduled therapy session is a clue that a door has been opened on issues or feelings that have been quite comfortable in the dark. Or patterns or fears from the past are spilling into the present. **When our stated commitments do not match our behaviors, our soul is often asking us to stop and really listen to our whole being.**

It can be easy to fall into the trap of focusing on the drudgery of doing those things to which we have commitment, but for which passion is nowhere to be found. In those times, I often remind myself of how varied and diverse the world can be. I begin to search for SOMETHING — ANYTHING — I can notice and enjoy in the moment: sometimes it is the smell of my candle burning, sometimes it is the sound of the leaves on the tree outside my window enjoying the wind. Maybe it is just remembering what I will be doing or how I will feel when my committed task is accomplished. **When passion is far away and commitment is a necessary ally, finding some joy in the moment and asking commitment to share its space, can make all the difference.**