

August 2000

Keys for Living
This month the key is: "Peace"

Peace. Not the usual topic this time of year. But don't be fooled, it's not the winter holidays yet! As you may know, I always meditate to seek suggestions about the intended topic of my newsletter. This month, I was asked to offer information about three specific types of peace important to our lives.

Each type moves peace further outward, and each one supports the other.

Internal peace is the first key. No matter what is going on around us, as long as we have an internal knowing that what we are doing is the right thing, then external chaos or not, we have a quiet *core* from which to draw. For this, we must take the time to listen to our inner voice.

I recently went to a conference in Toronto. When we left, we were expecting to stay in a rustic private cabin on a 94-acre retreat center. When we got there, we found "rustic private cabin" meant a horse stall with a bed in it. Needless to say, we headed off for a hotel, incurring unexpected hotel and taxi costs. Then, two days into the week-long workshop, 13 out of 19 of us were struck by food poisoning. As I lay on a mat at the back of the conference room the next day, **I drew great resolve, comfort, and stability from an internal peace that, despite the troubles, challenges and expenses, I was in the right place and all was as it should be.**

There is **another kind of peace** that I call "**practical peace.**" This peace *extends outside of us to other people*, and is probably the most well-known type of peace. It has many forms and can range from preventing war, to the amazing works of Mother Theresa, to "playing and working well with others."

To create this type of peace, we *use a loving and compassionate heart* to listen to others without judgment, *use discernment* to clearly see others' strengths, vulnerabilities, and fears, and then we strive to *find creative solutions* to respectfully address the needs of everyone involved. The book Getting to Yes (by Fisher) has a crucial idea in it, which I use often. They suggest listening *not* to positions (I want to go out for dinner, and you don't); instead, **listen to issues** (for both of us, it might be we had a stressful day at work, and we are tired). *Positions are often black and white* (eating in or out); *issues have numerous helpful responses* (take-out, delivery, napping before dinner, 30 minutes of quiet before exploring options).

A third form of peace is "Peace towards All." **Traditional Native American culture is a wonderful example** of this kind of peace. If we believe that everything is touched with the love and energy of The Great Spirit (The Source or Creator), then we use a loving and compassionate heart to *relate to all people and things*. When I cut my grass, I thank it for its growth, I say hello to the trees in my yard, and I send well-wishes to the birds, bunnies, squirrels and deer that live in the wild area at the back of the yard. And I thank the moles for sparing us their presence!

Striving for "Peace towards All" can cause us to reflect anew on situations previously considered simple. We might take the spider in our home outside instead of killing it without a thought. We might begin using natural mixtures on our lawn instead of poisons that hurt the Earth and ground waters. We might begin to honor trees and speak to them before we trim their branches.

No matter what level of peace we are striving for, slowing down and listening is the key. For internal peace we must listen to our hearts. For practical peace we must listen to our hearts *and* the hearts of others. And ultimate peace comes from listening to the energy and messages of "All That Is".

So, as you move through your day, consider listening! In doing so you may find, and create, great peace!