

Finding the Courage For the Next Generation  
Conversation Can Change The World

*Solitary chimps, like solitary people, seldom laugh, a result consistent with laughter's role as a social signal. But chimps and humans differ in the social situations in which they laugh—we human have added something new to our still present chimp like tendencies. Adult humans laugh most during conversation.*

from Robert Provine  
*Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*

Words, words, words. Human beings have words, why not use them to change the world?

There is a built in fear of saying what we feel and want. It  
Makes great leaders stand out because we could feel them,  
Connect with something that we so seldom experience.  
In our lives, people seldom use their words to save the planet.  
There are lectures and speakers and even conversations about  
Problems and solutions, but at some deep level, really  
= humans are afraid of their own voice.

We desperately need our words now. To exchange ideas, to  
Brainstorm possibilities, to work as a think tank, to untangle  
The ways we stay separate, judgmental, isolated and angry.  
It is time. It is time to listen, time to speak .

In real conversation we come to the table...fully , being ourselves.  
We risk being rejected but this kind of courage is what is missing  
In the world. The tidy table and the polite “ how are you?”  
followed by “ fine” don't work anymore.

People go to their deathbeds without finishing unspoken longings,  
resentments, judgments, hurt or love. The things we're afraid to say stay  
in the body. People go to their deathbeds without loving the ones they  
care most about, staying so busy that it's impossible to reach each other, in  
more ways than one. What's up with that?

Over the years, as I worked with clients, I noticed that whatever  
abusive situations they had suffered were not the cause of their greatest  
grief. Their deepest pain arose from not having a caring person to walk  
and talk with them about what they had experienced. They never felt  
heard. We need respectful witnesses. We long to tell our stories, to get out  
our hairballs, to explain our grief or share our joy.

The feeling of deadness before you actually die is a waste. This lack  
of vitality and juice is an unnecessary loss.

Joy and laughter come from the freedom of being you. The part inside of us that never felt like enough is at the root of our sense of separation. Most of our attacking, shutting down or self-abusive behavior arises from this constantly reinforced sense of not being adequate. Our addictions, depression, anxiety and isolation are all a result of not learning kindness to self early on. There's a dull, emotionally constipated feeling of perpetual self-judgment in most of us. As Alice Miller says, "For the majority of sensitive people, the true self remains deeply and thoroughly hidden. But how can you love something you do not know, something that has never been loved? So it is that many a gifted person lives without any notion of his or her true self. Such people are enamored of an idealized, conforming, false self."

I cannot say it enough: what we need most are honest, emotionally intimate talks, within ourselves and with others, with clarity around our intentions. It's okay to be confused or ambivalent - even that is real .

I learned this from my parents. They were insistent on a life of meaning. They had conversations that mattered. I grew up around active discussions about social issues and their marriage. My mother loved an argument. Sometimes I saw her as a wild stallion that could not be tamed, but she told the truth. Our home wasn't perfect, but there was a lot of honesty and openness. Authenticity put blood in my veins. So, now I'm passionate about passing the ball to future generations: speak up! Let's not allow their spirits to be broken.

It's full freedom of speech that's being driven out of us in this world. The false self is what we present. Michael Lerner says, in *Surplus Powerlessness* about the political system: "It depends on repressing a fundamental aspect of what it is to be human. As such it can only function through an ongoing struggle and that struggle has severe physical and emotional consequences for human beings." On a deep cellular level, we're creatures in survival, confused about alternatives, missing real

Meaning and connections , like animals needing to survive, so we use various defenses ( shutting down, violence,eating, sleeping, feeling anxious or robotized.)

In the 60s we had connection, conversations through music, poetry, marches.We didn't have acid reflex or tight jaw syndrome. We used our voices freely!

Since that time, therapists have become enamored with "boundaries" and "setting limits." I believe that boundaries are a

substitute for soul. Setting limits has been misunderstood. When you say what you feel, fear and desire, you don't need to push people away or avoid them. You don't need to kill anyone or dislike yourself when you are real. When you are yourself, when you risk being authentic, people know what's happening; there is no sniper attack; everything's on the table, and it's not just greed or gulping and trying to numb ourselves. Our deepest, most vulnerable needs and intentions could change the world.

When my parents died, my brother had a stroke and his divorce followed: writing hairballs saved my life and my health. I found my source of spirituality, which was love of self.

Conversation takes courage. "In the beginning was the word."