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## **A Model for Peer Support**

The basis of a humanistic approach to helping people is the belief that we are each unique and that healing and growth take place when we are present with and we connect with another being.

We are born from the stuff of life, often called, God, Universal Energy, Chi, The Force, the Tao, Universal Force, Higher Power, etc. We each begin with our own unique attributes and potentials (essence, spirit, DNA.) We are born into a world that has structure, rules, codes, expectations and we begin immediately to begin learning to fit in. We enter into a relationship with our parents who agree to take care of us; they take on the obligation of looking after us, of raising us, of civilizing and socializing us. We agree to obey them, to do what they tell us, to conform, and to be civilized, socialized.

Through our very young lenses, we begin to emulate and imitate our parents and later on, teachers and others and we begin to learn to fit in. In order to do this we begin to focus outside ourselves to determine what to do, how to behave and even what to feel. We stop paying attention to our own wants, needs, impulses, talents and abilities. We create boxes so that we can be in conformity.

As time goes on these boxes begin to get more rigid and we lose contact with the Universal Energy and begin to forget our true nature and lose touch with our true impulses and essence. In doing this we stop defining our boundaries and we develop walls. These Walls are determined by rules, expectations, shoulds, obligations, accomplishments and skills. We begin to think that this is who we are and we spend more time polishing and “perfecting” the Walls of this Persona. As we do this, our natural flow of energy begins to slow and rigidify. We lose conscious contact with the Universal Energy and we forget and neglect our Essence.

As we act more and more from the constructed persona, or personality, we then need or crave the approval of others and we try even harder to “fit in” – to do what we “Should” do. A cycle becomes fixed in place in which the more we concentrate on the Persona the less we are aware of our true nature, the more we have to depend on the Persona and the thicker the Walls become and the more our Universal Energy rigidifies. As this cycle continues, the more we lose contact



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with our Universal Energy and our beingness, the more we try to make up for this alienation/disconnection by immersing ourselves with more doing or diversion...and so the cycle grows.

Many people continue like this throughout life – living, as Thoreau said, “Lives of quiet desperation”.

For many people this rigidification and freezing of the Universal Energy leads to serious distress such as, addictions, depression, workaholism, relationship problems, burnout, anomie, or illness.

The concept of Peer Support is to provide support to the individual in thawing and in re-accessing awareness of the Essence and of the Universal Energy.

This isn't done by giving advice and telling the distressed person what they “should” do which would help put yet another brick in the wall. It is done by being authentic, by maintaining our own conscious connection with our own Essence and with the Universal Energy. It is done by sharing personally – from the heart, from the Essence – your own experience.

To provide valuable peer support you need to work on being more aware of your own walls and loosening your own walls. Expose your own nature, work on being more self-aware, be prepared to acknowledge and share who you are with others. Learn to accept yourself and life as you are and it is. From this vantage make conscious and responsible choices of the action to take.

By working on yourself and being willing to share who you are you support the other person to begin the journey of self exploration and growth. This is the greatest gift you can give another. We all have to do the work ourselves but it helps to have understanding Companions on the Journey.

The **diagram** (see following) on the following page outlines a model for relating to others in a way that can help them grow, develop and recover. The diagram shows what has been described above. In the diagram the circle represents one person and the triangle represents another each with his or her authentic nature. The dotted line represents the personality or persona. When we are aware of



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and in touch with our authentic nature we express ourselves from our boundaries. As we begin to conform and take on roles the boundaries begin to rigidify into walls, as that happens we begin to lose conscious contact with the Universal Energy and our energy begins to freeze or slow down. We begin to feel separate and isolated. As this happens we feel even more need to conform, do what we “should” etc. and the cycle continues.

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