

Communication Beyond Ego and Gender

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How much wiser would we be, I wonder, if we learned how to relate and communicate from that place inside us that lies beneath our conditioning; the place beyond the roles we play, our ego, and even gender? I have held a passionate interest in how to do this for a long time.

I didn't speak till I was six. For no apparent reason, I was petrified of expressing myself. And then, as the well known Anais Nin quote says: *The day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was greater than the risk it took to blossom.* My teacher asked the class who would play Mary in the nativity play and, in the split second before my trembling hand went up, I made a choice. The wide-eyed teacher gave me the part (along with an understudy), and I learned my few lines without uttering a sound. The big day finally came and the class parents, knowing my 'disability' sat on the edge of their seats in anticipation of a mini-miracle. I walked on stage serenely, dressed from head to foot in blue, and although somewhat stilted, pronounced each word clearly: "I have travelled a long and weary road..."

I remember this as my first powerful sense of being my real Self (even though I was dressed as Mary). I had simply said "YES" rather than succumbing to the powerful "I can't". Throughout my life, I have repeatedly lost that sense of Self but finally came to understand that what matters is not how many times I lose mySelf but whether I choose to find and use the compass skills that will take me back 'home'.

Take a moment to close your eyes and recall, as vividly as possible, an experience when you felt truly wise, alive and in your own skin. Then ask what took you there and what needs to happen to take you there more often.

In 2011, after a six year period of co-creating the Bowden House Community in Totnes (a fabulous experiment in conscious living and relating), I was holding the question: What is the next creative project that will allow me express my full Self? Then, one morning I was woken at 4 am with a powerful dream. I sat bolt upright in bed and knew that I would write a book about holistic communication and relating; a book that could offer the compass skills I have gathered in my life. *Heart of Relating: Communication Beyond Ego* soon started to materialise and I want to share some things that might be useful on the subject of knowing, ego and gender that were stirred in this creation process.

For three years, I crafted and honed until finally 52 chapters (one for integration each week) emerged that cover the main aspects that make up what I see as a hologram of holistic relating. During this time, I ran Conscious Communication workshops where it became glaringly obvious that as soon as we think we know something already, further learning is

stopped in its tracks; openness and listening diminishes; and communication suffers. We need to practise inhabiting the ego-free state of knowing nothing and becoming empty in order to access the wisdom we need in each moment. This practice is perhaps easier for women than men (it was the men who exhibited this 'I know this already' stance most) but, having said this, please can we avoid, even in our minds, the contagious female habit of belittling and gossiping about the struggles of men.

Yes, let's celebrate the miracle of our female bodies, our amazing cycles, depths, feelings, power, wildness, wounds and scars that have strengthened us. Femininity can be luscious to marinate in, and yet, when we identify strongly as being women whilst our ego is active, we might well find ourselves entering the common 'us and them' mentality that sabotages our relationships with men. The challenge is to live our 'She Who Knows' wisdom without comparing ourselves to men. How do we tell if our ego is active? Simple! It feeds on comparison, usually has a self-righteous or self-deprecating manner and puts ourselves and/or others up and down: 'better than' or 'worse than'. Oh, and it loves to justify why it is doing this, which keeps us absolutely stuck.

Before I say more, I want to ask you to stop and ponder an important question:

Is the part of me that is aware of being a woman, female?

Perhaps, our true identity is beyond gender as well as ego. We know that whether male or female, every human is a meld of feminine and masculine energies. The ratio we each hold of these energies is fundamental to the way we relate. Our business is to balance own inner feminine and masculine, not to attempt to change all expressions of what we perceive to be out of balance in others. If we carry a strong emotional charge about men and masculine traits, we can be sure that our relationship with our own masculine is out of balance and vice versa with feminine traits.

*Be like the bow and arrow...
one cannot be fulfilled without the other.
Each gives purpose to the other.
Without the bow the arrow cannot fly.
Without the arrow the bow is empty.*

~ JOSEPH M. MARSHALL III
(Lakota Historian and Writer)

The shape of a bow is curved like the new moon, like archetypal feminine energy. It is the strong, holding base in which the arrow is received and centred before its purposeful release. An arrow that flies true from the bow is straight and aimed at a target, as masculine energy is naturally drawn to do. Together they serve their purpose.

The western world has been dominated by a primarily masculine mode of communication for a long time. Generally speaking, both sexes are now well skilled in the art of *doing*. We tend to move fast like the arrow; we plan and steer our lives towards our goals for the

future. We gather information from outside ourselves and use our reasoning power to fix and work things out, to debate and form opinions. We live and work mostly in angular buildings and often sit in straight lines in public places. None of this is wrong, but do our bows and arrows need reuniting?

The way of the bow, the true feminine energy, is the way of *being*; of patient, deep listening to intuition; of sensing feelings; of surrender and just knowing. This way values non-action, takes time and space and it trusts an arrow-like direction to emerge when necessary from this beingness. The feminine creates soft, supporting, curved environments that nourish, and it knows how to sit with apparent brokenness to await solutions from within, moving only when the impulse strikes.

Where do you stand in all of this; your knowing, your ego and feminine/masculine balance? I suggest, before quickly moving to the next page, you take time to gather your awareness of anything you want to remember. Write it down or make a commitment to something that you will sit with further or, if ready, activate in your life.



Carmella B'Hahn is an author of 3 books, grief counsellor and communications coach. Her new book is now on sale and she is running courses locally, one of which - 'Holding Our own' is specifically for women.

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