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Welcome

Thank you for joining us to explore The Inside Connection. We want to encourage, challenge, and support you to explore your full potential. We believe that success comes most directly when you look inside yourself first, before seeking change from other people or the things around you. If you enjoy our e-zine, please forward it to colleagues, friends and family who might benefit.

Inside The Inside Connection

June began with a number of unexpected and routine-destroying events in my life. Hence the late launch of this issue. I was feeling annoyed and unsettled about all the changes I needed to make until I read the following in Gerry Spence's book "Seven Simple Steps to Personal Freedom:"

"We get up in the morning and proceed through the same routine every day. We turn on the coffeepot, let out the dog, stagger to the shower, brush our teeth, blow our hair dry, let the dog in, and pour our second cup of coffee. If anything intrudes into the routine, the intrusions bring on immediate irritation. Every day we drive to work over the same route, have lunch at the same place, often with the same people, and, in sum, encounter the same daily routine that has already left us mindless and benumbed. At last we fall into bed to watch the same inane sitcoms on television, which will paralyze the few remaining brain waves that dare slither across the mind's blurry screen.

"When we proceed through one day in one way, for sure we have experienced that day. If we repeat the same routine on the second day, we have still lived but one day - the first. Some people have spent a lifetime engaged in the monotonous repetition of that first day, day after day, and at last they die having lived little more than that one monotonous day of their lives. Routine, habit, and fear of something new have become the venal thieves of freedom. *Test your habits. Abandon those that reduce you to the slavery of sameness.*"

The rest of the book talk about a variety of ways that we enslave and prevent ourselves from experiencing personal freedom. It offers some common sense and some radical thinking on how to overcome our own self-imposed slavery.

This month's article encourages us to pay attention to the wisdom of our own inner voice, especially as it speaks to us through physical symptoms of pain, injury and illness in our body. Listening carefully to your inner voice is one of the paths to personal freedom.

Want to Hear the Real Truth-Listen to Your Inner Voice

For the first time in as long as I can remember, I've woken up in the middle of the night and I can't fall back to sleep. There's an idea inside me that wants expression. There's something that wants to be said and I know that if I fall back asleep, it'll be lost. Ever had that happen to you?

It's gotten me thinking about our inner voice - that inner guidance each of us has that tells us the truth, our own truth, if we're only willing to listen. Back in September 1997, while rushing to get to a meeting, I slipped outside on a wet piece of slate and severely cracked the fibula bone in my right leg just above my ankle. One moment I was walking along, my head busy with all the things I needed to take care of, the next I was lying on the wet ground in incredible pain holding my foot and crying out for help. A couple hours later I was in surgery having my ankle repositioned and a steel plate attached to the broken bone in my leg. I left the hospital later that day with a full leg cast, and a whole lot of time to sit (mostly lie) on my ass and think about my life.

Only once before in my life had I ever broken anything. It was November 1985, the week before I got married for the first time. While out jogging, I twisted my ankle and broke a tiny bone in my foot that was almost invisible, except to a trained MD on an x-ray. That time, I only needed a removable stirrup cast and was able to walk down the aisle with just a good tape job supporting my foot.

Here's the important connection. Both times my body was trying to tell me things that my rational, logical, bullheaded intellect didn't want to hear.

My first marriage only lasted a couple of years. If I knew then how to pay attention to the internal warning signs of my body, I might have saved myself a lot of grief. Even without knowing how to listen deeply to subtle internal signals, just realizing that my body never lies would've delayed my betrothal. Instead, I plowed ahead, as I often did in those days, right into disaster.

After my divorce, I remembered back to how painful it actually was for me to walk down the aisle at my wedding on my broken foot. Then, toward the end of a Jewish wedding ceremony, the groom breaks a glass with the heel of his foot. Since my broken foot was not steady enough to stand on, I used it instead to break the

glass. The pain that shot up my leg at that moment was excruciating. I didn't realize it then, but I now believe that my small but painful foot injury was my "wise" body trying to warn me about something.

If you believe in the wisdom of the body, and the symbolic way it communicates, it might have been saying: "Don't walk in that direction. It will hurt. In fact, every step you take toward this marriage will be painful." And it was.

After that realization, I made a promise to myself and my body that I would always seriously consider any body signals, any pain, and immediately stop and listen for inner messages before proceeding with important decisions in the future.

OK, now jump forward ten years to 1997...

Ankle surgery is completed. I'm lying on my back in a full leg cast. So I asked myself if there was some important message that I wasn't paying attention to, and I closed my eyes to listen for the answer.

The answer came loud and clear: "You're walking the wrong path." As soon as I heard that inner response, I knew it was true. Problem was, I didn't know what the "right path" was at the time. How could I leave what I was doing without knowing what I'd do next?

Despite my lack of clarity about my future, I remembered and honored my previous promise to listen carefully to the warnings of my physical body. Within a week, I'd given notice at my management position. I stayed just long enough to transition my responsibilities into good hands. Then I spent the better part of a year searching for direction - the "right path" for me. It actually took a few years for everything to fall into place, but that "break" led me to my current situation - work I love, a wife I adore, and a much more open ear to subtle information signals from my body!

Over the years, I've spent lots of time in workshops, seminars and retreats trying to learn to "hear" my inner voice. What was it trying to tell me? Why couldn't I figure out what to do? When there were lots of voices, how could I know which one was true? How could I listen better, deeper, more accurately?

Well, here's what I know about our inner voice of truth. We each have one, whether we listen to it or not. At first, it speaks softly with subtle information, guidance or warnings. But most of us ignore that information, so the voice, the messages, and often the pain inevitably become louder and more insistent.

As a coach, I often look at my clients to see what I notice that they're obviously not paying attention to. It's amazing how "loud" that message can often be - so loud that an outsider can see it clearly - while the client continues to deny or ignore what their own life is telling them.

Sometimes people are amazed at the things I seem to know about them just from an initial meeting. I'm not psychic and don't believe I have any unusual powers. I just observe and pay close attention

to information that most of us actively deny or ignore.

You see, after our inner voice tries to tell us things in a soft, subtle voice, it starts to speak louder and louder until it's shouting at us. It may start out as a small body pain or minor annoyance. Many of us just take an aspirin and forget about it. It might also be insomnia or one of many other "acceptable" discomforts that we can easily medicate. Medication (whether it be aspirin, prescription pain killers, alcohol, or any number of other addictive substances and practices) numbs the annoyance and robs us of the chance to gain deeper meaning from the body's message, so the next signal needs to be a lot less subtle to get our attention.

That's the point when, like me, we fall and break an ankle, or have some other serious injury, or go see a doctor for some attack or strange illness. Now I'm not suggesting that we intentionally cause ourselves harm or disease. What we do is often ignore the subtle signals that our bodies give us. These signals, these small annoyances, these discomforts are all part of the "inner voice" that we need to be listening to rather than ignoring or medicating.

Here's an example from my own current life...

I sit and work at the phone and on my computer, often nonstop for hours at a stretch. My body gives me countless signals that it's time to get up and move around. If I ignore the signals, I end up stiff, cranky and short-tempered at the end of the day. Even worse, I may pull my back later on and be uncomfortable or in pain for days. On the other hand, if I do pay attention, get up and move around, then return to work, I easily avoid further "yelling" from my inner warning system and save myself the pain, frustration and lost time from work (which was my original goal when I tried to plow through my work and ignore the initial body warning!).

I've yet to meet anyone who can't detail a long list of physical complaints if I simply ask them to close their eyes, take a few deep breaths, and pay attention to their body. They immediately start to describe the stiffness they feel in one spot, the exhaustion they've been ignoring, the mild headache, and so on.

So all I'm asking you to do is listen carefully to what your body and your life are already trying to tell you. Believe me, broken bones and metal plates are not the most enjoyable ways to "take a break" when you need one! If I'd been honest with myself and paying more attention to subtle signals back in 1997, I wouldn't have the gorgeous ankle scar that now serves as my reminder to listen sooner.

Maybe we need to be smacked on the head by our bodies in order to get us to pay attention. Then again, maybe we just haven't had the encouragement or training to listen deeply enough. I know that learning to listen to ourselves is a lot more rewarding and a lot less painful than the alternatives.

Is your life trying to tell you something that you're trying to ignore? Sometimes it's a challenge for us to notice what we've gotten so good at ignoring. It's one good reason to work with a coach. Good coaching will quickly bring to light issues that are obvious to an outside observer, but often hidden from within our

own view.

Final note:

If you decide to follow the Action Tip below, be sure to write down your insights as soon as you get them. Don't believe that you'll remember your insights without writing them down. It's like convincing yourself that you'll remember the amazing dream you had when you woke up in the middle of the night, even if you fall back asleep and promise yourself you'll write it down in the morning.

So we come full circle. I had an idea about listening to our Inner Voice. I woke up to write about it so I wouldn't forget it by morning. Now that I've gotten it out and on paper, I can go back and get my rest!

Action Tip-Inner Voice Dialogue

Find a quiet place and minimize potential distractions - turn off the phone ringer, ask others not to disturb you, etc.

Ask yourself a question that speaks to your inner voice. Here are some examples:

- | Pick a current life/work/health challenge and ask: What is this challenge supposed to help me learn or realize about my life? Is there some deeper significance or guidance that I can gain from the situation?
- | What am I ignoring, resisting, or denying that needs attention now?
- | What do I know I need to do to (but have not been willing to face)?
- | What support/help do I need right now?
- | Is there a past promise to myself that I am not honoring? What do I need to do about it?

Give yourself as much time as you need. Trust that an answer is there just waiting for you to provide the time and space you need to hear it.

Your goal in this exercise is to listen deeply to yourself without judgment. To listen for your own truth. Try not to be so smart about it all while doing this. Just relax and stay open to any insights, thoughts and information that come into your awareness.

Try not to mentally "argue" with yourself over the information you hear. Just listen and consider what you hear with an open mind. It's reasonable to assume that you won't like some of the answers you get. Remember, you've been talking yourself out of this information for quite a while already. If this was easy information, your body and your life wouldn't need to be yelling at you to get your attention!

Finally, don't worry about "knowing" when you hear the answer. Believe me, you'll know when you do. The truth is often loud and clear and startling in its clarity.

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