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# LEARNING WORKS FOR ALL OF US

*"a networking newsletter from the office of  
LearningWorks Enterprises Inc., [www.learningworks.ca](http://www.learningworks.ca)"*

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Winter 2003

Volume 2 No. 5

## **Leadership Yoga** by Anastasia Humenuk

As I was sitting in lotus posture in my afternoon yoga class, trying to notice and clear the thoughts that passed through my mind, I noticed how leadership, like yoga, is a practice and thought I would write down a few thoughts that flowed from this concept.

Leadership, like yoga, is a practice that requires both study and mastery in order to fully appreciate the experience and be successful in its results. Similar to the practice of learning to play an instrument or piece of music, the practice of leadership requires of its student, dedication and reflection, a deep connection to the music/words and, among many other traits, the ability to hear the whole piece of music in order to understand where the musician (leadership) fits in.

The practice of leadership consists of many things including the mastery of leadership practice as a way of being and learning. Ultimately, mastery comes inherently from a deep connection and knowing of the self and from paying attention and reflecting on how we communicate in relationships. The author, Margaret Wheatley, looks at the aptitude of learning about the self from a systems approach and states, "(s)eeing the interplay between system dynamics and individuals is a dance of discovery between the whole and its parts. We expand our vision to see the whole, then narrow our gaze to peer intently into individual moments. With each iteration, we see more of the whole, and gain new understandings about individual elements." (1999, p.143)

As such, new understandings emanate from being able to develop an awareness of a whole system. To use the music analogy again, it is much easier to play part of a symphony if you know where your part of the music fits and how the end result sounds with all of the pieces of the orchestra playing at the same time. How we, as leaders, contribute to the whole is a profound learning that can help to determine critical moments of leverage and intervention.

The practice of seeing is also a key component of leadership. Leadership asks the leader to perfect the ability to see the self both in relation to others and in relation to simply the self since “understanding your patterns and how you maintain them are the most powerful and empowering tools (a leader) can have.” (Ron Short, 1998, p. 59) In the words of Peter Druker, “(s)uccess in the knowledge economy comes to those who know themselves, their strengths, their values and how they best perform.” The mastery of self-reference originates from internal honest reflection and dedication to cultivating an openness to seeing the self in a different way and challenging potential mental models.

Finally, as in yoga, the importance of intention and how leaders “do” process to inspire or shape the practice of transformation in organizations is key. In other words, how a leader shows up and moves or actions any body of knowledge with others can impact the results if there does not exist clear intention or a state of being truly present with the initiative.

Leadership, like yoga and any artistic endeavour, asks of its student the ability to dedicate time, energy and passion to its practice. At times I am haunted by knowing that all I need to move into my practice of leadership is within me. At times I am comforted by this because I realize, at that moment, I am the instrument and the music or the yoga posture simply awaits me.

## **References**

Short, Ron. (1998) *Learning in Relationships: Foundation for Personal and Professional Success*. Seattle: Learning in Action Technologies.

Wheatley, Margaret. (1999) *Leadership and the New Science*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

## **LearningWorks’ Lowdown**

This has been a very busy fall, with all four of us scattered around the city and beyond. We have been working in Whistler, the Sunshine Coast, Vancouver Island and Manitoba. Our business has taken on a new energy with Anastasia on board which, according to our resident astrologer, is exactly what is predicted in the stars!

Our last breakfast meeting, our largest ever, was a wonderful welcome to Anastasia who spoke with passion about the values of Open Space learning as an Organizational Development Tool. Thanks to the Yaletown Brewing Co. for loaning us a corner of their restaurant for the occasion and to Scott Comber, Annie Cousland, Terry Parsons, Sonja Reisdorf, Francine Bolduc, Paul Teichroeb, Rosemary Hagiwara, Bob McGilvray, Ed Ronyecz and Billie Carroll for joining us.

As we come to the end of November we would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our subscribers a very safe and happy holiday season. We look forward to hearing from you, and seeing you more, in the New Year.

### **Next Breakfast Meeting**

Please join us to hear Jane Roberts talk about the role of the Third Party (the Witness) in resolving conflict as a follow up to our last newsletter.

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Date: Thursday, December 4, 2003

Place: LearningWorks  
Suite 205 – 1110 Hamilton Street  
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2S2

**RSVP: LearningWorks at 604-669-6757 by November 28<sup>th</sup>**



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