

WHO's *our* TRIBE

Catherine Nelson, Ph.D.

in This Day and Age?

Somewhere deep, very deep inside us is a need for safety in our lives. Perhaps it is in our DNA from living thousands of years on planet Earth. We believe that our safety is determined by our family and our “tribe.” Our ancestors survived trusting that membership in the tribe would help to keep them safe from harm, from attack, from hunger, and so much more—and it often did.

Strangers were suspect. They might be enemies, invaders, or potential conquerors capable of causing the death and destruction of our loved ones.

The strangers might have looked different. Maybe they spoke a foreign language, dressed strangely, or had different values. In essence, the thinking was: if you don't look like me, or talk like me, or believe as I do, then you are my enemy. These are all historical examples of how we have lived in fear of strangers. We have either approached strangers in our migrations and possible conquests, or they have approached us in their migrations

or conquests.

No wonder most of us feel more comfortable with others who look like us, talk like us, believe as we do, and have the

cause us potential harm. Who are the real members of our tribe?

The doctor who may be able to help your child recover from a serious disease may be from a different country, have a different religion, and a different skin color. Is she a member of our tribe? The firefighter who speaks with a foreign accent who has traveled a thousand miles to help fight forest fires in the U.S. is our friend and ally, not our enemy.

No longer do our physical, cultural, or religious differences give us a clue as to who is our friend or our potential enemy. Our technology and our telecommunications networks

have made the world a “global village.” The world has grown smaller and increasingly interdependent in so many ways. Our economies are intertwined. Many countries are working together to protect the oceans



same cultural values.

Here we are in the twenty-first century and our DNA continues to stimulate our need for safety. However, it is now essential that we rethink who will help us to be safe and who will

and natural environments, as well as endangered animal and plant species. We do not need to travel to learn about other cultures. We can learn about them on the TV, the radio, the Internet, through books, magazines, etc. Our telecommunications have made travel an option but not a necessity for learning.

Our physical and political borders are becoming less relevant at separating various cultures. Again our technology and communications have magnified the opportunities for learning about and appreciating diverse cultures, religions, languages, music, and art.

We no longer need to be afraid of our differences. In fact, our lives are enriched by the abundance of our diversity. It is exciting and stimulating to meet people from different cultures. Our technology and communications have greatly enhanced the international sharing of scientific research, medical findings, and even our discovery of common core values.

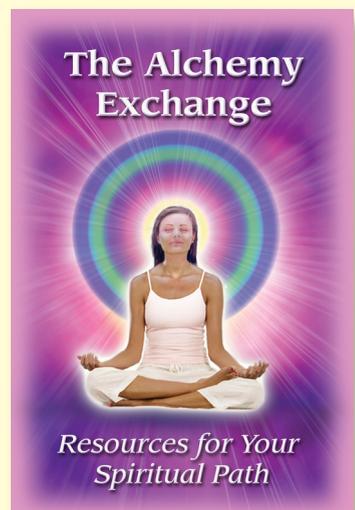
Our need for safety still lives within us as a survival mechanism. There are still major

threats to our existence. There are wars and ongoing destruction of human lives around the world. The big difference is that our sense of “tribe” needs to be redefined in terms of our common values in the global village. The current members of our tribe are all those who subscribe to the same core values. Here are examples of these core values:

- ✦ We all want our families and our children to be safe, healthy, and enjoy their lives.
- ✦ We all want our children to have the opportunity to be educated.
- ✦ We all want peace and the opportunity for prosperity.
- ✦ We all want to have basic religious and political freedoms.

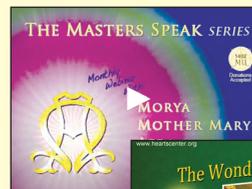
As Americans, we have many different groups or smaller “tribes” that we belong to in our communities. We have our political groups, our special-interest groups, and many more. Nevertheless, when it comes back to that deeply embedded sense of safety and survival, it is time to embrace all others who are intrinsically our brothers and sisters in the global village. ■

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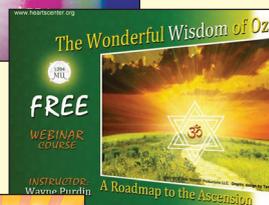


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