

Getting Back to Basic Core Values



Here we are at the beginning of a new year. In our culture it is customary to reflect on the past year and set some goals and priorities for the coming year. We are leaving a year that was filled with excess and inundation—political commercials spending excessive amounts of money. We are inundated with all the pressure to buy things over the holidays, with the emphasis on “things,” not relationships. We are bombarded with excessive amounts of information in the media, on our computers and cell phones. Endless kinds of entertainment is available day and night. Many of us are distracted, mesmerized, overwhelmed, even addicted, to looking at the little and big screens in our world of technology. More and more of us, adults and teenagers, look like cell-phone zombies as we walk down the street totally focused on their gadget. Some of these individuals trip and fall; some forget where they are; some get hit by cars!

It's interesting to note that Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were both very restrictive about the use of technology for their children and teens. There are recent reports from veterinarians

that our domestic animals are suffering from depression because their owners are not paying attention to them. Another factor to examine is the high rate of suicide in the US, and especially in Montana.

The beginning of a new year is a good time to review our current patterns of behavior and ask some important questions. How many hours each day are we immersed in technology? How are those hours contributing to our well-being (and that of the beings around us), or to our spiritual growth and emotional development? Let's check in on our sense of self-worth. Do we feel good about how we have shared our unique gifts and talents with others lately?

What are the core values you try to live by each day? What matters most to you? Our “basic values” create the compass that we live by. It takes time to search for and develop these values. This search requires an ongoing awareness of our inner essence. Let's look at some behaviors that reflect upon our basic values common in our culture.

One is attending to the relationships we cherish. It could be sharing a meal with an older relative and listening to their life stories. Another would be playing with your dog every day and scratching it in favorite places. Another is sitting comfortably in silence finding a time for inner awareness and reflection, where feelings might surface. There is so much richness in one's inner world to be explored and appreciated.

Another core value is gratitude—that feeling of deep appreciation for yourself or another, and for life's blessings. Too often we get caught up with complaints, criticisms, judgments and negative energies that pull us down. Can we develop a daily habit of finding gratitude for some aspect of life, in our self or in other people? The positive energy of gratitude will shift our focus and bring joy to our life.

Another core value that many of us have developed is our relationship with nature. Do you find the time to hike, to look and to listen to the bountiful diversity in nature? Our children have much to teach us about the spontaneous awareness they have of the wonders in nature. These are words taken from a song that reminds us of our intrinsic connection with nature:

I am the sunrise.

I am the night sky.

I am the falcon that flies high.

I am one with all that is.

As the new year rolls around, take some time to ask yourself some of these questions. Consider what your core values are and whether you are living them. If not, begin again in 2019. ■

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