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## Relationship Networking - on Another Level

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*"Our truest life is when we are in our dreams awake. Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize the infinite extent of our relations."* Henry David Thoreau

In the heaven of Hindu and Buddhist tradition, there lies a vast silken web whose strands span infinitely across space in every direction. At each intersection, there's a shining luminous jewel and each one completely reflects every other jewel. The jewels are said to represent the souls of all animate life. For many, Indra's Net represents the interconnectedness of all souls. The idea is: since each jewel reflects all others, we both affect, and are affected by, others.

### Consider:

How do you feel when you're treated abruptly and disrespectfully by someone - a colleague, a boss, a sales- or wait-person, a client or vendor, a physician, a relative, partner or spouse? Moreover, you're feeling unhappy or angry, on a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to allow your negative emotions to leak out and spill over into your next interaction, and the next, and the next? And, if others react negatively to your negativity, how do you suppose they'll react in *their* next interaction? And, if the opposite were true in terms of your feeling "seen," acknowledged and appreciated by another, would that positivity affect your next interaction, and the next, etc? Get the picture?

**The Butterfly Effect** - The idea is that if a butterfly chances to flap his wings in Beijing in March, then, by August, hurricane patterns in the Atlantic will be completely different - (this concept is initially attributed to meteorologist Edward Lorenz). Interconnectivity, networking, on a global level.

So, moving from the heavens to "down here," at ground level, the practical implication of Indra's Net would have us be curious about how we choose to relate to the various "jewels" we come across in our daily life at work, at home, at play and in relationship.

Caught up in a life where many are moving at 90 miles an hour (think "ant colony") - mentally, physically, on- and off-line, etc., how often do we consciously or unconsciously ignore those other jewels with whom we come into contact? We DO have some effect on everyone with whom we come into contact whether we/they are aware of it or not, whether we choose to or not.

Living a life, rather than a lifestyle, or living "in" one's self, rather than living "next to" one's self (i.e., robotically, disengaged), means being aware of "who we are" and "how we are" in every moment understanding and appreciating the significance of the web of interconnectivity, our interconnectivity.

*Once a human being has arrived on this earth, communication is the largest single factor determining what kinds of relationships he makes with others and what happens to him in the*

*world about him.* - Virginia Satir

### **Consider:**

With how many people do you interact (face-to-face, electronically, etc.) every day? And how many of these folks are actually "visible" to you as you interact? That is, how many of these folks do you really see as having any real-ness or personal-ness? Do you tend to overlook or dismiss them as "ordinary" because you view them as "roles" or tasks, or insignificant or simply as a means to an end direct reports, assistants, secretaries, clerks, taxi/bus drivers, street sweepers, shopkeepers, and the like?

Indra's Net reminds us that we can make the invisible, visible. That the jewels that connect one strand to another and reflect one another are just that jewels to be seen, acknowledged, appreciated and valued.

*"I wish Pooh were here. It's so much more friendly with two."* Piglet (A.A. Milne)

### **Seeing the diamond through the dust**

What our planet seems to be crying out for are conscious, healthy interactions and relationships between and among folks - folks we know and folks we don't. The easiest way to begin to remove the dust and see the jewels is simply by recognizing another as, well, another human being someone who in their own right is a jewel at the crossroads of other strands, reflecting other jewels.

How I choose to react or respond to another will affect how that other responds or reacts to others. My glance, my words and my actions (verbal and non-verbal) can have a positive or negative effect on that other, and their glance, words and actions will affect others - the web is infinite and real. We will make a difference - a good difference or a not-so-good difference. But, in all likelihood, we will make a difference that ripples out to others as a ripple moves across a pond.

The idea is not to create an ego-driven difference, but a soul difference - making an invisible person, visible seeing the diamond through the dust with a loving or mindful glance, word, or kindness, as opposed to an unconscious, dismissive or robotic "I hardly notice you" role-playing-type reactivity. Just a quarter-carat energetic response is all it takes. It's mutually energizing on a soul level.

### **Every diamond is unique**

*"It's surprising how many persons go through life without ever recognizing that their feelings toward other people are largely determined by their feelings toward themselves, and if you're not comfortable within yourself, you can't be comfortable with others."* - Sydney J. Harris

Every jewel in the Net possesses a uniqueness. When our "eyepiece" is jiggled or jostled by the speed of life, or a bruised psyche we cannot see clearly and are more apt to dismiss, reject or

judge another diamond as a simple, worthless stone. Here, we need to not only obtain a new eyepiece, but turn it on our self to examine perhaps a flaw or two within our own diamond something we have denied, repressed or not accepted about our jewel. When we discover what it is, work with it and polish it, then others' brightness will be readily available for our viewing pleasure.

The practical application of Indra's Net is that the diamond within us chooses to see the diamond in another. The beauty of Indra's Net, and real networking - is just that - the beauty that arises naturally when connection is based on acknowledging and appreciating the uniqueness and value of another - just because they are.

**So, some questions for self-reflection are:**

- Do you ever observe and reflect on your own observations of others? What do these observations reveal about yourself?
- When you choose to see someone as being different from you, what might it be about your own unconscious that you are discovering?
- Do you experience discomfort around others who are "not like me?" Do you tend to be more inclusive or exclusive in your orientation to others?
- Do you know the name of the person who cleans your office, the wait-person you see every day in your local coffee shop, the elevator operator, your refuse collector, your mail carrier (you get the picture)?
- Have you ever caught yourself being too busy to acknowledge or show appreciation to another?
- How do you feel when another person does not give you the attention you'd like (or think you deserve)?
- Can you think of times when a good/bad experience with someone influenced your behavior in subsequent interactions with others? What was that like?
- Can you envision a world where an Indra's Net orientation to people actually exists "down here?"

*"The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another." - Thomas Merton*

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