

Life is a Circle



KNOW THYSELF

The first time I came to Anguilla I felt the sweetness of this place...the people, the land, the sea, the light...and I had the feeling of reconnecting with some part of myself that I wanted to know again. I returned many times as a tourist, never tiring of being here and always sad to leave. I had a real estate career and a successful life in Canada but more and more I was questioning the validity of focusing most of my time and energy on making money and in turn, collecting more and more possessions. After a lot of soul-searching I moved here and Anguilla, which had always been a place of my heart, became home.

Leaving a lifestyle and beginning another was a difficult emotional challenge but I began to see that the space I had intentionally created between what 'was' and what 'could be' was a unique opportunity to re-evaluate what I had always accepted was the right path for me. It was a chance to take a deep breath and start thinking outside of the box. Some time studying Tolle's philosophy in 'The Power of Now' had a significant impact on my thinking.

THE POWER OF NOW

I hadn't taught in a long time but I started to volunteer a few hours each week at a local school helping children with reading difficulties. As I had some music in my background, this soon evolved into doing musical activities with the children. It was exciting to watch their progress and some of the teachers felt there were immediate benefits seen in the children. The kids loved it and I was having more fun than I could remember. After several years I approached the Education Department to see if I could help promote more music in other primary schools. My suggestions

were positively received and I began to travel to all 6 primary schools as a music facilitator teaching classes from Kindergarten to Grade 4.

A year ago I read an article about depression in children and it referred to 'Drum Circles' as 'the answer'. I googled and what I read has taken my teaching in a new direction and impacted me personally.

Drum circles are a way to create group improvisational music with drums and other percussion instruments by getting in touch with the rhythm we all instinctively possess. No musical experience is necessary because drum circles don't have anything to do with musical knowledge but have everything to do with heart...our first drum.



DRUMS FOLLOW OUR HEARTBEAT

I was fascinated by this concept as an educational tool....and then as good karma would have it, a few months later I was able to take a workshop given by Arthur Hull, a charming and self-described elfish gentleman from California who has been a major influence world-wide in the renewed interest in drum and percussion circles. In the workshop I began to learn how to 'facilitate' a drum circle by using non-verbal, easy to understand cues given to the rest of the circle to help create a song. But the joy in being a facilitator is that most of the time you are just a part of the circle 'following the people who are following you' and once a nice groove is established it is easy and relaxing to just carry on and on listening to the music which can be lively and everybody wants to get up and dance, or something that turns out to be more quiet and meditative.

Needless to say, that very first drum circle at the workshop called to me and after some 350 classroom circles this year, I have repeatedly seen how a drum circle has the ability to bring together any group and connect them rhythmically to each other and even themselves. It continues to be an enriching experience.



PUT YOUR HEART INTO IT

Something else unexpected and wonderful happened after I changed directions. I'd never held a brush before but went to a water colour class given by Lynne Bernbaum, whose work I admire. I painted with those water colours every day for 6 months, changed to oils and found my bliss. No one was more surprised than me when people responded to my paintings and it still seems like a bit of a miracle. It's difficult to describe how it feels to express the beauty of nature or to capture light on a canvas but it beats

selling a house any day!

Today I marvel at the changes in my life. Although contrary to popular trends, I've learned that, for me, less really is more and a simple life is very sweet. I am blessed to work with children which is gratifying beyond words. And that I am teaching the children and grandchildren of the friends I first made in Anguilla over 20 years ago has a completeness that I cherish. Life is a circle!

After I made the decision to move, I received the following from a financial consultant with whom I had many conversations about 'how much is enough'.



Drum circles are being used in music programs in schools throughout the world and there are also many circles regularly held in community settings open to the general public. Interestingly, they are not only great fun but there are documented health benefits which include stress relief and a big boost to the immune system. They have also been found to be helpful with cancer patients, recovering addicts, the well-elderly, Alzheimer patients, people with autism, kids-at-risk and the list goes on. It is such a beneficial activity that many multi-national corporations and governments are using facilitated drum circles for employees to help build morale and team spirit.



Postscriptum

THE MEANING OF LIFE?

An investment banker was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellow fin tuna. The banker complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Mexican replied, “only a little while”.

The banker then asked why didn't he stay out longer and catch more fish?

The Mexican said he had enough to support his family's immediate needs.

The banker then asked, “but what do you do with the rest of your time?”

The Mexican fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siesta with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life, señor.”

The banker scoffed, “I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time

fishing and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats and eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman, you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then LA and eventually New York where you will run your expanding enterprise.”

The Mexican fisherman asked, “But señor, how long will this all take?”

To which the banker replied, “15-20 years.”

“But what then, señor?”

The banker laughed and said, “That's the best part. When the time is right you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich, you would make millions.”

“Millions, señor? Then what?”

The banker said, “Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siesta with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos.”