



**Village eView April 22, 2020**

*Colette Hoff, Editor*

# Sense of Belonging Loyalty

## **A Sense of Belonging and Loyalty = Kindness**

Colette Hoff

A sense of belonging and loyalty are two additional aspects of kindness. We have learned that kindness includes the qualities of empathy, patience, trust, humility, service, gratitude, and flexibility. This week, a sense of belonging and loyalty are the focus. *The Power of Kindness*, loaned to me by Pam Jefferson, is beautifully written by Piero Ferrucci and features 18 aspects of kindness.

A sense of belonging is our birthright. In ideal circumstances it starts with mother and then family and goes into various clubs, sports, scouts, church group, community. Without these affiliations, it is difficult to define ourselves and have reasons for existing. It is truly difficult to know ourselves without reference to others. We need the protection and security of other human beings. This is so apparent even in social isolation and the world emergency we are experiencing. When the need for belonging has been undeveloped or wounded early in life, discomfort, feelings of depression, disorientation, and hostility are likely to be problematic.

The age of individualism we live with is a counter force to belonging. Individual efforts are highly prized, specialness is competed for, originality sought after, egos inflated and a sense of community is not valued.

I observe that people who are new to community have a soul-ish sense that community is just what they need. Then, after a time, ego makes it difficult to see the value of joining and belonging and they begin to talk themselves out of the desire to belong. A choice can be made to want to belong. It is not automatic and while the group needs to be inclusive and inviting, the person joining needs to want to join and belong.

A sense of belonging, described by Ferrucci as . . . “the feeling we are part of a whole greater than ourselves with which we are physically, mentally, and spiritually involved is a necessary factor to our well-being.”

### ***On-Line News of the Goodenough Community System***

The American Association for the Furtherance of Community

Convocation: A Church and Ministry

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The sense of belonging can be free and flexible, making life fuller. Community or any group gives many benefits and asks for people to conform to the culture, lifestyle, norms, and ways of relating which can feel limiting to the ego. On the other hand, the practical support offered by group participation is important for physical and mental health.

These attitudes are essential to kindness. If I greet someone with an attitude of coldness and suspicion, seeing only our differences, it is unlikely we would connect. However, if we cultivate the ability to feel part of an even larger world community, I would more likely to be accepting, sharing a common destiny, belonging to the human race together.



Brene' Brown points out that self-acceptance is an important pre-requisite to a sense of belonging.

*Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.* — Brené Brown

A article titled True Belonging by Brene Brown can be found on page 17.

The Goodenough Community works to offer opportunities for growing into an authentic sense of belonging. The community covenant is considered a guide to behavior. We are very accepting and intend to be non-judgmental to folks who want to experience the many benefits of community. And, I am so grateful to have friends for 30 and 40 years who stand by each other, offering support and loyalty, helping each other to continue to grow and committed to lifelong learning.

Loyalty provides the good feelings that come from being present, supportive, and offering friendship over time to another person, no matter what. Individuals who have strong integrity are naturally faithful and trustworthy. They are clear about what they want and their beliefs and their loyalty grows from clarity and inner strength.

People who are not loyal find it difficult to look into their feelings and fear what is there. To be exposed is too much, with low self-esteem, insecurity, and past hurts that shape a superficial life.

Brand loyalty, according to Ferrucci, is based on the basic need to trust something. We need the emotional bond with the "thing." This is partly due to the fact that continuity in relationship is rare these days for most people. So this basic need has gotten commercialized.

Distractions and interruptions are the norm with cell phones etc. keeping us from really being with another. "What was I talking about, I've forgotten," is heard often as interruptions trivialize interactions. As someone who attempts clear communication, I am going to pay

more attention to how I interrupt an on-going conversation or what happens when I am interrupted.

Friendship is the place we are most likely to experience loyalty. Holding a friend in our heart without judgement or demand, because we care what she thinks about our ideas and because that friend is ready to listen and offer understanding is the essence of loyalty. Reliability and faithfulness are qualities that go along with loyalty. Reliability is about congruence in feeling tone, attitude, and behavior and a sense of internal coherence. Faithfulness is our loyalty to our own feelings thus ensuring integrity and a sense of well-being.



*Loyalty gives substance and strength to kindness. In a world so often distracted and careless, this is a priceless value.* —Pierro Ferrucci



## 2020 Human Relations Laboratory, August 2 to 8

### SahaleWood Squares

The Leadership for the 2020 Human Relations Laboratory came together and zoomed into connection this past Friday, Saturday and Sunday. While no one was sure what the process would be like, we enjoyed the experience with personal work accomplished as well as leadership training. We have committed to plan the Lab as though it could happen, knowing it might need to be different.



As you can imagine, the virus has caused at least three events at Sahale to cancel. In growing concern for our economics, **we are asking you to register for the 2020 Human Relations Laboratory as soon as you can.** On-line registration is available and please let me know if you have a problem. We hope you also might consider a donation to our scholarship fund to help others participate in the event.

You will read more about the Lab in the eView over the coming weeks. We hope it catches your interest.



### **WASH YOUR HANDS**

Dori Midnight (Submitted by Bill Scott)

We are humans relearning to wash our hands.

Washing our hands is an act of love

Washing our hands is an act of care

Washing our hands is an act that puts the hypervigilant body at ease

Washing our hands helps us return to ourselves by washing away what does not serve.

Wash your hands

like you are washing the only teacup left that your great grandmother carried across the ocean, like you are washing the hair of a beloved who is dying, like you are washing the feet of Grace Lee Boggs, Beyonce, Jesus, your auntie, Audre Lorde, Mary Oliver- you get the picture.

Like this water is poured from a jug your best friend just carried for three miles from the spring they had to climb a mountain to reach.

Like water is a precious resource  
made from time and miracle

Wash your hands and cough into your elbow, they say.

Rest more, stay home, drink water, have some soup, they say.

To which I would add: burn some plants your ancestors burned when there was fear in the air,

Boil some aromatic leaves in a pot on your stove until your windows steam up.

Open your windows

Eat a piece of garlic every day. Tie a clove around your neck.

Breathe.

My friends, it is always true, these things.

It has already been time.

It is always true that we should move with care and intention, asking

Do you want to bump elbows instead? with everyone we meet.

It is always true that people are living with one lung, with immune systems that don't work so well, or perhaps work too hard, fighting against themselves. It is already true that people are hoarding the things that the most vulnerable need.

It is already time that we might want to fly on airplanes less and not go to work when we are sick.

It is already time that we might want to know who in our neighborhood has cancer, who has a new baby, who is old, with children in another state, who has extra water, who has a root cellar, who is a nurse, who has a garden full of elecampane and nettles.

It is already time that temporarily non-disabled people think about people living with chronic illness and disabled folks, that young people think about old people.

It is already time to stop using synthetic fragrances to not smell like bodies, to pretend like we're all not dying. It is already time to remember that those scents make so many of us sick.

It is already time to not take it personally when someone doesn't want to hug you.

It is already time to slow down and feel how scared we are.

We are already afraid, we are already living in the time of fires.

When fear arises, and it will,  
let it wash over your whole body instead of staying curled  
up tight in your shoulders.

If your heart tightens,  
contract and expand.

science says: compassion strengthens the immune system

We already know that, but capitalism gives us amnesia  
and tricks us into thinking it's the thing that protect us  
but it's the way we hold the thing.

The way we do the thing.



Those of us who have forgotten amuletic traditions,  
we turn to hoarding hand sanitizer and masks.  
we find someone to blame.  
we think that will help.  
want to blame something?  
Blame capitalism. Blame patriarchy. Blame white supremacy.

It is already time to remember to hang garlic on our doors  
to dip our handkerchiefs in thyme tea  
to rub salt on our feet  
to pray the rosary, kiss the mezuzah, cleanse with an egg.  
In the middle of the night,  
when you wake up with terror in your belly,  
it is time to think about stardust and geological time  
redwoods and dance parties and mushrooms remediating toxic soil.  
it is time  
to care for one another  
to pray over water  
to wash away fear  
every time we wash our hands.



### **Pathwork, a Program of Convocation: A Church and Ministry -**

By request, our Pathwork Circle has met on Zoom and we found a good feeling of connection, despite technology.



**Sunday, May 3, May 17, and May 31** we are inviting anyone who would like to join in meditation and connection. Please email Colette at [hoff@goodenough.org](mailto:hoff@goodenough.org) to get access information to the Zoom call.



### **Corridabat, Costa Rica – Humans aren't the only citizens in this city**

Kirsten Rohde

*"Pollinators were the key," says Edgar Mora, reflecting on the decision to recognise every bee, bat, hummingbird and butterfly as a citizen of Curridabat during his 12-year spell as mayor.*

*"Pollinators are the consultants of the natural world, supreme reproducers and they don't*

*charge for it. The plan to convert every street into a biocorridor and every neighbourhood into an ecosystem required a relationship with them."*

*The move to extend citizenship to pollinators, trees and native plants in Curridabat has been crucial to the municipality's transformation from an unremarkable suburb of the Costa Rican capital, San José, into a pioneering haven for urban wildlife.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/29/sweet-city-the-costa-rica-suburb-that-gave-citizenship-to-bees-plants-and-trees-aoe>

I love this story about a suburb of San José joining the natural world. New Zealand has granted "personhood" to natural systems such as rivers and mountains. Bees, rivers, trees, plants, bats can't take their case to court but they show us through their beauty, their interconnections, and alive-ness that they are part of the earth's existence. As extinction of living beings accelerates, it hurts all of us, as we realize our essential connections.

Here at Sahale we remind each other of the importance of every bit of life on this land and its connection to everything else. We work to restore our soil, increasing beneficial insects and microbes. We do not take cutting down a tree lightly as we thin our monoculture forests and let them become more diverse with native plants volunteering and some help with more plantings. We plant more native trees and shrubs every year. We find ways that plants can help trees and shrubs be healthy – for example, comfrey shades out grass. We are mulching around our newly planted trees with compost, cardboard, straw, leaves, wood chips.



I feel so fortunate to live with such abundance. The raven and the heron have found mates this year. The swallows are back. Insects everywhere. Little new shoots of vegetables are coming up thanks to Marley Long and Julie Wolf. We have planted more donated nut and fruit trees and will share our harvest with wildlife – we have no choice anyways. Deer and squirrels and slugs will always find a way to help themselves. After all this is their land too. We look for natural ways to discourage them without chemicals.

Sahale is one example of how we can join all the beings in the natural world to restore and repair. Our community, the Goodenough Community, creates fertile ground for humans to restore and repair. This past weekend we discovered that, through Zoom, we could be quite intimate as we built our leadership abilities in preparation for the Human Relations Lab. Whatever form Lab takes this year, we will be contributing to the human potential to do good in the world.



This story about Songaia Community in Bothel, WA, is written by Nancy Lanphear, a longtime good friend to our community. She sent it to me and I asked if we could put it in our eView.

*Kirsten Rohde*

### **CLIMBING SPRING HILL MOUNTAIN**

Dear Friends

You may have heard the story of a previous name for the property of Songaia Neighborhood, it was called Spring Hill Farm. In fact, I remember that name coming up when we were searching for a name for our greater neighborhood, at that time, the name didn't rise to the top of list.



Since the covid19 hit our national shores, the community has been distancing and limiting our actions and perhaps our behaviors, the 3 of us who are 81 years old have been finding ways to connect with each other as often as possible. We are no longer shoppers, we don't sit inside each others homes to check in each week, our evening meals are delivered to our door from the common house kitchen. None of us have been out in our cars more than once in 3 weeks!

With a couple of exceptions, we 3 80's+ have done a daily walk of about 30 minutes – you might see us going up and down the driveways of our Songaia



Neighborhood and around to our mail boxes. Or, walking through the large development east of Life Song Commons. However, our best walk comes as we climb what I am calling, Spring Hill Mountain, the rather steep but small hill in the forest east of our community. Marilyn often leads the way with me following using my two red walking sticks followed by Chuck with his new bright yellow walking stick and clippers,



trimming bramble as he goes. Chuck and I often carry our cameras to hold the beauty of a trillium and a berry flower OR a new shoot of a fern quickly emerging from the forest floor. Every now and then there is someone picking nettles, like the day we encountered and walked carefully around Jacob with his bag and clippers – yes, gathering the nettles for tea.

I realize that the practice of being in the moment, and yes, it is a practice, helps me living in these uncertain and scary times.

It truly delights me to spend time in the natural world of quiet and beauty, and climbing up Spring Hill Mountain with my friends.

Sent with love and hugs, Nancy



### **Mindful Mike's Blog: Tribe** *Mike deAnguera*

Notice I am wearing my mask but I am no longer anxious about it. So I decided to take another header photo of myself. Like it? We are all planning to make masks a real fashion. That's good.

In times like these is when I really appreciate the value of community.

How can I be useful to other people in society at large? There's a limit to what I can do to reinvent myself. Our community is the bedrock of my security now. The security of the tribe. There's nothing else that can match the tribe when it comes to growing healthy people.

Relationships make my growth possible. Without them I can't be loving, compassionate, empathetic, or kind. These characteristics can only appear when I am with my friends. Without my friends I would have been a very shallow closed down person. I was like this most of my life.

Once again I want to thank all the people who have made my tiny house possible: Colette Hoff, Paul Rawe, Josh DeMers, Jim Tocher, Pam and Elizabeth Jarrett-Jefferson, Bruce Perler, Drai Schindler, Marley Long, and Pedge Hopkins.

Pedge's free life living in various environments was one inspiration for my tiny house. She has lived in a van out in the desert.

Isn't it a coincidence that Covid-19 appeared just as I moved into my new home? Like 9/11 and our acquisition of Sahale? Like the economy crashing immediately after I moved out to Sahale? I don't believe in coincidence. Everything happens for a reason. Nothing is

random. The Divine is at work in flushing out our stories. These events are major signs in my life.

Here's me doing what I do best: digging a hole. This hole was dug to locate the waterline where a connector would be installed to bring water to my house via a hose and filter. The filter is an RV filter which came with the house. Paul Rawe took my picture. He and Josh finally located the waterline and connected me to it. Look at how happy I am.



The left hand photo shows Josh coming up with the Kubota and a load of gravel to fill in the drain field for the house. We all collaborated in getting this house up and running.

Today I moved my bed with Josh's, Pam's, and Marley's help down to the tiny house. Already a new bed was brought in to replace mine in the Khlawi Guest Cottage.

I can't believe I have lived in Khlawi for nearly 12 years. I remember when this apartment was created. Originally it was a combination kitchen, living/dining room on the main floor. Max Fain and Ryan Ziebold did most of the work building the apartment.

Now I have a home of my own with no walls abutting neighbors. Woods all around. No big asphalt parking lot. I can do anything I want to with the outside as well as the inside.

My tiny house is bucking the trend of larger and larger houses. New houses near where my condo was had garages for two to three cars. They were palatial. I wondered who could afford them.

Now I try out my mattress in my new bedroom. Ahhhhhh! Thanks to Pam who took the photo of me inside my house. As you can see a merry crew was busy with the work. True revolutionaries help move their friends to a different life.





It's true. In a parallel universe, this week I flew to Dallas.

It was definitely my plan. To spend the last half of April visiting my friends and family first in Austin then in Dallas. After months slogging through the grey Pacific Northwest winter, every bone in my body was aching for the indomitable Texas heat.

All that changed, of course, with the quarantine.

I now have credit with the airlines and a plan to cash in at a future, undetermined date. Though I count myself enormously blessed, it was tough to let this trip go.

*I wonder what in your life you've had to let go of as these weeks of pandemic turn to months. With no out of town trips to fling me across the country and my work gone entirely virtual, I have slowly, finally, started exploring the woods just outside my front door.*

I have taken walks almost every day here on Discovery Bay where I live. I have sat and watched slimy slugs almost imperceptibly inch across the road. I have listened to water rushing over rocks. Several times I have cried as I moved my feet one in front of the next. I have breathed and heaved and huffed as I've climbed mountains, taking fresh air in more deeply than I have in a long time. So far in April, I've hiked over 20 miles and feel a hunger to keep going.

*I wonder what in your life you have been newly welcoming in since the pandemic started.*

This week I am leading two virtual connection games events where we will explore what in your life is dying or ending and what is newly being born or arising.

This **Tuesday April 28th**, I will be co-leading games for the Dallas community on the theme, "Softness for Self" from 5:30-7:30pm PST. It won't be the same as being there in person, but yet I am excited for the chance to see faces I miss and love.

Then **Wednesday** I facilitate SpeakUP on "Being With What Is" from 6:30-8:30 PST. This

will also be my last virtual SpeakUP with Madrona Mind/Body Institute. Starting in May, I will be leading online games independently with the plan to return to Madrona as soon as their doors re-open.

Wherever you are in the world, you are welcome at either or both of these events!

Nothing feels static to me these days. Some things are fading away - plans, patterns and even some relationships. Some things are arising and deepening - a more embodied relationship with nature among them. Life is asking me to stay highly responsive each day.

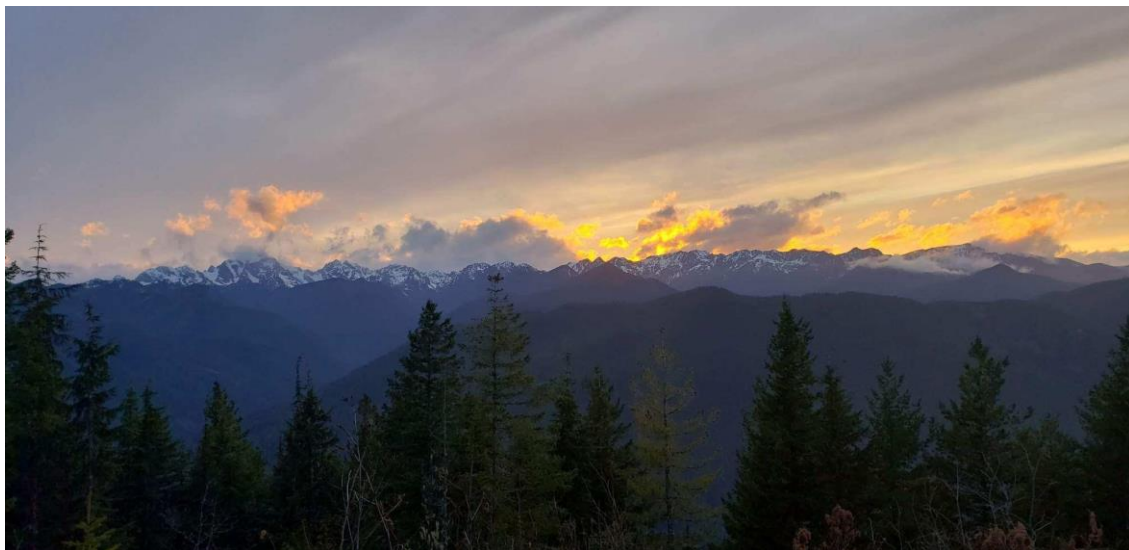
Instead of "doing it as I've always done it", there seems to be an opportunity to hang out in the unknown and listen a little more closely.

Being in the unknown is wildly challenging for our psyches that love predictability and order! It's nothing short of a spiritual practice to slow down and listen without knowing what is coming.

Wherever you find yourself, I pray you too may feel supported enough to listen to what life is asking you to let go of in order to make space for what may be arising. And if you are willing to be find connection through your practice, I hope you will join us for connection games this Tuesday and Wednesday, so that we can listen together.

With great love,  
Dr. Jessica Tartaro

(p.s. I leave you with an image from my most recent hike this weekend. We summited just as the sun was sinking under the horizon and snapped this photo.)



*Mount Walker | Brinnon, WA | April 25th, 2020*



We are hoping to host this new event:

**Pain Body Healing, July 2 through 6, 2020 at Sahale Learning Center**

Academy of Qi Dao - Lama Tantrapa; In Flow Coach - Sean Hall

Do you or anyone you care about suffer from physical pain? Would it be great to know how to overcome years - or even decades of chronic aches and pains?

You are welcome to discover for yourself how to heal physical pain and address its root causes, rather than covering them up with pain killers. Start now by using the four foundational principles of this healing system. These applications can help you effectively release the undue tension that is responsible for most of chronic pain, stiffness, and energy blockages that may be wrecking your health without you knowing it. Learn effective methods to release muscle tension and explore how pain can be a powerful teacher on the path of healing. Determine your holding patterns while identifying the psychological states of being behind them. Learn how to avoid and correct spinal abnormalities and experience natural flow of energy.

Release and heal chronic tension and pain faster than you ever thought possible! By attending this presentation, you will discover for yourself the principles of energy awareness that will help your mind and body collaborate in your healing process.

Lama Tantrapa is a Bon Lama in the tradition of Tibetan Shamanism and the 26th generation lineage holder of his family's tradition of Qi Dao, also known as Tibetan Shamanic Qigong. His teachings integrate the physical, psychological, and energetic practices of this form-free style of Qigong with the essence of Tai Chi, Qigong, and Yoga.

Lama has over 40 years of experience in Meditation, Qigong, and Martial Arts having been trained by his Grandfather from the tender age of six. After receiving religious asylum in the US in the 1990's, Lama has dedicated his life to helping others through his Academy of Qi Dao as well as educating people about the Energy Arts through his award-winning talk show The Secrets of Qigong Masters.

Lama's teachings empowered thousands of people from all over the world, including many professional athletes, speakers, dancers, singers, writers, and actors, to live happier and healthier lives.

Sean Hall, BCaBA, RYT, (son of Lynette Hall) is a qigong coach who specializes in combining qigong, yoga and behavioral intervention to help his clients realize their full potential. He is the founder of In Flow Coach and serves his clients by coaching them in developing their inner wisdom and self-awareness through movement and introspection.

For the past ten years he has worked both as a behavioral analyst for the developmentally challenged and a yoga teacher. His endeavors have taken him to Peru where he has worked in clinics for the locals of impoverished communities. He now leads workshops in the pacific northwest on body mechanics and energy awareness. Sean has gotten the attention of musicians in Tacoma who want a better connection with their bodies and works with many of the local artists. Sean is a musician and mentors other young musicians over the summer months during the Live It Out Loud program. It is his love for music and movement that inspires him help other musicians thrive and succeed. [seamusic@live.com](mailto:seamusic@live.com)> with questions.



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# Goodenough Community

**While we are in an unknown time, these dates represent our intention.**

**What makes community meaningful and fun?** The richness of life in community comes in many ways – getting together informally over a meal ... celebrating a significant birthday with long- time and newfound friends ... working together in a creative endeavor ... collaborating in a work party ... thinking deeply with others about what it means to be fully alive and connected with ourselves, each other, and Spirit ... and more.

In the Goodenough Community, we recognize such ways to connect as expressions of living life fully and in communities of all kinds. Throughout the year we offer programs that help you participate in your own development, learn about relating well with others, and discover your potential to have a good time in life and with others.

We welcome your interest and your participation, and hope that you will join us at any – or many! – of this year’s events. More information about programs and upcoming events can be found on our website: [www.goodenough.org](http://www.goodenough.org)



The **General Circle** meets Monday evening for light dinner & business at hand. In 2020, our meeting schedule will be: April 20; May 4, 5, 18; June 1, 15.

**The Women’s Program** is a long-established and ever-growing way for women to enjoy each other’s company, learn about themselves as women, and even perhaps to experience the Divine Feminine. We meet Saturday mornings from 10:00 to 2:00 with lunch included. For more information, contact Hollis Guill Ryan, [hollisr@comcast.net](mailto:hollisr@comcast.net)



## **True Holidays Celebration, Saturday, December 5, 2020**

Be part of this fun-filled family-oriented evening and prepare yourself for the winter season (whatever faith tradition you follow) that fills your heart. Contact Elizabeth Jarrett-Jefferson for more information.



**The Third Age** - Those age 60 and older have been gathering every other month, Friday evenings in Seattle. Contact Kirsten Rohde for more information: [krohde14@outlook.com](mailto:krohde14@outlook.com)

## **The Men’s Program**

Our **Men’s Circle** is an expression of brotherhood and practice with wisdom, gathered from own lives, other men’s work advocates and the founders of this circle. The semi- annual men’s weekend will be June 5 to 7. For more information, contact:

[bruce\\_perler@hotmail.com](mailto:bruce_perler@hotmail.com)

**Pathwork, a Program of Convocation: A Church and Ministry** - On alternate Sunday evenings an interfaith circle of practice meets between 7:00 and 9:30 PM under the leadership of Colette Hoff. This is a time to learn together about our personal goals, to talk out our chosen practices for the development of a spirit filled life, and to learn the skills of joining with others in service. **In 2020, Pathwork will meet April 19, May 3, 17, 31; June 14.** Contact Colette Hoff for more information: [hoff@goodenough.org](mailto:hoff@goodenough.org)



**Summer Camp for Youth NEW DATES for 2020!**

**In 2020, Camp will begin Monday June 22 and will close on Sunday, June 28.**

*Summer Camp is a wonderful opportunity for children 9 to 12 to have a full camp experience in a beautiful setting with loving leadership.* Contact: Irene Perler, [Irene Perler@hotmail.com](mailto:Irene.Perler@hotmail.com)



**Human Relations Laboratory, August 2 to 8, 2020**

This intense and joyous week-long event is a communal experience of personal growth and relational development within a rich culture with art, music dance, song, drama and more. This summer we will celebrate 50 years! Contact: Colette Hoff, [hoff@goodenough.org](mailto:hoff@goodenough.org)

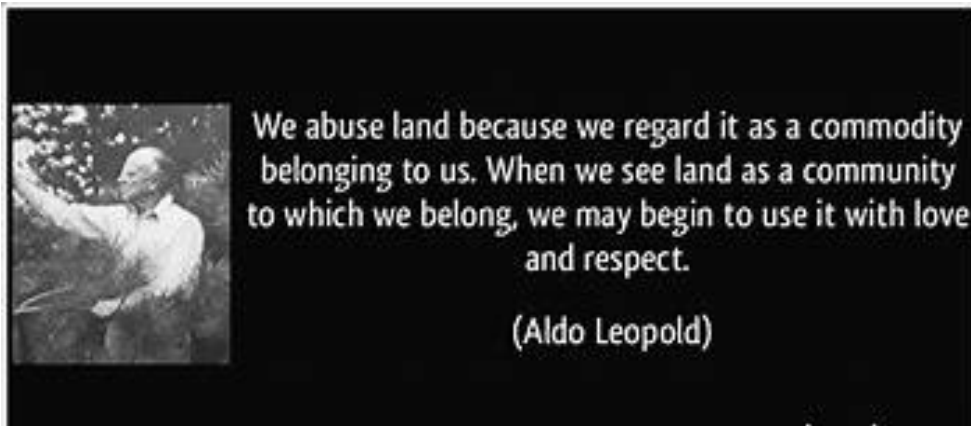
**Work and Play Parties throughout the Year.** *Traditionally,* the Goodenough Community sponsors work parties over Memorial Day weekend (May 22 to 25, 2020) as well as other times throughout the year, to express gratitude for the presence of our beloved retreat center, Sahale, and to experience the satisfaction of playing and working together. Please email [hoff@goodenough.org](mailto:hoff@goodenough.org) with information about what may be coming up. It is a great time to bring friends to share Sahale!

**Quest: A Counseling and Healing Center**



Our belief is that mental and emotional health is a prerequisite for spiritual well-being, collaboration, and the expression of compassion. Quest's counseling and education programs, open to all interested individuals, focus on empowering individuals, couples, and family groups to be happier and more effective in relationships.

**Call Colette (206-755 8404) if you find you need to talk out your feelings regarding the crisis.**



## **Brené Brown on True Belonging**

By Azriel ReShel on Sunday March 11th, 2018

### **Show the World Your Real Self First**

Have you ever felt like you just don't belong? Like you're a pink chicken in a field of graceful giraffes, or that perhaps you came to the wrong planet? Certainly many people seem to feel this way, either about their families, or their community, their sexuality and culture. We yearn to belong, to fit in, to have a tribe and yet this most basic and profound desire is so often thwarted.

World-renowned researcher Brené Brown has spent years studying and interviewing people about the things that really matter: vulnerability, courage, worthiness, and shame. So much of these characteristics are tied up in the concept of belonging. When she asked what people are worried about and trying to achieve, it was the idea of belonging that was most important, with many yearning to "be part of something—to experience real connection with others—but not at the cost of their authenticity, freedom or power."

*Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance. – Brené Brown*

Peculiarly enough our need to belong is also tied in with our need to be different and unique. Our sense of community clashes with our fear of difference. We want to belong to our tribe or our family and to feel loved and cherished. Our desire for connection and love runs deep, so much so that we may compromise who we are, in order to belong. Brené Brown says that when we 'fit in' instead of actually 'belong,' we mould ourselves to the situation instead of

standing for our authentic self. This doesn't create real connection and we can end up feeling lonelier with people than we would have if we had stayed true to ourselves.

## Belonging to Ourselves

In reality, the only true belonging that exists, and the connection that underscores everything else and all other relationships in life, is that powerful sense of belonging to ourselves. We are so often trying to belong elsewhere that we turn our backs on this most important and key aspect of belonging anywhere and everywhere in life. If we do not accept and love ourselves; if we don't belong to ourselves, how can we truly belong anywhere else? Brené Brown describes this deep belonging to ourselves as akin to being in the wilderness, the place that we have the courage to experience and ultimately become our true selves.

*Belonging so fully to yourself that you're willing to stand alone is a wilderness—an untamed, unpredictable place of solitude and searching. It is a place as dangerous as it is breathtaking, a place as sought after as it is feared. The wilderness can often feel unholy because we can't control it, or what people think about our choice of whether to venture into that vastness or not. But it turns out to be the place of true belonging, and it's the bravest and most sacred place you will ever stand. – Brené Brown*

Today the world appears to be becoming more and more disconnected, with the cracks between people, races, genders, ethnicities, political beliefs, religions and philosophies widening at an alarming rate. But, when we look deeper, this disconnection and the political and economic machines that are moving people apart, are ironically spawning movements bringing people closer together than ever. People are uniting in their humanity, joined by their hearts, by their desire for a better world and the sincere wish to help others who are less fortunate. It takes great strength and courage to remain open-hearted and vulnerable in the world we live in today. And yet, in order to survive we must lead from the heart. And we must belong to ourselves. There is no other way.

## Be Who You Are

Life can feel like a wild jungle of emotions, people, challenges, and intense craziness. I know for myself sometimes I feel deeply connected and part of something—a community, a movement, a family—and then in the next moment I feel alone and different, apart from everyone. Belonging I think remains a paradox until we find that infinite and eternal place of belonging deeply to ourselves.

*True belonging is the spiritual practice of believing in and belonging to yourself so deeply that you can share your most authentic self with the world and find sacredness in both being a part of something and standing alone in the wilderness. True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are; it requires you to be who you are. – Brené Brown*

## The Four Keys to Real Connection

True belonging is a calling. It asks us to get messy, to walk into the fray, to soften into the hard edges of life instead of shying away. It asks us to dig into our own psyche and to discover our deepest fears and to meet our most vulnerable selves. We only really enter into life when we cast off the anchor, leave what is comfortable and familiar behind and sail into the

unknown. Brené Brown discovered in her extensive research that there are four powerful elements of true belonging:

1. People are hard to hate close up. Move in.
2. Speak truth to bullshit. Be civil.
3. Hold hands. With strangers.
4. Strong Back. Soft Front. Wild Heart.

There is intense power in these words. And these four elements, she says, are a daily practice even while at the same time feeling like a paradox. Yet, imagine the world we could create if we all practiced true belonging and lived from these four elements?

We all belong to the human race. Once we can truly and deeply understand the words of the Indigenous elders when they say “the Earth is our mother and we are all brothers and sisters,” then we will belong in a way that we each yearn for, to ourselves, and to each other. *Brené Brown is a research professor at the University of Houston. She has spent 16 years studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. She is also the author of three #1 New York Times bestsellers: The Gifts of Imperfection, Daring Greatly, and Rising Strong*  
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