



deeper
WHERE WE STAND
an invitation to wholeness...

EANTCONFERENCE2011

PRESENTER HANDOUTS

BARBARA WHITESIDE

Using Family to Kindle Inner Awakening



Using Family to Kindle Inner Awakening

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Can we have a fresh impression of those we love most when we are fixated in our Type?

Is it possible to work directly with our reactivity in our families, using this energy as fuel for transformation?

How can we use the Enneagram to bring compassion to family members and how can we avoid using it in subtle and not-so-subtle ways as ammunition?

How can we become fully present to our family members, in a way that they feel our open heart?

Can we imagine a different way of approaching family life, a way that reflects something whole, centered, grounded, present, and fully alive?

Is Love the great mediator? If so, how can we use Love, which so longs to be used by us, to heal the deep wounds that are so often a part of family life.



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A woman went to her priest and said, "No matter how hard I try, I just cannot find my way to loving God." The priest replied, "Is there anyone you do love?" The woman thought for a moment and said, "Yes, I love my nephew very much." The priest said, "There He is."

We often think of going on a silent prayer retreat, or to our favorite ashram for a week of dharma talks and meditation, or into nature without our tech trinkets, in order to return to something true, substantial, and alive within us. It helps - in fact, it helps tremendously. Certainly many great teachers have encouraged and modeled this.

Yet, most days of the year we are not on retreat. We are firmly planted in daily life with all the demands of work, home, family, and community. Even if we live alone, or with only our partner, most of us have family, and it is in these relationships that we often experience our best and worst selves. Family provides us with many moments daily to wake up to ourselves and to others in ways that allow something fresh and alive to happen within us. But, when we live out of our reactive, egoistic selves, it is really difficult to see and seize these opportunities.

Family life is a crash course in the School of Love. Family life is the very best place to learn to love well. It can also be the hardest. Sometimes it feels like it's more about getting through the day, or the reunion, or the wedding, than about growing in love. Psalm 101-2 NIV reads, "I will walk in my house with a blameless heart." How many of us do that? We may feel resentful of our siblings who are not doing their fair share in caring for aging parents. Perhaps we are angry with our husband for not being available to our 16 year old. We may be sad and blaming ourselves for what we said at a recent family gathering. We may be struggling to keep a connection or confused about how to have appropriate boundaries with certain family members.

How do we perceive ourselves in our family structure? Do we play a role in our family, sometimes to our satisfaction and sometimes not? Do we fall into the stereotype of our type? Can we learn to be with others in our family out of "the mind that abides in the Divine" instead of our ego self? Can we recognize the opportunities for transformation inherent in these relationships and relate to them from a different place?

We cannot connect with others until we connect with that which is substantial in ourselves. We must muster the courage to bring that substance forth in relationship. So often we "relate" from our biases, projections (positive and negative) or defenses in relationship to one another. We "relate", fixation to fixation, without stopping for a moment to sense our way back to the still heart where something true can come forth.

In other words, it is often from our wound that we unconsciously "relate" to others. The Enneagram passions show us with great specificity where to look for the wound in our soul. These passions have been explicated in many traditions: the Christian ascetics spoke of them as demons, sins, and passions and named seven out of the nine we speak about in the Enneagram: sloth, anger, pride, envy, avarice, gluttony, lust. The Hindus and Buddhists talk about these emotional reactions as the "ego" or "small self". Gurdjieff called these destructive forces the "negative emotions". All great spiritual traditions seem to agree that it is not advisable to seek to destroy these negative emotions but rather to bring them into the light of Awareness itself, freeing us from either suppressing them or giving into their expression.

From enlightened awareness of both our strengths and limitations, a very different picture of family can emerge. When we see our whole selves, both the positive parts we like to identify with and the not-so-positive parts we relegate to the basement of our own unconscious, we can wake up and approach family life in a way that reflects something whole, centered, grounded, present, and fully alive.

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From Fixation to Freedom

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Inspired by the work of Richard Rohr

I) Symptom Removal, “Normalizing” Type Structure

- Understanding our Type, seeing the habitual ways in which we think, feel, and behave.
- Having more choice around behavior. Taking the Type out of the driver’s seat.
- Choosing to not act out our Type in compulsive ways.

II) Dis-identifying with the False Self (Type) & Re-identifying with the Shadow

- Attachment (liking our Type)/Aversion (disliking our Type)- two sides of the same coin.
- Opening to the denied parts of ourselves, learning to tolerate what seems intolerable (that another point might be just fine with), seeing what we avoid.
- Bringing to consciousness the lost aspects of our being that we relegated to the basement of the unconscious.

III) Identifying with another Ground on Which to Stand

- Can’t use Ego to get rid of Ego, the small self to deal with the small self (can’t drive out the ‘devil’ by the prince of ‘devils’)
- Fall into the hands of God, the Higher Self, the Divine, Truth, Total Reality.
- God is using all of me to bring me to God, Truth uses all of me to know the Truth of Being.

IV) Integrating Type (False Self) into the Whole (include and transcend)

- Effort of non-effort. Relaxing into Greater Being when Type appears – possibly a thousand times a day.
- Integrating the gifts of the Type before they became compulsive.
- Allowing the denied aspects of the self to be lovingly re-incorporated into our being.