



Embracing Confusion

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

Life is great at keeping me humble. I have spent the last twenty years working to understand what I am passionate about and turning this passion into reality. On this journey toward independence, there have been many times I feel so empowered I have wondered if there were limits to what I could accomplish. Yet, many times, just as I began to feel invincible, I fell flat on my face. Thank goodness.

For about twenty years I have realized that I am not like most people. I am more sensitive and intense than the average person. I used to feel bad that I was not more “normal”. When I finally embraced these qualities, I found out what was really special in me. I also found my career direction because of this discovery. On the other hand, unbeknownst to me, I also developed a tendency to judge others who I felt were unable to achieve an inner sense of direction. In other words, I am embarrassed to say, that when I came across someone who felt insecure to me, I would dismiss them. They experienced my behavior as arrogance, because it was.

Because of this tendency to dismiss others, I especially found myself struggling in situations where the culture of the group was one of competition and upsmanship. I judged this communication as shallow. Not only would I disengage from this type of a situation, but I would be marginalized by the group because they sensed my discomfort, and worse, my judgment. Interestingly, for years I blamed my being marginalized on their immaturity and the fact that I was just different from them. Now, it seems to me that I was preventing my own development by blaming them for my problem.

Recently, I have had the opportunity to address my limitations in this area. I will tell you, it has been a humbling and confusing discovery process. Over the last year, by embracing my confusion as I have struggled in this area, I have begun to get some insights into my limitations and what to do about them. That discovery process is so exciting to me! I am now attempting to take full responsibility for my challenges in this area. Thankfully, I have many friends who have been wonderfully supportive of my development in this area. I want to point out however, that I was not ready to accept their help until I embraced my own confusion about this matter.

It is also rewarding to realize that this process has provided healing in my relationships. As I sat at the dinner table recently, and asked my family to help me in this exciting area of development; my teenage daughter began to cry tears of joy. She told me she sometimes felt inadequate around me because I seemed so “together”. By hearing that I was struggling and that I, not she, was responsible for her discomfort, she felt a great sense of relief. So did I!

It never ceases to amaze me that when we work to heal ourselves, we help those around us. Also, as I embrace my own confusion and accept it, I grow as a person.