

A Bridge Over Troubled Waters

-- Marcia Hughes and James Terrell

Now is the time to live our intention to be the finest people we can be. Two public shootings occurred this week in states near our home in Colorado. West of us in Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords was shot while she spoke to her constituents in a simple public setting outside a grocery store. The Democratic lawmaker was doing the best work our politicians do; she was meeting with her constituents. Chief Judge John Roll of the U.S. District Court for Arizona was killed as were others and many were wounded. To the east of us in Omaha, Nebraska Millard South High School Vice Principal, Vicki Kaspar, was killed and Principal Case was injured in a shooting at the school by a student, Robert Butler. Acts of violence and tragedy are being experienced worldwide.

How shall we respond?

- Listen with the ears of our heart. Focus first on the quality of what is said rather than letting the relationship be objectified. Our messages to and from one another matter.
- Be forgiving. Forgiveness is the process of repair, healing, making whole again, it is the opposite of retribution. Omaha students are designing T-shirts printed in school colors to raise money for the three parties most affected by the tragedy, including Butler's family. This is an example of forgiveness in action, and it is the only way to heal.
- Recognize and acknowledge our *essential* connection with one another. Research is showing our species thrived not because of ruthless competition but its remarkable ability to cooperate. Try saying to yourself when you encounter anyone: "In love I am one with you." Just try it and see what happens.
- Explore the truth and *implications* of the ancient Mayan statement "en la k'etch, which translates as" – You are another myself.
- Calm yourself. Whether you meditate, pray, walk or use another strategy, be intentional about taking dedicated time to calm and center yourself as you move beyond stress to connect with your truth.

Developing emotional and social intelligence (ESI) is the focus of our work. We've written [seven books](#) providing specific strategies for making a sustainable difference in the quality of the lives of individuals, leaders, teams and

organizations by expanding ESI. This is how to mitigate and prevent the conflict that escalates to violence when we treat each other carelessly. We've worked with people on six continents and are blessed in the many ways we have been touched and taught by people worldwide. The heart of our work is coaching people to expand their compassionate truth telling with themselves and with one another. While we offer many formats for engaging in this vital path, in truth employing the five simple and profound steps listed above will accomplish all that is needed.

Paul Simon wrote Bridge Over Troubled Waters in 1969 and Simon and Garfunkel released it in 1970. At that time in the United States, where we live, people were deeply troubled over the Vietnam war, the civil rights movement was growing, on May 4, 1970 four Kent State University student demonstrators were killed and nine more were wounded deeply shocking our nation. It was a time of deep challenge and this beautiful song touched our hearts, minds and souls. Simon and Garfunkel sang:

When you're weary, feeling small
When tears are in your eyes,
I will dry them all
I'm on your side
When times get rough
And friends just can't be found
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down

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This song is perhaps one of the most profound expressions of empathy ever written in English. It acknowledges that a great deal of our human adventure is still fraught with disappointment, loss and sorrow. It volunteers to be consciously present in those times providing strength and companionship to help us get through them. Empathy is the ESI skill most critical to understanding what others are requesting and why they are making the request. When we take time to understand the heart of the message, it becomes much easier to respond to those needs and desires and to avoid the kinds of conflict that is certain to result from ignoring the true request.

Thank you Simon and Garfunkel. Thank you to all who are willing to slow down, listen with the ears of your heart and know that communication matters. Thanks to those who go beyond fear and the belief in separation to know and assert with your whole self to all beings on this planet "In love I am one with you." Thank you to those willing to be taught by the ancient Mayans and so many other cultures that "I am another yourself." Thanks to all who stop in the midst of the chaos, the demand for social media interactions, the busyness and expectations to be still, breathe and send peace to yourself and one another.

Thanks to all our friends and colleagues for the privilege of communicating and working with you.