

INvironment (December 2007)

From Leslie Carver at Go Green Learning (www.gogreenlearning.com):

In business, as in life, we tend to depend on the people around us and the environments we work and live in for our energy. Great individuals have an ability to focus on and redirect their inner environment, their INvironment, to find balance, ability and productivity. We often speak about balance and alignment. The words come easy. What it takes to be purposeful and balanced regardless of what you're facing in your outer environment requires a building of character and developing your individuality. One has to learn to connect to a larger energy, something that can pull you out of a difficult situation, like a tow truck can pull your car out of a ditch.

A lot of corporate environments are toxic. They are not asking for individuality, they require compliance, slavery and shutting down. And we easily comply. We are well-schooled in fitting in. To be the individual is to stand out. And it takes courage. Why would companies want this? Change is here for ALL. What we do now does not work. Individuals are the ones who bring in new ideas, enthusiasm, and the energy to face rejection and resistance. Any new idea you can think of was brought through by one who could face his detractors and move forward. In the movie Rocky Balboa, he speaks about taking the punches life throws and keeping moving forward.

You can always move forward with a closed heart. But that does not earn respect, joy or fulfillment. Keeping the heart open is the key to enjoying whatever you do. It is easy to become bitter, frustrated and disheartened. Learning to open the heart is a fundamental aspect of balance and alignment. Then you can move forward and be an example of individuality. People around us don't necessarily want our freedom. Freedom is the ability to hold to your individuality. It doesn't come from a boss, a mother, a wife. It comes from a larger source and is an energy that can be connected to in any moment. It's those times when everyone around says 'can't be done' and someone goes and does it that freedom has been demonstrated and all around are lifted by it. World records are set and everyone who becomes aware sees a new level has been attained. We are attracted to that and repelled by it. We all want to say one can do it and we shrink from being *the one to do it*.

Businesses have to learn and change. Individuals will be the ones to lead the way. Demonstrating the courage to be the individual encourages people. We tend to submit to corporate dictates or withdraw our energy and just go in, do the work and wait to get out. We have to learn to stay balanced and connected to people and ideas we may not like, respect, or approve of. We must develop the ability to be aware of our energy and what its impact is on our invironment, as well as the environment. We are not neutral in terms of our effect on others, we either lift or drain. This is why meetings can be such drains. Who holds themselves accountable to stay present and lift the meeting environment? To lift your environment you have to be lifted in your invironment. You can't give unless your well is full. This is why sacrifice, in any form, has such a draining quality.

Our inner environment impacts the way we receive ideas, make decisions, interact with others and approach our work. We are trained to think that what we say is the truth about our energy. From what I see, we all talk as if we are open but we rarely are. Often we use our words as a substitute for our heart, not as an expression of it. Our energy does what it does, regardless of what we say. Often leaders tell people 'I have an open door policy.' People know whether that is just policy-speak or honest words. Some executives I've worked with haven't had one person walk through their open door and they are darn glad of it. Sometimes we show up at work after a horrendous day of traffic and inside we're saying 'bad day' and it's 8 am! What does that do to our energy and to those we will interact with the rest of that day?

We are good at using people and situations around us as an excuse to shutdown, close our hearts, and lose our enthusiasm, spirit, desire. We become complainers and drainers and won't open to our full potential. This is the perfect formula for getting old. Now, we all say we want to be open, balanced and loving. And I suppose deep inside that is so. But being open is not just a mental idea. It requires a building of the character to hold it and connecting to that which brings that quality. We are quick at shutting down, blaming and going to war. We're good at it. That requires no character.

Balance requires holding to principle. Holding the energy to lift, love and laugh calls for a strong heart. We are rife with defenses, excuses and weakness. The truth is I am responsible for what my energy is doing 24/7. I must admit I was scared to write that sentence because it holds me accountable to the truth of it. I am not a Pollyanna, thinking that the challenges every one of us face are easy or can be dismissed with a snap of the finger or a wish. We all face difficult people and trying times. But we can learn. We can learn to face what is there for us with courage, character and an openness that leads us out of it. That is where true respect is commanded from others. We cannot control people or situations, we can control our attitude, our approach and what we do. And for that we are accountable. That is where character can be built.

Over a lifetime, we are graded less on *what* we do and more on *how* we deal with what happens. We spend a lot of our time building the mind. We spend little time developing the ability to face the new and embrace now. That takes great heart. Our environment is a place of learning. I can stay open no matter what faces me. I don't but I can. Learning to be open is the way to bring peace and balance inside you, no matter what is going on outside, NO MATTER WHAT. We, at GO Green Learning, are students of learning to strengthen our environments and we instruct others to develop this ability. It is an ongoing process of learning. There isn't a button you can press that will just keep you open forever. We are so good at shutting down, we do it all the time. But what really counts is how quickly you can open up and move forward. We all read each other's energy all the time, even though we rarely speak to it. When you start being open more, your life will change. The people who used to shut you down will either leave you alone, want to learn from you or just build a respect for the character you demonstrate.

Your environment is what you walk around in day in and day out. Is it working for you? Is it working for others around you? Often the only time we step into learning is when we have to. The time is now, we have to. And the payoff is great – more joy, more ease, more balance, more heart.