

## Reach For The Balm of Friendship

By Suzanne Douglas Harris

There is a lot to worry about in the world around us. We are a country at war – and even though the war is not physically here, it is hard to escape the news of loss of our young men and women, the devastation abroad and the effect on our economy and culture. Closer to home, we are engaged in our own personal battles – our advancing age, our children’s demands, our fears for their future, the elusiveness of intimacy, the changing role with our parents, our work/life balance, and the innately competitive nature of life here, in Fairfield County in 2004.

To our credit, we seem to manage to put a finger over most every leak in the bucket that holds each of our concerns. But, in spite of knowing that we are accomplishing quite a lot, many of us still feel little satisfaction. Do you, in fact, feel *inadequate? Restless? Anxious? Overwhelmed?* These are just some of the symptoms of a hungry spirit.

Time after time, I hear clients tell me all that they are doing for those they love and for their community, even before turning to topics around their own work, personal care and social obligations. Their question is: *what else can I do so that I will feel good? More fulfilled?* Depleted by worry, an express pace of living and the need to perform in so many areas, they do not even realize, that their spirit is starving.

If *knowing* that your spirit is hungry is hard to discern, *feeding* it is even more elusive! It takes looking inward and getting to know one's own subtle responses to discover what nourishes you, with the same diligence that you have been practicing to know those of others.

- **Look yourself in the eye.** Practice looking in the mirror. Look into your own eyes and get to know more about what they are expressing. Ask yourself questions with the same care you would if you met those eyes in a friend’s face.
- **Pay attention to when you *do* feel good.** Learn to listen to your own heart when it is happy. What makes you take a deeper breath? What makes you feel good about yourself?
- **Open your mind.** Read something different – or something classic. Look for characters with whom you resonate.

Starvation requires a slow feeding, and being highly discerning about the form of nourishment. But, as you begin to know your inner self, know that sharing it in a safe and nurturing relationship is a key to fulfillment.

The concept of “tribe” is certainly considered primal. Yet, women today are discovering the soothing *balm of friendship*. Like tribes, they are forming circles around common concerns and spiritual questions. The success of Support Groups for so many conditions and illnesses demonstrate that they are finding what they need by drawing on each other’s experience as a part of their diet for balanced sustenance.

*Reach for the balm of friendship as it can often provide you with the much needed food for your starving spirit.*

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