

by Catriona O'Curry

Leadership and the Emergence of a New Consciousness

Our job is to teach our future leaders how become fully present - to attune to, embody and act on our knowing

Within the current atmosphere of economic anxiety, planetary degradation and political volatility, many of us are coming to terms with the fact that we are all deeply connected and we had better get our act together soon. In certain circles, it's understood (intellectually at least) that all the dimensions of our humanness—spirit, body, community, heart and mind—are parts of the whole. Having outgrown the confines of practicing as a psychotherapist and working as a community college teacher, I think a lot about the emergence of a new consciousness. Below are various related notions whose threads I'm striving to follow in the hopes of weaving a coherent picture of our larger human self.

If I am to be of any use in these disquieting times, I am obliged to amplify my capacity for being present. I am trying to listen more deliberately with my heart. Increasingly, I'm called to pay attention to more than what my intellect alone can grasp. Edwin Friedman said that, if we want to lead with Personal Authority, or hold a non-anxious presence for our clients, students, mentees or children, we should follow our intuition. This, he explained, is because data tends to endlessly multiply. The relentless pursuit of facts merely heightens our anxiety, eventually leading us to exhaustion. Since his death in 1996, the world has continued to speed up, and it is increasingly overwhelming to wait for all the facts to weigh in before taking decisive action.

I envisage us—teachers and healers, leaders and counselors—being called upon to align with our purpose and to migrate upwards through our individual energy systems. We're shifting from three-dimensional (or black and white) thinking to fourth (and fifth) dimensional thinking. We're tuning in and moving our awareness upward from the third chakra (in the solar plexus) to the fourth chakra or energy center (in the area of the sternum or heart).

Deepak Chopra said in his book, "*The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*," that the heart has a capacity that far exceeds the brain, because: "The heart is intuitive; it's holistic, it's contextual, it's relational. It doesn't have a win-lose orientation. It taps into the cosmic computer—the field of pure potentiality, pure knowledge and infinite organizing power—and takes everything into account. At times it may not even seem rational, but the heart has a computing ability that is far more accurate and far more precise than anything within the limits of rational thought."

We're learning to pay more attention to the information found "below the waterline," as I learned to call it at LIOS, but what I and others also know as *vibrations*. We're practicing (and modeling for our communities) how to pay attention to the invisible. The Little Prince knew that "What is essential is invisible to the eye" (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry).

There is talk of an emerging Feminine Consciousness. *It's Girl Power time!* Thank goodness so many of us have taken the time to develop the relational abilities that we've come to associate with the feminine aspects of our psyches. As we become more comfortable leading from our hearts, we are also transitioning into a collaborative way of being with our brothers and sisters.

We've been taught that, as humans, we have a fight or flight response to peril. I have read that women often have a third response: *to befriend*. It has been there all along, but it was not discovered until we studied women's responses to danger.

It was groups of courageous (heart-centered) women who backed civil rights movements, helping marginalized groups to gain more equality. *A horizontal heart to heart connection negates the need for hierarchy. Hierarchical leadership is dying because it's unsustainable.*

On the other hand, the concept of the "web of life" is gaining popularity in our emerging world culture. You can see it beautifully depicted if you look at Alex Gray's work. Integrity, diversity, multi-cultural, holistic health, are all terms that speak to our knowing that our renewal has to involve the inclusion of all aspects of ourselves, individually and collectively. We know from our exposure to fundamentalist religions and politics that a right/wrong, either/or mentality is destructive. *We have to include all parts of the whole and find a creative way to dance with them all.* It was Martin Luther King who said that "Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted."

I'm comforted by this idea, for I pride myself on being a free spirit! If we are to dance freely, then it's definitely time to clean up our act. As a more embodied knowing replaces our old way of reasoning, we're struggling to break free of restrictions. Restrictions show up as physical, emotional (*Now would be a great time to do that Family of Origin work!*), energetic, or spiritual (*What are your beliefs about where we come from, where we are heading as a human family?*).

We are entering the age of intuition. Our job is to prepare our future leaders, train our behavioral scientists, coach tomorrow's parents and model for our fellow citizens how to think holistically, how to attune to, embody and act on our knowing. To welcome differences—while both discerning and speaking our truth—is easier said than done.

Beyond the physical body, beyond the aura and the chakra system, there is a deeper energetic system known as the "Hara." Our Hara is our energetic skeleton. It embodies our individual purpose and is aligned with all others' purposes. No competition, no boundary violation is possible when acting from this place. It is a dimension that can be felt and aligned with.

The Hara is our own unique note, which, when played, is in harmony with the rest of the universe. Our painful experiences, life's twists and turns, can distort it and we can drift from it; but once we become reacquainted with it, we have found home.

From this solid base, we can more effortlessly do the leading, the teaching and the healing

we are called to do. In fact, the Hara system includes the “soul seat,” where our yearning can be found.

Years ago, [LIOS faculty member] Dan Leahy planted a compelling seed in my awareness when he taught my class that, if we can access and name the stuff of our dreams, there will be a gravitational pull towards that stuff. Many of the teachings from my years at LIOS and the people whose works I read then (Edwin Friedman, Parker Palmer, Carl Whittaker, Deepak Chopra) still hold wisdom and value. In the ensuing years, like many of us riding with the motion of this collective wave, I’ve learned to embody more of that wisdom.

I wrote the following a few years ago when I began to work with the Hara systems of other healers and facilitators who wanted to align with their purpose in a more tangible way. It helps to summarize my thoughts on awakening to our true purpose and place within the web of life:

In order for us each to awaken to our individual purpose, we have to let down our defenses. When we do, we become more present to our thoughts, emotions and bodies. To be aware in this way is to be empowered, to be grounded in the earth’s life force, and to be more naturally connected to one another. Once aware of the emotional and energetic realms, learning becomes embodied knowing. Moreover, an expansion takes place in our minds and hearts, enabling us to feel the connection we have always had to what eco-psychologists call the “web of life.” One’s true purpose is aligned with this universal support system. (Catriona O’Curry, 2008)

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