

## **Wellness from Within - November 2006**

### **Keys to Good Conversation - By Jennifer Powers**

Conversation is the catalyst for so many things in life. From relationships to resolutions, it can act as a launching pad like nothing else. But if not done with care, a conversation could also have a counterproductive result without a person even knowing it. So the question is “What makes a good conversationalist?”

By definition, a conversation is “an informal interchange of thoughts and information by spoken words; or oral communication between persons”. However, it is the process and technique you use that makes you a good (or bad) conversationalist. There are simple practices you can adopt and use to go from good to great. And in this case, a little effort goes a long way! Here are some quick tips to help you brush up on your conversation skills:

**Be a good listener** - Don't be concerned with what you'll say to a person or how you will fit your stories and personal “stuff” into the conversation. Let it flow naturally. Focus on honoring each person by hearing their words in the moment without the constraint of your own desire to talk about yourself. By being completely present, you are giving people space to be heard which is more valuable than you could ever imagine.

**Be interested**— A skilled conversationalist always demonstrates a high level of genuine interest in others. Make it your goal to really get to know the person you are talking to. And remember, if you only act interested it will come off as such. Ask pertinent questions and use appropriate body language to show you are in tune to what they are saying. People tend to remember those who show a true interest in them. Don't you want to be memorable?

**Be considerate** – When you connect with a person by telephone or in person try to be aware of how that person is receiving you. If you notice that the person is shifting his look away from you or repositioning the way he stands repeatedly, he is probably not in a good mental “space” to talk. If on the phone the person seems distracted by other activities around him, that probably means you are not getting his full attention. Be considerate of this and ask something like, “What would be a better time to talk?” or “It sounds like you are busy, would it be better if I called you later?”

Which of the above tips could you apply in your next verbal interaction? Pick one and practice it until you are satisfied then move on to the next. Use these simple rules and a little care to take your conversation skills to the next level; and be prepared for many good things to follow.