

What Do Your Communities Say About You?

There is an old phrase that says, *show me a woman's friends and I can tell you all about her*. Our communities are mirrors for how we are living our lives. They reflect our values and beliefs. They call us forth in powerful ways or bring out our negativity and pessimism. Being part of a community can be a great source of energy or it can leave us feeling drained. Here are questions to consider:

- What are your communities?
- What do your communities say about you?
- What value do you get from your communities?
- What can you do if you feel disconnected?

What do your communities say about you?

Take a moment and think about all the different communities you belong to: work, family, old friends, new friends, academic colleagues, children's classmates' parents, and so on. If you put a descriptive word around each of the communities in your life, what would you say? Collaborative, independent, exciting, boring, creative, routine, loving, judging or inspiring? When you are describing your communities you are describing yourself. If you are proud of your communities, great! You've done an excellent job creating communities aligned with your values. If some of your communities are draining or negative you might want to make choices to align those communities with your current values.

What value do you get out of your communities?

Community is generated when you feel a connection with others. The value of community is found in the energy it stimulates. The value may range from a certain community that depletes your energy and is stressful to other communities that uplift you and make you feel happy, excited and energized every time you are connected to it. Even if you feel stuck in a certain community that drains you, remember you do always have choice around how you spend your time and who you are being in any circumstance.

What can you do if you feel disconnected?

If you feel disconnected from a community, ask yourself if it is the community or if it is you causing the feeling. Sometimes it is possible to be surrounded by great people and feel completely alone. Consider that's a function of you and not the community. You might be creating a self-fulfilling prophecy if:

- You don't show up at meetings or events
- You are waiting for others to make the first move
- You are judging instead of listening and understanding
- You are not sharing of yourself

By changing your perspective, your being, or your actions, you will change the dynamic of the community. If the community is actually toxic, please minimize your time with that community.

The feeling of community is a sense of oneness, collaboration, and mutual purpose. You can generate a feeling of connectedness in any situation at any time. It is a function of you, not your surroundings or circumstances. Women all over the world are engaged in the inquiry of community and connection this month. Take a moment to ask yourself the questions in this article, and enjoy a holiday season filled with magical connections.