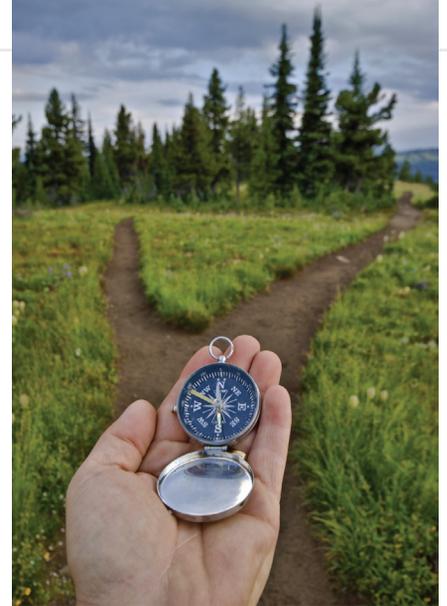


WHERE IS YOUR COMPASS POINTING?

“What ever our wandering our happiness will always be found within a narrow compass, and in the middle of the objects more immediately within our reach.”

Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton

BY CAROL L. BROOKS, SR/WA



When we function on the right path, life seems grand. We're productive, satisfied and confident. We're better able to deal with stressors because our life is aligned. But sometimes we find ourselves distracted. When we stray off course, we become dissatisfied, unsure and even frustrated.

As the temptations and pressures of the outside world pull you in different directions, staying centered on your principles is not always easy. But that's the time to rely on a moral compass to guide us. These are often referred to as True North Principles, and they form our basic beliefs, values and convictions.

True North Principles are the natural laws of human conscience. These laws are timeless. They are inscribed in our minds and stand at-the-ready to keep us balanced. Let's take a look at some of these principles:

Integrity

We've all been there - standing at the fork in the road of right and wrong. It may be a critical moment in our lives when we are faced with making a life-changing decision. Taking the "right" path may be the rockier road. It may be narrow and steep or filled with potholes. Then we shift our gaze to the "wrong" way, and that path looks level and wide. It's a welcoming road and very appealing. Which should we take? As we struggle with this decision, we know we need to do the right thing. Our integrity helps us to be true to ourselves, even when it's the toughest path to take.

Fairness

Over the course of our lives, most of us at one time or another felt something was unfair. But how do you really know when something is unfair? The best way to analyze the principles of fairness is to ask some basic questions. Did an injustice involve lying or taking advantage of others? Did it involve playing by the rules or was it more about playing favorites? It can be difficult to stay objective when our emotions are involved. The key is to not blame others for your own mistakes or deficiencies.

Kindness

Do you recall how you felt the last time someone showed you some kindness? Perhaps it was a calming word that was said during a heated exchange. A simple word or gentle voice can change the direction of a conversation. Sometimes it will throw people off-guard, especially if they are feeling defensive and expecting a conflict. A kind word or gesture can soothe even an angry heart.

When I was treated unfairly as a child, my mother would often say, "Kill 'em with kindness." It was a crazy thought, initially. The first thing I wanted to do was retaliate. But I took her advice and found that kindness actually worked!

Dignity

The face of dignity has features that convey human rights, respect for others, the common good. But there's another side of it that is more introspective that includes self-respect, self-esteem, personal poise and pride. When our compass points to these, then we're better equipped to project dignity to others. The ability to give away the very best of ourselves to others is the very least they deserve.

Keep your trajectory pointed to this simple principle: Treat others as you want to be treated. When you do, you will be better positioned to align with those who share similar values.

Various people have been strategically placed along your life path, and they have either given you support and a strong sense of your True North, or they've been difficult and helped to refine it. Stay alert to those who enter your path. Find your compass. Point it at True North. It will provide markers to alert you to the hazards along the way.

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Owner of Cornerstone Management Skills, Carol is an internationally-recognized author and lecturer on conflict management, interpersonal skills and success strategies. She has nearly 20 years experience in the right of way profession and is a Master Instructor for IRWA courses. ©2013 Carol L. Brooks All Rights Reserved. For more information, visit www.cornerstonemanagementskills.com

