



Strengths@work

## Consulting Women

### A Norfolk Retreat - June 2011

“It was a warm sunny day, the moon near its fullness and Moira and I met with a group of Next Level alumni at her gorgeous home in Norfolk for a one day retreat.

**Our theme for the day was ‘support’: What we mean by this much used word, how we give and receive it and most importantly, how we seek and ask for it.**

Moira and I settled on this theme as we reviewed incidents and conversations in our own lives over recent weeks, and acknowledged the support we receive that make such retreats possible.

Even introducing the theme touched a nerve in some of the group, revealing how great our needs might be for support. We then explored how we give and receive support in different areas of life:

- to our communities and professions through contribution and creativity;
- to the health and well-being of others and ourselves;
- within our relationships - with others and ourselves.

and drew examples from our recent personal histories.

Here are some of the examples that emerged.

#### 1. Support within our communities and professions:

- A Parish Councillor takes courage to ask the ‘naïve’ question and receives the recognition that she is ‘a breath of fresh air’ which gives her greater confidence to contribute;
- Neighbours, having had at times, difficult conversations, providing each other with unexpected support during a hospital stay;
- Asking for inspiration to help a friend with an intractable problem “ what is the difference I can make now?” and following the answer to the letter - without any attachment to any consequences or expectations of thanks;

- Appreciating the speed of response and care from NHS staff.

#### 2. Support given and received around well-being and health:

- Sharing ideas and stories of therapeutic interventions that have been beneficial;
- With age, letting go of the discipline of going to the gym; trusting one’s body to stay well and increasingly applying discipline to manage one’s thoughts;
- Inviting angelic inspiration to ‘manage’ one’s diary; to achieve results with ease and grace and spend time on what is truly enjoyable.

#### 3. Support within our relationships:

- Creating family gatherings;
- Supporting elderly relatives and accepting acknowledgement of this from other family members;
- Standing up to powerful siblings to assert what we personally would like to happen in a direct way.

Throughout this exploration, we noticed how we welcomed or blocked support *“I don’t want their support- they wouldn’t do it properly!”* and empower or inhibit ourselves by critiquing how we go about getting support. In this discussion it was useful to draw on Eric Berne’s perspectives of “Transactional Analysis”.

Our conversation took us deeper into individual questions about how we give and receive support in social and intimate relationships.

This dialogue revealed how we often choose the ‘dance’ of familiar relating patterns which while creating the comfort of habit, may also be painful. At the same time, by adopting these patterns we may fail to support ourselves in creating what we want for the future. Recognizing that we are doing this opens up our potential to learn and grow.

We also discovered that by taking the risk of asking open questions and truly listening for the reply we may take ourselves beyond the familiar ‘dance’ steps, and pave the way for new insight, and ways of relating. In this way, we can grow ourselves through how we work with ‘support’ as indeed we did during our day together.”

Gill June 14<sup>th</sup> 2011