

EDITORIAL
Valuing Your Instincts

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What do I mean when I say "Value your instincts?" I can tell you it means more than doing something *by the seat of your pants*, or *with your gut feeling*.

Instincts, for all intents and purposes, are physical in nature. They are abilities that we as human animals are capable of doing without the need to be taught how. Obvious instincts are: crying, laughing, being emotional, walking, and so on.

But in society, instincts can have a very negative connotation. Instincts are seen as things in our human nature that we should learn to avoid. This flows from a more philosophical perspective, stating that humans are by nature bad creatures, capable of bad things. If one takes an exceptionally brief look at history, clearly humans are indeed capable of some horrific and tragic acts. But is it true to say that just because *some* of us do it, *everyone* can do it too?

In October 1999, I had the opportunity to discuss the issue of human rights with many visitors who came to view the exhibit, ***Citizen of the World: John Peters Humphrey and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights***, which was presented by SFU, SGI (Soka Gakkai International) Canada, and the UN Association of Canada (Vancouver Branch), and media sponsored by *Perspectives*. What struck me the most while I was a receptionist for the exhibit was a comment made by one man who disputed the value of *every* right as stated in the Declaration. He stated his opinion that within the entire Declaration there are some fundamental human rights that must be protected, while some of the other rights shouldn't be considered as universal human rights. In particular, he didn't accept the notion that Article 5, stating, "No one shall be subjected to torture..." is equal to Article 24, which states, "Everyone has the right to rest and leisure..."

What I conveyed to him was the opinion that in Western society there is a continuum between fundamental rights and superfluous rights, but in many societies and cultures, the value placed on particular rights are incongruent with the value given by Western society. To North Americans and Europeans, what constitutes as torture is virtually universally understood, but that is not the case in other continents. Westerners may consider it torture to cut off a person's hand for stealing, but not the case in the Arab world. Other cultures do not even recognize, in practical terms, the rule of law, so regardless of the Declaration, human right abuses can still occur because the culture does not recognize the notion of human rights.

So what's my point? It's that if we are to understand the accomplishments, failures, tragedies, and joys of our own lives, the lives of our friends, family, and members of our respective communities, we must first understand what *makes us tick* as human beings. We must first value the life around us, and keep an open mind to the possibilities available *because* of the inherent capabilities within us.

Each of us is interested and capable of a variety of interesting, sometimes eye-opening things. Before we place a value judgement on it, let's appreciate and respect the individual first.

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