

## Inner Independence Day

By Dave Markowitz

For some, July 4th provides an opportunity to explore patriotism, for others it's a chance to eat lots of hot dogs, and for others, like myself, it's an opportunity to visit my inner fireworks display of love and gratitude. This is my Independence Day of sorts as I celebrate my own independence. Or is it?

While the founding fathers of America had good reason to be independent of England, we often have insular ideas of the benefits of being independent of others. Many want to be self employed, independent of a boss in a traditional business environment, only to then realize they're still dependent on others--clients, advertisers, co-workers, etc.--we need them and they need us. Unless you live on a farm, how can you be independent and still eat? Unless you have your own windmill or solar panels, how can you be independent of energy needs? Unless you're an ascetic breatharian living on a mountaintop in Tibet, you're going to need other people.

Dante said that Hell is other people. It is my belief that Hell is the lack of other people. While I recognize the need to be alone on occasion and to make time to go within, the desired sense of independence is often a setback to growth in many areas. Surely there is growth to be attained by going within, but only in real-world situations does it have any effect. We are to do our inner work to then do the outer work and benefit others.

We are social animals, who always thrive better among others. We thrive on connection, that's why we invite family and friends to our weddings, bar mitzvahs, and even funerals. Our need for connection has recently branched out into online social marketing for social as well as professional purposes. We've taken this need for connection global! Let's face it--we need each other--even when the 'other' seems to drive us crazy!

For those who have had negative and painful experiences with others--maybe even been mistreated by those who were supposed to love you unconditionally--true connection can be a scary venture. But we have to remember that what seems horrible at first is often the greatest of lessons. Whoever seems mean is often the greatest of teachers. Whoever hurts you the most is the one who can spur a tremendous heart opening--but we have to see these situations as opportunities, not burdens. And none of these opportunities would have existed if it weren't for these other people. They are gifts. Nothing but angels have been sent your way. When you open to the bigger picture, this becomes clear. But that bigger picture requires both real world and spiritual world antennae.

Well-rounded growth involves others. It's like dancing or even sex; it's good when alone, but can be great when with a partner. And it is my belief that we are here to be great. Who's with me?

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