

From the Heart
By Heather Schneider

Being a young adult means being constantly unsure of your place in the world and how you relate to it. Everything is new -- your first apartment, your first job, your first romantic experience. You try to learn the rules for fitting into the workplace -- what to wear, what's too much of a relaxed style or too little, how late is too late in getting to work, how do you relate to co-workers and bosses as adults rather than college buddies? In the midst of all this turmoil, why on earth would you take on another huge uncertainty -- like trying to have a spiritual life?

Young adulthood is all about fitting into what society sees as "normal & acceptable" in order to benefit society. You learn how to be a good corporate worker, that the result is more important than how you got to it, that you are supposed to be busy every second, that you are supposed to be connected by mass communication at all times, that by being successful you can buy love even if you're undesirable, that human beings have the right to contain and control nature. We are bombarded with instructions that clash with our intuitive knowledge and feelings.

It takes a lot of self-knowledge, self identity, and personal values to stand up against such cultural norms. It's a wonder that young adults dare to disagree with their peers at all. To disagree with the norm is social suicide. It means not getting the money, not getting the romantic partner, not being able to provide for yourself later on in life.

To have your own authentic life, you have somehow bring together the warring factions within yourself -- the ones that fight to be like everyone else and the ones that want to show the world our authentic selves.

This inner peacemaking is the hardest challenge. My generation has so many ways to occupy our minds and not think about our inner lives: cell phones, the internet, television, ipods, pda's, the radio, and Blackberries. It is only when our environment is quiet that we can hear what is going on in our internal landscape. In order to know yourself you have to first listen inside and learn what makes you react. And our environment hardly ever quiets down.

It is so ironic that all the communication devices keep us from people, from physically connecting and reaching out to someone and holding their hand. The simple act of touching can be a spiritual experience. How will my generation learn to sit in front of a campfire while others drum and dance...to walk in the rain with friends...to stare up at the moon and stars and wonder about our place in the vast universe -- how, at the same time, we are both very small

and very large? How do we learn to “unplug” from all the buzz in order to “plug in” to more meaningful relationships, with others and with the deepest parts of our own selves?

I hope some of you will take the chance to coach a young adult’s soul. You may say “Why me?” And I would say “If not you, then who?” And if you still think that you don’t have enough experience to be a soul coach, then I want you to consider what role models my generation has: Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, and Bernie Madoff. Surely you aren’t as bad as them, and that’s what our society has left us as role models.

So the next time you see a young adult, don’t be put off by their seeming lack of attention to the world around them. Go up and just talk to them. They may be waiting for you to help them “unplug” and connect on a deeper level. You never know what the two of you can discover about each other and yourself.