

Small World, Isn't It?

By Elle G Garfield, LMSW

During my meditation this morning a thought floated by about the world getting smaller. Of course, the world is not getting smaller but how is that illusion created? How often do you hear yourself say it's a small world when you recognize a connection to a person you were not aware of having before. A client of mine will say, "Your husband is my foot doctor", or a neighbor will share that the very place I'm planning to go on vacation is the city she grew up in. "Small world", we say when we recognize less and less degrees of separation.

On the other hand what happens when the stress and difficulty we are experiencing seems to widen and even "go global"? We can be bombarded with information not only about how our actions affect the world but how the world affects us. For example, the Wall Street downturn affected the world marketplace, and the raise in food prices causes us to spend more to eat and make different choices. Our world appears more and more small because there is so much more where there once appeared to be space.

What effect does the lessening of space have on our mental/emotional health? We certainly feel more stress, more pressure. Think of when you are in an elevator. First imagine you are going up to the 23rd floor alone or with one or two other people. Then imagine the elevator full, barely enough space to move and inch. How do you feel in each case? If you have a tendency to be anxious already you may feel overwhelmed and know in that moment that you need to seek help.

As we practice yoga- breathing (pranayamas) and poses (asanas) we literally create space. First when we roll out our mat and then lengthening our spine as we draw the breath in deeper into that space. As we develop a witness consciousness, (a nonjudgmental observer) we notice more spaciousness even with all the connections we have to the rest of the world. In Sanskrit the word for happiness is, *sukha*, which literally translates unobstructed space. When we perceive pressure our tendency as human beings is to shorten our breath, limiting that feeling of expanse. As we learn to increase the depth and width of our breathing we experience more space more room for the breath. More room for ourselves.

So in fact the world is small and expansive both. The following breathing exercise will help to foster the awareness of space. Do this when you are anxious about our world getting smaller still.

Bellows Breath: Draw your fists in towards your shoulders with your elbows bent. Take an easy breath in then let it go. On the next inhale, with energy raise your arms above your head extending your fingers to the sky. As you exhale, as if you are pulling energy in, close the fists and draw them in to the starting position. Inhale and exhale through the nose only. Repeat this 15 times. Do this for 2 or 3 rounds. At the end relax and let your hands rest in your lap. Notice how you feel. Have you cleared some space for yourself?

If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment call me at 1-248-961-4081 or email me at egilgallon@aol.com.