

## **Finding IT: Getting to the Heart of Friendship**

*"Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter: whoever finds one has found a treasure." Apocrypha: Sirach 6:14 NRSV*

Either we got IT or we don't when it comes to friendship. Many of us are searching for IT – that true friendship that will bring us joy, meaning and hope to our lives. I've found IT in my friendships with Sara and Julie.

### **If You Build IT, They Will Come**

Eight years ago I had a vision to start a women's spirituality group. Seven came, four continued and three remain – Sara, Julie and myself. We believe that we were brought together for a deeper purpose and we "conduct" our friendship that way. We have a name for our group – WINGS: Women in Nourishing Group for the Spirit. We have a mission, vision and values for our group. Our mission, or purpose, is "a sacred women's group committed to growing our faith and ourselves." Our vision, or long-term goal, is "uplift and to help each other soar." Our values, or guiding principles, are: "prioritize our commitments; respect our rituals; share our whole selves and inspire each other."

### **Make IT Happen**

*Value One: Prioritize our Commitments*

We prioritize our friendship by agreeing to what we want to prioritize and we stick to it. We schedule monthly "conference" phone calls to check in (we use to see each other in person each month until Sara moved to Green Bay) and go on an annual weekend retreat to the ARC Retreat Center each May. We cherish the time we spend at the ARC because it's the only time that we all see each other in person. It's our yearly opportunity to come together like the ARC's motto in action, reflection and celebration. It's a chance for us to rest, rewind and renew. It's a time to journey inward and outward. Most importantly, it's girl time!

### **Go For IT**

*Value Two: Respect our Rituals*

Custom, habit, tradition and routine are words used to describe a ritual. We embrace many rituals that we enjoy – gratitude journal, book club, letter writing, scrapbooking, pampering and having fun. Monthly rituals include emailing each other our gratitudes for the month and keeping them in a gratitude journal as well as discussing and documenting our book club insights in a binder for each book. We have several yearly rituals while at ARC. We

review our monthly rituals. We read letters that we have written to ourselves the prior year while at ARC, reflecting on our past year and then write new ones for the year ahead. We plan our goals for the year ahead. We pamper ourselves by doing fun things such as painting our nails and watching a movie. We cook and share meals together. We take lots of pictures and capture our year's events in a scrapbook.

### **Let IT All Hang Out**

*Value Three: Share Our Whole Selves*

We support and encourage each other to bring all of who we are to our friendship – the good along with the bad. We celebrate the “highs” and pick each other up during the “lows.” We share laughter, tears and an occasional teasing of one another. We challenge and question each other. We encourage and pray for each other. We share with one another things we've learned along life's journey. But most importantly, no matter what is going on in our life, we know that we can count on each other to help us get through it all.

### **You Can Do IT All – With a Little Help from Your Friends**

*Value Four: Inspire Each Other*

We are devoted to inspiring each other. In the latest book we read, *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren, he discusses the importance of fellowship - connecting with an intimate group to share your spiritual journey with. According to Warren, fellowship should be authentic and should experience mutuality (the art of giving and receiving). “It is a genuine heart-to-heart, sometimes gut-level sharing.” With each other we experience fellowship. The ARC offers spiritual companioning – an opportunity to have someone else walk on our spiritual journey who will listen to us and hold us sacred. We are spiritual companions to each other. We are each other's WINGS. We've found IT!

*“I believe that friends are the quiet angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.” - Anonymous*

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