



Meaning of “Go Direct”

The Center for Spiritual Living is committed to having a “go direct” culture. Such a culture fosters a healthy, functional community.

Going direct means that whenever anyone within the spiritual community has a CSL DE-related problem, concern, upset, gripe, discomfort, conflict, unhappiness, etc., they go directly to the person who can address their concern – who can “do something about it.”

Going direct means that they do not go to other members of the congregation to gossip and complain. This is called “triangulation” and is extremely unhealthy in any community.

There’s a wonderful Hasidic story that describes beautifully the widespread effect that just one person spreading gossip and rumors can have. In this tale, a woman says hurtful things about her neighbor. But, eventually, she feels badly, goes to her rabbi and asks what she can do to make amends. Her rabbi suggests, “If you want to make amends for what you’ve done, I recommend that you take several feather pillows, cut them open, and let the wind disperse the feathers. Once you’ve done that, come back and see me.”

She does what she is told and returns to the rabbi, who says calmly to her, “Now, there’s one more step. Go out and gather up all the feathers.” “Why, that’s impossible,” she said, “I have no idea how far and wide they have already spread!” “That is right,” replied the wise rabbi, “Once gossip, complaining and rumors are ‘out there,’ they simply cannot be gathered back in and their wide-spread damage may never be known. So, while you cannot undo what you have done to your neighbor, my counsel to you is that you never spread gossip again.”

And here is a story about the philosophy of the great Socrates. One day an acquaintance met the great philosopher and said, “Socrates, do you know what I just heard about your friend?”

“Hold on a minute,” Socrates replied. “Before telling me anything I’d like you to pass a little test. It’s called the Triple Filter Test.” “Triple filter?” the friend asked.

“That’s right,” Socrates continued. “Before you talk to me about my friend, it might be a good idea to take a moment and filter what you’re going to say. The first filter is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?”

“No,” the man said, “actually I just heard about it and...”

“All right,” said Socrates. “So you don’t really know if it’s true or not. Now let’s try the second filter, the filter of Goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about my friend something good?” “No, on the contrary...” the friend began to say.

“So,” Socrates continued, “you want to tell me something bad about him, and you’re not certain it’s even true. Let’s look at the third filter: the filter of Usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my brother going to be useful to me?” “No, not really,” conceded the friend.

“Well,” concluded Socrates, “if what you want to tell me about my friend is neither true nor good nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?”

This is why Socrates was a great philosopher and held in such high esteem.

Isn't this something we can all practice? Listen to what you are about to say regarding a fellow congregant and see if it passes the filters –

- Is it **TRUE**,
- Is it **GOOD** and
- Is it **USEFUL**?

If not, perhaps it is best left unsaid.

How to Go Direct

Let's be honest -- who has not had their buttons pushed at one time or another when they are in relationship with others? Whether it be in a friendship, in a family, in a marriage/partnership, at work or here at The Center for Spiritual Living, when two or more are gathered together, there may be an opportunity for conflict.

How we deal with the conflict and our own buttons being pushed can make the difference between a healthy, functional relationship and an unhealthy, dysfunctional one.

The Scripture at Matthew 18:15 is a good lesson on building healthy community. It says if someone has a conflict with their brother, they should go alone to him to talk about it – it doesn't say they should talk to a bunch of people on the way!

Going direct also implies that the issue is addressed shortly after it arises, so as not to create a festering of negative energy. As Mary Morrissey says, "shovel while the pile is small."

Whenever our buttons are pushed, the first thing to do is to go direct inside ourselves – because we know that everything on the outside is a reflection of what is going on inside of us. So, before going direct to another person, we should always go direct with ourselves.

For example, if we are upset because no one else ever seems to step up to help, we could ask where inside ourselves are we not "stepping up" to serve and support ourselves? If we are hurt because someone spoke harshly and in a judgmental way to us, we could ask where are we being harsh and judgmental to ourselves?

These are important questions to ask and perhaps we would want to turn to a Practitioner or Minister for spiritual guidance, clarity and prayer to help us sort this out.

If, after having done that, we still feel it is important to "go direct" (and it may well be), then asking ourselves the following four questions before going direct will help create a productive outcome. (From Dr. Greg Baer's *Real Love*)

1. First, is the issue about which I want to "go direct" any of my business?
2. Second, does it really matter?
3. Can I say what I have to say with love? (Meaning, do I have concern for the happiness and well-being of the other person as well as for myself?)
4. To the best of my ability to know, can the other person hear me?

Receiving Someone Else's "Go Direct"

Having a "go direct" culture also means that when someone goes direct to us, we will listen to them with open ears and hearts. We will have the spiritual and emotional maturity to hear what they are saying and to seek first to understand their position rather than defend ours.

In the work of *Real Love*, whoever speaks first gets to be the speaker, meaning whoever brings something up first, is the one who gets to talk about their concerns at that time. Here's an important thing to know about relationships: We completely shut down effective communication and destroy any hope of reconciliation when someone says to us, "I am unhappy that you did xyz," and we respond, "oh yah, well, I am unhappy that you did abc." At this point, productive conversation is over.

So, if our buttons get pushed when someone "goes direct" to us, it is our responsibility to realize that has happened, to temporarily remove ourselves from the conversation if we need to (In *Real Love* language, it's called "strategically withdrawing"), go deal with our own feelings and emotions, and then return to have the conversation.

It is imperative that we do return and, in fact, we should make a commitment to return before we withdraw. We could say something like, "I find I am not able to talk about this right now, but may I call you tomorrow at 5:00, so we can

continue this conversation?" And then we must be sure to honor our commitment and make the call – after we've done our own internal work, of course.

Finally, take these words from Mike Dooley in Notes from the Universe to heart when someone else's "go direct" is directed at you:

The beginner scorns criticism.

The wise soul carefully weighs it.

And the Master says, "But, of course!"

Being Invited Into a "Triangular" Conversation

If someone comes to you complaining about a CSL DE situation, we ask that you say something like, "I absolutely hear your concern and I can empathize with you. However, I'm not the person who can do anything about this. So, please go directly to [whoever can]."

If someone comes to you saying that "three people have come to me complaining about . . .", you say to them, "since we believe in going direct here at The Center for Spiritual Living, please encourage those three people to come to me [or to whomever can address the issue] directly. I can only talk to you about what your concerns are. If I can help, I will. If not, I will ask you to go directly to [whoever can]." If they say, "These aren't my concerns, they are the three people's," then ask them who the three people are, so that we can have a direct conversation with them. If they won't say, then your response could be, "then I can only assume these are your concerns, and we are back to addressing them directly."

If someone comes to you complaining about a CSL DE situation and says, "Keep this confidential," we ask that you respond something like, "That information is actually not something that can be kept confidential. The health and well-being of our spiritual community is dependent on issues and concerns being out in the open, so this information needs to get to the appropriate people who can address it." Personal issues, yes, they are 100% confidential. Confidentiality around CSL DE issues, however, simply does not foster healthy community. In the words of Unity minister Rev. Wendy Craig Purcell, "We want to be a safe place, but not a hiding place."

Conclusion

Creating a culture in our spiritual community where "going direct" is the norm begins with each of us. It is an important role and responsibility of CSL DE membership. Learning and implementing this important communication skill will create not only a healthy, vibrant and alive spiritual community, but a healthy, vibrant and alive world.