



VAN's Annual Conference Workshop
Tuesday, June 25, 2013

Tending the Fire: Who is the Person in the Profession?

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Touchstones – guidelines for this workshop.

- **Choose for yourself when and how to participate**
There is always invitation, never invasion; always opportunity, never demand.
- **Embrace differences**
Listen with an open mind to others. Speak your truth with "I statements."
- **Make space for silence**
Slow down and pay attention to the that voice *in you* that you may not often hear.
- **No fixing**
Seek instead, through listening and open questions to help each other find clarity and resourcefulness.
- **When the going gets rough, turn to wonder**
Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry. "I wonder why they feel/think this way?" "I wonder what pushed my buttons?"
- **Observe confidentiality:** Safety is built when we can trust that our words and stories will remain with the people with whom we choose to share, and are not passed on to others without our permission.

Fire By Judy Brown

What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
a breathing space.
Too much of a good thing,
too many logs packed in too tight
can squelch a fire,
can douse the flames
almost as surely
as a pail of water can.

So building fires
requires tending in a special way,
attention to the wood
as well as to the spaces in between,
so fire can catch, can grow, can breathe,
can build its energy and warmth
which we so need in order
to survive the cold.

We need to practice building open spaces
just as clearly as we learn
to pile on the logs.
It's fuel, and absence of the fuel
together, that make fire possible,
let it develop in the way that's
possible when we lay logs in just the
way the fire wants to go.

Then we can watch it as it leaps and plays,
burns down and then flames up in unexpected ways.
Then we need only lay a log on it from time to time.
Then it has life all of its own,
a beauty that emerges
not where logs are
but where spaces can invite the flames
to burn, to form exquisite
patterns of their own,
their beauty possible
simply because the space is there,
an opening in which flame
that knows just how it wants
to burn can find its way.

For reflection

- **How do you experience your *fire*?** Is it burning brightly? A pilot light? Does it wax and wane, leap and dance, or is it a kind of steady flame? Has it died down to embers or ashes?
- **What kind of kindling does it need to get it restarted?**
- **What color is your flame?** Fire can burn white or red or blue or even green.
- Does an image come to mind when you think of your “inner fire?”
- What are the logs you lay on your fire? Can you name them?
- **What logs do others lay on?**

The Way It Is

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

~ William Stafford ~

(The Way It Is)