“The Lady” and her Tree of Life

Connection Connoisseur episode 5

Hello and thank you for joining me today! My name is Brenda Ridgley. Years ago one of my best friends suggested that I was the “Connection Connoisseur” because I love all things connection. I love helping people connect to other people and also anything that they may be seeking to make their lives better and whole.

I recently wrote a book called Lady and the Tribe that will be available on Amazon and in bookstores shortly. Lady and the Tribe is about the woman and her closest circle of friendships. In the book readers will experience a journey of friendship as I share my own personal stories and those of other women. In the process, you’ll discover how to find, nurture, and deepen friendships and create a Tribe culture that is unique to you.

In this episode, we will discuss “The Lady” as represented by the Tree of Life. At the end I will tell you how you can get a copy of my girlfriend's guide “10 Benefits of a Girls Weekend”. For now do me a favor and click on the subscribe button to be notified of a new Tribe building episode each week!

You are about to embark on a journey that can fill the space inside your soul that is longing for more. You may have no idea why you feel empty, but you know something is missing. What is it that is preventing you from becoming the best “whole” version of yourself? I suggest that the missing link involves our lack of meaningful connection to other human beings. You may be thinking, “Oh no... that’s not me! I have lots of friends! I have so many friends I can’t even manage to interact with them as often as I’d like!” That very well may be true. However, it is not the quantity but rather the quality of these friendships that are in question. In the weeks ahead we will discuss what it means to find, dive-deep, build, preserve, and broaden friendships so that they become the family you choose. When three or more of you gather together, you are a Tribe.

There is a dichotomy that exists today between our concurrent hyper-connectedness, having the immediate and ongoing ability to check up on faraway friends, and many Americans’ elevated sense of emotional alienation. It has made our real-life, face-to-face friendships even more important to sustain. Add to that, we as a culture are so focused on career success, financial accomplishments, and family milestones that we often lack time and energy to connect with others beyond those arenas.

With all we have going on in our super busy lives, surrounded by people, places, and things, somehow we are left feeling alone. We are not alone because we lack relationships. We are alone because these relationships lack depth, knowing, and certainty. A column “Loneliness is Killing Us” published in the Guardian suggests that this era, much as we labeled the Stone Age, Iron Age, Space Age, and Information Age, is called “The Age of Loneliness”.

Almost without noticing, we have distanced ourselves from the connections that *choose* to love us *voluntarily* without obligation. These are our closest personal friendships that are not demanding our time, yet ever-present. This neglect does not go without a price.

It starts showing up as an occasional feeling of loss when you have a spare moment to reflect on friends you haven’t seen for a while. You dismiss the thought because you feel there isn’t anything you can do about it right now. You are just too busy. Over time that occasional feeling of loss develops into a feeling of emptiness and dissatisfaction.

You can’t even put your finger on what is missing. Overall you feel that your life is great. You have a healthy family, a beautiful home, and your schedule is certainly full! By this time you might describe yourself as just being in a “funk”. What is this nagging feeling in the pit of your stomach?

We must actively seek, grow and maintain these voluntary, close personal friendships. The word voluntary is important. These relationships are not bound by blood, vow or contract. They just love you for you without any obligation.

If we fail to nurture these friendships, we don’t just lose a friend, we lose a piece of ourselves because our relationships mirror back to us who we really are. The wonderful thing is that no matter where you are right now with your friendships, you can exponentially improve your connections with just a decision to give them a little more attention and intention.

I am going to paint a picture of our wholeness as if we are our very own tree of life. Picture yourself as if you were this beautiful tree in the prime of your life, strong, sturdy, and flourishing with beautiful leaves and blossoms. As you envision your tree, lets start by visualizing what is unseen yet so very important to your wellbeing.

*The Roots that Nourish and Anchor*

Our parents and how we are raised provide the seed and soil to our tree of life. Our genetics, traits, and characteristics all come from this seed in our internal environment. The soil is our external environment. It includes the lessons we were taught, the role models we observed, and the experiences that created our values, ethics, and morals. It also includes where we live and what individuals and activities to whom we were introduced.

We are nurtured from a young age to acknowledge the light within us that teaches us about who we are and what we are to become. Much like the roots of a tree searching diligently in the dark for life saving minerals and a true source of living water, there are times in our growth that we learn our preferences, question individual beliefs, and discover our purpose. Once we dig our roots in far enough and find the nourishment we need we start to recognize our own identity and we embody the trunk in our Tree of Life.

The strength that is found by purposefully digging in our roots during moments of trials, doubt, and figurative droughts, is what strengthens the core of our being. Much like the roots strengthen the trunk we carry that nourishment upward to the branches that will extend outward to produce and bear the weight of our fruition, our best life actualized.

In our metaphor, the trunk of the tree is our being, our individualism and identity. There is an intrinsic beauty of the trunk of our tree, the bark cracking as it expands like our wise, old wrinkled skin, and the ever-growing inner rings of our tree strengthening us from the inside out. These rings and cracks not only show our age, but are also like the notes of our biography preserving knowledge from season to season.

It is in the symbolism of the tree’s trunk that we are reminded that we need to first nourish and grow ourselves by diligently and deeply drinking from the soil so that we can have the core strength to nurture the fruit we are meant to create.

Everything about us literally stems from nature and nurture.

*The Branches that Lift and Support*

Our closest friendships become the branches of our tree of life. These relationships strongly resemble tree branches because they grow stronger with timend attention. They hold you up in high regard and stay strong with the winds of change. As the seasons of your life pass through, the branches of your relationships remain growing, supportive and ready to lift you higher the next season.

*The Leaves that Grow to Flourish*

The life you build for yourself is represented by the beautiful, thriving leaves and blossoms in your tree of life. With the growth from your imperfectly perfect seed and soil of your external environment, you are provided with a strong foundation. Although unseen your roots grow deep and wide, almost mirroring the branches above, keeping you grounded. The strength of your tree trunk builds and the support of your friendships are the branches that lift you up, always reaching higher year after year so that you can flourish.

Some seasons are better than others. Life brings its challenges, sometimes our tree experiences ice storms, droughts, torrential winds, and even infestations. However, life is good and repeatedly offers growth and expansion opportunities. Your leaves are the product of the tree of life you, your family, and your Tribe has nurtured.

A tree models for us that she has learned to be still in all the seasons of birth and renewal, growing and harvest. She doesn’t guilt herself during a season of rest, nor does she grow her fruit before its season. And she observes all of this without any judgment for what is done after she has done her part.

We can actually glean some wisdom in how a tree manages the fruit. The tree creates the fruit and nurtures it until it is ripe, but does not do the harvesting, preserving, canning, market sharing, grocery shopping, dinner prep and dishwashing all by herself. She also isn’t worried about what others will think if her ripe fruit drops from her branches before it can be harvested. She isn’t worried about whether her fruit will be used for a healthy snack or a dessert.

Seasons don’t come without struggles but come they must, and with an open heart, they come bearing wise gifts. They come with the gift of strength gained from withstanding the storms; perfected patience for the process of growing life; humble gratitude for days of warming sunlight; and reverence for the cleansing rain that pours down from the heavens.

The branches of my tree, my Tribe that I am honored to call best friends truly lift me up with encouragement, affirmation and love. They give me strength when I am weak, push me when I want to give up, and cheer me on when I am succeeding. They are loyal and true to me. I completely trust their intentions and know that they have my best interest at heart. They have been with me through failure and triumph, as I have been for them. I am a better wife, mother, and contributor to my community because of these rewarding relationships.

*Great Expectations*

Regardless of how your tree of life stands today and the condition of your current friendships, they could probably benefit from a little more attention. In the weeks ahead we are going to take a deep dive into all things Tribe - the family you choose.

Thank you for taking the first step in this journey. Please subscribe to this channel for a new episode each week! To get your copy of “10 Benefits of a Girls Weekend” click on the link below and sign up for my newsletter that also provides a weekly friendship tip!

My goal is to uplift all women with the power of connection. With your participation in this movement, you can make a difference not only in your own life but in the lives of those around you. Wherever you are right now, you can realize a more rewarding and joyful life with your own Tribe.

 When Three or More Gather, We are Tribe.

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