



**mind**set

BY KAREN STEWART, MA

## balance in the new year

**A** couple of years ago I joined *Bodies, Voices and Spirit*, a wonderful chorus for women, led by Kathleen Hannan, a gifted singer and songwriter in our area. I was worried that I couldn't carry a tune and went to Kathleen for a private lesson. Kathleen asked if I listened to the other singers when I sang as well as to myself. I said not only did I not do that, I had never thought of doing it and didn't know if I could. She showed me how and it has been wonderful to feel more self confident about my voice and able to participate more fully in the chorus.

Balance is all about the ability to listen to both sides of any question, need, or desire and to find that place of harmony where both sides are integrated into (in Webster's words) "a pleasing and consistent whole." If we are to thrive as individuals and as a planet, balance and harmony will have to be our guiding principles. If we are going to be able to enjoy this beautiful world we are going to have to "listen" to our environment as well as our own needs. If we are to be good parents we must listen to our children and to ourselves. If we are to be good leaders we must hear our own wisdom as well the collective wisdom. If we are to be good friends, lovers, human beings we must listen to our own voice as well as the voices of others. If we are to be centered as individuals, we need to be able to listen to our hearts as well as our minds, our bodies as well as our spirits and our own needs as well as what is good for others.

We cannot pretend that we are unrelated any longer. What we do affects others and the health of our planet. This interrelatedness may sometimes feel like a burden, but in fact it is a blessing, a pearl of great price. I love You Tube for the amazing, uplifting snippets it can bring, especially the ones where seemingly ordinary and sometimes unrelated people are dancing, laughing or playing together. When we are engaged with each other from a place of love, we are at our best and we are happiest.

If we are to thrive as people, a nation, a world we must move from competition and hierarchy to cooperation and equality. Instead

of trying to "win" arguments we must look to consensus so that everyone wins. Instead of aggression we must look to peaceful solutions. Force is always the simplest solution but the negative consequences are profound. In parenting, it is pretty easy to hit a child to force them to comply, but the effects on the relationship and the child's self esteem are devastating. If we "fight," it must be against ignorance, intolerance, poverty, inadequate health care, tainted water, famine, and to be most effective we must come from a place of love and compassion. John Lennon sings in his song *Imagine*: "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one..." Dreaming of a better world is the first step, but of course it is not enough. We must each find our own small way to bring balance, harmony and peace to our world.

I want to close with two quotes from President Eisenhower and my wishes for us in the New Year:

*"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."*

and

*"I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than our governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it."*

In the New Year this is my hope for each of us:

May the love of family, friends and the Divine

Surround us

Sustain us

Strengthen us

May the stream of infinite compassion flow through us

For ourselves

For our families and friends

For the whole world and every being.

May hope be our constant companion, and

May peace fill our hearts and our world. ❧❧

---

David Stewart, PhD, and Karen Stewart, MA, are psychologists who work with individuals, couples, groups, and organizations in their Durham practice at Suite 220 at 811 Ninth Street in Durham. Reach them at (919) 286-5051. [www.stewartpsychologists.com](http://www.stewartpsychologists.com)