

WHAT SECRET SOCIETY SUPPORTS YOU?

This question shouldn't be new to you. What? It is? You didn't actually spend time with the questions from the SECRETS card, did you? You don't think you have any secrets? Oh, you KNOW you have secrets ... you just don't want to expose yourself to them!

Ha! Well, I guess I can't make you do it. I suppose I can't make you do much of anything. And I became aware while taking a break after that last rather lengthy monologue on secrets, that perhaps I didn't share a vital bit of wisdom around secret exposure.

I hear you. You don't think you can trust me. I have let you down with all that music mumbo-jumbo. I have proven to you that I am flawed and not "exactly what you need" in your life. Well, that leads to another topic: "The perfectly imperfect human". But, I'll not digress. Will you remind me in the next chapter about the *perfectly imperfect human* topic? Thank you.

Where were we, oh yes, secret support societies. Actually, the important word here is "support".

***What does support mean to you?
Who supports you - really supports you?
And who doesn't?***

If secrets keep us sick (or stuck or inauthentic) and a solution is to share them, who do we share them with? Who can we really trust with our vulnerability, our sensitive, fearful inner child? Who do we know who will hear us with compassion, confidentiality, non-judgment, acceptance? Who will not try to fix us, but will just listen or offer advice once they have our permission?

Often we find ourselves turning to the people we are closest to in proximity: family, coworkers, friends. Sometimes, these are exactly the folks we need!

Sometimes, they aren't.

I wish I didn't have to write that but it's true. Think about it. The secrets we need to share may have some relationship to this other person. If so, it might be very hard for them not to take it personally, judge us, or react. Perhaps our secrets are the things holding us back from big change, following our passions, expanding into our lives! This can be threatening to those closest to us. It's also possible that the very act of sharing our secrets may be such new behavior that those close to us might, without thinking, laugh or say something demeaning. That reaction is often just enough to close us down tighter than a drum and lock those secrets in even deeper than before.

Secrets must be shared ... safely. If you don't feel safe with those close to you, that's okay! For now, grow your *secret sharing muscle* somewhere else. You'll know if and when the time comes to share secrets in the *close proximity* relationships.

Where are those safe people? Here are a few places to look:

- support groups, men's and women's groups which practice confidentiality: "Who you see here, what you hear here, let it stay here when you leave here."
- counselors and therapists
- clergy
- life coaches
- mentors and teachers
- retreat experiences

How do you know if a person is safe? You may not know for sure until you have taken a risk and noticed the impact. You will need to take risks! Please, listen to your inner voice. When you are considering someone to be on your support team, let your intuition guide you. Is there a knot in your gut warning you to stay away? Do you find yourself thinking you need to preface your words with, "Will you promise not to tell anyone?" What do you see in their character, in their communications with others? When they talk, do they tell stories about others? Safe

persons don't gossip. They don't repeat things they've heard in confidence. More than anything, you respect them. Listen for that.

Then invite them into your inner world slowly. If they prove to be honorable, hold you in compassion, non-judgment, acceptance, and keep your secrets confidential, you've found a gift! Treasure it.

And, as for keeping your secrets confidential? That is for others! At some point, your secrets will, for you, lose all power and you may find, as I have, that sharing them openly is extremely freeing. It is also an example to others of your "perfectly imperfect" human expression and can be a source of connection in all your relationships.

***Who will you invite to your support team?
Who will you bench or kick off the team for now?***

Your turn: Explore Your Inner Landscape



The questions below are from the **FRIENDS** Inspiration Card. Use them to deepen your understanding of friendship, connections, support.

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| What is friendship? | What advice should not be shared? |
| What works? | What secrets hold you back? |
| What complicates? | What do you have to give? |
| What brightens the relationship? | What power lies in receiving? |
| What dims their light? | What are your true blue qualities? |
| What is codependency? | What must you stop doing? |
| What is supportive? | What strength lies in interdependency? |
| What do you depend on? | What makes a relationship complete? |
| Where are you caretaking? | |
| What does healthy look like? | |
| Where is trust the answer? | |
| Where are you enabling? | |

Music to Inspire

When Women Gather was written on the last morning of a weekend women's retreat. It speaks to secrets hidden by masks we wear in our day to day lives. It also tells the true story of how trust develops and our support team can be created in the context of a safe retreat experience.

When Women Gather

*Each has come, aware of depth,
that they alone can know.
For all have journeyed to this point
a path that is their own.*

*When women gather, far away
from life's unceasing tasks...
in time each slows from hectic pace
and dares remove the mask.*

*Gently first, just dabbling
with this freedom all so need;
Joy and laughter fill the air
as trust grows from this seed.*

*'Tis then, in moments unforeseen
and catching unaware,
a message strikes an inner chord
and sorrow deep is shared.*

*And miracles of bonding grow
as stories told reveal
the oneness of the female soul
we nurture now to heal.*

*When women gather, far away,
a blessing we behold.
Now joined as one in sacred space:
the mirrors of our souls.*