

CHAPTER 10
Form Alliances

DISCIPLINE NUMBER TEN

The noble warrior forms trusted allies with those who know the terrain.



Lesson

What is an ally? It is one who is in helpful association with another. To cultivate allies the warrior seeks after people who are growing themselves, fellow warriors, with whom he/she can form an alliance. This alliance is based upon spiritual goals and values, and the desire to be mutually supportive to each other in the attempt to achieve such goals and live by such values. Forming alliances is making friends with spiritual people, offering support, and accepting support on your warrior journey.

Forming allies can be accomplished in different ways. Some warriors simply find good friends, and informally rely on them in times of trouble, and offer support when their friend is in need. Others have formed groups openly dedicated to support each other in some particular struggle. This is the case with all twelve-step groups and other support groups dealing with an addiction or dysfunction. Others have formed groups based on the warrior concept, having regular times of meeting to discuss their battles, share their wounds and support each other for healing.

The benefits of having allies in the spiritual battle are many. When the warrior shares with another what is happening in his or her particular battlefield, the warrior has an opportunity to benefit from the insights another person may have. Often an individual who is struggling with a particular challenge is so caught up in it that even if an obvious solution is present, the person doesn't see it. When sharing with another, the warrior is given the opportunity to gain the objectivity of another, and even gain more personal objectivity by relating the challenge to another.

Another benefit is the healing power of sharing life's intimate struggles in a safe place. By safe place, I mean with people who are safe, that is, on a path of spiritual growth themselves. There is something magical about sharing groups. Talking about one's life and challenges in a safe environment, and even having others hear what one has to say, brings healing. I have seen countless people receive healing through simply sharing with others and listening to others in a support group. It is as if the burdens are lifted, the darkness dispelled, the chains broken, the spirit revived, so that the person can go on to actively pursue a healthy and happy spiritual life. Healing can come in many ways, but it seems to come more quickly with some through sharing struggles, and enjoying the benefit of the support of others.

Still, another benefit in forming alliances is that these alliances can help the warrior with accountability. The spiritual enemy loves nothing more than to isolate the warrior, cutting the warrior off from help and the reasoned voice of others. When the warrior shares the struggles, and knows that he or she will have to come back to the friend or to the support group and report progress, it is more difficult to slip off the path into spiritual defeat, because others are there to hold the warrior accountable. This is the kind of peer pressure that may actually be beneficial. It is like the soldier who would love to flee the battle, but fears the judgment of his fellow soldiers more than the battle itself, and so stays to fight.

Another entire area in spiritual warfare is the help the warrior receives from spiritual allies in the heavenly realm. Some religious philosophies put forth the hope that angels accompany us, whispering to us the way to go, offering comfort in times of distress, and even fighting the demons in the spiritual realm for our survival. Prayer may very well bring the presence of such spiritual beings as strong allies in the fight against darker forces in one's soul. It is written in one sacred text, "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways " (Psalm 91:11).

Gems from the Masters

When on intersecting ground
Form alliances.

Sun Tzu

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile
This day shall gentle his condition:

Henry in Shakespeare's Henry V

Battle is a joyous thing.
We love each other so much in battle.
If we see that our cause is just
And our kinsmen fight boldly,
Tears come to our eyes.
A sweet joy rises in our hearts,
In the feeling of our honest loyalty to each other;
And seeing our friend so bravely exposing his body to danger
In order to fulfill the commandment of our Creator,
We resolve to go forward and die
Or live with him on account of love.
This brings such delight
That anyone who has not felt it
Cannot say how wonderful it is.
Do you think
That someone who feels this
Is afraid of death?
Not in the least!
He is so strengthened, so delighted,
That he does not know where he is.
Truly, he fears nothing in the world!

Jean de Brueil

If the traveler can find
A virtuous and wise companion
Let him go with him joyfully
And overcome the dangers of the way.

Buddha

There is a destiny that makes us brothers,
No one goes his way alone
All that we send into the lives of others,
Comes back into our own.

Edwin Markham

Where two or three
are gathered together
in My name,
I am there in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:20

If you suffer the same illness
as other people,
And you all aid each other;
If you have the same emotions
And complete each other;
The same hatreds
And assist each other;
And the same likes
And seek them together--
Then without any armored soldiers
You will win.

T'ai Kung

My well-being, my happiness
Depends very much on you,
And your well-being, your happiness,
Depends on me.
I am responsible for you,
And you are responsible for me.
Anything I do wrong,
You will suffer,
And anything you do wrong,
I have to suffer.
Therefore,
In order to take care of you,
I have to take care of myself.

Thich Nhat Hanh



Questions for Personal Reflection and Discussion

What do you consider important in a good friend?

What do you get from your best friend? What do you give?

Have you had the sense that you have allies from the spiritual realm?

Meditation

Get comfortable. Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Gently settle down your body and your spirit. Let yourself relax. You are safe. You've been through a lot. Think of all the experiences you have been through from childhood up until now. You have survived. You have flourished. You have experienced joy and also real pain. Sense that pain, the pain of childhood, of adolescence, of adulthood, the pain of relationships and of loneliness. Don't shy away from this pain. Honor it. It has taught you a great deal about life. If you honor it and hold it as part of the sacred process of growth it will not rule you, but serve its rightful place. Keeping this pain in your consciousness, call to mind someone close to you. (If you are in a group, call to mind someone in the group who is with you now.) See that person's face in front of you. Drop your judgment surrounding this person, your projections, your needs surrounding your thoughts of this person. Look into the eyes. See that this person is another you, who has experienced this thing called life just as you have, who has felt the joy, and also the pain. Realize that this person grieves as you do, fears as you do, loves as you do, and is loved by God as much as you. Look into the eyes. See the child in this person, and the innocence of childhood, see the youth in this person, and all the innocence of youth. But notice the pain too. Now, as you see the adult, recognize that the innocence of youth is still present, all the memories are still present, all the pain and joy are still present. Realize that you stare at another. You have so much in common. You are so much the same. Honor the goodness in that person. Hold it precious. What are the gifts you receive from the person. How has this person taught you, acted as your ally, your guardian, your jester and your wise sage. Let your heart fill with gratitude for that person. Thank the heavens for this person's presence in your life. Take a moment to pledge support to this person, in the way that is needed, from love and a desire for integrity. Smile into the face of this person before you. A nod in affirmation of your spiritual connection. Perhaps there are others as well that you would like to bring before you. Bring them to you, and see them for what they really are, and how much they are like you. Let your heart fill with gratitude and love.... When you are ready, open your eyes. Take a deep, cleansing breath. Let your heart remain at peace as you awaken to full consciousness.



Process

For an Individual: You need two candles, and pencil and paper, and a mirror nearby. If you are able, find a thick candle that has burned down the middle quite a ways, so that the flame is deep inside the candle, or place a short candle inside an urn or glass jar. Set this candle in front of you and light it. The flame that burns deep within represents your inner life and spirit, all your pain and joy from when you were a child until now. The second candle should be long enough that you are able to take the second candle and reach the flame inside the first candle to light the candle in your hand. Hold that candle in your hand. Turn off the lights, close curtains, and let there be darkness around the candle that is burning in front of you. As you sit before this candle, let it represent all that is you on the inside, the hope and desires, your love, your fears, your pain and joy, your everything. This is your life. See it burning deep inside the candle and recognize that this life burns deep inside of you. Much of that fire that is you hides deep within. Allow it to come out so that you can see it, see yourself for what you really are, without fear, without judgment, but with love and respect. You know what needs to be changed, and all your shortcomings. But right now, just allow everything to be seen about you. Take the candle in your hand and place it inside the candle that is burning in front of you. Light the flame of this candle with the flame of the one that burns deep inside. As it lights up, recognize that you are allowing that light to shine into the darkness, into the world. Bring the candle in your hand before your face. Sense the light illuminating your face. With candle in hand, look into a mirror. See yourself in the light of this flame. See the brilliance of your youth, the innocence of your childhood, the shadows and the light. See the warrior, ready to do battle, the healer longing to bring relief, the elderly person who seeks solitude and the youngster who wants to play. Look at yourself in this light. See all the many, countless facets of your life. Smile at that

face, and realize that this is the face of not only you, but every individual in the world. It is the face of those you love and those you do not love, those you respect and those you disdain, those you trust and those you fear. It is your face. It is the face of humanity. Honor that person in any way you choose. Turn from the mirror and blow out the candle in your hand. Turn on a light. With a pencil and paper, think of those who have been allies to you, those people who are there for you. Write those names down. Also think of those whom you love and respect, those who may become allies to you and you to them if you can reach out to them. Write those names down. With the sense that these people on your list are another you, with all the same experiences, hopes, wants, fears, and noble loves, say a prayer for them and their safety, for their growth. Ask that you may have the love, courage, and strength to be there for them, ask that they might be there for you.

For a Group: You need two candles, and pencil and paper. If you are able, find a thick candle that has burned down the middle quite a ways, so that the flame is deep inside the candle, or place a short candle inside an urn or glass jar. Have the group stand in a circle and set this candle in the middle of the group, and light it. The flame that burns deep within represents your inner life and spirit, all your pain and joy from when you were a child until now. The second candle should be long enough that each individual is able to take the second candle and reach the flame inside the first candle to light the candle. Place this unlit candle beside the one that is lit in the middle. Turn off the lights, close curtains, and let there be darkness around the candle that is burning in front of the circled group. As you stand before this candle, let it represent all that is you on the inside, the hope and desires, your love, your fears, your pain and joy, your everything. This is your life. See it burning deep inside the candle and recognize that this life burns deep inside of you. Much of that fire that is you hides deep within. Allow it to come out so that all can see it, see you for what you really are, without fear, without judgment, but with love and respect. You know what needs to be changed, and all your shortcomings. But right now, just allow everything to be seen about you. Each individual will take a turn and take the unlit candle, place it inside the candle that is burning and light the flame of this candle with the flame of the one that burns deep inside. As it lights up, recognize that you are allowing that light to shine into the darkness, into the world. Bring the candle in your hand before your face. Sense the light illuminating your face. With this candle before you, turn and stand face to face with each person in the group, the candle lighting up your faces. Stand face to face for several moments, in silence, and then move to the next person in the circle and do the same. With each person take time to see the brilliance of his/her youth, the innocence of childhood, the shadows and the light. See the warrior, ready to do battle, the healer longing to bring relief, the elderly person who seeks solitude and the youngster who wants to play. See all the many, countless facets of this person's life. Smile at that face, and realize that this is your face as well, and the face of every individual in the world. It is the face of humanity. Honor that person in silence. When you have stood in front of each person face to face, return to center and blow out the candle in your hand. The next person then enters, light the candle and repeats the process. When all are finished. Blow out the candles and turn on the lights. Write down your thoughts, and perhaps a word or two about what this particular group of allies means to you. In a sacred manner, each share with the group what he/she has written.



What are your closing thoughts about Allies?

End this lesson with a prayer.

