

Teachings of Wellbriety

Use the Good Mind!

By Freida J. Jacques
Onondaga Nation



Freida Jacques

The discipline of the Good Mind is a practice which the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Nations have been using ever since the Peacemaker helped them bury violence under the Tree of Peace a long time ago. Freida J. Jacques, Onondaga, shares a bit of this practice with Wellbriety! Magazine so that an individuals sobriety and recovery can take the next step into Wellbriety.

Thousands of years ago, at a time when our people were in the midst of wars and pervasive violence the Peacemaker came and brought us a message of love and peace. One of the gifts he brought to us at that time was the concept of the Good Mind (Ganigonhi:oh). As children grow up in our Nation they hear the words use a good mind, many times. I felt that a deeper explanation of what using the Good Mind means would be beneficial and this is how I explain it.

When the Europeans first came to this continent they were surprised to see that the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) did not have a police force or many laws to make the people behave themselves. I feel that the use of Ganigonhi:oh was so pervasive that it was unnecessary to have a police force and many laws.

I refer to the Good Mind as a discipline, rather than just a description of a persons state of mind. First of all Ganigonhi:oh recognizes that we are connected to the good, that we have access to a loving source of good thoughts. Each and every one of us has many, many thoughts each day. With discipline we can

become aware of each thought, see its substance, realize its intent, and then determine if you should follow and build on that thought. This realization that you have a will over your thinking is key. You have a choice to follow your thoughts based on a loving purpose (the Good Mind) or let go of thoughts and certainly not build upon thoughts steeped in anger and judgement. In most cases it takes thousands of thoughts to get to a point where you are harboring hate for someone and capable of violence. This discipline helps us redirect our thinking to more constructive, kind and loving thoughts. Since our actions follow our thoughts, what we are doing with our lives will be kinder and gentler. Since the words we speak follow our thoughts, we also have a way of affecting the world around us with words that will reflect the Good Mind.

By observing our thoughts we may begin to identify areas in our lives that may need to be reflected upon and healed. Watch out for over reactions to your experiences and also under-reactions for they may help identify places that need healing. Consider being more willing to look at these parts of yourself and



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seek out people who work as healers to help you work through old hurts and anger. Stifled anger never goes away, it lingers in the background ready to show up to add to your next angry moment. This can make for more dramatic moments than you may want. Work through old anger and life will be less painful.

While we actively become aware of our thoughts, especially those that have a kind and loving intent; we naturally allow our-

selves to become spiritually in tune with the Creators wishes. This allows us to use our talents to fulfill our purpose on Earth. This is my motivation to follow the Good Mind. When it is time to leave this Earth I would like to feel that I fulfilled the purpose that the Creator sent me here to accomplish.

As Haudenosaunee, we give thanks to all the parts of Creation that make life possible here on Earth (The Ganonhannioh). This keeps us connected with the very vital purpose of all living things. So our respect and love includes all parts of Creation. This understanding helps us use the Good Mind in our interactions with the natural world around us.

It has been said many times that change begins with the individual. If you want change to happen, begin by changing yourself. The discipline of the Good Mind is a process anyone can use to help him or herself change. Much can be accomplished with prayer, love and patience. ✚

