

*If you only have a minute:* Rooted and unwavering is all about connecting deeply with ourselves, others and our service in the world. But the events of daily life can reach out and pull us into a whirlwind – work, school, family, friends - monopolizing our attention and separating us from our true self. What happens when we consciously step back from the fracas and let the bigger picture in?

## Take your Eye Off The Ball

*By Esther Groves and Hylke Faber*

What are you obsessing about right now? What has grabbed your attention like an angry pit bull and won't let go? Maybe:

- A project at work has gone off the rails
- A serious argument with your partner is not resolved
- You or someone else said something inappropriate or hurtful

What thoughts have attached themselves to the situation you're obsessing about? They're probably something like:

- "I screwed up"
- "People will think I don't know what I'm doing"
- "These people are idiots"
- "I'm fed up with this place / relationship / job!"

Go ahead and take a minute. What thoughts are flooding your brain?

Now see if you can identify the feelings that are generated by the thoughts around the situation. Fear? Anger? Shame?

If you're awash with any of these feelings, and we've all been there, you have become disconnected from your true self and have an opportunity to hit the reset button. But how?

As a young soccer player, Toni Townes-Whitley, NASDAQ Board Director and former President of Microsoft US Regulated Industries, was taught by her dad as her soccer coach to "watch what's happening OFF the ball." What took her soccer game to the next level was looking at the field and not watching just what was happening to the ball.

The ball is the thing that happened – what was said, the action that may have caused harm. "But aren't we so much more than the last, worst thing we have said or done?" Toni practices forgiveness – of herself or someone else – to move forward. How? By consciously opening up the aperture to see the rest of what's going on, off the ball, beyond the offensive thing that was said or done.

Let's make this practical. In a difficult meeting, Toni may take a few deep breaths to reconnect with herself, also leaning back slightly in her chair, symbolically taking a wider view of the situation by activating her peripheral vision. From this more inclusive and forgiving vantage point, she may ask herself:

- What else is true about this situation?
- Am I truly listening to what others are saying with the intent to connect with them?
- What can I see that I couldn't see when I was just focused on "the ball"?

Think about your situation. What happens when you apply Toni's off-the-ball-questions to it?

- Do your thoughts soften when you breathe deeply, fully back to the present moment, and take in a wider view?
- If so, how do the new thoughts affect your feelings about the situation?

Having tried this simple exercise, perhaps you feel a little lighter, calmer and more deeply connected to yourself. Perhaps you can see a way forward that is harmonious with your true self and that acknowledges and inspires others. Sometimes looking "off the ball" can actually bring us back into the game.