

# THOUGHTS ON EMPATHY

By Maria Scaros, Executive Director, The Greens at Greenwich



Maria & Harry dancing.

“tive” course of study which minimizes its importance in the field of caring for another human being in times of crisis. We often forget that communion with another fellow human being requires empathy. We all can have an equal partnership with our mind and our heart. One need not discard one for the other. We need both. Empathy sits at the core of both our mind and our heart.

Being human, in its purest form, is being aware of the life within and outside ourselves. How are we in the world and how do we choose to live? Learning to



Britta and Kate with arms around each other.

listen to ourselves and to our emotions helps us to become self-aware and able to connect to ourselves and to others. We are social animals. We seek harmony, connection, and love. In a time when hate speech has become the norm, we need to take a hard look inward at ourselves and outward to our world. We need each other to survive and the quality in which we connect ensures the quality of our survival. This emotional connection is empathy, and it will secure our survival as a species in a complex and everchanging world.

To be human is to have the ability to offer empathy to another, to feel what another is feeling and to offer comfort and a healing presence. At this time, empathy is difficult to access or recognize. Anger and distrust are affecting our efforts to connect with one another. Our society has entered an era of darkness. I cannot help but recall a quote from my favorite author, William Shakespeare, “Now is the winter of our discontent.” (Richard the III).

Fortunately, I am not as cynical as I sound. Humanity overall is the most extraordinary of species and can easily see themselves in another’s shoes, feel another’s pain and put another before themselves. Humans have sacrificed their lives for strangers without a second thought and forgiven unspeakable atrocities. Empathy saves us. Empathy lifts us out of our self-imposed darkness. When we become still and listen, our ability to empathize rises. It moves from our intelligent mind to our intelligent body to our intelligent heart and to our intelligent soul. In a mechanized world, we often forget our simplest and greatest gifts.

It is a matter of survival. Empathy is considered a “soft skill.” Medical professionals take it in school as an “elec-



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