

# Reconnecting with the Woman Behind the Mother: A Journey Back to Self

by Ruth Landis

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Not long after the recent U.S. presidential election, Michelle Obama sent a mass e-mail inviting people to contribute to their communities. Because I collaborate with a friend – a social worker by profession – to develop innovative workshops that integrate the Enneagram with creativity, nature, the body and other self-awareness approaches, we decided to brainstorm how we could be of service and what population might best utilize what we had to offer. Ultimately, we decided to focus on mothers and caregivers, offering support to those who spend their lives supporting others. We now call the series: “Reconnecting with the Woman Behind the Mother: A Journey Back to Self.”<sup>©</sup>

We offer free, two-hour workshops every month at the public library, and the programs are attended by women who would not normally spend money on themselves for personal growth. We explore topics they may have previously avoided – for example, loneliness, self-worth, and re-learning what it means to receive. The demographic for these programs spans multiple age groups and roles and includes young or pregnant mothers; empty nesters; grandmothers and women in their seventies; and nurses or women who have no families but who function as caregivers.

Most of the women who attend have never heard of the Enneagram, and we began by teaching them about the three Centers of Intelligence, a concept few of them have ever considered. For example, during one of our workshops focused on self-worth, we introduced Enneagram styles Two, Three, and Four, and their underlying feeling of unworthiness. At each session, we first work with the mind through questionnaires and group processing, the body with body awareness techniques, and the heart with a variety of innovative exercises so there is balanced learning and holistic integration. In upcoming workshops, we will explore anger and assertiveness, while introducing Enneagram Styles Eight, Nine, and One, and confidence and courage, introducing Styles Five, Six, and Seven.

We link the Enneagram to a specific monthly theme or topic rather than focusing initially on Enneagram typing. This has aroused their curiosity about the Enneagram and increased their desire to learn more. Attendance has been remarkable – both in numbers of participants and enthusiasm – and word about the program is spreading rapidly, creating an interest in personal development that comes from tasting something new, fun, and applicable in their daily lives.

We spend as much time preparing for these pro-bono offerings as we have for our paid seminars and workshops. We have found that we have a freedom in our design process because we don't feel compelled to please an individual client or give them their money's worth. Consequently, the designs have been inspired and magical and have offered us, as facilitators, more gifts than we could ever have imagined. Each month, we delve more into our own personal development work as we teach what we need to learn.