

## **Reconnecting**

### **By Etty Collins**

When Covid 19 hit in 2020, I couldn't see my family in Peru, and it was dragging me down. It was stressful. I tried my best to stay positive, but I couldn't avoid feeling depressed. The forced isolation started to increase my anxiety. The sadness of not being around my loved ones and not doing my job the way I used to, made me question my life.

I was wondering constantly; Should I return to my country to be with my family there? Should I continue working as a teacher? I missed being in my classroom around my students and creating a learning community. My job was changing 180 degrees. Using just a computer was not the way I wanted to teach. I wanted to be a teacher to have a face-to-face connection with students. The joy that I have connecting with people was going away. I didn't know how to respond to all those changes. Is this the kind of future I want? I was overwhelmed and burnt out.

That's when I realized that I need extra help. I found the YWCA class, Healthy Communications, where I had the opportunity to learn more about myself. The main goal of this class was to distinguish the difference between what changes I can do for myself and how to handle outside situations. I began to remind the importance of taking care of myself. I realized I was living a life like a plant without water and sun.

In order to keep my energy up, I needed to find tools like exercising, sleeping well, healthy eating, and new ways of socializing. It was all about reconnecting with myself and living in the present. It took time, but it was the beginning to balance my life again.

To increase the opportunity to be well, I started to enjoy life's small details with all my senses, going outside walking, looking the trees, and seeing the sun. I even changed the way I drank my tea every day. I took the time to feel its warmth, enjoy the smell, and finally sip it. It was the source to feel alive once more.

That's when I decided to reconnect with my family. I used WhatsApp every Sunday during the pandemic. At first, mostly small talk. How's dad doing? Did you sleep well? How's your dog? What did you cook today? I called my sister every day and we still use Messenger to keep in touch. This way to communicate with them, helps me to validate my understanding of how much I love to be around people.

The Y class was a wakeup call for me. Working on myself is a continuous process that helps to be aware of my feelings to improve my life, physically and mentally, and learned to better handle uncertainty. I also understand how much I love my job as a teacher and helping adults to reach their goals. I realized the importance of being closer to my family. But the most important lesson was to reconnect with myself first.