Robert Watts – Questioning our Values

We have a lot to learn from so called 'primitive' cultures. We in the west suffer from delusions of grandeur and falsely believe ourselves to be the best that man has to offer due to our advancements in technology. Sadly we have created a society with a level of suffering and inequality that surpasses anything else in history. Look at what is happening all over Europe at the present, everyone is obsessed with economic growth but quality of life and sustainability are never included in the equation.  
The idea of sharing has played a very important part in isolated cultures. If they didn't share the resources amongst themselves they probably wouldn't have survived. I remember reading about a former American CIA agent who quit after an experience with an Amazonian tribe. He was walking a forest track with members of the tribe when one of them observed a group of sick plants. One of them turned to the former agent and told him that they would have to make a new path and abandon this one. He was perplexed so they explained to him that excessive use of the trail was damaging the equilibrium of the ecosystem, as observed in the sick plant. This incredible respect for nature had such a profound effect on him that his personal value system was shattered for good. He now dedicates his life to helping others and exposing the corruption and selfishness in the US power structures.

I try to help people by encouraging them to question their own value system, as more and more people awaken to the realization that humanity and all of nature forms part of a spectacularly beautiful symbiosis, we will gradually shift towards a healthier and saner world.  
Here in Spain at the moment we are undergoing a savage economic crisis which is extremely damaging to the physical and psychological health of an ever increasing number of people. A lot of charity organizations are now forced to tackle issues closer to home which is causing grave repercussions in third world countries. I admire and respect the work of all these wonderful people who dedicate their lives to helping others, but the fact is that this is a patch on a much bigger underlying problem: It is vitally important to stimulate people’s awareness and shatter the rigid value systems that perpetuate selfish insane societies. Only a global awakening can definitively solve hunger and suffering.

I can not offer any guaranteed technique for helping people to question their value system. It's a very spontaneous thing that varies a lot according to the kind of individual you are talking with. There is however a very important issue that needs to be established before the magic happens: Both parties need to be truly listening to each-other. This is extremely difficult to achieve because we are often overwhelmed by our own internal dialogue. How often do we find that whilst immersed in conversation, our mind is already planning a response whilst the other is talking? This is a clear indication that we are not really listening. What generally happens is that the mind picks up on keywords from the conversation of others and reacts to reinforce our own point of view based on our own value system. Only when we are immersed in genuine dialogue and are truly 'connected' is there hope for mutual growth. But this is not an impediment to what I call 'sowing seeds'. Sometimes a simple comment can suffice to induce someone to question their values at a later date. This has happened to me and friends of mine. A friend may make a comment to me that causes a defensive response but leave before I get involved in defending my posture. It appears that the unconscious mulls over for some time and then I suddenly realize that they were right. I had a friend who came up to me once and said: "Do you remember a few months ago when you told me such and such, we'll you were right, I just didn't see it at the time."  
It is also very important to know when to abandon a conversation or not to start one as we are often too heated up to participate in a true debate. We often say stupid things in heated moments and it's wiser to ignore them. I see this in myself a lot; when angry I can say the stupidest things!