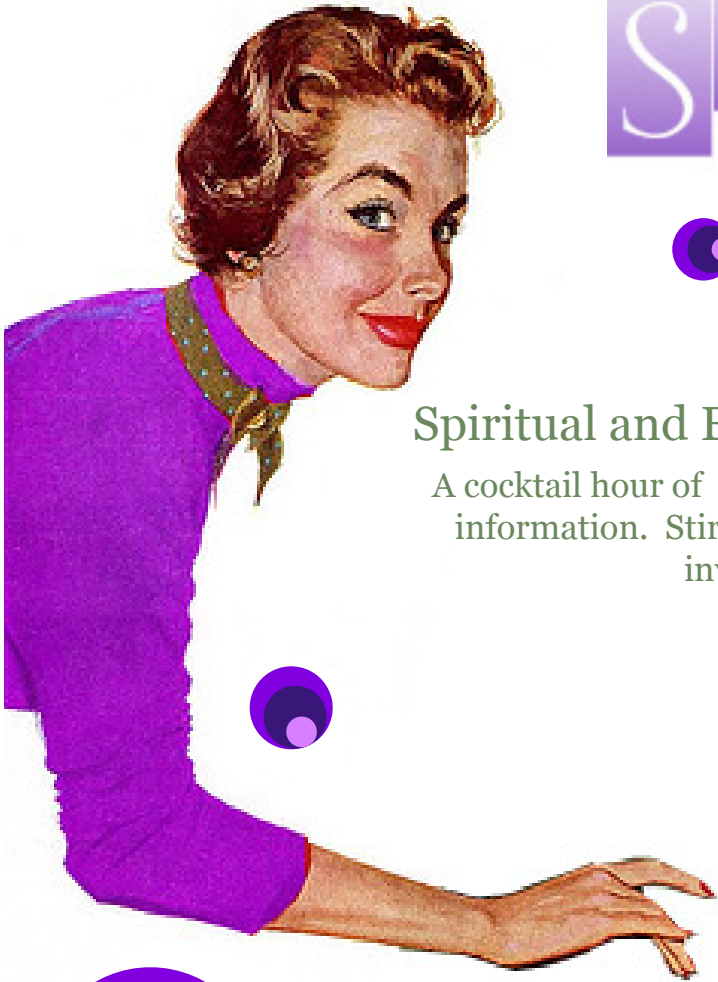


Spiritual Gossip

Spiritual and Environmental Articles and Stories

A cocktail hour of spiritual and environmental stories and information. Stirred but not shaken; refreshing and invigorating.

This month Ruth Kenrick-Smith gets stuck in a pine tree as she explores the backyard of her childhood .



embracing CHILDNESS

BY RUTHY K.

**I have a personal philosophy called
"Embracing Childness." Here is
where it starts.**



During the time before I went to school, I was cared for by my elderly Grandparents while my mother and father worked long hours in laboratories in the city. My Grandmother could not drive, so we often walked together around the suburban streets, bland in nature but vibrant with gardens. This description almost defines those childhood days for me - pleasingly predictable, stable and routine, but with my own flashes of colour and sublime joy. ▶

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My Grandfather and Grandmother would sleep after lunch each day and I clearly remember the moment when I finally rebelled against this tradition and was allowed to remain wakeful, but ostracised, in the back yard. It became my world. I would play games by myself, never having any playmates nearby, and investigate the minutiae of grass, insects and plants.

When I felt brave I would climb the brick walls surrounding the compost heaps in the corner of the back fence and, balancing on bare feet, gaze at the wasteland of the neighbouring yard, completely concreted-over and shimmering in the early afternoon heat. I often wondered why anyone would willingly cover the earth with something dead and unpleasant and grey. It made me feel delicately sorrowful inside. Then I would look into the empty back gardens of the other houses bordering my grandparent's property and imagine them to be distant, unreachable lands, shady and green with a strangeness I would never know.

From these lonely hours I learned much that has

benefited me over the years. Silence. Inquiry. Imagination. Self-reliance.

Once I climbed the enormous pine tree that dwarfed the centre of the lawn, higher than I had ever reached before. This tree was my second home. A small gap in the branches provided an entrance to my private realm. Inside was a cathedral of empty space enclosed inside a shell of waxy foliage and laddered with branches. Heaven. However, I recall this tree teaching me a most important lesson, having once climbed to the point where I could poke my head out of the top. I felt pinned by the innumerable small twigs I had forced myself through and could no longer see my feet. I couldn't move. I had lost my nerve. I called and called for my grandmother, but when she finally emerged from the house I was struck with the thought that she was too old to climb the tree and help me. What could I do?

Somehow she convinced me that there was absolutely no choice but for me to climb down by myself. She filled me with the confidence that every little downward motion was a step in

the right direction. Overwhelmed by the whole (or height) of my problem, I had panicked and frozen. Now with her cajoling and probably bribery with a biscuit, I summoned the courage to move. Finally, with her calling instructions to me about where to place my feet, I discovered that to tackle the descent I needed to take it slowly. One small step at a time and focus on the outcome. Fear is defeated.

The point is that you learn so much as a child that you discard as an adult. Life needs re-examining at some point, your compass re-setting and I believe that childhood holds the key. Think about this example. What were your impulses towards animals when you were small? Did you hate to think that any harm might come to a beloved pet or a wild creature in your yard? Isn't this a true expression of your natural capacity for compassion that persists until this day? You were born that way! If it is truly your heart's wisdom to do no harm to animals, then perhaps you should consciously consider vegetarianism as a life choice.

By examining your 'factory settings' with an adult perspective, you can shed light

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on many of your behaviours. For instance, do you remember a feeling long ago of breath-taking joy where you were lost in a simple moment? Time stood still and there was nothing but bliss. As a time-poor and harried grown-up, do you need to get leglessly pissed to experience a similar (yet somehow imperfect) exaltation? Have you ever stopped to examine why you take the boozy shortcut to feelings of relaxed, open, happiness that every human craves? You even take this shortcut with full knowledge of the nasty consequences.

So here's the most commonly posed question by children everywhere - WHY? Why do you choose this? Are there alternatives? I can think of a few outstanding choices that will also stop you feeling time-poor and harried. How about becoming happy, relaxed and open the old-fashioned way - by enjoying the moment and forgetting everything else for a while. Be a kid. Go into nature, sing your heart out, swim across a river, whatever you love, and enjoy it simply as it is. The world will still be there when you come back and you might find that things that once bothered you, matter little now.

Don't you think it is so much more authentic to honour your need for relaxation, openness, and happiness in this way?

"Embracing Childness" can be applied to almost anything in life. When we were little, our minds were not as polluted as they are today. It puzzled me why the adults would want to indulge in something as horrible and sad as the news, or boring as TV sport when there were dams to be built in flowing gutters and lizards to tame in the back yard. I lived in the same world as the adults, the same house, the same reality, yet I was largely unaffected by the media's judgment about how Mr Jones is running the country, how many goals the lacrosse team got, and how sad it is that there is a war going on in some place I didn't know existed.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that you need to cut yourself off from the world and become a hermit. Rather, be like a child and trust that the information you need to know will come to you from other sources at the right time, and in the right amount. Life is an adventure to take as it comes - like a boy scout, you are always prepared. But often you will find you have unconsciously allowed

yourself to be hijacked by someone else's opinion that the world is a hideousness, fearful place. When a skewed version of reality is shoved at you in 'helpful half-hourly updates', it generates unfounded fear and paralyses you until all you can see is misery. Life is not misery - your child-self knows that.

You can choose your information sources just like choosing a movie at the DVD library. Are you stuck in the horror section when the next shelf over is bursting with sci-fi, art-house, documentaries, and comedy? Are you even aware that you are in a shop full of these other choices? If you focus on what really matters, as a child would - the happiness of helping others, the splashiness of a puddle, the real and tangible things in the 'DVD library' around you - you will see what is in your core nature. Love. Gratitude. Compassion. Honour. Positive action. If you bring these things into your adult life and live them each day, then you will change your world.

Then, of course, there is the story of me trying to 'fly' home at age 5 when I first started school. But we'll save that for later..

We welcome new writers.
If you have something to contribute to the Spiritual Gossip section,
please submit your ideas via **Vine's Contact Page**.