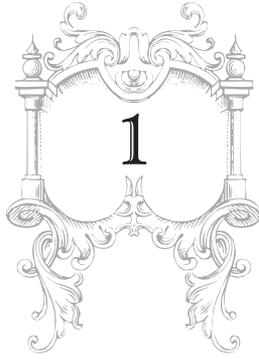


See the World Through the Eyes of a Child . . .

*Messages from Children . . .
and What They Can
Teach Grownups*

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Be Happy Now

“MOM, I DON’T THINK I’M going to college because I feel like I’m going to peak too soon and I will want to do other things.” We were in the car at the time and like the start of many of our conversations, this was completely unexpected.

“What do you mean by peak too soon?”

“Well . . . it’s just that I might want to try other things.”

“Well you’re eight and feelings change. Besides, you really don’t have to think about all that right now.

This message was timely—I too needed to hear that the next five years of my life didn’t have to be completely mapped out. Yes, it is great to make plans and set goals. It is also okay to not know exactly what will happen next and allow things to unfold. When we are constantly trying to figure it all out, we lose sight of all that is right in front of us. When we trade in what is for what could be, we miss out on what is happening right now.

It is important to realize that we are not meant to know every single detail of our lives in advance. Many of us wish we could. Then, just maybe we could keep our life in a permanent state of order, nice and neat. No more roadblocks, no more struggles,

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no more pain. But that's not how life works. There is nothing permanent or immovable about anything we ever experience. There is always movement. There are always changes. Change is the nature of life. It is happening inside, outside and all around us. Just as the cells in our body are constantly changing, on every level we are experiencing change daily. We are always growing and healing and changing and evolving.

Each day presents another opportunity for us to move forward in our lives. What appears to be a roadblock often positions us on a path we have yet to consider. It is our struggles that often allow us to know our inner strengths. It is often pain that signals our attention to the things that truly matter. How else would we grow? How else would we stretch beyond our everyday comforts? How would we come to know all that we truly are?

Instead of focusing on the distant future, what do you want to do with this day? If you have a long-term goal in mind, what can you do today that brings you just one step closer? When you focus on each day, it is less overwhelming than if you try to determine what the rest of your life will look like. No amount of worry will change the present circumstances, but our thoughts and actions can.

Watch your thoughts; they become words.

Watch your words; they become actions.

Watch your actions; they become habits.

Watch your habits; they become character.

Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

-Author Unknown

I have heard people say, "In my next life, I'll do this." What about this life? When will you start living the life you already have? Why continue to give this one away—to your children,

your parents, your spouse, your job, to everyone else but you. Life is still about making choices. When will you recognize the divine life force that is within you? When will you start living the life of your dreams? I mean really living and doing what you are meant to do. More important, when will you be who you are meant to be? Do you even know who you are? I mean, who you really, really are, not just who everyone expects you to be. When will you transform into the highest expression of yourself? This is where true happiness lies.

Easier said than done? No, I didn't say it was easy at first. It takes practice. Practice doesn't always make perfect, but it gets us closer to where we would like to be. And then it does get easier. When you begin to live your life with intention and purpose, it can be magical how it all unfolds. Trust that the right people and books will show up to help you along the way and they will. When you are open and willing, you are better able to make sense of all that has happened in your life and see where your experiences have been leading you this whole time.

If you feel that you are already giving one hundred percent to your dreams, a project, a business or a relationship and it's still not working, it's time for a fresh perspective. Look inside yourself and ask, "What am I not seeing?" "What else can be done?" "What's my next step?" Seek out and accept appropriate guidance. We often benefit from others who ask the questions we may not think to ask ourselves. Be truly open to other viewpoints. Remember that you still get to decide if it feels right for you. Consider all the options and then see what resonates with you. Also, be willing to make mistakes. We all would like to get it right on our first attempt, but mistakes are often how we learn. Trust that nothing is ever without purpose.

Ask yourself, what can I do in this moment that would allow me to experience joy? What thought brings a smile to your face or makes you laugh out loud? What did you once dream of doing

that you have yet to experience? Having the awareness is not enough. You also have to put your thoughts in action by doing one thing each day that makes you feel joyous and gets you one step closer to living the life that awaits you.

If you want to give of yourself in the way intended, you have to decide to live your life and create your own happiness. This does not mean that you stop caring for others. When you are fulfilled, there is so much more that you can give to others. If you are unsure of where to begin, let the child inside of you and the children around you lead the way. Children are experts at creating happiness and filling their days with pure enjoyment. Let's not wait another day. Begin now. Wherever you are in your life, choose happiness and begin to experience life fully.



Live With Compassion

*“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.
If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”*

-Dalai Llama

A LITTLE GIRL NAMED REBECCA* (her name has been changed for privacy) was born with only half an arm on one side. She was at the pediatrician’s office when a little boy about her age kept looking at her. Rebecca was two and a half years old at this time. Noticing her son’s apprehension, the boy’s mother remarked, “You don’t have to play with her.” Rebecca’s mother overheard and was upset by this statement. But then Rebecca walked over, put her other arm around the little boy and said, “Oh, that’s okay.” She too sensed the little boy’s apprehension, but responded with love.

This little boy’s reaction was likely because a child about his age looked different. Very young children are able to notice differences based on symmetry, but how they respond depends on their parent’s response. His mother’s response is likely due to

her own discomfort with another child's physical condition. If she had said, *it's okay, you can go play with her*, this would have been a much different scenario. Then again, Rebecca's mom would not have had the opportunity to witness her daughter's beautiful gift of compassion.

Some children have *special* needs, but for their specific purpose in life they are exceptionally-abled. Every man, woman and child have a place in this world that only they can fill. Even those deemed less fortunate can give far more than what is given to them. Once they recognize that the choice is theirs to make, there is no telling what they can do. As Barbara de Angelis has said, "No matter what age you are, or what your circumstances might be, you are special, and you still have something unique to offer. Your life, because of who you are has meaning."

We are all created from the same source. That source is love. Each of us has a choice on how we express that love. And we all have the same essential needs—to love and be loved. I am reminded of a story told by a woman I met at a retreat. She shared how she and her friends had stopped at a rest area along their travels. They noticed an unkempt man and after observing him a while, she felt compelled to go over and ask if there was anything he needed. Her friends stood nearby as she approached him. "Do you need anything" she offered. His response took her by surprise. "Only love" is what he said. Only love.