

Treasures from My Path

Inner Work Articles & blog Posts from 2008-2011

Hello and welcome! Over the years, one thing we have become known for is our commitment to the inner development of Mom. Our job can be so overwhelming at times and it is easy to forget to take care of ourselves. Without this vital care, we wither, our days become drudgery and we act in ways toward our children that we aren't proud of. We are missing that connection to God... Light...Source. Part of my passion is rekindling that Light within you and inspiring you to get back to being the parent you have always wanted to be – or for those searching for that spark, to become the parent you have longed to be. It is all in the striving.

This is a compiling of articles and blog posts I have written through the years, they are not really in any particular order. You likely won't agree with them all – some might even make you mad – but in the end, I hope they make you think and perhaps offer some reflection for your path. I am here to support you. I am happy to answer questions about what I have written. Remember that is isn't about being better than anyone – it is only about being better than you were yesterday.

As usual, I have made every effort to correct typos and grammatical errors. I hope you will forgive me if I missed a few.

Love and blessings,

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Obstacles or power?

I was sitting in church yesterday...the last Sunday in our current congregation before we make our move to Utah this week. After shuffling to get everyone there with flies up and ties tied, trying to get in the pew before Harry's talk in front of everyone - I just wanted to sit, listen and hopefully come away edified - I should say most Sundays I come away with oodles of nuggets, but we have been pretty tired this week with packing and planning and working in addition to our regular work, so I decided I would be happy for my brain to get quiet enough for one nugget. Imagine my delight when I came away with two! God is good.

I felt so called to bring home and share these nuggets; they both struck me as something that as homeschooling mothers we need to keep in mind.

1) God isn't here to give us a perfect day - but rather to help us work to be perfect. This spoke to me so much! We are all striving. What sets apart the moms that succeed from the ones that are left frustrated is remembering that each and every day isn't going to be perfect, but we have to work to make ourselves the best US we can be... even if it just means we are better than we were yesterday. It is all about striving. We can desire that perfect day, one where we are on time and no one fights and all of our lessons are perfect, but that is not God's job, the bumps in the road are to help us continue to strive - to mold us, to help us sculpt the life we want. Striving comes in the act of working our plan, in changing each diaper and bringing that 4 year old back to the circle for the third time, it comes in the struggling-to-read 9 year old and the preteen that isn't spelling up to his or her capacity. It is in us getting up and setting the pace for our day and working to be better than we were yesterday - not better than our neighbor or even as good as that mom with the perfect looking blog - just better than the mom we were yesterday.

2) When we are engaged in Holy work we never have as many obstacles before us as we have power behind us. Is homeschooling and mothering Holy work? YES! It is hard for me to think of a work more Holy than mothering or more challenging than homeschooling with Waldorf. It is so easy to feel like we have obstacles that keep us from being as good as someone else - maybe it is reading Steiner or learning the basics of Waldorf or even just as small as getting through the day with all these little people! It often seems SO hard. Standing back and thinking about this as Holy work, reminds us that with this work, God finds a way. We wouldn't be told to be a mother without being shown a way to do it well, we wouldn't be directed to homeschool without being shown the resources (in print or in person) - we wouldn't feel the prompting to stretch without the material to stretch with. We have great power behind us and sometimes we have to stop fighting long enough to allow that power to be felt.

Just a couple nuggets I wanted to share. Last week was a very imperfect week for us, we have been packing and it has our rhythm off from where I would like it to be - I know though that I would not be called to strive without the resources to do it. I know that being the best me I can often means just being better than I was yesterday.

February 04, 2011

Waldorf Pure

That terms strikes frustration into the core of many... usually because it means that you have a perfect home with only wooden toys, your children aren't rowdy and you are always right on top of it all, baking bread day in and day out, knitting constantly and being the perfect mom. Reality is often much different for the homeschooling Waldorf family. We all have an ideal that we are striving for, but for the most part it is an outer ideal... how we w

ant it to look.

A beautiful Waldorf home is a wonderful thing but a FULL pure Waldorf heart is an even better thing. Now I know this topic will be controversial because as adults we think we can hide our inner self from our children. I submit that we can't. Steiner taught me this. When there are behavioral issues with children we must first look to ourselves - not the children. What is our part? Now here is where I'm going to get ya... what are you watching after they go to bed? What music makes your heart sing? What activities do you take part in? How do you talk to yourself? Remember, this isn't a call to judgment - we are our own worst critics and our own best humblers. This topic is uncomfortable because as a culture, we do not want to have our morality dictated to us by anyone. So I say, I am not dictating to you... neither is Steiner, I am however going to challenge you. If you are struggling with parenting and with being centered, take a long hard look at you and your partner.

When my older three were little, I had the perfect Waldorf home, we had circle each morning, beautiful wooden toys (most we still have years later) I worked to connect with Source and I was dutiful in the OUTER ways. I struggled inside with an unhappy marriage. All that I was doing on the outside to bring my children peace was not making the impact for good as I was not giving them the parts of me that they needed. When I divorced this changed, behaviors changed, connections deepened and healing began. When I remarried, I had the task of helping Erik understand that what lived in his heart was what he brought to our children. He has a degree in film and loved many movies that are not appropriate for children. Becoming a step father changed him; he began to realize that even the music he listened to affected his heart and in turn theirs. He realized that what lived in his heart poured out, no matter how much he tried for it not to. We began to study together such lectures as **Gratitude, Love & Duty** and really questioned each other about purity, what it meant and how to bring that purity of love to our children. It of course began with being on the same page - something I talk about often. I am suggesting that when possible, these conversations should come about before you have children - now I know that isn't always what you are thinking about, lol, but in the absence of it, work to come to a common understanding of purity in heart.

I love the Trostli puts it in his book *Rhythms of Learning*:

"As teachers we therefore have a responsibility to strive to master ourselves, to bring ourselves into harmony and balance, so that we can promote the health and well-being of our students for the rest of their lives."

How can we do this without purity in our hearts? I have the privilege of working with many families from all walks of life. Many are ready to work on themselves and ready to jump in and get to work on being that Beacon for their families, these families soar. There are some families that really struggle, I watch them and can offer support but it often comes down to a lack of will to change their lives and turn their hearts to love. It isn't even always on the surface, many times they don't realize just how much of a journey they have ahead. It isn't one that will be completed in a month or even a year, the journey of our striving begins with one step and takes a lifetime to complete. A lifetime of making choices that will benefit the good of our entire family.

Erik and I were having an interesting conversation the other day about blessings. We all want them. We all see those around us who seem much more blessed than we are. It can be frustrating. In examining these people, I found that they were no different than I was, they just made different choices. We live in an instant world, instant pudding, instant popcorn, instant movies, instant sex, instant cash, we have forgotten that God doesn't work in an instant. Often the blessings of making proper choices do not present themselves right away, they are ponderings, small voices, opening lights, one tiny step that seems a mile long. Blessings of proper choices come in weeks, months or years of making them. It is these choices that lead to a pure heart, it is these choices that lead to a peaceful home.

NOW... I am not saying live like a nun and don't ever watch a rated R (or worse) film or don't listen to some loud music now and then... what I am suggesting is looking into your heart. What lives there? Do you crave the torture in today's horror films? Do you crave the hatred in some of today's music? Do you engage in activities that you'd be sad if your children knew about? Sometimes our many freedoms enslave us. Sure we are free to choose what we do... but we must also realize just what effect that has on us, body, mind and spirit. If all experiences work on us, even as adults, then what are we allowing to work on us when we make the choices we do? Again, not judging anyone, just giving the process up for others. I have been there... looking at my choices changed my life and the lives of those around me. We must remember that our children's actions come from our own during the first 7 years - what are they watching us do? Even when we think they aren't watching?

I love what Steiner says... he suggests we need to cultivate piety "not the kind that dwells on one's lips or in one's thoughts only, but a piety that will pervade the entire human being and that will be upright, honest, and true." How do we do this? We must model it. We must look to ourselves for the change we want to see in them and others. He also suggests that as educator - PARENT - we are part of their social setting and we

bring to them "the social environment and its ethical attitudes" as they grow. It does all come back to our own wills... we in turn bring that attitude of will to them.

Now don't get discouraged. Even though Steiner is pretty straight forward in what he thinks will harm the child, I think that as parents we have the connection with these children that teachers in a school setting don't - we are their life line, we can change and in turn they can too. We can pray, we can learn to love unconditionally, we can make better choices. These actions have immediate healing on ourselves and our families. The long term blessing will be noticed in time, stay the path. Continue to strive. Pray for healing on actions in your past that trouble you. Have faith - in yourself and in Source. Remember that you are embarking on a journey that has no end in this earthly place. You may not always see the blessings for making the right choices right away, don't let that discourage you, keep making them.

December 21, 2010

Are you an inn keeper or a shepherd?

Time seems to be slowing down, finally! All of our projects are nearly finished, baking is underway, school has been set aside and we are eagerly awaiting the arrival of Erik's brother from Boise and my nieces and nephew. My thoughts have been turning away from the hustle and bustle to toward the inner work that I so enjoy cultivating as we head into Christmas and the Holy Nights that follow.

A few months back I stumbled across a Steiner lecture and I made a few notes while reading. While I don't religiously agree with all that Steiner asserts in this lecture, I DO strongly feel that he was inspired. There are pieces of the lecture that made me stand up and cheer and really deeply contemplate the question... Am I an inn keeper or a shepherd?

Steiner said:

"From the simple "Shepherd Play," a bridge will lead us to the finest attainable comprehension if we cultivate spiritual science to the degree that we have the mentality of the shepherds rather than that of the innkeepers. The contrast between materialism and spiritualism is wonderfully described in the characters of the innkeepers and the shepherds. In fact, the great problem of our time is whether we wish to be innkeepers or shepherds. Many of today's events may be traced to the fact that people prefer to be innkeepers. The innkeeper nature is widespread in the world today; we must again work to become the shepherds. Naturally, there are man disbelievers, even among the shepherds. When one of the shepherds says, "I think I see a light yonder" (which means, "I perceive something of a spiritual nature.), there will always be another shepherd who will be slow to agree, saying it is just a fantasy."

What does that make me? As mothers we often tend to be both, many of us are working to pull away from the inn keeper and striving more and more to be a shepherd for our families. This time of the year smacks us in the face a bit and many of us struggle to push away the persona of the inn keeper - "I want to have a simple Christmas" turns easily to "oh that wooden doll house would be so nice under the tree for Suzy." It can be so hard! It made me wonder... can we, as mothers, lovers of Waldorf *stuff*, care givers, ever just be shepherds? Maybe some days, at least we can hope right?

More from Steiner:

"Of course, we must be able to distinguish between the nature of an innkeeper and a shepherd; after all, don't innkeepers surround us on all sides? Wherever we go, they surround us, yet we convince ourselves that we are shepherds. This is natural, but we must not ignore this: We must investigate, at least in a small way, the innkeeper's nature within ourselves, and not view ourselves too certainly as the shepherds. We must occasionally ask ourselves, "Are we already able to see the approaching light, which will proclaim what must come through the new spiritual science?" We should cultivate inwardly everything that can keep alive the inner feeling for celebrating Christmas in our hearts through this new spiritual direction; this feeling will help us seek the light in the midst of darkness. We must seek and truly be willing to seek, however, in the right way. While we are seeking, we must truly have the feeling that we cannot reach our goal by trying only once; we must return again and again as the shepherds did, for they promised that they could come again and would not be satisfied to come only once. This is a fact; yet, people can become shepherds if they can begin now to develop within themselves the side of their nature that is not derived from earthly experience — if they can find, instead, a connection with what they brought to earth with them in their innermost being from the heavenly realms. People today stand far too firmly within the "house" where they can get what the innkeeper has to offer — what was brought from the earthly realms, and this can be evaluated only through earthly discrimination. On the other hand, those who still have a certain relationship with everything spiritual that surges and pulses through the world — those who have kept their shepherd nature — will be able to find the paths; they are able to discover that, in reality, ordinary knowledge finds only the outer appearance. People will gradually begin to understand Christmas when they learn to distinguish the innkeeper's nature from that of the shepherd, and when they come to realize how predominant the innkeeper's nature is today."

I do think we can all work to cultivate our inner shepherd. It doesn't mean that we won't slip into the earthy, materialistic realm, but being conscious of it, accepting it and walking back to the road of the shepherd allows us to continually seek, just as the shepherds did, seeking again and again.

As you walk through the next few days, contemplate the shepherd within. Do you continue to seek? Again and again?

September 08, 2010

Home Rules

I just thought these would be nice to remind everyone... they've been needed here, lol. They are also good for anyone working on 3rd or 6th grade this year and need a bit of writing practice.

HOME RULES

Always be honest ~ Proverbs 12:22

Count your blessings ~ Psalms 34:1-3

Bear each other's burdens ~ Galatians 6:2

Forgive and forget ~ Micah 7:18

Be kind and tender hearted ~ Ephesians 4:32

Comfort one another ~ 1 Thessalonians 4:18

Keep your promises ~ Romans 4:21

Be supportive of one another ~ Acts 20:35

Be true to each other ~ Revelations 15:3

Look after each other ~ Deuteronomy 15:11

Treat each other like you treat your friends ~ Matthew 7:12

but most important...

Love one another deeply from the heart ~ 1 Peter 1:22

We have this hanging in our home, it was compiled by Carole Taylor. It can be a wonderful family affirmation. Blessings.

July 01, 2010

Are you patient?

I have been exploring this lately within myself. There are times when I think I really exemplify patience. There are other times when I think I am down right rotten at it. I discovered years ago that praying for more patience was dangerous, so I just started taking each day as it comes. I am definitely more patient with my children now than I was say... ten years ago... but, I think I am less tolerant. I was thinking about an interaction with Sam the other day... he wanted to go one way and I needed him to come with me. We were in the store and I needed something in a hurry. Now five or ten years ago I would have probably gotten frazzled and started losing it, only to feel terrible later. At the store with Sam though I found myself incredibly calm, pleasant, but

FIRM. "You can walk with mom or you can ride in the buggy. Which would you like?" On the second reminder, he got in the buggy. Still my patient self. I was examining how this came to be... I am Italian, I yell, I am choleric, I have tantrums, I am also sanguine, I get over it fast. Steiner suggested that patience grew insight. I think he's right. I think there are many ways to grow patience... we can pray/ask for it - not my favorite as I keep being put in situations where I need more patience than I seem to have. Another way is to move into it. It is a will developing activity. I like this description of patience that my oldest son found:

"Patience is the capacity to endure delay, trouble, opposition, or suffering without becoming angry, frustrated, or anxious. "

The Christ Impulse calls us to develop Christ like attributes... you can do this regardless of your faith - who cares who said it first... a Truth is a Truth. Some of these attributes are faith, hope, unconditional love, charity, virtue, knowledge, diligence (ohhh that one is important!) humility and... PATIENCE. None of them are a cake walk, but patience... that one seems to be so hard. I found that as I worked on the other ones, especially unconditional love (which I am NOT perfect at) and diligence then my patience got stronger. Steiner discusses diligence all the time. It has so much to do with the will. It isn't enough for us to do it once, we have to do it time and again, gaining control of ourselves and in turn moving into a more patient place.

I talk often about living present, being in the here and now. I also talk of planning. They don't seem like they go together. They really do though. When we take the time out to plan then we can live much more present. I recently got hooked on the show Top Chef... not for kids as there is a lot of bleeping out of words, but one thing that impressed me about the chefs who consistently won their challenges was their amazing ability to plan. The challenge might be to come up with a great dish in two hours using some insane ingredients. I watched the winning chefs, stop, take five or ten minutes to pull together their strategy and then go gang busters on their dish. They were often finished before the ones who didn't take the time to plan, they were calm, collected and had extra time to really talk to the judges about their vision. That takes planning on their feet - not something that can be done without practice and... PATIENCE. There is that pesky word again.

I know we are all enjoying the summer holidays, taking a break from planning and thinking about school... don't take too much time off, keep open to the quiet voice of the Spirit calling you back. Enjoy yourself, plan.

March 23, 2010

Have you gotten lost?

That might seem like a strange question. How are you feeling? How are things going for you and your family? Do you feel like somewhere you got off track and you haven't been

able to get moving along the straight and narrow again? Did things get chaotic and you are scrambling a bit to get it all ironed out?

How did that happen? I'm not sure either, but it happens from time to time. We can be really connected to Source and it happens or we can be struggling to connect to Source and it can happen ~ maybe we didn't watch our diet as close as we should have and our eating got off, getting our moods off and then when we get our mood off of course everyone's does, or maybe you had a major event (birth, death, divorce) and you have been struggling to recover. Whatever it is, it happens. Forgive yourself. Now what will you do to get back on track? There are a few things that help me.

1. Immediately realize this is a pattern that I want out of. It is not worth blaming anyone, it just IS... so your job is to just FIX IT. You are mom. You are the Beacon. You will set it right.
2. Excuse yourself from your children, either go to the park, find a sitter, something... get a moment or thirty to breathe and make a short term plan that will then become a longer term plan.
3. Decide that you will change your mindset NOW. There is no more thinking that life sucks or that you don't have enough money. STOP. That thought process does not serve you. It is what has kept you in this place of lack and made it hard to recover. Life is so that we can have JOY. Decide now to have joy.
4. If you and your partner are on the same page then make a plan right away to sit down and come up with a solution. For Erik and I, it usually consists of waiting until the children have gone to bed that night and then grabbing paper and pen - we write out where we want to be - we don't spend a lot of time hashing out how we got to where we are, just enough to realize the lesson. Once you see the lesson then going over and over your faults is not helpful... it's a bit like the monk in "The Da Vinci Code" who beats himself... great visual isn't it? don't go there. It is not what Source wants. I am a devotee to "A Course in Miracles" and I love this statement: "I have said that you cannot change your mind by changing your behavior, but I have also said, and many times, that you *can* change your mind. When your mood tells you that you have chosen wrongly, and this is whenever you are not joyous, then *know this need not be.*"
5. Write yourself a really good affirmation/verse to carry with you as you recover. One that I use (and often wonder WHY I stop using it! LOL) goes like this "I believe I am always divinely guided. I believe I will always take the right road. I believe that God (or Source/Goddess, etc.) will always make a way. Even when there appears to be no way." I have this written on a tiny piece of card stock that I can carry with me.
6. Make the commitment to connect with Source daily. Erik and I often will be accountable to each other. We each make our own plan for getting connected and then we check in together daily to see how we are doing. It isn't meant to keep our feet to the flame, just a gentle reminder.

7. If it is dietary related or depression related, commit to yourself that you will get going NOW - who do you need help from? Ask for it. Be specific. ASK.
8. Once you get started caring for yourself again (aka inner work!) - stick with it. Love yourself enough to do it daily. Daily take the time to connect. Make the time. Get up early, even ten minutes before your family. Source is waiting for you. Waiting to help.

A great Steiner thought...

I ran across this quote this morning... all kinds of things are finding me as I pack up for this move. This one I thought really needed to be shared.

"Everything calls upon the human being today to be a whole human being, not only to surrender to passive ideas which stream to him from the outer world, but to unfold inner activity, to experience the life of thought, the life of ideas too, with inner activity, with the will." ~ The Driving Force of Spiritual Powers in World History

How are you doing with inner work? Feeling stuck? This world often makes us think that handing over what troubles us is so hard. We make it much harder than it needs to be. You don't have to feel stuck. This journey is supposed to be fun!!

January 23, 2010

The Spirit Converts - Building Your Waldorf Testimony

I know the word "testimony" makes some people cringe - someone told me once that it sounded too churchy - too much God baggage involved. I like to think of the word as I do the word "Truth". What is a "truth"? To me it is something that I have either experienced in some way or it is something that I have faith exists. Waldorf education is a "truth" for me. I have gained, through years of study and practice a strong testimony of the method and the founder and I have also experienced that strength in that testimony brings me closer to Source through inner work and my daily strivings for my children and myself.

I have been pondering lately what brings people to Waldorf and what makes them stay. I keep coming back to the idea of having a testimony. Some will scuff and say that this next part sounds too religious, but stick with me... the Spirit converts. When people try to push Waldorf or anything and others are not willing or ready to open up, then it is dead... BUT when the Spirit is involved and we are open, amazing things can happen.

Sometimes we have to lean on someone else's testimony as we are gathering one of our own and that is okay as long as we are doing the work involved in getting our own. Gaining a testimony comes from DOING. It means we take what we have learned and we put it into practice - we work - we meditate and pray for guidance and we work some more. Part of the work is planning and continual work with the method - working

to understand the WHYs behind it all... WHY is XYZ appropriate for this age but not this one? These are things that can be learned by doing and continual study. A lot of work? yes it is... but WORTHWHILE!

So my questions for you to ponder are this:

1) Was your conversion to Waldorf a calling of the Spirit? or did a friend convince you it was cool and now you are struggling with which direction to go? If this path was not a spiritual calling then take some time to put it to prayer and meditation. Make sure this is the path for you.

2) If you have a strong spiritual conversion to Waldorf - keep at it. Pray and meditate for guidance and then once you have it - DO IT! Let the Spirit help you control your will. Work with all the tools you have available (and there are so many!) meditate on direction and then go for it.

Even if every ounce of Steiner doesn't ring with you, continue to learn and progress so you can make informed choices about what works and what doesn't in your case. Maybe you are not homeschooling (or Waldorf schooling) and can't because of different reasons so Steiner's educational lectures might seem useless... well read anyway, you never know how you can affect your child when they are home. Work to have a home of peace. Remember you are not alone.

November 15, 2009

Are you willing?

Are you willing to do what it takes? I woke up this morning pondering what makes some people rush forward and feel confident while others seem to get stuck. I thought about all the families I have worked with over the past few years and how some can talk to me for an hour on the phone and then make huge strides because they just needed that extra oomph and others that I can talk to week after week and they still seem to struggle with the same issues - ones really central to homeschooling... planning... inner work... rhythm... so it really got me thinking - what separates the two? I started by thinking of common things I hear:

- "I don't have the money." I hear this one a lot. It always gives me pause because Steiner's basics dictate that education should be free - accessible to all - all who WILL it of course. If you lack the will forces to make it happen then all the money and curriculum in the world will not make it happen. The **curriculum basics are easily found** - we have written about them time and again, they are available on our blog, through our Thinking Feeling Willing program and other places on the internet. Once you have them you can do so many things - you don't have to buy a curriculum, but if you do it **doesn't have to be expensive** (look at ours! It is so reasonable.) For my single years, when I was homeschooling three children, I used the library extensively - I couldn't buy

books, I didn't have the budget to get the expensive (or cheap!) ones recommended on Waldorf groups so I got really good at using the library and praying/meditating on what my children needed. I kept a wish list handy for times when a family member or someone would offer to buy a book for me (keep an Amazon wish list updated and make sure your family and friends know you have one.)

- "My life is too hectic. I don't have the time." I hear this one a lot too! So wouldn't NOW be a good time to get things smoother? Do you like a hectic life? Do you enjoy how it makes you feel or your children? I live one of the most hectic and busy lives of anyone I know and I could easily let my inner work time go to the birds but if I did... my life would go to the dogs! The wolves! Someplace bad. These are the moms who need the inner work the most.
- "I just can't make myself do it." WOW. When I hear this one then I often think... they are just not uncomfortable enough or they would seek change. When we are uncomfortable enough with our current situation then we seek change - change can be hard if we let it. Change that is forced naturally makes us resist. Life should not be lived in resistance. What I often find when talking to these moms is what they are resisting is peace. WHAT? Why would I do that? Well Mama... only you know that answer to that one. Peace comes from us. We are the peace makers - there can be strife all around us but we are the ones who make peace and hold it within our home. If you want it - create it. If you want the peace that can come from this curriculum and teaching your children this way... you have to create it. It doesn't come from a book, it doesn't come from an outside source... it comes from YOU. It is within you. The best way to figure out why you resist peace is to connect. This brings us back to inner work. My guess is you think you were called to Waldorf for your children - maybe in part... but you were really called here for you. Don't waste another day - CONNECT!

When I look at families that are getting it quickly and walking forward, it is because they have a connection or they are willing to make one. They see the need for change and they do just what they need to do to make it work. They are willing. Steiner confirms this in his writings - the only thing that separates us is the WILL to do it. This doesn't mean you won't have down times! This means that your down times are out weighed by your times of complete peace and bliss. It is a choice. Life can't make you happy. You make life happy.

I tell anyone I work with - "I will match my energy with your effort." What does that mean? Well if you are ready to make change then you are teachable - you are starting to pick up speed and want a running mate - you understand that part of learning is doing and not just watching - you are ready to jump in. You are **becoming a Beacon**.

Someone asked me about depression... you know depression is an odd thing. I know it can be totally debilitating. So much more is known about depression today than even five years ago. Diet, environment, inner work... there is so much more than just getting medication and being done with it. Being willing to work on depression is part of

developing will forces. Sometimes we really need help with this and when this is the case then we need supportive and STRONG loved ones. We need partners willing to step forward and help us in ways that may not be on every partner's to do list! This is where our connection to each other is so important.

November 10, 2009

More thoughts on the Will... for Mom

I have been meditating on moms a lot. I often hear "I am trying this but don't see a change" or "how long does this will thing take?" I know that when I say "it is a journey" sometimes it just irritates people so I began meditating on a good analogy. I started thinking about professional sports stars. If you woke up tomorrow and decided you wanted to be a basketball star but didn't know anything about basketball, how would you go about learning? First you would have to learn about the game - all the rules. Then you would have to learn how to play the game. You would still not be an expert - there would be endless days of practice. Practice. Without practice we can not excel. Practice doesn't mean we do a bunch and then declare we are finished - practice means working on with iron perseverance, here a little, there a little, line upon line. Daily practice.

So the next time you fight prayer and meditation... think about the daily practice that must happen in order for someone like Michael Jordan to be great - then go pray!

October 11, 2008

How do I spread myself around?

Recently a mom on our **Waldorf egroup** asked this question, she was concerned about never getting it all done and feeling pulled apart. She also had a higher needs older child (age 10) as well as a 5yo and a 2yo. This is tough sometimes but we can learn to make it a blessing if we only step aside and let some of the control that we think we have back over to Source.

Below is my response:

It really ALL comes down to Mom. The speed of the mom determines it all, so my question to you is... are you getting enough planning and inner work time in? Do you rise before your family? I know I beat this horse a lot, but mamas... get up before your kids... when you get the time you need for you then the rest is gravy. I know that is music to some of your ears and sharp knives to others, I used to not be a morning person, I floated through the day getting done what I could with what I saw my limited time was. I was always late because I always felt like I was rushing through things. When Source came to me with the very beginnings of our business (the kindy book) I told God there was no way I could get up in the morning. He had the wrong chic

because I was lucky if I was up by 7am. I was immediately directed to pray and meditate on it. I prayed and meditated about it for about a week and then handed it back over to God and told him that if this was the plan then I needed help. That very next Monday I started the 5 o'clock club.

Anyway, this isn't about me, it is about the power of intention. What do you want for you? For your homeschooling life? Your marriage? Only YOU can control it. And let me be the first to say that you can't do it all! You have to be happy with what you CAN get through and you intend it, you live life being present and enjoying it all. If you want to be baking more then focus on making one baking day per week and come hell or high water you find a way to bake on that day. That is how rhythm is born. Decided what you want it to include in your week, when you want to get up in the day, how you want your day to look. Also, don't try to take things (painting, modeling, music or handwork, etc.) to your children until you have spent some time trying to own it and making it yours! You can't teach the flowing nature of painting if you are uptight about painting, take the time to nurture it in you first... that is what you are doing in the mornings! If you plan to paint for a school lesson, get up and paint it yourself first so you aren't put on the spot in front of your child. Take the time. If you are still unsure about how to bring things to your child, then don't bring it just yet, take some time to study it through, walk before you try to run. You will be so much happier with yourself and your results if you build a Waldorf life bit by bit rather than trying to throw it all in together. Decide what is important to you and go from there... maybe it is living more naturally and lightly on the earth so you start bit by bit putting together how that would look but slowly replacing toys and food containers, feeding everyone better - so one of your early mornings each week you are putting together a food plan for the week. The other mornings you are focusing on your school plan and how each day will flow, play it out in your head and really pray about what each child needs.

Having a higher need/special need child can throw a wrench into things but there is a reason why this child is there... I speak from experience.. . your work is to just love that child into nurturing his own gifts. Focus on the gifts and not on the harder times. Until your son is reading on his own better, you may need to take focused weekly dates with your other two so they get fed as well. Thankfully they are young and you have this year to really pull together a plan for your older child. It will come together. Have you meditated on him and his needs? When I reach a wall I tend to focus on that child through my own painting and drawing. How does the Creator see this child?

September 25, 2009

Developing the Will NOW!

At first glance this might seem like a post for moms to help them develop the will in their children. It isn't. While that is a wonderful topic and one that comes with time and attention, like anything else with this path, this really starts with mom or the adults the

child spends time with. It has been said that we often become like the five people we spend the most time with - if the child spends their time with anxious and impatient people then they can not be expected to develop something that isn't modeled. By now you might be irritated at me! It is okay, I can handle it. You see this has been brewing for a while, steeping like a strong cup of tea. We are an impatient society. We (even Waldorf families) often believe we need to have it all and have it NOW. What do I mean? First, you need to know that I am doing my best to be as silly as I can about this because while it is a really serious topic, it hits home really hard and being silly and keeping it light feels better than having a finger wagged at us! How often do we fuss at our little ones for being impatient but then we tell them to hurry up? How often do we tell them to be patient but then become frustrated at someone in traffic? Email? A shop keeper doing their best? How about our partner? A neighbor? The cashier at the grocery? My list could go on. I keep thinking about that song by Queen "I want it all and I want it now!" No longer are we content to wait for anything - now don't get me wrong, that isn't always a bad thing - it is great to have milk down the street when we need it, a computer to research lessons on, movies that come out quickly after the theater release date (anyone remember how long it used to take something to get to video?) It is wonderful to want something and be able to go buy it the same day... all these conveniences are helping our lives.... right? Right? Sure I am joking with you a bit but I can't help but think if we expect our movies on demand, are we expecting our knowledge that way too? I find more and more that many moms are not content to study something about in their minds before rushing to the internet to find the answer - so disconnected from Spirit that they need the opinion of five other moms before they can decide if they are making the right choice - is that what has happened in our wonderful age of technology? What about time off and weekends? Does anyone do that anymore? I know we've had people get down right angry if they email late Friday and don't get a response until Monday - I think wow... what sort of expectations have we set up for ourselves? And really... what does this teach our children?

The best gift we can give our children is to teach them to be connected and present. Helping them to connect spiritually through prayer and meditation will help them develop the patience of mind and clarity of thought. Teaching them to be present will help them to enjoy the moments that lay before them. So how do we model it? Take time. Realize that you can't learn everything about Waldorf or anything for that matter without taking time. It is a little like riding a bike, you master the basics and then you challenge yourself to do more and just when you think you can't learn more then something pops up that makes you look at everything differently and WOW what a wonderful ride! Enjoying the journey and being present is the best part.

I know when you are new to Waldorf, you want to soak it all in and gain all the info you can, so you join every email list, bookmark every blog and pour over message boards - then after you do that you realize you are just cracking the ice - all of that reading and many moms haven't glanced at Steiner. It is a little like wanting to learn about auto mechanics and not looking at a car. You just ask a bunch of people and read things people wrote about cars but you haven't actually gone to look at a car. Seems silly

doesn't it? It is so overwhelming because gosh there are so many cars to pick from. Makes me think a bit about talking to my grandparents who said in their day you could get your car in whatever color you wanted as long as it was BLACK, lol...now there is choice for you! When I started homeschooling with Waldorf a million years ago I had only a handful of resources to pick from and I was so thankful for that. I got my hands on all the Steiner I could - read it, put it down and worried I was dumb for not getting it, prayed, meditated and pick it up to read it again. After a while I started to understand - the words sunk in, I made connections. With the help of my spiritual journey, I relaxed, I handed it all over to Creator and I decided that I would learn in good time. I look back now and think about all the mistakes I made with my oldest son... mistakes? Not really. My intention was right. I prayed for him and meditated on his needs and did what my heart called me to and it wasn't always Waldorf the way I understand it now but it was how I understood it then. He's turning out ok... I think *wink*.

Now I am not saying don't join any lists, don't look at blogs or anything like that... just remember your motivation - are you doing it to gain more information about the method while taking time away from your child? Here is where that getting up before your kids comes in. Get up, meditate and pray - ask Spirit to only show you what you need to see, then get down to it - research, read, ask questions. Also, join one or two lists, not ten - one or two, become part of that community, get to know the moms there. Find a couple of blogs you like and that make you feel good (not ones that make you feel like you aren't doing enough!) Give yourself a certain amount of time on the computer each day and spend the rest of your time reading, modeling patience, being with your children - working on you.

We are going to start a series of blog posts to help you target your will. Stay tuned, the first one is tomorrow. In the meantime, grab a cute journal for your journey and be committed to setting aside time once a week to really get moving on this task of developing your will.

September 26, 2009

Inner Work 101: Developing the Will

The **last post** (above) may have left you really wondering what you can do about your frustration over developing your own will. There really is a lot - the biggest thing to understand is the **ONLY** thing that stands between you and inner peace is **YOU**. That stings, I know, but once you learn that part then the rest of the journey isn't so daunting. Knowing that you can change your attitude and give birth to your will, whether it be a rebirth or a first birth, is an empowering feeling.

When we first started writing our 'A Journey Through Waldorf' curriculum series, we layered in information on inner work each year, but the **grade one book** probably has the best information on working from a beginner's perspective. **We also have a great inner work book called "108 Days" (the audio is free in our store.) Steiner himself is a

great place to start with inner work. He had a wonderful set of exercises that can serve as a starting point or even a tune up for any inner work routine. We will explore these through a series focusing on these exercises, and encourage you to take part and to share your experiences in the comments section of each post.

The first basic exercise:

Differentiate in meditation between the essentials and inessentials.

This sounds almost too basic to be useful, but it is the core of the Waldorf teacher or parent's development. We are constantly assessing what our children need and in order to do that effectively we need to ask ourselves, "Is this essential?" with everything we do. I would start with your day - meditate on what is on the agenda; it helps to have your schedule written down so if you haven't done so yet, I encourage you to do it now. Lay out your week, not the way you want it to go, but the way it is in reality. This is important so you can see your weak areas and where things break down for you. Once you have it down on paper, take the time to meditate on it. What's that? You can't meditate? Sure you can! See our section below for a little help.

Now that you can see the reality of your life on paper, take it to meditation...is everything on there essential? If not, what can go or be given a lower priority or even be delegated to someone else? This is an example of doing the exercise with your schedule, it is a good place to start but it is not the only way you can put it to use. One thing I find incredibly helpful is to do this exercise when I start feeling like I might go into panic mode - you know when you feel that pit in your gut and it begins to crawl up your throat until it has to escape in the form of you becoming She-Hulk before you can put it back? Well, try to recognize the pit when it begins. Excuse yourself from the situation. I like going into the bathroom (my kids probably think I potty a lot!) Once in there, I lock the door, close my eyes and say a silent prayer, "Please only show me what is essential right now." I get my answer and then I go and do JUST THAT - nothing else! Only the task I have been directed to do. Then it is off the pile and I can move on with renewed strength and no pit in my belly.

Do this exercise daily until it becomes a habit, then it will be like an old friend. That is how I find it these days - something comforting, I use it even when I am not in a panic spot to stay on top of it all. I strongly believe that if we ask, it is given... that doesn't just mean money or power or material things, it begins and ends with spiritual gifts. We need to work to develop them within our selves so that we can pass them on to our children.

Beginner's Meditation:

Sit comfortably. Find something to set your gaze upon (I like to look at something pleasant like a flower or the nature table). Relax your mind and body, trying to think only of the object. If your mind wanders then bring it back to the object. See if you can

do this for one minute, then stretch. Guided meditation works also and there are many guided meditation CDs on the market; try your local library before buying one.

October 03, 2009

Inner Work 102

Hopefully you have done **Exercise One**. How did it go? Did you try it more than once? Can you accomplish it with ease? The next exercise sounds like a cake walk but it will work to develop that will of yours because your initial response is going to be that it is stupid and can't help you at all! Remain open.

Exercise Two:

Initiative - pick one act each day, same time for two weeks.

Sounds easy, huh? What will you pick? It can be as simple as a twist of your wedding band, a potty break timed just right, or even a piece of chocolate. Keep it simple so you will be more likely to stick with it.

Couple this with **Exercise One**. Remember to check back in to tell us how it is going!

October 10, 2009

Inner Work 103

On a radio show this fall, I spoke about gaining confidence and not letting people hand you their **bag of poo**. Today I was grumpy - I couldn't sleep, allergies that never bother me were keeping me from rest, my head was pounding, and I was just plain crabby. I knew I had better get some meditation in lest my family wake up to a very grumpy mama gnome. I left the house at 5:30 a.m. to greet the morning and get my head in a good place. I found myself resisting; I was mad and didn't want to go but I forced myself and during my quiet time a thought occurred to me...what if the person trying to hand you the bag of poo is YOU? That isn't what one wants to hear. It is easy to blame our anger and frustration on a myriad of other things like bills, spouses, ex-spouses, kids, mothers, mother-in-laws. You name it. They make you mad and you are justified at being mad. Right? Well, yeah, but if you allow it to make you mad then it will control you. Anger is the best tool of the darkness.

Today's exercise is one of the best for dealing with our own bag of poo. Add it to the other two in your meditations this week.

Exercise Number Three:

Equanimity - holding back expression of emotions to help us find perspective.

Think about your own bag of poo today. Are you spreading it or can you walk forward and be drama (and poo) free? Work on this exercise for a few days, add it to your others and don't forget to tell us how you are doing.

October 17, 2009

Inner Work 104

One of my favorite modern self-help gurus is **Dr. Wayne Dyer**. Between Wayne and Steiner, I got through some very dark days on my journey. I remember during my divorce, I would put one of Wayne's CDs on as I went to bed at night and let it work on me as I slept. I made it through that tough time surprisingly grounded. One of the things that attracted me to Dr. Dyer's work in the beginning was something he says frequently, "I challenge you to bring me depression in a bottle...depression is nothing more than regular people thinking depressing thoughts." Does that make you mad? I remember a time when it made me mad. Now don't get me wrong, I do believe that depression exists but there are usually chemical, dietary or hormonal reasons that can be addressed through diet, exercise and hormone balance if one works at it. From my study of Steiner, I believe it has a lot to do with temperament - an unbalanced temperament, polarized in any direction, would contribute to a depressed state, and this polarization could be harder to address than the chemical, dietary or hormonal reasons for depression!

The Fourth Basic Exercise:

Positivity - find something positive in every situation.

This will be very hard for some of you. You may be struggling to keep your head above water, maybe you have four little ones and you can't imagine not living each day just getting by, maybe you are drawn to Waldorf because you know your children need it.

What you don't expect is that this journey is really about you. You need to walk it before you can bring it to them. Stop resisting and just work through it. You can do it. I will be your biggest cheerleader! Lean on my testimony of living a happy life until you gain your own. Crap happens, life happens...walk forward. Look at your current drama and find something positive about it.

Add this exercise to the others and keep working. If you aren't commenting on our blog about your findings, then be sure to keep a journal. This is a journey worth chronicling.

October 24, 2009

Inner Work 105

We are in the home stretch! Steiner's next exercise involves something that can be very hard so again I turn to some of the things **Dr. Dyer** says about gaining peace. One thing

that sticks out in my mind is that Wayne often speaks of looking at each situation as it comes and trying to remain free of personal bias. This is exactly Steiner's assignment...

Fifth Basic Exercise:

Freedom from bias - develop in oneself the feeling of approaching every new experience totally without prejudice - be ready to accept a totally new experience.

How many times in a day do we walk into a situation with our spouse or our children and our own bias keeps us from seeing what could be the whole picture? More than once I have fussed at one child, usually the one that I assume would be causing the trouble, only to find out that I was totally off-base. This exercise is good for working on relationships with children and adults alike. When I can practice this one, it becomes apparent to me that I can give situations no energy, either positive or negative, until I feel like I have a full grasp of it all. It allows me to practice the other exercises as well. Think about how peaceful our world would be if everyone of us could approach daily life this way; conflict resolution would be so easy!

Make it an intention tonight as you mentally prepare yourself for tomorrow that you will begin the day without bias and see how you can work through the day. How does it change things for you? Today, as you are journaling, I would love to for you to comment on one situation in which you approached it with bias only to realize you were in the wrong.

October 31, 2009

Inner Work 106

You made it! This isn't an easy road (and if it was, go back and do the exercises again). You may have to work through this series many times before you feel like you are making headway. In truth, these could be part of your regular inner work routine. I try to use them all, perhaps not together, but they each have a place in my overall spiritual tune-up each day.

The Sixth Basic Exercise:

It is simply to have persistence.

No one floats through life. No one has perfection without work. Some people work harder rather than smarter. Your task is to figure out how to work smarter so you aren't working harder - working harder just takes more of your energy.

Ways to work smarter that have worked for me:

- Referring back to the first exercise, differentiating the essentials versus the non-essentials. This is vital to being able to walk forward and feel grounded. Once this becomes a habit then you can do it no matter where you are - you won't need to run to the potty, lol.

- Learn to let go of some things. Look at your schedule and your work load - if all the things are essentials then see where your partner can help and also what tasks your older children (if you have some) can take off the pile. Often the hardest part is asking for help, but remember that no one expects you to do it all. It is between you and the Divine so work toward being comfortable asking for help and also saying no.
- Remember when it comes to school work that you will never get it all done. Learning to prioritize when they are young will help tremendously as they get older. When you do this then you can also keep a list with you of things you know you aren't covering in your main lessons and often times they creep in through other activities and an opportunity arises that you didn't see before - there's that freedom from bias exercise at work!!
- Take your time. Remember this is not a race. If you take your time and are constantly working, building and training your will then your children will see that. It will have an enormous affect on them. Even when they are older they will be watching you, how you respond, how you act in situations and this will help them to develop these things within themselves. By about age 12, they can do some of these exercises too, before then, teaching them to meditate is a gift you can give them
- Listen to or read something uplifting everyday. What is coming out of your radio? What are you reading? What are you watching on TV during your down time? There is a time for listening to Greenday and a time for listening to something inspirational. I love to listen to Dr. Dyer, Esther Hicks, **STEINER** - there are so many. Many of our followers love **our radio show** and while my children can't imagine someone actually wanting to hear me talk, some moms find it helpful. I remember my kids telling me once they missed Wayne, lol... it took me a minute to realize they were talking about Dr. Dyer and that it had been a while, of course I was in a grumpy place when they said it and it really made me take pause. Take a good look at what you are reading and watching too...are you reading gloom and doom? Knock it off! There are hundreds, even thousands of uplifting books so try those. Are you watching crime shows constantly? Psych doesn't count since it is funny, but if your main TV-watching when the kids are in bed is CSI or Law & Order then stand back a bit. About three years ago I decided after having a little addiction going with L&O that I needed break. I have never turned back. It is a GREAT show, but it was not doing my mental health any favors. There is so much on TV, too much, that even without cable I can find plenty of good programming or movies from our library to keep me going in my off hours.
- Swear off drama. If there are people in your life that constantly try to give you the bag of poo then say a prayer to meet new people or that these poo slingers will get a life of their own and leave you be. You have enough to deal with trying not to create your own bag of poo that you don't need to be worrying about this. Begin to attract into your life people who help you feel good about you. This totally depends on you.

- Talk about positive things. Misery loves company and I can get down and negative with the best of them if I let myself, so my work is to stop myself before I talk and ask myself "is this really what I want God to hear me saying?" If the answer is "no" then I really try to keep it to myself. It takes work.

The above is a lot to chew on. Take it in, go slow, find out what works for you and do those things, stay open to change when needed and work on being free from bias so that you can see opportunities to make things better for you and your family.

Go! Be a Beacon. You can do it.

10 Feb 2010

Are you creating or existing?

"The difference between great people and everyone else is that great people create their lives actively, while everyone else is created by their lives, passively waiting to see where life takes them next. The difference between the two is the difference between living fully and just existing." -- Michael E. Gerber, Author of *The E-Myth Revisited*

I came across this quote today and wanted to share it with you all! It really made me think of changes Erik and I have made in our lives over the last year and how we finally got the difference between letting things happen and being active in their creation.

Being in the business we are - for those who don't know, Erik and I work our business full time, he doesn't work outside the house - we realized last year (January of 2009) that things needed to change. In 2008 Erik was very sick and we nearly lost him to Mono. We loved what we were doing but the trap in working from home or for yourself is that you often are working 24/7 and 365 days a year. We often felt like we were letting life happen to us and then reacting. We noticed that stress or not, bills seemed to get paid - sometimes on time, sometimes not, everyone had a roof over their head and food in their belly - these things happened consistently even if we were not worrying about the bottom line - in fact we found that when we were consciously more carefree and present our sales were better, our lives felt lighter and things seemed to flow. Source had shown us that we could do this. So much transformational healing took place for us both in the realm of having faith - this was where much of our former Beacon program began. I began to hear Source reminding me that I didn't have to do it all - I was reminded that when I was active and creating then we not only survived, we thrived. I set out to begin a plan for us to be able to live more in this manner. It took us the better part of a year to fine tune - lots of trial and error. Now we feel much calmer, smoother, life rolls with us and we have control over the brakes - not that crazy driver's education teacher with the special brake pedal on their side and you are at the mercy of them!

There will always be things that occur that are beyond my control - what I have control over is my own agency - how I react and what I bring to the table. Steiner's basic exercises are so good for working on this. Withholding emotion and judgment are so helpful - but not always plausible! I can pick how I react to bad news (or perceived bad news) I can pick how I react to having a block thrown at me or nasty words from my oldest... I can pick. I can also pick how I want my day to flow - I can ask for help in every moment if I need to - I can walk out of the kitchen, ignore the dishes and play with my children - I can bless every breathe from my overweight, in need of exercise but BEAUTIFUL body - I get to pick how I feel. Just me... no one else gets to pick that! It is my choice. No one can make me feel angry or sad or depressed. I pick. I can pick to sew all day. I can pick to lie in bed and watch old movies all day. I pick.

What will you pick today? Don't be passive - create your life. If you have little ones that sometimes make you feel trapped... go do something - anything - today that makes you feel happy! Only have \$5 to your name... well then pick something cheap or free! Pack a snack, pile into the car and go for a ride, if you are lucky they might fall asleep - then pull over, hug yourself and be alone with your thoughts for a bit. Pull out some handwork or some drawing... create. Enjoy. Love yourself!!!

Recently I have had many moms ask questions about how to face issues with their children - issues they hoped that they would not have to face since "they are homeschooling and therefore safe" - HA! I wish! Our children, while protected from a lot still have hurdles to over come and learn from.

Maybe the TV is part of your home, or maybe, like us, you have a blended home with a former spouse that doesn't have the same values. Or maybe it is scouting or other homeschoolers with different values, or maybe it is something as simple as a billboard. Whatever it is, we have a tough job as the beacon to our families.

I often speak of our relationship with the Divine. I will go beyond that today and ask about your child's relationship as well. I am not talking about church or religion, I am talking about virtues. Do your children know what your family virtues are? Have you spent time to discuss them together? What do you stand for? Does your child know? Do you speak of them as a family regularly? Are they posted somewhere in your home? Are you and your partner on the same page with your children?

Think about coming together as a family and creating a mission statement - it could be something very simple like:

"We believe in being honest, respectful, responsible and reverent. We believe in loving and honoring each other and strive to have the Spirit with us at all times. We believe that in strength and honor we can do all that we have been sent here to do."

Say this together daily - pray and meditate together daily - I promise you that your schooling will go better, your relationships with each other will thrive in ways you didn't know were possible and you will live the life you dream of.

Teaching our children virtues also teaches them accountability and integrity - and helps them to know how to respond when they are confronted with different experiences.

Today I suggest your inner work fall to this idea of virtue - is your family where you want it to be? If not, how can you work together with your partner to get your family where you want it to be? You can do it! Be a beacon! Make it work for your family!

In closing... I hope you enjoyed this collection. When I realized how much I had written on this topic, I decided it needed a home much more proper than just a blog. I know that our work will touch each person differently and it is my hope that it helped you through things you may be struggling with. Waldorf education is such a special path, and even if you don't stick with it for your children's education, my bet is you will be forever changed. If you enjoyed this collection, I invite you to visit our site often. I regularly blog about homeschooling, rhythm, inner work and the foundations of Waldorf education. I am always happy to share or discuss our work. Please feel free to contact us at waldorfessentials@gmail.com.