Preparation for Nurturing

All of us, as we pass through the stages of our life, have opportunities to nurture and to receive nurturing. Humans are born helpless, dependent upon those around us to feed and care for us and to keep us well. Instinctually, humans care for our young, offering not only sustenance, but love, warmth, and learning. Ideally, we offer the life skills to move into adulthood and independence.

While we associate nurturing most immediately with parenting, whether we are parents or not, we all have the opportunity and the skills to nurture ourselves and others in a variety of ways. Depending in part on how we grew up, however, those nurturing skills may be fully expressed or limited. Early experiences of being nurtured can vary widely from person to person, but it is this first essential experience that teaches us the value of nurturing and being nurtured. Even if we were not nurtured well, we can still grow in our capacity to nurture.

The art of nurture becomes, as we grow, the art of creating an amenable environment and a contented life. Just as those things which we focus upon take on greater weight in our lives, those things which we choose to nurture thrive and become shaped to our desires. For example, we may be interested in writing, or painting, or making music. But it is not enough to express an interest. Unless we work to improve our skills, to practice and learn, our abilities will not grow to their full potential.

Similarly, we may enter into relationships with the intent of finding love, compatibility, or friendship. But relationships require effort to flourish and without effort, may slip away untended.

Not all that we tend grows and not all that is ignored withers. As any gardener will tell you, sometimes the “weeds” grow lush and rampant while the fruits and flowers we treasure require careful tending and optimum conditions to thrive. A gardener chooses what to grow, where to water, and what to encourage, and similarly chooses what to expunge to allow the chosen plants to survive. Correspondingly in other aspects of our life, we deal with our desires by encouraging them, and we sometimes must expunge those things which impinge on the choices we have made.

We may choose to tend relationships which provide satisfaction and comfort and exit relationships which don’t feel beneficial. We endeavor to live a particular lifestyle to experience the benefits of good health, while avoiding behaviors that could lead to disease and increased morbidity. We may also nurture our spiritual side by practicing compassion and turning away from negativity. Sometimes it feels as if the “weeds” of our lives have more power than our will to wellness, but our efforts at nurturing are never wasted.

The more effort we put into nurturing our wellbeing and our ideal environment, the more growth we experience and the more able we are to nurture those things outside of our personal experience. Nurturing, like every other skill we practice, becomes easier and more effective the more we chose to apply ourselves to the task. It is a natural aspect of what it means to be human, and nurturing our inherent humanity allows us to be part of healing, helping, and growth.

Consider the following quotes on nurturing.

Sometimes people appear in your life unexpectedly like a gift from the Universe. You didn't even know you needed them, or that you had called out silently to them. They appear when you needed them most, to lift you, educate you, wake you up, or shine a light on your path. They sprout the seed that was in you, and patiently watch that seed emerge from the soil. Sometimes it wears them out to water and fertilize you every single day as you grow. This is a delicate time, you as the plant, and they as the nurturer. You as the plant need them for your growth, and they as your nurturer, have to have the energy to believe in your growth. Then, one day you blossom, and awaken to the beauty around you and rejoice. The only thing you ask from them anymore, is to celebrate the flower they have brought to life, and to accept the riches you now will give to them. *Riitta Klint*

The sad thing that many of us empaths don't realize is that often our desire to heal others is a disguised cry for help for our own healing. Because many of us weren't taught how to value or nurture ourselves at a young age, we tend to unconsciously seek out our own healing in the healing of others. Mateo Sol, Awakened Empath: The Ultimate Guide to Emotional, *Psychological and Spiritual Healing*

This was where she discovered that intelligence, this wonderful gift, grows in silence, not in noise. It was here too that she learnt that a human mind, a truly human mind, is nurtured over time, with hard work and discipline.
Natalia Sanmartín Fenollera, The Awakening of Miss Prim

Questions to Ponder

1. In what ways did you experience nurturing as a child? How did your family encourage you to become more caring of others?

2. Outside of your immediate family, who, if anyone, nurtured your growth and encouraged your ambitions?

3. What passions have you chosen to nurture? How have you improved your nurturing skills through practice?

4. In what ways have you offered your personal resources to nurture a more just and equitable society?

5. Which aspects of your life would you like to apply additional nurturing towards? In which areas would you like others to offer additional nurturing?

Words of the Day

Before the Gathering, reflect on the nurturing in your life. The Words of the Day sentence is "I feel a sense of accomplishment when I nurture …"