

Natural Awakenings

Emotional Fitness: Playing in the Sandbox OF YOUR LIFE

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Have you ever watched children play in a sandbox? Have you ever sat in a sandbox with them, and observed their single-minded focus on what they're creating, and their ownership of it? (i.e.: "No, no, let me do it!") Take a moment to look back and remember the feelings of warmth, joy, comfort and happiness you felt when being a part of that experience.

There is something about watching a child's freedom of expression that touches our yearning for the ability to do the same thing as adults. Yes, as adults, we have had to learn to express ourselves within the behavioral guidelines acceptable in society. But, have we 'thrown the baby out with the bath water' by stifling our creativity? Have we set up so many boundaries that we can no longer feel safe enough to think outside our familiar world? What would it feel like to not only observe children playing in the sandbox, but to join them in that sandbox?

Could we allow our hands to feel wet and messy in our creative process? Could we stick with that uncomfortable feeling long enough to see the germ of what we are creating start to take shape?

A couple of weeks ago I was out for my power walk and turned down a quiet side street off Columbus Avenue. In that relative silence I heard the sound of a gaggle of little children, happily chattering away. Within a half second of identifying the sound I looked up and saw a small sea of colored balloons bobbing along. All the children were holding the balloons they received on their outing to the frozen yogurt store.

I got that information from the excited, happy, chattering faces that greeted me when I inquired about their adventure. As soon as I saw and heard them from a half block away there was a smile that immediately came to my face. That smile only broadened when I was among them. The sound of that joy and the beautiful, radiant colors of the balloons brightened my day.

I was so taken by their openness to be present in the moment. I asked myself to be present like that for the rest of the day, and what happened is that it turned into a better one. I said hello to more people on the street. Believe it or not, in the middle of NYC, they said hello back, and some of them with a smile. I made a better effort to acknowledge the sales people at the stores. I asked the checkout guy how his day was going. I remember he looked at me with that hesitating look of, "Did she really ask me how my day was?"

Two days later I went back to that store and that same clerk went out of his way to get something for me. I was surprised at his effort. I shouldn't have been.

We are in a world that distracts us from our basic good, kind and playful nature. We need to set our intentions, which I discussed with you in previous articles, to carry an open heart for adventure, and then keep it open to receive what good comes from it.

My hope is that this month you will give yourself permission to play in the sandbox of your life, with your inner child's open heart, and carry your own colorful balloon, with your inner child's eagerness and expectation. Happy adventure!