



December 2008 Newsletter  
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Welcome to the December 2008 issue of the monthly newsletter from **Hearts and Minds**. We offer this free newsletter as one way of supporting our mission, which is to educate parents and other caregivers about mindful practices and strong, trusting relationships with the children in their lives. This month, we include our usual content categories: *Stories of Mindful Parenting*, *Reflective Questions for Parents*, *Tips for Living Mindfully with your Children*, *Share Your Views*, and *What's New*.

In this holiday season, it can sometimes be easier to be mindful of miracles than it is to be conscious of the concept in everyday life. Yet the children in our lives are miracles, every child, every day, and each moment of every day. Our lives as parents and caregivers are miracles too, for it is through our interactions with our children that they grow, learn, love, and discover their own miracles of life.

*Where there is great love, there are always miracles. – Willa Cather*

### ♥ *Stories of Mindful Parenting*

Each week, I try to write about my experiences with my children. It helps me reflect on the moments of the days and on my words and actions. Sometimes I learn more by writing about my experiences as a Mom than by thinking about them. This month, I include one of these stories for your reflection.

#### Little Miracles

If I had to pick one thing that I really drive myself crazy about with respect to my oldest daughter, Chrissy, who will be 5 next month, it's when she flat out refuses to do what I ask or completely disregards what I have just asked her to do (or not to do). I don't know what it is, but something in me is really heightened when she does not cooperate. I am not bothered by her refusals to cooperate all the time, thankfully!, but when it comes to safety or other behaviors that I really want her to pay attention to, like screaming or yelling at her baby sister, or even at me, there are moments when I can have little to no patience. I want to say it one time (or more precisely, once again) and see her change her behavior in the next moment. Now that would be a miracle.

In reality, I know that's not how it works with Chrissy. When she hears what it is that I or her father are asking of her, she usually takes it in, even if she shows no outward sign of doing so. She has a good memory for words and will often say something days later that reflects a conversation from days before. Sometimes she will respond in the moment, other times she will not.

I think that she is not driven to immediate compliance, mostly because she does not live in fear of severe punishment or retribution. My husband and I, in our long conversations about how to approach our children, agree that we do not want to teach them to be afraid of us (although he is willing to strike a little fear now and then, I am not). So we resort to consequences, which usually means the loss of a privilege (e.g., TV time, a story, a book etc.). Sometimes this loss is very disappointing and Chrissy will behave more consciously on the other side of it. Sometimes, she just looks at us and says quite candidly "That's OK. I don't really want to watch TV anyway."

I'm telling you all this as a backdrop to the story of what happened yesterday. Yesterday, I broke a promise that I made to Chrissy and to myself before she was born. I promised that I would never physically move my child against her will unless she was in immediate physical danger. Yesterday, for some reason, I was driving myself crazy about her behavior more than once. And more than once, I picked her up and moved her. It was not because of physical safety. Each time, it was because she was doing something that I did not like and she did not respond when I asked her to stop. Not only did I move her against her will, I did it in anger.

Here's one example. Chrissy was screaming at her little sister Mina who started to cry. I took Chrissy by the hand and said "Come here. I want to talk to you." She came with me. I put my hands on her shoulders and told her that her screaming was not OK with me. I think that she was scaring Mina. It's important to me that she be gentle to others, which means in part, no screaming. She seemed to be listening and I was silently patting myself on the back for handling this so well when all of a sudden, she screamed in my ear "STOPPPPPP!" In that moment, I had nothing to say except "OK, I want you to sit in the Quiet Time chair and settle yourself down." "No I won't!" she said. "Yes, you will," I said as I picked her up and put her there. She was wildly upset, sobbing very loudly, and trying to wriggle out of my arms and get away. Perhaps she was afraid as she's not used to being physically moved against her will. I sat with her for the five minutes, as she cried and tried to get up and leave. And this was only the first time it happened.

By the end of the day, I was completely worn out. When my husband got home, I went out for a 20-minute trip to the grocery store. When I got back, I told him that I needed a break from being the parent in charge; I was going to coast for at least an hour! I'm not sure that actually happened but saying it felt great!! I was a bit pre-occupied with the frustration I was feeling around my daughter's behavior and my own – with the promise that I had made and had broken five years later.

Just when I started telling myself things about how awful I had been, I remembered the miracle of becoming a mother, not once but twice. I remembered that my two miracles are alive and well: living, breathing, learning, smiling, singing, screaming, crying, fighting, struggling, snuggling and playing. Growing up. I remembered my deeply held belief that my approach to parenting is itself a miracle. I don't know when or where I first felt drawn to gentle, respectful parenting but I am thankful that I did. I'm thankful for the moments when I feel complete joy in being a mommy. I'm grateful for the passion I have about bringing mindfulness into my relationships and into my home, day by day, minute by minute. I'm nourished by the mindfulness work I do for myself and for others.

Mindful or not, I know that I will continue to have moments when I think I've acted badly. I also know that's not about being a bad parent, that's about being human. I am not and will never be the perfect mom. But I am profoundly dedicated to living with an awareness of my words and actions and the influence that I have on my children. That, to me, is a miracle. And I am regularly comforted by the miraculous understanding that every moment is a chance for a new beginning.

### *Reflective Questions for Parents*

Each month, we include questions that help you think about the stories you've read in our newsletter and the connections to your own life.

1. How do you think about miracles in your life? What or who seems like a miracle to you?
2. What promises have you made as a parent, either to your children or to yourself about your children?
3. How do you live out your promises?
4. How do you acknowledge and celebrate your miracles?

### *Tips for living mindfully with your children*

1. Practice seeing your child as a miracle. Note how this perception affects what you say and do around them.
2. Practice seeing yourself as a miracle. Try to be conscious of how this way of seeing influences you and others around you.

### *Share your views*

We are interested in stories of parent experiences, stories of all kinds: joyful ones, difficult ones, moments where you were able to turn things around, or moments that just stayed difficult. If you are interested in sharing a story of your own or you have an inspirational quote you'd like us to consider for another issue, send it to us at [info@withheartsandminds.com](mailto:info@withheartsandminds.com)

### *What's new*

#### **Upcoming Seminar**

Early in 2009, we will launch a new online seminar titled "Extravagant Love: Our Children, Ourselves." This seminar is a 12-week course on parenting as the discipline of meeting our best selves, again and again. We will consider the concept of extravagant love as a set of actions, rather than feelings, and reflect on specific commitments and practices that can strengthen our relationships with our children and ourselves.

**Online seminars, On demand!**

We offer our online seminars *on demand* to groups of 6 – 12 participants. This service is helpful when colleagues, friends, or others within a community want to take a course together. You can choose from any of the courses that we offer and we can make it available to you, online, on demand, which means we start when you want to start. Check our website for detailed descriptions of all courses; [www.withheartsandminds.com](http://www.withheartsandminds.com). Contact us at [info@withheartsandminds.com](mailto:info@withheartsandminds.com) for details on how to schedule an online course on-demand for yourself and a group of your friends, family, or colleagues.

## Practitioner's Circle

As part of our mission to help parents and other caregivers develop mindful relationships with the children in their lives, we have created the "Practitioner's Circle," which allows us to encourage our customers toward continuing education. Our Circle is also one of the ways that we show appreciation for our clients. After you take your first course with us, either in person or online, you will automatically be enrolled in the Practitioner's Circle and earn a discount of 20% on all subsequent courses that you enroll in with us through December 2009. Earn an additional 20% discount for every friend you bring or refer to a class. Bring 4 friends with you to one of our workshops or seminars and you attend for free!

Here's how it works:

- ♥ After the first class you take with us, either online or in-person, you are automatically enrolled in the Practitioner's Circle.
- ♥ You receive a 20% discount on all subsequent classes, either online or in-person through December 31, 2009
- ♥ If you refer or bring a friend with you to another class, you earn another 20% discount for a total discount of 40%
- ♥ If you refer or bring 2 friends with you to another class, you earn another 20% discount for a total discount of 60%
- ♥ If you refer or bring 3 friends with you to another class, you earn another 20% discount for a total discount of 80%
- ♥ If you refer or bring 4 friends with you to another class, you earn another 20% discount for a total discount of 100%

## Parents' Online Discussion Forum

We now offer a free, online discussion forum to support parents and other caregivers who are drawn to the concepts and practices of mindfulness in their lives, particularly with respect to their children. You can come to read, post, or just browse. This discussion area is also a place to ask questions of each other.

We invite you to post your own stories about parenting and welcome you to comment on existing stories posted by others. We request that all content to be posted is relevant to the purpose of this forum, authentic, and respectful. The forum moderator reserves the right to remove inappropriate postings.

If you want to post, you can register for yourself for the forum (registration is free). To register,

1. Go to <http://www.withheartsandminds.com>
2. Select "Online Forums" from the blue navigation bar on the home page.
3. Under Discussion Forums heading, click on the link to register yourself. You will be prompted for a username and your email address. Select "Register" button. A password will be mailed to that email address within a minute or so.
4. Check your email for a message from "WordPress" [wordpress@parents.withheartsandminds.com](mailto:wordpress@parents.withheartsandminds.com). The Subject is "[Parents' Discussion Forum] Your username and password" Open this email to find your username, password, and a link to the forum login page. Click on this link.
5. Enter your username and password, then select the Log In button. You will now be on the Hearts and Minds Parents' Discussion Forum.
6. Once on the Parents' Discussion Forum page, which contains stories, you can read the postings that are there. If you wish to add a comment, you will need to login. Click on the Login link which will be in the lower right hand side of the screen. Comments are currently moderated, so your postings should normally be available within a day of your actual posting. Enjoy!

<http://www.withheartsandminds.com>

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