



Summer 2009 Issue
Hearts and Minds Newsletter
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This monthly newsletter is one of the ways in which we live out our mission to educate and support families and caregivers of children. We hope to inspire and encourage parents, expectant parents, teachers, and others to explore the gifts of intention with the children in their lives.

The Summer Issue of the **Hearts and Minds** newsletter extends wishes to all readers for safe and sunny season. Summer is traditionally a time that families make concerted efforts to spend more time together, either traveling near or far, or staying at home. No matter how your family spends these precious days, remember that even in the most ordinary of moments, honoring your child for whomever she is feeds her most basic human need for love and connection.

Every family is a communion of souls.
– Deepak Chopra

The Summer 2009 issue is offered in a condensed format, which is different from our regular monthly issues. Look for the next full issue of the newsletter in early September 2009.

[The Watermelon Incident](#)

I was recently on the checkout line in the grocery store about to pay when a mom and her toddler son came in behind me. I guessed that he was about 3 years old. Mom was holding one item, a small package of pre-cut watermelon. I heard her ask her son if he would like to have some watermelon now. “No, we haven’t paid for it yet.” “That’s OK,” she replied. “You can eat some now if you want.” “No we can’t ... I don’t want it” he responded. I remember thinking about how different our children’s understanding of the world can be from ours, and how refreshing it can be to hear their points of *viewing*.

I was focused on paying and leaving but in the background, I could hear this mother and son continuing the same exchange about the watermelon, her offering it, him saying no. They must have gone back and forth 3 or 4 times. I didn’t hear what the little boy finally said that precipitated the end of the conversation, but

whatever it was, it did. I heard his mother announce sharply and loudly “Fine! No watermelon for you! You’re being bratty. I didn’t raise you to be a brat.” Given the volume of her comment, I made up that she wanted all who had witnessed the *Watermelon Incident* to know that she was going to have the last word on the subject. The little boy didn’t say anything in reply. He stood at her side quietly with a sad expression on his face, looking mostly at the floor. I left the store feeling empathetic toward the son and his mother.

I wondered how often this three-year old boy’s “no” was rejected by his mother or how often he was accused of being bratty if he didn’t do what she wanted. We all have the right to say no; exercising this right and being respected for it is part of what makes us feel safe. Although we don’t have control over everything that happens to us in this world, we certainly have a say in whether or not we want to eat watermelon, or anything else for that matter.

For his mother, I wondered if she often fought this battle with the people close to her. It seemed like it was hard for her to *hear* no from her son, to take his “no” as an acceptable answer. I imagined that she probably felt frustrated with her son but not for reasons that she could do anything about. We can’t force our children to think what we want them to think any more than we can force them to eat something with relentless requests. The only thing this mom (or any of us) could really do anything about is herself, her own point of viewing and behaving.

I think this story illustrates two key lessons about parenting and relationships. First, our children think what they think. They see the world differently from the way we see it. If it is not an issue related to safety or wellbeing, it is far healthier for all – and much more enjoyable – to engage children in their perspective, whatever that happens to be. Overall, our children fare better when we work with them where they are and offer full acceptance of them as individuals, “quirks” and all. Second, when we accept our children where and for who they are, we teach them to accept themselves and others. When we respect our children, we teach them to respect themselves and others. Conversely, a child whose thoughts and feelings are routinely disrespected or dismissed will likely come to struggle with self-acceptance and self-respect (among other things), as both a child and an adult.

Case in point: I suspect that the watermelon mom herself was once a child who was in some ways routinely disregarded because it is in our nature to do what we know. We recreate or reenact experiences from our families of origin in one form or another *until we learn to do something else*. Although developing more relational habits of mind is not easy, it is far healthier for us and for everyone around us. Paying attention to what we currently say and do is the very first step on the path to relational health and wellbeing.

Think About It

1. Pay attention to yourself the next time you find yourself getting frustrated with your child. What’s going on with you? That is, what are you thinking and feeling?
2. Reflect on whether and when you see yourself in this story. What do you do and say when your child disagrees with you?
3. Think about whether and when you have been purposefully able to honor your child’s position, especially when it has been different from yours. How did you feel? How do you think your child felt?

♥ What's New

NEW online seminars!

Hearts and Minds newsletter subscribers are eligible to receive a 25% discount on registrations for these two new online courses. Our online seminars are run *asynchronously*, which means that you can participate at your pace. Email info@withheartsandminds.com for more information.

Communication through Connection, is a four-week online seminar that explores a relational model of parent-child communication and mindful strategies for speaking and listening. Topics to be covered include: Awareness, Flawlessness, Curiosity, Discernment, Empathy, and Generosity.

Cost is \$120 per individual, \$200 per couple. Starts 06/22/09 ends 07/19/09.

The Invitations is a four-week online seminar about parenthood as a path to spiritual growth. Topics to be covered include: Passionate Presence, Seeing Anew, and Compassionate Witness.

Cost is \$120 per individual, \$200 couple. Starts 07/01/09 ends 07/28/09.

Register Today! Space is limited to 12 participants per seminar.

NEW! Starter Kit for Relationship Repair

The **Full Respect Living Tool Kit**, a new educational product that describes nine essential skills for living respectfully with yourself and others, was co-edited by myself and Susan MacKenty Brady, President and CEO of The Relational Life Institute (RLI). It is being offered through RLI as part of the **Starter Kit for Relationship Repair**, which includes the tool kit and a DVD of an engaging talk by Terry Real titled "Making Love Work." Terry is a best-selling author, experienced family therapist, and the founder of RLI. His work has been featured on *NBC Nightly News*, *Today*, *Good Morning America*, and *Oprah*, as well as in *The New York Times*, and *Psychology Today*.

For more information, follow the link to RLI under **What's New** on the Hearts and Minds home page at www.withheartsandminds.com or go directly to www.relationallife.com

♥ Reminders

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!

Online seminars, On demand!

We offer online seminars to groups of 6 – 12 participants on demand. This service is helpful when colleagues, friends, or others within a community want to take a course together as a private group. You can choose from the set of courses that we offer and we can make it available to you, online, on demand. Check www.withheartsandminds.com for detailed descriptions of all courses. Contact us at info@withheartsandminds.com for details on how to schedule an online course for yourself and a group of friends, family or colleagues.

Parent Discussion Forum is now part of our blog

As we work to develop an online community of parents who are also practitioners, we are providing support and opportunities to connect through our new blog “Not Your Average Zen Mommy.” Come to browse, read, reflect, and post comments. Even better, send us topics that you want to discuss on the blog and we’ll get the conversation started; email topics of interest to maryann@withheartsandminds.com

Happy Father’s Day!

Happy Summer!!

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