

We Are all Enough

Intro

By Liz Rog

Dear Friend,

I was once a mother of two growing children and wanted to raise them well, like you do, like we all do. Wishing for guidance, I looked around my community at people who were actively parenting or had already raised children, but there was no system in place to help me to learn from their experiences. If I wanted to know something, I had to first even comprehend that there might be something to know, and then figure out how to frame the questions. This was the stumbling way that our independent, separated, nuclear family structure had handed to me.

Of course I could and did read books from the library, but I wanted to know the stories and ways of my people, of the people whose lives intertwined with mine and my children's. So I wrote a letter and sent it to dozens of local parents who were my friends, asking them to write down: 1) something they did as a parent that they would do again today, and 2) something they did as a parent that they'd do differently the next time. I had the notion that I would compile these responses into a book which could be available to share with other new parents in my town.

Well, we were all busy with family-making and work, and so when only one response came back, I sighed and set the project aside.

Fifteen years later a young friend gave birth to her first child and asked me to write down what I'd learned about parenting, and the memory of my own longing for such a tool rose up in a new way, telling me that I owed it to the next generation to give it a try. And soon enough I saw why it might have been hard for those I had asked to do such writing: one doesn't want to appear to feel 'expert' in such a personal, spiritual, and culturally influenced realm as parenting.

Yet, parenting is some of the most important work in the world, and we're trying to mend some broken systems for family-making in community, so we really ought to share what we're learning. So I wrote down what I could, which

is part one. Ten years after that, I wrote down a bunch more and called it part 2. And after giving this writing to many friends, I finally decided to compile it into a little book, which you're holding now.

I trust that you will take these ideas for what they are: my own experience, based on my own circumstantial background, children, community, and landscape. For all of these factors influence our parenting, making healthy families possible or making them difficult. I hope that my writing can be a contribution to the dream that we will work together, at all ages and stages of life, to support parents in the brave work of raising children. For the raising of children can be a community task, a community gift.

I am writing here about some of my ideals. Often I did not live up to them. They were what I aimed for. Some of them came to me as a direct result of a moment in which my parenting was shamefully immature and un-loving. My family could tell you stories of things I said or did which are embarrassing and even horrifying. Ida tells me that she'll never forget the time I intensely threatened her and Sophie, during a time when they were arguing and I was fed up with them, saying that I was considering moving to my folks' and leaving them behind. Could I have said something so cruel and careless? I want to think it's not true, but who can know? I humbly report this incident to you along with the good news that both Ida and Sophie, who are now in their twenties, seem to have overcome that day as well as many of my other stumblings. Again we fall down, again we get up. Let's keep learning out loud, for in the end we rise or fall together, and much depends on whether we're doing well by the children.

Do you hear what I'm saying? It has nothing to do with how often we live up to our ideals as parents, nor with how often our children do beautiful or terrible things. It's only this, and just this simple: every day we get another chance to practice seeing the best in another, in this one other who has a way better chance at evoking our love than anyone else ever could.

Our reward for getting up and trying, again and again, is unspeakably beautiful:

- to watch a person grow up knowing that they are enough, that they are whole, and that we all are enough, we all are whole.