

Find Your Inner Child

While we are all aware of the adult responsibility to teach children about the world and life in general we sometimes forget the natural wisdom that children possess. Standards, morals, beliefs and behaviours are all taught to children as they grow up and they mainly learn by what they see and experience rather than what they are simply told. Today the responsibility of this seems to be a particularly heavy burden. We have never known as much about children or child psychology and so we have all become experts in behavioural analysis, hot housing, stimulating and educating children. As adults we stomp around with an attitude of we know best. While I agree that someone has to be in charge for an orderly society, adopting some childlike attitudes could help us all in the current climate.

We tend to use the word 'childish' as a derogatory term while being childlike is quite a desirable personality trait. We are led to believe that we all have an inner child and are encouraged to nurture it. It is apparently good for us as adults to remember to be playful and inquisitive. Yet the Ireland of today calls more for childishness rather than childlikeness. Who can blame anyone for throwing the mother of all tantrums as decision after decision seems to be another blunt instrument to torture the average citizen. Income reduces as expenditure increases. It is a most infuriating equation; less money coming in and more money going out equals a bloody large gaping hole of unpleasant debt.

So how can being childlike help us?

Learned a lot!

Having spent some time recently with a few under sixes, I've learned a lot. First of all they have a never ending capacity for play, great imaginations and everything and anything can be turned into a game. Despite our belief that they need sophisticated toys, I discovered that a roomful of expensive gadgetry couldn't have produced the laughter that breaking invisible eggs on their heads caused. Running, cycling and hunting for fairies all created hours of endless mirth. Make believe worlds were accepted instantly as fact and the spirit of the adventure wholly embraced without the raising of even one cynical eyebrow. We went to Spain, California, Alekadamia (wherever that is!) and the Swamp of Doom without packing so much as a toothbrush. We were instantly transported to California and Alekadamia when we stood on the magic rock at the bottom of the garden but we travelled to Spain on an old rug from the shed which, of course, had no engine, wheels or wings but great magical powers. We accidentally walked into the Swamp of Doom on a fairy hunt and nearly didn't live to tell the story. Thankfully we were saved by the invisible cloak that someone had in their invisible bag. We threw it over us immediately and so the monsters in the swamp couldn't see us as we made our escape! We don't need expensive toys to have a good time.

A beautiful gift

It was ridiculous, but no one was so rude to suggest it. It was all about 'now'. No one was worried about their dinner or where it was coming from. When thirst or hunger hit, the game was instantly abandoned for a drink, a snack or an ablution and then immediately resumed. In fact I was told more than once, "Put yourself on pause I need to pee". These are children who are totally comfortable with Sky Plus and believe life can be paused or rewound on a whim. During one pee break I actually considered the idea of pausing and rewinding.

Wouldn't that be something! While we can't physically rewind we can indeed pause and it's no bad thing every now and again. We should all do more of that.

Children have a beautiful gift of living right in the 'moment'.

Unlike adults, a happy child is always 'present'. Rarely will you find a child unwilling to play now because they are worried about what is going to happen tomorrow or next week. We teach them that and how masterful we are with the 'worry' lesson. We also teach them about guilt because they don't have it naturally. On doing something wrong the episode is forgotten

pretty quickly and they move on. They don't tend to wallow around for days feeling bad about it. Adults on the other hand have a nasty habit of going over and over and over it again; verbally, mentally or both often depriving themselves of things on the back of it. Even the odd childish tantrum is worth observing.

While it's not fitting for any of us to lose control, scream with abandon and stomp our feet, it has to be said that it is a highly effective way of getting what you want. Having had lunch out on Sunday, my three year old niece decided she wanted to go home with my mother for the afternoon. When her mother said "No" a noisy standoff ensued. The screaming and crying were all too much and eventually she was loaded into the back of my mother's car. When my mother got into the drivers' seat she was told, "Now drive quick Nanny, let's get out of here!" Another good lesson; adults can change their minds so drive quick and get out of there once the decision has gone your way.

Natural trust

While playing with the kids I was also struck by their natural trust.

They would have gone anywhere with me because they felt safe and secure. There are two things here, first of all betraying that trust is the most evil thing in this world. To wilfully damage such innocence, physically, sexually or mentally is unnatural and wrong in the extreme and it must never be tolerated, even in academic discussion. Secondly as adults we have lost that feeling of trust

and no wonder we feel so abandoned. The erosion of trust is what makes us hard, suspicious and complicated. We have been let down by so many, the church, authority, the government and even people. No wonder life is difficult and petrifying for our inner child as we choose fear over faith more often than not. It's time to get back to faith; a simple childlike faith that everything is going to be alright, even if we are at present walking through the Swamp of Doom.