

Learning in Childhood

"Now you tell your father not to teach you any more. It's best to begin reading with a fresh mind. You tell him I'll take over from here and try to undo the damage--" ~ Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Repeatedly in these teachings, we encourage you to start asking questions that might arise in you, but for the most part it is extremely intimidating to people to do so. This is a huge block to evolving, for most people. The best learning is when there is a genuine question that arises in you that leads to an answer. It is this answer to a question that makes the impact and provides the learning - not the absorption of facts unrelated to the question. Consider something simple. You watch the birds at the feeder and one arrives that you have never seen before. What naturally arises in you, is the question, "What bird is that?" This leads to a searching on Google to identify the bird. There is excitement and joy in the learning and the experience. You are then delighted in your new found knowledge and you remember and internalize that bird into your knowing. You don't say, "Oh, I am so dumb - I didn't know that." Do you live like this with everything, including the teachings?

Consider what learning was like for you as a child:

- What was the teaching method in your family and in your schooling?
- Were you spoon-fed information and had to regurgitate it to pass a test?
- Were you encouraged to think for yourself, ask questions and be curious about everything in life?
- Were you allowed to pursue your genuine interests or did you get slotted into careers that others thought were sensible, made money and stability?
- If you asked questions what happened? Were you treated as if you were stupid for not knowing? Were you rewarded?
- How much shame/self-doubt and distorted beliefs do you have around learning?
- What have you had to learn that you hated learning?
- How did you have to make your parents proud?
- Is your desire to learn now motivated by suffering, depression, anxiety, boredom, lack of meaning? Or is it motivated by curiosity, interest, excitement, bubbling questions about your evolving self and the universe. Both are needed for genuine internalized, transformative learning to happen.

The work for you, is to start noticing all that blocks genuine, curious, excited questions and to examine how these blocks got put in place, so that the natural curiosity can start bubbling through the breaks you make in the blockages.

Genuine questions come from removing the blocks, not from forcing a question because it is expected. Let's start talking about some of the ways your natural joy and excitement of life and learning was shut down in childhood. In preparation read the story of "The Elephant's Child," by Rudyard Kipling.

"Instead of teaching kids to memorize the answers to predetermined questions, we must inspire them to come up with their own questions." ~ Abhijit Naskar, *Boldly Comes Justice: Sentient Not Silent*