



I AND YOU ARE WE

We are more alike than we are different. What initiated emotion in us may be different, but we often experience emotions similarly. Our paths are diverse but the way we walk is alike. When we view each other and ourselves from a place of curiosity rather than judgement, we leave space for connection and mutually beneficial interactions. What would it feel like to move through your life without the fear of being judged?

We were almost home from our regular afternoon walk when my 2-year-old stumbled over a rock and fell. She caught herself on her hands, knees didn't even hit the ground. I went to her, picked her up and turned her toward me. Brigit took one of those gasping breaths that tell us a big wail is coming. Then it didn't... instead, my daughter took on the look of someone just before they have a seizure. Body rigid in my arms. Head arched back. Not breathing. Glossy eyed stare. Flat affect. Non-responsive. 20 seconds, maybe. It felt like an eternity.

Resilience is often defined as "the capacity to overcome challenges." We all face obstacles of varying degrees regularly. The way we respond to what life presents is directly related to our own personal engagement with Resilience. Often our responses are automatic. We do what we've learned helps us handle the situation and return to our regular way of being. Other times, the challenge feels so monumental it requires all our focus and energy to respond.

My child being unresponsive in my arms was overwhelming and had my full attention. I breathed into her and thumped her chest once. Her eyes fluttered and she let out a small cry as her body went limp in my arms. She then began crying in earnest as I held her and made our way back to the house. Pallid Breath Holding is the name for what occurred. This is a physical manifestation of high tension and happens most often between the ages of 2 and 6 years. Brigit's tension level was so high that her body reacted and shut down. My work as a therapist afforded many opportunities to witness this exact phenomenon. A physical manifestation of emotional tension. Breath holding was a message to me that my daughter was struggling with emotional overwhelm.

Our ability to move through this incident smoothly was fostered by our active engagement with Resilience. Brigit and I talked about this event whenever she brought it up for several days after it occurred. I cried multiple times, Accepting the significant feelings of fear, anxiety and helplessness to be acknowledged and released. We together continue to identify what Boundaries we need to adjust to better support her. I believe in our innate ability to know what is best for us. She has not had another breath holding incident since and I attribute this to our increased engagement with rating our tension levels and conscious Connection while doing activities that reduce tension. Play!

My understanding and respect for our own individual power and knowledge of ourselves is what gives potency to what I teach. For me. For my clients. For my loved ones. How I teach fosters engagement with our own intrinsic power. Our Resilience is entirely personal but with predictable Aspects which can be fostered. The ABC's Of Resilience: Acceptance, Boundaries & Connection.

ACCEPTANCE

Without first Accepting what IS, we cannot move through it. We remain stuck and often numb to avoid feeling the discomfort. Awareness with Acceptance, AKA Mindfulness, is the first important aspect of Resilience. When we allow ourselves to Accept rather than run from events / emotions / people, we support ourselves to thrive rather than just survive. Brigit's episode was a message about her current needs. Being mindfully aware of what occurred with curiosity rather than fear and judgement gave us the space to Accept this event with minimal disruption to daily life.

When we learn to increase our awareness of ourselves and the world around us in a way that fosters Acceptance, we are much more likely to move through life with less emotional stress. There are various ways to increase our mindful engagement in life. Many people have found meditation supportive to increase awareness of themselves and what is best for them. I invite you to investigate your own inclinations. Is there something you do that allows you to feel comfortable just being with yourself, be fully engrossed in the moment and investigate your own thoughts? For some of us this may look more like creating, moving our bodies or engaging with nature than the proverbial monk on a mountaintop.

One of the primary keys to mindful Acceptance is how we interact with our thoughts. Allowing ourselves to notice them curiously, without judgement provides space to explore our world in a productive way. Intentionally engaging with thoughts that foster appreciation and gratitude for the blessings we all have in this life are often soothing and increase our ability to engage Resiliently with the challenges we're currently facing. Sometimes internal exploration results in the realization that some facet of our life may not be productive for us and change is needed. This leads us to our second Aspect of Resilience: Boundaries.

BOUNDARIES

For some of us, "Boundary" can be a dirty word. Brene' Brown defines Boundaries as "what is true and right" for each of us. It is not a wall or a barrier separating us from people. Instead, Boundaries are an opportunity for us to create space in our lives for what and who are truly important to us. Without being intentional with Boundaries in our lives we often find ourselves depleted and reactive. The very first step is to understand what our Boundaries are. We all have them. What are some of yours?

We people have variations of the same needs. None of them are wrong (so long as they're respectful to ourselves and those around us), they're just different. When we identify for ourselves what our Boundaries are, more than half of the work is done. Communicating with others takes practice and recognition of our worthiness to take up space in this world and our families. We are all an integral part of the Universe and even more so to the people we engage with daily. How would it be for you to truly know how to best support and love the people in your life? And for that love and support to be reciprocated in a way that is best for all of you?

After Brigit's incident, we set about better understanding what Boundaries were needed to prevent her tension level from rising so high. Just before this incident was the 1st anniversary of

the most traumatic event in my life. Healing from trauma is not the most gracious of processes and Brigit absolutely felt my tension as I moved through intense emotions and released triggers. Life was just starting to settle around her. I understood that many of the factors contributing to her tension were no longer relevant and had created the space through work on my own challenges to focus on helping Brigit with her big emotions. We set Boundaries around different times of day and increased our Connection time.

Living our lives in a way that is most supportive, loving and productive for us creates space to grow, learn and GIVE. When we're simply surviving or even barely making it through each day, there is very little to give ourselves or the people around us. However, when we stand firmly in our Boundaries and they are respected, we create more energy to give. If each of us are living from this place of energetic abundance, think about how much more positive an impact we would have on ourselves, our family and community? Which brings me to the final Aspect of Resilience:

CONNECTION

There's no getting around it. We are social beings and we require Connection with other living beings to engage Resiliently with our lives. The various ways people meet their needs for Connection and intimacy are wonderful and diverse. From the parent who has a house full of children to the individual who lives alone. People who have wide social circles to those who prefer to commune with animals and nature. No matter how we Connect socially, it is imperative to do so. Physical touch is also an important aspect of Connecting with others. Again, this does not have to be human, but our human forms do need physical Connection. We see evidence of this in the way our bodies respond to petting animals, snuggling with children and nurturing touch.

Connection is vulnerable and requires a sense of safety to engage with. No matter the relationship in our lives, Connection is key to productive movement through life's challenges. After Brigit's breathing incident, I made a point the next few days to Connect with her in all our favorite ways. We talked about what happened, how we felt and what we think we could do better. As a result, we continue working collaboratively to identify tension and actively engage in activities that reduce tension throughout the day.

Resilience is supported through mindful engagement in our lives which requires that we know and communicate what is true and right for us in a connected environment. Increasing our Acceptance of whatever presents creates a freedom and space in our lives like no other. In that space we are better able to both identify and communicate the Boundaries that are true and right for us. Through healthy Boundaries we have both space and power to Connect with those in our lives in a meaningful and productive way. Energy is both preserved and generated and we are better able to create the lives we dream about. You are already Resilient. BUT, you can increase your engagement with resilience and therefore become more peacefully productive in your life.

Interested in learning more? Visit resiliencewithkelley.com to learn about current offerings.