

Healing Early Wounds

Birth into Being

We search this world for the great untying
Of what was wed to us at birth
And gets undone at dying.

-Rumi

It is common knowledge that we are shaped by our childhood experiences. Our first relationships teach us about life - and about love. It is during our formative years, when we are coming into being, that we lay down the foundations of our later life and relationships. Many of us are wounded during this time; it is important to know however, that we can heal our earliest wounds and that doing so can free us to be ourselves, to live authentically and to live our passion.

There is part of us made of starlight; and it is that spark in us that becomes dim when we are wounded. We were once close to the divine. There is a story told that on the night before birth the little unborn soul is carried all over heaven and earth by an angel of God. It learns all there is to know. The light of knowing burns brightly in its face. Just before it is put back into its mother's womb, the light is extinguished, thus the tiny depression at the base of the infant's nose and peak of its lips. From birth on, we search for this feeling of knowing God, of completion and divine love. The Sufi poet Rumi makes reference to our endless search to release the karmic imprints of our souls. As babies and small children we are close to spirit and our essential selves. On incarnating, we take on our soul contract that contains the lessons we have agreed to learn to further our spiritual growth. We also take on our archetypal and ancestral legacy. We are born into our chosen family's history, and the myths of that time. Jung wrote that the story of those who have gone before continues to unfold in us. A newborn is not a 'blank slate', as was once thought. Trans-generational patterns are passed on in prenatal life, and pre-existing trends begin to be activated. Each child is born with the contours of its life already present in potential, which isn't to say that our life is mapped out for us, it is more that we are predisposed to experience life a particular way.

When I wrote my first book *Songs from the Womb*, it was still relatively new in psychological circles to talk about the formative impact of birth

and life in the womb. It was commonly (and conveniently) thought that psychological life began at or after birth. The main reason given was that the prenatal baby lacked the mental capacity to record his or her experience, much less memorize them. However the work of later pioneers such as Grof, Lake, Chamberlain and Vernay to name a few, proved beyond a doubt that life in the womb was a formative experience whose memories, furthermore, could be recovered. The unborn baby is not merely a developing biological organism but a sophisticated evolving human being of immense sensitivity and capability.¹ And what happens at birth is very important with lasting imprints. A difficult birth may stay as a traumatic memory with various consequences well into later life.

I believe that the healing of emotional wounds is largely a spiritual process. My work with childbirth was a spiritual opening for me in that it revealed and confirmed the ever presence of the divine in our lives. And that early wounding is profound and far-reaching. Preparing couples for childbirth and bearing witness to the tearing pain of many who experienced birth as traumatic for various reasons, led me to further training and research. *Songs From The Womb* was written from my experience as a birth teacher, therapist and mother and backed by research in pre-and perinatal psychology that places prenatal life and birth as formative experiences creating patterns we carry with us into later life. 'Birth', I wrote, 'is an experience which is deeply engraved in our souls, leaving traces that permeate our lives'. But it was my own journey towards spirit that taught me about healing. And taught me that, like the Wounded Healer, our wounds are in fact a conduit to healing and to soul growth-if we engage with them.

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How do we heal such early wounds? The first imperative is acceptance and awareness-Awareness that we are wounded, trusting our instincts and the 'hidden' wisdom therein. It is the wounded child in us all that guides us for healing-always. And this child will awaken particularly in love relationships. Equal first comes love- love gives us the opportunity to heal a loss of connection with our souls. Unconditional love of one self is vital to healing. Sometimes, often, birth can be our first love wound. A sense of abandonment can, and commonly does, begin in the womb (we may have been unwanted) or at/after birth. We may have experienced loss in early life that has left its mark as a terror of abandonment or a fear of

¹ Mauger, B., (1998) *Songs From the Womb-Healing the Wounded Mother* p.50

attachment. A phobia of commitment may come from feeling constrained or smothered in childhood. Fear of stepping into the world or an inability to feel love may be the outcome of a traumatic loss in early life or of a rejecting or demanding parent. Attachment patterns are laid down in early life and form a template for our future relationships. Intimacy does not come easily to the wounded child. And like the Ugly Duckling, the 'un-mothered' child may wander from relationship to relationship looking for acceptance and love. She finds it finally, when she comes home to herself. A boy may struggle to emerge from the womb of his mother who claimed him when she was disappointed in his father. And it may take him a lifetime and several lost loves, to finally heal his heart wound and stand firm as a man. Wounded children may take a long time to shake off the mantle of shame they grew up in and finally learn to accept and love themselves for who they are. In our culture, we are not taught to love ourselves but to 'atone' for a sin some deem we are born with. It is small wonder we find it hard to heal. Our sense of unworthiness bats away love and the chance of redemption.

Our complexes may go beyond the biographical; the roots of the soul go back a long way. Does it matter where our wounding originates? What matters is what we do with them. And healing I believe is always possible; it is courageous journey to trek our souls. Soul wounds inflicted at a very early stage in one's life are always the hardest to heal because they are so deeply embedded in the unconscious, it can be hard to find them. Psyche determines when it will reveal its hidden messages in our individual stories.

Healing From Within

After the publication of my last book '*Love in a time of Broken Heart*' in 2008, I devised a method of working which I call *Healing From Within* and I began running workshops on this theme, using a synthesis of Jungian, depth psychology and spirituality to create inner healing. The work involves active and experiential engagement with the unconscious imagery spontaneously produced during meditations and guided visualizations. It involves self-examination and engagement with our inner archetypes, forces that govern our lives. And most of all, surrender to the numinous, the divine. It is this transcendent perspective that embodies transformation and the potential for healing. Dream enactment, psychodrama, artwork, and the use of myth, music and poetry in a sacred and safe space. Constellating the healing waters of the Divine Feminine, it

is always gentle and respectful. The journey is deep and profoundly healing. No one emerges from the process unchanged.

Fundamental to healing from within is forgiveness and acceptance. I mean self-forgiveness and compassion. It may come as a surprise to some to know that it is much easier to forgive others than to forgive ourselves. Endurance and the willingness to suffer are important too. Without 'conscious' suffering, there is no healing or in the words of James Hollis 'there is no turning up for that appointment with life'². Acceptance of what is, trust that there is a greater plan at work in our lives. And surrender is the most important ingredient of all. Surrender to the power of the 'numinous' to heal us. When we surrender, we open ourselves to divine grace.

Living our Passion

Passion is the flow of life that opens our hearts and propels us beyond any sense of limitation to create a life we love living. It is not dependent on anything outside of us but rather generated by our choice to align with that flow. Most of us want to live this way, but we are hampered by our sense of wounding not least of which is our feeling of being separate from our inner divinity. The story of our ancestors is in us and anything un-lived or unconscious will seek expression through us-that is our human condition. Our childhood experiences and in particular our parents (who activate our inner masculine and feminine) are formative so that we will walk through life with their imprint. Our search of love and spiritual fulfillment take us on a long and sometimes arduous road. It's a trek that will take us off the beaten track and into ourselves. It is worth it, engaging with our inner selves develops a soul stamina without which we cannot change direction, heal or take opportunities.

I am the captain of my soul. And I alone have the power to both heal myself and live my passion. Healing from within means travelling into the profound terrain of our souls. A challenging and ultimately rewarding journey, it is for all of us who want to live a passionate and authentic life. Join me on June 6-8th 2014 at Dunderry Park, www.dunderrypark.org for my next residential workshop & retreat. Bookings & info:

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² Hollis, J.,(2013) Hauntings: Dispelling the Ghosts Who Run our Lives. P.65