

One Moment at a Time: The Choices We Make

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She looked to be only three or four and her disheveled 'I've-been-traveling-all-day hair' was held by a pink ribbon. A fuzzy jacket and leggings matched what held her ponytail, while her long black eye lashes rested on flawless cheeks as she slept peacefully.

Just watching the scene in front of me was like balm for my restless and weary soul. A good four city tour was nearly over but an extremely delayed flight out of Chicago-O'Hare and a completely broken iPhone had left me cut off from family as well as my ritualized distractions. I was mesmerized by the scene in front of me, the fatigue and frustration was quickly forgotten. Desperate to capture the moment and unable to take a photo, I began writing on a napkin. I felt like a voyeur as I watched such a private and intimate moment.

The beautiful child was held by a man who appeared to be her father. A deep love and protective tenderness was palpable from a mere yard away. While her right cheek rested against his chest, his hands gently cradled her - one of his hands held her left cheek with the other around her sleeping body. He, too, was asleep with his face resting on her as if he had fallen asleep kissing the top of her head.

My discomfort dissolved as their energy washed over me. Remembering the experience of unconditional love and safety brought a smile and I felt the muscles around my eyes relax. Ahhh...I exhaled quietly aware I had been holding my breath in awe. Love. Peacefulness. Witnessing a person simply love a child with an innocence and respect, after spending days teaching about trauma, reset my focus. Their moment was contagious.



If I had been plugged into technology, I would have missed this beautiful scene and instead would have been reading all the various news sites weighing diverse opinions...and facts. We rarely watch the television version of entertainment news in our home, because of the yelling, interrupting and hyperbolic opinions ...all making a buck off of exploiting and fueling the differences between people. The creation of drama and intensification of themis plays on nearly every station: red versus blue, men versus women, gay versus non-gay, Christian versus non-Christian and American versus non-American. Hate, animosity, righteous indignation and impotent rage fill the airwaves. Why do so few people agree to disagree anymore? What happened to the desire find a common thread? That thought reminded me of a comment made to me a while back when I lamented my reflection. "You sound just like Rodney King!" I was told, the disgust in tone made it crystal clear it was not to be taken as a compliment. Focusing on the news and state of things made my chest tighten again. I returned to the duo beside me and breathed in the peace they exuded. "...and the greatest of these is love." Love and fear hold very different intentions and energy and when we as a community or culture focus more on one than the other, it is magnified collectively.

A thundering voice over the speakers woke me out of my philosophical bliss. Someone went over to awaken the sleeping duo. It was time for them to board their flight. Saddened that my inspiration was leaving, I smiled at the gentleman, a bit embarrassed that I had been staring. He returned my smile and then spoke gently to the small child in a language I didn't recognize. The language of genuine love is universal.

As they walked away, I realized a powerful moment had just transpired. I had gone from discombobulated and stressed, to seeing the love around me. We always get a choice of what we see. What will it be today? Love or fear? There will always be scary and painful things happen in the world. Sometimes life hurts. Yet much more often than not, I meet wonderful, kind and loving people. In fact, "bad" people are a rarity. Perhaps it is partially what I do for a living and am reminded of a Henry Wadsworth Longfellow quote:

*If we could read the secret history of our enemies,
we would find in each person's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.*

Can I find the good in most things? I always choose to see love when really conscious and mindful. Human beings seem to see what they choose to see. When I feel afraid and angry, I see more fear and reasons to be angry, making it easy to rationalize certain actions. When I see the good, the good expands.

As adult and child disappeared through the boarding door I looked around the boarding area and saw an elderly couple whispering and giggling; a group of teen girls smiling and hugging; a woman on her phone with a smile on her face, "I love you too." Love was everywhere around me and when that was what I chose to see, everything was transformed around me. I looked at a man in the boarding area, clearly angry our plane was extremely delayed. Rather than judging, I smiled and said "Hello," and he smiled back maybe realizing it was looking snarky and said, "Hello. *(laughing)* What can you do, huh?" Simple. Contagious.

What do you wish to rule your life? Is it love or fear? I suppose it is what we choose to see. Each moment we choose.



There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear. (The Bible - 1 John 4:18)

Until he has unconditional and unbiased love for all beings, man will not find peace. (Buddha)