

The Secret Life of Seeds

Looking out my window, if I squint my eyes just right, I can see buds on the tree across the lawn. The daffodils by my kitchen door are sending up shoots and I'm sitting at my kitchen table remembering my grandmothers. Both loved flowers and had beautiful flowerbeds. Were they still alive, they'd probably be fretting about the lack of rain, ordering seeds and preparing the beds for planting.

My grandmothers both tried to teach me about botany with an almost religious zeal. Though these lessons were more successful than their efforts to teach me to knit, I wasn't a particularly good student and I have haphazard flowerbeds as a result. Only now am I beginning to understand that when my grandmothers were trying to teach me about botany, they were really trying to give me the spiritual tools I needed to understand life.

I finally get it that when they were explaining germination, they were explaining life's basic process of growth and development. In order for a seed to become a flower, it must first germinate underground. The outer shell must break apart so that it can send up shoots to find the sun, grow leaves and flower. In other words, in order to become the flower it is to become, the seed must die to its original seed self.

This is a great metaphor for the process of change and explains why we are so reluctant to actually engage in the process. At its most basic, real change begins with quiet contemplation, from spending time alone in a state of stillness. From the calm, centered space of a quiet mind, we are able to shed the vestiges of our identities, the ego driven part of the self that keep us stuck in the same unfulfilling and possibly harmful patterns. You know the ego place. It's the part of you that digs its heels in about organizing the kitchen because doing so would involve capitulating control over to your partner. Or maybe it's that part of you that resists your efforts to organize yourself because you've labeled yourself as disorganized. Or maybe it's the part of you that says, "I can't slow down. I have too much to do. I simply have to get it done and if I miss a few hours of sleep a night, so be it." It's also the voice of addiction that keeps the drinker drinking, "I don't really need to give up drinking. I can just cut back, a little," even as they grow more and more isolated and the consequences of drinking continue to add up. Unfortunately, it's our ego that keeps getting us in trouble. In order to become who we can become, in order to truly and deeply change our patterns, we have to let the identities that keep us stuck die so that we can create new healthier conceptions of who we are. Did I mention that this can feel like a really hard, painful process?

Luckily, even though our egos get tied up in our identities, they aren't really who we are. They are simply strategies we use to get our needs met. They have a lot of power because they have a significant payoff. Hanging on to control in the kitchen probably gives you the illusion of safety – the idea that as long as you're

in the driver's seat, your partner can't hurt you. Labeling yourself as disorganized works like a pass. People don't expect much of you because – well, you're a disorganized mess. You have a built in excuse if you lose someone's phone number or an important file. Your chronic busyness keeps you from facing the inner longings of your soul and makes you feel like you matter because of all the "things" you get done. It also protects you from other people's expectations because you're too busy to really spend time with people. And as long as you're numbing yourself with alcohol, you don't have to feel the fear, anger, resentment, and/or sadness you carry. The question is, is the payoff worth the cost?

What I know is that if you can slow down, stop your incessant spinning, running and avoiding, and let your busy mind grow quiet, you will be able to let go of judgments, expectations, old definitions of who you are supposed to be or what you are supposed to do and connect to the core of yourself. This part of you knows that you are not anyone's label or job description or expected behavior pattern. You simply are. In this place, there is no good or bad, no right or wrong, there is only love. The fear of losing your identity dissolves into the peace of just being. You don't have to work at changing, change just happens. (You may have to work to keep the change going when your busy mind starts up again, but this is a different part of the process.) The more you can let yourself come to this place, the more your words and actions will be consistent with the creative force of love and the more able you are to meet the challenges that you now face or will face in the future and live the awesome potential your life has to offer.

I think that my grandmothers knew this. They knew that to grow into reality meant shedding limitations, labels, and fears. This must be how they survived the Great Depression, the loss of too many friends and family members to count, and drastic social and technological change. They didn't meditate or do yoga or even journal. They loved. They prayed. And they grew flowers.

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