



Life Experiences

Life...how do early childhood experiences shape today's experiences for each of us?

When I was about 4 years old, I experienced the abundance of the fall harvest at my uncle's farm – picking one apple, tomato or berry for the basket, and picking one for my mouth until at last my tummy was bursting. The harvest ritual is one of my favorite memories.

The fullness, the abundance I felt following the harvest was a perspective which applied to all aspects of my life for about a week. Then things changed. My mother took me to the grocery store, another harvest spot in my 4-year old view. As my mother picked items off the shelves, I innocently turned down an aisle and came face to face with a supply of candy bars to last my lifetime and the lifetime of all my friends and family. Swept away in the thrill of the harvest, I took the wrapper off one of the delights and began eating, while filling my pockets with candy. My mother wheeled around the corner and saw me. I knew by the look in her eyes that something was wrong. What could be wrong? I offered to share part of my harvest with her, only to be painfully surprised by her response. I was told I had done something bad, had my bounty taken from me, was spanked, and told I'd better not cry. Further, it was clear to me I was not to embarrass her or bring shame on the family. "What's going on here?" I asked myself innocently. I was confused, but one thing was clear...It if harvested and ate candy, I'd better not let my mother catch me. If ever she asked what was in my mouth, there was only one safe answer, "nuthin' mom".

From that point on, I learned other things as well. Telling the truth doesn't always work. People want to hear what they want to hear. I often feel powerless. What looks good is good. It's best to duck when I see people could be upset by my truth and could extract a price from me.

The challenge, and joy, is to once again stand in my truth, to undo some of the things I've learned, to recapture my innocence and courage. Now I am rediscovering honest excitement, innovation, creativity and a personal sense of value.