



## The Role of Nurture in Healthy Living

By Lynn Bieber

Nurturing one's Self supports the emergence of The Natural Self. Water, sunlight and earth are basic nutrients for healthy plants. We know children need security, shelter, touching, love and safety in order to develop into capable and healthy adults. Just what do adults need in the way of nurturing and where can they get it from?

For adults nurturing comes in the form of appreciation, validation, time alone, social activities, meaningful relationships, exercise, work, play, hobbies, aesthetics, music, dance, etc.

So if you're not feeling nurtured what gets in the way? Very often it is the lack of permission to receive for yourself that which you give so willingly to others. How many of us "cherish" ourselves? Cherish is one of the words used to define nurturing. Often the first thought that comes up is selfish! Perhaps next, shame! enters. After all we are adults, self reliant and responsible. We don't need any such thing as nurturing and if we do we are undoubtedly weak and immature.

These deterrents to caring for one's self are beliefs and cultural programming formed in another time. In today's world we are faced with changes at every level of our lives. Many of the structures and rituals that once provided us with direction and answers have become obsolete. Our structure and sense of certainty must come from within. It must be personal and unique to each individual. When the inner self is strong and clear, outer changes can be handled with greater ease and surety.

The word nurture is the root word for nurse. It means to care for, nourish, sustain, feed, support, foster, cherish, educate and train. That which nurtures you provides you with a sense of value, pleasure, peace, well being, happiness, gratitude and appreciation.

The exploration of beliefs and cultural programming around nurturing can be beneficial. Dialoguing with yourself, or someone else; journaling; reminiscing; drawing; and/or imagining are helpful processes. Use any, or all, of these techniques as you respond to the questions below that interest you most:

- As a child, who nurtured you?
- As a child, who did you nurture?
- How do you nurture others? What would it be like if you did that for yourself?
- What do you have in your life that you don't want? If that were gone what would you replace it with?
- List what you do or have that is nurturing.
- Who appreciates you?
- Who do you appreciate?
- Create three ways to increase appreciation for yourself.
- Imagine a daily ritual for self appreciation. Perform that ritual daily.
- What would it look like if the negative messages you give yourself were replaced with positive messages?
- Create three ways to incorporate positive feedback in your work, in your home and in important relationships.
- Ask a loved one to tell you what they love, respect, admire about you. Remember to let it in.
- Ask a loved one to join you in the following: You say, "You feel loved by me when \_\_\_\_\_"  
They fill in the blank. Do this 10 times, then its their turn to say "You feel loved by me when \_\_\_\_\_."
- Create rituals that honor the sacredness of life.