

RADIANT CHAPTER
GRAND VISITATION - APRIL 8, 2008
LEARN FROM KIDS
TO LIVE and PLAY IN THE MOMENT

Your Worthy Matron loves to write and as we all know she is a published author of children's books. Whether you read books with your children, or grandchildren, nieces or nephews, or at school; there is so much joy to be had, not only in the words written but also in the eyes of the children as they become immersed in the story. The children's books I've had the most experience with usually have a lesson for the children – but I find there is more often a lesson that I learn, re-learn or a skill I redevelop from the children. In the past ten years of helping with grandchildren I have two particular “skills” I have redeveloped to one degree or another and I'd like to share them with you – and say “thank you” to Kim for being able to inspire children to read and reminding me that I can learn from my Grandchildren, and when appropriate, I should TRY to be a little more child like.

The strategy of learning from kids is workable (or do-able as Heather would say) whether or not you have children living at home, or even if you've never had kids of your own. You can spend time around other people's children, or simply observe them at a local park. While it's certainly not always true, for the most part children naturally live in the moment. This is especially true of the younger children.

To experience life in the ‘present moment’ is not a mysterious endeavor. Essentially, all it involves is putting less attention on worries, concerns, regrets, mistakes, ‘what's wrong.’ Living in the present simply means living life now, with your attention fully engaged in the present moment, not allowing your mind to carry you away to experiences removed from this moment. When you manage to do this, you not only enjoy the moment you are experiencing to the fullest extend possible, you also bring out the best in your performance and creativity because you are far less distracted by your wants, needs, and concerns.

Happy people know that regardless of what happened yesterday, last month, years ago – or what might happen later today, tomorrow, or next year – now is the only place where happiness can actually be found and experienced. Obviously, this doesn't mean you aren't affected by, or that you don't learn from your past – or that you don't plan for tomorrow, only that you understand that your most effective, powerful, and positive energy is the energy of today – the energy of right now. When you are bothered or upset, it's usually over something that is over – or – worry about something that is yet to be.

Children intuitively understand that life is a series of present moments, each meant to be experienced wholly, one right after another, as if each one is important. They immerse themselves in the present and offer their full attention to the person they are with.

I remember an incident when my daughter Shannon was almost two years old. Kelly had been back from Viet Nam about four months and still Shannon wanted nothing to do with Kelly. She would scream if she found herself in the room alone with him. As upsetting as this was for Kelly, we both recognized that with patience, this would pass. To ease her anxiety with this loud stranger, I started taking a night school class one night a week – she was OK if her brother Lance was in the room with her. One night Kelly and I decided to hire a baby-sitter to watch

Shannon while we went to a Squadron event at the NCO Club. Lance was going on a Cub Scout field trip and left the house before the sitter arrived. Shannon and I were playing together when the sitter arrived. As I started to leave, my daughter let out a fierce scream of disapproval. It was as if she were saying to the sitter, "How dare you interrupt our fun together!". She yelled and screamed, "no Mommy, you - no Mommy, you". Shortly after Kelly and I made our escape I realized that I had forgotten the house keys and I went back inside to get them. I peeked into the back room and saw that my daughter was all smiles and laughter, playing, once again. She was absorbed in her beautiful present moment, playing with the sitter. She had completely let go of the past – even though the past was only a few minutes old.

A psychologist – or a cynic, might say that my daughter was being manipulative. There may be a grain of truth in that assumption. However, a happy person would recognize that she was voicing her strong objection in one moment and then moving on to the next. Once I had left the scene, Shannon freely returned her focus to the here and now. How often does an adult effectively do that? An excellent lesson for us all.

As you take this strategy to heart, you will discover that being able to immerse yourself in the present moment is a worthwhile quality to strive for. Doing so gives you the capacity to experience ordinary events in an extraordinary fashion. You will spend far less time being bothered by life, while spending more time enjoying life. You'll spend less energy convincing yourself that right now isn't the time to be doing this – or that; going here – or there. Instead you will be spending more time enjoying the special moment you are in – this one.

When I was growing up, every kid in the neighborhood lived to get outside and play. A knock at the door – "You coming?" "Be right out" – and we were off on adventures. We waded in the swamp with frogs & turtles, we spied on each other's hideouts, played school, dug to China in the sand, played house, or played ball until it was too dark. Our parents were rarely seen but always seemed to know when we needed a drink, a sweater, a bologna – or maybe a peanut butter sandwich.

Fast forward to fourteen years ago when we started having grandchildren around, and I discovered something awkward. In spite of all the hours I logged in as a child, in spite of all the hours I logged in in the land of pixie dust with my daughter, I no longer had what it took to play. Of course, I could throw a ball or cuddle a doll. But I lacked a kid's unlimited imagination, the capacity to just mess around — no beginning, no middle, no end – just in the moment fun. What do you say in the middle of a play while pretending to be a mermaid – or a baby whale. How do you sustain enthusiasm through sixty rounds of Go Fish? I couldn't switch moods fast enough to go for a quick gallop on the broom horse, then organize all the dolls' cloths for a fashion show. "Come play with us Grandma!" "Be right there" I said. But how? I needed to learn how to play again.

Thank goodness for books. I found I could fix myself a cup of tea and sit down on the floor with the kids, not up on the couch, and gradually I found my imagination again as the stories came alive to the grandchildren – and to me. Gradually I remembered and redefined how to play. It wasn't always pretty getting in and out of that fort on the floor, and I didn't always feel like being baby Star-Flower anymore. There were days when I would quietly head back to the kitchen, or chores that needed to be done. But one summer day after the kids had headed home, and I was picking up, I found myself setting up a parade of little people, cars, and animals across

the coffee table. The next morning you'd have thought it was Christmas when Aidan found this little scene. He was so enchanted but wanted to know why I hadn't waited for him to play. He played for several hours while I sat on the floor with him – and my cup of tea.

When you play with your kids, or your grandkids, you give up the role of parent or grandparent and take on the role of, as the Australians put it, mate. Alec, the oldest, is now fourteen. Aidan and Rhiannon, the youngest are six. What used to be child's play has matured. I don't need to make mice out of felt, or drums out of oatmeal boxes, or pretend to be a pirate, or read the same book six times in a row. Now, there is conversation, reading, telling jokes, playing cards, watching a movie, cooking, gardening, riding bikes, working on scouting badges. What we learned as playmates helps us be good friends.

We are never too old to learn a new lesson, or be reminded of something that didn't seem relevant anymore.

When Mom least felt like going to a meeting was exactly when she needed to get out the most. One time Aidan, in his age 5 going on 35 attitude, said "Grandma Connor, don't you know it's good to go outside and blow the stink off you with your friends". The "blow the stink off you" phrase" was one he had heard in a family "remember when" session and he evidently quite liked it. That was one argument Mom couldn't win and she did go out that night. It was an evening when she needed the love, the laughter, the play – the most. It was during these outings that she was able to put her energy into what was happening right now – forget the aches and pains. When she found she could immerse herself in the moment' "blow the stink off" and enjoy the time she was spending it made her a lot happier. The next day you would find Mom very focused to call up Thelma and Penn, or Zoe if she hadn't seen them at the meeting.

Yes, we can learn a lot from our kids. We can learn to live and play in the moment; – to be better friends . We can learn to enjoy the special moment you are in – this moment.

I'd like to leave you with this thought from Cynthia Heimel that is reinforced by the strategy of learning to play, and live, in the moment:

When in doubt ----

Make a fool of yourself

**There is a microscopically thin line
between being brilliantly creative
and acting like the most gigantic
idiot on earth, So.....leap!**

THANK YOU WORTHY MATRON, WORTHY

PATRON, SISTERS AND BROTHERS.