

WHAT DO GRANDPARENTS SEE?

A Sense of Place

By Annie Davy of The Nature Effect www.thenatureeffect.co.uk

Becoming a Granny has been a revelation. I watched this new little human emerge from the belly of my daughter Gemma in the middle of a warm May night. The place was the Maternity Suite on the 14th floor of Royal Sussex Hospital in Brighton. The view from the window was of a big moon over dark sea and the seagulls swooped passed the window on nocturnal scavenges.

I held little Maia who gazed up at me with that 'wide awake' attention of some babies in the first hours after birth. I told her 'Maia I promise I will always listen to you' – and I meant it.

But what do I mean by listening? I want to pay attention in a way that I was not able to do when I was a working parent of three young children. As I remember it then (rather hazily) my main concerns were getting through the day and making sure my children were fed, clothed, cleaned, and hopefully to have at least some laughs, songs, stories, cuddles, affirmations and adventures with them over the course of each year.



It's true what they say – becoming a grandparent can have all the joys of close connection with little children, without the hard work. For me it has opened up a space for paying full attention to this precious representative of a new generation. I hope I can use this time to reflect with the benefit more time, and my experience over a wider span of life. Who is this child really? What is she learning each moment? What is she thinking? What is she trying to express? What are her immediate surroundings teaching her each second, each hour, each day? What does she bring with her already? What does she need from me, from others, from the world around her?

My own enquiry and absorbing interest these last few years has been our human relationship with the wider Ecological World. What makes us feel connected to the rest of life – to plants, animals, the sun, sky, sea and soil? Without these things we cannot live and yet we take them for granted so much of the time. All the stuff we buy from shops comes from the Earth. Our very bodies are made of the same stuff as grass and stars....atoms, energy. But as humans we have done all we can to separate ourselves into an illusion that we can 'tame' and control and dominate the ecological system and make it serve us. It is only when there are 'Natural Disasters' of 'Acts of God' that we are brought up short to the terrifying truth that we are simply inter-dependent parts of the Universe. If we are lucky enough we might experience true awe and wonder when we encounter

a beautiful landscape, a glorious sunset, a murmuration of starlings, a shoal of coloured fish moving under water, an erupting volcano, a pristine meadow of new fallen snow, the dance of the Northern lights, a spiders web in hedge in the dew. Any one of these can wake up every cell of senses to know that we are in fact 'at one' with this glorious Earth in its Universe.

So now I want to explore my enquiry with my granddaughter Maia. To notice as she reaches out with each of her senses – seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, moving, balancing, thinking, voicing. Long before she could walk she was testing the World: she senses it and by doing so she is gradually developing a sense of herself and her belonging to this place. I fancy I can almost 'hear her thinking' as I watch her explore the movement of her body, the movement of birds, the movement of branches and grasses, the movement of light on the floor. I see her fascination with objects – putting things under, in, on top of. I see her delighted response to other living creatures – be they human, animal or insect. What is she learning from them? What is she learning from the way I, or her parents, or other children, respond to her explorations? What calls her? What is her response? What repels her? What is she picking up from the responses of others? Where do fear and risk and judgment and the desire to care for or destroy other living things come from? How does it develop?

I also want to explore my enquiry with other grandparents. What do they notice? How do they pay attention? How is the landscape and culture and behavior different from when they were children, and from when they were parents? What are their hopes for their grandchildren and the world? What place do grandparents have in the lives of their grandchildren and how to the children develop their own 'sense of place' in their homes, their communities and the world?

A Sense of Place – an Enquiry Group for Grandparents.

A new project beginning in Sept 2015, meeting for 5 evenings over the autumn term.

Proposed Dates and Timing

5 x Tuesday evenings:

22nd September 13th October 3rd November 17th November 1st December

Time: 6.30pm – 9.00pm

Sponsored by the Oxfordshire Parenting Forum

<http://oxfordshireparentingforum.blogspot.co.uk/p/welcome.html>

Delivered by Annie Davy of The Nature Effect <http://www.thenatureeffect.co.uk>

For more about the Grandparents Sense of Place project please see

http://www.thenatureeffect.co.uk/uploads/Grandparents_senseofplace_webflyer.pdf

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