

Let's weave a spell, one as old as time and with the power to make all your thoughts and your dreams appear real. Now, close your eyes and whisper in a soft, deep tone... *Once Upon A Time*.

For thousands of years these simple words have enchanted children and grown-ups alike. Their special sound, and hidden meaning, prepare an inner stage, a place where the magic of words and especially those of the storyteller come alive.

Each word chosen by the storyteller comes packed with a lifetime of experiences. Words are symbols, simple patterns of black and white which have no meaning by themselves. It is only when the outer symbol is connected with a inner thought, feeling or sensation held deep in our memory, that words dance with meaning.

Storytelling is similar to good theater. The same magic spell occurs as the lights dim and the curtain begins to rise. We suspend our normal judgment and allow ourselves to be taken-in by the performance. Both storytelling and good acting imply a temporary suspension of critical judgment. We actually make ourselves believe that what we are seeing or hearing is true. But, this tendency to make-believe has been taken too far. You and I are telling ourselves stories all day long. We create fantastic images and believe in all sorts of things. Now I am afraid, these inner images have become more real, more alive and more compelling than nature itself.

Imagination goes much deeper than make-believe play and storytelling. Imagination is a mental field, a swirling flood of impressions, a movement of the immediate present blending seamlessly with the distant past.

The dictionary defines imagination is the capacity to create mental images of something not present to the senses. Dreams and problem solving happen in our imagination. Logic, reason and mathematics are all highly imaginative processes. Anything symbolic, including all forms of written and oral language, involve imagination.

Imagination is the process through which we build the image we have about ourselves. It is for this reason that we need to discover all we can about this most creative capacity of all.

To understand what this means, it might help to consider that image, imagine and magic all have a common root.

Image: is a mental picture held in the mind.

Imagine: is the act of forming a mental images.

Magic: is when the mind believes that an image or illusion is true.

You and I have become powerful magicians. We use the magic of words every day to conger images in our own minds and in the minds of others. This process of creating and believing in mental images is such a fundamental part of the human experience that it is difficult to overstate its importance, yet we take it for granted. Few of us however, have tried to see what is going on behind the smoke and mirrors. We all want to know how a magician is able to make an elephant disappear. Why not have the same interest in seeing the true nature of our own magic show?

It might come as a surprise but, our eyes are playing tricks all the time. A great deal of research has been done on the process we call vision. What is most interesting is the fact that the light coming in our eyes is not directly involved in creating the image we see in our mind. The lens of the eye focuses an image on the retina, that's true. But that sensory information is instantly transformed into pulses of energy which are carried deep into the brain. Once inside, the brain constructs a new image using its own inner light and that is what we "see".

All mental images are created in the same way. When you dream at night no light is coming in your eyes yet, all those images keep popping up. The creative power of the mind is literally recreating what we see, sixty or more times each second. In a very real sense, the images we see with our eyes or in our dreams are all part of the same process, all part of imagination.

We participate in our perceptions. Part of what we call reality is information coming in directly from our senses and part is created from data stored in our personal memory. Though the light generated by the sun is the same for all of us, what each of us does to that light is quite unique.

The question is, "do we really see our children, as they actually are, or has the magic of imagination distorted our view? Does having an image, of your daughter or son, help you to be a better parent? Or does it get in the way? Is the rage that leads to child abuse really caused by the spilled glass of milk, or is something within the parent to blame?"

The creative power of imagination is so great that we often fail to see the difference between what is true and what is imagined, especially when it comes to our own self-image. So, **Discovering Imagination**, involves looking at the image making process, including and perhaps most importantly the image we have created about ourselves and our children. When we lack the sensitivity (which we usually do...), and our direct experience of the world is constantly being distorted by our past (which it is...), our response to the world, including our children, becomes confused.

This confusion begins to compound and very soon we end up living in a very complicated world.

Virtually all of our personal and global challenges have evolved because we failed to distinguish between what is coming in from the outer environment and the images we produce from memory. As the brain developed, and our capacity to create inner images became more powerful, the magic created by imagination grew more convincing. It became increasingly difficult to distinguish the inner from the outer, the past from the present. For most of us this inner world is at least as real, as important and urgent as nature itself.

Our greatest challenge is to bring about a new generation of human beings which have the clarity and creative capacity to solve the monumental problems we have created. This clarity implies seeing through the images and beliefs which have divided human beings for centuries.

Every child comes into the world with the same intelligence as you or I. It is there, full and active. They don't need to learn to be intelligent. They are intelligence. Then what takes place? We demand that they take this vast, infinite capacity to learn and narrow it down into a fixed image which then limits all future learning. The smaller, the more rigid the image the more selfish and violent they become. The bigger and more flexible the image, the more affectionate their response, to each other and to the environment.

Only by discovering and understanding the full creative power of imagination can we get behind the narrow, fixed images we have created about ourselves and for our children.

We must break the spell and see the truth that lays behind the image. Only then will we and our children recognize the infinite intelligence that flows through us and all of nature. Only then will the vast power to imagine be used correctly, sanely, wholly. Only then will we have the insight and wisdom to save the world from what we have imagined ourselves to be. But first, we must look deeply and understand how this image making process works. Then we can develop the sensitivity to understand when it is appropriate and when it is not.

And it all begins with four magic words. **Discovering Imagination** can make all things new again.... It is a gift of innocence and freedom. But we must learn how to use our magic without getting caught like the sorcerer's apprentice. Then we will see the world and our children as they truly are. Then and only then will we have the power and creative intelligence to help our children change the future of humanity.

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