

Engendering Hope in the Early Childhood Classroom

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From a chapter called "Hope, a Tonic for the Future", in a forthcoming WECAN book of essays from members of the WECAN Early Childhood Research Group

As we find our way into the future, what is it that is really needed? What are the healing gestures that teachers can provide so that the children in our care can feel safe, secure, and full of trust as they navigate their way through life? How can we engender hope in their lives? The teacher can become a kind of sensing organ to see what is needed to bring assurance to the children.

Hope is something that we need to cultivate. It involves the ability to live with the uncertainty of the future while still holding the confidence that whatever it brings, we will find a way to meet it. The cultural biographical destiny that we all find ourselves in is calling for us to awaken and meet each unprecedented situation with strengthened inner capacities.

Sometimes it feels impossible to find the way and yet navigating through the unknown is the only choice. We live with uncertainties all of the time that are not under our control. How can we learn to live with so many uncertainties?

Rabbi Moss suggests a path in a Sabbath blog that he composed. "It is not that we have lost our sense of certainty. We have lost our illusion of certainty. We never had it to begin with. We never know what the future holds. We have to admit our vulnerability. Close your eyes and feel the uncertainty, make peace with it, and let yourself be taken by it. Embrace your cluelessness, and every time you do, remember whose hands you are in."

Hope involves envisioning the future while recognizing that there will be challenges, setbacks, and unknown circumstances to face. The ability to have courage for the future, even when things seem to be moving in the wrong direction involves the resilience and power of the indomitable human spirit. It enables us to keep going in the face of adversity. When the adult who is with children has assimilated hope into their inmost being, the young child, who learns through imitation, will be able to absorb it because the child has placed their utmost trust in that person. For a child, the starting point for feeling hopeful comes streaming into them from the person that they trust.

Hope counteracts uncertainties, it provides a powerful antidote to despondency. It enlivens us to take steps towards the future knowing that our plans might need to completely change before we get to where we thought we were going. Flexibility and adaptability at every turn now is what is needed. To bathe one's soul with 'spiritual hope' provides an inner gesture of healing and will be a gift to the children in our care. Permeation with hopefulness enkindles warmth and vitality within us. This precious inner soul warmth brings comfort to others, even in the most difficult of situations. It gives us the potential to courageously face the circumstances that the unknown future might hold at any given time.