



'Therapeutic writing and drawing can become a way of life for children. A regular practice for staying centred in the face of life challenges, and the winds of change.' (Lucia Capacchione)

Nurturing Parent:

Tapping into our inner 'Nurturing Parent' - By Lucia Capacchione

Scientific research in the past 6 years shows that when we nurture others, we generate endogenous opioids (internally produced chemicals) that affect our brains like opium. It creates a warm glow, a good feeling within.

This may explain why many people nurture others even when they are stressed. (this fact has been observed in research). This is especially true in observations of women being studied. Their fight-or-flight response was tempered by oxytocin produced internally (called the "tend and befriend" hormone). The downside of this is that if too much nurturing is going out to others and not enough is turned inward, it can deplete our energy, lead to resentment and to burn out.

Researchers also found that nurturing ourselves triggers the same hormones as those that kick in when we nurture others. You've heard me say that 'The Nurturing Parent Within' uses the same nurturing energy we send outward to others. We just need to balance things by sending it inward as well.

Whether nurturing self or others, the same hormones are generated that make us feel good. I call this energy (associated with these "feel good" hormones) the Nurturing Parent Within.

You have all seen it in Voice Dialogue. The energy of the Nurturing Parent in the Inner Family is very noticeable for its warmth and compassion. You can feel the love it has for the Inner Child.

Nurturing others comes from this same place turned outward. The Nurturer in us nurtures the Inner Child of others. And yes, it feels good and is what draws many of us into the "helping professions."

Oddly enough, it is people in the "helping professions" who tell me they have the hardest time nurturing themselves. They HAVE the ability to nurture. They make a living at it, after all. It's just that they have been programmed to turn nurturing outward. Period. Their training and education and often their employers do not ask that they nurture themselves. That leaves very little for the "helping professional", for restoring energy and feeling revitalized.

In CJEA we are in the "helping professional" role when we work with others. And, "helping professional" or not, the holiday season calls upon us all to do for others. I hope you are also doing for yourselves. You'll have much more to give - genuinely - if you do. You'll be able to give without resentment or feeling it is "duty" and has no heart in it.



Learn to ask for help from others, too. Allow yourselves to receive. And allow yourself to give TO yourself. Here's a great exercise:

With your dominant hand, make lists of what for you are self-nurturing activities, people, places, etc. (This exercise is in *The Creative Journal*, Chap. 4, Nurturing Myself). Include such things as meditating, prayer or "Doing nothing" as one of those "activities". If you really want to give voice to your Inner Child's needs, write the lists with your non-dominant hand.

Do some collages of these self-nurturing activities - on vision boards or in your journal. I am finding that my journal work is leaning more and more toward collage and writing combined. I collage how things are, what's been happening that is noteworthy but also how I wish them to be. SO it is a combination of Creative Journaling with words and images and Visioning®

These are great tools to offer in workshop during the holiday season. *Dealing with Holiday Stress* is a good title or sub-title for workshops in self-nurturing. It is also a time for the protective Parent to set limits and boundaries. This supports our ability to nurture ourselves.

Recovery of Your Inner Child has a whole chapter on the Protective Parent, of course. It can be extremely valuable to do this work during and leading up to the holidays. For example, sometimes our Protective Parent needs to say No to yet another holiday invitation, request or demand from others.