

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Rappahannock
“Maturity: A Childlike State!” by Rev. Laura Jackson Loo
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READING

“The Childlike Innocence Deep within you Is God,” from Amma

“Children, the wonder and the love that you felt as a child will never return unless you can again play like a child. Innocence is within you, hidden deep inside. You have to rediscover it. And for this to happen, you must go deeper and deeper into your spiritual practices. When you can dive deep into your own consciousness, you will realize this innocence one day. At that moment you will discover the child within you. You will experience the innocence, the joy and the wonder that were hidden inside of you, and you will realize they were always there. You merely forgot your innocence for some time. It is as if you suddenly remember something after having forgotten about it for a very long time. That childlike innocence deep within you is God.”

Amma, whose full name is Sri Mata Amritanandamayi

SERMON

WELCOME, and what a joy it is to be here today with you all again.

You may be wondering, what in the world does that talk title mean?! Today I'd like to take you back to your childlike innocence. Or rather pull it back into you right now.

As adults we can get enmeshed in 'adulthood'. We forget the **wonder, joy and 'awe'** of what it was like to be a child. We'll **take a closer look** at those wonderful traits of children and how we can re-integrate them as adults. And at the end of my talk, I will give you **THREE childlike traits** to consciously choose for **YOUR** life.

As I move through this talk, here are some questions you could ponder today:

- What would **YOUR** world look like if you **re-captured** those childlike traits and made them a permanent part of you?
- **How** would your life be different?
- How would your **relationships** be different?

There are many references to having a childlike state in scripture, in prose, and among spiritual leaders. Amma is one spiritual leader in today's world.

Her name, **Amma**, stands for **Mother**. Many feel the Divine Mother presence in her. She is known as the "Hugging Saint," now hugging millions of people around the world. Amma has one of the largest volunteer support and charities in the world.

As I read this quote from her, please know that "God" can also represent Source, Spirit, All That Is, Buddha, Oneness Consciousness, Energy. It's referring to that energy that is greater than ourselves, so whatever you are comfortable with.

“God has the nature of a small child. God won’t even look at those who do tapas with ego, but He will shower his grace on the innocent hearted ones who don’t do anything. This may be due to His childlike nature.”

So the question I would ask you is: “If God has a childlike nature, are we to be any different?”

Let’s immerse ourselves in some of these naturally-born traits in children

Trust. Children are trusting. You have probably seen that trust in their brilliant, innocent gaze. They have no reason NOT to trust, until they learn otherwise through experiences later in their life.

Inspired. You’ve seen that wide-eyed expression and inspiration within children. It’s hard to miss.

Children are totally **Care-Free**. They are not self-conscious until it’s learned. They have light-hearted abandonment. [Reverend remarks: “Hum, should I have worn these shoes today?”] Children don’t worry about such things. They can do ANYTHING, even leap tall buildings in a single bound in their Superhero Underoos and cape!

Care-free in play also means not worrying. What would it look like if a child worried about which toy to play with. [Reverend gestures, holding up one hand and then the other. Reverend remarks: “Should I play with this toy? I don’t know, it might take 13 minutes and in 27 minutes I might decide I’m hungry. Or maybe I’ll play with this one. Look at all the colors. Can you see them? Are you using your imagination?!”]

You see, being care-free, childlike and not worrying means there is no mental analysis. There is only ‘being’.

Children **Openly Share**. They have not been taught to hold back, to filter, to modify or reshape how they experience people and events around them. Sometimes it’s interesting to witness how openly they share. You have probably seen examples in the grocery store, for instance. Since I may have been the ‘butt’ of some of those comments, I’ll share a different one. One day a little boy loudly proclaimed to his mother, “That woman isn’t buying seasonal vegetables, mom, look in her cart!” Obviously this was an example of a family who is aware of holistic living and the benefits of eating produce that’s in season. So children can share so openly, they can be **brutally honest**. Yet it’s done with innocence and good-hearted intentions.

Forgiving. Have you witnessed how quickly children can forgive and forget, whether it's something you have done or they have done? And often times, there is a **BIG** hug in store for you.

Innocence. Think about seeing the world through innocent eyes, the innocence of a child. Children are not jaded through the experience of teachings yet, familiar or societal.

Here is another quote from Amma entitled, "The Innocence of a Child."

"A child has no ego, no past or future. The child has no attachments, and because of this, he is able to express himself fully, without any prejudices or preconceived ideas."

Playful! Have you seen children at play recently? They are just playful, period. Who said adults can't be more playful? Maybe not in a Board meeting or other work endeavors. But that's not to say you can't instill that bubbly 'anything is possible' attitude, no matter what environment you are in.

Here's what the Dalai Lama says about children about being playful:

"They don't care what's their religion, what's their nationality, they don't care what sort of family background" they have." He said. "Basic human nature is compassionate." He continues, "while competition and materialism can encourage those feelings to go "dormant," he said, playfulness can bring those feelings back."

I have shared for years the amazing childlike nature of spiritual leaders, like the Dalai Lama for instance. Here is one comment about the Dalai Lama that absolutely confirms this: "His Holiness is constantly laughing and he's playful even when he speaks about such serious subjects."

Speaking of playful, what about actual play? Coloring, doodling, playing! How come adult coloring books and Mandala coloring books are becoming so popular? One source even remarks that Adult Coloring books are flying off store shelves.

Here's an interesting insight about doodling that may surprise you. Doodlers recalled dull information 29% better than non-doodlers, according to the Journal of Applied Cognitive Psychology. That's because when they are doodling, they are still open to receiving auditory information, whereas non-doodlers can 'totally check out' and not have any recall. Have you ever experienced that? I may have once or twice - or 1,000 times during my lifetime!

In another article, the Dalai Lama shared 33 Ways to be Childlike Today. After I cover those, we should be finished today by, oh, say, 2:00pm!

Energy. They are full of energy. And when exhausted, they usually sleep, even if it's by falling down to rest! It's kind of fun to watch, isn't it?

Faith. Children have the faith to move mountains. **ANYTHING** is possible. Do you remember that feeling? [Pause]

Children often see the mystery of life. You can witness children seeing the mystery of life through their fun, their excitement, their actions that come directly from the heart. Early in their lives, they are not caught up with analysis, confusion, and mental challenges of the mind. Seeing the mystery of life, being grateful and loving, one example it brings to mind is a homemade card from a child. Have you ever received one? How did your heart feel when you read it? I received numerous homemade notes from my daughter. And when I have received sweet cards from a flute student, or group of flute students, it fills my heart.

How about a child's **Laughter.** It is an unmistakable and unforgettable sound, especially when they laugh with their entire being. Laughter is also a very high vibration! As you become more childlike, you can grow your connection with Source. The higher vibration, the stronger this connection and the more expansive it becomes.

Before moving on, let's review the childlike traits we talked about today, knowing there are many more:

- Trust
- Inspired
- Care-Free
- Openly share
- Forgiving
- Innocence
- Playful
- Energy
- Faith
- The Mystery of Life
- Laughter

[Reverend remarks in a very serious voice]

AND NOW..... DA DA DA DAAAAAAAAA.... WE ENTER ADULTHOOD

Who decided adulthood was synonymous with seriousness?! Rigidity? Whose belief system was THAT created from?

As we grow up, we are bombarded by many belief systems. Sometimes we can become a product of many influences. **Unless we consciously choose our life.**

One of my trademarks is **“Living Consciously.”** Choose to live consciously, breathe consciously, speak consciously. Speaking – and writing – holds great power. You don’t hear about ancient and indigenous peoples saying something, and then saying, “Oh, my bad, I didn’t mean that. I take it back.” You don’t hear that happening because they realize the power of the spoken word. Because they choose to live consciously, in the present, with respect, and in balance and harmony.

As adults, we are predisposed to becoming a product of our:

- Upbringing
- Our environment
- Family values
- Societal values
- Our work experiences
- Our coworkers
- Our social networks
- Social Media
- Geopolitical world

As adults we can take on belief systems that we don’t even realize we have. Layer upon layer upon layer upon layer. And they often do not serve us.

A great example of how we can follow a handful of beliefs or ‘agreements’ in order to let the rest go comes from the **The Four Agreements** by Don Miguel Ruiz. He later added a Fifth Agreement.

1. Be impeccable with your word.
2. Don't take anything personally.
3. Don't make assumptions.
4. Always do your best.
5. Be skeptical, but learn to listen.

About the Fifth Agreement, I personally prefer the concept of 'discernment'. Skeptical links to the mind. It might, in essence, lead someone to believe they need to review and analyze everything through the mind. Discernment is much more encompassing and is directly linked to the heart. When you learn to listen to what you 'feel' and 'receive', you will know when something feels light and joyful, and you resonate with it, rather than those things that feel heavy, forboding and challenging.

So the idea of The Four Agreements is when you begin to incorporate these agreements into your being, you won't need the other **COUPLE HUNDRED** you've been carrying around! We don't often realize how much we carry, and how clouded our vision and intellectual insights have become.

Another beautiful aspect about children are the things they DON'T see.

Children learn **differences** when they are **TAUGHT** them. Because of these differences they in turn, learn **judgment**. Judgment is often rooted in **ego**.

[Reverend gestures and remarks: "**My** belief is better. **My** system is smarter. **My** way is more 'right'."] And we could come up with a lot more examples.

Now let's look at **3 childlike traits** as adults. When you adopt them, they can replace or transcend some of those stuckish, mucky muck characteristics of being an adult!

Here are some compelling reasons:

- Think about what it would **FEEL** like to return to the simplicity of a child's world.
- What could you cocreate without all those blocks, barriers, and burdens?
- What would it feel like to resonate with more joy and freedom?

Here is the first trait that could transform you, if you choose.

1 One of the **BIGGEST** things children do is **live in the moment**.

BE in the moment. BE present. **BE.** Be allowing. Be free. **BE HERE NOW.**

You are not reliving the pain of the past or the worries of the future.

Really ‘being fully present’, ‘being mindful’, being ‘in the now’ **IS A STATE OF BEING** as opposed to doing. When you live **IN THE MOMENT**, your full attention, focus, and energy is available to you. How much more imaginative and dynamic could you be? Could your creations be?

[Reverend gestures and picks up her cell phone: “Oh, excuse me.” Begins texting, then holds up a finger as to ask the congregation to wait. Continues texting, thinks for a moment. Holds up a finger without looking, asking everyone to continue to wait. Looks briefly at everyone and gives a brief superficial smile.]

[Chuckling] Many of us have unfortunately had that experience. And the faster we go, the more we may experience these kinds of things.

[Reverend speaking each word slowly, gazing into congregation] **VERSUS BEING FULLY PRESENT.** Now, how does **THAT** feel?

Give your brain a break! Engage the heart. It’s so much more rewarding, insightful, and the cocreator of infinite possibilities.

Being fully present also means honoring yourself. And as we’ve just demonstrated, it honors others.

This also translates into listening to your own body and honoring it. That’s just one aspect of honoring yourself in every moment. When your body ‘talks to you’, it is letting you know something is out of balance. How can you hear if you aren’t listening? What happens if you continue not listening? The ‘talking to you’ becomes louder, and a potential problem can become something more serious.

Living in the moment means you are free to be playful and joyful!

There are great gifts in being fully present.

2 Create with unlimited imagination

I believe creating with unlimited imagination begins with valuing yourself and recognizing your innate gift or gifts! You are brilliant, gifted, valued, and appreciated. You were born on purpose. What would happen if you created from that place of knowing?

With unlimited imagination, you can create things beyond your wildest dreams.

“If you can **IMAGINE** it, you can **CREATE** it!” William Arthur Ward

Here are just a few examples:

- Leonardo Da Vinci: Created more inventions than I can share today!
- The Wright Brothers: Studying the flight of birds, until they created the first airplane flight in 1903.
- Henry Ford: Imagined an engine design and told his team to figure out how to build it.
- Howard Hughes: Imagined the biggest plane in history out of wood.
- Dean Kamen: Modern-day inventor, and college drop-out, who has 440 patents - so far! He is famous for the Segway. One of his inventions is the **Slingshot water purifier**. Without a distribution network, he partnered with Coca-Cola to get these machines around the world. But Coca-Cola needed the machines half the size. At one point he turned to his team and told them they needed to cut the size of this machine in half, ‘figure it out’! And they did.

Creating with unlimited imagination involves **PLAY**. Remember, referred to earlier the Dalai Lama said you can use **PLAY** to return to this state of cocreative imagination.

AND, by the way, you don’t have to figure out the ‘how’. You create the idea, the concept. The rest will follow. Here is one good example. When you write a book, normally most people think about the writing part. So far in life, I have never seen someone who was responsible for every role in creating a book from start to finish: writer; editor; graphic designer; artist, layout specialist; publisher; marketer; distributor, bookkeeper.

What if **YOUR** imagination held the key to a problem-solving creation of tomorrow?

Imagination is the key to **living beyond** what you see in today’s world. Imagination is the key to **cocreating more** than what you see in today’s world.

Moving into the third childlike trait you could re-incorporate into your adult life, here were the first two:

- 1 **Live in the Moment**
- 2 **Create with unlimited imagination**

3 **Love without borders or boundaries!**

Children love without expectation. When they run to you to give you a hug, they aren't second-guessing or analyzing. [Reverend remarks: "Let me see, that person, I'm only going to give them a 30% hug. That person, well, I might give them a 63% hug. Yay, and that person, well, I could give them a 100% hug."]

Loving without borders means **NOT JUDGING**. When you judge another, who are you really judging? Yourself. Have you always done everything perfectly? Is that the goal?

The Universe doesn't judge. So why are you?

Loving without borders means you get to **experience more joy AND more peace** instead of more heaviness.

Choose to love without borders because IT'S CONTAGIOUS! There is a great ripple effect that occurs. And THAT is proven by quantum physics.

"Throughout his life, Albert Einstein would retain the intuition and the awe of a child. He never lost his sense of wonder at the magic of nature's phenomena - magnetic fields, gravity, inertia, acceleration, light beams - which grown-ups find so commonplace. He retained the ability to hold two thoughts in his mind simultaneously, to be puzzled when they conflicted, and to marvel when he could smell an underlying unity. 'People like you and me never grow old,' he wrote a friend later in life. 'We never cease to stand like curious children before the great mystery into which we were born.'"

— Walter Isaacson

CONCLUSION

As an adult, you can choose to release those limitations that you have placed on yourself AND that others have placed on you. When you do, you can reclaim your extraordinariness. Your divine childlike state can allow your many facets to shine like the largest multi-faceted diamond you can imagine.

- You were incarnated with a purpose or purposes this lifetime.
- There is no other person whose Light shines exactly like yours!
- Your Light is not meant to carry burdens and worries and belief systems that don't serve you.

An innocent heart with pure intentions can create infinite outcomes. **LET THE REST GO.**

Remember that anything is possible when you embody a limitless, unwavering, pure state of unbridled excitement and wonder of a child! How could **YOUR** life change if you did?

Thank you!

