



## ***A BREATH OF SUMMERTIME- ANYTIME***



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It's Summer and the air is warm upon my face. The sunlight dances across the grass, casting tiny shadows of the dandelions that wave in the afternoon breeze. It's nice here, sitting on the step, letting my mind wander, not really thinking of anything much. It's been a long time since I was able to just sit and enjoy the gentle rhythms of a summer's day.



There is always too much to do, too many things to get done, too many lists to consult. My life is dictated by color-coded lines on the wall calendar, each telling me where and when I am supposed to be somewhere. I am a slave to the lined pages of a Day Timer and THE SCHEDULE dominates my life.

But I don't want it to in the summertime! I want to run barefoot and feel the grass beneath my toes. I want to feel the caress of the sun on my shoulders and breathe in the warm, fragrant smells of newly mowed grass and summer flowers. I want to get my hands dirty by digging in the garden and surround myself with the sounds of summertime.

Do you remember the bell on the ice cream truck? Or the sound of waves lapping at the dock or the mighty sound of buzzing bees? Did you ever hear the vegetables talking or the birds singing? Did you ever do barefoot or wade in the mud puddles or dance on the beach? Do you remember summer?

Summer...that wonderful reprieve from winter's despair, was the season of innocence. We ran through the meadows, without caring about tomorrow. We



chased rainbows after storms and sang in the rain, chasing away whatever clouds appeared on our horizon. We picked berries and made lemonade and sugar cookies. Life was good and simple and gentle in the summertime.

Why isn't it now?

Why now, does light hurt my eyes and the sun sear my soul? Why now, do I see the crabgrass and the weeds instead of making fairy wreaths of the dandelions? Why does the storm cloud come and stay and where did the rainbows go?

Has my vision grown cloudy? Has grief permeated even the summertime place in my memory?

Why can't I remember the joy, the laughter, the games of early evening and the recipe for popsicles? What happened to me? Did I forget the light because all I can remember is the darkness? Has grief stolen even the sunlight, leaving only shadows of sorrow?

I didn't know it would hurt this much in summer.

I used to be able to imagine fairy castles and ice cream mountains, guarded by purple dragons and yellow birds. All I can envision now is the emptiness. Gone are the cloud sculptures, the skywashes, the paint-box flowers. Even when I close my eyes, all that I can "see" is blackness.



Will I forever be running away from pain and emptiness?

A storm gathers across the sky. The smell of rain comes on the wind and I know I must seek shelter, both from the rain and the grief that washes across me, day after day. It cannot hurt this much forever! I cannot hide forever. I cannot keep running away. I want to find Summer again!

And so, I must find a way back to the joy. As I dash to the porch to seek safety from the rain, I know I must too, find some way to embrace the pain of this grief in order to release it whenever I am ready.

Perhaps I can start by learning to breathe. When we are hurting or in a hurry or under great stress, we grab at the air, pulling it in as fast as we can. We swallow great gulps of air, inhaling and exhaling as quickly as possible. We never really quite fill our lungs because we are gasping at the air. We are almost desperate in our attempt to breathe.

But, here in the slowness of a summer's rain, perhaps we can learn to grow gentle in our breathing and in our despair, as well. Breathing isn't a big step in the grief process, but it is the most important one! Without breathing, nothing else works. And since we are breathing, we might as well enjoy its healing capabilities.

So, as you sit on the step, or lie down in the grass, begin to become aware of your breathing. Notice how and when you take in air and how and when you release it. Do you grasp at the air, grabbing at the air, trying to fill your lungs to capacity? Or do you merely "sip" at the air, allowing small amounts to slip past your lips? Perhaps breathing deeply hurts in some



way, causing muscle spasms or memories to flood across your mind....

Become aware of your breathing and try to orchestrate your breath.

Bring air in through your nose, holding it for a count of 1-2-3- and then let it escape past your lips. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. FEEL your breath and follow it as it flows through your body.

Breathe IN through your nose, imagining the oxygen flowing through every cell in your body, bringing its healing energy to every corner of your self. Exhale through your lips, letting the used up oxygen rise all the way up from your toes and send it out of your body, letting it escape through your mouth.

You can even add sounds to the breathing OUT, if you wish. Listen to your body and find the sounds that may be hiding somewhere within you. You can find those sounds and let them go as you release your breath. Perhaps you find a groan or some anger that needs expressing. Perhaps it is a song or laughter that bubbles up and out. Whatever the sounds, let them come, as you allow your breath to be released.

You may find tears coming as you practice this breathing technique. Let them come as well as any feelings that rise to your awareness. Healing begins when feelings are recognized, acknowledged and released.

As you continue to breathe IN through your nose and OUT through your mouth, you might wish to close your eyes and let your mind begin to drift. Grow quiet and find the rhythm of your body, breathing in a way that feels comfortable to you.

Perhaps you can imagine a warm light shining down on the top of your head. It is just like sunlight dancing across your forehead, warming your whole being. As you continue breathing, imagine that sunlight moving



down your body, drifting slowly across each part of your body. Imagine the sunlight caressing the back of your neck and your shoulders, easing away the tension that we often carry there.

Imagine the sunlight flowing down your shoulders, your elbows, across your chest. As the warmth of this summer sun washes across your body, you can feel the tension leaving. The cares of the winter drift down your legs and leave through your toes. You feel lighter, softer, calmer.

As you begin to feel more at peace, let your imagination create a “safe place” for you. Find a summertime memory that brings feelings of warmth, safety and pleasure to you. You might find yourself on the beach, feeling, seeing, hearing the waves wash across the sand. You might be standing in a mountain meadow, surrounded with wild flowers, the sounds of a gentle mountain stream calling you to rest.

Whatever picture comes to you as you spend a few moments in reflective breathing, enjoy it completely. Smell the smells of your favorite place. Taste the tastes, hear the sounds of this magical moment. It is yours, deep within you, a place of safety and calmness.

You can find this QUIET WITHIN any time you need to, just by becoming aware of your breathing, always breathing in through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. As you become more experienced in this breathing technique, you will find you can create any scene you wish, creating any landscape you find comforting. You can create a summertime place anywhere, any time. You just have to breathe and imagine.



Breathe in PEACE. Exhale TENSION. Let it flow out of you, imagining our summertime sun warming each part of your body.

Breathe in JOY. Exhale sadness. Blow out the grief, if only for a single moment. Feel your heart becoming lighter, your pain growing less.

Breathe in LOVE. Exhale grief. Let the light of your loved one's life fill you with memories, not just of summer time, but of every time you laughed and sang and danced and dreamed and loved.



It is so simple and so basic, yet in our hurry to get “over” grief, we often miss the obvious. We are always looking for THE ANSWERS in the wrong places. We look in books. We listen to speakers. We ask each other in hopes of finding the perfect answer. We listen FIRST to others and never really hear the right words. Instead of looking for answers around us or from others, we need only grow quiet and listen to ourselves.

The wisdom is WITHIN.

Make the commitment to grow quiet within and listen to the music of yourself. Take one small footstep each day. Make one small change each day. It only takes a moment to find the MAGIC WITHIN.

So, here in the warmth of summertime, find the peace that is deep within you and let it bring comfort to yourself and others. Be gentle in your despair and trust the wisdom within.

Find a new wholeness for yourself this summer. Find the balance of heart and mind that allow the memories to heal rather than hurt. Come out of hiding in the summertime and let the breath of summer begin to heal the hurts. Breathe in love and find the memories and the magic of those who have loved us. LOVE is the magic that heals us all.