

Believing Mirrors
By Jeanne Loehnis

When was the last time you heard:

“Wow! You are awesome!”

“That’s a great dream you have. I support you all the way!”

“You’ll be terrific at that job ... Go for it!”

What? You’ve NEVER heard those things? You’ve heard:

“What a crazy idea! That will never work!”

“You can’t support a family with that job!”

“You can’t possibly compete with others doing that. Stick to what you know.”

We all need believing mirrors (*), folks who support us, who want us to be happy, who believe we can accomplish anything we set our mind to. As children, if we are fortunate, we DO hear messages like “Way to go!” As adults, many of us believe that children benefit from praise and encouragement. So we don’t hold back, don’t hesitate, and we enjoy watching the little ones around us grow and succeed, become competent and self-confident young adults.

Unfortunately, there comes a point when a few things seem to change:

- Parents begin to instill “reality” in children with statements like “That’s unrealistic. You’ll need an education in order to support yourself.” or “Haven’t you ever heard of the starving artist? You should change your major to business.”
- We come to believe that adults “shouldn’t need” that kind of encouragement any longer so we stop giving it and we stop receiving it ... in those rare moments when it is given
- As adults around other adults, we stop encouraging each other, fearing that another’s success might negatively impact ours

What happens to creative growth, freedom of expression, and pure joy in living when ideas, plans, and dreams are not nurtured, not given support? *They die*. And with them, a part of the dreamer goes underground and dies as well. The dreamer eventually stops dreaming, starts conforming, often experiences depression. Another life is spent “keeping up with the Jones” instead of following the creative version of “Be all that you can be!” which of course doesn’t need to happen only in the Army.

Human beings are amazing and creative creatures! Without the human mind and its dreams and visions, the Wright brothers wouldn’t have created the flying machine nor Edison the light bulb. And without over 6000 failed attempts and the unwillingness to hear “Give up. It’s hopeless!”, Edison wouldn’t have discovered the carbon filament to make the light bulb possible.

How do we learn to believe in ourselves? How do we reconnect with our inner, creative child? How do we find the courage to move beyond the daily routine and begin to dabble in those activities which nurture us, feed our spirit and grow our talents?

Begin by reviewing your relationships. Which people routinely respond negatively to your expressions of creativity, your ideas, your dreams? Do you regularly return for another dose of discouragement? If so, step 1 is simply this:

“Stop sharing your dreams with anyone who cannot support you!”
“Stop expecting from others what they cannot give.”

You don't need to stop being their friend or abandon family members, just stop sharing your dreams. Build a mental boundary around that special, inner sanctuary and do not open its doors to the naysayers.

Then, since nature abhors a vacuum, step 2 is to *replace* those connections with persons who share your talents or who are honor their *own* dreams *and* can honor the courageous spirit in others. In the 12 step programs, we are asked to find a *sponsor*, someone who “has what you want” and to learn from them how they got there.

In recent years, life coaching has sprung up as a pathway for anyone to find support for the process of living a vital, full, creative life. Your life coach supports and encourages, serves as a mirror for the journey from where you are to where you want to be. By echoing your dreams back to you and by lovingly challenging you to be courageous and to take the next step, your coach is your mentor, your guide, your “believing mirror”. From www.ManifestingPossibilities.com, the Internet home of life coach, Maripat Abbott, CPCC:

“As a trained coach, I'll be your partner and help you attain more balance, fulfillment, focus, and vitality. I'll support you, encourage you, and inspire you to bridge the gap between your present life and the life you'd like to lead. I'll empower you to design creative ways to tap your full potential and step into your dreams.”

So, are you ready to move away from the “unbelievers” in your life and surround yourself with “believing mirrors”? Are you ready to live the life of your dreams?

(*) *Julia Cameron, in The Artist's Way, defines the term “believing mirror” as “a friend to your creative self, one who believes in you and your creativity.”*

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