

My Early Childhood Education



Marghanita Hughes

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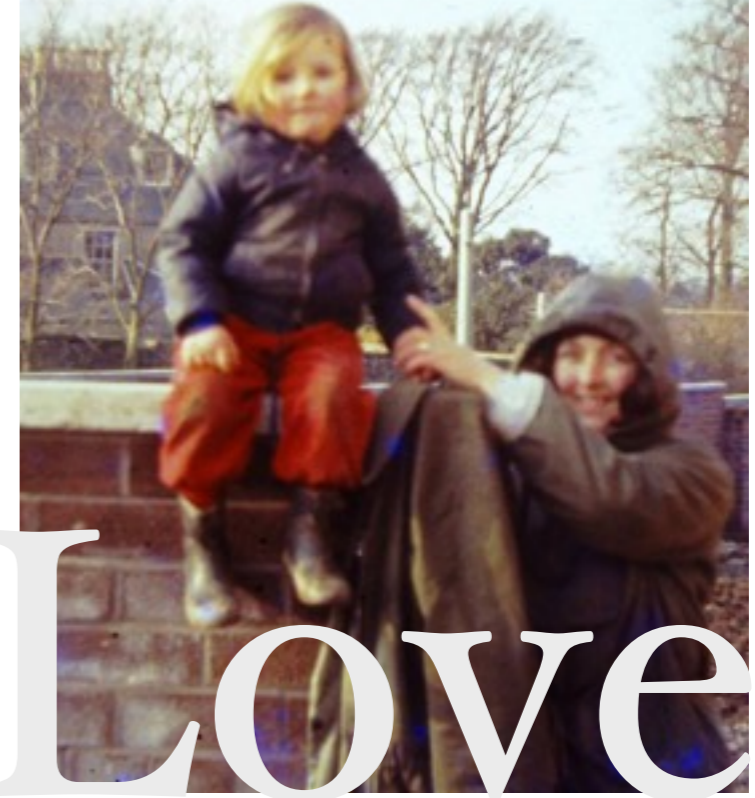
Why my Early Childhood Education is relevant in the work I do today

I would like to share with you a little bit about my early childhood education.

From the minute I was born I was cradled with love

An abundance of Love

Love is the beginning of everything



LOVE LOVE LOVE



My **early childhood education** was at home

I had **3 amazing teachers**, my mother, my father and mother nature. My parents believed in nurturing the whole child and gifted my 3 brothers and I the freedom to be who we needed to be unlike so many children who are deprived of this freedom.

Both my parents were art teachers so there were always art materials and art books around to explore and experiment with, helping to stimulate and support our curiosity and creativity.



No Rules - No Judgement

My parents never judged and still don't to this day. Paints, clay, chalk, oil pastels, and craft materials were always available and accessible. We had the **freedom to express ourselves creatively** every day. My brothers and I were allowed to be messy - really messy! There were no rules, other than we had to tidy art materials away when finished and wash the paint brushes etc.

No right or wrong



My mother loved music and singing and would teach us songs like *Kumbaya* and *If I had a hammer* and record us on a tape machine and play it back to us which we thought was super cool. I also remember dancing around the dining room table singing my heart out to Abba's *Dancing Queen*. And I loved the stories my mother would make up - like *how the giraffe got his long neck* or *how the bee got his stripes* - just writing about this makes me smile so much, gifting a warm glow in my heart.

Music and Dance



Memories

I remember...being cradled;
feeling your heartbeat; your
love; your warmth



I remember...

you let me climb the trees as high
as I might



I remember...
you helped me plant flowers
in the garden

Marghanita Feb 2019



Creativity

The Arts were a big part of all our lives

Always process over product; the joy was in the journey! Art is a language and form of communication that humans have used throughout history.

Through the arts I learned that - I am my style - I was an individual - I was unique and so too was my art.

My early childhood educators gifted me the freedom to be ME. Sadly today, many children don't have that freedom anymore - **just to be children** - to be who they need to be - not what others think they should be or do.

My brothers and I had the freedom to choose what we wanted to do and when we wanted to do it.

"The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling." - Elliot Eisner



Freedom of Expression

Health and Happiness

I spent most of my early childhood education outdoors, where we made mud pies danced in puddles, chased butterflies and sometimes bubbles. It rains a lot in Scotland so squelchy mud was a big part of childhood.

My mother taught me the names of the visiting birds and we planted seeds and watched the flowers and vegetables grow. I



loved helping to cook and bake, especially rock buns and coconut snowballs. Meals were simple, wholesome and nutritional. We had a fish van that visited twice a week. The fisherman would *share stories about his adventures out at sea*. He was part of our larger community. My mother liked to *share stories* too. Cloud watching and making up stories about the elephant or rabbit cloud above us was a favourite, so too was sharing stories while making daisy chains. Daisies still make me smile today...they are such happy flowers and they remind me of *stories shared*. The value storytelling holds as a source of inspiration and as a teaching tool makes it one of the most important tradition mankind possesses.

Opposite – Daisy by Elise



Storytelling with nature

“After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world.”

— Philip Pullman



PLAY

I got to play all day, every day

Sometime I played with my teachers but most of the time I played with my brothers and friends.

We made up our own games and solved our own problems and built many different structures out of old scraps of wood, ladders, tyres - anything that was available.



Me and a friend and my little brother above and to the right

My Outdoor Classroom



In my mixed age outdoor classes that I ran for over 6 years, we were one big family. Mixed age classes generate a family of learners who support and care for one another; older students nurture the younger ones and motivate them.

One Big Family



PLAY

Freedom of choice

We Protect What We Love

My father was passionate about the outdoors and shared that passion with us. He taught me how to climb a tree and find butterfly chrysalis and we would go hunting for agates. We would go camping and hill walking in all weather. My brothers and I were immersed in nature at a very early age developing a deep love and rich appreciation for the natural world.

We would roam *wild and free* with the neighboring children, so I had a lot of interaction with older and younger children. Our play was spontaneous - We found the natural world fascinating, full of wonder and awe. *A giant playground to investigate, to explore, to create - and over time, we got to know it intimately.*



Freedom to explore and
take risks



Creativity blooms in the soil of freedom

Nature provided us with an infinite amount of treasure - natural materials for us to engage with. Sticks became magic wands that made things disappear or fighting swords for our pirate adventures. Our wild imaginations allowed us to disappear to far off lands and beyond. Leaves and rocks morphed into little people and creatures that I would draw later when I returned home. We built dens and then took them apart and rebuilt over and over again and in different locations near and far from our home. We constructed obstacle races and played hide and seek almost every day. We dressed up and acted out plays for our neighbors to watch. It was a magical time, an enchanting time, a wild and happy time.

We had rabbits to pet and care for and in those early years, I formed a deep loving relationship with the Silver Birch trees in our back garden where so many birds would visit. The golden leafed limbs of the birch became a safe place for me to escape to when I needed time alone...time to just be.



My special place

The Mighty Stick

The Best Toy Ever

A stick is one of the first natural items a child plays with outdoors in nature. The stick can morph into a fishing rod, a fairy stick, a slithering snake, a stick for poking, drumming, stirring potions.

Larger sticks are used to build dens, or wonderful climbing structures to hang upside down like these Icelandic student's opposite.

Fishing rod fun



Rough and tumble - Building Resilience

There were bruises and cuts, I fell off my bike several times but each time I got back on my bike. I loved my bike - it gave me a sense of freedom and I imagined at times, I was on a horse racing super-fast. I still love to bike, only now its mountain biking! I also broke my arm playing tag in the back garden. The injury didn't put me off playing tag - what it taught me was patience and I learned how to write with my left hand. It also felt super cool to have all my friends sign my cast.

Through our wild and adventurous play, we learned to problem-solve, to negotiate and to share, we shared a lot. The older children watched over us, helping us younger one's if we needed help - they showed us compassion and trust.



Barefoot is Best

So our “early childhood education” built and formed loving relationships that have lasted throughout our lifetime. An unconditional Love - a deep love for ourselves and each other; for the natural world and all its inhabitants; And a love of the Arts.

My early childhood education set me up for life. That strong foundation helped me navigate through the hardships and difficulties I faced later both in school and growing up through the stages in life. Nature and the arts are part of me - how could they not. Today nature and the arts play a fundamental role in my work with both children and adults and the way in which I live my life.

Today I am still that child - playful, curious, full of love and wonder and a passion to share what it means to be *human.*





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Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all

My students decided to decorate their seating

Being Human

Childhood is Precious and Sacred

We all have a responsibility to ensure all children have access to a well rounded education and life enhancing experiences. And just like my early childhood educators - I too believe in nurturing the whole child - the mind, heart, body and spirit.

The child needs to know he is loved.

The *mind needs to be challenged*,
the *spirit needs to be recognized, nourished, encouraged*;
the *imagination needs space and seeds of wonder to nurture*,
and the *body needs fresh air and exercise*.

Play Explore Create

We know time in nature and the arts are essential for the developing child and why I will continue to create and share resources that can help provide a more holistic approach to education by infusing *playful* nature based art activities into the curriculum.

Quiet time



Children need time to just be - **to be alone**
And time to play with other children



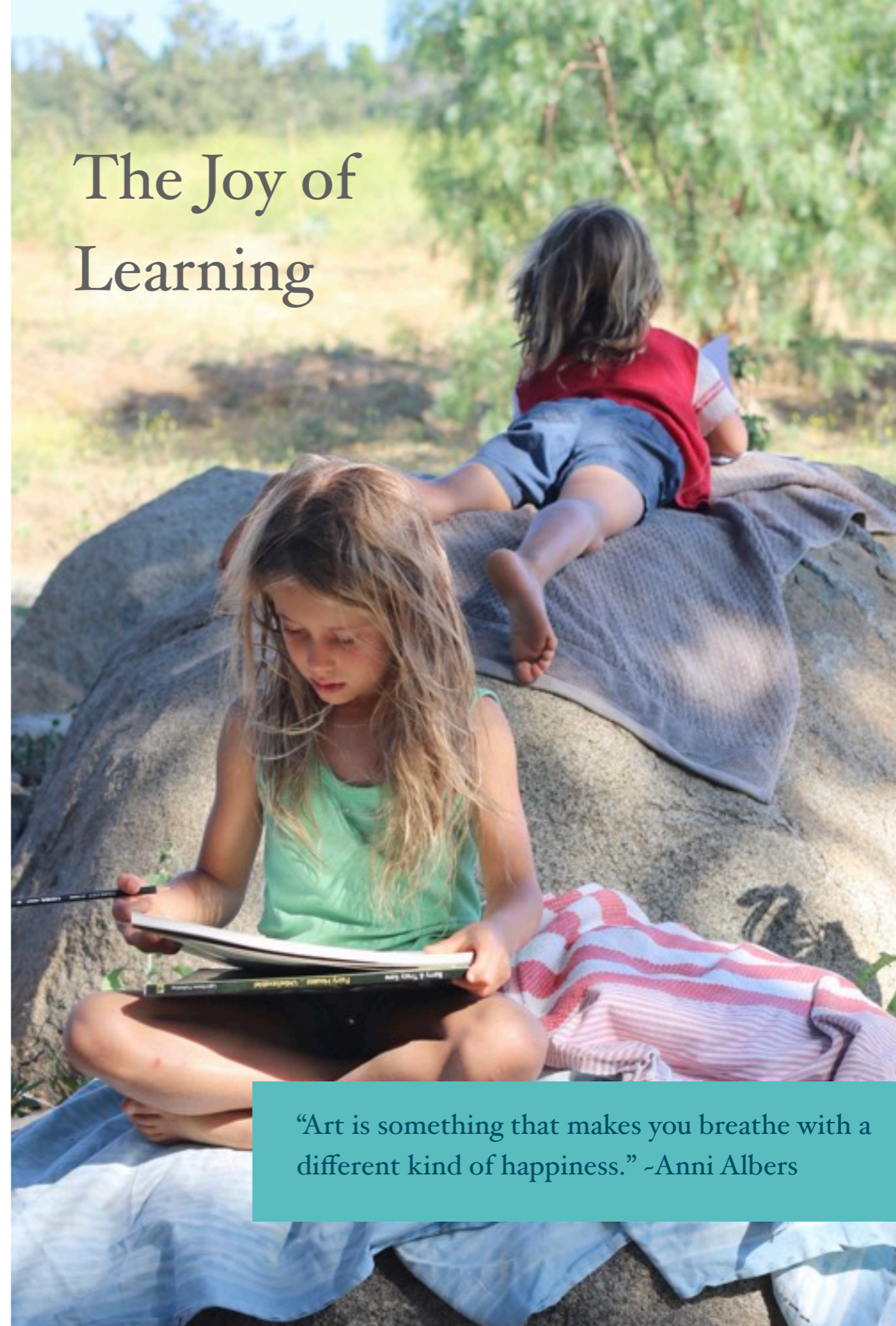
Grateful to my early childhood educators for sharing the natural world with me. *Today I am still very much that child, happiest when I am playing and creating outdoors in nature with nature. And the more I learn the more I wish to share.*

Play is a need for all human beings

Play isn't just for children. In our increasingly busy world dominated by technology, we all need to make time to play and I cannot think of a more beautiful inspiring environment to play than outdoors in nature.



The Joy of Learning



“Art is something that makes you breathe with a different kind of happiness.” -Anni Albers

What we experience
as a child establishes deep
rooted connections
that influence our
development and what we
might become

I cannot finish without sharing one of my favourite quotes by the beautiful artist Paul Klee. He found nature a constant source of inspiration for his art. As a child he would spend hours in the garden drawing.

“Lead you students towards nature, into nature; let them learn by experience how a bud is formed; how a tree grows; how a butterfly opens its wings, so that they will become as rich as variable; as capricious as nature herself.”

One of my one to one sessions with my little student Elise



“Every child is an artist The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up” - Picasso



The Outdoors invites our imaginations to play and create - my outdoor classes



That is beautiful
which is produced by the inner need,
which springs from the soul

“The spirit, like the body, can be strengthened and developed by frequent exercise. Just as the body, if neglected, grows weaker and finally impotent, so the spirit perishes if untended.” - Kandinsky



Photo Jeanene Tremoulet



“Painting from nature is not copying the object; it is realizing one’s sensations.”

- Paul Cézanne





“Only through freedom and environmental experience is it practically possible for human development to occur.”

Montessori



Play Explore Create

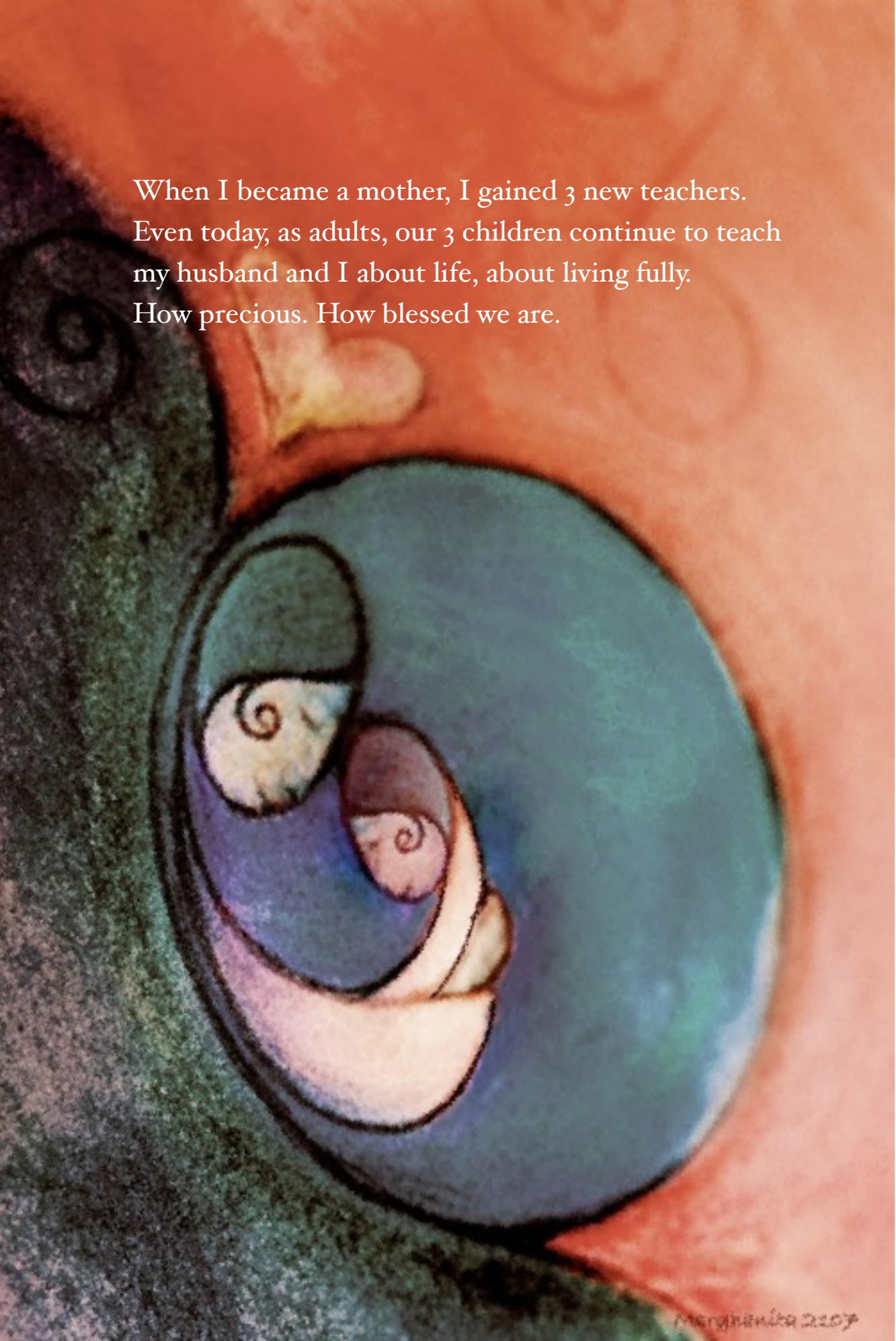


Thank you for taking the time to read about my early childhood education and the impact it has had on my work I do today. **Let's go play!**

With love and gratitude Marghanita

www.marghanita.com

www.educatingheartnatureart.com

A painting of a mother and child in a blue circle. The mother is on the left, and the child is on the right, both with their heads tilted towards each other. The background is a warm, reddish-orange color. The painting is signed 'Marghanita 2007' in the bottom right corner.

When I became a mother, I gained 3 new teachers.
Even today, as adults, our 3 children continue to teach
my husband and I about life, about living fully.
How precious. How blessed we are.

"Maternal love is our first taste of love, the origin of all feelings of love. Our mother is the teacher who first teaches us love, the most important subject in life. "Without my mother I could never have known how to love. Thanks to her I can love my neighbours. Thanks to her I can love all living beings. Through her I acquired my first notions of understanding and compassion." – Thich Nhat Hanh

Further reading

Please take a moment to read this article
by Peter Gray:

**As Children's Freedom Has Declined, So Has
Their Creativity**

And a beautiful short film about
the *importance of play*
PLAYED

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