

Peace begins at Home

Living Lovingly With Parents



By
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As an only child, eleven-year-old Grace had always been tough to handle, but in the last two years, everything had become a struggle. Grace wanted more freedom; Mom needed to keep a watchful eye. Grace thought Mom was overbearing; Mom found Grace inconsiderate. Her parents were braced for trouble at fifteen, but the tween years had become a fast-forward to stormy adolescence. Explosions erupted constantly. They didn't know what to do.

When I met Grace, I was struck by her sophistication and told her I didn't have answers for her, but she did. That her Imagination was the key. We went over slow breathing as a way to access her internal wisdom. Because Grace didn't recognize how her behavior affected others, we decided to call in *Animal Friends* as possible guides. "Maybe they can show us what's going on."

When Randy Raccoon and Jake Jaguar appeared, volunteering videos of her conduct at home, Grace described what she saw. First there was a "mean" video where she screamed at her family; then there was a "nice" one where she got along with everyone. I had her Imagine stepping into the action and asked her not only how she felt in each scene, but also how she wanted to feel. She preferred staying pleasant and agreeable. With this intention, we were on our way.

Next, she consulted her *Heart*. "How can I resolve my conflicts with Mom?" Her *Heart* surprised her. "Speak to her," it said. "Understand her point of view, and go from there." How could understanding *Mom's* point of view solve this? *Heart's* wise answer: "When you do, she'll understand you."

Grace still didn't get it. "Pretend you are her," her *Heart* continued. "Imagine why she may have seemed mean." This was an interesting but troubling suggestion. "Why can't I forgive her?" *Heart* spoke again. "You know you love

her, but you don't know if her yelling shows she loves you." Grace sighed. It was true, and it felt good to admit it.

What could she do now? I invited her to ask for another Image. A mirror showed two hands – hers and her mother's – holding each other. There was a Peace sign above them. When Grace asked about the meaning, she heard, "Work toward Peace and friendship. Think positively." What about residual anger? Another picture appeared: a floating green and white checked cloth. It turned bad thoughts into good ones whenever she wiped her forehead with it. Grace finally felt comfortable about going home and apologizing, and she resolved to be more aware of her part in arguments.



Grace's relationship with Mom started improving, but then she began resenting Dad's long work hours. When he was home, he seemed to pick on her for "little things," such as a messy room or too much TV. She felt she could never please him, yet she couldn't picture how she wanted their relationship to be. I encouraged her to keep a private diary to express deep feelings. Grace had a long list. She felt impatient, cranky, irritated, frustrated, unloved, and overwhelmed. I wondered out loud if she could visualize letting go of these intense feelings as she wrote them out. She started to Imagine letting love clear her hurts, one at a time.

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Life improved until the prospect of a family vacation put Grace to the test. Car trips were hard; during long hours in a small space with no means of escape, personalities slammed into each other and friction festered. In the past, she had screamed at her parents and dissolved into tears. She wanted to keep Peace this time but didn't know how. Calming herself by breathing deeply, closing her eyes, Grace again called on *Animal Friends*.

Raccoon and Jaguar showed up with Otter and Koala in tow. They came bearing *Gifts* and inspiration. Raccoon suggested taking her camera and "art stuff" to scrapbook the family's adventures. Otter recommended that she help with packing and unpacking. Mom would appreciate it. Exasperated, Koala said, "Just have a good time! Don't whine about what you don't want to do."

Then she softened. "Enjoy nature, use your time wisely, and let it be fun." Jaguar agreed. "Be nice to everybody, and they will be nice to you." She followed their advice and consulted with them on the trip as needed; it was a great success.

Grace reconnected with the love she felt for her parents – and theirs for her. By practicing these and other Imagery tools, the family set themselves up for clear communications during adolescence and life beyond.

[Adapted from *The Power of Your Child's Imagination: How to Transform Stress and Anxiety into Joy and Success* (Perigee/Penguin).]

Charlotte is a child educational psychologist, author, media consultant, and international workshop leader on the healing power of children's Imagination, She is our recent Imagery International Personal of the Year. Find out more at www.ImageryForKids.com.

Exquisite Peace

Imagine Exquisite Peace softly swirling within you, always in attendance,
breathing through your cells, filling your mind with stillness,
caressing your soul with gentle affection.

Like watching ocean waves embrace the shore, yield to nature's graceful rhythm,
experiencing sweetness in each inhalation....
exhaling, becoming free of all that binds you,
releasing openheartedly into PEACE.



NANCY SMYTH

Nancy's journey towards peace began as a child in a family that lived in conflict. Believing that peace was possible, she sought and cultivated the understanding and experience of peace throughout her life. Nancy received her credential of Master Certified Coach through the International Coaching Federation. Her international contributions include: Planetary Dance, SupportED, teaching meditation and training coaches world-wide. To carry the precious gift of peace to yearning hearts is her joy.