

Planting Seeds of Consciousness

By Kathy Fitzpatrick

I still recall the very first packet of seeds i planted. They were Kentucky Wonder Pole beans. I planted them in an unlikely spot, along a small stretch of picket fence that divided our driveway from the neighbors, where my father was sure they'd never grow. There was a well-used basketball hoop on the garage next door and the ball constantly slammed against the fence. Despite his concern i planted my seeds there anyway. I grew them with tender loving care, nurturing them into a prolific profusion of beans. My father was amazed and i was hooked on gardening for life.

These days i continue to plant seeds, not only in my garden, but in the hearts and minds of the everyday people i come in contact with. Being chemically injured i feel compelled to warn others about the everyday dangers of our EMF-a-fied, chemical, WI-FI world.

I work part time at what i believe is the only shelter in the United States with a fragrance/chemical-free policy. While the policy was first put in place as an accommodation, it's no longer the only reason. Many residents come to us with children who have lead poisoning, asthma, autism, ADD, or ADHD. Mothers come with fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, COPD, depression, anxiety, PTSD, or a host of other DISeases. Before our shelter, they never considered the impact chemicals had on their health.

Our shelter serves as a laboratory where residents can explore a new way of living. We provide them with fragrance-free products to use during their stay. We teach them to recycle and how make cleaning and personal care products out of inexpensive, easy-to-find ingredients. Many residents have reported their children sleep better, had no asthma attacks or that they didn't have to use a breathing machine during their stay. One mother recently shared that since she stopped wearing Paris Hilton cologne, her sinuses no longer bother her.

Many are resistant to change. They are stuck in their own worldview and far too rigid to see there is another way or they simply disbelieve. In fact, they refuse to even consider the damage chemicals can cause. Because of this we build on our common humanity knowing there is a potential for far greater understanding when we share our journeys with one another.

Of course, you can share your journey and still have others completely negate it's value by asserting themselves in ways that cause real, not imagined, physical harm. When this happens there is a need to

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**Being defeated is often a temporary condition.
Giving up is what makes it permanent.**

Marilyn vos Savant

make a distinction between conscious and unconscious people. An unconscious person will act in a destructive way by twisting words around to suit their own best interests. You can see this being done in every thing from politics to the environment to religion and to those of us with chemical injuries. Once, a staff person stood in the office doorway, looked at me, then turned and walked right into the kitchen and turned on the gas stove. He is aware this causes me harm. In fact, there's a sign clearly stating it's not to be used during office hours. But because of his own beliefs, he disregarded me and did it anyway. As i sat in the office i kept telling myself i was imagining the sensations in my body, that he would never cause me harm this way. But there was no ignoring the swollen lymph glands or the feeling of my brain swelling. I got up and went into the kitchen. By this time the burner was still on but he was gone. I left for home, almost crashing into the rear end of a vehicle in front of me and spent most of the evening in bed unable to function. My body was a mass of aches and pains that lasted for over a week. All because his belief system was so rigid it could not include my worldview. It's difficult to plant seeds in soil that isn't fertile. But that doesn't mean we should give up. We need to continue to speak our truth, regardless of blatant disregard and disrespect. And we shouldn't water it down; we need to keep it real so it doesn't impede the progress of those around us who are open and receptive to new ideas and ways of living. And conscious enough to know theirs is not the only worldview.

In my journey with this illness i've found even those with EI continue to adhere to old behaviors that cause harm to the planet and to the people around them. They remain stuck in a materialistic mindset that propels them to purchase particular products or behaviors that are harmful. Perhaps it's habituation, or a need to somehow cling to a past that no longer exists.

We need to move beyond the mindset that compels us to consume, consume, consume without regard for the consequences. But how do you wake up those who have been injured to the continued injustice they are doing, not only to themselves, but to the larger community of injured people? Is a hair salon, hair color, personal care or cleaning product more important than an entire injured population? How does the end justify the means? While it's true our injuries and chemical sensitivities are all different, how can we, as a community, come together and say, what harms one harms us all, so that together, we can make a difference?

We can begin by demanding corporate America to take responsibility for it's role in the harm they've caused the planet and it's inhabitants. We have a right to demand they make the necessary changes for the survival of the planet and all sentient beings. We can support companies that make "good" products and ask them to make "better" ones. We can shop locally when possible and purchase fair-trade goods. We can support non-toxic hair salons and companies that

I will not have my life narrowed down. I will not bow down to somebody else's whim or to someone else's ignorance.

Bell Hooks

manufacture fragrance-free products. We can write letters, speaking our truth. We can stop believing in the myth that our dollars don't count. Yes, they do! Without our support, corporations have nothing. We are a documented 15% of the population. Our ranks are growing on a daily basis. We can use our buying power for the highest healing good of the planet. Change is not going to come easily, but change will come. We can plant seeds wherever we are, even if it's shopping from home on our computers. We have been given a gift, a keen insight into what's happening in our world. Our world view has been altered, there is no turning back. We cannot begin to save everyone, but we can try to save those who are willing to listen by nurturing their growth and supporting them so we all flourish. With the simple act of planting seeds, we honor the earth, life and each other.

Kathy Fitzpatrick is a writer, activist, and naturalist who loves to dig in the dirt, eat weeds and grows her own organic herbs and veggies.