



LESSON 6: Inner Child



By the time we reach the age of 18, we have acquired a huge storehouse of memories derived from experiences of living with our family, friends, and neighbors. Some experiences were pleasant and formed positive memories. Some experiences were unpleasant and formed negative, even traumatic memories. Every human being has childhood memories that live in us and continue to influence our behavior. When we feel out of balance, it can be helpful to check in with our Inner Child to find out what the real feelings are. We can be the good adult and guide our “child” toward the light of safety and a more conscious identity. It just so happens that drawing with the Inner Child is a wonderful way to re-establish balance in our lives.

Children approach drawing as play and I encourage my students (no matter what age) to approach this kind of drawing as play too. It feels good to put your feelings and thoughts onto a piece of paper with crayons and pencils. It feels good to make your mark. Remember, children of every culture, have to be taught how to speak their parents language and how to write. Children know what to do with a pencil—make a mark! Show the world that you have a point of view, you have feelings, hopes, desires, thoughts. It’s innate. It’s natural to draw.

At some point children hear someone say their drawing is wrong: *Mommy doesn't look like that! Trees are green not pink!* They are stunned and dismayed to learn that their squiggle of Lassie doesn't look like a doggie to someone else. When their drawings are ridiculed, children come to believe that something is wrong with them. Most people stop drawing around the age of nine or ten.

Adults carry the Inner Child part of themselves around unconsciously. When stress builds up, emotions of the Inner Child flood up into our conscious mind and we wonder what's going on? It is at these times that we take a break, get our crayons out, and have a dialogue with our Inner Child. Treat the Inner Child part of you as a legitimate and valuable little friend.

The exercise is very simple:

1. Relax and calm down. Breathe. Sit comfortably with paper and crayons before you. Close your eyes.
2. See or feel a child near you. Notice things about this child. (Hair color, height, posture, clothing. Open your heart and feel yourself loving this child unconditionally as best you can, especially if she or he is angry, sad or frightened.
3. Ask this child to play a game with you. The adult-you will ask three questions and the child-you will answer. The adult-you writes the questions with your dominant hand, the child writes the answers with the non-dominant hand.
4. Question One: What is your name?
5. Question Two: What are you feeling right now?
6. Question Three: What can I do to help you feel really good?
7. Continue the dialogue if you wish. Thank the child for sharing with you. If this works well, arrange a meeting time and place for the next drawing session.