



Staying Small To Stay Safe, by Peggy Dulany

Somewhere along the line of human evolution, fears caused many of us (especially those who lost their link to the natural environment and came to live in crowded, stressful living conditions) to shrink into a smaller way of understanding -- and living -- our existence. We needed to feel safe. And the unknown made us fearful. So we shrank the unknown into manageable bits that took much of the meaning -- and the magic -- out of it.

It's very understandable when you think of it from the survival point of view: we are mortal, our lives are so relatively short, and, just when we are beginning to be able to understand something larger than our small, limited lives, we die. We manufacture all kinds of beliefs (religions, ideologies, myths) to rationalize our life and our death, to reassure ourselves that something (heaven, hell, reincarnation), some meaning, will continue after our bodies disintegrate and the light in our eyes is extinguished.

We come to live smaller lives out of fear of the wars that might kill us; of possible violence against ourselves that, in turn, cause us to manifest that against others; of the possibility that the emotional, physical, spiritual violence that we may have encountered in our childhoods and our short lives will be repeated on ourselves or our children.

So we do whatever we have to do to keep ourselves safe: a solution has been to 'hide' from the daring, bold, adventurous child of our self who wanted to go out and explore the world - and make our self very small and even invisible so that no one will perceive us as a threat and no one will hurt us. We hide as a way of protecting our self and, in doing so, we hide our magnificence, our wholeness, our full creativity, as well as those aspects we were taught were bad. We use a great deal of energy trying to keep these parts of ourselves invisible, sometimes to the extent that even we forget their very existence.

But magnificence and other, less appealing qualities don't like to be shrunk or compartmentalized. They suffer, fester, seek weaknesses in the walls of their containment and escape (to the horror of our safely small selves) in little - or sometimes larger - eruptions that startle or lead to disapproval or amazement by others and set our alarm bells to clanging loudly.