



The Seed

A seed was planted in good soil, unseen by anyone, in a personal act of love by one who desired to watch it grow and flourish, and become what it was designed and planted to be.

The seed began to shoot, and sprout up through the soil that had been prepared by the sower.

The sower then employed a variety of people to feed, and nurture, and protect, and make space for the seed. The seed, once dead, was now alive with fresh green growth, full of vibrancy and enthusiasm to become and produce all it was designed and destined to be.

The bank manager knew that growth comes from financial investment. So he surrounded and covered the small green shoots with money. But the sun could not break through, to give the shoots the vital nourishment they required, to continue to grow.

The librarian knew that growth comes from reading, and gaining new information. She loved books of good quality, so she surrounded and covered the small green shoots, and the money with fine leather-bound books full of knowledge. But the rain could not penetrate the beautiful leather to moisten the good soil, and nourish the seed with its roots beneath the surface, which was necessary for its growth.

The vermin controller knew that growth comes when protected from predators. So he covered the small green shoots, and the money, and the books with wire and a baited wooden trap to keep at bay, and catch any that would come to devour the shoots, or dig up the seed before it could grow to maturity. But the shoots were smothered, and had no space to feed and grow.

The agronomist knew that growth comes with the absence of weeds. So she sprayed over the small green shoots, and the money, and the books, and the wire, and wooden traps. But the good soil became poisoned, and made the roots and shoots sick.

And beneath all the good intentions, the new plant began to wither.

The sower was watching the seed he planted, and those he employed to feed, and nurture, and protect, and make space for the seed to grow...
...and his heart was breaking.

The sower had prepared the soil, the space, and the nourishment for the seed to grow to maturity, as it was designed to, but chose to share the joy and fulfillment of contributing to its growth with others.

The sower called together the bank manager, the librarian, the vermin controller and the agronomist to discuss the withering of the plant.

To the bank manager, the sower explained the need for sunlight to reach the shoots, to nourish them. Though he meant well, the new plant was malnourished.

To the librarian, the sower explained that the beautiful books prevented the rain from moistening the soil. Though she meant well, the new plant was dying of thirst.

To the vermin controller, the sower explained that the protective measures were smothering the plant. Though he meant well, the new plant was suffocating.

To the agronomist, the sower explained that poisoning the weeds, in turn poisoned the soil in which the seed was planted. Though she meant well, the new plant was sick with poison.

“I chose each of you for the good you might contribute to the growth of this seed I have planted. But you have each been working independently, instead of interdependently. The librarian can contribute to an informed approach to vermin and weed control, plant and soil nourishment. The bank manager can contribute to financial provision, and management for this education and the necessary resources. The vermin controller and agronomist can use their new education and resources, to promote the plant’s growth instead of its demise.”

As each one stepped back, and observed the tender plant, they were able to recognize what its needs might be. In turn they also enquired each of the other, to learn from observations they may not have recognized, or had prior knowledge of, to have even been considered.

Most importantly...

...as a team in constant communication, those employed for service to the growth of the new plant – in fact to service of the plant itself – began to listen for, and hear what the little plant was telling them. They heard and could see when the plant needed moisture, or sunlight, or protection, or space; because they were attending to the needs of the seed, instead of what they wanted to give or to do.

The little plant grew tall, and strong, and was borne of new seed, so that more plants could grow, providing clean air, and beauty to enjoy.

The workers and the sower lived with much joy, and with a profound, and unfathomable sense of accomplishment, as they witnessed the growth, and maturity, and provision, and beauty of the little seed, which became great.

Gina Schmidt 26/6/2014

The Family's Experience –
For the Educator and Professional

Gina Schmidt

“The Seed”

Today I have two observations I'd like to highlight.

Perhaps more by way of reminder than anything else, or maybe things you hadn't considered yet.

Both observations I'd like to share relate to our tendency to forget, or at least relegate to the back blocks of our mind the understanding we may already have of our diversity, individuality and uniqueness – both personally, as families, cultures, and communities.

One of the most precious, and most threatening aspects of the family's experience can be the medical and educational professionals' involvement in our lives.

Sometimes the diagnosis you give, or the therapy you prescribe, or the new way of modeling and teaching you offer is the greatest relief, or hope, or validation for us.

Other times, these things cast us off into grief, or despair, guilt and/or isolation. Hopefully our journey involves some experience of all of these things, which would be considered 'normal'.

From now on, you are part of our lives and our families. We may come to your office, but often you enter our homes. You observe us as we interact, play, eat, walk, read, cook...I could go on. Because our interactions are connected with many intimacies, as well as general functions of life, we may become close.

Alternatively, we may feel you're more a part of our family than you do. Or you may feel more a part of our family than we feel you are.

We need to help each other understand what the nature of our relationship needs to be.

We need you to remember that we are a family, as you have your own family. Sometimes we need you to remind us that you contribute to our family, but we are unique and will determine our own family's path.

I have experienced both. A very close and personal relationship with professionals built over time and three children. Also the intrusion of some; presuming positions and responsibilities within our family which were not offered, nor welcome, nor helpful.

The latter can be confusing for our children and blur the lines between roles and to whom our children are accountable. The former can be a beautiful collaboration of security, fostering growth and confidence in families – also a tangible illustration of the popular African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.”

My second observation is something we usually associate with those outside of the disability or, specifically this week, the vision impairment community.

We all hold to particular biases or preferences. Some biases are unhealthy because they are hurtful and damaging to someone else or ourselves. They may stem from false assumptions as opposed to being informed. Others though, are differences because each of us is unique, and each of our families, cultures and communities are unique.

There are choices we can make in relation to developing our young people or in maintaining the life choice of an adult with a vision impairment, and they are just that – choices.

Choices about the medical procedures we will, or will not embrace.

Choices about learning grade 1 or 2 Braille first off.

Choices about handling reactions to sensory stimulation, or lack thereof.

...toilet training, private or public schools, which piece or brand of technology best suits, city or country...

The list is endless!

I’ve learned that you all have your preferences, as do I. As does each individual, family and professional here.

Helping us to be informed but not overloaded would be the greatest gift of service you could offer us. Perhaps let us know the options, maybe another we can ask. Then help us follow up on the thing that interests us most. You never know, we may end up with the same preferences as you.

I’ve noticed that smaller communities are often a reflection of the broader community or culture, but the smaller may influence and therefore be reflected in the broader instead.

Looking forward to our little community being a positive influence in the broader community at large.

Let me finish by reading the end of the story, “The Seed,” to you again.

...As each one stepped back...