



## The Power Of Words

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”. How fallacious is that nursery rhyme? We use this trifle childhood saying to get children to feel better about the names that their playmates call them. How unreasonable of us to think that words can’t hurt. There are millions and millions of people in the world today that bear scars. A lot of them are scars that can physically be seen from war or from abuse at the hands of those who are supposed to be trusted, those who would take care of us. But many, many more bear scars that cannot be seen with the naked eye. They cannot be seen on the outside. Except perchance to see the depression that someone may be in or to see the low self esteem that they may have. These scars are from words; words that hurt. Words that come from those that are trusted. From parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and even teachers. Telling them that they are stupid, they are fat, ugly. Telling them that they will never be worthy. Words hurt. The power of the word. As a writer I have come to realize how powerful words can be. Other adages have been written regarding words as well ~ “The pen is mightier than the sword”; “Words have a longer life than deeds.” These axioms did not come about for no reason at all. Words hurt.

Not long ago the former president of the United States, George W. Bush, was in Iraq giving a speech and had shoes hurled at him. In the Iraqi culture this is meant as a malevolent act. I don’t know any culture where this would be meant in any form as being complimentary. His words were hurting. So that person did what he thought he should at the time to stop the hurting. Hurling a shoe at someone is not necessarily the best way to bring about a positive change. The only thing that is going to stop words from hurting is the people who are saying them. The people who write them. It’s time for people to take responsibility for their actions yes, but for their words as well. For what they say. Sometimes words are spoken in jest, like on a playground. But those words can hurt deeply even if you mean them in jest. It doesn’t make up for the hurt by following the words with “I’m only joking”. We need to learn how to speak truth in a way that isn’t going to cut down another person. Today’s comedians get their laughs and make their living by hurting other people. They don’t like it when the tables are turned and someone is making the same kinds of jokes about them. When will the madness stop? In order for peace to truly live in our hearts and in our world, we have to stop hurting each other.

Since I lost a good portion of my hearing, and it’s harder for me to understand the words of songs, especially songs I didn’t know before I lost my hearing, I look them up. Yes, Google is one of my favorite tools on the internet. I was listening to this song a little bit ago. I loved the music and I wanted to know the words that accompany this very nice music. The song is called Irish Heartbeat. I looked up the lyrics. “Oh wont you stay, Stay a while with your own ones, Don’t ever stray”. That is just the first three lines. How can we get to know other people and bring peace throughout the world if we are afraid to go out there and meet them. The song goes on to say that the world is so cold and you should just spend time with your own people. Yes, it is a cold world and by staying with our own people we are making that world even colder. We’re cutting off what could be beautiful friendships and relationships by staying closed, staying inside of ourselves. We need to step outside of our own comfort-zones. Yes, we may get hurt. But once we step outside, then and only then can we start the peace process. Only then can we start making things right in this world.

Children are a precious commodity. They are to be loved and cherished. Not ridiculed and scorned. It’s not their fault they were born. It’s not their fault they came out of the womb the sex that you didn’t want. It’s not their fault that they were born inheriting the genes from the family that they



come from. For their hair color, their eye color their skin tone. So why take it out on them? It's no one's fault for the physical traits that we inherit. What is at fault is the hatred that you are teaching these children. You are teaching them to hate people that don't look like them. People that don't fit into the "perfect person" category with a certain body type, skin color, hair color and eye color. When you take away those physical attributes, whether someone is skinny and looks like a Barbie doll or a Ken doll, you take away all of that, underneath you are nothing but blood and bones and vital organs, too. We are all the same. If you pierce us, we all bleed red blood. Even those people in Tennessee who claim to bleed orange. We all bleed red. We may not have the same blood type, but that is science and I am not getting into science. Our blood is still the same. We are the same inside. How we think and how we behave are things we have been taught.

The song in South Pacific says it well, "You have to be carefully taught" to hate someone who isn't like you. If you put wee babes in a room, they will play together. They're not going to look and see someone who is different and say I can't play with you because you are different from me. They will just play. Yes, they may have squabbles because one child is playing with a toy that another child may want, but that is human instinct. The bottom line is they will play together. We need to take a lesson from the children instead of each other and reach out. Hug the next person when they are hurting even if they are different from you. Stop saying the words that are going to hurt. Start saying the words that are going to heal. The words that will bring about compassion and peace. Don't dig a hole and bury your head. Stop clinging to what you think is right, your own people. There is a whole great big wide world out there to explore. People who are different.

No, some of the things people like to eat may not sound appetizing, but you never know till you try it whether or not you will like it. I spent six weeks in South America. My Spanish was very minimal. It took me most of my time with one woman whose English was non-existent and we communicated between us; through our hearts. We learned how to communicate. There may be barriers such as language, but they can be overcome, if you are willing to try. Try using words that break all of those barriers. Words of peace. Words of love. Words of comfort. See how much further you go. Just remember that while sticks and stones may break your bones, those bones will heal. But the words that you say to somebody else, those scars and that pain will be with that person for the rest of their life.

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