



Resilience and Soul Thinking

By Kathy Marshall Emerson, Executive Director
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My grandchildren ages 11 and 14 spent last week with us at the lake. My grandson and I sat on the patio chatting and watching his younger sister playing make-believe on the beach with sticks and shells. He said, "I stopped being able to do that in 6th grade. I hope it lasts longer for her." Don't we all long for those simpler moments? If only that feeling could stay with us for a lifetime.

The simple pleasure of life is really only a thought away. Sydney Banks writes, "When our channel to the soul is open, we live in a more harmonious reality. Such a state involves no effort and nothing we *have* to do. We simply go about our everyday business of living, our actions stemming from compassion, love, and wisdom. This **soul thinking** is always present when we aren't engaged in other types of thinking. Often our negative thinking gets in the way, and we are pulled away from this pure state of thought." Certainly any young girl can frighten herself with thoughts of starting middle school. A child can even have trouble sleeping once that mental tornado is set in motion.

Banks says, "We are very apt to take these [negative] thoughts too seriously and stray from our inner serenity. When our thoughts are in such an impure state, a sort of darkness descends upon us, closing us off to messages from the soul. In this darkness we forget the only way to experience happiness, contentment, and joy is to be connected to our own inner wisdom." (pp. 74-75, "Cleaning out the Clutter," in Carlson & Shield, *Handbook for the Soul*)

Those of us who teach the principles have used many words—original thinking, insights, flow, innate thinking—for what Banks actually calls *soul thinking*. Somehow our own terms may seem to slightly miss the mark in important ways. Innate knowledge "can only be found through an insight from one's own inner wisdom. ... Everyone in the world shares the same innate source of wisdom...." (pp.13, 16-17, *The Missing Link*) In my experience the very root of mental health is connection to the spiritual wisdom Banks describes as *innate wisdom*. (pp. 127, 133) Interestingly most principles teachers refer to innate health although Banks did not use this terminology. It does seem accurate to say that because all human beings have *innate wisdom* it is possible to realize innate mental health if we understand the role *soul thinking* plays.

Soul thinking is an important part of tapping natural resilience and navigating life successfully with ease and grace. Regardless of age or circumstances we never lose the ability to rely on this healthy, natural part of ourselves. Often it is in conversation with someone close to us that we can explore *soul thinking*. Parker Palmer writes, "Our real questions are asked largely in our hearts because it is too risky to ask them in front of one another.... Part of that risk is the embarrassed silence that may greet us if we ask our real questions aloud. But the greater risk is that if we ask a real question, someone will try to give us The Answer! If we are to open up the spiritual dimension of education, we must understand that spiritual questions do not have answers in the way math problems do—and that giving one another The Answer is part of what shuts us down. When people ask these deep questions, they do not want to be saved but simply to be heard; they do not want fixes or formulas but compassion and companionship on the demanding journey called life." (p. 8, *Educational Leadership*, December 1998-January 1999)

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