



# The Way of the Heart or Emotion - The Way of Every Day Beauty

Each of us perceives and receives beauty in our own way. The personal experience of beauty ignites within us the ability to transcend to that something greater than ourselves. This transcendence is the heart of spirituality.

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Spending time in the natural world allows us to slow down and truly experience life in one harmonious moment, where we feel our connection to all things. Let your mind experience the wonder of the moment. Enjoy the beauty of the landscape or go smaller and choose to examine a single flower. Experience the perfection of its design. Listen to your heart, and experience the emotions as they arise. Connect to the soil, the grass, and trees. Feel the breeze as it brushes against your skin. Say to yourself, the perfection of nature is my own perfection.

When I was a child, I grew up on the shores of Lake Sakakawea in North Dakota. There is a small creek that runs the length of the South edge of my hometown. Oftentimes in the spring and summer, you will find children of all ages gathered where the dam forms a small pool, below the larger pool above, just as when I was a child. In this one magnificent place is a world that exists with or without us. Here the wildflowers grow and cattails stand tall in the reeds. Fish swim in the clear water without fear of being caught. Birds of all sizes and colors flit to and fro, chirping their songs. Butterflies float on the breeze, alighting on the still child. Thoughts of wonder about the past, present, and future are discussed here.

When we experience the world as children, the experience is much different. It is filled with peace and wonder. There is beauty in all things, even the occasional snapping turtle, or snake that slithers its way to wherever it chooses. When we are connected to the all of everything, up close and personal, there is no fear. There is no sadness. There is no pain or tears. There is a centered peace that fills our soul with joy.

~ Donna R. Wood

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When we walk down an urban street, we are confronted with something that is not natural to the world – urban sprawl or the concrete jungle. Yet, here too beauty is found. Intermingled among the modern buildings are those that have stood the test of time. Each building rising above the ground built from the soul of the architect. Perhaps there are murals or graffiti art that requires contemplation regarding the soul of the artist. Maybe there is a single flower growing between the cracks on the sidewalk that begs to be asked how or why are you here?

As an adult, I have spent the majority of my time living in the ever-growing urban sprawl along the Red River of the North, in Fargo, North Dakota. In the heart of the city, Downtown, we walk along the streets and avenues surrounded by one hundred year old architecture - strong, sturdy buildings that have withstood fire, storm, and progress. Angelic faces look down on the passersby, with or without acknowledgement. On any given weekend, hundreds of people gather in the heart of the community. Music provided by the street performers is on every corner. When we walk through the crowds of people as observers, we find ourselves connecting to the sights and sounds of the heartbeat of the city.

When seeking beauty as adults, we often have to suspend our beliefs for a moment to make the connection. The more we practice seeking beauty through the suspension of belief, the more anchored our connection is.

The perception of beauty and ugliness are two ends of the same spectrum. The question is where on that spectrum our perception lies. If we only choose to see the ugliness that life has to offer, we may need to work on increasing our perception of beauty, and suspending our belief of ugliness.

You may want to visit an art gallery, an artist's studio, or museum. See the art as though you are seeing it for the first time. Listen to your heart. What emotions does it raise for you? Go deeper. Is there a specific experience in your life that is raising the emotion? Don't be afraid to connect. Feel the emotion and let it naturally process through you, then let it go.

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When we seek to better humanity, we are connecting to a divinity far beyond our own comprehension. From cradle to grave, we are here for one another. Recognizing humanity allows us to understand love in all of its pure forms.

When we seek the beauty in our relationships with others, we overcome the overwhelming sense of aloneness that we experience at various times of life.

We are all spiritual beings having a physical experience that is unique, powerful, and deserving of all good things. When we seek the beauty in others, rather than things that divide us, we experience a transcended relationship with others. We understand that at the core of our existence is a spiritual being longing to love and be loved in return; nothing more, nothing less.

I grew up in a rural region of North Dakota (USA). I was surrounded by the beauty of the Earth, and the beauty of inter-cultural living. My hometown is located on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. I am 100% Caucasian. We were not missionaries. We were not conquerors. My great-grandfather was a homesteader, trying to eke out a living from the land. We were Irish by ancestry, considered mongoloid by colonialism. As a child, my friends were primarily Native American children. I didn't know they were Native American until someone told me. They were my friends, and that was all that mattered. We laughed, cried, played and fought. We grew up together with the same triumphs and failures.

It was in my youth where I grew to understand the underlying similarities outweighed any physical differences between human beings. As an adult, I had the privilege of working with people from all over the world. In this work, I found that we all just want the chance to love and be loved in return.

We all need a sense of security and belonging. The over-arching existential theme is that we all belong to the human race. We have a duty and responsibility to each other to provide that sense of security and belonging, regardless of outward appearance or differences in belief. The way in which we come to the ability to provide that sense of security and belonging is to connect to the Divine Oneness, and recognize that we are all one together. Living soul to soul, or Namaste, will carry us through all things, as an individual, as well as collectively.

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