

Zelda Hall Psychologist and Therapist

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Welcome to Zelda's e-zine

I've been living in Amsterdam for more than 30 years now. Through my work, I've met many people from all corners of the globe. My e-zine provides the opportunity to stay connected with people from past, present and future. Where ever they may be on their life's journey!

What's love got to do with it?

Last week I watched a [BBC news report](#) about baby P. who died at 17 months after horrific treatment at the hands of adults. His grandmother was shown, saying she tried to help but couldn't. It turns out she had started mistreating her own child when he was 6 weeks old. And that she herself came from a violent background.

We're all well aware that a difficult childhood can have a great impact on the course of someone's life. Abuse can affect the DNA of the genes that mediate the stress response and leave us unable to deal with stress effectively.

This means that a person who has suffered abuse as a child is more likely to lose control over their anger in stressful situations. And so the abuse is handed down from one generation to the next.

Licking your offspring can protect them from disease (if you're a rat that is!)

There are many stories of infants in orphanages who have died simply because they were never cuddled and held. As a psychology student in the early 70's, I had to study animal behaviour, which is why I became well acquainted with a white rat and her family. The experiment was terminated when mummy rat bit my fellow researcher and he fainted. I think she preferred women!

In the course of our research, I recall reading about a particularly famous programme of controversial laboratory experiments, carried out in the late fifties by Harry Harlow, which studied the lasting effects of maternal care on baby monkeys. Babies raised with comfortless wire 'surrogate mothers' were psychologically disturbed, compared to babies whose wire 'mothers' were covered with a soft material they could cling to.

In rats, maternal licking and grooming tunes the response of a group of major glands (the HPA axis... if you really want to know!), which controls the amount of natural steroids and hormones they release in the face of a stressful or frightening situation.



Now, I'm not suggesting that you lick your children, unless you ARE a rat of course. But physical affection is clearly important in lowering stress levels in both children and adults.

Great expectations

How often have we heard about the 'unconditional love' that a mother feels for her child? And how many mothers feel a constant guilt about their apparent aberration of not feeling instant love for their child? And let's face it, what about all those babies who bear more than a passing resemblance to Winston Churchill?

My mother said my brother was very wrinkled and red when he emerged. I, of course, was all smooth and pretty! Sibling rivalry from the kick-off in the looks department.

Many new mothers, especially if they have experienced a difficult birth, far from floating about on a pink or blue cloud, may find it quite difficult to bond with their child and find it even more difficult to talk about the feelings they are having.

These days the decision to have a child is one that is preceded by a great deal of brow-clutching and soul searching, creating even more desire for it all to be a positive experience.

Despite the prevailing idea that children bring joy and fulfilment to one's life and that childless people must be less happy than parents, in a well argued [article in New York magazine](#) Jennifer Senior suggests that children more often make their parents unhappy.

So all you mums and dads who sometimes find yourselves wondering if having kids was such a good idea...you're not alone!

Breaking the cycle

Being honest about our conflicting feelings and letting go of the tremendous expectations we have of ourselves as parents is vital.

Dealing with our own feelings of pain and abandonment from the past frees us from the compulsion to give our children something they may not need. And makes us more capable of seeing them and loving them for who they really are.

One of the stumbling blocks in dealing with pain from the past is the tendency to a mistaken loyalty towards our own parents. We make excuses for our parents:

"She didn't know any better."

"He had a very hard life, himself. That's why he beat me to within an inch of mine."

This can be a way of avoiding really feeling.

Forgiveness is important and a lifelong career as a victim is not to be encouraged. But first we have to acknowledge any pain, sadness and anger we may feel. Then we can move on to accepting our parents as the human beings they are. We can get on with our lives and take responsibility for ourselves and our choices.

The poet's take on children...

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, And though they are with you yet they belong not to you. [Kahlil Gibran](#) "The Prophet"

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the goal in schools was to teach children to be happy and to care for other people? In this video [Children full of life](#) you can see how [Toshiro Kanamori](#) teaches children to do just that.



Clients often ask me if it is really necessary to re-examine their childhood. I reply that it might not be necessary. But it tends to happen anyway.

The following story is a young woman's account of how her past suddenly caught up with her.

Just a boy

I was in the Albert Heijn last night, searching for food for dinner. After-work rush hour saw the place swarming with people in the same mind as me. I caught sight of a 5 or 6 year old boy in a hood struggling to keep a large canvas bag from scraping the ground. How adorable, mom or dad let the little tyke carry the shopping bag.

His vision was impaired by his hood; he had to look up at all the passing adults, I presumed, so he wouldn't run into them. He searched the faces of passersby until he found a boy with an AH uniform. The little boy asked the AH boy for the location of an item on the list in his outstretched hand. I couldn't actually hear, his voice was so soft and delicate, I'm guessing that's what happened. The AH boy told the little guy to follow him, he'll lead the way. I watched as the boy and canvas bag disappeared down my aisle.

I was devastated. Quite instantly, a flood of tears tried to take me over. The little boy was alone. My throat tightened and I had to slow my breathing. The little boy was shopping by himself... alone. He couldn't even carry the bag. Something about him looked so odd...it was odd to see such a small boy alone with so much responsibility. He didn't seem scared but he looked too preoccupied for a 6 year old. The tears left my eyes. I stared at the wine bottles in front of me, willing the tears away. I really had to work hard to stop the onrush or I wouldn't make it out of AH.

I made my way to check-out and there he was, the little boy. He was emptying his canvas bag onto the conveyor he could barely reach. I could've taken my place behind him and helped, but I didn't, I went to the adjacent check-out. He scared me. I didn't want to acknowledge he was really alone. I didn't think I could talk to him without crying uncontrollably. It broke my heart to see him doing these adult things.

We were bagging our things at the same time. Again, I could've helped but I was stuck, frozen. I just kept watching him in horror, checking for signs if he was alright. An off-duty checker offered to help him. Again, the sweet whisper of the 6 year-old voice accepting the offer. I followed him outside, he turned right, I was going left. I waited to see, I'm not sure what I waited to see but I waited and released the tears.

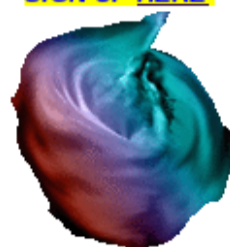
I cried on the way home and when I got there, I continued uncontrollably, with pain in my chest and throat, shaking a little, wondering why I didn't do anything, wondering how he could be all alone.

Trista Mrema

Agenda 2010

Places still available for The Dancing Goddess Workshop

SIGN UP HERE



A celebration of womanhood!

**1-day workshop
7th August
10:00-18:00**

For more information visit my [website](#)

[Unfolding Destiny](#) - Your Life's Purpose
Lecture
30th September
Dublin

[The Wisdom of Dreams](#)
Workshop
10th October
Amsterdam

[The Power of Dreams](#)
Lecture
28th October
London

[De Kracht van Dromen](#)
Workshop
21st November
Amsterdam



The Power of Dreams
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If you have any comments or feedback about my e-zine, please feel free to drop me an email

Interested in 1:1 Therapy or Counselling? [Contact me via email](#) or call 31(0)20-6831892.

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