



Going Through a Pandemic the GIFTED Way

Oh no! I woke up today and realized I was trapped in the Half-Girl story!

For those of you who have been through the Core Gift Facilitator training, you've heard the Half-Girl or Half-Boy story. It's a half-person story, so the gender can be whatever works for you. It's an old, old story that applies to all humans who are in any kind of difficult situation trying to figure out their next move. Pandemic come to mind, anyone?

For those of you who may not have heard the story, here's the short version:

A girl is born. As she grows, she wants to be an adult and do adult things, but everyone is treating her like a little kid. It makes her so mad she starts disrespecting her family and other villagers. Pretty soon everybody is tired of her attitude and they kick her out of the village and tell her not to come back until she figures out who she is and can stop being so angry all the time. She leaves the village, not sure where to go, but keeps walking. The next morning she sees the weirdest thing—it's a girl who looks exactly like her coming towards her. Both wary of each other, neither one wants to be joined with the other person, so they decide to fight to the death. Seems like a logical choice, right? They get so into the fight they don't realize they're tumbling down the path and end up in a lake, still fighting under the water. That's when the magic happens—they become one. Water has a way of doing that according to these old stories. The new girl, now whole, heads back to the village where she is welcomed and recognized as an adult.

There's a lot in this story to think about. But the story gives us three very clear instructions about what to do when you're in a difficult situation (Pandemic, anyone?) and trying to figure out what to do next, no matter who you are.

So here's the three ways for each of us to get through this time:

1. When you get in a difficult situation, go to nature instead of your couch. The Elders kick the girl out of the village into nature. She thinks she's being punished, but that's not why the Elders do it. They know the girl gets two advantages from leaving the village. First, have you ever stared at a lake and felt a calmness coming over you? Have you ever noticed how people walking in a park or on a trail seem to always be smiling when you pass them? Current brain research shows that nature is viral, just like the Coronavirus. But it infects us in a different way. It activates the "contentment" brain pathways in our body and calms us down. Plus, there's another bonus. When we are calm, our brain can come up with more and better ideas than when we're discouraged and stressed out. So making solid plans that actually might work is easier.

So do it:

Get outside. Take a walk or stare at a lake. Then do it again tomorrow, even if you don't feel like it. Focus on taking deep breaths and feel yourself connecting with the awesomeness around you. Get that woo-woo thing going. It won't fix everything, but it increases the chances you're going to feel much better and think clearer. It may sound too good to be true, but your body has never lied to you and never will. Ask it how it feels after being outside.

2. When you get in a difficult situation, you can see new parts of yourself that are worth “becoming.” We've all seen people who 'sorta' look like us. But what if you saw somebody that actually looks EXACTLY like you? And then you realized not only did they look exactly like you but they ARE you? Tell me that wouldn't make you want to go right to bed so you can wake up again and discover it was all a dream. But that's what happens to both the half-girls when they see each other. And rather than meet-up and figure out how to blend together and be more powerful than either of them can be alone, they decide to fight. Good thing they ended up in the water, which has more wisdom in it than either of the girls had in that moment. Older cultures tell us that water calms us down, unifies things, and heals us. And, most importantly, helps us to have a vision of how we are “more” as a result of encountering difficult events in our lives.

Hard times, hope, and happiness aren't mutually exclusive. They are often all bound up together in a messy thing called life. So, to get through difficult times, having a vision of how we've grown is essential so we can balance the difficulty with the goodness that can come out of it—we have something to be grateful for rather than just cope and survive. Some cultures call these new strengths “gifts.” Having a vision of how we're stronger activates the same brain pathways as being in nature. Now we've got a one-two punch of positive energy and contentment.

So do it:

First, pick one of these two questions that you like the best: “How am I stronger as a result of being in this pandemic?” “What is the gift I have received from being in this pandemic?” Second, whatever your answer to the question you chose, pick a person or a place to give that strength or gift. For example, if you have gotten stronger at having compassion for yourself, who in your life needs, right now, to be listened to and shown compassion? If you have received a gift of speaking up for yourself, who in your life could you help to speak up and say what they need? If you have made a solid plan for moving forward, who do you know who is stuck that you could help make a plan for moving forward? The important thing is to give that new strength you found to another person. When you do that, guess what happens? Gratitude for our gifts creates even larger contentment pathways in our brain. That path is becoming more of a road.

3. When you get in a difficult situation, do things that join you with others, not pull you away. Humans have a tendency to hunker down and be alone when we encounter difficult times. We've all felt like that. We may think others don't care what

we're going through, or that they can't understand our situation. But in the story, the girl doesn't hold on to her resentment or hide in embarrassment from being kicked out of the village. She discovers more of herself and goes back to share it with her people right away. She's eager to reconnect and contribute. For those of you who have heard the full version of the Half-Girl story, you know that the village welcomed the girl back—they danced all night and celebrated her return. Although she didn't know it, they were waiting for her to return. The question for you is: "Who is waiting for you to return?"

So do it:

Since we've all been more isolated than usual, we've all had a chance to slow down and have a lot of time to think about our lives and our relationships. It gives us the opportunity to check-in with our hearts and minds and ask ourselves: "Who matters to me the most?" "Who do I really want to make sure I'm more connected to after we all come through this pandemic time?" It could be a parent, a teacher, a friend, somebody you met years ago, a grandparent. Anybody who comes to mind that you know you really want to stay connected with. Pick three people to start with.

When you've had a chance to name the three people you want to stay connected with, reach out. Most importantly, don't just say hello and chat about what's going on. Although it may feel weird, tell them how much they mean to you, and tell them a specific thing you really value about your friendship. Trust us, they're really going to want to hear what you have to say. Everybody loves to be respected and told why they matter to others. If you feel more comfortable writing than talking, send them a text or write them a note. Guess what happens? You've probably caught on by now. Your brain once again rides those very same contentment pathways, which are now becoming a freeway straight to the core of who you are!

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Old stories give us comfort, they remind us others have been in difficult times and have gone on to live their lives. They also remind us that there are some essential truths that help humans get through difficult times. The Half-Girl story is one of those reminder stories. This isn't the first difficult time each of us has encountered, and it's likely not going to be the last. It's just life. But from the Half-Girl story we know that there are at least three benefits buried in the difficulties of a pandemic waiting for us to discover—as long as we don't hunker down and hide. We are, all of us, strong and capable. As long as we decide to be whole, not half!

Time to get out into nature?

Time to give your gifts to another?

Time to reconnect with others?

We hope to see you down the path!