

# Docia Shares a Story

## Being Our True Selves

With so many new experiences to grapple with these days, we sometimes miss what children and adults are thinking, feeling, and saying. Candace Gomber Brey, a wonderful early childhood teacher told me this story and I would like to share it with you. A friend of hers had been to Hawaii and stopped by the center where Candace was working to give her a beautiful tuberose lei. She was pleased and excited and wanted the children to share the pleasure she had felt in receiving it.

“When the children returned from school, I was bubbling over. ‘Look Paul. Come and smell my lei.’ Paul stood with a puzzled look on his face. Reluctantly he shrugged his shoulders, sat down in the empty chair next to me, put his head in my lap and smelled my leg! Sometimes teachers ask you to do the strangest things . . .”

It isn't only children who misinterpret what is being said. My daughter called and told me she was going on a rafter trip. I thought it strange that people were interested at this time of year in bouncing around on swirling, bumpy, ice cold waters on a raft, but I wished her a happy voyage. When she returned she was extolling what she had seen on her “Raptor” trip. She asked me why I was laughing and I told her I thought she had said “rafter” — raptor was a new word to me, not ever having had much experience with the migration of birds.

And here we are today, faced with information we don't really comprehend, bombarded with media messages that trigger multiple responses of fear, worry, and anxiety while at the same time we keep trying to provide an environment for young children that fosters security, love, appreciation, freedom, comfort, and joy in learning and living.

Never has there been a time when we needed to listen more carefully to what children are saying and rarely has it been so difficult. But we don't have to feel inadequate, angry, or guilty when we can't always solve problems or when we don't know what to do. We can keep in mind that we constitute a reservoir of potential strength and that by being our true selves we play an important role as models as we influence children as they grow and develop.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY JEAN BERLFEIN

*Known far and wide for her storytelling, she has traveled extensively as an early childhood consultant, lecturer, and adventurer.*

