

My Mother's Legacy

By Patti Teel
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On February 10th, my mother's light joined the heavens. Her spirit is now free of earthly constraints and I imagine that she sparkles with the radiance of springtime. As March arrives and her favorite season gently unfolds, I'm especially aware of the sights and sounds that thrilled my mom. Every morning I think of her as I lie in bed and listen to the birds greeting the dawn with their beautiful songs—or when I see a hummingbird flutter outside my bedroom window.

Last winter, I was fortunate to have been able to dedicate The Floppy Sleep Game Book to my mom. Now, as springtime arrives, I'd like to share the dedication with you. In doing so, I hope to honor my mother and pass along her legacy—the gift of recognizing and appreciating the wonders of our beautiful Earth.

Jeanette **Grace** Jones.

My mother's middle name is very befitting. Never have I met anyone who is more appreciative of life's small graces. The sound of a bird's song or the soft shade of a blooming rose would stop her in her tracks. "Look," she'd say in awe, "have you ever seen such a glorious shade of yellow?" Alerted to the rose that I'd been oblivious to, I'd admire its delicate beauty. But what really touched my heart was the loveliness of the rose reflected in the glow of my mother's radiant face. In my eyes, my mother's soft beauty rivaled that of the rose, which so enthralled her.

I'm fairly certain that my mother never read a book about "living in the moment," but then, she didn't need to. She never lost the wonder of a child, nor does she long for what most people would consider a grander life. Her flower garden or a newly ripened tomato are the things that bring her joy. My mother has lived a humble life, but it is no less worthy than that of a prophet or a saint. By simply being in her presence, those of us around her will catch a glimpse of the world through her eyes—and see the beauty in what we foolishly think of as "the little things in life." Thank you so much, Mom, for teaching me that the small graces in life are more than enough.

Celebrate the Seasons of Life

Growing up on a farm in Nebraska, my mother and her family were dependent on the cycles of sprouting, growth, fruiting, decaying, dying and then sprouting again. This reassuring cycle taught our ancestors to trust the promise of rebirth and renewal and to honor the process of death and decay. In times past, children helped to plant and harvest crops and were included in the daily life rituals of a community that honored Mother Earth's gifts. But today, most families get their food from the grocery store and are further removed from Mother Earth's important lessons.

As parents, it's up to us to teach our children to value the Earth and to treat every living creature with love, reverence and respect. This type of compassionate awareness and empathy is necessary in order for us to grow individually, and as a planet. Parents can keep a child's inherent sense of wonder alive by sharing the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in. This spring, let the kaleidoscope of Mother Earth's vibrant colors and shapes entice you to celebrate the season with joyous family activities and rituals.

Activities to celebrate spring:

Have a spring scavenger hunt.

Search for signs of spring, such as green buds, a bird's nest, a robin, etc. It's a great idea to repeat the adventure on a regular basis and watch the development and growth.

Fly a kite.

In many parts of our country, the windy days of March are perfect for kite flying.

Bird watching and listening.

Learn to identify birds by sight and by the sound of their songs.

Plant seeds and tend to them.

Whether it's in a pot, a window box, or an entire garden, teaching children to respect the Earth through growing things is one of the greatest treasures you can give them. If you have the space to plant a garden, it teaches children about the seasons, the cycle of plants, and food production.

Observe the tiniest creatures.

Join your children in observing the insects and other creatures that make their home in your garden or yard.

Take a walk in the rain.

Bundle up your kids in their raincoats and boots and celebrate a spring shower with a walk in the rain.

Celebrate the first day of spring. (Vernal Equinox)

Create an annual family ritual to celebrate the first day of spring. This year, the spring equinox falls on March 20th. On this day, there are exactly 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness.

Plant a tree and watch it grow.

Dubbed "The Dream Maker" by People magazine, Patti Teel is a former teacher and the creator of an award winning relaxation audio series for children. Her book, *The Floppy Sleep Game*, gives parents techniques to help their children relax, deal with stress and fall asleep. She is a popular speaker and presents innovative workshops for parents, children, and health professionals. Get R&R tips and sign up for her newsletter at www.pattiteel.com. You can listen to her online radio show at www.timeoutwithpattiteel.com.