

Respecting Parts of Myself
By Nancy Eichhorn
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In the past I've given myself away believing that in return I'd feel loved and safe. I was desperate for a sense of security, and I believed my safety came from someone else, more specifically from a man. I confused love with sex and money—combing all three into one package. I accepted the messages of my youth, the distortions created and accepted from other and Self. I believed that if I expressed any sign of intelligence I offended my man, made him feel inferior, and at all costs the man's ego must be supported, boosted, set on the almighty pedestal—he knows all while I know naught. I gave everything away because I believed it was the only way to survive.

Today I know that it isn't true.

Today I am responsible for me, for my Self, for Nancy, the woman I am today. Whether I have a good day or bad day, it is my choice. I am not victim to happenstance. I am not victim to anyone's power trip or control. I make my choice. I determine my attitude and my wellbeing.

Today I know that my security and my love originate from within, from my connection with Self and my higher power, an entity I choose to call God. I have reclaimed the pieces of my Self and through this long, slow process I admit they haven't always been safe in my hands. I have fallen into old patterns: the abuser comes rooting about though I do my best to lock her out; her buddy, the addict, comes hand-in-hand at times, too. Their nasty dynastic duo has created more havoc in my life than I honestly want to admit today. For years I haven't trusted ME to properly care for my body, to acknowledge my knowledge, to listen to my Spirit and to feel love. Today, though it can still be a struggle, I feel me, I take care of me, I listen to my intuition, and I know that my knowledge can be of service to others. I have something to offer.

Today, I have the opportunity to nurture, protect, love and respect ME, and I have the opportunity to also share parts of my Self, which is totally different than giving my Self away in hopes of meeting some vacuous need. I think that's the power of coming into my Self. I can share Me; I don't have to part myself out any more. I can share my entire entity, the being that I am in my entirety. I am healed and whole. When I offer Me, I offer a loving, graceful, spiritual, intelligent, kind, compassionate, caring, romantic, sensitive, sensual and sexual, witty, hardworking, loyal, industrious, athletic, humorous, beautiful, captivating, creative spontaneous, responsible, child of God. I share one heck of an individual ☺

I've given my body to men, let them have their way with it. And it was with an "it" as I left my body and drifted elsewhere, a strategy I learned early on to avoid feeling the pain of another's abuse. I believe that if I let them do what they wanted, they would love me. I only felt shame.

Today, I choose to share my body, to be physically close to another being, to feel the human connection whether it's a hug when greeting a friend, falling asleep in a dear friend's arms, or making love with my partner. All forms of physical contact are within my domain, my control. And the reasoning isn't to fill an inner need to feel safe and loved; rather, it's to share my feelings of love and joy. My passion is an expression of the life I feel inside. I want to share it because I have it

to give. I want to share it because it creates a ripple effect and love grows and encompasses all around. One smile generates many. One hug creates positive vibrations that impact all in close proximity. Letting a lover gently caress my breast, feeling his hand stroke my cheek as his lips grace mine, settling into an embrace as our bodies meld, our Sprits connect through body and soul, this is my choice, my way of expressing my love. As I share my love, I feel my love. And it's through this Self-expression that I receive another's love. And I have to the right to say . . . *touch me sweetly, tenderly, respond my body with a kind gentleness. Do not expect me to prod or push or distort my body into unnatural contortions to fit your expectation of beauty. My body is soft, curvaceous, full-figured, a woman's body not some child's rail-thin plank board. I am slow, graceful, my pace my own, and if I should choose to push myself, this it is my choice, otherwise treat my body as a cherished temple, a sacred space to always be honored.*

Today I have the opportunity to share my wisdom, not as a know-it-all, better-than-thou, but as part of a community whether it's part of a writing community, a publishing community, a spiritual community. My words, my knowledge, my intuition have space. I have the right to voice what I know and to be heard and valued and respected. My voice. My knowledge. To honor me, as I learn to honor myself, I ask for space to speak, for time to talk without feeling rushed, judged, corrected. I do not have to take on the old role of idiot. I grew up hearing my sister was "the pretty one" and I was the "smart one." I felt like an inferior being, my cognitive abilities eclipsed by a genius older brother and intellectual parents. Combine this with my learning disabilities and well, I believed I was totally ignorant. Past partners have maintained my less-than-inferior self-perception. My work roles, however, challenged that. I've kept myself in the less-than position most of my life. And today I know that I can write, and I can speak, and I can share my wisdom. In fact, I am wise, I am a smart woman. An amazing reality for me to accept. My wisdom helps other people, which is totally God's doing.

My Spirit has been driven underground many times in my life. There have been times when I felt abused, when I felt abandoned, when I felt isolated and alone. When I experienced intense grief with death, the sorrow of unfulfilled dreams. And I have abandoned God. I have blamed him for my mistakes and my inability to take responsibility for my actions and decisions. Today I know that God is with me. I sense his presence each and every day. I know that his light is what gives me life, and as I walk with him my life expands, possibilities I never imagined become reality. I live this incredibly richly blessed life. There are many times I sense his love, and his presence and his grace and I know his energy is part of my body, that his love is my love, and that my energy comes from him, and that it is his grace that allows me to continue despite setbacks, that it is his love that has kept me from answering Death's call, that his light has shown down the darkest alleyways that I've chosen to follow though a kinder, gentler, well lit path was there, too. I have always taken the hard road, the back road, the steepest rockiest terrain, and though grueling, though laborious and back breaking and intense, I clawed my way up and once at the top I felt the sense of success that I lacked in my day-to-day life. I felt as if I achieved something in the midst of all my failure.

Today I know that there is no failure. I may make mistakes, but I am not a failure. I do not need to tackle the hardest, darkest route to earn self-respect. I can walk in God's light, and I can share God's light. I know not everyone is comfortable

with God, with a higher power's presence in our lives. I know they need to believe in their own system, and I know that I do not have to squelch my desires, my passions. I can share my truth in my way, let my voice share the joy I feel when I walk with God and in that light I can also accept their joy as they walk with their higher power, too.