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Don't Look Down!
An Adventure Into the Subconscious
By Sasha Corinne Hirshfield
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I was eight years old in summer camp standing on the high diving board of the swimming pool. My knees felt weak, my heart began to race, and my hands could not let go of the railing. I could hear the counselors telling me to jump, just to let go, they told me, "You will be fine." My hands fell to my sides but my feet did not leave the floor. My body was planted to the bouncing board, and I could have sworn I weighed 500 pounds. All the voices around me were drowned out by the sound of my palpitating heart beat. Tears came to my eyes as I turned around and stepped slowly down the ladder. That was 14 years ago, and the beginning of my ongoing fear of heights.

As I was growing up this fear progressively got worse. It frustrated me that I never wanted to go on a rollercoaster or Ferris wheel. Simple things like going down a steep escalator or standing on a high balcony gave me a similar feeling in the pit of my stomach as the day at the diving board. I had dreams of going skydiving where I felt free and at ease. But when awake, this would never become a reality. Telling myself over and over again that there is nothing to be afraid of and that I knew I would be just fine didn't work. It was time to take another route to try and rid myself of this unnecessary burden. With some skepticism I turned to hypnosis.

Michelle Miller, C.Ht is an advanced clinical hypnotherapist focusing primarily on heart-centered hypnotherapy. Michelle explained to me at the very beginning of our session, that one cannot change a pattern of behavior or problem without reaching the source of its cause. She explained to me that even with something seemingly common like my fear of heights, telling myself not to be afraid was not enough. The only way to cure my fear is to find out where and how it began.

"Hypnosis is a natural and effective way of making contact with the inner subconscious mind; there you will find the source of many of your problems, as well as, a tremendous reservoir of unrecognized potential, knowledge, and inner strength," Michelle stated.

She assured me that the state of hypnosis can be described as very pleasant and relaxing. A very big misconception is that while “going under” one will have no control of his or her actions. This is completely false. The purpose is to reach the subconscious, not the unconscious! I was a bit nervous about beginning the process but soon felt very at ease after I took my shoes off and leaned back on a cozy couch with a warm blanket.

I was told to focus on a point on the ceiling and breathe slowly but deeply. Soothing music played in the background but it was Michelle’s voice that truly relaxed me. I then closed my eyes and the process began. Each individual is taken down a different path during heart-centered hypnosis, one that leads you on a journey slowly back until you reach the point of early childhood. I can’t give away all of Michelle’s secrets but what I can say is being very aware of what she was asking me, my answers were definitely not things that I would have thought of if she asked me half an hour prior. We continued along until I found the point where my fear existed even before the diving board incident.

What I learned, was that the person I am today is not scared of heights, it was the little girl back then.

My mental journey continued and before I knew it an hour had flew by. Michelle brought me back to a more conscious and shall I say less revealing state of mind. I felt extremely rested and relaxed, almost as if a weight had been lifted off my shoulder. She looked at me and asked, “What do you remember most importantly about the whole experience?” I thought to myself, “Where is there a high diving board around here?” I smiled and replied, “I know I will be just fine.”

I haven’t yet made it to a big pool with a high diving board nor do I have the urge to jump on a rollercoaster. However, I can now step out on my sixth floor balcony and enjoy the breathtaking view. I have also stepped down the escalator at the movie theatre without getting those butterflies in the pit of my stomach. I definitely am on my way to getting over my fear of heights.