



## **What Happens When We Wonder?, by Katie Steedly**

When I think about wonder I think about waterfalls, newborn babies, and whales. I think about seeds, snowflakes, and rainbows. I think about lightening, skyscrapers, and silk. Wonder defies description. Wonder often leaves me speechless. Wonder does not happen every day.

What happens when we experience wonder?

People get along. When people are struck with wonder, they generally are not yelling, arguing, fighting, or angry. Wonder brings people together. We all agree that flowers are wonderful. We all agree that ducklings are wonderful. We all agree that coral reefs are wonderful. Butterflies? Wonderful. Chocolate? Wonderful. Sunsets? Wonderful. Wonder provides a moment where we can hold hands, (perhaps) tear up, and find common ground.

The noise of life fades. A silence akin to speechlessness falls when we experience wonder. A gentle hush that is beyond words eases tension. Reflection paints wonderful moments with reverence. Wonder is calm in the chaos of the world. I learned this on the road to Hana in Maui, when I had to be reminded that my iPhone was not as important as the majesty of a volcano. I had to let the noise go and be present to the wonder of the moment.

The best parts of ourselves guide our thoughts and actions. Gratitude, compassion, and understanding happen during wonderful moments. Our interconnectedness, our stories, our dreams, our histories connect us when we allow ourselves to feel wonder: to really see, to really touch, to really taste, and to really hear. Creating and being present to moments of wonder in our lives builds our best selves. We have less time to be less than our potential when we experience wonder. Our sights are set higher.

We are connected to the natural world. Nature is wonder. Glaciers. Fjords. Mangroves. Mountains. Coral Reefs. Oceans. All animals. All plants. All stars and planets and galaxies. There is wonder when we see beauty in all of that, and feel related and interdependent and grateful. Appreciating and respecting the wonder of the natural world creates an environment of protection and stewardship in which future generations will also know wonder in nature.

Miracles can happen. Wonder makes me believe in miracles. Every day is

a miracle. The sun rising. My heart beating. My breath flowing in and out of my lungs. The fact that all that happens with perfection is miraculous. Let me take it a step further. Our capacity to experience awe, for our jaws to drop and for time to stand still, is a miracle. Feeling wonder, and the joy and happiness of it, is a miracle. May we know more, and more, and more wonder.

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