

## She is... Becoming Her Authentic Self

Karen Rider

*“How would your life have been different, if, as a child, there had been a place for you to go to be yourself, where you were free to express all that is beautiful and ugly that you held within you...? Where there were elders to teach you to trust your own becoming—in darkness and in light... Where you could weave together the fabric of your life?”* adapted from the writings of Judith Duerk

For the second time in my life, I am witness to the emergence of an authentic being. My youngest daughter, almost two years old, shows a keen awareness of who she is and what she wants. Her expression of feeling is both beautiful and awesome. Beautiful in the moments she reaches for me, cooing “hold you ma-ma” and hugs me with an intensity that is far too strong for someone so tiny. Awesome in the moments when her emotions go beyond her ability to express herself and all she has in her bursts out in physicality.

Witnessing my baby, Arianna, coming into ownership of her voice is different from what I experienced with my older daughter. Perhaps because I am a more aware parent or maybe it is because I have two girls, I feel like things are happening much faster with Arianna. Her sister, Angelina, was nearly three when I first observed how she expressed herself as a separate sacred being. Angelina is like gently flowing water. She observes before she acts and settles in before she engages. Arianna is all fire! She gets into things before she knows what she’s gotten into!

As a mother, I want to celebrate and support my daughters’ individual journeys to authenticity. Their uniqueness lies in each’s ability to “feel her feelings” and communicate them in her own way. As each girl discovers the quality, rhythm and power of her voice, I (and my spouse) must find ways to teach our daughters how to channel this energy in safe and healthy ways—physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Will I be able to guide my daughters into staying true to her emerging sense of self. How do I teach them to be authentic? Is it possible to teach my daughters to not get caught-up in images of ‘who she thinks she is supposed to be’ in relationship to parents, siblings, peers and even, her self? And, what about later in life, with colleagues, friends or partners? How much do I have to stay out the way while they learn from their mistakes?

What I most want to provide for my daughters is a place where they can go *to be*—where they are welcomed and affirmed, even while they struggle to become who they truly are. In this place, this sacred circle, we gather to share and to be heard, and to *be present* to one another and honor the unfolding of all that is beautiful and ugly in our lives.

Not having had such a sacred space as I grew from girl to woman, I wonder if I can provide this for my daughters. I take it one day at a time. I call upon the women in my life who are friends, mentors and guides. In the company of wise women, my daughters might learn to weave the fabric of their lives and become the authentic beings they were divinely created to be.