The Baby Elephant Syndrome

2 Votes



There is a story about elephants and their owners in Africa. Look at an adult elephant; it can easily uproot huge trees with its trunk; it can knock down a house without much trouble.

When an elephant living in captivity is still a baby, it is tied to a tree with a strong rope or a chain every night. Because it is the nature of elephants to roam free, the baby elephant instinctively tries with all its might to break the rope. But it isn't yet strong enough to do so. Realizing its efforts are of no use, it finally gives up and stops struggling. The baby elephant tries and fails many times, it will never try again for the rest of its life.

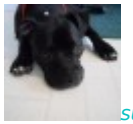
Later, when the elephant is fully grown, it can be tied to a small tree with a thin rope. It could then easily free itself by uprooting the tree or breaking the rope. But because its mind has been conditioned by its prior experiences, it doesn't make the slightest attempt to break free. The powerfully gigantic elephant has limited its present abilities by the limitations of the past—-hence, the Baby Elephant Syndrome.

Human beings are exactly like the elephant except for one thing—We can CHOOSE not to accept the false boundaries and limitations created by the past…

" Don't let your past dictate who you are, but let it be part of who you become."

- Anonymous

ONE THOUGHT ON “THE BABY ELEPHANT SYNDROME”

1. *suehawks* says:

on May 30, 2010 at 9:55 pm

Hello,

I particularly love the elephant metaphor as it pertains to the conditioning we see so prevalently in society. I recently wrote and self published an illustrated poem based on this very subject titled How to Train an Elephant. It’s supposed to have the appearance of a children’s book but it speaks through the voice of an adult. I thought you might be interested… (if you would like to read the whole poem please feel free to email or ping back with that request. It was written with the intention of being experienced as spoken word.)

Authored and Illustrated by: Sue Hawks

How to Train an Elephant is a beautifully illustrated poem. The inspiration came from the endeavors of elephants captured in infancy and therefore trained to perform in circuses and whatever other unnatural settings these poor creatures are forced into for the sake of profit. As the captured elephants grow into massive beasts, they have no concept of their latent power and subsequently all resign to lives of slavery at the hands of meager men and women. This conditioning is known as “baby elephant syndrome.”

I believe, as do so many others, that this plight is not exclusive to our friends the elephants, and is a strong metaphor for the mental conditioning of the human race. We too are great and grand creatures capable of amazing feats, yet we are shackled by the beliefs that had been poured into us from childhood on. This poem is about this plight and our hopeful escape.

Below is an excerpt.

“…Sulfuric popcorn

anointed the stairs

the way it always

does at county fairs.

But there

stood an elephant 50 hands high

the whole time some idiot

marked up the sky.

And my my my

did the whole crowd wonder

just how he would land.

While from my distant bleacher

I simply reached out my hand

toward the elephant's ear,

praying she could hear

that I

understand.

For I too

as a baby was tied to

some maybes,

and some days,

and no ways,

and just who do you think you are,

eh's?

And

shut ups,

to my cut ups,

and dry heaves

turned to hiccups…"

How to Train an Elephant is 31 pages, with 17 beautiful and colorful illustrations of elephants in all states and stages of life.

You can buy How to Train an Elephant in paperback from Lulu.com for only $23.00. I make about $2 for every book sold, the rest is the cost of publishing.

Support independent publishing: Buy this book on Lulu @ http://www.lulu.com/commerce/index.php?fBuyContent=8563954