

Rosebud

Once upon a time...

...there was a little girl called Rosebud who felt decidedly cross. She had been sick in bed for a whole week and now that she was up and about again, everything seemed difficult, as if the whole world was against her. She felt tired, irritable, and crosser and crosser as the day went on.

"I hate everything!" she began to grumble. "I hate the world!...I hate everybody!...I hate myself!...I hate everything!" And her mood became blacker and blacker, and her world bleaker and bleaker.

Finally, as she was about to burst with frustration she broke away from the chores she was supposed to be doing, crying "I DON'T CARE ANYMORE! I HATE EVERYTHING!" And she began to walk.

She didn't know where she was going at first, she just walked away, and away and away. Guilty thoughts about what she should have been doing followed her for a while, but she chased them away, saying: "Go away and LEAVE ME ALONE!"

"But we're just doing this for your own good!" the guilty thoughts would say. They were persistent.

"Leave me BE!" she finally began to wail, collapsing in a heap. The guilty thoughts must have felt guilty for upsetting her so, because they decided to go back and leave her to herself.

After a while she felt herself to be finally in a quiet place. She got up again and walked on. The path grew narrower and climbed ever upward. Up ahead she realised her destination was the top of the tallest ridge in her county, and she felt buoyed by the anticipation of the view. With each step she felt less burdened by her hostile environment.

Soon she was joined on her walk by her animal friends: Willie the Wombat, Kanga and Joey, and Cuddles the Wise Bear. She didn't mind them coming too, as they were good listeners and never asked her to do anything she didn't want to do.

It wasn't long before Rosebud and her animal friends reached the top of the ridge. The view was exquisitely beautiful - on one side lay the river valley and the town from which she had come, on the other, a narrow belt of green forest met the vast blue ocean, and a yellow strip of sandy beach tickled their borders.

Rosebud sat...

After a while she said to the others: "I still feel GRRR! I wish I could feel something else!"

Cuddles the Wise Bear asked, "What made you walk away from your chores?"

"I hate everything. I hate everybody. I hate myself," she replied, with more sadness than anger now. She began to cry and the animals formed a big group hug around her and stroked her hair.

"It's OK, Rosebud. It's OK, to hate everything. And everybody, and yourself," they whispered.

"Well, I don't hate all of myself," she conceded. "I like the part of myself that took me away on this walk."

"And, and I don't hate Everybody and Everything," she said. "I don't hate Nature and the Earth, and I don't hate you animals, or the other animals for that matter. It's just people I hate."

"I see," said Cuddles the Wise Bear. His big brown eyes twinkled and we all know something good is cooking when that happens... Rosebud and the others waited. You can't rush Cuddles the Wise Bear.

Then, with a slow blink, the Wise Bear asked, "Rosebud, do you know where people came from?"

"Well...no...not really," she said.

"Well a long time ago there was a tribe of ancient peoples known as the Rainbow people. This tribe lived in a fertile valley not unlike the one we see below us, except in those days they were the only people in the county and numbered a total of thirty.

These were such ancient peoples that they had not yet learned to speak in words. They gathered food and made light clothes and shelters for themselves, and several generations: grandparents, parents and children of a few families in the tribe lived harmoniously.

Not that they never got upset. Of course, life being as untamable as ever, there were numerous frustrations, fears and sadnesses for the tribe members to endure. But they were a close tribe. They had rituals.

At the end of each day, as the sun set, they would gather in a circle around a fire, and begin a rhythmic chanting. Although the tribe had no words, they had lots of sounds, and lots of dances. But the most important part of this nightly rite was that each member of the tribe would have a turn, in the midst of the rhythm circle, to dance and sound their day. And the tribe would echo it back.

Now if one had had a good day, one would jump and shout or skip and the whole tribe would join in one's frivolity. If one had an angry, frustrating day, one could stomp, scream, and the tribe would echo with more stomps and screams. If one was sad, one could wail and all would wail. And if one was frightened, all would shiver and quiver back. After so much skipping, crying, quivering and stomping the people of the tribe considered their emotions were no longer owned by them, but by the whole tribe, and so they were free to feel something different the next day. In fact, once this ritual had been performed it didn't occur to them that they should still hang on to any particular emotion except contentment and sleep, as they cuddled up close for the night."

"What a beautiful ritual," said Rosebud. "But where did it go, what happened?"

"Well, gradually, as people learned to use language, they would start asking angry people, "Why are you angry?" "Who are you angry with?" "What is the anger about?" And dozens of other questions would begin from each answer. The people became so caught up in their stories and dramas about where, why, whom and how, that they forgot to dance and shout and the whole ritual was forgotten.

It only remains as a vestigial greeting: "How are you?" which is not even meant to be answered most of the time."

"What a pity" said Rosebud.

"The worst part being," said Cuddles the Wise Bear, "that people now think they own an emotion once it visits them, and they attach it to things and people around them so that they will be sure to find it again in the morning."

"You mean, like my: I hate everyone, everything and myself?" gasped Rosebud suddenly.

"Yes, Rosebud, little one."

"But that's how I felt," she said, confused. "I hate everything! I hate everybody! I hate..."

"Exactly - simply: I hate," said the Bear.

"Oh, I see..."

"Now, let's get back to basics, even further. What is: I hate?" he asked.

She closed her eyes and felt the feeling in its raw essence still warm within her.

"Grrr! Grrrr!! Grrrrr!!!" she began to stomp, and the "I hate" became a rhythm in her whole body.

The others followed her around in a small circle. all echoing "Grrr! Grrrr!! Grrrrr!!!" Stomp. Stomp.

And as she stomped and raged she took in the ocean and its pounding waves... and the river with its swift currents... and the ridge with its rocky boulders. She took in her stomping pals. She took in all those "people" down there in the valley she "hated". She took in the millions of sad, angry, frightened people who lost their precious ritual because they got caught up in their words, and who thought they owned their emotions instead of letting them loose at the end of each day. She understood...

And soon she was in a cosy group hug with her animal pals with grateful tears in her eyes. She looked at Cuddles the Wise Bear.

"One day, when I grow up, I'm going to join a group of people to be a tribe just like the Rainbow people," she said. Their eyes sparkled together.

And..... She DID.



The Stories that have visited me...