

Maribeth Poole Life Change Story

I am: Boring. I am: No Big Deal. I am: Tofu.

This is the image that I had of myself for the larger part of my life no matter what pep talks of truth I gave myself. And out of my fear of having this confirmed, I preferred to be reclusive, keeping this image in place. Growing up in a boarding school with hundreds of other children, I was just one small, insignificant child. Coming to America, I was just a backwards, socially inept misfit. Why would I put myself in any kind of a spotlight where I would be ridiculed, or overlooked? I sadly missed out on great opportunities. I missed meeting several authors and speakers I held in high regard because I believed it would be the same as a regular person off the street wanting audience with the president! How silly would that be?



I was not able to truly bond or love.

I had a disconnect button in my heart that got triggered when I left a person, even a friend. I felt like the texture of my soul was smoothly oiled glass, connected as much as possible with whomever I was with, but sliding off as I left them. In high school I was tormented by the biblical question, “How can you love God, who you do not see, when you do not love your brother, whom you do see?” I was supposed to be a good Christian, and yet was uncertain if I knew how to love at all! In desperation and despair I got up the nerve to voice my turmoil to a teacher. His unhelpful response was “I know you love your brother. You’d miss him if he was killed, wouldn’t you?” I thought I’d miss him, and yet we had not bonded well at boarding school so I wondered how much I would miss him. I sunk deeper into my inner sense of guilt and strengthened my determination to hide my self away from others.

I was aware of the chronic ache of loneliness, desiring a soul companion yet unable to attain or keep one if I was to find the person. Many people have best friends. I like people. And some people I really enjoy. But it wasn’t until I was in my 30’s that I deeply connected with a friend. After years of enjoyment of this friendship, it came to a surprising end. I was thrown into the most intense emotional pain that I could ever recall. One of the swirling emotions within me was confusion. What was this about? I had a history of connecting with people and then due to being uprooted again, disconnecting. It had never bothered me before to move on from one relationship to another.

I would evaluate myself as *quite responsible and independent. A nice person.* Committed to *doing the right thing.* There is no doubt in my mind that I was *in God’s family!* Yep, and even a “good Christian” from all outside appearances, with a great resume. Missionary parents, Christian schooling up through high school, Bible College, Seminary, Short term missionary, Christian counselor. And yet life was more of a chore and unfulfilling drudgery rather than joyful. Reading my Bible was not much better than reading a science textbook. Praying was an empty one-way conversation with my voicing complaints and requests for an easier life. Fasting? Well, giving up a meal or more was an experience of useless deprivation except for a slight sense of pride in my

religiosity. I mostly maintained beautifully in life. It was at least important that I looked nice and godly to people so they would like me.

THEN our Eternal Father, who is committed to complete the good work He has begun in me, merged my path with Shepherd's House. Included in this package deal, I was gifted with the challenge of helping to write The Life Model. Light bulbs of understanding were turned on. Not for the mere sake of further understanding. But for the purpose of freeing me up to continue my process of growth into the fullness of God's original blueprint when He designed me.

I was introduced to the amazing research that has been done in the past 10 – 15 years regarding the development of the emotional brain. What a remarkable process our Creator developed. He had a plan that, ideally, would correlate with being made in His image. To some degree, we are made in our earthly parent's image. We are designed to be creatures of JOY. In the formative months of life, we are to be experiencing that we are delightful. We are sparkles in the eyes of others. Research shows that what we experience during this time frame, and then to some degree throughout life, is being bio-chemically reproduced within our brains! Unfortunately, due to circumstances for which I am too limited to be the judge, I had downloaded a sense of being unimportant. It was not due to my perceived lack of faith that this image persisted. It was a physical impact on my life from living in a flawed world.

Gradually, but obviously, I am learning that I am not boring. My soul and heart are not the color and consistency of tofu, as I previously believed! Through what I was learning from the scientific community, I was ushered into a new paradigm of learning to recognize the true design that Creator God wove into me, knitting aspects of His image into my very fiber. As I learn to receive the messages from those who see me with the eyes of heaven, I am delighted to get to know a *colorful garden*. I am enjoying the discoveries of what this looks like as I live out this *unique flair*.

One day while studying The Developing Mind by Daniel Siegel, I came upon a description of me! I was reading about attachment patterns, specifically the “dismissive attachment pattern”. He even used an example of children raised in an institution! I learned the reason I am easily able to slide out of a soul connection with others, even though it contradicts my deep desire. It is not that I am “a Bad Christian.” Yes, I did have trouble living the great commandment of loving our neighbors as ourselves. Worse, I even slid easily away from our God. These flaws, along with my inability to bond well, are more of a reflection of my growing up in a dismissive attachment pattern. Gaining this understanding, along with incorporating what I increasingly appreciate of how God desires us to mature, has given me something concrete to be intentionally working on changing.

And the excruciating pain I was overwhelmed with when losing my close friend? I had actually bonded and it was appropriate for me to hurt since we had not been designed by God to undergo separation in relationships! I have now gained tools to help me “roughen up my heart” into more of a Velcro consistency, than smooth glass. I am moving in the

direction of an *earned secure attachment pattern*. Learning to stay in the love that I receive from others as well as the love I have for others.

There is a sequence in which nature lives and develops. And there is a sequence within human development, that when followed will result in an individual living life responsibly and joyfully. But life doesn't go so smoothly when the sequence gets out of order. Like when children are forced to do tasks that are beyond their appropriate maturity level. A child may be able to carry the task out, but the pay off is not a good one. The task of making a bed is great. Yet if a child learns to do so under fear of punishment if not made perfectly, then the child never experiences the thrill of victory in the accomplishment. When the stakes of fear are too high, the task is associated with the fear rather than satisfaction.

I had learned inappropriately well how to take care of myself by age 5, when heading off to boarding school. And what I didn't know, I learned quickly! I was outwardly very independent but inwardly fearful and drained by the pressure and the lack of relationships to help me in the growing up process. This "lack of rejoicing" in all things was not a reflection of my being a fake, as I feared. It is more of a reflection that I'd grown to be overly responsible out of fear of failure. Much of my maturity was a pseudo-maturity due to springing from fear rather than from a fountain of the life-giving joy that comes from appropriate accomplishments in the process of development!

I am intentionally in the delightful process of *learning to have joy* poured into my soul's foundation from our God as well as from people. I am in the process of learning to appropriately *unburden myself from responsibilities that are not mine* to carry. Learning what it takes to thrive. Receiving life from our God as well as those He generously brings into my life. Growing up into my own fullness. Growing in joy, peace and grace. In addition, I am continuing to enjoy helping others on their unique journeys into fullness of life! Deprivation is life robbing but...life is good.