

The Storying Project, a Sparkle Stories Workshop

Elisabeth Simard – Check your heart before responding.



David:

I think that that is something that we're really smart when we're little kids, that we have a fear, there's something that's an impediment, something's in our way, and it's this fear, so we need to deal with it, and so you can do research into it through this story; meditating on the story, really sitting with it, imagining it, practice it.

David:

Hi there. This is David, and welcome to The Storying Project, a Sparkle Stories workshop. We are so glad you've come to visit this podcast where we delve into the process of creating a Sparkle Story. What you are going to hear is a conversation between me, our chief storyteller here at Sparkle, and a special guest. Our guests are people from all walks. Some you may know, and others you might not, but all are conscious of the stories we tell our children and their impact.

I ask all of our guests, "What do you think children need to hear right now?" And we have a conversation that will ultimately lead to a produced audio story for children. We will share a bit of that story here after the conversation. Today, David will collaborate with Elisabeth Simard. As well as being the mother of three, Elisabeth Simard is a certified Simplicity Parenting Family Life coach and the author of *Vivre Simplement, Living Simply*. She is also the wise and generous voice behind her website and Instagram account, *rubancassette*, where she shares her inspirations on living a simple life and conscious parenting. And yes, being French Canadian, she does all of this in both French and English. Thank you for joining us, and we hope you enjoy the conversation and the process. And be sure to listen for a special message from Lisabeth of Sparkle Stories at the very end. Now here's our conversation.

David:

Elisabeth Simard, good morning. How are you?

Elisabeth:

I am good, thank you. How are you?

David:

I'm doing really well. It's a brisk day today, and so I'm luckily sitting in a very warm closet, so it feels very comfortable.

Elisabeth:

It's very cold here, too. Minus 20.

David:

Well, let's talk about that. Let's talk about where you are. So Quebec City, I'm very curious about personally for you when describing Quebec City and the markings it has on your heart, what comes to mind? How do you want to describe your hometown?

Elisabeth:

I just moved out of the old part of the city last year, so I had all my kids in the heart of Quebec City. So I feel a strong connection with this place because I feel like we were part of the heart of the city. My kids run around those streets that are now mostly for tourists, but I feel like we were part of it, and it's still is.

David:

Now, you use the word heart. I'm really taken with that, and I'm picturing this golden heart, as you say it. And I'm wondering, do you have any particular images that come to mind either of when you were little or taking your children there? When you say heart, what do you see in old Quebec City?

Elisabeth:

Mostly, I feel warm. The old houses are all in warm stones and bricks and it's beautiful. The streets are all paved. It feels like old Boston a bit, but it's less reddish. The bricks are more red in old Boston. It's more like stones here. But I didn't grow up in Quebec City. I was in the suburbia area in another town, but very close. And we didn't go often in the old part. It was very special for us. It wasn't part of our daily life. We were not part of the old Quebec City when I was young. So the fact that I was living there in my adulthood and the fact that I was becoming a mother in this part of the city felt very special to me.

David:

Can you remember when you were young and coming into the old part of Quebec City, and were there particular places that felt uniquely magical in all the world coming in to town that you would visit?

Elisabeth:

Yeah. There's many places in the old Quebec City that you have historical objects, you have real cannons that were used in the battles, in the great field. I don't know how to say it in English, the battle field. So every now and then when you walk around, you come across a huge cannon and cannon balls and you can climb on it and it feels so special to just have this in your city. And I never felt like it was associated with war. It was just part of our culture and the beauty of our city? So it wasn't a negative feeling.

David:

Isn't that something though, because so many in... you go to any town and inevitably you're going to find some monument, statue, even something as straightforward as a cannon, and yet children manage to come in and level it in a way, transform it into something that you play on, that you marvel at. I love that quality.

Elisabeth:

Yeah. That's it. Because children, they have this capacity to live in the present moment. When they see that, they don't use all this history and this scary stuff to just go back there, they just... well, this is great. So I can be a pirate and I can climb on it and I can play. So it's amazing.

David:

I have a question about that, because that is part of your expertise is presence, is consciousness, with your book and with your podcast and with your coaching and in your teaching and at home, you clearly use simplicity and presence and consciousness. And I'm wondering, can you track that back to your childhood at all around the way in which you were parented or not parented? I'm just wondering if you can see a moment in your life, in your childhood where the notion of presence may have germinated that was waiting for you. Yes, tell me.

Elisabeth:

When I was a kid, me and my friend, Emily, we had this big rock in a little wood near my house, and it was our magic rock. It was kind of a small, maybe one meter big. It wasn't that big, but it was our rock. And we would meet there every now and then really, really early in the morning. And we really felt like this was a magical place. And we climbed on it and we made promises to each other to always respect each other no matter what happens. Often we were starting our day with this kind of promises to each other, and then just start playing and imagining all those fairies and everything that just... These memories are very, very clear and present in my heart. It was those moments when you're a kid and you go play for 20 minutes in the woods, it feels like a whole day. This amplifies everything. So this is what presence means to me in some way.

David:

Oh, I totally agree. I think it's a wonderful image for presence. And what I particularly love about it, or one of the ways in which I love it is, you ritualized it with a commitment between the parties, the players. The two of you made a commitment to each other to treat each other a certain way. You created a container almost, and then it was a safe space that you could exercise your play. How did you know to do that? That was just something that was built into your relationship?

Elisabeth:

Yeah. It just came up to us through play. I don't even know. We were not watching TVs, not a lot of outside influences when I was a kid. I'm a kid from early eighties, so I was kind of free outside most of the days, and my friends too. So we just came up with that through imagination and presence.

David:

Organically. Well, that makes me wonder if you can think back to those days or earlier, books that you may have read, or stories that you encountered in any media that impressed you, that mean something to you to this day. Can you think of any in particular that are coming to mind?

Elisabeth:

Yes, I do. I have two stories that are coming up to me right now, but they're kind of scary. And I didn't keep a really nice memory with, but they were really present.

David:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Do you feel comfortable describing one of them? Grown ups are listening to this, so I think we're solid.

Elisabeth:

Yeah. Okay. Well, my kids wants to hear it.

David:

Sure. Go ahead.

Elisabeth:

Yeah. I remember one book. It's a Walt Disney book and it's about... I think it's called Tartan and the Magical Cauldron, something like that.

David:

Oh, I'm not familiar with this. I'm excited to hear about it though.

Elisabeth:

And it's been a while, but I remember it's the story of a young boy who encounter a witch and she's trying to get power to be young, or to have some things for herself, very ego-centric. And I remember Tartan, I think the boy was trying to steal the cauldron to create magical potions to help, but I don't remember exactly what it was. But the story was really around the witch and she was trying to kill the young pig. The boy had a pig. It was his pet and she was trying to get it and put it in the cauldron. And I remember I read this book a lot. I don't know why, because I was a kid with a lot of fears around... I had a lot of imagination, so I had a lot of fears around witches and the darkness and going to sleep at night was terrible to me, so I don't know why I had this book, but I remember it very clearly.

David:

It makes sense to me. I think that that is something that we're really smart when we're little kids, that we have a fear. There's something that's an impediment, some things in our way and it's this fear, so we need to deal with it. And so you can do research into it through the story, meditating on the story, really sitting with it, imagining it and practicing. And if you were to be maybe a little bit more specific of what... or just an interpretation, what fear do you think this witch was helping you with?

Elisabeth:

I think she was helping with the fear of the unknown. Just trusting life and just trusting my inner strength, things which I didn't think I had that much when I was a kid. I was very, very shy. I was kind of a loner kid. I would never talk to you. I would never imagine I would do this kind of work or project if you told me that when I was a kid.

David:

Well, I think that's genius. And I wonder, is that a part of your practice as a teacher and as a parent in term, because children are fearful, they all are. To a certain extent, that's part of growing up is the unknown because they don't know it. And is that part of your conscious parenting is helping them with their fears?

Elisabeth:

Yeah, it's part of it too. And the big piece for me around fear is getting to know my own fears and how they trigger. They are the root of all my triggers. And if I know my fears and I know how they play inside me and how they play when I interact with my kids, I feel like my kids will unconsciously know more about their own fear and about how they play inside them, and how they can become their superpower and how they can... So anyway, a big part of it is entering the now, and we're trying to... I have one of my kids, I have three boys, one of them is an over-thinker. I don't want to label him, but he thinks a lot. So going to sleep is very... it's taking a long time and Sparkle Stories are helping a lot for him.

And part of what we do together is practicing entering the now, and practicing emptying the mind. So sometimes all those thoughts are related to his own fears, but sometimes they are not. But when they are related to fear, so we can explore that and see if it's important in the present moment, or is it something to the future so it doesn't exist. And so it's a big part of my parenting. But not in a conventional way, not like fears of... I had fears for them like they're going to hurt themselves or something like that. But I'm trying to understand them and see that they are mine and they are not theirs. And I feel like it's mostly how those fears are influencing the way we are.

David:

It's so true. It really is remarkable to see how our fears, especially those growing up, are almost like sculptors for who we become, and this young Elisabeth researching witches just to figure out what's their motivation here, how do they tick because they're using great power for themselves, keep eternal youth, whatever it is. And that unknown stayed with you, and now you get to use that awareness of your own fears as a professional and as a parent. And I'm wondering, what kind of message do children need to hear right now?

Elisabeth:

I really feel that the kids today need to know that adults are owning their own things. As an adult, I'm going to take care of my inner landscape and I'm going to take care of my consciousness, and I'm going to take care of my healing, so I'm not going to put it on you. So if I react, or if I say something that is not conscious or is not related to the situation I'm going to take ownership of that. I'm not going to put it on you. So I think that kids need to hear that adults are taking their real responsibility in front of them.

David:

Which is what I heard you just say, it's that you almost did an inventory. You did a thorough investigation of your own fear and recognize, the fear that I have right now for my children is different than the fear I have for myself that I've brought with me. And so what would that look like in practice? We'll get to playing with that in the form of a story, but a day-to-day practice you with your children or you as a teacher of parents, what would you encourage the adults to do?

Elisabeth:

In a day-to-day practice, I suggest that when you feel trigger to take note of it, and then later when the waves goes to shore and go back to the ocean and everything is okay, go back to that trigger and understand where it comes from inside of you, because all the triggers comes from inside us. Yes, something on the outside can inflame it, but it's already there. So if you had a trigger, you can go to the root of it by just being curious, meditating on it, and just going to the root. Why am I scared of, because it's almost always related to a fear that it's inside us. It can be a fear of not being enough or not being a good parent or a fear of something happening to our kid. But it's almost always linked to a fear that we have. Well, sometimes it's from society, but sometimes it comes from our childhood.

David:

Yeah. Now that investigation, when you're taking a pause as a grownup and before you react and you just want to know the source of something, is it a bodily investigation? Are you looking for it in your body?

Elisabeth:

It's part of it. It's important, I feel to become aware of the body messages of that. So it can be informative about what fear it is or just to become more conscious of before you get triggered, you kind of feel it in your body. So you can take your pause and not react to your kid because you feel like it's coming up. So yeah, it's part of it, but I also... you feel it in your body, you take note of it, but you can also see the train of thoughts that is going up. When it's starting, it's like a machine that goes... The spinning thoughts are very informative to know about the triggers and the root.

David:

I'm getting so many really wonderful images. I really feel like we should... Let's see if we can pull a story out of this. And I'm just going to say a few things that are coming to mind, and I wonder which ones resonate with you, and that might be where we can begin this. But you talked about the ocean and you talked about the waves hitting the land. I could see that really clearly. And then I could see a ship. And then when you were talking about this investigation including the body, but also just the images and the thoughts that come in quickly, and just being able to pause and almost map them, I kept seeing an explorer on a ship, that kind of thing. Does that mean anything to you? Do you have a personal interest in those sorts of stories?

Elisabeth:

Yeah. I love adventures. My kids are really into pirates right now. It's really present in our home right now.

David:

So your kids are interested... Is it pulling on you right now? Does that feel like we could take up a pirate story?

Elisabeth:

Yeah.

David:

Okay. All right. Let's tell a pirate story.

Elisabeth:

I'm not a storyteller, but yeah.

David:

Well, like you would probably say to parents and other teachers, whenever they say, I'm not something, you probably want to tell them why they are, and so I have that with stories. I think we tell stories all the time, all day long. They may not begin with once upon a time and they may not end very elegantly, but if we take that judgment of our stories away, oh boy, that's all we do. We just tell stories all day long.

Elisabeth:

Yeah. And just the train of thoughts that comes into your head when you're triggered, it's a story.

David:

Oh, that's where this story begins. Perfect. So that's a very powerful image for me. I'm very excited about that personally. So let's find at least one of our main characters. Who is being triggered?

Elisabeth:

Well, the first image that comes to mind is a captain holding a map. But when he is triggered, he is transforming, he is becoming someone else.

David:

When he's triggered-

Elisabeth:

Oh my God, a tiger.

David:

A tiger.

Elisabeth:

With teeth and claws.

David:

Teeth and claws becomes a tiger. Oh my. And that's terrifying. So here we have a tiger on the ship. So the captain when triggered becomes a tiger. And so now let's give this captain someone to interact with who actually triggers him. So is this a member of the crew? Is this a visitor to the ship? Is this a family member?

Elisabeth:

I feel like it could be a part of his team, close to him, working every day, long trips.

David:

Great. Yes. Someone he sees every day. And so I'm just going to give you a few options. Could this be the steering master who says where we go, the bosun is the one that's in charge of all the gear and all the stuff, which there's a lot on a pirate ship, could be the cook, could be the person feeding everybody that seems to be registering with you?

Elisabeth:

No, the guy with the stuff.

David:

Okay, great. Bosun. Let's go with the bosun. I love the bosun. I think it's such a fabulous position on the ship. Now, do you think that the bosun... All right, let's investigate the bosun for a moment, dealing with all the stuff. Any particular images come to mind to give us a hint on this character?

Elisabeth:

I see a sensitive guy trying his best, but overwhelmed with stuff.

David:

Yeah. There's a lot.

Elisabeth:

Yeah.

David:

There's a lot to really cover. And this might be a particularly difficult voyage. There may be added stuff to deal with.

Elisabeth:

Well, I feel like in the adventure, there can be something that's happening to the whole crew.

David:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). I'm feeling a lot of empathy towards these two. It's a big deal. It's a tough gig. And so something needs to happen. And so when you work with adults or children for that matter, sometimes the hardest thing is to just pause to take a moment. How do you encourage them to remember to do that?

Elisabeth:

I call it the micro pause or the sacred pause, and I encourage people, kids and adults to just put one hand on their hearts. That's it. I'm sorry, but I have this strong image of warm tea brought to the captain and the bosun to just take a pause.

David:

Who brought the tea?

Elisabeth:

The cook.

David:

The cook brought the tea. Let's take a moment to investigate the cook, and then I think we have our story. Picture the cook for me.

Elisabeth:

I want to put a lady in the story, but it's not a lady in my mind, but I want to.

David:

Oh, you want to. So what's in your mind? Let's start with that.

Elisabeth:

The first image I have is a cook. It's a young boy who is the cook brought tea, but I feel like it's lacking some ladies on this boat too.

David:

Oh, this story is not written. They can all be ladies. We have power over that. But for us to really swing authentically with the story, let's just go with the images that we're working with and then we can-

Elisabeth:

I see a young man, just really young, but an old soul, just really present, just so happy to be a cook, just chop veggies and offering nurture and nourishment. So he's very present, speaks slowly, just warm person, but young. The newbie on the boat, nobody know him.

David:

There's something about his past that I feel like would do us well to discover. Before he was on this ship, where was he?

Elisabeth:

At home.

David:

At home. And with a mother and a father?

Elisabeth:

A mother.

David:

A mother. Okay. And how was he raised?

Elisabeth:

He has this great relationship with his mother on a human-to-human level. And their life is simple. They had their worries. The father is not there. But because of this relationship between him and his mother, they see each other. They're the same level in their interactions because of that. He has this kind of wholeness in him, so he's just really grounded. He see the others when they decided to go on an adventure of his home.

David:

And brought that simplicity that you talked about from your own youth of not distracted by lots of media or anything like that. Just focused on playing, and in simplicity and in that consciousness able to create a really powerful bond with a friend and some really meaningful play and interaction around this rock. And so that bubbles out, and this relationship between this boy and his mother and the foundation that's there, he's able to bring that almost like a magic spell like a witch and actually transform an entire ship.

Elisabeth:

He's so full of this presence, of this warmth because he had it during his youth, so he embodies that now. It's nature.

David:

Yeah. We have a story. That's really great. Thank you for that. That was really very calming to tell a story with you.

Elisabeth:

Oh great.

David:

Yeah. No, I'm really grateful for that. Elisabeth people can get your book and it is called Living Simply; Getting Out of Modern Chaos and Enjoying a Smoother Life, which I feel like is a version of the story we just told.

Elisabeth:

Yeah.

David:

Yeah. And you are trained in conscious parenting coaching method which is a part of... can you pronounce her name for me?

Elisabeth:

Dr. Shefali Tsabary.

David:

Yes. Dr. Shefali Tsabary. And how can people find you if they want to learn more about you and your work?

Elisabeth:

I have a website where people can see everything that I offer, find my podcast and my book. And I'm writing another book right now, so it's in French. But I'm mostly active on Instagram. This is really where I share every day examples of what I called conscious simplicity. And it's really embedded in our family life. So this is really important for me. You go from all of those ideas and great wisdom teachings, but you embody them in your everyday life, in every area of your family life. So on Instagram, I share a lot to just give example and help people get there. If they cannot take my programs, they just have a lot of thing there that they can...

David:

Yes, I completely agree. I encourage everyone to find you there. And we will have links to Instagram as well as to all the other places that they can find you and get your book and eagerly anticipate the next book. So thank you, Elisabeth, for this time. This has been really lovely.

Elisabeth:

Thank you, David. It was great.

David:

All right. Okay. Bye-bye.

Hey there, David here with a little bit of the story that we came up with from this conversation. It occurred to us after our time with Elisabeth, that the story actually sounded a lot like something that could happen with a character from our Windward Ho! crew, so I decided to do a special episode of Windward Ho! featuring Fiona Murphy, the ship's doctor. Enjoy.

A pause before T. Fiona Murphy, nine year old daughter of an herbalist mother and ex fishermen father in Kinsale, Ireland sat in a pirate ship's brig and shook her head. She had made some choices and they had landed her here alone in a strange cell behind bars and unsure what was going to happen next. Now, the first choice that Fiona had made was to take a pirate voyage on her own. You see, Fiona was a member of a group of eight, very unique girls from around the world who could magically travel into the past and become real life pirates. There was a captain from New Hampshire, a quartermaster from Colorado, a steering master from California, a bosun from New York, a cook from Guam, two twin mates from Australia and Fiona herself, the ship's doctor from Kinsale, Ireland.

Sometimes the crew would choose to meet at a certain hour in a certain place and use their special travel objects to set an intention and then off they would go. Usually, it took just an instant for them to arrive in some remarkable place in the Seven Seas during colonial times. Now, this time she had decided to travel on her own. She had a particular destination in mind and a particular reason for going. But traveling without the full group often had consequences. When any of the girls traveled independent of the group, things tended to go wrong. There was a strength in their number. They were able to better hit their mark when they were all trying to hit it together. When it was just a few of them or one of them, they tended to end up in different places. And this is exactly what happened to Fiona.

So her plan was to go to a very particular island near Spain. She was going to an island that apparently had a special fountain on it that was rumored to be the fountain of youth, and Fiona wanted to take a sample of the water and give it to her mother to test. You see, her mother was an herbalist, but also kind of magical scientist. She quietly referred to herself as a witch, but most people didn't understand what that really meant. So she only used the term witch with her own family.

Lisabeth:

Hi, this is Lisabeth of Sparkle Stories. What you just heard was a snippet of the full collaborative story David and Elisabeth created together. If you want to hear the entire story, as well as over 1,300 other original stories, visit us at sparklestories.com. The podcast stories are all free to listen to. You'll find them on the Sparkle browse page. And while you're there, consider subscribing. You can start with an extended free trial when you click the button in the top right corner and use the code `storying, S-T-O-R-Y-I-N-G`. That way you can enjoy all of the stories in our library as often as you like. Because this story is a part of the Windward Ho! series, I recommend you go listen to the very first story in the very first collection, Windward Ho! Book One, Episode One: Periwinkle's Parrot.

The Storying Project, a Sparkle Stories workshop, was produced by Marjorie Shik. The audio editor is Nate Gwatney. Theme music composed by Angus Sewell McCann. For this episode with Elisabeth, we are grateful to her for her deep, deep presence and her willingness to share her own childhood stories with us.

I was particularly inspired by the discussion about managing your own emotional life as parents, because I believe this makes more room for our own kids to have theirs, and that's a beautiful thing. We hope you enjoyed it. If you enjoyed this podcast, please consider following us, then leave us a review and let us know what you think. Thanks for listening.