

# A Life of Longings

Category: Longing

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As a little girl, I had a family of dolls. One doll was an outlier, due to my older brother's pranks. He had cut her long blonde hair (assuring me it would grow back). He'd also used dark-colored permanent markers to highlight her eyes, cheeks, and lips. She looked absurd—almost freakish. That's when I became familiar with the word *yearning*: I yearned for her to be accepted by the other dolls for who she was, not how she looked.

My yearning then transferred to myself. I was taller than my classmates, both girls and boys, and on the thin side. I had no sense of rhythm, so I could neither dance the twist nor twist a hula hoop around my awkward body. I was also extremely shy, worried that I would say something that would bring attention to me, but at the same time hoping my words would bring me notice. So I grew up as an outsider. And even now, at age 78, I have few friends. I still yearn to be part of an inner group, but I am not sure any inner group wants me.

Since giving birth to my son and then my daughter, I have yearned for many things for them: good health, happiness, security. Most of all, I long for them to find their own group and be accepted, not to be bystanders in their life's journeys. I yearn for them to be popular, which is unfair to my children because my definition of popular is not necessarily theirs. I want them to be at the top of the social hierarchy, to be surrounded by hordes of friends, to be the life of the party.

My own mother always begged me to "let my hair down" the few times I was invited to a social gathering. Basically, Ma wanted me to crack open my shell and be part of the group. I yearn for my children to let their hair down, but their reality does not always match my wishes.

I have wasted years yearning for acceptance by other people, but how can others accept me when I don't accept myself? I should have focused my longings on becoming comfortable in my own skin, not having others determine who and what I am.

Now, I just yearn for inner peace during my remaining years.

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