



# Au Naturel

April 2016

Volume 11, Number 4

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## Soul-filled Updates

This month's cover photo is of me with my grandmother Mabel on her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday (March 21<sup>st</sup>)!! Can you believe she's 100 years of age?! She takes aging gracefully to a whole, 'nother level!! And she's always fashion conscious. I could definitely take a few tips from her. She actually put lip stick on for her birthday photo shoot. It was 12:30am!! She was bright, chipper and ready to go. I still had to drive back to Raleigh to go to work in the morning and was just about spent. But, we all got our second wind at midnight when the real festivities began. The family partied ALL DAY LONG while I monitored my brother's Facebook page for regular updates!! Life is good, and Grandma is GREAT!!...and beautiful, and divine and hilarious and giving and hard-working (even now), and entertaining and a joy to be around and the reason for me being alive at all! ☺ Can you tell I'm STILL celebrating?! Everyday! ☺

We gave her birthday greetings worthy of the ages, complete with a birthday greeting signed by The Obamas. I thought it was pretty funny that Grandma was celebrating with family when the letter from the White House came. She didn't even open it. She stayed focused on the family and opened it much later in the evening when the festivities had died down. I kept calling back to the house to see what the letter said. Grandma was not greatly impressed by the White House mail, though appreciative. She preferred her time with family. THAT'S MY CLAN! Unimpressed with impressive!! Now if you want to make an impression, sit down to tell her a unique story that brought you to deep thought or reflection, and you'll have her full attention. ☺ I recall asking her how she felt to see a Black man elected to President back in 2008, and she looked at over the tops of her glasses and said, "Schatzi, if they've given this country over to a Black man, things are MUCH worse than anyone will ever admit! You can believe THAT!" And they were!! 90+ years of living in America...some things just don't change. And she was right. So, the Obamas letter was icing but nothing more.

Within the salon, life is rolling merrily along. We give thanks. I must confess that with my teaching schedule being so tight, I've been working some pretty long Saturdays. But it is the greatest joy to my heart to complete a long day of service, grab dinner at [Pho Super 9](#) (a restaurant owned by the family of my son's BFF Duy) with my husband and crash for at least 2 hours when I get home. That feels like a day well lived, if I can be honest about it. I then coast the rest of the week-end to do it all again on Monday.

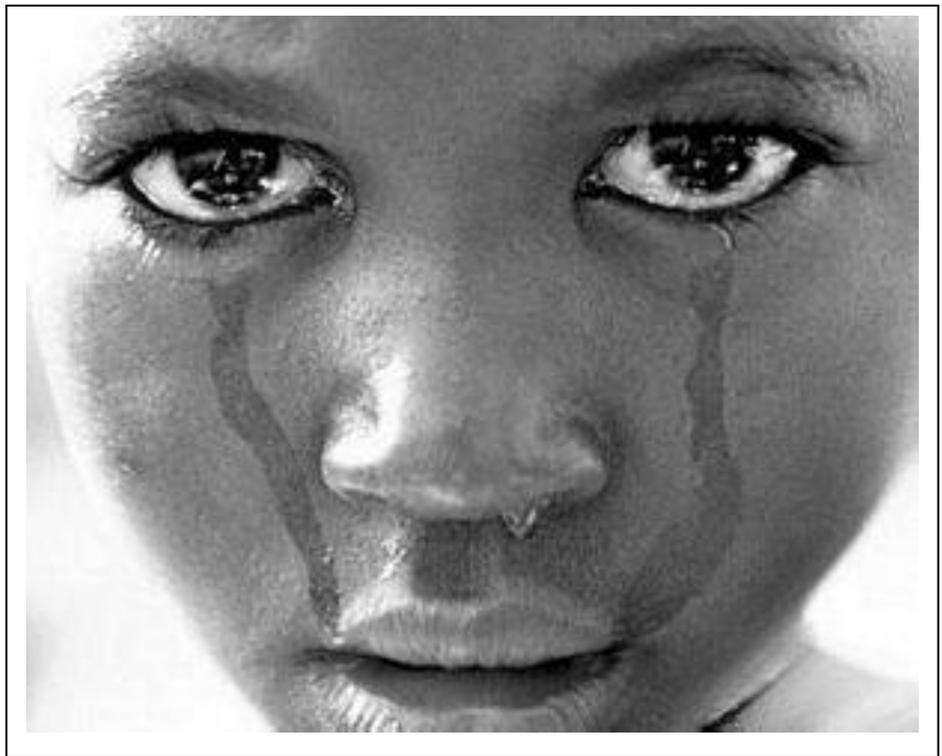
This month's issue of Au Naturel is all about emotions. It just happened that way as so many things in my life do. I didn't realize it while writing, but after inserting the two articles (written at different times), I realized the commonness among them. So, I can only surmise that this is where this publication needs to be right now. The first article is an essay on tender-headedness: how it manifests and how to treat it, while the second article is on our emotional connection to divinity and to creation. I pray it edifies.

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## Tender-headedness: Is it truly a condition of the head or of the heart?

*Note: This story is inspired by a beautiful young lady who is a regular visitor to our salon. For a while, she's been in the care of other stylists primarily, as her Mom typically scheduled her after school. Over time, I have seen this young girl growing into a beautiful young lady. But a consistent part of her salon experience has been tears due to extreme tender-headedness. So, I have recently taken over the care of this young woman's hair exclusively. The first day I met with her as her stylist, I looked her eyes and said, "Today, my whole, entire life has one purpose. That purpose is to get you through a haircare service without tears. I have blocked out 4 hours for you. We will have no interruptions. I will do whatever I need to do to ensure that you are comfortable. Are you ready to begin?" She was. So, I employed the strategies outlined in this article, with some modification based on the condition and circumstances. We have had no tears since that day.*

*I have since used these techniques over and over again. More recently while assisting one of my students at Wake Tech, I met another young woman who has an extreme tender-headedness condition. I employed similar strategies to the care of my client's hair to this young girl. It worked like a charm. And so, I'm inspired to write and share. Hopefully, you too will learn to heal the heart through the skill of your hands and the compassion of your soul.*



Since opening a natural hair salon, I have been privileged to style the hair of numerous ladies who are seeking to better understand the ways in which they

can serve their own personal needs and those of their families. Invariably, young children are shaped and molded by the environment in which they find themselves. However, when their mothers or caregivers are young and somewhat in need of guidance about how to care for hair, ignorance can easily transform into frustration. When the hair is seen as more of a bother or nuisance than a *crowning glory*, it is often mistreated though intentions are mostly good. As such, some young girls (in my opinion) develop the condition called **tender-headedness**. The Urban Dictionary defines tender-headed as:

*"having a sensitive scalp that is easily irritated during hair-styling procedures. Chiefly used among African-Americans, the term has existed for at least a century."*

But, I do not believe this description is an accurate representation of the condition that these young girls are facing. On the contrary, I believe that tender-headedness is a condition of the heart, first and foremost. Why do I believe so? Because in my experience, a girl who is tender-headed will often cry regardless of the style and procedure used to care for her hair. In other words, she will protest the process and the fact that she has to endure it as much as the actual pain suffered in service delivery. For this reason, the tears are often independent of the pain and vice versa. Don't get me wrong: There are numerous instances when these children are in fact protesting pain suffered as a "price for beauty"; but, I've noted that the tears soon become learned behavior that is difficult to transcend even when the pain is absent. For example, I would say that I've faced the condition called extreme tender-headedness in several instances and in all situations; I found that tears began independent of a painful experience. Firstly, I know how to comb a child's hair to keep them comfortable. (Click [here](#) and reference pages 102 and 103 for tips on hair care.) So when a tender-headed child sits in my chair and the tears begin, I'm suspicious. Being a natural researcher, I run an experiment to see what I'm working with.

After the tears have begun (for new clients), my first tack is to turn the child away from the mirror. I want to test and see if they are truly crying because their hair is being pulled and they have a hyper-sensitivity to that pulling or if the child is merely crying out of habit. In all cases, I have discovered that the child is crying out of habit. When the child's face is away from the mirror and I resume combing, I invariably see tears. When I pretend to continue combing but in actuality am not touching the child's hair in any way that is abrasive, I watch to see if the crying continues. Invariably, it does. Then, I bring the child's attention to the fact that I am not combing their hair at all. When they observe that I am merely pretending to comb the hair, the tears begin to subside and their own suspicion is piqued. Then, I turn the child around to face the mirror, and I actually start to comb the hair. (*Note: I have learned and know the techniques for combing and caring for natural, thick hair in its varying textures. So when the child is observing with her attention on the fact that I am testing her, I am fully confident in my ability to command the child's hair without hurting her. At this point, your technique has to be impeccable because she's looking for a reason to justify her tears.*) As I resume combing, residual twitches from the child indicate a response to learned behavior because I know I'm not hurting her. I look at her eyes in the mirror, and we both know that she's not feeling pain. All the same, I stop combing to acknowledge her twitching but I look confused and concerned as if I don't understand how this can be hurting. With us both witnessing this dance in front of the mirror, the twitching subsides. I then ask, "Okay (child's name). Now, I need you to please tell me when I'm *really* hurting you. I need you to speak to me with words and tell me that I'm hurting you. I will

then change what I'm doing to make it better. Is that okay?" Because we're building trust and she has already witnessed me honoring her feedback through twitches, the response is invariably "yes." So, we continue in this way. When I pull a little too much due to hidden tangles or knots, the child openly expresses "That hurts." Or "You're hurting me." Or she raises her hand. I acknowledge her compliance with my request by saying, "Thank you \_\_\_\_\_." That's very good. I appreciate that you told me that. Is this better?" I will change to accommodate her feedback, and she will respond accordingly. When I reach a section of the head that is particularly tangled, I alert the child ahead of time that, "This section seems to be really tangled so you may feel this a little bit more; but, I'll do my best. Okay? Let me know if you are uncomfortable." And they do.

In this way, we progress through the entire service with *no more tears*. I have seen this technique work effectively with several children now. So, I have concluded that tender-headedness is not a condition of the head but is one of the heart. Why? Because in short, the child felt that her opinion and feelings did not matter. So to be heard and acknowledged, she self-expressed through tears. Once she knew that she has a voice and will be acknowledged and respected, she rose to match the level of respect given to her by speaking with her words and acknowledging her say.

*In the beginning was the word,...and the word was God (John 1:1) ...and God is love. Amen.*

That is the essence of communication. Communication or the lack thereof, is one of the leading causes of hurt feelings. Quotable quotes note that:

*"Communication is depositing a part of yourself in another person."* Unknown

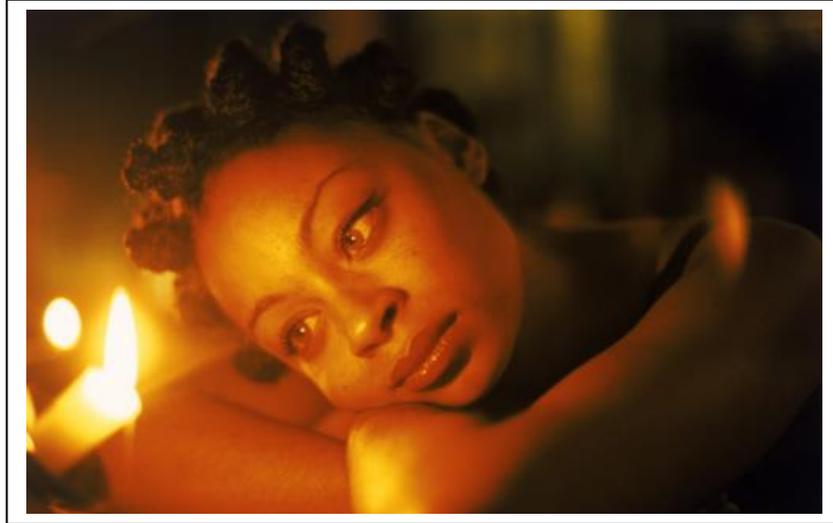
*"Some think that love is all flowers and good times, but I think love is more than just that. Love is the bad, as well as the better, not lived alone, but a journey together.*

*Something that only the closest can share, with communication, respect."*  
Unknown

So, it is that through the word, the heart is healed. The prevailing challenge for me is to convince the young person in my chair that the process of caring for her hair is not harmful, hurtful or offensive. I do so by spending the required time to care for her natural hair with full honor and reverence to the gift and to the spirit being endowed with it. And so, tender-headedness becomes a thing of the past. Yes, the condition is likely to re-surface when the child is in the care of someone who does not have the skills needed to prevent a painful experience. But, she now knows that she has a voice. And so, she can speak life and truth through the word by demanding better service; because, she knows that better is possible. And now, you too are empowered to heal tender-headedness in your own right. We give thanks.

Embrace the beauty of you.

## Contemplating the Emotional Body



**Context:** As you have surely surmised, I'm a reflective, sentimental, meta-physical type of girl. I see life in abstract and detail and wonder what it all means--knowing that it means everything and nothing. I see all of life as inter-connected and therefore whole. I recall being somewhere between 12<sup>th</sup> grade and college and ~~thinking~~ knowing: *Everything is inter-connected. I can make linkages between all things. EASILY!! Because they are the same.* I knew that I can take any two seemingly discordant concepts in the universe and find the common thread that binds them. And so, I write about everything and nothing with the stroke of a pen.

Well for some time, I have heard reference to the "emotional body" as an integral part of the human design, along with the physical body, the mental body, the spiritual body and the energy body. [One author](#) goes on to write:

*"a being living in the astral world might be occupying the same space as a being living in the physical world; yet each would be entirely unconscious of the other, and would in no way impede the free movement of the other."* (Hodson, 2007, p. 56) In other words, based on the principle of interpenetration, different realms of existence exist simultaneously here and now, **thus to perceive and experience them movement in space is not needed; we rather need to open ourselves to higher levels of consciousness by tuning into them, similar to tuning into different radio stations.** (Powell A. , 2005)

There was a time when I thought these ideas a bit extreme...too "psychedelic, star-child" for my liking. So, I considered these ideas and shelved them. But as I'm growing in faith and spirituality, I have expanded my base of knowledge so as to take nothing for granted. We are taught that our own bodies are the temple of God; yet, we remain oblivious to our connection with the divine. We are the antennae; but I believe, our radios are turned off. Or if they're turned on, they're connecting to the wrong frequency. And so, we suffer in the midst of paradise. If we are to [elevate our consciousness](#), how do we recognize this divine connection within our own being-ness? How connected are we to the Divine? How connected are we to each other? And how do we recognize connectedness in the realm of duality or separation. For me personally, it's time to take these ideas off of the shelf and examine them a bit more closely. Here's why:

Some days really make you wonder. March 29<sup>th</sup> was one of those days for me. It started out pretty uneventful. I had some things to work on but no pressing deadlines driving me forward as I had just cleared some major hurdles the two weeks before. So, it was a day to coast. But for the life of me, my spirit was not on a "coastal" plain. Instead, it was in a valley, somewhere deep. I looked outside and the sky was bright and luminous...beautiful!! But the day seemed to drag on. And when I finally did try making some progress with work, I came upon roadblocks. So, I had to sit in the silence of the moment and the emotion. Web surfing didn't help, as I quickly came upon a crazy video on shootings of more Black people. So, I came off the web. Eventually, I asked: "What's wrong with me? Why do I feel like this?" I pondered, surmised, wondered.... Then, I said, "Okay, I'm going to go with the feeling of the moment. I won't fight it. I'm going to embrace it...acknowledge it." My colleague obviously sensed my tone as she kept coming into my office trying to cheer me up. I don't believe in "faking it 'til you make it" so I know I wasn't much encouragement to her. I eventually said, "I'm not in a good spiritual place right now. It's all good." She's a dear soul. She understood me.

So having decided that I would embrace the moment, I went with the flow of my spirit. I acknowledged that "I" (my soul) wanted to be alone more than anything else. That's crazy because I have my own office and can close the door anytime I want. But, somehow that would not suffice. I wanted to be completely alone, and the office space just felt too large. It was after 2pm; so, I grabbed my phone to monitor the time and went out to sit in my car. That seems silly but it's what I did. I looked at my phone, put it down and looked at nothing in particular. I sat in the moment. I felt the heaviness of the moment and just stared it in the face saying "I see. I feel. I know." After some time, it was over. I then returned to my office, got on the computer and was [fine the rest of the day!](#)

Have you ever felt that way? It makes you wonder: what is the body, the mind, the emotions, the soul? Do they "belong" to us at all? I've read of articles where mothers can sense their child's illness though the child is half a world away. Or one twin can get a migraine and the other shares the pain of it. On this occasion, my emotional body was a part of me; but, it was much larger than my physical body--which could only be defined as the antenna. This emotional body wanted to be acknowledged and nurtured. And like a thirsty plant that has been deprived of attention and finally receives life giving water and affirmation, it said, "Thank you. I'm good now." And so, it was. The Lao Tse Ching says:

*It is better to leave a vessel unfilled, than to attempt to carry it when it is full.  
If you keep feeling a point that has been sharpened, the point cannot long  
preserve its sharpness. (#9)*

Likewise...

*...he who would administer the kingdom, honouring it as he honours his own  
person, may be employed to govern it,  
and he who would administer it with the love which he bears to his own person  
may be entrusted with it. (#13)*

So, the next time you're feeling any emotion that's particularly strong, sit with and observe it. Don't try to change or empower it, only to honor its beingness. Ask: Is it "my" own? If not, maybe "God's trying to tell you something." Here are [some tips](#) on how to go about this contemplation.



*(Note: I don't subscribe to this author's views really. I just noticed that when researching the "emotional body," her prescription for "healing" is what I did intuitively. All the same, I believe the "healing" reference to be a negative judgment of the condition--one which is unwarranted. So, I encourage you to keep what makes sense. Discard the rest.)* Sometimes, the deep, true experience of it is the pain and beauty of it. Some know this truth better than others.... I remain ever-learning.

Always giving thanks, peace and love. XOXOXO