

## The Age of Reason:

I live in a world full of grown ups, folks who reached the “age of reason” a long time ago. As a rule, people in this group have become accustomed to thinking along certain trusted lines. We have a difficult time with novel, or challenging situations because our relied-on lines of thought are built for everyday, recurring realities. For us grown ups daily life is so routine that alterations, even slight ones, can be very unnerving.

Ever notice that when you lock the keys in the car you spend the first few minutes patting your pockets or searching your purse. You can see the keys in the car but your brain is not ready for this reality. So you stand there as if it might somehow change.

Kids have a wonderful take on difficult situations. They don’t think anything is impossible and more often than not, they’re right. Because they are young and have not yet developed routines, kids don’t see challenges as obstacles. They see them as new, just new.

I watched a three-year-old girl-child push a 15-year-old cat around the living room. The child is full of energy, ideas and motivation. The cat is not. The cat is large and immobile. The girl is slight and in motion. The cat weighs more than half of what the girl weighs. They spent an amazing twenty minutes winding their way around the furniture, between the house guests, across the hardwood. After watching her push this reclining feline as if it were a living dust mop, I inquired, “Why are you pushing the cat?” The girl answered, “Because she’s too heavy to pick up.”

There is strength in defining the challenge. There is power in focus. To Ella, the challenge was not how do I pick her up but how do I make her move from here to there and back again. Many of us abandon unusual challenges as too difficult, not worth the effort. Not the child. For her it was clearly a matter of method. The goal was worthwhile to her and therefore worth a sideways solution. For us the lesson is obvious. Change your point of view and take another shot at it. Forget about lifting what you can’t lift. Get down on your hands and knees and push the cat.

I have seen her lift herself off the floor and onto a windowsill (she calls the sill her balance beam) by using the window-pulls as handholds and the windowsill as a toehold. The windowsill is as high as the top of Ella’s head.

I have seen her get the prized extra piece of candy after brushing her teeth. How do you get around the prohibition of a pre-bed sweet? Ella suggests we just don't tell anyone.

I have seen her get her toy away from another tot by explaining that, "It's broke and it needs to be fixed." The fixing takes so long that the other child finds another toy to play with.

I have seen her take a scrap of paper, fold it and put tape on it. Then she scribbles something on the front and by this method writes her mother hundreds of "greeting cards." She has a pretend mailbox that never fails to deliver.

Those of us who have achieved the age of reason know that the cat is too heavy, that Ella is too small for gymnastics, that the extra candy is forbidden, that someone else has her toy and that She cannot write.

But Ella moves the cat, walks the balance beam, eats the candy, gets the toy and corresponds regularly with her mom.

She knows, intuitively, something that the rest of us tend to lose sight of. She simply has no doubt that there is a solution waiting. I wonder if she senses yet that the age of reason is fast approaching.