



## **June 2010 – What Is Family?**

My definition of family years ago was Mom, Dad, kids, siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins. My family hadn't changed in years. When I moved from Canada to Switzerland six and a half years ago my idea of family changed – there was still my “family of origin” although they were far away. My notion of family expanded, unconsciously at first and then intentionally. Family became fellow expats who I became close to and who were in the same situation: new country, new job, far from home and family. In fact, we created family by celebrating birthdays together, checking in on each other, having people we didn't know over for Christmas dinner and even being beside peoples' hospital beds digesting medical news. It was about being there for each other, supporting each other, caring for each other, receiving and giving love and being integral to each others' lives.

Then my parents died and I felt like an orphan even though I was a seasoned adult.

Then a friend's first-born child died at birth – and she was a mother without a baby.

Then a friend's sister adopted a baby girl – and she was a mother without giving birth.

Last month I spent a week with my cousin and her family – we hadn't spent that much time together since she lived with my family for a year during high school. She's like the sister I never had.

As I write, I am looking after my friend's three boys (aged 10, 7 and almost 5!) while her and her husband are at a concert. Six weeks ago I doubt the boys could recognize me in a police line-up, tonight a little hand slid into mine as we walked across the park, a squirmy body cuddled close during bedtime story and a goodnight hug was returned when the light was switched off.

My learning is that “family” can be whatever you define it as and can change over time – it's about creating close connections with those around us. It's about enriching your life, being enriched and enriching others' lives. It's about caring, sharing and loving.

What could you do to further connect with your family? What could you do to extend your family and create more love around yourself?

**Live your potential!**

**Anne Taylor**

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