

Inside Out

Holding the Child Within

Nana Hinase

Edited and compiled by Masaya Shikishima

Synopsis

Inside Out is a work of narrative nonfiction about a young woman's search for the child within. Drawing on Jung's child archetype, the book understands this child as a vulnerable presence within each of us: the source of wonder, hope, and the feeling of being alive. Her story offers readers a way to recognize this presence in themselves and understand what it means to cherish and protect it.

For Nana Hinase, this search begins with a decision, at sixteen, to be honest with herself. In the diary she starts to keep, she tries to give words to feelings she cannot yet understand. Her friendship with Aimi and long-term psychotherapy with a clinical psychologist help her approach the lonely little girl she senses within her. As she faces childhood trauma, dissociation, and bereavement, the question becomes increasingly urgent: can she find and care for the child she feels she has lost?

Edited and compiled by her husband, Masaya Shikishima, the diaries and poems form a three-act narrative: learning to listen to her feelings, facing the past those feelings disclose, and undergoing an inner transformation that changes her experience of the world. The third act brings this journey to its climax; a discovery in the epilogue then casts the whole story in a new light, allowing the reader to grasp what finding the child has meant.

The book draws on twenty years of contemporaneous writings and more than seven hundred pages of clinical records, with editorial supervision and a foreword by clinical psychologist Hiroyuki Uchida, Ph.D. Its account of psychological change as experienced in daily life speaks to readers living with trauma or grief, their families, and practitioners.

Part One

Emotion Is the Language of the Soul

The first part traces nearly five years in which Nana, initially unable to recognize her own wounds, begins to find a way forward by listening to her feelings. At sixteen, she begins a diary, determined to be honest with herself. Through her website, she meets Aimi, a friend who responds deeply to her drawings, stories, and poems. Each wants the other to live, yet Nana cannot understand why she should matter so much. Within her, she senses a lonely little girl, always waiting for someone to come.

As part of her psychiatric care at a regional hospital, Nana begins psychotherapy with Counselor S, a clinical psychologist. His willingness to share her silence gradually allows her to trust him. In 2006, a vision of a blue bird during a hospital stay brings a sudden certainty: "I am here." Months later, Aimi dies by suicide.

Among her readers is Shikishima, whose responses to her writing grow into a relationship. Through his love, Aimi's friendship, and S's listening, she begins to trust her feelings and believe that they deserve to be heard. This is the first turn in her search: she can start to follow what she feels, even when it leads toward grief and uncertainty.

Part Two

Facing Is an Act of Love

The second part follows roughly five years in which this new trust in her feelings leads Nana toward the past she has tried not to see. Her reading of André Gide leads her to reconsider love and happiness; flashbacks of childhood abuse then force her to confront her own history. These experiences converge at the story's midpoint on a recognition: the lonely girl within her carries suffering Nana has been unable to acknowledge as her own.

Recognizing that suffering, she begins to understand Aimi's wish to protect that child. Caring for the child becomes a way of protecting what her friend held dear. But this understanding sharpens the conflict that follows: Shikishima's proposal offers a future Nana longs for, while seeming to demand that she leave the little girl behind. The crisis culminates in a suicide attempt; even in the letter she writes beforehand, she asks for Little Nana to be saved.

The way forward begins with a resolve to let the child speak. In a letter prepared for her wedding, Nana acknowledges both love for her parents and the hurt they caused. Facing her past becomes an act of care for the child, whose place in her new life remains to be found.

Part Three

Perspective Shapes Perception; Perception Shapes Experience

The third part follows a spiritual journey in which inner transformation changes how Nana perceives and experiences the world. Her losses cannot be undone, and the effects of trauma persist. Through psychotherapy and Focusing, she attends to feelings she cannot yet explain. "I am here," first encountered years earlier, returns as a presence in her own heartbeat. She begins to welcome the child into her life.

Ordinary days acquire new meaning: warmth at the dinner table, the pleasure of learning, the possibility of a future. When S's illness abruptly ends nearly fourteen years of therapy, that growing sense of connection is tested by another separation. She recognizes that his trust has become part of her and resolves to protect what he and Aimi have left in her care.

These changes build toward the third act's climax: a way of loving that can sustain connection even through loss. Prayer and her Catholic baptism in 2019 give outward form to this inward journey. In the closing poem, the figure who once waited for light runs toward it, carrying her memories and those she loves. The world she once feared entering has become a world she can move toward and belong to.

Epilogue

After Nana's sudden death in 2024, Shikishima discovers that the diary he thought she had stopped keeping had continued in private. Why had she written where no one could see? Wary of interpretations shaped by his own grief, he comes to understand those pages as a place dedicated to the child within, free from a reader's expectations.

This discovery brings the reader an unexpected recognition that changes the meaning of the entire journey. The diary itself becomes visible as a way of cherishing the child. In a late entry, Nana describes the growing feeling that she herself is a small being worthy of love. The child who once waited for someone to come is now someone she can recognize and protect as herself. The answer to the opening question emerges through these final pages, gathering earlier words and experiences into a new understanding of what it means to feel alive. The closing poem extends

that recognition toward the reader's own life: love both connects and frees us, and everyday life itself is a treasure.