



**A Personal Note from Single Steps Strategies Founder
Mary Grace Musuneggi**

Feather Your Nest

When I moved into my house about five years ago, I hung a wreath above the fireplace in my outdoor space. The wreath was made of vines and ribbons and baby's breath. Within a month, I saw that the robins in the area were picking away at it, taking pieces of the vine and ribbon and flying off to add to the structure of nests they were building elsewhere. On one particular evening, I noticed that a very industrious robin had chosen to use the wreath as the very foundation of his nest. He began by packing mud between the fireplace wall and the wreath. To discourage this building project, I removed the wreath, removed his structure and re-hung the wreath. I came home the next day to see that this determined robin had rebuilt the nest. Taking it down one more time, I came home the next evening to see that he had built it again; and that his female partner had moved in. I was amazed. I decided that such determination should be rewarded, and I left them alone. Within a few weeks, eggs appeared; and within a couple of months, baby birds were born, were fed and taught to fly; and finally the entire family left the nest. A nice experience to watch.

Even though I removed the old nest when the family moved out, for the next five springs, new robin families have come, built their nest, bore and raised their children and moved on. Somehow all feeling very secure in my space; and all willing to share the space with me and my family. When we come out to sit, or watch TV, or cook outside, or just take in the evening air, the robin families do not fly away; but instead they watch our activities just like we watch theirs. They fill the mornings with their chirping and singing. On occasion, after the babies are born, the mothers sometimes squawk if we get too close, just to remind us that we are sharing their space, too, after all.

But this year something new happened. This year, after the robin family moved away, I had forgotten to take down the nest. I had been traveling a lot; and upon returning from an extended trip, I was surprised to see that a male and female dove had taken up residence in the old robin's nest. Not only had they made it their home, but they had added an addition of more mud and twigs and leaves. It was big enough for the two of them to sit in it side by side. Upon further investigation, I discovered they were sitting on two eggs. For weeks they took over my deck, flew in and out, perched on the furniture; and even sat on an outside ceiling fan, while it went round and round as the air blew past it. They were having a great time and really making themselves at home. When the babies hatched, the parents littered the area with seed pits and other food sources that they shared with their family. Unlike the robins, they were very unwilling to share the space. They squawked anytime I came out the door and frantically flew from side to side in the space anytime someone approached.

By the time they moved out the wreath that had been the foundation of all the nests and the source of building materials for so many robins had totally deteriorated; and so I took it down with nest attached and threw it away. It was like the end of an era.

But in the process of clearing out the wreath and cleaning up the space I found myself meditating on what life lessons I had learned from this five year odyssey.

All of these birds do what comes naturally. They follow their instincts.

They are determined to accomplish their goal. They let nothing stand in the way of their progress.

They use natural elements to create a home and raise a family. And the doves recycled an existing structure to adapt it to their needs.

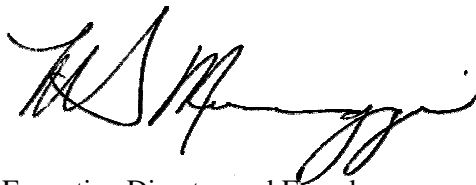
The priority for these birds is their family; and the parents work together to create a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment. They protect their nest from outside influences. They raise their children to ultimately become independent creatures, teaching them to fly, to search for food and to leave the nest. They teach them to become productive members of their society.

Their life is uncomplicated. It includes work and family, but creativity and fun. The perfect example of simplicity, joy and abundance all rolled into one of God's small creatures.

I am glad they have shared their lives with me. I am glad that I had the chance to share my space with them. And I am glad they reminded me of some basic rules for living well.

As we enter the autumn of the year, come and share some time with the members and Resource Providers of Single Steps Strategies to learn more life lessons through our upcoming workshops. Learn to relieve life stresses, create and accomplish your goals, build your business, and enjoy life's simple pleasures. Your life too can be joyful and abundant. And all of life's journeys begin with a single step.

Mary Grace Musuneggi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Grace Musuneggi', written in a cursive style.

Executive Director and Founder

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