



### **A Mantra for all Time!**

We all have people in our lives growing up that have impacted us in positive ways. Think of those people and jot down what it was about them as a person, what they may have done or what they may have said that made them stand out in your memory. Have you incorporated what they may have done or said into parts of your

own life? Have you passed along any of these gems to those you know and/or love?

When I was around eleven years old, a mother and her two daughters moved into a bungalow house down the street. The girls were a little bit younger than I was but that didn't matter. Our love for riding our bikes like demons through the neighborhood made us fast friends. Their mother was an accomplished opera singer with a beautiful voice which you could easily hear when she frequently sang in her home. What I found amazing was when her daughters and I were out riding bikes and she wanted them home she used to sing out her daughters' names. We could be blocks and blocks away and we could easily hear her rich and powerful voice beautifully calling. But as amazing as this was that wasn't what I found the most amazing and inspiring thing about this woman. What I found fascinating was that she was blind. I loved having conversations with her about how she handled her life as a blind person. Watching her navigate through her home was amazing. No pun intended, but it was eye-opening to me at that age. Everything she did and how she did it was with purpose. I guess you could say she always was living in the now. I'd watch her do something simple like making herself a cup of tea, every action being deliberate; from filling the kettle, putting it on the stove, turning on the stove, pouring the hot water into the cup and stopping just at the right place. (This was achieved by placing a finger on the edge of a cup in order that the fingertip registers the increased heat. When you feel a certain level of heat you stop pouring. This isn't as easy as it sounds and takes practice!)

One day I was there when she was filling a payment envelope for the milkman. She took the exact amount of money out of her wallet while explaining to me that each bill was folded a different way (by either a bank teller or her daughters) before placing it in her wallet. This method signified the denomination of each bill. Coins are all different sizes so there's no need to separate them. She was fascinating. What made this a great experience was that when I was around she would explain how she was able to do the things as she was doing it. She was a great teacher! This was a treasured learning experience!

She expressed no sadness or regrets over her disability. I don't think there was a mean bone in her body. She knew the joy of living in the moment. Once, when she expressed her love of her beautiful garden I asked her how she knew it was beautiful. Her answer was poignant but simple, "I don't have to see my flowers to know they're beautiful. I smell their aromas and touch each of them gently and know which are delicate and which are strong. I sing to them and in return they grow beautifully for me. This is also the way I know my daughters are beautiful." I felt moved by what she said that day and it was only as I grew older that I discovered how valuable those words were. Appreciate everything in the world through all your working senses and you get the full picture of how absolutely beautiful every single thing that exists in this world is.

I learned at a young age that you shouldn't underestimate people who have disabilities and to appreciate the extra effort it takes for them to accomplish what nondisabled people do. This experience made me think: if they can accomplish living in this world successfully than people without disabilities have no excuse not to succeed in anything they want to do. At eleven, I now realize, I had formed a mantra for myself that I have kept ever since: "You can do anything you put your mind to." I have not only kept this mantra but have passed it along to the members of my family that followed.

What words or actions of wisdom said or done by others have affected your life? Have you passed along these nuggets? If not, start, they are too valuable to stay locked inside.

*With Gratitude,*

*Kai*