

The Smallest Moments are EVERYTHING!

So, I looked my physical therapist dead in the eyes and said, *"You can tell me right now if this isn't going to work, I can take it. Cause if this isn't going to work and I will never walk again, just tell me now!"*

Colleen's eyes never flinched as I spoke. With her gaze locked on mine, her calm voice replied, "Yes, Annette, this is going to work. You WILL walk again."

As they say, if wishes were horse, beggars would ride and I was not even trying to wish, I was going on blind faith and trust. I had nothing to lose even if it didn't work.

"Okay," I said, "then we'll keep going."

Three days into an 18 day therapy program and I simply wasn't up for false hope. Everything within me was banking on three hours worth of treatments a week and the belief there would be a miracle. For why should I be able to walk when I hadn't in 3 months? Why should this work when the Doctors were telling me to go find a nursing home where people could take care of me until I was old enough for a double knee replacement? After all, I had been told 15 years earlier that I was 6 months away from young adult life in a wheelchair and decades away from surgery. Where was this magic going to come from? I was about to find out.

I was a good patient, doing whatever Colleen told me to do while she was there and following through on my homework in between visits.

Baby steps, baby steps, baby steps became the mantra for she knew that once I had the belief that everything could turn around, I may unwittingly sabotage the plan by moving too fast.

My mind played her statement of hope over and over, while I exercised my weakened legs. Then I would lay back on my bed, taking deep

breaths... letting go of fear and drawing in strength. I would visualize my legs working normally, or as Colleen would say, normal for me.

The day I took my first step was scary. Not just because it hurt, but because I knew there was no turning back. It was only moving the right foot forward and back but it was lifting the foot off the ground and bringing it back which was the key. Shuffling was where I was before I fell, sliding my feet along and barely moving my hips or legs. What was that, if you don't use it, you lose it? Yes, very true. By the end of that week, I had actually taken a step with both feet, progress!

It wasn't only progress in my walking however; there was progress in my mind as well.

I began to see the gift the Doctor's words were to me. Of course they were going to do nothing for me because I wasn't showing I was willing to do anything for myself.

I expected them to have the answers yet the answers were deep inside of me.

Had I believed their prognosis, I would still be laying somewhere wondering "what next?" making "what next" happen.

The day I decided to baby step my way into the kitchen was a huge turning point for me. I found myself standing in front of my kitchen sink, somewhere I had not been in over 3 months. My roomie/caregiver had let the dishes pile up and I was bristling inside. So, I turned on the water and began washing dishes.

I cried tears of gratitude for the sheer joy of feeling running water on my skin.

Yes, I over did it and painfully made my way back to the bed only a few minutes later but nothing and I mean *NOTHING* could take away the

exhilarating feeling of accomplishment. I knew at that point I was making "what next" happen.

How blessed I was.

Blessed? Oh yes, it was a blessing to have the Doctor's tell me they weren't going to help me. It was a blessing I had to be waited on hand and foot, living my life through other people's schedules and not having choices. How was all this a blessing?

Because it forced me to choose to try and obtain a level of existence I enjoyed. Never imagining my life would be where it was, I could now imagine where I wanted it to be.

It gave me back the decision making power which I had so readily handed over to everyone else.

I wasn't happy with doing that, so now I was the only one with the power to change it.

Daily, I would walk, walk down the hall, through the house, into the kitchen. I would help out with chores as I could and eventually I took over the cooking. Soon, I was attempting the laundry, scooping litter from my cat's box and the biggie, *stairs!* It was my greatest thrill when I opened the front door to my home and walked down the 3 little stairs to the ground. The fresh air on my face, smiling at my neighbors, and gazing into the clouds, I was free!

Again, tears of gratitude streaked my face; in fact, Colleen was wiping her eyes too.

Where did the freedom come from, really? Did the movement I so intently worked on create the freedom I was finally enjoying or was it the fact that I freed my mind from fear which actually brought me to where I was. I have come to the conclusion it was both with the mind leading the way.

It is said, when we free the mind, the body will follow.

I had the physical proof that when I allowed myself to conceive something better than the circumstances presented, and I believed it was possible, I could achieve it.

What else had my journey taught me? To appreciate the smallest moments in my life as though they were everything.

Preparing my own meals became an adventure, washing my own hair, even being able to walk into the bathroom at any point in time to brush my teeth or even use the toilet were joy filled experiences. Little things I had taken for granted were the very activities I looked forward to.

In my adult life of mechanism and schedules, I was taking the time to experience the thrill of achievement as most of us enjoyed as children but from the perspective of appreciation of getting back the right to choices.

Now, I know this will work for anything I want in my life.

I have learned to respect the value of the journey.



Annette Aben says, Life is good! I believe those words and live those words. Through creativity, I find peace and balance. Because I allow myself to vary the activities, writing, drawing, painting, jewelry crafting and photography, I am always enthusiastic about what I am doing.

My furry companion, Baby, is featured in many ways in my projects. I photograph her, draw her, write about her and am so grateful to have her energy in my life.

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