Don’t Quit

As far back as I can remember, I’ve always been in situations where I’ve wanted to give up. When I was seven I had a speech impediment. I wanted to give up (on speech). When I was ten I continually fell riding a bicycle. I wanted to give up (on learning how). When I was nine I was considered a ball hog for scoring the most points. I wanted to give up (on playing basketball). When I was twelve I fell ten feet after falling through the bleachers at school. I wanted to give up (on climbing). When I was fourteen I was bullied for a birth defect that was out of my control (pectus excavatum – concave chest). I wanted to give up (on life). When I was sixteen my crush rejected my advances. I want to give up (on dating). When I was eighteen I felt college was too stressful for me. I wanted to give up (on obtaining a college degree). When I was twenty-two I found out how hard it would be to get into Medical School. I wanted to give up (on my dream).

Life gets hard and it will challenge you many times. Life isn’t for quitters. My dad instilled that within me when I was younger. He even gave me something to serve as a personal reminder of perseverance.

*“When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,*

*When the road you’re trudging seems all up hill,*

*When the funds are low and the debts are high,*

*And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,*

*When care is pressing you down a bit,*

*Rest! If you must; but don’t you quit.”*

From that day on I carried this reminder in my wallet. To me it is sacred; I only look at it when I want to give up. This very same item is found in my dad’s wallet. At his age he’s endured more moments of doubt than I could ever count. And before him my grandmother carried it around enduring even more. Its functionality is obvious; it is used to defeat the darkest of feelings, hopelessness.

It is unclear where this tradition started, but I am confident in saying that I will entrust my children with it someday. In the story *Everyday Use* there is a clash in culture and heritage. Since Dee always thought of Mama and Maggie as inferior to herself, she became enraged when Mama allowed Maggie to keep quilts that had cultural significance. She was sure that Maggie would use them and ruin them! Mama claimed she would rather have it that way! Being ignorant and egocentric, Dee failed to realize Maggie’s labor intensive lifestyle better reflected their families past. Thus Maggie was better suited as the caretaker of the family’s heritage. However, instead of only passing it down to one child like Mama did, I will give this reminder to each child no matter how they turn out. Even if they turn out like Dee, changing their birth name and resenting my family’s lifestyle I will still offer them what I have carried for the past nine years (more to come).

In a way I treat this object like Maggie treats the quilt and also the way Dee would treat the quilt. I not only use it, but I like to share it with others in need. To me, sharing this doesn’t have to be limited to family members only. If it has the potential to help someone through hard times as it has helped me, then I might as well share it!

*“Life is queer with its twists and turns,*

*As everyone of us sometimes learns,*

*And many a failure turns about*

*When he might have won had he stuck it out,*

*Don’t give up though the pace seems slow;*

*You might succeed with another blow.”*

By examining this piece of paper, in which these words are written, I can see that it is smudged and bent, each crease a reminder of past events. Looking closely, I can see the places on the paper where I’ve gripped the hardest, leaving a memento to remind of the times that I struggled the most.

In the story *Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa*, Ray hears the phrase “if you build it, he will come (Kinsella).**”** Afterwards Ray was consumed with the idea of building left field for Joe Jackson to play in. With his wife’s support he realized his dream. ‘Talking’ to Joe Jackson gave us a glimpse of the passion Jackson felt for the game of baseball. The story shows us that someone could find happiness without money. Ray pursued his passions and created a life he was happy with. Ray also reinforces the idea that anything is possible through determination. Even with all the obstacles and ridicule, he ultimately overcame it through sheer resolve.

The idea that through willpower anything can be fulfilled, is something I agree with strongly. In times of threat I sometimes become trapped in a pit of hopelessness similar to a bucket filled with crabs. Each time I try to crawl out something pulls me back down. The piece of paper I carry with me is my safety line. The words provide me with the purpose I need in order to accomplish any problem I come face to face with.

When I find myself going through a difficult time, I can hear this piece of paper ‘whisper’ to me, “if you read me, you will overcome”. I have lost count to how many times I’ve read this piece of paper. To this day, it has never lied to me. I am fully aware that letters on paper cannot physically help me. But after reading it, I am filled the strength and mental determination that is needed.

*“Often the goal is nearer than*

*It seems to a faint and faltering man,*

*Often the struggler has given up*

*When he might have captured the victor’s cup.*

*And he learned too late, when the night slipped down,*

*How close he was to the golden crown.”*

Without the protective laminate the words would long have faded. But this piece of paper will last. The plastic cards and dollar bills found within my wallet are constantly changing. This piece of paper has been loyal to me since the day I got it. It isn’t planning on leaving my wallet anytime soon, even though there will never be another lifelong companion for it.

In the story *The Things They Carried* O’Brien shows us how each soldier carries unique items. By doing this O’Brien is able to establish his characters’ personalities and priorities. For example, Ted Lavender carried around tranquilizers and marijuana to calm his nerves, Henry Dobbins carried his girlfriend’s pantyhose around his neck as good luck, and Lieutenant Jimmy Cross carried around various memorabilia of Martha, whom he was in love with. From this, O’Brien is showing us that there is no need to know someone’s story to understand their character, the items they hold dear in a situation of despair reveals their true colors.

I will always carry with me the **poem** my father gave me. I am not a quitter.

*“Success is failure turn inside out;*

*The silver tint of the clouds of doubt;*

*It may be near when it seems afar;*

*So stick to the fight when you’re hardest hit;*

*It’s when things seem worst that you mustn’t quit.*

~author unknown

To me this poem is magic. Each time I pull it out, I am pulled into a different dimension. I can visualize my father explaining to me how to move on and not dwell on a problem. He told me:

*What may seem like a curse could in fact be a blessing in disguise. There are always more doors to be found in a hallway, yet a person never notices them until the door he or she always goes to is locked. When this happens the first reaction by the person is to be frustrated, sad, and bitter. The person has been going to that same door for what has seemed like an entire life but now there is a problem, it’s locked. But why do people choose to sit there banging on that door embittering other people’s lives.*

*Sometimes smiling through the problem and the pain being felt is the best choice. Eventually you will trick yourself into being happy which will help you to see the belvedere of life going on. More importantly the people surrounding you won’t feel down because you are. People don’t realize how much of an effect they have on other people by the way they act. I feel this is one of the most neglected truths about life. A simple smile has the potential of turning someone’s day from a bad one into a good one. Quite drastically the same thing happens in reverse when we act like the world is coming to an end due to a problem being faced in life. I come to conclude that the best thing to do is to move on and not dwell on the problem. In other words find a new door to open.*

I will never in my life forget what my dad did for me when I was going through some problems in life. He sat me down at our kitchen table, walked over to a drawer and pulled out a blank piece of paper. My dad then grabbed a pencil and put a single dot in the middle of the paper. He pointed at that dot and told me that sometimes we are stuck at a problem in life and can’t see a way to get around it. He preceded to then point at all the space surrounding the dot. I can’t quite remember what he told me while pointing at all the space surrounding the dot but it was clear to me that I was stuck at that dot. Afterwards he handed me a poem to remind me of this.

This scenario applies to all things in life. As humans we tend to dwell on problems we have. We forget about everything else and concentrate solely on the problem being faced. I urge, no, I beg of you not to let this happen. Always remember to look around the dot at the center of the paper. This is why this poem is so important to me. It is my strength in a dark world.

Kinsella, W.P. Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa. Retrieved at https://uwec.courses.wisconsin.edu/d2l/le/content/2889590/viewContent/17517783/View

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