

A Compassionate Stranger

Written by Gayle Nobel

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Blog-a-thon Day 24

I'm wiped! It's been a long day, in a good way. Kyle has a lot of activities on Tuesdays, hence, I do a lot of driving.

I just asked Neil, "What do I write when I don't feel like writing?" He proceeded to give me a bunch of ideas on what to write about. I have the ideas, I am just too spent to write them. But I made a commitment to myself to stay on the blog-a-thon trail, so here I am.

Here's something inspiring by Dr. Rachelle Sheely, co-director of RDIconnect.

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"We have all had the experience of being in the supermarket with a difficult child, our discomfort exacerbated by the eye aversion of well-meaning adults. For parents of children with special needs, whether physical or neurological, this aversion of gaze can sometimes have the unintended effect of further isolation.

Recently I was talking to a mother whose 10 year-old with autism had a meltdown at the grocery store. He wanted the toy car, she said "no" and he threw himself on the ground, repetitively shouting. We can all relate to this mother's discomfort and many of us would have bought him the car just to curb our own embarrassment, even if we threw it away at home. But this mother didn't give in, even though she was aware of her spectacle; what she believed others were saying or thinking about her. What happened next, however, was not only a surprise but a compassionate moment from a total stranger. There was a light touch on her arms, she turned to see a much older lady standing next to her. "Stick to your guns, honey, you're doing great."

I was reminded of her encounter recently as I watched "What would you do?", a television show that sets up scenarios where people need to decide whether or not they will interfere in the lives

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of strangers who cross their paths. The compassion or avoidance of strangers is striking and understandable. However, for this mother, it was life changing and although she never saw the woman again, she says it seemed like an angel was sent, just when she needed her.

One imagines that the "angel" had interfered in people's lives many times over the course of her life. There were probably times when people responded as this mother did but there may have been rebuffs as well. For whatever reason, the woman remained compassionate-she wasn't judging this mother nor was she judging her child. She was a mother encouraging another mother. She didn't take over neither did she tell her what to do. She walked alongside her for a few seconds and the mother was no longer alone.

As you move throughout your day, we hope you feel and project compassion with your fellow sojourners...those you meet along the way."

Dr. Rachelle Sheely serves as the co-director of RDIconnect as well as the head of professional training and supervision. For the past fifteen years she has been a leader in the development and logistical implementation of programs for both families and professionals working with children, adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities.