

Reaching Out

Written by Gayle Nobel

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What if seeing the good, learning the lesson, shifting perspective, or changing our attitude doesn't feel available to us? What if we are knee deep in life's muck and all we can see is muck? No matter what our intentions are, there are times in life when we will feel this way. I certainly have.

Kyle's autism and other developmental issues have brought our family a tremendous set of challenges. While the journey has been rewarding and growth filled, it has not necessarily been an easy one. In fact, there have been several very distinct dark periods when it was pretty tough to feel a glimmer of happiness or even conjure up anything resembling gratitude. Knee deep in the muck, all I could see was muck. My focus was on survival: getting through the day, or maybe the hour, or perhaps even just the minute. Kyle had severe and frequent seizures in early childhood. Then, beginning in puberty and into early adulthood, debilitating anxiety was an unwelcome guest. These were very trying times during which I felt emotionally drained.

Moments of quality in Kyle's life were few and far between during these periods. He seemed to be suffering and it's hard to watch your child suffer. Though I have always subscribed to the idea that loving and living well with autism was all about my attitude, there were times when I could not create a glimmer of an attitude that would lead me to living well. Finding a shred of gratitude or having anything that resembled a sense of humor was not in my radar. I couldn't seem to detect any light at the end of the tunnel. Feeling good? Noticing the positive? Seeing things differently? All these felt far out of my reach.

What helped me through these times? It was hard to be my best for Kyle or my other children when I was struggling in crisis mode. I had to find a way to take care of myself. What helped move me through the darkness and out into the light was my support system. The key players were my husband and my friend and coauthor Kathy Almeida. The way Kathy and I were there for each other, supporting and embracing each other from afar, was, and still is, one of the keys to cultivating an attitude that can draw us closer to feeling good. This didn't mean there were always good times or that we always appreciated our sons or the lessons we were learning along the way. When we were in the depths of whatever, we knew the other was just a phone call, and later on, an email away. It didn't matter how we showed up to those phone calls because the other, walking a similar path, was there with open ears and open arms to walk beside us. When changing our attitude didn't feel available to us, we were always available for each other. And that is another essential piece of autism with attitude.

Autism with attitude is all about forming a community of support. I'm excited to see that our

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members have begun to blog. Reaching out for support and offering it to others is an important stop along the road to loving and living well with whatever life sends our way.

Autism with attitude is about real life. And sometimes, real life throws you muck and you could benefit from a helping hand. Reaching out is the first step.

Any thoughts?

Gayle