



Barriers

by Anne Welch

When I lived in Yorkshire I went to school. I thought I liked

school but my Mom thought I didn't. The teachers in Yorkshire didn't help me. They only helped the ones that were smart.

It is a shame that they left us behind. There were a couple of us who couldn't read and write. We wanted help. But we did not get help. When I left school at 15 years I still couldn't read and write. I felt ashamed.

When I was 24 I came to Canada. It has taken me 16 years in Canada to build up my courage to come back to school to learn. The teachers in Canada are understanding. Now I can read and write because someone has taken their time to help me. I don't need to be ashamed anymore. I've overcome the barrier that stopped me from learning.

Background Information

Talk about your school experiences. Were they good or bad? What one thing do you remember most about school? Then talk about what you think the differences and similarities might be between the school system in England and the one in Canada.

Questions

1. Where do you think Yorkshire is?
2. Why does Anne think the teachers didn't help her?
3. When did Anne leave school?
4. What is another word for smart?
5. What does ashamed mean?
6. How old was Anne when she came to Canada?
7. How long did it take her to go back to school?
8. Use the word courage in a sentence.
9. Why do you think the teachers in Canada are so understanding?
10. What is a barrier?
11. Why do you think people feel ashamed when they can't read and write?



Other Activities: What barriers have you faced in your life? How have you overcome them? Write a story about this.

21 Kilometres On

Crutches

Arturo Ruiz-Verde is from Mexico City. He has cerebral palsy. He uses crutches to walk. Arturo came to British Columbia for the Vancouver International Marathon on May 7. The marathon was 42 kilometres (26 miles) long. Arturo ran half of the marathon. He ran 21 kilometres (13 miles) in 2 hours and 44 minutes.

Arturo says he ran to honour British Columbia runner Terry Fox. "Terry Fox is my inspiration", he said.

Terry Fox

Terry Fox was a runner with one leg. In 1980, he tried to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research. He ran five thousand three hundred and seventy three kilometres. Then he had to stop because he had lung cancer. He died in 1981.

Background Information

This story is about two people with disabilities who ran marathons: a Canadian who ran a Marathon of Hope across Canada and a Mexican who ran a marathon in Vancouver to Honour the Canadian. Do you know what the Marathon of Hope is? Who ran that marathon? What was he raising money for? Do you know of any other persons with disabilities who test their endurance running marathons?



Questions

1. Where is Arturo Ruiz-Verde from?
2. What are crutches?
3. What is a marathon?
4. How long would it take Arturo to run the entire marathon?
5. Use the word inspiration in a sentence.
6. Why do you think Arturo was so inspired by Terry Fox?
7. What happened to Terry Fox's leg?
8. How far did Terry run?
9. Why did he stop?
10. How does Terry's dream continue today?

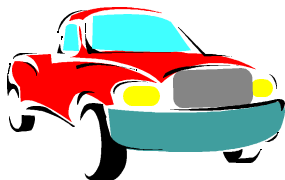


Dog Goes For 17 Days With No Food Or Water

Doug Mann comes from Victoria. On February sixth he traveled to Vancouver for a meeting. He took his dog, Laska, with him. While Doug was at the meeting, someone stole his truck. Laska was in her kennel in the back of the truck!

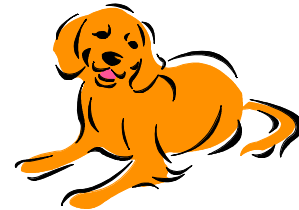
The police looked for the truck, but they could not find it. On February 22nd, two men found Doug's truck. It was parked on a street in Vancouver. Laska was still in her kennel. She was alive, but she was very weak. A veterinarian at an animal clinic took care of Laska. Doug took her home after five days.

"The people at the animal clinic brought Laska back to life," Doug says.



Background Information

Dogs are pets. They are a part of the family. They need love, food, shelter and exercise. Talk about what it's like to have a pet (if you've had one) or what you think it would be like. How would you feel if something happened to that pet?



Questions

1. Where is Doug Mann from?
2. What is Doug's dog's name?
3. What happened to Laska?
4. What is a kennel?
5. Why do you think Doug took his dog with him?
6. How many days was Laska lost?
7. Where was the truck found?
8. Why do you think the thieves left Laska to die?
9. What is a veterinarian?
10. How do you think Laska stayed alive?

I Don't Drive

by EV

My mother had cancer and died soon after. My sister phoned me and told me that she had cancer. She moved to Surrey because she didn't like the doctor in Courtenay where she was living. We went to the Cancer Clinic.



Then she was told to go to the local doctor who told her she had a tumor. The doctor phoned me and told me about the tumor, and I started to cry. Then he asked me to drive her to the Cancer Clinic, but I told him that I don't drive because I don't read or write.

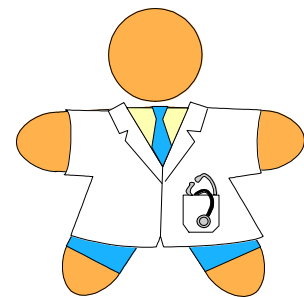
He told me about the school here and gave me the phone number, and then I phoned the school and made an appointment to see Mark. Then I came to school, and I was scared and afraid, but I came anyway.

Background Information

What do you think are some of the things that a person can't do if he or she can't read or write? Also talk about cancer. What is cancer and what can happen to a person who has cancer? Is cancer a scary word? Why?

Questions

1. What happened to EV's mother?
2. Why did EV's sister move to Surrey?
3. Where is Surrey?
4. What is a tumor?
5. Why do you think EV cried when she heard about her sister's tumor?
6. How do you think EV felt when the doctor asked her to drive her sister to the Cancer Clinic?
7. Why can't EV drive?
8. What is an appointment?
9. What is another word for scared from the story?
10. How do you think EV was able to overcome her fear?



Linda

My name is Linda. My birthday is May 16, 1949. I lived with my mother and father. When I was 3 months old, I got very sick. It left me paralysed on my right side.

I have five brothers and four sisters. I was raised on the farm in the district of Bangor, Saskatchewan. I went to Pilchak School with my brothers and sisters. I could not walk, so we used to ride horses in the summer and used a sleigh in the winter. We lived five miles from school. I cried when I couldn't go to school. When I turned nine years old, the school bus picked me and my sister up every morning and returned us home at four o'clock every day.



Background Information

This story is about a woman who lives in Saskatchewan. What do you know about Saskatchewan? Have you ever lived or visited there? What do you think schools were like there in the 1950's and 60's?



Questions

1. When was Linda born?
2. Who did she live with?
3. What does paralysed mean?
4. How many children are in Linda's family?
5. How would they get to school in the summer and winter?
6. What is a sleigh?
7. How far did they live from school?
8. Why do you think Linda cried when she couldn't go to school?
9. What happened when Linda turned nine?
10. What time would she return home everyday?

A Touch of Heaven

The Lord gave me a gift. I did not know Kokum was sick. But I saw her before she died. In this vision I saw a really bright light. Then I saw my Kokum lying in bed. My aunties were around her. They were crying and praying over her. It was so clear I thought I was there. I kept seeing that vision in my head, hoping it wasn't true.

I knew in my heart that she was home.

Lisa McKay.

PS, Kokum is the Cree word for grandmother.

Background Information

Do you believe in visions? Why or why not? Some people truly believe that they have seen visions, especially during stressful times.



Questions

1. Who is Kokum?
2. Why do you think Lisa didn't know that her Kokum was sick?
3. Who gave Lisa a gift?
4. What did she see first?
5. Why do you think the aunties were crying?
6. Do you think Lisa really saw her grandmother's last moments on this earth? Why or why not?
7. What is a vision?
8. What do you think Lisa means that she knew Kokum was home?
9. What nationality is Cree?

Rusty Makes Life Easier

Sarah Lapp is 10 years old. Sarah has cerebral palsy. She cannot walk. She uses a wheelchair to get around. In November, Rusty came to live with the Lapp family. Rusty is a working dog. She has special training to help people with disabilities.

Rusty helps Sarah in many ways. The dog can turn on lights, open doors, and push a wheelchair.

Sarah's mother says Rusty makes life a little easier for Sarah.



Background Information

Have you ever seen a working dog assisting a person with a disability? Do you think dogs can really assist a person with a disability?

Questions

1. How old is Sarah?
2. What's another way to say cannot?
3. Why can't she walk?
4. Who is Rusty?
5. Where do you think Rusty is trained?
6. Do you think Rusty's training would allow her to work with a blind person? Why or why not?
7. How does Rusty help Sarah?
8. What is another word for helps?
9. Do you think Sarah and Rusty get along?

Super Swimmer

Vicki Keith swam the Strait of Juan de Fuca on August 10th, 1989. She is the first person to swim the 30 kilometer strait using the butterfly stroke.

She left Port Angeles, Washington at 2 in the morning. She arrived in Victoria 14 hours later. She was very cold and tired. The temperature of the water was about 10 degrees Celsius during her swim.

She swam the strait to raise



money for disabled children. Vicki's many swimming records. Here

are some of her records. First person to swim all five Great Lakes.

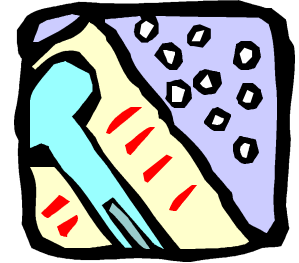
First person to swim across the English Channel using the butterfly stroke.

First to finish a double crossing of Lake Ontario.

Holder of the distance record for butterfly stroke, 38 kilometers.

Background Information

Do you like to swim? Do you know someone who swims a lot? How physically fit do you need to be to swim long distances? Also talk about sports heroes in our society. Are many of them good role models?



Questions

1. When did Vicki Keith swim the strait of Juan de Fuca?
2. What is the butterfly stroke?
3. What time did she leave Port Angeles?
4. Why do you think she was cold?
5. What other way do we have to measure temperature besides Celsius?
6. What is a strait?
7. What are the names of the Great Lakes?
8. What does the word record mean in this story?
9. Why did she swim the strait?
10. Do you think it's dangerous to swim such long distances? Why?

Other activities: Look in a newspaper, magazine or watch for an athlete in the news who is doing something for charity. Write about who the athlete is, what he or she is doing and who it will help.

Christine's Haircut

A hair salon was ruled in the wrong for denying a disabled woman service. Christine Schink leads an active, productive life and wishes others would see her the way she sees herself.

The severely disabled Capilano College student has just won \$1,500 in a human-rights case after she was refused service by a Richmond hair salon.

"Wow! I'm happy-it's great news," said Schink, 40, who communicates by body motion and tapping her thoughts into a computer, using a head stick.

The British Columbia Human Rights Council found that Schink had been "subjected to public humiliation for no reason other than her disability".

The SARAW student, who has cerebral palsy combined with scoliosis, a spinal-cord disease, relies on a reclining wheelchair on which she lies face-down.

She was accompanied by her sister, Maureen Bucholz, when she arrived at Raymond Salons in Richmond Centre Mall for an appointment with senior stylist Raymond Chiu in September 1994.

Chiu's refusal to cut Schink's hair "was so hurtful", said Bucholz. "It was devastating to a person's self-esteem. It's not acceptable in this day and age".

Chiu testified that he had never given a haircut to someone lying facedown and was concerned about injuring her. He also said his English skills weren't adequate to communicate with Schink.

Human Rights Council member, Tom Patch, accepted that Chiu's refusal arose from a genuine fear of hurting Schink. But Patch wasn't persuaded that the refusal was reasonable in the circumstances.

He found Chiu's English was adequate to communicate with other English-speaking customers, and noted that other stylists were available to assist.

Background Information

Most people have faced some kind of discrimination during their lifetime. They may face discrimination because they have disabilities, are of a minority race, are women, are elderly and the list goes on. Talk about experiences you may have had with discrimination. How did it make you feel? What did you do about it?



Questions

1. What does deny mean?
2. How much money did Christine win?
3. How does Christine communicate?
4. What is humiliation?
5. How does Christine get around?
6. Where did she go to get her hair cut?
7. Do you think Chiu should have cut Christine's hair?
8. What is another word for adequate?
9. Why did Tom Patch rule against Chiu?
10. What do you think you would have done if you were Chiu?

On Writing

by Hong Ngo

To me writing is wonderful. It expresses all of my feelings. I love writing. I think writing is not always easy; I often get stuck on it, and it makes me feel angry. I love writing and to me writing is wonderful. It expresses all of my feelings; however, I often feel angry when I get stuck on my writing or I don't have enough English vocabulary to describe precisely what I feel. It's easy to write to describe a building, a car, a table, etc., but it's difficult to indicate your feelings.



I can see myself in my writing. The mirror only helps you to decorate yourself to look good, to look more beautiful, and to look more attractive. You cannot see inside when you look at yourself in the mirror.

I find that I cannot write whenever I want. I sometimes sit down almost an hour, but I cannot write anything, even a sentence or if I can write it is only an unclear and unstructured

paragraph. However, I usually do my writing on the street. While driving a car, I suddenly think about something and I immediately desire to write it down; therefore, I stop the car, find the right place to park and write. I feel wonderful after arriving home and I read again what I have written.

Background Information

This story is about a man who loves to write. He uses writing to talk about his feelings, even though he says it is very hard to do this. What is your experience with writing? What do you like about writing? What do you hate? Talk about why people write.

Questions

1. How does Hong feel about writing?
2. Why do you think Hong writes even though he says it's not easy?
3. What does the word express mean?
4. Why does Hong feel angry?
5. What does it mean to describe something precisely?
6. What is a vocabulary?
7. What does Hong think it's easy to write about?
8. What does Hong say the mirror helps you do?
9. Do you agree that you can't see inside when you look in the mirror?
10. Why do you think Hong gets his ideas when he's not thinking about writing?



Treena's Story.

My name is Treena Guy. I have Cerebral Palsy. I lived at Rideau Regional Centre from the time I was 3 years old until I was 18 years old.

When I was a child at this time, I was not able to go to school because I did not have any way to communicate. Someone came to Rideau Regional Centre with Blissymbols for us to try them. When we learned Blissymbol, we could say anything that we wanted to.

Then I moved to Ottawa to Parkway House; this is a home for adults whom are physically disabled. When I moved here I started going to McArthur High School. At this school, I was doing many different things like some reading and numbers work, also science and geography.

After that, I started going to Fisher High School for each afternoon. At this school I took law, family studies and also English. My aide read to me what the teacher gave out to us because I was not able to read on my own but I did know how to do that work.

When I finished these two schools, I heard about the school called Parkway Adult Day School. At this school, I was working on reading but it was

not so easy to get in there because I needed an aide to come with me and Parkway Adult Day School does not have or did not have aides.

We had to find some friends and my sister said they would come to help me. I am not going there now because it was too much for the teacher to have us. She was not able to handle all of us without any help. My home gave an aide to come with us but when they were not able to come, we could not go to school.

After all that I wanted to go to Algonquin to their upgrading program. I have been waiting for about two years but I still want to get in there.



I was able to take an interesting course at night school in child psychology. I do work at the Y on the computer. I do many different things on the computer. Each Tuesday, I help with a woman who uses Blissymbol. I make up some questions for her and she has to answer on her table. Also right now I am putting a book on the computer for persons who maybe have some difficulty turning pages.

Now I am going to try to tell you what some people do when they see a person who uses a Blissymbol table. They often times talk loudly to us. This bothers me because I do not like it. If I have someone with me, the other person will talk like I am not there. In school if the teacher wanted to ask me a question, she all the time asked my aide to give me the question. This makes me angry. I can understand everything and I can use my bliss table to answer.

Treena Guy.

Background Information

Talk about what it is like or would be like to be unable to communicate with other people. How would a person get an education? What might happen to them? Also talk about what people do when they interact with someone with a disability.

Questions

1. Why couldn't Treena go to school?
2. What is Blissymbol?
3. What is one word that means numbers work?
4. What subjects was Treena studying at Fisher High School?
5. What is an aide?
6. How do you think having Blissymbol helped Treena?
7. How long has Treena been waiting to go to Algonquin?
8. What is the Y?
9. What do people do to Treena that she does not like?
10. Why do you think people act this way?

Other Activities: many people are uncomfortable around persons with disabilities, persons of another colour, religion or anything that makes them a little different from each other. Write about someone who made you uncomfortable. If you can't think of anything, write a story about what it might be like to have a Christmas party and one of your friends brings someone who is of another religion (say Jewish - don't believe in Jesus Christ). How would you act toward this person? Would you be comfortable with them during your party?

My Hand

by Barinder Johal

On Oct. the 9th my friends came from out of town. It was the Thanksgiving Holiday long weekend. We had so much fun on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. I went to work on Tuesday afternoon. We started working at three o'clock. We started work the way we usually do. I was working as a trimmer man. We worked there two hours with no problems. At half past five there was a twenty foot long piece I was supposed to cut. First I cut six feet from that twenty foot length. After that I was supposed to cut an eight foot long piece. I was moving the piece with my hand up to the eight foot length when the air pressure cylinder that pushed the saw out broke. The saw got free



then came out by itself and cut my hand completely off. I didn't know what had happened. When I looked I saw it in the conveyor. I saw my hand sitting there and I started yelling, then other workers heard me crying and they were wondering what had happened to me. Then they saw me holding my arm with no hand on it.

It was bad luck because there was no one with a first aid kit. They didn't even have a foreman there. I didn't know what to do. Then I told my friend who was working with me to take me to the hospital. I told the other guy to get my hand. I told him to get my hand because a few months before

my accident a guy cut his two fingers off. They didn't take his fingers when they took him to the hospital. When they reached the hospital the doctors asked them where were the fingers. The doctors told them to get his fingers from the mill. Then they went back and it took them so long to come back in. By the time they came back it was too late. The doctors tried to put them back on, but it didn't work. This was the reason I told the guy to bring my hand.

Then I told my friend to get the car keys from my pocket. He got the keys and he told me to wait for a minute. I was thinking about what he was going to do. He brought on old shirt and told me to put it on my arm, otherwise he couldn't drive. He was very nervous. He started the car and put the emergency lights on. My friend was from Vancouver. He didn't know the way to Surrey Hospital, he told me. I showed him the way. We got there and we went to the emergency department. When the nurse saw my arm, she right away took me to the emergency room. Doctors put the bandage on my arm. I don't know what they did with my hand. I had so much pain. They told me they were going to take me to VGH and they put me in the ambulance. I was getting more pain. I asked the nurse if I could have some sleeping pills. She told me they were going to operate on my hand and they couldn't give me any medicine. At times I was thinking this was a bad dream, but I looked around and then I knew it was true. We reached the Vancouver Hospital.

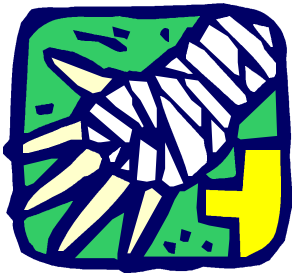
Doctors came up to me and told me they were going to try to put my hand back on. They put me to sleep. After that I don't know what happened.

Two days afterwards when I woke up I was in the recovery room. I saw my hand. It was attached on my arm. I was a little happy. I asked the nurse if my hand would stay on my arm. She said the chances are fifty- fifty. The doctor came on the third day and I asked him about my hand. He said, "We are about seventy- percent sure". Nurses were checking the temperature every two hours and comparing it with my normal hand. Every time they came I asked them about my hand. After a few days the doctors opened my cast and they told me they were sure my hand would stay on my arm.

I have good movement in my hand, but I have no feeling in my hand. I am very happy with it. I am very, very thankful to the doctors who did this great job on my hand. Especially I am thankful to doctor Fitzpatrick and my physiotherapist, Grace.

Background Information

This story is about a man who has an accident. Talk about how people handle stressful situations. How do you handle stress? What happens if a person panics? What do you think it would be like to lose a hand or a foot, or even a finger? Do you think doctors can reattach limbs that have been cut off?



Questions

1. When did Barinder go back to work?
2. What was he doing?
3. What happened to Barinder?
4. What is a conveyor?
5. Why did Barinder have his friend get his hand?
6. Why did his friend have him put on a shirt?
7. What do you think Barinder was feeling at this time?
8. Why didn't Barinder's friend know the way to the hospital?
9. What's a shorter way to say emergency room?
10. Why do you think Barinder couldn't have any medication if they had to operate on his hand?

Jackie



My name is Jackie Lapierre. I was born in Montmartre Saskatchewan, on July 16, 1959 in the Montmartre hospital. When I was three months old they found out I had meningitis. They also found out I had fluid on the brain. So, they had to put a shunt in to drain the fluid. But, they had to do it three times before one would work.

When I was a little girl the only way I could get around was by crawling on my bum because I didn't have a wheelchair of my own until I was 10 years old. I was sent to Wascana for therapy so I could learn how to walk. I also went to school there until I was 14. Then, I went home and took schooling by correspondence.



When I was 13, I was told by a doctor that I could possibly die by the time I was 30 because my lungs and my heart were being crushed. So, when I was 18 I decided to go to Toronto to have an operation. My mom came with me but she could only stay for a week because we lived on a farm, as my dad needed her at home. I was in Toronto for three months. When I came back one of my aunts came with me because they did not want me to travel alone.

When I got home I could only sit up for a couple of hours because my back would get really sore. I finally got into Wascana for therapy so I could learn how to transfer again.

My dad died in 1984 of a heart attack so my sisters talked my Mom into moving to Weyburn. But, when they were looking for an apartment they could not find one with an elevator. But, there was one being built and it wasn't going to be finished until spring. So, my mom and I spent the winter on the farm. I lived with her for three years.



Then, I moved to Cheshire homes in Regina, where I have lived for almost 10 years. After I moved I decided I wanted to go back to school to get my grade 12. I started going to Robertson Career College but the classes were only on Saturdays and it was a very long day.

Then, I ended up in the hospital with an ulcer on my back, which I ended up having to have plastic surgery on. But for some reason the skin graft disappeared so they had to do another one. I went home just two weeks before Christmas. When I went home I had to lie down in the afternoon because my back wasn't quite healed yet. The day I went into the hospital I found out that Robertson Career College was closing. I was not happy because that was where I was trying to get my grade 12.

I ended up in the hospital about a year later with another ulcer on my back. This time I was in the hospital for three months. When I got out I had to lie down because my sore was not healed yet. Then I got some help and found a SIAST that had a program called the Learning Centre where you can learn at your own pace. I have been going there for about four years. But, now they charge \$1.20 an hour. So now I only go on Saturdays because they don't charge any money. It probably will take a long time to get my grade 12.

Last May I found out I had contracted hepatitis C. I had

been getting a needle for something else when the nurse was taking the needle out. She accidentally poked herself with it so the doctor asked me to go and get a blood test to make sure I did not have AIDS or hepatitis C. I was really scared at first, because after I found out all I heard on TV was that people die from it.

I live with seven other people, six of them are men. Their names are Gary, David, Ken, Darren & Nick. The girl's name is Nicole. I get along with them all. Nick is my boyfriend. We broke up on March 9th. Sometimes, it still hurts, because we went out with each other for almost 5 years. It might not hurt so badly if he hadn't decided to go out with Nicole shortly after we broke up. Sometimes, I don't think they think I have any feelings. And, for some stupid reason I still care what happens to both of them because they are my friends. I hope it stays that way. But, most of the time they act like I don't exist, because they are in their own little world.

This is my life to date.

Jackie.

Background Information

This story is about a woman's life. It's about her struggle with illness and disability and how she made a life for herself. Talk about what living with a disability means to

you. Talk about what it might be (or is) like living in constant pain and under the threat of death. How would you live your life?

Questions

1. What disease did Jackie have as a baby?
2. What did doctors have to do to remove fluid from Jackie's brain?
3. How old was Jackie when she got a wheelchair?
4. What is a correspondence school?
5. What did doctors tell Jackie when she was 13?
6. Do you think her mother should have stayed with Jackie while she was in the hospital? Why or why not?
7. What does transfer mean in this story?
8. Why did Jackie have surgery on her back?
9. How did Jackie find out she had Hepatitis C?
10. Why do you think Nick and Jackie broke up?

Laura's Story

by Laura Laurencelle

It was one of those days you could never imagine happening.

It was April 24, 1989. My husband, Trevor, had not arrived home from work. It was eleven thirty a m. He worked night shift. I started to get concerned so I called his boss. He seemed surprised at my call. He asked if Buddy had called me. I told him he hadn't, and he continued to tell me that Trevor had been in an accident.

Through searching of my own, I found out he must be at Lion's Gate Hospital. I called there and they told me they had nobody there by that name. I told the receptionist that he had to be there, I'd checked the other hospitals. She then told me there was an unknown man in I C U. I said that had to be him. I talked to the head nurse and I had to identify him. The only way to do that was to describe a tattoo he had on his left shoulder. I finally found him. The nurse said he was pretty bad. I was hysterical by this time and all the nurse could do was to try to keep me calm. My daughter at this time was only six months old. The nurse asked me to get someone to watch my daughter and get down there right away. He had been in a head on collision and they didn't know if he would make it. I tried to get myself together enough to call his parents. His father came right away.

Within an hour or so the whole family was at the hospital. All that kept running through my head was that he wasn't going to make it. We arrived at the hospital. The doctors and nurses took us into a room to explain his condition. They said that he had multiple fractures on his skull. He was bleeding on the brain and also fluid on the brain. His frontal lobes were damaged quite badly. His jaws were broken and his face was cut up quite badly. The doctors said he'd need a lot of plastic surgery. Trevor was in a coma. The doctors told us they were hoping he'd wake up within nine days. If not, it could be a long time.

I finally went in to see him. My heart just fell. This person did not look at all like the handsome man I loved so much. His head had expanded tremendously. All the life support systems were on him. He did not look at all alive.

I knew I had to be strong for Trevor and my daughter. I tried so hard to keep a positive attitude, but deep down inside I knew he was going to die. The days ahead were very hard for me. I was at the hospital day and night, spending as much time with him as I was allowed. We started to see some progress. He was completely off the drugs. I would talk to him continually and finally he started to move around. If you touched any of his injuries he would move that part of his body. The nurses would try to suction the tubes in his mouth and he would try to push them away. It was quite apparent that he could feel pain and hear. I talked to him one night for 45 minutes about our daughter and how much I loved him. He had tears come from his eyes. I was so excited. I really began to believe he would be okay.

I went up one night to see him. As I was talking to him, I asked him to squeeze my hand if he could hear me. Within seconds he did. The doctors explained to me that if he did come out of the coma, he was going to be a totally different person. There was a good chance that he wouldn't know who any of us were. At this point I didn't care how he would be. The doctors wanted me to try and



prepare myself. The chances were that he would be like a child again, having to learn all over. The extent of the brain damage would not be visible for some time later on.

Trevor stayed stable for six days. On May 1st his mother and I went up to visit. The doctors explained that Trevor was in trouble. They were not sure exactly what was happening. We had to wait one hour for the results of the CAT scan. That was the longest hour of my life. I knew this was it. I finally spoke to the doctors again. They told us Trevor was brain dead. At that point I felt I'd died along with him or at least, wished I had. That special person I'd waited all my life for was now taken away from me. It wasn't fair. I couldn't figure out why or how this had happened. We had just brought a new life into the world, we were so happy. The family and I had to decide whether to take the life support off of him. That was the hardest decision I had to make in my life.

I knew in my heart that he wouldn't want to live as a vegetable. I went in to say my last words to him. I could not believe he was gone. He seemed to be the same as he'd been for the last six days. It was hard to accept that this was the last time I'd ever see him again.

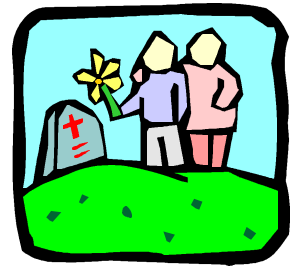
Well, it's been five months now and I often wonder if I made the right choice. I miss him so much.

Background Information

This story is about a terrible tragedy. Talk about car accidents and how easy it is for someone to be hurt very badly or even die. Also talk about the decisions family have to make when a person is close to death. Have you had someone close to you die because of an accident? If you can, describe what you felt and how you reacted.

Questions

1. Who did Linda call to check on her husband?
2. Why do you think Linda had to call all the hospitals herself?
3. What ~~was the condition of Trevor?~~
4. What was Trevor's condition?
5. What is the frontal lobe?
6. How did Linda know that Trevor was making progress?
7. Why do you think the after effects of the brain damage would take so long to become visible?
8. How many days did Trevor stay stable?
9. What does brain dead mean?
10. Do you think she made the right decision to take her husband off of life support? Why or why not?



A Slice of Life

by C.G.

My biggest fears were while I was in Elementary School; my biggest problem was paying attention. I was afraid. Nearly everyone and everything affected me in a negative manner. I was chosen to be the one to pick on by other class mates about anything I did or didn't do. I was always afraid of the teacher asking me any kind of questions. I could never pay attention long enough to understand the question, or to know the answer. I would let people get to me so much that my feelings would be hurt constantly because of the mocking and teasing. When I was being talked to by the teacher whether in front of the others, or not, I could feel myself turning a hot red. I used to cry a lot in my school, and I didn't like going.

One time really comes to mind. Our class had a film on war and as usual I was daydreaming and not paying attention. When the film was over we went back to our class and Mr. Handcheroff our school teacher asked questions on the film. He planned a game to go with these questions. Those who couldn't answer that question given to them would have to stand in the corner of the Principal's classroom while his class was in session. I thought for sure he'd ask me, and the more I thought about it the more I couldn't control myself, and as I had before I started to cry. Then out of embarrassment I put my head on top on my desk. I wrapped my arms around my head tightly and over my ears so that the talking of the teacher



and the laughter of the others sounded as distorted as they always did to me in the first place. I thought I hated them, I'm almost sure I did. I never did go stand in the corner of the Principal's class. I was not even asked a question, not even about why I was crying. I guess my crying was so regular that it was well known and associated with my actions and reactions.

Today I still don't really understand my fear of others, or why I was like that. There it is, 17 years later and I'm full of questions and answers; I'm not afraid of being wrong in my answers; I know I won't be punished if I'm not correct.

Another thing I don't clearly understand is why wasn't I helped to get out of the shell, that trap? Perhaps if I would have had help then I could have been a happier, better, freer person a lot sooner.

Background Information

Sometimes something that happens to you as a child stays with you as you become an adult. Did you get teased a lot in school? Do you know someone who did? How did you handle it and would you do anything differently now? Also, talk about something in your life that has made you the kind of person you are now.

Questions

1. What was C.G.'s biggest problem in school?
2. What's another word for pick on?
3. What is the opposite of negative?
4. Why would C.G.'s feelings be hurt constantly?
5. Why did C.G. turn a hot red?
6. Why do you think the other children teased C.G.?
7. What was the name of C.G.'s school teacher?
8. Why do you think C.G. started to cry during the war film questions?
9. What does distorted mean?
10. How could someone have helped C.G.?



Finding My Real Voice

by Linda Calahan

Expressing myself has never been easy. Sometime between childhood and adulthood, I lost the spontaneity of meaningful and honest expression of feelings. Growing up in a household where one's emotions were not to be let loose, explored or talked about, I soon learned to shove down all the bad feelings far down into my body's inner depths, then stuff tons of food on top to keep them down under control.

Years went by when I did not shed a tear, since I had been told as a child to "Shut up or I'll give you something to cry about". I recall many times during my teens when I felt that I would go crazy from all the disturbing feelings that were tumbling around in my body, begging to be heard. There was no one willing to listen, so obviously I thought these feelings were unimportant and stupid. I would stuff more food into myself, temporarily relieving the pain. I came to believe that I was an insignificant person.

At an early age I learned to smile and say what I thought people wanted to hear, but as time passed and more feelings went unexpressed, more swallowed, I began to experience a lump blocking my throat, choking off my voice, whenever I was put in a conversational setting. I couldn't share myself. I felt what I had to say was boring and trivial.

Abused as a child and teenager, I could never chance exposing what was happening in my life. This caused more denial of feelings. I built a shell around myself to keep feelings inside and the hurt and pain out.

Years went by and I was unable to free myself from this shell. This fear that would overtake me when I was placed in a room with people: parents, family, friends or strangers, and expected to talk. I always projected the attitude that no one could hurt me, although I was in extreme pain from holding my emotions tightly in control.

Marrying and raising children served as a distraction from my pain for many years, but my inability to show and express my tried emotions caused problems in my relationship with my husband and children. Many times when I was alone with my children I would want to have a conversation with them to see how they were feeling about things. Since I had few skills in this area because of my own childhood, I often found myself at a loss for words. I don't think the kids noticed, but I felt uncomfortable and I felt something was wrong with me because of my lack of words. I couldn't understand why the words wouldn't come out. It felt as if there was a tight wire around my throat cutting off everything except my breath.

Parents should be careful when expressing the well worn phrase that "children should be seen and not heard" because it may truly be the last time that small voice, with its honest need to express itself, may be heard out loud.

Growing up in my house meant there was never an exchange of conversation. My parents weren't interested in how my day had gone. We never discussed whether the day was good or bad, or if I had learned anything of interest or had met any interesting people. When my family sat at the dinner table, only my father spoke. He would express his anger at his job, would give us our orders for the next day, or criticize what we had done on that particular day. There was no chance for me to experience a normal give and take conversation. There was also a great fear of speaking up and saying how I felt. My father had a quick hand that I would feel on my face if I spoke out. It was very restricting and out of those experiences grew my reluctance to express myself, and the feeling that what I thought and felt were wrong and of no importance.

I've found it very difficult to discover and understand many things about myself because I have never had a means to examine my life and feelings. Everything went in and nothing came out.

Presently, I have nothing left to distract me from the emotional



turmoil that has left me voiceless for so long. I refuse to let my feelings go unheard; they are screaming to be released from the bondage of my constricted body. How can I free myself from the emotional shackle that was placed on me so early in life? How does one let that inner self out to "test the waters", to check out the safety of exposing one's feelings?

I feel strongly that for my own physical and mental well being these feelings need to be set free. I went to a therapy group for one and a half years, and the therapist kept telling us to write our feelings down. I could hardly bring myself to write a letter but my desire to get healthy was so strong that I tried writing. Writing only sporadically, mostly when feeling disturbed, I felt inadequate and this added to my hesitation. As I went further into therapy and as my life seemed to fall apart, I realized my need to seriously write about my feelings. There were so many emotions inside of me, fighting to get out.

Finally, I decided to take an evening writing class to increase my writing skills and to see if I had an ability, or if I'd be wasting my time. I soon discovered that a person does not learn how to write, necessarily. It only takes a little courage to be honest and a willingness to put your pen on the paper and let your feelings rush through your arm, down the pen and onto the paper. It also demands a teacher willing to let you write about what you know best: yourself!

Sometimes I get so excited when I write that my mind is way ahead of my pen. I write furiously not wanting to

lose my important thoughts.

This is an exciting time in my life. I have gained self esteem and self confidence at a very crucial time. I'm still not a great conversationalist, but through writing I am examining feelings that have been tucked away and kept secret all these years and I feel a new sense of freedom in mind and body as I put it all down on paper, read it out loud and shed these important pieces of myself with the class as they share their writing and feelings with me.



At last, my inner self has a voice by which to be heard.

Background Information

When children are not allowed to express feelings or participate in conversations, they do not learn to communicate or to deal with their feelings. Talk about experiences you or someone you know had. What does it feel like to hold emotions inside? How well do you hold a conversation? How do you deal with: anger, stress, sadness?

Questions

1. What does spontaneity mean?
2. How did Linda keep her feelings under control?
3. What happened to Linda as time passed and more feelings went unexpressed?
4. What served as a distraction for Linda?
5. Do you think it's healthy to hold in your feelings? Why?
6. Use constricted in a sentence.
7. Do you think therapy is helpful?
8. What did Linda do to get her emotions out?
9. Do you think writing can be helpful for everyone?

DECtalk Engineer Continues Research

Digital Equipment Corporation's Tony Vitale has ALS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, which most of us know as Lou Gehrig's Disease. It is a degenerative disease that affects the central nervous system, giving its victims an average life expectancy of one-to-five years.

Vitale was diagnosed in July 1993.

Until then he was living a vigorous, active life: running four miles a day, lifting weights at night, playing a lot of tennis.



Today, little more than two years later, he cannot walk. He is in a wheelchair.

Vitale works for Digital's Assistive Technology Group. He rejected an option to stop working and receive a long-term disability pension. He works at the office two days a week and at home the other three.

For the last 24 years, Vitale has been developing speech synthesizer technology, which he may become dependent upon in order to communicate, as his disease takes its course.

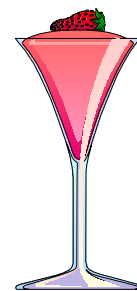
He is currently in the process of teaching computers to speak not only English, but German, French, Spanish and some Japanese. "I am the teacher, the computer is the student", said Vitale.

Vitale is fluent in French, German,

Polish, Italian and Swahili; he has written two books about Swahili. And now, while continuing to publish technical papers on text-to-speech synthesis, he is writing a book about his life's experiences.

Always driven by adventure, Vitale has trekked through East Africa, spent time in the Peace Corps in Kenya, and worked with the U.S. Government in Somalia and Zaire. He also worked with the U.S. Information Agency in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Morocco and Hungary, and taught under a senior Fulbright professorship in Tanzania and Poland.

Many years ago, he and his wife Jeanine sat on the floor of an apartment in Tanzania eating dessert while bullets screamed overhead, smashing through windows across the street. Vitale promised her that the next assignment would be "someplace peaceful." The next assignment turned out to be Poland during a state of unrest.



He spent one evening with Cambridge University Professor Stephen Hawking, the noted physicist who also has ALS, and who uses DECtalk to communicate. When the subject of winning the lottery came up in conversation, Vitale said he would spend the rest of his life drinking rum on a beautiful island in the Caribbean.

"No you wouldn't," said Hawking. "You'd keep working on speech, just as I've kept working on theoretical physics, because we owe it to mankind, and it's a much more useful endeavor than the one you just spoke about".

"Hawking was right," says Vitale. "I'm much happier now than I used to be," he says. "I no longer sweat the small stuff. The most important things are family, friends and doing something useful. In that order".

Background Information

This story is about a man who has lived a full life both without and with a disability. He is living proof that all a person really needs is determination and love to make it in life. He is the designer of the voice synthesizer that you may use with the SARAW program.



Questions

1. What does ALS stand for?
2. What does life expectancy mean?
3. What kinds of things did Tony Vitale do before being diagnosed with ALS?
4. Why do you think Vitale rejected the idea of quitting work and going on permanent disability?
5. What does the word synthesizer mean?
6. What languages is Vitale fluent in?
7. What is a book about someone's life experiences called?
8. What countries has Vitale been in?
9. Use the word endeavor in a sentence.
10. Why does Hawking continue to do his work?
11. According to the last line of the story, what is most important to Vitale?

Lou Gehrig's Day

Lou Gehrig was a baseball player for the New York Yankees from 1925 to 1939. He was known as the "Iron Horse", and set a record by playing in 2,130 consecutive league games. In 1941, at the age of 37, Lou Gehrig died of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis.



Tony Vitale is one of the principal designers of the DECTalk speech synthesizer. The following is part of a speech Vitale gave on Lou Gehrig's Day, July 23rd, 1995, at Fenway Park.

I am honored to have been chosen as Honorary Chairman of Gehrig's Day at Fenway Park. I have ALS. This day is dedicated to Lou Gehrig. He also had ALS. I would like this audience to know that I am neither angry nor depressed nor sad. The soul seems to create situations for itself in life so that it can learn from them and grow. Sometimes, illness can be just the situation that enables us to make changes in our lives. It provides the needed space, the emptiness, the silence that, it seems, must occur before creativity is free to operate. The emptiness seems to act like a vacuum, pulling the needed experience to it.

Illness can be a magnificent opportunity to become a whole person. I always felt I needed to learn certain skills in order to become a happier and more complete and fulfilled individual. Skills like patience, greater trust of my fellow man, humility, understanding and acceptance of my own imperfection. I have begun to learn and to practice these skills since my

diagnosis in the summer of 1993. There is nothing like tragedy or destruction to quickly push one along to learn something new when everything is taken away. You can start all over again. The slate is wiped clean.

My wife Jeanine does a lot of gardening. She loves to watch things grow. However, by late summer, she becomes somewhat weary of her mistakes: mistakes in the placement of plants, the plague of insects, or the constant watering of plants. I notice that she seems to be relieved to see autumn arrive, the first frost wiping out all of her mistakes.

Then comes the empty winter, a time for dreaming, dreaming anew of beautiful colors and exciting flowers which my wife has never had the chance to grow. If winter never came, as happens in warmer climates, she would never have the chance to start from the beginning. She would always be trying to add the new while simultaneously dealing with the old, a much more difficult process. But living in New England as we do, she greets each spring with joy, relief, surprise and wonder as nature unfolds her beauty yet again. She feels sorry in a way, for those with no winters in their lives. No chance to rest, no chance to start again, unfettered, no hope of spring to sustain them. I've always wanted to move to a warmer climate, one in which there is no winter. But now I'm beginning to understand my wife's reluctance. There is no change, no new beginning.



This horrible disease called ALS is like the winter. It is in one sense a death, but in another a hope of renewal. Now that I have only perhaps a few more years to live, I've been working harder than ever before. And I intend to keep working hard until it's impossible to lift my hands. And then I will use a speech recognizer to do my work until I can't speak. And then I will use a speech synthesizer to communicate with my co-workers, family and friends. So the reason why this day is so important, Ladies and Gentleman, is that if we are able, in the process of making money and gaining fame, to help one person like myself, then all our lives will have been worth it. John Donne said, No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main". We are all connected.

I'd like to end by repeating a sentence from a famous individual. I use this sentence because due to this illness, I have met the most wonderful people: compassionate physicians, acquaintances who turned out to be close friends, family members who have been extremely supportive. The sentence is from Lou Gehrig at his final address in Yankee Stadium on July 4, 1939: I consider myself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth".



Background Information

Do you know what Lou Gehrig's Disease is? Talk about what you know about the disease. Also talk about or find out about Lou Gehrig the man. What did he do? Why was he famous? Finally, talk about what your disability has meant to you. What has it taught you about life? What is important to you?

Questions

1. Who was Lou Gehrig?
2. Why was he known as the "Iron Horse"?
3. How do you think he was able to set the record for most consecutive games played when he had ALS?
4. When was his record broken?
5. Why is Tony Vitale neither angry, or depressed or sad?
6. What is the root word of imperfection?
7. What do you think Vitale means by "the slate is wiped clean"?
8. What metaphor does Vitale use to describe having ALS?
9. Why does Vitale say Lou Gehrig's day is so important?
10. Why does Vitale say he's the "luckiest man on the face of the earth"?