

Crystal

EDU 370

Reflection 2

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Empathy with Pearl

We have just finishing watching the film Best Boy in class. It was moving and I enjoyed it very much. One statement stays with me though. Philly's mother was talking and said that if God wanted to punish someone, just give them a retarded child. That statement began a class discussion about our reaction. My reaction was one that stemmed from personal experience. I have empathy and have an idea of the feelings behind that statement. Pearl did not have support in her care of Philly. She had days where she was at her breaking point. My family knows this feeling.

Three years ago my brother was diagnosed with diabetes. He was only twelve years old. The entire family was shocked, hurt, and confused. We had no idea what to do or where to begin. We felt like we were thrown a in a huge canyon with no possible way out. After a few days of denial and then cautious acceptance, we began the daunting task of caring for Justin. A problem arose when we realized that we had no idea of the extent of care he needed. My mom became the one to take on every responsibility in taking care of Justin. She talked with doctors, dietitians, endocrinologists, nurses, friends, and teachers. She received a different opinion from each one on how to take care of Justin. She was again lost as were the rest of us. We just sat back and watched as his sugar levels spiraled out of control. We couldn't get anything under control. He even had the doctor's puzzled because they could not diagnose whether he was type 1 or type 2.

Without a diagnosis we could not get a proper regimen of care. This is where my mother took over.

She started with his meals. They had to be proportioned and scheduled. He had to eat the right amount at the same times every day. The diets that were initially given to her were not helping at all. She developed her own. This did not come easy. It was by pure trial and error. We had to experiment and find out what Justin could safely eat and what sent his sugar through the roof. As a mother every meal was stressing. She could only wait and hope that Justin would be Ok and that she was on the right track.

Eventually we developed menus that worked and helped us regulate his sugar somewhat. Also at this time my mother was visibly exhausted. She lived only to care for Justin on a daily and sometimes hourly basis. Her world as she knew it had ceased to exist. It was true for the rest of us also.

The next item on the agenda was exercise. Exercise does lower blood sugar levels. What exercise would be best for Justin? That became my task. I was the one that had to do this every afternoon. My mother was unable because of severe back problems and my father did not get home in time. I was assigned the task, regardless of what else was going on in my life. I had no choice. Football, unfortunately, was my brother's sport of choice. Needless to say, bruises became an every day occurrence. Full on tackle are the only words in his vocabulary. His disease began to take a toll on me as well, physically and emotionally.

I was forced to watch the disease wreak havoc on my entire family. It was taking its toll on everyone. My mother became immersed in diabetes care manuals and books. She lived for nothing but to find out the latest information. She spent her entire day,

living meal to meal. She never seemed to leave the kitchen. Preparation took the better part of the day. The days of fast food were long gone. I remember seeing her cry as she stirred green beans. She would just ask me when it was going to end. Would we ever be near normal again? I could only stare. How could I answer those impossible questions? Justin was frustrated and on the verge of giving up. He began to hate everything about the disease and would frequently rebel. When his sugar gets high, his temper becomes uncontrollable too. Again it was something else for my mother to deal with. I was just trying to cope as I watched my family slowly fall to pieces. I was also tired. I was so tired of spending all day in classes and then coming home and spending an hour running outside or at the gym with Justin, only to check his sugar and see it had only dropped ten points. Frustration would be an understatement. I also felt for my mother. She was sacrificing everything to see to his care. She had no real support outside my father and I. No one else in the family understood the true effects of the disease. The attitude was, how hard could it be? You just give him diet soda and no sugar. What else was there? The doctors were still puzzled and Justin was trying to grow up with a disease that left him out of a lot of things. He can't just go out and get something to eat with friends. He can't leave the house at the drop of a hat and not plan ahead. We have to tote glucose monitors, insulin shots, snacks, and many other things.

I remember his first shot and I remember my mother spending the rest of the day crying. I remember her making a statement just like Pearl. Diabetes was a punishment. No one could possibly understand unless they lived with it. She said she wished everyone who was so insensitive about it would just have to deal with it for one day. Bitterness set in and it just became worse.

Today we are still struggling. It never gets better; you just learn how to cope. Justin is trying to be as normal as possible. In fact, he just ignores his condition for the most part. He doesn't let people at his high school know he has it. He just pretends it isn't there. In fact, if he goes low he will rarely tell anyone because he doesn't want anyone to know. It is frustrating and we are all still in the learning process as to his care. We want a cure but that is a near impossibility in everyone's mind. I understand completely where Pearl was coming from. It is the heart of a mother who cannot fix her child. Nothing she can do can make it any better. Her only option is to care of him and watch as he tried to live his life the best way he can.