Writing Our Journey: Poems and Essays by Family Caregivers

Each meeting has a suggested prompt, or idea, for people to write about. Everyone is free to interpret that prompt however they’d like. Below is one of the prompts, followed by a sampling of what was written in response.

Please remember that each piece of writing belongs to the writer and, if quoted, must be credited to that writer.

Three Wishes

If you were granted the proverbial three wishes, what would they be? If your child can answer for him/herself, what would her three wishes be? If not, what do you think your child would wish for? What are the similarities and/or differences between your wishes and your child’s?

- “Dream Big” by Kathy Mullery
- “Guesswork” by Kathy Roberson
Dream Big

I was awakened by an animated conversation in the next room. It sounded lively, bellying the lateness of the hour, with laughing and the ups and downs of voices sharing secrets. It took me only moments to focus, relax, realize this is all familiar, one of the regular sounds I sometimes hear when I either can’t sleep or that persist until they wake me, not unlike my husband’s occasional snoring or the early bird whose home is in the tree by my window or even the start of my neighbor’s car; occasionally he is called in to an overtime shift in the wee hours. But unlike these other home fixtures, this conversation that I hear has me straining to hear more. My son is talking to an imaginary person. I vaguely wonder if this is the same person he talks to during the day, what particular thing woke him up and, of course, what they are talking about, what secrets they are sharing like kid conspirators at a slumber party. I glance at the clock: 2:45. We’ll both be tired in the morning.

During daylight, when my son starts these conversations out in the open, right in front of me, I recognize this quirk of his as an opportunity. Alert, I have strained to catch some of the content or purpose of these talks. Sometimes I interrupt, confront him, insert myself as a willing party to the dialogue, but usually he shuns me, ignores me, denies that he is talking at all. He moves to muttering to keep me out of these most private interactions. Sometimes I sit silent, no action required, but take in what I can, and try to put his words into context. I note that, as when singing, he is not stuttering.

Looking into the window of mystery that is my child, I feel as if I have picked up his private diary to try to know him. I can’t read the words but I discover he is happy. I wonder if his friend has a name, do they make plans, dream big. I can see my son uses this sounding board to seek advice. I can hear a faint, “Take a shower.” “Take a shower? Okay.” Other times he just needs a friend. One day, we were joking with one another, laughing at a phrase that he uses sometimes to get a laugh. Then, when the joke became tiresome, when the repetitiveness started to cross the line between funny and strange and I told him, “That’s enough,” he continued the joke under his breath. When I confronted this, he said, “It wasn’t me.” There was someone else there, a friend, a co-conspirator, who would take the rap for him.

At night his talk shifts to intimate and playful, like bedroom fun between lovers. Through the walls I can discern only inflection, nothing that is being said. And I know that I won’t walk down the hall to see if I can make out any of the conversation; such efforts have proved fruitless. I imagine he is dreaming, dreaming or making plans or just letting off steam. I won’t know. He has his dreams and I have mine.

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Guesswork

Lying next to her, stroking her back, attempting to comfort with no idea why, what was dreamt, what vivid picture, what memory this disturbing.

She sits cross legged on the floor, listening to childish songs, talking alone. What fantasy makes her giggle so coyly? Or call out when touching herself on a bed littered with the toys of a toddler?

On the cusp of adulthood, what does she yearn for? What future feared? Or life coveted? Is there a restlessness stirred that she can’t name? And if I could, would it matter?

It’s a mystery that persists, along with this insistent question: If granted one wish for anything, anything at all, what should I choose? What would she?

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