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.

Someone who has been a source of support for you

Write about someone who has been a source of support for you as you’ve raised your child. We’ll write another time about someone who’s been important in your child’s life. This is meant to be about you, and your needs, and the ways (big or small, expected or unexpected, one time or over a long period) those needs were met. The writing could be a letter to that person (to be delivered someday or not), a poem, or just a description of what that person did that you found so helpful.

- “In Twilight”, by Brenda Considine
- “Hope”, by Kathy Mullery
- “The Rhythm in Between”, by Kathy Roberson
In Twilight

In soft April twilight
We stand together in a parking lot where
I sob in your arms
again,
but this time with joy.

You let me wipe my nose on your shirtsleeve

Your strong, safe, familiar hands brush away
my unexpected flood of tears
so we can both see
Our son – now tall and broad -
completely disappear
undistinguished
into a crowd of
boys wearing bow ties and black shiny shoes, and
girls with up-dos and roses pinned to their sequined dresses.

© Brenda Considine
Hope

As it is with every parent, I hope for my kid that he will be able to socialize with his peers and he will have successful interactions with all kinds of people throughout his life - teachers, other kids, the doctor, storekeepers, his employer, his landlord. I hope that my parenting and his schooling are giving him the skills he needs to make his interactions successful – the skills that make the difference between keeping a job or getting fired, having a playmate or being alone, making the next appointment or not attending to your medical needs, finding the right ingredients or not eating what you wanted, asking for what you need or going without.

This hope that I have for him is at the root of many of the decisions I make for him. It is why I asked for placement in the class he is in at school, why I have him do his own ordering in the restaurant, why I wait for him to ask for the milk he needs for his cereal instead of just pouring it, why I praise him when he announces any news to me, reinforcing that he is contributing to a conversation. I am very conscious about my efforts because I am in pursuit of his success, his independence and his getting along with others.

Deliberate as I am about all of this, I decided to take the plunge and arrange a play date for him with one of the boys in his class. My son is seven. It was time. I know that some of the skills you get in life you get by playing with other kids. My son has little to no experience with this.

I made the first big step and called Frank’s mom. My son had already been to Frank’s birthday party weeks ago so I had already considered Frank to be a potential candidate for a play date. I gave the mom no warning I’d be calling and did it over the phone to protect myself from showing her my disappointment should she reject the idea. She did, in fact, hesitate when I asked if Frank could come over and I immediately read it to mean that she saw nothing in common between her son and mine. After all, mine has Down Syndrome. I immediately offered her an out while thinking to myself that we both knew the reason for her hesitation. I was quick to suggest maybe it isn’t a good idea…maybe some other time…and I babbled for a minute or two. She said no, she’s hesitating because she had never done this before, her son is an only child and she was having trouble letting go. Oh, sure, I understand. This I could handle.

Frank was over my house the very next day. For two hours I watched, studied the kids’ interactions, intervened when my son got off on something that was of no interest to Frank, responded to Frank when my son did not answer all of his questions, engaged in their play to model for my son how you do this, and stayed
away when their kindergarten life in common was all they needed. They chased each other, chased the dog, chased me. They had snack and explored the neat things in the basement. When Frank asked me if he could begin a new game, I said your mom will be here soon so maybe next time you come. Frank said he didn’t think he’d be coming back. My heart sank. Why not, I asked, bracing myself for the brutal honesty 6-year olds are known for. Frank said, because I go to school every day and I get home too late to come. Oh, is that all? Again, this I could handle. With a smile. With hope.

© Kathy Mullery
The Rhythm In Between

Resistant, she is, to transitions, the moving forward, the letting go to hang suspended, for even an instant in time, as if she were a trapeze artist with a partner hidden in shaded silhouette. She needs someone proficient in the art of leaping and the art of living uncaught. My sister is like a morning incandescent with a multitude of drifting petals, their riotous colors banishing sleep, dullness, the cold weather rationing of our senses. It is carnival time when she arrives, and my daughter is still raging and fuming at fear of departure, throwing herself on the ground, kicking her heavy, sneakered feet, wailing with a clean, fast fury, no, no to being led or left. I close my eyes, seeking rest, replenishment of empathy, a mothering metamorphosis of sorts, and my sister rises to the call, as she always has. She’s an earthy guardian angel, one who relishes the compelling tempo of laughter and impetuous giving, and grants
my wish by stepping forward into the hot, noon sun to tango with her niece, their arms extended, their stride wild, high and long, dancing without grace, but with a rhythm they create while they fly, fast and bold, to the fair.

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