

“You have everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want.” – Zig Ziglar

A great quote with so much meaning. This quote struck me this morning because I realize as I pace and walk through the clouds of my own mind, I have everything I want, peace and safety. I will never get all that I want until I feel that others are on the same track of acquiring peace and safety.

A lot of people have been dying recently, famous people that is, that brings attention to one thing, what did they contribute? I believe so often in today's society that we look upon the famous and the well-known as not a part of us (the general population) and by doing so we lower our expectations of ourselves. My worst nightmare would be to become “famous” but my other nightmare is to leave this life without contributing as much as I possibly can.

We do not have to be world known to make a difference, to impact another's life in a positive way. We do not have to be wealthy to give and we do not have to be doctors to help heal emotional wounds. I have a habit of meeting a person and thinking to myself, “OH – I need to go back to college and obtain a PhD in order to help them.” Or “I need to write a book, call a senator or write a letter to the governor and defend them.” I think big, we all know that. But, no, that is not what I need to – none of that actually. I need to hold my hand out, give them a shoulder to rest their head and share with them my own testimony to provide them hope. There is no medium more powerful.

I am filled with joy when I am with those that are searching for hope. Everything thing that I am seems to be filled when I am giving hope to another human being. My wounds don't hurt so much when I see one that could hurt someone else be helped themselves. When I see the fear masked in a tough exterior of someone internally battling the demons that haunt them, I know my eyes say, "It will be alright, I know." When I gain the trust of a person that has been abused in every sense of the word, I know God exists and in that process he softens my own abuse. When you allow someone to talk, without prejudice and without judgment – you allow them to express, you allow them to release the hurt, the anger, the fear. They teach me so much.

If you have never experienced giving of you yourself, not your money, not your possessions, but yourself – please do – because in that you will receive more than you can ever imagine possible.

I am not writing this column today to tell you how I think you should live as much as I am writing this column to remind myself of how I choose to live. I have been away from very chaotic life for eight months now... I find myself sometimes being "on guard" for the very people I want to dedicate my life too. There is no reason that. I love them; I love their stories and their possibilities. They are colorful, not dark. They are hope wrapped up in a mess. They are irresponsible, frustrated, sometimes vulgar and impatient. Me – who has lived that life, should know more than anyone that that is not WHO they ARE it is HOW they SURVIVE! I have always been able to see the heart in a person in these situations... I have been surrounded by simply WONDERFUL people for the past eight

months. Beautiful family and friends, very few who have judged me or shunned me. My mind has ran the gambit of shame, heartache, fear, frustration and anger... even a little resentment for the ten years that I have missed with all these people.

Anyone of the countless men and women I have met with Mental Illness can do what I have done. Anyone of them could write a book twice as big as mine. Anyone of them can love and be loved and all of them deserve hope.

Like I said, this column may be just a cathartic expression for myself, because I had to remind myself this morning what I stand for and that my convictions must meet my words. It is easy sometimes to just say, "Why bother!" However, I remember all too well thinking the same when I walked the streets... but I kept walking. And I will keep walking now. Because when my day comes, regardless of how many may have a bad opinion of me, I pray that maybe just a few can say, "He gave me hope!"