

## :: Dana's Weekly Insight ::

### 04.07.08 – Disaster Recovery



There is a popular school of thought going around lately that would suggest that we are all ultimately responsible for everything that happens to us - the good and the bad. A lot of people think that you can concentrate, focus and determine your way out of negative outcomes or hard times. I don't. Sometimes stuff just happens! No matter what we do or how hard we try to avoid it, sometimes all hell will just break loose, whether we want it to or not.

When faced with a crisis, blind-sided and caught off guard, what matters is not what you may have done or what you could have done differently. What matters is -

How you rise to the occasion and who you can become.

She describes her son Jason as being a darling little boy with a twinkle in his eye, who loved little league and was president of the national honor society, who, after a summer at camp, decides that he wants to serve in the military and hold political office one day.

Carol says that she was looking forward to seeing her young son thrive.

After graduating from the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis Maryland, Jason went off to Orlando, Florida to nuclear engineering school where he met a girl named April. They fell madly in love and Jason telephoned his parents to announce that his orders had changed, he was moving to Rhode Island and because he and April wanted to be together, they were going to get married "next Friday".

"My only child was planning on marrying a woman that I had never met 'next Friday', Carol recalls. "But not only was he asking to marry a woman that I had never met, he was asking to marry a woman who was divorced with two children - 'next Friday', she concludes.

This was not exactly part of the plan that she had for her son's life.

When Carol met April, who had been previously married to a man who was sixteen years her senior, she loved her very quickly. She welcomed April and her daughters Chelsea and Hannah into their family.

Carol was looking forward to watching this new family thrive.

The first year of their marriage, April's ex-husband, who had been accused of abuse, had been petitioning for unsupervised visitation rights with his daughters. Carol recalls that Jason was often worried that his step daughters would be hurt if they were left alone with their biological father.

Then --

"We got one of those "middle of the night" calls that no parent ever wants to get. I will never forget watching my husband pick up the receiver, put it to his ear, pull it back saying 'Carol, Jason has just been arrested for the murder of his wife's first husband. He is in the jail in Orlando'".

Carol describes how her legs would not hold her weight as she tried to get out of bed and so she had to crawl to her office to call the Orlando jail.

Two and a half years later Jason was found guilty of murder in the first degree and sentenced to serve out the rest of his natural life in the Florida State Penitentiary, without the possibility of parole. They call it the "toe tag" sentence because the only way out is to be carried out dead on a slab with a tag on your toe.

A boy of such promise marched out of the court room in leg irons and chains.

Imagine.

One moment her life was going along exactly the way that she had planned and she would find herself in the next moment having to make an adjustment that would require her to make room in her heart for a divorced mother of two. In one moment that was the biggest problem she had, clueless to the fact that on the other end of a phone call in the next moment, she would find herself the mother of a murderer.

Sometimes bad things happen that are outside of our control. No matter what we do or how hard we try to avoid it, sometimes disaster just strikes, leaving us with the profound opportunity to discover -

who in the world we really are.

A year ago on Christmas day Carol describes that she was in the ladies room at the prison. She was in one of the stalls when another woman came in. She was weeping and cussing - "I hate this place! I hate these people! I think I'm having a nervous breakdown!"

The old Carol admitted that she would have given this broken-hearted woman some sort of irritating self righteous advice, but the new Carol was weeping before she even left her bathroom stall. Putting her arms around a woman that she had never met before, she told her how sorry she was for her pain. "My boy is here too." And then they cried together.

That woman needed to know that one human being understood and cared about what she was going through and Carol was able to provide that special brand of compassion that is earned on the battlefield when life deals you a bad hand.

And you?

How will you rise to the occasion and who will you become?

Bad things happen whether we like it or not. No matter how well we plan or how hard we pray, sometimes stuff just happens, yet somehow life must go on.

Adversity is a necessary part of self discovery that mysteriously completes our ultimate journey. It is through adversity that we develop the capacity to authentically connect with other human beings and the willingness to truly and deeply trust that -

beyond what is within our control, life can still work beautifully.

Dana

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