



Providing support and information for families of children with disabilities, chronic illness and other special health care needs

A Dad's Story

Tom Prior, Austin

Our daughter, Brenna is 16 yrs. old now. She is very excited with life, music, dance and just people as are a lot of children with Down syndrome that we have met along the way. Brenna, we've always been amazed by, will sometimes swing mentally and emotionally from 8 yrs. to 16 yrs. and sometimes just completely blow us away by saying or doing something beyond those year ranges.

I've always wondered if she indeed did have this special entry way into the next world by some of the things she's done and said. At least I've enjoyed the possibility anyway. For example, both her grandmothers have been dead for some 6-10 years now. She knew them fleetingly, maybe my wife's mother most of the two. But she will, out of the blue, and almost invariably when we least expect it ask, "Do you miss your mom - I do!" In and of itself, that's probably not too intuitive yet I'll get goose bumps when she asks. Almost as if mom wants us to know - not to forget them!

But perhaps, the series of events that occurred about 3 years ago has always stuck with me as absolute pure "heavenly" connection and still does. I own my own business, a small cabinet shop/renovation company with me as the only employee. Summers have always been a challenge for us, mostly my wife. Long before school lets out and summer arrives, she's very busy trying to line up camps, session, sitters and events that will occupy, teach and otherwise keep Brenna active throughout the summer months while we can still be free to work, as we both do. Invariably, there would be long periods of a week or two when we couldn't find anything or couldn't afford anything for Brenna to do.

This particular summer was no different and Sue, my wife, couldn't take off to be there for Brenna as sometimes she could. As for me, well, when I don't work, I don't get paid. But, I was renovating a house, where the owners' would be gone, and having met Brenna were okay with her being with me while I worked. Brenna is actually quite easy to keep entertained - her music to sing and dance with, her guitar to make up her own music and drawing paraphernalia to create masterpieces along with plenty of snack and orange juice. However, during this particular summer I was doing two jobs at the same time, had some subcontractors dealing with the other job so I could consistently be on this one. In addition, I was dealing with some anxieties over a pet project I wanted to put on the market myself - there was a lot on my plate at the time.

Now, I want to back up a bit on something very relevant to the story. Brenna's favorite book, bedtime and anytime was, "Guess How Much I Love You." The story is about a daddy rabbit, Big Brown Hare trying to get his son, the Little Nut Brown Hare to go to sleep. Big Brown Hare asks, "Guess how much I love you?" Little Nut Brown Hare would respond, "How much?" "To that tree and back," said Big Nut Brown Hare. Well, Little Nut Brown hare, not to be undone or to show how much he loved his dad, would ask the same and on and on between them until they reached the stars and moon. Wherein, Little Nut Brown Hare finally falls asleep and by this time so does Brenna. Brenna absolutely loved this book and would consistently ask for it to get to sleep by. One morning we were headed down the crowded, rush hour

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3710 Cedar Street ★ Box 12 ★ Austin, TX 78705-1449 ★ 866-896-6001 ★ 512-458-8600
website: www.txp2p.org ★ Email: info@txp2p.org

highway toward this particular job. I had been very pre-occupied with how badly some things on both jobs had been going, not at all what I had been hoping for. I was very quiet and into my thoughts as we crawled up IH35 through town and out of the blue Brenna asks, "Dad?" Not pulling myself away from my more "important" thoughts, I blankly returned, "Yes, Brenna what do you want?" Wherein, she replied, "See those clouds over there?" pointing over to my left above some high rise buildings. I looked half thinking and said I did. Her reply, "that's how much I love you - from that cloud to here!" Immediately my thoughts vanished and looking over at her smiling face, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. So I did both! The rest of the day was my best ever.

Somehow, from somewhere spiritual, she knew what I needed that day. And not just that day either. Not soon after, summer had ended, school had started and was weeks into it by this time. My task in the morning was to drive her to school, and then I would head off to work. Well, unfortunately again, I had been steeped into my business/financial thoughts again and had been very quiet. When all of the sudden I felt this little hand on my shoulder. Turning toward Brenna, her head was tilted and a smile on her face. Not a word did she say, just lightly patted my shoulder as before, the rest of the day/week was great. Happenstance? Maybe. Tuned in - most definitely! We still believe she, as well as all children in their innocence are a special link to the spiritual world. Wouldn't it be a great world if we were truly like children!

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