

## *The Audacity of Tomorrow*

Story time:

*Brysse was in the second grade the first time she came home and told me she liked a boy a school. I was definitely surprised by this but still tried to play it cool.*

*“Oh yeah?” I asked her. “But what do you like about him?”*

*She shrugged. “He’s cute.” I waited a moment, expecting her to have more to say than just that. I took a breath and tried another approach. “Okay, so he’s cute. Cute isn’t a skill. Anyone can be cute. I mean ... tell me about him. What in particular do you like about him? What makes him special?”*

*She gave it a moment. Then she told me she’d think about it and let me know. Fair enough*

*As we ate our dinner later that night, Brysse says, “Okay, so I thought about it.”*

*I nodded (probably a little too eagerly) and tried not to break into a proud smile right then and there. But dangit!- she’d actually given it some real thought and had now come back to with me an answer. My daughter had my full attention.*

*“Yeah so ... I decided ... that ... you just don’t understand.” Then she filled her mouth with spaghetti and that was that.*

*About a dozen questions and statements ran through my head and collided with each other.*

*There was so much I wanted to tell her. Ask her. But instead, I just sighed and picked up my fork. Now wasn’t the time. Not yet.*

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Tomorrow, itself, is not just a word, but a *feeling*; filled with a sense of security and entitlement. We speak on time as if it is ours to claim. And without even the slightest hesitation, we expect to find that Tomorrow will be there, waiting for us. It’s a pretty easy thing to take for granted, the illusion of time. Both the time we have with our children and the time our children will have with us. Especially because, as mothers, everything we do for our kids is so entangled with the future. Everything is done with an eye to *Tomorrow*.

Maybe one of the greatest challenges about the many things we strive to teach our daughters, is the ways this wisdom remains at constant risk against their own burgeoning intelligence and the weight added by new experiences. For some of us, is the frustration and sadness as we try to get our daughter to see how beautiful she is and wish she would stop comparing herself to people who (in our purely objective opinion) don’t deserve the comparison. Some of us are overwhelmed because our kid has been too focused on impressing certain peers, than on her schoolwork. Maybe, like me, you try to explain to her that the cool kids usually all peak by graduation. She thinks we don’t understand. We reason that maybe with time and a little more maturity, it will all come together then and make better sense.

These realities happen to all of us Moms, differently. One of the best things about the position we are in today with our girls is that right at this moment, we are equipped with both wisdom and foresight. In the aftermath of many of these respective battles we've faced and overcome, is a particular brand of insight. The key, however, is in protecting today what we can't put off for a tomorrow that doesn't belong to us. In creating this experience for my daughter, one of the most valuable benefits I've taken away has been the respect I've gained for the illusion of time.

The inspiration is literally all around. I have been on the train commuting and within earshot of conversations that, for whatever reasons, have made me angry, made me sad, and made me sick. And in those moments, I feel inspired to jot down some things in regard to those things, for Brysse. Whether it be my feelings on the value people seem to place on friendships and relationships these days, or something specific I'd want her to keep in mind as she lives her life- I don't wait.

Because the other thing I've realized is this:

All we really need to know about life and love and people are in the things our own parents probably taught us by the time we were seven years old. What's interesting is that its usually the simplest of life's lessons that we come back to most often. Yet, strangely, the uncomplicated truths become harder to see the older we are and with the more life we've lived. Still, they remain as pure and simple to understand now as they were when hearing them for the first time as small children.

Although our adult problems often may seem light years away from the ones our kids are going through- they really aren't very different at all. And though we may offer the advice that seems the most obvious to prescribe, from where we sit on high, and a top on our perches of maternal wisdom - our lives run more parallel with our children than what we might notice in a single glance. And as immature as the bulk of their school-age dilemmas may seem, upon closer inspection, you might just recognize that there are some 'problems' that we tend to never fully outgrow. often the kinds of situations that never really stop happening to us.

After all, as adults, we are the ones who worry about what our co-workers think of us and we try to fit in rather than taking the time first to determine if we would still choose to associate with such people under different circumstances. We don't go for promotions we really want because we allow office politics to hold us back. We date people for the wrong reasons or without stopping to ask ourselves any real questions first. These "school-age" situations and the feelings they create within each of us, tends to show up again in the future, time after time, but wearing the clothes of a grown-up. But it's the same crap. Really it is.

I have caught myself in moments of such indulged hypocrisy. As I wrote to my daughter about the importance of owning her power, and blah blah blah, so she'd be reminded again in the future of its value, I cringed to see the thread between my words to her and the ways that, I, myself, was not living up to it in my own work life. And once I saw that connection, I'd then scribble that down for her too. Because of the enormous value of perspective it will offer her. A

triple treasure via Fragment of insight, personal testimony and reminder all in one. Yes, I'm *still* growing as a woman, even as I'm a mom. Didn't I tell you I was?

The need for these conversations will present themselves in whatever ways they unfold. And of course, there can be no substitute for the value of this happening face to face with our girls. However, what we choose to include for our daughters while they are still small is not solely about preserving that particular nugget of insight whenever it may come to mind- but also to reinforce the value of some of these critical lessons and remind our daughters (and ourselves!) of *Why*.

And so the next time that Life presents us with situations (courtesy of our children) that we might like to pretend we've never seen before - rather than over analyze or overthink, or rattle off answers that *seem* as if they should be obvious ... Perhaps we can instead take a second, get quiet, and see if we can find *some* thread of commonality between our daughter's life and our own. There is a little girl inside of all of us. If we get quiet enough, we may be able to hear 'her' voice, she just might lead us back to the simplicity of the lessons we were taught as children.

Especially because it is the foundational principles of such lessons that never ever change. But we have the privilege now to prepare differently for the future and the foresight to include the very resources we'd most want her to have and be reminded of in her womanhood. And *then*, you exhale.

*(So yes, Brysse. I DO understand. Because I've been there many times myself.)*