

Story #18b

The Senses as a Gateway to Observation

18. Give permission to your student and yourself to observe something without thinking of conclusions - then, later ... see what thoughts arise.

(The Teacher's Bill of Rights)

You know, observation is one of the highest spiritual activities that you can perform. It causes you to be here. Giving loving attention to the world is just a wonderful thing. And your senses cause you to pay attention to the world. So, they are a gateway to observation. But using your senses does not necessarily imply that you are eating food or smelling flowers or listening to music. It also can mean that you are simply paying attention to what's going on around you. You are open with your awareness to everything around you.

Well, somebody taught me this. Her name is Ali. She passed when she was 52 years old, but I knew her since she was a little girl. She was my neighbor. She and her brother and sister were in the carpool with my son and I going to the school where I was teaching. So, I would drive them every day and really got to know them. We played in the park on the weekends and I got to know her as an athlete. She was quite an athlete. She paid attention to her sports as well as everything else, eventually becoming an Olympic Athlete for the American Handball Team.

As she was growing, I watched her serious perseverance - but also her presence. And it struck me to see that as her mom got sick, Ali chose to stay home. Of the whole family, she chose to stay home and have a job while nursing her mother until her mom's passing. And besides that, she went back to school to become a doctor. I mean, medical school is hard. But she had perseverance and presence for that too, which I also admired.

Several years later, she was visiting me. She was out here for nine days with her soon to become wife, Aida and Aida's mom. But, for all of the hikes we were supposed to go on, Ali kept saying that she was sick and didn't feel well. This was very unusual. A person with this much perseverance - staying home from a hike? It was unheard of! Then it turned out, the next month when she got home, she found out that she was in stage four of lung cancer.

Well, she persevered in that the way she persevered in everything else. She battled the cancer and lived her life! I got to proceed at her wedding. During it, I said to she and Aida and the group that was present, "Ali is one of the people who is a voice in my head." Since she was little, I could draw on who she was as somebody that I really respected.

Ali eventually went to Colorado Springs and lived right in sight of Pike's Peak and took hikes up into the mountains. I took a hike with her right before her passing, and although she was in so much pain that she was crying, she wanted to do the whole hike. She just loved the mountains and loved the outdoors and wanted to finish what she had started. She was persevering and enjoying her life right till the end. But it wasn't till just now - years later - making this video that I realized how she is a voice in my head. Normally, when you say

someone is a voice in your head, you mean that you can think of things that they say. You hear words, you here phrases that come back to you. But she is a voice in my head for who she was in demonstrating - ***how to go to your senses***. She is an example I draw on quite often actually. I think, what would Ali do? How would she approach this situation? Not just to persevere through - but to be present. And that takes your senses.

And so, thank you Ali and thank you for listening. I'll see you in one of those tomorrows.

