

Being real creates real magic

by **Connie Brisson**

All I ever wanted was to be a mom, so when I finally got pregnant at 36, I was ready for the most wonderful experience of my life.

But life is unpredictable. It was Christmas and just two weeks before I gave birth to Gabrielle, when I saw my brother, Gene and realized (or maybe accepted) that he would die very soon from cancer. My Mom had also just been diagnosed with cancer and had a kidney removed just after Christmas.

Then just a few weeks later, when Gabrielle was only 10 days old, we moved our new little family to Fort McMurray. In addition to trying to deal with all the changes, Gabrielle was colicky, crying much of the time. My body was still trying to heal, so when I got mastitis twice that first month, it just wiped me out. This was not how I thought 'wonderful' would be.

What was supposed to be the most amazing experience of my life was one of the most difficult. Gene died when Gabrielle was only six weeks old. Shortly after both she and I were admitted to the hospital in Fort McMurray. She was dehydrated (breastfeeding was not going well) and the doctor admitted me too because he said I looked worse than she did.

While in the hospital a nurse told me about a weekly group meeting for new mothers. The group was meeting that day and she encouraged me to go and meet other new moms. I didn't know anyone in Fort McMurray so it seemed like a good idea... until I walked into the meeting.

In a perfect little circle, were a perfect set of manicured moms and their perfect sleeping little babies, like an Anne Geddes photograph. I walked in looking like something the cat dragged in - big circles under my eyes, no make-up on, greasy hair back in a pony-tail, wearing an oversized plaid flannel shirt of Marcel's, holding my little baby, who was *not* sleeping and *not* quiet.

Once everyone had a turn to talk, it was my turn. I said my name and then I think I cried the whole way through whatever else I said. I didn't have an ounce of strength in me to be perfect or fake. When I was finished talking, every other mom in the circle looked shell-shocked. No one said a word and then I wished that I hadn't of either.

Months later, when one of the other moms and I got together, she told me that she couldn't believe what I'd said

in the group that day. She said it wasn't WHAT I had said that shocked her, as she didn't find motherhood that easy either. It was that I had the honesty to express what each of them was thinking and experiencing, but would not admit out loud for fear of looking like they weren't 'good' moms. She added that whenever she was having a hard time after that, she would remember what I said and felt comfort in knowing that she was not alone.

About two months ago I was speaking with a friend that I'd previously been very close to. Although we've seen each other off and on since then, our friendship had become more casual. However, this time as we talked, she opened up about a difficult situation she was going through. She was worried that she was going 'crazy' over the whole thing.

I told her I could easily relate to her fears because I had experienced something similar. As we continued to openly and honestly talk about our lives, the more we were both comforted, knowing we aren't alone in any of our problems or fears.

No one is alone. The real 'craziness' is how hard we often try to hide our vulnerabilities, our fears, our problems, when almost everyone is or has experienced something similar in their lives. In our self imposed isolation we think we're the only ones going through 'this or

that', when in reality, we are all here learning life lessons.

I know I don't have all the answers but what I've learned along the way is that my honesty, my ability to 'be real' has often been the greatest gift I can give to anyone or be in any situation.

There is something about being real that is magical. It can open up invisible doorways that lead to hope, acceptance, connection, forgiveness, understanding, compassion... whatever is needed to bring light and transformation to a difficult situation.

Often it takes a tremendous amount of courage to be open, to reveal ourselves, to be vulnerable. And when we do, we graciously invite those around us to have the courage to express their truth, their fears, their hearts desires. That's when the real magic unfolds. ☺

Connie



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