

ACE WOMEN'S Network™ Michigan

Mentoring Mondays
April 26, 2021

During the pandemic when most of us are working from home, I don't know about you, but I have spent a great deal of time purging files. I don't have space to store all of the paperwork that I generate in the course of my work day. Of course, during the purging process, I tend to read everything before I toss it in the shredder. This past week, I came upon this article written by Joe Caruso, founder of the Caruso Leadership Institute in Grosse Ile, Michigan, who has done professional development training for the college. It's an old article but his story is relevant today. It's a great story and I hope you enjoy it.

'Little Miracles' Happen When We Affect Others

We all affect each other. This connectivity is one of the best parts of the human experience. Once in a while, if we're really fortunate, we have the opportunity to affect another life in a way that has a dramatic and positive impact. Sometimes, it's with a person we've never even met. I call these moments "little miracles."

I recently had the honor of speaking to a high powered group of business owners in Washington, D.C. The subject of the speech was my upcoming book, "The Power of Losing Control." I talked at great length about how much pain is created in the workplace, in relationships and in our individual lives when we choose to spend our time and energy trying to control that which we can't. I pointed out that while we can't control our spouses, our children, our employees, or even our health (try to stop breathing or give yourself a heart attack), we can control our approach, our response and our behavior.

In all other areas of our lives, we may find that we have *influence but no control*. Some of the greatest damage to our emotional well-being happens when we believe the myth that we actually can control that which we can't. I went on to explain to the group that most times, in any situation, we have *power in it, but no control over it*.

I then shared with the group how and when I first learned this fact and how it helped me through the most trying experience of my life. They sat attentively as I told them of the incurable cancer I was diagnosed with at 17 years old. Thanks to my participation in an experimental chemotherapy and surgical protocol, I lived through the experience. I shared with them how the experience forced me to *accept what I couldn't control* and only *focus on what I could*.

It was during the question and answer period following my speech when the little miracle happened. And, I was caught completely unaware. One of the first questions came from a well-dressed gentleman in the back of the room. "Joe," he began, "was your cancer a gift or a curse?" I candidly responded by telling him it was an excellent question because, while it was the worst and most difficult time of my life, it was also the impetus for me to commit to a life's work of learning all I can about the human experience. And during my treatment I dedicated whatever may be left of my short life to do all I could to help others by sharing what I learned. "In short," I said, "cancer was a *curse* that I decided would be the biggest *gift* of my life."

Following the program, I noticed that the gentleman was waiting around while I was signing some books and audio CDs. Finally, when he and I were the only two left in the room, he approached me. He was tense and obviously doing all he could to stay in control of all the emotion bubbling up inside of him. He stood directly in front of me and looked right into my eyes. His voice trembled as he began to speak. "*My cancer . . .*," was, at first, all he could get out. Immediately I began to think that perhaps he had been diagnosed with an incurable cancer, but that, for him, there would be no miracle, no experimental cure.

I soon learned how wrong I was. "*My cancer,*" he repeated after he was able to speak again, "was . . . my son's disability. And today you taught me that it is my *gift*." We were both crying as he gave me a brief hug and quickly left the room.

I stood alone in the big empty room thanking God for the life he's given me – for the words he gave me when I answered the gentleman's question. And for the little miracle of helping me touch a handicapped boy I will never meet.

Joe Caruso is an expert in the psychology that drives people's thoughts and behaviors. For more information visit www.caruso.com.