Forever Grateful

By Carol J. Decker

Unexpected trials and challenges come to everyone; they’re an unavoidable part of life. Although we cannot always control these events, we do have the power of choice. We choose how we think, what we do, what we say. We choose how we react.

My live took an unexpected turn in June of 2008, when pregnant with my second daughter. My pregnancy had been uneventful for the first 33 weeks, but then I began experiencing flu-like symptoms. Contractions started, so my husband Scott and I went to see my doctor. The doctor suspected a problem and sent us directly to the hospital. Then pain started shooting through every part of my body, and the doctors and nurses finally realized my life was in danger. Before going through the operating doors as I was rushed into an emergency C-section, I turned back and looked at Scott, not knowing it would be the last time I would see his face.

After the delivery, I was diagnosed with a bacterial blood infection caused by strep pneumonia that led to sepsis. Sepsis is an overwhelming reaction to the infection causing tissue damage and organ failure. To save my life, they amputated both feet, my left hand and right ring finger. I was also left completely blind. Over time, I underwent skin grafting over 30% of my body from secondary complications.

After spending 20 days in a medically induced coma, I awoke to a world turned completely upside down. I couldn’t see my injuries, which led to more confusion as I tried to understand my situation. I strained just to sit up or even feed myself. I was haunted by the thought my life would never be what it once was, trying to bond with my newborn or even reconnect with my 18-month-old daughter. Every day was a struggle, and at times I wanted it to end.

After spending months in the hospital, I had a choice to make – either give up or pick up. It was a decision I faced every day, fighting through endless physical and occupation therapy sessions. I had to look at each day as another step closer to returning to life with my husband and two daughters. With the loving support of family, friends and the community of Enumclaw, I decided to pick up the pieces of the life I once knew. I became determined to work even harder to get it back.

These experiences have led me through many life lessons. The one standing out as a favorite is to be ‘forever grateful’ for life. Each day spent with my children, husband, family and friends is one to appreciate. My optimistic attitude didn’t happen overnight. While choosing to live, I learned how to cultivate gratitude in everyday life. It was critical for me to do this. Over time I realized when gratitude fills your heart, you can find happiness and joy in the darkest of moments. Being grateful carried me through mine. My story was recorded and can be viewed on the City of Enumclaw’s web site under ECTV, Videos, City Events, 2017.

Great challenges bring important opportunities. My hardships eventually led to engagements as an inspirational speaker around the nation. I strive to uplift others by sharing my story. My life motto is to let go, embrace the moment and have fun. Please join me for SoHaPP’s ‘Forever Grateful’ workshop on November 3, 2018 at either 10 a.m. or 2 p.m. at Green River College in Enumclaw. Learn the power of gratitude and how to become more grateful.

I will return to the College on November 29, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. to lead a discussion on my new book “Unshattered: Overcoming Tragedy and Choosing a Beautiful Life”. To help promote SoHaPP’s initiative, The Sequel has it 25% off these next five months. Please come to have questions answered or to share what you found interesting. I would love to hear your comments.