

Robelisticus Maximus

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English 1

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A Person of Presence, Courage, and Love

When my mom was 21 years old, she was cleaning up the dinner dishes one evening. Suddenly her father collapsed on the kitchen floor. His health had been declining for years, but this fall wasn't one of his epileptic seizures. My mom cradled her dad's head on the floor and shouted across the house for help, and somebody called for an ambulance, but it came too late. My grandfather died right there, in my mom's arms, from a heart attack. For years my mom had already been taking care of her brothers and sisters so that her mother could go to work at night cleaning office buildings. I can't even imagine the horror, pain, and grief of losing one's father in this way, but my mom lived through this event and went on with her life, continuing to take care of the people who needed her and never giving up hope, despite the grief and the fear that this and other traumas would leave her carrying. To this day, my mom remains one of the most amazing people I have ever known, inspiring me to be honest and authentic with people, to face life's harsh realities with courage, and to view other human beings with compassion and respect.

One of the greatest gifts my mom has given me is the knowledge that I can be honest and authentic with her, and that she will listen to me without judging me. When I was younger, I didn't always feel like I knew how to open up and talk to my mom with complete honesty, but that fact has changed. My mom and I definitely don't agree on everything, but I have learned that we can be close to each other even when we disagree. For example, about ten years ago, I was feeling pressure from her to raise my three children with the same religious upbringing that she

**Kommentar [1]:** Here is a proper MLA heading:  
Your name  
Your teacher's name  
Course Name  
Due Date

**Kommentar [2]:** For the HOOK, the writer chose an ANECDOTE to grab the reader's attention.

**Kommentar [3]:** This is the TRANSITION between the hook and the thesis.

**Kommentar [4]:** This is the essay's THESIS.

**Kommentar [5]:** The paragraph's first sentence states its MAIN IDEA or CLAIM.

had given me and my brother. My brother and I grew up attending Catholic school, going to church regularly, and following Catholic traditions. However, once I became a father, I was not certain that I wanted to pass all those same traditions on to my kids, and tension between my mom and me built up over it. Eventually, I decided that I wanted to discuss the issue honestly with her, so I wrote her a lengthy letter explaining my perspective and feelings on the issue. It was frightening to write that letter because I knew my mom wouldn't be happy about my choices. However, I sent her the letter, and soon received her lengthy response. Over time, the two letters evolved into an actual discussion between us that involved hurt feelings on both sides, but also something miraculous. My mom did not try to argue with me or prove that my point of view was wrong; instead, after some time of talking back and forth, she accepted that my feelings and my point of view were as real as hers were, and we became able to talk openly about a subject that had once been frightening for me. I had feared that she would accept me only as long as I followed her wishes, but I learned that she will listen to me and accept me as I am. All I need to do is have the courage to fully "show up" and be honest with her.

**Kommentar [6]:** One lengthy ANECDOTE is used to develop this paragraph's main idea.

Life can sometimes be harsh and frightening, but my mom has shown me how to face life's realities with courage and an open heart. She refuses to let her past wounds or her fears for the future keep her from living a full life. Though her life has brought her tremendous pain and loss, she has continued to push forward and to find fulfillment, and she refuses to give up. For example, after her father's death, she took care of her siblings and her mother for two more years as everyone in the family struggled with the grief and trauma of the loss. My mom also met my dad during those years, and they married in 1963, two years after her father's death. She and my dad began their own family, with my brother's birth in 1965 and my birth in 1966, and for six years they shared the adventure and joy of creating a family and a life together. However, on

**Kommentar [7]:** The paragraph's first sentence states its MAIN IDEA or CLAIM.

**Kommentar [8]:** One brief EXAMPLE is used to illustrate the paragraph's main idea.

September 6, 1969, my mom received an unexpected and horrific phone call that changed our lives: my dad had been killed in a traffic collision. He would never come home to us again, and I would be left with no memories of him. My mom was left with two young sons, aged four and two, and was suddenly faced--for the second time in her life--with the trauma of losing a loved one and the challenge of figuring out how to heal and move on. As a kid, I couldn't begin to appreciate all the trauma, grief, and pain she had been forced to carry through life; it was simply too much for my innocent mind to grasp. However, by the time I became a parent myself, thirty years later, the reality of what my mom had faced most of her life began to sink in. There were so many times when her grief and fear must have been enough to make her want to give up, but my mom never did. She worked and saved money to buy a house; she put me and my brother through grade school, high school, and college; she made our meals every day and took care of us through every illness. My own life journey has been shaped by terrible tragedy and loss, but because of my mom, it has also been shaped by courage, love, and a refusal to give up.

**Kommentar [9]:** An ANECDOTE is used to further develop the main idea.

**Kommentar [10]:** A list of additional EXAMPLES is used to develop the main idea.

Being an adult has taught me that life can be overwhelming and that we human beings need to take care of each other. I have learned this lesson more profoundly from my mom than from anyone else. For example, when my neighborhood friend Leanne and I were both in eighth grade, Leanne was diagnosed with cancer, and she ended up fighting it for four years, receiving repeated treatments of both chemotherapy and radiation. My mom was there every step of the way, helping Leanne and her parents deal with all the challenges, the fear, the grief, and the hope. She helped Leanne and her parents battle the cancer, and when the battle became hopeless, she then helped Leanne and her parents face Leanne's impending death. For me, watching Leanne slowly die and watching her parents grieve was one of the most terrible things I had ever witnessed, but I was also amazed to see my mom help our neighbors every step of the way, as

**Kommentar [11]:** The first TWO sentences of this paragraph state its MAIN IDEA or CLAIM.

though they were her own family. Much later in my life, my own divorce became one of the toughest struggles I have ever had to experience, but my mom was there for me in every way she possibly could be. It was painful to leave my home, to be with my kids only half the time, and to basically start all over again again. I felt alone, sad, and scared during that time, but I know I wasn't really alone. My mom called me regularly to check on me, she flew out to California from Chicago to visit me and my kids, and she even flew us all back to Chicago to visit her, despite it costing money that she really didn't have. She showed me that unless we decide to take care of one another, we are all basically on our own in a harsh world; I now see that my mom has created a loving world around her in which the people she cares for are not alone after all. Her example has helped me understand that each one of us is someone's child, each one of us is loved by someone, and each one of us is capable of supporting one another. We just need to look beyond ourselves and pay attention to others.

I don't know why we human beings have to deal with pain, loneliness, and loss, but I do know that one human being can make a big difference; whether the world seems like a harsh place or a fair and even loving place can often come down to the presence of one person in our lives. My mom has seen more than her share of this world's harshness and pain, but for me she remains a living example of what is good in the world and in each of us. A favorite writer of mine named Tobias Wolff, once wrote in his autobiography, "We are made to persist, to complete the whole tour. That's how we find out who we are" (Wolff 220). These words apply perfectly to my mother, who lost both her father and her husband in the worst of ways, because instead of giving up on life or hardening herself against it, she responded to these losses by becoming even more open-hearted and thoughtful for others. In virtually all ways I can think of, her pain and struggles have made her more compassionate, more able to be present for people

**Kommentar [12]:** An ANECDOTE is used to develop the paragraph's main idea.

**Kommentar [13]:** A second ANECDOTE is used to develop the main idea.

**Kommentar [14]:** A CONCLUSION should end the essay in a satisfying way, leaving the reader with a *lasting impression of the most important ideas or details covered* in the essay. (A good conclusion will often *answer* the question "Why does this topic matter in life?")

**Kommentar [15]:** A QUOTATION is incorporated smoothly. The writer makes clear WHO SAID IT *beforehand*, and then explains its SIGNIFICANCE *afterwards*. A proper CITATION is also included.

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and to treat them with kindness and love. I hope that I can persist as my mom has, with equal parts courage and compassion, and live up to the example that she has set for me.

Works Cited

Wolff, Tobias. In Pharaoh's Army: Memories of the Lost War. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Print.

**Kommentar [16]:** Because the writer incorporated a quotation from an outside source, a proper Works Cited entry is included on the last page.