

The SOLUTION source

Thunder Bay Counselling Centre Newsletter
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For You & Your Family

Spring 2013

Defining Moments

ONE MOMENT. THAT'S ALL IT TAKES.

One moment of inspiration to change a life, change the world.

What is a defining moment? What do we mean when we say **"it was a defining moment"** in my life? Sometimes our defining moments in life come from a teacher, a passage from a book or perhaps a scene from a movie. Sometimes our defining moments stem from a life challenging question of why or why me? Sometimes they occur when we are searching for answers.

Where have your defining moments come from? What was the experience like? For many it is a profoundly moving experience, often life changing.

When posed to staff and friends of Thunder Bay Counselling Centre, this question stirred up surprisingly intense and meaningful dialogue. Defining moments meant different things to different people. Here are a few simple and unique examples of a "defining moment".

"Words are so wonderful. We use them all day long, and everybody knows what they mean. What always surprises me though, is when you really try to sit down and describe what a word is, it's incredibly difficult. For example: cat. We all know what a cat is. But how to explain it? A short furry animal that-uh-will scratch the freckles off your face if you attempt to give it the pill prescribed by the vet. Oprah's experience of defining moments is the "aha moment". "Aha moment" has made it into Merriam-Webster's Collegiate dictionary version, where it's described not just as a noun but as a "moment of sudden realization, inspiration, insight, recognition, or comprehension." (From Oprah.com)

A defining moment is a time when you experienced something that has had a significant effect on your life.



The "Aha" effect refers to the common human experience of suddenly understanding a previously incomprehensible problem or concept. The "Aha" effect is also known as the eureka effect, which is named after the myth that the Greek polymath Archimedes, having discovered how to measure the volume of an irregular object, leaped out of a public bath and ran home naked shouting "eureka" (I found it).

"An 'Aha Moment' is the trigger that can create conscious awareness and improve your state of wellness and performance in life." (aha moments blog spot)

So, what is your most memorable defining moment? We can have more than one!



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Personal Moments

The following are defining moments submitted by staff and friends of the Centre:

One of my “defining moments” came from watching the movie *The Interpreter*. I was struggling with the theme of forgiveness and justice when a character in the movie relayed the following:

“Everyone who loses somebody wants revenge on someone, on God if they can’t find anyone else. But in Africa, in Matobo, the Ku believe that the only way to end grief is to save a life. If someone is murdered, a year of mourning ends with a ritual that we call the Drowning Man Trial. There’s an all-night party beside a river. At dawn, the killer is put in a boat. He’s taken out on the water and he’s dropped. He’s bound so that he can’t swim. The family then has to make a choice. They can let him drown or they can swim out and save him. The ku believe that if the family lets the killer drown, they’ll have justice but spend the rest of their lives in mourning. But if they save him, if they admit that life isn’t always just...that very act can take away their sorrow.” These words allowed me to open myself and let go of my need for justice for something someone did to my children and to me that was unfair and devastating. It was a moving and life changing moment.

My defining moment? I realized I needed to learn how to fight as passionately as I loved, and I came out of that darkness in a loving state by choice. I remember watching the movie *The Thin Red Line* (a Terrance Mallick masterpiece in my opinion). The main character was a medic and a soldier and he was struggling so terribly with finding any kind of balance between love and war. I identified with the character as I was a nurse fighting my own demons and those being thrown at me from external forces. My favorite line from the character was, “Love it”. When I heard him say this, it was a crucially defining moment for me, do I let this fear and anger consume me, or do I make a choice to love, and not let the purpose in my life be extinguished. It was powerful, I chose to love, but had to accept the fight to maintain my choice to love. That’s my little story for you!

- Love Reagan

A defining moment came for me when I was getting some of my own psychotherapy. I was targeting my lifelong struggle with public speaking and anxiety of speaking in front of groups. My therapist did a floatback technique with me to the earliest memory I had of anxiety. I was brought back to age of three when I was out walking in the cold winter weather at night with my parents. I proceeded to walk up to a steel post and stick my tongue to it. This was an upsetting event for me, I was really quite scared. I recall my Dad running to the nearest house to acquire a cup of warm water which he used to free my tongue. My therapist helped me understand how this early “tongue trauma” played a part in “social tongue anxiety” as an adult. We used a technique to clear the trauma from my memory. Not only was this a defining moment about the shaping of my own journey with anxiety, but it also made me strikingly aware of the impact of even small past traumatic events on our adult lives. Also, how clearing and resolving past trauma can heal, release us and provide a new freedom in our lives.

- Stacey

My defining moment came in the form of a song lyric; “Pretty pretenders, negligent vendors, aren’t you precious inside? I have no use for anger with intimate strangers; I’ve got nothing to hide”. To me this meant I had the option to let go and forgive the things that were not of my doing but also weren’t of malicious intent and in doing so I would find solace in my authentic self.

- Karen

I think a big defining moment for a lot of us is upon the death of a loved one, in my case, a parent. All of a sudden things we’ve thought were so important in life become irrelevant in the big scheme of things, the true meaning of life becomes clearer and our approach to life is altered.

- Allane

Years ago, when I was quite young, I started to join my father when he delivered Christmas Hampers to families in need. The first home I ever went to had barely anything in it and the Christmas tree was made out of coat hangers and tinsel. This was the moment I realized how truly lucky I was. This was the moment I realized that life isn’t fair. This was when I realized that there are people out there living with a lot less than me. This was when I decided I wanted to help others in some way. This is when I began to realize that all of my worries and stresses were not worth it. Whenever I am feeling down, I think back to this moment to put everything in perspective. This moment has always stayed with me.

- Sarah

My piano teacher, Sister Immaculata, told me that when I was preparing to be married “you must not go into a marriage thinking it’s 50/50. It’s not. It’s 80/20 and the 80 is you. If you go into a relationship with this mindset you will have a stronger relationship”. I thought this was powerful advice. The same teacher also told us that you must always keep your word with your students. If you promise one week that you will play a piece the next week, at the next lesson you must make sure that you play it no matter what. Even if the lesson is carrying on late, you must follow through and keep your word. In a child’s world, an adult’s word means everything. I try to remember that with my kids.

- Soraya



I use to volunteer for a youth organization where there were quite a few problem children who needed a mentor. One of the speeches I always gave the children was to follow their dreams:

It was a warm summer day and I decided to go for a walk at the Marina. I saw a young lady that was one of the youth I used to volunteer with. The expression on her face when she saw me was priceless. She ran to me, gave me the biggest hug and said, "Thank you ma'am for everything you have done. You always told me to follow my dreams and I have. I am now going to University to be a nurse". This brought tears to my eyes and at that moment I knew that the 10 years of volunteering with these young children has made a difference in their lives, as well as mine.

- Helene

One of my defining moments was when I quit college for the second time. I had returned to school after a year of traveling in Australia and I was living in Edmonton, taking the second year of a Business Management diploma, I had previously started. A few days after coming back from Christmas vacation, I attended half of the only class I was looking forward to that semester; I left at break thinking "What the hell am I doing here?" Business was something I could do, I got good marks but wasn't passionate about it. I left at break, went straight to the registrar's office and dropped out of school. I felt like a weight was lifted off my shoulders! I walked out of the College, treated myself to a Slurpee in the -25 degree Edmonton winter and never looked back!

- Claire

“ Sometimes the slightest things change the directions of our lives, the merest breath of a circumstance, a random moment that connects like a meteorite striking the earth. Lives have swiveled and changed direction on the strength of a chance remark.”

(Bryce Courtenay)

I'm not sure there is only one defining moment in a person's life. I am a big believer in "seasons" of life and so maybe there is a defining moment for each season? By this I mean a moment that changes your course (slightly or drastically) and propels you into the next season. Some moments I can think of for me are:

- Sitting in a dark hospital room with my dad and he tells me he has cancer.
- Getting up suddenly from a party with my "friends" realizing I didn't really like these people and didn't want to go where they were headed and leaving, never to see them again.
- Watching my dad take his last breath.
- Deciding that I would say yes if my husband ever asked me to marry him (funny that I don't really consider our engagement or wedding as a big moment, I guess in my mind it was a done deal, the rest was formality).
- See my first child emerge from me (the births of all my girls were special, but there is something about that first one)!

I feel like each of these events changed the path I was on, the events can be good or bad, but they change you and sort of force you to create a new reality. I think it's important to look back on these events every once in a while and realize how adaptable we really can be (which is very hard to see in the moment, or for some time after the event), and that life really does go on.

- Sandra



For parents of children with a disability, the question “why” can be a constant in their lives. Why my child? Why does my child have to suffer so much? Although she did not get all the answers she needed, the following book passage was a small defining moment:

Dear Mom,

You already possess the answers to your questions. You already hold them in your heart. But your mind still resists. I understand that sometimes we need reassurance, to hear the words. I came here to simply be...This brings me to the other reason I was here. I was here for you, mom. I was here to teach you about love. Most people love with a guarded heart, only if certain things happen, or don't happen, only to a point. If the person we love hurts us, betrays us, abandons us, disappoints us, if the person becomes hard to love, we often stop loving. We protect our delicate hearts. We close off, retreat, withhold and withdraw. We might even hate. Most people love conditionally. Most people are never asked to love with a whole and open heart. They only love partway. They get by. Autism was my gift to you. My autism didn't let me hug and kiss you, it didn't allow me to look into your eyes, it didn't let me say aloud the words you so desperately wanted to hear with your ears. But you loved me anyway. You're thinking, of course I did. Anyone would have. This isn't true. Loving me with a full and accepting heart, loving all of me, required you to grow. Despite your heartache and disappointment, your fears and frustration and sorrow, despite all I couldn't show you in return, you love me.

You loved me unconditionally.

- *Genova L.* excerpted from *Love Anthony*

I thought about it and I actually have so many! Obviously, for women that have children, their lives are changed from that moment on. My defining moment just within the last 5 years was when I started to volunteer at the emergency shelter for abused women and their children. It became apparent to me that women need to be empowered. Hearing the struggles and atrocities these women were faced with made me passionate to help them overcome. Having two daughters, this probably makes me feel strongly about this. I felt called to become a part of an organization that would help women develop their leadership skills. Every woman has a gift and with the right knowledge and tools they can accomplish anything. I have seen so many women discover their gifts, calling and vision/goal. Women in their sphere of influence can make a difference. A team of four NextLevel Leadership facilitators went to Ghana W. Africa to train women there. Check out this video, the women in Africa love to wave scarves when they sing and worship. We sent a scarf for each Ghanaian woman from a Canadian woman. When they learned about Life Change: developing their confidence, character and competence they made a song and sang about it. Here is one of the classes in Kumasi:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWAJ2YcXJYE&feature=youtu.be>

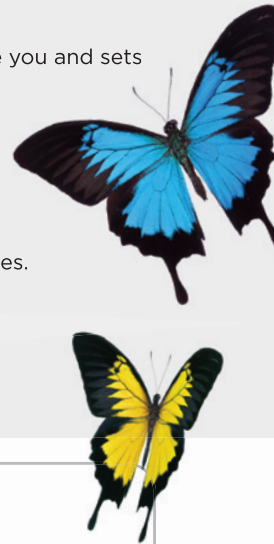
So as you said: “one moment of inspiration to change a life, to change the world”. My life was changed to help change other lives. I love the Salvation Army youth motto “Saved to Serve”.

- *Julie*

My defining moment came to be after a break-up. I couldn't understand why it had ended and why I was so hurt about the entire relationship. It was a long process, but I started looking at the entire relationship from start to finish and realized that I had compromised my own happiness. The moment I stopped caring about my own emotional, mental and physical needs was when our relationship went sour. I've always heard that you create your own happiness, but I finally realized it after this relationship. A person cannot define who you are as a person. I am thankful that I had this experience and I know that if I am not happy, there are two things I can do; adapt to it or change it!

- *Carly*

There are moments in your life that make you and sets
The course of who you're going to be.
Sometimes they're little, subtle moments.
Sometimes, they're big
Moments you never saw coming.
No one asks for their life to change, but it does.
It's what you do afterwards that counts.
That's when you find out who
You are.



We are here for you

With the public inquiry into the collapse of the Algo Centre Mall set to begin in March, the Counselling Centre of East Algoma wishes to remind the community that we have counsellors available should anyone require supports related to their participation in the inquiry or as a result of feelings that may resurface during this process.

Please feel free to contact our office should you have any questions or concerns for yourself or someone else

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