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When Genes Collide

Sunday, December 06, 2015

I'm feeling introspective this morning, so this is a follow-up to yesterday's blog.

I understand anxiety, both the situational and generalized forms. I have inherited my mother's "anxiety gene." She had a very severe case although 60 years ago we called it "the scaries." Disorders like this weren't well understood and usually met with "just get over it" advice. We carried "smelling salts" just in case we had to revive her.

Mom never did get over it. In fact she was convinced that she was right to be afraid of a variety of things because bad things do happen. You could fall running or climbing. You could get stuck in an elevator or in a traffic jam in a tunnel. You could be mugged on the street. You could catch cold in the rain. You could get lost on an unfamiliar road. The list was endless.

Dad on the other hand was adventurous and competitive and quite willing to step into a potentially dangerous situation even to the point of confronting a bully.

He would take me to the playground and let me play on the jungle gym encouraging me to climb all the way to the top. Now in Mom's defense, old time playgrounds were built over concrete. Many kids were hurt, some seriously. It took decades for the obvious solution - let kids climb but build safer playgrounds.

I have Dad's adventurous/competitive gene too. I want to see what's out there. I want to participate. I want to do well. I want to right the wrongs of the world.

Both of my parents are gone now, but their voices are always in my head activating the genes they've given me.

Mom: Why are you running/racing? Are you crazy?

Dad: Did you WIN?

Mom: What do you want to travel for? It's dangerous. Better to stay close to home.

Dad: Go see what's out there. Bad things can happen close to home too.

So it goes - my perpetual quest for balance.

When events beyond my control threaten to overwhelm me, I have a safety net - not smelling salts, but a Xanax prescription. Just carrying it and knowing that it's available is just about always enough for Dad's gene to take control. There are exceptions - natural disasters, serious accidents/illness, mass murder. If I want to be helpful to others, sometimes I need to take the pill.

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FIFIFRIZZLE

What a timely blog as I think how to best help my DH who is about to go to visit his elderly DM who is suffering from anxiety.
2011 days ago



PGBACK

Great blog.

THANK YOU!

For sharing.

2011 days ago



GINIEMIE

I love the dichotomy between your parents natures. Yes our genes sure do help us in ways and get in our way in others. I'm glad you are adventuresome. I try to think if my parents were like that, and I just remember both of them working hard all the time. I know that my father all though protective of his girls still wanted us to learn to do so many outdoor things. My mother who was a teacher by education, and a seamstress by providence was so busy she didn't see our crazy antics until someone pointed out that -for instance-my brother's were jumping off the low addition roof with umbrellas....I was too afraid to break a bone and didn't like roofs very much...so I had an

inherent fear or wisdom..



2012 days ago



LIVEDAILY

My parents were opposites to some extent also. My Mom had anxiety issues and relied on "Mother's Little Helper" (valium) for years. But this was the same woman who stood up to her own mother to be allowed to leave her small home town and go to nursing school, and who married a man from that same small home town who later became a submarine captain in the US Navy. Go figure. We're all a combination of both sides of our families, plus what we create for ourselves.
2013 days ago



FORZACHANDMATT

I love this blog and I think this is so interesting and I think a lot of our behaviors are a "balance" of these genes and the balance between nurture v. nature, and you described that so well in this blog.
2013 days ago



TERI-RIFIC

Very interesting to read. It's nice to have the blend. I wonder about people who might have 2 anxious parents or two adventurous. My Dad used to say of my grandparents that Grandma was afraid of everything and Grandpa was afraid of nothing. I wonder if opposites attract applies to this.

In my family it seems to.

2013 days ago

Well Said!



DOVESEYES

What a wonderful blog, thank you
2013 days ago



PHEBESS

Sounds like your two inner voices balance each other rather than collide.
2013 days ago



SYLPHINPROGRESS

You've carved out your own road, the one that takes you where you want to go. Isn't that what it's about?
2013 days ago



PRNCSCUP1-2FULL

All I can think is what a wonderful life.... Striving for the balance between true, anxiety, the scaries, and your sense of adventure and challenge!! I keep a prescription also, but more for the stress I experience with being blind, and it is my safety blanket. Thanks for sharing this blog and I am ever so grateful that I tuned into SP today and was able to catch it! that has not been happening often!



2013 days ago



WATERMELLEN



I often think that the "mother" gene is the anxious gene -- I became more anxious after having children! But it's terrific to have the adventurous and courageous gene too: when my daughter was a year old and our house was pretty much destroyed in a tornado, I had not one second's hesitation risking my life running to her room and getting her out of her crib -- huge pieces of window glass flashed in and embedded themselves in the wall, but I had taken her to safety.

Don't always hit the right balance in every situation, of course not. But: never wish I'd worried more, after the fact!

2013 days ago



DEB9021



Great blog! You were lucky to have two voices. I, too, had mom and dad with differing approaches to a lot of things. I see a difference today in so many single parent households. It would be hard to find that balance with just one voice. I know that I would not be as good a parent if I didn't have my husband to help reassess some of my first instincts regarding our kids. They are big enough now to make many of their own decisions, and it is comforting to know that all those old conversations still play in their heads. I know my parents and even grandparents voices are still in my head!

Thanks for the thoughtful blog.

2013 days ago



ONEKIDSMOM



It took a few "bad things" happening to push me past my own tendency to be anxious... and take calculated risks. I, too, have that push-pull of adventurous versus fearful... makes life pretty "interesting" at times. I sign up for the scary, then do my best to prepare so it doesn't result in the "bad things"!



I think you do VERY well navigating that balance line!

2013 days ago



CRACKERS4554



Thank you for helping understand about these voices in my head!

2013 days ago



MISCHAKEO



You are doing a good job of balancing those voices. Having the xanax for emergencies is helpful. We certainly inherit voices from our parents!

2013 days ago



WILSONWR



You do a great balancing job, but I definitely see your dad in you. Bad things may happen in life, but we can't let them rule our day to day decisions. We should just take normal precautions and move on. Since you do have a little of your mother's genes in you also, I'm glad you have the "help" right there if you need it. Take care.

2013 days ago



BBEAGAN



What a wonderful blog! and how nice to have had those two voices, which still remain with you. And I love that they both express deep concern and caring for you, just in different ways. I love you - go have fun; I love you - be careful.

My parents were neither overly anxious, nor adventurous. And coming from a very small place, non-adventure was simply assumed... Why would you consider leaving here? What else could there be to see/do that is so important as to warrant leaving home? So I tend toward nesting, making my home space a happy, comfortable, cozy one. Then my father died suddenly at age 63... So the voice in my head that replicates to those ingrained messages of inertia now is countered by my own message of "Life can be unpredictably short - live as fully as you can now!"

2013 days ago



SWEDE_SU



when i was younger, i used to suffer from nausea - but if i carried around a little container of pills, no nausea. i carried that container for years.... funny how that works. and in our family, mom's side historically says of course you can - you can do anything! while dad's side says - are you sure you can? it's very hard... when the kids come with their fears and concerns, i remind them of mom's side - of course they can!

great blog, thanks!

2013 days ago

NELLJONES



I think everyone wavers between a desire for peace and a desire for adventure. As I have aged, I desire more peace than adventure.

2013 days ago



HOLLYM48



This is such an interesting blog as I read it and thought about your mom's voice and then your dad's voice. I think we have both of those voices inside of all of our heads. When asked if I would go to Paris again after the attacks a few weeks ago, I said of course I will. I can't just sit around being afraid. But in the back of my mind, I am more worried about attacks here in the US in big crowded events. And it is a question of whether you put yourself in the middle of those kinds of events. I will, but it is definitely more scary. Probably even more so thinking of my daughters in those kind of events. But I guess, in the end, I have to have faith that there is a time and a place for everything and a higher power knows when it is my time to leave this earth.

I think you are right to keep on putting yourself out there in all types of situations and when you need the xanax, it is there.

Thanks for this thought provoking blog. Happy Sunday!

2013 days ago

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