

The Miracle That Was Facilitator Training

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From my first impressions at Paving the Way (PTW) through that entire summer of 2011, I was on a spiritual journey. Having been emotionally shredded by the recent break-up of the Community and still suffering from PTSD, walking into QLN with their genuinely happy staff to guide you through the process, was like discovering a new world with a new way of existence. Suddenly I felt at home, I could feel my self-protective barriers dropping to the floor like the dragon skin of Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawntrader*, by C. S. Lewis:

“Then the lion said — but I don’t know if it spoke — You will have to let me undress you. I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it.

“The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I’ve ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know — if you’ve ever picked the scab off a sore place. It hurts like billy-oh but it *is* such fun to see it coming away.”

“I know exactly what you mean,” said Edmund.

“Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off — just as I thought I’d done it myself the other three times, only they hadn’t hurt — and there it was lying on the grass, only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knobbly-looking than the others had been. And there was I

smooth and soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been. Then he caught hold of me – I didn't like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I'd no skin on — and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone from my arm. And then I saw why. I'd turned into a boy again. . . .

(C. S. Lewis Quotes, Retrieved 11/04/2018)

At PTW, whenever I was asked to do something or volunteer for a role, the Lord gave me the words, the moves, the jokes that flowed so naturally, but I knew the secret – He was working through my broken life to bless the others in the room. It was such a delight to discover what God was revealing that I had to marvel at what came out of my mouth. For the last scenario of the day, the trainers painted a word picture of a grumpy, non-cooperative group of teenagers that you had never met before, but were asked to jump in as their facilitator. They asked, “What would you do in this situation?” Immediately my hand went up with the words, “I got this!” Jumping to the front I addressed the audience of prospective facilitators like students, “Hi, my name is Martin, and you don't know me, but I have this amazing gift of remembering everyone's name even if you say them all together. OK, ready? When I say GO, you will all shout your names as loudly as possible. GO!” And you can imagine the cacophony of the moment. “Great, I've got this!” Then I started around the room, giving people ridiculous names as everyone started to laugh. Chicka Elloy was standing on the far left of the audience, and when I turned toward his direction, I continued pointing and naming the Marx Brothers, “then there is Groucho, Harpo, and,” pointing to Chicka, “there is Chico. Oh, no, that was Chicka. Sorry, about that. At least I got all the other names right.” And everyone was laughing in stitches, as I flopped back on the stage exhausted. “That's all I've got,” I declared, and just lay there for a while.

Some days later I received the good news of being hired. The staff directed me to the online script for the camp that we referred to as the “Vade Mecum,” which translated means, “Go with me,” in Latin. Now was the time to pour over both your specialty subject, which for me was Quantum Writing, as well as all the general “main room” pieces. Every presentation for the ten-day camp had a script, and though we were not expected to memorize them word for word, we needed to get the main ideas across to the campers in the correct sequence. And as the next training event pointed out, we needed to “know it by heart.”

Know It By Heart (KIBH)

Like Eustace mentioned above, God had sent His representative lion to me in the form of Mark Reardon. His comment about my needing to decrease so the students could increase, was God’s claw, ripping away at the dragon skin I had been wearing. The first swipe was so deep, so excruciatingly painful, that it penetrated my heart, but like the scab being removed, it revealed the tender underbelly where I really lived. The removal of this awful skin at the beginning of KIBH, allowed me a clearer view of the training. I instantly knew I was treading in deep water and did not have a clue about why I was there and what was next. I had a choice, I could simply acknowledge I was out of my depth and walk out the door, or I could float. Feeling so much lighter by the removal of my burden, I laid back like a child in its mother’s arms, and succumbed to the flow of the river. I literally “found that all the pain had gone . . . And then I saw why. I’d turned into a boy again. . . .”

(C. S. Lewis Quotes, Retrieved 11/04/2018). I allowed myself the privilege of being a child again, watching the facilitator training go by with the wide eyes of childhood, marveling at all the wonderful things I was learning.

At one point, Bobbi DePorter took the stage as the rest of us were sitting cross-legged on the carpet. Bobbi was sharing about the history of QLN and SuperCamp and how they had touched the lives of so many children through the years. She said, “Later, I’ll share about how the 8 Keys of Excellence were developed.” “Yea, that would be interesting to know!” I blurted out in unconstrained glee. And suddenly the room was quiet, and looking around I saw all the other facilitators staring at me as Bobbi stopped her presentation. “Well hey,” I explained, “I really want to know.” It was the picture of the 59-year-old man, sitting squat on the carpet and sounding like a 10-year-old, curious about something spectacularly new, that startled everyone. I could just hear someone say, “Have you no shame?” And the answer would have emphatically been, “Nope, none at all, thank you very much!”

The staff taught us how to dance and clap to the music, return call-backs like school children and play together in a wonderful percussion band, complete with drums, cymbals, sticks and anything that could keep a beat. Wow, what a trip. Chicka took us into the large convention hall where mats had been laid out on the floor. We danced and played, free of inhibitions. Chicka formed us into a large circle and announced, “Cartwheels!” The young and athletic in the group bounced across the floor. He asked, “Anyone else?” My skin had been tingling and excited, then suddenly I raised my left hand in typical gymnastic pose, and flung myself forward, completing a perfect cartwheel and “stuck” the landing. Where had that come from? I hadn’t done that since I was in high school. We all cheered and rejoiced as our family bonds were growing.

FIT Training – Wake Forest

Nikki and I were the last new facilitators to arrive by plane for the training and it was getting fairly late in the day when we were picked up at the airport and dropped off in front of a

college dorm on the campus of Wake Forest University, North Carolina. We said to each other, it's so late, I doubt they will be doing any training this evening, so we were a bit stunned as we walked in the door and were told to "drop your bags over there, and head into the training room." Everyone had been waiting for us, and immediately the train was moving. Over the next ten days there were so many training pieces that I cannot remember them all, but there was one about which we were all nervous, it was the "Stand and Deliver" presentation, referring to the movie of the same name about the high school math teacher Jaime Escalante at Garfield High School in Los Angeles. Our stand and deliver was where we had prepared an entire section of our SuperCamp curriculum and needed to present it to our trainers. Charles Smith and I were both Quantum Writing specialists, destined for different university sites. The day before stand and deliver, we got together for a long walk, going over our lines, correcting each other and challenging each other to our highest. I think we must have walked around the dorm building a dozen times before we were exhausted and finally quit.

Patti Brucki helped us with our stage presence, learning to be comfortable in our own skins and not freak out if something went unexpectedly wrong in front of 125 students. She taught us how to use different types of voices to accomplish our varied goals with the audience. Once, she was teaching us a command voice and said, "Now turn toward the wall and recite *Mary Had a Little Lamb*" as if you are commanding the audience with firm directions." Another time we gathered on the sidewalk outside the University Chapel. Patti stepped to the middle of the circle and ask two other people to join her. When the two stepped in, she stepped out and instructed them to start an impromptu conversation. Then each of us were to rotate in by tagging the shoulder of one of the participants and starting a new conversation. Charles was in the circle and I tagging his partner, started talking about an emergency evacuation. With that, I stealthily

leaned over and picked Charles up in a fireman's carry and started twirling him around on my shoulders, looking for a way out of the building. The whole thing was hysterical. With the last person to tag in and have their conversation, we were all overcome by the sheer joy of the exercise, but it did sharpen our confidence in keeping a conversation going even if we had no idea what just went wrong on stage.

The most memorable and life changing part of FIT training was preparing our bio to present on the first day of camp. We each needed to share with our student audiences a bit about ourselves as an introduction, while at the same time keeping them engaged. Our training room at the dorm was quite small, and yet we had to imagine giving our bio to a large audience. I was simply destroying my presentation, and could not find a cohesive thread to wrap the story around. I was frustrated and Chicka was also. I could sense his concern about how successful I was going to be. If I couldn't pull off this first on-stage piece, how was I going to do two full camps of ten days each.

Then one day, Chicka took us all in tow and walked us across campus to the SuperCamp site. The main room was not being used at that time and he wanted us to try our bios in this environment. Boy, was I nervous. Then to top it all off, in walks Bobbi, sitting now among the chairs in the middle of room. Then the creative juices started flowing from the Lord, and I could see a clear picture of how I was to do my presentation, what point about my life to share and how to "stick the ending," so the kids would want to learn more. Each facilitator had chosen a song to accompany their presentation, and I chose "California Girls" by the Beach Boys. The music started and I burst onto the stage, explaining that I was from Orange County, California and I even remembered Disneyland being built. I jumped off the stage, running down the center aisle, getting the whole audience included in the story. Around the back of the audience the pieces of

my life story were poured out of the vessel, like wine at a banquet table, each part staged at a single location around the audience. Jumping back on stage I switched to a solemn tone, explaining my childhood sickness and subsequent brain damage, highlighting both the struggle and the victory of overcoming the odds to live a fruitful life. “And I’ll be looking for you this week at camp to overcome whatever is keeping you back. My name is Martin, and I’m glad you’re here!” I finished by running back down the center aisle with smiles for each of the campers. I tried then to take my seat back among the facilitators, but Chicka said, “No, no. You come back right up here on stage. Now where has that person been all week???” he asked with sheer delight. I walked over to him and laid my head on his shoulder. “I don’t know. It just came out when I got into this room,” I replied. “From now on,” Chicka exhorted, “that’s the person I want to see.” And we all laughed and hugged in delight. We later talked and realized that when I was in Scouts as a youth, our troop met in an auditorium. It was there, in the large room, that the real Martin was free to express himself, so the dam burst forth when I walked into the SuperCamp main room, and the rest as they say, is history.

References

C.S. Lewis quotes | Peeling Dragon Skin. (n.d.). Retrieved November 4, 2018, from

<https://peelingdragonskin.wordpress.com/tag/cs-lewis-quotes/>