

## Love is a Choice

Written by Gayle Nobel

Friday, 13 August 2010 10:38 - Last Updated Saturday, 14 August 2010 17:21

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### Blog-a-thon Day 18

I did not choose to be the mother of a child with autism. I was chosen. I then had to learn how to accept, let go, and rise to the occasion as best I could.

If given the choice to adopt someone like my son Kyle, never having had a child with special needs, I'm not sure I would have made that choice. Fear, insecurity and selfishness would have probably gotten in my way.

I am always in awe of those who choose to adopt children with special needs. I admire their courage and willingness to decide to step off that cliff into unknown territory. I admire their willingness to make a choice that will affect them for every single day, every single moment of the rest of their lives. I admire them for taking on the challenges and being able to see the gifts brought to us by these kids who need so much support and at the same time, are so full of love.

While I was placed on the high road, people who adopt children with special needs volunteer to place themselves on that road. With a biological child, love is built in via maternal instinct. With an adopted child, it seems that love becomes a choice.

Meet my friend Pam. In addition to her two biological children, she has three children with special needs who are adopted. She has a new website dedicated to sharing her experience and perspective, <http://mydaughtersvoice.com/> . (Copy & paste. Live link feature still not working.)

Here is a taste of her story.

### How It All Began

Posted on August 10, 2010 by mydaughtersvoices

*The decision to adopt was an easy one. The process of adoption was much more difficult. The bureaucracy, the agencies, the paperwork, the discussions, the classes, the prying into our personal lives, proved to be exhausting. The final payoff though, was worth every agonizing moment.*

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*Our Social Worker quietly whispered to my husband and I that she would like to see us in her office after the group concluded. "Could there be a problem," I wondered? "Did we get a negative reference? Was there more paperwork?" It was too early in the process for her to have a child identified for us.*

*The class seemed to go on forever and the anticipation was growing stronger. Finally 9:00 rolled around; we helped her straighten up the room and said good-bye to our fellow classmates. We met in her office where she pulled out a note, which was tucked under other paperwork on her desk. "There is this little girl I was wondering if you would be interested in meeting. She is seven-and-a-half years old, and the victim of horrific abuse, which has left her to function as an infant. She cannot walk or talk, has a seizure disorder, a shunt, and has had a portion of her brain removed which has left her with right hemiplegia, a form of cerebral palsy. She is not potty trained. Did I mention she is also blind?" She handed us Melissa's picture. I wouldn't say it was love at first sight, but it didn't take long.*

*Meeting Melissa changed my life forever. It was also the beginning of a life I never could have imagined. I never realized there was a world out there that was so different from that which I was familiar. It was the real world of the disabled, and it was challenging and rewarding all at the same time.*

*I am 52 years old, married, and the mother of five children. Two of those children were born to us, and are older than Melissa. The other three are adopted and have special needs. I have learned more from them than I could have imagined. I learned what it means not to judge others, and I learned what it means to constantly be judged. I learned empathy and compassion, and to advocate from the bottom of my heart. I was introduced to physical, occupational, speech, music, feeding, equine, aquatic, and vision therapy. Acronyms such EIP, IEP, and ISP became part of our regular vocabulary.*

*There were bath lifts, car lifts, hoier lifts, various other lifts, and LIFTING. Overpriced equipment was necessary just to make life comfortable. Doctor's appointments, specialists, surgeries, and rehabilitation were part of this strange new world. I learned to find resources, to find strength in other people, and to listen and support them in return. I became familiar with the ADA (the American with Disabilities Act) and challenged it on a couple of occasions (you win some, you lose others).*

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The rest of the story can be found on Pam's blog <http://mydaughtersvoices.wordpress.com/>

Thank you Pam!