

Divine Intrusion



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college roommates. There was much joy and laughter during those warm, extended days, but I found myself frequently teary-eyed.

When I stopped to consider the source of what moved me, I realized that only 6 months ago, I sat beside Mark's bed in a hospital ICU for 10 days wondering if he would make it and how much damage the stroke had done if he did. The idea that he might pull through and be fully recovered to enjoy his "60th" seemed a distant possibility.

As I waited for his recovery and getting off the necessary medications, I had many questions that would go unanswered until a later date: Would he walk and talk again? Would he know who we are or who he is? What would our future hold? Could I provide our family with the emotional support they would need to get through all of this, yet undefined, future? It was a frightening time.

I can tell you that in the

midst of the unknowns, there were divine intrusions, you might call them serendipity or coincidences, which gave me hope that I wasn't alone in all that we were facing.

The first was when the stroke occurred. I had come home early from work to take our tween daughter to a doctor's appointment. I spoke to Mark who was working from home before getting on a four o'clock train for a series of meetings and an overnight in Manhattan. Our daughter came in from the bus, grabbed a snack, as I ushered her out the door for the appointment. I called out a final goodbye to Mark. There was no reply. I knew he had been reading on his computer at his desk, so I assumed he was distracted and didn't hear us. I reached for the doorknob. This has never happened to me before, but I felt a tap on my shoulder, and words came to me, "Make him respond to you." Those aren't words I had heard before and despite their unusual content,

I found myself irritated by them. I was in a hurry, this was a new pediatrician, and if we left right away we might just make it on time. However, I did call out once more, perhaps not as warmly as the first time, "Mark, we are leaving for the doctor. See you tomorrow!" Still no reply. I turned and walked briskly down the hall to his office. As I looked at him, I realized he couldn't respond because he was having a stroke at that moment. After trying to engage him to no avail and coming to grips with what was happening, I called 9-1-1 and my daughter called off her doctor's appointment. Like a kaleidoscope, time seemed to move at an altered frequency, as police cars and ambulances arrived and Mark was taken to the ER. A dear neighbor volunteered to take my daughter and dog before I knew that was needed.

I started to realize other divine intrusions along the way. They came in the form of loving support and grace given

by our children, extended family, friends, neighbors, hospital staff, my daughter's school teachers and guidance counselor, and particularly my board and counseling team, who all stood by us as we journeyed through the rough waters of a three week hospital stay.

Mark is an unusual stroke survivor because he made a complete recovery and is fully in the swing of life and work. We are blessed. His was a brain bleed, which meant that rapid response was critical. The prognosis would not have been anything like it was had the nudge and spoken words not happened when they did. Ever since the event, I have been humbled with gratitude for that divine intrusion. I knew that no matter the outcome, I was not alone. It reminds me to pay attention to the other daily intrusions of grace and nudges that come our way.

I can't explain what happened the day of his stroke, but I can say I am so grateful

that he not only survived the stroke but was well enough to enjoy and savor every moment of his birthday celebration with those who love him most.

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