

You Are Enough— A Lesson I Learned From My Father

by Kara Stein-Conaway

I am enough. These three words hold immense power. As a criminal defense attorney, I see people in their fear, pain and deep sorrow. Whether they are an innocent person accused of something they didn't do and are in need of a champion, or they have made a mistake and are envisioning the life they have built disintegrating before their eyes, sitting with my clients is a privilege. I sit with them in all their humanity, and many times I witness people who feel like they are not enough.

During the past 10 years that I have practiced criminal defense, I have realized that much of the pain my clients are suffering from stems from a feeling of not being enough. Actually, I would go so far as to say that this pain is felt by many people in our society, regardless of whether they are criminal defendants.

Marisa Peer, an author, speaker and therapist, works with many people who seem to have it all. She has observed that her clients are very successful by society's measure, yet they are miserable and suffering. Peer concluded

night. When his father finished eating, he gave his leftovers to the dog and never permitted his son to eat the food that he had prepared. The little boy developed the belief that he was not worthy of even being able to eat a decent meal, that he was less worthy than the dog.

Hearing this story, I began to ponder my own childhood and relationship with my father, Jeff Stein. The very essence of his parenting was, "YOU ARE ENOUGH." As far back as my memory can go, I remember feeling that even though I made mistakes, I was always enough in his eyes and in his heart.

As a little girl, I loved gymnastics, even though at times it also scared me. No matter how demanding his work schedule was (and I now better understand exactly how demanding his schedule was), he was at those gymnastics meets. I knew that if I fell off the balance beam, he was there loving and supporting me, telling me that no matter the outcome, I was enough.

In high school, at my father's urging, I took up pole vaulting,



Kara Stein-Conaway, father Jeff Stein, grandfather Sol Stein (seated).

take flight. Sometimes the results weren't pretty (thankfully, I was wearing a helmet). Sometimes the results were beyond what I had ever dreamed possible. Knowing that at every meet, my father was there, that he was proud of me for being brave and for trying, and that he always thought I was enough regardless of the outcome was a gift. It was a gift because I was internalizing that message.

In 1975, my father began working as a criminal defense attorney. He knew his clients' pain, he saw their suffering, and he knew that by being with people, really seeing them, and reminding them that they are enough, he was doing good in the

He has cared for their futures, he has been their advocate, but more than anything, just like he did for me, he has always shown up. He has always expressed to them that they are enough. He continues to do this for our clients to this day, and he continues to do this for me.

As a parent, beyond all other lessons that I seek to teach my little boys, who are now six and three, is that they are enough. Hurt people hurt people, and healed people heal people. People who know they are enough seek to support other people. People who know they are enough still make mistakes in their lives, but they know that they are worthy of putting in whatever effort is required to make the changes they need to make to live as the best versions of themselves.

I recognize that I am incredibly lucky to have a father who, throughout my childhood and now into my adult life, continues to remind me just how enough I am. Although the aerial flight sports are a thing of the past for me, beautiful new opportunities are always available when we are open to them. Knowing that we are enough is what gives us the bravery to move forward into the unknown and to go after our dreams.

In sharing this observation of my father I hope that it inspires

love. You are enough.

A practical tool for fixing an unhealthy belief system that Marissa Peer shares is putting up signs all around your home and setting reminders on your phone to pop up throughout the day. These signs and reminders read, "I am enough!" The constant reminders reinforce the new belief system and eventually crowd out the old belief system.

If you don't need the reminder that you are enough, then I hope you will share this tool with someone you think would benefit from it. ■



Jeff Stein and Kara Stein-Conaway at the 2019 SLO Bar Summer Social.

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