

The following is excerpted from Sarina Kier's upcoming book entitled "The Art Of Advocacy: a guide for parents and adults who care for children with special needs." Sarina Kier has her MA in Integrated Special Education and Health and is in private practice in Vancouver. To learn more about her work or to contact her directly you can reach Sarina at sarinak@shaw.ca or at 604.264.8481.

ADVOCACY – PERSPECTIVE AND HEALING

If we are to have harmony within ourselves to pass on to our families, we need to first look at removing the potency of two opposing forces or powers in our lives — the potency of words like good and bad, and even right and wrong. You need to really sink into the awareness and belief of one power, the power of love, healing, and harmony. When I ask parents what they feel is the strongest power they have with their children, they usually tell me love. They feel that love has helped them to understand and move with their children's various needs. It has also helped to motivate their children to try the various therapeutic modalities that these parents had provided. Love. A simple four-letter word with the greatest impact. We need to acknowledge this vast power, and learn to actually vibrate with it, rather than vibrating with the misguided power of judgment. If you can do this, you will begin to see that a particular social worker who just turned you down is not an evil or stupid person. They are just a person living outside this vibration of love. Love carries with it a vibration of creativity, abundance, and infinite possibility.

If you can honestly get to a point where you can say that this person literally is not living in a capacity of being able to know what they are doing, you do not feel anger but love's compassion for them. This compassion will then be allowed to overflow into how you deal with yourself and those you love. This does not mean that you stop writing the letter that seeks to overturn their decision. What it does mean is that your body does not close down with anger and so all your creative channels can remain open and working at their maximum potential towards the goal that you have set for your advocacy. It also means that you can walk around with a smile on your face and love in your heart for your child and family, and not wither away in angry bitterness.

This fear is very pervasive among parents who have children with special needs. Fear that we can't provide what is needed for our child, without this help that we are seeking, fear for our child's safety and well being, fear of not knowing what will happen to our child if they do not receive the kind of therapy they need for their improvement, fear of our child being abused, fear of our child being institutionalized, fear for our child should something happen to us or we should die. I could go on and on. Although worry also co-exists with this type of fear, it is the fear itself that is the most debilitating. It is the fear that stems from seeing the world as a place where there is a finite amount of resources and support. It is a fear that stems from a lack of trust and faith in the power of love which is infinite. When you are able to step back and realize that your source for creativity, support and care are infinite, you can approach advocacy from a much different place. You also find that without this fear, anger itself begins to slip away.

There is also a feeling of hurt and pain that goes along with perceiving a world made up of opposing forces or dualities. But this too can lose its potency as a reality if you stay with truth. You can do this by acknowledging in your heart, that these people who seem to be placing obstacles in your way really do not know what they are doing. Without judging them as ignorant you recognize that they sit in a closed vibrational space in a closed room and in a closed system. They are literally blind. By seeing the truth of their blindness there is no more hurt because nothing they do is personally directed at you. They are blind and therefore they see you not.

When we emotionally commit to a vibration of hurt, anger, and fear we attract it. It is the basic principle of attraction. If you are afraid that you will not be supported, chances are that this is exactly what will happen. But if you sit in a vibration of support, opening to the possibility that you have infinite sources of support and then begin to vibrate with the vibration of support, it will not take long before you will be able to look around and recognize the many places you are receiving support and the many people who are helping to support you. You may even begin to see how your own child who has special needs is supporting you. I make it part of my nightly routine to go over my day and see the ways that I was supported. A few weeks ago my son came up to me and asked if I could teach him how to unload the dishwasher so that he could help me more. I believe in my heart that no amount of behavioural therapy would have brought him to that point. The ability for me to hold the vibration of support enabled this to happen in my home.

It may still be that you need to advocate actively for a specific kind of support but when you can vibrate the energy of support and hold fast to it those previously thought of hard nuts to crack, may indeed begin to crack with less pressure needed. It may be that someone does not pursue writing a follow-up letter to you and thereby paves the way for you to go above their heads. Be prepared for support to come to you in diverse and mysterious ways.

You need to accept that most agencies, bureaucrats, and government bodies are, as a group, definitely coming from a place of finite resources. That is the god they worship and the vibration at which they resonate. The key here is to take one person at a time and one issue at a time. Greater progress is made by finding the truth in one situation at a time, than by launching an all-out strike. Would you ever take on an entire religious group and try to change their beliefs? No you would not because you know that you wouldn't succeed. In fact if you look at all of the great world religions they began with one person having a deep belief and passion and spreading that belief one person at a time. This is how you must work within your own advocacy case.

Try not to look beyond the issue that is in front of you right here right now or you can become overwhelmed. If you can hold fast to the truth of love and infinite resources, you are the one who will remain sharp and clear and able to lead the discussions where you need them to go. If you can believe in your heart, that the right person will recognize your truth and support will be there, it will happen. Along the way you will encounter people who are so entrenched in their blindness that they will not open their eyes for themselves let alone for you. Staying in your truth will allow you to move through this person and not sit in constant angry engagement. You will swiftly see what is truly there and decide what letter you need to write or who else you need to speak with.

Through their experience with you these entrenched people may themselves begin to heal. That is not your direct goal, however the places our children push us into are remarkable places of healing. I remember a situation I had with my older son's first preschool. When my son was four years old he attended a five-day pre-school. Although he had not been diagnosed at this point, his challenges were obvious and the preschool allowed me to attend with my son as his aide. We only went to preschool two or three times a week depending on how Joshy was doing. To say that the other four year olds mistreated him would be an understatement. I felt my job was to support Joshy but not to be glued to him. One day he went to the bathroom and was taking far too long. I went to check up on him and I found him surrounded by four other four year olds. They were calling him stupid and were telling him that they were going to kill him. Joshy was paralyzed with fear at the time and could not move. My brave little child chose to return to school the very next day.

I did not get very far with the teachers and the school until one day at snack time when all the children were sitting together at the tables and one little girl said to another to "pass the oranges please." The girl that she had asked said in a very nasty tone "They are not oranges, they are tangerines. They are TANGERINES," and would not pass them until the other girl called them tangerines. This time when I spoke to the teachers they could not say that the episode occurred because the children were "uncomfortable" with my son's "differences". This was not about my son. I used this blessed episode as an exercise in healing. I spoke

to a systemic problem in the classroom, the fact that this was a preschool, that the children were not learning academics, that what they were there to learn were ways to feel safe, to be loving, and to learn to build community on their developmental level.

Something miraculous shifted within those teachers. To this day anytime I bump into my son's pre-school teacher she thanks me and says how much she learned that day. My son, having the courage to continue in that pre-school, was the catalyst for an opportunity of profound healing. Healing not just for the teachers and for the other children, but for all the children who would come into that preschool class in the future. These are remarkable children.

How much time do we spend speaking of our children as disabled or having special needs? You say something long enough and hard enough it becomes true. You begin to look at these beautiful spirit creations as somehow broken and your life as a tragedy. Within this model there is no room for change and movement. Because you may perceive people as not being there for you and listening to you, you tend to up the ante, over dramatizing every little situation just to get some kind of notice. You have no trust or faith that the system will work in a timely fashion for your child so you begin to say the things you think will get your child help now. A frustrated child is now portrayed as a volatile child. There are no half-way measures to the disability. Pretty soon all this over dramatizing becomes a way of life. Instead of asking a friend to help you out you have to create a situation of utter chaos to ask for just simple help.

This is the primary place for advocacy. It is clear, clean, and systematic. It can be seen as completely separate from your life, as just something you are doing in the best interest of your family devoid of any other emotions. You need to use advocacy as a way to stop the drama. Your children are not disabled they are simply differently-abled, and who among us does not have special needs reflecting our special way of being. We are all put here to become the best we can be and to heal ourselves and each other. A healthy community helps to take care of these needs, and if they won't or don't, you advocate. You must decide to advocate simply for the purpose of bringing potential to fruition without any stories attached to it. Every human being has the right to reach their potential. You do not have to make your story worse than your neighbour's.

I have learned so much from my children. My so-called disabled children have taught me how to love, how to experience and appreciate the small things fully, how to surrender, how to see the infinite within life. They have brought me to places where I must walk my talk, where I must use all of the gifts, knowledge and wisdom that I have at my disposal. They have forced me to create much-needed boundaries in my life. They have shown me what is real. Is this what you would call disabled or is it gifted? I think it is a powerful healing.

We need to step back and be clear about what we feel is needed in a letter or when dealing with agencies and boards, as compared to what is needed in our real life. You play the part of the victim and downtrodden long enough you begin to become that. If you come from a place of love and acceptance, your need to live in two separate worlds is minimized. If you can accept that the MCFD truly believes that they do not have enough money to help your son and you hold true for them a position or vibration of infinite resources, you can remain in harmony within yourself. If you do not accept and recognize that their belief system is misguided, you again are tempted with anger, fear, and abuse. With your raised anger and fear comes their parallel reaction of anger and fear.

I can go to court yelling and screaming, or I can go with the simple truth. We have all become fanatics perpetuating lack, but really it is your children that have come with the answers, if you only dared to look. They have brought with them the gift of potential healing. They offer you an opportunity to learn and heal yourself first, getting rid of states and beliefs in polarities and judgment. They have then paved the way for you to bring this kind of healing to individuals in the community and in positions of power. Exactly because of who my children are as people, I have been encouraged to perpetuate healing and peace. That is what their hearts ask of me everyday. And every day I need to try again until I get it. They don't want to eat poisoned food or contaminated water or their bodies will rebel. Their bodies reject the over stimulation that we continue to produce and accept in the marketplace. By their mere existence these children are asking you to care for the planet, the world, and each other better. I think that it is time that we all listened to them.

We also need to look at our own perceptions of what is normal, what are needs, what is important (outward appearances or what is carried in the soul), and what is good or bad for that matter. When you narrow your own perceptions of the diverse and wonderful combinations in humanity you find yourself getting stuck. You feel helpless and hopeless and hurt and sad. This is a place of choice and you must recognize it as a choice. You can just as well bravely choose to celebrate our differences and move away from this other debilitating choice. My older child never lied. It was not within his ability to learn this form of communication. As he begins to become so called more neuro typical he has been able to learn how to lie like his peers. What is more desired? You need to just be with the reality of your children and their individual beauty and realize that your advocacy is not a reflection on them or on yourself. Your advocacy is simply a move towards reaching potential — potential personally, in our communities, and in our governments.

The same desire for potential and creative growth exists in all living organisms. You do not need to create stories around yourself and your life to justify advocating for life potential. You do not need to vibrate horror and frustration.

When you advocate then advocate keeping your children's legacy of healing in the forefront of your mind — for as you heal so will they. Be clear, clean, and concise with your words, thoughts, and deeds. Rise up as an example to others, not as a victim but as a healer. This is true advocacy.