

## Listen to Your Heart

I met up with an old friend the other day, someone I hadn't seen since college days. Granted, it took a rather lengthy conversation to catch up on jobs, kids, and so on. And then I asked her, "What else are you doing with your life?"

This question might have made some hesitate before speaking, but she didn't miss a beat as she shared, "Well, I've been doing some artwork. In fact, my work has been in a few shows."

Of course I was impressed and happy for her, but before I could share my congratulations, she continued, "Do you remember our grammar-school art teacher?" Amazingly, I did. An old toughie (of course, thinking back on it now, I realize she could've been my current age).

"Well," she continued, "one day in fourth grade as she was inspecting each child's artwork, she took one look at mine and declared that I shouldn't waste my time. I would never be an artist-absolutely no talent."

That message played in her mind throughout the rest of her school years, as she watched from afar as high-school students' work was showcased in the glass cases in hallways. That message followed her into adulthood.

Until one day just a few years ago, now a teacher herself. Sitting in the back of one of the watercolor classes her students were taking, she just picked up a brush and started playing. When the teacher walked by, he asked her how long she had been painting. Looking at her watch, she said, "Twenty minutes." Thinking she misunderstood his question, he asked, "No, I mean how long have you been painting?" Again she gave the same answer. "You're kidding me! You have such talent!" he said enthusiastically.

The floodgates of emotion opened, releasing what she had always wished for but never dared to explore were being validated. And the rest is her history.

My purpose in sharing this encounter is twofold:

For all of us to recognize just how powerful our words can be, either to a positive or negative effect.

No matter what messages we might have received in life, if you hear a little inner voice trying to shout, "I've always wanted to ....." Listen to it! Even if it doesn't work out, you are never worse off than you were when you were just wondering.

So many of us have gifts that we've never taken the time to explore, be it a comment someone once made or our own lack of self-confidence that keeps us from our dreams.

If I could share with you the radiance on the face of my friend as she talked about her passion coming to fruition, all of you would rush to create that for yourselves.

You deserve it, and so does the world.

~ Sharon Lee Riguzzi  
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