

Rx: Watch Ellen and Eat Dove's Bars

"All but death can be adjusted..." – Emily Dickinson

At 79, my mom's mobility is limited these days. Her neurological disorder, cerebellar ataxia causes constant dizziness due to her eyes fluttering, making it difficult for her to balance herself even with a walker. She recently told me that she doesn't want to live like this anymore. When she heard that the oldest woman in the world died at 116, she said that she would shoot herself right now if she knew she would *have* to live that long. Living has become a chore in her depressed state, but there are moments when joy enters and I know this is God at work.

Her constant companion is the television and whatever it's spinning. She used to love reading but her impaired vision makes this nearly impossible. She will occasionally play her CD collection that features the songs of her generation: Tony Bennett "Duets" and "Greatest Hits", "Barry Manilow Sings Sinatra", Michael Buble, Queen Latifah and Rod Stewart who cover with their own styles the tunes she prefers with orchestras playing in the background. Music has a special way of lifting her as she hums along and delightfully says, "I love this one," and shares a special memory attached to it. But her favorite event Monday through Friday is the talk show "Ellen" so I know better than to call from 10 to 11 a.m.

Ellen DeGeneres is medicine for my mom's soul with her playfulness, good heart and genuine enthusiasm towards life. There is no prescription that can be written by a doctor that can do for my mom what Ellen does. The spontaneous belly laughing makes her feel good for a while and life isn't so much of a burden. I am grateful that Mom has Ellen who she can count on for a boost 5 hours each week.

Part of the fun for Mom is retelling me what occurred on Ellen so even if I have watched the show, I just let her excitedly spill the details for as long as she wants to. I understand that humor is essential to us all; but at times, I get caught up in wanting to fix my mom which makes me tense and this extends to her. She can feel my frustration and this doesn't do either of us any good. When I can

allow Ellen's shining example to inspire me, I enjoy my time with Mom and there is a noticeable difference in her state of mind.

We tease about her beau, "Chick" who she dated before she met my dad 60 years ago. He began calling her a few years ago when his wife died. He lives in California and she lives in Indiana, but their time on the phone is precious as they reminisce about days gone by. She chuckles as she retells about him calling her on St. Patty's Day a little tipsy singing like a leprechaun. I tell her that when I answer the phone, I am going to say with my best twang, "Hey Chick! Are you gonna' be my new daddy?" This always brings a wide smile to her face and magical laughter that arrests her worries.

Whenever I spend time with Mom, I say, "Have you had a Dove's bar today?" because she loves Dove's ice cream bars. I go grab her one out of the freezer and she drapes a kitchen towel over her chest like a bib to catch the falling chocolate pieces. As she savors bite after delicious bite, the happiness she feels is healing for both of us. I help her clean the chocolate from around her mouth and try to locate any chocolate on her lap or around her chair. She is like a child who doesn't care about staining clothes because she is only experiencing the goodness found in eating something tasty. This is refreshing!

After the last trip to the Emergency Room when Mom's blood pressure dropped dangerously low, I promised her that there would be no more doctors unless she felt like she needed one. I told her from now on it was her decision – she was in the driver's seat after an 11 year absence. While at the ER, the doctor on-call ran a battery of tests, taking four vials of blood from her tiny body. I tried to explain her neurological disorder, but the information fell on deaf ears in the over-crowded, under-staffed facility. They did unnecessary scans and x-rays which lengthened our stay, making Mom miserable. As I began to press them so I could take her home, the doctor came in and said that they found nothing, recommending that we contact her neurologist.

I knew the ER doctor was doing all he could, and I also knew that I would not be contacting the neurologist unless Mom wanted to see

him. The neurologist has no answers for us because there is nothing medically he can do to treat her disease. On our drive to my sister's home where Mom has a private living area, I told my mom what I believe is the best prescription: watch Ellen and eat Dove's bars. She giggled quietly. I said, "I'm serious! You should eat a Dove's ice cream bar every day because they make you so happy, and you should keep watching Ellen because she makes you feel good. Do anything and everything that makes you happy and makes you feel good!"

My recommendation for my mom is applicable to us all. We are all much healthier – mind, body and spirit when we do what makes us feel good. For years people have said to me when they find out that I'm a runner, "I hate running!" My response is always the same, "Then, you shouldn't do it. Find whatever you enjoy and do that." Life is far too precious to squander ourselves and our time here. Life isn't about surviving; it's about thriving in the joy of being here. I believe the secret to life is this simple: "Whoever has the most fun, wins." Fun is good. A life well-lived is revealed in our happiness. Find what makes you happy. Be happy!

Meditation: *Do you know what makes you happy or makes you feel good? When do you feel most alive? Are you going through the motions every day or do you let happiness in?*

Action: *Observe yourself throughout each day. Pay attention to whatever makes you feel good. Pay attention to what makes you happy. Invite goodness and happiness into your life as soon as your eyes open every morning!*