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“No Pain, No Gain”

When I was 15 years old, I decided to run track, not just for the exercise, but for the social aspect of it as well. Little did I know then, I was going to learn a phrase that would change my life, for the good, forever.

It was a chilly, spring afternoon as a light rain moved in on my high school track practice. The coach decided after the team was done running sprints on the track, it would be a good idea to run five miles up the canyon from the small town I lived in. I was feeling tired and annoyed as I took off on the back road that would lead me up the canyon. The coach followed behind in his old Chevy pickup truck. The muscles in my legs were on fire and my lungs about to burst, when my coach yelled out a phrase from the window of his truck that changed my life. “No pain, No gain!” Easy for him to say, I thought to myself. But as I heard this phrase over and over during my practices, I came to find out, he was right. The pain I felt in practice paid off all the way to the Regional Track Finals and on to the State Finals, when my team won Region and took second in State.

I believe at quite a young age I was learning about this phrase without actually hearing it until my track coach instilled it in my mind during my teenage years. I was learning to apply this phrase at different times in my life, and not just physically. Having experienced “no pain, no gain” on an emotional level helped me to overcome the aftermath of perhaps one of the most painful experiences of my life.

My mother stepped out of my life when I was five years old, leaving my dad to raise my two older brothers and myself. Growing up I found it difficult watching all my friends interacting

with their mothers. I yearned to have a relationship with my mother, but by her choice, she was not a part of my life while growing up. My father, who was a police officer, was busy but he tried to fill the role of mother when he could. He even showed up in his police uniform to my 5th grade maturation program at school that was for the girls and their mothers. All the mothers attending thought it was cute, I thought it was embarrassing! That was just one of many times I wished my mother was there for me. Even though she never came back, I never gave up the hope that one day I would get the chance to bond with her.

As I have grown older and have children of my own, and as I look back upon my childhood, I truly have been able to apply the powerful phrase of, “no pain, no gain”. I have applied this throughout my life as I have faced many different challenges.

The experience of being pregnant and giving birth was the most joyful pain I have endured. My body took on the shape of a giant pear and during labor when I didn't think mentally or physically I could bear the pain anymore and I wanted to give up, into the world came the most beautiful little person I instantly fell in love with! The happiness and joy I felt erased any pain I had endured. It was such an amazing experience I decided to do it two more times.

I consider myself a devoted mom as I enjoy every day with my children. I can't imagine not being a part of their life and not giving them the love they so deserve. By experiencing such a painful childhood, I have gained a secure and amazing relationship with my children. I made a decision a long time ago that I would be the mom to my children that I never had. I knew I would never give up on my children.

Not only have I gained from a painful childhood, my children have too. I have been there for them when they said their first word and took their first step. I have picked them up, wiped

away tears and bandaged their knees when they crashed their bike when riding without training wheels for the first time. So basically I have been my children's nurse, chef, maid, chauffeur, comforter, bank account, and so much more. But I have to say, it has been the most wonderful and rewarding responsibility I have had. As the years go by, my children experience the different stages of life and I'm right there with them giving them the love and support they need to succeed. I am their number one fan, always encouraging them to keep moving forward and to never give up.

I have passed, "no pain, no gain," on to my children, as they have struggled with different tests of life, in hopes they will be strengthened from within. My son, never before having wrestled, decided to try this sport during his first year in high school. He has had to work hard to condition and strengthen his body to be able to endure wrestling on a high school level. He practices at 6:00 a.m. until 7:30 a.m., goes to school until 2:30 p.m., and then practices again until 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. When he gets home there are chores to be done, then it is dinner, homework, and off to bed. It has been a challenge for my son to change his lifestyle in adjusting to wrestling, but he has remembered the phrase "no pain, no gain." My son has become a believer in this phrase as he has worked hard and it's now paying off as he maintains good grades and is pinning his opponent on the mat. Before he goes out on the mat at his matches, he finds me in the crowd and mouths the phrase "no pain, no gain." Even if he loses he knows he has gained. He didn't give up.

As I have passed on and witnessed the influence of this powerful phrase in my children's life, it continues to impact mine.

Last year I came down with an illness that limited my physical activity for a period of time. This proved to be a trial for me as I have always enjoyed doing activities that helped me to

stay physically fit. When I was able to start physical activities again, I decided to start hiking on a daily basis. I began my hiking endeavor on a smaller, steep hill full of rocks, and since then I have challenged myself to hike steeper hills and mountain sides. The first day I began hiking, my legs were burning and my lungs felt as if they were on fire! When I felt that I couldn't take another breath of air or one more step forward, a familiar phrase came to mind, "no pain, no gain". The memory of my high school track coach yelling out this phrase when I didn't think I could run anymore and I wanted to give up, came flooding back and I pushed myself to keep going. Because I still repeat "no pain, no gain" in my mind when the terrain gets rough and steeper, I'm able to endure and press forward. The victory is mine when I reach the top, drink in the fresh air and let my legs feel the triumph of conquering new heights. I will not give up!

I love the words of William Ernest Henly, "I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." I have the power to decide what I will gain out of my challenges in life, molding the person I choose to become. With all the lessons learned in my life, big and small, good and bad, I have been able to learn from them and better myself. I have empowered myself by finding endurance to life's trials and tribulations by simply repeating and applying the solid phrase "no pain, no gain", which simply means to me, don't give up.

I believe in the power and strength to not give up that comes from the simple phrase "no pain, no gain".