

There are some students who touch your life in ways that you can never **imagine**. Students who do not even realize that they are having an **impact** on you. For me it was a student that I taught right out of college. After **graduating** college in May, I set out to teach **junior high summer school**. Not the ideal choice for a first time teaching **experience**, but I was young and **enthusiastic**. Well I did not count on the class I was going to **encounter**. **My students were a rough bunch to say the least**. A combination of every school in the district's worst of the worst. Still I was positive that I could make a difference. By the fourth week of summer school I had given up on making a difference and just hoped that at least some of these kids could pass the course. Of course, no class is complete without a ringleader. **Apparently** "John" found pleasure in just driving people **crazy**. There was no **logical reason** for the way he behaved. He was an extra challenge in a room full of challenges.

I cannot tell you when and how something changed, *but one day it did*. John's **behavior** was still **atrocious**, but something else in him changed. *John became very close to me*. He moved his desk right next to mine and he became almost like my personal assistant. John still did not like to listen, but he loved to talk. He would tell me many different stories about his life. One day he told me a story that forever changed my life. John asked me if I liked CK1 perfume. I said yes, not knowing where the conversation was going. He told me that his parents had an argument and his father brought the perfume to **make amends**. He said that his mother did not like the perfume and that she did not want the gift. He brought me the perfume and said it was because his mom did not want it. I accepted the gift from him after being sure he had gotten **permission** to give it away.

A week later I was on the phone with John's father. We were discussing John's behavior again. His father started the conversation by saying, "since my wife **passed away**," and before he could finish, I stopped him and asked him to explain. John's mother had died the beginning of that year from cancer. The story about the perfume was true, but it happened almost a year earlier. John's father insisted that I keep the perfume, stating that his son must have had a special reason for giving it to me. John and I talked about his mother, but we never discussed the gift. At the end of the summer, John was able to pass my class (barely) and move on the 7th grade. I never had an impact on John's behavior; his grades barely improved. I didn't make any of the impacts that teachers are expected to make. However, I made another impact that I never expected.

On the last day of summer school, John who never liked to show feelings or **emotions** came back to my room to say goodbye several times. On the final trip to my room, John **hugged** me a long time and said, "Thank you Ms. Rivera. I love you." Those words have changed my life forever. Those were words I know that child had not said in a very long time, but he felt that he could tell me. As I waved goodbye and **assured** him that I loved him too, I knew that I would never forget John. How can you forget the student that illustrates to you that teaching is more than just grades and books? Teaching is about those life **altering** moments you never expect. **Teaching is about touching a student's life and having a student touch yours.**

LIFE

A philosophy professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When class began, wordlessly he picked up a large empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, rocks about 2 inches in diameter. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was and laughed.

The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. "Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognize that this is your life. The rocks are the important things – your family, your partner, your health, your children – anything that is so important to you that if it were lost, you would be nearly destroyed. The pebbles are the other things that matter, like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else. The small stuff."

"If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your energy and time on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you."

Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take care of your body. Take your partner out dancing. Talk to your teenager. Show the love you feel for the people you care about. Take care of the rocks first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand.

YOU AND THEM

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies.
Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you.
Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight.
Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow.
Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.
Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.