

Alaska Strength & Muscle December Challenge

The Power of Five

By M Redington, MAT



One of the key characteristics of a successful person is the company with whom they keep. Think about the company you keep. Do you have mentors you can readily name? Do the majority of your friends and family love you unconditionally, challenge you to grow, and support you in your endeavors? Is your work environment healthy and does the leadership within your family and employment field inspire you to give your best?

These are questions I like to reflect on at least annually. In education when talking about kids at risk I have heard research presented about the power of identifying at least 5 people who

become the safety net necessary to help keep kids from falling through the cracks. As an adult I think the same principal exists. If you want to go far surround yourself with people you admire and respect.

As a child my mother was definitely my strongest safety net and to this day I am surely her greatest admirer. She was always present and dutiful to parenting. Her diligence was evident in tirelessly working to instill morals of character. Trust me she had her hands full. I would not describe myself as any easy child to raise. Precocious, high spirited and energetic. Sometimes we have to learn the importance of honesty through the pitfalls of lying, the power of compassion from cruelty and one of life's greatest challenges – to persevere in the face of unimaginable challenge. My mom stayed deep in the trenches and never missed an opportunity to instill these powerful morals. She forgave me every time I messed up, focusing on the next opportunity to succeed instead of dwelling in defeat.

My aunts were part of my childhood fabulous 5. I remember riding my bike for what seemed like miles to Auntie Fran's farmhouse. She was blind from diabetes and I never knew her any differently. She adapted gracefully never let her disability affect cooking and hosting family events, which are my childhood treasured memories. I never once remember feeling sorry for her; instead she was an inspiration, full of class. She made the best meatloaf in the world and sometimes I got to help her. My auntie Betty was the

coolest grown up I knew. I got to spend the night with her sometimes and she made Barbie Doll clothes to die for. Also, she did not listen to country music and my cousins, her kids, were my most beautiful people I knew. I loved staying with them. To me it was living the glamorous life.



When I became a mother I had no other thoughts beyond devoting myself to raising my child to the best of my abilities. I had a few key mentors at that time that inspired and encouraged me to return to school to become a teacher. At the time I was living in ‘bush’ Alaska. With fulltime work, a toddler and an extremely rustic lifestyle I followed that advice because others thought I could even though I had my doubts. You see growing up I always defined myself as an athlete not a scholar. In fact I never took challenging classes in High School – I needed to keep my time preserved to focus on sports. I kept good grades by taking easy classes. I never considered myself to be smart. Nonetheless I plunged into a Master program in Education; as my mom might have

said, “Jumping from the fry pan into the fire,”– but, the lengths you can go to succeed for your child is beyond amazing! That I never doubted.

Educating myself about child development, teaching and learning and much more gave me a lot of confidence in my parenting. However, without key people encouraging me to push on I doubt I would have ever returned to school to obtain a Masters Degree. In my mind to this day I find great irony in completing graduate school; only smart people do that. I would describe myself as tenacious, unyielding dedicated and more but not ‘school smart’.

In addition to working mentors as a young mother I also had best friends some of who were parents that I admired, spent both working and family time with and emulated. To me from 25 to 35 years old was really the time of life that I defined who I was – aka became a ‘true grown-up’. Together my sisters from other misters and I were never afraid to talk about uncomfortable subjects and to this day we continue to share deep thoughts on the meaning of life, and on the flip-side laugh with reckless abandon no matter how much time has passed, secure in each others company. Together we threw every themed birthday party imaginable, an annual event the Saturday after school let out for summer vacation.

My son has grown into a Senior in High School and life now is quite different now. We moved from rural Alaska to Wasilla four five ago, which is a story in itself. Any family with kids that has moved; enough said. As a child I never moved so I was not prepared nor did I have a reference for how to be successful upon moving. Over time we have

adapted well and I can identify key people in my new city life that I admire and respect, people of strong character. It is good to know people who have accomplished more than me. It is a reminder to stay hungry for growth and hopeful to accomplish more than I might have left to my own. Here and now I am in a position to give back. Today if you take a moment to think about 5 people who make you want to be the best version of you than I have accomplished greatness for this day. That is my gift today - a little piece of me.

