

Alaska Strength & Muscle October Challenge

“Just Believe”

By Melanie Redington. MAT



I remember walking home from the mailbox along our dirt road in Southern Minnesota with my mom’s words rolling in my head, “Honey you’re special; most parents just get their kids we got to pick you.” This memory I’m sure is embedded closely with learning that I was adopted – which I have no memory of not knowing. I rolled those words around in my head like ammunition seeing nothing but promise in ‘being picked’ I

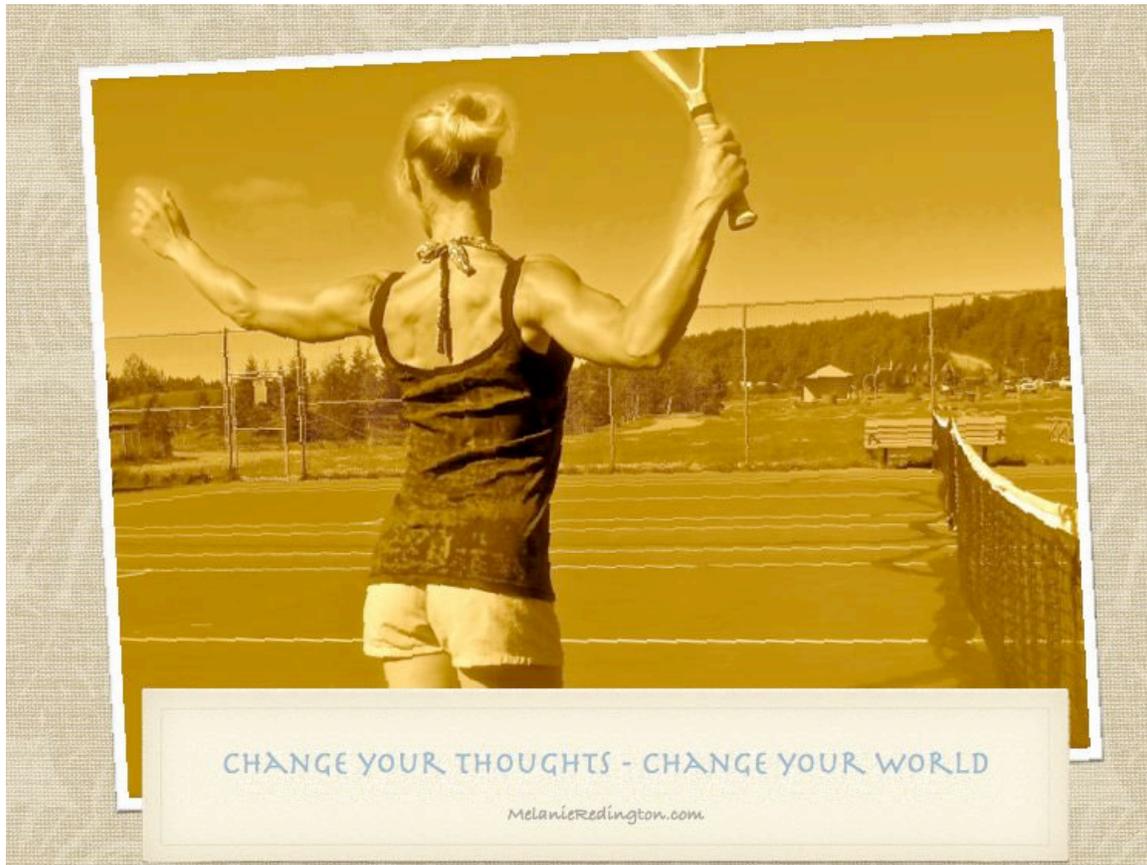
innocently thought this nugget would shield me from teasing and the likes of things that trouble a little girl no older than seven.

As I got older I became wary of this spin on adoption, in fact I rejected it complexly and instead became fixated with abandonment issues occasionally mixed with fairy tale ideas of perfect parents that may at any moment whisk me away to a wonderful life, because the fact was, for a long time, I did not like myself at all. Sound familiar. Does anyone reading struggle with self-acceptance?

During my senior year of college I brought my best friend home during spring break. By this time I had been to what I thought was my ‘bottom’ and thankfully survived. I had traveled the US with a backpack and was liberated by the variety of cultures and lifestyles I’d seen. My best friend was born and raised in Los Angeles and I was as star struck by her big city life as she was amused by my country midwestern upbringing. One night we took a late night stroll down the city streets and I remember declaring to the world that I would do great things in my lifetime. She smiled her beautiful smile and laughed. It was a perfect night. Four years passed when her mom called to tell me she died of a drug overdose. She could never break free from the grip of cocaine.

When I turned 35 I got the call to return home. My mother had fought type-1 diabetes her entire life. She had always been frank with me that “when they start to cut I’m leaving this earth.” We had many conversations about life being short and precious and many more about faith. My mom was deeply religious on earth and is now everlasting in heaven. Her faith is my foundation and the reason I have made it this far in life. She never complained of her physical limitations. It was not really until after she dies that I

realized the impact and severe toll that diabetes took on both my mom and my dad as a caregiver.

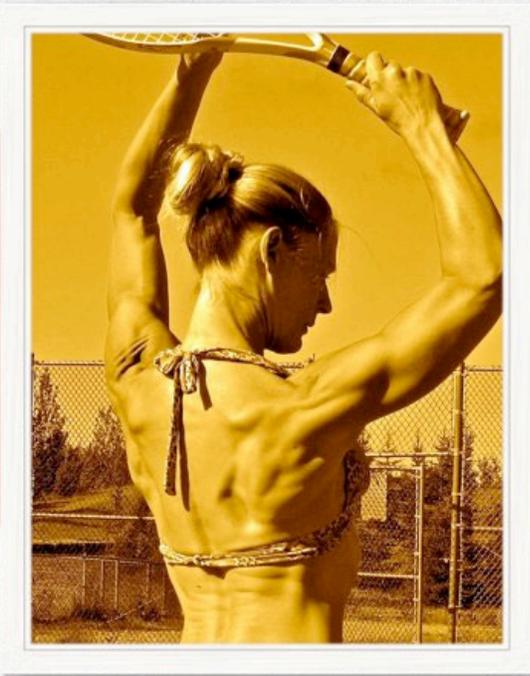


My mom was the greatest love in my life equaled only to that of my family. She left a book behind that she wrote to my son, a treasure that I uncovered before returning to Alaska. Within this book was evidence to me that life is really everlasting, faith is beautiful and we all can overcome again and again. In my mom's book there were many beautiful stories. Her handwriting is preserved with all the memories it elicits in me.

On one profound page she wrote about her hopes and dreams; she always wanted to be a teacher and her proudest secret accomplishment was winning a footrace in second grade – being the fastest girl in her class. Flash forward – that's me! I was dumbstruck – I had been teaching for 7 years but never knew that about my mother. The racing part I had no idea about either. I never thought about my mother longing to be active, restricted by medicine of the time and a different generation of what girls could and could not do. It made me wonder though if that was why my mom let me play every sport that interested me. I was born to move, wired to be active. When I read my moms 'secret' I decided I would in part honor her by living life to the fullest I could and attaining the highest level of athleticism possible. I know my mom is watching and I talk with her often while training. My mother does live forever through me just as I will live forever through my son.

I think it is a life long pursuit for many of us to struggle to understand our purpose on earth. Learning to love and respect ourselves so we can love and respect others takes effort. I have yet to meet anyone who has not struggled with heavy and personal issues. Yet despite all that can weigh us down at times at the end of the day faith is far more powerful than fear.

We are what we repeatedly do



Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit - Aristotle

