

# *No Doubt*

*Amy Kietzman*

I don't usually feel sleepy in meeting for worship, but that First Day it was a struggle to stay awake. My head drooped at least once and I found myself thinking that I shouldn't sit on the facing benches if I couldn't, at the very least, stay awake. My attempts at meditation seemed more like dreaming and I had to pull myself back from them over and over again. What was going on?

Meeting continued to be a struggle; my attempts to pray seemed pathetic and neither the silence nor the ministry helped. Then suddenly an answer came to a prayer I had not realized that I had offered the day before.

My oldest daughter had been away for two weeks and that afternoon we were going to pick her up. She had been visiting Camphill Soltane, a college for people with developmental disabilities. Kate has been away before, but never to a place where I did not have to worry about her, or try to make things go well from a distance. As the first week unfolded, I began to realize that my life

felt qualitatively different. It was hard to put my finger on at first. When I finally had time to write in my prayer journal about it, clarity emerged. There has been a dissonant chord sounding in the background music of my life—a constant worrying about things not being right for Kate. While she was at Soltane, it vanished and I felt relaxed and more deeply happy than I can remember ever being before.

I began to realize that this worrying had taken on a life of its own— independent of how things are really going for Kate. While things could always be better, my worrying did nothing to change whatever might need it, and there are many things that I cannot change, no matter what. How was I going to stop worrying and simply do what I could and let go of the rest?

I was hesitant to tell my husband about this because of the rigid roles we have played in this area of parenting. He has been the pessimistic, disappointed one and I have been the eternally optimistic, pleased one. I was afraid that he would interpret my experience wrongly and attempt to confirm the sad “reality” of the situation. I was able to tell him what I was feeling during that first week and then tried to make some

time to have a longer discussion with him over the weekend.

When the time manifested, I was surprised at the deep emotion that surfaced, making it hard to articulate. Grief overwhelmed me as I struggled and shared with him this thought, “I have not dared, for the past eight years at least, to notice that I have any feelings of hopelessness, disappointment or grief about Kate’s disability, since you feel so consistently negative about it... I want, I *need* there to be *at least one person who never doubts her worth.*”

David held me as I sobbed for a minute or two longer. Then I listened as he thought out loud about some things he and Kate might do together on a regular basis. I laughed and commented that it had probably been my stubborn optimism that had kept his rigid negativism in place, and perhaps that would change if I would notice and voice my doubts and fears. Afterward, I felt more connected to David and pleased with things in general, but I was still unconsciously longing for an answer to my plea.

That is, the longing was unconscious until it was answered unexpectedly. There I was, sleepy and struggling in

meeting for worship, when seemingly out of the blue came, "*I have no doubt.*" No person had spoken; in fact, I hadn't exactly heard the words. It was as if they simply *were*, resonating in my body/consciousness. An astonished smile broke across my face and I felt as if a beam of light had suddenly illuminated the dark cavern I had found myself in. Sweet tears of joy and thanksgiving trickled down my cheeks, accompanied by a sense of relief and well-being. Of course, God has no doubt about Kate's worth or anyone else's.

Although it is wise and good to follow the example of divine, unconditional love, no human action can ever match or take the place of it. My prayer is not to forget that Kate is beloved by the Creator, if not by all creation.

*Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.* Jeremiah 31:3

*You are loved today  
And always  
Without condition  
Beyond measure  
Until the end of time.*

Charlotte Williams

## **About the Author**

*Amy Kietzman is a lifelong Quaker, a member of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. She is the mother of three girls, ages 20, 15 and 11. Her oldest daughter has Down's syndrome. Amy is married to a family physician who also teaches at the University of Pennsylvania. They live in West Philadelphia and have raised their children there.*

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