

Sometimes there are days when my critical mind kicks in and I wonder if I am really making a difference through the work that I do. This, of course, does not last very long as the universe will provide a thankful parent, a happy or confident child to remind me, and I am assured again that I am making a difference.

One example of that assurance came around the holidays when I had a meeting with Michelle about her 16-year-old daughter. When they first came to see me a few months prior, her daughter Jackie had been having a lot of difficulty for many years in school. Michelle had been struggling to help Jackie and advocate for her at school. But Jackie had finally reached a point where she was tired of trying, her self esteem and confidence were low and she had no real goals ahead of her once she finished high school.

In a short period of time I realized that school was not her strength and since she only had a few years left of high school I wanted, instead, to find out what her strengths are and discover a way to focus on those instead.

Jackie is a beautiful girl with a warm, gentle soul and every time she came to see me she was dressed fashionably from head to toe, totally classy and put together. I used that as an opening. We started talking about clothes, designers, and styles. I even brought in some fashion magazines and had her cut out clothes that grabbed her attention. Then once she had cut out a bunch of pictures, I asked her to put them together into outfits. In a matter of minutes she had them all grouped together and they were wonderful. It was then that I realized fashion was her gift. She had an eye for style, putting clothing together, accessorizing, and fitting personalities with clothing styles.

Up to this point Jackie had not excelled in school so no one talked to her about college (which seemed to be the only option once someone left high school). Instead, they were saying she was lucky to graduate. This belief was carried through to Jackie, and with this negative reinforcement why should she create any goals past high school?

I worked with Jackie and Michelle to shift their thought processes and look at the bigger picture. While school and society would like parents to believe that education and grades are everything, and thus should be your main focus, the bigger picture asks what your child is going to do once she graduates high school and gets out into the real world. What is your child's life purpose and how can she pursue that once high school is over?

In Jackie's case, she needed to get through the next few years of high school, do the work and graduate. But, in the

## Seeing the Bigger Picture

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meantime, I wanted to cultivate her talent, research avenues that were available within the field of fashion, and figure out what she could be doing after high school to follow her life purpose.

As I encouraged her fashion sense and discussed what opportunities there might be for her, Jackie began to regain her confidence. She wasn't a bad student going nowhere; she was gifted and could work in New York City after graduation in some aspect of the fashion world. It all depended on how a person perceived the situation and what energy was put forth. I was also able to assist her on another level as my cousin is the Fashion Director at Seventeen magazine. I decided to call her and ask about internships or opportunities where Jackie could learn more about the fashion industry and different jobs she may be interested in pursuing. She mentioned that Seventeen had an internship program and that I should have Jackie contact her assistant about applying for a spot this summer. What better place to learn about fashion and the options available than by being involved with one of the premier fashion magazines in the country!

When I shared this opportunity with Jackie and her mother, it only increased Jackie's confidence and made the pursuit of a career in fashion that much more of a reality. Up to that point no one in her life would have thought she was capable of this type of opportunity. And until I started talking about fashion as an avenue for Jackie, everyone had said "she knows how to shop," or "clothes were her thing," but they didn't see the bigger picture of Jackie having a talent for fashion and making this her career later on in life. Even when Jackie and her mother worked on putting the paperwork together for the internship, and getting the high school to give her credits for working at the magazine over the summer, many people still felt that there was no way she was going to get the internship. However, I knew differently. I saw Jackie's potential and I knew that if I encouraged her, supported her, and assured her that she could do this, she was going to make it happen.

At our most recent meeting,

Michelle shared with me how well Jackie was now doing in school, how her confidence and self esteem were back, how she is achieving her goals one by one and is finally looking towards the future. She is also opening up and sharing more. Michelle was very thankful to me, and I was happy that I could help by opening a door that was closed before.

Being an evolved parent requires you to see past limitations that society tends to put in front of you. It requires looking for the positive when everyone else is focusing on the negative. It requires you to think outside the box and look down the road to the real world. What role will your child play and how can you help him or her achieve it?

There are so many aspects involved in the world of fashion. Jackie could be a major clothing buyer at a national retail chain, she could be a well known designer with her own line of clothes, she could be involved in Fashion Shows, assisting models on the runway, or she could be involved in fashion shoots for a national magazine. The options are limitless. They are only limited by our own minds.

Jackie did end up getting that internship at Seventeen magazine and she did it on her own. She went in and sold herself to the person at Seventeen as to why she should be chosen and she is going to do her internship this summer. I am looking forward to seeing what other doors will be opened by that experience and where she takes this opportunity.

This experience also made me look at the bigger picture with what I am doing at A Child's Voice. With each child, and parent that I help, there is a rippling effect. There is no telling where Jackie will end up once she is out there using her talent and sharing with the world. But I would like to think how much better the world is because she found her gift and will now put it to good use.

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