

July 5, 2003

Dear Peter,

My Husband, Eddie, (you remember the cigar smoker) just handed me our local paper with an amused grin on his face. "Read this!" he said. I cautiously took the paper. I immediately recognized the tension of opposites in the parental rhetoric. "Hey this is our Peter!" I exclaimed. Eddie and I have had some laughs over our own decision making process about sending Chelsea to your house. Believe me the laughs only started after we met you on your driveway to pick her up!

I want very much to be able to express to you what a growth oriented experience this was for our entire family. I was so excited after meeting you at Chelsea's dance studio. She was ecstatic and ready to be "discovered"! After we received your package on the workshops I did everything that you said. I read every word, crossed the t's, dotted the i's! I spoke to people all over the country about you and your workshop. I was 100% sure about sending Chelsea to the workshop. I was instrumental in convincing others in our dance studio to seriously look into sending their children. I was moving forward with excitement and anticipation.

Right up until that moment that I stood in your office and handed Chelsea and her friend over to you for a week. I am proud to say that at that moment I lost it so bad that I earned my own special paragraph in your next workshop info package letter. You know the one about inspecting your home....

First let me say this, "Happy Easter!". It occurred to me some weeks later that I was actually pretty rude and did not even wish you at least a happy spring on Easter Morning! I apologize. I was so completely seized with fear at that moment that I did not know how I would walk out the door. Had my very brilliant husband not had the insight to go with me (I had planned on bringing the girls by myself) I know I would have brought the girls home. But with a last check from the girls, and from Eddie, I moved like a ghost across the floor and out the door. I got into the car and cried all the way to Baltimore. Eddie says I didn't talk all the way home to Virginia.

Well, let me tell you it was a tough week. I went so far inside myself, apparently right where I needed to go. At the age of thirteen I was trustingly handed over by my mother to a family that as it turned out did not deserve her trust. There was from that point a long, slow seduction over the course of the next two years. I was the babysitter. I'm sure that I

do not have to paint this picture for you. Suffice it to say that the effect of that situation on my life had been long standing. It is very hard for me to try to put into words what took place the week that Chelsea was at your house. I was lucky enough to have a wonderful spiritual director who listened with great love as I explored my deepest feelings concerning my past experience. I really did my soul work that week.

I found that in doing my homework concerning your workshop and in trusting you, when my own life experience begged me not to, I experienced a real change in my self. Just as Chelsea found that in sitting with her pain of being away from home and sticking it out anyway she was changed forever. I can't tell you the number of times she has drawn on that experience when she has been faced with something tough. Like this month when she had to dance a duet in a show by herself because her partner didn't show up. She was magnificent!

I continue to explore the experience of the workshop with Chelsea as she brings things up. I asked her one night why she thought God had sent her to New York. What he may have wanted for her. She said, "You know Mom, I don't think that God sent me to New York to get discovered and be a big star. I think that he sent me there to learn that lesson about sticking it out when things are hard." WOW! Thank God for you, Peter.

All of my life experience goes into trying to be a good parent. Having a realization of what can happen I have tried to not squash Chelsea's voice. I have a deep awareness of the wrongs that parents may unknowingly do by their children because of their own fear. I have tried to help Chelsea see that when I wig out, and I do, it is always my fear and not she. I hope that I have helped her to see that there are many layers to people and that it is hard to know what makes people tick. I often remind her that all she can control is herself, all she can know is herself and the more she knows herself the more she knows God. When you let go of fear God shows you who you are. He shows you what he wants for you. It's the most amazing little shift of focus.

I know that Chelsea sensed my fear when I left your house that day. I feel badly that it probably made the experience a little harder for her. We have had lots of long talks about both of our experiences. We both wholeheartedly agree that the workshop was a very good thing. Peter, I wonder if you really know how far reaching your work is. Please go easy on us poor old parents. I hope that most of us really just want to do what's right for our children. I imagine that in your work you've seen the other side too often.

Well, I wish that I could tell you that we have all converted our evil ways as far as our diets go. The most that we have been able to maintain is the Kashi cereal and we definitely eat more fresh veggies. We did get some flaxseed oil and Chelsea is choosing salads over burgers. I am trying harder now that we are in preparation for the workshop this summer. Your list and advice really help. Wish us luck...we'll need it.

We are making preparations for the workshop. Chelsea has been experiencing some apprehension about going. This past week her dance company danced for the Miss Virginia Pageant and she was able to see one of our graduated seniors who is dancing for the Rockets, Erica Whitaker. Erica was very excited about the workshop and shared her "New York" stories with Chelsea. She is now more determined than ever to go and have a successful experience. Our e-mail is

if you can send her an encouraging note or just a hello it would mean a lot to her. We think of you all the time and know that God is blessing your work and your life. Take care, Peter.

Sincerely,