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Assignment #1

writing about self
10 hrs spent
could not get out what
has 6 pgs wanted

It's About the Smile

Come on Danny, fist-pump it! There you go, buddy- now let me see a high five!

As I kneel down beside him, he reaches his hand out for another "fist-bump". I return with mine, and he immediately bursts into giggles. I help him catch the hot potato ball once more and guide his toss to another classmate at the other end of the room. His eyes cheerful and his smile wide, Danny can hardly contain himself. He lifts up his fist for another fist bump and once again erupts into a fit of giggles. I join him.

good
intro

Danny is an eight year old boy with cerebral palsy. He is just one of the several children I get to work with at a nearby special needs school. Whether it is teaching him how to high-five and fist-bump, or helping him play a game of giant tic-tac-toe with his classmates, I truly enjoy every minute I spend with him and other children like him. Although I "volunteer" my time for these kids, I hardly think of my work with them as much of a sacrifice. Seeing Danny smile is just one reason why I love what I do; I also get to help teach other children how to play tennis so that they can participate in the Special Olympics summer games, for example. From the beginning where I teach them to hit a forehand, through the middle where I see them compete at the summer games, and to the end where I watch them proudly march to the podium to accept their awards, the entire experience is priceless. I love every minute of it.

Not all of the children are as able and responsive as the ones I coach. Most are hardly able to interact, respond, or communicate, if at all. So many times I have found

myself waving photos in front of a child's eyes for hours, desperately hoping to see him smile or even look at the pages. There is feeling of hopelessness and failure that couples these moments. All I can think is, *why can't I do something to make him a little bit happier? Anything at all.* I remember in one particular instance, I had been trying to read to Eli for at least an hour. The teachers told me that they were trying to help him become more active; he had had brief moments in which he was able to interact with a teacher, and they wanted to further this behavior. No matter what I did, neither I— nor anyone else—could make that little smile on his face return. As each visit passed, I grew more and more discouraged. I knew that Eli could engage in an activity, yet I was incapable of helping him accomplish this.

And then he reached a tiny finger to the fuzzy caterpillar on the book I was holding in front of him. A small grin formed on his face, and his eyes locked onto the image. After so many days of trying, after thinking that I could never help him communicate what he was thinking deep down inside of him, he finally did. He breached a barrier that had been holding him back, even it was only for a moment. And I helped him—I was able to give him this at last. I understand that it wasn't much, and my efforts were only minimally responsible for his step forward. I know that he still had a long road ahead of him to improving his communication skills, but I had something to do with it. In my heart, I hold this as one of my greatest accomplishments to date.

Very good imagery

Through my experiences with these children, I have gained so much. I have witnessed the happiness I can obtain just by immersing myself in these children's world for a few hours at a time. I have experienced fulfillment of the purest kind. And I have found an escape to a little world in which smiles and giggles are one's only end goal.

Could you write more? Tell more stories?
Don't change anything 😊