

Elaina Zylberberg

Virtue
Contest

How I Turned My Cousin's Life Around

There are many virtues that a person might have that will benefit that person. A virtue is a good quality that someone has that makes him or her morally good, and righteous. Patience is a helpful quality to obtain because it will make us better people. It will allow us to have self control which will enhance our relationships with others, as well as enable us to accomplish anything that we set our heart and mind to.

There are some people in life who work hard, and get everything done at a slow pace; and then, there are others who think too quickly and make the wrong decisions. This can be with anything for example: relationships. People move too quickly into relationships and get hurt. Also, when making important decisions, the ones who have no patience at all come to a conclusion fast, think they will be happy, and later on realize they made a huge mistake. I think things through before I do something, because I take important things like school very seriously. I also believe that good things are worth waiting for even if they arrive slowly. When everything happens rapidly and a person just jumps into any decision due to pressure or a lack of knowledge, that person will feel lost and regretful. It's wise to think things through depending on how important and serious the situation might be.

To be honest, patience is not an easy character trait to achieve. Some people are calm, and are able to wait for things, but some simply can't. From past experiences I have learned that having patience was really rewarding because it allowed me to learn from others, and to learn what I can handle and that I'm able to help someone and make a difference. It also caused others to look up to me as a role model. Looking back, putting my frustration aside, and pushing

myself the extra mile really helped to shape a person's heart from sour to sweet. I was able to change someone's life and to me that's amazing and one of the best accomplishments and satisfactions I have experienced.

I have a cousin who is dear to me. He is a really good person and has a good heart. Sometimes he does certain things that he doesn't mean and regrets. My cousin is unique in many ways. He has always cared to do the right thing, but never succeeded because he has never had the proper guidance. When he would try to do a good deed, or help someone, it would result in criticism. He would have good intentions, but sometimes people would always look down at him because he would say the wrong thing, or would try helping out and then make the situation worse.

My cousin has encountered many hardships throughout his life. So many obstacles have come his way, and I give him credit for not giving up on life. He stays strong, and has faith. My cousin tells me that one of the reasons that he has not given up is because of me. When he met me four years ago, on my visit to Israel, he saw something in me that would help him cope with his distress. Something about me caught his attention. I was caring, and saw the good in him. I treated him like an equal which was unaccustomed to him. It was as if I was a tiny ray of sunshine breaking through heavy gray clouds on a gloomy day. He was going through a rough time since his parents divorce. His sister didn't make it easier either. She wouldn't talk to him, or my side of the family. My cousin felt lost with a mother who didn't give him enough positive attention because she didn't have strength, and patience to deal with him. She would get angry and scold him. His mother would also reprimand him for every immature act. All his life he felt unwanted and a nuisance. The difference between me, and the rest of the family was, I was understanding and empathetic. He saw I was a sensitive, and good-hearted person with a high

tolerance level. He came to me for guidance, and I was more than happy to help because I knew that I would be able to do it since many people in the past have consulted me, and told me that I was a great help to them. When I initiated to help my cousin, I thought it would be easy to alleviate his pain, but I didn't realize how deep and sensitive the root of the problem was.

As I got to know him better, I realized how much work, and persistence it would take to build up his confidence. He indeed was a lost soul. I would advise him not to do something and I would teach him the right way to approach a situation, but he would still mess up. Then he would come back crying to me, explaining to me what he did wrong and that he knew he should have listened to me, but he kept slipping. Sometimes he would message me a whole long text repeating himself and telling me he's sorry and he didn't know what to do. There were so many times when I just wanted to just give up on him. I became so frustrated because he wouldn't listen to my words and he would go back to square one, and his mistakes were simply redundant. There were times when I wanted to yell and tell him to stop bothering me. I was going to tell him that I was giving up on helping him, but then I thought to myself this kid really needs my help. If G-d forbid something were to happen, because he thought that his only hope gave up on him, who knows what he might do. I wouldn't want him to do anything to hurt himself.

I would compose myself and calmly listen to him as he would pour his heart out to me. He would tell me about his day, and the people who bothered him and "disrespected" him. Every little thing bothered him to the point where sometimes it was unbearable to hear. I would take a deep breath, and I would continue to help my cousin. The more I hung out with him, and helped him; I learned that he can't take criticism very well. He runs away from it. He's very sensitive and he can't handle to be put down. My cousin wanted to learn how to change his ways, but he didn't like to be told what he did wrong in a negative way. All his life he has been told that

everything he did was stupid. He had a low self-esteem and he never had the right guidance. My cousin never had a father-son relationship. He claimed his father hates him and wishes he was never born. He truly never had a close connection to anyone until four years ago. If I would yell at him and tell him what he did was wrong, he would run away.

This trained me to become more patient and to be calm. I learned that if I really wanted to help, I had to be even more tranquil than usual. Slowly, slowly over the past year I have seen him prosper and mature. Occasionally, I give him strength and tell him when I see him doing something good and when he's becoming better. He tells me that these evaluations actually strengthen him. This doesn't mean that my job here is done. I still help him until this day. It's difficult to help him sometimes because he lives in another country so our conversations are through messaging. I try my hardest to accommodate him with my busy schedule and sometimes, it's so hard to hear his issues because he wants an answer right away. Instead of getting angry at him, and giving him attitude, I try to be sensitive to his feelings and give him hope.

I think of how I'm helping him, and how we're both benefiting, and then serenity rescues me. I always tell him that I'm here for him and everything will be fine. I also tell him to be happy and smile. Now he always asks me what to do before he does anything major. He changed his life around. He is currently going to college and studying to become a manager in a bank. My cousin says if it weren't for my patience and encouragement, he wouldn't be where he is today. He tells me I'm like an older sister he never had which makes me proud. I want to change the lives of others. I feel I was put on this world to make people happy and help them.

When I look back to when I first met him, I definitely see that he has grown and blossomed into a beautiful flower. He has learned many lessons for life. I taught him to look at

the glass half full instead of empty. Life has its ups and downs but it's not entirely dark and hopeless. There is a light that shines at the end of the dark tunnel. My cousin has to continue having faith and move forward. Life is beautiful and full of opportunities, just have to be patient and take it one day at a time. The important lesson he has also acquired was that it's imperative to count your blessings and be thankful for everything you have.

Having patience is a rewarding quality to have, but sometimes not an easy virtue to maintain. If people would learn the benefits and beauty of this quality, they would see good outcomes and would desire to work hard at mastering this characteristic.