

The middle child, Callia

generation connection

By Sierra Canyon resident Linda W. Peterson-St. Pierre



Aging & Sage-ing

If you are like me, you probably have wondered what you want to leave behind for your grandkids. Are your possessions what you want to give them, or is it something you taught them that you hope they will remember? Have you thought about how you truly want to be remembered ... your legacy, perhaps? These questions prompted me to write about aging and “sage-ing” — the blending of wisdom and experience — and how this amazing process might work for you!

My first experience of “sage-ing” was with my middle granddaughter at the age of 4. Callia stood with hands on her hips in a defiant pose after a sibling rivalry episode with her older sister and said, “Grandma, can I come and live with you?”

Taken off guard, I answered: “Sweetheart, did you know that you have chosen this family for lessons you must learn? Some will be really hard, but you can do it. When you get older, you can come to stay with me whenever you want to!” Much to my amazement, the prophecy came true when Callia, at 17, phoned from her home in Ohio to ask if she could visit me. This time it wasn’t sibling rivalry but because she was stuck writing her college entrance essay.

Ironically, she has been the Editor-in-Chief of her high school newspaper and has written countless articles. But, as we all know, writing about oneself can be more difficult than writing about others. The hardest part was finding which stories from her life best represented whom she had become. She had tried many different topics, but nothing was working. Her teacher would read her college entrance drafts and tell her they had potential, but she hadn’t found “it” yet — that special “thing” that would identify something about her that would capture her readers. She had found another student college essay she loved that had been written by a fellow senior that began, “I had never broken into a car before,”

a sentence that immediately hooked her! She knew she had to read on, and it was with relief that she discovered the author was locked out of his van at a Habitats for Humanity site and was not a criminal. He went on to explore what he learned from his family, living in constant chaos, and convinces the reader he's the perfect college candidate!

Callia wanted me to help her find the perfect opening anecdote for her own essay. To help her with that, I shared one of my favorite psychological tools from Dr. Ira Progoff, a Jungian therapist. I asked Callia to write the steppingstones of her life from birth to the present in a grocery-list format. Callia was told to start with "I was born..." and write about 20 important milestones up to the present. She pulled out her iPad and began writing her steppingstones. Later, I requested that she read her life events to me. As she did, she found the moment she needed. She turned to me with a big smile and said: "I've got it!"

At 8 years old she was cast in her first ballet, *The Magic Toy Shop*, as the middle dancer of a fish. A fish head and body drape were thrown over two other people with Callia in the middle. She was beaming as she explained that what delighted her most was the laughter and claps from the audience. This memory sparked her passion for years of performing as a ballerina and the purpose of *being in the middle* as a support to others on either side.

Ira Progoff, *At a Journal Workshop*, has said in his book that finding our purpose and passion can change the trajectory of our life. It was clear that this moment sparked something within Callia. We began brainstorming more about "middle moments." Not only was she the middle of a fish, but she was also the middle child (with a musically talented sister on one side and computer-wiz brother on the other). Lastly, Callia was a diplomat by nature (both within and outside the family) always finding the middle ground and looking at both sides of issues. After we found these moments, we talked about words that would fit her, such as connection and collaboration. The theme and purpose of her life emerged.

Our visit was short, but right before I dropped her off at the airport, I shared with her where I do my best writing — on the plane. During her flight, Callia wrote about these memories and more, such as the importance of listening to diverse perspectives and being inclusive even when there is pressure to exclude. She was inspired by the F. Scott Fitzgerald quote, "The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function."

Callia started her college essay by writing:

I was cast in the middle as a fish. With my arms stretched out before me, I clutched the sides of my vertical hula hoop, knowing that if I wavered, the entire fish would collapse. I checked in with the girl behind me (the tail) and the girl in front of me (the head) and counted the music. Emerging from the wings, together, we danced.



Dr. Scott F. Futch, DDS

(formerly the practice of David Pastrell)



DENTAL CARE FOR
YOUR *loved* ONES
AGED 13 & UP

GENERAL
DENTISTRY
COSMETIC
DENTISTRY
DENTAL
IMPLANTS



6120 MAE ANNE AVE. #3 📍 RENO, NV 89523
(JUST 5 MILES FROM DEL WEBB!)

775.746.1177 📞 www.futchdental.com



Callia the ballerina

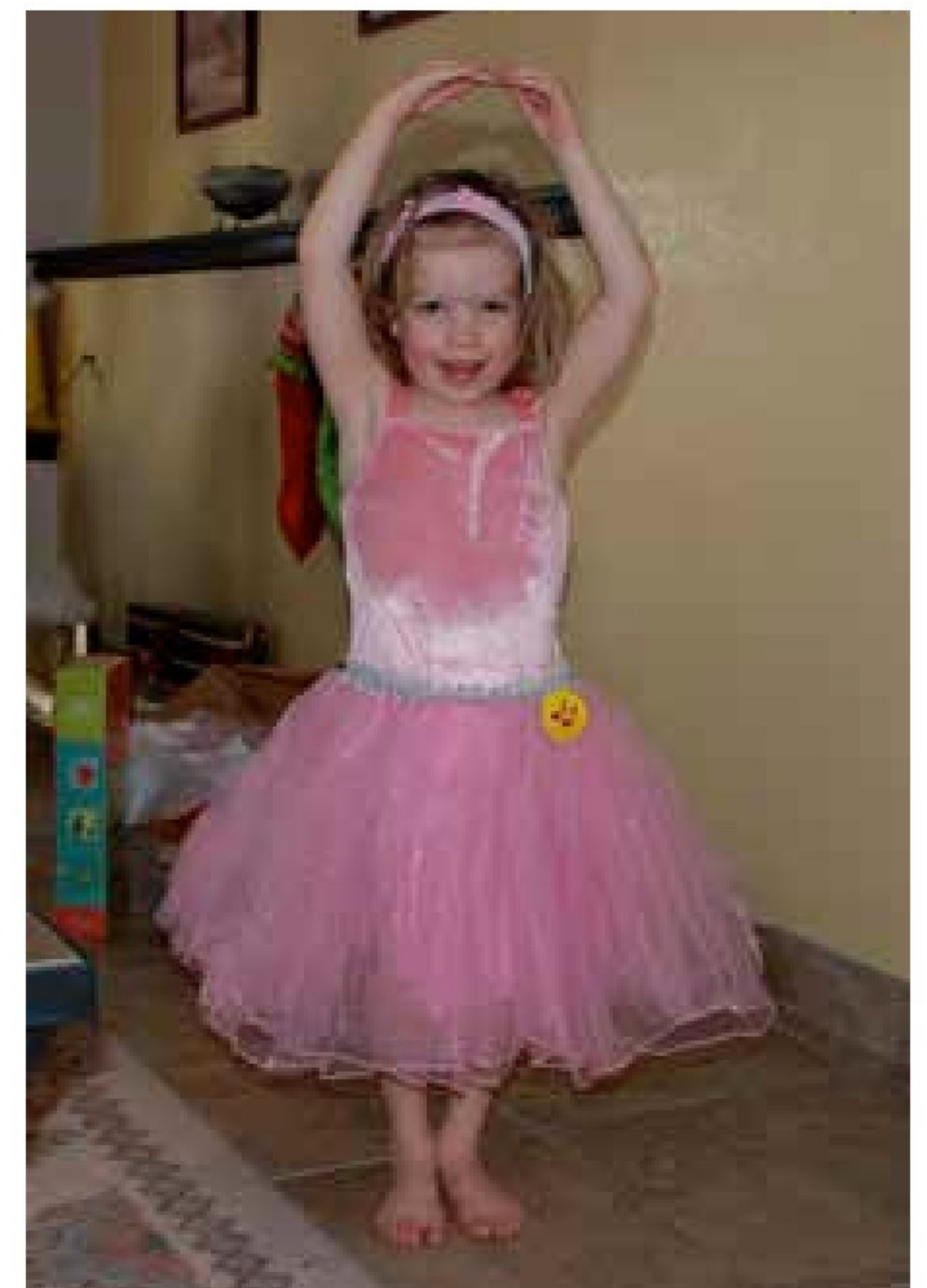


Callia dancing in the middle of a fish for a performance

Callia finished writing the entire essay by the time she landed in Columbus. She sent her writing to her English teacher as soon as she got home from the airport. She woke up to her teacher's comments: "Man, you have done some deep thinking! This is REALLY good, Callia. You say a ton about yourself as a human while also weaving in who you are as a student."

With that finished, Callia gave me a call. She told me that without visiting me and doing the steppingstones activity, she probably wouldn't have discovered the right hook for her essay. She said the brainstorming process helped her discover the theme of her life over time and identify her core values as a human being. I knew then that my legacy had left its mark.

As I reflect on this experience with her, I am aware of the love and wisdom we each share with our grandchildren. Here, I was a coach rather than a fixer for Callia. I didn't tell her what to write about, nor write the essay for her. Instead, I guided her to the moments that best represent her as a human being. In this case, I tapped into my experience as a psychologist and the methods I have seen in my research. But each of us, as grandparents, have our own unique skills and wisdom to share with our grandchildren. We serve them best by being their coach, teaching them by example, and being their biggest cheerleaders near and far. We are here to recognize their strengths and the important impact they bring to the world and us. And, if we are lucky, they find their unique path and become our teachers in reciprocal learning.



Callia as a young Ballerina

Now age 18, Callia has been named the 2022 Ohio Journalist of the Year! She will go on to compete nationally. On her latest visit, she toured Stanford where she was just accepted for her first year of college. How about that for living closer to grandma?

Here's some final food for thought. Whether you're with your loved one or on your own, take a look at the 2017 movie *Undercover Grandpa*. In this hair-raising action flick, grandpa, actor James Caan, teaches his shy grandson how to be brave. Perhaps the inspiring book *Age-ing and Sage-ing, A Profound New Vision of Growing Older* by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi will provide ideas to both share your experience and wisdom with your grandkids *and* specific ways to leave a memorable legacy. For me, I have found just the peace I needed to help complete my circle of life. How do you want to complete yours?




The Julie Knecht Group

YOUR LOCAL 55+ REAL ESTATE & RELOCATION SPECIALIST



As the exclusive Northern Nevada Partner Agent with 55places.com, I work with hundreds of clients wanting to relocate to Del Webb Sierra Canyon. If you're thinking of selling, let me connect you with the right buyer for your home!

Visit 55places.com or call me at 775-691-1956

julie@julieknecht.com | www.julieknecht.com
10795 Double R Blvd Reno