

The Courage to Move Forward

Category: Grit

written by Lynne Schwartz | January 8, 2025

My daughter and I sat on her bedroom floor, packing up her soccer gear. We both knew the time had come for her to walk away from the sport she loved. Her chronic illness had gotten the best of her, although she'd fought it as long as she could.

When Haley was 11 years old, she had what we now know was an undiagnosed concussion. It started with dizziness and progressed to frequent headaches, vertigo, nausea, and syncope. She started middle school this way, and by her sophomore year of high school was unable to attend class at all. During this time, she continued to play soccer, sometimes passing out on the field. We knew she was in trouble when she raised her hand and took a knee.

People have asked why we let her keep playing. The answer was because she loved soccer, and we didn't have the heart to take it away. So her father and I continued to drive her to practice, knowing she might not participate at all. We were tired but admired her determination to keep going. When we hinted at the idea of quitting, we could tell she wasn't ready yet, so we continued to go through the motions.

Haley and I cried that day as we put her jerseys, shin guards, and cleats in a box. Looking back, I realize the day she made the decision to quit soccer took as much courage as it had for her to continue to play through her illness. Quitting was an acknowledgement of where life had taken her, and it was somewhere she didn't want to be.

Haley has continued to show strength through adversity during the 13-plus years since her life changed one summer day. She dropped out of high school, earned her GED, got into college, graduated with her associate's degree in fashion design, won an entrepreneurial award, and started a business. There have been ups and downs, but, through it all, she has never given up. I'm proud of her for all she has accomplished, but equally proud of the hard choices she has made along the way.

True grit, I have come to realize, is sometimes reflected in our ability to keep going in spite of our circumstances, while other times it is taking the path we didn't want to choose. Either way, it's about always moving forward.

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