By Emma Caponi

“Educated”

Being educated is not something that can fit neatly into a box. Instead, education is ever-changing and uncertain.

For me, education can be found in a classroom but for my brother it can be found working with his hands. For someone who’s deaf, education might be seeing something new. A musician may find education in sound. Being educated isn’t something that can be calculated or perfected, it’s something that is unique to anyone who pursues it. Education comes from the need of “something more.”

For some, this might entail learning how to fix and repair cars; for others it might be found in a classroom being taught by a teacher. I do think a person can be forced to know something, but I think if they want to truly “learn,” they must want to know it. I think “to learn” is to open the mind. Consider this quote: “The mind, once stretched, never goes back to its original dimensions.” I like that idea. It means that knowledge changes a person. Even if someone doesn’t agree with an idea, the mere notion of the idea alters the mind causing it to never be the same.

We learn when we are challenged. Just like triceps and biceps, the brain can be strengthened. When we force ourselves to do something we’re not used to doing, our muscles will grow. When we learn something new, our brain does the same. Learning something new doesn’t always change someone’s beliefs, but more often than not it can give us a perspective that leaves us open to more. The more open our minds are, the more doors will open for us.

In the memoir Educated, Dr. Westover mentions her time reading the Bible while mulling over words that she had no idea of the meaning. She mentions that her time studying the Bible is one of most important times in her education as she had to develop patience for what she didn’t yet understand. This is the lesson that I believe allowed Dr. Westover to become as accomplished as she is.

There was a time in my life where I could not for the life of me understand math. From about fourth to eleventh grade, I would fail almost every test. In my junior year, my math teacher was
different. I warned her I was bad at math and would fail our first test. She told me we would cross that bridge if we came to it, and that if I listened in class I would be fine. I told her I always listened in my old math classes, but I still failed. She told me to trust her.

I made a choice to open my mind to what she was saying, to go to class, and believe I would be able to understand what was being taught to me. After we took our first test, I was certain I failed. However, upon getting the test back I discovered I scored a 98%. I told my mom that I couldn’t understand why I was doing better. Ms. Detorie had been teaching me all the same material as my previous math teachers, so what was different? Reading Educated made me realize that somehow Ms. Detorie taught me how to open my mind. Since then, math has become one of my favorite subjects.

There is a reason why we have more in our lives than just the necessities. We saw plants and wanted to know how they grew. We saw stars and wanted to know why they glow. To be educated is not just simply the books we read or the instincts we have. It is the desire to build upon this knowledge, even if it stretches our minds past where we’re comfortable and past the things we understand.

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