

Commencement address made by Kerbanoo D'Rozario, Regional Coordinator for Parent to Parent of NYS, New York City office on June 20, 2013

Good morning, to all
Administrators, Teachers, Staff, Parent, Caregivers, Family & Friends
Special Shout out & Congratulations to the Graduates of Q811 at QHST

Last Wednesday, I was at a Committee for Day Hab meeting, and at the end of the meal I opened a fortune cookie. It read...
"You will receive some high prize or award soon"

I had just accepted this most honorable invitation to talk to a class of graduates and that too from Q811. What better award could I have been given?

I have it etched in my memory, the day I visited Q811 Marathon parkway in 1995.

It has been an extension of Yohaans life for over 16 years, hence making it a part of our family. He had the opportunity to attend three of their sites and eventually graduated from QHST.

When I met with the first evaluation team, I was oblivious of the facts and unaware of what was being offered. Even with my years as a teacher, this was a new education. The resources were endless but to learn to understand them one had to get more than involved. I joined every group as a parent at school level, support teams and attended every meeting that I learnt about at the State or City level. I made sure I was seen & heard because this was opening doors for me to be a better advocate for my child. Involvement is the key that helped me at every step with better avenues for Yohaans and connected me to supports that I could share with families and guide them about the correct language and respect of this new world that I had stepped into.

Yohaans greatest teaching to me has been to enjoy what a person can & has achieved & to embrace it. His humor and yet serious personality have made me understand so much as we as a family have crossed over several medical hurdles.

In return, his sister has taught me to enjoy life with Yohaans like driving on an open road journey with a couple of bumps and a slight curve but the scenic view does not change.

My position as Regional Coordinator of NYC by Parents to Parent of NYS has given me a platform to be able to walk this walk with other caregivers and be able to reach out emotionally and advocate to a larger population. It gives me the good fortune to share what I have learnt to be able to make a difference in the lives of others.

No one should ever have to take this journey alone.

To the Graduates:

This is a day to look back & realize an accomplishment beyond what others reach. You are stepping out of this warm nurturing cocoon & looking for a placement into something new. Each of you visualizes a horizon and tries to reach for it. Do not let your positive attitude be ever squashed by the negativity of those you may meet, embrace what is good.

It is always difficult to step away from the known to the unknown and any school under Q811 is a comfort zone which you presume is not replaceable. With an open minded outlook get involved with what is being directed your way, voice your opinion & ask for options.

As you step out, picture it like opening a door to a space built in your imagination.

Go up to the door

Pause

Knock

Maybe knock again a little harder

You hear no response,

Turn the knob,

The door is jammed,

Gently push,

Ask for help if need be,

Now use a little force with diplomacy not to hurt yourself,

Crack the door a little open and peek,

There you are, Step in

Adapt yourself to your new surroundings, settle in.

Give it time and after trying numerous ways, if it does not suit your ideals, find another door.

You will find a space to call your own.

Time is the essence that will lead you to the best placement.

When you are settled, look back at the years that have brought you to this threshold in life. As you reflect always smile & remember those who have walked this road with you and do not forget to thank them. School is where you have built your firsts of everything, especially lifetime friendships.

I have been blessed to have watched some of you grow into the phenomenal human beings that you are. Each one of you makes life more Beautiful just by being in it and I thank you for touching mine.

Once again,

Congratulations to the Graduates of Class of 2013 from Kerbanoo D'Rozario

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