



IT'S ALL GOOD! The Trials and Tribulations of Parenting

“You will never walk again and you will never be able to father your own children.” I will never forget those words that a doctor shared with my family and me almost twenty years ago as I laid in a hospital bed, paralyzed. At the age of 15, with dreams of going to college and playing either basketball or football, I was shocked and in disbelief. My life of movement had now been brought to an abrupt stop. Actually, being able to father my own child when I got older was even more

By Scott Chesney

important to me than walking again. I always wanted a little sister and since that never happened, I dreamed of having a daughter someday. Now that day looked like it would never come, either.

On December 28, 1985, I awoke to a numb toe after a high school basketball game and within 48 hours, that numbness climbed up both legs, leaving me

paralyzed from my waist down to my toes. There was no accident, no injury and no trauma. After about 20 different tests, an MRI, a test that was very new 20 years ago, determined that there was a disturbance in my spinal cord. After exploratory surgery and a diagnosis of Foix-Alajouanine Syndrome, a.k.a a malformation of blood vessels that burst and put pressure on the spinal cord similar to a spinal stroke, I now had to entertain the thoughts of the possibility of living

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the rest of my life in a wheelchair.

Life for the next twelve years seemed to move even faster than it had before I was paralyzed. I was running, or shall I say rolling, away from myself. Just because I had a special need did not mean that life automatically was going to slow down. I did not want to deal with my disability, I did not want to feel my feelings and allow all the sadness, anger, rage, and hopelessness to surface because it was just too painful. Therefore, I escaped. I escaped by using humor, I escaped by putting a smile on my face all the time and tried convincing everyone that I was courageous and an inspiration, and I escaped by simply keeping myself busy and active ... all the time.

Then I got a wake-up call. One morning, while living in Miami, FL, I woke up sad. I wheeled over to a full-length mirror, looking directly into my own eyes, leaning forward so my nose touched the mirror while my eyes just reflected all this sadness, and asking the question, "Who am I?" Waves of tears cascaded down my face as I kept asking the question, but no answer came. The only thing I do know now about that moment was a decision had been made and an intention was launched into world. The decision was to make peace with the past and the intention was to do whatever it takes to make that happen.

Intentions are powerful, especially when one is detached from the outcome. There was a part of me, at that moment that knew life was going to get better, somehow, somehow. And sure enough, my prayer, my intention was answered. I was given the opportunity to travel around the world by a dear friend of mine, someone who has been like a second father to me for the past twenty years, and someone who knows himself so well that he understands others so well. He extended an invitation to me to travel around the world, research alternative/complimentary medicines if I was interested, and simply embark on a jour-

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ney of self-discovery. Needless to say, I was rendered speechless by this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and knew that it was something I needed to do. There was also a part of me that wondered how he knew this. Looking from the outside-in, I believed everyone would have thought that despite being paralyzed and in a wheelchair, I was living a wonderful life...great job, great relationships, great family and great friends. Since he is someone who knows himself so well, he can go beneath the surface of an individual and truly assess one's needs.

After an amazing journey of self-discovery that took me to 15 countries in 15 months, I married an incredible woman, Pratiksha. We began speaking across the country about living life to its fullest and overcoming life's challenges. This led to a second tour around the world that I would take with Pratiksha in which we would deepen our research into alternative/complimentary medicines. Before this journey began, I decided to be tested to see what the chances were at that time of being able to father my own children. Now that I was speaking and coaching people about maximizing their lives, it was time for me to fully practice what I was preaching.

The news was not very promising. As you may know, the longer a man with a spinal cord injury remains paralyzed, the more challenging it becomes for him to father his own child. Specifically, the motility of one's sperm is reduced. Another challenge, or as I began to think, another opportunity, presented itself.

My desire to have my own children became a motivating factor for exploring the unknown, taking calculated risks and living in the moment. While I knew

I would be blessed to adopt a child if that day came (something we still may do some day), I wanted to explore every opportunity, turn over every stone and see what could happen when you put the powers of belief and intention behind a dream.

After exploring over 70 alternative/complimentary forms of medicine, practicing meditation and creative visualization on a daily basis, and cultivating a belief that anything is possible, we returned home and began the whole process of creating a family. On November 17, 2002, Nia Elizabeth Chesney was born. She was the first girl born on my side of the family in 72 years.

Over two years later, Raymond Vinod Chesney was born, so we had two miracles. Our family was complete.

Sometimes I will just watch my wife and children from afar and tears of joy overcome me. Imagine if I had given up, if Pratiksha and I had given up hope. I was once told that "hope" is an acronym that stands for Hold On Possibilities Exist. Yes, possibilities are always there waiting for us if we so choose to look for them.

When I speak to audiences around the country, I am always asked, "What is your next adventure" to which I respond, "The greatest adventure of them all...parenthood!" Don't think for a moment that I am kidding either. Ever since my children have been born, I have been on a roller coaster ride, full of peaks and valleys.

My children are my greatest teachers and are teaching me so much about myself and the world in which we live. Sometimes I see them as my greatest enemies, pushing my buttons like no one else, and after a few deep breaths (and some timeouts...for them and myself!), I

regain my composure and realize that there is a message and a lesson waiting for me in this experience...again, if I so choose to see it that way.

Nia is now three years old, going on 15, and really keeps me on my toes. Sometimes I get really upset because I want to just run around with her, toss her high in the air, go hiking with her, go on amusement park rides with her, and simply do what most fathers are able to do with their children. But the truth of the matter is that Nia does not care about those things. She only knows how to love her Daddy for who he is and will simply say, "Daddy, can I sit on your lap?" Nia only knows her Daddy in a wheelchair, so there is nothing odd about it to her. Every once in a while when life gets a little busy and I am trying to get so many things done around the house, she will simply say, "Daddy, come down onto the floor and play with me!" Guess what? That puts me right back into the moment. One of the best ways to put me back into the moment is to get me out of the wheelchair...because I can't go anywhere!

What is so amazing and wonderful about children is their innocence and fearlessness. Every once in a while, she will ask me why I am in a wheelchair and why I can't walk. Rather than making something up, I always tell her the truth in words that she can understand. Why? If she has the courage and love to ask me mature questions, then she deserves mature answers.

Usually when I get done explaining my situation, she replies with a compassionate, "Oh, that's okay. I'll go and get my doctor's kit and make you better." Every once in a while she will actually kiss my legs or rub some lotion on them. She, like every child, is a healer.

Humor is also a key ingredient to healing and happiness and children are the best messengers for this as well. Just the other day, I took Nia into my bathroom at our restaurant because we both needed to go to the bathroom. The bathroom is filled to capacity except for the accessible stall

that I need to use. So once we are in the stall, Nia says, "You go first Daddy." So I proceed to prepare myself. For your information, I need to catheterize myself, so I always travel with several kits that I can use doing the course of the day. My children have seen me go to the bathroom

hundreds of times, but there are always still those innocent questions. On this day, in public, there would be no exception.

My catheter is connected to a drainage bag. Once I am finished, I merely tear open the bag and empty it into a regular

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"AT CROTCHED
MOUNTAIN I FEEL
LIKE A WINNER
BECAUSE
I AM A WINNER!"

PAUL
learner
competitor
olympian
friend

"I'M DOUBLE FAST!" says Paul. The challenges of disability don't hold him back, as Paul is always racing towards his next victory. From Special Olympics to specialized computers, there are many chances to excel at Crotched Mountain. "Paul loves to compete," says Clair, his teacher. "He uses the opportunity to make new friends."

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toilet.

Well, Nia has a fixation with watching the urine fill up in the bag and likes to hold the bag. On this day, I was trying to be as quick as possible so we could return to the rest of our family and our food, so I was holding the bag myself. In all of her innocence, Nia says in a demanding voice, "I want to hold it, Daddy!"

Please let me remind you that the bathroom is filled to capacity. Imagine being in the bathroom and hearing this. I can only imagine what everyone in there thought. I, on the other hand, starting cracking up and once hearing me, Nia did as well. Upon returning to our table in the restaurant I told Pratiksha, and she cracked up as well. You just gotta love her!

Nia never ceases to amaze me. Just the other day, I picked her up at daycare and

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while driving home she spontaneously said, "Mommy and I have brown butts and you and Ray have white butts." You see, my wife is from India, so she has a beautiful brown tone to her skin and thankfully, my daughter has inherited that gene as well.

So I replied to her laughing, "Yes honey and we are just one big happy family, right?"

"Yeahhhh!" she said with conviction.

I wish I could bottle her innocence, fearlessness, and unconditional love, qualities that all children have, and give it to all adults around the world!

Meanwhile, Ray, now 11 months old, just wants to be held and loved.

He is another child who does not know his father to be any other way than in a wheelchair. My wheelchair is like a jungle-gym for him.

He pulls himself up on it to stand, walks around it, and goes under it to play hide-and-seek. I am looking forward to my growth experiences with him as well. Together, my children are healing me on a daily basis.

They are full of so much love, wisdom, and compassion for their parents and others. We believe that the more they

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are exposed to other people with disabilities, people of all different cultures, all different religions, and of all ages, the more their love for themselves and others will grow.

It is just a matter of time before I bring my children on my new Internet radio show to let listeners know just how innocent, fearless, and loving all children are. "Maximizing Life with Scott Chesney," on VoiceAmerica, www.voice.voiceamerica.com, every Monday from 3-4 p.m. and available On Demand, would never have come to fruition had it not been for my wonderful family. All three of them challenge me, on a daily basis, to live more from my heart than my mind and how a life of simplicity is really the way to go for us.

I can't imagine a show going by where there will not be some type of mention or discussion about my children, a guest's child or children or probably

even a caller's family.

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Just the other day, when I mentioned to her that daddy was going to be on the computer, she first said that she did not want me to be downstairs doing the show (where my office is) and that she wanted me to be upstairs with the family. Then she told me that she wanted to come on the show with me and talk about bunny rabbits, dolphins and dogs.

I'm not sure how I will make a topic out of these creatures and my daughter, but will certainly be having her on the show frequently because at the very least, she will put a smile on listeners' faces.

This entire journey into parenting, thus far, can best be compared to the ocean. There are days when the ocean is so peaceful, calming and you simply wish you could spend all day in the water or gazing at it.

There are other times, when the ocean seems to be very angry and is just tossing everything out of its way during a storm. Whatever the situation is, though, the tide will still come in and the tide will still go out. It's all good.

The same holds true for us as parents. Whatever trials and tribulations evolve during the course of every given day, it's all good. Why? Because there is an opportunity to grow and learn more about ourselves in every moment and as parents, we are all blessed to have many of the moments filled with life's greatest teachers, children.

Enjoy the journey! 



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