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Beautiful
PURPOSE

Purpose Story

Meet Soledad Tanner:

HER LIFE LESSON "HAPPINESS IS A DECISION I MAKE"

I grew up in Ecuador in a time when gender differences between men and women were very pronounced. Since childhood, I have seen that men and women were treated differently and acted differently and that women tended to stay quiet to be considered "nice girls." In other words, for a woman to be outspoken, she wouldn't be a "nice girl," but I knew that was no way to live.

During high school I was on a pre-medicine track, but when it came to applying for college, I decided to switch to business and engineering. All the applicants for each major had to take one introductory 3 months course, and only the top scoring students got to continue studying on that track. Without having taken the preparatory classes, I was starting out at a disadvantage.



But, out of 1,200 applicants, I was one of only 120 who made the cut. That was only the first part of the battle. Then, I had to figure out how to pay for university, because they are private in Ecuador, and there was no financial aid. I didn't have a job, so I had to find one. Over there, most of the jobs were gotten by word-of-mouth.

My mother is from Ecuador, but my father was Ecuadorian with Swiss roots, and we would attend events at the Swiss Consulate.

I was at an event there, and I gathered the courage to ask the Consul General for a job. I was only 17 years old. It paid off, and I got my first job as the Assistant to the Swiss consulate. I was a full-time student, employee, and party girl. By my third year of college, I was the Operation Manager of a Financial Institution and a model college student. But, my life was turned upside down. My father died. I lost the person whose opinion I valued most.

At that time, my older brother was already in Switzerland and my younger brother was finishing high school. I was the only person in my family that was working.

My salary was good for a single student living at home, but it wasn't enough for a breadwinner in a family. I once again found my voice and spoke with the President of the Financial Institution and applied for a Treasury Manager job with them. I offered to do both jobs for half the value of the second position, which meant I would do double the work for 3/4 what it should cost them. This boost of income gave my family time to find jobs to support themselves.

I also learned a powerful lesson about paying it forward. I went to one of my previous managers and asked for a job for my brother, and the manager said, "I don't have a job for your brother, but I have something better."

He told me that he was a young boy living in Argentina when his father died, and his father's boss saw the hardship that fell onto the family and paid for his college education.

"I tried to pay him back later, but he told me to pay it forward and help someone else instead. I have been waiting my whole life for that person to come along, and here you are." He paid a full year of tuition for my brother to attend college, which was a big relief to my family because he wouldn't have to delay his education as we sorted out our finances.

"I also learned a powerful lesson about paying it forward."

That generosity was especially well-timed because my faith in humanity was being tested when I had to go to the banks and take care of the legal aspects of my father's death. I was only 20 years old and having to talk to lawyers and deal with contracts my father had signed, and the only way they could hear me was for me to speak in equal terms. I wanted to leave my father's name clean, so I found the fire within me to stand up for him and protect the estate. Since then, I respectfully, eloquently speak my mind.

My university classmates saw my struggle and collected 100 signatures in a petition to the Dean asking for a scholarship for me. The university didn't give scholarships, so this would be the first one, ever. They granted me one, but it wasn't charity. It was because of my good grades, that my father was an alumnus of the school, and that they didn't want my hardships to stop me from my path, which was heading toward success. As a way of saying thanks, we donated all my father's professional books to the university's library.

After I finished my engineering/business degree, I wanted a new life and the opportunity to further my education. Such a life awaited me in the USA. I thought, "This is my life, and I'm going to do what makes me happy because when you just do what makes other people happy, you're not fulfilled. Happiness is a decision I make." This mindset helps me see clearly what's important and not important.

This is my powerful soul engine. I grew into a determined, powerful woman. If you really want to do something, you have to put your voice to your dream. I arrived in Houston with very little idea of how the university system works here. I had thought you just paid for and attended university, so I was disappointed to find out that there was an application process, and I didn't have any letters of recommendation. I took a day and looked at all the universities in Houston, and I really liked St. Thomas. So, I went to the admissions office. It was July, and I wanted to start in August. I gathered my courage and asked the receptionist, "Where do I register?" I was told to apply and wait a semester, and I said, "I want to start now." "That's not how it works. You have to have GMAT and TOEFL scores." I persisted, and finally, she realized I wasn't going to leave. So, she told me to fill out the form, and if someone dropped out of admissions, she would submit my request to the board. A spot opened up, so they gave me conditional admittance and three months to finish those admissions tests. I had studied the English language, but never studied other subjects in English, so I began by taking only one class the first semester. I had to read with the dictionary beside me and learned the credit hours and grading system because I didn't know what a GPA was at first. I had also never seen multiple choice exams and didn't know how to take them at first. But, I kept learning, and after four years, I graduated with my MBA in International Business.

Life is a set of miracles that happen if you continue to walk in the direction of your higher self. You've got to have faith and know that a miracle would happen somehow. We are all angels for each other at different times. I love people who come into my life and listen to them with sensitivity because I know that at any time I would need to be that angel for someone, like all the people who helped me in my times of need. Nowhere did I see this more clearly than on one of my jobs with DHL that took me to India. That place overpowered my senses. It's the opposite side of the planet from Ecuador, but it was also upside down from the culture I had known. That attracted me because I saw that there were other paradigms for living a balanced, happy life. I saw new avenues for thinking and experiencing, and I got to explore them. For instance, eating with your hands. I wouldn't have ever thought to eat without a fork. I felt very developed because the French invented the fork and knife, but the Indians say, "Poor Westerners, who have lost the 6th sense of feeling the food." It's a more complete experience of eating.





The religious diversity and tolerance were also eye-opening. There were Muslims, Buddhists, Hindu, Sikhs, and Christians living in harmony and respecting each other's sacred spaces and practices. I had the privilege to go into Mosques, the Golden Temple of the Sikhs, and Hindu temples. All the spaces were beautiful, energetic, and respectful. I was off-put by the Hindu animal gods at first, but I saw the faith and devotion of the people, so I investigated. I now see the goodness in each of the religions. I also got to see the ceremonies of the Himalayan Ganges River in Varanasi, the oldest city in India, and the experience was incredible. There's a ritual that celebrates the female energy and respects the Ganges river for nourishing the area and supporting the crops. This ceremony includes cremation of those who died, and then the ashes are sprinkled in the Ganges to return their souls to the mother source and be carried into the next life.

When I went to Varanasi, I took a boat tour on the Ganges and found peace with my father's death. I participated in another ritual they have for souls whose ashes are not there to be put into the river. They place a flower boat with an offering into the Ganges for those other departed souls, and I performed this ritual for my father. This opened a big window inside my heart, and I try to look at the soul of each person that I meet, not just their human shells. When I speak, I choose words from my heart and trust my voice, because my voice is divine self-expression born from the love I felt when I brought my father's soul to the restorative power of the Ganges River.

And now, as an entrepreneur, I started my financial services business because I know and that others need my knowledge and experience. It's also important to me to empower the people around me and impact their lives, as well as serving my clients. My business is a vehicle for my truth about how education leads to knowledge and experience, which can open you up to lead a life of adventure and growth. Particularly, for me, this is about the financial sector and how when we're educated about how our money works, we can make better business decisions about how to grow it. With a strong voice, I demand respect, and I use that power to pay it forward and help others who have big dreams and need angels to help them pave the way.

What does purpose mean to you?

I speak with gravity in my voice, so that I am heard. I have found my voice through knowledge and experience, which are the foundations of my confidence. As I exercise my ability to speak my truth, I get more comfortable to do it and not stay quiet when I know something is wrong, or I have help that someone needs—for me, this is primarily in terms of business and finance. No one's going to suddenly knock on my door and tell me I have the right to speak. I speak from my soul, and I give myself that permission. My purpose is to associate with and support strong women so we can all rise together and discover our highest selves and do the most good.



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