

Dayonni

WR 13300

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### Basketball Camp

It was the summer before my senior year in high school, and I was ready to relax. Junior year was extremely stressful and I looked forward to a summer of serenity. I planned to hang out with my best friend, Teresa, relax at the poolside, and workout at Planet Fitness. One night my basketball coach, Coach Steve, called to ask me if I wanted to volunteer at his summer basketball camp. The four-week basketball camp would be for children between the ages of three and thirteen-years-old. He informed me that I would be one of the five coaches, including him, at the camp. It would be my job to help the children with different drills and workouts, as well as teach them new basketball skills. Although I was hesitant, I could not disappoint my coach; so, I reluctantly agreed. After I got off the phone, I knew my summer plans were officially ruined. I dreaded the idea of spending my summer in a hot gym rather than at the poolside. However, after the first week of camp, I was glad that I had decided to volunteer. All of the children were amazing and became a special part of my life. Volunteering at basketball camp allowed me to build the children's self-confidence. I was able to encourage and inspire the children while, simultaneously, they inspired me. Deciding to volunteer at basketball camp was a great decision.

Basketball camp allowed me to encourage the children. After each day at basketball camp, I went home knowing I had encouraged a child to reach his or her full potential. Specifically, on the first day of camp I met an eight-year-old boy named Reggie. It was lunchtime, and everyone had begun to walk out of the gym to the cafeteria, except Reggie. I noticed that he was

attempting to dribble the ball between his legs, which was the drill everyone had just practiced before lunch. Just as I began to walk over to him, Reggie threw the ball across the court after yelling, “I hate basketball!” I grabbed a nearby basketball and walked over to him. I handed the ball to him and said, “Here, try again.” He hesitated before grabbing the ball. He dribbled the ball once on his left side before attempting to dribble it through his legs. However, the ball instantly hit his leg which caused him to be overwhelmed with frustration again. I grabbed it and dribbled between my legs. Then I said, “I had to practice too before I could do that.” A wave of reassurance drifted across his face and he asked, “Can you show me?” I smiled and said, “Of course I will.” I slowly dribbled the basketball through my legs to emphasize the technique. We practiced that day and the next day during every break until he mastered the new skill. On the morning of the third day, Reggie excitedly ran over to me as I walked into the gym. He cried, “Look Coach Onni! Look!” Then he spread his legs wide, like we had practiced, and dribbled the ball through his legs. I began to laugh and clap with excitement as I hugged him. He looked up smiling at me and said, “Thanks Coach Onni.” At that moment, a feeling of triumph rushed over me because I realized that encouraging Reggie and the other children to excel at a new basketball skill was more rewarding than anything else I would have done that summer.

In addition to being able to encourage the children, I realized that every time I challenged a child to try a new activity that he did not believe he could achieve, then, once he succeeded, his self-confidence increased. For example, during the second week of camp, I met a six-year-old girl named Alexa. Coach Steve had just finished splitting the children into small teams of seven, and Alexa was on my team. She caught my attention because all the children, except a young girl, were jumping up and down with excitement. The young girl was standing to the side with her head down and her hands folded behind her back. I walked up to her and said, “Hi, what’s

your name?” The little girl, with her head still down, replied softly, “Alexa.” I asked her if she was ready to play in the game, and she finally looked up with tears in her eyes and said, “I can’t. I don’t know how.” During basketball camp, Coach Steve created a motto for each day, and the motto for the previous day was “*Can’t* does not exist in the gym.” I hugged Alexa and reminded her that she could do anything she put her mind to, because *can’t* does not exist in the gym. I told her that I believed in her, and whenever she felt too uncomfortable, I would let her come out of the game. She smiled, but I could still see the fear in her eyes. However, as the game progressed, I saw her slowly begin to relax. By halftime, Alexa was running and laughing on the court with the other children. Shortly after halftime, she stole the ball from the other team and passed it to Brittney (who would later become her best friend during the camp) who then scored the basket for two points. After that game, I noticed Alexa’s demeanor changed. She began to talk and play with the other children when before she always kept to herself. In fact, Alexa began to rush to the front of the line or volunteer to demonstrate a drill because she had more self-confidence. Because of my great decision to volunteer at basketball camp, I was able to help Alexa and the other children believe in themselves and build their self-confidence.

Furthermore, the mutual inspiration that I experienced at basketball camp had the greatest impact on my life. I realized that I was inspiring the children to pursue basketball while, simultaneously, they were inspiring me. For instance, on the last day of camp the coaches scrimmaged against the twelve and thirteen-year-olds. It was entertaining, because whenever the other coaches or I would make a shot, the younger children would cheer with excitement and astonishment. At the end of the game, a six-year-old girl named Laila came up to me with her mother. My initial thought was that Laila lost her basketball or lunch box, but her mother asked, “Are you Coach Onni?” I replied, “Yes,” and she said, “Laila wants to tell you something.” Laila

was smiling up at me when she said, “I want to be like you when I grow up.” Suddenly, my heart began to pound so hard that I could hear my own heartbeat, and my eyes began to fill with tears. I grabbed and hugged Laila and said, “That is so sweet, thank you, Laila.” At that moment I realized that I was Laila’s role model, but, in that same moment, I realized I wanted to be someone worthy of being a role model for children like Laila. Laila’s touching remark left me inspired to become a better person. I may have inspired Laila to pursue her career in basketball, but she inspired me to become a better young lady. I decided I wanted to build my character by becoming less selfish and more compassionate. This mutual inspiration allowed me to see my personal character flaws which motivated me to improve them. Younger children were always watching my actions; therefore, I want to set a better example by becoming a better person. Although I inspired the children, they concurrently inspired me to become a better young lady.

In retrospect, deciding to volunteer at my coach’s basketball camp that summer was the wisest decision I have made thus far. My summer would not have been as productive or rewarding if I had turned down Coach Steve’s offer to volunteer at his summer camp. The summer basketball camp allowed me to meet and bond with a lot of great children. Every time I encouraged a child, I found that I was encouraged as well. Whether it was encouraging Reggie to practice dribbling the basketball between his legs or building Alexa’s self-confidence, I was always impacted in a different way. When Laila told me she wanted to be like me, I was motivated to become a better person. Still today, I will be at a grocery store and hear, “Hi, Coach Onni.” I would then turn around and see one of the children from basketball camp with a smile on his or her face. Every time my heart melts, and I smile back and give them a hug. Each time I see one of the children from basketball camp, I am reminded of the person I strive to become. I

have worked and will continue to work at being more virtuous and altruistic. Meeting and bonding with great children, such as Reggie, Laila, and Alexa, are the roots of my ambitions in life. I will not disappoint them, because I will do my best to come close to becoming the young lady they *should* admire.