

In Giving I Connect w/ Others by Isabelle Allent

I have lived with passion and in a hurry, trying to accomplish too many things. I never had time to think about my beliefs until my 28 year old daughter Paula fell ill. She was in a coma for a year, and I took care of her at home until she died in my arms in December of 1992.

During that year of agony and the following year of my grieving, everything stopped for me. There was nothing to do – just cry & remember. However, that year also gave me an opportunity to reflect upon my journey and the principles that hold me together. I discovered that there is consistency in my beliefs, my writing, and the way I lead my life. I have not changed; I am still the same girl I was 50 years ago, and the same young woman I was in the 70's.

I still lust for life, I am still ferociously independent, I still crave justice, and I fall madly in love easily.

Paralyzed and silent in her bed, my daughter Paula taught me a lesson that is now my mantra: You only have what you give. It's by spending yourself that you become rich.

Paula led a life of service. She worked as a volunteer helping women and children, 8 hours a day, 6 days a week. She never had any money, but she needed very little. When she died she had nothing and she needed nothing. During her illness I had to let go of everything: her laughter, her voice, her grace, her beauty, her company and finally, her spirit. When she died I thought I had lost everything. Bu then I realized I still had the love I had given her. I don't even know if she was able to receive that love. She could not respond in any way, her eyes were somber pools

that reflected no light. But I was full of love, and that love keeps growing and multiplying and giving fruit.

The pain of losing my child was cleansing experience. I had to throw overboard all excess baggage and keep only what is essential. Because of Paula, I don't cling to anything anymore. Now I like to give much more than to receive. I am happier when I love than when I am loved. I adore my husband, my son, my grandchildren, my mother, my dog and frankly I don't know if they even like me. But who cares? Loving them is my joy.

Give, give, give – what is the point of having experiences, knowledge, or talent if I don't give it away? Of having stories if I don't tell them to others? Of having wealth if I don't share it? I don't intend to be cremated with any of it! It is in giving that I connect with others, with the world and with the divine.

It is in giving that I feel the spirit of my daughter inside me, like a soft presence.