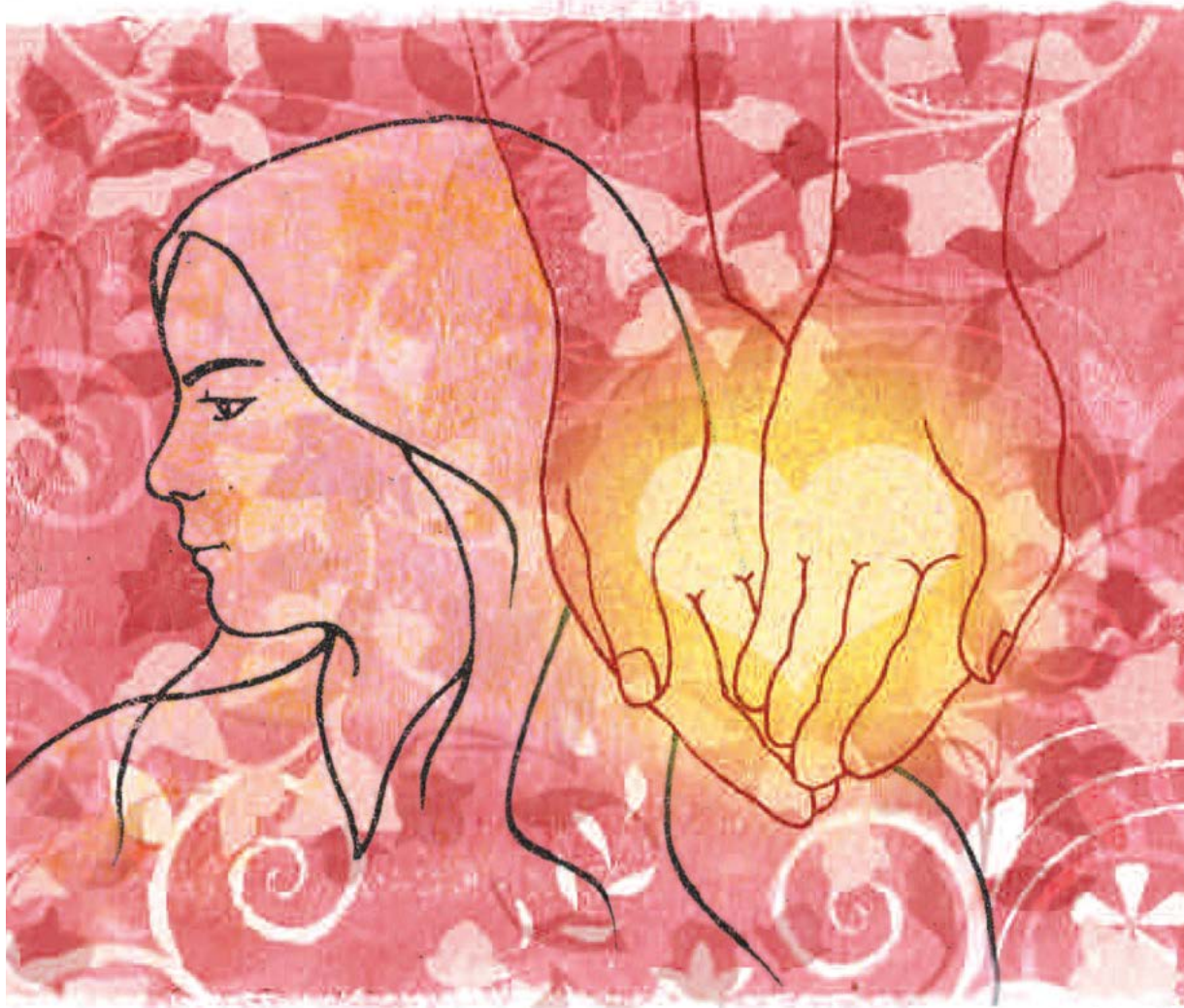


Did you ever know that you're my hero?



(Sharon Kilday/TNS)

• BATYA L. LUDMAN

Last week my last remaining aunt – my mother's only sibling – died, exactly one week before my mother's 25th *yahrzeit*.

One marks the time after a loss first in days, then weeks, months and finally years. Years turn into milestones such as five, 10, 18, 25. I remind my clients that we never really “get over” a loss, we simply move on in spite of it. We move on, we build and rebuild our lives and, hopefully, find ways of putting meaning into our own life, carrying the memory and values of our loved ones.

Perhaps it was coincidental that I found myself humming along with the radio to “Wind beneath my wings,” a song about a hero, and was suddenly reminded of my mother. While fortunate to have been able to tell her how much I loved her, even though she died so young, it was only as I became a mom myself and then again as a “savtie” that I truly began to appreciate just how amazing a woman she was – with uncorrectable hearing loss resulting from meningitis at age 17. I have greater appreciation than ever for the way she overcame the many steep obstacles in her day-to-day life.

A hero is a person admired for “courage, outstanding

achievements or noble qualities.” Think about the heroes in your life. What traits make them feel heroic to you? How can you help your children to discover the heroes in their lives? Whether a mentor in school or a youth movement, someone in the community, an important figure or even a biblical character, there are many people we can admire. We just have to take notice.

Here are some of the values the heroes in my life possess. Hopefully this list can enable you and your children to discover yours.

1. My heroes are brave. In the face of difficult challenges, they put up a good front, look at all possibilities and give up gracefully when left with no other choice. They are not afraid.

2. My heroes are compassionate, warm and caring. They are there for others, present in the moment, yet not at all intrusive.

3. My heroes are giving. They put others before their own personal needs and comfort.

4. My heroes are forgiving. Recognizing their own imperfections, they willingly accept mine, while striving to bring out the best in me and help teach me how to grow into a better person. They remind me to embrace challenges and teach me that mistakes provide

valuable learning experiences.

5. My heroes are nurturing and loving. They model patience and understanding and love with all their heart. They act as gentle guides – knowing the balance between leading me when necessary and letting me take the lead when possible.

6. My heroes take initiative. They are not afraid to be the first. They look failure in the eye, pick themselves up when they fall and start all over again with determination if need be.

7. My heroes give freely of themselves – time and energy, putting their heart and soul into everything they do.

8. My heroes make me feel safe and secure. They accept and appreciate me for who I am and give me confidence and support. They make me feel understood and treat me with respect.

9. My heroes are very real. Whether in a serious discussion or when it's time to have fun, they can laugh and cry, always genuine and unassuming. They recognize the impact of every word.

10. My heroes know how to make people feel loved and special and make a huge difference in everyone's lives.

As I review my list, I realize that I am blessed to have so many heroes.

For example, I am fortunate to be able to spend time with a wonderful man who is 90 years young. I feel we never have enough time to spend together; I could listen to his amazing stories for hours. I value his opinion and treasure his wisdom. He fears nothing, makes every moment of his life count and is completely unassuming about all the good he has done for others. Modest, warm, sweet and trustworthy, he makes time to listen like few do in this fast-paced I-want-it-now world. He knows what's important in life, and I am grateful that he generously lets me be a part of his life. My friend Avi is a true hero of mine.

In the past few months I have become a member of an amazing group of first responders. Our Trauma and Crisis Response Unit of United Hatzalah, one of the newest additions to emergency medical response in Israel, is something I had imagined for a long time. While we Israelis know how to look after our wounded, now we finally have a response for dealing with psychological trauma in real time, during a crisis.

Our trained team responds to such tragic events as terrorist attacks, crib deaths, motor-vehicle accidents and suicide attempts, for example, within minutes. These volunteers selflessly give of their time, leaving behind families or work to walk into emotionally difficult situations, never knowing what they will find – all to help lessen the trauma of a catastrophic event. They do it willingly and energetically, with love, dedication, skill and training that every Israeli should feel proud of. These people are the first team worldwide, as far as I know, to respond immediately to provide psychological and emotional first aid, in the face of both big and small disasters. These people, each and every one of them, are genuine heroes.

Now it is your turn. Look for the many heroes in your life and let them know how much you appreciate all that they do. ■

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