

Regarding Henry – A Movie About Disability, Loss, and Love

Here's a movie you won't want to miss. Join me on Henry's journey.

Henry was a wildly successful attorney and a significantly unsuccessful husband and father. One day, on his way home from work, a car accident altered his life. The resulting brain damage left him unable to move much of his body and without the ability to speak with clarity. Gone was his confident flair, eloquent communication, and fluid movement.

Some months later Henry's former law firm colleagues invited him and his wife to an office party. It was a perfunctory invitation – just to demonstrate their appropriate response to a “damaged man.” At one point in the party, thinking Henry was too far away to hear them, one former colleague commented to another “He was so brilliant ...and now he's an imbecile.” Henry heard those words and saw the phony smiles. He stood there quietly, listening as his former colleagues focused so intently on his obvious disability that they missed seeing the real Henry standing there in their midst.

Before his brain injury, Henry had been physically and verbally skilled. Now both skills remained severely damaged. The new Henry couldn't move fluidly. His speech remained difficult to understand. Henry's disability had indeed changed his life, but his apparent losses were triggering personal change more valuable than any physical improvement could bring.

During his arduous, struggle to rehabilitate his body, a compassionate and wise physical therapist modeled for Henry two truths Henry had never considered. From the therapist, Henry learned that his disability didn't diminish his value. He also learned that relationships are far more precious than success or knowledge or skill.

Losses and Gains

Though he'd suffered many losses, Henry gained far more. He'd known how to perform for others; he gained the ability to *notice* others. He'd known how to win; he gained the ability to *care*. Henry had known how to be smart and capable and right; he now was learning learned how to *love*. His family, once relationally starved, became relationally rich.

The true Henry had a good heart which had suffered from years of neglect. His vocational tunnel vision had hidden – even from himself – the awareness of what brings meaning and significance to our lives. Had Henry's disability damaged him? In one sense, yes. But in a deeper sense, Henry had not been damaged; Henry had been set free.

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