

Empathy Museum

"Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference, that is, the capacity to place oneself in another's position."
– from Wikipedia.

On August 31 I received the photo below in an email from our friend Alice Saltonstall of her daughter, alumna Safira Amsili, taken recently in Denver. When I received the photo, I was immediately intrigued and wanted to find out what the Empathy Museum was. And what did "A Mile in My Shoes" refer to in the photo?

Here's what I learned from their website: Empathymuseum.com. "The Empathy Museum is a series of free participatory traveling art projects dedicated to helping people look at the world through other people's eyes. With a focus on storytelling and dialogue, the travelling museum explores how empathy can not only transform our personal

relationships, but also help tackle global challenges such as prejudice, conflict and inequality All of their projects are travelling pop-ups. They've been across the UK and to Belgium, Ireland, the USA, Australia, Brazil and Siberia."

"A Mile in My Shoes is a shoe shop where visitors are invited to walk a mile in someone else's shoes – literally. Housed in a giant shoebox, this roaming exhibit holds a diverse collection of shoes and audio stories from the shoes' owners that explore our shared humanity. The stories cover different aspects of life, from loss and grief to hope and love and take the visitor on an empathetic as well as a physical journey. This exhibit gives people a chance to step out of their own perspective and experience the world through another person's eyes."

I found out that the museum is currently in Denver, literally right next door to where my sister Andrea works!

(big coincidence). So, I asked my sister to go and she reported: "I was given a pair of sneakers that belonged to a woman. She is the head nurse at an ICU Burn Unit. She went through the travails of a typical day, the heartbreaks and the frustrations. She went into great detail and I really felt like I got to know a part of this woman. It was a good experience for me that made me feel empathetic towards nurses."

I hope to have the chance to experience the empathy museum's *A Mile in My Shoes* exhibit one day. You can listen to some of the recorded stories of people from around the world whose shoes have been used at various locations of the exhibit on the YouTube channel of the Empathy Museum. I do believe that the more we incorporate empathy into our daily lives, the better life will be for all of us.

- Janice Nigro, Director, Vitamin L



Safira Amsili, Vitamin L Alumna



The shoes of Kristina Canary, nurse



Photo from Empathymuseum.com



Some children are fortunate to grow up being encouraged to express themselves, while some grow up having their self-expression discouraged or even crushed by people at school, family, or others. Sadly, there are plenty of children and adults who do not feel safe to be themselves and express their thoughts, their beliefs, and sometimes their sexual orientation or gender identity. This song written by Jan Nigro encourages freedom of self-expression for everyone.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

by Jan Nigro ©1991 Janimation Music BMI

If you've got a song, sing every note,
 Don't let someone make you keep it in your throat!
 If you've got a dance, go on and move,
 Don't let someone tell you you're not in the groove!
 If someone's got a notion to squash your emotion,
 You've still gotta let it shine through...
 Don't disappear for someone else,

CHORUS:

Express yourself! - your smile, your voice,
 Express yourself! - your gifts, your dreams,
 Express yourself! - your hurts, your joys,
 Don't disappear for someone else, express yourself!

The thoughts in your head, feel free to share,
 Show the world you've got some good ideas in there.
 If something's unfair, maybe it's time,
 To do the world a favor and speak your mind!
 Someone may be thinking that they'll have you shrinking
 To less than what you really could be...
 Don't disappear for someone else,

CHORUS

Like breathing the air, it's your natural right,
 To be who you are, to shine your light,
 If discouragement comes around,
 You can rise, rise, rise above it,
 No one can keep you down!

If you've got a dream you want to make real,
 Don't let someone sway you from the way you feel,
 And if you believe, deep in your heart,
 No one else's words will tear your dream apart!
 If folks try to break you in hopes they can make you
 Quit before you've even begun...
 Don't disappear for someone else,

CHORUS



Cooking as a Creative, Expressive Art

Vitamin L alum Tyler Kord is a super creative, innovative chef, restaurant owner and author living and working in New York City with his wife Katherine and his toddler Barbara. He is the chef and co-owner of the No. 7 Restaurant group. His first restaurant opened in September 2008, right as our country was going into a recession. Though this was a risky time to open a new business, Tyler's No. 7 restaurant in Fort Green Brooklyn received critical acclaim and was named one of the top 10 new restaurants in the country that year by Bon Appétit Magazine.

Tyler is known for his imaginative recipes and his unexpected and unconventional combinations of ingredients. Tyler graduated from Oberlin College with a BA in English before attending the French Culinary Institute. He's authored 3 cookbooks: His first, titled *Broccoli*,

includes his favorite thing that he has ever invented: double decker broccoli tacos, which Tyler calls "the most delicious thing I have ever made and by far the bestseller at our restaurant." Next came *A Super Upsetting Cookbook About Sandwiches*, which was well received for its unique recipes and humor. The New York Times said that Tyler might be "the Willy Wonka of submarine sandwiches," but he prefers "Sandwich Batman."

Tyler's restaurants feature more than just his sandwich creations. His new cookbook, *Dynamite Chicken, 60 Never-Boring Recipes for Your Favorite Bird* is coming out on Oct 08, 2019 and it will delight readers who enjoy Tyler's humorous writing and creative cooking.

If you want an entertaining break from the daily news, you can access articles online that Tyler has written for Bon Appétit, ("My Apartment Always Smells

Like Chicken Soup from the Restaurant Across the Street ...and I never want that to go away," or "The Absolute Optimal Sandwich to Eat While Driving," or "Where to Eat in Montreal in the Depths of Winter." You can also find articles by Tyler online in Mens' Health such as "What Happens When a Chef Tries to Cook for His Kid - I own a restaurant. My daughter is unimpressed by my cooking. That can be hard to swallow." You can even find his writing online in Popular Mechanics: "Cooking (and Shrinking) the Modern Combat Ration."

And of course, if you are in New York City and would like to sample some of Tyler's creations, you can at No. 7 Restaurant in Brooklyn or No. 7 Sub in Manhattan. Lots of choices, lots of creativity in cooking!

- Janice Nigro, who enjoyed one of Tyler's creative broccoli sandwiches.

From Alum Tyler Kord...

As a kid I always thought that the emphasis people put on self-expression was frankly a little weird. And Jan's song "Express Yourself" was a constant reminder in my head that I could, and for some reason should, express myself. It's not that I was opposed to expressing myself, I just really didn't understand what was so important about dancing simply because I felt like dancing. And who wanted to stop me from dancing anyway? I mean the song says, "Like breathing the air, it's your natural right/ To be who you are, to shine your light," and I would sing it on stage in front of a bunch of kids at a concert, surrounded by my friends with our parents cheering us on and I really couldn't imagine why anyone in life would ever feel like they couldn't express themselves.

And then I went to high school where I was in a rock band, and college where I was in a different rock band, and then culinary school where I learned to be a rock star in the kitchen before opening a restaurant and ultimately writing a cookbook, and throughout it all I just took it for granted that I could just express myself whenever I wanted and anybody would listen to or eat or read whatever I put in front of them and that nobody could slow me down. And it wasn't until five minutes ago when I sat down to write this that I wondered how different everything may have turned out if I hadn't been so supported by the Vitamin L community and encouraged at such a young age to express myself.

And I get it now as an adult; some kids are just trying to figure out how to survive in this world, much less being given the opportunity to be in a band with Jan Nigro and have a bunch of parents and friends literally putting you on stage with a microphone and letting you sing your little heart out. It was that incredibly fortunate experience and others like it which gave me the confidence to create things and find so much satisfaction in doing so. And now that I have a daughter of my own, I'm sure that she will find it just as bewildering when I put a ton of emphasis on self-expression, and hopefully she will find as much joy as it has brought me.

All that said, I really expressed myself in that cookbook and despite my association with Vitamin L, know that it is not for kids and it may not even be for many of the parents reading this either. Sorry guys, but you told me not to disappear for someone else and it turns out I use a lot of inappropriate language to express myself!



Tyler circa 1991 with Vitamin L



Tyler Kord - Chef, Writer, and Vitamin L alum now



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*I loved their
songs and how the songs
teach you respect.
I learned a lot
from Vitamin L.
Sincerely,
Luke*

For concert schedule and more info: www.vitaminL.org

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