

### Heart of the Matter

by Paul Young

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I live with my wife Marilyn and my brother Raymond in Sidney, Nova Scotia. For those of you who like to study disabilities, I was born with cerebral palsy. I am a specimen to be studied. I have been labeled with developmental disabilities, and don't worry Peter; I am not using the "R" word. I attended special education classes, and attended a sheltered workshop for 12 years. I did everything that people do in sheltered workshops. I felt alone, different and that was where I belonged.

Two big things happened in my life. The first big thing, is that I got out of what I call "the cocoon of impossibility", where people in that cocoon are told that you can't do anything, those around you know you can't do anything and you feel you can't do anything. I met a radio announcer. His name was Jay. He encouraged me to get a job in radio. I got a job in private radio and then I met a man named Walter, who encouraged me and helped me to become an audio technician. I got a job a CBC Radio in my hometown, Sydney.

I bought a home, got married, learned how to drive a car, got involved with the disability rights movement and I guess you could call me a disability rights "nut." But I just didn't talk about rights, I talked about responsibility.

I became President of People First of Canada; I am past chair of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities. I thought I had found my real place from the "cocoon" to valued roles.

The second big thing that happened in my life, was when I was President of People First of Canada, I was having trouble figuring out what was doing, how was doing it and how I was reacting to things. Peter Park, whom some of you know, suggested that I take SRV training and that is when I discovered the "wounds" and I that I was devalued. I felt sad, angry but really I had something to identify my actions, too.

SRV has helped me discover my intellect so that now the people I look up to, I now look across to. SRV helped me know that the wounds were not my fault. I made me appreciate the people who have helped me in my life, like Jay and Walter. People said I could not learn but SRV has helped me know that I can learn. But something more important, SRV had helped me know that I can teach. I am a teacher. I help teach SRV. Devalued people are stuck in that "cocoon of impossibility" and they will never get out. I am fortunate with my accomplishments. I am fortunate to have found SRV. SRV should be taught not just to service providers, but all people. I am fortunate for knowing you, my friends, and my colleagues in SRV.

I am frustrated because I was trying to think of an ending all day. I wanted to say something really clever, but nothing came to me. I close with this remark. If we teach SRV it may be that some other fortunate people with my history will break out of that "cocoon of impossibility."

**Submitted by Paul Young**



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