



M.W. Story 7

May 7, 2017

Written for:

Cindy Kucharski

Written by:

Melissa Johnson



The Art of Hospitality

What does love look like, feel like, sound like? At the age of 32, I can gratefully say that I am well acquainted with the unconditional embrace of love. Love looks like my mom's kind eyes that always see the best in me, it feels like her warm embrace that makes me feel like I am coming home, and it sounds like her tender voice, so keyed into my words and the emotion behind my words.

Though I am not yet a mother myself, I want to thank my mom for teaching me to love well. One of the most remarkable ways my mom has modeled love is the way she practices hospitality. I used to think that hospitality was an empty concept that simply meant that you invited people over, cleaned the house, made the table look nice, and cooked something fancy.

Thankfully, the concept of hospitality has become more profound in recent years. I have begun to see that true hospitality is the gift of welcoming others into a space where they feel loved, special, and known, no matter who they are or where they're at; where their best, true self is beckoned forth. As I have assimilated this new view of hospitality, I now look over the years of dinner parties at my parents' house, the afternoon chats at the kitchen table, and mid-morning coffee dates and see the distinctive mark of love. I see my mom preparing food and a warm, inviting space for others that they



might feel understood, feel loved. I see that all of the time my mom spent filling the house with the scent of fresh baked cookies on the first day of school or looking me in the eyes and asking “how was your day?” were not empty gestures. Rather, all of these acts of hospitality were acts of love.

It has been said that the greatest gift in life is love. The trouble with love is that it can feel so ungraspable and indefinable. Jean Vanier does a beautiful job painting a tangible picture of love. I am immeasurably grateful to have a mom who has helped me to know this kind of love:

“Loving someone does not simply mean doing things for them; it is much more profound. To love someone is to show to them their beauty, their worth and their importance; it is to understand them, their worth and their importance... it is to rejoice in their presence, spend time in their company and communicate with them. TO love is to live a heart-to-heart relationship with another, giving to and receiving from each other.”” –Jean Vanier