



HELPING IN 2024 AND BEYOND

Sandra Day O'Connor died on December 1, 2023. I admired her not only because she was the first woman Justice on the Supreme Court, but because of who she was as a person. Despite her lofty position she was down to earth, brave, and compassionate.

So it was with great interest that I watched Justice O'Connor's funeral on TV. I listened to her family and friends eulogize her. They talked about her achievements, about her love for her family and about her character. Her son ended his remarks with a quote from his mother...

"The purpose of life is to help others along the way."

This simple quote touched me, and it has been on my mind for weeks. Why? After all, I am a helping professional who has thought about and practiced "helping" for years. After much reflection, I realized Justice O'Connor's simple quote challenged my notion of helping, and it caused me to question whether I was indeed the exemplary helper I have considered myself to be.

I like to think I've been a dedicated helper all my life. I've had a career as a helper; my wife and I give to charities, and I volunteer at nonprofits during the holidays.

But when Justice O'Connor described the purpose of life as "helping others along the way" I don't think she was talking about the kinds of helping I've been doing. She was not talking about helping specific "needy" groups; she was not talking about helping at certain times of the year; and she was not talking about helping as a career. Here is what Sandra Day O'Connor's statement about helping others means to me...

Helping others needs to be woven into the very fabric of our lives. It needs to be something we "just do" as part of our life's purpose and not as something special or scheduled. We do not need to search for people who need our help. We will encounter them "along the way" ... friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, strangers... And when we do, we must meet their needs... big or small... no matter who they are.

This is the kind of helper I want to become... a person whose helping others permeates his everyday life. I will continue helping as I have in the past (giving to charity, volunteering during the holidays ...), But I also want to help those I encounter "along the way."

Fortunately, I know many "along the way" helpers whose example I can follow including... my wife who brings homemade soup to friends who are sick... my friend who mows the lawn of his brother with cancer... a young neighbor who does handyman work for his elderly neighbor... and a young college student who makes time to visit a home bound veteran.

These are just a few of those who are "helping others along the way." They are all around us.

I want to be one of them in 2024 and beyond.

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