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Father's doubts inspiration behind children's book about self worth

At age seven, Lisa Johnson Davis said she knew her purpose. At age 37, she wrote a book to encourage children to discover theirs.

"A Simple Brown Leaf," Davis' first published children's fiction book, creates an environment where children can explore nature and discover what it means to have a purpose and belonging in the world.

"It is simply a story about an autumn leaf that thinks its life is over when it falls from a tree, not realizing that it is being watched by a squirrel that plans to use it to line her nest for winter, she said.

"It's main premise is that every living creature needs to feel a part of their family, their community, and their world. Children need to know everything has a purpose, no matter how we try to trivialize it. I truly believe that this is one of the most important messages we can give them today."

Born in the late 60's, Davis grew up straddling two different cultures with differing value systems and ideals yet everyone was an advocate when it came to encouraging her how to read and write.

Quote Quotient

'I always dreamed about becoming a writer but I denied it for a long time.'

"My father's grandparents emigrated from England and my mother's parents emigrated from Mexico and Cuba and none of them ever had a degree or even thought about education. Yet, they all encouraged me," Davis said. "I never saw, until later in life, how different types of encouragement could really lead you in different directions."

Davis' mother, Lorraine, grew up in a "very encouraging" family and she took a positive outlook on life, but her dad, Larry, led a life that reflects her books message.

"My father was the baby of three children. His father was in WWII and at age three his mother walked out and said she didn't want to raise her

children anymore. His father came back and did the best he could but it created a negative aura and subsequently the children never got over it."

At the age of 52, Larry died of cancer.

"He died of cancer but the feeling that no one wanted him ate at him his whole life," she said.

Davis said that if her father only realized his self-worth there wouldn't have been so much self-doubt in his life.

"He could never fulfill potential as a person because he was like a child asking, 'What's wrong with me and why doesn't anyone care.'"

Davis' father struggled in his life but did the best with her.

"My family always made me feel loved."

Davis said she has always been observant. Her father's experience has given her evidence that everyone has a purpose even if they don't see it for themselves. Her father became the lining of her nest and has always allowed her to raise her children and expose her community to show the importance of always encouraging children.

"My focus is on the next generation," she said. "I want them to have self-confidence and to be proud of themselves."

Davis' two daughters, Dempsey, 11, and Ceiley, 7, also help her create inspiration.

"I always dreamed about becoming a writer but I denied it for a long time," she said. "There were certain circumstances that kept pulling me toward that direction until finally I realized that writing is what I needed to focus on. Once I made that commitment to writing as a craft that's when all my ideas started flowing."

Davis said she has always been interested in how human beings form relationships and how they are a product of the people in their lives.

"Books like this are important because children really can understand when we talk about animals and plants. When you get them to understand relationships and put that in the context of animals and the environment, they understand and realize what you are trying to say. More so than they would from adults."

Davis' book targets readers ages four through eight and is available on Amazon.com for \$15.26.

by Melissa N. Hernandez