

# You Get Proud by Practicing

## You Get Proud by Practicing

by Laura Hershey

If you are not proud  
For who you are, for what you say, for how you look;  
If every time you stop  
To think of yourself, you do not see yourself glowing  
With golden light; do not, therefore, give up on yourself.  
You can get proud.

You do not need  
A better body, a purer spirit, or a Ph.D.  
To be proud.  
You do not need  
A lot of money, a handsome boyfriend, or a nice car.  
You do not need  
To be able to walk, or see, or hear,  
Or use big, complicated words,  
Or do any of those things that you just can't do  
To be proud. A caseworker  
Cannot make you proud,  
Or a doctor.  
You only need more practice.  
You get proud by practicing.

There are many many ways to get proud.  
You can try riding a horse, or skiing on one leg,  
Or playing guitar,  
And do well or not so well,  
And be glad you tried  
Either way.  
You can show  
Something you've made  
To someone you respect  
And be happy with it no matter  
What they say.  
You can say  
What you think, though you know  
Other people do not think the same way, and you can  
keep saying it, even if they tell you  
You are crazy.

You can add your voice  
All night to the voices

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Of a hundred and fifty others

In a circle

Around a jailhouse

Where your brothers and sisters are being held

For blocking buses with no lifts,

Or you can be one of the ones

Inside the jailhouse,

Knowing of the circle outside.

You can speak your love

To a friend

Without fear.

You can find someone who will listen to you

Without judging you or doubting you or being

Afraid of you

And let you hear yourself perhaps

For the very first time.

These are all ways

Of getting proud.

None of them

Are easy, but all of them

Are possible. You can do all of these things,

Or just one of them again and again.

You get proud

By practicing.

Power makes you proud, and power

Comes in many fine forms

Supple and rich as butterfly wings.

It is music

when you practice opening your mouth

And liking what you hear

Because it is the sound of your own

True voice.

It is sunlight

When you practice seeing

Strength and beauty in everyone,

Including yourself.

It is dance

when you practice knowing

That what you do

And the way you do it

Is the right way for you

Introduction to Disability

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And cannot be called wrong.

All these hold

More power than weapons or money

Or lies.

All these practices bring power, and power

Makes you proud.

You get proud

By practicing.

Remember, you weren't the one

Who made you ashamed,

But you are the one

Who can make you proud.

Just practice,

Practice until you get proud, and once you are proud,

Keep practicing so you won't forget.

You get proud

By practicing.