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Notekey

Keynote Address
By
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You Raise Me Up

This is our CODA OHANA. Our Coda family. Our club.

Thank you for getting it. This is the one place I can go where I don't have to explain. Here with my coda ohana. I don't get looks of pity (unless it's my outfit) like I do from hearing people. Nor do I get looks of desperation like I do from some deaf people who want my help.

You raise me up.
Thank you for getting it.

I just (well, not just) changed jobs. Went back to my first love. Interpreting. Coda's got it. Especially those who interpret. Hearing saw it as a demotion. Deaf people. 50/50 till I explained.

They/you raise me up.
Thanks for getting it.

You and I have come to realize that coda is a process. For some a step by step one – for others a huge leap. Those steps and leaps occur on an individual basis. We cannot tell people how this whole thing we call coda works. Or if it will for them.

Some come once and that is enough. I believe for them a seed has been planted. It will grow. They are codas. Thanks for getting it Some come one time and there ain't no seed planted. They are not, nor may they ever be ready to deal with the exposed nerve they found. But – remember: they are codas, too. Thanks for getting that.

Others come and see a mass of people going nuts with coda-talk, hugging, crying, deaf voice, crazy dancing and say NOPE. Not for me.

Others come one time. Get it. Use it and don't ever return.

But all these folks are codas. And they raise me up.

Now there are others who come and stay. It works for them. They go to breakouts. They do Fire and Ice 1, 2, and 3. Some are up to Fire and Ice 19. How many Fire and Ices can you do? But they are codas. They raise me up.

Others come with anger, rage, and sadness. When I was talking with Elot before this keynote, he said don't paint it all like it is all sunshine, lollipops, and rainbows. Because for many people it isn't. So, Elot, this is for you. They had childhoods like Dale says, "a little bit not good". It pains them to see so many people happy to be codas. You see their parents put the burden of adulthood on them at a young age. Robbing them of their childhoods. Their hearing families made them de facto caretakers. They made them (us) all wise and knowing because we could hear. The hearing world looks at young codas with pity (or is it admiration?). A lot for a kid to bear? Yes.

Deaf parents who rage out at the hearing world inadvertently make their kids the brunt of their anger.

Other codas whose parents are peddlers come seeking solace. Do we give it?

Elot said – make it real. He is right. Many of our lives were not, are not, and will not be like our hearing peers. WE carry a hearing stigma – DEAF. We carry a deaf stigma – HEARING. Some carry such anger that they have left the deaf community forever. They have hidden that anger deep inside. Being a coda is not easy.

But you get them. And we must raise them up. To all of you in pain, turmoil, and rage: Here is Ohana. All in time. All in time.

Others come here, go home and start groups, dinners, and lunches. You raise me up.

Others live and breathe life into CODA. Just like our parents live and breathe for the deaf community. They are our ambassadors. They do us proud. Newsletters, KODA, Board, Committee.

Some come and find love. All you coda couples, please stand.

Many come for the fix. Marianne. Just that annual shot of coda. Because we get it. They know it. They come just “TO BE”. No breakouts. Just come to let the madness wash over them. They become our sages.

Many others will never come. Why? We don’t know. They have their own reasons. We must get it. Because they are all codas.

Your raise me up.

Many others feeling their parents approaching deaths or just went through it. What better place to come to where we all get it. Where better to loose it than in a group that can raise you up?

Because deaf must share, must share:

Last two years full of trauma and drama:

Gotta brag. They named a building after my father!

The Robert G. Sanderson Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Utah. Big proud! My deaf aunt died leaving my deaf dad as patriarch to the hearing family. Dad had rare skin cancer. But they got it. Started new job.

Mom had something like a stroke – but a bit better now. Whew.

Last week I had a kidney infection. My partner said stay home. I said it’s coda! He quiet. He expect me will die here. But big wrong him.

I didn’t tell many all of this. Why? You all knew anyway. You all said it will be OK. Whatever it is. You really do raise me up.

I could go on and on – but – the you raise me ups are probably getting old by now. Now I have a few questions:

Why can’t hearing spouses just learn that they are gonna get A to Z no matter what? For us, the short version is A to Y!

Why cant’ some of us realize that coda cannot fix everything for everyone? Look inside. Get help. Look for a coda therapist. But, get help.

Is it just me or do you all get nuts when hearing people do deaf speech or say they are an honorary coda?

No one has to take parenting classes so why must we defend all deaf parents right to be parents.

Do you get that funny tingly feeling inside when deaf people start a conversation with “You Coda...” Then ask why relay calls always go through and coda calls are always busy? Don’t you just want to hug those koda kids? I know at that moment it is genetic.

THEY raise me up.

So this is what we are: Ohana. Family. This is a family we chose because we all have one thing that unites us – at that deep, deep level we are different than our parents. But here we are the same. We are coda ohana.

As I said, thanks for getting it. I’d like to close with 8 lines from a song written by Brendan Graham and Rolf Loveland and sung by Josh Groban. This is for our parents who did their best and for you:

When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary
When troubles come and my heart burdened be
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence
Until you come and sit with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be.

Thank you all for letting me note key. I love you.