

Image script:

Nothing is impossible..! Press my hand! More! Can you feel, that it's stronger now?

*The gift of Gabriella Pásztor, physiotherapist*

## **From Mátészalka to London**

Breaking out, yet staying. Leaving, yet coming back with fidelity.  
Always giving and never asking. Saying good bye with clenched teeth.  
Easing the pain of others, paying high for own knowledge. Working  
without getting tired. And winning.

We met first in a sickroom. She entered and was like a hurricane. She whirled up everything. Behind her steps fresh air flew into the room and washed away all resignation, doubt and flaccidity. She assessed the terrain in the blink of an eye. She stepped to the patient. She talked to him, touched and palpated him, encouraged him, asked and directed him and praised him. She showed him exercises. In the meantime, she chatted, took notes and smiled. She had only one hour. Her plain was to take off to London. Years ago she found a special physiotherapeutic challenge there. Being constantly curious who never gives in, she started learning again. She learned a special healing technique for rehabilitating stroke survivals. She brought home this special knowledge. First to Mátészalka, however, she would like to foreshow and teach it in the entire country.

She steps back from the doorway.

- Homework! Practice! I come back in a month and then we go on!

Briskness remains on her heels. And in this briskness hope wakes up, that it could be slightly better even in the most helpless situation. This better is to be aimed at – she said – I will help just in that.

### **In the father's shadow**

Gabi Pásztor in the 70's was the same like all the other small girls in Mátészalka. She preferred to spend her time in her grandfather's garden, where she could furnish the empty corn-crib a dollhouse, which was her empire. She cooked lunch for the hungry dolls, while healed the ill ones. At home she had other games. The balcony was a post office and she was the postman, delivering lots of money - she said – this made everybody feel happy. Her parents were honoured teachers of the town, they passed the love of teaching on their children. Gabi was diligent but reserved. If you get to know her today, you would not believe that once she was a silent and shy child. In college she had already found herself, it turned out that being shy was just conformation. It could be forgotten.

Her father specialised in physical education, obsessed of moving and sports, coached not only his students, but made her daughter start moving early. He became her coach. Gabi did athletics,

ran, played handball and took part in every school sport event. She had a straight way to the teacher training college in Nyíregyháza. She graduated as a teacher specialised in physical education and biology and started working in the same school as her father.

- My father was a well-known person in Mátészalka, he was the engine of all sport and school events. As daddy's kid, I adored him, however, I could also see that besides him, I would not be able to do anything new. I had been teaching for 4 years already, when I noticed that I was still referred to as István Pásztor's daughter... One day I decided not to stay in my father's shadow, so I stopped teaching. Towards healing, I guess, mainly my mother's illness directed me. I was also interested in children exempted from PE. I wanted to do something so as they could also learn the joy of moving. I also wanted to help my mother. She had suffered from unbearable back pain for years by then and was able to teach – exist - only with the help of painkillers.

Gabi sat back again into the school chair, and having her teacher's diploma, she also qualified as a therapy PE teacher, as a physiotherapist and then attended about twenty different post gradual trainings. All these while also having her family, as she got married to Péter very young, already in college, and had two beautiful small girls.

### **“I just keep my mouth open...”**

Mátészalka is a nice country town with one-story houses, and I was surprised to see not so long ago that very old ladies still wear their old hats and put on lace-gloves on special occasions. People greet each other on the streets as good friends and are fond of their small town. They still remember that in 1888 – in the same time as in New York – the first electric lights were lit in Hungary in a civic home: in the salon of Pál Szalkai, and on the street, today called Kossuth st 16. Not far from this place the first solid iron pylon is guarded. Every year, in the first week of September, the Bright Days Festival of Mátészalka is beginning there.

As her time allows, Gabi Pásztor arrives home to this town from London; where many people remember and love her, and who does not - for a long time - wear the label of “the daughter of Steve Pásztor”. She led for 20 years the physiotherapy department of the local hospital, which centre she created from scratches, where at the end she alleviated and ceased the pain of many people suffering from waist problems and other musculoskeletal disorders. She taught for 10 years physiotherapy students of the University of Debrecen. Her daughter, Réka, whom she managed to “infect” with the passion for healing, became a physiotherapist too, with a similar vocation, after working and learning the language for 2 years in England. Then she came home, and now she works in the community that is the result of her mother's activity.

- I had to come home. I am a Taurus, I do not tolerate locomotion. I live 2 streets far from my workplace and 1 street away from my grandmother, who I visit – if I can - every day. And this is good for me this way. I chat with my Mom every day, by phone or by skype and when she arrives home we spend minimum 1 hour with hugging and kisses each other. We need so much time to calm down. People say our radiation is similar, we both suggest calmness, safety and serenity. This is interesting as I am calm and my mother is very active. Of course I admire her for other reasons too. Mainly for her will power and intrepidity.

Mother's and daughter's confession rhyme.

- I am biased in mentioning the priority, and eternal role of the family. I cannot even imagine where could I find more understanding, even if I made mistakes, so much consolation, even if I have no reason to be sad, so much sympathy and support for realising even my seemingly hopeless plans. I will never, never forget this, and I am very grateful for what I have got from my parents.

It looks like the entire Pásztor family is like this. Gabi visits her family by phone every morning: her mother and her daughters, and only if they are OK, she starts her day. Her mother - whom she really healed, and still takes care for - lives without pain killers, and took a new lease of life, and is 80 this year.

- We taught our children first of all, to family cohesion. We loved them and we also loved other children. You can teach children at school only with love. Both my children are alike: they work with, educate, teach and heal people. Even my husband lived long enough to be proud of them. My son is a teacher in Orosháza, he was elected the best teacher of the year. I just keep my mouth open and wonder how Gabi could have so much strength and knowledge to help people in such difficult situations.

Only Petra is missing from the family pageant. She also works in London; her mom calls her every day too.

### **There are no sour-cherries in London**

- *Gabi if everything is holding you here, why did you have to go to London?*
- "Halfway through the story of my life I woke to find myself in a dark wood" ... Let's word it like this cryptically. The reality is that after 23 nice years, our marriage went wrong, so we divorced. In peace and friendship. I had to start from the beginning... I thought that to be able to do this, I have to go very far from Mátészalka. Beyond the Ocean...
- I came to England at the age of 43, first I learned the language, then after the exams I got the possibility to develop my professional knowledge. I started learning again. Besides lots of work, over my power. Fortunately, my work is my hobby, and the feedback of the patients give me so much strength, that I can start every day with new energy. Even when I have to work 7 days in a week. Success achieved together with the patients affects me like an energy bomb. I keep close relation with my ex-patients too. I am persistent, I have a goal, and I go until I reach it. I have been struggling for almost 6 years for my physiotherapist registration here in England, and sometimes I was close to give up, but there was always someone who helped me: you have to go on, you would get it, just hold on!
- If I do something, either I do it 150 percent or not at all. As success came, so did envy people. They could not see how many sleepless nights, how much exacerbation and crying are behind all the success. This is life: we fall and we stand up, we struggle and go ahead – this is what I tell to my patients, whom I treat.
- There is one problem. Here you can buy any kinds of fruits, however, you cannot buy their taste. They are savoury only at home. And there are no sour-cherries in London. No

sour-cherries! There are no apples from the trees, no apples that I can just pick from the trees to bite in. There are no good peppers either. When I could finally find yellow pepper, I made real ratatouille. My patients tasted it too... that was my biggest success!

PHOTO: With my parents. Thanks to God, they lived long enough to see that I could stand my ground in England too.

When I got to know the ARNI therapy and I dig deeper in it, I said, yes, this is it! It's worth working with it. It is simple, yet holds lots of possibilities in the rehabilitation of stroke patients. And my life made a big twist when I met the developer of ARNI, Tom Balchin.

### **He brought himself back**

Gabi Pásztor came back from London 2 days ago. She already visited Mátészalka, now is waiting with people interested in the method for dr Tom Balchin's arrival at the Apáthy Movement Centre.

The young man got a severe bleeding stroke at the age of 22, and doctors gave 1% chance for his survival. Tom's brother abruptly died at the age of 21 under tragic circumstances. Tom got his stroke half a year later after the tragedy, most probably due to stress. He had been to hospital for months, in the meanwhile he started physiotherapy with a completely paralysed left side. He developed the ARNI method – that took Gabi's attention - on himself over the years. With the alternating exercises he trained 3-4 hours daily and as a result he could achieve that his paralysed left side became active again.

To understand the method of ARNI, I could list worlds like functional rehabilitation, task oriented exercises, cardiovascular training and so on, the essence is that with the exercises we re-teach the brain to do its task. And if the brain functions then the arms and legs can move again, and even the wheelchair may become unnecessary. Not only one patient could stand up by the help of ARNI method from a wheel-chair.

Gabi Pásztor committed herself to the method 6 years ago. Seeing her hard and devoted work she became already in the second year a senior instructor, and in the stroke forum in England Gabi presented instead of Tom Balchin. Tom is very strict, but highly appreciates if someone is committed. Seeing how fast the patients recover, who Gabi works with, he gave greater and greater trust to her. If a new patient comes from abroad Tom Balchin calls her Hungarian colleague, Gabi Pásztor.

### **Bringing home what I have learnt**

Like in the old times the wondering young craftsmen, Gabi wishes to bring home the healing technique she has been using daily. She knows the Hungarian statistics: 45.000 people suffer from stroke every year in Hungary, and only a part of these people can get appropriate rehabilitation.

- I convinced Tom to come to Hungary. First he was hesitant as he had never taught outside of England. Yet, when I organised everything and he only had to get on a plain,

he said yes. He visited Budapest several times. In Mátészalka my daughter also learned the technique, she is also committed to ARNI, as she can see the results. And we are planning the next course. It was not difficult as Tom fell in love with Budapest. Some days after writing this article I got a letter from Gabi that finally, she got her physiotherapist registration in England as a result of a 6 year long hard struggle.

### **Postscript**

I offer this story to those who surrender and who has no goals. To the ever disappointed happiness-chasers, to those who are demanding and who are never satisfied. And yes, to those who are envy. Why? I do not really know. Perhaps because Gabi Pásztor from Mátészalka is just the opposite of all these listed above.

Erzsébet Schäffer