

The Cello and Tears

A novelist took a job teaching creative writing to delinquents at a juvenile detention center. He was able to help quite a few of his students express their confused feelings about their very difficult young lives, yet he learned as much himself.

One day, the writer played his cello for the group, choosing a difficult piece he offhandedly said reminded him of his mother. As he applied himself to the complicated score, he noticed that many members of his audience were in tears. He thought, "I must be playing really well."

He was applauded after each piece, but finally one boy called out, "Play the one about mothers again," and the group cheered.

The writer realized that it wasn't his technique that was moving his audience but the link he'd established between the song and their own memories of motherhood, perhaps the last consoling memory they had.

The story is a good reminder to us in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home that it is worth asking what really motivates the people you lead: Is it your technique? The rewards you offer? Or the chance to fulfill some inner need to create, to make a contribution, or to support someone they care about?

The more you know about the people you lead and the residents you serve, the more meaningful your own contributions can be.

– Beecher Hunter