Connection Through Care

Carl Chang explores the significance of familial love through care and support.

Who do we care about the most? It might be that one friend we grew up with, it might be our dog that excitedly wags their tail whenever they see us, or it might be that sports team we won the championship with. But for many of us, the answer is family. Our connection with our family is defined by the love and care we share, where we are willing to go to great lengths to help each other out. It is for this reason that family should support and care for each other under all circumstances if they wish to maintain a healthy relationship with each other.

Don't believe me? There are numerous proofs of this concept out there, with Elissa Down's Black Balloon being one such example. The film explores the importance of being willing to go above and beyond for family, even in the face of constant ridicule and embarrassment. But there's more than one way to prove a point. We can also look at Mark Hadden's The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, which proves the importance of being able to look after family, by showing the effects of not doing so. But what use is proof in stories made up by others if there's no proof in the real world? That's where I come in.

Take my life for example. I used to hate my parents for their controlling ways and strict discipline. I would stare out the window and think about all the other children that got to watch TV and play video games while I was stuck in my room completing worksheets. 'It's not fair', I would think, and curse in frustration, longing for any form of entertainment. I'm sure we've all been there.

Despite my constant complaining and whining, and the pain they must have felt seeing me in such a dejected state, they stood their ground and assured me it was for the best. Looking back, I now understand that it was all done out of love and care for me, for my success. They built habits into me that would go a long way in making my life easier. It's not just my story though.

There's the story of Black Balloon, featuring fifteen-year-old Thomas Mollison and his autistic older brother, Charlie. The family has just moved into a new home, and so Thomas has to adjust to a new school, new surroundings, and new friends. We all know the struggle this can be, but imagine Thomas' frustration when he also has to devote all his time and effort into caring for his brother.

Yet, when Thomas finds Charlie being bullied at his school, he does not hesitate to jump in and protect his brother, even under the extreme harassment and embarrassment. This level of commitment to caring for his family is what keeps the Mollison family together, and later in the movie, we get to see Thomas and Charlie joyfully dance together at the school musical. This beautifully ties together the result of supporting and caring for family no matter what. The amount of love and care Thomas possesses for his brother, though sometimes clouded by anger and frustration, is truly admirable and we should all strive to treat our family the same way. So what happens when the struggle of looking after family becomes too much to bear?

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time follows the story of a young teenager named Christopher in his journey to unravel the mystery of his neighbor's dead dog, leading to the discovery of the truth behind his mother, whom he believed was dead. Christopher's relationship with his parents is very clearly centralized around the concept of care, just like most of ours.

Unlike most of us though, Christopher had a mild form of autism, which Mrs Boone was unable to deal with. Emotionally, like all parents, she still loved and cared for her son, but physically, she found herself unable to accommodate for his needs. She felt she was a burden on her husband, and her reasoning is outlined in a letter to Christopher where she explains that she felt "you didn't really need me at all" and "he [Mr Boone] would only have one person to look after instead of two".

Now you might sympathise with her and argue that it is a lot to deal with, but the consequences speak for themselves. In the eyes of Mr Boone, she is seen as selfish, while Christopher is simply left confused and motherless. There really is no benefit to such a situation, and it truly makes us wonder what would have happened if, despite her difficult circumstance, Mrs Boone had persevered and been a bit more patient with Christopher.

Now you know what happens when we go above and beyond to care for our family, and what happens when we don't. It's pretty clear how unconditional love and support is vital to keeping a family afloat, but I can admit this point is not absolute. The question is, at what point should we stop caring about our family? I would imagine most people would draw the line at criminal or extreme moral wrongdoings, but ultimately, what that truly means is up to us. At the end of the day though, most families won't need to worry about that, and maybe, out there somewhere, a young teenager is realizing who truly cares about them the most.