

• W O R T H Y •

2016 Worthy Women's Professional Studies Scholarship

By Evelyn Parise

My mother only ever gave me three pieces of advice throughout my life:

1. Always have enough fresh underwear.
2. Go to university.
3. Never let your mother in law move into your house. (This particular advice came from years of horrendous experience between her and her meddling mother in law.)

To this day my underwear drawer is stacked to the top; I made it one of my requests to my husband before getting married that we would never have to live with his mother and I received my master's degree teaching English and German.

Besides those disjointed suggestions, my mother never told me what to do, even if I asked her directly. Sometimes this infuriated me. Sometimes as a budding, hormonal teenager, I even thought she didn't care about me. "You have to make that decision", was her standard response to my befuddled face. "Well, thank you!" I would retort sarcastically.

Today I understand why and I thank her, truly. She wanted me to take all the wrong as well as all right turns in my life by myself. Be proud of decisions that I would make and stand by those I messed up. She never criticized me for mistakes and she hardly praised me for my successes. Ever the Japanese mother she was and still is, she wanted me to be independent and well educated, two things she valued most and didn't always get herself. I learned from my mother that education is a great privilege and it makes me feel worthy to learn, study, experience as much as possible. Being a worthy woman is empowering yourself with knowledge of all kinds. Every night I go to bed and wonder what I have learnt today. Sometimes it may be that tofu hot dogs taste terrible, sometimes it may be that ruby gets its red color from chromium. I feel worthy as long as I learned something.

Studying gemology with GIA means I'm coming full circle. As a kid, I collected fossils and gemstones. I would often sneak into my mother's jewelry box to awe at the pretty

stones. Initially after high school I wanted to become a goldsmith. Pleasing my mother and her rare advice, I chose instead to study at the university to become a teacher and followed that career path for many years. Those years were invaluable, stocked with education, perseverance and lessons of independence.

All through those many years, I also learned to make jewelry, continued to go to gem fairs and self-educated myself on gemstones. Finally I started studying gemology via distance education with GIA in 2014 and am on the track of becoming a Graduate Gemologist. Part of me wondered many times if I failed to follow my initial wish to learn the jewelry trade to begin with. But often failure is a harsh word for self-improvement, life experience that you would never have had if it weren't for those detours in our life.