



STUDENT SERVICES

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We all know the names Simone Biles, Michael Phelps, and Naomi Osaka, but probably few of us know the name Jessica Long. As the world's youngest person to go to the Olympic games and the youngest ever to win a gold medal, Jessica is not your typical athlete. Many of us first learned of her during the last Super Bowl when the powerful Toyota [commercial](#) first aired. We then had the chance to watch it again during the Tokyo Olympics, and we have since had the opportunity to watch her earn her 25th medal during this year's summer games. While all of these athletes are impressive, what is most impressive about Jessica is that she has been able to accomplish all of this without the use of her lower legs. Her life isn't easy, but it is amazing.

We can learn a lot about our world and ourselves from the people living in it. We have those we want to emulate and be close to, and those we want to avoid. We hear stories of ordinary people who chose to do extraordinary things (e.g., [the Boatlift people of September 11](#)), and we certainly know of people who choose to do horrific things. All people, regardless of background, upbringing, circumstances, or mental and physical attributes, begin the day with a choice, and as each day unfolds, we find ourselves having to make other choices and other decisions. Every choice guides us forward and leads us to the next decision we need to make, ultimately leaving us with the cumulative effect of ALL the choices we made. Clearly, not all choices will have the same long-term impact or have the same end result, but learning how to evaluate decisions to achieve the desired outcome takes learning and practice. Children learn how to do this over time, with guidance from teachers and caring adults in the context of their daily lives at school and at home. They learn from their failures and mistakes as much, if not more, than they learn from their successes and accomplishments. They should be encouraged to, as John Maxwell suggests, [fail forward](#).

Many of us in the community were fortunate to Zoom with [Dr. Jeannine Jannot](#) on Wednesday evening, and we benefited from many of the things she shared with us. She spoke about the challenges of raising children during these times and how many students in high achieving schools are struggling to remain healthy and well. She noted the importance of children having a growth mindset and briefly summarized the work of [Carol Dweck](#). She went on to mention that despite our best intentions, we sometimes create more long-term problems by sheltering our children and trying to alleviate all their stress. Instead, she suggests we just acknowledge the issue(s), listen to the concerns, and then work to empower them to make their own choices for how best to move forward. If they are successful, they learn they have the capacity to handle life's challenges, and if they fail, they will learn to make different decisions and other choices. They also learn that our care, concern, and love for them is not solely tied to their success but is a direct result of who they are.

The people mentioned above reached the heights they did because of the choices they made. They chose to work hard daily, and they acknowledge the fact that their success came with many failures, personal insecurities, and mental health battles. They have also noted that through it all, they received support from many people along the way and these people see them as the people they are, not as the athletes they became. As educators and as adults who care for children, let us all choose to see the child before the student and remind them that they have the power to become who they want to be and the strength to handle the difficulties of life.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUW_hjqJD_4

<https://www.atlantatrackclub.org/blog/losing-a-leg-gaining-a-life>

<https://drstankovich.com/examining-the-psychology-of-commitment/>

Take Charge of your thoughts. You can do what you will with them.