

October 9, 2015  
(Sept Letter)

Hi Samantha,

I thoroughly enjoyed hanging out with you in your suite last month. There seem to be so many things that are just right – even though you may feel out of control sometimes. Here are some of the things I like about your situation.

I like your choice of programs. The topic seems perfect for your talents and interests – a nice combination of theory and applied material. It is also a wonderful bonus that the number of people in the program is small since it will give you a ready-made circle of buddies to hang out with and ensures that you get some valuable attention from the teachers. It is also nice that they have built in plenty of experiential material – who wouldn't love to learn by going camping? It is also fortunate that you are already skilled and experienced at many of the things you will be doing. Thanks to Daegan and Steve for that, I guess.

I also like all the signs of organization around your place. I remember the challenge of juggling classes, assignments, shopping, cooking, cleaning, and all the other things that make being a student a busy life. You probably don't realize it now, but this is good training for life – in all its complexities and demands. It is nice to see how you are working out ways to manage all these things as you make your way on your own. One might expect that it is rather simple to only be responsible for yourself, but I have found that it is demanding in many ways that are not apparent when you have someone else at your back – or “prompting” you to get to the next meeting, don't forget your keys, or even get out of bed. A lot of these are logistical, but many are emotional as well.

I am pleased to see that you are willing to ask for help along the way. It is a skill and an aptitude that will serve you well in many different contexts. I remember how difficult it was as your mother worked through her drive for independence with her need for help. It meant that we were never sure when offering help was okay and when it would be soundly rejected. In the end she seems to have worked it out nicely, but the process was seldom smooth.

To me this is a reflection of the tension we all face between independence and dependence.

My favorite illustration of this tension is one where I came upon Daegan dancing by herself to some music on the radio. She seemed totally absorbed in the pleasure of the music and the dance. She didn't need anyone else to join in to make it special and fun – or so I thought.

As soon as I stepped in the room, however, she called out “Look at me!”.

It wasn't enough to just dance on her own, but she had to be noticed by someone special to her.

I had just finished reading a lovely book titled “The Bonds of Love” by Jessica Benjamin. She argues that we are all caught in a tension between dependence and independence – that we want to be taken care of yet we want to be independent and



recognized for ourselves and accomplishments. Her main point is that we can never resolve this – and that attempting to find a resolution in complete dependence or complete independence are both doomed to failure and at the root of much pathological behaviour. The “normal” condition is one where we are constantly torn between the two.

I have found this to be a valuable insight into many things – from Daegan being absorbed in her dance yet wanting someone else important to recognize it all the way to the wish to be on one’s own but the desire to get back home.

I am thrilled to see the ways you are developing to balance this important tension and look forward to seeing the outcomes along the way.

Love,  
Bill

