

Chapter 1: The Big Decision

Have you ever really wanted to be able to do something, but you came across a roadblock of some kind? Maybe you're afraid of new things, or maybe you have a physical challenge. Are you going to follow your dream, or are you going to push it aside without even trying? You must make a difficult choice.

Instead of taking the easy street, I changed my whole life by choosing new experiences. What do you think I dreamed about? I wanted to ride horses. It doesn't sound like such an impossible dream, does it? I imagined feeling a horse moving under me, like we were a team, but there was an obstacle to overcome. I didn't learn to walk at the usual age because I was born two months early, weighing in at three pounds. At first, the doctors told my parents it would take time. I would catch up; but, they got worried when I still crawled around at three-years-old. Finally, they took me to a specialist who said I would never be able to walk, so they might as well accept that as being set in stone like the Ten Commandments.

The doctors decided I had something called cerebral palsy. It means part of my brain was damaged when I was born, making walking more difficult. My dad, being a determined person, promptly picked me up and told the doctor where he could go with that opinion. He had a very hot, unpleasant place in mind, the opposite of Heaven.



Deanie at two-years-old

When tears splashed down my face, Daddy made a big announcement. He said, “I’m going to teach you to ride and you’ll be fine.” I thought, *Daddy and I could do anything together*. I wiped the tears away and wanted to prove the doctor wrong. Daddy never accepted something as fact if he thought he could change it. He wouldn’t shy away from this challenge.

I took my first wobbly steps at nearly four-years-old. At first, Daddy knelt down one step ahead of me. He said, “Come on, honey, you can do it.” He stretched out his arms. I tried to move my feet, but I’d fall without going anywhere. We practiced every day.

Eventually, I took one tiny step and flopped into his arms. *Hooray, we did it*. We celebrated with hugs and kisses. Gradually, Daddy moved farther away. I fell often, but I learned to get up and carry on. Daddy encouraged me to keep trying. He didn’t help me get up because he wanted me to figure those things out on my own so I could manage when he wasn’t with me. That was a wise choice, don’t you think?

