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Patience

Peggy Wood
Concordia University-Portland

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It's kind of funny to watch her white, fluffy afro from beyond the edge of the desk. I'm too small to look completely over the edge, but I know exactly what I would see if I could. My grandma's sitting in her chair, back straight and fingers gliding over the keyboard with an ease not many her age would have. She lives on this machine, the telephone, and coffee. She stays up late into the night and then takes long naps in the afternoons. Her piercing blue eyes stare into the large, weighted, white box with a screen that glows like a television and it's entertaining to watch. The tap-tap and click-click as her fingers dance across buttons with letters and numbers magically appearing on the blank, glowing display amuses me.

Grandma doesn't even look at the keyboard and that's because she's so tech savvy. Computers, phones—you name it and she knew how to work it.

She had always been a self-made woman; she could do anything once she put her mind to it. Perhaps that's why it's hard to believe that this frail woman, who barely comes to my shoulders, is the same one that towered over me and picked me up with ease. She reads more slowly, as she hunches in her chair, and at times she leans toward the screen until the tip of her nose almost touches it. The phone, once an object glued to her ear, is becoming a disability. This touch-screen object, which has symbols instead of buttons, frustrates her. It's like her element has disappeared.

I know that age has to do with her lack of comprehension, but I don't want to accept that. It's truly difficult to watch her struggle over something that's three clicks from completion instead of the fifteen it used to take.

Sometimes, I wonder if it was the same for her when she taught me how to type. When I sat in agitation on her desk chair and tried desperately to make my fingers bend to the keys that I needed to reach. My hands were tiny and typing began to hurt after only a few short minutes. I couldn't find the right letters; 'a' beside 's' and 's' beside 'd.' The entire thing was ridiculous. All the while, Grandma sat beside me. She made me keep my short, tiny hands on the keyboard, tapping letters over and over. Now it's my turn to teach her.

"Press the green button with a telephone silhouette on it." I tell her, but she doesn't understand, and that's most likely my fault. I tend to jumble words around her. "It works like the green button on the home phone. After you put in the number, press the green button and it will start the call."

Even this seemingly simple instruction is a struggle.

"I don't need that," she tells me again, "I can make a phone call on the home phone while at home. I want to learn to text."

"Here," I go even more slowly, showing her the buttons and the insertion of contacts, how to bring up the keyboard screen and type in a message and how to send it to another person.

"No, I don't want to call them. I want to text." She declares.

The green button that means 'send' also allows you to call. One would think that my careful explanation of each step would suffice, but I now assume that instructions must be done in a much more separate and accurate order. So I try again to give her the directions in a way that's as clear as I can manage. However, words elude me and I start mumbling my instructions.

"What?" she asks. So I say it again, only louder.

"I can't hear you. Speak up." She orders with the same calm, loud voice she uses on the phone. So I repeat the words, only louder.

"Huh?"

I say it again, louder still.

"I still can't hear you. Stop mumbling."

She's also raising her voice now. So I reiterate the whole thing repeatedly until I'm almost shouting the words.

"No need to yell! Stop getting so agitated." She tells me, but this is the eighteenth time that I've tried teaching her since she received the phone. At this point, I still don't know if she understands texting, but now she's asking me how to use the camera and where the pictures go.