Afraid of Experiencing Joy

Fear of experiencing joy is something I have thought about over the years but never fully acknowledged within myself.

September 2, 2021 By Megan-Claire Chase

Am I afraid of experiencing joy? Yesterday, I was listening to the podcast Small Doses by the exceptionally brilliant and talented comedian, actress, author, and businesswoman Amanda Seales. Her guest on this particular episode was Layla F. Saad, the author of Me and White Supremacy. When Layla was talking about her experiences as a black Muslim woman raised in the UK, she struck a painful chord in me when discussing the fear of joy. It's something I have thought about over the years but never fully acknowledged within myself.

After cancer, the expectation by friends, family, coworkers, and even some other cancer survivors are to feel joy and happiness that you "made it" to the survivorship stage. I don't feel joyful about being in this stage because I'm in more physical pain than I was during active treatment. I've tried so many medications to try and help manage the fibromyalgia, neuropathy and back pain, but none have brought any real relief.

How do I embrace joy when just breathing can cause ripples of pain throughout my entire body?

How do I embrace joy when getting out of bed causes me to cry out in pain and hold onto my cane for support?

How do I embrace joy when I don't have a family of my own to live for?

As I struggle to navigate my way through the thick clouds of despair, frustration, anger, resentment, and pure rage, I do have fleeting moments where I've experienced joy. That's the issue. The longest period where I experienced pure, full on joy was during my recent adventure in Zadar, Croatia where I met the amazing Ancora.ai team for a bit of business and tons of fun and team bonding. I experienced so many levels of joy that I was almost in shock by how light and happy I felt. Is this what life is supposed to be like?

When I look at pictures from that trip, I almost didn't recognize my face because it was literally glowing from the joy I was feeling. There were no filters or spotlight used. I had not realized how weighed down I had become from dealing with...

battling racism my entire life

oppression and microaggressions my entire professional career

feeling like I don’t belong anywhere

fighting to have my symptoms taken seriously by doctors

the reality that racism seeps deep within healthcare and certain Facebook cancer groups

not being able to fully be myself and be accepted

and

not knowing how to be joyful long-term.

Yes, I was scared to travel to Croatia by myself but also knew I had to do it. I needed to get away from the United States and see if I’d feel the same oppressive weight over there that I do here. I wasn’t followed in any stores. I wasn’t looked at suspiciously. In fact, some of the local people didn’t automatically know that I was an American. The waiters I met were welcoming and hilarious. I never felt pressured to hurry or make a rash decision. The entire Ancora.ai team were so lovely, compassionate, hilarious, caring, and brilliant. I didn’t have to compartmentalize any racist comments or feelings of being undermined in order to make it through the day. I could just be full on Megs/Megsie/Meggie/Megan-Claire without judgment. My laughter and sheer joy were real and not faked. I didn’t have to wear a mask. Is this what joy feels like on a consistent basis?

Courtesy of Megan-Claire Chase

Unfortunately, as soon as I landed back in Atlanta, GA, I felt the weight of oppression, microaggressions, fear of police, and felt suspicious eyes on me. So, once again, my joy was fleeting. In fact, the joy in Croatia seemed almost too good to be true.

Maybe that's why I'm afraid to experience joy long-term because I've never known life without having to deal with hurt, pain, despair, fear, frustration, stress, and rage. Yet, I have the right to experience joy more than once every blue moon.

I need joy.

I crave joy.

I deserve joy.

Damn it; I’m going to find some joy!!!

Until next time,

Warrior Megsie

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