Mother's Day Eve 2018

May 17, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

As I prepare for Mother's Day — well, yes, we mothers prepare for our own holidays (we get it) lol. We have to clean the house and organize the events and make sure all of the other mothers are getting cards and/or gifts from the family (read: husband and kids) and more.

As I am getting these things "done," I cannot help but think about all of my past Mother's Days and the different ways I focused on all of the wrong things, year after year after year and to forgive myself for it.

When my daughter was born in 2007, I was on maternity leave for 10+ weeks and during that time, I felt (as I guess most of us new mothers do) like I ceased to exist. For most women, maybe, this feeling passes or gets less with time but for me, it did not. I continued to feel as though what ever I needed was not even on the list of things "to do."

I worked full-time in NYC and made a big salary and I hated leaving her but I also enjoyed a bit of pretending to be able to attend to my own needs at work for a few hours… but then, things got bad.

My husband got sick and by that first Mother's Day, I was just clinging on and hoping, praying for a day where keeping my daughter ALIVE did not rely on me. (And yes, it felt that dramatic — there is no "the baby will tend to herself" and at the time, I had no help officially available to me beyond certain set times…) I just wanted a day to sleep in — it seemed like such a luxury — to sleep uninterrupted without having to get up and do something for the baby, who I loved more than life itself but my body and mind wanted just one day. One day.

Reader, I did not get it that one day. It seems laughable now but at the time and in coming years, I continually held out hope that that random Sunday in May would be the day I could rest and be "me" without having to run around like a lunatic but eventually, I embraced it and I could see no other way to be so even that one day was not one for me to take off but to keep going …

I took this to the extreme. Even if help did become available, I was not interested in it. I had become a one-woman machine — getting diapers, bottles and whatnot — toilet training, removing the bottle, nutrition, activities, homework, etc., etc. I was a dynamo. People marveled to my face, "I do not know how you do it." To my behind probably something more like, "That woman is a control freak!"

I was in this pattern and ready to continue on it — did not anticipate where I could let go or how. I

had no clue. I was a bad friend and definitely someone who was not the best of “support” when it comes to my husband but he also had his demons and issues, towards me… So we can call it a draw.

Then, bam, I was hit with cancer. How in the world would I be able to keep doing what I was doing the soup to nuts of everything with my kids and work full time and survive? The main question I had was on surviving. I struggled with what hospital to go to, mainly because of the kids and my own fear of traffic.

Ultimately, I learned slowly and painfully that the old way was dead. That in order to survive, in order to truly live, I had to let go of being the control freak worrywart mother who did not allow sleepovers or play dates where I could not be present (omg, I hated that version of me but at the time it was all I knew how to be so I forgive that version of me and love her again) …

It helped immensely that my kids WERE 6 and 9 when I was diagnosed and not 2 and 5, though it was still hard for them (and me) and it continues to be hard for them to adjust to this new normal, too (and of course, me, too though it should go without saying — this new normal is one you have to adjust to each day, and it is different each day, too). I say all the time that it is not just the patient who gets cancer but the whole family — friends, too as most of them are close as family…

So on the eve of this Mother’s Day, I think to myself, “the kids are all right” — part prayer and part belief in it and most importantly, or just as importantly, I am, too.

I have big ideas for the rest of this year and next — I hesitate to say, “plans” because the truth is we never know what the future holds but I have my ideas … I want to focus on my nonprofit 501(c)(3) career after cancer initiative — I want to travel and spread my training and books around the country and maybe beyond. I have so many stories to tell in my fiction writing, even beyond my first publication in the Visible Ink anthology.

I want to spend time with my kids and family, too — first and foremost and I am going to go easier on myself in terms of my “deadlines” and “planning” as though I am a project manager and this organization is my baby, my project but my kids are on the list, too. And every day, they get a bit older … pretty soon, they will be more and more independent and I know I will miss these days.

But, the big news for me personally and spiritually is my trip in February 2019 back to my second home, Rome. The home I left 20 years ago. Where I grew up. But listen, do not tell my kids yet — they do not know! It’s a trip I am taking without them.

I am not just going to Rome but also to see San Giovanni Rotondo, where Padre Pio is — I feel as though I am being called to go and so I am going. More on that in another post. This is what I do in the time between.

Happy Mother’s Day to all of my readers — whether you’re a mom, an aunt, a sister, a godmother, grandma — thank you for all that you do for the children in your lives XOXO.

PS: Happy Mother’s Day to my golden girls in Heaven and of course to my mom who always has my back and yells at me only sometimes and to my mother in law, too, who also has my back. I am a lucky girl & my kids are lucky grandkids!

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/mothers-day-eve-2018