A Promise to Me

March 19, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

This blog has been for me and continues to be an online diary, in a lot of ways. I share things that I really did not think I would ever share with more than my own private diary and it does help me put it out and I know it helps others to read it. I am sure I get some looky-loos just showing up to read about stuff they hope to never experience (with 3,200+ people this week alone on my blog, how could it not be so) but overall, I think we are all here because we are or we know or love someone with cancer.

I have been very unkind to myself, friends. I have been pushing and stressing and trying to build an empire when I can barely make it through my week. What does this mean? It means I am moving too fast, trying to do too much and I am not really sure to what end.

I want to be an entrepreneur and make my own hours with The Next Step, but I do not have the stamina or the mental wherewithal to get it where I want it to be and let's be honest, even pre-cancer me struggled to really get to a point where I could say, yeah, this is a living. It was not a living. It was a constant fight and struggle to get in front of people, to sing for my supper, so to speak and I did it and then got offered a full time job and did not even think twice about walking away from that endeavor.

Now, here I am, battered, bruised and missing a tit — it is just something that although I live for the flexibility, there will not be the financials to justify pushing, clawing and presenting my way through the next 6-8 months to even get somewhere.

Then, I am trying to build so much around career after cancer when as you all know I have yet to find a job period. It almost feels like a bad case of imposter syndrome though I do know I can help others with my background and lessons but just the thought of launching this is giving me such cold feet.

My children's book is my passion but just getting it out there costs money and to be honest, as I have been before, my budget is broke.

Here is where it all comes together — I need to let it go. I cannot change my budget or my financials at this time. I do not have the stamina. I went out dancing like a fiend on Saturday night and then spent yesterday in bed and today I am coming to you from my couch without the energy I needed to do a practice of my first presentation via seminar.

I beat myself up too much, I get too pulled in with trying to be something I do not think I ever was.

I have always been the person who needed 8+ hours of sleep, even before cancer. I have always been a bit of a homebody who struggles between being totally outspoken and social and really introverted.

I need to promise myself some stuff.

1. I need to forget about my finances and stop trying to correct them, add to them and/or freak out about it anymore full stop. I spent the other night in my bed so sad thinking about the job/opportunities I just do not think will work out and/or the ways in which I cannot continue balancing it all out and my husband and children came upstairs to hug me and to tell me how much they love me.

THAT is what is important and is what made the tears fall more than the sad thoughts about budgeting and being broke but instead about how much I am loved and how much I have to be here for it.

2. The financial toxicity of cancer is not just something I am going through — everyone who has been diagnosed and gone through something knows it is true. There are costs you cannot budget for and the biggest cost, for me, has been my mental capacity and my stamina (the former is still pretty decent but man it used to be so much more and the latter while always bad is just so much worse it is comical). I do not think I have it in me anymore to rush around to multiple places a day to sing for my supper or even to manage out the ability to have a set schedule of a few days a week.

When I feel terribly about it, which I do, I want to shake myself and remember that is has not even been a year since my last chemotherapy yet (May 1; coming close but not here yet) and that money is only good for things. Health is most important but it is so hard for me to get that when I have things I need to pay for but cannot. I also have things I want to pay for but cannot. I have said before that our budget was often bad once I opted out of full time work in NYC but this past year (almost) since I stopped working due to being laid off it has been the worst ever.

3. I need to stop focusing on sharing and sharing and sharing so much all the time. Although it is wonderful to share for sharing's sake, getting sucked in to doing it for ego and/or for "fame" is something I do not want to do. I want to treasure the relationships I have built, never exploit them and to just enjoy life whatever is left of it.

This means I will scale back on my guest posting, my constant sharing and my self-promotion. I do not want to ever make money from cancer PERIOD but I also do not want to trade in my authentic self with something cloying and/or manufactured. This is me, I am half flat, I still want to focus on healing and being out there so much means I have less to give to myself … and that is not acceptable. I will still update my blog but I will use Instagram less and not jump so much as the chance to do X Y or Z for the thought of making myself the face of something. I am just ok being the rear end of it or the missing tit of it — not the face, it is not necessary.

4. I need to enjoy the little things more and not think about how to post it and/or share it —

ironically as I am sharing this but the fact remains that writing things down and getting it out helps me and if in turn it helps you too that is an amazing by-product of what is basically my self-therapy…

5. Health is most important — putting this last but it should be first. I want to just balance out my sharp edges — my fears, my anxieties now shifting from cancer to bills - it is not acceptable. I survived fucking stage 3 cancer, so what I am struggling financially to hit certain things — I am not alone in this. I am lucky, I have my house, my food in the kitchen and husband, kids and dog, too. Oh and parents, mother-in-law, friends, brother(s) — only one is speaking to me but that too has to be let go of because I cannot keep it all inside or worry about it.

This is what I am doing in the time between — trying to learn to let go of what is poison and focus on what is good. As I have said before, a bunch of people in a room slap their problems down like playing cards everyone will want to pick up their own problems to leave the room with so I won't stop smiling … just have to stop worrying.

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