The Scary Thing About Silence

Speak up, especially when it comes to being an advocate for your own health!

July 24, 2020 By Avie Barron

The world is noisy right now. Everywhere you turn, there's an issue at hand. Mask or no mask? Red or blue? Stay at home or open up? Who matters and who doesn't? Send the kids back to school or home school? Processed or organically sourced? Dr. Pepper or Coke Zero? It's exhausting…it's stressful…it's overwhelming.

If you know me personally, I tend to keep on the quiet side until I feel comfortable. It's not that I don't care – it's that I am a slow processor…like watching paint dry or waiting for grass to grow slow…I have to have all the facts and see things from all angles – know the risk factors and the define the return on investment before I make any kind of decision. It makes me a great analyst, which is what I do professionally – but has also been the cause of many fights between me and my poor hubby who is quick on the draw and even quicker with the comebacks.

My 2020 vision board and paper planner all included reminders and motivational quotes to help me with myblogger goals but then..BAM!!!Covid-19 came up on all of us like a persistent pimple right in the middle of our forehead that refuses to just goaway…and so life as we all came to know it dramatically changed and continues to change. Things are evolving so quickly that it is a huge struggle for people like me to keep up with all the "data" and"facts" that are posted, published and shared…so in true introvert form I stayed silent and I wanted to wait…so I did.

Two weeks from the first Stay At Home Order, I said "okay", I am going to fall in line and do my part…and then two months in I started to freak out…like buckle up buttercup this is what watching multiple seasons of the Walking Dead and reading Revelation in the Bible prepped us for…let's do this kind of freaking out. We are four months in and I've scaled it back…and although I have days where I'm "over it"…most days I come back to the end of one of my favorite Bible verses:

> "And who knows if perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"
> – Esther 4:14

I've been down this road before…you all were with me…life in 2017 for me and my family changed in the blink of an eye and I went through almost the same stages of emotions…shock, acceptance, anger, peace…lather, rinse, repeat.

So why now am I breaking my silence? If you have read this far down and were expecting a

profound political stance/statement…well then you don't know me very well. I am more likely to post a cute puppy picture and ridiculously cheesy motivational, uplifting meme than I am to posting a scathing statement trying to force you to convince you why you're wrong and I'm right.

I'm breaking the quiet as a reminder to all my readers that each problem, each tragedy, each obstacle that you face…and friend, they will come and continue to come – some bigger than others…is an opportunity for growth and learning. You can continue to freak out about it – but the only thing you can control in the unknown is how YOU are going to respond. You cannot change a person's mind on an issue with CAPS LOCK keyboard warrior-ing and you definitely will not change a person's mind through shouting and resorting to name-calling. You also cannot create change by staying silent…so what are you supposed to do? I'm choosing to start with conversation, civil discourse and being kind anyway.

Here's my personal stance that pretty much sums up all aspects of my life: I'm going to keep loving you – I don't have to like you or agree with you all the time, but I will continue to love you…Sometimes my love for you means that I'm going to watch you run into that brick wall – but I will be here to help you with the painful recovery. Sometimes my love for you will be me sitting in front of you telling you truths that are painful for you to hear not to cause you pain but because I want to see you grow and thrive.

I'm also here to remind you that while silence is sometimes a good thing…silence can also be scary. Speak up…especially when it comes to being an advocate for your own health. Back in February, I shared with you that I found a lump. For a cancer survivor, it's one of the scariest things to find because it's an immediate warp speed path to the recurrence rabbit hole.

Weeks after a mammogram and an ultrasound, I was sent a letter that said "no cancer found during test" but also a follow-up paragraph saying that just because they didn't find anything doesn't mean there isn't something. Really reassuring, huh? I fought with my health care provider to follow-up and spent countless hours on the phone trying to schedule an appointment only to get hung up on after being on hold for an infuriating amount of time…only to get to the appointment to be told I had to be referred to a specialist and repeat the process…and then Covid happened and my follow-up progress was dead in the water. In June, when I switched employers, my husband and I switched health care providers in hopes that going to a PPO meant I could get a little more control. Within days of switching, I finally got an answer—it's not cancer it's a side effect of birth control and nerve damage from radiation. The IUD (not IED as I embarrassingly found out was a bomb at the doctor's office…) that my previous health care provider insisted was the solution to getting my cycle regular again after chemo turned out to be the root of the pain in my breast. It was also the cause of persistent weight gain, mood swings, and fatigue. All things that my previous doctors had said were "just after effects of cancer."

I had to speak up and fight in order for doctors to correctly diagnose me. I had to insist that I felt that something was wrong with my body and force the professionals to keep looking even when they wanted to guinea pig approach me. "Try this prescription" and "let's wait and see in six months" are not acceptable responses to me. In places where I can take control of my health, I will

choose the most natural, homeopathic solution even if I get the raised eye brow from my doctor. In places where I need professional advice, I will push the limits, question and challenge until I get a direct answer/solution. Some of you may be blessed with a great practitioner who works well with you—in my case, I haven't been. If you find yourself in a similar place as me, then I encourage you to speak up. Open the conversation with your healthcare professional. Please do not go in guns blazing with your Google search/Mayo Clinic self-diagnosis, but do research, print it out and start a dialogue.

"Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth." – 2 Timothy 2:25

Gentleness is not weakness. In fact, being gentle means that you are in complete control and your actions are being guided by love and compassion. But Avie, where is your jiu jitsu analogy?!? Ah, yes friend, it's coming…jiu jitsu is the "gentle art…strength can get you only so far…but without technique you will never learn how to use that strength more efficiently. Your words work the same way…you have the power to tear down as much as you have the power to build up with words alone.

What are you going to say today?

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