You Are Not Your Experiences

May 14, 2014 By Rae Lewis-Thornton

There is no such thing as a perfect life, but I've come to understand that there are perfect moments of joy. Yet, we can miss the perfect moments stuck in the un-perfect parts of our life.

On a deeper level, we miss the perfect moments when the un-perfect moments becomes our life.

We miss the goodness of life for the pain in life. It's like this, Saturday I went to the Crossfit North Regional games to cheer on the team from RiverNorth Crossfit where I workout.

When I woke up it was great day by my estimation. My bronchitis seemed to be getting better, the cough had tapered to where I didn't think my chest and head was going to explode. Overall, my health is getting back to a good place. The Neuropathy has taped off, as well as the night sweats. I am actually getting some sleep. There was nothing that could interfere with me attending the games.

The Crossfit competition was amazing and I was having a great time. I had watched the women's competition and was in the middle of mens competition when I felt that surge from my tummy to my behind. Without hesitation I made my way to the bathroom. I could feel the poop starting to come, as I made way to the end of the very long line.

Without any shame, I made my way up the line, “Excuse me,” I said, “I’m about to use the bathroom on myself.” The women looked up at me without any response. As the poop starting to come more rapidly, I thought it best to throw decorum out the women. “Ummm excuse me, but I’m pooping on myself can I butt?” I didn’t really wait for a response, I just my way to the front of the long line into a stall. There was a big sigh of relief as I sat on the toilet, I had made it with only a minor accident.

I sat there long after I was finished to make sure that whatever this was had passed. As I sat there I couldn’t quite figure what brought this on. It’s been well over eight months since I’ve had any

gastrointestinal drama. I shrugged it off happy that I hadn't had a bigger accident. When I was sure that my tummy was good, I washed my panties in the toilet, wrap them in a paper towel and headed for the front door.

I didn't know what was going on with my body and I knew that Navy Pier was not place figure it out. I had made it to the first level and was asking security for directions to the door when I started to feel that surge again. "Wheres the bathroom. I'm about to go on myself?" I asked.

As I made my way to the second toilet the poop started to surge out my behind and down my leg. "This is not going to be good," I mumbled, as the pooped surged like fire hydrant on a hot day in the inner city. When I made it to the toilet I knew this was a disaster. I rolled down my pants and sat on the toilet. Poop was dropping out of my pants onto the bathroom floor. "Oh lawd," I cried, "how am I going to get out of this?'

When I was sure that I had finished, I took my pants off to start the cleaning process. I was not prepared for the mess that I saw. From top to bottom, my entire back of my pants were wet and

saturated in a brown substance.

“Well, at least the front was in tack,” was all I could think. I started my regular process, of trying to clean my pants with damp toilet paper, but the poop was embedded into the legs of the pants. I knew that I had to dip them carefully in the toilet to clean them. Carefully, because I couldn’t get the front wet. I still needed to get home by way of taxi. But dipping the pants in toilet was not doing the trick. This poop was grainy and not moving. So I dipped some more and all that did was make them wet and more wet and the poop was still barley moving.

Eventually I decided that I need to move on. It was clear to me that I was not going be able to clean the pants. The stench was so bad that women where entering the bathroom saying, “OMG what’s that smell?” Now that bothered me, it shamed me in some way. I couldn’t put my finger on it but it made me feel a certain kind of way. Then I thought how sad, we really do want a perfect world don’t we? We even want to be able to go into the bathroom that is designed to consume human waste and not be able to smell the waste.

I cleaned the floor, balled my slacks up and took the shrug that I was wearing and wrapped it around my waist. “Thank God for this shrug,” I mumbled. When I made my way out of the stall, I

apologized to the women for the smell. I'm sorry, "I pooped on myself."

I washed my hands and started the process of trying to figure out how I was going to get home with as little of my body showing as I could. The problem was, shrugs are short in the front. I couldn't tie it, or you would have seen my vagina.

I didn't have time to be overwhelmed I was just on a mission. I set on the floor holding the shrug closed. As women came into the bathroom I asked them for a safety pin, explaining my desperate situation.

I was happy when the cleaning lady came, because I could get a bag for my pants that was smelling up the bathroom as I explained my situation, so she could also sanitize my stall.

I asked everyone who came into the bathroom to no avail. Then one girl, a Crossfitter with a big backpack came into the bathroom. I just knew she had one in that big bag, but she didn't. However, she started brainstorming with me on how to secure the shrug. After we went around a few times with ideas, it finally hit me, I could take one of the headbands that I had purchased in the exhibit and pull it over the top of the shrug. It wasn't the best solution but it would get me out of the bathroom and on my way home.

After I had fixed myself up, I sat back on the floor, making sure that the tummy drama had passed. A few minutes had slipped by when the Crossfitter came back with some shorts. “Will these help?” she asked handing them to me. Tears rolled down my face. I was overwhelmed and grateful for that act of kindness. I love Crossfitters because we have a spirit that says, I want you to succeed. “Are you sure I asked?” through tears. She said to me “Don’t cry, just take these.”

I put the shorts on, sat on the floor and called Tiara. As we were talking I started to cry again. Tiara’s sweet compassionate voice, came through, “Don’t cry auntie, don’t cry.” In that moment it hit me that I was clinging onto the pain of my tummy drama and that opened the door for the pain of living with AIDS, which is all consuming. I then became at the moment all the pain of this disease. The pain took center stage, it became me.

In my conversation with Tiara I started watching me, I became aware of myself. I noticed that my

cry wasn’t one of the joy that I had felt when the Crossfitter gave me the shorts, instead it was a cry of pain, the one that I felt when it was clear that I couldn’t wash my pants in that toilet. The one that I felt years ago when my T-Cell Count was 8 and I had PCP. I almost missed the perfect moment of joy consumed by the dark moment of pain.

I stopped the tears in a instant and watched the pain passed through me. Once I did that, I was able to get off that floor and leave the bathroom. I am coming to a place of understanding that I am not the

darkness of AIDS. I am the person who is watching the darkness of AIDS in me for the last 31 years.Michael Singer argus *that your sense of self is determined by where you are focusing your consciousness. The force of consciousness ends up holding the object stable simply by concentrating on it. ....*
I wonder how many of us become the pain of our journey just by simply holding onto it rather than letting it pass through us? How many of us give the pain energy by holding it stable through our consciousness?

Instead of holding onto the the tummy drama, I looked it straight in the eye and saw it to be yet another experience that has helped me to grow. For sure it helped me to see the practical side of my spiritual journey. I know that while I have lots of work to do on this journey, I am on the right path. This experience was confirmation. I've been reading and reading, but this was the first time where the words in those books became alive in me.

I am not the darkness of AIDS, I am the person who is watching the darkness of AIDS and by understanding that simple point I am able to watch dark moments pass through me, rather than become me.

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