



**This is what it means to be Alive.**

**April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016**

I have a new favorite song by Danny Gokey. You know, the American Idol contestant who lost his wife, and has overcome his grief with such grace, and tells the tale of how God gives us hope and peace? In his song titled, "This is what it means to Be Alive" he states:

**Sometimes the joy can give you wings to fly**

**Sometimes the pain will cut you so just like a knife**

**There's fear, there's faith, there's loss, there's grace**

**I've seen it from both sides**

**This is what it means to be alive, alive...**

**ALIVE.** This is what I have been celebrating lately. Life with all of its grit, pain, joy, excitement, and complete uncertainty. I haven't blogged in such a long time because I have hardly been keeping up with my own steps to doctors, and school drop off, yoga seminars, errands, trips to LA, and San Francisco, interviews, and sleep.

After my surgery in June of 2015 ("repair" of 2 of my 3 hernias from childbirth trauma) left me feeling quite odd, I had not a clue what was brewing within my physical being. I began to have a skin rash, moments of complete brain fog, and pain, debilitating pain. I returned to my local surgeon and asked about the pain, the pop, the odd feminine bleeding that had worsened, and this golf ball mass that felt like a monstrous sized hernia, I was told that I had torn fascia. I was told I would need more mesh to suture the fascia, and that my hernia repair was intact. I had been referred in for an ultrasound of my pelvis. This surgeon completely ignored the report that stated that my uterine lining was extra thick, and my ovary still had a cyst that had grown in the last few years.

I was told that I needed to have surgery to repair such fascia, and the sooner the better. I was prescribed narcotic pain meds, which I just couldn't take as I am a mother of 3

littles and being clear in my mind is as important as breathing in my opinion. As I listened to him, I started to get dizzy. I asked him if my rash could be due to the mesh and I was shut down so fast, and told, "Mesh is inert!" I saw this murky orange and grey fog with my spiritual eyes, and the days that followed brought intense anxiety. I would have nightmares at night about leaving my body for good. I awoke one morning and told Tim that we really needed to take care of a will. Tim looked at me like I was so silly, and said, "You need to get a second opinion."

Something indeed was not right. I called my brilliant pelvic physical therapist, Brande Moffatt in Redding, and asked if she knew of anyone who could give me a second hernia opinion. She said she had heard of a woman named, Shirin Towfigh, M.D. in Beverly Hills. I flew to the city of my birth, Glendale, CA and stayed in a bright room with Marilyn Monroe on the walls. I prayed so hard. I enjoyed legs up the wall, and a romantic comedy as I couldn't sleep. The pain was bad, I was alone in the city, so scared to have surgery again, and my skin was on fire. My body was on fire. I couldn't bear the inflammation, and I knew I still wanted to appear somewhat pretty and intelligent as I had to find my way to the surgeon on Roxbury Drive the next morning.

Dr. Towfigh's staff was so amazing, kind and attentive. As soon as Dr. Towfigh walked in the room I knew I was in the right place. She spent over an hour with me on my first visit. She let me know that the mesh very much could be causing the skin reaction, and she said that I absolutely did not have a tear of the fascia. I had some sort of "oma." Possibly a meshoma (use this new vocab word at dinner tonight ;)), where the mesh gets balled up, or something else. I was also shown on my CT where my rectus diastasis was never repaired and the other hernia would one day resurface. Did I need a stillness break? You bet! Her nurse, Bel took copious notes, and I asked what I needed. She was willing to operate: mesh removal, deal with the hernia underneath, and investigate the pain region.

Fast forward through the grimy details, of how all things came about quite miraculously, and on the afternoon of the 20<sup>th</sup> of January after my surgery, I was overwhelmed with how beautifully my surgery went (warm blankets while being prepped for surgery, an all-female surgical staff, and an anesthetist who really listened to me. She understood I was a fast metabolizer and didn't want to give me full general). As I awoke, Dr. Towfigh's peaceful

presence drifted into the room and she summed up the surgery: mesh removal (sweet relief), neurectomy of the ilioinguinal nerve and one other due to neuromas caused by the mesh, hernia repair, and removal of some sort of mass...it was sent to Cedars Sinai, and a few days later we found out the real cause of my pain and bleeding for the last 3+ years...ENDOMETRIOSIS.

**OK reader's take a breath...this is where it starts to get good...so take a few deep belly breaths, and enjoy this song...**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pAaqY2bO3M>**

As I left Beverly Hills, after a week of recovery with my doting and slightly pent up husband, I couldn't wait to see my 3 miracles. The family and friend support through this part of the journey was astounding to me, and I was so ready to go find my little cuties. As we got home, we looked at the calendar with the knowing that I needed to be at a workshop with Judith Lasater (queen yoga mother) in San Diego a mere 8 days later. I hobbled around the house, and scheduled doctor appointments in San Francisco with my new endometriosis doc, and pelvic physical therapist.

Judith Lasater is a hoot, and for you yogis out there that get a chance to sit under her teaching, DO IT! She is hilarious and wise. I had a moment in "Instant Maui" (a therapeutic restorative posture) where I was thinking to myself, "I'm here in this blissful pose in San Diego just a few weeks after being on the operating table in LA...life is so crazy!" Judith spoke to my thoughts as the best of yoga teachers do...she spoke of her favorite word being "bittersweet." Life is bitter and sweet sometimes simultaneously. We have moments of utter bliss, followed by utter catastrophe, and all we can do is find the still place in each moment to hear God's voice, our inner teacher to make sure we stay in the light and enjoy the ride.

The ride became wild shortly after my week with Judith, as I had my first pelvic exams with Dr. Giudice, in San Francisco. I was told that I am very fertile, but right in the middle of one of those fertile ovaries are 2 endometriomas. We discussed my birth experiences, and

Dr. Giudice was astounded that I still have my female parts (blessing). I was referred for more tests, and have found out I have more muscular tears than I knew, 3 disc injuries, and adenomyosis.

The dichotomous nature of life makes me smile. The same day I was told I had muscular tears unknown to me, was the same day I stared at the coast in Pacifica and breathed in the salt water air. The day I waited in the waiting room for 6 hours for a 2+ hour MRI at the same hospital Isaiah (my youngest) had his hernia repair last year, I ate at Rainforest Café with my 3 cherubs and explored Fisherman's Wharf. The day I had an ultrasound to rule out more endometriomas was the same day I met a koala at the zoo. Is life bittersweet? Oh my! If we really look at our lives, the painful is painted with the pleasurable, and the memorable is oftentimes stained with what we'd like to forget. It's part of being alive...**It's part of being alive.**

So for those of you, clients and students, wondering what is next...I have ceased my 9 classes a week and fulfilling my client list in my office through summer. I have decided that mothering and healing are my top priorities. I am planning on returning to COS in the fall on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and I am beginning a 2<sup>nd</sup> blog for those of you who have been asking for information on endometriosis and adenomyosis called, **Endo Info.**

I have learned that endometriosis is one of the most misunderstood dis-eases, is hard to diagnose, and is truly something that allopathic and naturopathic medicine must meet in the middle on. The excision surgeries are necessary, but diet and lifestyle are just as important.

As my health continues to improve, I know I have a lot of students craving their truly gentle yoga, and I have more understanding of pain, vertebral injuries, abdominal issues, pelvic floor pain, etc. I have been attending life school, and so much I studied throughout college has now become a real storyline off the pages of textbooks and into my heart. Life is funny, and we must see the beauty amidst the difficulty for it's a message from above that you are in fact still alive.

**Pictures Below: Legs up the Wall in Glendale, CA. Trip to meet Dr. Towfigh**



## **Love Yourself, Let Go.**

**March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015**

Let go of the old to make way for the new. A theme I have been seeing lately in my own life is how we humans use our old experiences to see our present situations, and when we do this with a tragic or painful memory how we can pull that energy into the present moment tarnishing it.

The first time I really became aware of this recently was when we were at UCSF Children's Hospital last month for Isaiah's surgery. He had an inguinal hernia repair by the amazing Dr. Padilla. As we were preparing for the big day, my arms would go numb at the thought of him being anesthetized, and I would become so terribly emotional. I recognized that I was not just a nervous mother, I was a mama who had gone through a lot my own hospital trauma, and was carrying my pain from the past into little Isaiah's situation. This was not ok with me!

I began to meditate around this and let my old layers dissolve. I began to see that his surgery was for a positive reason that had nothing to do with our past painful

moments. I imagined the angels that would be watching over him, and in my core I knew all was well. My intention became being fully centered and present as I entered the hospital with him in order for him to have an optimal experience without my energy of pain from the past. Wow. It went so well. The nurses actually commented on how peaceful he was coming out of anesthesia. How they had never seen anything like it. His healing is beautiful. He is stronger than before.

Another example was the anxious feeling I have been having during my classes at the college that are held in a gym. It's not like me to feel less than confident and in God's presence when I show up to teach and I have been feeling an insecurity in myself that is new. As I meditated with this I became aware that my severe hurt I held from a past dynamic of teaching in a gym a few years ago: rude gestures, inappropriate athletes, and moral degradation surfaced in this past memory, and I realized I was carrying that crummy feeling into the now. I said to myself, "I let go of the past and embrace the present for the blessing that it is." I imagined the grey cloud of the past floating far away from me as the luminescence of the opportunity to teach today presented itself. Almost instantly I could feel that white light peace that I normally experience when I teach. I could see into the eyes of my present day students, and recognized that the wounds of the past are just not allowed here now, because I have let them go, and I want to experience this present moment for the gift that it is.

How often do I see the same things in others! Do you ever realize that we carry our old patterns into what could be amazing present moment experiences?

As the Queen of Arendale in the Disney movie Frozen, Elsa sings, "Let it go..." It is a gift to yourself when you do. You never know what blessings this moment is giving you that are stained with hurt from your past. As you let the hurt go, space is made for the new brighter and more beautiful moments.



## **God is in the Details**

**February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

Our room at The Garden facility was filled to the brim this last Christmas with our Tai Chi/Yoga combo class. As I taught, I felt such gratitude for all of the important and precious beings that graced me with their presence, including Danielle Brady, one of the magicians who used her gift to paint our beautiful walls of both the original Garden and during the remodel in 2012. I had no idea that this would be my last opportunity to teach in that space. Right at the New Year, our family collectively decided to let go of the space on Cedro Ln. in order to open the Gesundheit Village on Deschutes in Palo Cedro. It is the home to the Photon Genius (a medical technology that is saving lives), and I wasn't sure what was in store for me.

As I stood in an empty space that had often listened to me cry, met my children one at a time during baby showers and Garden Parties, and of course held me during 1000s of Savasanas, I knew that it was time to say goodbye. The last item I removed from the corner of the space was the little angel wind chime. The words, "have faith" were written on here gown, and dozens of times I would look at her and be reminded that all was well.

I stared at the bolsters and blankets and mats in our storage area and could feel in my heart that they had a home. I was encouraged to take them home with me to Mt. Shasta by my mother, but told her, "Not yet, I will know where they go in a week or so." I could feel it.

I grieved the loss, but knew in my heart it was right. Sometimes we have to let go in order to make space for what is to come. I thought, "Wow, so little yoga to teach in

the coming months...only 2 classes per week...God must have something in store.”

The following Wednesday I received a call from the Dean of the Kinesiology Dept. at College of the Siskiyous’ Assistant, “Can you meet with our Dean...the sooner the better?” I thought to myself, “No way! Is this what Heaven was making space for?!”...Those of you who have traveled my Wonderland road with me know that I was let go along with all of the other adjunct faculty at Shasta College in 2009 due to the CA state budget cuts, and was devastated. We had grown from 15 students one fall semester to over 40 students in 4 classes in less than 2 years. I taught there for almost 5, and the day I had to say goodbye was so sad, but I had peace because I had just opened the original Garden in Palo Cedro!

Now full circle, I am in fact back teaching at a Junior College (the one my parents attended in the 70s by the way), and have watched as these classes have just flourished! What a blessing. What a surprise! I am overwhelmed with happiness!

So for all of you whom I no longer get to see every week in Palo Cedro, this part is for you. I miss you terribly. When you visit the Shasta Yoga Institute on Sundays my heart skips a beat. My 2 worlds collide as I feel the Mountain’s presence and yours in the same space. You are forever in my true Garden (my heart), and my gratitude for the role you have played in my life overflows.