

Finding Joy Through Change and Challenge

After years in journalism and digital media, I've learned that life rarely goes according to plan—but it always offers another draft. Through my work, I've built communities, told stories that matter, and helped others rediscover creativity, courage, and joy in their own chapters of change.



Self-Discovery & Shine

I've always believed that self-discovery doesn't start when life falls apart—it's already humming quietly underneath the noise, waiting for us to listen.

For me, that hum began in my twenties, sitting in a newsroom surrounded by the constant clatter of keyboards and the low hum of discontent. Working at newspapers should have felt like an accomplishment—it was what “smart people” did, right? But even in the middle of deadlines and bylines, I couldn't shake the sense that I didn't belong. So many colleagues seemed unhappy, forever complaining, as if joy was something reserved for other people.

I remember thinking, is this it? I'd done what I was supposed to do—worked hard, chased stories, earned respect—and yet, something essential was missing. I didn't feel alive. Creativity was frowned upon, and happiness felt almost rebellious.

That quiet realization became my first act of self-discovery: understanding that fitting in isn't the same as belonging.



When I finally left the newspaper world, it wasn't because I had a solid plan—it was because I couldn't ignore that inner voice any longer. I didn't want to wake up one day as a fifty-year-old in a small-city newsroom, complaining about the same old things. I wanted to create, to build, to breathe.

The Internet became my catalyst for change. I was curious about its possibilities—how it invited thinkers, makers, and dreamers to shape new worlds. That curiosity led me to a position at AOL, and suddenly I was surrounded by innovation, creativity, and teamwork that felt alive. It was the first time I truly saw how I could thrive in an environment built on ideas and collaboration rather than hierarchy and cynicism.

That step cracked open the door to everything that came after: entrepreneurship, self-trust, community, and ultimately, healing.

Insight & Integrity

Life has a way of testing the lessons we think we've already learned. For me, that test came years later, with three small words no one ever wants to hear: *You have cancer.*

It was Stage I breast cancer, caught early—thank goodness for science and screening—but those words still rearranged something deep inside me. An old friend asked, "Was the diagnosis a wake-up call for you as much as it was for me?" I had to smile and tell her, honestly, no. I hadn't been asleep.

That answer surprised even me at first. But as I sat with it, I realized that my years of seeking, learning, and growing had built a quiet strength inside me. I didn't need a wake-up call because I'd already been awake—tuned in to gratitude, curiosity, and the importance of living fully.

Still, the diagnosis invited reflection. I shared my experience openly with my church community and friends, not because I wanted sympathy, but because I wanted to show that something frightening doesn't have to take over your life. We can choose not to let fear define the story.

Cancer taught me another layer of integrity—the courage to live in alignment with what I know to be true. I learned to relax into trust: in my doctors, in science, and in my body's ability to heal. I also learned to let others support me, which might be one of the hardest lessons for an independent woman to learn.

The insights were simple but profound:

- Gratitude grounds you when everything else feels uncertain.
- Openness builds connection, even through pain.
- Integrity isn't just about being honest with others—it's about being honest with yourself.

When you stand in integrity with your truth, even the hardest seasons can reveal unexpected light.

Mindset, Mindfulness, & Meditation

Healing—whether from illness, loss, or burnout—begins in the mind. Not in a “think positive” kind of way, but in the gentle, grounded awareness that what you focus on grows.

For years, I've started every morning with a simple ritual: before I get out of bed (after I play Wordle, admittedly!), I list three to five things I'm grateful for in the notes app on my phone. I've done this for eight years now, and it's not

not an exaggeration to say it has changed my life. Gratitude sets the tone for my day—it roots me in presence and possibility.

When you begin with gratitude, you start the day with abundance, not scarcity. You remember that you already have enough, even when things aren't perfect. That mindset is both armor and medicine.

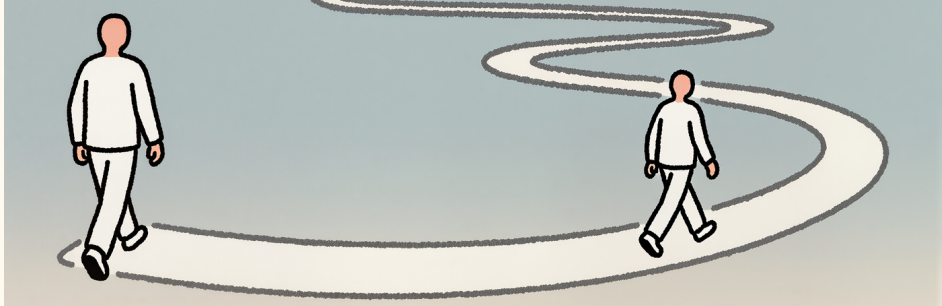
I've also learned the power of stillness. I often sit quietly with a pen and a blank piece of paper—just listening. Sometimes my thoughts rattle around like marbles in a tin can. Other times, clarity rises like sunlight through clouds. Either way, that practice of pausing—of letting my mind settle before rushing into doing—keeps me balanced.

Mindfulness doesn't have to mean sitting cross-legged for hours. It can mean noticing the colors of the trees during a walk, breathing deeply before sending a stressful email, or taking a moment to smile at the sky.

And meditation, for me, isn't about escaping thoughts—it's about befriending them. Letting them move through, without judgment.

I remind myself often: you can't control what happens, but you can choose how to meet it. That choice—of presence, of perspective—is where transformation begins.





Pathways & Potential

The path of transformation is rarely straight. Mine has been a winding, sometimes messy trail through grief, loss, creativity, and resilience.

Leaving journalism led me to entrepreneurship. Working at AOL taught me about being individually responsible for outcomes—and that realization sparked a fire. I started two companies, each a reflection of my curiosity and belief in innovation. The challenges were real—uncertainty, long hours, and plenty of trial and error—but they were also exhilarating.

Each experience taught me that potential isn't something we find—it's something we build. Step by step, decision by decision.

And yet, not all growth comes from career milestones. Some of the deepest growth came from loss. Losing my mom two years ago cracked something open in me. Grief strips away the unnecessary and forces you to see what truly matters. My dad and sister, Melissa, became my anchors, and together we found new ways to hold each other up.

Community has always been a source of renewal for me. In Boston, my church and our minister, Joy Fallon, reminded me that service isn't just about giving—it's about belonging. Through volunteer work feeding the unhoused on Boston Common, I learned something profound: even those without homes have community. They look out for one another, share what they have, and celebrate small joys together. Humans seek connection—it's how we survive.

That truth has guided me in every chapter since.

I've come to see life's changes—career pivots, loss, illness—not as detours, but as pathways to potential. Each challenge has refined my focus, reminding me of my guardrails: family, personal growth, professional satisfaction, and well-being. These are the filters I use to decide where to invest my time and energy.

The potential isn't in doing more—it's in doing what matters.

Love, Liveliness, & Legacy

Through all of it—career shifts, cancer, grief, and growth—I've learned that love is the thread that ties it all together. Not just romantic love, but the love that comes from connection, purpose, and gratitude.

I love the people who have walked beside me: my family, my lifelong friends from college, my church community, my creative collaborators. Each has reflected something back to me about who I am and who I'm becoming.

Love is also liveliness—the spark that keeps you curious, playful, and engaged with the world. I try to live that way: busy when I want to be, contemplative when I want to be, social when I want to be, and delightfully anti-social when I need to recharge. Balance is the rhythm of a joyful life.





As for legacy, I hope mine is about courage and curiosity. That I pushed boundaries, took risks, moved on when I should have, hung on when it mattered, and learned every single day.

Legacy isn't about monuments or titles—it's about moments. The quiet ones where you choose gratitude over complaint, compassion over criticism, presence over distraction.

And when I think of love and legacy now, I think of my mother's gentle wisdom, my father's resilience, and my sister's laughter. I think of the women who read these words and realize that their own joy is still within reach.

Because it is. Always.

Envision & Embolden

So where does that leave me now? In a season of learning, always.

Lately, I've been exploring new creative territories—writing fiction, participating in writing cohorts, and even diving into AI testing and rubrics. It might sound like an odd mix, but for me, it's all connected by curiosity and growth. The same approach I brought to healing, I bring to learning: understand the context, trust the process, and move forward with courage.

If there's one message I want you to take away, it's this: you are not behind. You are exactly where you need to be, learning what you need to learn.

Change will always come—sometimes softly, sometimes like a storm—but you are equipped to meet it.

Here are a few reminders I carry with me:

- Stay curious. Ask questions, explore new ideas, keep learning.
- Practice gratitude daily. It's the simplest way to rewire your brain for joy.
- Listen inward. Your intuition knows what you need before your mind catches up.
- Find your people. Healing happens faster in community.
- Rest in joy. You don't have to earn it—it's your birthright.

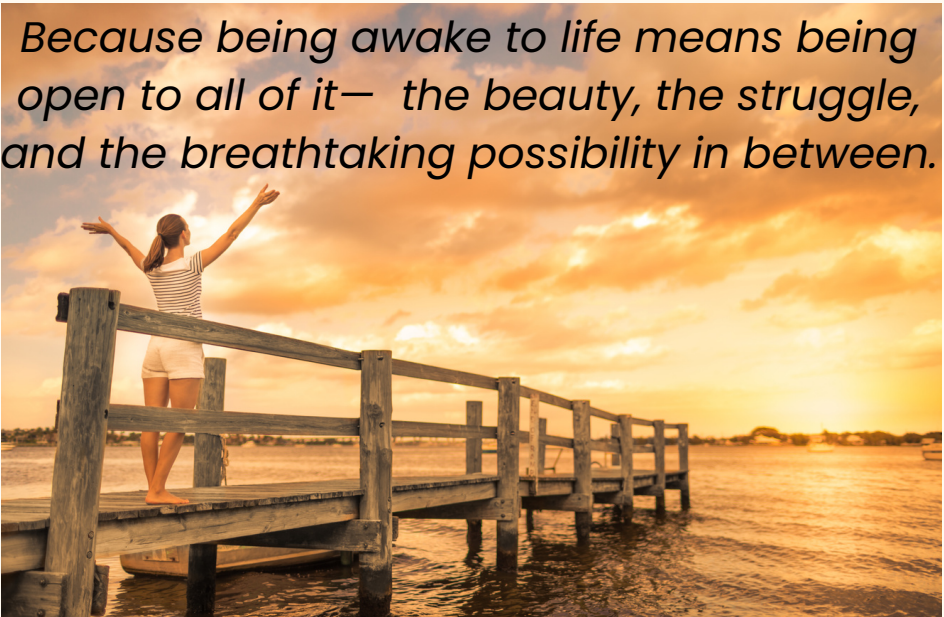
Looking ahead, I want to travel more, experience new cultures, and continue helping my dad while making sure my own world stays balanced. Renewal isn't a one-time event—it's a lifelong rhythm.

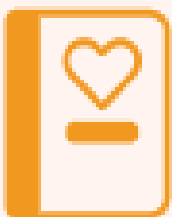
So I invite you, wherever you are in your journey, to pause, breathe, and ask yourself:

What would it look like to meet change with joy, instead of fear?

Because joy isn't the absence of challenge—it's the light we bring into it.

Because being awake to life means being open to all of it— the beauty, the struggle, and the breathtaking possibility in between.





Journal Exercise: “Listening for Joy”

Set aside 15 quiet minutes with your favorite pen and a blank piece of paper.

1. Take a few deep breaths.
2. Write the word “JOY” at the top of the page.
3. Beneath it, list three recent moments—big or small—when you felt even a flicker of joy. Maybe it was sunlight through your window, laughter with a friend, or finishing a task that once felt daunting.
4. Next, write three moments that challenged you recently.
5. For each challenge, ask yourself: What might this be teaching me?
6. Close by writing one sentence that begins with, “I am grateful for...”

When you finish, sit quietly for a minute. Notice how your body feels.

Joy and challenge often travel together. When you learn to listen for both, you start to see that every chapter—even the hard ones—holds a little light.