

bella GRACE

Life's a Beautiful Journey

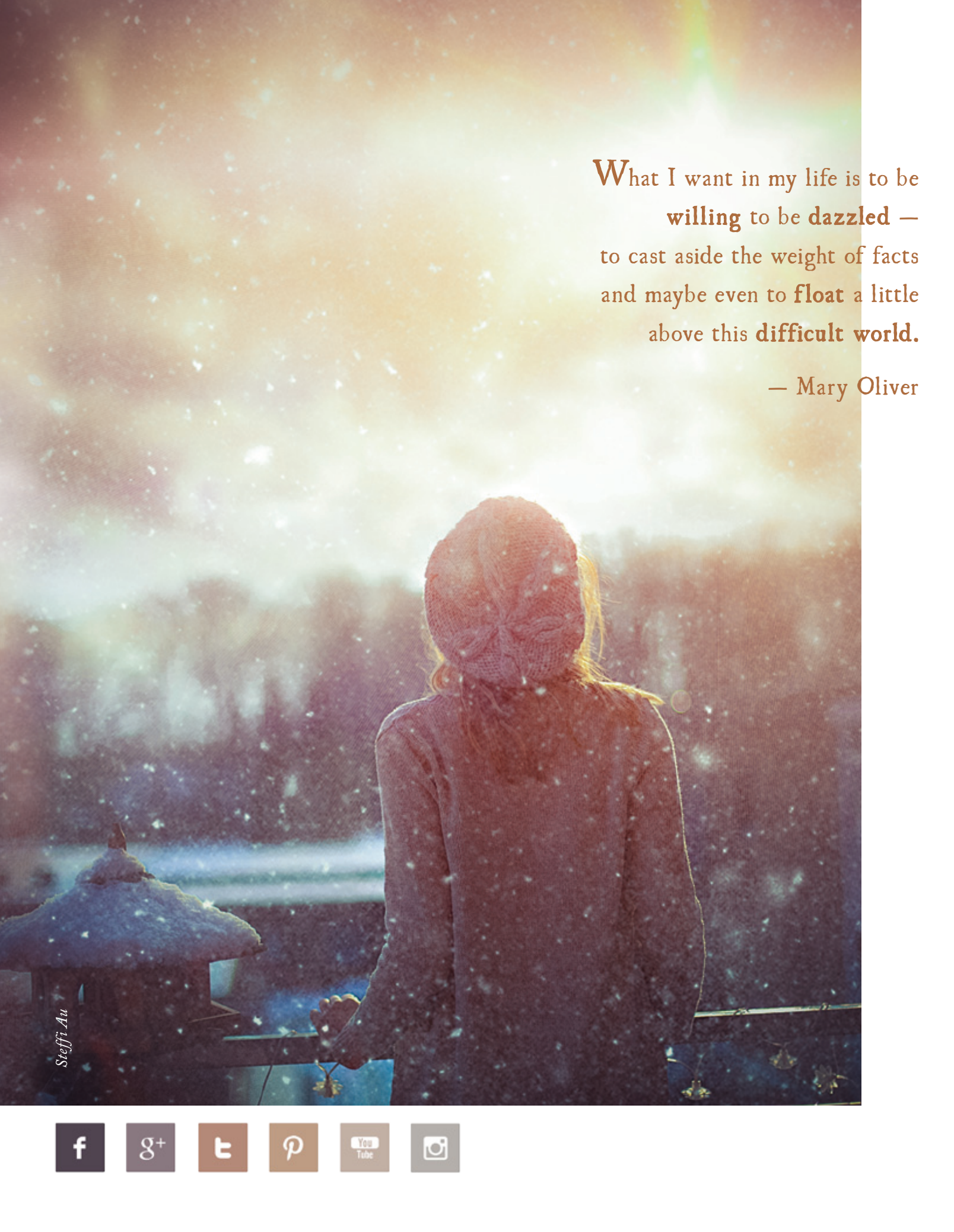
*The Universe
is Listening*

*175 Tiny Things That
Give Us Big Feelings*

A Lovely Mess of Life

Mining Magic



A person wearing a dark, hooded sweater stands on a balcony or deck, looking out over a snowy landscape. The scene is filled with falling snow and a bright, hazy light source, possibly the sun, creating a soft, ethereal atmosphere. A traditional-style lantern is visible in the lower-left foreground.

What I want in my life is to be
willing to be **dazzled** —
to cast aside the weight of facts
and maybe even to **float** a little
above this **difficult world**.

— Mary Oliver

Steffi Au



Dear Friends,

When people ask me to describe Bella Grace, I'm often at a loss for words. To say it is a magazine doesn't quite do it justice. It is, of course, but it's much more than that.

The moment you hold a copy, with its thick paper and sturdy book-jacket cover, you know you're in for something special. The pages within are filled with inspirational quotes paired with breathtaking photography, thought-provoking worksheets, and beautifully penned stories from ordinary women who view life in an extraordinary way. To some, I say it's an experience.

Most often, though, I describe *Bella Grace* as a friend.

One thing I've learned in my life is that most of us are looking for reassurance that we aren't alone. Whether it's a personality trait you worry is odd, a penchant for the unusual, or difficult life circumstances, we just want someone to say "Me too!" or "I know just how you feel."

This is something I learned as a teenager, when I chose Jane Austen and knitting over nights out with friends. I longed for someone who would sit next to me with some yarn and knitting needles, ready to talk about Emma Woodhouse or Elizabeth Bennet. Surely I wasn't the only 14-year-old who preferred to spend her time this way.

Bella Grace began as a series of shared thoughts between Kellene Giloff, the President of Stampington & Company, and myself. We both had a similar outlook on life and similar passions. It was comforting, and we knew there were others like us out there. We wanted to start a magazine that was filled with women who found overwhelming pleasure from the simple things in life. Women who saw the extraordinary in the ordinary. Who, despite difficult circumstances, continued to seek out life's beauty. Who shared and celebrated their unique quirks. Who wanted to lift up and support other women.

Immediately after launching the first issue, we received letter after letter from new readers. Many compared reading the stories to having heartfelt conversations with a close friend. They were comforted to know that a whole world full of kindred spirits was out there. That we are able to provide comfort and company to women around the world is something we are extremely proud of.



From the pages of the magazine and into real life, *Bella Grace* has become somewhat of a person to us all. She savors life — from that first sip of her morning coffee to the 15 minutes to read in bed she steals for herself each night. She doesn't find it funny that you like taking pictures of your feet all over town because she enjoys the very same thing. She writes letters — real, handwritten ones — to her friends. She stays up all night talking to you about how lovely it would be to pack up her things and move to a small town where she can live a quiet life.

Most of all, she is there for you when you need her most. Cheering you on. Letting you know that you're not alone. *Bella Grace* is you. She's me. She's all of us.

My best,

Christen

Christen Hammons
Editor-in-Chief



Robert Zaleski

THE UNIVERSE IS *Listening*

WORDS BY SARAH CLAYVILLE

I've written in journals for as long as I remember, and I can distinctly find the bumpy spots of my life by the gaps. Days, weeks, or months where there was written radio silence because I'd convinced myself I didn't have time to sit down, breathe, and put my pen to paper. Those were the times of my life I cruised through with little reflection and consequently little success.

The beauty was, in fact, all around me. I was moving too quickly to see it.

So I crafted a quick Post-It reminder of the guidelines to journaling, or at least the tips that helped me make the effort when I felt completely blocked. Some defy traditional journaling practices, but *the reality is if you can articulate your thoughts into words on a page, they have strength. They have traction.* The universe is listening.

- 1. Journal with friends and family.* Writing is often equated with solitary confinement. Throw a journaling party. Assemble the family under a tent in the backyard. Sit back to back with your partner. Bring your journals to a pedicure day at the spa. Build your writing community.
- 2. Don't journal chronologically.* Write at the end of the journal and go backward. Start in the middle. Skip days that confuse you, and recover them when you have achieved a safe and healthy distance. Don't let a date govern journaling success or failure.
- 3. Draw your thoughts.* Studies have shown that a student doodling pays more attention than a student staring blankly at a teacher. Capture words along the back of a bohemian elephant. Fill balloons with crazy hopes and dreams.
- 4. Bullet journal.* This recent trend incorporates doodling with bulleted lists to help you be brief and more succinct. Categorize. Color coordinate. Forget sentence structure and get to the point.
- 5. Rewrite the day.* Let the journal be your personal time machine. Wish you hadn't snapped at a coworker? Write what should have transpired and come to peace with your revision.
- 6. Create a dreamer's to-do.* If the day was dreary, spend the journal entry imagining a more enticing tomorrow. Be unrealistic. Journals are the perfect private space to drift off into the stratosphere.
- 7. Journal around.* Thanks to craft stores and discount retailers, stunning journals are available inexpensively. Many even offer writing prompts to fuel your creative motor. Different journals can hold different moods. »


8. *Journal in other people's words.* Well hello, Pinterest. Search for inspirational quotes and reflect on individuals' moments of brilliance. You may find you quickly segue into your own radiant ideas.

9. *Don't sweat the small stuff.* Allow yourself the freedom to let go. You are not a news reporter bound to record each misstep of the day. Be generous and kind to yourself. Note the tiny triumphs and the revelations that made you hold your breath, because the world, and you, are just that wonderful.

Ultimately your journals should be exactly what you want them to be. By carving out a few moments to reflect, you may actually find you have more time in a given day because some of the time-snatching worries and wants have been sequestered and calmed by the pages you inscribe.

Sarah Clayville is an author and high school teacher in central Pennsylvania. She believes that everyone has a voice that needs to be heard and has built her career around encouraging this in both children and adults. To learn more about her writing, visit sarahsayswrite.com.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a vibrant red, textured dress and a matching red headband with a beaded necklace, is floating on her back in the ocean. Her arms are outstretched to the sides, and her legs are also outstretched. The water is dark with gentle ripples, and the background shows a soft, golden sunset sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Oh my God, what if you wake up some day, and you're 65, or 75, and you never got your MEMOIR or novel written; or you didn't go swimming in warm pools and oceans all those years because your thighs were JIGGLY and you had a nice big comfortable TUMMY; or you were just so strung out on PERFECTIONISM and people-pleasing that you forgot to have a BIG juicy creative life, of IMAGINATION and radical silliness and staring off into space like when you were a kid? It's going to break your heart. DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN.

— Anne Lamott

THESE ARE

Those Moments...

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAWN HANNA
WORDS BY AILISESPIRIT DETOMMASO

In her poem, "These Are Those Moments ...," 14-year-old poet, Ailisespirit DeTommaso, captures in words the world as she sees it. Whether our adolescence was a time that causes us to remember youthful excitement, one we would rather forget, or a combination of both, Ailisespirit encourages us to reflect on how life looked through our own 14-year-old eyes, and imparts the kind of wisdom characteristic of an old soul. Inspired by the beauty she sees in the everyday, Ailisespirit reminds us to pause and reflect in our most hectic moments, to remind ourselves that at the end of the day, despite the ups and downs of our hurried adult lives, life is indeed extraordinary.

When you're driving with your head out the window
the sun flickers as it travels through the leaves of trees
splattering light across your iris

Where the whole family laughs at a joke from years ago
A laugh with a dash of yearning to travel back in time

The times where the sound of crunching blood orange
leaves under my bare feet is so loud that it distracts me
from the worries of the world

When the youngest in the family makes a joke
and everybody laughs so hard
that the child now believes he is unstoppable

When you look over and catch him staring at you
that teenage girl feeling surges through your "admired" body

Where the birds have a
unique song of their
own language
letting you know there is life
beyond humans
beautiful life ... we aren't
alone here

When that one cloud finally
leaves the sun alone
and sunlight fills and warms
up your bedroom
reminding you life is out
there and life is waiting

That moment when you
realize you care most about
the simple things in life

That perfect second when
you come to see you are
exactly who you want to be
in this beautiful world
You've made yet another
mark on this planet

When you plan to go outside
for a second
but find yourself out there
for hours
because nature's beauty has
gotten a hold of your soul
every breeze exhaled by the
earth seeping into your skin

That time you find yourself
smiling for no reason
but there is a reason
life will go on

These are those moments
moments in the life made up
of mystery and beauty
and what I wanna do on this
beautiful mystery
is live ≈

*Ailisespirit DeTommaso lives in Long Island, New York. You can
email her at etrie66@icloud.com.*

A Lovely MESS OF LIFE

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY BY D SMITH KAICH JONES

I like it when you invite me in and say, “Excuse the mess,” and there really is messiness — a lovely mess, but even lovely messes count. I like the roll of striped fabric you’ve propped in the living room corner while you figure out what to do with it and where it should go; I like knowing you felt you couldn’t live without it, I like that you bought it with someday in mind, and I like that you’re ok with someday not showing up yet. I like that you know it will.

I like the dishes in your sink, waiting to be washed. I like knowing that that someday will also come — for me, it comes when I run out of bowls. I let them stack, never minding the fact that it will take less than a few minutes to actually wash them. I like that you do too.



I like the stacks of books, read and unread, your Kindle on the top, plugged into the wall, charging. I like the pages half written you’ve left on the couch or the table, weighted down by apples and small pieces of rose quartz. I like the flowers that need to be tossed, but instead hang over the edges of vases and planters, reaching for sunshine they no longer need, but still boasting a last bit of color you can’t let go of. I like the flowers you pick from the bushes outside, the ones plunked down in tall glasses like an afterthought at the end of the day, like a treasure you found when you emptied your pockets. I like your shoes everywhere, kicked off at the front door or when you sat down to check the mail. I especially like them forgotten under the dining table — I can see you sitting there, relaxing with a glass of wine or water, discussing the almost gone day, toes free at last. I like the boxes of matches next to tea lights burned to the bottom. »



PROCESSED AND MANAGED BY PETER PIVER
PIVER

SHELTON *Going Back to Bisbee*


ARIZONA

3 *The Print* ADAMS NY GS

2 *The Negative* ADAMS NY GS

WUG *Coming Home* Spiritual Interiors Vinny Lee WATSON GUPTILL

The Garden Sanctuary Keith Mitchell hamlyn



I like that the floor and the couch are equal sitting places, that the drinking glasses don't necessarily match, and ditto the plates, but I like that they go together without the matchy-matchy, if you know what I mean, and I like that you do.

And vice versa. I like when you walk into my home that you love the fairy lights over my bed and pay no attention to the fact that the bed is unmade and piled with clothing. I like that you don't ask if you can have a Coke, that you just open the cabinet for a glass (I like that you know which cabinet to open), open the freezer for ice, and open the refrigerator for the Coke. I like that you grab big pillows and sprawl on the floor, and want to know what's on TV, and I like that sometimes you fall asleep on the floor, right in the middle of the good parts. I like that you never know when I step over you on my way to the kitchen to get myself another drink, and I like that you never wake when I click off the lamps and settle back on the couch to watch the rest of the movie alone.

I like that you like my broken Buddha with his arm glued back on (see the Buddha, break the Buddha), and the Ganesh I repainted and draped in jewelry. I like that you like the milagros tossed in a not-quite-finished-never-will-be papier-mâché bowl, a metaphor for true life lived one day at a time. I like that you like the unframed paintings next to the photographs that cost big money.

I like the messiness of our friendship and our lives twined together. I like the tulip you give me, one each week from the bouquets you buy, or the sprig of blooms from an azalea bush, and I like the pink hawthorn blossoms the neighbor gave you, in a not so fancy vase, and I like your dog curled up, asleep by your front door. I like when you keep that

door and your windows open to the rain. I like that my cat likes you and knows you as friend, and I like that, even though it has taken years, she will at last lay next to you, sprawled against you on the floor and pillows, and I like the smile that brings me, a smile you never see, a smile the cat ignores.

I like that those pillows are the ones you changed your mind about buying and let me buy instead.

I like that you get me, my hurts and happinesses, and I like that you open your heart and show me your scars, your fears, your truth, and your hurts, and I like that you like the same colors I do, even though it means that sometimes I show up at your door wearing the same shirt or shoes and one of us must change before we head out.

I even like that. ≈



"The only people for me are the ones who spill things, the ones who drop their cups sometimes, the ones who get dirty hands and messy hair, the ones who can go barefoot if they feel like it, the people who forget things, and can laugh at themselves every day ..."

- C. JoyBell C.

Read more of D. Smith Kaich Jones' writing at emmatree.com.



Feeding the Wolf

WORDS BY WENDY WOLF

A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson.

He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is a vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is a loving, compassionate one." His grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?"

The grandfather answered, "The one I feed."

This is one of my favorite inspirational stories. It's a universal message that applies to everything. What you pay attention to thrives, and what you ignore or let go of fades away.

I've long thought that happiness is largely a matter of where we choose to focus. I'm not free of negative thoughts or complaints, by a long stretch. I try hard to look at things as they are, not how I want them to be, which can be painful. ***I trust my intuition, and if something feels off, I try to figure out why.*** If there's something happening that I believe is wrong — cruelty, exploitation, social injustice, etc. — I speak up. Most of the time. When I get weary, I pull back inside myself like a tender, squishy snail retreating in to her protective shell (an analogy that fits me in oh so many ways). Like everyone else, I pick my battles. But I do "speak up" a lot, and it's often not well-received. I've been accused of not being "positive," but there's a fine line between being a chronic fault-finder and bringing something wrong to light.

All of that is to say that I'm not Little Miss Sunshine all the time, but I do look around and I see what's good. And beautiful. It's everywhere. From the comfort of a warm, fragrant cup of tea in my hands to the way clouds glow with yellow and lavender at twilight. The way that one person destroys something and thousands rally to help pick up the pieces. Or how grateful I am to be breathing and mobile and clear-headed. »



And though gratitude is an important component of the lesson, another is perspective. Or reframing a story. How I think about something determines how I feel about it. I've solved precisely one fear this way. I used to be afraid to fly. I wasn't phobic, and I would fly if necessary, but I was really scared. One time, though, I boarded the plane, sat down, buckled my seatbelt, and — as usual — scenes from every disaster movie I've ever watched started playing in my head. But then I thought: What if I imagined the plane landing safely, rather than picturing a fiery ball of plummeting wreckage? The likely case is that it will land safely, so what if I just keep that image in mind? What if I stop feeding the fear? And so I did. And weirdly (weird only because the idea is so simple) it worked. The change wasn't instantaneous — it took some application (AKA “feeding the good wolf”). The next couple of flights, I had to remind myself to imagine a safe landing, to keep that thought in my head. And to breathe. (Breathing's always good.) I got better with practice, and now when I get on a plane, I don't sweat it at all. Except when there's turbulence. But thankfully, I don't get tossed around an aircraft often. It's generally smooth sailing, and now I don't die a thousand interim deaths from fears I no longer indulge.

It isn't always easy, but it's a powerful arrow in my quiver. I remind myself often that, for the most part, I have no sway over other people or world events, but I do have some control over how much it affects me. If I'm depressed about ugliness far from home, I limit my media. If I feel sad, I avoid things that add to that sadness, and instead listen to music that makes me feel like dancing, or read captivating books or watch shows sprinkled with humor. I try to eat good food and get enough sleep. To spend time outside, and to be kind and encouraging to myself and others.

As much as possible, I feed the good wolf. The life I want to live depends on her.

Wendy Wolf is an artist and writer who lives with her husband in the misty, enchanted Pacific Northwest. She's short, has freckles, adores eating (especially chocolate, Indian food, and mashed potatoes!), and is vegan purely for the love of animals. You can find her on Twitter (@grasshopper93).



Feed the Good Wolf

Wendy shares how reframing her thoughts can have a huge impact on difficult or stressful situations. What things in your own life can you reframe?

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A close-up photograph of a woman's hand holding a tall glass filled with vibrant green juice. The woman has teal-colored nail polish and is wearing a ring on her ring finger. The background is softly blurred, showing a floral pattern and a blue garment. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The Art OF THE GRATITUDE LIST

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPH
BY MADELYN MULVANEY

It's been recommended in a number of books to write a daily gratitude list, recording all that you feel thankful for. Those who have completed that exercise know that it can become repetitive, repeatedly recording appreciation for a roof over their head, their health, and more. While these are obviously things to be grateful for, there are plenty of other things to jot down, if only you pay attention. We were smitten with Madelyn Mulvaney's gratitude list and its extensiveness.

A Toast (of Green Juice) to Gratitude

It's been far too long. Far too long since I made a list of the abundance overflowing in my life — and my exaltation, my gratitude for all things I cherish.

So. Here. Now. I. Celebrate.

1. The love I share with my family and friends, and the ways I am moved daily to make a difference in our exquisite world
2. My dogs, Roxy and Lucy, and my daughter's puppy, Romeo
3. The dancer's pose in yoga
4. Dark chocolate—joy bars
5. Spice — all spice — especially Indian!
6. Fresh, homemade pizza dough and the way he makes the toppings sing
7. Green, violet, silver, gold
8. Conversations with my kindred friends — deepening, opening
9. Seashells and sea glass, and driftwood and bones
10. Love letters (I want to write more)
11. My always-present Pete, who has a heart of gold and shows up every second, every day for our family/children in rain, and in sunshine, with unconditional love
12. Running water (my bath!)
13. Vegetables (and green juice drinks)
14. My hands — to hold my beloveds with — for hugging and touching and connecting — love makes me hold the world differently, always
15. Meditation (on the couch, on the beach, in the beam of sunlight beneath the giant sequoia trees)
16. My sweater collection (thrifed!)
17. The mountains and the sea of my beautiful sea to sky Vancouver
18. Wild raspberry bushes
19. The old and wonderful violet-tinted windows of my house
20. My house (circa 1941)
21. That I am loved (oh, thank you, thank you, thank you!)
22. That I love (times infinity)
23. My past and my present ... and the morning sun
24. Tea
25. Morning coffee
26. Sunday mornings
27. Bonfires (especially on the beach!)
28. Sailing with Michael »

29. Wine: organic, red, full-bodied, smooth
30. Autumn
31. Elephants (luminous elephants too)
32. Colorful pens and my sketchbooks
33. My studio
34. Snail mail
35. Nests and eggs
36. Books (reading “the power of now” at present)
37. My feet
38. Rose quartz
39. Wild salmon
40. This quote: “Open the window in the center of your chest and let the spirits fly in and out.” (Rumi)
 41. Teaching! Oh, my glorious spirit! I love teaching!
 42. All the gifts of teaching I have been blessed with ... students who have taught me the power of an open heart, an open mind
 43. My lovely laugh lines
 44. My bicycle
 45. My voice
 46. My children’s laughter (oh, oh, oh!), all laughter anywhere anytime
 47. All beautiful things that are wild and free
48. Creativity — my sweet muse (after a bit of creative block or perhaps the natural ebb and flow of such things, the spirits are flying in and out and hatchlings murmur in their awakening)
 49. Joy
 50. Random acts of beauty and love
 51. Twinkle lights
 52. Perfume
 53. My camera
 54. My Kate Spade notebooks in my satchel, gifted to me by my daughter Tess
 55. This moment, now (and I love that we are all in this together)

Madelyn Mulvaney believes in love and magic and exquisite human connection. She lives in a darling little house in the mountains and belongs to a very happy family. She cherishes her children, Tess and Noah with all of her heart and soul, and you can share more of her beautiful life at madelynmulvaney.com.

Most gratitude exercises suggest making a list of three to five items; we think that's too limiting. Selecting so few forces you to choose what you consider to be the most important. Challenging yourself to keep a long list demands for you to be creative. ~

Fill this page up with your gratitude list. When we say to fill it up, we mean it. Write along the paper edges. Write in the margins. Cover this page up with all you're thankful for.

“I want to think again of DANGEROUS
and NOBLE things. I want to be light
and frolicsome. I want to be improbable,
BEAUTIFUL, and afraid of nothing as
though I had wings.” — Mary Oliver





Whitney Justesen

Staying Gentle in a *Loud World*

BY SARAH ELWELL

A cicada is singing in my garden; further on, the distant roads are humming with people already going to work and school, despite the dark hour. When I glance over my shoulder, through lace and patterned glass, I can see the deep blue promise of day.

I am endlessly glad to be able to be quiet myself in such a morning. As the day goes on, I will lose that feeling — looking ahead to long hours with much to do, I know I will become scratchy at my edges and tough at my heart. I wish not, so much. But the thing you might not realize about many grumpy people is that they could very well be sensitive and quiet spirits who cannot cope with all the clamor of the world.

To support myself in staying softhearted and gentle, I do small things — wrap myself in a pashmina (because shawls are no longer approved of), wear rose-scented talcum powder, wear clothes that are soft and warming. The lace trim of a petticoat, unseen but drifting across the skin, can bring such comfort. Carrying a lovely book can also help — not to read, necessarily, but just to hold so the memory of its poetry or beautiful words can flow through my field of energy. Sometimes listening to peaceful music is good, but when senses are harassed by too much stimuli, music can perhaps make things worse.

Do you like to be gentle in the world, or are you a strong and striding woman, a fierce and wonderful woman? Either way, what tricks do you have to keep yourself authentic and inside yourself when amongst the frenetic world? ≈

Read more of Sarah Elwell's writing on her blog, knittingthewind.blogspot.co.nz.



So many unique stories with intriguing titles. So little space to share them all.

Here are a few of my favorite articles we've had the honor of publishing.

Kellene

Kellene Giloff
Founder & Creative Director
Bella Grace Magazine

- » Here: The Sacredness of Place
- » The Simple Charm of a Clothesline
- » Notes on How to Be the Dark Horse
- » Cello, Chai & the Perfect Cupcake
- » 10 Ways to Host the Coziest Night In
- » Silence, or Something Like It
- » If you Stand Still Long Enough You'll Grow Wings
- » Underneath the Mess, Everything is Marvelous
- » Surprised by Joy: 31 Small & Simple Things
- » The Road to Lost
- » We'll All Become Stories
- » Simple & Beautiful Ways to Grow Your Soul
- » 65 Heart & Soul-Saving Reasons to Say No
- » What Weetzie Bat Taught Me About Life
- » Your Wild Woman Edge
- » 25 Things That Take My Breath Away
- » Showing up in My own Life
- » My Selfie in Words
- » 70 Everyday Bits of Magic to Celebrate
- » Mining the Quiet
- » I like In-Betweens
- » The Beauty in Our Wounds
- » 95 Ways We Instantly Reset Our Days
- » How to Embrace Cabin Fever
- » Winter Soul Aromas
- » 58 Beautiful Messes We Love
- » Doing Less, Savoring More
- » Magic in the Midst of Heartache
- » A Thousand Bits of Life
- » 8 Summer Troubles We Secretly Love
- » Coffee With Two Hands
- » Enchanted Portals
- » Tales of the Domestically Challenged
- » 23 Ways to Stop Living Life on Autopilot



Mosuno

- » When Great Expectations Falter
- » Room to Breathe: Seeking Refuge in the Big City
- » 51 things We Love About Ourselves
- » Cloud Surfing
- » What Does Your Heart Look Like?
- » 5 things About Relationships I Learned From My Dog
- » Reclaiming Winter Play
- » Go for the Glow
- » 10 Ways to Make Every Morning a Daily Miracle
- » Tea, Toast, & Lemur Kisses
- » I Am Not My To-Do List



Aaron Burden

- » Humbuggery & Laughter: 15 Ways to Protect Your Peace This Season
- » Life's Tattered Edges
- » A Different Kind of Fairytale
- » 27 Ways to Spend the Perfect Summer Night
- » I am Dust & Dazzle
- » Campfires, Gregorian Chants & Empty Cathedrals
- » Taking Messy out of the Box
- » 8 Reasons why Grocery Shopping with My 6-Month-Old Restores My Faith in Humanity
- » The Beautiful Words Project: How Words Helped Guide Me Home



Nabi Tang

- » Frozen Ponds, Made-up Stories, & First Kisses
- » A Letter to Outwit the World
- » 45 Happiness Boxes to Stash for a Bad Day
- » Taking up My Fair Share of Space in the World
- » Missing the Days of Bad Photos
- » 21 Gifts We'll Never Forget
- » Putting Kisses at the Top of My To-Do List
- » Infusing Calm (and a Bit of Magic) Into Your Workplace
- » 81 Ways We Relive that Childhood Magic
- » The Anti-Hustle
- » In Quiet Nooks
- » 10 Ways to Keep that Hygge Feeling During Summer

THE *Magazine*
THAT THINKS IT'S A
Book

HEAVY BOOK-JACKET
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Inside Front Cover: Sara K. Burne

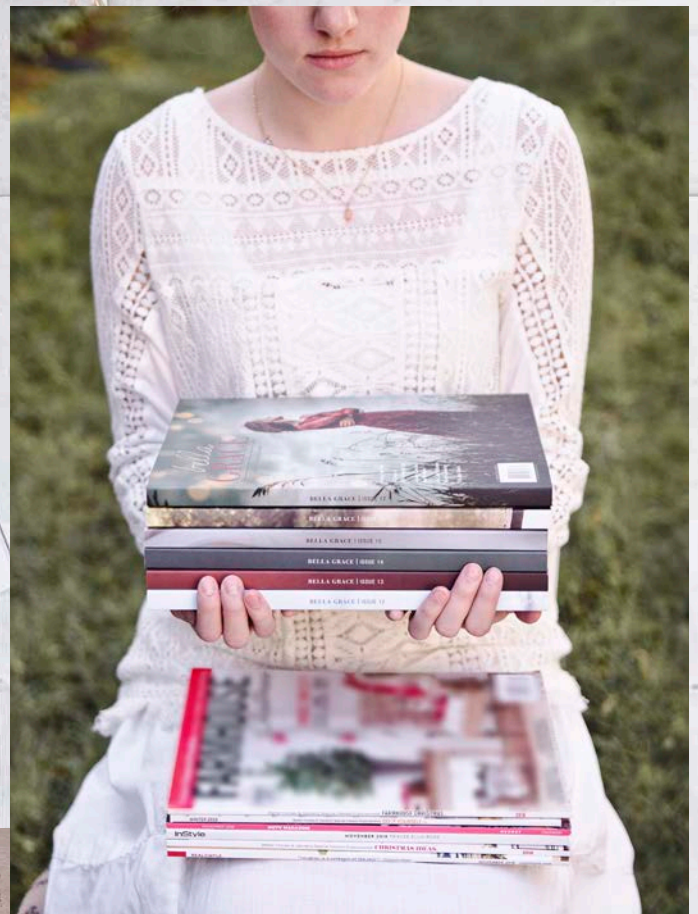
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like night-time things.
wolves. moons.
auroras. art. music.
firelight. *mystery.*
- Victoria Erickson

BELLA GRACE COMPARED TO OTHER MAGAZINES

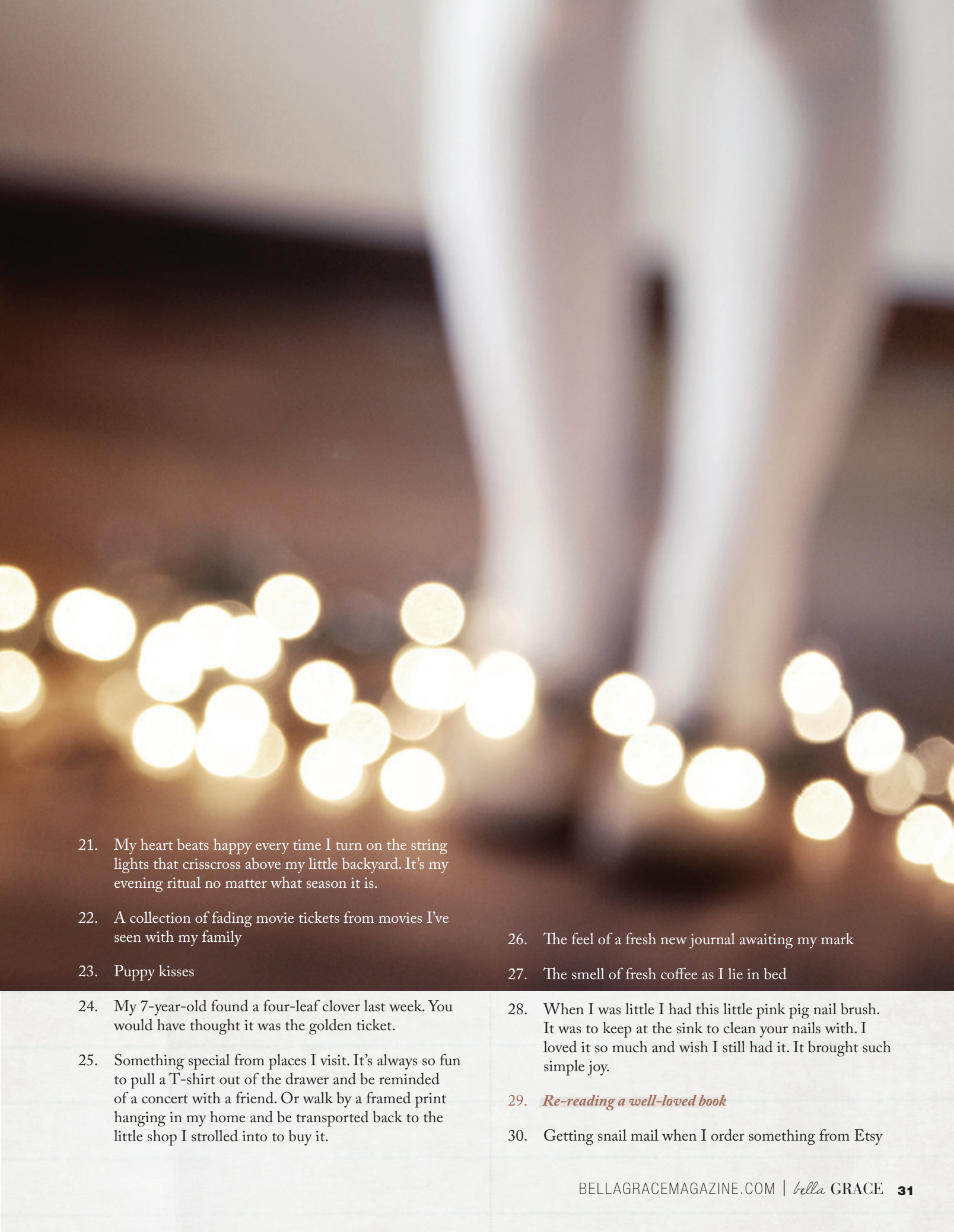


THOUGHT-PROVOKING
PROMPTS WITH SPACE
FOR JOURNALING.

175 Tiny Things

THAT GIVE US BIG FEELINGS

1. Dried roses
2. Uncontrollable laughter with loved ones
3. A good pastry in a cute coffee shop
4. Homemade peppermint lime lip balm
5. The way the sun shines through the window behind my desk
6. Driving past hay bails. I don't know why, but they always make me smile.
7. *Getting home on a Friday night knowing you have the entire weekend ahead of you to relax*
8. My sweet little grandchildren's feet
9. Scoring a deal on photography equipment after holding out for the right price
10. The Pinocchio pen I bought in Pisa. It always makes me smile and briefly takes me away to Italy.
11. When "Coffee" by Sylvan Esso pops up spontaneously in my playlist while I am making my first cup for the day
12. Orange blossoms in bloom
13. A new bottle of nail polish
14. The smell of new books
15. The squishiness of my down pillow
16. Hugs. Real, squishy hugs.
17. Taking my bra off at the end of a long day
18. An oversized sweater
19. Little heart-shaped charms
20. A freshly poured cup of coffee

- 
21. My heart beats happy every time I turn on the string lights that crisscross above my little backyard. It's my evening ritual no matter what season it is.
 22. A collection of fading movie tickets from movies I've seen with my family
 23. Puppy kisses
 24. My 7-year-old found a four-leaf clover last week. You would have thought it was the golden ticket.
 25. Something special from places I visit. It's always so fun to pull a T-shirt out of the drawer and be reminded of a concert with a friend. Or walk by a framed print hanging in my home and be transported back to the little shop I strolled into to buy it.
 26. The feel of a fresh new journal awaiting my mark
 27. The smell of fresh coffee as I lie in bed
 28. When I was little I had this little pink pig nail brush. It was to keep at the sink to clean your nails with. I loved it so much and wish I still had it. It brought such simple joy.
 29. *Re-reading a well-loved book*
 30. Getting snail mail when I order something from Etsy



Sonya Khogay

31. Soft, soft yarn
32. When my daughter was in kindergarten she came home from school saying it was, “the best day of her whole life.” She had found a plastic bead on the playground. I still have that bead in my jewelry box to remind me that joy is found in the simplest of things.
33. My simple gold wedding ring. Every time I put it back on my finger after washing the dishes or taking a shower, it gives me a little jolt of happiness. It reminds me that I have someone wonderful to share my life with and that I’ll never be alone.
34. Watching the birds that visit my homemade bird feeder
35. I love the feeling I get sitting on my patio when the gentle breezes carry the scent of lilacs to me.
36. Any office or art supply
37. Stickers
38. Sprinkles
39. When I pour creamer into my coffee so slowly that it rises in the cup looking like clouds
40. *Hitting every green light on my way home*
41. Talking on the phone for hours without looking at the time
42. A brand new box of crayons
43. Flower petals on the lawn
44. I love the seasonal scents of Mrs. Meyer’s dish soap. During the holidays I buy several of them. They make doing my dishes seem like less of a chore.
45. Pens that write well
46. Feeling the vibration of music
47. Seasonal coffee mugs
48. Sitting in a coffee shop, sipping my latte, and peeking at my husband next to me
49. Opening my eyes in the morning to the sun peeking through the shades in stripes across my room

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>50. Two blue raku glasses that I purchased from an artist in Wales</p> <p>51. A colorful scarf from Anthropologie</p> <p>52. I have an affection for the right guitar picks</p> <p>53. An unexpected bouquet of ranunculus</p> <p>54. Head's up pennies. After my grandma passed away I started seeing a lot of them. They would show up in the craziest of places. Some might brush it off as coincidence but I believe I was finding them for a reason. Were they from her? Possibly, but whenever I find one I think of her.</p> <p>55. The tiny tendril of a fiddlehead fern as it uncurls</p> <p>56. Little geckos and lizards that drink from the water captured in leaves and blossoms after the rain</p> <p>57. Coming home after you've been away for a few days</p> <p>58. The smell of my favorite candle</p> <p>59. Flea market finds</p> <p>60. Family photos rotating across the computer screen</p> | <p>61. Finding just the right quote and sharing it with the ones you love</p> <p>62. A freshly sharpened pencil</p> <p>63. A new planner</p> <p>64. Lip gloss</p> <p>65. Writing with the manual smooth swipes of my fountain pen</p> <p>66. <i>Stumbling upon beautiful wildflowers growing in random places</i></p> <p>67. The smell of fresh rain</p> <p>68. The tapping patter of raindrops on our roof</p> <p>69. An unexpected rainbow</p> <p>70. The warmth of wool socks on a cold day</p> <p>71. Snuggling under a few layers of blankets</p> <p>72. Used books</p> <p>* For more <i>Tiny Things</i> look into Bella Grace Issue 16.</p> |
|---|---|



A Kathleen Kelly

KIND OF SICK DAY

WORDS BY JENNA
VILLFORTH VEAZEY

Once when I was home from school with a bug, my mother brought my usual sick-day soda and crackers on a tray set with a small flower in a bud vase. All these years later I can't recall what type of flower it was, but I will never forget how that flower brightened my mood when I was stuck inside with a fever I was sure would last forever.

As an adult, there is very little about a sick day that evokes images of beauty or thoughts of gratitude. Probably because there is never a good time to be sick. Illness seems to arrive when our schedules are planned down to the minute, or when a presentation hinges on your performance, or right when friends or family have been counting on you for support. Often we try to power through as best we can. Propped-up by dark circle concealing makeup and over-the-counter medications, we do our best, but sometimes slowing down and listening to our body's demands to reset and recharge is exactly what we need. And often when we're forced to stop what we're doing and rest is when we take note of the details that make us feel better.

Living with chronic illness has taught me that there can be ways to celebrate when the mind or body mandates that we slow down to restore healing. When I'm feeling low and need to take care of myself, I always remember the feeling of that flower on my tray so many years ago. I curl up on the couch between my dogs and indulge in one of my favorite sick-day movies, "You've Got Mail." Sure, I'm never as adorable as Meg Ryan when she gets sick with her dainty ker-choos and stripy pajamas. But, I've made a note of the sick-day accoutrements in her apartment: the treasured children's classics strewn upon her bed quilt, the whistle of the tea kettle, the books, soup bowls, and tea mugs. And, of course, Tom Hanks brings her daisies! All the essentials to feeling better in one room.



Helen Rusbrook

Whether recovering from a migraine, overindulgence, food allergies, or a virus, here are 10 things that make me feel better on a sick day:


- » Go to bed early and wake up late. When that's not possible, allow yourself to nap and rest during the day.
- » Staying hydrated is important for both your organs and immune system to function properly, so drink up! »

- » Add 1 cup of Epsom salt to your bathwater (or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup to a basin for a foot soak) to help your body detox.
- » Pick your favorite healing scents of essential oils for aromatherapy. Add them, along with a carrier oil (such as jojoba or coconut oil), to your bath or add them to your diffuser.
- » Clear your agenda to help clear your mind, and save all your energy for healing and a faster recovery.
- » Count on special friends and family to lean on for help when you might not realize you need it most.
- » If you get sick often, keep pre-made bone broth and leftover soups in the freezer for easy, pre-made meals. My favorites are carrot-ginger soup, chicken soup, and curries rich with garlic and turmeric.
- » Getting lost in a great book or podcast is a great way to relax and let your body rest. Bonus points for keeping it light ... laughter is the best medicine!
- » Being comfortable is essential. Just the job for your favorite pajamas, stretchy pants, and fuzzy socks.
- » Make yourself a nest with cozy blankets and soft pillows in bed or on the couch. Give yourself permission to stay there ... unless, of course, it's to go get more lemon water.

Jenna Villforth Veazey is a poet and river lover. You can find her on Instagram (@stirringsandstories).



Kelly Knox

A woman is shown in profile, facing right, wearing a wide-brimmed, light brown hat with a decorative band and a white, long-sleeved lace dress. She is holding a vintage black camera with a lens and flash. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field.

“Learn to pause ...
or nothing worthwhile
will catch up to you.”
— Doug King



Rona Keller



Rebel

WORDS BY ELLA WILSON

I received elegant stemware for my 21st birthday with the guidelines to reserve them for honorary occasions. Relics in my life have always been forbidden unless used for a holiday or a momentous celebration. I recently changed my mind about these valuable beauties lurking in my home. So, last night I made hot cocoa and poured it into a fancy bone china teacup. This act of indulgence felt like a portal as memories arrived. The moment was decadent. It felt like an expression of care — like an act of self-love.

Don't wait another day to celebrate ... get out the fancy, the delicate, the fragile, and enjoy. I poured milk in a fancy wine goblet the other night and my inner child laughed at me. I cheered my great-aunt who would have scolded me. The next day I used depression ware plates for dinner and filled a fancy crystal vase with some sunflowers. I felt encouraged to break more rules and I dare you to do the same. It is playful, zany, and fun.

"If you never did, you should. These things are fun, and fun is good."

-Dr. Seuss

This simple act has encouraged more rebellious behavior. I wear mismatched socks on purpose, I wrote my inner child a love note, and this evening I used a straw to blow bubbles in my glass of chardonnay.

If it rains, I will wear boots and jump in the puddles. Recently, we bought a new bed and, yes, I started jumping on it to break it in and had a pillow fight with my hubby. One night a week I eat dessert before dinner. If this is too extreme for you, be French and have cheese and fruit before your entree. I play my music louder these days and on occasion play ball in the house. »

"Congratulations! Today is your day!"

-Dr. Seuss

Living like this has invited more laughter and magic into my life. A friend asked me if I was having a mid-life crisis. I told her, "No, I am having a mid-life party and these playful acts remind me special is now."

"Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You."

-Dr. Seuss


Ella Wilson is a mixed-media artist who loves to recycle, sees potential in everything, and often shares the chocolate she has been squirreling away. You can visit Ella's website at ellasedge.blogspot.com or her Etsy shop at ellasedge.etsy.com.



Guille Fangold

Join the Rebellion
What rules are you just dying to break?





“It is when you’re going through the most difficult chapter of your life that *your hero is revealed*, and how beautiful it is when you finally realize *you have the strength to save yourself.*”

— Author Unknown



A Beautiful, Colorful Mess

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS BY ACACIA FALZONE

It is a work of art on its own. You take a white(ish) wedding dress and literally drag it through the mud/sand/sea and are able to capture photos of the bride that can be striking, beautifully, and provoke thought. There are a lot of people who disagree with this relatively new practice, but I, for one, think it is amazing. Brides pay upward of thousands of dollars for a dress they may wear for a few hours. There is something deliciously exciting about destroying the perfection of the dress and documenting the transformation.

For Mikaela, my “bride” and dear friend, this was a personal journey about literally shedding a skin and moving on. This dress wasn’t worn down the aisle; it never made it there since the wedding was called off. Ironically, she had reached out to me years ago to photograph her wedding and instead I ended up shooting her “trash the dress.” The dress traveled with her from New York to Charleston and spent time between her closet and the trunk of her car. To her, there was really no other way to handle the dress. It became this heavy symbol of the past, something that should be set free. Of course, you can donate it or have it made into something else, but it seems wrong to pass on that kind of energy. We collaborated to do something that artistic, representative of Mikaela, and transformative all at once. »

As a few weeks of some crazy Southern storms, the skies took a rest to reveal burning pinks, purples, and reds along with rolling clouds that served as our backdrop on Sullivan's Island. The beach was windy, and the water warm. It was perfection.

For those who may be critical of this choice, Mikaela also made a donation to the Keeper of the Wild Fund in the amount of the value of the dress. A few months ago she lost her Newfoundland, Will E. Wonka, to Wobbler Syndrome, and Keeper of the Wild is a foundation dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating wild animals.

True to her effervescent, artistic, and firecracker spirit, it was all glitter, paint, sand, and salt water for Mikaela. A beautiful, colorful mess — just as she likes it. In the words of one of her favorite quotes:

*"At the end of the day your feet should be dirty,
your hair should be messy, and your eyes sparkling."
- Shanti*





*Acacia Falzone and
Mikaela LaPlante own
an event planning and
photography company
called Bright Lights
Events based in beautiful
Charleston, South
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All I Want Is ...

Most of us don't spend our days dreaming of larger-than-life mansions and fast cars. We would gladly trade a designer dress for a day to ourselves. We would jump at the chance to spend the day curled up with a good book rather than go out for a fancy dinner. Most of what we crave are simple pleasures and comforts. Some of our desires can sound silly to others, but we know they make our heart sing.

All I want is ...

"I want to live simply. I want to sit by the window when it rains and read books I'll never be tested on. I want to paint because I want to, not because I've got something to prove. I want to listen to my body, fall asleep when the moon is high and wake up slowly, with no place to rush off to. I want not to be governed by money or clocks or any of the artificial restraints that humanity imposes on itself. I just want to be, boundless and infinite."

— author unknown





We Breathe

WORDS BY JENNIFER CLAWSON FARNES
PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAFF

We breathe. We gasp. We sigh. We breathe. We start our lives with that first breath ... almost a gasp, really; and over the course of a lifetime, the pattern stays the same. *We breathe. We gasp. We sigh. We breathe.*

Life is an adventure. A journey that sometimes leads us to our dreams but more often than not, it takes the high road and propels us down detoured paths, brings us to deadends, up seemingly unsurpassable steep grades, or it plummets us over roller-coaster one-lane highways where our sudden intakes of breath are the result of shock, surprise, sadness, wonder, grief, or elation.

Our lives crave discovery, as if there were roadmaps tucked into compartments in our minds and hearts begging to be unfolded; routes charted, milestones recorded, wonders of the world plotted, all while leaving portions of our journeys open to serendipity. Serendipity is not our destination, but consists of the quaint stops along the way where we encounter either life-changing events or sudden soul-shivering moments of utter joy. Leaving ourselves open to those spontaneous diversions that take us from our intended paths to previously unimagined places is a necessary and needful part of our journey. That is where the adventure lies, or at least a portion of it.

Our life's adventures may consist of exploits, feats of daring-do that we dream about and set off toward, with the attitude of "nothing ventured, nothing gained" beating in our hearts. On the other hand, we may suddenly find ourselves at an unplanned stopover called Chaos »

with little or no control over how we got there. In either case, we must navigate an uncharted wilderness, learn to survive in the badlands, or ride rapids down the river of life fraught with startling and unexpected hazards.

We may strategize quests for ourselves, planning a course of action that leads to desired destinations in our lives. Pursuing an education, searching for meaning in whatever condition we find ourselves, hunting for purpose in our lives when we are lost on dead-end streets or while preparing for expeditions that lead to self-discovery. The ramifications of such a discovery are a big part of those quests into the unknown. We breathe.





Joy is a companionable friend.

Whatever it is that we do, or wherever it is we find ourselves, there must be joy in the journey.

A friend that is deliriously happy to accompany us on our individual road trips. The best thing we can ever do as we embark on our adventure is to let her tag along. Joy is an amazing thing. She reveals herself at the apogee of our greatest happiness. She is there quietly lending her peaceful assurance at the depths of our profoundest sorrows. When joy shivers, she sends undercurrents of exultation through us; bliss thrills our souls and makes us tremble at the sheer delight of life and the gifts that life bestows upon us. When joy weeps, we take the solace she offers and we wrap it around us. She is comfort. We gasp.

While traveling toward our adventures, we must allow ourselves to pick up another traveling companion, Contentment. Kiki Knickerbocker said, "Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but the realization of how much you already have." Contentment allows us to fully view the passing scenes of life and all that we possess, all that we are, with satisfaction. Contentment has in her rucksack ever-present gratitude and both will ride happily along with us. Gratitude, with her telephoto lens, enables us to clearly see the sacred in the ordinary. As we move through the seasons on our individual journeys, let us not waste a moment in a winter of discontent; rather, let us move joyfully through each season, celebrating the days. That is wisdom. We sigh.

A friend once coined the best word in the world: ribbistrate. The best definition is an image. In most Charlie Brown movies or in the Peanuts comic strips, we find Snoopy at his happiest; head up, nose in the air sniffing out every single ounce of gladness, arms thrown out wide, his feet in constant motion dancing to his music of utter joy. **A joy that so completely possesses him that he dances.** That is ribbistration. It is not so much that we perform that little dance. It is more the feeling that we are dancing like that on the inside. Pure bliss runs wildly through us. My friend and I shared that remarkable feeling

in anticipation of something wonderful that we planned together or that we serendipitously discovered. Anticipation is the delicious appetizer before the full course of whatever follows. Ribbistration is uncontained ecstasy that bursts from us, rising in effervescent bubbles that make us giggle in gleeful expectation or what we experience in a moment of life-altering delight. **Ribbistrate.** Then breathe.

Jane Austen wrote about "a nest of comforts." Life can be sweeter, more beautiful, and infinitely happier if we built ourselves nests of comfort that we could cozy into wherever we found ourselves on our journey. Little rest stops tucked here and there where we fill our souls with solitary pleasures. A quiet moment spent listening to music played by a breathtaking sunset. Watching lightning dance across the sky to the percussion of thunder and the reedy harmony of the wind. Catching sight of a golden moonrise. Sniffing the sweetness of a newborn. Capturing the strains of birdsong caught in flowered branches. The leafy scent of autumn mixing with the smells of fresh rain and tired earth. The crimson of a morning sky swirling into the blueberry-blue part, the sun a hot pink button slipping into the buttonhole of a new day. We breathe. We gasp. We sigh.

Our journeys, our adventures, have self-discovery as milestones, marking each leg of our progress. We arrive at each stopping place weary, exultant, and grateful for each mile that led us ever closer, world-wise, and heart-strong from the experience. We find, hopefully, that we are not the same person we were when we started; that our journey continues as long as we live and with each adventure, we anticipate growth, discovery, wonder, amazement, and soul-stirring magic.

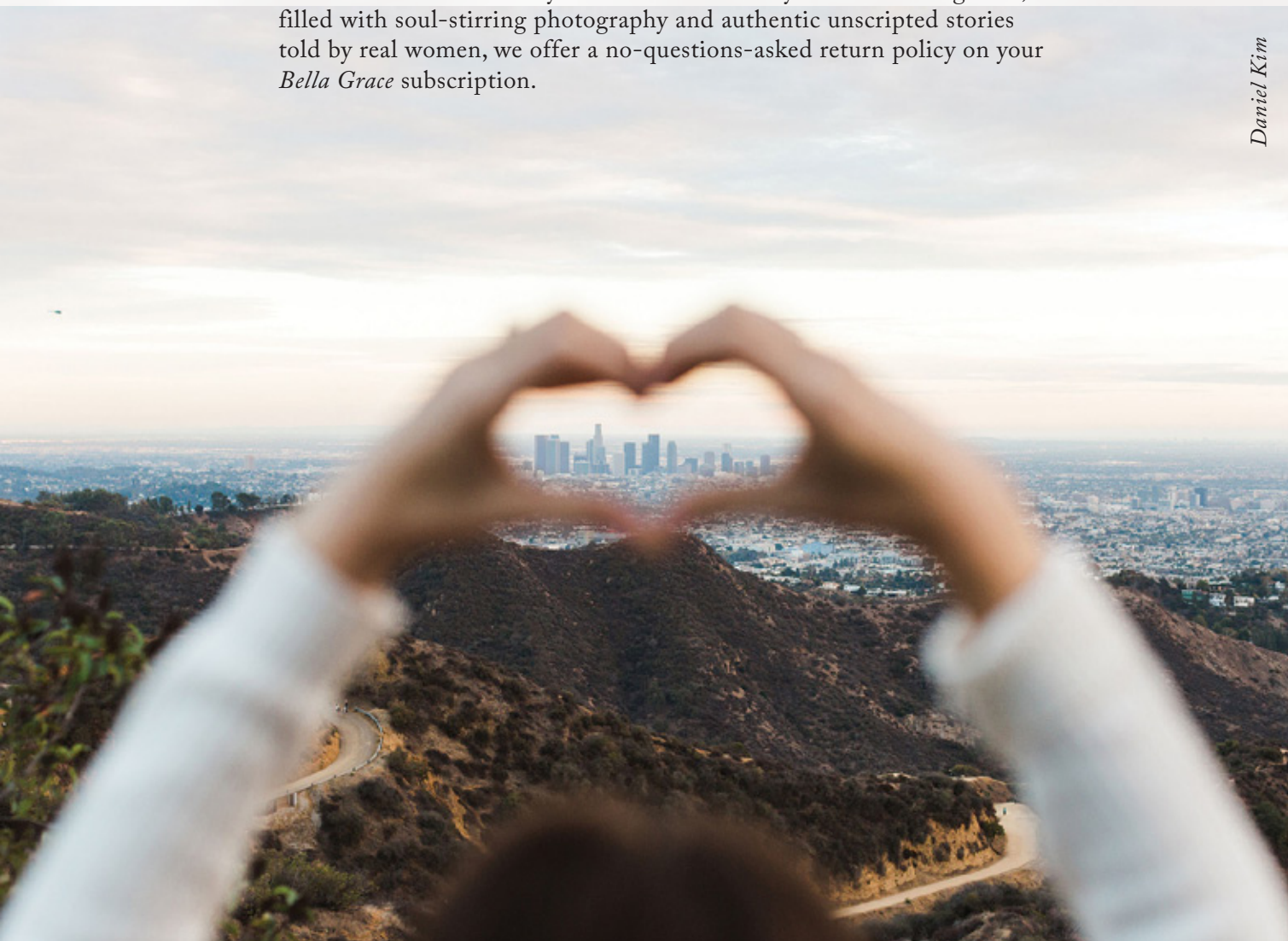
To help chart your course, consider this exercise. You may find yourself moving ever closer to that True North so many refer to ... your authentic and beautiful self.

Jennifer Clawson Farnes lives on an island in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and an itinerant peahen named Edna. A mother of six, grandmother to seven, she loves old stuff, finds beauty everywhere, and is still without a clothesline. Follow along with her at thechroniclesoffarnia.com.

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Daniel Kim



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The *Bella Grace* Team

*"Don't wait for extraordinary opportunities.
Seize common occasions and
make them great."*

— Orisen Swett Marden



Carrying On

WORDS BY KIM NENTRUP

I am about to tell you something intensely personal, but I don't mind, considering you are pushing your own wheelbarrow full of troubles and you'll have compassion for me. I was recently diagnosed with multiple types of mental illnesses. Confessing a mental illness gets easier with practice. It often comes with a pallid prejudice that people don't mean to carry; it's just a stigma of misunderstanding. I forgive all that. And I know that many, many people suffer similarly.

There is something overwhelming about an unexpected medical diagnosis. It is like a smack of cold water in the face, or an ice cube down your shirt. It sends the same icy chill and has the same following numbness.

I went to a new doctor for a second opinion. I knew I had moderate major depressive disorder, recurrent, meaning I live with it year in and year out, but the treatments (and I've tried them all) haven't worked. Truly this would be a sixth or seventh opinion, but in this type of jam you just keep kicking no matter how bad you feel.

The new doctor was a psychologist, and he was amazingly thorough and kind. After two hours he offered me his own diagnosis of my condition(s). It was not moderate depression, it was severe, with the added bonus of melancholia. It was not only generalized anxiety disorder, it was also panic disorder. It was not just anxiety in crowds, it was agoraphobia.

Since that moment, I have been pondering my options for handling such news. I can a) give in to the grief, or b) carry on.

There is plenty of grief, and I can allow myself to feel it, but there is something different in letting that blanket of sadness wrap itself around me too tightly. I do have to come to terms with my illnesses. I know I have the strength to at least loosen that blanket to allow me to breathe.

It is the notion of "carrying on" that tempts me more intensely. See, depression tricks you into thinking that you don't want to carry on at all. Severe depression makes you feel like living is just too hard. But life is a true gift, and it is worth fighting the trickster depression like an attacking wild cat.

How does one carry on? It seems everyone is "Keeping Calm and Carrying On," but what does that mean, and how do I do it? Following is a list of ways I am carrying on in the next 12 hours:

1. *There is a ray of sunshine across my lap, and the color of it is lovely.* Noticing this is one way I am actively carrying on in the here and now. Nature is awe-inspiring, and takes me outside myself.

2. *My cocker spaniel, Baxter, is snuggled at my feet.* He is warm and soft, and full of loyalty. He was

a formerly abused dog we got at the shelter. He has some problems, but we overlook them and love him anyway. I'll do the same for myself.

3. *I made a list.* It is a simple list of what I am doing for myself today, which includes stopping at a new Parisian bakery just to check out the place, and to get a dose of my beloved Paris from here in Indianapolis. This will take only 20 minutes, but will make me smile.

4. *I will call that friend who I love, and who loves me, even though she is pressed for time.* Even if I just leave a message, she will know I am thinking of her, and maybe life will offer us a window of time to spend together soon.

5. *There is a half-sewn quilt upstairs that I plan to work on for at least 15 minutes a day.* It is a project bigger than me, with new skills I need to acquire, which means there is at least one reason for me to get up tomorrow morning.

6. *I will write all the bad feelings I have about being sick in a notebook that is for no one but me.* I will allow myself to grieve, whine, and moan about the unfairness of my situation. I'll eventually throw it away.

7. *There are things I need to do for my physical and mental health that are important, but hard to find motivation for. All I plan to do is ask my spouse to help me write out some goals and to encourage me to do at least one at a time.*

The list is not exhaustive, but carries me on into the next moment, hour, day, week, and into the rest of my life. I encourage you to make your own plan to carry on. And if your particular crisis is mental illness, I am pulling for you. You really can carry on despite. ≈

Kim Nentrup is a freelance writer who recently completed her first novel and is working on her second. She enjoys short stories and essays that cut to the truth of life. She is a grant writer and ghost writer, and can be found at kimmnentrup.com. Her first non-fiction book was ghostwritten for a public speaker about tips for teenage faith. She lives at home with her beloved high school sweetheart now husband, Eric, and snuggly cocker spaniel, Baxter.

Pleasure, Please!

Four Tips for a *MORE* *Seductive* LIFE

BY CASSANDRA KEY

*P*leasure is a glass of Shiraz and a book of poetry. It's dancing under the moon, saying yes, saying no, and biting off a square of gourmet chocolate. Pleasure is sitting at an Italian café, drinking a cappuccino, and watching passersby. It's wearing pink lipstick, sending yourself a love letter, sleeping in, or taking a nap.

Pleasure is so many things, and yet, we hardly find time for it or think we don't deserve it. Even the smallest pleasurable thing gets put off or branded to be "too much work."

No more excuses! Here are a few ways to sneak pleasure into your everyday.





Turn the Yuck into Yay!

Hate going to the gym, but want to work out? What's the most pleasurable workout you could do? A dance class, yoga, a walk after dinner ... find something you actually enjoy.

Can't find time to work on your novel, but really want to write one? What's the most pleasurable step you can take toward getting it written? Writing for 5 minutes in the morning while sipping tea, taking a notepad into the bubble bath, writing in the park on your lunch break ... you get the idea.

Let yourself be seduced by the task at hand. Turn it into play. Ask, "What's the most pleasurable way I can accomplish this?"

Make it Easy

I used to date this guy who'd always tell me, "Cassandra, life is easy," and then flash me a huge grin. Honestly, I wanted to reply with something like, "Well, I'm so glad it's easy for you," and then punch him in the face. But in retrospect, I see that he was right.

Things don't have to be complicated. I know this sounds cheesy, but it's about surrendering to the flow of life. It's about not getting too wrapped up in the details and how things will work out and just trusting that they will.

Also, you don't need a lot of things to be happy. Although I don't fault anyone for wanting material things, I know from first-hand experience that you can be happy with less. **Life gets easier when you're not chained to constant desire and trying to maintain all the stuff you've already acquired.** Try letting go of some of your possessions (Do you really need that dress you haven't worn in six months?) and see how you feel.

Jovo Jovanic

Stop Playing the Beat-Up Game.

So you drank a Frappuccino with whipped cream, skipped your workout, or watched "The Walking Dead" marathon instead of doing something productive. So what?! **Does any of it really matter in the grand scheme of things?**

You hereby have permission to take a break, "cheat" on a regimen, and be lazy just because it feels good.

Allow yourself the pleasure of the moment, even if it means having a chocolate-covered strawberry instead of a salad. **Give yourself a break every now and then.**

Forget The Rules.

Do you stop wearing white after Labor Day or pass on the most beautiful pair of 5-inch heels because you're too tall and could never get away with that?

DO YOURSELF A FAVOR AND CHUCK "THE RULES" IN THE GARBAGE, PLEASE.

And this doesn't just apply to fashion. **Do whatever interests you, even if it's unconventional. What's the worst that can happen?** You get a few stares and whispers? And does it matter if you're happy and having a good time? Nope.

So what's seducing you right now? **What small step can you take toward pleasure today?** Go ahead and take it. I dare you.

Cassandra Key is an American ex-pat living in the Philippines and spends her days beach bumming and wedding blogging, while writing for her own blog, The Sacred Middle, where she writes about happiness, magic, and self-love. Someday she hopes to write a young-adult novel and have tea in England. You can follow along with her at thesacredmiddle.com.

* Mining * Magic

I believe in magic. Subtle, everyday magic. Each morning before I give myself a chance to doubt otherwise, I smile knowing that this day is laced with wonders, and it's my plan to focus on finding them.

Sometimes, if I have a minute to spare before my 9 a.m. report time, I'll park by the nearby estuary for magic mining. On this morning, as I parked and looked out over the small river, steam rose up, interlacing its fingers with sunbeams. I wanted to be a part of this mystical beauty. Unzipping my purse to remove my camera, I smiled with the scene before me. I walked toward the water, sun, ducks, trees, and mist, feeling the slight chill, yet warmth rose up through me.

"Excuse me," I heard. I turned between clicks to see a young woman dressed in work clothes. "I couldn't help noticing you taking pictures. Do you want me to take yours?" Turning, I discovered a friend I'd just met, someone with whom to share this magical moment. I reached out to hand her my camera, then stepped more fully into the scene.

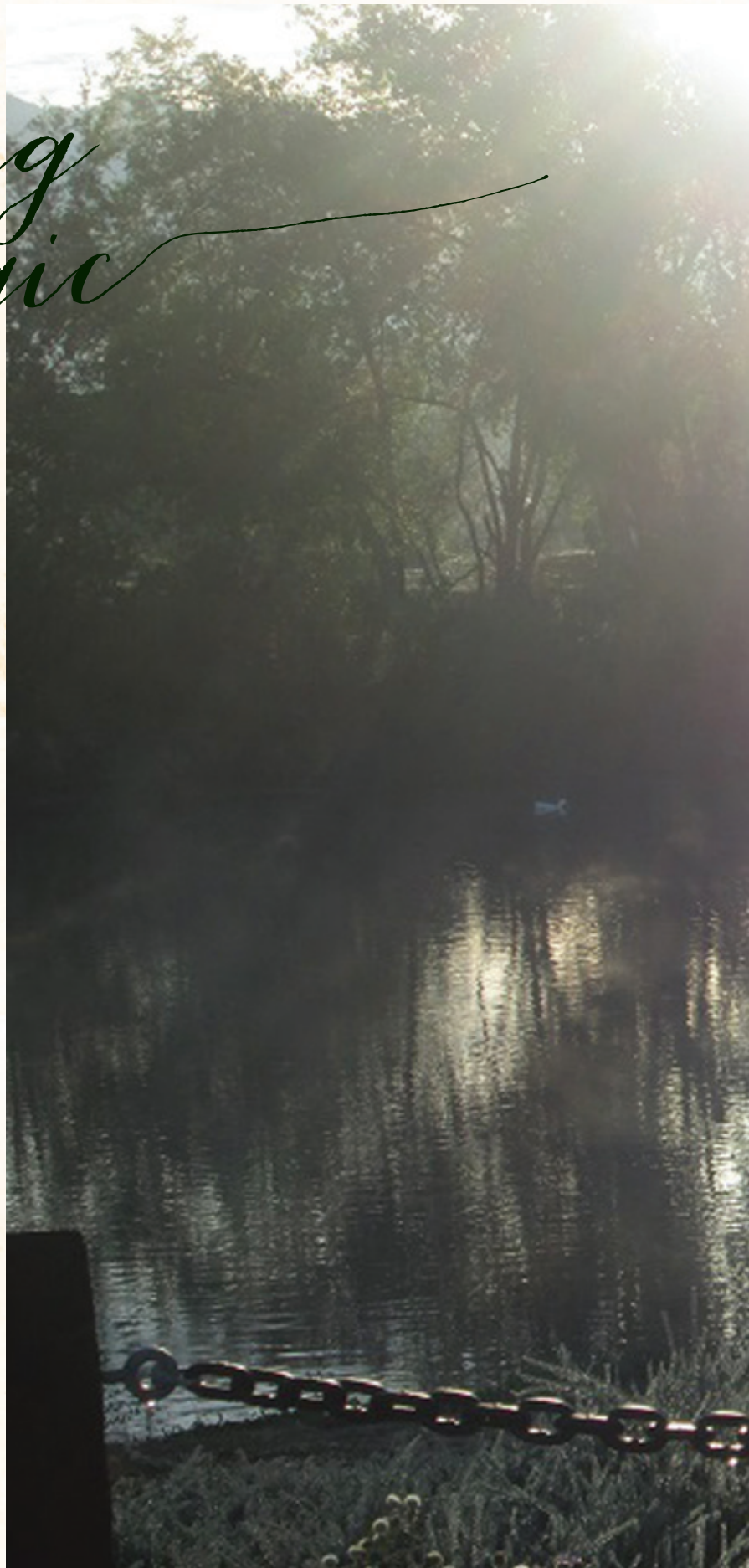
"Now turn," she suggested. "Face the water."

Snap.

"You have to see this. You look like part of a fairy tale."

We viewed the image. She was right. What we saw together was a complete reflection of what's been in my mind. *These days I feel awake in the happy ending of a fairy tale.* ≈

Suzanne Robbins plays many roles but identifies herself primarily as an Uplifter. She teaches original courses in her local community and via email on how to use journaling and meditation to "Mine for Magic" in everyday life. She prefers personal correspondence. For information on her offerings and courses, email mineformagic@gmail.com.







Sara K. Burne

"I like night-time things.
wolves. moons.
auroras.
art. music.
firelight.
mystery."

- Victoria Erickson

More From the

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The Cozy Issue is based upon the Danish concept of "hygge," and the desire to embrace feelings of warmth, coziness, simplicity, and charm.



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PUBLICATIONS

Willow and Sage shares more than 70 unique recipes, uses, and beautiful packaging and gift ideas for homemade bath and body products.

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Mingle explores the art of entertaining — from various types of intimate, creative gatherings to uniquely-themed parties to larger-scale retreats.

The Handmade Gift Issue shares beautiful packaging ideas and DIY bath and body recipes that are easy to make and give, like body scrubs, butters, melt-and-pour soaps, candles, and more.

A person wearing a dark, fringed poncho stands in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. The background is a soft, hazy sunset sky with warm orange and yellow tones. The person is positioned on the right side of the frame, with their back to the camera, looking out over the field.

We believe:
An ordinary life
can be *extraordinary*,
there is beauty in
IMPERFECTION,
and that *magic*
can be found in
the everyday.

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