

The Price of Admission

Category: A Fresh Start

written by Kerensa Peterson | January 4, 2019

I had been accepted to an accelerated graduate program in Health Communication and was considering deferring for a year. New responsibilities at work and figuring out what I wanted to do next with my life took priority.

But then, I found out that my friend, Liz, was sick.

Suddenly, my husband and I were having regular email correspondence and conversations with Liz and her partner, Jake, about treatment and doctor appointments. We were trying to normalize those conversations so the fever pitch of worry stayed below the surface of our emotions. Liz and Jake had been part of our circle of close friends for a long time. Liz was not my best friend, but hierarchies didn't matter anymore. Liz had glioblastomas. And I couldn't help wondering the clichéd question: why was this happening to her?

Because Liz was fiercely smart and wise beyond her years. Because she was finishing her PhD and involved in important research. Because she was an athlete. Because she loved horses. Because she was so young. Because life is unfair, as my mother-in-law often says. Because...

We figured out times to have dinner, to see each other more, to take Liz to one of her many doctor's appointments. We needed to be there, to be present for everything that Liz was still a part of.

My husband came to me one night after I had received yet another packet of information about the graduate program in Health Communication. He started asking how I thought we'd pay for school. I told him I didn't know if I could go to graduate school right now. Not now, not in the middle of everything.

He looked at me and just said, "I don't think there is another time to go to grad school."

I knew what he meant. So, I decided: yes, I would be part of this year's cohort and earn my degree within a year. Because we might miss something important if we don't grab onto every opportunity. Because I needed something else to focus my energy on. Because I can do anything for a year. Because I could talk about health and health care in the classroom and that might help me cope with the process of losing my friend. Because death is the price of admission to life. Because we're all too young. Because...

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