

# On Living in the Moment

Category: Omicron

written by Eve Louise Makoff | March 17, 2022

When Omicron hit, we were planning my father's eighty-fifth birthday celebration. We were vaccinated and boosted, so it wasn't Dad we were worried about. It was my brother Jeff who needed extra consideration.

Two years before the pandemic, when he was in his late fifties, after years of subtle symptoms like a slightly diminished sense of smell, Jeff was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Knowing of his vulnerability, our mother spent months planning the long-awaited family reunion, taking every precaution, though it was still risky since Omicron was so ill-defined. In the end, we all made it. And what's more, Jeff taught us something crucial.

An attorney, Jeff was initially shattered by his diagnosis. He tried to make sense of this non-fatal but life-altering disease. He believed a steady hand, a solid bearing, were critical to his success. But although cognitively unchanged, Jeff had a hard time adapting to an unpredictable body. For the first time, this giant of my childhood seemed to feel unsure of himself. But, in reality, Jeff was just in flux.

Six years my senior, Jeff had been my childhood idol. In his teen years, Jeff sold me STP oil stickers he'd ordered for free. In high school, he painted his room eggplant purple and put up cool black light posters. He was on the debate team and once stood on our knotty-wood coffee table and flawlessly argued the merits of a chocolate chip cookie. When I was sixteen, Jeff took me to a Dodgers game and a concert at the Roxy, where under bright lights I reveled in his attention, his wisdom about life.

I missed him terribly when he left for UCLA, even if it was just six miles from our home, so I briefly sang in his band until my mom wisely thought better of that plan. Decades later, when I was forty-five, Jeff sat by my hospital bed and brought me steaming cups of soup from Jerry's Deli when I had a brain bleed (from which I fully recovered).

In a photograph from New Year's Eve, at a table covered in party hats and champagne flutes, Jeff is smiling—no, glowing. There's a glint in his eye, the same twinkle that had sold me anything and everything in my youth. But there's also something bigger than mischief in his gaze. A sense of peace sets Jeff apart. It's as though his journey to accept what he can't control about his body and his future, has allowed Jeff alone to be at ease in this perilous moment. As I take in this image, I am once again at the mercy of my big brother, captured by awe.

*Eve Louise Makoff*

*Los Angeles, California*