

Writing Our Stories- Kori L. Propst, M.S.

Lying on the hospital gurney this past Tuesday evening, writhing in pain due to God knows what was going on in my lower abdomen, I can honestly say that I thought about what it was I was supposed to take from my experience. A few hours earlier I had been at work, answering client emails, training my last client before I could wrap up for the evening and head home to prep food and get myself packed for the upcoming trek to New York City for the WNBF World Championships. I got home around 7pm, started bagging and freezing chicken breast, green beans, white rice, and I threw a chicken supreme pizza in the oven thinking, "I probably won't even get to eat this backstage!" When the oven timer chimed after 25 minutes, I very carefully pulled the piping hot cheesy goodness out and waited for it to cool before I divided it into 8 small slices. I stole a couple pieces of the chicken and threw it into my mouth with pleasure! With everything bagged up, I began preparing my next meal to eat, noticing that with each passing minute my stomach was becoming more and more painful. "What is wrong with me?" I thought? I had eaten quite a few vegetables that day, lots of salad and I was questioning whether I should have done that having had trouble with digesting that much fiber a few weeks ago and ending up with pretty significant colitis. But I continued cooking. I sat down to eat feeling nauseous, not wanting to take each bite and wishing I did because it's so unlike me not to want food! I finished and went back to my bedroom to sort out all my clothes and decide which items I was going to leave at home. I tend to overpack and I knew this time I needed to be very selective with what I would bring.

As time rolled by, I felt worse and worse. I could barely stand up. Walking was tortuous, and my abdomen was so distended I looked like a sumo wrestler! I posed in the mirror and winced in pain. I put on my pajamas and went to lie on the couch. I could barely breathe the pain was so unbearable. My roommate was at his computer, and I said to him, "I seriously think I'm dying..." He asked me what was going on and started a web search. The symptoms I was describing matched those of appendicitis or a gallbladder attack. I was scared. Not now! Not when we leave for Worlds in less than 48 hours, I thought. But if this were happening, I couldn't just grin and bear it.

Fast forward a week. I am on a plane traveling from NY to Cincinnati, connecting back to Evansville--reeling from my experience at the 2009 WNBF World Championships and in utter amazement at what has taken place over the course of the last seven days. I think a lot about the journeys of my life. Each day brings something new--an event that we have to chew on, a situation that requires some processing, or a circumstance that makes us take pause and ask ourselves what we're doing, what we're supposed to learn, and where do we go from here? That is what this past week has done for me. I say "for" me, because I really do feel like these past seven days have been a reminder

of a few key areas of importance in my life. What I've come to hold dear over the last say ten years is a focus on not sitting idly by and just watching my life roll by, like an old time picture movie. I want to be an active participant; I want to be the protagonist in my own story! I want to live in every sense of the word, not just live...if you know what I mean.

In the span of 72 hours I went from being in the hospital in the worst pain of my life to standing on stage at the World Championships and being awarded a Runner – Up medal for the Pro Fit Body division and a 4th place finish in Pro Figure. Life certainly has a way of being a geyser of amazement! Now that I have the time to sit back and process it all, I want to share with you what I've gleaned. I believe that each one of the next statements may serve you well as you navigate the waters of your life. Even when you may not feel like you're driving, you possess more control than you know.

1. **In every moment there is a choice.** Say you are driving down the interstate, and in the blink of an eye, you have hit the guard rail and are facing the opposite direction. You've been in an accident- that's the fact of the matter. But do you think, "This is the worst moment of my life" or do you think, "Okay, I've been in an accident. Am I okay? What do I need to do next?" You get to write the script for how you will respond to everything that happens to you, around you, within you. I was in the hospital 48 hours before I was supposed to board a plane to New York City. I can honestly tell you that I never thought, "I am not going to make it to the World Championships." I chose the way I wanted to respond. With action. I operated in a fashion that said to those around me, I am going to get through this. Okay, if I have to have an emergency appendectomy, the fact of the matter is that it's unlikely I will be flying in 48 hours, but I wasn't writing that into the next few pages of my life. Had that been written, then I was going to choose how I as the protagonist in my story would respond.
2. **We can live by looking through the rearview mirror or through the bigger windshield!** What do we want to have happen in our lives? How do we want to feel? What do we want to experience? The rearview mirror provides a view, but it's limited in scope, it's small and it impedes our vision. Peripherally, it doesn't provide much width. But the windshield-- it's expansive. We can look ahead and see what's in front of us and to the side! Choosing to live in the past is like driving your car using your rearview mirror as a guide and driving backwards. Do not misunderstand me. USING your past is important. We can learn a lot from the experiences we've had, and I encourage you to look at where you have come from and change your life according to what you have been through, but to LIVE there thwarts your ability to grow and change and blossom into the individual you

are meant to be. Living there makes you a victim of your circumstances and removes any control you possess. You become the innocent bystander in the story of your life.

3. **We must be willing to say no.** Being the “YES MAN” can lead to a few things if we are not careful: making unnecessary sacrifices; resentment; overextending ourselves; anger; feelings of unworthiness; and a harmful and misguided approach to finding worth, love, and the admiration of others. Have you ever said ‘yes’ and knew at the time you said it that there was no way you could take on another task, that doing so would lead to exhaustion? We all have. Why do we do this? I have been in relationships in which I’ve acted in this manner....and I’ve been on the receiving end of the resentment that breeds when the person making the sacrifice realizes just how much he/she has been giving and suddenly feels used, abused, and tired. My experience in the hospital prompted me to look at just how much I’d been running myself ragged. In order to give to others, serve and support, and offer my expertise I must first take care of me. I must discern what it is that I actually have available to give and not give away what it is that ‘I’ need. It’s okay to say “no” and share with others your overflow rather than what you recognize are your necessities.

You do not need a life-threatening experience to thrust you into observation! Take the time daily to look at your circumstances, the roles you play in your life and the lives of others, look at yourself in the mirror, and examine your thoughts. We can very easily get locked into just flying through our days, focusing on the minutiae of the tasks at hand, oblivious to the value of investigating just who we are and what we need and what we’ve created in our lives. Looking back at the last couple weeks of my life, I’m amazed at the depth of my experiences and can’t wait to dig in even further to investigate what it is I believe and assess how and what I’ve been holding in place. Rather than looking back and having to acknowledge that my life was just a series of events, I want to be the author of my story!

Kori Propst holds a BS in Exercise Physiology and an MS in Counseling. She is a WNBF Pro in bodybuilding, figure, and fit body. As the Wellness Director for the Diet Doc she created the Mental Edge Program to aid competitors in developing individualized strategies for optimal performance in their lives and for competing. She can be contacted at kori@thedietdoc.com.