

# Millennial Musings: Millennial Marriage

My husband José and I have been married for eight years. From a modern millennial perspective, we are an anomaly. We married when we were still kids – 22 and 23 years old. With the statistics going the way they go these days, I don't think anyone expected us to last more than a year. Yet here we are, in our thirties with three children and more in love now than ever.

## Respect Marriage

To make this story even more unbelievable, José and I were an arranged marriage. It was arranged by our daughter Mia. We didn't know each other at all on the day we wed. On January 14, 2011, we were just two strangers with a baby saying "I do."

The first years of our marriage were rough, sometimes impossible, but two stubborn people are hard to break apart. **I think part of our secret is that we both are quite serious about the institution of marriage.** ☐ Even though we made our what-the-hell promise in a courthouse nine days after our first daughter was born, even though we don't wear wedding rings, we are deeply invested in the commitment we made on that day, a day we now celebrate with reverence every year.

José and I have lived through countless hells and heartbreaks, moves and misunderstandings. We've spent many months of deployment separated, and I've even spent months living with our daughters at my parents' house in summertimes, when the bickering got too intense. But it wasn't ever going to be an end. Our worst breaks were often the precursors of our best beginnings.

## It Doesn't Get Easier

Part of our secret might simply be our stubborn commitment, but **the real secret to marriage, I am now convinced, is that it is frustratingly, mind-numbingly, unbelievably hard.** And I just don't think that people understand that it's supposed to be hard. It's supposed to drive you mad. It's supposed to make you want to tear your hair out and run away from the house you mortgaged together screaming your head off. That's what marriage is sometimes. She's ugly. But she is also beautiful. Like so many classic goddesses of antiquity, She is both goddess of Love and goddess of War.

Marriage is hard and it doesn't get easier. Well, eventually it does. But I think it can take a decade or longer. It takes time and patience and fortitude to get there, for every couple. None of us are exempt.

It took me years to learn how to focus on my marriage, that it was worth my time, that **it wasn't supposed to just magically "work out,"** that I was going to have to work hard at it. But as soon as I struck that understanding, it was like striking gold. José and I have come from a place of battling over the rights to crumbs, to vacuuming them up together. I would be lying if I said neither of us ever threatened "the d word," but afterwards I would always cry too much and I just couldn't follow through. It's not always rainbows and cupcakes, but through half a dozen marriage books and hundreds of tedious discussions, we have found a place to coexist in mutual understanding on all our old trigger points, and it has created a space of serenity in our lives I deeply treasure.

## Why are our marriages failing?

I have been inspired to share our story because I see a phenomenon happening amongst my fellow millennial Mrs. that stirs up a deep sorrow in my heart. At least once per month, sometimes more, I hear that another of my mommy friends has

suddenly left her husband, divorced, or is having a baby with another man. I'm over being shocked by this. It is now so commonplace in my newsfeed I almost expect it. **But I never stop feeling like something in the world has gone horribly wrong.**

I keep reading articles about how [millennials are causing the divorce rate to plummet](#) because [we are marrying later](#) and considering marriage more of a status symbol once we can actually afford a wedding, inevitably later in life, but I am not seeing this reflected in my reality. And I don't wholeheartedly agree with the new trends either! I am happy to have married young, and by the way very happy to have started having children young, but that's a whole other article.

Presently, I am not seeing this so-called millennial marriage success. I don't want to come across as judgemental, because I do not know these women's stories. And even if I did know them, it wouldn't be my place to judge. But I won't keep quiet about how I feel either.

I know I am supposed to feel happy for them, but I can't help but shudder when I think of what my life would be like if I were in their shoes. The custody battles. The flights halfway across the country every month. The long drives. The ongoing disagreements over children, that one shared responsibility we can't sell and disburse like the house and the car and all the stupid stuff he bought and all the ugly decorations she insisted on hanging up that he never could stand. No. Children connect us beyond our lifetimes. **Children and grandchildren transcend us in our petty squabbles over money and accidents and stupid mistakes.**

Almost all of the women I know who have been divorced had children, and their lives are so much more complicated now. I am so grateful that I have been blessed with this mind-numbingly hard, yet beautifully simple life with my one husband and our children we have had together. We got through

some really, really hard years, but we stayed. And staying has been so worth it.

I would be a terrible consolation to a friend contemplating a divorce, because pending extreme cases of abuse I find it too difficult to fathom. I know people grow apart, but I also believe that people can grow back together, with faith and time and patient nurturing of a relationship that was once a beautiful thing.

## Just Stay

I am an advocate for marriage, and for staying in marriages, even when they seem like they would be better off left to fall apart. Because even when mine did, over and over again, José and I found a way to pick up the pieces.

As Brendan Clarey writes in [\[Dear Fellow Millennials, marrying at 22 was the best decision I ever made\]](#),

**“[There is] a common perception that 50 percent of marriages end in divorce. But that dismal statistic [is inaccurate.] The New York Times reported in 2014 that 89 percent of college-educated couples who married in the early 2000s were [still married seven years later]. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that college-educated women have a 78 percent chance of a marriage lasting [20 years] while their male counterparts have a 65 percent chance.**

**Your mentality matters. Millennials like to challenge the culture, so challenge the divorce rate. Approach marriage without accounting for the possibility of divorce. Statistics don't determine whether marriages succeed or fail – you do.”**

I think these stats make a pretty clear case for the fact that education does make a difference in the success of our marriage, and education can be directly correlated with effort. In the depths of my marital despairs, I often found solace in marriage books, readily available at the local library.

Clarey also points out that millennials are marrying at a median age of 28, and considering that I am currently 30, and only a quarter of my generation is married, that means that most millennials who are even married yet have only been married for a year or two. How do we know that their marriages are going to last? How do we know that millennials are lowering the divorce rate? We don't. The articles that say so are all hype. It is too early to know.

As for José and I, our love has grown, intensified, and deepened. And I am amazed. Through years of refusing to give up, and working hard on our marriage, my husband and I have made each other into a better man and a better woman, and a better team. I am not ashamed to say that I am proud of us. I have faith that other couples can break through and find this harmony too.

This Valentine's day, as so many millennial marriages fall apart around us, I just want to say that **Love deserves another chance. And another and another and another! Until you can't stand it anymore and then some. That's what it takes.** Marriage is a test of fire. But like gold tested in fire, again and again and again, in the end, it comes out as something pure and truly worthy of our heart's devotion.

Marriages often feel impossible, but they are worth it. Too many millennial marriages are failing today, but I know that we can do better. We beat the odds, and I know that you can too. <3

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# Millennial

# Musings:

# Resolutions and Reneges

The week between Christmas and New Year's is a time of nostalgia, as we visit with good friends and family and receive that last smattering of Christmas cards in our mailboxes, and inboxes. It's also, for many, a time of reflection as we look back on the year that is ending, and prepare ourselves mentally for our return to work, school, and/or reality in the new year coming our way.

## **“NYRs are so overrated”**

During this time of introspection we are often encouraged to make New Year's Resolutions. NYRs may be old-fashioned, overrated, and all-too easy to misconstrue as a flippant promise we don't intend to keep beyond January 31st, however the concept of a resolution still retains value to some of us. It's a promise to ourselves to change, to improve, or maybe just to try something different and new.

I personally love NYRs. I love the period of reflection that precedes choosing a resolution, and I love the specific flavor of commitment that goes along with making – and keeping – resolutions. You don't owe shit to anybody – you owe shit to yourself.

This week, I'm thinking about all of the NYRs of the past that I kept, and also the ones I still haven't achieved. This process always requires the filtering of a certain amount of guilt.

This brand of guilt is the same as the one that made us feel obligated to make perfect Christmases for our families. So, shouldn't we reject it with the same attitude and finally make a promise worth keeping – a promise to treat ourselves with respect and not beat ourselves up over un-kept resolutions?

## **Pursue Happiness**

In January we may have decided exactly what would make us happiest, but in February the path to that happy could be a completely different one. We cannot promise ourselves that what makes us happy today will still make us happy tomorrow. We simply have to be at peace with the fact that The Pursuit of Happiness that shapes all of our lives is possibly not going to look the same in 2019 as it did in 2018, probably not going to look the same in 2021, and it definitely isn't going to look the same in 2026.

It's hard to be at peace with this fact – that the world is constantly in flux. It's when we finally find peace with that that we can progress to the next level of our soul's development in this universe.

When I say “the world is constantly in flux,” I mean not only the ever-evolving world and society that we live in, but also our own ever-changing desires, goals, perspectives, and directions. In short, the flux of our lives.

One day we might be 100% confident that we know what we want, and have made a life-altering decision. The next day, the next year, or five years later, we may realize that it's not what we want anymore. This is evident in the fact that college students change their majors, middle-aged adults change their careers, couples divorce, carpenters become soldiers, and nurses become novelists.

Every day, life has an opportunity for us. It beckons us with a promise of what could be. The grass is always greener there.

## **Keep the Change**

So we find ourselves in a world where finding someone who has worked the same job their entire lives is rarer than rare. This is testament to the fact that none of us are able to

stick with one thing for too long. Some of us just manage to do one thing longer than most and society has made that the standard. Or at least, the ideal. Society encourages commitment; wants us to pick something and stick to it, colloquially known as finding our niche.

Of course, to refuse change completely and live in routine, may be a comfortable place. It may feel safe. But the slightest unbidden change can send that house of cards crumbling to the floor.

Even the hardiest of souls resilient to change experience a reluctance to change at some point, because it can feel like giving up; like not persevering. Most of us, who say we are completely adaptable, still have trouble adapting to the whims of our own soul. It's hard for all of us.

Even for me, someone who was born into this life with a penchant for constant change and a wanderlust that keeps dragging me back and forth across the country. Even for me, it's hard not to turn my head back at what once was, and wonder if I should have stayed, should have tried harder, even if I wasn't happy anymore. Never mind that being happy is the whole point.

This disappointment in oneself for a lack of perseverance spans across the board. We all pick up jobs, hobbies, or education that we intend to see through and then have a change of heart. This feeling can lead to remorse at best and low self-esteem at worst. I challenge you to find one person who doesn't feel this way about at least one thing in their lives.

Unfortunately, we all fall into the trap because there really isn't an alternative.□ (Except perhaps becoming a pan-handling bum or a Buddhist monk, but either way you don't get to take a lot of showers.) It is a fact of human nature that we will never stop wanting to improve ourselves.

To be honest, part of me wants to commit. To find that one thing I was meant to do. To do it, and to save the world. But commitment binds us, and makes us accomplish less in this lifetime than we were meant to do; than we are capable of.

But wait... How can commitment to accomplish a wonderful goal – a good goal – ever possibly be bad? I'm not saying it's bad, I'm saying it's good, but we need to listen to the flux of our lives and not let it keep us committed past a point of being happy.

If we wake up one day and we're no longer happy in our commitment, it's OK to change it. It's okay to say, *"This commitment is not making me happy anymore, I'm going to let change happen even if it feels like giving up, because it's not, that's only what I've been trained to think. I'll think of it as simply going in a new direction in life, one that I was actually meant to go in."*

The problem is not with commitment itself, it's with the word. It's a permanent word, disallowing any future changes to the self and to others connected to the commitment. Imagine I committed to being a nurse, but then the zombie apocalypse broke out and my job required me to treat zombies all the time but their rotting flesh made me throw up a little bit in my mouth. In that case, it's perfectly ok to break the commitment and decide to do a different occupation.

## **Find Your Peace**

Despite it being the natural proclivity of all humankind to ceaselessly seek improvement, I feel that the answer lies neither in constant improvement, nor in sitting back and watching life go by. It's somewhere in between. A place in that spectrum is appropriate for one soul, but inappropriate for another. We all must find our own balance.

So what can we do? We cannot abandon our current life

circumstances, or the loved ones who unwittingly bind us in chains to this life we have chosen or let be. I think the answer simply lies in acceptance: a complete and utter calm despite any disruption, change, change of heart, or catastrophe that befalls us. The calm cannot be forced however, it must stem from an understanding that change is an inevitable part of the universe that we cannot control.

This is what Buddhist monks are trying to teach us when they spend countless hours building [mandalas out of sand](#) only to destroy them immediately upon completion. It's more than a straightforward representation that nothing lasts; that all things are impermanent and that everything eventually dies. It's about personal acceptance of impermanence and how it affect us in the here and now. And that is not something that can simply be taught and known. It must be experienced in order to be understood, and it must be actively practiced in order to be accomplished in true faith.

Life is less about finding our place than it is about finding our peace in many places.

In the end we are all dreamers and collectors of experiences. In the end we never stop pursuing happiness. So Happy New Year to you and yours. Wherever you find yourself this New Year – at whatever juncture along your own personal Pursuit of Happiness – write your Christmas cards, make your resolutions, and keep the change ☐

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## Millennial Musings: Ornaments

# and Obligations

Around the holidays, Mommy's to-do list goes from a mile long to two-thousand miles long jacked up on caffeine and candy canes. There is so much we want to do; so much we "have to" do, and so much our family will miss out on if we don't do it.

We are all so inoculated at this point with Christmas commercialism that we're almost immune to it. Or at least, we think we are. It's just when we think we've beat the system that it finds it's way again under our skin.

The sector of society this hits hardest is women. Throughout the entire holiday season, from October through December 25th, we are bombarded with images of perfect, magical Christmases that ad upon ad implores us to replicate in our own homes for our own families. The subliminal messaging is: you need to create this for your family. You need to make this happen.

If Mommy doesn't bake homemade Christmas cookies, no one will. **If Mommy doesn't decorate the house, Christmastime will feel like just another ordinary day of the week, and who are we to betray our children's confidence and not make that happen?**

Why are we as a society putting so much burden on the women of our households to stress themselves sick over the decorating, the baking, the gift shopping, the gift wrapping, the Christmas card sending?

## The Christmas Card Obligation

The tradition of giving Christmas cards is slowly being replaced with the instant gratification of text messaging, email, and Facebook, but it isn't completely obsolete yet. **Many women still feel obligated to design photo cards or purchase beautiful cards and write out the same "Merry Christmas with love from the Mojicas xo" 50 times on 50 cards year after year after year.**

The only positive thing I see about this tedious tradition is that it forces me to update my address book, although with the majority of my friends being Army wives like myself, that task in itself is a chore.

Much can be said on the subject of Christmas cards. One year, for example, my mother has been sick and chose to skip a year of card writing in favor of visiting with old friends and baking a batch of cookies, but skipping this year means that she cannot skip next year, according to her brother, who believes that if you skip Christmas cards two years in a row, you will be removed from your sendees' card lists! I had to think about this for a minute, because at first I wanted to protest, but then I realized that he's right.

Old friends of mine who I used to exchange Christmas cards with, I no longer do. If they had continued to send me cards, I would have sent cards back, but because they stopped sending, I stopped sending. And because my mother is skipping this year, she feels she does not deserve to receive cards unreciprocated. She says, "I feel guilty with every Christmas card I get. I am exhausted and it becomes a chore, to check off a list."

At this point of course my father starts caroling "...with every Christmas card I get!..."

So it's true that Christmas cards are an object of mutual exchange, and [they can be wonderfully fun to make, send, and receive](#), however it's the point at which one feels obligated to accomplish them, the year they feel like a chore instead of a joyful holiday activity, that we ought, perhaps, to stop doing them.

## **The Gift-Giving Obligation**

I will attribute much of the inspiration for writing this article to my husband. My husband is one of those life-rebels

who fiercely protests all feelings of obligation throughout the year.

**During Christmastime, obligation hangs ripe in the air like the pungent scent of fresh mistletoe,** so of course during this time more than ever his grumbles get louder. Part of this is his frugality. He hates to spend money, especially on gifts given not out of a deep love and desire to give, but out of obligation. To him it is obvious that this is a supreme waste of money, and after years of ~~marital bliss~~ harmonizing, I have to agree with him.

I have to ask myself, when I'm out shopping alone on Christmas Eve instead of drinking mulled wine and watching an old Christmas movies marathon with my family at home, seriously why the hell am I here and is this really what I should be doing?

At some moment every day of our lives we forget what the point is. What's the point? The point of life; the point of everything. Happiness. Mine. My families. (Hopefully they complement one another or I'm probably doing this family thing wrong). But you know. Happiness. Christmas happiness. Every day happiness.

Ever since I was a child old enough to collect coins in a piggy bank I have felt this familiar giftgiving pressure like a literal heaviness peeling my hard-earned pennies out of my palms. If this guilt affects even our children, should we really be perpetuating it amongst ourselves?

A good, old friend of mine once told me that instead of looking at birthday and holiday giftgiving as obligatory, I ought to look at it as an opportunity to remember and honor the loved one I am bestowing the gift(s) upon. This works for me. I can handle the pressure and the obligation if I do it in the name of love.

However **there is still something that bothers me at a bone-**

**deep level, when I see my mother run-down with winter sickness and on top of that guilt over – what? – not having done Christmas cards?**

Then the commercials come on for all the big-box stores, with women singing “I’ve done everything you can see,” surrounded by perfect Christmas trees and perfect platters of Christmas cookies with their children in perfect holiday attire while I look over at my little ragamuffins with their uncombed hair in their footie pajamas at 2 o’clock in the afternoon and **I feel inadequate.**

Strangely, I also feel like running out to the store to remedy my failure. I feel that I **MUST** or else something won’t be right with the world and I probably won’t be able to sleep at night then I’ll double the pressure on myself next December and all my hair will fall out and I’ll lose 5 years off my life and **PLEASE** people. The madness has to stop.

## **Enough is Enough**

If my husband doesn’t receive a gift from me this year, will he feel scorned? Will I be ridden with guilt? No. **He will probably kiss me under that pungent ball of obligation and thank me for saving our money instead of buying into commercialism and my own demanding guilt complex.** Perhaps this year, instead of buying him a gift, I’ll frame this article for him instead.

It’s enough. One branch of holly is enough. [One batch of cookies](#). One string of lights. One gift. Coming from someone who lived in a tiny house (330 square feet for four people), let me tell you one of each thing is really, truly enough. **Whatever you can do before 8 o’clock at night, that’s enough. You are enough.**

So let’s send Christmas cards this Christmas. Let’s give gifts. Let’s decorate our houses and our cookies and ourselves

in all the festive arraignment that only this season can afford us. But let's not send Christmas cards if we're tired or sick. Let's not give gifts if we can't afford them. Let's not decorate our house because we feel guilty for spending money on all that half-priced merch we picked up after Christmas last year. **Let's not, feel obligated.**

Let's send out the Christmas cheer our pocket books and our health can afford. Let's send out the love in our hearts if that's all we have, and nothing more.

*Merry Christmas with love from the Mojicas xo*

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## **Millennial Musings: Mind Over Multitask**

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, "multitasking" was a skill we put on our résumés with pride. Well I never did, because I didn't think I was very good at multitasking. All my friends said they listened to music while they studied, but I couldn't do it. It made me wonder if something was wrong with me. Was there something I could do to become a good multitasker? Did I even want to?

**Millennials worldwide have grown up with the myth of multitasking.** Over the past few years, neuroscientists and cognitive scientists and brain researchers of all kinds are finding more and more evidence to disprove it.

### **Multitasking is a Lie**

In a book we just read in the Gold Millennial book club, [Leaders Eat Last](#), Simon Sinek says that "true multitasking

does not actually exist. Rather, what we are doing is ‘mental juggling’ or ‘rapid toggling between tasks...’ **we aren’t doing two things at once, we are merely switching back and forth between things.**” He refers to the American Psychological Association and University of California Irvine researchers who found that “when a worker is interrupted, it takes them around twenty-three minutes to return to their original task.”

I read about similar studies in Gary Keller’s [The One Thing](#) last July, where he says that researchers call multitasking “task switching” and that they “estimate workers are interrupted every 11 minutes and then spend almost a third of their day recovering from these distractions.” We just can’t do it all – at least not all at once.

Printed before even the table of contents is the Russian proverb “If you chase two rabbits, you will not catch either one.” In Chapter 5, Keller states point-blank that “multitasking is a lie” and quotes [Steve Uzzell](#) as saying “multitasking is merely the opportunity to screw up more than one thing at a time.”

And then Keller points out something really poignant here as well: our biology may have hardwired us to do two things simultaneously. Our prehistoric ancestors had to constantly scan for predators even while doing all the other tasks necessary for survival. We can obviously chew gum while listening to the radio while driving a car. However, **there is a difference between *doing* two things at once and *focusing* on two things at once.** We may be able to have music playing while we read, but are we hearing the music, or are we hearing the words on the page?

## **Multitasking is an Addiction**

What really deepens the complexity of this is that it goes far beyond a belief that we can multitask and therefore we should. **We are actually addicted to it.** Keller says that “media

multitaskers actually experience a thrill with switching – a burst of dopamine... Without it, they can feel bored.” Dopamine is a chemical our brains produce when we check something off our to-do list, or when we engage in habitual behaviors that make us feel good. Behaviors like smoking a cigarette or eating half a box of doughnuts. We are literally getting a drip of dopamine just by switching from the Facebook app to email.

This chills me to the bone when I think about the school I worked at in September. All of us teachers would talk about how our students were too distractible to focus on anything we were trying to teach. We theorized that it might have something to do with tablets and TVs. My daughter's *first grade* teacher told me that he had resorted to projecting educational media from his computer during the entirety of class, regardless of what he was teaching, just to keep his six year olds engaged. **Six years old, and our kids are already so overstimulated that they don't even know how to focus anymore.** I thought this was genius, until I realized that it was only feeding into the problem more.

I am finding further validation for my early days of doubt in more and more studies and articles being published every year. Keller's *The One Thing* was published in 2013. Sinek's first version of *Leaders Eat Last* in 2014. An article entitled [“How Multitasking Affects Productivity and Brain Health”](#) on [verywellmind.com](#) was just published today, October 30, 2018!

## **Mindfulness is the Cure**

Researchers started heavily studying multitasking in the early 2000s, and a decade later we are faced with a clear, foregone conclusion. Gone are the days of the 90s when multitasking was heralded as the hallmark of the modern man. Perhaps we have shifted into a new era, that of the post-modern man! **A human who recognizes his own value is greater served when he renounces multitasking and focuses simply, on one thing at a**

**time.**

All hope may not be lost for the millennial generation, if we can learn to embrace our new, collective understanding and work hard to shed multitasking's addictive influence over our lives. But I feel even more strongly that there is great hope for Gen Z and Gen Alpha, my children's generations. **I believe the yoke of responsibility falls upon us as millennial parents to own up to our shortcomings, and teach our children that social media and technology in all its manifestations are just as addictive as alcohol and drugs.**

Some things I vow to consciously do at my house to help my children learn how NOT to multitask:

1. I will keep my phone out of sight at all meal times.
2. I will actively model completing one task at a time.
3. I will make eye contact with my children when I speak to them.

I came up with this list because personally, I don't believe that enforcing rules and making our [Screenagers](#) sign contracts is as impactful as emulating self-regulation. Although I do plan to view the [next public screening of Screenagers in Denver on November 15th](#). Field trip anyone?

Millennials love to talk about mindfulness, but how well are we really minding this mantra when we mindlessly scroll? I think we are better than that. In fact I know we are. We have the power to replace multitask with mindful. For our own sakes, and for all the generations yet to come.



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# Millennial Musings: Living Far From Home

They say that home is where the heart is, but what does it actually mean to call a place home? Is home near family? Is home by the mountains or the sea shore? Is it where you feel happy when you live there? I think that home is all of these and more; it is variable. Home and heart mean different things to different people, and it's up to each of us to be patient enough to withstand the time and experience it takes to get us to our own individual understanding.

It wouldn't be fair for me to say that Army life took us far away from home. The truth is, it has been life itself that has taken us far. Millennials may have been stereotyped as a generation obsessed with wanderlust and travel blogs, but again, that box does not do us justice either.

The real reason my family and I have relocated so many times is that we have this nagging little spirit of adventure in our hearts. I have wanted to crush him so many times. I have wanted to tell him to go to Hell in the same hand basket as all of his crazy schemes. Unfortunately, spirits like that don't mind reason very well.

## Army Life

My family and I became a family in South Korea, where I was teaching English and where I met my soldier husband, José. After that we lived in a cute little single family home we own in coastal Georgia, in a condo on post in El Paso, Texas, and then off-post again in a rental in the suburbia of the borderlands. Little did we know that our journey to find home was still only just beginning.

After José retired from the Army, I threw him a retirement party where we smashed the watch he had not taken off for 11 years with a sledgehammer. It was the best retirement party activity I think I've participated in to date.

As all the little bits of glass and plastic and rubber and wire shattered, our freedom became tangible. We had the whole world in our hands. We were no longer at the mercy of time, or so we thought. We could go anywhere. So where would we go? When faced with this kind of life-altering choice, it's easy to make the wrong one, especially when there is an overwhelming panoply of them.

## Moving Towards Home

We started our post-Army life in October of 2015 in a place I like to affectionately recall as the Wild Wild West. Twenty minutes outside of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, we invested all our savings into a [tiny house](#) we lived in for two months.

The tiny house had no running water and only some electricity. Needless to say we got tired of camping out in there real quick. We were twenty minutes from the nearest grocery store and our social life was going to the laundromat every other week. The situation devolved into one of the most miserable experiences of my life. We finally decided to move back to our house in Georgia.

During this time a pain developed at the base of my spine when I sat that was persistent and unappeasable. No matter what I did I could not relieve it. I was learning Reiki at this time, so I practiced self-healing, tried making use of various stones and essential oils, worked out for 1-2 hours every day, sat in dead sea salt baths twice a week, and ate an impeccable diet. I did this for over 5 months. Nothing helped.

## **Getting Warmer**

Although my daughters and I were very happy in Georgia, my husband was not. Something was not right. So after just six months, it was time to leave again.

This time we tried living in New York, so we could be near family. After a summer of desperate homelessness, we still could not find a place to live. □ New York was spitting us out. We love our family, but the state did not seem to love us back. We decided that Colorado would be the best place to settle our family, so we made plans to move to Colorado Springs.

It was October, and with the change of seasons we seemed destined to change again ourselves. Once again within a week we were packed up, trailer hitched to our jeep. The pain in my spine was worse than ever, an affliction that was not easy to ignore on the long road trip west.

## **Coming Home**

We were overjoyed to see [Pikes Peak](#) and its glorious assorted mountain friends the closer we got to our new home. We already had an apartment waiting for us, so we unpacked and settled in quickly.

It wasn't until about a week later that I realized something extraordinary. The pain at the base of my spine had not only diminished, it was miraculously gone.

Before then, I had not made the connection between the pain and my root chakra, but now I saw it so clearly. The root chakra is associated with security, safety, and home.

For a year I had been in pain. For a year we had been living far from home. For the first time in over 12 months, we were living in a place where we intended to stay and call home. For the first time in over 12 months, I could sit and meditate or write with no discomfort at all. My root chakra issues were resolved. The synchronicity was unmistakable.

We were home.

## **The Mountains Are Calling**

I still miss my family every time we miss a birthday party or a graduation or a family vacation. Especially now that I am expecting another little one, I wish more than ever that my family could be near me to experience the joy of new motherhood again with me.

I often wonder what it would be like if we had just powered through somehow and stayed in New York. But staying wasn't an option. That incorrigible little spirit would have called me from the west, and he would have kept calling. He would have called me from the mountains, and I would have known that I must go.

We moved to Colorado Springs on October 12, 2016. It has been exactly 2 years. Although I have been unhappy for most of that time, I could always go to the mountains to clear my head, and turn to my good Colorado friends to clear my heart.

It couldn't be clearer to me now – this is where my family belongs. Colorado is where our heart is, and Colorado is our home.

At least for now ☐

Stacy has more to say! [Read her follow up post here on her blog!](#)

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# In Poetry & Prose: I Eat Words For Breakfast

I Eat Words for Breakfast

I can only taste words  
when I speak ones that have been written.

Thought flavors them, like salt. And they are yummy. Even “yummy” sounds yummy. Fuck cellar door. Cellar door has no fucking idea in it. But yummy... I can chew on yummy.

I like to see what happens to words that have ideas in them. Listen to how they feel. Feel how they taste. Suck on them, and roll them around in my mouth.

(pause)

there is some depth in those. Filled only halfway and daring you to guess if they're half full or half empty and daring you to finish filling them yourself while each stroke of sound is pulled into the air, melting like sugar in iced tea.

especially poetry, where meaning seeps through words that are only a vehicle for their expression (there are different kinds of tea, you know). so we don't have to wonder where meaning resides because it pervades through us through every word.

Those words are like cotton candy in my mouth. A split second

- and they are gone into my tongue. Then I'm sure I can still taste them even after I've stopped eating. Then I think I'm okay, but then I get a sugar rush!

This melting, is like when I go to see a movie in theaters and when the movie is over everyone gets up and leaves right away and every time, every time, I think they're all stark raving mad because I need to sit, and absorb the light-sound-transformation that just happened before my eyes like butter into popcorn. And more importantly, the ideas conveyed therein. Those last longer than the popcorn smell stuck to my clothes.

Words are so powerful, in fact that we invented the idea of magic spells that control the uncontrollable with pre-thought speech. And is it a coincidence that spells are so close to how we spell a word? Spell it. Spell it out. Spill your wwwoooooorrrrrdddddss out. It has something to do with stitching words together. It seems so, taken for granted. But the pattern works so well, because words do so much, because we do so much by words with words because of words.

They must be magic.

I eat words with my eyes when I read them.

I eat words with my pen when I write them.

I eat words so fast I choke sometimes when I type them.

I eat words with my soul when I write poetry.

Someone recites to me and: did you like that poem? All I can say is: marshmallows.

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# In Poetry & Prose: A Cigarette

## A Cigarette

I am a slave to your  
silicone cinders of compressed pomp  
of awkward moments rolling by  
the carriage of innocence that no one caught.

I am a slave to your□ proud embarrassment funneled into □  
deceptive paper cones that we are□ damned to disregard.

I am a slave to your□ beautiful danger, your□ smoky sex  
appeal—IT—like Belladonna□ in a flapper girl's eyes.

I am a slave to you for so many whys□ that I can't remember  
how when □ all of us started all of us □ failed to quit.

I thought a delicious mistake□ could decidedly not be  
mistaken□ when an inch of my lifeline – o□□ deluded, maybe –  
never forsaken!

When I wake up I forget that I am not free □ but the chains  
tighten around my chest□ squeezing my freedom down the funnel  
□ of your paper cone.

It was “as natural as breathing” until□ the girl who's voice  
lived in your cage □ for a decadent decade□ decayed and turned  
into a guy.

The fierce camaraderie we felt waivered □ on the ephemeron  
ember at the end.

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# Millennial Musings – Being a Millennial in 2018

When you think of “millennials” what comes to mind? What defines the millennial generation? Technology? Privilege? Wanderlust? Student loan debt? Personally, I’d agree with all of the above, and maybe even more that you can add to the list, but for me the biggest thing that marks my life as a millennial is that my life is fucking crazy.

It is never-ending change. And never-ending anticipation. In the song [“Rich Love,” by One Republic](#), singer Ryan sings “I was saving up for something hoping life would finally start.” Right? But we all figure out by our 30s that this shit is basically it. A future where we are always someday happy is no substitute for now.

## **We have so many more options.**

The biggest difference I think between millennials and the older generations is that suddenly the world has become much bigger. We’ve been granted a magical genie lamp for asking questions – it’s called Google and Wikipedia and Quora. There are so many more options and opportunities available to us. An infinity of options, compared to the quantity our parents and grandparents faced before.

To think, at 30 years old having my third child, only now am I finding out about my “option” to have a free birth. I feel funny calling it an option because what it really is is a birth right. But I never knew about it before. And now, thanks to the internet and facebook groups and this crazy thing called [podcasts](#), I am aware of it, and I feel awakened.

Maybe that’s why so many of our generation claim to have “awakenings” – because the Internet has so finely created a

“collective consciousness” of so many millions of thoughts and ideas and answers at our fingertips. How could we not feel our minds opening as the information pours in?

There are [apps out there that claim to teach you a foreign language in 3 weeks](#). Goodbye Rosetta Stone! I’m betting younger millennials won’t even get the reference. But then there’s several different Babelfish devices on the market that provide [in-ear translation for at least 40 languages](#), and counting. So why even bother learning a foreign language anymore?

Personally, I’m feeling a lot less motivated to brush up on my Spanish. And with driverless cars now literally a thing of the present, I’m starting to feel like my New Year’s Resolutions from 5 years ago to learn Spanish and how to drive a stick shift are now totally obsolete.

## **But the options can make us crazy.**

It makes our world- our life- feel so much more out of control, when so much more is possible.

Navigating options in 1988 was like catching fireflies by the wood line at dusk in a little jar while Pop made a camp fire. In 2018 it’s more like running away from a fucking swarm of fireflies and trying to be hit by only a dozen of them, while the whole sky is on fire and the little jar is shattered at the wood line like ashes scattered on a grave.

When I graduated college it took me about 5 weeks to find out that I didn’t have to limit myself to jobs in my hometown – or in my home country for that matter. I took a job in Korea teaching English for the public schools.

When I had children, [modern cloth diapering](#) offered me literally hundreds of different ways I could diaper my babies,

and when they were school-aged, homeschooling was “mainstream” and not just for the churchy kids anymore. Just to make things even more confusing, there were also free public charter schools and Montessori schools galore to choose from.

In a world of endless options, it can feel dizzying just keeping track of them all, let alone making decisions. It’s one of the reasons why I often feel sick over the number of difficult decisions I have to make every day.

Which of the thousand restaurants in town should I eat at? Or which of the million recipes should I make? Or which of the seven nearest grocery stores should I go to? Or should I skip all that altogether and order my pantry goods on-line and my produce from a co-op?

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Beyond that – more day-to-day decision making pounds me further into the dirt of my consciousness that's just screaming – when will it end? Do I really want to make this doctor's appointment? Maybe it's not worth the copay. Do we really need dental insurance?? Can we budget for a gym membership? Full service laundry? Is it legal to shoot a lamppost if it's keeping you up all night? What would Jenny think if I RSVP "maybe" to the party?

## Life isn't easier.

I've heard that some believe that life is much easier for millennials with our [smartphones](#) and instagram and video chat. I would argue that psychologically, it's much harder. We have so much more crap to juggle every day.

Between email and Facebook groups and online news we still need to pay our credit card bills and make time for the rest of our lives that aren't any less in proportion to our parents'. We may not have to line dry clothes or balance a checkbook, but we have a thousand other to-dos that have replaced them.

Life isn't easier. It's at least just as hard – in a thousand different new ways that we barely even understand yet. It isn't any easier, but it sure is crazier. So maybe, the biggest millennialism of all is really just a fucking crazy life.