

## Journal entry/and a note to those just starting this journey

February 11, 2004

It's been close to four years since the person I had spent most of my adulthood with, raised our family with, shared Valentine's with every year, cried and laughed with, ---- looked at me like a stranger one day and walked out the door to start a life with another woman.

Four years since I started checking the "divorced" square on forms rather than the "married". And that same number of years raising our daughter by myself, when he moved out of state for a better job.

Four years filled with fear, adjustment, juggling, growth and ultimately a sense of accomplishment and empowerment that this new life had brought me ---- a life, that despite all the pain and loss, I could not imagine not having now. And, I can't imagine not being the person today that this whole process has helped me become. Someone far from the shattered person I was four years ago when my life seemingly came screeching to a halt when my then husband left.

Nearly four years ago was also the time that I went on a Visions Anew Retreat with other women going through a break up of their marriage and family. We gathered together, most of us with varying emotional wounds from our recent sojourn into the realm of separation and divorce. It was here amidst the safety of this group that we could really expose those wounds. These women that were mere strangers hours before, became sister-like during the course of one weekend---because they *knew*, they knew the pain of the loss, how it could get so big it seemed impossible to wrap yourself around it, they knew how empty a house and bed could be, the sorrow of vanished dreams, the numbness, the awkwardness at the possibility of dating again, the stress and confusion of the legal process, the absurdities, the fear of the unknown...they *knew*. And amidst all the open wounds, we shared one other thing together ---- some laughter. That weekend was the first time since I had separated, that I actually could laugh a little. Talk about healing medicine.

Almost one year ago, on Valentines, I put off a date that evening so that I could get together with my two closest friends instead. We drank wine, talked about our dreams, our children, men, friends, careers, silly things, laughed a lot, and celebrated all the wonderful things in our lives, and how happy we were in the new lives we had made for ourselves over the course of the last few years. And we thought back of that Visions Anew weekend where we all met each other for the first time. We were all so wounded and lost back then when we first walked through the doors. Today we just smiled, and clinked one another's wine glasses.

Time does heal, and friends heal, family, and our children, trust, belief in oneself, and love. The wounds heal, but it's gone beyond just healing for me. I thought my old life was pretty good. But, this new life, this journey, has brought me gifts I could never have imagined before and taken me places I never thought I could go.

I think it was FDR who said "when you find yourself at the end of your rope, just tie a knot and hold on". I guess that's what many of us were doing at the beginning of this journey. For those who are just now embarking on this voyage---hold on tight! The seas will be mighty rough at times, but it's your ocean, and your ship---and you can use these same seas to guide you to safe harbor, as well as to some amazing destinations.

Happy Valentine's Day

RM