



Mariellen

Change is not a destination – it's a process.

On Jan. 12, 1998, my younger sister Victoria and I went to my mother's apartment to make her lunch, as she had been sick with what we thought was a bad chest cold. My mother was only 67 and had never been sick before, but we walked into her apartment to find that she had died in her sleep, probably of heart failure.

In that moment, I too almost died – of heartbreak. I was 37 years old, unmarried and childless; I didn't have a feeling of stability and was struggling to find a satisfying career. After graduating with a degree in journalism, I had worked in public relations, custom publishing and marketing. I always wanted to be a writer or journalist, but didn't have the confidence to pursue it. And though I was engaged, I still felt unsettled in my personal life.

I went through years of dark emotions and depression. My fiancé tried to be there for me, and he hung in for two years, but I withdrew into my grief and almost stopped socializing. I lost friends, and after my fiancé left me, lived alone with my cat in a small apartment, trying to find a patch of joy I could build on.

I threw my faith into yoga. I went to my teacher Bibi's yoga class three times a week; the Friday night class, and dinner afterward, was sometimes my sole social outing each week. Slowly I started to breathe, and found the courage to go after a dream – to get a yoga teacher training certificate. While I was in training, I had a cathartic experience and felt compelled to go to India. I saved for almost a year, sold about one-third of my possessions, gave up my apartment and moved into a room in a colleague's house.

My life started to change. I graduated and began teaching yoga, started dating again and grew excited about my impending departure. I would spend one month in a yoga study program in Chennai, India, and two months in Dharamsala volunteering to help Tibetan refugee children adjust to life in India. The following three months I'd be free to follow my heart's desire.

I went to India because I needed change – in the end, it restored my belief in the possibilities of life. The excitement I felt about travelling in such a stimulating place gave me a focus for my career and helped me to become the writer I longed to be. I now make my living partly by writing about India and transformational travel, and I started a blog, BreatheDreamGo.com.

Change is not a destination, it's a process – often an internal one. The outward signs of my life may seem the same, but I now live from the inside: I listen to my heart.

What I've learned from the experience of feeling like I'd lost it all – and then deciding to risk what was left – is that it's not safe to play it safe. The truth is, we are all going to die. No amount of RRSPs, vitamins or corner offices is going to change that. Every minute is precious. »

– Mariellen Ward

CATHY'S COMMENTS

- Great joy often comes out of the darkest moments. Mariellen's world was turned upside down before she could view life from a different perspective and get in touch with her inner voice.
- Listen to your heart. It's the voice of reason, patterns and behaviours that will never steer you wrong.
- Inner guidance is subtle, positive and very trustworthy.