

## Jungle Gym

Healing is an individual process with its own time frame. No way to sugarcoat suffering or simplify sorrow. First, I had to dance with demise, hopefully soon with destiny. As I began to stumble out of the debilitating stages of heartbreak and disbelief, I managed to get myself off the merry-go-round of misery. Once I was feeling steadier, the seesaw was my favorite plaything. Alternating newly positive, healthy habits with earlier familiar, destructive, but comforting ones, I thought I had a handle on the rhythm. Every time I hit that sweet spot of balance, I pretended I had made it to some non-existent far side where that would be my new normal. I was alone on that wooden plank, deftly moving from side to side. But I'm not the dancer I used to be, and a see is meant to saw.

After bruising my butt enough times, I got off that contraption and intentionally shifted away from the old coping mechanisms. I was maintaining, but the temptations were still there: when I felt that grip of anxiety in my gut, the unexpected reminder of something that brought me great joy at another time, or tears falling for no apparent reason. I sparred with the shades that sought to sweet-talk me down that slippery slope.

Then, I had a dream. I was teaching a class, and there were two bullies who told everyone it was time to leave. They all started to do so, but I said they needed to stay and reminded them that I made those decisions. While the bullies did not return with the class, the rest did and were respectful. I realized the remaining students should not be punished for the unruly behavior of the others, and I dismissed them. This illuminated for me that rather than wrangling with my familiar fiends, I could focus instead on galvanizing the constructive parts of my psyche to produce a robust resistance and protection force. What a concept, support! I am fiercely independent, used to doing things for myself, by myself, so this nocturnal note was hugely helpful. I now mobilize my minions to assist when I see warning signs and am maintaining better emotional equilibrium. Small but significant victories. I have moved to the slide. At least up and down are clearly defined.

I have also discovered that while who I am is someone I am, mostly, proud to be, I am fairly certain that I no longer want my life or work to continue as it was. Figuring out what my passions and interests are right now, not what I have done, happen to be good at, or have been doing for a long time and used to love, but not sure about anymore, is daunting. Everything is wide open, yet I still have to consider what's next in terms of concerns that impact choices. Comprehending all of it at once is overwhelming, but from my years as a choreographer, I know that imagining, deciding, and manifesting are all distinct endeavors. I start by moving through the playground in no particular direction. Noticing what makes my heart feel lighter and captures my attention, my body always tells me what she does and doesn't like. Oh, look, the swings! My favorite was always the feeling of almost flying.

Just as a park has no singular entrance, a clearly defined commencement or tabula rasa is not possible, lovely as that would be, because life, people, emotions are all messy, and time is ceaselessly continuous. It is only in hindsight that we arbitrarily place these demarcations. I can only stand where I find myself and keep roaming from there. Progress sneaks up on me as I realize there are more good days than bad. I'm giggling on the trampoline again and managing the strength to grip first with one hand and then the other as I cautiously make my way across the monkey bars, legs dangling freely. There's a rhythm to it, this holding on and letting go.