



Loving Life

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A few weeks ago, when my daughter Kelsey got the tragic news that her 16-year-old friend had died during surgery to remove a brain tumor, she looked stunned as well as grief-stricken.

"He was one of the most alive people I knew," she said. "I didn't know he was sick."

Last night at the memorial service, she learned he had been fighting cancer since 4th grade. I'd only been acquainted with Chris through Kelsey – pictures she took, conversations recounted, glimpses at band performances.

But, believe me, seeing this teen with the longish raven hair, sweet smile, the vitality that shone in his eyes, you would never have guessed.

Why is it that we so often need a brush with death, or even a death sentence, to appreciate and love life?

Last night, I realized I'd been guilty of late: guilty of stressing about life (Endless farm chores! Story deadlines!), worrying about life (Teen driver in the family! Swine Flu, the Sequel!), complaining about life (Why did I have to get bursitis in my hip now, with everything that needs to be done?!), and rushing through life (gotta feed the animals fast so I can go for a fast walk and then – fast – get to work!).

But for awhile now I haven't truly been appreciating life, and certainly not loving it enough. And somehow that makes the loss of this boy who wrote "I love life" feel even sadder, and even more unfair.

So last night I decided that today, so as not to feel like this gift of life was wasted on me, I would ditch my stresses, worries and complaints. I would slow down and savor life.

Today, so far, I've experienced and loved –

The sweet-tart taste of fresh-picked blueberries on my cereal.

How perfect the morning air felt against my skin – not too warm, not too cool.

The dappled gold sunlight playing over the trees and flowers.

Talking with our silly turkeys as they trailed me around their pasture.

How soft my old sheep Marigold's wool felt when I scratched her neck.

Sticking my nose into my mare Sophie's neck and inhaling her horsy scent.

Listening to Kelsey play The Offspring's tunes on her bass guitar.

I'll try hard to keep living and loving life for the rest of today, and tomorrow, too.
For Chris, and for myself.

~ Cherie



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