

# *A Personal Note from Denise*



Denise Bissonnette

## Message to my Community

Hello my friends. I am speaking to many friends that I have been fortunate to make over the years through my work, and to my colleagues who I have met in my training sessions and conferences. Many of your faces I would recognize if I saw you, but I wouldn't know your names. And I am also talking to those of you who know me through my books, webinars or YouTube videos. Regardless, you are my tribe – my work community I love and admire so much!

I am addressing you on video today to give you an update on what is happening in my life. You may have seen on my website, or perhaps received notices, of the cancellation of my training events and webinars for this fall, winter and spring. I recently learned that I have Multiple Myeloma, a rather rare cancer of the blood, which is incurable, but – I am very happy to say – treatable! Amazing strides have been made in recent years in the treatment of Myeloma, such that they keep pushing out the expected lifespan of those of us who have it. I wanted to tell you in my own voice that I have good reason to believe that I will enjoy many years of remission, and plan to be around for a very long time.

However, the journey to remission is the challenge before me. I just started a weekly four-month regimen of chemo which will be followed by a stem cell transplant, a term they use interchangeably with a bone marrow transplant, in which they will be using my own stem cells. If all unfolds as we anticipate, I should be back in the world by May, and I hope to be seeing you all again in training rooms and conference centers by fall 2018. My plan is to return stronger and better than ever.

Here's the really weird thing. I used to tell people when I was in my 30's and 40's that I would peak as a writer and a trainer at age 60. Well, I turned 60 in May, and thought to myself, "What did I think I would know or who did I think I was going to be?" And then I got this diagnosis and treatment plan, and I'm thinking – so much for peaking!

Then I was given a beautiful gift from one of our sons whose name is Colin. I was telling him that I have this book I want to write which would curate the best of my 15 years of monthly True Livelihood newsletters, and that I think I have the framework for doing it. I said that if I felt well enough, I would use this time to work on that book. He smiled at me and said, "So, you're on sabbatical." The idea hit a vein of gold inside me – I thought "I'm on sabbatical!" I realized that if I'd said to my husband, "I want to take 9 months off the road and write my book.", it would feel like a such a luxury! This reframe changed everything!

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So, my friends, what I want you to imagine for me, what I want you to envision and hold for me, is a time of healing, of course, but also of deep growth and learning. Maybe I won't feel up to writing my book, but perhaps this will be a sabbatical of a different kind – of silence, prayer and meditation, who knows? But I do know this. On the other end of this journey, one way or another, I am going to come out with new, brighter, deeper insights than ever before. I am determined to live into that vision that I held for myself as a younger woman. I am going to put into practice all of those things you have heard me extol in my trainings, my keynotes, my poetry. I may decide that I have been full of shit all along, but deep inside I believe that much of what I've been teaching for years, is exactly what I need to lean some new and primal way.

I think you hear from me along the way ... perhaps I'll like this YouTube thing, or write and send articles. In the meantime, I do have two on-demand webinar series up and running that you can register for at any time – the Resilience Series, and the What I Know In My Bones Series. These webinars were a tremendous labor of love, and if I do say so myself, they're really meaty and fun. So, you if want a hit of my work, you don't have to wait to the latter part of 2018. You can find them under the "Resources" tab on my website.

It will not surprise many of you that I want to end this message with a poem. This is a piece I wrote almost exactly a year ago, just before the 2016 election. It's about the necessity, the urgency, and the importance of hope. What would we do, who would we be, without the life-giving powers hope? For years I searched for prose and poetry which spoke to its potency, only to scratch this out on an airplane on my way to New Brunswick – a poem which I would recite the following morning in my keynote. I have not published or recorded this piece before now, and it feels really neat to offer it to you now.

This poem is not about me and it's not about you ... it's about our important work of being beacons and messengers of hope in the world – to the people we serve and work with, and those outside that circle. People the world over longing for fresh hope as they look to rebuild and recover from losing their homes and/or communities to hurricanes, firestorms, earthquakes, and to the ravages of war. And may I say, our world politic, our country, our very democracy, is thirsty for robust, radical kick-ass hope, not the Hallmark, pie in the sky wishful thinking – but the hope that is born of bone-deep conviction of what we know to be true and right and just and sane. The world is asking us to step up big and bright right now, not to cower in cynicism, but to be a voice for love, for humanity, for inclusion, to be as Lincoln referred to as "the better angels of our nature". Each of us will hear a different call summons from this poem, as we inhabit unique corners of the world. I thank you in advance for responding to the call that is uniquely yours.

So, get comfortable, and posture yourself in receiving mode. This poem is called Rainmaker.

## Rainmaker

For those who hunger in heart or spirit,  
Hope is bread.  
Even the smallest crumbs of compassion and encouragement,  
If leavened with love, will rise and nourish like manna from heaven.  
Hope is bread.

For those in need of a light in the dark,  
Hope is fire.  
It brings shine and warmth to the cold, dim places.  
It rekindles confidence, and reignites imagination,  
Calling fear and doubt out from the shadows.  
Hope is fire.

For those in need of sanctuary,  
Hope is shelter.  
It is four walls, a sturdy roof and a solid foundation.  
Hope is a place of rest and belonging,  
where we dare to be with our longing.  
Hope keeps the window open and the door ajar,  
Lest grace slip in with the morning sunlight, or  
possibility blow in on the evening breeze.  
Hope is shelter.

For those whose well is dry, and whose buckets are empty,  
Hope is rain.  
It penetrates the parched earth of the inner desert,  
Restoring the root, as it beckons the bud to blossom,  
the blossom to flower, and the flower to become fruit.  
The miracle of apple, plum, peach in the fertile orchard of a beating heart.  
Ah, but for the rain. That long-awaited storm of hope.

It is time we update our job descriptions!  
The next time someone asks you what you do for a living,  
Stand tall, and proud, and declare:  
I am a baker of bread. I feed many.  
I am a fire-breather. A torch-bearer. I spread light.  
I am a sanctuary-builder. I provide shelter.  
I am a water carrier. Better yet, I am a rainmaker!

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Many blessings to you all – may the force be with you!