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Live by themselves

"He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how." –Friederich NietzscheHospital beds are filled with people whose bodies are connected to machinery that keeps hearts pumping, lungs expanding and contracting, tubes providing nourishment and draining excess fluids. These are external forces offering life sustaining activity. It may very well be, that in combination with an intangible... the will to live keeps them from crossing over the line between this life and the next. In recent conversation with a friend, she posed the question: "What do you think gives people the will to live when they are in chronic pain or when faced with serious illness?"This came in the midst of the hospitalization of two friends. One is in an ICU, following open heart surgery and the other is receiving major doses of chemotherapy and radiation for metastatic cancer. Both have made it clear that they although they know death is one possibility, they have no conscious intention of "leaving the building" at this time. Is it fear of death or love of life that helps us to remain incarnate?When visiting the second friend a few days ago and then today, she related that she wants the hospital staff who have been caring for her to "love my life as much as I do." She was propped in bed, wearing pretty pink floral pajamas. Her hair was combed and she had a sparkly headband at the ready, should it become unruly. At the foot of her bed was a laptop computer. Although the nurses sometimes chided her for working when she should be resting, she retorted, "What if I live?I will have all this work to catch up on when I get home." She also made it clear to us that if she was to die, she wanted to be sure her co-workers knew what needed to be done in her absence. Two friends and I visited and offered her Reiki. We got the strong sense that she is there to teach the staff how to work with patients who don't fit the typical mold. She looks far better than they expect given the prognosis and what they view as the norm. Decked out in Hello Kitty jammies with strawberries on them, newly showered, her hair being brushed by her wife, sense of humor intact big time. She joked about many things. Then she mentioned this song, feeling that she was ready to play centerfield. I pulled it up on my phone and all of us in the room bopped around to it, including her. I made a sign to put up on her bulletin board that reminded staff that there was absolutely no place for negativity in that room; only love, only healing intention. She said that she thought she was there to give the staff hope; not the other way around.The other friend who had the cardiac surgery and is still receiving dialysis and is breathing via a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine that is predominately used by people with sleep apnea, has a strong desire to continue on this side of the veil. He has a wife and many friends who are praying for his recovery. The strong support system, he has acknowledged, has helped greatly.What Gives Life Meaning?When asked this question, responses included:"The promise of tomorrow. The beauty outside. It does change day to day sometimes moment to moment"For me, it does change from day to day. Staring down death lately does have a way of addressing this very important question. Sometimes the will is there and other times it is not but I ignore the not times. I don't want to leave that kind of legacy to my young ones. Surely I can do better than that! Leave them with intangible things worth living for."Sharing my joy and how I increase it gives my life meaning. In physical illness, I know there is a way out and it will be revealed. Depression is my cry for help. My guide grants me hope. My spirit assures me it's true. It changes day to day because there are so many aspects of me that the each require time and attention. This is me grounding, refining, nurturing, teaching, learning, exploring, enjoying and expanding."I don't always have the will to live, or at least not for myself. What has typically pulled me out of it has been the desire to help somebody else, knowing I was needed to help them. I suppose if I had children or people in my life who literally needed me, that would be my answer. But since I don't, it's usually the need of an outsider I can somehow put them in the way no one else has chosen to do.""Knowing that we are all here for a reason... learning lessons from past lives to hopefully "get it right" this time to be able to move forward to the next chapter... at least that's what I believe today!"I was a caregiver for a decade for my late husband. He REFUSED to give in because he didn't want to leave me. After he transitioned, my will to live became a testament for those that lose the struggle, like my husband. I feel as if I do not live life to my happiest... I am slapping people like him in the face.""Knowing that life is impermanent. Indian masters have said that to come into a body is a powerful way to heal a soul, because we can reach out and get help. I am reading a text called A Course of Love that speaks about unity consciousness. It takes a village to get me through. When I am depressed, I have to reach out, sometimes at 4:00 in the morning and ask someone if I can sleep on their couch, because I am that scared."In an article written by John Grohol, Psy.D, entitled The Power of the Will To Live, he explains that in anticipation of pivotal events, such as holidays or birthdays, people have the capacity to hold on a bit longer, if they are facing death. They are referred to as "ceremonial finish lines," over which they want to cross before giving themselves permission to die.Is it fear of death, self-preservation or purpose that keeps the heart beating? Is Depression Draining the Life from You?Depression is one of the most prevalent mood disorders and can be caused by genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors. Each person responds in a different manner to the occurrence. Signs and symptoms of depression include:Self-described or other observed persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" moodFeelings of hopelessness, or pessimism ... "Why bother?"Uncharacteristic irritabilityFeelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness... "I don't matter." Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activitiesDecreased energy or fatigueMoving or talking more slowly; a feeling of heavinessFeeling restless or having trouble sitting stillDifficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisionsProblems sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleepingLittle desire to get out of bedEating too much or restricting foodAppetite and/or weight changesThoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attemptsA therapist who has worked with clients who have either expressed suicidality or acted on the commensurate impulse to end his or her life, observed that what prevented someone from following through with the outcome that led to death, was a stated will to live. Sometimes the reason de'tre is another person, or a milestone achievement, such as a child's graduation or wedding.Others have said that they are continuing to live for their dog or cat. She noted that learned resilience was a key factor. When people are able to look back at life events and determine that they have survived each of them, they are better equipped to move forward. In conversation with someone in crisis, she asked what had gotten him through previous challenges. He had learned helplessness that was no longer serving him. He reported that relying on his parents was his M.O. Now that his father has died and his mother is in a nursing home, he needs to formulate a new strategy. Another person reported that her parents had "taught me how to live without them," so that when she feels overwhelmed, she calls on her resiliency reserves to get her through every eventuality.Even in her darkest moments when the thought that "it would be better if I wasn't here," that certainty that she would emerge triumphant helped her to keep on keepin' on.The will to live is a powerful force that can be generated and sustained in the face of love.monkeybusinessimages/Bigstock

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