

Falling Into Place a Midlife Journey **by Marilyn O'Malley**

We are all influencing each other whether we are aware of it or not. What matters is what you choose to follow, see and allow yourself to experience.

In 2005 an old friend contacted me on the Internet after 25 years of absence. I was curious why Tom would search me out after all these years. After much consideration, I determined his gift of connection was to remind me of my adventuresome self. Just thinking about living fearlessly, being curious and spontaneous got me excited and day-dreamy.

The next day my daughter called and said she wanted to check out schools in California over spring vacation. Before my reminder from Tom, I would have hemmed and hawed, but instead I stayed with the adventurer feeling and said "YES, but only you and I are going!"

A couple weeks later, Caitlin and I were driving on the coast highway from LA. to Santa Barbara. As soon as we came into the expansive view of the ocean, sky and mountains I felt myself breathe in more deeply than I had in a long time. I felt free! We stayed with a welcoming college friend and his family. I found myself full of gratitude and warmth in my soul as I walked the beaches barefoot, smelled the ocean air, watched surfers ride the waves and felt the mountain energy sooth my New England winter body. I felt naturally comfortable here, like I'd come home. More than my home in Mystic, CT where I have lived the last 20 years raising a family and building a life. I finally had the feeling of being home.

My daughter commented on how everyone was so friendly and smiles. This reminded me: When I first moved back east, I had new friends tell me I couldn't smile as much, because New Englander's wouldn't trust me. I had to turn down my natural enthusiasm for life or not be trusted in my new home. At the time it felt like a no brainer. Don't smile as much to be accepted. I'm sure from that point forward I tried to match "New England mannerism" to fit in, leaving parts of me feeling abandoned.

Back in Santa Barbara, without the imaginary boundaries of New England and my husband, I felt free to turn my light up. My New England façade was thawing and my free spirit, happy roots were becoming exposed. I experienced how much I had been denying my true self-expression, even as simple as losing my smile.

After Santa Barbara, we went to San Diego to see my mother and friends. While I was there I kept getting comments from friends I visited about an old boyfriend, named Peter. Multiple times there were comments, Peter this and Peter that. I thought what is up? I didn't really think he wanted to see me, as he was married with two children and we hadn't connected with each other in 25 years.

Peter and I grew up together in Coronado, a town in the San Diego area, but we didn't date each other till I was in college. By then we didn't live in the same town. I was in Santa Barbara and he lived in Lake Tahoe. We would get together for weekends when we could.

In 1979 I was moving to San Francisco to attend a new college to study parapsychology and I felt like I wanted to make a bigger commitment with him. He was moving back to San Diego for work. No cell, the only way to reach him was his family's home phone and he was never there when I called. After many attempts to catch him, one of his brothers definitively tells me, "Peter doesn't want to see you and stop calling!" I assumed Peter was getting my messages and his unreturned calls were proof his brothers comments were the truth.

I was hurt and felt like Peter and I had unfinished business. So for the next 25 years, at least once a year, I'd have a dream about him. I'd arrive at a party and someone would tell me Peter is in the next room and I'd go to find him in the crowd of people only to find out at the other end of the house that he was already gone. I would wake up frustrated.

On the last day of my trip, I was visiting my mother in Coronado and the day's events kept oddly changing. A part of the plan had been to say good-bye to mom after our lunch at the Hotel Del Coronado and go back to my friend's home in San Diego for dinner. Instead, Jeanette called me and said she and her son were driving to Coronado, so why didn't we have dinner there. I changed my plans and said, "Okay!"

A few hours later, my mother, Jeanette, her son and I are eating dinner on the patio next to the sidewalk when Peter walks by the restaurant. He doesn't live in Coronado now, so this is a chance encounter. "Oh my God," my heart is pounding. What do I do? If I go out now I may never come back to the table. I remind myself he may not want to see me. What if there is still chemistry? I set a marker, if he is still there after we all finish dinner, then it is meant to be and I will say hi. It took us another 20 minutes to finish and when I walked out, there he stood.

I stepped forward vulnerably and said, "Hi Peter" and he looked at me with his head straining forward trying to make sure what he was seeing was real. It felt like such a long time with no response I thought, "do I need to say my last name?" But, as he slowly moved toward me I could feel a tremendous amount of love pouring out of his eyes and heart. This startled me. It was only seconds but it felt like forever and all the sounds around me were on mute until he spoke and then I noticed my mother, Jeanette and her son staring at us.

After firing questions at me, "How long are you here for? When can I see you? I need to see you!" we scheduled a meeting at a coffee shop the next morning before my flight back home with my daughter.

The next day Peter walked into the coffee shop with a baseball cap on over a baldhead, 50 pounds heavier than the hard body, blond, longhaired surfer I was in love with 25 years ago. And yet, his energy still excited me and I felt like I was eighteen years old again. The first thing he said to me was, "Why did you leave me, you were my soul mate?" Totally confused and blown away, we both figured out that Peter's brother never told him I called and he never was one to pursue.

As we talked, my life force energy came back into me like it hadn't been in a long time. I literally felt a click go off in my brain, just like someone turned on a light switch, and I knew I was going home and leaving my husband. I could no longer live my life with my light turned down. I thought I was drying up and aging because of peri-menopause, but at that moment I realized how I had been feeling was a result of what I had been willing to settle for in my life. I realized at that moment with Peter, I was no longer willing to settle for less of anything in life. I felt the juices of my life flood through me. **I am alive! I choose to live my life fully!**

I couldn't live a lie. I couldn't be the wife, the mother, the life coach, the friend I wanted to be and live the lie I was living with my husband. I needed to be able to be vulnerable, authentic and be celebrated. I needed to be able to express myself without feeling wrong for being different than my husband. I didn't love him as a wife anymore. To continue this journey was harmful for not only me, but as a role model for my children. My spirit was dying in this relationship.

When I returned home, I shocked my husband and my friends noticed a change in me immediately. I felt so alive, vital, frisky and with unlimited possibilities. I wanted to hear music all the time and I felt like dancing.

I teetered between an orgasmic life rush and heart gripping fear of the unknown as I transitioned through the struggles of leaving 20 years of my life invested in a community, friendships and a marriage. I had to deal with my husband's anger and humiliation, friends confusion, children's reactions, the uncertainties and fears of others, as well as my own. I had to deal with my guilt of breaking up a home. I knew I was turning our lives upside down and inside out and at the same time I needed to put myself first this time and decide what I had to bring to my game of life.

I wanted my children to see what a healthy, respectful and deeply caring relationship was like. I wanted them to know that they could be in a relationship where they could fully express who they are and be celebrated. I wanted them to know sacrificing yourself is not an option. I wanted them to know you're never stuck. I wanted them to know they are responsible for creating how they feel about their life.

I was leaving my husband. I never thought I would do that. We had been together for 24 years after meeting and both feeling called to each other. I remember the sensation of a hand coming out of my gut and taking hold of a hand

out of his gut. At that time, I knew I was marrying him and we would raise a family together. When we married, I made a commitment to him for life. I believed we would grow old together with our family and friends. Over time it became apparent that our definitions of an intimate relationship were different. I kept thinking I was doing something wrong. I kept thinking it was all my fault. If I become a better lover, better communicator, smarter, and etc., we would have the connection I desired. Jerry considered my dissatisfactions of the relationship, my problem. I worked on bettering myself and from my efforts I grew and learned a lot about relationships. I learned I can't change him I can only change me. All I was hoping for was for Jerry to grow with me. Instead what happened was we grew apart.

I want to make it clear, I didn't leave my husband for Peter, I left him for ME. Thankfully the timely email from Tom and the in-person conversation with Peter woke me up and reminded me who I AM.

Exiting my marriage, I set out on a midlife journey leaving my security and comfort behind to face my biggest fears while becoming more of me. Fulfillment, living my big dreams, celebration, happiness, deep connections, successfully serving and expansion of love for others and myself was what I aimed for. I was scared but at least I would live or die moving in that direction. Jerry was right, it wasn't about him, it was about me all along. I still thank him for all the opportunities he provided for me to grow.

Scared to death and yet feeling some confidence, I felt called to move back to Santa Barbara where I knew I was resourceful enough to make the transition. I didn't know how, but I knew where I was headed was healthier and more in alignment with my truth than where I was at the moment. I had to find my faith in myself and in the universe.

When I would wake up at three in the morning with an anxiety attack about money and worrying about how I would support myself, I would say, "STOP! What do you want?" I'd get clear and ask the universe, "if I'm not meant to do this, then make it very clear to me and show me the way with ease and grace. Then I'd go back to sleep. And the next day I would open up to me with ease and grace in between the heart pounding fears. Each day I grew my faith and love for myself. Eventually, I could sleep through the night.

I've learned my life is about who I am, not about my personal "stuff." My faith in the universe and in myself allows me to walk with uncertainty towards my challenges and use my creative expression to develop solutions. I had to discover who I was without all my comforts, learning to be with my pain, so I could find my way to saying, "**yes**", to life instead of "**no**" out of fear. This takes time and it has been an amazing journey. I could not have imagined the life I live now had I stayed in CT, with my husband.

Some say it took great courage for me to leave my comfortable position to

seek greater happiness. It did and it took me knowing what I really desired from my life. I had to know deep in my soul why I was leaving my husband and moving across the country away from all my friends. My friends weren't leaving their husbands and they had some of the same complaints I had. Friends and family were questioning my sanity. I had to know what the value of leaving was for my future.

This journey required me finding support and learning the ability to ask for help. I had friends offer money if I needed it, friends who listened, mentors who were teaching me about my power, and friends who celebrated my need to go out into the world and express myself differently. My second day in Santa Barbara, I joined a networking group that felt like a family and supported me every Thursday morning to feel connected to my new life.

I realized I could sink or swim by my choices. I was no longer co-dependent. I had to redefine how I saw myself and be the new me. I had been the wife and mother for 20 years and all that involved. I had to grieve the loss of my relationship to my husband and the family environment I had created for us all. I had been thinking I wasn't enough for my husband and now I knew I could be more than I imagined. I could no longer afford to see myself as not enough.

To manage the fears I created plans with back up strategies in order to feel confident. Even though I moved very quickly I had plans A, B, and C and would remind myself when fear reared its ugly head that there wasn't only one solution. If something went wrong there were many solutions. My trusty intuition guided my decisions leading me to my homes, meeting key people, and a new life partner. I made up what I wanted to believe about my life and all the possibilities. I meditated, exercised, and connected with others. For me to be ME required I show up in alignment with my truth as they were revealed to me.

All the expectations I had for leaving have fallen into place in my life and so much more than I ever imagined! Three years into my transition, I was driving home from a two-week road trip with my life partner, Jeff, and all of a sudden I started crying because it hit me that I had everything that I wanted. I was in a relationship with a man who got and valued me. We were adventurous and I spent lots of time in nature. I experienced my value as a life coach and I was happy. Jeff and I now shared a home with our cat Prince Philip. We lived across from a park, that sits on top of a cliff, where I can watch dolphins, whales and birds pass by. I have helped create incredibly supportive and dynamic communities in my life, filled with magnificent women, energy readers and healers.

I have only benefited from my choice to leave as I continue to learn to define my life and overcome my obstacles. In my unraveling, I revealed my personal power and my essence. The process of this journey has bared an intuitive, strong, adventurous, courageous, vulnerable, resourceful, leader and creative woman whose life is falling back in place.

I AM HOME.