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Pandemic Reflection

Kendra Quadra · Saturday, July 17th, 2021

He tells me not to worry. He tells me that everything is going to be okay. He's one of the most mentally strong people I've come across in my life. He's patient and he's kind. He keeps a positive outlook and attitude towards life despite his situation. Some might say it's a stretch, but he's the love of my life. He's perfect. We're perfect, but here's the catch. We entered a long distance relationship during a pandemic and he was diagnosed with Stage IV Kidney cancer a few months after we started dating. They say you will meet the love of your life when you least expect it and they were right, I definitely did not expect to meet him amidst a pandemic.

You would think the long distance nature of our relationship would be enough to deter me, let alone the pandemic and his diagnosis, but alas, it didn't. It's hard enough as it is being in a long distance relationship, so why continue dating when there's so many obstacles ahead of us? It's cliché and it's simple, but it's love. The pandemic has taught me (so far) that you could have the quintessentials in life, but it would render as nothing without love. I'm not exclusively talking about romantic love either. I'm talking about all types of love. It could be love for your family, your job, your friends, your community or even your pet fish. Whatever or whoever it is, we need love in our lives.

I didn't mention this in the beginning, because this isn't as big of a deal to me as it is to my family, but my boyfriend is twice my age. When I first met him I knew he was older than me, but I didn't think he was twice my senior. I knew my relationship with an older man would be frowned upon by my traditional family, but I knew there was something special about him. To make a long story short we were coworkers before we started dating. We met at work and bonded over books and philosophy. On my last day at work I asked him out to lunch and the rest is history. There were so many questions and concerns that ran through my head, but the one overarching question was, "What will my family think?" I was so afraid to tell my family about him, but I knew he would be worth the risk. After all the trials and tribulations we have faced, I still don't regret telling my family about us. Our lives are too short to live for the opinions of other people.



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The pandemic has forced me to really reassess my priorities, because I am constantly reminded of my mortality. We know our time on Earth is temporary, yet we waste it thinking about the opinions of other people. I see this pandemic as a blessing and a curse. It is horrific the amount of lives that have been lost, but I believe that this is the wake up call that world needed to snap out of its hedonistic trance.

The second thing I've not only learned, but have also been able to practice (so far) from this pandemic is to act in spite of what I fear and to beat the odds. I secured a full-time position at a Fortune 500 company straight out of college and was living in Pasadena, CA with my best friend (at the time) in an apartment walking distance from my work. What else could I ask for? I got exactly what I wanted. I believed I had everything. It all *looked so good* on paper, yet I was unhappy. It would be so much easier to keep my full-time job and climb the corporate ladder, but I wanted to build the life I wanted not one society believed I should have. I look at my life now and I look back at what it used to be. I don't know where I'm going or what I'm doing with my life, but I'm much happier in the pursuit of that than pursuing tenure. I let go of security to search for meaning and purpose.

The odds aren't exactly in favor of my relationship either. We're long distance. There's a pandemic that restricts us from having a "normal" relationship. He has Stage IV kidney cancer and there's a significant age gap that my family doesn't approve of. I don't know what's going to happen to my boyfriend and his cancer diagnosis. I don't know how much time I have left with him. I don't know if my family will ever accept him or if we will ever be able to have a family of our own. I don't know if quitting my full-time job was a mistake. I don't know if I will ever find what I'm looking for or what to do with my life. I don't know how long this pandemic will last, but despite all these odds I must act in spite of them. I rather live my life than submit to it. Courage is vulnerability and strength. Uncertainty is scary, but we forget that nothing in life is guaranteed. I can't control external factors, but I can control my decisions and my mindset.

There is an abundance of things to be afraid of in this world especially now. People are afraid to go out in public. We're afraid of seeing our family and friends. We're scared to spread or contract the

virus. COVID-19 restrictions and rules are changing faster than stores can change their signs. Thinking of the pandemic, riots, and political unrest is debilitating. There is so much uncertainty in our world it's paralyzing, but if there's something I've learned (so far) from this pandemic it's that we need to be religiously reevaluating our priorities in life and act out of love instead of fear. Our lives are too uncertain not to.

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