

Life Lesson: Keep Moving Forward

By Michael Schnabel

The obstacles people face in life do not define them, but the way they deal with them might. Stephanie has been challenged more in the last year than I have in all of my life. The assaults come in waves knocking her down, but she keeps getting back up. She is not fearless, but she meets each test head on telling herself: Keep moving forward. One day at a time. Never quit trying. I am simply amazed at how strong she's become.

Kristen and I bring Caden up to visit his mother, and it's hard to tell who is more excited. Kristen plans to spend the night with Steph, and after visiting hours, Mark will bring Caden home. Midday Nana and I leave the hospital, I drop her off at home, and leave town for work. Our patient's mental health is refreshed when she and Kristen have a comedy movie marathon in the hospital. It also helps the time pass quickly.

Driving has often been part of my job, and I enjoy it because it gives me time to think. I reflect on everything the team has been through and wonder how we can prepare for the future. How do you prepare for the unknown? The only thing I can think of is to live each day as well as we can and stay focused on that. We can't change the past; we can only learn from its lessons. We can't control the future; we can only plan for its probabilities. We can, however, choose what we do at this moment. It's really all we have. For my sanity, I will try to remember that and hope it makes things simpler. I think about the people who stepped up to help us during this crisis. What would we have done without them? Maybe each of us really can make a difference in this world simply by helping those around us. As the miles drift by, I find myself at peace and remember how blessed we really are.

Stephanie is released from the hospital after the oncologist reminds her to take additional precautions against exposure to germs. He tells her, "You can't eat any food prepared out of your home, it must be fully cooked, and you should wear a mask when you go out. If there is any concern about what to do, err on the side of safety. Questions?" Steph tells him she understands and appreciates his help. She continues to receive multiple IV antibiotics at home and leaves the hospital with enough for the next 24 hours. Mark and Kristen bring her home at the same time I return from my trip.

That night I tell Steph about my thoughts in the car, and she agrees we need to focus on what's happening now and do our best. It worked with the surgery, the blood clot, and the sepsis. We didn't know what to do but did our best with a lot of help from those around us. Something continues to guide us through the terrifying maze of her illness. Is it faith, love, or God? Neither of us knows, so we agree to embrace and cherish each of them. Someone this week told me to hang in there, no storm lasts forever. I tell Steph I like that advice and she agrees. Our faces fill with smiles instead of tears for a change, and we both feel better. Nana hangs a fresh bag of antibiotics, and we all head to bed.

The above is an excerpt from *Daddy's Girl: A Father, His Daughter, and the Deadly Battle She Won* (2023; Armin Lear Press) by Michael Schnabel. All Rights Reserved.

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