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itsjustyou **NEW**sletter

RAINA O'DELL @ITS.JUST.RAINA

Merry Christmas! Exhale. Today feels... like it should. The girls and I woke up around 6:30 am - got eyebrows on (haha), took the dogs out, made matcha, and started with stockings. "New tradition" they said. :) We opened gifts, that was fun + they liked everything they got. We then made monkey bread and cinnamon rolls with bacon, ate most of it and then got around for the day. We took the boys to the dog beach and got soaked! Kenzie took the boys out a little too far and a giant wave came up farther onto the beach than the others had, haha - it went up to my butt, soaking my sweats, over Archie's head, and rushed Dexter right up on to the beach like a dead fish - LOL. He stayed up farther on the shore after that. We just got back, bathed the boys, and changed clothes before I sat out on the balcony here, listening to the waves while I write. Nothing will beat this journaling space going forward, nothing. I'm spoiled now, I'll always be craving this backdrop, I'll most likely think of it every day until I get annoyed and force myself to make it a daily reality. I'd move back in a second, if the kids each gave me the green light, but they don't really want to move high schools. Until then, I'm soaking it in. We will probably sit and relax for a bit, we did get a new Grinch board game to try out at the theater performance yesterday. I'm going to take a big walk with Archie before we start our Christmas dinner, steaks on the grill. It feels - like it's supposed to. I feel like I can finally release this... guilt - maybe fear - of disappointing the kids because things look so different now. I can see it in their faces, how much they enjoyed today, being here, being together. Bella got a tarot deck and pulled a focus for today for herself, it was encouraging a "letting go" of old ways to bring in new life, growth, and

RIDING THE WAVES

experiences. I thought - how perfect, especially for her. Out of all of us, she's had the biggest attachment to what used to be, especially around the holidays. After she read it, she said she knew it meant Christmas. I wish I could tell them the things they love, people they know, traditions they enjoy, experiences they look forward to - will be forever available to them but that's not the case. People change, grow apart, life carries you in new directions, pivots, yet we need to remember that we are right where we need to be.

- JOURNAL ENTRY: 12/25/22

I wish you could see it, my backdrop. As I write, I can see in my peripheral vision, the waves rolling in. I can hear the constant crash as they ripple down the coast, hurling themselves onto the beach. I can smell the faint smell of seaweed and salt in the air as the sun hits my face. You *know* I love the sun on my face. I'm currently in my happy place.

This holiday season required a massive pivot, physically and emotionally, mentally too. I suppose that's something that happens as we get older, as our kids get older... and I guess I have a bone to pick with all the adults in my life who shaped who I am, especially as I dove head first into parenthood at the age of 18. I have vivid memories of them laughing as my kids were throwing fits on the ground or making massive messes in my kitchen. They'd say: "Oooh, enjoy it while it lasts, they only stay this little for a short amount of time!" I'd roll my eyes, thinking - fuck, can we please fast forward because this is the most stressed out and spread thin I've ever been.

What those people never shared with me is how much it would hurt. Year after year, you'd watch your little ones get bigger and bigger and

one day, you wish you would have known which snuggle would be your last snuggle. You find yourself wishing you could go back to those moments you rushed through to just see the sights one more time for a deeper mental picture.

pauses to ugly cry for a second...

I sit here writing to you from my happy place that I once shared with a husband and two baby girls. I sit here during one of the most family-focused months of the year, alone with my two daughters and our two puppies. I sit here, begging you to slow down and be in the moment you're in for as long as it lasts. I know that's easier said than done, trust me.

I was such a young mom, looking back I think it was so hard for me to be in that headspace. The biggest parts of me were still so incredibly selfish as I welcomed two girls, 19-months apart, while working through eating disorders and a marriage to an addict. The parts of me that weren't selfish were just trying to survive.

I didn't have many traditions to carry from my childhood into my kids lives so my husband and I started from scratch, creating a fun and safe place at grandmas (my [ex] in-laws) house every holiday. My little family didn't stay in one home for longer than a year which made it hard to plant roots and create our own traditions in our house. Every Christmas Eve, we would pack bags and head to grandmas. For 13 years straight, we had a holiday flow we were in love with. Starting at our Aunts house, we would feast with the entire family, cousins, aunts, grandparents, and a million kids, before opening presents. We ended the night with wine and red velvet cake before migrating back to grandmas to lay out cookies and milk for Santa and put the kids to bed. My husband and I,

along with his parents would make decaf coffee, stuff stockings, and lay out Santa's unwrapped gifts. The morning always came to early as the girls would explode into our room to wake us up screaming, "I think Santa came!!!" while jumping onto bed with us. We'd sneak upstairs with them, wake the grandparents, pour coffee, and watch the girls burst with excitement as they saw what Santa had brought for them. They'd giggle at the cookie crumbs he left and drop their jaws at the empty milk cup. It always made me smile. We would start to open presents as we sipped our coffee, pausing half way through

to eat a breakfast casserole and monkey bread, resuming a deep dive into presents as our bellies filled up. For the rest of the day, the adults helped put together toys or get

gadgets working while grandma cooked and started to prep Christmas dinner. We'd have more family join us in the evening as we feasted around the table again, laughing, connecting, sharing, and just enjoying each others company. We always stayed a few nights before heading home to our lives.

We did this - exactly this - for 13 years until my husband and I divorced. I remember one of my first thoughts as we finalized everything, being a deep sadness and fear around what the holidays were now going to look like. I felt angry, sad, guilty, and frustrated, all in the same

breathe. The first year after our divorce, we tried to coexist for the holiday and it was rocky.

Afterwards, I told myself things needed to change because I couldn't do that again. Especially if my ex started dating someone else.

I hadn't spent a Christmas Eve or Day with my own family since I was 18. We didn't have much in the way of traditions so I honestly felt out of place and uncomfortable. I hate typing that out... but it's true. *Home* didn't feel like home.

The following year I started dating and we grew close, quickly. The girls and I traveled to Virginia

the next two years to spend the holidays with his family, who welcomed us with open arms. We spent a couple of beautiful holidays with them and had so much fun. I tried to

immerse

myself into their traditions while maintaining some of the few that the girls loved like matching pj's and cookies/milk for Santa. I couldn't seem to shake the guilt and fear of disappointing them that stuck to me like an annoying piece of dog hair. As hard as I tried to let it go, I couldn't.

As annoying as it was, I knew it was something I needed to heal in me.

I started thinking about the holidays this year in July. That's *not* normal for me. I'm the mom that literally does all of her shopping towards the end of December because that's when my mind



starts to think about it. The thoughts weren't around what presents to get who - instead they were consumed with *what in the fuck are we going to do this year?!* I had just split up with my boyfriend so Christmas on the East Coast didn't feel like a reality this year. I hadn't spent the holidays in Missouri in years so that didn't feel aligned either. I started to pick the girls' brain around what their thoughts were and where they wanted to spend their time and we were all on the same page. I started to think about what would feel the best? Where is our happy place? Where would we all like to escape to if we had the option and across the board, we decided

to book an extended vacation in Encinitas, CA. for the holidays. If you aren't familiar with this little bubble that you'll miss if you blink, on your way from San Diego to L.A., let me tell you a bit about it.

This is the space that forever holds my heart.



I'll take you back to 2013. This small town Missouri girl went on her first adventure to California when I was invited as a guest for a work event with Beachbody. I spent a week in Orange County and completely fell in love, as anyone would, who had never sunk their toes into California sand. I traveled home telling my husband that I was one day going to move our family there. He laughed and allowed my dreams to run wild as I searched Zillow every week. In 2014, my husband and I did a road trip from Kansas to Las Vegas for another work event and fitness competition that I competed in. I begged him to extend the trip

with me so we could make the additional 6-hour drive into California to show him why I fell in love with it. My manipulative thoughts took over as I told myself *I just needed to get him to fall in love with it.* We settled in a little B&B in a tiny town named Encinitas and spent two days strolling the coast, walking the beaches, and day dreaming. When we got home I had a good idea of what the cost of living would be, having spent a good year researching homes in the area and roaming the streets like a crazy woman to find the perfect area I wanted to call home.

I remember the afternoon, like it was yesterday. We took the girls to the park and brought our

notebook along so we could put pencil to paper, calculating how much I needed to earn in my business to make this dream become a reality. By the time the girls were worn out from going up and down slides, I had a clear vision of what I needed to do to make this happen.

In July of 2015, I moved my little family of 4 (plus Dexter) to a condo in Encinitas, CA with a 180-view of the Pacific Ocean. I cried when we signed the lease. Part of me couldn't believe we had found the perfect spot and the bigger part of me wasn't surprised, feeling insanely proud for what I had accomplished. We flew back home to KC, gave our notices, and moved to California two weeks later.

I spent the next year & a half deep into California living. I'd fallen in love with the energy, the vibe, and the fact that I could take my dog to any restaurant in flip flops and be welcomed with open arms. I spent my mornings in a beautiful

routine after taking the girls to their ocean-view Elementary schools. I'd workout each morning on my balcony that overlooked the ocean, eat my meals and drink my shakes while I let the sun hit my face & listened to the waves crash into the shore. I spent 4-5 hrs/day in my *first* official office as I continued to build my business before sneaking into town with Dexter to roam the streets and grab a smoothie or a juice before picking up the girls from school. Wednesdays they had half days so we called it "Family Wednesday" and would scoop them up from school, heading straight to the beach with their boogie boards loaded.

I can feel tears welling up as the "live pivot" part of the story approaches. What felt like an absolute dream come true came crashing down just as hard as it exploded into fruition. In mid-2016, my husband was admitted into the hospital for opiod withdrawals. We spent a week in the hospital as he detoxed before he was transferred to an inpatient rehab. Within a few days, he had checked himself out, against everyone's advice. This

was the first snowball of many that came as I realized the amount of money he had been spending vs. saving for our family. He and his family decided in one breath that it would be best if we left California and started over somewhere else, somewhere *more affordable* - and away from the habits that seemed to follow the man I was married to. We took a short trip to Denver, and in true *O'Dell* fashion, we signed a new lease and left California within 2 weeks.

I fell into the story that what I wanted was irrelevant and allowed this shift to happen without putting up a fight.



We planted our roots in Colorado and 2 months later, I filed for divorce and took on a 3-year lease by myself with my two kids. I know it's not good to wish for re-do's or think about what you would have done differently in life - I truly believe that our move to Colorado provided a huge season of growth for me, *and* if I could do it over...

I'd tell him to move and shove it up @\$% while I stayed in California to rebuild my life...

Well, that's not what happened. And after divorcing, my Ulcerative Colitis surgeries leading to my permanent ileostomy, as well as my 3-year lease, kind of kept me planted while my

roots were spread all the way in the Pacific Coast. After healing my body and ending my lease, I met my boyfriend which kept me planted in Colorado for 3 additional years. My therapist had asked me a week or so ago, *why not move back!?* I shared that story with her, remembering all of the little life pivots that kept me in Colorado. I believe that everything happens for a reason and while I'd love to make Encinitas my new permanent home, I find

myself, yet again... waiting for a pivot.

While my home is still Colorado, I can already feel myself being pulled to Encinitas. I've been back to visit several times over the last few years and every time, it's like a wave of emotion smacking me in the face. It's the feeling of a weight off my shoulders, physically feeling lighter. It's a no-pressure, care-free energy. It's a hippie-surfer vibe that sucks you in and makes you think a little harder about the life you're living and what you allow yourself to be consumed by. It's a disconnection, from the busyness of humanity that I can't find anywhere else. And I've traveled... a lot. While I am most

definitely that person who pulls up Zillow on every vacation to just *look* at what houses are like in the area, this is different. This feels like home.

I've spent the last two weeks immersing myself into the city again, taking extra long walks with Archie, snagging a green juice at the local juice bar, and showing him all of my favorite spots. I've spent time back at our Airbnb to pick up and do laundry and have even taken pauses to work. I've spent hours on the balcony overlooking the pacific ocean and sent equally salty tears right down to meet the waves.

We went to Target when we arrived and stocked up on Christmas decorations so we could make it feel like home (ish) and had fun combining new traditions with old. I secretly loaded a basket with stocking stuffers since I'd packed them and displayed them on the fireplace in the Airbnb. We got a 6' Christmas Tree that was pre-lit and each picked out 2 ornaments that spoke to us. We spent that first evening unpacking and decorating the house as I adjusted to what this holiday could look like.

I journaled - you read it - late on Christmas Day after the presents were opened, breakfast was consumed, and kids were napping. I took a moment to soak in the morning we had just created with gratitude for the ability to provide

these experiences for my kids and pups. Moments of grief and mourning would flood in and I held space for those, while welcoming in the excitement for what was becoming.

It happens so often for me, so I know it happens for you. We set expectations on life, events, people, etc. and when those things don't go as planned, like they were in our heads, there's a sense of disappointment or worry around what we could have done differently. I've had to learn, over the last several years, to release expectations. I had to release it during this holiday season as I knew it wouldn't look like any other before it. So much of our life, we have no control over. I talk about the life pivots and our need to ride them like a wave. It's how I flow now, my routine within the flow. Leaning in when I need to brace myself for the chaos and easing back to let life just carry me.

I head home in a couple days. I'm going to be leaving as a different version of Raina than the one who arrived. She's a bit more clear. She's shifted, not only her vision but her goals. She's released some things that were weighing her down and exchanged them for new & aligned ideas. She's gained direction, clarity, peacefulness, and a new tattoo.

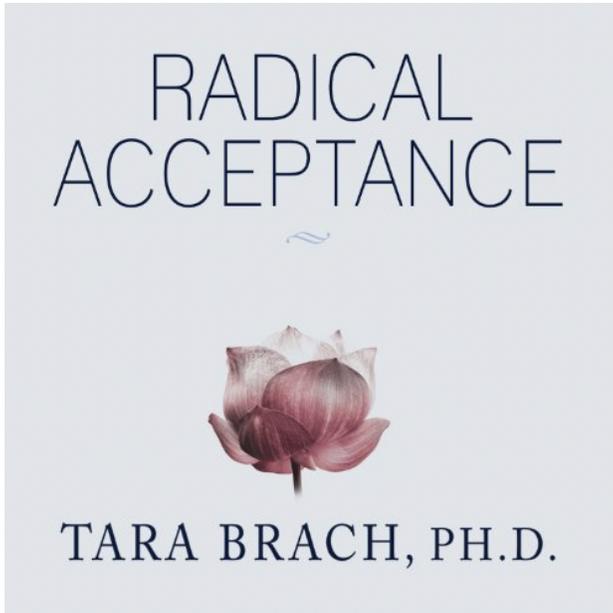
Watch out world. Haha - I'm heading home to rearrange some of the photos on my vision board because life is hitting different now.

A CORE



MEMORY

MUST READ.



During one of my couples-therapy sessions with my therapist I had explained the mindset I had adopted and she said: "Ahh! Radical Acceptance..." and explained what that meant. Radical Acceptance is defined as: when you stop fighting reality, stop responding with impulsive or destructive behaviors when things aren't going the way you want them to, and let go of bitterness that may be keeping you in a trapped cycle of suffering. This book was gold. I stumbled onto it and in each section, Tara Brach provides such intense and amazing insight into why we cling on to these beliefs that something is wrong with us keeping us in a state of suffering. This is a 10/10 recommend for me.

WORK WITH ME.

Tis' the season for all the shifts. Within the shifts, pivots, visitors, traveling, lack of routine, and whatever else was thrown at you this month, I know how hard it is to find your footing and figure out what needs to change. After pinpointing what needs to shift, we often don't even know where to start. We see the "shoulds" on social media, hear about "resolutions" that others are making and a flood of emotions seep in as you feel lost. I get it. I'd love for you to start 2023 with confidence, support, and accountability to identify what you want your life to look like, create a vision that excites you, and align your daily actions to help make that vision a reality. It's more than a daily routine - it's a way of living, lighter, fuller, and more peacefully.

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