

## Why Miss the Moment | A Conversation with Elizabeth

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*\*This story was originally posted in July, 2012 on Lucy's blog, with Elizabeth's blessing.*

It's never too late to start; it's never too early to begin.

One of my closest friends is living with terminal cancer. I selected the verb very consciously here, and "living" is exactly what I mean. As we talked the other day about the latest developments in her treatment plan, she said, "I no longer look at this as a journey or a battle. I am simply living my life."

My friendship with Elizabeth has been a long and beautiful dance of conversation, back and forth, between the two of us. We both love words. We choose them carefully and aren't afraid to use them to the fullest extent needed. But we don't toss them around lightly, either. In high school, my parents used to say that we talked so fast they could hardly understand us. We've never been at a loss for things to say to one another. Yet, we are also very comfortable sharing silence.



Early on, we dubbed our most cherished conversations as "1:00 a.m. chats," named after the hour at which we seemed to get to the root of whatever story, fear, hope or secret most needed sharing. Over our 31 years of friendship, I couldn't even begin to guess how many of these chats we've had.

We live 1,424 miles apart now (yes, I checked on google maps), making our face to face conversations far less frequent than in our younger years when we were just down the road from one another. We do visit periodically, but in the interim we are adept at substituting phone and text messages to keep our conversation ever present. When Elizabeth learned last year that her cancer had metastasized, those texts and phone calls began to feel like a life line. We have chatted during blood transfusions and chemo. We have texted during pedicures and our kids' sporting events.

Not too long ago, we met in Northern California for a weekend away together. The small house we rented had a lovely deck with a hot tub overlooking a beautiful olive orchard.



Each night after dinner, we sat in the hot tub watching the moon rise and talking. On our last night, we turned on a digital recorder and let it run as we talked. Back and forth, with candor and laughter, we narrated the story of how we met—the history of our friendship—for our kids, we said, but in truth mostly for ourselves.

Meandering, as we always do, to wherever the conversation leads us, Elizabeth began

to tell me of a recent morning when her husband was getting up before sunrise to hike a trail in the Blue Hills near their home in Massachusetts. Tired, she was just about to wish him a happy hike when she changed her mind and decided to join him. She told me the sunrise had been gorgeous that morning and the moment with her husband at the trail's summit an irreplaceable memory now, both for her and for him. She looked at me incredulously and said, "Why did I even think twice before deciding to go? Why would I want to miss that moment?"

In the dance of conversation, Elizabeth had unearthed an important question, and we both knew it. Why miss the moment? We actually repeated it several times as we sat in the hot tub, as if imprinting it on our brains. After all, it's not easy to break habits of routine or responsibility. So we said it to one another almost like a chant: "Why miss the moment? Why miss the moment? Why miss the moment?" Under the full moon and star-filled sky, everything seemed so obvious and clear.



It's never too late to start; it's never too early to begin. So why miss the moment?