



Thursday Memo – January 21, 2016

Today I had a moment – by Tina Runyan

Today I had a moment. A moment when doubt and reservations I privately hold about whether I am good enough or effective enough completely evaporated. A moment when I knew, without a doubt, that I am doing exactly what I am meant to be doing, exactly where I am meant to be doing it. That's the ending of this story.

The beginning is a 30 something year-old woman introduced to me by her longtime PCP for severe, debilitating depression, chronic pain, trauma and a toxic self-image. She was married, but her same-sex partner was not well accepted by anyone in her family except her mother. She was timid at first, unsure of what to expect from a psychologist and skeptical that anyone could help her crawl away from longstanding shame and self-doubt. She gradually opened up and I was introduced to an incredibly bright, creative, compassionate, and inspiring woman beneath the shell. We worked hard together until she began to glimpse what I saw in her. Until she trusted me enough to take risks I knew she could handle even when she still believed she would fail. But she did not fail. She enrolled in college and began to take art classes. She excelled. She planned and took a cross-country trip for the first time. Her world exploded in color and sounds and possibilities beyond her stilted self-concept and strained family relationships. And then her mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer and died and her partner's alcoholism intensified. She had setbacks and depression threatened her once again. But, with help, she created more art, kept going to school, traveled more and wrote. Layer by layer, she shed her limiting self-narrative and not only found herself, but discovered she really liked herself.

She is graduating from college this spring and has always been on the Dean's List. She is applying to graduate school to become an art therapist. And today, she came by the health center to give me something. A book. *Her book*. She and a friend just published a book of photos and stories. She pointed to the dedication, which read to: ... "Tina, for being a light in the darkness."

Years ago I had given her a poem by Rumi for inspiration. A part of it reads, ... "Keep looking at the bandaged place. That's where the light enters you." I am not sure if she even remembers this poem or made the connection, but for me, it was all part of the moment. She had come to share and celebrate her book and to thank me. But the hug I gave in return was in deep gratitude to her, for giving me this moment devoid of my own self-doubt.