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Dear Family and Friends,

Hello all ~ this will now be the second of these letters sent out this month. That could be a sign that things are improving for me and that my health is returning to 'normal,' but more on that later. So why two in a month? I think it is simply a case of determination to be doing everything I can to head in the right direction and to some degree that is true. However, as my Christian friends would rightly point out, it is the grace of God at work in my life and that I know to be certainly true.

HEALTH UPDATE

Well, there certainly has been a turn around in recent times and there is an element there of returning health as well. A couple of weeks ago I had thought my health had failed completely and that it was the end of the line. Thankfully that wasn't the case, though I had endured what was probably close to being the worst week of my life from a health perspective. It came out of nowhere (relatively speaking) and soon I was pretty much completely useless (some may think I'm like that most of my life). So today, it is pleasing to note that I am a long way from that week's condition now.

Am I well then? I've been sick for close to 18 years so I wouldn't go that far and probably wouldn't go anywhere near saying that. I know my health and myself pretty well these days and I sort of know where I currently sit on the health scale in terms of this particular illness. So no, not well, but I'm mostly 'normal' for me in terms of the last 18 years. Having said that, there are some reasons for having some concerns still for my immediate health - there are some wild swings between being 'good' and being, well, lets say far from being 'good.' I'll leave it at that for the time being :-)

Other than this particular illness (CFS/CFIDS), I'm doing pretty well health wise. There are no other significant issues that cause discomfort or noticeable poor health (yes, that means there is another illness, but it produces no really bad ill effects apart from impacting on my appearance from time to time).

Now having said the above you would perhaps think that I think I have a good reason for having a whine about my health, etc, but that isn't really true. There are other people I know who have far more reason to whine about their health than I do and I try not to allow my health issues to dominate my life (though obviously that is sometimes difficult to achieve). Certainly my family and friends letters have had a fair bit of content referring to my health, but that is because I'm trying to inform my readers (if you like) about what is actually happening to me and that usually is a big part of the story. In person I don't always go on about it - except when I'm extremely ill.

As I say, I have had friends who have it far tougher than me. I had a friend once who had diabetes bad - a worse situation than me. I have a friend who had cancer bad - far worse than me. In fact I know of plenty of people in that category - far worse than me. There are others with other illnesses - far worse than I am. I'm more concerned about them than I am about my bouts of ill health. I manage to cope most of the time - though admittedly it can be frustrating at times when people seem to think nothing of the fact that I'm not too well. I do react to that, well, not so well from time to time - especially if they are being somewhat self-centred. A character fault perhaps - maybe not, depends on your point of view I suppose.

WORK

Work is still very busy and probably always will be. I keep telling myself that things will get easier after this or that project is completed, but it never does. What I do know is that it is currently impossible for me to keep the hours I was when I first became the Maintenance Manager - just can't do it. I suppose that's a result of poor health. Truth is, I get incredibly fatigued quickly (CFS/CFIDS), no matter whether it be physical or mental work. One type of work affects my entire being and fatigue is now my constant 'friend,' especially since last March when I got really sick again.

I haven't worked any weekends for three weeks now (apart from the occasional call out) and have no immediate plans to do so. I just can't physically/mentally do it at the moment. My recent experience with illness has caused me to re-evaluate my time allocations - it was a very scary experience this last time. I do not wish to find myself in a continuous state of severe CFS/CFIDS, so I have to manage my time in a way that pays serious regards to the limitations of my health. There is simply no alternative now. It is certainly hard to do this because every instinct tells me you have to get this done and you have to do that too sort of thing.

I think it will probably take some time before there is any noticeable impact upon my health as a result of more time away from work. It has been quite a change. I think I have gone from doing approximately 60 to 70 hours a week, back down to about 40 to 46 hours a week. So that is a big drop and I'm finding it a little difficult to adjust to. But I have to make that adjustment and by God's grace I'm determined to do so. It will kill me if I don't - one way or the other.

So there are some challenges to try and sort out my time management at work, as I don't have the 'luxury' to put things off until the weekend anymore or until early the next morning. I have been trying to stick to a schedule I worked out a year or so ago, but it is proving extremely difficult when there are a plethora of things to deal with every hour. Thankfully I have a leading hand now who is helping to take a bit of the pressure off, but with so much he has to do with normal work duties (as I do also) to keep the village functioning, it is extremely difficult to get time to sit at my desk and do the required reports, documentation, OHS requirements, contractor and supplier management, etc. There seems to be 16 hours of work I have to try and fit in 8 each day ~ but somehow I have to try and make it work.

I like the job, that's why I do it. I think I can make a difference by doing it. But I have to say, some aspects of it make it a little difficult to find real joy in doing it. I'm talking here about the conflicts between people, the lack of gratitude in those you are working very hard to make life easier for (and in fact, the hostility you face), unreasonableness, etc. This can be so difficult to react correctly to and I do find myself getting angry as a result of some of the inconsiderate approaches you face, etc. So if you pray for me, here is an area that warrants your prayers - continued restraint and self control perhaps, ability to not 'listen' to the rubbish comments/or at least not take them to heart, etc. If there is one part of the job that could see me walk out on it, it is this very issue ~ I just do not believe there is a need for a lot of this sort of stuff. Again, perhaps a character flaw in there somewhere.

FRIENDS

This last month or so has been really difficult for me, particularly with the way my mind has been affected by CFS/CFIDS (memory issues, confusion, lack of ability to concentrate, prolonged mental blanks, etc). It can be a very lonely and on this occasion, a fearful experience. It is not easy to find yourself forgetting whom you are and what you are doing in a certain place you are usually very familiar with, such as work, etc. But that has been my lot in the last month or so. It had me really struggling to cope, being in tears at times through utter frustration and inability to understand what was happening around me, etc.

So I have enjoyed some quality time with a few friends during the last couple of weeks and it has been like a breath of fresh air for me. You know who you are and I thank you so much for just spending some time with me ~ you have no idea how important that has been after the harrowing couple of weeks previous to that. I am extremely thankful and perhaps have not said that to you, as I should have. So thank you.

I really enjoy talking with close friends about all manner of subjects and the 'DMs (Deep & Meaningful)' I have with them at times are really good. They are a blessing to my heart and a real sign of closeness, especially when they actually are those sorts of talks that bind hearts and minds together, etc. When I am able to get past my usual shyness (yeah, I am that way surprisingly) and feel I can trust the other with my words, heart, etc, there are some extremely good DMs. It can be difficult when I don't feel confident of the others person's trustworthiness, etc. When I sense or perceive that I can no longer trust them, have lost confidence in them ... I find it very hard to be open with them. Most people with commonsense are probably like that I would imagine. I know there are people I care deeply about, who have lost my confidence so to speak and so I have become more than a little reserved with them. Trust is a big thing for me and I really struggle with trusting people and probably not without good reason ~ but that's another story and I don't want to start going on about that here (I'm rambling too much as it is).

OTHER 'STUFF'

After a couple of false starts I am hoping to get along to a reasonably local Presbyterian Church this Lord's Day and I am quite hopeful of it. I know it isn't Particular Baptist, but I think it will be a good stop-gap measure for me at the moment and one I am really looking forward to. Lord willing my health won't stop me, though I'm not a little concerned of falling asleep during the service (CFS/CFIDS thing). Still, an elbow or two might help there (hint).

I have had cause to think many a thing over recently and to ponder many an issue, which is all good. I think this is a sign of some renewed vigour and a step forward from my perhaps disillusioned and dispirited recent condition ~ which I can only slightly blame on CFS/CFIDS I guess :-). Still, there are some positive signs here and that the battle that has been raging for some time is showing signs of turning in the direction that it really should be turning in - PTL for that!!! I know I am. I think the increased activity in work on my web site is also a sign positive of that.

Well I might leave my ramblings at that for the time being - it has been a bit different this time I think. I sort of sense that anyhow. What do you think? I think so.

Regards,

Kevin