



Life Actually

By Kari Kampakis

Bloom where you are planted

What's your resolution for 2012?

Perhaps your plan is to turn a new leaf, to take advantage of the blank slate a new year represents. Eating better... working out...praising more and criticizing less...these are just a few lifestyle changes we often implement to become healthier, happier, better functioning adults.

And while I believe in New Year's resolutions—and applaud anyone who manages to keep them—I think it's important to remember that being a happier, healthier, better functioning adult also means making the most of current circumstances. Some things we can't change—at least not now. Life throws curve balls, interrupts plans, gives our dreams on a silver platter to the *last* person we think deserves them. Nothing we do can budge our situation.

We are stuck.

Stuck in a job we hate.

Stuck at home with small kids.

Stuck with an illness or disability.

Stuck in a bad relationship.

Stuck in a body we don't like.

There's an old Irish proverb to "Bloom where you are planted," and ever since Labor Day night—when a storm caused a massive oak tree to fall on my family's new home, which we'd been in only 10 days—these words have resonated with me. The tree caused extensive damage, forcing us to move back out. We had to find a rental, live with my brother and my mother-in-law until the rental was ready, and begin major reconstruction on the backside of our home.

Ironically enough, we'd spent all summer renovating the *front* of the house. For six months we lived in a rental, dreaming of the day we'd be settled and finished with projects. Never again did I want to repeat that scenario.

In the 10 days I enjoyed my home, I felt a huge relief because our house situation has hung over my head for years. At last my family of six had the room we needed. We could host parties we'd long put off. We could check "Find new digs" off our to-do list and move on with life.

And then the tree fell.

Life uproots us when we least expect it. We'd barely dug our roots in new soil when

it happened to us. At first, I wondered what lesson I should take. Over time, however, I've realized it's not one lesson I should take, but many. I've learned what a blessing it is to have our own home—regardless of size. I've learned that God equips us to handle any circumstances. And—here's the newsflash— I've learned my kids can be happy anywhere. Nothing stops them from making memories, and it's adults—not children—who believe families need a perfect environment to thrive.

To my surprise, we've been happy in this rental. We're a minute away from our neighborhood yet in a private location that's allowed us to bond as a family and has enabled my writing.

And while our current situation is a pain, good things have happened, too. Two weeks after the tree fell, I heard from a New York agent I met at a conference last summer. She'd read my entire manuscript and loved it, but she thought parts needed work. She offered fantastic feedback—a gift in itself—and offered to reread it if I made edits. While there's no guarantee she'll represent me, I know my novel will be better because of her. I also see this as one step forward in my dreams to be published.

So no matter where you are in 2012, try to shine. Don't wilt in place and make excuses with half-hearted attempts. Maximize on the good in your life. Be the teller at the bank whose line everyone is drawn to because you smile, the FedEx courier who holds doors open and says, "Hello," the mom who gives motherhood a good name. Dig your roots deep, stand tall and proud, and produce a bloom so exquisite people stop in their tracks and think, "Wow."

After all, someone *always* takes notice of a beautiful flower. There are too many weeds in this world not to.

So keep your resolutions, but add a plan to bloom where you are planted. Start a garden if you wish, and let the fruits of your labor be evident for all to enjoy.

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