

painfully shy

taking wrong job

finding right guy

giving up maiden name

giving birth to twins

dad needs
quadruple bypass

finding time to write

need reading glasses

layoffs

kids need rides

housing crash

finishing first novel

broken heart

knocked out front tooth

new brother, new chores

best friend moves away

grandma moves in

spent senior year virtual

college out of state

missing mom's cooking

storm grounds flight home

switched majors

switched roommates

demanding first boss

married young

far from family

botched bangs

noisy neighbors

first gray

night school

turning 50

reenter
workforce

tuition bills

winter blues

empty nest

new community

Some call it grit.

story by MICHELLE SASSA

LIFE CAN OFTEN FEEL LIKE A SERIES OF BRICK WALLS WE HAVE TO CLIMB. WHAT IF THE CHALLENGES WE'VE MET, BIG AND SMALL, WEREN'T THERE TO BLOCK US BUT TO STRENGTHEN US? BRICK BY BRICK, WE'RE ADDING LAYERS OF PERSEVERANCE THAT BUILD US UP FOR WHAT'S JUST DOWN THE ROAD.

Some call it grit. Staying power. Survival. That magical force that fuels us to brave adversity, endure, and press on.

All of us have been tested in ways beyond what we may ever have imagined. Dwelling in the woe of what got in our way isn't healthy, we're told. But there is gain in recognizing what we found inside us as we fought to get through it.

Perhaps you've had more suffering and hardship than most, and it seems the dark clouds never clear. Or maybe you look around and think your pain pales next to that of others, feel you can't count yourself among the warriors. It helps to remember we're all on our own journey. Everyone gets hurt. How we measure struggle matters less than what we summon to surmount it.

Whether our route has been lined with messy breakups and mundane mishaps or loss and disappointment that made us question our very being, in these detours what we are flexing is fortitude. By definition, this means a gathering of courage and show of strength, so take heart in knowing these are traits that define you too.

It takes grit to leave the house after a bad haircut.
It takes patience to weather injury or illness.
It takes hope to love again after loss.
It takes tenacity to chase dreams that elude us.
It takes resolve to appreciate the good that comes with the bad.

Did you know these forces were aligning inside you? That the events you may wish to forget were readying you for something memorable? Often when we ground ourselves in this knowledge, it becomes easier to spot moments between the bricks that are good and worthy of pausing to acknowledge and enjoy.

Look back on all you have braved and go forth unafraid. The path is seldom smooth—we hit walls, face roadblocks. We are blindsided and don't know how we'll bounce back. And yet we do more than bounce. We pick ourselves up, unbow our heads, and keep trudging forward, bolstered with a strength we've been building all along. We come to see that the bumps in our way are actually stepping-stones, steadying us for where we're going next. Brick by brick, we'll get there by and by.

Where You've Been

WAS THERE A CURVEBALL THAT KNOCKED YOU DOWN, WHEN IT WAS TOO HARD TO LOOK PAST THE PAIN AND SEE GAIN?

THINK BACK TO A SETBACK THAT PIVOTED YOU TOWARD FUTURE SUCCESS.

RECALL LIFE EVENTS THAT GAVE YOU PAUSE, WHEN YOU PRESSED ON AND FINALLY PERSEVERED.

Identify and jot down the big bricks that make you who you are—and then spend some time recognizing the everyday moments in between those major life events that wouldn't have been possible if not for the harder bricks that paved the way.

Where You're Going

THINK ABOUT SMALL OBSTACLES YOU DEAL WITH IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE THAT MIGHT BE PAVING A WAY FOR WHAT'S TO COME—THE THINGS THAT SEEMINGLY HAVE NO PURPOSE OR DON'T MAKE SENSE NOW. HOW MIGHT THOSE THINGS BE WORKING TOGETHER TO PUSH YOU TOWARD A NEW DIRECTION?

CONSIDER THE GOOD THAT CAN BE FOUND BETWEEN BRICKS. LET THESE MOMENTS BE SOLACE AND ENCOURAGEMENT AS YOU PRESS FORWARD.

Remind yourself when things feel hard or out of your control that even now, in the hard and messy times, there is growth. These challenges might just be shaping us into the person we most want to become.