

My Wondrous Rosh Hashana Gift



the elul project

Recently, I shared a photo on Facebook of the moonlight hitting the ocean. For me, the significance of this photo was not that it was a brilliant specimen of photographic talent or luck (in fact it barely did the scene justice) but rather that it captured a light bulb moment for me when I finally found the words to articulate a feeling I'd had for some time. This was the feeling that those 'small things' in life I'd been going on about being grateful for, are actually not small at all, they're massive and wondrous!

I realised in that moment that I wanted people to understand that when I tell them that despite the myriad challenges I'm working through, today was a good day because I got to see the sparkle of the moon over the ocean - that's not a 'small,' throw away compensation - it's a legitimate acknowledgement that I have managed to find an awesome source of happiness, energy and positivity, no less significant than a night out dancing, a party, a show, a trip or all of those things which bring me happiness and I miss as much as the next person.

Not long after being able to articulate these thoughts in my personal life, I began to recognise the same patterns in my professional life. As the Chief Executive Officer of Access Inc, an organisation that partners with adults with disabilities, leading an organisation that impacts people's lives on a daily basis through an unprecedented pandemic has been challenging.

As an organisation where everyone knows each other by name and cares about each other's wellbeing, we were devastated when we were forced to suspend services due to Covid. However, in true Access style, we didn't dwell for long and looked to turn this challenge into an opportunity. From this Access Online was born – a new suite of online services which gives people with disabilities the chance to continue building their lives during the pandemic.

While I kept hearing from participants and families as well as staff and volunteers about how important these services have been to their Covid-survival, admittedly it has only been recently that I have been fully open to seeing through my 'crisis goggles' the gains being made through Access Online.

Perhaps more importantly, I have made the realisation that these gains are not compensatory – they're not advancements despite the situation - they're genuine circumstances of growth and development, which in many cases are because of this new way in operating.

None of these thoughts or realisations are profound. However, it is my observation that for many they are still abstract thoughts somewhere in the subconscious, as they had been for me.

I am thus so thrilled that for me, these thoughts are now not only conscious but are solidifying into my mindset each day and that it is so apt that my journey to this point has come in time for Rosh HaShanah.

What a sweet new year gift I have received to stop comparing the joys before Covid with the joys during Covid; to stop comparing the gains made pre-Covid with the gains made during Covid - because when I stop comparing...I start living.

Wishing everyone Shana Tova U'Metukah - may we all be blessed with good health and may we all receive the gift of recognising the wondrous moments around us.



SHARON MALECKI

Sharon Malecki is the CEO of Access Inc and an experienced not-for-profit professional specialising in the Jewish community. She is also a life-long volunteer, driven by making an impact and loves dancing and eating – always in that order!

ABOUT THE ELUL PROJECT

An initiative aiming to share stories and teachings from Jewish women leaders in our community. Whilst many of us are stuck at home, or isolated from family over Elul and the High Holy Days, we hope this project will serve to inspire, nurture, and uplift during this difficult time.

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