



Excerpt from MORE THAN ENOUGH

By Wendy Brown-Baez

Often when I look back at my life, I see that I had so many adventures, enough for several lifetimes, and it helps to take the sting out of where I am now. Despite the prosthetic, it is more work, more planning, and more energy to be active, the way I was when I was downhill snowboarding. Before the accident that changed my life. I will never forget the rush as I maneuvered the board, the exhilaration, the sense of flying, the wind behind me, the brilliant sky above, but it also took years before the terror and agony when I lost control and crashed receded to a distance I could handle. One wrong move and I went from competing to physical therapy and a fake foot, accompanied by night terrors and an easily triggered startle reflex. PTSD is a bitch.

If it wasn't so horrible, some days it would be funny. I found out that I could choose what kind of foot to wear but it's not quite the same as choosing which pair of heels, knowing you can discard them if they are hurting or aren't appropriate for your planned activity. There are fleshy-looking feet with cushioned support and blades for balance when doing more physical activities and special double blades for more intricate activities such as hiking. Well, hiking didn't used to be intricate. It was just push one foot ahead of the other. Now I need both balance and strength from my hip to the blade to manage uneven terrain and not only that, to have a balance between the real foot I still have and the fake one. And who knew that heels are possible with the right types of strap support and coordination from knees as well as hips? The metal ankle joints are stronger than your own bones, so that is a plus when trying new footgear.

When I got the idea of competing in a dance contest, I thought for a moment whether it would be worth the struggle. Not only balancing and moving gracefully on my own feet but needing to work that out with a partner. After all, Amy Purdy did it and made it look effortless. I guess all dancing is supposed to look that way. Her TED talk is what kept me going at first, those awful days when I was in excruciating pain and realized my foot had been damaged beyond repair. Believe me, it takes a lot to get to that point these days with all the medical miracles available, but it was frostbite that led to such a drastic decision.

At first after the accident, I was medicated for the pain and it seemed that by the time I came back to myself, I had accepted that my life was going to be different than I had expected. I had survived. I was lucky that the other injuries healed.

I had so many visitors in the hospital, the nurses started to make people take turns and wait in the hall until the room was down to four at a time. Dad encouraged this; he worried that I was getting exhausted and said I needed all my strength and energy to heal.

© 2021 Wendy Brown-Baez