

BRADDAH'S LIFE LESSONS

Inspired by

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Written & Designed by

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05.05.2008 - 02.02.2020

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I just know I did all of this.

Share my shit, don't steal my shit.

Photos on following Pgs taken by other peeps:

2, 33, lower 2 on pg34, 59, 66, 72, 81, 88, 93, 99

“In learning to define trauma by its symptoms, rather than by the event that caused it, we can develop perspectives that will help us recognize trauma when it occurs. ...

The journey back to health and vitality is anything but immediate. Any step, however small, is significant and noteworthy. ...

It is in your body—with the nervous system fully engaged and accessed through the felt sense—that you will be successful in working with them.”

- Peter A. Levine; *Waking the Tiger, Healing Trauma*

For Bradds

**A PART OF ME DIED WITH YOU
A PART OF YOU LIVES WITH ME**

*Thank you for changing me
even though I was resistant.*

You brought me closer to myself.

*I'll be grateful to you
beyond space & time.*





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Intro



This book is in honor of my dog, Braddah (*BRA-DAA*). These are the lessons and gifts he taught me. Which led me away from suicide. I would not exist without Braddah's influence and Love.

This book is also me, conquering my biggest fear, sharing my art and myself. By sharing with you what Braddah did for me, Braddah is once again bringing me closer to myself.

I feel lucky to still be here on this Earth. Braddah taught me how

simple and pure Love is. He gave me the greatest gift anyone could ever receive. He gave me Life.

If you have found yourself reading this book, thank you. Thank you for allowing me to tell his story. For being a part of my greatest fear. For listening to his story and lessons about Love. I hope Braddah's Love lives on. I hope you feel him. I hope you experience his gifts like I did.

*This is for you Bradds.
I owe you my life!*

Burdened Blessings

It's hard to admit. I did not want Braddah. I was left with anger when he was left with me. Let me start from our beginning together. I was married, sure, but Braddah was my ex-husband's dog. He found him. We had Braddah together for about a year. Did I love Braddah from the beginning? As soon as we were introduced, he bit my

hand. Labeled me *Sucker* in no time. Divorce is a funny thing though. Sometimes you associate things with the person you're divorcing. Braddah was such a thing.

I was married during my late 20's. A time when I was too unaware and lacked every tool in relationships and self-coping and self-care. We were damaging to each other.





My ex was now living with roommates and couldn't have a dog. I was living in a house. Was I willing to give my ex a key to the house to come over whenever he wanted to? No. Was I willing to take care of Braddah until my ex found a home? Yes. We couldn't find a compromise where we were both willing. At the time it felt like a burden was left with me. At the time I felt it was unfair. At the time all I could see was how my ex got all this freedom. I was left with responsibility. A life responsibility. A life I had to take care of. Come home too. Feed. Take to the vet. Get out on walks everyday.

It saddens me that although I loved Braddah right away, I also carried a deep resentment towards him. For years. Till he was about 2 or 3 to be honest. Did I mention this was my first dog? Here I am, lacking the tools of how to take care of this other living thing. I could barely take care of myself. Only adding to the layers of how much his Love impacted me... he Loved me, no matter what.

Braddah's Love not only softened me. It saved me, literally. But I didn't know that at the time. When I resented Braddah, I was at the lowest emotional point in my life. Contemplating and planning suicide.¹

1 I despise the word "suicide". Yet there's not a way for me to discuss my mindset in a way for people to understand it without saying it. Please note that when I feel it's appropriate, I will be using the term "not belonging to (my)Self" interchangeably with the word "suicide". "Not belonging to (my)Self" leaves room for all of the individual experiences out there. It leaves room for different physiology, stories, and emotions. It leaves room to understand the pathway that leads to "suicide". I like the space.

It still baffles me. A dog. A dog I didn't want. A frickin' energetic pit bull I didn't want...

... turned into the best thing that could have happened to me.

Now whenever something doesn't work out for me, it's easier to accept it. To trust that life is leaving me my lessons. By pointing them out. That belief allows me to conquer my fears, one small step at a time.

Current example, I don't care if I'm the only one who ever reads this book. I wrote this for myself. For the times I will struggle with what life is handing me. Reminding me there is a Grace about life. Even in the things we don't want. This book is *my* reminder of how Braddah lifted me from the world's darkest place. Who reads it won't matter. *Unless it's Rogan!*

Poopy Patrol!

We're gonna say *poop*. A lot. If that bothers you, skip this chapter. But you might miss out on a valuable Braddah tool.

My nephew calls me '*Poopy Pants McGee*'. He's being 4 but he might be accurate. I do use Poopy Patrol as an observational tool.

Braddah is my first dog. After having him I realized I had been

making assumptions about dog owners. Like the one screaming at me from the bottom of my shoe. Not all dog owner's feel it's their responsibility to pick up their dog shit.

I was always surprised by the amounts of *poop*. We get a dog, consciously. With the full knowledge that a dog is an animal, therefore it will urinate and defecate. Just. Like. You. We bring such





dog home and take 5 pics for Instagram. Your dogs gets you likes and loves... the least we could do for those likes is Poopy Patrol. Now I'm not saying that this is you. Even if it is, I'm not judging. But I do encourage the Poopy Patrol thought experiment. How you view and execute Poopy Patrol may say a lot about what's going on with how you operate.

Answer these questions honestly without judgment or adding your reasonings. *How often do you Poopy Patrol at home? Has your dog ever run out of room in your yard? Do you allow your dog to poop on walks? Or are you the type to keep pulling your dog leaving the mysterious every 3 inches for the next 6 feet poop? Would you Poopy Patrol if your dog pooped knee high into a bush. When you're at a dog park? Do you Poopy Patrol when your dog goes in someone else's yard? Even if you don't like that neighbor? Do you Poopy Patrol when on a trail? What if it's 6 inches off the trail? 2 feet? Do you only Poopy Patrol when you're being watched?*

To provide insight to all the layers of this observation, I wanna add a London perspective. Imagine a world. Full of dogs. So many dogs. Every year they are put down in massive amounts of numbers because they can't find a home. Oh yeah, we're there. Now imagine all these dogs. *Pooping*. Several times a day. According to dogster.com¹, the average dog excretes 274 lbs of *poop* every

¹ <https://www.dogster.com/lifestyle/dog-poop-facts>

year. They also say (not adding all of you not Poopy Patrolling) the US still ends up with 10 million tons of dog *poop* every year (from 78 million dogs). Worldatlas.com² says the world population of dogs is estimated to be at 900 million dogs. Mix these two stats together, and you get 115,384,615 tons, TONS, of *poop*. Worldwide. *That's a ton of poop.*

Now let's imagine the result if said dog *poop* was to get into our human water supply. Would that image alter how you originally viewed Poopy Patrol? Braddah was constantly pointing them out to me. *Look, another poop.* Asking me what I thought was the right thing to do since puppies & people can get sick from *poop*.

Or, what if you imagined those millions of tons of *poop* sitting in recycled grocery bags. Stuck in our landfill. Stuck in a plastic bag that will outlive your dog, you or I. Would that influence you to use biodegradable bags?

Again, none of this is a judgment. I've used grocery bags and biodegradable bags. But you have to admit. Walking with other dog owners, it's fun to notice how they Poopy Patrol. It reveals parts of their character. It's a great observational tool for others. My favorite was that it can expose a blind spot

2

<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/how-many-dogs-are-there-in-the-world.html>

into yourself. This is coming from someone who's great at any public Poopy Patrol, trails included, even with no witness. Yet my Poopy Patrol home skills are not as great. *Is it then a surprise that I do an awesome job of picking up around other people's shit; while struggling in my space to deal with my own?*

**Note: Article name on dogster.com is '5 things you didn't know about dog poop'. In case you were wondering, I guess there's tutorials on the USDA's website about how to safely compost dog poop for manure. And according to the EPA the best way to Poopy Patrol is to flush it (water-soluble bags). There it is folks. My mind can't unsee the future invention of the dog toilet.*

The Puppy Pooper.

Stuff

The first time I learned about an attachment to stuff was the day before my 13th birthday party, Sept 11, 1992. Most of you aren't aware of that date. But it's the date I experienced what it felt like to have life change direction in an instant. It was Category 4 Hurricane Iniki. Hitting the island of Kaua'i like a bullseye.

I got to feel the actual experience of "the eye of the storm". (My dad let us go outside for this). I'll never forget it. Till this day I've never experienced something so eerie and silent. I imagined it to be

comparable to what a black hole must sound like from inside. It's also the day I lost my stuffed animals from when I was 1 yrs old. My books. *'Awww man, my eraser collection'* (yes, there was such a time). Sure, life certainly moves forward after losing these kinds of things. But for a kid, it left a lasting impression.

Sure, losing our stuff was a jolt. But the reality was





life moves on. No matter how badly you want your things back. Life moves on. My mom, growing up with less, was great at reminding us the things we lost weren't the important things. My dad was immediately adaptive and grew a beard. Both of my parents did such a phenomenal job of not acting like we were in distress. We even lived at their office as a family for 2 years (If you ever tried to open doors labeled 'Gift Shop' and in return heard 2 kids screaming "*NOT FOR SALE*", that was me and my brother).

You would think with such an impactful memory that I wouldn't have any attachments to stuff. Wrong. I wish that wasn't the truth, but it is. It's difficult to not have any emotions attached to certain things. We all have our own 'certain things'. It's not only sentimental shit. Sometimes it turns into downright quantity. If you've ever had to pack up a whole house before, you know what I'm talking about. *'Maybe those trips to CostCo weren't necessary? Why do we have this? When did I end up with 30 pairs of shoes?'* Packing up your home is a terrifying mirror. So is a dog.

A dog will test your limits. If you wanna be the kind of owner that's bragged about at the Rainbow Bridge, your patience and attachments will be tested. At least Braddah tested me. The amount of energy this guy could expend never ended. You think you wore him out cause he took a nap. But that nap was a mini-recharge. When he wakes up he's 100% ready to *go go go!*
Let's get out of here Mom! Needless to say, sometimes it didn't feel possible to carve the time. I had to work a lot. When I did, he found

other creative ways to get out his energy. He became *Destructor*. The destroyer of things. All things. *'Dude. Are you serious? The carpet? The padding?'* Altec, my friend Cyndi's child, was growing up. I bought an entire box full of old stuffed animals once as a bribe. *'Plllllease chew this instead.'* He left me with a random eyeball collection.

Each time, testing me. How was I gonna handle it? Braddah taught me you don't ever know until you are *///* a new situation. Once I came back from a trip home and that carry-on box of Hawaiian chocolates. The one that carries 6 seperate boxes inside. I came home after work to the entire living room & kitchen covered in chocolates. All 6 boxes and the carry-on box utterly destroyed to a pulp. Chocolate everywhere. I laughed. Hysterically.

My most defining moment was coming home to find my prescription glasses chewed up so badly they looked like I ran them over with my car. Chew them once, I experience anger and frustration. Chew up the 2nd pair in less than a month, I have a complete meltdown. I fell to my knees in the kitchen, raised my hands into the sky & screamed to the Gods, *'WHHHHHYYYYY?'*

He drove me bananas as a puppy. Even long into adulthood. But his eyes. His expressions. They eventually would lead me to laughter. Which would remind me of that old valuable lesson.

It's just stuff Mom!

Adventures

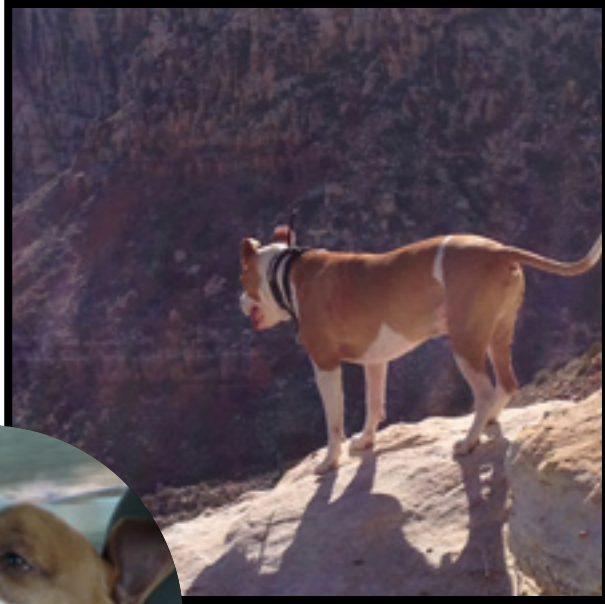
From here on out, Adventures will be spelt with a Capital A. Braddah thinks they are *THAT* important. Most of all, they work like Magic.

My recognition that Adventures create Magic comes from Adventures not being a choice. It was more like 'I absolutely cannot afford a 3rd pair of prescription glasses in the same year.' My alternative to *Destructor* was giving the energy a new place to go. We were already walking around parks and chasing rabbits. It felt like it wasn't enough for his personality. Plus, 'I used to adore hiking. Yeah, what about hiking?

15 minutes away is Red Rock Canyon. Yeah. This could be fun. Yeah. Let's get a map and try new trails all the time. Yeah. Braddah could be my Adventure companion. I won't need a dude or friend around either cause the world is afraid of pitbulls. World, you are missing out. This might work. Yeah.

Won't lie. It was bred in me to fear the world. 'Vans





will come and snatch you. The world is sick. People are evil.' So here I am, faced with fear as an opportunity. *'Let's try this scary thing where I go hiking alone, with no one waiting for me at home. In a town where I'm not close to anyone. Where I could disappear and no one would come looking for me for weeks. When they do, it's only because I'm not showing up for work and they need to fire me. Hmmm.... I should leave the trail name on my fridge just in case. Text a friend even if they live in another state.'* And that's what we did.

Funny how something as small and simple as a day hike ended up easing most of my fears. These Adventures replaced fear with confidence, step by step. Mind you, I'll always be fearful, it's my default. The intention was to wear out my dog. What I ended up with was a lot of healing, recognizing I could learn and change, and I could develop a desire to live. I'd even say those hikes built a bond between Braddah and I. We learned to trust each other. I'd help him down from spots where he'd climb himself into a corner. Can't tell you how many times I got lost. I dunno how, but I'd tell him *'Bradds, find the trail'*, and he would. *'Trust. Hmm. Is that what that feels like? Huh. Interesting. We're ride or die aren't we bud?'* *Yeppers!*

It did not occur to me that these Adventures could expand beyond our backyard. Whenever I could, and I was traveling, I brought him with me.

Thanks La Quinta. Next thing I know, we're road tripping and hiking whenever possible. I'd plan my vacations with Braddah. Road tripping

in the mainland still feels like a novelty coming from an island. Sure Braddah didn't experience a fun country farm life. But he's been to Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Kaua'i, Arizona, Utah, North Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and Idaho. In most of those states he's camped or stayed in multiple spots, multiple times. Not bad for a dog. Or. For me.

Each trip gave me a new experience. Each upcoming trip gave me something to look forward to. There's a plaque on my wall at home. It says *'When was the last time you did something for the first time?'* Yeah. Take that in. Really makes me think about my own patterns. Sure. I walk. But without Braddah I'd find myself walking the same routes over and over. I'd even have 5 routes so it seems like I'm doing new things, but not really. Braddah pushed me to explore, finding new routes even on a neighborhood walk.

'Huh, interesting. ...I think I like variety and change.' Every time we do a new hike or *Adventure*, I can't tell who's more excited, him or I. Who are we kidding? Him. 100%. My gazelle trotting Chewbacca sounding goofball.

These new Adventures created stories about *Theodorious*. (*Theo-door-ee-us*) The undercover Super Agent, Most Important Guy on The Planet, Super Spy. Who wore goggles and smoked cigars as he drove his invisible tank that he stored underground in the town of Zzyzx; because no one could pronounce it. I could keep going, but I'll spare you.

Do you see it? Do you see how this one act, *Adventures*, is responsible for a plethora of unveiling, choices, and experiences? *Adventurers are so cool man.* Don't take our word for it. Try it. See what happens in your life. It will challenge you. So have them often, you can't overdo it.

All I know is *Adventure* with Braddah has added more tools into my toolbox more than any other thing. I'm feeling lost again. *Adventure.* I'm not feeling like my best self. *Adventure.* I feel like I'm in the movie *Groundhog Day.* *Adventure.* Be like my friend Julia, *Adventure to Groundhog Day.* The *Adventure* doesn't matter. It can come in forms within your own neighborhood. In the act of doing something new, I've always found self-discovery as an effect without looking for it. Glimmers of myself found its way to show up in *Adventure.* *Adventures* became and are a great mirror. *'What do I do now that we ran out of water and the Big Guy is overheating? Did I allot enough time before work? Why am I so grumpy around this gorgeous sunset? Dang, I cracked under pressure when we got lost there. Whoa, did you see those Rams? Snake, snake, snake... is that snake eating something right now?'*

Yeah Mom, that's a Super Villain Spy. I planted a decoy. It THINKS it's eating. Don't worry. I have us in a protective shield. Let's walk around him and then I'll blast him with my tank. *Chewbacca noise*

Having Adventures is my favorite tool Braddah gave me. This trail of Adventures led me directly to myself. But it started with me bitter, complaining. On my knees crying and screaming because I did not know how to enjoy this life. I promise to stick these Adventures out, for him. They have changed me and led to bigger trips and more stories. Like my 35th birthday. Spent in New Zealand, an RV, by myself, a Waldo doll and a camera. Which started me on the path I'm on today. What will this path result in? I dunno. I don't really care. As long as I'm still creating *Adventures* in my life.

Listening to the lessons Braddah taught me,

If you wanna feel the wind lift your ears,
you need to stand firmly at the edge.

I cannot emphasize it enough. If you try one tool Braddah gave me, Oooo,
oooo, oooo, Pickle this one, Pickle this one.

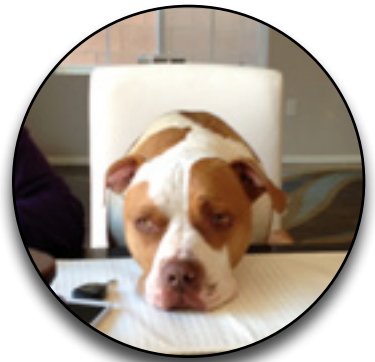
Love & Pain

The tricky part to numbing myself out, is I wasn't aware of it when I was doing it. I would have verbally told you *'I'm fine, it's just life'*. Unaware there was any danger in my fantasies about how I wanted to die. I found justifiable reasons why I worked so much. Couldn't get off my phone. I stayed social for appearances, but it felt more like pressure to go. One of the ways we can numb ourselves is by looking like a "successful"

human being. Someone with a "to-do list" that's better represented by a labyrinth. Wandering around from priority to priority when I came to realize there's zero end point. *'Wow, look at those baseboards. They NEED to be cleaned.'*

I do not obey this "command"!

When you're numb, it's difficult to prioritize. While simultaneously being





difficult to confront. You're frozen. It was almost as if I knew. To confront myself and all of the experiences that hurt me would require me to feel pain. The thawing would sting. And a lot of it did. I did become the Bill Burr of suppressed emotions. A skill I learned long ago. It's pretty much a family trait. In fact, we call it being '*Emotionally Constipated*'. See, we're even aware it doesn't feel good. Yet feel compelled not to change. Numb is more socially acceptable anyways. Which is the easier thing. I thought suppression was my best option.

In my opinion, suppression is absolutely the worst option out there. It's a fast track to feeling nothing. It's scary how quickly any of us can arrive there. Don't relate? Heed my warning, build your toolbox, your time will come. At least that's what I believe. I struggle with how we discuss depression, aka mental illness. I do believe mental illnesses exist. I'm not a professional. My personal experience is that depression is a needed experience in our lives. Look, children grow super fast physically for a period of time. We've become so used to these growth spurts we don't even question how weird it is. Our collective view is this rapid unannounced individual growth is a part of the human physical growth process.

That's how I view depression. I view depression as a critical part of the human *Emotional Growth Process*. Only difference is you don't get to know when or how the type of growth process will arise.

Have you ever known someone who hasn't had difficult things occur in their life yet? Aren't they the most annoying people to go to when you're hurting? *'Today is a new day. You'll have a great day if you just say it. Fake it till you make it. Like attracts like. So... what are you saying? My life is shitty because I'm shitty?'* Not really an effective way to teach someone how to help themselves.

I get there's truth to these mantras. *Om that shit Mom!*
Oooo-SA..... As much as I'm a mantra Lover, I believe the human spirit & experience is more complex than a mantra. Mantras are a great way to talk to the Self. A horrible way to communicate with others. So now, when I see someone else is hurting, I try to be aware and stay away from the mantras. That's not what they need. I can do better. Most of us want someone to sit with us. That's it.

I have deep issues with the mantra *'fake it till you make it'*. That advice led me directly towards suicide. You see, I was aware enough to know I wasn't ok. What was wrong, I couldn't have told you back then, not when I was in it. But I knew I was "off". I also knew expressing any of it to others was a mistake. Grief makes us terribly uncomfortable. I began to heed the daily advice *'fake it till you make it'*. Over time that damaged my Soul. The only thing I learned was faking it made *other* people happier, not me.

Throw on some make-up, an *'I'm fine'* smile & some big earrings (or anything

to give people to small-talk about). Boom. You made everyone else around you happy, except yourself. It hurt. It hurt me to know how people would rather comment on my earrings rather than look into my eyes. Cause if someone looked, really looked (including myself), they would have seen my pain. Problem is, in general, most of us don't like looking. It may cause us to reflect on ourselves. To deal with our own shit. When a cute set of earrings is enough to keep your shit in a closet, it makes pain easier to hide. Easier to suppress. There were a few that looked, but I wasn't strong enough to stand on my own. So when they looked for a moment and moved on, I'm not sure which one was worse. Being invisible. Or being seen to have people walk away.

Wanna snuggle?

Maybe that's why Braddah's presence was so impactful for me. Why he saved me from my own thoughts and behaviors. Once when I already decided. I was going to do it. It was now a matter of how. It was not something to be impulsive about. If I get to choose my way out, I was gonna give myself the kindest of the horrific options. I was researching my own death. I was planning on how I was going to die as mundanely as you'd write a grocery list. I couldn't even see what I was doing because I could no longer feel anything. In hindsight, that's terrifying.

Another time Braddah saved me was about a year after I decided to live. It was as if the Universe was testing my decision. As I found myself blindsided.

In the middle of a hostile work situation. *'How could this be? I decided to live. Why is this happening to me? Wasn't life supposed to get better after making the decision to live? How could life possibly get worse?'* Well, mine did. For about 6 grueling months. *'What kind of mind fuckery is this?'* There's no guarantee your life will get better based on your choice to live. You have to learn how to participate in living, one step at a time. *Adventure!*

I ended up deciding on what I thought would be the least draining. So I regrettably rejoined the family business (if your family owns a business, you get that), and consciously choose to separate myself from an unhealthy environment. If I was going to have a shot at not going back to suicide, I had to leave. I left feeling beaten. If those people knew I was battling to stay alive, would that have changed their behavior? I sadly doubt it. *Behaviour is contagious.* It preys upon the numb, the lost, and the ones seeking direction. Which is why choosing your environment is so powerful. Even when it requires a sacrifice.

Not everyone would agree with this solution, but this is when I chose my focus would be to give Braddah the best life. I somehow knew... giving him the best life would teach me how to give myself the best life. Cause life. Is. Hard. Period. If you didn't catch my emphasis... *LIFE IS HARD!* For all of us.

This is also the time I stopped asking "Why ...?" I exhaust myself with the questions. One looping around the other, draining my energy. "Why is this happening to me?" kept me stuck. If I was going to live, I had to start asking "How will I live with this? What CAN I do?" I've never stopped asking. This is how I taught myself to get back up. *Braddah puts on his fu Manchu outfit*

Mom, fall seven times. Get back up eight.

In the process of picking myself back up daily, I learned a critical lesson. A lesson some of you will disagree with. Which is part of the beauty of self-discovery. You get to choose what works for you and what doesn't. Which for me is how you take a detour. Away from the road to suicide. For me it was a road (it's different for everyone, part of our problem in understanding it). Not a singular event. It was a compilation of large and many small events that led me to believe I was alone. I didn't belong anywhere. Like Wolverine, a lone wolf left to deal with my anger on my own.

In my shift, I started to allow myself to feel things again. Mind you, it started very small. With hiking. I started with fear because fear is my default. Now that I felt ok hiking, it was time to do more. I decided to push myself to do something I was deeply afraid of. I feared my family would disown me if I got a tattoo (children of conservative parents will understand). In the process of getting my one and only tattoo, I realized literally, pain passes. In fact, it can even lead you to an alternative route. I started painting again slightly before

and during the process of getting my tattoo. Another fear. Another thing I hadn't done for almost 20 years. The next thing I knew I was feeling all this stuff. Lacking the words to express it. Finally, a place to put it. I completed 29 paintings in less than a year. All an expression of what it felt like to pull myself out of the grave. But just like life, in order to receive this beautiful tattoo (thank you Wakako), I had to be willing to feel the pain. *'Willing. Whoa.'*
There it is.

Braddah sat with me as I floundered through a shit basket of emotions I didn't understand. With time, it came. This epiphany I still wholeheartedly believe today.

My capacity to Love is a direct result from my capacity to feel Pain. My capacity to allow Pain to be felt increases my capacity for compassion, empathy and most of all, how to Love!

Good news everyone, as the Professor would say. This means you can increase your empathy, compassion and ability to Love.

The more Braddah allowed my Pain without asking me to fake it, the more alive I became. The more I began to Love, the more Braddah brought me back

from the depths of death itself. I am aware that I wouldn't exist without Braddah in my Life. This is why I don't know how to thank him. The gravity of his gift is difficult for a lot of you to understand. You'd first have to understand what it felt like to not wanna be here anymore. To no longer want to participate with life. Although, Braddah tells me there are a lot of you who also don't wanna be here anymore. We are so sorry you feel this way. I wish I could say it's not gonna hurt as you try to figure out how to build stairs out of your grave. That was not my experience. In my experience, it was the allowing of the hurt that saved me. It was having the Big Bradds who sat with me, with my pain, even if he didn't agree with it. He knew how to *just* Love.

80 lbs of Plop *Laps. Isn't this the best spot in the whole wide world?*

Showing Love

If you love poetry, you'll love the Hawaiian language. Speaking it is not a skill I have. But I love listening to the chanting. Like they are bellowing from the depths of their Soul to the Gods up above. It has always interested me how some cultures experience words. How Hawaiians have more than 200 words for rain. How Braddah had a Finnish term from his spy days, *Sisu!!!*
Mom, english doesn't work.

(Sisu¹ loosely means stoic determination, tenacity of purpose, grit, bravery, resilience and hardiness, somehow all in one.) Or how Sanskrit has 96 words for Love. *Whoa.*

I feel like multiple ways to describe Love is not only appropriate, but needed. Needed in a world driven by like's rather than experiences. Needed in a place where

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisu>





people feel depressed in our search for Love. How do you search for something when it's defined differently amongst all of us? Our disagreement of how to define Love contributes to our misunderstanding of it.

Have you ever loved a type of food on your dinner plate that you saved it till the end? I have. Only problem is I get full in my hot pursuit. Now I'm stuck. With two crappy choices.

1) Stop eating & now I can't enjoy the food I Love so much I saved, or the choice I took more often (purely out of a *'but it's sooo good'* stubbornness)

2) Stuff. My. Face. Justifying it was because I did it for the thing I Love. Walking around bloated. And thankful I made yoga pants my almost full-time attire.

Would this food Love be equal to how you feel for the person who understands you best? I mean, maybe that's true for you, but it doesn't make Bradd's point moot. *Love is only Transcendent when it's Unconditional.* Everything else is a *'thank GOD I'm wearing yoga pants'* moment.

When Love is unconditional, it doesn't ask me for something. It doesn't try to make me into the best version *they* see. It doesn't allow myself to *not* check-in, to peek, to see if my behaviors and actions are still aligned with

who I want to be. When Love is unconditional, it does not mean it loses logic or Grace. It still demands a presence. Unconditional Love makes *all* of us reach for the stars. That's my definition of it. You get to define it on your own.

What would you rather have, a definition of Love by likes? *Yoga pants!*
Or a definition of Love that requires you to reach? *'Kibble or bacon Bradds?'*

BACON!

The way in which Braddah Loved me was self-less. Maybe we Love animals because not being able to speak allows us to feel heard. Which is what we need in those low moments. To be heard. Somehow Braddah knew what I needed for every moment. When to let me sit. When to let me cry. When to get me outside. When to push me to do something difficult. Call me crazy, but as my friend Genesis says, *"It's like he's human."*

Now in hindsight, I believe we have the terms "unseen" and "unheard" a bit misplaced. I believe that by Braddah sitting with me, attentive and listening, he allowed me to see and hear myself. His listening and acceptance allowed me to turn down the noise. *Wow, it's so loud in here!* It gave me the space to see myself as I am. Good or bad, it didn't matter anymore, it just was. This let me see my starting point on my map to recovery. Most importantly, it allowed me to hear myself. Braddah's ability to listen and accept allowed me to turn up the volume of my own voice. Giving me

discernment as to which direction to take. *The best Adventures require a map!*

Feeling safe & Loved by Braddah is what brought me back to the belief. I no longer have a choice. Suicide is not in my option basket. Nowadays I wonder. About all the other people who have committed suicide. Or the ones that have it on their mind now. *'What if they were to learn this powerful tool? A tool that taught me how to discern when Love is unconditional or conditional. Which taught me who's safe for me to share what with. Not everyone needed to know everything.'* *Protect your playbook.*

This tool shifted my perspective. If other people had this tool, would they still feel what they're feeling? Or would they, like me, slowly build stairs in the grave I had been digging? That's right, living beyond almost committing suicide makes me a zombie.

I'm a zombie bitches! I believe you must first define what you are seeking from this Life. Then practice actions of Unconditional Love.

I believe if we can learn how to communicate in a more candid way, we can do a better job at practicing Unconditional Love.

My sci-fi/fantasy brain is curious. What could we accomplish in a lifetime where we *all* checked into ourselves? Where we all bear the responsibility of digging stairs where and how we've dug our own graves. Call me evil, but I desire a world of zombies. *Rick Grimes Bitch!*

Feel ALL Of It

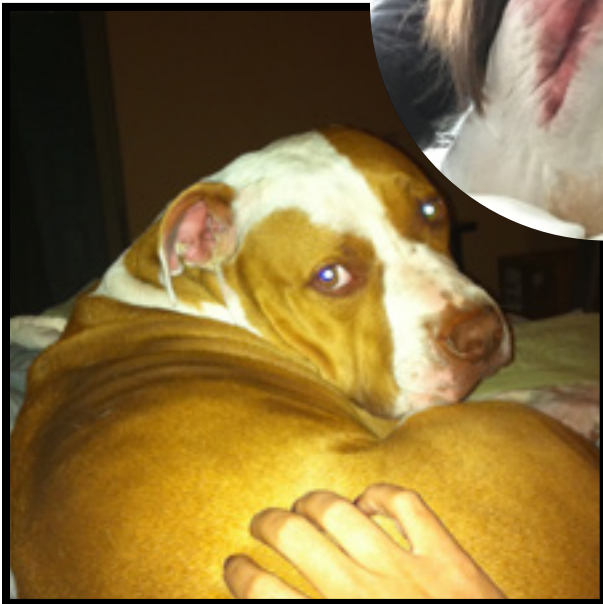
Have you ever been left wondering when your body will run out of tears? Yeah. Me too. It wasn't until my yoga teacher training and reading *'The Body Keeps the Score'* that all that crying made sense. I found the book spooky. Difficult to read without analyzing myself. My pudding proof that trauma can be stuck in the body came after teaching one of my favorite things, Yoga Nidra. Reading how we can store old

emotions in our tissues is one thing. It's jarring to experience the effect of guiding people's bodies into relaxation. I'm not talking about binging in front of Netflix relaxing. I'm talking about the deep healing kind of relaxing. Very often people cry.

I was living with my nervous system on fight-or-flight (or in my case, freeze) too often and for too many years. The



1 by Bessel van der Kolk



reason why this is *not cool* is better explained in 'Waking the Tiger' by Peter Levine².

"Helplessness is closely related to the primitive, universal, biological response to overwhelming threat—the freezing response. ...

The helplessness that is experienced at such times is not the ordinary sense of helplessness that can affect anyone from time to time. The sense of being completely immobilized and helpless is not a perception, belief, or a trick of the imagination. It is real. The body cannot move."

What makes it difficult to decompress is my forever racing brain. "What if" scenarios of the unknown future. Alongside the obsessive analytical nature that comes with the thoughts of the past. The term 'living in the Now' can feel elusive. It can be a frustrating concept when you lack the experience to know what that would feel like. To be in the Now. Explanations like feeling the wind upon my face made me wanna punch people in the nose. You don't know what you don't know. Help a sista out.

² *'Waking the Tiger' by Peter Levine;; Pg 142.*

This is why Yoga Nidras (or NSDR's) became my favorite thing. It put my body into the physical state of 'Now'. Finally giving me the feeling. A ruler, a guide, my compass. This gave me a more honest lens of my own discernment. If I was really present or distracted. Kamini Desai Phd says it better than I in her book *'Yoga Nidra: The Art of Transformational Sleep'*³.

"Yoga Nidra is a powerful method to develop your capacity to allow all experience to come and go and to be peaceful in the midst of all of them. The more you know that peace is always present and always available, the less you need to fear or hold onto what comes and goes. You know that no matter what comes, you are okay. This allows you to soften your grip on life. You are more able to abide and flow amidst the natural tides of life."

Feeling is that part where you *"allow your experiences to come & go."* Which can include experiences of Pain. In fact, it will.

I've been both people in the yoga class. The one that has had a complete meltdown. And the one who has taught a class where someone else had an emotional release. Witnessing people cry after you guide them into yoga nidra made me believe in 'The Body Keeps the Score'. It took me years to realize how big it was that Braddah let me cry. That depth was only realized after

³ *Yoga Nidra: The Art of Transformational Sleep by Kamini Desair PhD; Pg 199.*

I experienced how the body stores trauma (not an expert here, this is my personal experience).

There are two important things Braddah taught me about emotions:

1) *Emotions are a fool man.* A tool that can only be utilized when you allow yourself to feel them.

2) It's healthy to feel your emotions, it's unhealthy to stay in any one emotion for too long. *Emotions that don't move, blind.*

The tricky part is *"for too long"*. You're the only one who can say what's true for you. You're also your biggest liar. Luckily, I had Braddah. Every time my Soul cried out for too long, Braddah would come running. Pinning my shoulders down and licking away my tears. You'll only understand if you've ever Loved a pitbull. If they wanna give you kisses, you're getting kisses. Pits are aggressive. Aggressive Love givers that is. He wouldn't stop until my tears turned to genuine laughter. Even anger wouldn't stop him. Only laughter.

If all I could muster was holding him after he licked my face off, he was good there too. He'd sit with me for hours if that's what I needed. Any emotion I had, he allowed it. But I wasn't allowed to stay there.

Some of you might be confused. *'What do you mean 'it's unhealthy to feel*

one emotion for too long? What about Love? Or Joy? Huh, huh huh?! Those emotions feel great. Like you, I prefer to be in those emotional states as well. The difference Bradds gave me is an awareness.

Awareness that the human experience is a fluxing emotional experience. Happiness can turn into sadness about a family tragedy in an instant. For all of us. This awareness allows me to feel my sadness, but with the promise that the sadness will flux into a new emotion at some point. This tool helps me to determine if the change in my emotional state needs to be felt *I'm gonna sit with you* or if I need to assist myself *I'm gonna lick your face off.*

Assisting yourself with a behavior will look different for all of us, for every circumstance. Sometimes I need more stillness and I'll do yoga nidra, or sit in a hammock. Other times I need intensity and I'll find a way to sweat. Most of the time, I need to breathe. And the two of us would head out on an Adventure. *Yay, let's go, let's, let's GO!*

In other words, I learned how to honor my state. Versus suppressing or needing to change my state. What a paradox! I ended up finding a pattern that remains true for me till this day. I can determine what I need by developing an awareness of how my body communicates with my mind. And because I am Nature, I must accept that decoding my own language is

ever-evolving, ever-changing. And my responsibility.

One more thing on this subject. Have you ever practiced Gratitude? Have you ever realized you were lying outwardly because you didn't actually experience that feeling inwardly? You know that's the truth because you're not elated like others who practice Gratitude. *'Is anything happening?'* I have found this process of building my compassion, empathy, and ability to Love... that's the ticket *to* Gratitude.

Gratitude journals annoy me a bit. A lot. I think it's just my personality. I'm super happy for you if they work, hell, even jealous. If you happen to be like me, think of Bradds instead. It always felt like he was telling me, *It's ok to cry. But we're not gonna stay here ok?* Braddah basically ShiftAdapt'd me. *Regulate your state Mom!* Gratitude followed.

Phoenix Burning

'Trust the Process' is not another way of accepting circumstances to the point of being a doormat. Rather, I see it as a skill that you build over time. For me, knowing which choices to follow comes in a super quiet, super still, and super small voice. But it is still a voice. In other words, I *'Trust the Process'* when I learn to *Trust Myself* enough to sort through motivational bullshit. Sure, some of it is great. I even follow a lot of it. Where I think the

water gets murky is there are no 'one size fits all' methods. We are literally called to change individually, first. Then we can change collectively. What I think is bullshit may be your greatest tool. What worked effectively for me may not work for you at all.

Don't be mad at me if this triggers you. But I see massive amounts of people who claim they wanna rise





up, like the Phoenix. It confuses me because we leave out the whole other half of the process of becoming a Phoenix. To be destroyed. *Destructor*. To be burned alive in temperatures so hot you become a pile of ash. Braddah showed me on our Adventures how destruction follows Nature's pattern. After massive destruction, Nature creates. The Universe finds it's rhythm after chaos. The Phoenix rises. *After it's bby'd.*

My view of this process of burning oneself is like an unlearning. Rather than adding on more skill, more tasks, and more pressure, it was more like an unveiling. I found my small inner voice to live in the center of a Russian doll. *Da!* As I unlearn something that doesn't fit the life I want, I become closer to that center. By burning away an unneeded layer. *Bby.*

For example, rejoining the family business created a lot of anxiety for me. Mostly because we have different definitions of *"hard work = success"*. It's super difficult to get us all together as a family. My folks have worked 7 days a week minus Christmas and Easter for 34 years. Going out to lunch is like pulling teeth. No matter the day, no matter the circumstance. *'I'm too busy, there's not enough time.'* This is how *Star Wars* became a surrogate. There is nothing wrong with their point of view. My parents provided. This is a conflict of definitions. Before I realized I could create my own definitions I've sabotaged every potential success I've ever had. Carrying around this subliminal message

I gave myself. One that left me in fear. Fear of a life that wasn't mine, sucking my energy, burning me out, lacking In *Adventure*.

When Braddah was putting his energy into my prescription glass, I had to find a better way to get his energy out. As I told you before, I fell back into a childhood Love for hiking. After some time I'd stop complaining about Bradds taking 2-4 hrs of my day. I found myself enjoying our time out in Adventure. Oddly, once my attitude shifted from being bitter *'Braddah you take up so much of my time'*, I became productive. A lot. I couldn't figure the math. It didn't make sense. I didn't have time before Braddah. *'Now we're spending 2-6 hrs a day outside and I'm somehow getting more done?! I think I just learned how to prioritize. Huh? That certainly changes things.'*

It took me almost his whole life to realize what occurred. I unlearned. I created a new definition of success that felt good to me. Making prioritizing easier. It felt light, flexible, *Adventurous*, uplifting, hell, even exciting. I realized redefining my definitions was a tool. *Bby.*

Think about how much you could unlearn and redefine in your own life. The short list is framed by culture, religion, what your zip code is, family dynamics, relationships, society and more. I realized that when I didn't take the time to look deeper, I was living a life that wasn't suitable, *for me*. Discovering what does and doesn't work for me gave me a fun Robbie-*Braddah*-style

toolbox. There's not a single person who gets to decide what your toolbox looks like. *Bba.*

Every time I made a decision that was suitable for the life I wanted, I took off another layer that didn't belong to me. It didn't matter if those decisions were as small as when I wanted to eat breakfast. It was all up for debate. Did I really like that show everyone else loves? Can I accept that I'm solar powered and winters are brutal? Will I learn to love that I'm unable to recharge around other people? All for me, me, me. This weird mix is me.

Bba. Bba. Bba.

Each individual decision about how I perceive life, define life and what I desire for my own... *bba.* Each time I don't follow someone else's '5 most effective ways to start your day'... *bba.*

I hope all the Phoenix wanna-be's out there stop focusing on 'rising up'. Rising up from what? *If it's cozy you have no reason to rise.* Again, this is just my belief, my toolbox. Yours will be different. My experience led me to more moments I needed to ignite (shame), to get rid of (false beliefs) or to let go (unproductive self-talk). There were more things I ignited into ash. More than there's been things that I've added.

I believe we can all be a Phoenix, so does Bradds. *Ca-Caw!* A Phoenix

hasn't caught our attention for centuries because it's merely beautiful as it rises. It's beautiful as it experiences a fierce & powerful Grace, letting pieces of itself go. That's the coolest part of the story man.
fi-yah!

Erosion

My sister, Trini and I, can instantly go back to our muppet days, using our imagination while bobbing our heads. When CGI didn't exist like today, using your imagination was part of the fun when watching Fraggles, Sesame Street, Mr. Rogers or our all time favorite *'The Muppet Movie'*. Have you ever heard the words to *'The Rainbow Connection'*? *Rainbows!* (Side note, I'll never forget my yoga final. During the portion where I received my grade. *'Did I hear Kermit?'* *'Ha. Yep,'* I said sheepishly. But that was me, practicing to use my individual toolbox.)

Bradds wants you to use your imagination and think of your emotions like rivers. Rivers remind me of how I envision emotions to move. A healthy river needs to flow. Stagnation (suppressing emotions) will make a river toxic. Too much build up. It takes time to clean it up. Once it starts flowing again, stagnation can still remain for a while, or even occur again.





Rivers have a purpose, erosion. Braddah showed me that depending on how I dealt with my emotions, I could either create a canyon. Or a mountain. That part is my choice. The emotion had nothing to do with it. The emotion, regardless of which one, will be neutral. The emotion is the river. How I react to them determines if I'm building a bigger canyon. Or if I'm carving out a mountain.

Braddah had this sweetness that made strangers immediate fans. Every walk we've ever been on, if we saw people, someone commented about him. Kids loved him beyond. Young boys especially. I think it's because they could sense his goofy energy. '*Cool dog*' they'd say as they coolly walked past.

But it was also because Braddah looked you in the eyes. Which by the way is another lesson. We have forgotten how to 'see' each other. It's why I believe suicide is at an all time high. We're so distracted. Our forgetting of the knowledge and practice of 'seeing' each other is showing its effects. Try it for yourself. Look. Really look into someone else's eyes, with a goofy ass smile and a wag in your tail (however that shows up for you). See how your interactions with people shift. Sure, it doesn't work with everyone. But we don't need everyone to love the world more. Although we do need most of us.

Once I took Bradds on a hike to Mt. Charleston near Vegas. When we got to the lookout of the hike, he HAD to say *Hi* to each & every individual person up

Heyyyy man, where'd all the Love go?
Let's exchange some more. Wasn't that fun?
Wasn't it? Wasn't it?

Then the stranger folds and says something around the terms of *'Fuck. It. I gotta get me some of that Love.'*

I saw Bradds shift people's states like it wasn't hard. Like it was pure and simple. And that's because I think it is.

The only issue most of us have is a social issue. We're embarrassed to be our goofy Loving selves. It's not a Love issue. Braddah showed me how deep Love goes. He also showed me we humans have a depth even we don't understand. There's a caveat to understanding our own depth. The only way to understand how much depth you're capable of is to express it.

But how will you express it? What will be created around the erosion of your emotions? What mark will you leave on others? That's up to every single one of us. I hope to express it like Bradds. Bradds Loved life to the depth he did because he expressed his Love first. He received so much Love because he gave so much Love. I want to be like him.

Connect the Dots

'La, la, la, connect the dots.'

Sorry, I can't say that phrase without hearing Pee-wee Herman. Do you see what kind of environment Braddah got stuck with? I'm a weirdo. I think that's part of the reason why I haven't found a career or purpose. As I write this, I'm 40 and I've never done more than have a job. You grocery store workers, I feel you man. The public is hard.

Nothing ever really fit. I've been a server. I've waxed

vaginas. I currently have a real estate license I don't use. The biggest blessing my horrible jobs gave me was an awareness of how I'd like things to be different. I don't know what that exactly looks like from here. Or how I'm going to get there. All I know is Braddah helped me to Love myself more Gracefully. And in that Grace, I received peace.

Did I mention I'm a weirdo?





I describe myself as an 'acquired taste'. I'm not for everyone. Everyone isn't for me. Being yourself can be a lonely space, at least in my head. Each minor rejection adds up to playing small. I, being strong willed as I am, took that too far. I played so small, I became so tiny, I almost didn't exist. Until Bradds would knock me back to the present.

Braddah was a nose nudger. If you weren't giving enough Love, he'd tell you. Sure, sometimes I let it annoy me. Absolutely I could have disciplined that away. But I felt like it was my reminder. *Hey, in THIS moment, Love, ok? You hear me? Just Love. The rest won't matter.* And I already knew that was true because I was almost there. Playing with the idea of death was dangerous. But it did give me a perspective that has never left me. It's simple. After you've defined it, just start practicing Love. Start with yourself.

These days I start with the acceptance that in some ways, I am still lost. In fact, because of Bradds, I now view '*being lost*' as an emotion. Rather than a physical place. I took 'lost in a maze' as the literal scenario of feeling lost. Like there was somewhere else for me to be. As if I've been doing life wrong.

Defining 'being lost' as an emotion, I see it's purpose for showing up in me, as an alert. It's trying to tell me to recalibrate my compass. I'm doing something that may be logical, but completely wrong for me.

Mom, do you even know yourself? Real estate?

Braddah participating in my life as my *ride or die* partner helped me understand myself. I began to recognize when my body was telling me something was right or wrong for me. It was stupid simple.

Braddah didn't care what I did to bring home the bacon (& cheese). He purely cared that we were together. So why did I care about what I did? All of the jobs I've had ended up leaving me feeling empty anyways. I began to pursue a feeling rather than a career. Lordy did *that* create a clusterfuck of tries with no wins.

You see, I imagine life to be less of a timeline. More of a *la, la, la*, connect the dots. The tricky part is '*where in the hell is my pencil?*' Each time Braddah and I created an Adventure memory, it left a star or a dot. When we would try new things, I would either Love the feeling and it would leave a big & bright star on my path. Other times we tried new things and it left me feeling dull. Those stars don't shine as bright. I don't use these stars for navigation anymore. They aren't bright enough and I can't depend on them. My timeline is more like looking at all the constellations. Using only the brightest of stars. Making navigating myself more simple.

This slow process of following what made me feel like "I Love this life with

Bradds", led me in a zig-zag pattern to pursuing my yoga teacher certificate in Boise, Idaho. Although I'm still putting it all together, I recognized that Yoga was one of my pencils, connecting my dots. *La, la, la!* Your pencil will be different. But I believe you'll find it as you navigate the brightest stars of your timeline. You'll find the constellation that is you. It may take time.

During my yoga training I learned tools that would be needed at a later time. I was lucky. My yoga mentors believed that Yoga can assist with the "finding yourself" journey. I either learned new tools or they would solidify something I learned from a dog. In this process, I learned I Love teaching in my pj's and telling a Story with Yoga Nidra. Stories that gave me permission to remind me what Love feels like. How it shows up. Like how Bradds consistently showed up for me. Always in the energy of Love. From the felt-sense of my body.

By giving myself the permission to follow my brightest stars I had to learn how to read my sky. Stars are ever-moving and shifting. It's ok if I do too. It's ok to wander and shift. I'm leaving myself clues to my bigger picture, which in time, like the constellations, will change.

I don't know what my life will look like. Or how I will get there. Today my life looks like a gift from Bradds. I'm meant to tell his Story. To heal myself. To force myself to pursue my constellation's biggest and brightest star, Braddah's Gallery. To guide me and remind me of the lessons Braddah gave me. *"That*

was his purpose - so every breath forward is in honor of him." Thanks Trini. Said perfectly. La, La, *Startled* Laaa? Hey, what the hell was that?! Did I fart? I don't believe it.

Swollen Ass

I met the smartest rabbit in the world. She lives along White Rock Loop at Red Rock in Nevada. Me & Braddah saw her, just once, like a powerful myth. Braddah saw her first and tried to catch her. He heard once that if you successfully catch her you shall be granted one wish. And he desperately wanted *Bacon!* He chased her with all of his might.

He was hairs away from snatching her up. As quickly as she appeared,

she disappeared. Into a cactus bush that is. Yep, you read that right. A cactus *bush*. All 80 lbs of the Big Guy careening into it. Did I mention we were almost exactly $\frac{1}{2}$ way on the loop? Meaning the direction didn't matter, it was gonna be a painful walk back to the car.

It took us over a week to get every piece out of his body. Sometimes with sneak attacks during naps. Frickin'





guy started sleeping with one eye open... always cautious... always watching... forever a Spy.

Back then I couldn't decide when he was the toughest. The cactus bush? Or when he was a pup and ran full speed into a brick wall pursuing a soccer ball. Just to shake it off and ask for *More plllllllease*. Little did I know of his tenacious spirit. He was so jolly it was easy to overlook he was also a fighter. A fighter who danced his happy trot till the end. He did "Love" our dance parties (I was really good at annoying him with my moves).

When I say Braddah LIVED for his *Adventures*, my guess is you haven't imagined it enough. It was part of his charm. Let me tell you how he lived his greatest Adventure, living life here on Earth. You know the term child-like Joy? This was Braddah's default. While mine is fear.

Braddah's dancing tenacity showed itself when we realized he's been Thriving while having terminal prostate cancer that has spread into his lymphatic system. You see Braddah's definition of Thriving is Loving life AS IT IS. They gave him one month to live. In fact, what I thought was a change in his dietary needs due to his senior status, turned out to be his prostate, literally in the way.

I promise you, I didn't allow him to suffer. But I also wasn't gonna take his life

prematurely. If you saw him you'd know. He wanted to Live. He wanted more than just to live. This guy would beg to swim in the Boise River. *In December and January. In Idaho!* (He's a Wim Hof fan.) Sure, we had to snuggle up in front of the space heater when we got home. But am I gonna regret fluffy blankets, Braddah snuggles, and most of all watching him Love life?

I LOVE SWIMMING! Nope.

It's no surprise to me that Braddah would want to go out by having *Adventures*. But I didn't expect him to still be gearing to go while experiencing hemorrhoids. No, I did not foresee that tenacity, his *Sisu*.

Here he was, in a circumstance where I would have allowed the trumpets to sound my ballades of self-pity. Instead, he chose to still play reggae. Bouncing with his happy gazelle trot to the rhythm of Life. If before I couldn't recognize Grace, well here she was.

Like a mystical rabbit, granting the wish of Loving Life.

Except there were no wishes made. It was all from his Spirit and how he participated with Life. It was fierce, powerful. I hope to emulate Braddah's Spirit when it becomes my time. I can't think of a better way to end this Life. In enjoyment. In Awe. In Adventure. Surrounded by the ones you Love. And only when it's time. Sounds pretty awesome to me.

For you Big Guy, I will stop living by happenstance. I will stop allowing life to occur as if I don't have a choice in the matter. I will stop being satisfied with the crumbs. I promise you I'll go after the whole damn cake. I will follow your example. I will Thrive. I won't let a bump to my head, running into cactuses, or a swollen ass stop me from living an honest life.

Even if that means *SWIMMING* in the wintertime.

Awe Quest

My most recent affair with Awe was with Braddah as he lived out his days with cancer. I was shocked it affected me as much as it did. A part of me thought I was ok with it. *'He's an old guy. Something was bound to happen. He's in his next phase and will be like those old tired dogs that can barely walk.'* *Nope.* That is NOT how Bradds wanted to go. That showed up every day. He was ready to experience Life every single day. Even though, yes he got slower.

Yes, he slept a lot more. His Spirit kept asking for the next Adventure. He desired more. *Let's go, let's go, let's go go go!* He'd have these bursts of playfulness that would melt me. The look in his eyes that made me a promise. That somehow we would figure out space & time together. We will see each other's energy again.

He also taught me in these last days, Awe is a feeling





that must be pursued. If you're like me and have never found a purpose, fuck your purpose. Give it up with Grace. Accept you don't have one and move intentionally forward. Intentionally seeking Awe instead. Like Big Bradds. Make your purpose less about being somewhere in life or being someone. Make your purpose more about your character and who you are. In that pursuit, your curiosity will lead. In time you'll discover there was never something you had to pursue besides yourself.

The best part about Awe to me... is it only speaks to you. You are the only one who can say what actions & behaviors create Awe for you. In myself, I know I feel Awe when I'm in Nature, listening, breathing. I feel Awe on the tops of mountains, swimming in waterfalls, watching a storm. I see Awe when I witness dusk & dawn. I'm in Awe watching the horizon glow on a sandy beach.

I'm humbled by Awe watching Braddah Love Life for all it's about, even as he was dying. Every. Single. Day. Braddah Loved. Whether he was Loving me, his Lugar pack, friends that adored him, the delivery guy/gal, or complete strangers. It didn't matter to him. In fact, if you made direct eye contact with him, forget about it, we were headed your way. He was gonna meet up. Introduce himself.

Hey. Hey. I'm Braddah. What's your name?
Man, isn't it a beautiful day? I mean,

look at the colors in the sky. Aren't we so lucky? Well, I just wanted to exchange some simple Love with you dude. I hope you have an Awwesome Adventurous day!

Braddah's capacity to Love everyone and everything, even through pain, has given me a tool that will never leave me. A lesson he wanted to leave me with. Love is really the shit! And completely worth the effort and pain that comes with it.

As life goes, my current challenges are injury and most challenging, living without you Bradds. As far as my injury, my foot still swells and my knees still hurt in even the most docile terrain. I have not been able to hike for 2 years due to ligament tears. For the first time in my life, I'm going to have to learn how to 'train' my body. This is new territory for me. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't frustrated. But I know in my heart why I have this challenge is merely another layer of me asking to be discovered. Life is asking me something I don't have the answer to yet. I'm still figuring that out.

Although I knew he would eventually go, I thought I'd sense it. Every friend that has gone through this told me *'You'll know. You'll see it in his eyes.'* Not Bradds. They gave him one month to live in late July, 2019. He lived till

February, 2020, not skipping a beat, living for Adventure. I even thought he might make it to his 12th birthday. *Cinco de Mayo*. He was so incredibly happy to go outside and explore. He still ate well and drank water like a champ. His ears would still flop around when he galloped his happy trot. Braddah Loved *Adventures* so much I made one of those illogical decisions on paper.

There's a beautiful walkway along the river here in Boise. Braddah's biggest Love's were his lady, Emma, and *SWIMMING!* I've never seen a pitbull that could out swim a lab or retriever before. There won't be a body of water that won't make me think of him.

So we could go on *Adventures* right outside our door, I sold my house. I only lived in this house for 1.5 years in the city with the hottest real estate in the country. Instead of letting my investment grow, I got an apartment along the Greenbelt (which is another Braddah moment. Let's just say he picked it months prior). This made it capable for us to have *Adventures* twice a day. Almost every day, minus the days I made him rest, from November to February.

*You rocked it dude. I'm in utter shock you're gone. But I hear you.
You're asking more from me.*

I hope I properly expressed Love back to you. I hope I become the part of you that didn't want to go. To never allow suicide in my option basket.

Jake and I had to guide you down to the ground after the 1st two injections. Your body left before your Spirit or Heart. Your prostate had become so large, it's completely blocking your urethra. You were crying and shaking. For the first time you showed Pain. You only stopped giving me and others Love when I decided I wasn't going to push you into kidney failure. It was the most difficult decision in my Life.

You're Loving Spirit & Adventurous Heart wanted to Live on. But your body had to move on. A kind compassionate vet was delivering your injections. He allowed me to lay with you on the ground. Your face on top of my arm. We were spooning. I get to feel you push up against me while I grasped you tight. Telling you I'll find a way. I'll figure out the Magic of time & space. We are Entangled Big Bradds.

Thank you for giving me a shot at living. It never felt like anything was big enough to thank you. I promised you I wouldn't be embarrassed. I'd sing to you your lullaby as you moved on. 'Hey

Jude'. You picked this song around the time you were 4. Falling into the deepest, most relaxing, trusting snore sleeps. In an instant, 2 verses, that's all it generally took. You didn't like being called Jude though, so we changed that part to 'Sweet Pea'. Until you got cancer, I never really paid attention to the words I sang. It was during one of our nightly rub my belly sessions. I realized that you picked that song out for me. All those years ago.

For this moment. This moment, when I needed to say good-bye. With one last snore and push up against my body, you were gone.

Leaving me with a request. Be a Storyteller. Tell your Story. Learn to Thrive.

The most difficult part about saying bye to Bradds is knowing what he's asking of me. I ended up not committing suicide because of the Love Bradds & I have (yes, present tense). It's difficult to think about coping with life without my anchor. It's terrifying to know that's exactly what I'm called to do.

I guess if there's anything I could plead from anyone who can relate, I would say **stay open** to the forms of Grace. Maybe it shows up for you as a lizard, a pine cone, in Lego's, it doesn't matter. *Stay open* to how life is talking specifically to you. Your Grace could end up in the form of a pitbull you didn't

even want. **Chewbacca noises**

What will keep me going now that he's gone? I'm sure I'll get flack for this but I don't care. This vision is a silly thing I get to hold onto, as I learn how to Live. In school, I was learning how to do a guided Somatic Breath by practicing it. Now I'm not exactly sure what happened, we'd have to ask a neuroscientist like Andrew Huberman. Although I was awake, I "saw" like I was in a dream.

I saw myself dying. Not by my own hand. But by doing something with this Life that Braddah gave me. I know my energy shifts into something else and I'm suspended. As I start to feel form, *'No, it can't be. It couldn't. IT IS!'* It's the Big Guy. Except, he's more than big. He's the size of a dragon. As I climb onto his back, he flies me into space to head off on an *Adventure*. Exploring the Universe. When we take off towards the star-filled night, I fist pump the air while simultaneously yelling out *YEAH!* Braddah was my Falcor.

I will unapologetically hold onto this vision. I will allow this vision to guide me into something I have not learned yet. I want to do more than just Live. I want to Thrive. Like Big Bradds did. To the very end.

**THE
END...**

...for Now!



Goodbye Big Bradds



Lyrics to 'Hey Jude' by the Beatles¹;
Braddah Man's style

Curious to feel Braddah's energy?
I understand. Braddah sounds
like the song "Honolulu" by
Slumberville. Hell Bradds, you
sound more like music, period. I
finished the first version of this
book with this song on repeat. It
made me wanna dance, to live to
the beat of Life. Like Bradds.

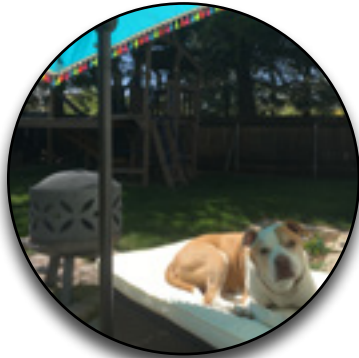
**Sweet pea,
don't let me down,
Take this sad song,
and make it better.
Remember,
to let her under
your skin,
Then we begin,
to make it better.**

**Sweet pea,
don't be afraid,
You were meant to,
go out and get her.
Remember,
to let her into your heart,
If you should part,
to make it better.**

¹ Sorry ultra Beatles fans. I apparently have murdered the lyrics all these years. Hope you forgive me. I'm one of those that thought it was "Rock the cashbox". Anywho, here's the Big Guy's lullaby. This is what I sang to him when we said good-bye.



BRAAADDAHHH



The day after Braddah passed, Jake (Emma's dad), Sasha, Em's and I went on a hike. Something Braddah has done and that I was capable of with my injury. At the end of the hike Jake & I separately talked to the Big Guy. Then we ended our message to him by throwing out one of his tennis balls. While screaming his name so the Gods could deliver the message.

Braddahhhh

He even got two extra screams. From his friends Cyndi and Genesis.

I told him I Love him. I selfishly wish he was here, with me, forever. But I also Love him so much that he needs to move on to his next Adventure! He will visit me from time to time. We will hangout in dreamland. I'll somehow get myself back to the mountain tops, figuratively and physically. And when I do, I'll be sure to say, *'Hey Dude. I Love you Big Guy. I'm still having Adventures. And it's amazing out here.'* I'll do this by screaming your name at every future mountain top.



Braddahhhh

I know most of you don't know him, but please say **Hi** to him too. Scream his name when you're at the top of your mountain. He'd **Love** nothing more but to come down & say,

Hey, I'm Braddah. It's great to meet you.
Isn't it a beautiful day?



To All The Dudes!



Because Braddah saved my Soul, I always saw him as an equal. Braddah built his own relationships with people. I had nothing to do with it but allow it. When Braddah passed, one of the things that helped me heal was how others Loved him. How other people shared their photos of him with me. Their personal stories of hanging out. *Ice Cream?* Ways that Bradd's affected them.

I'm left in Awe with how many other people cried for the loss of my dog. It reaffirmed to me

Braddah's ability to Love was Pure & simple. And he shared it with anyone who would let him.

Thank you to everyone who shared a piece of his Love with me. He was the *greatest* Dude.

Braddah would like to thank the following:

Emma - You made me work for your Love. I'd do it again. I Love you!

Jake - Even though you and my mom aren't together anymore, you both showed up to Love each other



in a new capacity. I'm proud of you. Keep seeking your Awe. Take care of Em's for me. You were my very best friend in the whole wide world. I'll miss you man.

Lugar Pack - We were all pretty rad huh? The Ginger Turkeys. Keep the Adventures going.

Grandma & Grandpa - You guys Love popcorn like how I Love bacon! Mom Loves you both. Go get crazy. Have lots of Adventures.

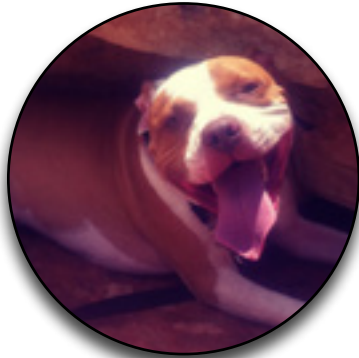
Uncle Stew - Dude, thanks for

Loving me man. You're one of my favorite Dudes. If I could come back & be yours, I would.

Murphy - You Love Mom's crazy. Thanks for digging her as she is. She will take your kids to the moon and back. STORY TIME! (Mom does the best voices huh? Gerrrrrrald!)

Trini - You & Mom have the same quirky sense of humor. Love each other. Hard. Can you smell it? Me & Kegger farted.

Trinidad - Sweet heart. You are



my Mom's next Sweet Pea. She Loves you so dang much. You immediately wake up to the sunrise. Chipper from the get go. First words are "sun's up". It makes Mom laugh so hard she now loves to see dawn.

Boeing - What can I say Dude. You are the New Dude. Keep my Mom laughing ok? Poopy Pants McGee. Ha! Good one man. Ps. I'll leave you the keys to my invisible tank. Everything you need to be the next World's Greatest Spy will be in there. Oh, and blowing stuff up is fun too. I mean, Duuuude.

Genesis - You & my Mom created something for each other that was safe. You guys became family. Follow your heart. I Love you. Look out for my teeth. I'll keep making you laugh.

Cyndi - Dude. There will be more moving of couches between you and my Mom. Thanks for Loving her even though soft shit ain't your thing.

Michael - I know we never met. But you've been there for my mom in a bad ass way. There were many messy years all while going through things yourself. Thank you for that.



Janel - You are my mom's most consistent friend. For that, I Love you deeply.

Hilary - I knew I picked the best fairy godmother before I left. Chest bumps to you and a multi-pass for Roger.

Michael Singer - When Mom first decided to live, she was angry she had to figure out how to Love Life again. She was tired of the world. Your book, *The Untethered Soul*, guided her to her very first steps.

Marie Forleo - Dude. I Love when Mom watches your show. Hi-larious! Mom thought her compass was broken. You teach growth takes time. You taught her to be patient & gentle gentle with herself. You exposed things she was previously blind-o to. It's like working with a dizzy cat. Ya feel me?!

Elizabeth Gilbert - You made Mom shake like an injured animal. You were guiding a journal exercise then asked her to share her entry. She wrote about almost committing suicide. DUDE! If you



didn't ask her to do this, she would still NOT talk about it. And my story would have never been told. She had to grab the tail after it flew out of her mouth.

Sara Bareilles - We heard "Once Upon a Time" for the first time on a drive. Mom was having dark thoughts. She still sings this when she's hurt. It feels like you wrote it for her. Big thanks Dude. Those times were touch and go. Now that I'm not there physically, you give my Mom's heart songs to sing. Those ones I hear. Thanks.

Melody Gardot - Your music kept us company when Mom had to downsize our Lives. The final version of this came out with your songs.

David Goggins - Mom's gonna carry the boats!!! Merry Christmas!

Mom's Sage Family - In Yoga Mom rediscovered she had a body. And that body mattered and had its own language and needs. Marisa Radha Weppner, Naomi Jones, Marcy Midnight, Mary Baker (Mantra Simran Kaur), Eric Wallace, Stacy Matulis, and all of Mom's peeps who



walked through the fire besides her.

Andrew Huberman - PhDude. Mom found you before your podcast started. It was an accident. She wanted to make her Nidras rad. But when Mom was super sad, language like "ascending to the heavens" would not have worked. Costello sent me a radar and I made you show up on her YouTube. Then as if your knowledge wasn't enough, you led her to Brian and his dudes, where everything changed. Thanks man. Mondays are kinda a thing.

Brian Mackenzie - Dude. You validated my relationship to my Mom. Thanks for starting @Shift_Adapt and guiding Mom on how to regulate herself.

Rob Wilson - You are one smart Dude. Keep blowing up Mom's brains out! It's good for her to suffer.

Emily Hightower - If there's anyone I'd choose to come back and snuggle with, it'd be you. You gave Mom the rest of the puzzle. You helped her to Connect many dots.



**AND
TO ALL
OF
BRADDAH'S
NEW
FRIENDS:**

Love man!

It's so much fun.
Build your toolbox.
Go on Adventures.
Stop ignoring each
other's pain.
Be gentle with yourself.
Keep going.
Get back up.
And Love!

Life is AMAZING!!!



Mom, dude.

I'm so proud of you.
Only I will know how writing and
designing this sucked ass.
How heartbreaking and difficult it was.

Don't just Live Mom. **THRIVE!**

We are ride or die. We conquered the world
together. We're not done yet! We are bonded.
You'll see. See you in the next lifetime.
I'll come pick you up!

**Chewbacca noises drift off in the distance...
...as Bradds trots his happy gazelle trot off into the sunset to explore the Universe**



RESOURCES



If you currently have feelings of suicide, Braddah asks you to *call* the National Suicide Prevention Hotline. 1-800-273-8255¹

Again, I'm not a professional. This book is my own personal experience. If you need a professional, seek one out. These resources may not be as impactful for you as they were for me. But I wanted to give you a list of things that assisted in changing my trajectory. *Ultimately look to your behavior.*

¹ *I need to be honest. I'm struggling to list this number. Not because I don't believe it has value, it does. More so because I never called and I don't want to lie about my Story. I do, however, believe people struggling with "not belonging to themselves" are being called upon that work individually. With individual experiences, individual stories, individual perspectives, individual physiology, individual emotions and individual needs. In honor of that, I will list this number. Not for myself or a reflection of my Story. But for the individual out there that it will help. Please call.*



If there is a single thing I could give you in hopes it works as well for you as it did me, it would be a simple mantra (*yes, but remember, mantras are great for self-talk*).

GET BACK UP... EVENTUALLY.

Now eventually isn't a cop out to allow myself to live like there's no consequences. But when I feel like I'm being overtaken by that wave of grief and despair, I'm driven by the thought that if I allow my body to feel what it needs to, eventually the feeling will pass. Start looking up how to regulate

your nervous system with behaviors. Behavioral tools help me shed off the need for "eventually". (Now not every time has that bounce, but you're training the mind to "get back up".) And stop asking "Why..." Start asking "How..." Watch your brain start to look for solutions that you were previously blind to. Simply because you were giving your brain the wrong problem to solve.

HOW. I Love that question. 'Get Back Up! How...?' There you go. Two things. Hope that helps. Me & Bradds send ya all the Love we can.

You got this!



Books

The Untethered Soul by Michael Singer

Mindset by Carol Dweck

Grit by Angela Duckworth

Loving What Is by Byron Katie

The Desire Map by Danielle LaPorte

Big Magic by Elizabeth Gilbert

The 4 Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz

Man's Search for Meaning by
Viktor E Frankl

Braving the Wilderness by
Brene Brown

Attached by Amir Levine, M.D. and
Rachel S.F. Heller, M.A.

Money: A Love Story by Kate Northrup

Atomic Habits by James Clear

Linchpin and *Tribes* by Seth Godin

The Body Keeps the Score by
Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.

Waking the Tiger; Healing Trauma by
Peter A Levine with Ann Frederick

Why Zebras don't get Ulcers by
Robert Sapolsky

Why We Sleep by Dr. Matthew Walker

Breathe by James Nestor

Oxygen Advantage by Patrick McKeown

Incognito by David Eagleman

How Emotions are Made by
Lisa Barette Feldman

7 ½ Lessons of the Brain by
Lisa Barette Feldman

Guardians of Being by Elkhart Tolle art
by Patrick McDonnell

You Can't Hurt Me by David Goggins



Podcasts & Programs

**Huberman Lab* by

Dr. Andrew Huberman

**Shift Perspectives* by Shift_Adapt

Art of Breath by Shift_Adapt

Skill of Stress by Shift_Adapt

N=1 Events by Shift_Adapt

N=1 Mentorship by Shift_Adapt

...(this was the most informative thing I participated in as I was trying to understand my physiology and how I react to it)

**The Matt Walker Podcast* by

Dr. Matthew Walker

**Stop Chasing Pain* by

Dr. Perry Nickleson

Lymphatic Mojo by

Dr. Perry Nickleson

**MarieTV* by Marie Forleo

B-School by Marie Forleo

Copy Cure by Marie Forleo

**Impact Theory* by Tom Bilyeu

**Women of Impact* by Lisa Bilyeu

**Relationship Theory* by

Tom & Lisa Bilyeu

**Available for free. No costs necessary.*



I'd like to note I am not receiving commissions by any of these people or products. This is a personal list that helped me figure out my own way forward. Don't forget, I'm my own mix, so are you.

Find your's.

It's ok if your 'mix' shifts & changes. It's also ok if you disagree with mine.

...And
Love
Hard!



So you're saying you got feelings huh?
Let's shake it off together.
Can I sit with you while you feel it all?

Theodorious has given you Super Spy Super Powerful Super Secret magic paper. Whatever you write, Braddah will get your message. Tell him what weighs on your heart. How you will learn to Thrive. He's a really great listener.

A large rectangular frame with a thick black border. Inside the frame, there are 20 horizontal lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a template for writing.



Playing the game Scribbles by myself. Drew mid 2019, before selling the house.

*We DID it Big Bradds. We told your Story.
I am a STORYTELLER!*