

My To Be List

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Gradlogic.org

August 3, 2016

Identities

These are the primary ways that I think of myself. One is vocational, but it is not my job title.

Good Friend. This is the #1 thing on my To Be list these days. A year ago, as my sister was dying, we were surrounded by her friends. Seeing her community of friends come together around her – and us – in the last days of her life, I realized that I was no longer prioritizing friendship. My friendship circle had shrunk through neglect. My sister, by contrast, she had an enormous circle of friends, who enveloped her in love. Since then, “Friend” is at the top of my To Be list.

This To Be has changed my To Do list. I plan to make phone calls to friends who live in other cities. I deliberately schedule social activities. I remember birthdays. At the end of dinner out, we set a date for the next one.

I am happy to report that in the last year, I have spent much time with old and new friends. These relationships give me great joy. I don’t just want to be a friend, I strive to be a **good** friend.

Teacher. This is a core element of my professional life. “Teacher” is an identity that can be enacted in many occupations, including faculty member. These days, my teaching includes mentoring, presenting workshops, classroom teaching, and writing this blog (because the emphasis is on advice).

Cook & Foodie. I love food, and I make time for it. I like to cook, and I love to eat. I talk about meals. I plan them. Many of the things I do, like gardening, are related to food. When I look at how I spend my time, it is obvious that cook and eater are important parts of my life. This is arena where I don’t aspire to be “good” so that I don’t judge myself. I am simply happy that I carve out time for preparing and eating food.

Qualities

There are a few characteristics in myself that I value very highly, and that I try to keep doing (affirmations). Others, I aspire to be better at (goals). These are qualities that are works in progress; that require effort.

Generous. This word encompasses kindness and helpfulness, and is an affirmation.

Towards the end of my PhD program, when I was in the throes of data analysis, someone I respected highly pulled me aside and chastised me for being rude and unpleasant. “You can’t treat people like that,” he admonished. “But I don’t have time to

be nice!" I exclaimed. (I often learn what I am thinking when it pops out of my mouth.) That exchange shocked me into taking the time to be kind, exhibit empathy, and reach out to others.

Gentle with myself. This is another goal that has emerged in the last year that I had not made time for the past. Handling the grief associated with my sister's death, however, moved self-care and self-compassion onto my To Be list. As a result, I strive to *do* less and am less self-critical when I don't meet my To Do goals.

Patient. I put this on my To Be list because it is goal. It is definitely NOT a strength.