

Joy - Midyear Reflection



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When I chose Joy as my word for 2026, I knew it would not be easy. I never choose a word because I want a theme/intention for the year. I choose it because I want to wrestle with it. To let it show me something I could not see before.

What I did not know at the beginning of the year was how much my capacity to hold Joy... and everything that lives alongside it... had grown.

The work of the past few years, quietly and sometimes painfully, built something in me I did not fully recognize until this year started asking me to use it. I can hold more now because I trust myself more (not because it hurts less.)

I want to say something about Joy that I think gets lost in the way we talk about it...

Joy is not one thing.



There is a distinction in positive psychology between two kinds of wellbeing.

Hedonic Joy...

the electric, alive, almost-too-much-to-hold feeling I wrote about in January. The kind that feels like drinking from a firehose. The kind that lights you up from the outside in and the inside out.

Eudaimonic Joy... *(and yes I had to look up how to spell that more than once... wink)*

quieter, steadier, harder to name (and say...) Less like electricity and more grounded. It is the Joy of living in alignment with who you actually are. Of meaning. Of growth. Of showing up for your own life even when it is not exciting or easy or going the way you planned.

I came into this year chasing the first kind.

And somewhere along the way... the second kind found me instead.

June feels more like contentment and ground than electricity.

This had me spending some time wondering if that meant Joy had left... or if my value had shifted into something else entirely.

But here is what I am learning... Joy did not leave. It deepened.

Because what I am feeling alongside it... a quieter, less comfortable companion... grief.

And I think grief and Joy are actually more comfortable neighbors than I gave them credit for.

A counselor once asked me during one of the harder seasons of my life...

What if you cry every day for the rest of your life?

What? At the time I could not imagine a worse way to live. (Right??)

But sitting with that question over several years, I started to understand the invitation underneath it.

If I could make space for sadness and grief...

If I could let it in instead of pushing it down, ignoring it, or distracting myself from it...
Then something would shift.
And it did!

No emotion actually stays forever! It just wants to be honored. To be felt. To be given a seat at the table instead of left standing outside. Joy and grief can live together. They do not cancel each other out. They are both asking for our presence.

And when I make room for both...
The things that feel impossibly heavy breathes... If that makes sense...



The butterfly is my business icon but it actually is my life symbol.

My high school locker was covered in butterflies.
I sponge painted pastel butterflies on my bedroom walls.
My friends and family would find butterfly gifts for me because they knew.

And what drew me to them was the combination of their beauty and fragility but oh so tough!
Something that looks like it should not be able to survive... and does.
I did not know then that I would be drawn to my own symbol in so many ways...

And this is what I keep coming back to about the chrysalis...
I can romanticize transformation (I think we all can), the same way I can romanticize Joy.
We see the butterfly and think... Beauty. Arrival. Becoming.

What we do not talk about is what actually happens inside.

The caterpillar does not just grow wings. It dissolves completely into what scientists call imaginal soup (*a friend of mine calls it goop - looking at you Andrea!*) It loses its entire form. Before something new can emerge, everything that was has to let go.

That does not sound like a gentle process to me!

The caterpillar has to completely release what was...

So that it can become more aligned with what it is meant to be and can take that shape.

And that is what learning how to do all kinds of Joy alongside various tougher emotions are doing for me. Not falling apart. But dissolving (just enough) to make room for what is coming!



And what I keep noticing in myself this month...
even in the harder moments... is that I am not waiting anymore.

I am...

Joining communities.

Moving my body in ways that feel alive.

Visiting places that feel like home.

Planning things that matter.

Saying yes to life adventures.

I think that might be the most honest thing I can say about Joy at the midpoint of this year.
Not electric. Not ecstatic. But real. Present. And all mine.

Enough words for now...

Scroll down to see what real presence and Joy looks like.

(Hint: it has four legs and a very long tongue.)

🌿 What I'm Offering This Month

🌿 The Harmony Equation ™

If you are curious how The Harmony Equation ™ can work for you, learn more...

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💛 Coaching | Consulting | Leadership Training

If you are a leader, team or someone in a transitional phase of your life that feels you are working hard to keep it together, let's connect and chat!

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Thank you for being here.

Whether you've been following along for a while or this message found its way to you through a friend—I'm grateful you're here.

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Let's keep growing together!

With Gratitude & Luv,
Kristen



Sent to: kdombrowski.llc@gmail.com

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Kristen Dombrowski, LCC, P.O. Box 402, Arnold, MD 21012, United States