



If you saw a picture of me in 1983, you would see a pretty, 5'6" tall, blond-haired, blue-eyed girl. That's not what I saw when I looked in the mirror. My thighs curved out where they should curve in. My nose was too big and lips too small. Standing sideways in the mirror I couldn't tell if my feet were too big or my legs too short, something I first noticed at age ten, but by seventeen, I was *sure* that something wasn't right. My mother was on the "Dolly Parton Diet" and that sounded good to me. I never managed to sustain this diet for long, but more importantly, people noticed. They noticed and commented. They said, "Have you lost weight?" but I heard, "You look great!" Ahh, attention. Just what I had been craving.

Two years later, standing in a pool of vomit in the girl's bathroom of my college dorm I wondered, "How did I get here? How did I go from the Dolly Parton Diet to *this*?" While some of my classmates were clear about their goals for college and were actually attending their courses and studying for exams, I was trying to find the safest places where I could throw up after bingeing. I was a lost little girl.

Painfully aware that I was missing my life, I longed for something else. I continually promised myself, "Tomorrow, it will be different. Tomorrow I will start living my life. I will do all those things you are supposed to do in Colorado. I will live the outdoor lifestyle, hike, camp or just be outside. I will stop this disgusting habit. Tomorrow, because today is lost." I hid and wondered, "When did I lose control? When did my life become about finding the next bathroom? When did I decide I wasn't enough, that I was broken? When did I start comparing myself and come up short. When did I decide that I needed to be perfect?" Then I would cry, feeling completely alone.

It turns out that I made many decisions along the way that formed who I had become. My parents divorced when I was young and the resulting moves back and forth between Dad in small-town New England and Mom in Fort Lauderdale brought the issues of adjusting to new schools and groups of friends. All I wanted to do was belong, but every time, my shyness would take over. And much to my dismay, I never seemed to wear the "right" clothes. I would try to prepare and anticipate what people would wear at each new school

but somehow each time I missed something – tight designer jeans when “they” were wearing preppy chinos, the *wrong* shoes (“tacky” they said). Then there was the tragic death of my aunt – who was killed on a motorcycle - my mom’s alcoholism, my own discovery of alcohol and drugs and more divorce. Life seemed sad and out of control. I actually remember saying to my father, “I wish something was wrong with me so I could have some attention.” Looking for that attention turned into an obsessive focus on how I looked and by my junior year in high school I was convinced that something *was* “wrong with me” and dieting seemed to be the only answer.

College consisted of a lot of alcohol and drugs, bingeing almost daily, starving myself when I was “doing well,” over-exercising and crazy relationships. Therapy throughout college kept me alive. My first experience with treatment was in 1987 where I learned, much to my surprise, that fat was not a feeling but actually that “feeling” fat was an indicator of unexpressed emotions. I saw my first glimmer of hope but upon returning to the same environment at college I sunk back into the morass.

During the final months of college, in 1989, I became more and more desperate. There was a buzz of excitement among my friends and classmates, but I was terrified. “Now what?” I thought. “I don’t know how to do *anything*.” As graduation approached, I saw it as a black hole coming to swallow me up. Then my parents stepped in for the second time. When they proposed treatment again, I was ready. I saw a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. The night before treatment was one of the longest of my life. I knew that I was at the end and that something had to change. On the second day there, they told me I would have to give up alcohol and drugs as well. I called my father and begged him to come get me. He said, “I think you should stay.” That was September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1989 and I *stayed*. And I continue to “stay” everyday. My life changed forever and I began the journey back to myself.

As Anna Freud wrote, “I was always looking outside myself for strength and confidence, but it comes from within. It is there all the time.” The adventure since that day has been about my realization of this in *all* areas of my life. All those early questions I asked and

decisions I made. I now see the answers. Am I enough? Of course. Is there enough love to go around? Yes, more than enough. Does my parents' divorce mean anything about me? Not at all. Do I need to prove how good I am? Not in the least bit. Do I have to be sick to get attention? No, I can just ask for what I need. Am I loved? Dearly, plus, I can love myself. What happens if someone thinks my shoes are tacky? Nothing! It doesn't mean anything about me!

As a result of the gift I was given, I was determined to assist people who felt trapped like I did and I returned to school for a Masters Degree in Counseling in 1991. I interned, then worked in treatment centers for four years. I have been passionately committed to the field of personal development and self-discovery since that day in 1989. I have had my bumps in the road along the way – cancer, death of dear friends, fertility struggles and pregnancy losses, but I have never gone back to my eating disorder or addictions. When I turn my attention to helping someone else and get the focus off of me, my life goes smoothly. As one of my mentors says, “if you are not happy, joyous and free – you’re focusing on the wrong thing.” My message is that solid, long term recovery is not only possible - as in someday you will get there - but it opens up a whole new world of *anything* is possible. Imagine what the world could be if we turned our focus from destroying ourselves to creating miracles in our lives and the lives of others. This is not to be used to beat yourself up if you are in the grips of the struggle, but as a glimpse into what recovery can look like.

My passion for helping others has transformed into a career as a life coach. Empowering people to be “a fierce disruption of the ordinary” in their own lives and the world is my mission. This means that people can *choose* to live life fully by stepping into their power. This is available to all of us. Instead of reacting to life, we can create the life of which we have always dreamed. You can create the life that John Lennon so famously quoted, the life that “happens when you are busy making other plans.”

Recently, I was inspired to write a book, called *Waiting for Jack*, an exploration into why we wait for our lives to start and look outside ourselves for the answers. Even after all

these years of recovery and growth, I found myself waiting. And I realized that I am not alone. Many of us are waiting for our “real life” to arrive and searching outside ourselves for the answers. As the well-known quote says, “most people die with their music still inside them.” Now, I am committed to disrupting this pattern in the world. Express your music even if you think you can’t! It’s time to stop searching and start finding!

This adventure was not something that was “possible” before recovery. I am grateful every day for the life that I get to live and the difference I get to make. For you to begin, all you have to do is reach out and ask for help. Start wherever you are. There *is* hope and you can choose recovery at any moment – so I hope, one day at a time, you choose recovery and choose to live your “one wild and precious life!”

#### Biography:

Kristen Moeller, MS is a life coach specializing in empowering people to live extraordinary lives. Her first book, *Waiting for Jack*, will be released in the spring of 2009 ([www.waitingforjack.com](http://www.waitingforjack.com)). When she is not actively making a difference in the world, she thrives in the beauty of Colorado and enjoys hiking, running, skiing, snowshoeing, riding her horse, or just spending time reading or relaxing. Kristen lives in a magical, solar-powered house on the side of a mountain with two large dogs, an ornery cat and her best friend and husband of 12 years. For more information, please visit: [www.becausecoaching.com](http://www.becausecoaching.com).

