

I Wish I Liked Spring

When people ask me what my favorite season is, normally I say summer or winter. Summertime because the warm weather is here to stay. The kids and I can play outside. Wheat harvest is always a highlight even though it's busy. Ty's busy irrigating but we get to go with him sometimes. But, then I also love winter. Basketball season is here; Ty's coaching and doing what he loves but he has some downtime so we get to see him more. The kiddos and I get to stay in the house and play. Plus, call me weird but a snow day with a warm cup of coffee, and a pot of chili on the stove just makes me so calm and peaceful.

I've come to the consensus over the years that spring is just *not* my time of year. Actually, five years ago around this time I was contemplating checking myself in somewhere for a mental health evaluation. I am working on writing my next official "Mental Health" post, but I'll give you a little background here. It was 2015; Ty and I were engaged. I was SO excited to be his wife. But teaching, coaching track, dealing with colleagues, trying to plan a wedding and realizing I was going to be four hours from my family forever was wearing on me. I missed three days of work one week (I taught high school Biology). I didn't eat at all those three days and I spent that entire time in bed. I could not bring myself to eat anything. I lost 15 pounds in three days. I was genuinely worried about my mental health and sanity. Ty and I got through it though and I'll save the rest of that story for another day (I promise I am writing my next mental health post; those genuinely drain me and right now I'm having a hard enough time right now with all this damn virus stuff!)

So, back to why spring is just not my time of year. Pretty much every spring as long as I can remember, I've struggled, mentally. That seems crazy because spring means everything greens up, new beginnings, warm weather, yada yada yada. Obviously the spring of 2015 was rough for me, but I got through it (that is when I started going to therapy weekly, which literally saved my life). The spring I was pregnant with Nora (2016) was difficult because I was hormonal, uncomfortably large, and made the decision to quit teaching so I could stay home with her. The spring after Nora's birth (2017) I was pregnant with Mila, coaching track, trying to run a small business and be a farm wife. I had spread myself too thin and didn't know how to say no to anything - lesson learned. The next spring (2018) Mila was a baby, Nora was a sassy one and a half year old and life wasn't too bad. It was one of the better springs I had had in a while. I honestly don't remember the spring of 2018 much except I worked out a lot, and we went with Ty a lot just to get some fresh air. The spring of 2019 was slow going for us. I was in a fairly good place mentally, but was pregnant with Baker and did not feel good (physically) at all. I knew two things from the beginning of my pregnancy with him: 1) This pregnancy was way different than the girls' and 2) He was going to come early. (I was definitely right about the last one) ☹️ And so here we are, in the spring of 2020, and I find myself struggling again, immensely.

But I think we all know this spring is *very* different from so many others, and we can all thank Covid-19 for that. I *am* doing better than I was a week ago. A trip to the grocery store still stresses me out to no end, but I am doing better because my little family has been socially distancing ourselves and doing everything in OUR power to stop the spread. I think

this virus has taught us a lesson - don't take the little things for granted. What I wouldn't give to be taking the kids to the park in town, or dropping Nora off at preschool - I keep telling myself in due time.

So back to the purpose of this post - my love/hate relationship with spring. It took a couple intense, emotional conversations with my husband over the past few years to realize why this time of year makes me feel the way I do. It all goes back to high school. State track my freshman year, to be exact. Call me crazy but my sports injuries are a HUGE source of the anxiety that I feel. My freshman year of high school I was ranked #1 in the state in the 100M and 200M dashes at the state track meet. I was high on life, cocky as hell (sorry Mom and Dad) and quite frankly kind of a pain in the ass. I loved track and was so excited for the state track meet. Fast forward to Saturday of the state track meet (quick side note: anyone who has been to the state track meet in Kansas knows how epic it is; gosh, it was a blast). I got the prelims of the 100M ran that morning, and that afternoon before the finals, a huge thunderstorm came through Wichita. It seems to be a common occurrence at the state track meet for there to be some sort of rain.

Anyway, I ended up taking a nap while the storm came through. Before I knew it, it was time to warm up for the finals of the 100M. Talk about adrenaline. I won't lie, my heart has started to race a little faster since I've started writing about this. I warmed up as best I could after a 3 hour break for the thunderstorm. And then it was time. I was down in the blocks, shifted over the line, ready for the gun to go off. The gun blew; I drove out of the blocks and was legit flying. Twenty meters from the finish line, I thought, "Holy shit, I'm going to be a state champion." I was winning, the entire race...until I wasn't. Ten meters from the finish line, I felt the back of my left leg snap, pop. I literally thought someone shot me. My mom told me later there was a collective gasp from the huge crowd in attendance for the finals. I was 10 meters away from a state championship, and it was all over. I had pulled/partially tore my hamstring and my dream of a state championship was gone. I finished 8th, running a time of 13.48.

I remember limping off the track and my friend helping me walk to the med tent. I got a huge bag of ice wrapped around my leg then I limped over to the fence where my mom was standing. I remember bawling. She was crying. My dream was gone. My chance was gone. I told myself that day that I would make it back to the state track meet to compete again, but in that moment I remember all I wanted to do was cry, and hug my mom. I definitely cried, but I couldn't hug my mom because she was outside the fence and no parents were allowed inside the facility.

The rest of that day was just a blur. We went to my cousin's house after the track meet. I was devastated. My parents were devastated. The feelings and emotions of that day definitely came rushing back as I wrote this post. I actually read it out loud to my mom via FaceTime and we both were crying. She said she's never been able to watch the film of that race. I told her she didn't need to.

So, therein lies the reason why this time of year is so hard for me. All the memories of track. All the memories and hopes of being a state champion; of competing and working my ass

off. I don't think I'm "stuck in high school," I just truly believe some of the experiences I have had have affected my mental health and it takes continual work to stay mentally healthy. I won't say all the memories of springtime are bad though. Some good springtime memories do remain. I remember working with my 4-H calves and going to our neighbor lady Aurelia's house. She had the most epic garden and would always make me macaroni and cheese. I remember playing with baby Border Collie puppies and gathering cattle on horseback. I remember switching out my winter clothes with summer clothes and pulling weeds in my mom's iris bed.

But sadly, the root of my anxiety about springtime stems from the state track meet in 2007. I still, to this day, don't know exactly why it happened, but I know God had a plan. I do believe the whole situation humbled me as a human being. I think it helped me become a more empathic person. I hope and pray I never have to see one of my children go through such pain, but if I do, I know I can always lean on my mom (and dad) because they were there with me every step of the way.

I'm taking this coronavirus quarantine and social distancing time to reflect, and work on enjoying the small, minute details of life. They truly are the most important, precious parts of our life. It's my goal, someday, to enjoy spring. I know I'll get there, it's just going to take some time and effort on my part; but if you know me, when I set my mind to something, I give it 120%. I hope you can find a way to enjoy this new ordinary we're all experiencing, and if you struggle this time of year, just like I do, remember...This too shall pass.

Have a wonderful Friday, friends!

TODDLERS