

More running

There are days I wake up very congested. I have allergies all year. They make me miserable despite antihistamines. On the days that my face hurts because my allergies are raging, all I want to do is make it all go away and sleep.

I get up anyway. I run on days I've scheduled for running. On other days, I make a cup of tea, read a little, and catch up on emails. My family stays asleep because the noises I make while getting ready or puttering around are not abnormal noises. It may be ridiculously early in the morning, but I'm up and I'm moving. I'm happier for it.

I'm not sure when I transitioned to actually looking forward to running. Part of it is that I know that, miserable as I might be while I'm actually running, my congestion is usually a lot better by the time I'm done. Knowing that I'll be able to breathe through both sides of my nose for the rest of the day is ridiculously exciting. The primary reason is different, though. I actually like running now. I'm not proving anything. I truly don't care what my times are, though I'm sure that will change again as I get closer to a race. Running is my space, my time. No one cares if I'm fast or slow. Other people do care, though, that I'm a better person when I'm running regularly. I'm happier, more relaxed, and less likely to get irritated over small things.

I used to be a night owl, but I get more done in the mornings. I'm up at least an hour and a half before the rest of my family and, by the time I get to work, I've already accomplished something. I know the day might hold its challenges, but I can work through almost anything when I've had my bit of time to myself.

Since I started getting up early every day instead of just running days, I have felt calmer. I sometimes feel like I am

defined by everyone else in my life. I'm Katja's mom and Xander's wife and related to a bunch of other people, too. I love my family. I don't have a problem being identified as their relation. Sometimes I need to remind myself, to be reminded, that I am my own person, too. I'm not responsible for anyone in that time. I am, simply, myself, with no one tugging at me or needing me or even wanting me. The strongest pressure I get is from the cat. She'd really like to be on my lap on days that I'm not out running.

It isn't always easy to haul my often-tired body out of bed when it's still dark out. I regularly want to stay in bed more than almost anything else in the world. The more times I get up, though, either to run or to sit and read and sip hot tea, the easier it will be the next time I am tempted to succumb to the silence of the early morning.

Odd running moment

I went out running this morning. Tuesdays vary, but today was my hill work day. A few blocks away there's a reasonably large open space with hills and I decided I'd work there. The terrain is different enough from my usual sidewalk running that it's good for me.

It was about 4:15 AM when I saw the first coyote. It was running across the hill I was running up. It stopped and looked at me, partially silhouetted against the still-dark sky and the light spilling over from a nearby street lamp. It was a striking and beautiful moment. The coyote kept going and so did I.

Later in my run I decided to do a little work on flat ground to ease off on my legs a little bit. There's a very large lawn

area and I started running the perimeter. I saw a flicker of movement out of the corner of my eye and, when I turned, there were two more coyotes wrestling and tumbling on the grass. They didn't notice me at first, or maybe just didn't pay attention, since I wasn't very close to them. After I'd run around them on the edge of the grass a few times, they both noticed me and stood, very still, watching me. As I continued my run, the third coyote made another appearance. All three of them began following me from about 30 feet away.

The sky was still fairly dark. I don't think that coyotes generally attack people, but they were watching and following me and it made me a little nervous, silly as that sounds. I felt stalked. I kept checking behind me as I ran to make sure they weren't getting closer. One of them was less fearful than the others and got to within 15 feet or so, trotting slowly behind me. I decided that maybe a street run was better today and got out of their territory.

As I finished my run, I heard their voices barking and yipping on the hillside. I don't think they would have hurt me, but despite being in the middle of the city, I was definitely in their space. It was a little surreal to be followed by such wild creatures in the middle of a city run, but it isn't something I will forget soon. I think I might start running that particular hill during the day rather than quite so early in the morning in the future.

Monday meander

The longer I wait to start writing again, the harder it becomes to put words on a page, so I am screwing my courage to the sticking place and writing despite the months of silence

here.

We'll be moving again hopefully sometime this fall. Our current apartment, while a nice place to be, is too far away from the university for convenience. We also have upstairs neighbors who sometimes wake Katja up at weird hours. Since she's very good at waking me up, I'm always exhausted after a bad night, too. I'd like to be able to expect to sleep all night. I think I'd like apartment living more if we could soundproof the shared walls somehow. I like the utility effectiveness that can come with carefully designed apartments, but the shared walls are hard for me because their noise encroaches on our lives.

I have a pendulum on my desk that draws patterns in sand. I got it because work was kind enough to get me a standing desk, but the only place I can put it is in the corner right up against the light, which is motion controlled. One of my monitors now blocks the sensor, which means every 15 minutes or so the light turns off. This is not exactly conducive to a consistent workflow. I got the pendulum to offset this issue and it works very well unless I forget to tap it periodically, in which case I'm reminded when the light goes out. My coworkers are rather amused by this, I think.

We are having another feast later this month. This time I'll try to remember to post the menu and pictures. We're also planning to start our Sunday waffle tradition again once we've moved. I liked being able to just have any of our friends show up and eat on Sundays, and I really enjoy making waffles. We'll do it around lunchtime so I have time to do my long run and have a little time to recover. I'd prefer to avoid inflicting my sweat-soaked self on anyone else right after a run.

Speaking of running, I have now completed three half marathons. I'm happy with that. They weren't fast, especially not the third one, but I got through them and it was fine. The

third one was the best in terms of experience. My first half marathon was a struggle; I started too fast, went at someone else's pace for a while, and felt like I was struggling throughout, but I'd paid to go through a program (Nicole's No BS Run Club <https://www.lifelessbullshit.com/no-bs-run-club/>) and I was damn well going to finish it. That was followed by hip surgery, which was far from fun. I scheduled my second half marathon a year and a half after surgery and I finished it because I needed to prove to myself that I could, that I wasn't broken. The third one, run after tearing my calf muscle and a month of jury duty, really should have been miserable. I was out of shape and my calves cramped up badly starting around mile 8, but the course was gorgeous (Huntington Beach on the bike trail!), the volunteers were very nice, and they wrote messages on the path to keep us going. One of the last ones was "My mascara runs faster than you!" which made me laugh. The earlier ones were supportive and also funny, but that one stuck in my head. I'm signed up for a few more over the next several months, mostly local but one a little out of the way. I have discovered that I really like the smaller races more than the big ones. I'm training for a repeat of the one I did in February, since I'd like to do better on the hills ("California flat" apparently means that it is never actually completely flat), but the others are mostly smaller local races.

Running is becoming a habit. It isn't completely there, especially on nights when I don't get enough sleep, but it's almost automatic now to wake up, get into my running gear, warm up, and go. It definitely cuts into my sleep, but if I wait until evening the likelihood that I'll actually run is pretty low. I'll run tonight, since I missed this morning's run due to multiple sleep interruptions last night, but this one is only half an hour so I should be able to talk myself into it.

I can't quite believe it's June. For the first time in years,

for me, winter has not included any snow. The months are smearing together a little bit. I'm happy to be here, but I don't think I've quite adjusted to the lack of seasons. The year round produce is amazing, though!

Life in general is going pretty well. We've had some hiccups, of course, but we're trundling along fairly happily. I'm enjoying being in the pool more, both on my own and with Katja. I am going to have to teach her how to put sunscreen on my back, though, apparently, since I'm a little bit lobstered at the moment. Work is going well. I'm starting to make friends, thought that is, of course a slow process, since despite being technically right on the line between introvert and extravert, I'm still somewhat shy.

I'm learning a lot right now, which partially explains the silence. I'm learning to be a better parent, learning to be Katja's advocate, and working on some internal personal challenges as well. I'm also playing more in the kitchen, experimenting rather than following a recipe, and I'm gaining quite a lot of confidence there. I feel like there's a lot going on but none of it is really fascinating to anyone else, which is fine. I just find it difficult to write when I don't feel like there's much to write about that isn't just rambling. I suppose I've gotten rather good at rambling over the years, though, so I should go with my strengths.

FAI: One year later

A year ago today I was off work so I could go in for hip surgery. My hip was resurfaced (which is a really weird term for me when applied to something inside my body; not a comfortable image), I spent a while on crutches, months in

physical therapy, and there were times when I despaired of ever being able to run again.

Today I ran. I've been running for a few months now. I only ran 1.67 miles because I had to take some time off due to irritating my hip by moving lots and lots of boxes. It feels good to be running again. I still have moments of frustration that my distance is so limited now when I used to be able to run much farther, but I'm getting better at accepting that it will just take a while to work back up to that level.

There are days that my hip is still a problem. If I'm very tired, it gets achy. Sometimes pressure changes can make it hurt; the first time I was on an airplane after the surgery, which was about five months later, my hip was extremely uncomfortable. I flew a couple of weeks ago, though, and only got a little bit of an ache on the last of four flights. I can overuse it, as evidenced by the fact that moving boxes was not my best idea ever. Necessity sometimes dictates my choices, though, and we needed to get Xander and Katja moved. I have a few weeks before I have to make another trip, my move to our new home, and my hip is already almost recovered from the move last weekend.

I'm glad I got surgery for FAI. I was in a lot of pain before the surgery and it was getting worse, not better. The recovery has been slow, but not as slow as it could have been. It has definitely been frustrating. I can run without pain now, though, and running is my stress relief and relaxation. I decided I wanted to run a half marathon and, somewhere in the training cycle, I ended up loving it. I am very glad that modern medicine can allow a doctor to make three small incisions, slide in a camera and some tools, and take off a nasty little bit of bone. It's better now. It's not completely healed, but I can move freely, enjoy life, and go running. That's a huge difference and it means my life is better than it would have been if I'd decided not to go through with the surgery.

Slow Running

I love running. I'm back to it despite hip surgery. When I thought I'd never be able to run again, I cried. When we were told that surgery could make it possible for me to run again, I had to think for a long time about whether major surgery and up to a year of recovery time, with, of course, possible complications, was worth getting rid of pain and moving freely again. The final decision was not just about running; it was also about not living with constant pain. Running was a part of it, though.

I'm running again. I've never been fast, but I'm more comfortable with being slow this time. I'm running at a pace that doesn't hurt me. I'm still doing intervals, so I don't know where my pace will settle out. I was running at four miles per hour last time, though, so I'm sure I'll get back to that, if nothing else. My cadence is settling at 180 steps per minute, my breathing is okay, I'm doing core and strength work, and when I'm done with a run, I feel tired and centered. I'm still a little worried that my hip will break, but every run that I come back from without pain lets that fear back off a bit.

Being slow does not mean I'm not a runner. It just means I'm a slow runner. I run three days a week and cross train with strength and core work two more days. I'm working my way back to a half marathon. I know myself well enough to need a goal, so I have picked one and signed up for it. Next February I'll be running the second half marathon of my life. I won't be fast, though I expect to be faster than I was when I ran the last one. I expect to be neither first nor last and I'm discovering that I'm quite happy, in this particular area of my life, to be in the middle of the pack, probably somewhere

near the back.

I am a perfectionist. I'm learning to curb the tendency, but it still rears its ugly little head on a regular basis. Running helps. I know I won't be fast. I have short, stubby little legs, but they're strong legs and, once I'm comfortable with running without intervals again, I can keep going. While we were growing up, my dad compared me to a Clydesdale at one point because I just kept chugging along. I was never fast (and, to be honest, when I was younger I really didn't like running at all) but once I have a reasonable level of fitness, I can just keep going. I have decided that I am happy, finally, with not being fast, but being steady. Stubbornness has always been one of my stronger traits, and now I am applying that to running. I don't have to be perfect. I just have to be myself, a runner, though not a fast one. I run. It makes me happier. It calms my brain. It eases my stress. It settles my anxieties. In running, I have found one of the very few places in my life where my body can work hard and my brain can stop niggling at everything. If I start worrying at a problem, I count my cadence as long as I can. By the time I've counted for a while, I've forgotten what was worrying me.

As far as I can tell, except possibly at the elite levels, other runners really don't care how fast I'm going. They're kind. We're all part of a group of people who are just a tiny bit nuts. We go out and run in weird, uncomfortable weather. We push harder than we should sometimes. No matter how slow or fast, we know that bad days will be made better if we can just get a run in there somehow. I've run in races, slowly, and never had anyone say anything unkind. On the contrary, I get cheered on, all of us do, almost as much as the first runner. Sometimes more, actually, since the people ahead wait at the finish line to yell encouragement.

My run on Tuesday was immediately after a very windy night. I spent some of it jumping over downed tree branches and stepping on twigs. It was a very odd experience in the dark of

5 AM. It was a good run, which is defined as one that doesn't leave me hurting afterwards, and the rest of the day, stressful as it was, went much more smoothly because of that run. Sometimes I struggle, especially when I run with other people who are much faster than I am. My approach to life is drastically better when I run, though, so even if I will always be a slow runner, I am a runner.

Job hunting

I've been job hunting in preparation for our move later this year. Job hunting is one of my least favorite activities, but there are a few things that are actually kind of fun this time.

I get to think about a new job. I've been with my current employer for about five and a half years. I have held three very different positions in that time and have enjoyed all three, but it's rather nice to think about getting to learn new systems, adjust to a new culture, and getting to know new people. It's always a little scary to start over, but the excitement definitely overrides the fear in this case.

The other nice thing is that I'm forced to look carefully at my strengths. I tend to focus on what needs work or adjustment, not on my best qualities. While job hunting itself is hard on my ego, being able to look at the positive changes I have wrought in my current job certainly helps.

Right now I'm feeling impatient. I want to move somewhere new. I won't have to scrape ice off of the car this winter! Morning runs will never involve negotiating through piles of unshoveled snow! The new city is extremely bike-friendly, which will be a huge, positive change. We will also have

access to a much wider variety of foods. I'm sure it won't be perfect, since nothing ever is, but I am focusing on the positive aspects. I have lived here much too long and my wanderlust is making an appearance. We will be in the new city for at least five years, so we're not becoming nomadic, but there is so much to explore there that I'm very excited. I have decided that Katja and I, at least, will do a lot of exploring, and Xander is completely welcome when he has time.

In terms of running, my intervals are now two minutes running and two minutes walking. This morning's run was not the best, but it's done. Since I'm doing most weeks twice, I know that I have another few runs exactly like this one to get more comfortable with the intervals. I always feel better after a run even if the run itself is miserable. I had forgotten that side effect; I will try to remember it the next time I feel like I am slogging.

[Back to running!](#)

Slightly over a year ago, I ran a half marathon. It was slow, but I did it. I got all the way through.

About ten months ago I had hip surgery for femoroacetabular impingement. It was not exactly pleasant. I spent a while on crutches, another while moving very carefully, a ridiculous amount of time at my physical therapist's office (it's surprising how easy one-legged squats get when you are doing them every day!), and a lot of time at the gym. It was winter for a lot of those months, so gym workouts weren't bad, especially while I was terrified of slipping on ice. I swam. I worked on the treadmill and the elliptical trainer. I did lots and lots and lots of strength work. Finally I achieved my

goal: 20 minutes on the elliptical trainer with no pain the next day. I was ready to run again!

Mentally ready and physically ready were different things, though. Rattling around in the back of my brain were the physical therapist's warnings. "If you do too much, too fast, you can actually break the bone in your hip because right now it's remodeling." "Don't fall on it if there's any way you can avoid it." This, of course, was being said to a klutz!

I finally decided I needed to just start. I rejoined the Facebook group for my 0-13.1 training. If you want to run a half marathon, start with [Nicole](#). Her program is very good. I started reading about training, good runs and bad, the normal swirl of questions about various injuries and treatments, and ongoing discussions about shoes and tracking and other small things. I started remembering that I liked to run.

I got a new pair of [Vibrams](#), since I'd run holes through my last pair, and a few new pairs of [Injinji](#) socks.

I started the program again.

I'm doing each week twice. It's going to take me a long time to get back to a half marathon, but I will get there. The first couple of weeks were walking because I wanted to make sure I had actually healed enough to do this. I found myself facing my first run with a certain amount of trepidation. I set out my gear, got up early, packed myself into my [Enell bra](#) (if you are well endowed, these bras make sure nothing goes anywhere it shouldn't!), got into running gear, did my warm up exercises, and started running.

I had decided that I was going to switch my cadence from I'm-not-paying-attention to 180 beats per minute. It was a little hard at first. I run with a metronome, 3/4 time so I'm not emphasizing the same foot every time, and I'm mostly keeping pace with it. I'll be doing intervals for a while. The first weeks were 60 seconds jogging, 90 seconds walking. I'm working

on 90 seconds jogging, 2 minutes walking right now and I'm very ready to be done with jogging by the end of the interval.

It has been surprisingly anticlimactic. My hip aches when I'm tired, which is hard since sleep is in somewhat short supply right now, but I haven't had a problem with it while running. I'm working on the mantra from the book "Born to Run": easy, light, smooth, and fast. I'm running faster than I did last time around and I'm happier with how it feels.

I was really angry when I found out I couldn't run. I'm still struggling with remembering being able to run miles without much stress and being limited, now, to 90 seconds at a stretch. On the other hand, I'm running again, and I was afraid that might never happen.

I'm not all the way back, but I'm getting there.

[FAI: update](#)

Almost four months after the surgery and life is pretty good. I'm off crutches. I've been released from physical therapy. I'm no longer under a doctor's care, though I have my physical therapist's email if I have any questions. I have a list of exercises to do to get my left leg back to full flexibility and usefulness again.

I should, barring anything else going wrong, be running by the end of next year. Hopefully sooner, of course, but that's a very safe bet.

At the moment, I'm allowed to walk half a mile and see how that goes. I did ten minutes on the elliptical trainer tonight and will see how my hip feels about that in the morning. I'm

doing my balancing squats (on this thing with the round side down: <http://amzn.to/1dzC7nI>) every time I'm at the gym and I'm slowly getting better at them. I'm allowed to take Nyx for a walk, though I'll wait until all of the ice has melted before I do that.

My hip still aches, especially when I'm tired. There's one rotation that still hurts a lot to do, so I ease into that stretch every day and sit with the pain for a little while, then let up. I don't push too hard, but I'm allowed to push a little bit.

I can only swim for about 20 minutes before getting tired. My stamina took a huge hit from not working out much for six months and it will take a while to work back up to it. After ten minutes on the elliptical tonight, I was ready to be done and sweat was dripping down my back. I am working hard on not being frustrated because now, at least, I am getting better.

I met a lady at the gym tonight named Sara. I was doing my balance squats and she was doing lunges; she had to move so I could get the balance ball out. I said I was doing physical therapy and she responded that she was supposed to do the same squats but didn't always. I told her I was recovering from hip surgery and we got to talking a bit. Turns out she recently found out that she has FAI, too. I knew I was lucky to be diagnosed so quickly, but I didn't know how lucky; she's been putting up with this pain for six years. She said her doctor was very firmly against the surgery and wouldn't do it if at all possible. Physical therapy isn't helping. I gave her the name of my doctor who specializes in hips and has a lot of experience treating FAI; hopefully she will be able to get some help and eventually get it fixed soon. Living with constant pain is draining. I would hate to have lived with it for years without knowing what was wrong. The problem with FAI is that it can only be diagnosed with an MRI and some doctors don't want to do one unless they have exhausted all other options. At least she knows what she has, now, which will help

her figure out what to do next.

It's nice being on the recovery side of the curve. I am feeling very lucky about where I was treated and who treated me. It took a couple of months to figure it out, but that's a lot better than six years!

I will be running again eventually. Swimming butterfly may take longer. Bellydancing will take longer yet. Eventually, though, I will be able to do the things I love.

FAI: surgery day

Surgery was this morning. We got to the surgery center about 6:20. Xander dropped me off and my mom stayed with me while Xander took Katja to daycare. He got back before I went in.

Everyone was very nice. I was a worried, but that's not unexpected. I kept telling myself that they do lots of these every week, that everything will be fine, but I don't like general anesthesia. The anesthesiologist was great, though, and once he knew why I was worried he said he'd make sure it was okay. They have a special surgery table for hip surgery – my feet were on rollers and my legs weren't on the bed. The bed just went down to my back and the bottom of my spine. I didn't see much of it because as soon as I was settled on the table, the drugs started taking effect.

I woke up in the recovery room. The nurse was sweet and held my hand for a few minutes because I was kind of freaked out. I kept sliding in and out of sleep. Eventually they took out the IV and gave me something to drink, water, I think, and took me into another room to see Xander and my mom. I don't think I was very coherent. My throat closed up at one point so I took

my inhaler and it opened up right away. I'm not sure if it was an asthma attack, but I couldn't get air in fast enough and I was making noise while I was breathing, which never makes me happy. In any case, it ended up being fine.

They shifted me into a wheelchair and got me to the car. I got in with lots of help. I was in and out of sleep all the way home. Xander stopped and picked up apple and carrot juice because my mouth was really dry and tasted nasty (probably from being intubated) so I got to drink a bit of juice. When we got home I didn't think I was in good enough shape to get on crutches even as far as the door. I dozed for quite a while in the car; my mom stayed with me and Xander went inside to make sure everything was set up. Once I finally could focus my eyes and felt steadier, I got out (with help, lots of help!) and got inside. I settled into what's likely to be my home for the next couple of weeks and then I slept some more.

Xander tracked when I needed to take doses of pain pills; many people have said that it's extremely important to stay ahead of the pain. I spent much of the afternoon dozing, too. I wiggled my foot around and stretched my calf muscles; the doctor said as long as I wasn't engaging the hip or moving it, I should move my lower leg to keep the blood flowing.

I haven't been hungry yet. I have been drinking a lot of juice and Xander made matzo ball soup (Jewish penicillin, one of my favorites) and I ate a little of that. My throat is quite sore. I'm not having nausea from the painkillers, which is very good; it's a common side effect. I just don't have much interest in food right now. I'm sure tomorrow my family will make sure I eat!

I'm non weight bearing on that leg for 3-4 weeks; we'll know more in a couple of weeks after my first appointment. Two crutches are not fun, but I'll follow doctor's orders perfectly for this. If I do, I should be running again in six months. If I don't, I could do permanent damage. That leaves

me no reason to push or screw anything up.

I know that later days will be harder, but for the moment it's mostly okay. Painkillers are working on the worst of the pain. I'm keeping my hip iced, which helps with pain, too. Today is the start of a long set of movements towards recovery. The pain is easier to handle, though, because I know, eventually, it will get better. I didn't know that before, but now the damage has been fixed and I can look forward to something instead of just slogging through every day in constant pain, not having any expectation that it will get better.

I'll try to update this regularly. I know it helped my state of mind a lot to read what other people had been through with this.

PT: Day one

Today was my first day of physical therapy.

I'm in rather more pain than I was yesterday. Big surprise. Physical therapy isn't easy and it is painful. I have a long list of exercises to do twice a day. I think I'm going to refer to it as the List de Sade.

I didn't think my hip was awful. I mean, yes, it hurts all the time (which should have been a clue) and I'm down to about 90 degrees of range of motion. Outside of that range it hurts a lot more. Adding in physical therapy, though, is a whole new level. Generally I try to avoid pain. That's why I'm wandering around on one crutch and not trying to run. Now I'm supposed to push it, see how far I can go. Well, except that I'm not supposed to push it too hard, but I don't have much of a read on how much is too much, so I just do my exercises and deal

with the fact that it hurts and it's going to keep hurting for a while.

Constant pain is exhausting. I want this to be over. I want it to get better. I want someone to fix it. That just isn't going to happen. Even if I end up getting surgery, the rehab is going to be worse than the physical therapy. I know that and it does not make me happy. On the other hand, at least there would be an end. I don't know if this month of physical therapy is going to fix anything, make anything better, or just result in more people asking me to push to the point of pain and a little bit past it to see how far I can go and if it's getting any better.

I'll be good and do my exercises twice a day. My next appointment isn't until next week, so at least no one else will be causing me pain for a little while. That's all on me.