



MY MANIFESTO: One Year Later

ABSTRACT

One year ago, my life changed—and so did I. This manifesto is a reflection on the healing, connection, and quiet collaboration that carried me through, and a reminder to choose humanity before crisis demands it. I hope it inspires you to pause, breathe, and trust yourself and others.

Jamie Shaw

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One year ago, my life changed.

I was on a family vacation, laughing and having an adventure with my sons, when everything shifted. I won't go into the details here—some of you know them, some of you don't. What matters is this: I experienced a life-altering accident that took away my memory, my voice, and for a time, my sense of self. And then, slowly, it gave me something back.

This past year has been a journey—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. It's been a year of healing, of reckoning, of remembering who I am and discovering who I'm becoming. I've done the hard work: physical work, somatic work, healing therapies, yoga, journaling, breathwork, silence, movement, stillness – you name it. I've cried in unexpected places. I've laughed at things that used to make me anxious. I've learned to rest without guilt. I've learned to speak with a voice that sounds different but carries more truth than ever.

And I've learned that I could not have done any of this alone.

When I tried to thank people—my sons, my partner, my colleagues, my care team—they all said the same thing: "It was nothing." "I didn't do much." "You're the one

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who did the hard part.” But that humility is exactly what made me see it differently. That’s when the baton metaphor came to me.

Recovery wasn’t a solo act. It was a relay.

My sons picked up the first baton. They found me, performed lifesaving actions, and called for help. My partner flew across the ocean and passed it to the people who could get me home. My colleagues carried it with grace and care. My doctors and nurses carried it with skill and compassion. And eventually, the baton came to me—for the long road of healing.

Soon after the baton was passed to me, I came across the book *When Breath Becomes Air*. I didn’t know how much I needed it until I started reading. Up to that point, I had been holding back the emotional breakdown I knew was coming. I wouldn’t allow myself to feel it—because we’re conditioned not to. We’re taught to be strong, to push through, to keep going. But this book cracked something open.

Written by a neurosurgeon facing terminal cancer, it offered a dual perspective—doctor and patient. It helped me see myself and the medical staff around me as humans. Not machines. Not roles. Just people. It gave language to the emotional complexity I hadn’t yet processed. It reminded me that breath turning to air means dying. And that sometimes, healing means letting go of the breath we’ve been holding just to survive.

The concept of breath turning to air has stayed with me. It’s become a thread through this entire year.

The timing of the accident was not random. The week was already meaningful to me. August 14th is my birthday—the day I took my first breath. Eighteen years ago, on August 13th, I found out I was sharing my breath with another human who

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became my second son, EJ. I was going to tell my dad the next day, on my birthday, that he was going to be a grandpa again. And I was going to tell my oldest son, Logan, that he'd be a big brother. But later that day, on August 13, 2007, my dad's breath turned to air.

So August 13th and 14th were already sacred. I chose that week to take my family to Maui. And on August 12th, my breath turned to air. My sons turned it back to breath.

This week—August 12th, 13th, and 14th—is now a representation of life for me. Pain and joy. Loss and love. Breath and air. It's a reminder that life is not linear. It's layered, messy, beautiful, and real.

After I was released from the hospital and the baton was passed to me, the next eleven months of healing were filled with people who picked it up again and again. Friends, colleagues, and even strangers—some focused on physical healing, not knowing how deeply they were helping me emotionally. Their support, their care, their presence carried me through. And my youngest son, EJ, has been there every single day. His presence alone has carried me through.

I've also learned the power of vulnerability. In the beginning, I didn't allow myself to be vulnerable. I thought I had to be strong, composed, in control. But I wish I could go back and give pre-accident Jamie a hug. I'd tell her it's okay to not be perfect. It's okay to fall apart. It's okay to be seen. Vulnerability is not weakness—it's truth. It's connection. It's the doorway to healing.

This year has changed how I live.

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Here's how I'm approaching life now:

- I check in with myself—body, mind, and spirit—every day.
- I rest when I'm tired. I don't call it lazy.
- I cry when I need to. I don't apologize for it.
- I speak, even when my voice shakes or sounds different.
- I ask for help. I receive help. I offer help.
- I let go of perfection. I hold on to authenticity.
- I trust myself. I trust others.
- I pass the baton. I receive the baton. I honor the baton.
- I breathe. I remember. I live.

I'm not perfect. I have to remind myself of these things. I'm learning to do them—not always doing them. I'm human. I'm fully recovered. I'm on the other side. But I'm not the same—and I don't want to be.

If you're reading this, I hope you feel happy for me. I hope you see that I made it. And I hope you feel something stir in your own life. Maybe it's a connection. Maybe it's a nudge. Maybe it's a quiet invitation to pause, to breathe, to listen, to find joy. Don't wait for a crisis to give yourself permission to be human.

You don't have to earn rest. You don't have to prove your worth. You don't have to carry the baton alone.

Know this: You are magic. You carry batons every day. Sometimes you know it. Sometimes you don't. And that—quiet, human, imperfect, and beautiful—is magic.