



2 Months of Magic: A Reflection

ABSTRACT

This reflection captures how we leaned into July and August with open hearts and full presence. What unfolded exceeded imaginations. These pages hold the milestones, reconnections, and quiet magic that made it meaningful. The story will continue to unfold. We'll stay curious, present, and trust that time will reveal what we cannot yet see.

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July: The Opening Door

July was a month of quiet momentum. I spent it reflecting on my healing journey and preparing for the WIL talk on the 29th. At work, we hosted an onsite mid-month with Sarah and Darren—and Karthik joined. It felt like a full-circle moment, reminiscent of our FAME collaboration. It was overdue. It opened doors.

On **July 26th**, EJ and I found ourselves in the front row at The Lumineers concert—again. Same venue, same band, just like August 13, 2022, the night before we left for New York for my birthday trip. That trip was full of magic: Yankees game, Julie Gibson and Jason Neuman, and a workshop on the career site. The parallels between then and now are uncanny. It's like life is rhyming.

Then came **July 29th**: the WIL National Leadership Event. I sat on stage with Julie for a fireside chat, and the response was overwhelming. It was more than I could have imagined. I shared my story publicly for the first time—about the accident, the recovery, and the baton metaphor that now defines how I see collaboration and

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healing. The energy in the room was electric. People cried, hugged me, thanked me. It was a moment of deep connection and truth.

I wrote a LinkedIn post afterward, and that was significant. It marked the first time I publicly shared my accident and healing journey. It was a milestone in my recovery and a turning point in how I show up—vulnerable, open, and real. It was the beginning of the new Jamie, emerging both personally and professionally.

August: The Anniversary of Breath

From **August 1st to 10th**, I poured myself into creating. I wrote the manifesto. I designed the baton trophies. I made coffee mugs with Corbin's yoga mantra—"sip in a little more"—to honor the people who helped me heal. I planned our trip to Bentonville. I cleaned and prepped the house for the backyard party. It was the first time anyone had been over in more than a year. Every detail mattered. Every act was a ritual. Also in August, I sent a copy of my manifesto and a tulip card to my mom. We hadn't spoken since January, and while I'm still not ready to reconnect, we exchanged texts. I made it clear that the tulips were a celebration of me. It was a huge step—one that felt like being the bigger person. It was quiet, intentional, and meaningful.

August 11th–15th: Bentonville. Skai, EJ, Meredith, and then—Karthik surprised us. It was the most special trip. We visited Coler Mountain Bike Preserve, Onyx Coffee, the dog park. We rode bikes, ate crepes, played cornhole, and laughed. On August 13, we ate at a Hawaiian-themed restaurant—coincidence? Maybe. But the "One Hula of a Good Time" sign felt like a wink from the universe. The next day, we ate at The Hive. EJ loved it. It was nostalgic. It was healing. And Skai—she was so chill, so well-behaved. Her energy mirrored ours. That's when I realized: she's a mirror. She reflects the vibe. And the vibe was peace.

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August 16th: The backyard party was everything I hoped for—chill, joyful, full of love. Skai's energy mirrored the vibe again. It was the perfect close to a sacred week. I reconnected with friends I hadn't socialized with in over a year—not just seen, but truly hung out with. And I did it in my home, my safe space. I let people in. That was huge.

The invitation said it best: "This isn't just a party—it's a celebration of you." And it truly was. The month of August had started as a memorialization—an acknowledgment of the one-year anniversary of the accident, of the healing, of the journey. But this night marked a shift. It was a celebration. Of milestones. Of new chapters. Of breath. Of life. We had food, drinks, music, games, and a "fun-to-keep" tent gift exchange. People brought random, cool, funny things to swap. I gave away one of each of the coffee mugs I had made in my yoga teachers honor, and Meredith ended up with Corbin's – both who work at KU – and Erin ended up with Christians which summed that week so perfectly – "The days are long and hard, but the years are short. Find joy". That felt like magic.

The theme of the party was "Bring Your Batons to the Backyard," and it was more than symbolic. It was a collective celebration of the batons we've carried and passed. Literal or metaphorical, they represented our journeys. That night, we honored each other's wins, transitions, and healing. It was a celebration of us. It represented life.

August 18th: EJ started school. His senior year. It felt so different from last year—lighter, more hopeful. He's ready. I'm ready. This is going to be a great year.

August 18–20: Digital Insurance Connect in Austin. I facilitated a roundtable on Employee Experience—my passion. Karthik and I had attended this same conference two years ago. The timing of our return, one year after the accident, was surreal. It felt like a milestone for both of us. The conversations were deep, the

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connections real. I wrote a LinkedIn post afterward—another moment of vulnerability. I never used to share professional wins publicly. But this time, I did. I talked about how technology should be a bridge to connection, not a barrier. I talked about empathy, openness, and the human experience. It was me, living out my manifesto.

August 21st: lunch with Julia and Molly to celebrate our birthdays. We did this last year before I left for Maui. This year, I was there because I survived. That night, EJ and I saw The Avett Brothers. We've seen them so many times over the years. It was nostalgic. It was healing.

August 26th: NICA practice. Our return. EJ racing. Me coaching. Our happy place. We saw people we hadn't seen since the accident. It was emotional. It was right.

August 26th–29th: Karthik came to Kansas City. We saw Gregory Alan Isakov. That was significant. The last time we saw him together was in October in Bentonville of all places. I had just gotten out of the hospital. I still had a tracheostomy. I was still on medical leave. That was the hardest time of my life—but I was determined to go. It was huge. And now, to see him again, with life so much better, was memorable. Meredith and my brother were there too. The last time the four of us were together was December, another intense healing period. To be together again now, at such a different milestone, represented progress.

We also worked. I had a great meeting with Sarah. I was asked to create a deck for Martyn to present to Ron Lockton on People and Culture's Agentic AI plan. The deck turned out perfect. Karthik helped shape it. We're confirmed to speak at the People and Culture Leader Summit in October. We have so many ideas.

We completed IDEO U's "Bringing AI to the Design Thinking Process" course together a few weeks earlier and both posted about it on LinkedIn. One of the most

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powerful takeaways for me that I included in my post was this: I believe AI is a companion, not a replacement. I was able to build that and all of our takeaways into the deck that will be shared with our CEO, as well as, create a sensible approach. That feels like the biggest win.

August 27th: While Karthik was still in town, we joined a hybrid “Happy Hour” to celebrate the launch of Digital Workspace. It was a milestone. Karthik and I had set out the beginning of 2024 with a vision, found funding, started discovery—and then I had the accident. I also changed roles from IT to People and Culture. But I’ve still been there, helping the team, even though I’m not leading it. We vocalized our ownership of this at the Happy Hour. It was a moment of pride, of continuity, of contribution. It was a celebration.

August 30th: Royals game with EJ, Tony, and Geralyn. Crown Club seats. Royals won. We were on TV. It was a blast from the past. We reconnected with friends—just like on August 16th. That’s been a theme: reconnection.

August 31st: I gave Corbin his gift and a copy of the manifesto. We talked. We connected. We’ve both been through so much—me with the accident, him with heart failure. He’s a pharmacist at KU. I was flown to KU from Maui and hospitalized there for three weeks. They saved my life. Meredith, who got the coffee mug at the party, is an anesthesiologist at KU. Corbin went to UMKC. Logan is at UMKC. His girlfriend is a pharmacy major. The connections are endless. The magic is real.

Where It Goes From Here

These past two months have been monumental. Not just because of what happened—but because of what repeated. So many moments mirrored the past. So

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many people reappeared. So many threads wove together. It all reinforces what I wrote in my manifesto: Life is not linear. It's layered. Messy. Beautiful. Real.

Breath has been a theme. Breathwork returned to me through Corbin's yoga class. His mantra—"sip in a little more"—reminded me of the book *When Breath Becomes Air*. That book cracked something open in me. 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.

Still remembering to breathe. But we're here. We made it. And life is not the same. I don't want to be. Maybe.



A Zen Buddhist Fable

This is the story of an old farmer who had worked his crops for many years. One day his horse ran away. Upon hearing the news, his neighbors came to visit. "Such bad luck," they said sympathetically. "Maybe," the farmer replied.

The next morning the horse returned, bringing with it three other wild horses. "How wonderful," the neighbors exclaimed. "Maybe," replied the old man.

The following day, his son tried to ride one of the untamed horses, was thrown, and broke his leg. The neighbors again came to offer their sympathy on his misfortune. "Maybe," answered the farmer.

The day after, military officials came to the village to draft young men into the army. Seeing that the son's leg was broken, they passed him by. The neighbors congratulated the farmer on how well things had turned out. "Maybe," said the farmer.

Be present for and curious about your experiences in life, for nothing is permanent and only time can tell the whole story.