

## **What Are You Tolerating?**

*Originally Published: March 16, 2010*

I am one of those Moms who alternates between feeling that I have everything gloriously under control to knowing in my gut that my life (like everyone else's!) is as messy as they come.

That said, I do pride myself in being on top of stuff. To Do lists, regular car oil changes, never running out of milk, signing permission slips way before they are due -- the stuff of every-day life that can totally overwhelm and bury us if we don't stay on top of it.

Yea, I got that covered.

And yea, I have been known to pat myself on the back for getting "stuff" done. Sometimes I judge the success of my day or my worthiness as a human being by how far down The List I was able to make it.

So that is why it hit me hard a couple weeks ago when I realized just how much I had let go. How much I wasn't attending to. How much I was tolerating.

Ug.

I am all about living full-out and playing big. Tolerating -- that's not for me. That's for people who may be OK with mediocrity. But not this girl. Not this control freak!

Right!

Right?

The moment-that-beat-me-into-submission was pretty subtle on its own. But in the bigger picture of things, it showed me something pretty significant: Tolerating is tolerating, whether it is in a significant relationship, a job or career choice or, yes, even a "minor" thing at home or elsewhere.

And in this case, my minor thing was, on its surface, pretty minor: My best friend Elizabeth had come from California to visit for a few days. We had a great time living,

playing and working together. One evening, we were sitting in my home office -- me at my desk and Elizabeth in my big comfy chair.

We were quietly working/tweeting/skyping/texting until she stopped what she was doing and looked up at me with a look. You know -- the kind of look only your best friend can give you when she calls you on your "stuff."

"What on earth is that noise?"

"What noise?" I asked

And right as I was asking, I knew what noise she meant. It was the annoying, creaking, groaning noise that, while impossible to ignore, I had somehow managed to ignore. It was coming from the second computer in my office, the one that is rarely used but always on (a whole other story).

We both just started cracking up. The kind of cracking up that says so much without saying a word.

"Promise me you will deal with that as soon as I leave," she said.

"I promise," I told her.

And so I did. I dealt with it. I paid for a computer guy to come over and deal with it. (My past "computer guy" was my Ex-Husband who generally did a great job but, like all friends and family members who do us favors, it was the last priority on his plate.)

When this new and paid computer guy came over, I also had him deal with some other computer-related things I'd been tolerating. (Worst of the bunch was my printing situation. If one of my kids had something to print for school, he or she would email it to me and then I, in turn, would email the file to yet another computer from where it would print -- only once I logged in and printed it. It is a long and silly story how this process came about and why it lasted. Suffice it to say, I tolerated this one too.)

Of course, the Noisy Computer Incident got me thinking about all of the other things I'd been tolerating, even on the most simple and basic level.

- The dishwasher (makes an annoying grinding noise when running -- it is only a few years old)
- Squeaky doors in the house (one in particular that drives me nuts)
- Light blubs that flicker or cause trouble and some that went out months ago
- Drawers (my Tupperware drawer is the worst offender) that require serious maneuvering to open and close because they are so messed up with lids, containers and miscellaneous stuff that I barely use but hang on to because [fill in reason that makes no sense here].

- The hot water situation in my shower is just so-so. Water takes a long time to get hot and then doesn't stay hot for very long.

I know nothing here is terribly significant or meaningful in the bigger picture of the world.

And I am not complaining about my "problems." I am very, very blessed and very, very grateful for all that I have and all that I am. And I know I could be tolerating, still, stuff I tolerated in the past (like a so-so marriage or a crappy job situation).

I am, however, calling myself out on my "stuff." And by "stuff" I mean leaving things to "work themselves out" when I know they won't/can't and then ignoring them as long as they remain just minor inconveniences or slightly annoying.

So to stop tolerating and start improving, I did what I do best: I made a list. Of all of the annoyances, noises, creaks, leaks, shortages and outtages that exist in my world (which is basically my home and office).

Then I called Dave. Dave is the guy who can fix anything and everything. He is a Boston transplant with a dirty mouth and a heart of gold.

Dave is currently going through my "Will No Longer Tolerating" list and making it all better. And going forward, I have vowed to myself that I won't get in this situation again. I am trying to spend half-an-hour every day (more is too intimidating, less is fine) fixing or organizing or mending or straightening one thing from an office drawer to a dusty object to an unruly pile.

While I will never be in control because, really, there is no such thing, I am managing. I am doing. I am in action. I am now taking note of and then taking action on any new can-be-but-won't-be-tolerated things that come up. And I am not ignoring or tolerating. Because life is too short for merely tolerating.

What about you....what have you been tolerating? Nothing is too small (or too big, for that matter). Look at your life. Your whole life. The reality of your life, not your tolerant perspective on it.

Let me know what it is and how (or if) you plan to tackle it.