EVERYTHING HAPPENS ~~FOR A REASON~~

WITH KATE BOWLER

Discussion Questions

Jason Rosenthal: Blank Spaces

1. It was an infectious spirit that drew Jason Rosenthal, author of *My Wife Said You May Want to Marry Me*, to his would-be wife on their first date. What drew you to someone you've loved and lost?

2. After twenty-six years of marriage, Jason and Amy were walking into their second half of life as empty nesters when Amy was diagnosed with late-stage ovarian cancer. When has one of your hoped-for horizons suddenly shrunk?

The metaphor of that intentional empty space became something that I used as a guidepost as I walked through those dark days and on my way to some joy and happiness.

3. The impossible task of telling Jason and Amy's three older kids was made lighter by their being so in tune with what their mom needed. Have you ever had to share heavy news with your closest circle? What, if anything, made it lighter for you?

4. After Amy came home for hospice care, Jason did everything he could to infuse the space with beauty: candles everywhere, tiny concerts, visits from their favorite people. How have you befriended beauty through the terrible?

5. The cost of caregiving is that you can forget your own needs while tending to the practical and emotional needs of someone else. What practices help you remember yourself when caring for another? Do you think your gender makes any of these practices easier or harder? How so?

6. Kate tells a story about a man in Minneapolis who made bird houses as a way to remake himself after loss. What you do with your hands when your heart is hurting?

7. It's hard to know what to say in the wake of someone else's loss What is the worst thing someone has ever said or done while you were grieving? What is the best thing someone has said or done to acknowledge your pain without prying?

8. Kate and Jason both tell stories about the power of small gestures of connectedness—yellow duckies, dumb erasers—when we're hurting. Tell a story about something small that reconstituted you.

A blank space can be a place of tremendous fear and uncertainty.
And every now and then, like the one Amy gave Jason, an open space can be a gift.

9. After Amy's death, instead of going to the same places from his honeymoon Jason decided to try something new. He invited his friends on a trip that would soon be dubbed "The Heal Jason Tour." How might you trade sameness for newness in your search for healing? Who could you invite to join you on this healing tour? Where could you go to honor your soul?

10. Jason wrote a companion piece to the one Amy wrote about him shortly before her death. In it, he gifts the reader with permission to write their own story in the same empty space his wife left him. If you were to write yourself a permission slip to keep living and loving, what would it say?

BONUS. After listening to this week's podcast, what part of Kate and Jason's conversation resonated with you most? What insight will you carry with you?

Discussion Questions written by author, editor, and facilitator Erin S. Lane (ErinSLane.com).
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