

Judy Howdeshell – This I Believe

The first neurologist nodded his head affirmatively and softly said, “Parkinson’s.” I cried. The second neurologist said kindly, “Yes, it’s Parkinson’s.” I cried. I would cry other times and rail against the unfairness. I would defiantly declare that I would not let this define me.

I went through the stages of grief in a hurry, first zooming through denial. There it was; there I was. I did consider one afternoon that I might have Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and this would go away. It didn’t.

Bargaining also was a quick trip. Negotiations didn’t seem appropriate.

Anger? Oh, yes. Why me? I didn’t want to have to deal with the tremor, the inflexibility, the rotating neurologists, Medications-are-Us, the cost factor, et al.

My life wasn’t supposed to be this way.

Finally, an uneasy acceptance came. I have Parkinson’s. Awful and terrible things may happen. Or I could be hit by a truck tomorrow. It’s not as much fatalistic as realistic.

Parkinson’s changed my perspective, but not my beliefs. I believe in beginnings, middles, and ends.

We pop into the world, ranting about the light and noise and keep it up for a while. We go to school, become socialized to some degree, and begin to develop our individual personalities.

The early middle life is when we start to become who we will be. We experience learning, work, relationships, spirituality and parenting. We define ourselves as we go along.

Later, if we've been doing our work, we become our Real Self. We strip off layers seemingly put on by families and society and add back layers that are ours.

Throughout our lives, there may be small endings as circumstances change. As we edge closer to the Big Ending, we think about what we have done, what we've not done, how we might have done something differently. We tie up loose ends and reconfirm what we believe in.

I believe that my soul is endowed with an intellect and feelings and my take on spirituality is that I am responsible for my life. Though we can ask for guidance, we are always responsible – for our own choices, actions, and for our own good time.

I believe laughter is essential for a reasonably good life and that we must choose joy.

I believe also in new beginnings – be it heaven, the astral plane, reincarnation, or some other reality. I believe our souls live on, always becoming. I believe that no matter what the afterlife is (or if there is one) that all we ever really have is this day, this hour, this moment.

I believe in hope. I believe that I'll be back.