

Katie Macarelli's notes (aka the first chapter of the book I really hope she'll write)!

My history (for listener frame of reference).

I grew up in the 80's and 90's in a small rural town on a Dairy farm with Holstein cows. Family of six, two older brothers and an older sister. It was an amazing childhood. We worked HARD. My dad had taken over the family farm his immigrant parents had started. My grandpa came from Germany and my Grandma came from Russia.

There was no separation of our home life and work life because it was all the same. My oldest brother still owns and operates the farm and my parents still live in the house I was raised in on the farm. It wasn't a 20 cow operation. When I was in middle school we were milking about 700 head 3 times a day and feeding an average of 75-100 baby calves 2 times a day. Every day. Alllllllllll year round. We always had about 5-10 employees working on the farm as well, but we were in it to win it. Or lose it, so to speak as many family farms died during that time. It was a self-sustaining dairy as well, so that meant planting crops to harvest as feed for the cows on our farm and others.

- I drove a little red tractor probably shortly after I could read.
- I could run the milking machines if needed by standing on a stool (luckily we didn't have to do that part too much--unless we were short on labor).
- We took dairy cows to the fair for 4H.
- My dad and brothers had shot-guns laying on the bench seats of our pick-ups in case they needed to shoot a coyote.
- We bailed hay in shifts in the summer, sleeping in the bed of the pick-up under the stars until a sibling or parent would need sleep and wake us up to take our shift.

A little bit about my parents--because they definitely made me who I am and shaped my work-ethic. My dad graduated high-school and was drafted to go to Vietnam immediately at age 18. He actually failed the physical due to a hernia, voluntarily went to his hometown Dr. to get it fixed and re-took the entry tests. He was in basic training 2 mos after his 18th birthday. This was a hardship on his family because at the time, as the youngest child he was the only one left to help run the family farm aside from my grandparents.

My mom grew up in a large family in a small town in Illinois. She went to a bitty Christian college and was traveling with the choir to churches around the US and happened to stay with my dad's parents for host housing while singing at their church. **The only reason my parents met** was because my grandma liked my mom's voice, thought she was pretty and looked kind. My grandma basically sold my mom on what a great guy my dad was asked my mom to write my dad in Vietnam because she figured he was lonely. My mother agreed.

I won't even pretend to know what being an 18 year old soldier in Vietnam was up until that point had lived on a farm in eastern Colorado was like. But from what my dad has told me, it wasn't pretty.

The way my dad tells it is that he never even received my mom's letter until AFTER he'd been discharged to come home and help on the farm when my grandpa got sick. They wrote back and forth - my dad writing my mom far more than she did back to him, but it obviously worked out because they've been married over 50 years.

My parents have always been committed to each other like no other couple I've ever met. We used to joke as kids that if we had been on the Titanic when it was sinking, my mom would definitely help my dad find his boots and coat before getting us off the boat and vice versa. But the point here is that I learned you never give up. Not on your tasks at hand, your livelihood, your family, your partner. You work until the sun goes down or the equipment breaks. Work is life and it makes you strong. It solidifies relationships in the way that nothing ever will.

These are lessons I am very, very thankful for. They've served me well in life. They've helped me in my own marriage (going on 21 years now) and these lessons are now being ingrained in our teenage daughters, too. At least I hope they are. It's very important to me to pass on a solid work ethic on to our kids. So "Working hard" is obviously a good thing in my eye. Buuuuut. As an ambitious female in my late 30's/early 40's, working in a male dominated industry this work ethic took over my life.

1. When is it time to go?
 - a. When you start to dread or resent it. Particularly if it's work you love at it's core. Easy to recognize burn-out when you hate the people you work with and/or the job you're tasked to do. When you love both, it's much harder.
2. When does a job become too much?
 - a. When it takes priority over everything else.
 - b. Physical health - I was constantly getting sick over the last year-which is unlike me. I had gained weight from stress eating and drinking and not getting enough exercise.
 - c. Mental health - I was maxed. When I'd get home, I just wanted quiet and had a difficult time focusing on conversations with my family. I was constantly in my head worrying about work. How would I get things done? I was dreading work trips to amazing places because I knew I'd be missing my family and also I'd just get further behind. I was losing sleep over things at work that weren't that important-it's the bike industry. I wasn't saving anyone's life.
 - d. Resenting bikes. I stopped racing bikes or even wanting to talk about them with anyone. Work had blended with my favorite thing. I was missing very important events among my family and friends.
 - e. Friends - funny. I'm very social by nature. But over the last 1-2 years I was a poor friend to many. I didn't ever do much with friends. I thought about my friends a lot, but there just wasn't room in my brain. I considered my workplace friends enough because I just didn't have the time or energy for anybody else outside of work and my immediate family. Barely my immediate family.

3. When does it leave you unfulfilled but spent and wrung out?
 - a. See above.
4. How to tell.
 - a. See above.
5. What to do.
 - a. First, I'd suggest taking vacation. A real non-working vacation. Or at least just a 1/2 day every month. Part of my responsibilities at my old position was handling our brand's social media channels and sponsorships. This was often a round the clock job. Such a trap. Yes, you improve your brand's impression and engaging with your customers is nice. But over the last year or so, I felt like I was made of birdseed and the crows were just constantly coming and pecking me away. I got to the point that vacations stressed me out. Again, I knew I'd be so far behind. But once I left my previous position, I had the last last 9 days off of December and New Year's Day. This was the most rested, relaxed, happy I could remember being in over 2 years. Had I given myself those much needed breaks things might have gone differently. Secondly, if you love where you are, have a very frank conversation with your employer or the person you report to about lessening your workload. In hindsight, I asked for help, but I probably didn't make it clear enough that being overworked was going to make me leave. This is a hard balance. Particularly as someone who felt they had to prove themselves within the industry. I had climbed the ladder from a part-time social media position to the global marketing manager. And I worked hard to get there. Just get it done, you know? Be respected as someone who doesn't need hand-holding and don't admit any weaknesses.
6. How scary it is to leave or make a change to the unknown.
 - a. Very. I was very scared to make a change. My husband, daughters, sister and close friends helped me.
7. Life is more important than a job.
 - a. You are damned right it is.
8. What do I want people to know about finding courage to make a leap or advocate for yourself.
 - a. Take a deep breath and have those hard conversations with your employer/director. With yourself. Take the time to be mindful of what your day looks like from start to finish. I realized that almost every minute of my day was scripted aside from about 2 hours. That's dumb. And exhausting. Because if anything falls, you're fucked.
9. How I made mine.
 - a. Steps. Baby steps.
 - b. I allowed myself to think of being somewhere else and doing something else.
 - I approached a long-time friend in the industry. He and I had talked several times about me joining his Marketing Firm. Once I committed in my mind to seriously explore this option, it was a fairly easy path but it would take some time to see if it would work out.
 - In the meantime, I explored options-even ridiculous ones.

- I applied to do landscaping at the local college campus.
 - I applied for a communications job for my local county Sheriff's dept.
- c. I took care of business at work. I worked like I always did. 120%. I didn't want anyone when I left to say "Yeah, she checked out." I nailed each and every event up until the day before I gave my notice, in fact. That last event --cyclocross nationals was very bittersweet for that reason. I had met so many wonderful people over the last few years. I knew I was going to miss them. And I did. In fact, I was really really sad for a few weeks after I left. Prepare yourself for that. Because it's like a break-up with a partner you've had for 4 years.
10. No job is perfect. No place or person can force you to slow down or set limits. That's true.
- a. My current set-up fosters this better, I would say. But I know it has to come from within.
11. Fight for your priorities. Surround yourself with people to support that fight. Who get it. Yes. What helps you be happy and healthy while still doing the job you love to the best of your abilities? Be mindful and go for it.