

a



Aidan

Kid number one is now cruising through her 14th year. How did that happen? Aidan is well into teenhood now, and there's no looking back. She is smart, introspective, creative, funny and meticulous in her work. She's got a style that is totally unique, and changes on a whim. She's a hipster when it comes to music, and yet also adores complex choral pieces in Latin. She has matured a lot in the past year, having gone through a first heart break and the lessons that come along with it. She is also suddenly into having a really neat and tidy room which we're not quite sure where that is coming from, yet we aren't complaining. She loves *Dexter*, *Bones*, *Fringe* and *Gossip Girl*. We have to occasionally remind her there is a world beyond internet TV. She'll be entering high school in the fall. It's hard to wrap my head around the fact that life is barreling onward, and my baby is really growing up. I am so thankful to have this person in our lives. She is truly one of a kind. The original Aidan. See also *Kids, I have really awesome*

Athlete

If you had told me a year ago that I'd be running three days a week, biking two, lifting weights, doing Zumba or any number of activities on another, I would have said, "Yeah, right." But in 2010, I have somehow found my inner athlete. At first, I was leery to really let myself think like this, but the proof is in the running path, people. What started out as an effort to shed some libbies had resulted in a whole new mentality on fitness. My only goal? Keep it up, sister. Just keep it up. See also *Newton running shoes, runner, (I'm officially a)*

b

Blogging

Here I am in 2010, and still going strong with blogging. I can easily see how something like this could have been a flash in the pan, and yet for me, it's always seemed like a bit of a treat to write and manage. Granted, now I have paid sponsors, and I feel more pressure to provide good and useful reader content than ever before. There have been more than one Sunday night where I simply stared at the blank Typepad page and thought: now what? Inevitably, something will come. I do use my blog more than ever to promote my digital products, and I am still learning to find a balance between marketing content and organic content. I am very, very thankful for the readers I have.

Bras, Finally Got Me Some Good

It's no secret, my disdain of supportive foundation under garments, but this year I broke down and finally went into Victoria's Secret and was fitted for two new bras. I just realized the girls were in desperate need. I also went and got fitted for sports bras at Title Nine. I have to say, when you compare the two, my Moving Comfort sports bras are the bomb. When I'm running, nothing is moving. Nada. Zip. Even though I'm not exactly the busiest person on the planet, I love the fact that now, it's all safely contained.

Brownies, No Pudge

No Pudge Brownies are a gift from Heaven. Plain and simple. I don't indulge often of late, but when I do, oh mama. Come to..well, mama.



Aidan's a no brainer, but kicking off this album with 'athlete' really did set a tone for the dominant theme for this year's volume.

I thought a shot of my underwear might be a bit tacky for this "bra" entry. I also didn't include brownie shots because they would only make me hungry.

c



Coleman

What can I say about Coleman Asher Zielske? He's non-stop, 100% creative energy. From mastering his Lego collection to mastering The Force, I don't think I sit back nearly enough and just marvel at this boy. He's so smart. He's so funny. He's so engaged in life. It can be infectious if you let it be. He is 11 now, no longer a baby in any way shape or form. Sigh. He still reminds me though, in small ways, that he's still my little boy. He loves to snuggle at bed time and swears he will want to snuggle with me even when he's grown and has a family of his own. While I know that's likely not going to happen, it seriously warms my heart. He covers his ears and talks nonsense whenever scary commercials come on the TV; he counts the number of kisses I give him each night and makes sure they're done evenly; he gets nervous still during storms. I know he's not me, but sometimes, the similarities are astounding. I must always remember, however, to see him with open and fresh eyes. He is a true original. See also, *Kids, I have really awesome*



Chi running

When I started running, a handful of blog readers recommended this book to me. I truly believe it has made it possible for me to run with minimal pain. See also *athlete, runner (I am officially a)*

Chester

My current favorite dog boarder. He comes, he stays, and he is a very, very good boy. He has spoiled me for all other dogs. See also *Pets*

d

Dogs

I still love them more than words can say, but with each passing year of not owning one, combined with the pleasures of simply dog sitting, I feel as though I'm getting further away from every taking the plunge. It's selfish and I know it. I'm selfish with my time, my work and so on. Sometimes I wonder if it's that self-employed person's mentality, and what I mean by that is, I have this set amount of time to kick it hard while the kids are in school. I fear that a dog would tip the balance I work so hard to achieve in my life. Again, I'm not seeing the full picture at times. No one said I'd have to get a crazy puppy. But I'm gun shy on this one. I have a hard time, considering my two sad histories with dogs (Dylan and Reno) that a third time would be a charm. I do worry that my kids have been deprived of something that was so important and integral to my own youth. Sigh. This one remains to be seen.

Dan

Since 1989, and going strong. Yep. That's Dan. He's sticking around. As we have learned this year, that might just be a share under 'miraculous'. We married for better or for worse, and as we're finding out in therapy, some of that 'worse' stuff can be challenging. Like, *really* challenging. But I'm here and he's here, and we are both up for the challenge of making things better. I'm thankful for such an open-minded person to share this life with. We have a lot to learn about ourselves and each other. After being together for 20 years, we're like two old dogs learning new tricks. And that's going to turn out to be a pretty good thing.



Cole, another obvious choice. I have found that after I finish writing, I come up with far more ideas than ever. I would suggest to all of you to keep that tag book handy for over spill. Once your brain starts working this way, it's hard to turn it off.

I just realized Chester made it onto a spread. If I could kidnap that dog, trust me, I would. Oh, and this year, Dan made it into the "Ds". But he could have gone so many other places.

e



Eating slightly better

2010 has been a year of better eating, so far. When I jumped back on the health cart in January, I committed to following Weight Watchers, but with one caveat: to not rely on a bevy of diet foods to save points. Yes, Weight Watchers Giant Fudge Bars are awesome, but I also can't pronounce a number of the ingredients. The goal has been to eat as many whole foods as possible. Ground beef, a salad, and a slice of french batard? Better than a Lean Cuisine any day of the week. Sure, there are a few areas I slip up on, but overall, I'm doing pretty well on this one.

Excuses for not moving

Guess what? This time around, I don't have any. Imagine that?
See also runner, I am officially a, swimming

Exploring Life at 44

Who would have guessed that by entering into counseling at 44, I'd discover so many things about my life? Admittedly, a lot of it's rather painful and not very pretty at all. And part of me misses the old life of 43, before I took the step through a door that apparently, I can't go back through. But I am clinging to the hope that it's all going to shake out in the end. Yes, that's fairly vague, but maybe in my next volume of *Me: The Abridged Version* I can write about all the things I've learned and gained. That would be the goal anyway. For now, I move onward and am thankful for the opportunity to explore and grow.



More on health and fitness. You will notice I have yet another entry on 'obsessive compulsiveness' under O. I more than back it up in this album.

f



Forty-four-year-old body

I guess I shouldn't complain about the functionality of this 44-year-old body of mine. I mean, sure, I've basically abused it, neglected it and completely taken it for granted in these many years. Just because I decided to get into shape and now am experiencing bothersome but normal aches and pains doesn't mean my body is failing me. I guess the sore muscles and the painful heel are just its ways of reminding me that nothing comes for free in your fabulous forties. It's funny, I don't feel that my age should limit anything I want to do. I really do think my brain could go a lot further than my body wants to take things. Slow and steady might be my mantra with weight loss, but I'm definitely not as patient with how these body parts respond to the demands I've placed on them of late. As they say, better late than never. Oh, and thanks body of mine, for all you've let me do thus far.

F-word

I can't help it. It's my favorite curse word. I don't know how or why that it came to be. I mean, it's not like I was raised in a house where I ever heard it. I know that swearing is supposed to make you sound classless and uneducated, but every time I hit my toe on the edge of a door, or get cut off in traffic, or do something really shocking and stupid, it provides just a bit more tension relief, than say, "Oh fudge!"

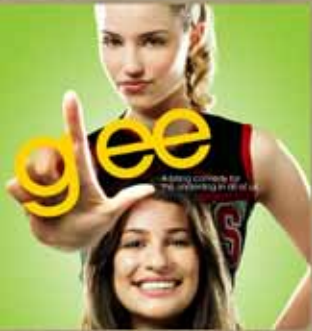
Food

I wish I wasn't quite as obsessed with it as I tend to be. Can I just say that and leave it there? Really? Oh good!



While I never ever swear in print because I think it's tacky and unprofessional (okay, I use the word 'ass' but that word also appears in the Bible! and maybe I've dropped the "s" word occasionally), I had to put an entry in about my propensity for the f-bomb. I'm just keepin' it real, y'all.

g



Glee, the series

Not that I spend too much time worrying about the state of network television, but in 2010 the best show on it has to be *Glee*. It manages to be quirky, a bit raunchy and extremely heartfelt all at the same time. A ridiculously talented cast, universally relatable story lines and fun and nostalgic song choices all add up to a really entertaining hour of television. Plus, the music stands on its own after each episode. I have an ever-growing playlist on my iTunes, all courtesy of each successive episode. Suffice to say: I love *Glee*.

Gang of four

Up until Dan visited Dr. Urology and had the main baby-makin' vein severed, I suppose there was always a chance of a 5th family member being added to the mix. We toyed with the idea of changing our foursome to a fivesome, but never really committed to anything other than, "Let's wait and see." Four is a good number. We can pair off into teams for Pictionary, or visits to the Mall of America. I can buy expensive plates knowing that four is the most I'll ever need on any given night. We can splurge a bit here and there on things the kids really want because there are only two of them. We fit very neatly into our Hyundai Santa Fe and do not require a minivan to get where we want to go. We can get hotel rooms with two queen beds and sleep just fine (girls with girls and boys with boys, of course.) We can do various sports and after school activities with only minor transportation headaches. We can fill the Water Raft ride at the Minnesota State Fair all by ourselves. We are a successful Zieske gang of four.



Glee makes me happy. My family makes me happy. Most of the time.

h

Have bike, will ride

I've biked more this year than any year since I was 11. I finally dusted off the city bike Dan gave me for Christmas 4 years ago and put it through the paces, so to speak. As part of my new fitness regime, biking fits in nicely. I'm not Lance Armstrong, but I do get a workout in as I tool around Como Lake and my surrounding neighborhood. What is amazing to me is how I have lived in this area since 1993 and never even remotely appreciated what a great place it is to get out and exercise. The only problem with this new ability to bike is now I have road bike envy. The idea of doing sprint triathlons next year, combined with the fact that it seems everyone I know is doing them, makes me want to drop some serious coin and get a kick ass bike. Still trying to figure out how to make that happen. Stay tuned. See also, *swimming, runner, I am officially a*

Home

Home is a smell that's just right. Home is a house that only stays clean for roughly a few hours when the kids are at school. Home is Legos, everywhere. Home is furniture we sort of like; some that we love; and some that is hopelessly in disrepair. Home is late night internet. Home is the occasional family meal. Home is coffee and Caress brand soap and laundry that smells good. Home is music. Home is an office that's just right. Home is watching episodes of *Fringe* in bed on the laptop. Home is Dan, and Aidan, and Cole. Home is the place that I most want to be.

Heavy

I'm less heavy than I used to be. That makes me proud and happy.



More fitness. I'd really hoped to upgrade my bike this year and get a fancy road bike. But, the hubby thought maybe it best to just ride the bike I have that works perfectly well. Good point. See, he could have gone under "Rational".

i



Injuries, running

A year ago, the only kind of injuries I would have written about would have been getting my feelings hurt. Oh, how much changes in a year. So I started in all gung ho with fitness, and I'm guessing that my ho could have been dialed back just a titch. While I'm certainly not hobbled, I am dealing with plantar fasciitis and some random hip and knee pain. Ugh! Come on, 44-year-old body. Work with me here! I'm trying to pay attention to what this old girl is trying to tell me. Thank God for cross training. (Again, the fact that I can write that sentence with a straight face? A miracle. Who is this person and what have you done with the old Cathy?). See also athlete, runner, I am officially a



Inside yelling

It's just one of those inside jokes that never gets old. It's usually applied to the loudest of the Ziesakes (most days, that would be Coleman) and it often happens in the car or in the house, when Cole is loudly talking and Dan will say, "COLE! Inside yelling, please!" Or sometimes it's "COLE! Inside whining, please!" Or sometimes it's "COLE! Inside braying, please!" You get the idea. It's just one of Dan's charming little inventions. One of the things that makes him such a fun Dad that these kids are so blessed and lucky to have. I think a sense of humor is so critical in life. The ability to laugh and make light of things; to joke... it helps in a world that is quite often out of our control. It helps us all to take things just a bit less seriously. Wow. All that just from 'inside yelling'. Who knew?



j



Jeans of a smaller size

I recently went shopping for a new pair of jeans. I'd posted a question to Facebook asking my friends where to go and what to buy, mostly because the only thing I've bought for the last 20 years came either from The Gap or Old Navy. I decided to hit the Lucky Brand Store at Mall of America, fully aware that I'd be paying top dollar if I liked what I saw. Turns out, I did. But here's the freaky part: I left with a pair of size 8 jeans. They actually fit. Comfortably. As in, I can wear them and breathe. I haven't been an 8 since my brief super skinny smoker phase of the late 1990s. To be honest, it's freaking me out a little. As if this is just a cruel joke, and I'll be back to a size 16 before you can say, "Zipper too tight?" I have to continue to work on this healthier lifestyle and strive to create a balance between living fully, staying in shape and enjoying food and life. Who knew smaller jeans would affect me in this way? Go figure.



Jewelry, I'm starting to get into wearing

What started with the two Lisa Leonard necklaces has turned into a full fledged fact: I wear jewelry now. Necklaces, to be precise. And mostly the hand made silver variety, made lovingly by DIY jewelry artists like Lisa Leonard and others. My latest favorite necklace was a gift from a special blog reader, Leslie, who won the iPod giveaway I hosted. She sent me this amazing silver necklace that has "Running Makes Me Happy" hand stamped around an open circle. I think anytime a piece of jewelry can carry a message of positivity AND look good, well, sign me up for wearing it. This jewelry makes me happy.



'Inside yelling' came to me at the 11th hour. Again, it's something from my life that incorporates more than just me. It shows that my rational hubby, who invented 'inside yelling' is also wickedly funny. To me.

In my last album, I wrote about how I didn't like jewelry. Now? I rarely take the necklace you see above off. It's like my source of running power.

k



Kids, I have really awesome

Yes, I have awesome kids, but that's not very specific now, is it? Let's try this: my children are individuals, with creative ideas about life and how to live it. Aidan expresses her world view through writing and photography and blogging and fashion. Coleman lets his creativity flow into drawing, Lego making and imaginary play. Both of them show empathy for others, and compassion. Both of them demonstrate a deliciously dry sense of humor. Both of them have open minds and unjaded hearts. (Okay, maybe Aidan having the first boyfriend breakup added a titch of jaded into her psyche.) I have recently decided that I don't want them to move out and onward with their lives. I like sharing every day of my life with them, even when I'm saying no for the 800th time to Cole for his requests to buy more hard-to-find Lego figurines on eBay, or when I'm reminding Aidan in what she calls my 'annoying' voice to clean her room and do her homework and brush her teeth. Even though I'm being a little cheeky, I know I will support them in every phase of their lives, even the ones that take them away from me. This is a reminder to me that I need to be conscious here and now of just how awesome this time in our lives really is. Singular, unique and never to repeat. See also Aidan, Coleman



Krispy Kreme donuts

Honestly? They're overrated.



Kids. Of course. I had no other Ks though. So I really reached with entry number two.



Lucy

Is it possible to credit a store with helping you get into shape? I believe is is. Case in point: Lucy. In January, when I decided to get my ass in gear and get into shape, I was in desperate need of some new workout gear. Not because I had to look good for the gym (because I don't go to gyms), but because I needed to feel truly serious about the task at hand. I went to Lucy, a store that I was just barely able to fit into, size wise, and plunked down around \$300 for some new workout duds. Because we don't take spending money lightly in this family, I looked at this as an investment in my future fitness. I had to justify this expense which meant that working out was non-negotiable. And you know what? It worked. What I didn't realize was how much I would fall in love with the clothes at Lucy. I have bought much more than workout gear and I have to tell you: the clothes (and the fact that the sizes are now getting smaller) make me feel like a million bucks. So thanks, Lucy. For making me look great and keeping me motivated to make the money spent worth the while. See also athlete, runner (I am officially a)

Losing time to Facebook

It was my former boss, Jennifer Martin, who said to me, "I can't believe you're not on Facebook!" Funny, but I always thought it was something only people with PCs used. Now here I am, on it every morning, checking messages, reading statuses, and generally wasting time. It's funny, but I'll just sit and doddle with it and before you know it, an hour is gone. No wonder companies ban its usage at work. Here's to self-employment and all the Facebook time I'll ever need!

I am obsessed with the Lucy store, and I know I shouldn't be. Whenever I go in there to shop, predictably I am wearing Lucy clothes. Then I feel all embarrassed, like girls wearing their Rick Springfield concert tees when they go to a meet and greet at the mall, with Rick Springfield. Next...

l



m



Mom

So let's see...I've been doing this job for 14-plus years, and is it my imagination, or am I getting better at it? I'm not talking about huge monumental leaps, but more of a subtle thing. Over time, everyone grows. Not just the kids. But I think that's the key to being a better parent: time and age. I don't yell and scream any more. Not the way I did in the early years. Sure, I get frustrated some times, but I'm trying to choose better reactions in every situation. The kids deserve a more thoughtful mother, and I'm really trying to deliver on that promise. I want to model a healthy, responsible, independent person for my kids, while also being sure to acknowledge that as they grow, their perspectives are unique. I'm grateful for the opportunity to do better at this every chance I get.

Marathon, Half

Is it crazy that a small but vocal part of me is dreaming of a half marathon? I realize I have yet to run a dang 5K, but for some reason, I can picture myself doing a half marathon. I can picture myself running for 2 and a half hours. Make no mistake, it would be slow and steady. There would be no records in danger of falling. But man, what seriously bragging rights, and the personal satisfaction of setting a goal, and achieving it. For now, I need to stay healthy and injury free, and pick a 5K, then a 10K. Maybe after that, we'll be in seriously business.

I love this picture of me for the 'Mom' entry. It was taken at my sister in law's wedding. I was in makeup and wearing a dress for the first time in an awfully long time. My fitness journey has given me more confidence.

n

Newton running shoes

Okay, maybe I didn't need a pair of \$149 running shoes, or maybe I did! Because I'm following the whole natural running/Chi Running approach, I figured a shoe designed for the old mid-foot strike was perfect for me. So far, so good. Plus, Donna Downey said she put these shoes on and never looked back. Good enough for me. Plus, they are a dream team color palette. Hello! Lime green and orange? That's a Cathy Zielake custom palette. Cuteness aside, if these shoes help me to continue my quest to run, then they're absolutely worth it. And don't even get me started on my hot pink ones. *See also athlete, runner, I'm officially a*



Neil Finn

I still adore this man. I really do. And to think that recently, I was a little down on him for his new album with the boys. That was until I went and saw him in concert with Aidan at the Minnesota Zoo in early September. Oh. My. God. It just rekindled my love and admiration for this man whose voice makes me swoon to the very depths of my music loving soul. Thank you, Neil. For getting me all giddy again.

Ne dis jamais jamais

One thing I have learned in 2010, is to never say never. Never say you can't do something, because if you actually make an honest, concerted effort, you may just surprise yourself. God knows I certainly have.



No album of mine would be complete without a picture of my beloved, Neil Finn. (Think "Hey now, hey now, don't dream it's over"). I love this man. Don't tell Dan.

O



Oregon Chai

It's all Peter Kelsch's fault, really. I never thought of myself as a Chai latte kind of gal, but that all changed during the photo shoot for Pete's catalog. I was hit with a miserable cold, but had to be there all the same, and Peter kept me fueled by insisting I have a cup of his Oregon Chai. That was in the Spring of 2009, and once I realized I could buy it in powder form, I've never looked back. Generally speaking, I try not to abuse it. One cup a day. 120 calories of pure, hot, mug-filled bliss. I don't even count the points on Weight Watchers. It's my one, pure, sugary treat and I'll be damned if I'm going to feel guilty about it. Every day, between 2 and 3 p.m., I turn on the electric kettle and the process begins. I like to make the cup, then go up to my office and work on something—anything really—to complete the chai latte daily ritual. Doesn't matter the weather; just give me that hot mug of happy. See also *obsessive-compulsive tendencies*



Obsessive-compulsive tendencies

Really? You have to ask on this? I may as well just cross reference everything in this book. Starting with the chai ritual and ending with running and nearly everything in between. I don't always look at being slightly OCD as a problem. Actually, it tends to help me get things done. It contributes to my overall efficiency, or my need to get up-to-speed on any number of topics. It's not like I wash my hands repeatedly and can't leave the house because of it, right? That's the story I'm going with anyway. See also *Coleman, Oregon Chai, and pretty much everything else in this volume*

My cross reference for 'obsessive-compulsive tendencies' is my fave in the whole album.

P

Pedicures

As much as I love getting them, I'm always mildly uncomfortable having my toes done. I think it goes back to the very first time. I was in New York visiting Molly when she suggested we go have our toes done. Up until that point in my 23 years of life, I never knew that people went and had that done. As in, really? So imagine my surprise going in, having them start soaking, and shaving and doing all the traditional pedicure things. It felt weird then, as if I was a bad person for making someone else touch my feet. I decided then and there that if I wanted my toes done, I'd just do it at home myself. It wasn't until I was pregnant with Aidan and couldn't reach my feet that I returned to occasionally having my feet done by someone else. Even now, I probably get about four to six pedicures over the summer months, and that's about it. I still feel awkward and weird and somewhat like I'm being a bit extravagant every single time.



Pets

Aside from Atticus the beta fish, we have no pets. Yes, we take in Chester and Kyla from time to time (RIP sweet Chipina, of course), but we have no permanent pets. I worry. I worry that I'm depriving my children of the magic of having a dog, but I know in my gut that I'm just not in the right frame of mind for that level of responsibility. Someday, if the time is right, I know I'd offer a great home to a dog who needed one. Until then, I keep the Zielske Pet B&B operating, and continue to occasionally check the Humane Society's web site.



I actually look forward to Fall, because I really can't justify getting my feet done more than a handful of times a year.

q



Quirks

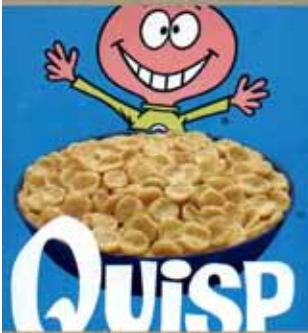
- I don't like anyone to read magazines that come in the mail before I read them first. Somehow, it lessens my reading pleasure.
- I like to drink my Oregon Chai latte every day at roughly the same time, and when I drink it, I like to be sitting at the computer. If someone is on the computer, I'll wait, and make the chai later.
- I hate the sound of doors opening and closing repeatedly.
- I can't stand the sound of whistling. It's so pointless, really.
- I'm extremely attached to my telephone headset and without it, I will talk for far fewer minutes on the phone.
- I believe, and perhaps naively so, that I have fewer quirks today than say, five years ago.

Q tips

If you walk into my daughter's room on any given day, you will find a host of Q tips in assorted places. She uses them for any number of things, and then simply tosses them where she will. I spend a lot of my time picking up Q tips. Don't get me wrong. They really are useful for a great many things.

Quisp

When I was a kid, this was one of my most favorite cereals. No one I know here knows what I'm talking about but the other day, guess what I saw at Target? A display of Quisp boxes. Someone got the memo!



When I saw a box of Quisp at Target, not only did I have my 'Q' idea, but I had a trip down memory lane. You guys, it is SO good. Also, I like the bullet idea. I plan to do more bullet lists in future volumes.

r



Runner, I Am Officially a

What started out as a "I need to rev up this cardio if I really want to shed some chubbage" has turned into something I never thought I would see myself doing: running. With my 40-something knees and zero stamina, I started out jogging one minute, and walking four. That was in January. By April, I had managed to log a 4.2 miles run around Lake Como, in 45 minutes. Without stopping. Using my legs. But the strangest part of all of this is that I find myself craving this once foreign activity. As in, looking forward to the heavy breathing and the sweat. I may be slow (read 11:15 per mile pace) but running makes me feel powerful. And cool. Like I'm part of some secret sisterhood of bad asses. And, speaking of tushkas, mine is no worse for the wear, thanks to my new sporty status. See also *athlete, chi running, Lucy*

Race, My First 5K

July 2010. Something I never EVER thought I'd do, I did. I ran a 5K in 32:38 around Como Lake. I was so sick with nerves the night before. Why? That feeling of not being a real runner just nagged at me to the bone. Well guess what? It gave me my very first time. Now who's a real runner? Yep. That'd be me.

Run Like a Mother

Love, love this book by Sarah Bowen Shea and Dimity McDowell. It made me believe in the sisterhood of runners. It made me feel like a part of the tribe. Not only that, I've gotten to know both of them through e-mail and I feel like they are both running mentors and friends.



Run, run, run, blah, blah, blah, run, run, obsess much, blah, blah, run, run. (Told you I was single minded!) But man, running makes me happy.

S



Swimming

As part of my whole new fitness regime, I've been trying to find other activities aside from running that I can fold into my cross-training. And guess what? I can swim. I swam for the South Snohomish County Dolphins from ages 9 to 11. I started out with a bang back in the day, making all AAA times for my age. Then I turned 10 and never recaptured the magic or the speed. I swam one year in high school just to have the chance to letter (I did, although not because I earned the requisite points, but rather, Coach Pringle liked my positive attitude). Fast forward through years of smoking, and an occasional dip in the pool here and there. I remember barely being able to swim two laps without stopping in my 30s. Now? I warm up with an 800, mostly freestyle and a little breaststroke to recover, then knock out another 800 for a 45 minute swim. It's really making me realize how many options I have to get my move on each week. That, and realizing a triathlon could easily be part of my future.



Smoker, ex-

Four-and-a-half years and I'm still going strong. It feels like a lifetime ago that I quit. And the best part is? I'm to the point where if I even catch a whiff of smoke, I am disgusted by it. Walking outside where people are standing around smoking, I cover my mouth and make dramatic "humphs" and gestures to show my displeasure. Yep. Just call me the Really Annoying Former Smoker. I am embarrassed by all the years I stood in office building entry ways to puff away. I'd like to apologize to all who had to walk through my gauntlet of smoke. Amen.

This year to illustrate my ex-smokerness, I just used a nice shot of me, taken by my daughter, Aidan. That's me. Ex-smoker. And I smell really good, too.

t

True Blood

Some things just don't change, and one of them is my love for this gory, graphic, Southern-soaked vampire show on HBO. I love it so much that rather than await the Season 3 video release, I ponied up and signed on for HBO. I look at it like this: we save money in so many other areas of our life, and both Dan and I love this show. It's a lot cheaper at \$9.99 a month than pricey dinners out with bottles of wine that put us over the \$100 mark. Plus, CT comes over to share in the bloody good fun, so it's a boon to our social lives as well. And if that isn't enough, then all you need to know are the following two words: Eric Northman. Aw yeah.



Tea

2010 was the year I discovered the joys of tea, courtesy of the coolest company in teadom, Adagio Tea. I've been enjoying my mid morning Irish Breakfast blend for months now. No sugar or milk, thank you. Just black. In the evenings, lemon grass is often served up. I'm really enjoying the ritual of it all. Cheers.



Twitter

Twitter is a part of my every day. That's weird. That's a very 2010-ish thing to say, if you think about it. Stuff like Twitter and Facebook...they remind me how different communication is in this modern day. My God, when I was a kid, a cordless telephone was a big deal. Now, Tweeting from your iPhone is the way of the world. *(Note: of course, not from my world just yet, as I'm presently iPhone-less. One day, my pretties. One day.)*

Hello Mr. Northman. Ay carumba. Like, for real!

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Updates

I have an email group of girls. We've been emailing each other for years now. We fall in and out of being active in the group, but even when we fall behind, we can catch up quickly with update posts. Our updates are random, free flowing and often listed in bullet point format. I think for anyone who thinks they can't write about their lives, the minute you break it down into a bulleted update, it becomes tremendously more manageable. I mean, who can't make a list. Here, I'll show you with a recent email I sent to the group:

- school starts tomorrow and after that, I will become creative and productive again and make money.
- Aidan starts high school with a pimple on her lip. We don't think it's a cold sore. None of us have 'em. Nor do any of her friends. She just got a nasty pimple on her lip. She is BUMMED.
- Me and Aidan went to see Crowded House on Saturday night and had SUCH a fun night. The crowd was LAME. Sitting on their middle aged asses. Finally, for the encore, I lost my inhibitions and we danced for the last 6 songs of the show. It made me love their new album, which I had written off. Neil is like God.
- I'm half a pound from a 40-pound weight loss total.
- I ran 5.5 miles in the woods with my neighbor this morning, who I really like running with. We even ditched our tunes, and just switched on our Nike-plus, sans headphones. Chatted the whole way.
- Therapy is still freaking me out.
- *Fringe* is my new fave show.

v

Very much like to

- Buy a really kick ass road bike.
- Own a killer pair of boots.
- Compete in a sprint triathlon.
- Stay in the shape I'm presently in.
- Be a the best mother and wife I am capable of being.
- Be far less self absorbed and open my eyes to the world every day.
- Keep running and stay injury free.
- Own an iPhone 4.
- Drive my Hyundai Santa Fe for many more maintenance-free years.
- Make healthy meals the whole family will happily eat.
- Live for a really long time.
- Act more and more like the responsible adult I know I can be.

Vampire lovin'

Some things never change. This year marked the first year I signed up for HBO without even blinking! Sure, I'll pay my \$9.99 a month if it means I get a chance to see Eric Northman for a few precious minutes. Sigh. This year, CT has joined us most Sunday nights to watch. We make Cole go upstairs to his room, of course. I don't even want him hearing this show. Still, the *True Blood* reigns supreme. So much more than those shimmering, sex-free Cullens. (Shhhh. Don't tell Edward I said that.)



More bullet lists. Again, future albums will see more lists. In the book, *Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life*, author Amy Krouse Rosenthal uses lists and tables so well. A great way to jog your memory, too.

W



Weight Watchers

2010 has seen me jump back on the wagon with Ye Olde Weight Watchers Online. Even though I recently read a book that decries all diet plans (and I really do get what the author was saying) I seem to do better with numbers and parameters to follow. To date, I've dropped over 35 pounds since January, through healthier eating and exercise. The whole *eat less, move more* thing? I'm buying it. I'll admit, it's a challenge to maintain perfect WW form on a daily basis, but here I am, writing it all down and doing my best to realize I'm not going to die by eating well, but lightly. Sure, I may melt down occasionally and eat everything in sight, but tomorrow's another day. Amen.



Weird

If you had told me a year ago that I'd be running three days a week, biking two, lifting weights, doing Zumba or any number of activities on another, I would have said, "Yeah, right." But in 2010, I have somehow found my inner athlete. At first, I was leery to really let myself think like this, but the proof is in the running path, people. What started out as an effort to shed some libbies had resulted in a whole new mentality on fitness. My only goal? *Keep it up, sister. Just keep it up. See also athlete, runner, I am officially a, and swimming*

Workouts

I run, swim and bike now. In other words, I have fitness options beyond just plugging in a DVD. I actually work out. And like it. Who knew?



X



XL

For the past few years, this is the size I've sought out. XL. Sometimes XXL. You know, the bigger the better. I never really did buy into the whole, "Dress thinner to look thinner" approach. I just wanted it loose and flowing. I recently went through my shirts, and realized that all of the XLs are a little bit too big to look good anymore. While this is very exciting in terms of the progress I've made, it also makes me nervous. See, I like to have all sizes on hand for all occasions. Never say never. By the sheer number of food and weight related entries in this year's album, it's a fairly safe bet to say this is one issue that ain't over yet.

Xcited about, I am

- learning new things
- cross training options
- digital scrapbooking possibilities
- growing and learning about myself
- feeling more confident in how I look this year
- shopping! (never thought I'd be excited about that)
- blogging
- finding new places to run
- my new prescription sunglasses
- our upcoming remodel (scared a bit, too)
- life



Work those X entries!

y



Yeller revisited

Now maybe there will be those who argue with me, but the trend of not being a yeller continues in my life in 2010. I still fully attribute my lack of nicotine addiction as aiding this calmer state. But also, I've been learning how to choose appropriate reactions to situations; to try and see things in a factual light and respond with what is needed (thank you, Donna the therapist!). It is becoming more second nature than one might think, if one were me. And that has been a very positive continuing trend.

Yakima

I have a pet peeve and it's very minor in the scheme of themes but I hate it when people who are not from Washington pronounce this fine city as "Yah-KEE-ma." Really? Really? You're SO not from Washington.

Yes

Yes is a better word than no, for a lot of reasons. Number one, it means you're on board with something—anything—and you're in the affirmative zone, as opposed to the negative zone. It can sound amazing when used the following ways:

- Yes, you are getting an unexpected royalty check.
- Yes, that means the test was negative for cervical cancer.
- Yes, we can afford to do this.
- Yes, you really do need to go down a size in those jeans.
- Yes, I still love you.



I wish I had done more entries like 'Yes'. Because it starts in one place, but goes deeper than you'd think.

z

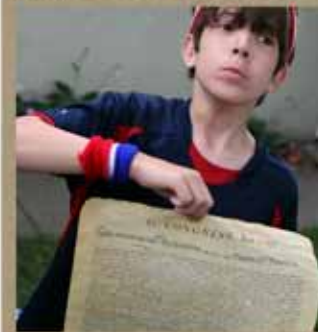


Zielske family

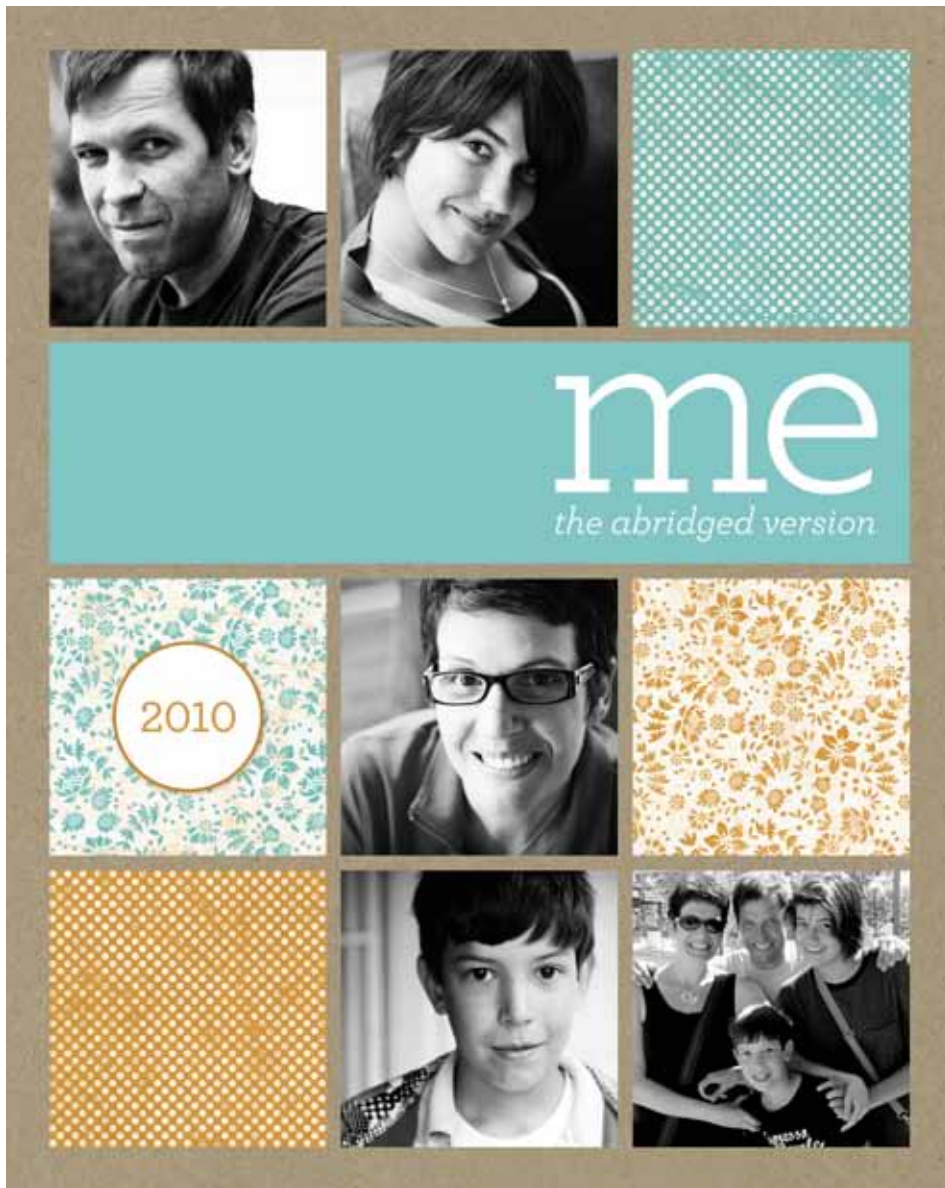
I've written about this before, but I really do like being part of this Zielske family. I've been a Zielake almost half of my life. Weird, huh? Give me a few more years of wedded bliss and I'll surpass that mark. I mean, without Dan, I'd just be "CM." I mean, where's the fun in that? CZ is way more fun.

Zebulon

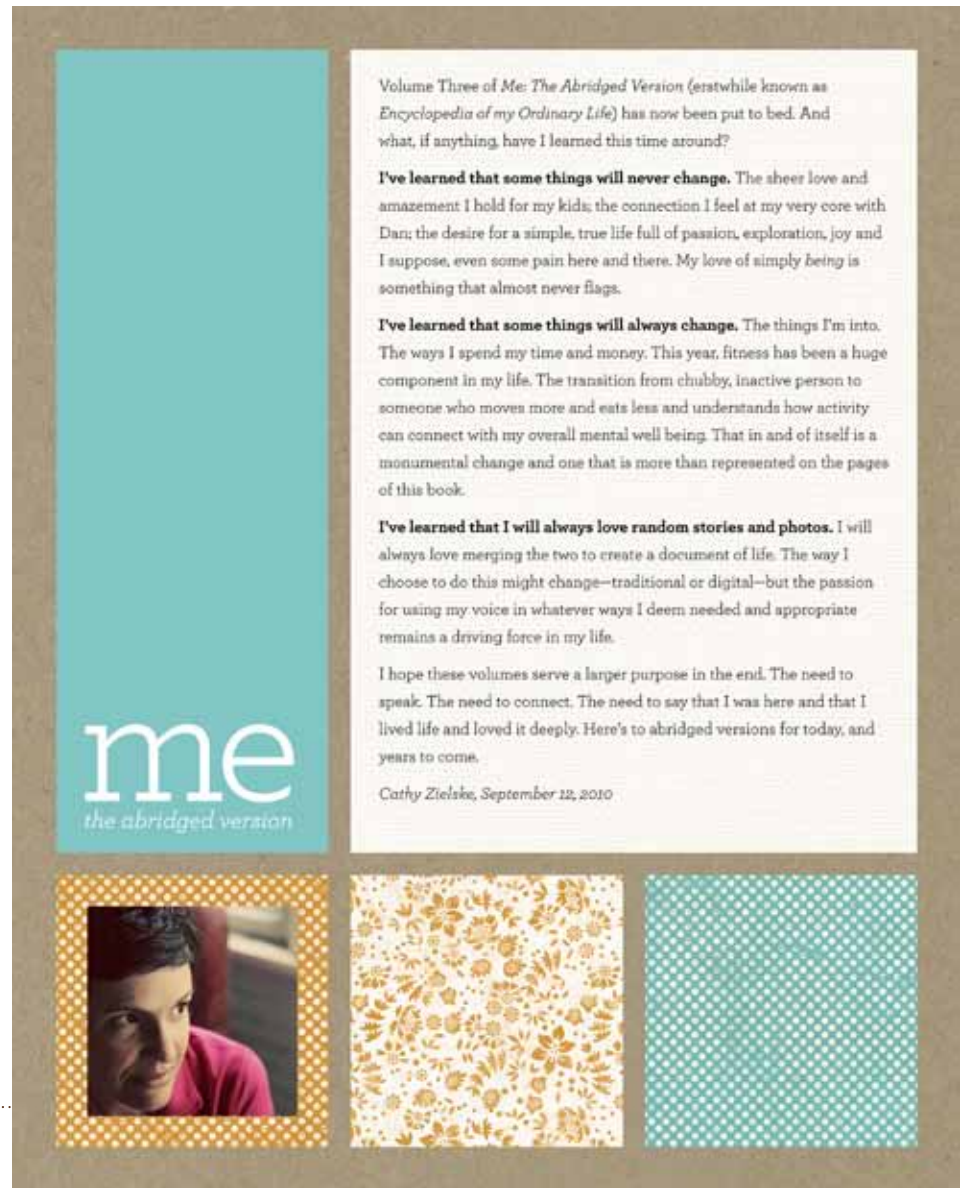
There is this beautiful song by Rufus Wainwright, called Zebulon. I went to see Rufus this year at Orchestra Hall. He is a phenomenal performer, a veritable virtuoso pianist, and he doesn't miss a note. He played his new album from beginning to end with a request for no applause between songs. It was intense to say the least. However, there is a line in Zebulon, that when he sings it, I get very teary and choked up. The line is: "I believe in freedom, freedom's apparently all I need..." It's such a soaring vocal, and such a beautiful idea. I guess in a time when there are people all over this big blue ball that are not free; who do not have the luxuries and the privileges that I have; when there are soldiers dying in the Middle East, all in the name of freedom, I guess this lyric makes me feel very thankful for my life. Very thankful for what I have been given. Very thankful for the time I have. Very thankful for those who came before and for those who protect and serve. Who said liberals don't appreciate their freedoms?



Of course 'Zielske' is going to be part of my album. How about you?



Thought I'd share the title page here.



And this is what reminds me of why I will do this project, time and again, volume after volume.