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Forcing Change - A Mainstream Metaphysical Mom Finding Herself with Family in Tow

by michelle payton

I recently moved myself and family to Western North Carolina. Asheville has been on my radar for more than five years, and I was completely at home before I even lived here! I can't say that, however, for the rest of my family.

We relocated from Columbus, Ohio. We moved there for work nearly 15 years ago like many modern American Nomads, and I knew early on that was a temporary stop. So when my first child (of three) entered high school I announced to my husband, "I'm going to research where we're moving next." He clammed up the same way he did when I said twenty years prior to that, "I'm going off the pill so 'we' can get pregnant."

My patient husband and life partner is in a general state of shell shock when it comes to my 27+ years of "suggestions." And after dropping the relocation bomb, I filled the ground zero void with measurable ideas for my research-oriented husband to wrap his mind around—or a "Great Quality of Life" plan. With teamwork, it ended up reading something like this:

1. Experience the changing of seasons, but lengthen the amount of time we can spend comfortably outside (so milder season fluctuations)
2. Have access to an abundance of safe walking and biking areas
3. More sunshine, but not too hot
4. Health conscious environment—cleaner air, food, water and respect for the environment
5. Good public schools for our kids
6. Keep and build on our current jobs/careers (maintaining consistent paychecks)
7. Have access to a larger New Age/Holistic/Liberal community (OK, well, that's really about me)
8. Higher cash flow (cutting expenses, purchasing a smaller home, living more simply, and other smart money moves)

Then it was about geography. Sedona? No, too hot. Certain areas on the East side of the California border? What killer bees?! No chance. I'd heard great "green" things about Austin, Texas. But after reviewing

many areas, we realized it was important to add another criteria point:

9. Driving distance to most of the family (so more East)

I really don't remember how I found Asheville, but we visited here on numerous occasions for about five years. This included staying in hotels and renting cabins numerous times and inviting our extended family and friends to get to know the area. While I mourned leaving after every visit, the idea of change was very scary for everyone else.

My attempts over the years to create comfort with the "Great Quality of Life" plan, the backup research addressing every point, and helping everyone connect to and become familiar with the area disappeared when our home in Ohio sold. Everyone had ways of dealing with the idea of change while the house was on the market—the Ohio house won't sell because of the economy (kids), my company won't approve the move (husband), the house will sell later in the school year and we will rent a house in Ohio (kids, husband, and extended family)... But every step of the way, (while I really really wanted it) what was clear to me is that this move would manifest when it was supposed to, and would be an important growth experience for everyone in some form (even if it wasn't immediately obvious).

So we're here today—in Asheville. And for a while, I allowed the thought to prevail

Above, So Below
Within, So Without

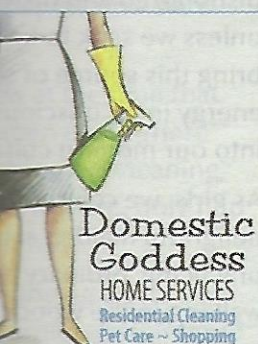
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that this move was "all about me." But now, like it or not, it's all about us. We've had some bumps in the road – dropping our oldest to college with her lamenting that we are now nearly six hours away instead of two hours, my son beginning his junior year in a new high school and (as he puts it) "having no friends," and my youngest in her new third grade class being pried from my arms by the principal to start the school day. But we're all growing for different reasons.

There's a chain email that hits my inbox every now and again, and a prominent business figure is (loosely) quoted as saying "Businesses don't care that you want to find yourself. Do it on your own time." But when Ashevilleans (business and personal) ask, "Why did you move here?" and I simply say, "This was a quality of life decision," the majority of the time I receive a knowing nod and an "I understand" type of response and even (from a local independent book store owner) a "welcome home!"

Michelle Payton owns an international wholesale art co-op [theleftside.com], is an author of six books including her self-bio *Adventures of a Mainstream Metaphysical Mom* [MichellePayton.com], and lives, plays, and works in Asheville.



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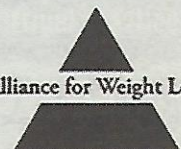
I was borderline diabetic and physically and emotionally exhausted. Still I failed at every "diet" I tried. Working closely with Sunny, I looked at what was missing in my life and how great a role food played in denying feelings I needed to face. Losing over 50 pounds was just a part of coming to terms with the importance of making my health, well being and living the life I deserve to live be among my highest priorities."

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~ Shelley Winters



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