**Are we out of the woods yet?**

February is heart month, the month of valentines, love and heart awareness. But most importantly (to me) today, February 9th, is the day of my two-year anniversary. It’s been two years since I was wheeled into the operating room for open-heart, by-pass surgery. Two years ago, today, before 7 a.m. with my chest wall scrubbed until 20 layers of skin was taken off (ouch), I left my world of before open-heart surgery to waken in my world of after open-heart surgery.

The world works in such mysterious ways.

Two weeks ago, while I was teaching my weekly in-door cycling class (aka spinning) ‘the’ song came on. I hadn’t planned for ‘the’ song to be on this list that specific day. I didn’t even realize that it was ‘the’ day, until it played. Somehow, I figured in my head, that the Wednesday of this spinning class was the anniversary of my doctor telling me I needed open heart surgery.

Two years ago, when I returned to in-door cycling after my surgery, I did it privately because I needed to know that I could ‘spin’ without chest pain and without dying. I didn’t want anyone to witness either of those possible outcomes. It was during that ‘come-back’ spin that the song came on at the end of the workout and has been sort of a mantra ever since. The good news was that I had no pain and I did not die, at least from my heart. My energy and endurance almost did me in though.

‘The song’ was a Taylor Swift song (judge me if you must) called “Out of the woods.” The chorus simply asks if “we are out of the woods, are we out of the woods yet, are we in the clear, are we in the clear yet?” Every one of these words was on my mind during that first workout after my surgery and remains often on my mind. Am I out of the woods?

Life dictates what’s remembered, what’s thought about and what’s acted on. All three things that are prominent in my mind two years later.

What do I remember? Pain. Lots of discomfort and pain. I remember the discomfort in my chest when I was working out. I remember brushing off that discomfort and telling myself that there is no way it is anything serious (after all, I was doing everything right). I remember those terrible words coming from my doctor’s mouth and me telling him no, me telling him that it’s not possible and there’s no way. I remember crying. I remember disbelief. I remember calling my parents to tell them and hearing their disbelief. I remember telling my children. I remember lying on the floor with my two Labradors and feeling their love, in the middle of the night because I couldn’t sleep before my surgery. I remember being wheeled off for surgery with tears running down my cheeks. I remember waking up with fire in my eyes, because I didn’t want to remember being intubated. I remember my family. I remember my father, my ex-husband and a new boyfriend all in the same recovery room (that was odd). I remember not remembering. I remember friends and more friends.

What did/do I think about? Everything! My heart. My life. My Loves. My kids. MedX. My staff. Dying. Living. Missing out. EMS. Being mad. Being happy. Friends. Being thankful. Thanking my angels and god. Travel. Home. It was the first serious time in my life, that I took care of ‘plans,’ just in case. It was a time that I made ‘extra-sure’ that I told everyone how much I loved them and where all my important stuff was. It was the first time that I realized how pretty important I am to lots of people. I remember thinking about the surgery and how brutal it was. I remember questioning modern medicine, my physician and the reason why the assistant was scrubbing 20 layers off my chest cavity.

What have I acted on you now ask? Staying healthy. Staying connected. Staying fit. Worrying about what really matters. Reducing stress. Improving relationships. Living every day to its fullest.

Are we truly ever completely out of the woods?