

Issue 30

Amber's Update





Doesn't 2025 feel like this so far?

2025 has been a long year already, and we still have 11 months to go.

It's been a lot like trying to find balance on a slack line
between two cliffs over the water. Or going through the day with the expression
above on my face.

And yet, despite how heavy everything feels, it's going to be ok.

We have each other. We are each other's safety tie.

Let's lean in to that.

A lot of my time this month has been spent with my parents,
who are both in their 80s.

Like many who live into their 80s, new health challenges have appeared, and with these changes come the complication of adjusting to these changes alongside all the other logistics of life. Logistics like the administration of doctors appointments, followups, referrals and tests, navigating medications, nutrition, cognitive and physical changes, financial decisions, and property maintenance. In addition to these logistics, they are operating in a world where there have been profound changes in the way we shop, consume media and use technology. Add to this the loss of peers and erosion of community, and you have a situation that would be difficult for any one of us, and almost impossible to navigate on your own as an elder.

Some people plan ahead for these things, and some don't, living day by day. My parents both grew up in families without a lot of stability. For them, asking for help was, and still is, a weakness.

Luckily, my parents raised three daughters who know that asking for help is not a weakness, it is an essential life skill. Three daughters who know that independence means seeing a situation clearly, without judgment, and getting support where needed.

Even with the benefits of financial resources, geographic proximity, excellent health insurance and veteran benefits, it's been so damn difficult, time-consuming and emotionally exhausting to adjust to these inevitable life changes. It's difficult for both my parents, and me and my sisters. It takes a lot of patience, and it's frustrating. I'd rather have more time with my parents for the fun stuff: storytelling, singing to favorite songs in the car, going for walks, and petting dogs.

And I have to mention the incredibly distressing news coming at us every day. I'm trying to find the balance between staying informed, freaking the f*ck out, and ostrich-style avoidance.

So, let's lean in to what we need.

Let's take care of ourselves, and each other. Let's be patient. Let's have a little fun. Life doesn't have to be all doctor's appointments, pill reminders and watching TV.

Here are some things I am doing along those lines. Join me?

Making healthy breakfast burritos I can freeze, for my future self on bad news days.

Next time I'll make two batches and give some away.

Unsubscribing ruthlessly from unnecessary notifications on my phone and computer. Do I really need to know the moment a plane crashes or someone posts on Facebook? No I don't.

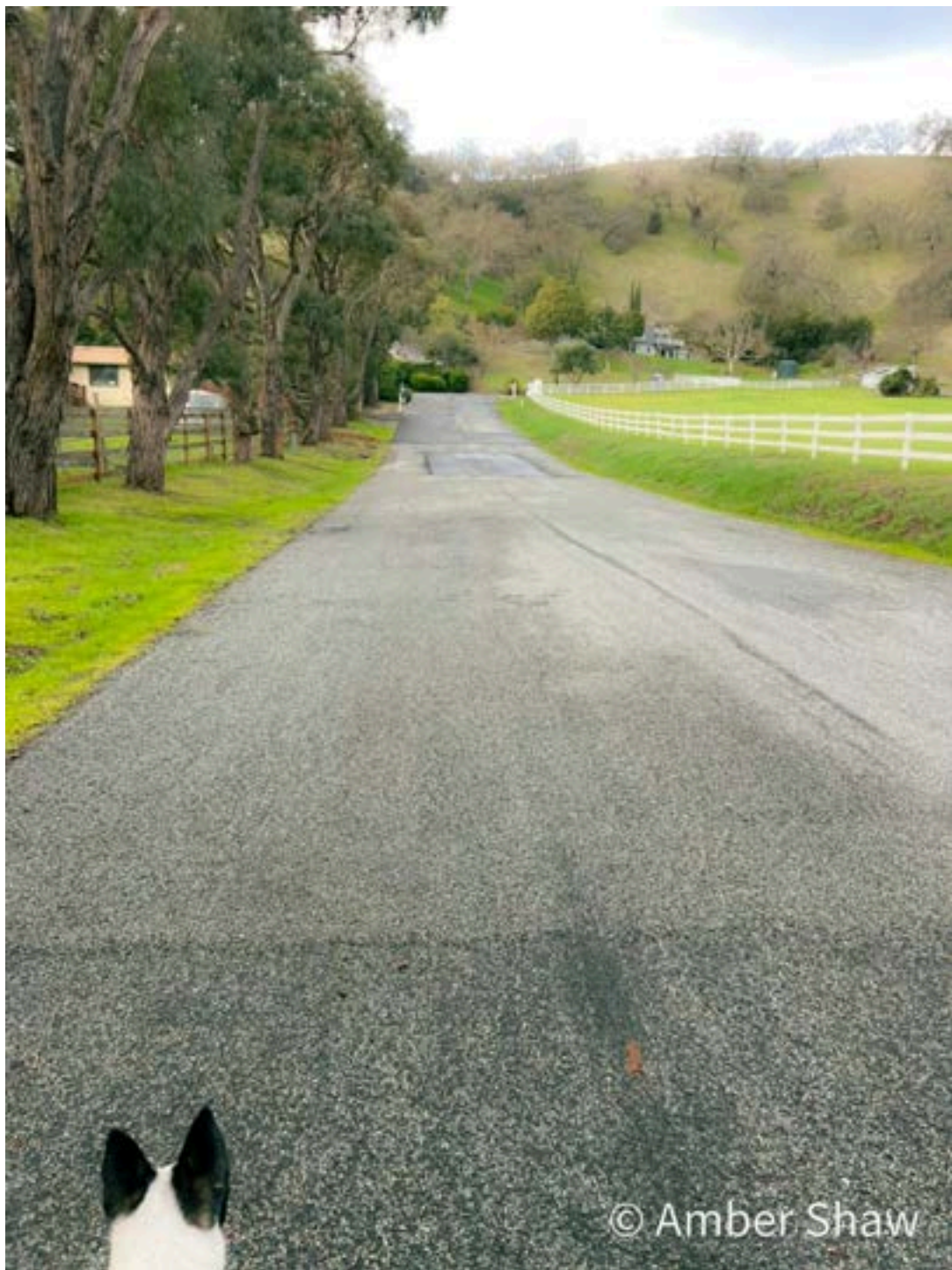
Spend time with people who support and inspire me.

Actively support people doing work that inspires me.

Finding ways to stay informed, that do not have anything to do with the echo chambers of social media. Misinformation, unqualified opinions, and lies are free. Journalism is not free, so I support it with subscriptions.

Photos from my January 2025

If you've read this far, you deserve to enjoy some cool photos!



When I was a kid, this road down the street from where I grew up seemed very steep, especially when my sisters and I challenged ourselves to bike or skateboard down it. I remember standing at the top, a little scared, but wanting to conquer it.

This hill was where I practiced taking a risk. I left some skin on this road.



My dad and I practicing taking a selfie.



I recently discovered that my washing machine has an EXTRA POWER setting. It's as simple as pushing the button, and it lights up. I don't know what the button does but I really enjoy pushing it.



Try this unprocessed natural wine. It's really good served in a nice glass.

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My emotional support avocado.



Hang in there!

Amber McClain Shaw, author, artist, mother, wife, friend, sister, daughter, aunt, neighbor, reader of books and eater of chocolate chip cookies.

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