

Kelly L Bronson

Professor McCarthy

ENGL 1121

14, April 2024

They say, “Grow up.” I say, “Shut up.”

They say, “Be more responsible.” I say, “No.” I heard this phrase from my twenty-year-old son and my oldest sister in the last two weeks. Leading a successful life means being responsible, working many hours and putting money in a bank account, “Shit, I don’t have a bank account and barely any money, alone any saved up, and if or when I do I burry it not put it in a bank account to disappear if the world goes to hell.” A responsible person is someone who pays bills on time and doesn’t just get up and go without making sure everything is in order. A responsible parent, according to my family, is someone who goes to work five or more days a week, comes home, makes dinner, is almost always on time, organized and has everything planned out and makes all necessary appointments and is on time or early to them, makes sure the kids are dressed nicely and have good manners, and never talks back to an adult. Someone who does not swear in front of their kids or shields them from negative things in life and doesn’t allow them to see your struggles. That sort of someone is not me. I am a someone who lives day to day sometimes minute by minute, doesn’t plan too far into the future because it is inevitable to

change and who wants to have anything else to get upset about when the future doesn't happen as planned. I say life is not all unicorns and rainbows and make the best of it. I say live life while you're living and try to enjoy it. It's too short not to.

Just the other day sitting on my king size purple mattress that I just recently picked up off Facebook for \$200, laptop in my lap, curled up in my cozy little comforter quilt that I got from the food shelf, trying to ward off my three month old Australian Shepperd, who is in fact got a bit of the devil in him, oh and by the way when I say 'ward off' what I am really saying is that I am using my one hand to try to pry his little jaws open to keep his sharp little chomppers from penetrating my skin, while using my other hand to keep his flailing furry butt from smacking into me while his feet are trying to trample my new-to-me laptop, whom, by the way, me and my girls road-tripped two months ago to Pennsylvania to pick up, a there-and-back trip, when my son looks at me and says, "You are the most irresponsible person -I know." Then proceeds to give me a list of all the things I do wrong.

People at school, at home, people just trying to look out for me, friends and family, outsiders judging while looking in all have a great idea of what I should be like. Everyone has an idea of what is best for others but why not embrace what someone thinks is best for themselves without trying to change them. If the way someone lives is not hurting themselves or someone else, then who is it for me to judge them or think they should live differently. Apparently, because I am not the most organized and don't have everything planned out and when I get a whim to go somewhere I pack up and go, that qualifies me as irresponsible, meaning I don't fall under the societal category of a "responsible adult", qualifying me, in the eyes of those , who are the so-called responsible adults living in the world, as irresponsible and immature, wreaking havoc in our society. Or so it seems.

I believe people need to live life, take time to enjoy it. Make memories. But the so-called responsible adults that don't forget things or run late all the time will criticize impulsive behaviors and go on about how to raise kids which is much different than I do. I personally let my kids pick out their outfits, even though they may be a little weird or not matched. I tell my kids they do not have to respect someone, even an adult if they do not get respected back. I tell my kids that mistakes are okay, and we can work together to get things right. I also don't have a bank account and instead bury my money. I try not to judge people by their past mistakes for the rest of their lives and I am rarely ever on time, which me and my girls like to call "fashionably late", and I certainly don't lie for the greater of good or sugar coat the cruel in the world. To me I hear from the so-called responsible adults, that they want me to raise my kids in a land of "make believe," instead I am real. They think I should sugar-coat shit because they are little, to protect them from the bad things in the world, I say be honest and open and if my kids are old enough to ask a question they are old enough to hear the answer, regardless what that may be. Everyone has these wonderful ideas of what responsible is or isn't and how one should be. But what's wrong with mine? Why is the way I live my life and my thoughts and ideas on it so wrong?

Many adults in my life have raised their concerns about how I live my life. Saying I need to be more responsible financially, put money away in the bank and watch what I spend. Telling me I need to grow up and start acting more my age. People in my family like to talk about how I make poor financial decisions and treat me like I have poor work ethics as well as allowing that of my sixteen- and eighteen-year-old daughters. As if it is a thought in any of our three minds that you don't have to bust your ass to barely keep your head above water these days. So, while still sitting on my bed I listen to my kid tell me about how irresponsible I am.

He goes on telling me the reasons why. Like spending my money on drugs and having a very bad drug addiction which led to losing custody of him and his older brother to my parents when he was a baby. So, he says if I wouldn't have continually chose to spend my money on drugs for so long and worked more when I was young and made better choices in men as well as not doing dumb shit leaving me paying a lot of legal financial debt then I would be more like him and his brother, who work long hours and save all their money. Which, good for them but I had to give my boy a reality check which he didn't often get from my parents growing up. I let him know that first off, I was with their dad for twelve years, second the drugs did not get bad until a few years into the relationship and with the drug addiction came the abuse. There was a point when the addiction got very bad and not doing drugs became a bigger battle than doing them. Using was not really a choice anymore but a means of not becoming sick and staying awake to work and take care of my responsibilities. I had to fight myself to continually make better choices, to get out of an abusive relationship and drug life, which I eventually did, but it was a long hard battle. I then let my son know a little about my work history. I worked a job and helped my parents pay bills from age ten until fifteen, at which time I then started working three jobs. I reminded him that I got pregnant at sixteen and had his brother at seventeen, was still going to school and working two jobs. I graduated high school with my 2-week-old son, his brother, at my graduation ceremony. "After leaving your father..." I said to him, I have had a job working anywhere from forty to eighty-hour weeks on top of being a single mom with no other financial help because their father only knows prison and drugs still to date and have made it this far. I reminded him that me and his sisters currently moved out of the house we were living in to move in with grama and grampa to help them, so they don't lose their yak farm. I reminded him "I recently was working a job working forty-five to fifty hours a week on top of going to college to

get my license for alcohol and drug counseling while still raising your sisters and being there as often as I can for you and your brother, and that my boy is one irresponsible immature person that just can't get shit right." He looked at me and said that I made a good point. I as well let him know he has some valid points as well. Like Arrow, the puppy, with everything going on it was pretty impulsive and irresponsible to drive to Pennsylvania to pick up a puppy when at that time I just lost my job and wouldn't start my other job for a good month and a half. I think we both learned a little in those short moments together.

It hurts when your past defines you. When people label you and society keeps that label it, creates an image of who they think you are in their head, and that image is now what they think defines you as a person. They may see irresponsible and immature, but I see someone just trying to make the best of shitty situations. I see it as living life and having fun. I try to shrug their words off and remind myself that I'm okay, but it's hard when the people that you love the most look so down on you and then I look at how other people are my age and I sometimes wonder if they are right. Am I not being responsible and looking at life all wrong? Am I not doing what I should to give my kids a better life? It is hard to see yourself as a screw-up, but what if they are right?

As a kid growing up there are certain things you remember. Things that stand out. That you tell yourself is not going to be you when you grow up. For me it was always money issues my parents would argue about. Life revolved around paying the bills and never having enough money. So as kids we didn't ask for much. Which was okay but impacted my future, my now. That said, the label my family has given me is the irresponsible one in the family. The fuck-up. The funny thing is I am always there if someone needs me, I listen when someone needs to talk or to just vent, I am the one who always says that every negative has a positive and point out the

positive when no one else does. I am always there to help someone who needs money if they are hurting even if it hurts me and always put my needs last and everyone else's needs first, which in my eyes, is also part of being a good parent, but that doesn't stop the judgements.

One day, before me and my girls moved in with my parents, my mom calls up and asks me and the girls if we can come move a chair out of the living room for her. "Of course, I'm on my way". We, at the time lived about forty minutes away. The three of us had woke up to the dog barking at the UPS guy dropping off packages on the front porch. As the irritation from being woken up to the dog having a cow subsided, realizing it was the UPS guy and must be our shoes we ordered, the three of us climbed groggily out of bed and retrieved the packages set on the porch. Ecstatic to find that we all ordered the right size, we primped and preened and matched our outfits to our new shoes and preceded to parade around the house admiring our new kicks when she called. We quickly hopped in the car and headed over to her house. I pull down my parents' long dirt driveway, a cloud of dust billowing up behind me. The last three miles to my parents' house consisted of me swerving from left to right, right to left trying to miss hitting the big potholes scattered across the road as if someone had taken a handful of marbles and threw them out in front of me, each one leaving a big hole, while the car itself fills with the smell of dust so thick you can taste it. Making it down the road without the car falling apart from being shaken so violently on the washboard road we just drove on, we arrived safely. Upon arriving I step out of the car right into a muddy driveway and my shoe smooshes into the soft sandy mud putting a ring of milk chocolate colored muck on my new shoes. "Uuugh" I shout as I see my mom stepping out the door onto the porch and with her snarky attitude, she looks at me and says, "You have another new pair of shoes? How much did those cost you?" Then she sees my girls and their shoes and says, "Oh, you all have new shoes. Must be nice to have that much extra

money” as she goes on to say that she only has one pair of shoes and has had that same pair for however long. I wonder why this bothers her so much. She looks at me and asks again how much, then continues “well must be nice to have that kind of extra money to be able to spend on shoes for you all.” And then I wonder, in that irresponsible brain of mine, maybe she is jealous and wishes she had some of that carefree attitude. I’m not saying that I pay my bills on time or even own my own place. Hell, I have walked out of jobs if my kids needed me for whatever reason, knowing that I would lose my job because to me my kids are my world. Jobs are replaceable but time is not. Shit, the one night, my first week of work, working at a treatment facility for drugs and alcohol, I get a call from my oldest son, whom at the time was living with me and the girls in Rush City, MN. It is ten o’clock PM and I don’t get off work until 11:30. I answered my phone seeing it was a call from one of my kids and at the other end hear my son tell me he thinks he is dying and asks me if he can overdose off of mushrooms. As I quickly get as much information from him about what he took as possible, I calmly tell him that the chances of that happening are very slim and would occur not from the mushrooms themselves but only something that they would have been laced with. While on the phone with my son, who is now crying and telling me that he loves me and is sorry, I let my co-workers know what is going on and that I need to get home to my kids. Knowing full well that I am new at this job and still within the thirty-day probation period, meaning that I could get fired if my employers simply think I am not a good fit, I leave my job early and head home. This is just one of the times where I dropped everything knowing the consequences may end badly, to be there for my kids. I did not yell at my son, by the way, for doing drugs, but instead was glad that he called me and I went home gave him half of a valium, which helped relax him so the rest of his trip was not terrifying,

then in the morning explained to him that this may not be the best choice of drug for him, being that he had a lot going on in his head lately and that can cause chaos with the use of psychedelics.

I sit back and ponder on the thought of people's perception of me. The flighty one. "Bat shit crazy" I've even been called, impulsive and irresponsible. And yet there is some truth to that. There has been more than one occasion where I have thrown some things together for myself and my kids, packed some sandwiches in the cooler and as soon as the kids got home from school were gone. The one time it was Oklahoma to pick up a friend. Then there was Kansas to pick up a truck. Two years ago, I grabbed my girls, spent \$670.00 on tickets to the Aftershock Festival being that I told my daughter for her 16th birthday I would take her to her first concert, and headed to California. On the downside of that trip, we veered off course and headed to New Mexico not making it to the concert because things got pretty sketchy in Portland, Oregon being that it was Marshal Law at the time because of the George Floyd conflict and Black Lives Matter movement going on. I remember that trip like it was yesterday. I always made sure to not go below a half tank of gas and planned the best I could to navigate so as not to be going through places known for having high crime rates and making sure to get gas at places that were not sketchy. Upon coming into the Portland Oregon area things got a little sketchy. I remember how bad I felt. For realizing I could not go on the rest of the way. Wrong time, wrong place, I guess. Portland at the time was Marshal Law due to the George Floyd controversy. The streets were badly ridden with more trash than I have ever seen before. Driving on the freeway literally looked like waking up to the terrifying scene that your dog had gotten into the trash and ripped the bag open and trash was from one end to the next. Between that and the sex trafficking being on such high alert I made the decision to eat the \$670.00 worth of non-refundable tickets and headed to New Mexico. We hit twelve states on that trip but didn't make it to the concert. Still

the experience was memorable. These times are what keeps me going. It makes me happy and enjoy life instead of just going through the motion's day by day. So, to some it may seem a bit impulsive but to me it makes life fun.

When my family or friends have family gatherings, they never ask me to bring anything, probably because I forget a lot of the times, when they do ask me. They tell me the party is an hour or two earlier than it really starts but, in their defense, I usually do show up late. That's why me and my girls always say "fashionably late", it just sounds better. It does hurt though that in their eyes they don't feel they can rely on me. I know in my heart that I will try my best. In the world today it just seems like a person's best is never good enough. It would be nice if people looked at the good in people instead of focusing on the bad. We all make mistakes in life. If you do your best to learn from them, that is progress. Let's not label everyone by the faults they have. Let's be open-minded, take a step back and see another way. A way that may not be "your" way but that does not make it the "wrong" way.

It hurts me to see my family and friends look at me as immature, unreliable, and irresponsible. They say you need money to live. I say If you don't live what do you need money for? They say be more responsible because something could happen, and you need to be prepared. I say "you can't live life on what ifs and maybes. Live for the 'now'".

My philosophy is that there will always be bills to pay, there will always be work to be done and maybe my way of living is different from theirs but it's good and we enjoy it. Doesn't that count for something? Think it like this... while lying on your death bed thinking about your life, do you smile? What makes you smile? Is it memories or money? Do you have regrets? That saying I said previously is what one of my old bosses would tell me a lot ... "You can't live life on what ifs and maybes.", and that has stuck with me ever since.

At the end of the day, I lay down and think to myself ... Is there anything that I need to apologize to anyone for? Did I do my best today? Are we all okay? Do I have any, I wishes?" at the end of the day such as "I wish I would have not judged people or put them down for being irresponsible, and instead opened my mind to the thought that sometimes it is okay to live beyond the social norm, to feel the rush of doing something that you maybe shouldn't have done because it was not the safe choice or the choice that was]the right or responsible choice. I hope you all will be able to lay down at night and say to yourselves that you had a good day. That you took the time out of your busy responsible lives to laugh and spend time with people you love because at the end of the day isn't that what really matters? May we all live a little simpler today and tomorrow as well. Choose your life not what others think your life should be.