Wednesday's with Harry

Wednesday's with Harry began early 2017...

Let's face it...living with cancer is not ideal.
It affects so many aspects of your being.

Besides the obvious crappiness, it can however,
if you let it, give you the gift of life.

If we speak of bucket lists and fulfilling dreams, then I wholeheartedly forgo any such list and roll it up into one.

So let my legacy be this...devoting time with my son to build memories that will last forever.

Life can be that simple.

Not sure if we are ready…but 2020 here we come!

Wednesday's with Harry
February 5th 2020

Well yes, it has been a little while between posts. Christmas has come and gone, although I must say I am still managing to find morsels of glitter in dusty corners and the once festive décor in the pergola is still desperately grasping onto the remains of the once bulging piñata, a couple of forgotten baubles and some shabby faded tinsel that is quickly losing its shimmer in the weather. The energy spent in the lead up to Christmas, I am sorry to say, has disappeared into the January abyss. I use the word abyss because it seems to be a huge gap between Christmas and now…It really cannot already be February!
I would love to be writing to you about all the fascinating and exciting adventures Harry and I accomplished during this holiday month, however I'm afraid, not a lot to report. With the bushfire tragedy affecting so many lives, fauna, flora and livelihoods, it became a time to be mindful and considerate to those affected and grateful for what we have. Within the January limbo, tennis and cricket were watched, the mornings drifted quickly into afternoons and the couch was utilised on a regular basis. Besides the odd and quite annoyingly messy phenomenon of it raining mud, the days started to blur into each other. As today is Wednesday and the year is already a month in, I inquired with Harry if indeed it was time to get back into the routine of doing something together…'Gym, eat, vege out, tv, eat, footy training, 10 mins study, eat…no time Mum,' was explained. I explained to him that it was possible to find some time if he could extract himself from his bed earlier than the current practice. This suggestion was met with confusion and disdain…a completely foreign concept that I believe will take quite a while to achieve. Speaking of underachieving…I did attempt to take a photo to accompany this post, because let's face it, posting without pics are rarely noticed. I tried to convince Harry that it was necessary however he wasn't having any of it. My stealth like lurking behind doors and furniture was sadly outwitted…or so he was led to believe! Whilst I admit the photos of his elbow are not great, I did overcome his avoidance tactics and managed to capture him in his natural fridge gazing habitat through the reflection of a picture on the wall. Never underestimate a mum on a mission!
Anyway, this is of course quite a lot of dribble, written simply to appease the frequent requests from facebook to write a post. I will endeavour to improve next time...So there you go!

Wednesday's with Harry
February 19th 2020

Yes it is Wednesday and yet again Harry and I have not managed to spend time together. Given the fact that he is facing an exam tomorrow, he thought perhaps a spot of studying was in order. I of course agreed, and so with a couple of encouraging and motivating words, instructions regarding leftovers for lunch and a hopeful hint to take the dogs for a walk, I scurried out early this morning to meet a friend to watch Little Women. By the way...for the ignorant among us, this was not a story about small females, but a classic tale from Louisa May Alcott!
It is not often that I seem to find the time to enjoy the pleasures of the cinema...and furthermore be viewing a film that I actually wish to see. Over the years I have sat through every children's flick and in more current times, I believe 'action/adventure' is the labelled genre. From Toy Story to James Bond, Diary of a Whimpy Kid to Mission Impossible and all the while the 'Romantic Comedies' have taken a backseat on the big screen. There is something quite fulfilling about watching a film in a cinema. You are transported entirely, surrounded by sight and sound that holds your full attention. For the next 2 hours there are no distractions, no noise and thoughts other than what is before you and I can't tell you how much I needed that right now. You are contained in a theatre, sink into your seat and surrender to the big screen. There is always quite a twilight zone moment on exiting a cinema. That out of focus period when you discover that you are no longer residing in 1865 Massachusetts, but indeed hustling to find lunch in the food court in the year 2020. Anyway, twas a lovely morning spent watching an excellent film, accompanied by a very good friend…and next time Leanne...remember where you parked the car!
Now whilst Harry was not included in today's activity, he did venture to the airport with me yesterday. From a very early age, Harry has always loved going to the airport and of course in particular when we are actually going on a plane. All very understandable. Not so sure the enjoyment continues when we are simply picking up or dropping someone off, however perhaps it is not my place to determine what Harry finds exciting. I guess the energy of travellers, the anticipation of journeys to come, creates a contagious buzz that appeals. I get it, but yesterday was a simple drop off that didn't even include leaving the car. He insisted on coming and of course as we approached the terminal, declared his urgent need for the toilet and food. I explained the cost of parking and food was likely to break the bank, however succumbed and agreed to the minimum parking time period. Somehow I managed to park the car in the furthest possible park from the entry and then proceeded to race in, grab a $9 chia cup (don't ask), a quick loo stop and back. When Harry spied the new AFL bar, I finally cottoned on to his depth of enthusiasm. Of course! So there you go.

Wednesday's with Harry
26th February 2020

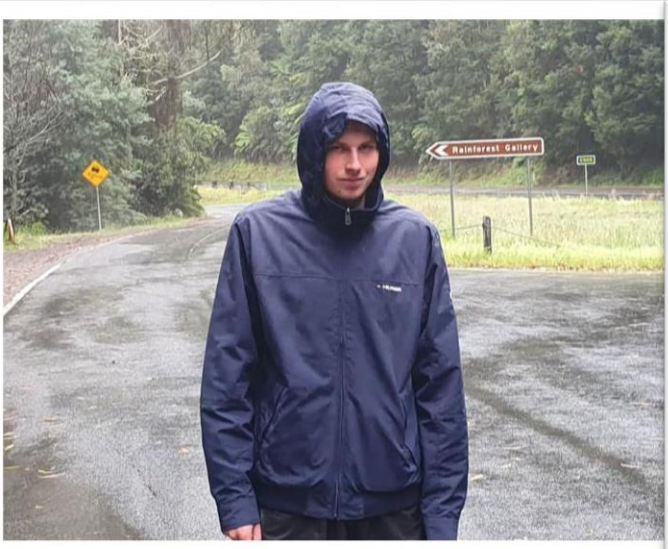
Finally we managed to complete an activity together…albeit a short one, but an activity no less. As I sit writing this, the sun is bursting through the office window, seemingly virtuous but in fact tainted with complete indifference to the fact that only one hour earlier it had gone missing, abandoned us and replaced by rain. Perhaps bad timing on our behalf, or perhaps it was meant to be…for what more appropriate weather to visit a rainforest than when it is raining? Ten minutes up the mountain from home is Cement Creek and a walk in the tree canopy and forest floor. Cement Creek…not the most romantic name for a beautiful pristine waterway, however named after the conglomerate rock formations. A lyrebird darted across the road and snuck off into the forest. It was too quick for the camera but as it scurried away, left a glorious impression with its ostentatious and elaborate feathered tail. I commented that it was a male because its plumage was more flamboyant than a females. Harry sighed and prepared himself for a lecture from me about how males in this world demand attention, leaving the females to be overlooked etc. He was in luck however as I felt no such need to spoil the moment with righteous virtues.
The view from the canopy walk is magical and you are encircled and humbled by the magnificent Mountain Ash. Testing my short stubby neck in this unnatural position was either going to enable me to appreciate the impressive height and command of these trees, or indeed cause vertigo and a complete black out! Fortunately I live to tell the tale and continued on our soggy but satisfying walk.

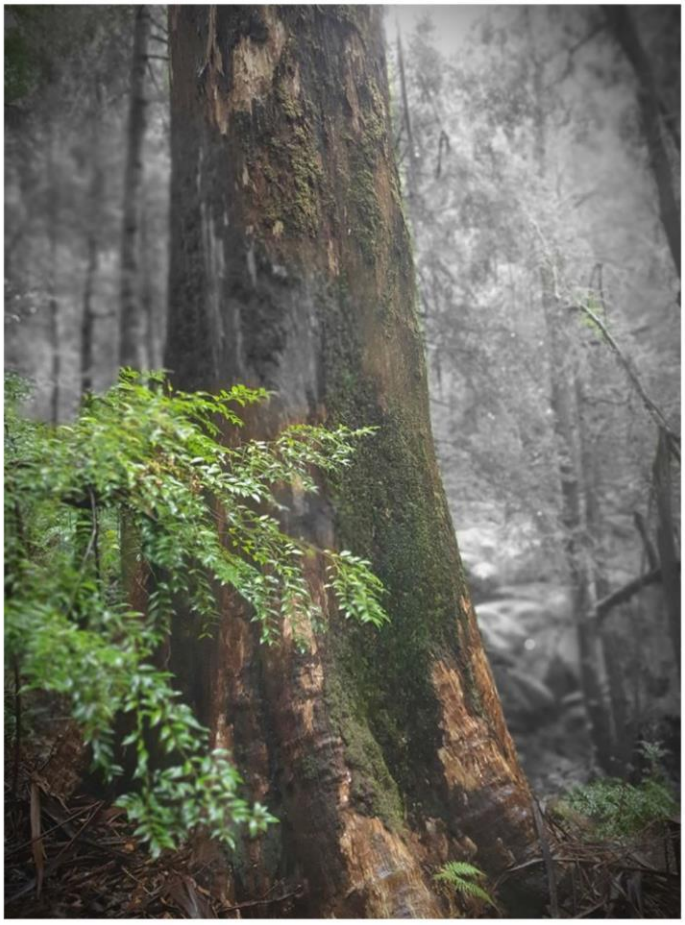
As it was raining, we were wearing what should be considered water proof attire. Now anyone reading any past posts would realise that the coat I continue to wear in dodgy weather, contrary to appearance, is in fact not at all waterproof and yes I do need to acquire a more appropriate coat. Harry of course was sporting a brand name coat and was indignant to the idea that it was anything less than waterproof…'Mum, it is a yachting jacket…if it can cope with waves on the high seas, it can handle a bit of rain'. The next stage of this walk was to venture down to the forest floor…it always seems innocuous to mention that you are venturing 'down'…until of course you have to venture 'up'. More of that in a moment…

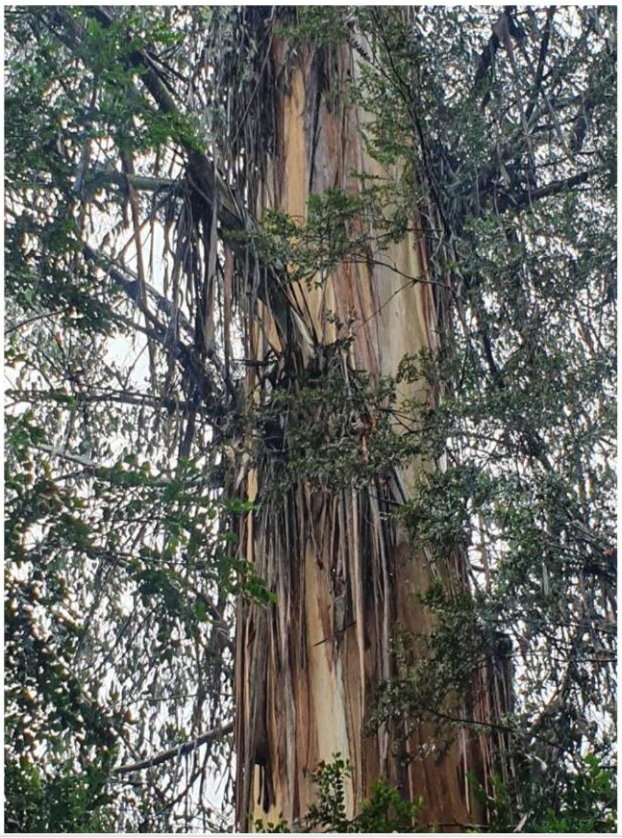
On the way, the luminous, shimmering foliage of ferns line the path…I push aside the thought that bloodsucking leeches may be lying in wait, and try and outsmart my camera's warning that I need to defog my lens. In doing so, I discover that I have camera options that I had previously been ignorant to. Harry is absolutely no help when it comes to explaining technology. He obstinately believes that it is not his responsibility to assist and instruct on issues that I can work out myself. I remind him that he wants to change his degree and become a teacher, which by the way, by pure definition, is a career in instructing. His silence was either a protest or a sign of defeat, but either way I did figure it out myself.

I was contently snapping away at the moss and the fungus until Harry broke his silence to suggest that we move quicker. It then became apparent that the 'up' was about to begin. I have noticed lately that my left hip is a little sore and as the 'up' involved countless steps, my pace was seriously compromised…well that and the fact that I am extremely unfit. Harry of course is a fitness freak and proceeded to leave me with the leeches and sprinted to the top. By the time I reached the top I

was questioning my will to live and then wondered if a defibrillator could be located. Harry was waiting, not at all patiently and was exasperated at the size of the steps I was taking. 'You know Mum, if you took longer strides, you would get places faster'. Yes Harry, but not sure I would be alive to tell the tale!
So there you go…







Wednesday's with Harry
March 4, 2020

Okay well in just over a month, Harry will be 21 years of age and so the topic of what he would like as a gift has been broached. Various ideas have been suggested and the latest is a camera. I explained my concern that he hadn't shown any great desire in the past to partake in photography and that it would perhaps be tossed aside for the convenience of his phone. I suggested that he make use of my camera first to see if the impulse subsided. I then went on to explain about my love for photography and how I used to spend hours in my dark room, completely absorbed in the process of turning film into negatives and then the anticipation as I swished the chemicals over the paper and miraculously an image developed. I was only equipped to tackle black and white however, so of course the need to have photos developed professionally was often. To the 'HAVE IT RIGHT NOW' generation, it is difficult to explain or indeed for them to understand that the process from film to photo was a lengthy and expensive one. The first decision was the length of film, 12, 24 or 36 pics allowed and this of course was the first expense. Harry looked confused. You took your time to take a picture as there was no delete or try again buttons. Still baffled. If you had an SLR camera as I did, you needed to have some understanding about focusing and depth of field, aperture etc. You then send your film off to be developed after you have proudly assured yourself that your photographic ability could see you working for National Geographic. You wait patiently for a few days and then as expectations of brilliance rises, you open the packet of photos only to be hit by reality…that sinking feeling when you discover you had just paid for 36 photos that highlighted the details of your thumb! Harry's reaction to my musings was in keeping with his usual response – a little confused with superior indifference.

So anyway…as to today's activity, we again kept it in the vicinity of home and took a short drive to the Redwood Forest in East Warburton. Yes we have visited in the past, but it is an ideal spot for Harry to try out the camera. On the way there the conversation turned to Harry's choice of clothing. We seem to have had quite a few conversations regarding Harry's clothing on these outings. Today was no exception. Whilst it is just into March, the weather was a tad cool, so I donned a jumper. Harry on the other hand was in a tee shirt. He casually mentioned that we couldn't stay too long as he was cold and also hungry. I asked him why he didn't seem capable of ascertaining the correct clothing for the weather. He informed me that firstly it was not winter so no jumper should be needed and secondly the forecast was for 22 degrees, both of which meant a tee shirt would be sufficient. I suggested that in future he just looked outside.

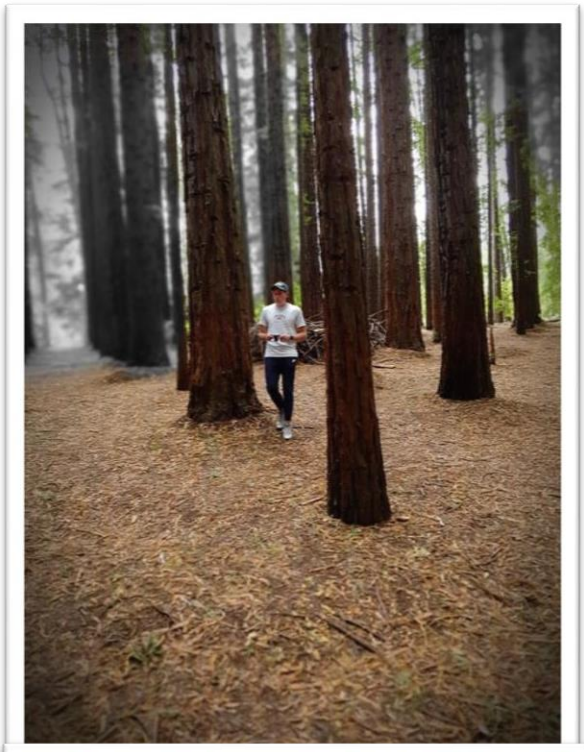
Fortunately today the camera was digital and there would be no end to the number of photos capable of being taken…that is until we discovered that the memory card of 3000 photos was blinking FULL. Are you kidding me! Okay so perhaps I haven't taken the time to delete the hundreds of dodgy shots taken over a number of years and let's face it, when you have no restrictions on quantity, you just go for it. So we sat on a log for a while, Harry still hungry and cold whilst I quickly made space for today's additions.

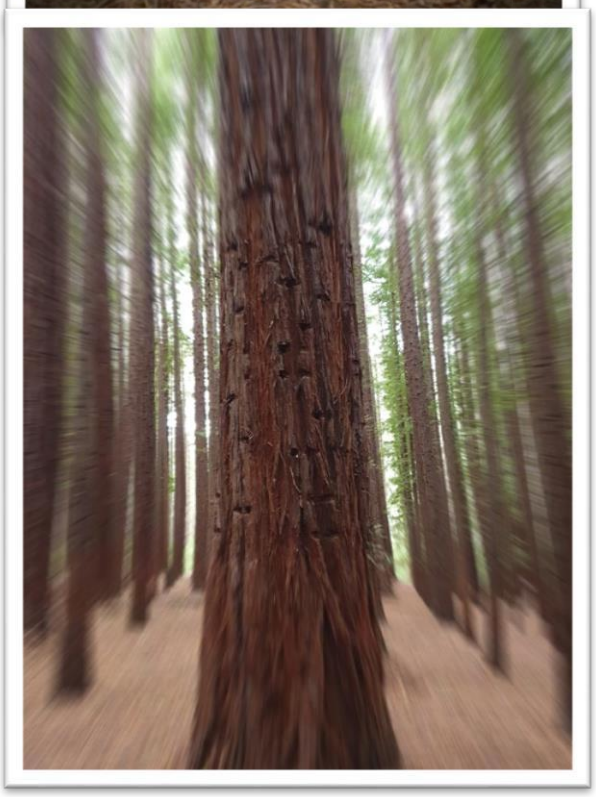
The Redwood Forest is indeed a unique and somewhat calming place, with trees stretching straight and skyward, standing in rigid uniformed rows with only their

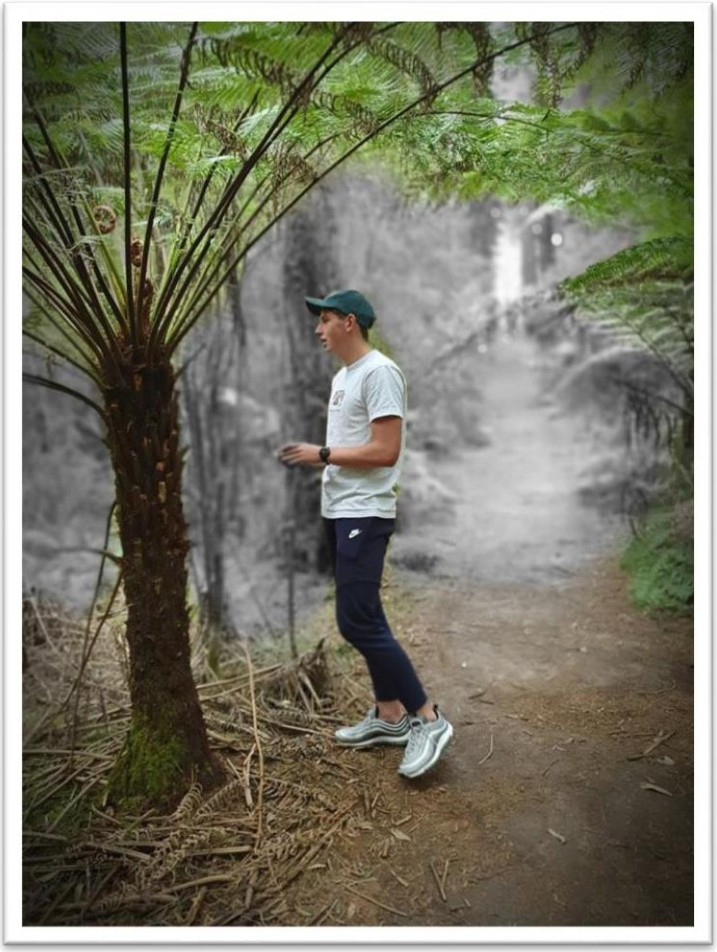
canopy allowed to sway. Their strength is somewhat comforting. It used to be only locals that knew of its existence, however now the knowledge is spread globally and tourists gather to partake in her spirit. Today however, there were very few visitors…a family playing and frolicking in the woven nests, others solemnly strolling with contemplation, and Harry and I with photographic intentions. We ventured past the forest boundary towards the sound of Cement Creek. Harry was quite keen to show that he could master the camera and so proceeded to focus on fungi, ferns and frogs and showed a liking for lichen, leaves and logs. This was of course until he explained that his hunger pains were going to 'literally' kill him unless we found food. You will be pleased to know that I managed to forage for some nourishment just in time and he is still alive and kicking!

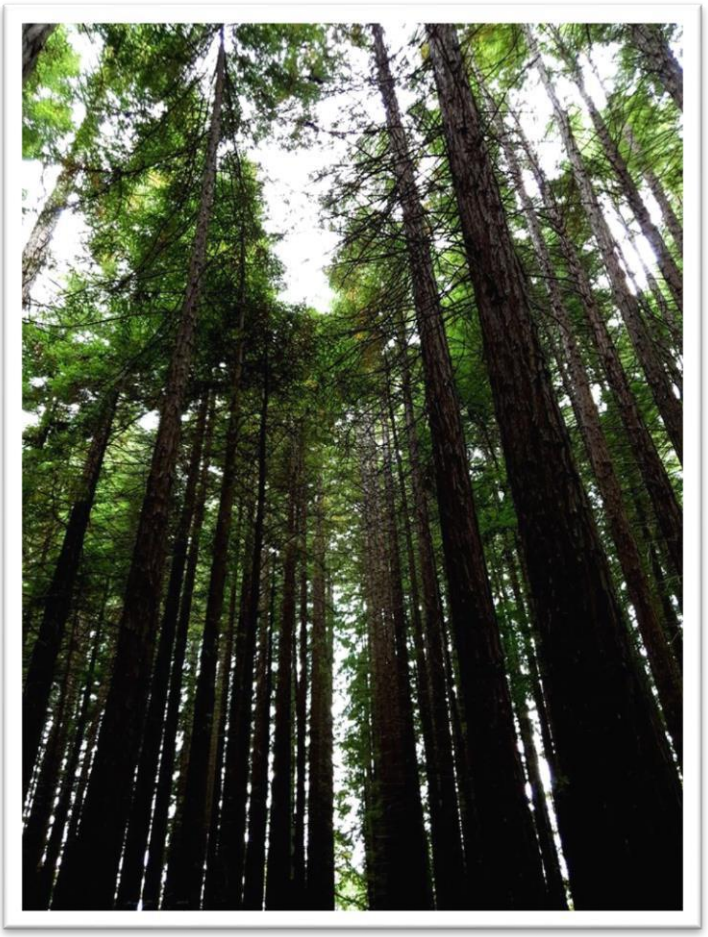
His photographic skills need a little work and so does my ability to download them…so in the meantime…the following are the ones I took from my phone camera. Thank goodness for digital.

So there you go.









Wednesday's with Harry
March 14th, 2020

Whilst we didn't get to share time together this week due to an overload of appointments and work/Uni commitments, we will attempt to put aside some time soon. In today's climate with restrictions and potential isolation scenarios, it very well could be more time than Harry would like!! Whilst I am excitedly dusting off board games and discovering how many cans of tuna are hiding in the cupboard, Harry is determined to continue life as he knows it. He is not however coping with the thought that we will not be at the MCG to support our beloved Blueboys. In our carefree lifestyle we have never really been tested to restrict the 'normality' of life. Many are commenting that it is 'just a cold' and are dubious of the restrictions necessary. The fear and panic of such a pandemic is overwhelming to others and they are emptying supermarket shelves. To me it is really quite simple...Yes it is inconvenient and will affect us all in so many ways, but surely our priority should be to those who could be gravely affected. I personally do fit into that category, but more so am concerned for my elderly parents and neighbours. Remain calm, be reasonable, think of others and accept the situation. Stay well people!

Wednesday's with Harry
March 18th 2020

As Harry is working today, my feeble attempt to amuse and entertain, at the detriment of the English language, will have to wait. Instead I wanted to discuss my health…so for those not interested, (understandably) you can stop reading now.

A friend contacted me last night to check if I needed help with obtaining any supplies especially given the gist of my last post regarding my health. It was quite a pleasant surprise and I really appreciate the thought. Just to let anyone interested know however, I am completely fine and functioning as 'normal'. In my last post I explained the absolute devastation in receiving the news that scans had shown the cancer had progressed and the only solution would be lifelong chemo treatment. From the medical standpoint they were 100% certain that the nodules they were now reviewing were cancer and that the targeted treatment I have been having every 3 weeks for the past 5 years would need to change to the more debilitating and destructive treatment of an aggressive chemo. I have often found myself balancing on that tightrope...the reality and acceptance of the medical world's expertise and my own determination based on my instinct and inner self. I truly comprehend that whilst I am being told my life is limited, I have faith in my own knowledge that I will be okay. Those thoughts are tested constantly but right now I am so thankful that I had the fortitude to believe in my instincts. Due to the fact that the nodules were now large enough to biopsy, I insisted that we do that prior to any treatment decisions. My choice was accepted but it was deemed unnecessary as on all counts it was concluded that it was the progression of cancer.

Well the results have come back that those particular nodules were not cancer, but inflammation. I was at my oncologist on Monday and was told that I am the only one they have seen this occur. Not sure how unique I am, but if it wasn't for my insistence to do a biopsy, I would most likely right now be on chemo for the rest of my life. I am still considered stage 4 and my regular treatment will continue, at least until we sort out the inflammation. They are thinking it may be an autoimmune issue. Relief is an obvious reaction but also the understanding that we were all given gut instincts for a reason.

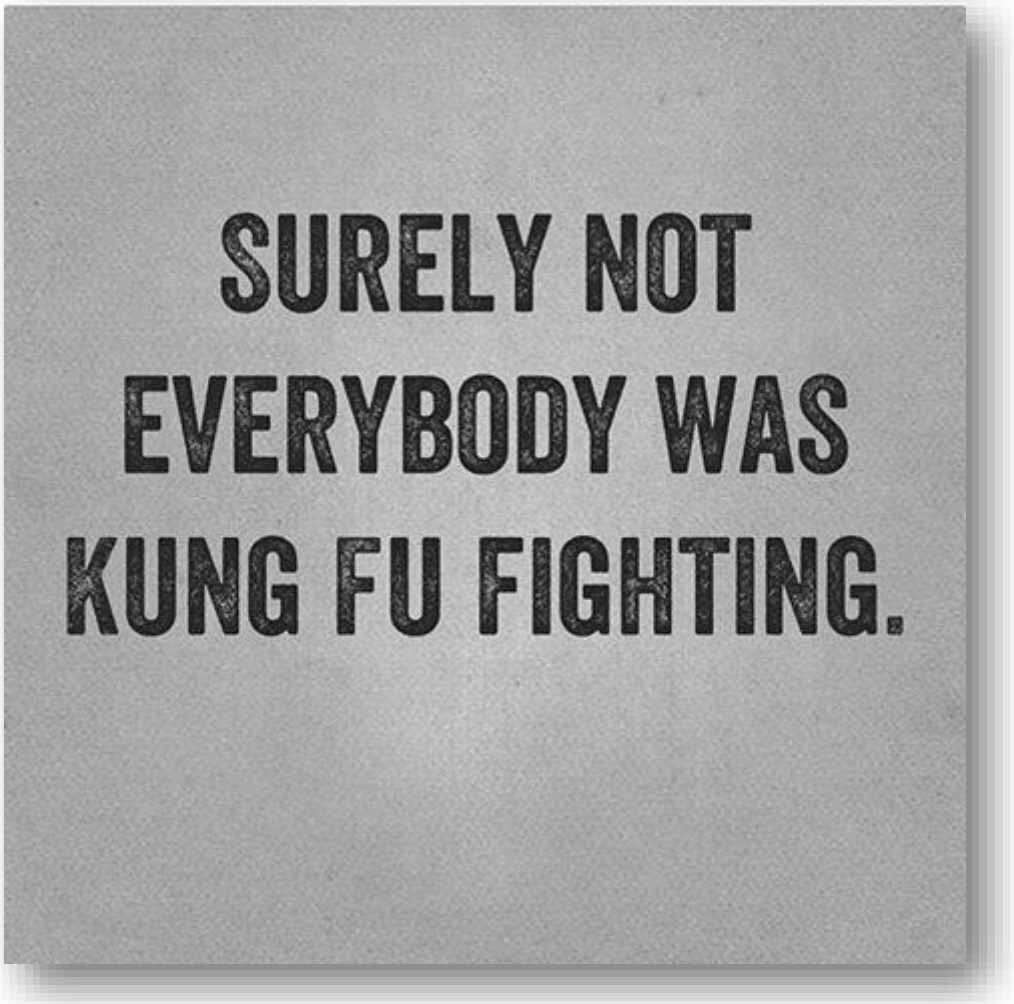
I have always felt that having cancer has given me the gift of life. Whilst I have sometimes been overwhelmed with the so called incurable nature of my situation, I have never once questioned 'why me' or become angry with it or about it. Cancer cells are part of me…they are my cells and treating them as an enemy can only damage me. I see them as the 'party' cells, they are not wanting to join the regular pack, but prefer to party on and cause a bit of chaos. I don't choose words such as battling and fighting because to me that only conjures up a war that I cannot win. These cells are mischievous and indeed may eventually encourage their mates to join the party, but I know that as soon as I understood that I can actually be accountable and responsible for my own part in this, then that allows me the power and belief to alter my outcome. Whether that equates to a longer life, is yet to be known, but either way it is a good feeling to be strong. None of us need to be a victim, we are all stronger than we know.

Speaking of health...
It is really disappointing, as we grapple with the health crisis of today that some

people seem to have lost their sense of community and values. Many people seem to be putting themselves and their self-entitled arrogance ahead of what should really be the only concern and that is looking after those who are vulnerable. Forget about being sceptical, forget about hoarding and about how it will affect you personally and start to understand that NOTHING is more important than health. Unfortunately this realisation comes too late for so many. Look after the ones who need it and stop the nonsense.

Life doesn't happen to you it happens for you and it is how you choose to react that is the real measure of your being.

I feel privileged and in fact a little smugly superior that I have gained an understanding of my own values and what is meaningful to me and much of that has been due to the gift of cancer.
Stay well myfriends.



Wednesday's with Harry
March 25th, 2020

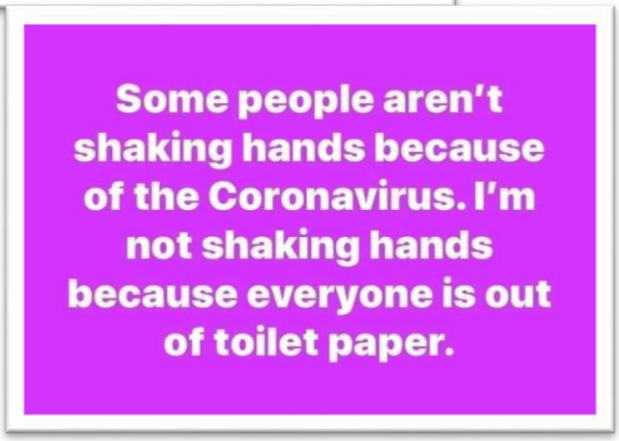
Okay, so the idea behind Wednesday's with Harry was so I could spend more time with my son…little did I know that would now mean ALL the time. Now the virus is a very serious situation and we all need to follow the restrictions and advise…so this is not about making light of the current circumstances…HOWEVER!!!

Needless to say our usual activities will be put on hold for now as we adjust to the 'new normal'. In their place will be me attempting to encourage Harry to partake in some board/card games, in-depth conversations, creative hobbies, cleaning skills and a spot of cooking. The reality will be Harry detesting board games, grunting one word sentences, spending time in the shed gym, going for countless runs, creating the need to clean, watching reruns of The Office and complaining that he is hungry. His Uni is now online and so the excuse for spending time in his room, in his mind is now technically justified.

As I am somewhat in the crappy category for immune deficiencies, I thought it wise to take Harry grocery shopping with me as some sort of human germ shield…and yes I do realise that is quite the oxymoron statement! He strongly objected to coming, but the need for him to purchase some hair goo altered his decision. Last time, I apparently bought gel instead of putty. Yes there is a difference. He explained to me that whilst the outside containers look simular, the putty was white inside. I of course informed Harry that it was highly unlikely that I would park my trolley in the men's toiletry section whilst I proceeded to open various hair products with the aim to detect their colour. He begrudgingly tagged along.
So the first step in this new age of shopping is the trolley itself. I figure that the least amount of my person touching it will be beneficial, so pry one off the steely ranks with my fingertips. I then use the same finger tips, and on occasion my elbow, to manoeuvre and steer my chariot whilst simultaneously being mindful of the 1.5metre distance from fellow shoppers and not to touch my face. Of course the fact that I shouldn't touch my face, instantly creates the most annoying itch on my nose. The first thing I spy is someone checking out with an 8 pack of toilet paper…my heart skips a beat and I quickly change directions to seek out the couple of pellets overflowing with loo rolls that are glowing like a beacon of hope in aisle 11. The craziness of toilet papergate will perhaps never be resolved, except to conclude that the human race are idiots. So I grasp onto the one pack allowed and feel calm in the knowledge that any plans of hunting lavatory necessities could subside, at least for another week. Now my thoughts shift to what else was essential. We cruise up and down the aisles with more reassurance that the panic buying had dissipated somewhat…that is on most items. Of course soap is hard to find and apparently dry biscuits are proving popular. It says a lot when the only packets left are Ryvita. Harry informed me that if he wanted to eat cardboard, he would chew on the box. I question my need to purchase another can of tuna and then start to second guess the necessity for other more luxury items such as razors and hair dye. Now I do understand that staying home invites the option to neglect one's upkeep in the hairy leg and grey hair department, but do I really wish to surrender all maintenance…perhaps not just yet. I do imagine at the end of this we will all exit our homes looking like we have been saved from a deserted island…bearded, unkempt, dishevelled and incoherently calling for a volley ball named Wilson.

So we manage to navigate the aisles, untouched and unbreathed upon and go to line up on a bit of tape marked on the floor for the checkout queues. It is about this time that I realise that whilst there are numerous shoppers waiting, there are only 2 checkouts open. It then becomes evident that I needed to use all my experience and skills to deduce whether queue number one, whilst more items in trolleys, but a quick checkout assistant, would beat queue number two with less goods but quite a chatty and therefore quite slow register operator. Harry was confused and strongly disagreed with my choice of queue number one. So the challenge was on…and for some time, Harry had that 'I told you so' look on his face and his objections were not too subtle. I held strong however and when we finally managed to complete our transactions ahead of those in queue number 2, victory was mine! I smugly pushed the trolley, (with finger tips) back to the car, vindicated and justified. The celebration was short lived however as I needed to search the depths of the glove box to locate, among the odd collection of phone chargers, breath mints and car manuals, a packet of hand wipes, with the hope they were not entirely dried up and may be somewhat useful to disinfect my contaminated fingertips.
So there you go, another quite useless rambling account that just happens to be on a Wednesday. You will be pleased to know, or not, that there is plenty more where that came from. Clearly I need a hobby!

On a serious note…
The economic effects of this will be felt by all and that will be a challenge…from that we can recover. Your health is everything. Without it you have nothing. Sincerely hoping that everyone is keeping well. Heartfelt thoughts to all those affected, especially those hit hard in Europe.



Wednesday's with Harry
April 1st2020

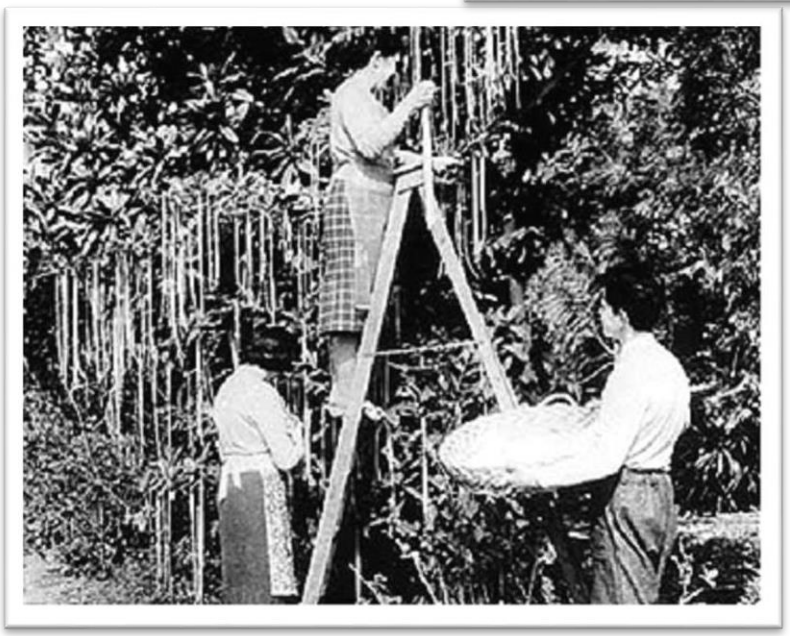
Typing April 1st just now, prompted me to realise that indeed today is the day that practical jokes are pranked among the unwary. One I clearly remember, many years ago, was a news report regarding the outbreak of a deadly disease in the spaghetti crop. It was devastating farmers and causing widespread concern from lovers of pasta. They showed the spaghetti strung on the vines with a 'weevil' (aka black cotton) attacking the crop. The naivety displayed by the public was remarkable and I wonder if repeated today what the response would be. Sadly I feel it would be viewed no less sceptical and no doubt someone would take up the cause and create a Go Fund Me page! My only contribution to today's mischief was to turn a couple of clocks back an hour in the very small attempt to confuse. In our household we have a total of 10 clocks all ticking away. This, by the way, is a statement about my love for the look of a clock, not some obsessive disorder relating to knowing the time…and trust me, those in the know will acknowledge that we are always running late. Now whilst turning clocks back (or is that forward) is due to happen this weekend, the reality is that this is not going to have any great effect on Harry as he is equipped with various digital time telling apparatus that constantly beep and inform him of seemingly everything he needs to know. My piddling gesture however is a small nod to the Mexican standoff that is taking place here at the moment.
One of the sitcoms that Harry enjoys and tends to be played repeatedly here is 'Everyone loves Raymond'. In one episode, a suitcase is left on the stairs and neither the husband nor wife felt it was their responsibility to put it away. I think at one point Ray placed some cheese in it to create an offensive odour and therefore encourage his wife to attend to it. We seem to have similar incidents occur regularly, although, truth be known, I am clearly losing on the parenting front as I am the only one who appears to realise it is actually happening. At the moment, the clock in the toilet…yes the toilet…has stopped at 9.12. For the past couple of weeks I have made a point of not changing the battery in the very misguided belief that someone else in this household would bother. Obviously there is absolutely no intention of it being rebatteryified by anyone other than me…even if cheese was inserted! Finally I inquired if he had noticed and indeed he had…'not my department Mum'… So silly me, not in fact a Mexican standoff…simply status quo! I then went on to inquire if he had any knowledge of the shortage of bowls and spoons that had disappeared from the kitchen. I, of course already knew that the pile beside his bed was multiplying and along with other various utensils he found, and like a scene from the Cat in the Hat, he juggled them back to the kitchen…and when I say kitchen, I mean in the vague vicinity of the general area.
Speaking of his room… I shared with him an inspirational post from an ex-navy dude who was attempting to motivate those who perhaps are becoming overwhelmed by the current situation. 'If you want to change the world, start by making your bed.' The idea of course, is that one small task leads to another…if you attend to the small tasks then the bigger tasks happen…get up, get dressed, power of one, power of hope…etc. Now I must admit, that besides Harry spending countless hours staring vacantly into the fridge, he generally is quite motivated to get up, exercise and study, His bed however remains unmade. Harry's response to this was that it is a scientific fact that leaving your bed unmade created more opportunities for bed bugs to escape and therefore the healthier option. He very well may have a point, but may have also missed the point!

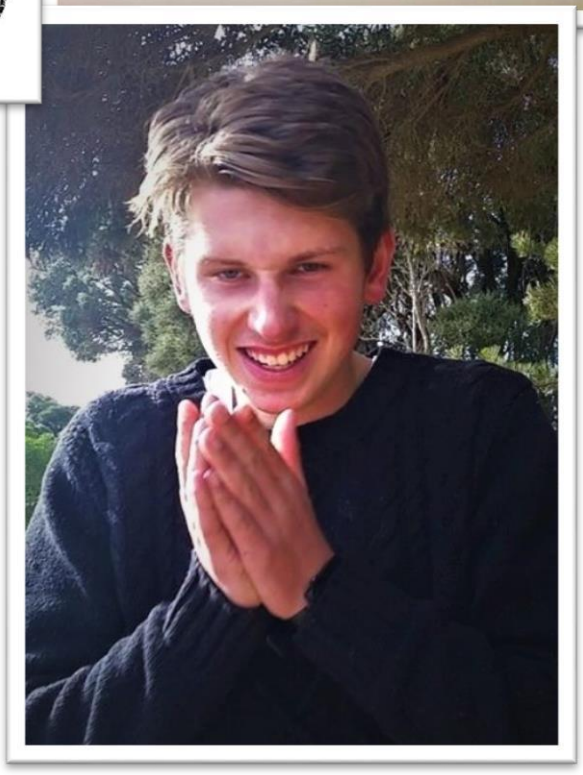
The closing remark from this post was a quote from Viktor Frankl…a true inspiration and someone I have turned to frequently over the years…' When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves'.

And now I must go and choose an outfit for tomorrow…as opposed to the 'at home' gear donned of late…an outfit you ask? On an outing you query? Overlooking the fact it is cancer treatment that beckons, I find myself in a bizarre conflict. The excitement from actually leaving the house verses the reality of where I am going and that it may involve wearing a Hazchem suit!

So there you go, another sprawling collection of words with no real direction, filling a page as we find ourselves contained in our own small worlds.

Take care all.





Harry…and this is not the end… Just a pause to wish you the best 21st birthday you can possibly have, especially given the current covid circumstances.

You have grown to be a beautiful young man and I look forward to spending many more years collecting memories with you.

All my love…xx

Wednesday's with Harry,
April 8th 2020

Well it took Harry to turn 21…and a little forced isolation…for my board game fervour to be allowed to surface from the depths of priority. And in fact it is 2 days later and the game of choice is still set up on the dining room table. I fear however that says more about lethargy to pack it up rather than Harry's new found excitement and motivation to continue to play. Currently the screeching noise from the new F1 PlayStation game is strongly indicating that revving the turbo charged vehicle, steering it into a slipstream after dragging out from pole position all from the comfort of the cockpit on the couch, is seemingly overtaking the desire to pursue trivia in a board game.
So my one and only child reached the age of 21. He does declare confusion as to why it is such a milestone especially as he became an adult at 18. Not sure which particular definition of an adult should be used at 18 and in fact I know 50 year olds that are still searching for that description, but I concede that I understand what he means I tell him to put it down to tradition and just go with it. Of course the fact that we are stuck at home in isolation doesn't help with selling the party theory that tradition requires a big shindig. I do acknowledge that the celebrations I had hoped for were most likely a reflection on my own need to tick off the milestones. For no matter how positive I feel regarding my health, there is always a small nagging doubt that I will miss out on all of the big stuff.
Harry didn't seem to mind that the celebrations were mild, but to try and compensate, I asked for contributions towards a video I was compiling for him. Thanks to more than 60 messages, from primary school teachers, footy and tennis coaches to friends, family and others that kept him guessing, I was able to record a memorable keepsake that he really did appreciate. Now just when you thought his day couldn't get any more wrapped up in motherly love, I presented him with a 187 page bound edition of Wednesday's with Harry...the story so far. He may have been a little overwhelmed at the prospect so I thought it prudent to gently guide and motivate him towards truly understanding the correct response upon receiving such a book. Sooo…for the next little while, we sat and relived some memories. We revisited a few outings including our Ikea visit, our Wii tournament and our bollard adventure in Geelong….which in fact is on page 105 and in the latter part of that entry is where I recalled the most hideous day I spent at high school. By now you may be feeling sorry for Harry, that on his special day he was being forced into sentimental torture…however pleased to say that he acted interested and chortled and guffawed in all the correct places.

So enough sentimental gifts, it was time to pull out the big guns and give him presents he actually asked for. The afternoon was spent playing Trivial Pursuit – yes his choice! I tried to insist on partaking in beer pong but no need to fear as Harry informed me quite emphatically that it would be just too weird to play drinking games with his mum. To be honest I am well out of practice and so we settled for a bottle of champagne whilst trying to recall if Ronald Reagan and Gorbachev met at a summit conference in Iceland? The more I drank the less I knew, which seemed in complete contrast to Harry. His intelligence oddly improved with consumption.

So Happy Birthday was sung, the candles were blown out, the cake was cut and the remains are still being eaten. The streamers and balloons, are now sagging and deflated, yet defiantly hanging on to extend their stay and remind us of the party that was. Thanks to all those who helped make Harry's day special…so there you go.

Wednesday's with Harry
April 15th2020

If not for my phone and its ability in informing me that is in fact Wednesday, I would have remained in my dayless stupor. One of the many muddled and nebulous consequence of isolation. It is actually quite a blissful upshot so I shouldn't complain…except for the occasional annoying lack of awareness when it comes to TV programming. With little regard for the names of the day finds me missing one of my favourite shows…and yes I do know about catch up, however the programming dudes seem to entirely miss the point with only 2 out of 9 series presently listed.

Now those of you who may have participated in a conversation with me regarding TV shows, will not be surprised when I tell you it is Taskmaster of which I speak. So far, I have yet to discover anyone else on the planet who has either watched it, or share my love for it. I obviously haven't sold its hilarious virtues comprehensibly enough, as have not yet managed to convert or encourage any fellow viewers. The premise of this British programme is for 5 comedic personalities to partake in tasks set by Taskmaster underling Alex Horne, and ruled and adjudicated by the tormenter Taskmaster aka Greg Davies. The tasks are of course ridiculous and invites the participant to twist the instructions into lateral and unfettered results. It is indeed not always the task itself, but the comedic reaction that creates such amusement. As I have yet to convince anyone in this household the value of its humour, I find myself cackling and laughing alone…until today.

So whilst I couldn't manage to bring Harry to Taskmaster, I decided to bring Taskmaster to him. Very little searching on the web resulted in the understanding that I am actually not alone in my love for this show. Globally it is vastly popular and the world in lockdown is lapping up the regular tasks that Alex Horne provides via twitter. Camouflaging yourself as a wall or converting the use of your bed is providing boredom buster ideas across the world. Beds are becoming ski runs, pool tables or a box of tissues.
Encouraged by this, I set up 6 very easy tasks for Harry to complete. After a fierce negotiation, he agreed to give me 30 minutes of relatively good humoured behaviour, but with the added caveat that his attitude may change at any moment. Yay!

NB: Most of these are time trials and Harry didn't seem to realise that he was not actually competing against anyone, which was possibly a good thing.

Task 1: Time trial. Burst all the bubbles in a piece of bubble wrap.
Harry's method of choice was to twist and squeeze the bubble wrap, attempting to expel the air in one quick motion. Wasn't the quickest of methods as it took him almost 3 minutes to complete. He declared that this particular piece of bubble wrap was inferior as it appeared to simply transfer the air from one bubble to another.

Task 2: Best likeness: Wearing a blindfold, draw a self-portrait on paper.
Needless to say the results speak for themselves. Besides the fact it is a stick figure, it seems only the feet and hair are detached, so well done.

Task 3: Time trial: Leaning against a wall at all times and with your hands in your pockets, manoeuvre a cushion from the floor to behind your head. Your back must

stay in contact with the wall at all times and you must not touch your cushion with your hands.
Remarkably, Harry achieved this in one quick swoop taking just 3 seconds. I was surprised and he was nonchalantly chuffed. Due to the quickness of this task, I was unable to capture the first effort on camera and so then he repeated…not so easy the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth time.

Task 4: Time trial: Holding a spoon in each hand, throw an object with one spoon and catch it in the other. Hands must be 1 metre apart.
For the next 2 minutes 32 seconds he tried a variety of objects including a roll of tape, Easter eggs (yes still some left), a rock, a ball and when all those failed, a coin. The coin was ultimately successful. Now I must retrieve the number of Easter eggs that rolled under the couch before the dogs sniff them out.

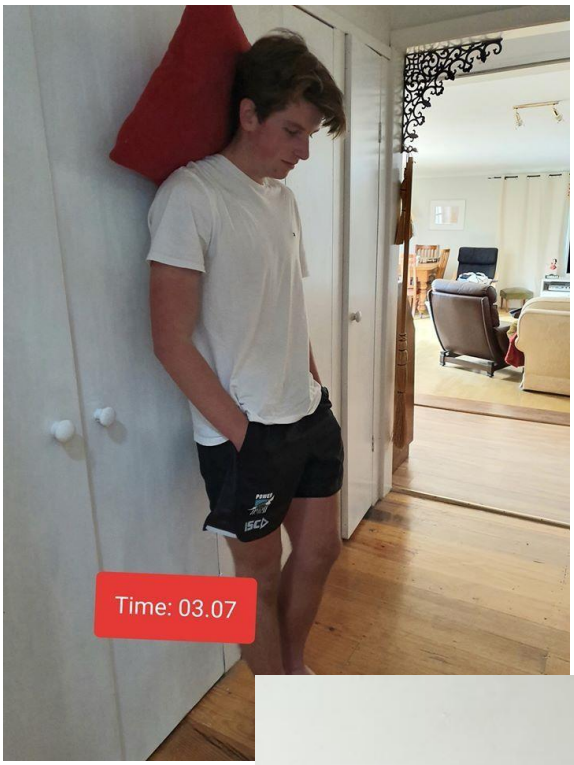
Task 5: Longest wins. Make the longest continuous noise. Your noise must come from your body.
The lack of interest was beginning to show with this one and after a very poor performance of 21 seconds, he gave up. Whilst I was grateful that the noise of choice came from a facial orifice (and not a burb), he was not at all competitive and his winning reputation was dwindling.

Task 6: Best story over the furthest distance. Write a 20 word story on paper and ran as far as you can at the same time. You must be running as fast as possible while writing.
Harry's choice of foot apparel to complete this task was Nike slides, a clear indication that speed was not a priority. Okay, so maybe the story will be fabulous? That would be negative. He appeared to fall back into the mindset of a 5 year old when their form of expression imitates their surrounds. 'Once upon a time, a man ate a dog and he was full from the dog he then went on a trampoline.' BTW dog is NOT on our menu tonight!

So whilst this exercise will not influence Harry's interest in Taskmaster, it did account for 30 minutes of today.

So there you go…let the challenges commence!

Time: 1.06.41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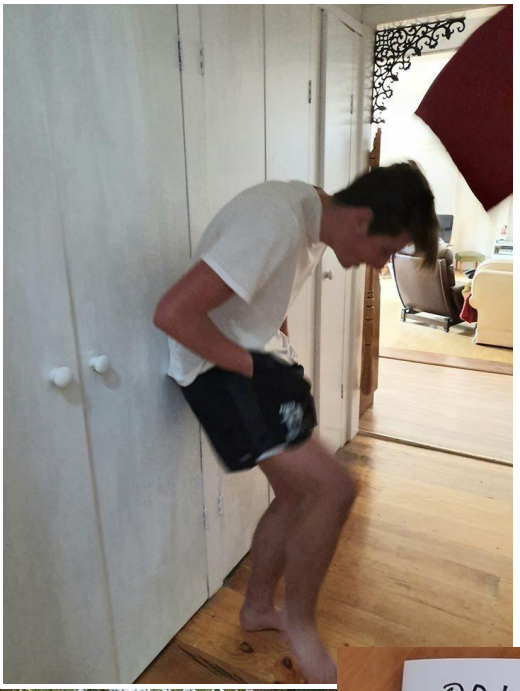
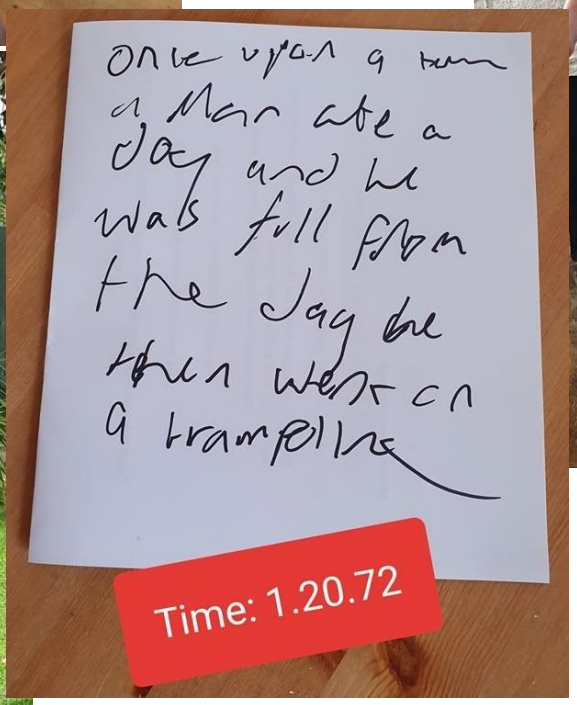


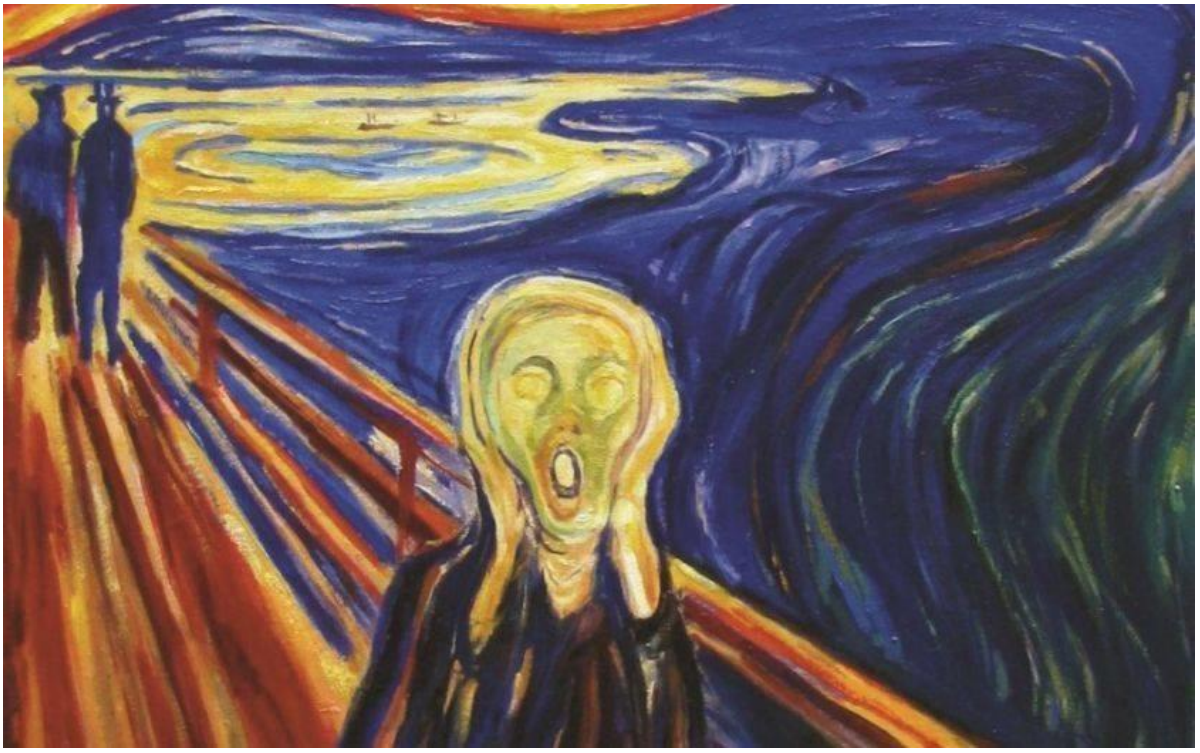
Time: 2.32.86


Once upon a time
a Man ate a
day and he
was full from
the day he
then went on
a trampoline
Time: 1.20.72

Wednesday's with Harry
April 22nd 2020

This current period of isolation and restrictions hasn't altered my day greatly. Perhaps I am one of the lucky ones as my 'normal' routine involves working from home. I still manage to drag myself to my office in whatever attire is slung over the back of a chair, sit munching on muesli whilst catching up on the latest news from my computer and then contemplate my next project. The 'Rona' ramifications leave in its wake, cautious health measures and complete lack of income, however on the whole I am still busy preparing for life on the other side. The exception appears to be an overwhelming desire to bake. This of course is entirely at the mercy of the flour provisions available. For others in this household, the living in limbo scenario is starting to take its toll, evident from the numerous times the fridge is opened during the course of a day. The fact that our fridge has the most annoying and relentless beep when left ajar for an undetermined time, just adds to the awareness of the mission and indeed the predicted vocal cry 'there's nothing to eat' will follow.
This challenging time will be a chapter in history that we are all involved and the positive is that it has encouraged many to slow down and explore their creativeness. The fact that dining room tables across the planet have been appropriated by jigsaw puzzles is testament to this time. Not to be left out of this trend, I dusted off a Wasgu and proceeded to sort the pieces. This hurdle is the first test to determine if someone is puzzle worthy or not. It requires a significant amount of space, patience and perseverance… and that is just from flipping the pieces the right way up. The next step that all wise puzzle gurus know, is to complete the border. Now this is when you are seduced into the mistaken belief that you will actually finish this project, as the joy of slotting pieces together is achieved with relative ease. For the next 6 months you will spend day after day squinting desperately in search of that elusive piece that will enable you to finish just one corner. You will convince yourself it is possible to cram the piece with 3 holes into the slot for 2. You will question your choice of selecting such a cryptic puzzle that didn't actually show the outcome. You scoff at those who pass by and declare how easy this must be. And finally you wonder why you began it at all and then go bake a cake.
So leaving the mystery and misery of the jigsaw puzzle aside, I did wish to acknowledge all the amazing creative people this week. As a tribute to the trend from NGV and Yarra Valley Arts etc who are sharing photos of those recreating famous paintings, I decided we too would contribute, if only in our own little world. Now when I say we…of course I mean Harry. I discussed the concept with Harry and much like all other times he has been exposed to art, he was less than enthusiastic. I could sense that some extreme negotiation would be needed for him to become involved. Fortunately I am a mother and as such hold the key to vital resources in this department. After a rather flexible agreement was in place, I then started to present to him the various options. Experience and natural cunning lead me to initially show him paintings that I knew he would absolutely reject…then I swoop in with the less offensive and just like that, he agrees. So the Little Boy in Blue, Mona Lisa, The Birth of Venus and The Girl with the Pearl Earring were vehemently snubbed leaving The Scream and Whistlers Mother to shine through. Harry did suggest that Edvard Munch would have painted The Scream after listening to the crazy notions from his mother.

You will note that these 2 replicas have original backgrounds. I was dealing with a very delicate and pampered model who refused to wait nor partake in prop design. So after securing a costume from black cloth and table napkins, Whistlers Mother was born. You may notice that our version is a little taller than the original and neglected to put on 'her' shoes.
It was a quick shoot, but smiles and in fact a touch of laughter was present. So there you go, not child abuse at all.



Wednesday's with Harry
April 29th2020

Some days, no matter how well intentioned to achieve greatness, you just get bogged down in other stuff. Today was one of those days and so my grandiose plans have been put on hold, of course much to Harry's extreme disappointment. The 'stuff' I refer to has left my brain shattered, my patience tested, my will to live slim and a sizable headache. The day began with the appropriate degree of enthusiastic zest in phoning the ATO at precisely 9am. On hold for over an hour and 40 minutes left me questioning the need for a chat so changed tactics and called the Superannuation Company connected to my query. Well after 30 mins and repeatedly pressing #2 for consultant, I was finally connected to an actual person. Karen had a pleasant enough personality however my question caused her to put me on hold for a further 20 minutes whilst she researched the answer. Then it was established that she needed to transfer me to Marnie who would certainly be a helpful ally. Marnie was also pleasant enough however after another 15 minutes she decided to put me back to Karen to complete the request. Unfortunately my query was deemed a little too difficult for both Karen and Marnie, but it was suggested I phone the ATO to follow up. Of course!

Meanwhile Harry was pushing me to follow up with Australia Post on his Nikes I had purchased online for his birthday. His birthday was at the beginning of April, so running a tad late. I discovered that it had arrived in Australia mid-April and passed on to Australia Post to continue its journey. The tracking number stated it was 'On its way'. I realise that the post is delayed due to everyone's online shopping, however thought they may be able to identify where it was and how long till it arrived. Failing to discover a phone number, I had no option but use their online chat thingy. It began by connecting me to a robot dude who, sorry to say, was no help with an individual query. I was then given the option to wait for the 'Live chat' consultant. It informed me that I was #28 in the queue. Yay! Finally David introduced himself and explained that post was delayed but they were doing their best. Yes, I understood that and complimented their hard work, but still questioned why the tracking number hadn't updated the information since April 14. He explained again that they were very busy and not everything is scanned but it would be 'On its way'. Yes I understood that but surely the idea of a tracking number means that you have the ability to actually track it and could tell me its whereabouts. David then explained that they were very busy and overloaded with mail and doing their best but he was certain that my parcel would be in transport. I asked about the transport and he told me that it would be on a truck. Yes David, but where exactly was this truck? David then explained that they were very busy and doing their best to cope with the increase in mail. I began to wonder if David was in fact a Live Chat person and not an incognito robot but gave him the benefit of doubt. Finally I was defeated and so after an hour and a half, I had enough of Australia Post and informed Harry that they were working very hard and hopefully his Nikes were 'On their way!'

Just to add to my day, at precisely 2:43 the internet dropped out. Yes, did the usual reboot and verbally abused the whole communication system before searching Telstra for any outages in our area. Alas, there was no local outage and after pressing every relevant button, took a deep breath and summoned up the strength to call Telstra. Pretty much after on hold for an eternity, I gave up, finally found the

microscopic hole in the modem and shoved in a paperclip. The modem took about 20 minutes to decide if I had buggered it completely or happy to reconnect. Fortunately it was the latter and we are now happily back in the world of the web with only a tad of inconvenience.
Now I do realise my day is not that unusual and we are all subjected to such days and good on you for handling it better than me. Fortunately phones have speakers and so whilst on hold I did manage to do the washing, sweep the floor, wash the dishes, wash my hair, watch Dancing with Wolves, baked sausage rolls, ate sausage rolls, grow a plum tree and perform surgery on my toe…so not a complete waste of a day!

Just to update you on the jigsaw puzzle mentioned last week…Finished it! 1000 pieces of puzzle, with no actual picture to use as a guide...Well done me! The picture shown is a clue to the actual puzzle so somewhat tricky. Approaching the end of the project, I found myself patting the finished sections in tactile satisfaction. With the last few pieces left to place however I began to realise that I was one piece short. You cannot be serious! After quite a methodical but somewhat frenzied search, I discovered that the elusive rascal had attached itself to my cardy sleeve. Now the question is how long does one leave it displayed on the kitchen table before deconstructing?

5.40pm…Just heard the local fire brigade sound their siren in honour and respect for the 4 police who were shockingly killed on duty last week. Perspective is a wonderful thing.
So there you go…

Wednesday's with Harry
May 6th 2020

Quite frankly, I am astounded I am still capable of creating a post right now as I am extremely sleep deprived. Be prepared for slurring of words, muddled metaphors and rampant ramblings.

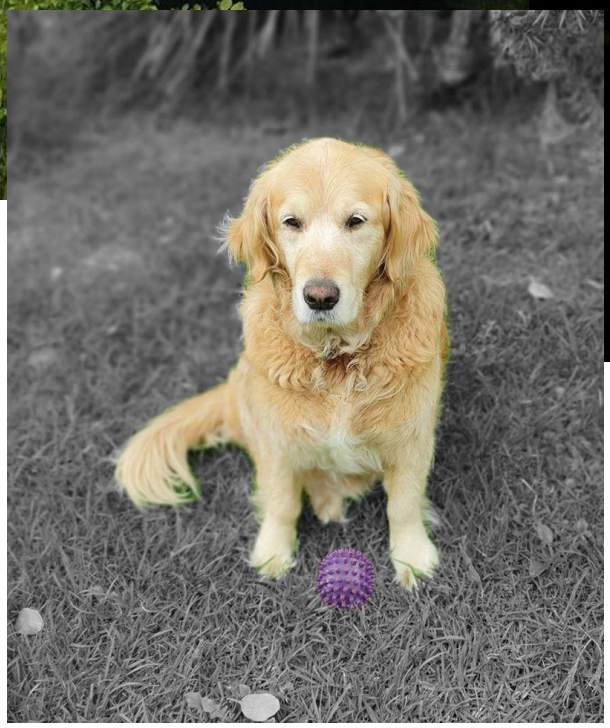
Harry and I happened to be listening to Kennedy Molloy on Triple M yesterday when they were discussing the astronomical event about to grace our skies early this morning. Brilliant! I thought…Harry not so keen. Unfortunately for my plans, Mick Molloy explicitly argued the downside of rising at 2 in the morning, underdressed in the cold backyard searching for a couple of stars. The fact that Harry now had an ally in his 'stay in bed and sleep' argument, only slightly diminished my enthusiasm to encourage him to agree.

Apparently this cosmological occurrence was a combination of the sighting of Swan Comet and Eta Aquariids Meteor shower. Amateur astronomer, Michael Mattiazzo from Swan Hill in Victoria, discovered this comet and is seemingly a big deal in the cosmo world. An astronomer Professor from the University of Southern Queensland, Jonti Horner, yes Jonti…said 'Comets are like cats, you try to predict what they are going to do but they'll do their own thing anyway'… He said that it would look like a green fuzzy blob on the eastern horizon. Not sure that 'fuzzy green blob' is a particular astronomical term but goodo. The other spectacular, not to be missed star event coinciding with the Swan Comet is the Eta Aquariids Meteor shower, which is a collection of tiny grains of dust from the tail of Halley's Comet. They hit the earth's atmosphere at about 60km per second and create lots of shooting stars. Jonti was at it again with his analogies…'They're a bit like buses – you might wait for a while and then you might see 3 in a minute'. Halley's Comet was last seen in 1986 and is sighted every 76 years but it is likely that the dust from Halley seen this morning is from a fly-by thousands of years ago. So there you go.

Now as you may imagine…ahem…Harry was fascinated with all this celestial information. He still however, vehemently explained that under no circumstances was he going to leave his bed to watch such an occurrence. As he went to bed last night, the final negotiation was a little sketchy, but in my mind, he may have agreed to get up if it was worth it, and some mumbling about not being responsible for lashing out in his sleep. For my part, I knew that I didn't actually have to set an alarm, as one of our dogs has adopted the habit of needing a wee at precisely the same time every morn. She has come to realise that I am the only responsible adult in this household that will listen to her needs and so finds me in my slumber and pesters me to be let out. Alas, the time is always 2.05am. I have also discovered that I seem to have synchronised my own toiletry needs…yes very sad, I know. Marley did appear surprised at 2.05 this morning however, as my utterings towards her were a tad more gentle than normal and so on her way out collected her favourite ball in the hope that a game was on the cards. It does take a minute or 10 to adjust to the time and the darkness and I also discovered that it takes a while to put thongs on the correct feet and for my neck muscles to behave in order to stare upward in a satisfactory star gazing position. Oh and Mick Molloy was correct…it was cold. So I am teetering in the cold backyard with Marley licking my foot whilst nudging me to toss her ball and it was then I came to grasp the reality that there was NOT a star in the sky and definitely NO green fuzzy blob on the eastern horizon! I quickly concluded that

Jonti's cat and bus analogy was completely irrelevant and whilst the moon was looking welcoming, complete cloud cover was miserably hiding anything else of a cosmic nature. Not to be completely disheartened, I decided that perhaps the clouds would pass and that 4.30am would be a more suitable star shower time. Tottered back towards the house, overlooked the fact that my phone has an inbuilt torch, cursed that I couldn't see where I was going and managed to clunk my head on the one juicy lemon that is dangling over the path…and no Marley, not playing ball! Well of course, there was no point waking Harry up to sight a moon and some cloud, so decided to try again at 4,30. This time I did need to set the alarm and of course was horrified and confused when it actually went off. I was starting to question my need to complete this particular task! Once again I found myself standing in the back yard, surrounded by cold air and clouds, so finally surrendered defeat and shuffled back to bed. So to Jonti and anyone else who happened to be mesmerised and entranced by this morning's astronomical events, good onya!

Did I mention this morning the garbage trucks came? At least Harry is awake and functioning, and somewhat chuffed that he missed early morning cloud gazing, twice. I must say though, tired as I feel, I did manage a little chuckle when I saw him run into the back yard and get clobbered by a lemon! So there you go…



Wednesday's with Harry
Thurs 14th May 2020

Okay, so Mother's Day has come and gone and whilst the windows didn't receive a scrub as per my usual fanciful request, I did receive a pair of slippers. Keeping my expectations relatively low, I find is quite a handy strategy but I did suggest Harry sort out some breakfast. Eggs and bacon were retrieved from the fridge and then with a degree of difficulty of an 8, he managed to flip and spin a butter covered spatula and land it squarely on top of my right fluffy foot within 5 minutes of their initial foot covered outing. Of course it followed that Mulligan's attention was intently focused on said right fluffy slipper until all traces of food substances were licked off. You may argue that the positives are that Harry was willing to cook me breakfast and my slipper is now clean…the reality was that I was the one who actually cooked breaky and now my new fluffy slipper was covered in dog slobber!

Today I am writing this from the oncology ward where I frequent every 3 weeks. We are all going through quite an unusual and somewhat challenging time and many are feeling overwhelmed by the situation. I am doing okay mentally, but then again, I have had years of experience in health matters and have learnt that catastrophizing issues is not helpful and that staying present is. We do need to adapt to change and it is entirely your choice which attitude you select. Of course there is no particular joy in having metastatic cancer, but it has given me a perspective on life that somehow allows me to sift out the crap. Anyway…the reason I mention this today is that I feel the need to wholeheartedly thank the staff and particularly Deb, Nicki and Sam who have been my nurses here for the past 9 years. They are the most amazing women who tackle all their tasks with such care and patience. No doubt they are challenged with the emotions that naturally spill into an oncology ward, but they handle it all with thoughtfulness and a sensitivity that is so important. It was International Nurses Day on Tuesday and out of all the 'frontline' workers, I feel they are the most deserving of recognition and gratitude. I know that I could never have been a nurse…not only would I be grimacing and most likely chundering at the sight or smell of bodily emissions, but I would simply not have the tolerance or empathy that is clearly required. They are not just doing a job, they are invested in every patient that crosses their paths. Patients become personalities they come to know and for whatever amount of time they are in their care, they laugh, celebrate, cry and feel with us and for us. We currently use the term 'we are all in this together'…but nowhere else I know truly emulates that saying as in the oncology ward. They are with me all the way and for that I am so grateful.

Whilst we are talking nurses…a big virtual hug to Melanie Davies…a truly beautiful friend who happens to be a palliative care nurse and involved with Peace of Mind Foundation. An amazing organisation supporting those diagnosed with brain cancer. Have a gander at their website www.peaceofmindfoundation.org.au

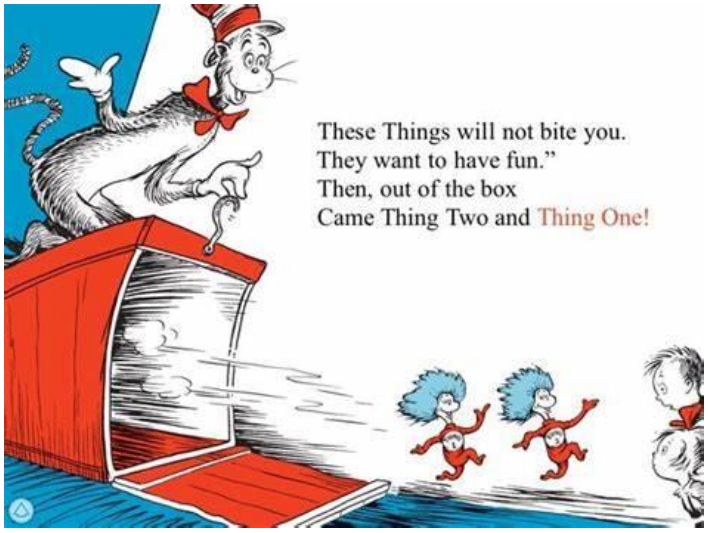
You will be truly touched by the work they do and the stories that are told. Peace of Mind Foundation

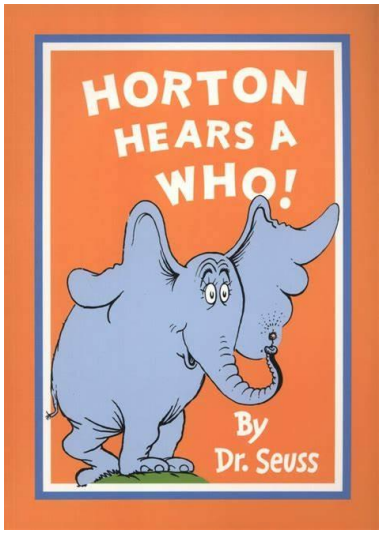
And speaking of great organisations and causes, the annual Big Freeze Fight MND campaign is on again. Just received my beanie, although obviously Harry has claimed it as his. They are encouraging you to spread the word by being creative wearing your beanie and posting on social media. I did suggest to Harry that he should do just that. Well this photo of him with Mulligan is about as 'creative' as he could muster...bit of a fail, I'm afraid. Neil Daniher is such an inspiration. If we want to talk about doing it tough, then look no further than what he is going through. Not only dealing with his day to day health, but leading the way in fundraising for a cure. They have raised over $37 million since 2014.

So there you go…feeling grateful.

Wednesday's with Harry,
15th September, 2020

Has anyone else experienced the situation where you appear to be the main character in a Dr Seuss book? I do believe I am currently living with Thing 1 and Thing 2...meanwhile I am Horton in a completely different story.
Yes it has been many months since last posting here and the fact that it is not Wednesday is indeed a reflection of the merging of time. The lack of entries is purely because I can only scribble random nonsense about absolutely nothing for so long before the significance of that exact nothingness impacts and defines your life. What?...my point exactly! Life for the past few months has been same, same, not different. Harry has managed to surface from his uni studies for exercise, eating and mumbling the odd greeting. And when I say 'odd' greeting that is not only because it is irregular, but also because it is not articulated in any language that I recognise. I believe there may be an ancient tribe somewhere in the jungle of New Guinea who may understand. As far as doing anything together...Well let's see. We bonded over screaming at the telly in unison and complete exhaustion over yet another disappointing footy season for Carlton, he makes a mess in the kitchen and I clean it up, his hair grew out of control and I was instructed to cut the particular chosen few, I cook dinner and he eats it, I play Otis Redding and he asks who's that?, he completes online purchases and I pay for them...and so it goes.
Whilst some aspects of life in lockdown has been mundane, I have spent much of my time being somewhat productive. I have written a couple of children's books, produced a couple of birthday videos for my sisters and planned our 2021 calendar. Time tends to vanish when I have a project to complete. The sleepy notions that vaguely corner my mind are probed until a full cacophony of visions and colours invade my world. I calm them down, assess their value and invite only the worthy to party. One Yelpy Kelpie is once again mustering her way onto a page in her Great Western Plains Adventure and Aloysius the ram from Chateau de Lalande also came to visit. I seem to be drawn to the adventures of livestock. Perhaps a throw back to my days on cattle stations in the NT?
Well I do believe I have satisfied Facebook's nagging reminder to write something and at the same time cement my belief that I have written absolutely nothing at all...so there you go. Stay well my friends. xx





Wednesday's with Harry is a delightful account of a young man and his mother.

This transcript of their adventures together has been lovingly collated and in this bound collection.

One can only hope that the binding will hold for many years to come…the other one may wish for it to unravel.

The random nature of these escapades are cleverly connected by Wednesday…or so we are led to believe.

The reader will be gripped in anticipation when Wednesday is unavailable.
This thrilling suspense can only add to its appeal.