



Honoring Commitments

By M.J. Clark, M.A., APR

This year, I was unable to participate in our Relay for Life walk in the way I had hoped. I was dealing with a medical situation that would have made it very painful to walk.

We always tell our clients how important it is to take care of YOU. When we really make an effort to take care of ourselves, we will become the best parent, friend, boss or business partner to the others in our life because we will be calmer, more patient, healthier and more centered when we engage with others. It was very tough for me to follow that advice as it applied to my Relay for Life commitment this year. Despite the pain I was in, I really wanted to walk. Even though my husband and kids were walking laps in my place, I really wanted to walk. Although it was enough that I showed up at the Relay site to support the ILS team, I really wanted to walk.

I felt so bad about not walking because I had made a commitment that I wanted to uphold. I was walking in honor of my client's mother, Gayle Adkins. I knew my team mates and family were supporting my effort, but it still felt hollow to sit on the sidelines while everyone else walked. When my friend Becky Von Ohlen, a breast cancer survivor and one of the most courageous women I know, showed up to walk with our team, it was heart wrenching to not be able to join her in some laps around the track.

I mentioned to our Relay coordinator and to my husband several times that maybe I could try to walk. Both told me to just take care of myself and not worry about it.

We sometimes overbook ourselves. We take on too much. And then we kill ourselves to make sure we complete all the work – working late at night when we should be with our families, working through lunch when we need nourishment for our bodies, working for long hours without the mental break we need to recharge our batteries, and perhaps walking in a relay when our bodies tell us they need rest.

I wanted to share my experience with our readers to let you know that my ILS colleagues and I fully understand that the work you do to change or improve your business and/or personal lives is difficult. As we work with our clients, we also work diligently to improve our own lives, practicing the same principles we teach and coaching each other if we backslide or need encouragement along the way.

We struggle with change in the same way all of you do. I think that's why I feel so honored and humbled to work with the clients I do. I know how scary it is to be vulnerable, to admit my challenges and work toward improvement. I have so very much respect for my clients who are courageous enough to be vulnerable with me and with their families and with their business associates. We are all human, and it's critical for each of us to accept ourselves when we simply can't do something. It was painful, and yet so very helpful, for me to go through what I did during the Relay. Next time, I hope it will be my turn to help someone else who needs it.