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## I thought of you last night

This post comes from the TODAY Parenting Team Community, where all members are welcome to post and discuss parental solutions. Find out more and come to us! Because we are all there together. &gt; See my posts &gt; Visit my blog I am a child of God God, wife and mom of 2. I am a country girl who loves to write songs, short stories and blogs. I also love adventure, nature, and just fun with my family. Night, the time of darkness caused by the disappearance of the sun under the horizon. The limits of the night are not defined. The night can be considered as the time from sunset to sunrise, or as the time from the end of dusk to the beginning of dawn. The length of the night in most parts of the world changes with the seasons. For humans, night is a time of natural rest, but many other animals are more active at night than during the day. Many insects, fish, reptiles, birds and mammals have eyes adapted to weak night light. This is an excerpt from My Glory Was I Had Such Friends, a memoir by Amy Silverstein about the power of friendship and the resilience of the human mind as she waited on the precipice for a life-saving heart transplant. Joy, Jill, Leja, Jody, Lauren, Valerie, Robin, Ann, Jane. We were adult daughters all, some mothers of high school or college kids, a few of us experienced career women. We had become our middle-aged self – our smartest, most steadfast, most powerful self that we were not yet. And we discovered a new best in us together because I died, really die this time, and we were no longer 25. I died, this time really, and we were no longer 25. I had also been ill at the time. Shockingly sick. But by our mid-20s, we hadn't become fully trained women. Still in adulthood, we turned around as moody and funky as self-serving teenagers. Our focus was on the appointment or the development of a newly married life, the way to the first job or the completion of the graduate school. We swam over small problems, giggling arm in arm through parties and bars that kept us out until late into the New York night. We invested more in great shoes and best-fit jeans than in how to get up for a friend who needed some kind of crazy surgery that we couldn't understand. Our empathy had not matured at the age of 25. At 50, she had it. So in the winter of 2014, when a doctor said that my transplanted heart was in precarious failure, my friends paused their lives and gathered around me. When I was told that my Shot at the re-transplant depended on my husband Scott and I immediately moving from our home in New York to a hospital room in California, followed friends in constant rotation – and gave up the duties that got husbands into a scramble, irritating the bosses and teenagers unattended by the crucial maternal eye. When I woke up again and again in the darkness of this hospital room so far from home, I was engulfed by what was Like a literal heart of fire that burned a series of breath-taking pains from shoulder to shoulder, my friends threw their arms toward me, from where they slept on a low cot next to my hospital bed. Jill, my closest friend since second grade. Beautiful Jane, my style guru, who never seemed to bother my imitation attempts. Lauren, the always meticulous mother of three children and my steadfast escort to many surgeries, procedures and scary medical tests. Val, all steadfastness and serenity even as a roommate during our grueling first year of law school. And Ann, my hippie sister-in-law in platform flip-flops, her mother-earth smile, which indulges in the tamed lips, wordless, just holding my hand. Rougher than I had ever seen, these five friends – along with four others – took care of me until the sun rose, showered quickly, if at all, and came straight back to my bed, cheerful and energetic. They pulled surprise gifts from their suitcases, anything that would help me survive another day. There have been more conversations than nurturing and distracting – our best conversations so far. No filters. Last-chance candor. It was a time and a place to solve. We got serious. Became silly. Came clean. Concerned. Thought. Raged. Laughed. Our honesty faded with purposeful devotion and responded to a call of necessity that challenged each of us: If not now, when? We sink into truths and discoveries about ourselves, our husbands, our children, and our group of friends who light up the space around us to shimmer, no matter how disturbing the signs were that the time was running out for me. Floating in this desperately enchanted bubble, we found a new way to talk about life. And when death came up, in the most frank conversations of all, it was clear that no friend wanted me to die on their watch. After an intensely caffeinated day, Ann feels prepared for the night ahead. (I'm at the top of my 20th day at the top of the list for a heart transplant. Ten days before me, 10 days before I decide that my pacemaker will be turned off, and I will die if I don't get a new heart.) She sits on the chair next to my bed and swears again to stay upright and awake all night long. I turn to my side and stand up to it. My pacemaker will keep me informed. Enter it 15 minutes – watch. That's why I'm afraid to go to sleep. It's the worst part of my day. So I am not in a hurry to close my eyes. So do you want to talk? We can chat if you want... Yes. Okay, good. But let's not be over the wait for a talk, okay? She giggles. Fine with me. So let me tell you about your sweet daughter Abby. You know, she texted me every night... every night... I love you and good night to say? And she sends the most beautiful pictures. Have one of the other days of her in the toilet, in a bathroom stand at school. Think of you, Ames, she wrote, or something like that. I laughed out loud. She's a nut muffin. Ann Ann And oh, she loves her aunt Amy, Maddy too. My two girls worship you. I adore you. You know, Ames, I'll need your help with Abby's college treatments in the fall. I want to talk to you about some schools that could work well for them – where they can play football and get academic help when they need them. Abby has a learning disability and has to work writing and organizing. She can, I say, I have full confidence in their smarts. Abby would finish her junior year in just two months, and there were already college counseling seminars at her school, as well as assignments in the English class, which were asked to prepare for the standard college application essay. I will hand them over to you in the autumn, of course, Ann says now. When I'm here for it, I can't help but think. When I'm here for it, I can't help but think. Actually, she told me that she wanted to write her essay about you, Ames... about the texts she writes to you every night and how much she admires you. She is so proud of these texts, you know. It should be. You know, when you're young, you want to escape from people who are terribly sick, right? Don't you remember being small, passing through a cemetery and holding your breath? What Abby does is quite remarkable - to approach me every night. I tell them it's so much more mature than the way my 25-year-old friends behaved when I had my first transplant... some of them made their way to the hills and we never spoke again. Abby is brave. She loves you. Yes, but she has something in her, this girl. She is – uh-oh... Heavy. A pull in my chest. And here it comes... the painful pain from shoulder to shoulder. Ann – I'm step, damn. Ow, ow... Oh my God, ow... She jumps at her feet. Shall I, uh... What can I do for you? Me, uh... This is worse than ever, I scold. Holy crap... Ouch... Ouch... I move my legs over the side of the bed and push myself to a stop, hoping it will raise my pulse. Help me, Ann. I am too weak... She slips her hand around my waist, and I lean my body weight on her. I got you. Ow... Ow... it rips through my chest! Should I call the nurse? Uh... No... good, maybe yes... I don't know. The pace has been much worse lately. Let's, uh... give it a few more minutes... Can you stand it? I have to endure it, Ann. That's what my life is now... I squeeze my lips together and feel my eyes well with tears. But only 10 days left. And then no more. No more. Ann blinks and shakes his head. Just hold on, hold on to me... Oh, Annie! I cry and collapse against her shoulder. I start crying. Unfortunately you have to do this... Up to that moment, I tried not to let myself cry at night. Pacemaker fires because it seemed to make it so much harder. Friends have taken care of these episodes with a loving but mostly logical, problem-solving approach – each woman with her own method and her goal to get me through, it seemed, and a touch of confidence, whether real or cleverly feigned. However, Ann is not methodically suitable; it has no deceit. She is simply present, with wide green eyes, not even trying to disguise the tormented twisting of her facial expression or the lack of self-confidence when she sees me so sick. If Ann had come earlier, I would have been easier to bear and would have had to stand out. But timing and fate have taken them to the next point to my end and the furthest point of hope; she is here to catch my near fall – and I am so comforted by her presence. Her body movements channel serenity – the grace of a dancer in the way she lengthens her neck and always folds so slowly with a look of acceptance to me. I just love you so much, Ann, I say and pack them tighter. I love you too, Ames. After a few minutes, the pain subsides. She leads me back to my bed and pulls the blanket up to my chin. That's where you go. She pulls her chair up close next to me, takes my hand and holds it for a long, long time – 10 minutes, 15, 20. We sit wordless and stare with unconcentrated eyes. I turn my head towards the red flashing light without imagining tonight; the only happiness that shines on me is my choice to end this waiting list torture. From the silence comes an admission. I feel selfish, says Ann, playing her arm towards the wall of the photo faces. You tell me sorry... I am sorry that I have to be here with you. But you know what? I'm so happy to be here - it's a gift for me to be able to help a little bit. Because you gave me so much... and also the girls. I assure her that it was my absolute joy. Over the years, I've stepped in (often without asking Ann) to help her daughters achieve certain goals – whether it's schedule and checklist for university application deadlines, preparation for regent's examination in biology, or Shakespearean memory. My nieces are always grateful and much easier on work, my instructions and learning techniques than my own son. They're also girls - what's fun! I give them the short skirts that I no longer wear and the cosmetic samples that come with my wrinkle cream purchases. It was a special joy to contribute to their lives and to watch them bloom over the years. And Ann, you could have done anything without me. You will do it without me, if so... It don't go out like that, okay? They are not interchangeable. The way my girls react to you... and admire you. You are such an amazing addition, a wonderful... She starts sobbing... Part of – sniffing – my motherhood. You surround me as a mother. Yes, you do, Amy. She wipes away tears with both. It can't go that way, okay? They are not interchangeable. Ann – I turn to her and open my mouth to say something beautiful in return, but my thoughts freeze. In truth, it is Ann who rounded me off as a mother – and leads me by example in meeting The Expectations of Casey and supporting his quest for a variety of life paths, rather than imposing the narrow, predictable paths that I am familiar with. But what is in my mind at this moment is the most important way she has completed my experience as a mother: by inviting me to participate in the births of her two daughters. Since you can never give birth, I thought, maybe you'll come to me so you can experience it, she told me, eight months after her pregnancy with her first child. It was an unimaginably sensitive, friendly and selfless offer for me to invite me into the privacy and intensity of her first birth. Along with her husband Gary and a midwife, I would be the only other participant, she said, and I accepted with deepest esteem and reverence. A few weeks later, I drove from New York City to a suburban hospital where Ann, Gary and the midwife were already hard at work, which would be a very long (and very noisy) birth process that immediately horrified me when I decided to go for this fantastic, horrible spectacle. Ann screamed – I screamed. The incredible decibel level reached me the moment I got out of the elevator, and it intensified into such a penetrating howl as I approached the door to Ann's room that I couldn't get myself to open it. As I tried to force through the moment, I stepped in and experienced the next few hours of my dear epidural sister-in-law waiting for her damn cervix to expand, scream and grin, and cry in moments. The louder and rougher she became, the calmer and more agonizing the middle woman became – and oh, how did I want to beat the Mother-Nature Birth Ambassador in her stoic little face! Aaannn, yoo-hoo, Aaannn, called her and responded to Ann's call: I'm going to break in half! Then the midwife spied me out in the corner crying. Hey, you said, and lost her over-soul facade for a few seconds. Stop with the tears. I did. But I couldn't get myself to do much else to help things. Since I had no experience in dealing with other people in severe pain, let alone the agony of natural birth, I could only think to stand aside and let the drug-free delivery technique take its good, sweet time. Gary's attempts to calm Ann were mostly met with pain and another reason, I thought, to control clearly. It wasn't until the midwife called me to her side and dropped one of Ann's heels in my hand to hold in the air (just the moment the baby's head crowned), that I found my place in this exhausting scene: It's to observe the birth, as Ann had wished. Ann didn't take me there to help her, but simply to have an exciting experience of femininity and motherhood that I wouldn't otherwise have. I saw baby Madeleine coming into the world with one last push and howling - and then silence. A cut of an umbilical cord. A newborn on her mother's chest. A smiling Ann and tearful Gary. Joy. Pure joy. Editor's note: After six days, Amy received a heart from a 13-year-old girl whose parents donated all her organs. Today, Amy lives in New York with her husband Scott and their son Casey. Excerpt from the book My Glory Was I Had Such Friends: A Memoir by Amy Silverstein. Copyright © 2017 by Amy Silverstein. Published on June 27, 2017 by Harper Wave, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. 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