

This Fresh Filthy Thing Called Life: Hayley Lewis

Filth is everywhere, it's all around us.

I wake up, my body filthy with the sweat of another excruciatingly humid night. My sheets damp, needing washing. I need a shower. I drag my exhausted, wrung out body to the shower stall only to be faced with a mural of mould. The mould is an unconquerable consequence of the relentlessly humid climate and my inability to keep up with the housework. Who has the energy to clean in this heat?

That is when the shame floods over me, and I feel filthy on the inside. Shame, that dirty, secretive sensation so many of us have chipping away at our emotional fortitude.

Somehow I am dressing, pasting a smile on my face, masking the burden of inner desperation. Fingers crossed that the thoughts are fleeting this time. It's the same me encouraging, instructing, loving and herding my children through their morning routines. The same me hoping that nurture can triumph over nature, that my flawed cells haven't passed depression or anxiety to my children.

A podcast about epigenetics and generational trauma taught me that scientists have discovered that anxiety can be passed through sperm. A paternal gift. Thinking too long on maternal gifts I've potentially passed down brings more filthy shame.

A shake of the head, a huge breath and stubborn willpower allow me to surface from the unhelpful thoughts.

For me, the flip side of sometimes seeing myself as fundamentally filthy is feeling fresh. A fresh day, fresh possibilities, big and small, ordinary and extraordinary. I do have plenty of days where I feel this freshness, vitality, hope.

My kids are a major source of 'fresh'- a constant reminder- a tugging (literal and metaphorical as one child grabs my hand and the other is in my thoughts) towards the good and true. These inquisitive, hopeful little people of mine are the tangible flipside to my mental/emotional filthy. They remind me that even though the world is filthy and people can be filthy, the world is also fresh and people can be refreshing.

I feel more fresh than filth, and work constantly to see light and goodness around me. Without the drive and focus that being a mother has given me I don't know that I would have ridden into battle.

Filth IS everywhere, it's all around us.
But so is FRESHNESS- fresh starts, fresh faces, fresh ocean breezes.

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