



Essential for Wellbeing is written by Nick Wallace, from Sarnia, Ontario. I write stories, essays, and reflections about the quiet truths we all feel but rarely say out loud. I lost my job, my marriage, and people I loved—all in a short stretch where those around me seemed more willing to twist my words than face themselves. It dissolved me. Eventually, I realized the thing I kept trying to outrun wasn't out there. It was in me. I started to see the patterns I'd never questioned, and the beliefs I'd carried without knowing it. The culture around me offered plenty of escapes, but lacked peace. And culture isn't meant to be something we follow—it's just a word for what you and I do together, every day. We can create a more beautiful world. These stories are for the part of you that's been taught to stay silent—the part that still knows you're not the frightened reflex trying to control life. You are life. Each month is an invitation to pause, reflect, and remember—told through true stories that start with my life and end in yours.

A Note on this Month's Story: We often mistake our beliefs for truth, and those beliefs can become walls that separate us. But when we create a little space between ourselves and our thoughts, we find something much larger underneath. This story is about lifting the fog, seeing the person on the other side, and finding a way to stop the "inner and outer wars" we've been taught to fight. **Ages:** mature teens & adults

The Lighthouse and The Fog

There was a lighthouse keeper named Noah who lived on a rocky point where the fog rolled in thick most mornings. He had spent years perfecting his light. He knew its beam better than he knew his own hands. When the fog came, he would stand at the top and sweep the light across the water, and ships passing through would breathe easier, because the light told them where the rocks were.

Noah had a daughter named Ivy who lived mostly with her mother on the far side of the bay. And Noah loved Ivy more than the light itself.

One autumn, Noah had a scare. A storm hit while he was alone, and he fell, and for a long while he lay on the cold floor of the tower, uncertain if he'd get back up. But he did get up—because of a small thing he'd done months before; a rope he fastened to the railing, and coiled just in case. And when he finally stood, he thought: *I want Ivy to know this.* Not the fearful part, but the preparation, wanting her to know that the reason he's still here is the rope he coiled last spring.

So he told her gently. And Ivy, who was nearly eleven and feeling everything more sharply than ever before, heard something different than he meant. She heard: *the lighthouse might go dark.*

She didn't say this to her father. She carried it home with her, and at night it grew within her. After a few days, she asked her mother to never erase her father's voice messages, so that she could still hear his voice if the light went out.

Her mother, caught in her own fear for Ivy, wrote to Noah. And Noah read the letter feeling the old prickly defenses rise in him—the thing that said: *she is telling me what I really mean again. She's labelled me with her false fearful thoughts.* Because there had been years of him being told that he meant things he did not mean. Years of being removed from people and places he so loved based on words that were not his. Back then, his final instinct was to build a high wall of his own and shine his light hard and explain, and explain until she understood him. But his light was never seen, and his wall helped block his light.

But this time something stopped him. He looked at the letter again, and again; this time looking for a signal. And he saw that his wife may not have been pointing her finger at him. As she was also holding Ivy's fear in her hands, the way you'd hold a bird that has flown into a window—and she was showing it to him, saying: *Look what our daughter is carrying! It's your fault, and I don't know what to do!*

So Noah wrote back, this time short and warm. He said: *I hear you. I did not mean what she heard. I meant only to show her the rope that*

I coiled in the early spring.

This time his beam of light was seen, and so it stopped sweeping so frantically. And in the stillness, he could see the far shore again.

Here's what Noah understood after many years of struggle: The wall he built was like the brick wall of his lighthouse. It kept out the wrong things **and the right things**. He could not, for years, tell the difference between *"she is telling me what I really mean"* and *"she is telling me what she is really carrying"* — because both came from the same mouth, and there was no space between what she felt and what she said, or did. Her fear spoke before she did. This had hurt him deeply.

Noah's wall was his scar. And scars make us flinch before we look. This time he looked, and flinched. He looked again, and then wrote briefly and warm. Then he called her. That is the whole story.

The End — or maybe, for your heart, *just the beginning.*

Inner Reflection. I learned in my career, also with a close family member, and in marriage, that my words did not belong to me. They could be taken, reshaped, and handed back to me as someone else's interpretation. And that felt like it stole my authority. I believe I was defensive to not lose any more sovereignty after a serious bodily illness at a very young age. I could not easily standby, lovingly, with her regular twisting of my words. This was the very wound that I had been trying to express for many years, which went largely unnoticed.

I could not fix what was being done to me, so I fixed it the only way I could: hardening behind my wall. And it worked, for a while. It kept accusations and labels out. But it also blocked the possibility that her words were not about me at all.

This time, it was about our ten-year-old who asked her mother not to erase her father's voice messages in case he died.

Seeing this truth beneath my protective perception, let me see I was holding on to an underlying point-of-view built into my wall. There was nothing I had to do, but let the wall dissolve.

I had always tried to keep one foot on solid ground to protect myself. But I have since noticed what happened to me when I trusted *just a little*. Things softened, and then came her clarification that I did no wrong and had good intentions for Ivy—the exact opposite of what was expressed in her letter. Trust, as it turns out, is not something I must give someone (or even my own upsetting thoughts) in large



quantities. It can be extended in small increments, to see if they catch it. We both caught it this time. This did not erase all past mistaken intentions. But I seem to have found a small window in my wall.

My body has been telling me, in its own way, that I cannot live behind a wall of protection forever. I’ve lived there for a long time. Yet the moment I softened, I wasn’t injured. What I was defending against did not need defense, and allowed some common ground to come through with a mother saying *"we are both so lucky and blessed to have Ivy."*

This was a realisation that I can be hurt by someone I truly cared about and, in a single letter and phone call, I can choose not to be in a defensive war for any misgivings directed at me. I feel heard. It feels like this was the best outcome for Ivy too. It’s nice to see our daughter can be loved by both her parents at once, through stressful situations.

Noah's wall is not so unusual. Walk down any street and you will see lighthouses with their beams sweeping frantically. People defending

against accusations that haven't even come yet, bracing for labels that may never arrive, hardening because at some point—in a doctor's office, a schoolyard, at work, or in a marriage—their words were taken from them and handed back reshaped. When enough people live behind walls, you get a society that cannot see the far shore anymore.

May you find something to love in each day.

Essential for Wellbeing

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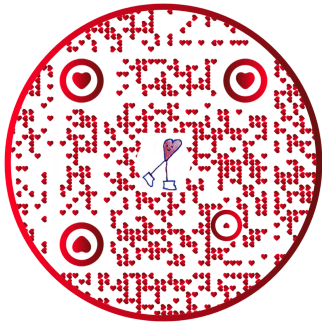
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