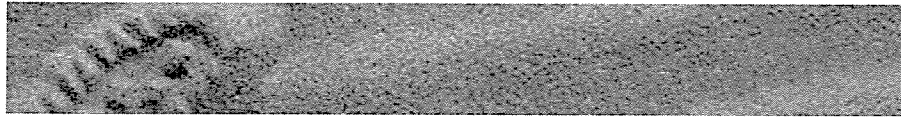


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...words...from some great local writers

## Storms and Sunshine – Why We Need Both

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karen amster-young :: The Beach Chair Chronicles

**...weekly observations & discoveries from manhattan to the east end...**

I wish I could tell you that I read this in the New Yorker or that it was written by a Pulitzer Prize winner; the truth of the matter is that I truly believe I was in the nail salon, perusing O magazine or People or a similar mindless magazine. I was reading about Angelina and Brad, Lindsey Lohan and articles with titles such as, "How to Attract Anything You Want", when I came across the following statement:

***Sometimes the soul needs storms as well as sunshine***

There I was, feet soaking in soapy, sudsy, warm water when I thought to myself, "that's it!" Perhaps not everyone feels this way, but I certainly do; I need both – storms and sunshine. If things are too peaceful, too ordinary, too repetitive, I start feeling anxious. It just does not work for me. Now, in case you think I am crazy, let me clarify: I am not seeking storms that cause damage – emotionally, physically or spiritually. I am not talking about the "get me a Xanax now", kind of storms. I am referring to storms in the sense of excitement, intrigue, challenge, variety. If there is too much sunshine, day after day literally and figuratively (i.e. routine, monotony) I begin to lose it. You get the idea. I can't even focus when this goes on too long. Let's take for example, my last few weeks in the Hamptons, which included Mom's annual week-long visit to the Hamptons: I love the Hamptons. In fact, if I don't get a Hamptons "fix" every week or so I also go crazy. However, too much of anything just does not work. Consider the following:

- How many times can one go the Fudge Shop in Southampton with two six year-olds (daughter and niece), buying overpriced candy after dinner? The fact is, nothing else is open at that time if you are with kids;
- How many times can you drive on the “back roads” in the pitch black without craving the din of New York City;
- How many times can you stand on line at Citeralla, stubbing your toes on the uneven, wooden floors without missing the crowded Gristedes in NYC with smooth floors (albeit a little dirty) and the smiling delivery guy?
- How many times can the birds at Cooper’s Beach swoop down and put their mouths on your water bottle, Coke can or lunch without craving a dignified lunch in Midtown?
- How many times can you bite your tongue when Mom says approximately ten times, during her week-long visit:
  - You Drive Like That – With Your Foot Up on the dashboard?  
(Yes Mom, I have been driving like this since I was 16)
  - You rent this big house and they only have one TV?  
(Yes Mom, the owners are just not a TV family; it’s not a big deal)
  - I hope you have enough sunscreen on her  
(Yes and bug spray thank you)
  - Why are there no shades on your windows in the living room? They should put shades up – anyone can see in!  
(Because Mom, it would block the farm views and there is no one around looking in, believe me!)
  - I don’t know how you drive around here at night – it’s so dark!  
(I know Mom, the back roads are like that at night here; that is what people like about it and especially if you live in the city)

**O.K.** This is not about bashing Mom or the Hamptons; Mom and I had a lovely visit although I did reach for the chardonnay a little more that week. This is about my personal disdain for repetition. I know these are not big problems; sometimes you just have to rant because you believe in your soul that others must feel this way and seek storms as well as sunshine. All of us out here know that time on the East End is wonderful for the body, soul and spirit and we are lucky to be here. I know. I know!

However, during the last two weeks or so in the Hamptons I truly felt like I was pressing rewind each and every day. Don’t get me wrong, mixed in were some great dinners, one too many BBQ’s, some elegant Hamptons cocktail parties, the beach, reading and so on. Don’t start adamantly telling me about the exercise classes, the fundraisers, the clambakes on the beach, the art exhibits, the great farm stands! I know. I know. Been there; done

that (well, maybe not enough exercise classes). I know many of you “love, love, love” living out here for 3 months. I JUST CAN'T DO IT!

Even for the “live out here, kids at camp, husbands on the cannonball arriving on Thursdays or Fridays” Moms, please don't tell me there does not come a time that you just start craving the routine of fall and the City, the energy, the NOISE, culture and putting on real shoes again. Please admit that you miss your hair salon, your apartment, your own stupid deli at the corner, great food DELIVERED at any time. Admit it! And, most of all, even if you are part of the “I live out here and love it and my husband come on weekends” tribe please, please admit that at some point this month you start missing using your brain for something other than nailing that dinner reservation at Nick and Toni's. OK, I feel better now. Let's go back to Mom's visit.

It started with a call from Westhampton on her journey out here. “I am near the Westhampton Deli,” she said with slight panic in her voice. “How do I get back on Montauk Highway”? Now if I tried to tell her that I had no idea where she was in Westhampton she would have gotten upset with me because, like many people, when you are nervous, there is a tendency to sound annoyed, particularly with the people you are closest to; emotions can run high when you are lost in my family. I simultaneously tried to give her directions and handle my 6-year-old daughter in the shower, while not dropping my cell phone in the toilet again as I had done a few weeks ago. I silently prayed that I would not have to return to Verizon in Bridgehampton.

The calls came in quick succession until, by some miracle, she ended up back on the Highway. Whew. I think I managed to handle that without sounding impatient. I knew that her arriving with minimal driving frustration could possibly set the tone for the whole visit. A little later in the week, I was looking all over for the milk I just purchased on the way home from dinner ; my nerves were a little shot on this 6th day, so I truly could not find the milk although I knew I put it down somewhere in the house. Mom was now trying to navigate her way to the front door area where she had put her suitcase upon arrival and literally asked me directions — IN THE HOUSE.

She was truly like a fish out of water out here as she looked for the non-existent shades in the living room to pull down, fearing that a deer may see

us in our pajamas.

I know sometime in October I will be craving the peace and tranquility and slow rhythm of August. I know I will be kicking myself that I went back, this 20th day of the month to the City for a mini-"fix". I plan on returning later this week and enjoying every last sandy, buggy, Fudge Shop stop moment. In fact, I can't wait for the last two weeks out on the East End. I know it will end and I will be sad but I am, I admit, thinking about the fall and that great "going back to school" feeling. Being out here also makes me appreciate the rhythm of the home routine and all that comes with it. Like I said, it is about knowing yourself and what you need — in my case, variety, balance, challenge and even the noise. I know there is nothing like pulling up in the driveway of your beach house after a week in the city. I know that. But honestly, I cannot WAIT to make that lunch reservation in Midtown. At the moment, it is stormy in New York City and the Hamptons. I think I picked the perfect time for my City "fix". I know, on the East End, with camp a distant memory at this point, I would have been at the Fudge Shop with Alison in Southampton at least once today. Ah...sunshine and storms. We need both.

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