



A Crash Course in Patience

I admit, patience isn't my strong suit, but I think I've recently been given a crash course (no pun intended) courtesy of the Universe.

While out for a walk on July 1, I tripped. I didn't want to break my face, so I instinctively put out my arms to cushion my fall. Unfortunately, in doing so, I broke my right arm. And I'm right handed. Instantly, I was unable to do a great many things for myself, and the things I could do became very difficult.

Since then, a typical day begins with a one-handed shower. So far, shaving my legs with my left hand has resulted in only one serious injury. Trust me when I say I now know what the phrase "blood bath" means. Drying my hair is simply that—there is no styling involved when I can either hold the blow dryer OR the brush, not both.

Getting dressed is no fun. I finally figured out how to put on a bra by myself. The first few days were humiliating. Pullover tops and elastic-waist pants are the only way to go—no buttons, zippers, or snaps. I need two hands to tie my shoes, so I have to ask for help or wear slip-ons.

I love to cook and take nutrition seriously, but I have come to dread meals. I can't use a knife and I can't take hot things out of the microwave without peril. I can't pour too well, so that's best left to the able-bodied. Scooping up food, grabbing a slice of something, getting it on a plate—all risky business. That's before I even begin to eat, which is tedious and time consuming. Spoons over forks, by the way.

Need to leave the house? My husband isn't about to let me drive, so I have to be chauffeured.

Finally, there's work. I wrote two long features for this issue, one long story, and this column—all using voice recognition software (obviously still in its infancy) and my left index finger. Happily, most of the editing was done before the accident. A writer/editor who breaks her arm is out of luck because the work doesn't stop, it only goes more slowly.

Have I learned patience from all of this? I don't know. I know what I *have* learned.

I have more empathy for children who want to do things for themselves, even if it takes them longer than if an adult did it for them. Learning to hold a spoon, learning to write, learning to tie shoes—these are skills we all master, but not without some struggle. Give those kids some time. "I want to do it!" makes perfect sense to me now.

I also have empathy for older adults forced to give up long-held freedoms as their bodies age and they have to ask for help with the activities of daily living. I get how frustrating that can be.

Finally, I am once again in awe of the sense of humor and patience my husband, Greg, can bring to even the worst of situations. If someone has to help me get dressed, cut up my dinner, or drive me around town, I'm glad it's him. Though I hope it doesn't happen again. Hey, Universe, I promise—I've learned my lesson.

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