



Last time we talked about when life sends you a "bigger than you moment." First you stop and breathe. Bigger than you moments teach you that one day at a time is too much to think about. You will get through the crisis by learning to take one step at a time. When you are hiking a difficult mountain trail sometimes all you can do is figure out the next single step. If you look too far ahead you get stuck in fear. What lies ahead appears to be challenging. So instead you stop, look at the path, decide where to place your foot, pick up your foot, and place it on the spot you just picked. The mountains of Yellowstone have taught me this lesson countless times.

Unfortunately, when you are in a bigger than you moment, the path is not defined. It is a new journey. Thankfully there are hot pink feather boas to show you the way.

When we left the doctor's office the day my mom was formally diagnosed with Alzheimer's, it was a "left foot right foot" kind of a day. I had to focus on breathing through it and just moving forward one step at a time. Hearing the doctor say "she can never be left alone again" was overwhelming. I always took her independence for granted. I knew there were things she needed help with. I understood she couldn't live alone. But never being alone again was far different than not living alone. My step-dad worked on the weekends. What was he going to do with her? It was too soon for her to be in a nursing home wasn't it? There were a tremendous number of decisions. They seemed bigger than any mountain I had climbed.

When Susie discovered her husband's affair, she too was faced with a vast number of decisions. Was she going to stay, go, who would she tell, what would her parents think, where would she live, how would she ever be okay again? When Lindsey's daughter died, she could barely breathe. How was she going to make funeral arrangements, would she ever stop crying, could she ever work again, how would she ever take care of her surviving daughter?

In the midst of her agony, Susie picked up her phone and called her best friend. Lindsey called her sister. My step-father, mother and I went to Denny's. None of us did anything cataclysmic or awe-inspiring. We were all in shock, but we were all breathing, and then we found the hot pink feather boa.

Once you are "just breathing" in a bigger than you situation, it is time to take a single step and do the next right thing. The next right thing does not take a lot of brain power to find if you know to stop and look. It is like the hot pink feather boa you wore to a costume party years ago. No matter how messy your closet gets, it stands out and you can always find it. You come across it over and over again even when you are searching for something else. Hot pink feather boas are never obscure!

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On the day of my mom's diagnosis, our hot pink feather boa was eating lunch. We were hungry and needed time to regroup. Nursing homes, caretakers, insurance benefits, telling our family, and even living life without her all came later. Susie's friends were her hot pink feather boa. Even with her horror and through a storm of tears she got to her phone and made the call. They came and spent the night with her. It was one of the longest nights of her life, but she was not alone. She and husband are now seeing a therapist. It looks like they and their marriage will survive.

When big things happen there is always a to- list with a zillion things on it. But when the initial storm hits, making a to-do is NOT at the top of the to-do list! Do not look too far down the road. You will only scare yourself. If you need a list, here it is:

- Stop
- Breathe
- Find the hot pink feather boa
- Take the step indicated by the hot pink feather boa
- Repeat steps 1-4

*When thinking won't cure fear action will.
- William Clemet Stone*