

Balance with Grace

A monthly newsletter by Grace Durfee, personal coach
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The mind singles out moments to ordain in ceremonies all it's own.—Frances Norton Honich

As I dropped my 17-year-old son off yesterday morning at the YMCA, I reminded him that this was where he'd had his first aquatic experiences outside of sinks and bathtubs. This is where we'd taken classes together when he was a baby and where he'd later learned to swim on his own. Although we'd switched to a different club by the time he was involved in swim team, somehow it felt fitting for him to return to this location to receive his lifeguard certification. Just as when he'd earned his Black Belt in karate, I had a sense that this full day of testing and training in First Aid, CPR, and AED was a rite of passage. During this "mommy moment," I became quite sentimental thinking about how far he's come. I think I'll need to make sure I'm well-supplied with tissues when his high school graduation rolls around next year!

This is typically a time of year that marks many rites of passage. These include graduations, marriages, first communions, confirmations, and coming of age ceremonies. Births, baptisms, and deaths don't always cluster in the springtime. Unfortunately, the latter seems to this year for us, as we've lost a number of friends and neighbors in the past two months.

Rites of passage are occasions commemorating the road travelled to this point and the promise of the future. They herald new beginnings, memorialize a crossing over, honor commitments, recognize growth, and extol achievement. Hard work is usually involved leading up to the rite, testing physical, mental, and spiritual strength and stamina. This work might include writing term papers and studying for finals, long hours of labor with painful contractions and arduous pushing, or a valiant effort to battle an illness. Individuals may toil alone, with a partner, or with a small, supportive group. Once the work is complete and the person has broken through to a new phase, people gather in community to mark the occasion often with a meaningful initiation or ceremonial ritual.

Rites of passage are markers on our journey of life and can bring with them heightened emotions. Tears are frequently shed during both happy and sorrowful occasions. Emotions can range from joy, relief, pride, and excitement, to sadness, despair, and uncertainty. Allow yourself to be fully present with your emotions and accept that they are all part of the human experience.

- What rites of passage are coming up for you, your family, loved ones, friends, neighbors, and colleagues?
- What feelings come up as you contemplate these upcoming changes?
- How do you want to honor rites of passage?
- What could best support you and others during these times of transition?

P.S.

If you know of any lifeguard openings in or near North Andover, MA, let us know. Our son passed his tests and received his certification, but is still looking for a job.

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