

POWER-LESS INSIGHTS

Transitions: The Gifts of Change

By Gail Kauranen Jones

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“I do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness and the willingness to remain vulnerable.”
—Jospeh Addison.

Rattled to the core following nearly three days without power, I felt quite raw in the aftermath of pulling my house back together and loading the refrigerator with \$200 worth of fresh groceries.

My kids, delighted by a school day off, wondered why I was so shaken by our short-term inconveniences from a wind and rain storm that left dangling wires and tree limbs spewed about our streets.

“People in other countries live without power every day,” each of my children has separately reminded me these past few days. Hearing the nightly news of other communities hit harder by the storm than Topsfield did not squelch my despair. Even uttering words of gratitude for everyone’s safety could not lift my mood. I tried unsuccessfully reframing the loss of power as an adventure, scurrying my son around from Dunkin Donuts to Panera Bread to Danvers Library to get an Internet connection. At the end of the day, I was exhausted, not enlivened as I usually am by our time together. The fact that I did not have much sleep the night before from a tree limb cracking outside my son’s window and no heat exacerbated my mood.

As one who can usually pull myself up and inspire others, I questioned my inability to shift more quickly to a positive state of mind.

The truth is being literally “power-less” ignited for me all the ways I empowered myself these past seven years of single mothering —from learning how to maintain a house solo to building a home-based business from scratch so I could be onsite for my children to

trying to sustain a breadwinner's income during a recession. Yet, for many single women I know, we get most challenged by the house maintenance issues. I am trained as a journalist and life coach, not as a contractor. My interest in learning how to replace smoke detector batteries or fix garage doors when they go off track is null.

Storms, which I once loved when they forced us to nestle in as a family, make me feel increasingly vulnerable. Being a single mother/homeowner is the hardest job there is. This time, I no longer impress myself by figuring out a warm place to sleep or what to do should my basement flood as the sump pump disengages with loss of electricity. Instead, I give in to my exhaustion and simply cry. Then, I take a whole day off just to regroup and pamper me.

It not only takes a village to raise a child, as Hillary Clinton's book by the same name claims, it takes a sense of community to truly feel comfortable in a storm. Hiring laborers to help when needed is not the same as feeling emotionally supported during a power outage. I miss being part of a team that runs a home.

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