

Perfectly Imperfect By Gail Kauranen Jones

For her bi-weekly column
“Transitions: The Gifts of Change”

Featured in *The Tri-Town Transcript*—Topsfield, MA
November 5, 2010



“Sometimes we strive so hard for perfection that we forget imperfection is happiness.”

--Karen Nave

I wanted to thank my boyfriend for all his help in moving me to my new home. After eating too many take-out meals in a rush through all the chaos of packing, I decided to prepare a quiet candlelight dinner for him.

As he walked in the door, I was stove-side, just about to flip over the chicken entrée sautéing on the front burner when suddenly the smoke alarm began blaring. In focusing on wanting to create the perfect ambiance, I forgot to turn on the overhead fan.

Scurrying about to open windows and doors to air out the room, I did not even have a chance to properly greet him.

The second time I cooked for him, I opted to create most of the meal beforehand so it would be ready upon his arrival. Still not knowing how to use the new stove, and not taking any time to read the owner’s manual, I simply turned on the bake button and set it at 350 degrees. It was not until thirty minutes later that I discovered in touching the cold entrée that I had turned on “the bake ‘n warm double oven” meant for heating bread, not the main oven for cooking meals.

Laughing over these mistakes, I recall some of my funniest and happiest moments have been when life was less than perfect.

Sitting on my backyard deck last summer, he and I were attacked by a swarm of yellow jackets that had nested under one of our chairs. Dotting our legs and arms with baking soda by the kitchen sink to calm down the painful stings and red marks, we were indeed a pathetic sight as we stared at one another in disbelief, laughing through our discomfort and shock.

In my twenties as a high tech business reporter, I was covering a trade show where Apple Computer sponsored a night at Disneyland for the press. Moments later, another female reporter and I were squished next to our much older male boss on a roller coaster ride, where we were laughing so hard at the social awkwardness of this seating arrangement that we both had tears in our eyes. He, on the other hand, stood stoically by our side afterwards without a comment.

Learning to cross country ski, after years of maneuvering black diamond downhill trails, was another adventure that left me feeling silly. “Falling is fun” became my mantra when I was placed on a tiny slope that looked so easy (sort of like golf) that I was embarrassed I was not catching on more easily.

In fact, many of our imperfect moments come when we are learning something new—whether it is discovering the nuances of a new home and its appliances, developing a new skill or relating in new ways to those with whom we cross paths. Stretching out of our comfort zones and making some mistakes along the way is how we grow.

Newness is a time to be extra gentle with and forgiving of ourselves. Humor is a great companion to take along, which I continually remind myself of now when I open a drawer to discover the item I thought I placed there is still packed away—or worse, no where to be found.

###

Gail Kauranen Jones is an author, life coach and workshop leader who has been guiding adults in transition for 19 years. A frequent radio guest on Common Ground (a public affairs program of WZLX, Boston, 100.7 FM), she lives in Topsfield with her two children. Her website is www.SupportMatters.com. She can be reached at gailjones@supportmatters.com.