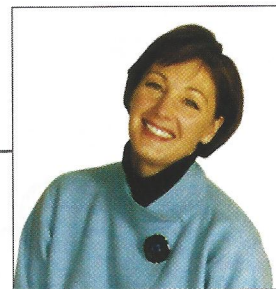


## Panic Gracefully

*"Life is what happens when you are making other plans."*

— John Lennon (1940 – 1980)



**A**h, Saturday morning. It's one of my favorite times of the week. I start the day in my nightgown, robe and slippers, puttering in my kitchen, making order out of a week's worth of clutter. I brew that first, delicious cup of coffee with great care, pouring the boiling water through a conical filter filled with fine, freshly ground coffee.

As if in the slow motion of a sensuous movie, I set the water pot down, turn to my left and SPLLOOSSSHHH! The sleeve of my robe catches the edge of the coffee filter, sending boiling hot coffee and grounds cascading all over the counter.

At first, I'm in denial. That didn't just happen. However, I soon grasp that the situation is very real. Well, I tell myself, it can't be all that bad. Wrong — it's bad. Hot coffee and grounds are spilling down the front of my robe, dripping onto the top of my bare foot and seeping into my slipper. Hot coffee and grounds are running down between the stove and the counter top, into that black slice of a hole that is home to god-only-knows-what. Hot coffee and grounds are flowing down the front of four stacked drawers, then puddling on my kitchen rug.

I stand entirely dumbfounded, wondering what to do next. Coming to my senses, I instinctively triage. Grab a towel and throw it on to the counter to stem the spread of the spill. Off with the robe and slippers and roll them into a ball. More towels on the spill. Minimize collateral drips as the towels are lobbed into the sink. She shoots, she scores! Peeking into each drawer I hope for the best. No such luck. Sigh. As I wipe grounds and silt off of each fork, knife and spoon, I realize that while I had very different plans for that cup of delicious coffee, this is what I am meant to be doing with my early Saturday morning. Who knew that today was the big day for the silverware tray?

As I fight the temptation to be crabby and indignant, I am reminded of two wise words my father once offered me: panic gracefully. While we cannot control what happens to us, we are in full control of how we react to it. Whatever the situation, whether it is someone else's big error at work, a fender bender, a toddler who independently cuts half of her blond ringlets to the scalp, or a public situation that has gone awry, we always have the option to panic gracefully. Not as a victim, not defensively, not angrily — gracefully. To do so requires some reflection:

**Self-Awareness** – How do you tend to react? How does your reaction affect those around you?

**Think Again** – How would you prefer to react? How will that affect those around you?

**Consider Options** – What can help you have your preferred reaction?

I often rely on positive perspectives to frame the situation:

At least it wasn't hot maple syrup.

That robe needed washing anyway.

I have a chance to think about Dad while I clean up this mess.

Now I've got four clean and organized kitchen drawers.

It is in moments like these I am reminded that if we are willing to notice it, grace is everywhere — even, and especially, in big, sloppy, unexpected messes.

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