

Letting Go

Category: Bravery

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | February 1, 2025

I have never been a brave person. As a little girl, the monster under my bed—a creature I knew was real—prevented me from sleeping or gave me nightmares when I managed to drift off. That monster morphed into peers who intimidated me with their confidence, their ability to flirt with boys, their freedom to jitterbug on the dance floor. Heights, reptiles and bridges over water continue to frighten me. I guess I am a weak person wrapped in a tall, seemingly strong frame.

Yet, I found courage when it most mattered—when the three people who raised me were nearing death. My paternal grandmother lay in a coma after an aneurysm burst in her abdomen; years later, my mother lay in a hospice bed, declining from dementia and an arm infected with MRSA; seven years later, my beloved father lay in his hospital bed at home, losing his battle with heart failure and old age. I loved these three people with every ounce of my being; life without them scared me, but their suffering hurt me even more. That's when I reached deep within my heart and found the courage to whisper the following words: *It's okay to let go.*

To utter those five simple words took more bravery than I ever imagined I had.

In giving Grandma, Ma and Daddy permission to die, I was putting their well-being above my own need to have them live. I was condemning myself to a lonelier life that lacked the anchors that had supported me for so many decades. But I owed these people this final gift after all the gifts, tangible and abstract, they had bestowed upon me throughout my life.

I know they heard me, because within minutes of my speaking, they each exhaled a final sigh and, with a peaceful look on their face, embarked upon their final journey.

I can only hope that when my time comes to die, that my children will have the bravery to let me go in peace—and the courage to resume their lives, just as I have resumed mine.

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