



DEVAN NORRIS

ONE SMALL LEAP

Several years ago I horrified my mother by doing something I had more or less promised never to do. I jumped out of a “perfectly good airplane”—and then proceeded to make it far worse by doing the exact same thing again two days later. As both jumps were tandem events, I tried to argue that I had not in fact jumped at all, I had merely tied myself to someone

else who did. Unsurprisingly, my mom wasn’t buying it, and over the next few days I was on the receiving end of several phone calls from different family members telling me that I had taken leave of my senses.

Sky diving was not and never had been on my bucket list; it was not something I had ever intended to do. But I had two good reasons to give skydiving a try. The first was that I often wear a parachute when going on aerobatic flights with my husband, and although I knew the theory of parachute use, it was important to me that if push came to shove I was certain that I would be able to jump if it proved truly necessary. The second was the knowledge that one of my greatest fears in life is missing out on some experience that I may never have the opportunity to try again.

In all fairness I did hit the ground rather harder than I intended to after that second jump and effectively busted my butt. Regardless, it is an experience that I have collected and added like a book to the shelves of things that I have done. There is a sense of satisfaction that comes from trying something new, from tackling something that perhaps scares you a little bit in some way. It is a far



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different satisfaction than the fleeting relief of completing one of the myriad tasks in your catalog of commitments—and committed we most assuredly are.

My dad always said to me that if you need help to get something done, don’t ask someone with time on their hands. Ask a busy person, or as he put it, a doer. That is the person who will bend over backward to get things done for you. While I have never known this advice to be wrong, I think that anyone who may be the doer my dad was referring to has observed the drawbacks, one of which is the tendency to become rather over-committed.

It can be very hard to say no to something you know you can do and do well, even harder depending on who is doing the asking. So like many others, I

say yes to things that I know I can do, or feel that I should do, and often find that I am too over-committed to do the things that I actually want to do.

There are very few things in this world that we are all given in exactly the same measure. In fact, the only one that I can think of is time. Each of us has exactly 24 hours in every day. The women I know appear to be all too aware of that number, calculating how many hours left in each day and comparing that to the list of tasks yet to accomplish. We prioritize and categorize our obligations to our families, our work, and our communities, and often neglect to make a priority of ourselves.

My own 24 hours can sometimes seem like a very short allotment when I have been saying yes to too many things. Even when I do muster the resolve to say no, I feel guilty about it, and still tend to think that I may be missing out on something by having said no! That terrible sinking feeling that comes when someone starts a conversation with, "I wish you could've been there," has become a little too familiar, but it is tricky to judge which activity will give you the most enjoyment, or the most satisfaction. Perhaps the real lesson I have to learn is how to embrace the idea that I will never be able to do everything, and live a bit more in the moment.

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Every activity is a choice, and sometimes I find that the outcome of those choices can be assumed or taken for granted—especially by me. That's when I need to shake up my own expectations and break out of my mold.

The opportunity to skydive had come up when my husband and I were working on the annual inspections for a pair of airplanes owned by a friend. That same friend also owns a skydiving school and drop zone, and offered me the chance to take my first jump. Clearly we had a lot of work ahead of us to get the annuals completed, and I could

easily have made that an excuse for not trying. Instead I reminded myself what regret feels like and thought up a reason to go for it.

Not every new experience will (thankfully) result in a deliberate plummet from the heavens, but more of them should be at least a little bit of a leap. ➔

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Devan A. Norris, WAI 13890, is an avid observer of people, and has had many wonderful opportunities to both watch and interact with them in her current roles: as a captain on the EMB145, and as an apprentice air show air boss. She and her husband live in a fly-in community in Florida, where they are proud airplane parents of an L8 named Sylvia.

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