

I have always known that I am a slow hiker, but my first day of Mountain Orientation made it clear to me that I am *slowww*. I remember chugging along, step after step, the group getting farther and farther away when Kent looked back to check on me. He waited for me, smiling in a way that said "You're doing great!" and I said "If these people want to learn to be guides, they're going to have to learn to make me feel like I'm not the slowest person in the group; I walk at a client's pace."

My asthma may prevent me from running uphill with a 50+lb pack, but it did not prevent me from leading the group up, over and down Pear Lake Pass or navigating off-trail with an analog map and compass. It didn't prevent me from learning about the importance of confidence and not second-guessing myself.