

BEHAVIORAL DIFFERENCES AS I AGE

I have come to realize that we behave differently as we age. I know it is no great insight. In fact, it is obvious. Certain “things” I once seldom utilized, I find myself utilizing more and certain other “things” that I once utilized a great deal, I no longer utilize. Let me give you three examples:

SHIRT POCKETS: When I was young, I never much thought about shirt pockets. If I had, I would have viewed them as decorations. On dress shirts, they were on the left side. On sport shirts, there were two shirt pockets, one on either side. They were also called breast pockets, which caused me to snicker when I was young. I remember a cartoon from World War II showing a very well endowed WAC Private standing at attention before a WAC Sergeant who was yelling, “Empty those pockets, Private!”

Anyway, when I was young, not only did I not think about shirt pockets, I didn’t use them. Whatever I had that needed to be pocketed went into my pants pockets. Then as now: a wallet, a comb, keys, a handkerchief, and loose change. However, these days I have a few more possessions that need to be pocketed from time to time, and the shirt pocket is the perfect place for them.

First and foremost are my hearing aids. I find, when I am no longer around people and do not expect to hear anything, I take them out. And where do I put them? Exactly. In my shirt pocket. They are safe there, and they are easily retrievable. In fact, I usually throw an extra battery in my shirt pocket in case a hearing aid battery dies.

I am reluctant to admit it, but I do the same thing, but much less frequently, with my partial dentures. Dentures (which used to be called false teeth) are never like the teeth they replaced. Sometimes, food finds its way under your denture, or your gums become irritated. I then leave wherever I am, locate a bathroom, remove my denture, wash it and place it in a Kleenex, and deposit it in my shirt pocket.

Finally, whenever I go shopping and use my credit card, I take it out of my wallet, give it to the sales person or cashier, and when it is returned to me, rather than take out my wallet (which I have returned to my pants pocket), I put my credit card in my shirt pocket. By doing this, I do not delay the line behind me any longer than necessary. Of course, there are times when I return home, and forgot that I put my credit card in my shirt pocket. I panic, thinking that I lost it, since it is not in my wallet where it belongs. I have become very dependent on my shirt pocket.

THEATRE MATINEES: When I was a teenager and discovered Broadway, a whole new world opened up. There was something magical about live actors on a stage. And a stage transformed into another world. I graduated from movies, and instead of going on a date to a movie house downtown, I started ordering theatre tickets by mail, or buying them in advance at the box office. And when did I go to the theatre? Saturday night! That was date night. And years later, and married, we still went to the theatre on Saturday night. If I could not get tickets for a show for a Saturday night, I would settle

for another night. But never, in the furthest stretch of the imagination, would I think of going to a matinee, whether Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday.

Who would go to a darkened theatre when it was light outside? Daytime is for work or play or shopping or visiting or sightseeing. When you were a kid, you went to the movies in the daytime, but not when you got older. How times have changed! These days, when we go to the theatre and to concerts, it is always a matinee. I no longer care to drive at night. Being retired, Wednesday matinees make a lot of sense.

Our senior center has a theatre club which buys blocks of tickets and provides a bus which takes us to various shows, weekend matinees. Looking around the theatre, there is hardly anyone under 70. So nice of them to have matinees. And so much more convenient to go to the theatre in the daytime.

STAIRS: When I was younger, if I had the choice between taking an elevator or taking the stairs for less than five flights, there never was any question: the stairs. I was always impatient. I had places to go and things to do. I didn't have time to wait around for an elevator. If it was not there when I was there, I would take the stairs. I lived in an elevator house, on the sixth floor, into my 20s, and most of the time, when going down, I would run down the stairs, usually two at a time. Going up and down the subway stairs, I was usually the first. I was annoyed when a building required you to take the elevator. If there was an escalator, I would run up and down them. I was always on the go.

And now, oh boy! In 2003 we moved out of our lovely house into a condominium with an elevator, largely because the stairs were becoming a problem. Am I glad we did it. It was getting harder to negotiate the stairs, and over the past few years, I have been unable to do stairs without holding on to a railing. And to think I once practically flew over them. At the senior center, I have a weekly class on the third floor. More than half my classmates, around my age, insist on walking. I am impressed. My excuse: arthritis, knee replacement and neuropathy.

One final observation joining theatre, stairs and shirt pockets: When I was young, I always sat in the balcony (in the evening). Mostly because they were the cheaper seats. And now, it is the orchestra (in the afternoon). No climbing. And to bring it full circle: Today, when I go to the theatre, I not only don't do stairs, and go only to matinees, but I have to take out my hearing aids, put them in my shirt pocket and use the device that the theatre provides, enabling me to hear even better.

12-16-14