

2-7-20 Insult to Injury

When you have injured your dominant hand and you are suffering through the severe pain and the humiliation and frustration of your new inabilities, it brings a whole new meaning to the phrase *adding insult to injury*.

Although falls can happen to anybody and account for a high percentage of injuries to young people they also count for a high percentage of injuries to the elderly. I am now in that latter category and so I have the expertise to speak about it rather than just looking at on-line statistics and suggestions, and it is my own injury I speak of!

Last Sunday I fell at home in the early hours of the morning with no lights on after all it's my own home and I know it, so why turn on a light? A moment later I had slipped and knew I was on my way down so out went my dominant hand. That's what they do. You don't even have to tell it to; it just does it on its own. My right hand took the brunt of that fall and a while later I realized I had damaged it badly. I went to urgent care because in my mind that minimized the injury and after all who really likes to go to a hospital? The folks at urgent care couldn't help but chuckle. They took one look at my wrist and said, "Oh, no, you need to go to the emergency room."

At the ER, X-rays were taken, showing a badly fractured and ruptured wrist. They would not know until I saw an orthopedic specialist whether I needed surgery.

I'll spare you the details of the interesting procedures done at the emergency room allowing gravity to do its work and straightening out the bones. That's bones plural because now it was in pieces and Because multiple bones were involved. I will tell you that it did not hurt because lidocaine had been injected into my wrist. I went home with a large cast and the instructions to contact the orthopedic physician.

While I fell on Sunday that appointment did not happen until the following Wednesday. All those folks at busy emergency room did what they could do. While the injury is not life threatening, I can tell you it has been torture to try to sleep, to find a comfortable place for that cast arm. The one instruction I had was to keep my hand above my heart which is an interesting phrase made me think of pledging allegiance to the flag.

Along with the pain and weirdness of this new experience, there were numerous comical moments like all those times I had to write my signature and I would tell them I could not. Yet, I had to. So, I carefully wrote with my left hand and they were the funniest squiggliest signatures ever; even worse than those on the plastic pads at stores where you inserted a credit card.

Pain gives me brain fog so all the more challenging it was to figure things out and there's a lot of figuring. You must figure out how to get dressed. Can you brush your teeth with only your left hand? Yes, is the answer but the results are not as good as working with your dominant hand, but it's done well enough. Well enough and good enough became the new standard for lots of things.

I read some tips online about dealing with life with a cast on your dominant hand. One tip was that you could, in fact, use your right-handed scissors by turning them over and while the handle might pinch your fingers a bit they will work. I did not find that to be true. You still needed a little pressure from the other hand to assist pushing those blades together. Thank you, Amazon, for delivering left-handed scissors with your speedy delivery. They were a godsend.

The other most useful item I purchased on line was a plastic sleeve with a neoprene like ring at the top creating a waterproof sleeve for taking showers. Well i did succeed in using packing tape to tape a rubbish bag over my right arm it took a long time was comical I guess but very frustrating and very difficult something I did not want to have to repeat. I give this waterproof sleeve 5 stars!

My sister was kind enough to take me to Savers where we shopped for sweaters and shirts with wide sleeves. That was a challenging shopping expedition and I quickly ran out of energy. I did not have energy for trying things on, so, we just guessed by looks. We found a shawl and a few shirts, and I was happy with that. At one point my sister held up a long shirt almost like a short dress and asked me, "Do you have leggings? This would look really cute with leggings!" I asked her, "Do you use two hands to pull on leggings? I don't have two hands to use right now, so, that is out of the question."

It's a good thing that the weather has been mild and dry as I found myself wearing Crocs. Ordinarily thought of as informal and something for the beach or yard but there I was wearing Crocs because they did not have shoelaces and I could easily slip them on.

The take home instructions included applying ice to the injury. However, that didn't make any sense once the cast was on as the cold simply did not penetrate it.

Each day that passed I figured some things out. Folding laundry was nearly impossible. So, it was good enough to spread the item out on something wide, such as a bed or couch and using my left hand do the best I could from one side to the other. Then either carry the item one at a time using my left hand or put just a couple items in a basket and deliver them to their place, as carrying a full basket requires two hands.

Leaving the caps off toothpaste, lotions, ointments, and eyedrops is the way to go. Once those caps were off, they were staying off! Every larger bottle required some sort of leverage between my hip and counter or elbow for my left hand to remove the cap. The bathroom counter sure looks messy but I can get to everything and use what I need to use, Without additional torturous frustrating turning.

Sleep presented the most challenges of all. Do you know how difficult it is to arrange pillows with only your non-dominant hand and meanwhile the other arm is hurting and that's the arm providing leverage in the bed? No sooner would I think, "There, I've got it. That's the right configuration and placement of pillows." Then I would realize it needed to be adjusted again. I found myself wishing my right arm was in traction with nothing touching the cast or injured arm at all but then I would suppose that wouldn't work either because my arm would probably be in a sling and the sling in traction would pull on the cast and injury and that wouldn't work either.

Challenges require changes. Lack of sleep at night meant having to take a nap, even if just a short one or several short ones, to get through the day.

I had to remind myself the rest of my body was not broken; just tired. However, movement to the whole body meant movement to the injured arm and movement meant more pain. Finding ways for gentle movement became another challenge and goal to be met.

Surely all these challenges of using my left hand and problem-solving must be good for brain development! Right? And they pave the way for meeting the challenges after surgery.

With brain stimulation and gratitude, I meet the future.

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