

## 2-21-20 Challenges Require Changes

The numerous challenges brought about by the January 26 fractured wrist continue to trigger changes, not only in lifestyle, (no soirees this week!) and how I do things (not quickly), but also changes in attitude.

These changes do not apply just to a fractured wrist, of course. Over the weekend I had a nice long chat using FaceTime with a friend who recently had knee replacement. Different body parts but similar experiences. I wasn't sure that was going to be the case, so it was kind of comforting in a way to realize the universality of dealing with the challenges of not being able to do the multitude of things we take for granted. My friend and I are not even at the point of talking about recovery; neither one of us has begun physical therapy.

We both found that it takes a very long time to accomplish the simplest activity such as getting dressed. In my case, it is difficult to put on socks, for instance. Have you ever tried to put on socks using only one hand and that one hand is your non-dominant hand? If you want to appreciate the use of both hands, try putting on a pair of socks using only your non-dominant hand.

That little experiment also applies to a multitude of other activities. I think this would be a good experiment to try, both by yourself and in your family and as a classroom activity. Very quickly you see that while something might be very difficult, it does not mean that it is impossible. It can be rewarding to discover ways you can improve achieving the task at hand. (No pun intended.) It can be an exercise in problem solving and creativity and interesting to see people arrive at different solutions.

The other thing you will quickly realize is how long it takes to complete this task without the use of both hands. Now for the next part you'll have to imagine what it is like to experience pain and frustration all day and all night. I don't say this so that you will feel sorry for me. No, that is not the point at all. The point is that by the time something has been finished, you are exhausted. You may have to lie down for a rest, and you may need to apply ice to parts that are aching. This is something that my friend and I both said at the same time. No sooner did we each describe how long it took us to get dressed, than we both added at the same time "and then we are exhausted!" At least I wasn't alone, and I felt understood.

There are rewards to these challenges also. Certainly, appreciation and gratitude are two of them. Appreciation for what I had and appreciation for the fact that at least most of my abilities are expected to return, as they are for my friend who had her knee replaced. Gratitude for a brighter future is a wonderful thing to have amid frustration and pain.

When assistance is required and you ask for it, say at the supermarket, and somebody cheerfully offers that assistance, again gratitude is there. When I asked a woman the other day to please place these items in the reusable bag for me and she gladly did so. I said to her, "While I am temporarily impaired, assistance from others is greatly appreciated." She responded by telling me how well she understood what I was saying, and proceeded to tell me about having both shoulders operated on, one at a time and the comical cast she had when she broke her thumb and the cast had the thumb sticking up as though she was hitchhiking. She said she was an accident waiting to happen. We laughed but we also shared being thankful for help from others.

As I was leaving the supermarket, I saw a young man energetically walking along, looking happy, and noticed that he had a prosthetic hand, one of those claw types that can move and pick things up. I did not talk to him, but I continue to think about him. Does he miss his hand? Has he moved past missing his hand of flesh and accepts and is grateful for its replacement? I don't know the answer to any of these questions but I'm glad I saw him at the moment that I did. The sight of that young man gave me many more reasons for being grateful.

Know a friend in need? Give a call , send a card, offer a meal and rather than saying "Let me know what I can do" , turn it into a question and ask, "What can I do for you that will be helpful?" That would be nice for a change; believe me.

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