

September 2007

Newsletter

Bonkers

September 2007

Bits

the monthly newsletter with a sense of humor

Beating Burnout

If you're feeling burnt out, and you want to reconnect to the meaning and joy in your daily life, then try the following:

Focus on the purpose. When you find yourself burnt out, it may help to remember why you are here in the first place. Your focus should be on ideas such as "What can I learn from this?" or "How can my gifts help in this case?" or "What is the greater good?" Then pay attention to the answers that are generated in your mind. The answers will likely remind you of the importance in what you are doing.

Lighten up. Choose a problem that is bothering you, and try to find something funny about it. Practice developing a sense of humor about obstacles and other perceived negatives. The humor will help lessen the negativity, and may open the way for you to discover more creative approaches to the situation.

Tune up your "mindset". Imagine taking your car in for a tune-up and cleaning. Try to picture your brain with all the things that are misfiring and cluttering the space. Then picture a team of workers reconnecting loose wires, putting mess away where it belongs, and doing an overall cleaning. Let your mind get cleaned, rewired and ready to go on.

Soul Search. Picture a wise man or woman who has all the answers you need. Close your eyes and take a walk with

him or her. Ask all the questions you can't seem to answer yourself. Then listen for your soul to answer them.

By Pat McHenry Sullivan, author of Work With Meaning, Work With Joy

Appreciate the Ordinary

How would you answer this question: If you could spend one more day with a loved one who already departed, how would you spend it?

Author Mitch Albom says that for his book, *For One More Day*, he asked people this very question and was fascinated by their answers. What he found was that people wanted to spend an ordinary day, doing ordinary things with the people they had loved. Almost everyone wanted to tell the person that they loved him or her one more time. Some said they wanted to do the habitual things they always did with the person, such as head to the racetrack, or eat in a favorite hamburger joint and talk about old times. Albom says asking people about this scenario, helped him understand what we yearn for. Often, he says, it's not something exotic or far-away. It's about connection, and realizing that each and every normal day is a treasure.

Lesson:

Treasure every ordinary day!

BONKER BITS

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A supplement of
Going Bonkers Magazine



I'm so Mad I Could Just...

Someone has just broken a promise to you. The more you think about it the angrier you get. You decide you need to say something to the promise-breaker for what he has done. But before you open your mouth, it's probably wise to step back and realize that you are angry -- possibly very angry. While anger is normal, and even a positive emotion when dealt with properly, you should take time to first recognize your anger - and then think about it as your own subjective experience. For instance, would someone else in your situation just shrug their shoulders and walk away?

There are many things you can do to manage your anger:

- ✓ Log your anger. Keep track of what makes you go into an angry tizzy. By learning what makes you angry, you can be better prepared when those situations arise. Develop strategies for channeling your anger in healthy ways.

- ✓ When you become angry with someone, try to see the situation from his or her point of view. Employing empathy in this way can defuse your anger. Acknowledging that there is another point of view and that we are all human and make mistakes can be a powerful reminder to calm down.

- ✓ When all else fails, sometimes laughter is the best antidote to anger. See yourself as you must appear: Your face is red and you are behaving irrationally. Try to lighten up a little.

- ✓ Use a relaxation technique, like deep breathing, to calm yourself.

- ✓ Improve your listening skills. Miscommunication is often the culprit in situations that inspire anger. Really listen to what the other person is saying. Ask questions to make sure you understand their meaning.

- ✓ Be assertive - not aggressive. That means that you need to let others know what your boundaries are. It may be difficult to clearly express yourself when you are overwhelmed with anger, so you may need to take a moment and gather your thoughts before expressing your feelings.

- ✓ Keep things in perspective. Always ask yourself, "how important is this?" Is this really worth the time and energy that an angry outburst requires?"

- ✓ Be forgiving. Let go of past hurts and resentments. This is a difficult thing to do, but the reward is your peace of mind and happiness.

By Redford Williams, Duke University and author of "Anger Kills"

How to Maintain Well-Being

A University of Wisconsin-Madison study has found that people who participate in community groups maintain a higher degree of psychological well-being. Those involved in religious groups showed the highest levels of psychological well-being, and those involved in recreational groups, such as hobby or discussion groups, came in second. The participants' physical, psychological and social functioning were tracked over a five-year period, say study authors Emily Greenfield and Nadine Marks. The findings indicate that community participation and the building of social resources are important. The findings were published in *The Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*.

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BONKERISM

Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; but discovering that you are the one who gets burned.



**"It makes no sense to worry about the future.
By the time you get there, it's the past!"**



How to Be Assertive

Being assertive means to stand up for yourself; share your views; or appropriately stop others from taking advantage of you. It also means you are communicating what you want, in a clear manner, while respecting your own rights and feelings, and the rights and feelings of others. Being assertive is an honest and appropriate expression of your feelings, opinions and needs.

Most people are not assertive for fear of displeasing others or not being liked. Although you may feel some immediate unpleasantness by being assertive, it's better for you, and for the relationship in the long run, if you assert yourself, rather than feel like you are being taken advantage of.

HOW TO BEGIN

Develop a value and belief system which allows you to assert yourself. This is the hardest part. It means giving yourself permission to be angry, to say "No," to ask for help, and to make mistakes.

LEARN ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

These include Basic Assertion, Empathic Assertion, Escalating Assertion and I-Language Assertion (4 Types of Assertion).

1. Basic Assertion

This is a simple, straightforward expression of your beliefs, feelings, or opinions. It's usually a simple "I want" or "I feel" statement.

2. Empathic Assertion

This conveys some sensitivity to the other person. It usually contains two parts- a recognition of the other person's situation or feelings, followed by a statement in which you stand up for your rights. Example: *"I know you've really been busy, but I want to feel that our rela-*

tionship is important to you. I want you to make time for me and for us."

3. Escalating Assertion

This occurs when the other person fails to respond to your basic assertion and continues to violate your rights. You gradually escalate the assertion and become increasingly firm. It may even include the mention of some type of resulting action on your part, made only after several basic assertive statements. Example: *"If you don't complete the work on my car by 5:00 tomorrow, I'll be forced to call the Better Business Bureau."*

4. "I" Language Assertion

This is especially useful for expressing negative feelings. It involves a 3-part statement:

- ✓ *When you do...* (describe the behavior).
- ✓ *The effects are...* (describe how the behavior concretely affects you).
- ✓ *I'd prefer...* (describe what you want).

The real focus in "I" language assertion is on the "I feel," "I want" part of the statement. When expressing anger,

often the tendency is to blame the other person, fly off the handle and get caught up in the emotion. "I" language assertion can help you constructively focus that anger and be clear about your own feelings.

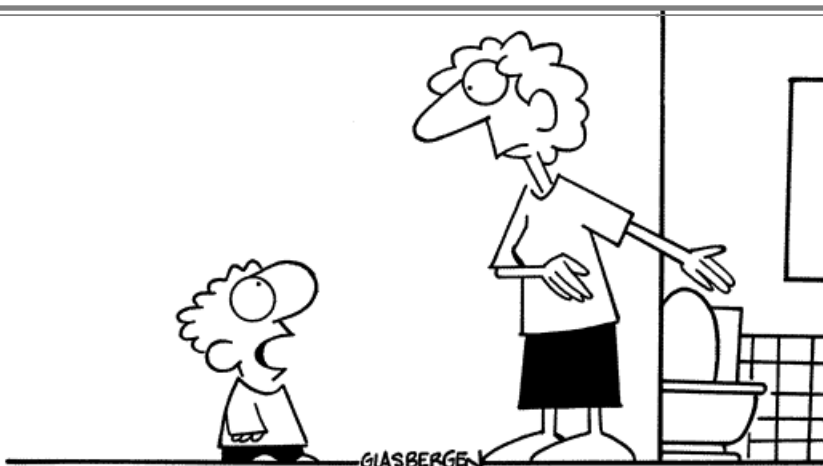
Example: *When you didn't buy the groceries like you said you would, I couldn't cook the dinner for my parents. I feel hurt and angry with you. Next time, I'd like you to follow through when you agree to do something like that."*

USE YOUR BEST COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Maintain direct eye contact; keep your posture open and relaxed; be sure your facial expression agrees with the message; keep a level, well-modulated tone of voice; select an appropriate time to be assertive.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

You won't learn how to become a more assertive person just by reading this! Practice on your friends and family. But tell them what you are doing first! Enlist their help; ask for feedback on how you're doing. In the long run, communicating honestly can help your relationships.



"Why do I need to learn potty training? Is it something I'll use later in life? Will it help me get into a good college? Do chicks dig guys who are potty trained?"

Is It Time to Purge?



Is stuff taking over your life? If so, it might be time to purge. Arianne Cohen, expert in this field, offers the following suggestions:

Kitchen

- ✓ Toss all your extras. Do you really need five or six wooden spoons?
- ✓ Check expiration dates on foods and toss if they're past the use-by date.
- ✓ Move seldom-used appliances into storage or sell them. Ask yourself if the breadmaker is worth the space it's taking up. Do you use it?

Desk

- ✓ Continually throw out the items that are in danger of building up. This includes junk mail, expired coupons and catalogs.
- ✓ Create activity zones. You should have a bill-paying zone, a reading zone and a stationery zone. Keep items for each activity in neat containers.

Cosmetics

- ✓ Sort through your bottles and toss any half-empty ones that you haven't used for six months.
- ✓ Put all similar products in neat containers.
- ✓ Try to avoid impulse purchases that repeat things you already have at home.

To Realize the Value of Time...

Have you ever taken "time" for granted, rationalizing it away, as if it has little or no value? Have you ever said, "I'll do it tomorrow, or next month, or next year...."

To realize the value of one year -- Ask a parent whose military son or daughter is held over for another 12 months in a war zone.

To realize the value of one month -- Ask a mother who has given birth to a premature baby.

To realize the value of one week -- Ask an editor of a weekly newspaper.

To realize the value of one hour -- Ask the lovers who are waiting to meet.

To realize the value of one minute -- Ask the person who has missed the train, bus or plane.

To realize the value of one second -- Ask a person who has survived an accident.

To realize the value of one millisecond -- Ask the person who has won a silver medal in the Olympics.

Recipe for Tough Times



1 carrot + 1 egg + 1 scoop coffee beans

Does it seem life has been hard lately? Are you filled with anxiety, self-doubt or sometimes feel like just giving up? It may seem that just as you get one problem solved, another pops up in its place. Everyone goes through tough times. What you may not realize is that how you react during those times will have a huge impact on how you feel about yourself. Try the following visualization to gain clarity and strength during difficult times:

Imagine walking into your kitchen and filling three small pots with water. Turn up the heat under each. Carefully place a carrot in one pot and an egg in another pot. Place a handful of coffee beans in the last pot. Let the pots boil for 20 minutes. Now imagine removing the carrot and the egg, and placing them in a bowl. Scoop the coffee into a cup. After cooling, imagine picking up the carrot. Note how it feels soft. Break the egg and notice how it is now hard

boiled. Taste the coffee and enjoy its rich flavor.

What does all this mean? Each of these three foods faced the same adversity - the boiling water - but each reacted differently to the experience. The carrot went in strong, hard and unrelenting, but after boiling became soft and weak. The egg had been fragile, easily breakable, but after boiling it became hardened inside. The coffee beans, however, reacted to the adversity by changing into something better - richer.

Which are you? When adversity knocks, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean? Will you lose your strength like the carrot? Will you harden your heart like the egg? Or, like the coffee beans, will you change for the better because of the very circumstances that have caused you pain?

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BONKERISM

Bite off more than you can chew, then chew it. Plan more than you can do, then do it.

Stressed out?

If you're feeling overwhelmed, you might need to regain balance in your life. Keep these things in mind if you are feeling stressed about life in general:

- ✓ Don't waste your time. It's not the number of hours that you work that counts, it's the way you use them.
- ✓ If you're overwhelmed, figure out what you like doing and then try to arrange for others to take over the things that you aren't crazy about or that could easily be done by someone else.
- ✓ Forget the old motto, "If you want it done right, do it yourself." This will not only stress you out, but those around you as well.
- ✓ Start trusting those around you to take care of what they are responsible for.
- ✓ Always set aside time every week to do things that you love the most.

By David Fischman, author of *The Secret of the Seven Seeds*, and international consultant.

Is your Self-Image Ruling your Life?

To be ruled by self-image is to exclude many feelings that we don't believe are in line with our imagined selves. This keeps reality at bay. You are no longer ruled by self-image when:

- ✓ You let yourself feel what you feel.
- ✓ You stop being offended by things.
- ✓ You stop worrying about how a situation makes you look.
- ✓ You stop excluding people you feel inferior or superior to.
- ✓ You stop worrying about what people are thinking of you.
- ✓ You stop obsessing over money, possessions and status.
- ✓ You no longer feel the urge to defend your opinions.

By Deepak Chopra, Best-Selling Author, *The Book of Secrets*

How to Be a Great Conversationalist

Conversing meaningfully, in a brief and clear way, is an important skill to develop. Here are a few tips to help you learn this skill:

- 1. Don't be shy.** Go ahead and be the first to speak. Ask an open-ended question to kick off the conversation.
- 2. Be inquisitive.** Let your curiosity drive the conversation. People love to be asked questions about themselves. Remember to keep it on the right level (you're not interrogating the person -- you're trying to have a pleasant conversation).
- 3. Listen to the other person.** When they are talking, don't use that time to plan what you will say next! Really focus on what the person is saying.

4. Don't be drab. Talk about someplace you've been lately, a good book you've read, or something you've enjoyed. Talk about something positive.

5. Avoid the dirty details of your life. While the other person may be interested in listening to you, you don't want to reveal everything about yourself in a brief conversation. Use discretion when you converse.

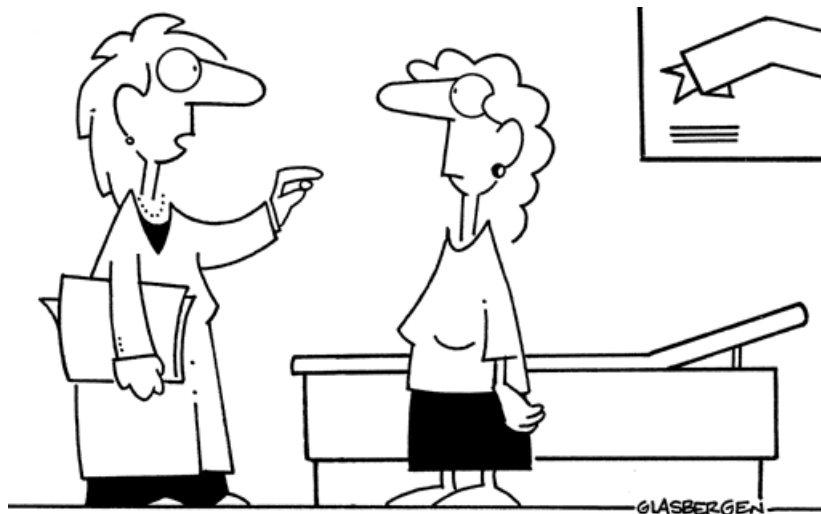
6. End the conversation at a high point. Remember, this is a quick conversation, averaging between two to eight minutes in length.

By Jodi R. Smith, Etiquette Expert, *Mannersmith Monthly*

Are You a Boiling Frog?

If you drop a frog in a pot of boiling water, it will frantically try to jump out. But if you place it gently in a pot of warm water and turn the heat on low, it will float there quite happily. As the water gradually heats up, the frog will sink into a tranquil stupor and before long, with a smile on its face, it will allow itself to be boiled to death.

This boiling frog story is a useful metaphor for human behavior. It seems we humans will tolerate a lot, if it's first introduced to us slowly and painlessly. In what areas of your life have you become like a boiling frog? If you're not happy with your present situation, then take a few moments and examine how you may have become conditioned, over time, to accept it. Once you have that figured out, then make a radical change and "jump out of your boiling pot!"



"These ear plugs will help you stick to your diet. When you wear them, you can't hear snacks calling your name from the kitchen."

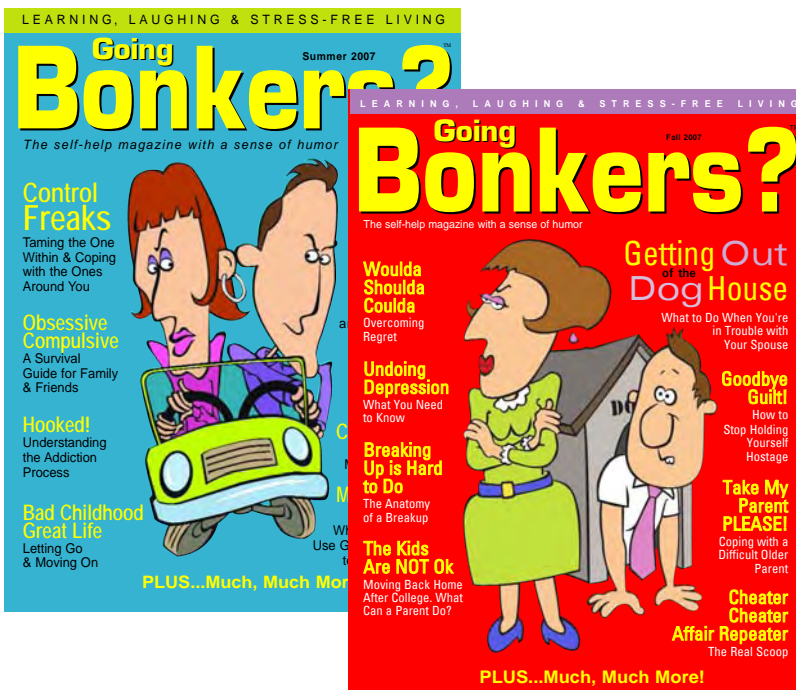
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YOU'LL
LEARN

YOU'LL
LAUGH

you'll absolutely love it!



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*You'll Learn, You'll laugh,
You'll absolutely LOVE it!*

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