

Something to Watch Over Me

I read somewhere recently that NBA stars Steph Curry and Russell Westbrook are both my exact height and weight. I'm something of a gym rat and am in pretty good shape myself, but occasionally after swimming laps I'll glance in a mirror. I don't see any significant similarities in our physiques, so there's a major disconnect here.

Note to self: Stop looking in mirrors when undressed.

In related news, my \$50 Timex Ironman digital watch died last month after years of faithful service. I have nicer watches, but the Timex got a lot of use on weekends when I tended to be knocking about outdoors.

Instead of properly rewarding the Timex company by purchasing its current model, I chose to acquire one more complex technological device that I'm certain I'll never learn to fully utilize – an Apple Watch Sport. Presumably I'm not the last on my block to join the digital fitness craze.

I had dinner with some male friends last week, and three of the four of us were wearing fitness trackers of one brand or another. I'm pretty sure the fourth guy arrived at the restaurant in a horse and buggy; there's no hope for him.

The three of us non-luddites compared our statistics and described how our daily routines have been altered, presumably for the better. It's almost impossible to get close to the end of your day and not find something active to do if your watch is telling you you're very close to achieving your daily goal.

Until recently, all the nagging I have endured has been provided for free by the women in my life, but that is now being supplemented by Apple. Hardly a daylight hour passes without my wrist vibrating for one reason or another, reminding me to stop slowly killing myself by remaining motionless for too long.

Being left-handed, I wear my watch on my right wrist. That's attached to the hand I use to operate a trombone slide and pluck strings on an upright bass, and my new watch seems to have difficulty interpreting those motions. One night last week I had two rehearsals back-to-back, and I'm pretty sure I was credited with the caloric equivalent of running a marathon.

I'm a believer in Pearson's Law, which states: "When performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported back, the rate of improvement accelerates." I step on a bathroom scale every morning, not because I expect to be any lighter than the day before but because I subconsciously understand I'll be doing it again tomorrow. My theory is that my subconscious is busily working behind the scenes to limit my daily calorie intake so weighing myself doesn't become a recurring unpleasant event.

There's also something known as the Generalized Peter Principle which states: "Anything that works will be used in progressively more challenging applications until it fails." Apple states on its website: "Each week, Apple Watch can suggest a new daily Move goal for how many active calories to burn each day, based on your recent history." In other words, it keeps increasing my Move goal until I fail to reach it.

On the one hand, it's good to have a digital friend who is endlessly optimistic about my capabilities and constantly encouraging me to do more. On the other hand, it can be a pest. And if I consistently underachieve my activity goal it condescendingly suggests a more modest number; I can sense its disappointment in me.

I suppose I could read the online manual and figure out how to limit the judgmental reminders, but for now I'm kind of enjoying the attention.

60-ish Writers Group member Dave Parsons didn't have a physique like Steph or Russell thirty years ago, either.