

Not Enough Time for Patience

A retired friend of mine was telling me recently that his 'bucket' list is growing shorter while his 'f-it' (rhymes with bucket) list is rapidly growing longer.

I immediately understood what he was talking about. The older I get, the more:
1) I find ways to avoid doing the things I know I should be doing but dislike, and 2) I tend to tell people how I really feel. These are not desirable behaviors for anyone who wishes to remain employed anywhere. Or have very many friends.

One way to look at it is that we all have a filter (hopefully) through which we channel everything we say and do. That filter never gets changed, and eventually it becomes so clogged up with crap that it can't handle any more, so poor decisions that would normally get caught start bypassing the filter altogether. This is a matter of simple mechanics - not your fault.

It's exacerbated by the fact that many of us experience a declining amount of patience as we grow older, which seems inevitable if you think about it. Consider that the average life expectancy of a white American male is very close to 76 years. At age 58, I'm (coincidentally) about 76% of the way along toward achieving that age. Or put another way, I'm roughly 76% dead.

When I was 10 years old (only 13% dead) and I wasted an entire day, that represented just a tiny fraction of my remaining estimated lifespan. A wasted day at my current advanced age is relatively much more important. Math was never my best subject, but if I had 66 theoretical years remaining at age 10 and have only 18 now, my remaining time on this earth is almost four times more valuable now than it was then. It will be even more valuable tomorrow – maybe I should figure out a way to issue stock.

As you can see, there should be an increasing sense of urgency in everything we do as we get older. If I knew I was going to live only 20 more minutes, would I spend the next ten of them (literally half my remaining life) listening to my idiot neighbors complain about our Muslim socialist president who was actually born in

Kenya? I think not. In fact, I'd immediately start to calculate whether or not I had enough time remaining to run to the hardware store to buy a Nerf bat with which to beat some sense into them. Now we're talking quality time.

Not surprisingly, as I get older I've noticed that I'm starting to pepper my conversations with verbiage like "life is too short to..." and "I no longer have the patience for..." I'm afraid it's just a matter of time before those phrases are displaced by "get away from me" and "shut up!"

Perversely, I'm becoming more patient when driving a car instead of less so. You'd think I'd always be in a hurry – trying to minimize unproductive windshield time - but instead I guess I've decided that life is too short (there's that phrase) to be continuously aggravated by clueless drivers. LuAnn says I drive "like an old man."

I'm not sure if she realizes that by her standards, everyone drives that way. She always has one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake, and thinks that idiot drivers need to be made aware that they are obstructing traffic. Last week she traded her 1992 Chevy Blazer for a 2008 Chevy Super Sport Trailblazer with a 390 horsepower engine, which is like handing a flame thrower to an arsonist.

Anyway, it's funny how some things fall off of (or onto) a 'f-it' list. Class reunions used to be on LuAnn's, but for some reason we attended her 40th (City High) a couple of weeks ago. She introduced me to a guy who was her boyfriend in high school, and we silently sized each other up. Finally, I said, "I'm not sure which of us is the lucky one." Could have used that filter.

But life is too short to be worrying about any of this stuff. Get away from me.

Writers Group member Dave Parsons is grateful that he doesn't have any bosses he can offend at the business he co-owns on the Coralville Strip.