

Matt's Home News

News To Help You Save Time And Money

April 2015

Beauty Is In The Eye Of The Beholder

In mythology, there is a story about Narcissus, a young man who kneeled every day beside a lake to peer at his reflection in the water and contemplate his own beauty. The story goes that he was so fascinated by his face that one morning while gazing at himself, he fell into the lake and drowned. At the spot where he fell, a flower grew, which people called the Narcissus (commonly called a Daffodil).

When Narcissus died, it is said that the goddesses of the forest appeared and saw that the lake had transformed from fresh water into a lake of salty tears.

"Why do you weep?" the goddesses asked the lake.

"I weep for Narcissus," the lake replied.

"Ah, it is no surprise that you weep for Narcissus," they said.
"We often pursued him in the forest to enjoy his splendor, but
you alone could contemplate his beauty close at hand."

"But...was Narcissus beautiful?" the lake asked.

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Surprised, the goddesses said,
"Who better than you to know that?
After all, it was by your banks that he kneeled each day to contemplate himself!"

The lake was silent for some time. Finally, it said:

"I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks, I could see my own beauty reflected in the depth of his eyes."

Moral: Much of what we see in others is but a reflection of ourselves.

~ Matt Haviland



Time For Spring Cleaning

The idea of spring cleaning has been around for thousands of years. In fact, in some cultures, doing an annual deep cleaning is associated with more than just clearing out dirt and clutter. For example:

In Jewish custom, Passover marks the exodus of the Jews from Egypt and takes place two weeks after the Jewish New Year. Because keeping leavened bread in the home during Passover is considered an affront, even overlooked crumbs count. To combat inadvertently insulting God, Jews scour their homes before Passover to ensure they didn't miss any bread. Since Passover comes around April, many people in the northern hemisphere consider this the origin of spring cleaning.

The Chinese also have a tradition of doing an annual cleaning of their homes, but they do it in conjunction with the Chinese New Year, which occurs in late January. The Chinese will sweep their floors and clean to get rid of bad luck that accumulated during the previous year. Once the house is clean, they welcome good fortune by observing a prohibition against sweeping for the few days following the New Year in order to prevent sweeping away any good fortune that came with the turn of the year.



Ultimately, doing an annual cleaning in spring may have more to do with simple biology. During winter, we're exposed to less sunlight due to shorter, often dreary days. We have less energy because shorter days lead to the production of melatonin, which induces sleepiness. Conversely, when we're exposed to sunlight in the spring, we feel more awake, and also more like freshening up after a long, closed-in winter.

Three Fun Paradoxical Questions

1. A man builds a wooden boat. Every three months he takes off one board, replaces it, and sets the old board aside. After a long period of time he has replaced every board on the boat. He then assembles the old boards into a boat. Which boat is the old boat—the one built of newer boards or the one made of old boards?
2. If God is omnipotent, can God create a rock that's too heavy for Him to lift?
3. Is the statement, "There is no truth," true or false?

April Quiz Question

Q: *What do the letters stand for in the emergency signal SOS?*

March Question

Q: *Which word in the dictionary is always incorrect?*

A: *Incorrect.*

Take Steps To Reduce Severe Pollen Allergies

With winter officially over, burgeoning trees and flowers herald spring and seasonal allergies. Tree pollens and mold spores can wreak havoc on the 35 million Americans who suffer itchy eyes, runny noses, scratchy throats and fatigue. Beyond over-the-counter and prescription medications, there are simple steps sufferers can take to reduce their misery:

- 1) Limit exposure. After months of cabin fever, staying inside with the windows shut tight on a lovely day may seem like torture. But consider the alternative: sneezing and wheezing and rubbing your eyes non-stop isn't fun either.
- 2) Plan outings carefully. Rainy and non-windy days are best for keeping pollen at bay. Remember, too, that pollen counts peak in the midday hours. Avoid grassy and wooded areas. Check your local news sources for pollen counts.
- 3) Park strategically. You've seen how pollen can sometimes turn a car greenish yellow, so if you park outside, try to avoid parking under a tree. Your car may be a bit warmer by being in the sun rather than under a shady tree, but you'll be less likely to get a nose-full of pollen when you open the door.
- 4) Scrub up. When you come back into your home, remove your shoes — or at least do a thorough job of wiping off residual pollen from your excursion. And wash your hands. You may even want to shower and get into some pollen-free duds. When you wash your clothes, use a dryer, rather than an outdoor clothesline.
- 5) Clean pollen magnets. Carpets and linens, too, can hold on to pollens, so vacuum rugs and change sheets more frequently than at other times of the year. That goes for bath towels, too. An in-home air filtration system can help remove irritating particulates.

Other allergens: The protein in **ragweed pollen** is also related to the irritants found in cantaloupe, banana, sunflower seeds, zucchini and cucumber. **Grass pollen** has a parallel to peaches, celery, melons, tomatoes and oranges. **Birch pollen** is related to a large number of vegetables, fruits and nuts, including potatoes, celery, walnuts, apples, pears, peaches, and cherries and other pitted fruit.

Depending on what you're sensitive to, you'll want to avoid foods like these. This is not a food allergy per se, simply an alternative way for those with *allergic rhinitis* to suffer.

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A Simple Way to Be More Highly Effective

Most of us recognize that to change, we must take action of some kind. We can't just "wish" for things to be different. We must exercise to improve our health. We must send résumés to change jobs. We must seek advice about children who are getting out of hand.

But not everyone takes action in the same way. More **highly effective people** tend to take action sooner, proactively.

Less effective people often wait for a compelling event to force them into action. For instance, instead of looking for another job, they wait until they're fired, then start looking. Instead of losing weight, they wait until the doctor tells them they have diabetes, then eat better. Only when the situation becomes critical do they decide it's time to act.

If we want to have better control in our lives, we must act voluntarily before we're compelled to act *involuntarily*. Look around your life. Are there small (or even large) challenges that you are ignoring? Consider a broken brake light on your car. By taking the annoying, but proactive step of using your lunch period to get it fixed now, you'll save yourself much more time and headache than if you wait until you're ticketed or cause an accident.

Living an effective life is often a matter of choosing to act as soon as we notice a need. What would happen if we acted immediately on the small things as quickly as possible? Why not try it and find out? Let me know how it goes.

DIY Home Maintenance That Saves \$

- **Plumbing Repairs:** While plumbing can be a pain in the neck (literally), most people are perfectly capable of making simple repairs, like replacing a leaky faucet or broken sprinkler head. Potential annual savings: \$100 to \$1,000 for typical repairs.
- **Pest Control:** Using approved chemicals and methods that you can look up online, you can treat your own house for insects and rodents. Savings: Up to \$50/mo, or \$600/yr.

As You Read This Note, Who Comes To Mind First?

Many of my friends, coworkers and family members have been telling me about their experience of being pushed and pulled in all directions. They call themselves the Sandwich Generation. Their homes have more people than space. You may know someone in one of the following situations who needs my help:

1. Someone caring for aging parents while supporting and caring for their own children.
2. Someone in their 50's or 60's, sandwiched between aging parents, adult children and grandchildren.
3. Someone in their 30's or 40's with young children, aging parents and, perhaps, even grandparents.
4. Someone involved with elder care, special needs care, or sibling care.

The one thing the people of the Sandwich Generation have in common is that they need more space. As you think about people who may need my help, feel comfortable taking out your cell phone and call me. Let's talk about helping your friends secure the funding they need to move into the home that gives them the space they deserve

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- **Painting:** If careful, you can tape and edge like a painting professional. Savings: \$400 to \$1,500 for typical interior paint jobs.
- **Replace Light Fixtures:** Many people avoid changing out light fixtures because they don't know how. But once the job is started, they realize how easy it is and wonder why they almost called an electrician who wanted \$180, when it took them 20 minutes and cost \$40 for the fixture.

Where Is Everybody?

Many astrophysicists believe that there are around 500 quintillion (**500 billion billion**) sun-like stars in the universe. Around those stars, low estimates are that about 22% of them are orbited by an Earth-like planet, one with similar temperature conditions that could have liquid water and potentially support life similar to that on Earth.

That suggests that there's a potentially-habitable Earth-like planet orbiting at least 1% of the total stars in the universe—a total of **100 billion billion** Earth-like planets.

Suppose, say scientists that after billions of years in existence, 1% of those Earth-like planets develop life. And on 1% of *those* planets, life advances to an intelligent level like it did here on Earth. That would mean there could be 10 quadrillion (**10 million billion**) intelligent civilizations in the observable universe.

Doing the same math in just our own galaxy, for the 100 billion estimated stars in the Milky Way, there could be **1 billion** Earth-like planets and **100,000 intelligent civilizations in our galaxy.**

SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence), an organization dedicated to listening for signals from off-planet intelligent life, has never picked up any kind of signal at all. Not one. Ever. So, *where is everybody?*

~ Adapted from Quara.com

Lost Luggage

After his return from Rome, Joe couldn't find his luggage in the airport baggage area. He went to the lost luggage office and told the attendant there that his bags hadn't shown up on the carousel.

She smiled and told him not to worry. She assured him he was in good hands, and that they were all trained professionals who were experts at finding lost luggage.

"Let me ask you a few questions, OK?" she said. "First of all, has your plane arrived yet?"

Joe decided he might as well write his luggage off forever.

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See page 7

Wake Up Refreshed

Most of us have experienced bouts of insomnia that make it difficult to get up in the morning. But for some people, waking up is a continuous problem. Here are a few suggestions for improving your energy in the morning:

1. Shut off all electronics at least one hour before bed. Studies have shown that electronics keep the mind active longer than other forms of mental stimulation.
2. Do a sleep hygiene assessment on your home. Do you have blackout drapes? Are all LED and other small lights turned off or covered? Do you have a source of white noise, like a fan? Is your pillow and bedding comfortable? Do you need a new mattress?
3. Keep the room cooler than you normally like when you're awake.
4. Exercise vigorously during the day, but not within two hours of bedtime. Also take a walk after dinner to help with digestion, which can also keep you somewhat awake.
5. Don't load up on carbohydrates at or after dinner. Digesting carbohydrates tends to spike the energy in your body.
6. Sit up and read a book in bed until you start to feel sleepy. Don't push past the sleepiness. Instead, put the book down and turn off the light.

Can Coffee Improve Your Health?

A daily cuppa can have benefits beyond helping people wake up in the morning. Tech Times lists these positive attributes of moderate caffeine consumption:

- **Exercise.** A study cited by the International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism found that people who drank a caffeinated beverage before exercise burned 15 percent more calories during their workouts than those who took a placebo.
- **Eyesight.** The *chlorogenic acid* in coffee contains a strong antioxidant that's been shown to prevent retinal degeneration in mice. Research suggests it might play a role in helping humans prevent deteriorating vision.
- **Diabetes.** A Harvard School of Public Health study found that people who drank an extra cup of coffee each day over four years decreased their risk of Type 2 diabetes by 11 percent.

MATT'S HOME NEWS

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Do you have a family member or friend who would enjoy a free subscription to Matt's Home News? Provide me with their contact info., and I'll add them to my mailing list.

Name: _____

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The Taxi Driver's Story

Dear Friend,

I want to share a story with you that touched me deeply, reminding me to slow down and focus on doing things that are *really* important. This is a true story, written by a NYC taxi driver:

I arrived at the address and honked the horn. After waiting a few minutes I honked again. Since this was going to be the last ride of my shift I thought about just driving away, but instead I put the car in park and walked up to the door and knocked. "Just a minute," answered a frail, elderly voice.

After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her nineties stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940's movie. By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets.

She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb. When we got in the cab, she gave me an address and then asked, "Could you drive through downtown?"

"It's not the shortest way," I answered quickly.

"Oh, I don't mind," she said. "I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice." I looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening. "I don't have any family left," she continued in a soft voice. "The doctor says I don't have very long."

I quietly reached over and shut off the meter. "What route would you like me to take?" For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the area where she and her husband had lived as newlyweds. She had me pull up at a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had danced as a girl. Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a building and would sit staring into the darkness.

[After dropping her off] I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away?

On a quick review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life.

~ This story is excerpted from the original, which can be found at:
<http://www.snopes.com/glurge/cabride.asp>

Sincerely,



Matt Haviland
Your Real Estate Consultant For Life

P.S If you liked this story, let me know how it touched you. Contact me at:Matt@SJHouses.com or 609-338-3773

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