

Vicki Husted Biggs

A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE



Frustration

After spending a few hours working in the yard this week, I found myself feeling irritated. Instead of the usual calming effect of physical work, I felt mounting resentment and anger. The more time I spent pitching debris into the wheelbarrow, and the more trips I made around the yard with shovel and rake, the more I felt a seething presence of something ugly growing in my gut. I wanted to use those garden tools to smash something. Finally, I had to take a break and confront this demon. It was not pretty.

The demon self-identified as frustration. I had so many projects planned simply to maintain some semblance of order on the property. In addition, I had some ideas for making a few changes to my outdoor space. All of these things would take time and money plus elbow grease, and I was feeling short of all ingredients. I allowed myself some self-indulgence (also known as a pity-party). Why was my life so hard? Didn't I already work more than 40 hours a week? Wasn't I responsible? Why wasn't anyone helping me?

I decided to turn this confrontation with frustration into a positive by doing a little research and writing about it. I was surprised at the amount of material I found on the topic of frustration with very little searching involved. The broad and universal theme of frustration is more than can be addressed in this column, but I did learn a few things.

Underlying the feeling of frustration there are usually deeper emotions at work. Anger is the classic partner to frustration, along with anxiety and fear. A person's inability to obtain what they want, or to change circumstances that are beyond their control, are common. Frustration can be internal, or can be the result of external circumstances.

Writers use frustration as the main motivator for their characters all the time. Moving a storyline forward with a character's quest for change, revenge, battle or death is accomplished by using the character's frustration over a given circumstance. Frustration is a strong emotion that can be expressed in many ways, illustrating a state of mind.

As I reflect on what I have learned, it is obvious that many people are currently experiencing frustration at a high rate. It can go without saying, I think, that people

are exasperated with Covid restrictions and all that goes with it. After an evolving discussion as a society over the last year, we see that circumstances are largely the same. Vaccinated or not, we still need to be cautious, we need to wear masks and we need to keep our contacts to a minimum. Economic fallout continues to affect families. Adding to the frustration, we have learned that the virus is mutating to stay alive and thwart our efforts to diminish its viability.

Writing in 'Psychology Today,' Toni Bernhard, J.D. gives us the following tips for dealing with frustration: Remember that you are not alone. Others have faced similar circumstances to yours. Your frustration is not set in stone. We cannot see the future and solutions to your problem may well be found. Work on developing patience by trying to extend your tolerance for irritations and annoyances. Contact someone you know who will let you vent without judgment. Administer self-compassion immediately. Be as kind to yourself as you would be to others.

As the author of my own story, I can become more mindful of the narrative I am telling myself. I can tell myself to be patient with my progress towards my project goals. I can remember to call the friend to whom I can say literally anything, and find comfort in that action. I can remember that others in similar circumstances found a way to work through hardships successfully. I can remind myself that my current perspective does not prevent change from happening. I can substitute positive images for negative ones. My frustration will be the motivational force in my own story.

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Phyllis Henry

COAST TO COAST



A Bridge for Troubled Waters

In the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol at the memorial service for William (Billy) Evans, the Capitol policeman who was recently killed, the U.S. Army Quartet sang "Like a Bridge Over Troubled Waters." The ceremony was solemn, serious and dignified — a mood that could swallow the moment when President Biden picked up a fatherless child's fallen toy from the floor and handed it back to her.

In the spring of 1973, when I lived in Washington, D.C. for three months in a

studio apartment at 3rd and C Southeast, I walked the three blocks to the Capitol nearly every day. On Tuesday nights one of the military bands, Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, provided a concert for the people sitting on the steps of the Capitol. No one checked the identity of the audience; there were no concrete barriers or barbed wire separating the citizens from their Capitol building. We listened and applauded, reveling in the music and majesty of the special Tuesday nights.

While in Washington I walked through that Rotunda many times, staring in awe at the ceiling, checking out the famed acoustics spot, impressed that our country could own and freely display the paintings and statues. Hoping to spot one of my Senate heroes, I wandered, avoiding tourists, and basked in the joy I felt to be in this hallowed building, my Capitol of the United States.

Several Capitol Police recognized me as a frequent visitor to the Senate, where I went several times a week hoping to spot my heroes, Sen. Ted Kennedy, Sen. Joe Biden, Sen. Walter Mondale, Sen. Hubert Humphrey, Sen. Edmund Muskie, Sen. Adlai Stevenson. When I was a delegate in Miami for the 1972 Democratic Convention, a rumor spread that if one was faltering in dedication to George McGovern, that information would be forwarded to Warren Beatty, and then he would phone the wavering delegate to encourage him or her to stay with McGovern. Standing 10 feet from Sen. Kennedy was more exciting than any phone call from a mere Hollywood celebrity.

After the Jan. 6 invasion of the Capitol, I felt only sorrow. Windows were broken, paintings were defaced, furniture was scratched. Traditionally senators autograph the inside of the desk they use while they serve in the Senate, and the thought of rough hands rummaging through items in these desks brings on that kind of sorrow where the throat constricts and the pain courses through the body. Some things are sacred. Leaving excrement on the floors of that building symbolic of our country's glory is not sacred.

Putting barriers between our government and its citizens is criminal. No wonder many people don't respect their government officials. Nearly 50 years ago on Tuesday nights on the Capitol steps, a supporter of Strom Thurmond might have sat next to a devoted follower of George McGovern, with no need for loud voices or cudgels. Back then I traveled alone from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial at dusk, and when I arrived I walked up the marble steps and

then, standing behind the giant statue of Lincoln, I read the words inscribed on the walls: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." I thought those words were true.

My three months in Washington D.C. will probably never be duplicated, or even imagined. The city then had an old-fashioned southern charm. It was a city where in 1909 the Japanese wanted to send the gift of cherry trees, a gift not only of trees but the gift of relaxing walks under the trees, and the ability to inhale that lovely scent. The trees are still there, but with the environmental warming each year, they bloom earlier, and sometime in the future they too will be dead and gone — or covered with barbed wire to discourage vandals.

I miss my old world of gentility and courtesy, and, more importantly, for my grandchildren and for all children everywhere I mourn this dearth of gentleness. With limited TV coverage, as a child I never saw anyone killed, other than the bad guys in the Roy Rogers movie, and even they died without any bloodshed. Like the battle to save us from COVID-19, I believe the "gentleness gene" must be supplied by our governments, national, state and local, and we must never forget that "good and fair government" is an empty framework and has no real identity until the offices are filled with officials willing to pick up a dropped toy for a child.

Award-winning columnist Phyllis Henry lives in Gig Harbor.

Krisa Bruemmer

IRREVERENT MOM



Dog People

I am not a dog person. I've never had a pet, not even a goldfish. I've never wanted a pet, aside from a few minutes in the late '80s when I was a small girl looking at a fluffy white bunny during the Vashon Island Strawberry Festival. Even then, the moment my mom asked who I thought was going to clean the cage, with pee-soaked animal bedding and pellets of poop, I decided that the red-eyed fluffball was creepy and gross and asked for a snow cone instead.

When my daughter Violet was 3 years old, we watched "Homeward Bound," featuring the epic journey of Shadow the golden retriever, Chance the bulldog, and Sassy cat. Violet ran around the house yelling, "Shadow!" and begged to watch the movie

Richard Gelinas
EMPIRICALLY YOURS



Milkmaids, George Washington and the End of the Pandemic

Two remarkable events in the 18th century that were a consequence of the viral disease smallpox have lessons for us today: How a simple method for vaccination was reduced to practice and presented to the medical community and how a mandate to vaccinate the Continental Army was key to winning the Revolutionary War.

But we are still enduring the COVID-19 pandemic. Some observers are now suggesting that the pandemic may decline substantially by the end of next year, 2022. How can this be?

Smallpox outbreaks were once a dreadful fact of life in Europe. Back then, in a rural area hit hard by the virus, 10% of the population would die and the death toll might be as high as 20% in towns or cities where the virus could spread more easily.

Edward Jenner (1749-1823), who trained as a physician in rural England, noticed that milkmaids never seemed to get smallpox although the cows they worked with had a similar disease: cowpox. He wondered if this resistance to smallpox might be transferable and tested the idea by inserting or rubbing powdered cowpox (and eventually smallpox) scabs or fluid from pustules into superficial scratches on the skin of a susceptible person. Most of the time this led to a mild infection in the recipient, but it also induced immunity to the smallpox virus. He described his work publicly; others readily repeated his general vaccination method; his fame and his method spread widely in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Jenner may have been aware of reports that similar methods had been practiced in China, India, the Middle East and Africa long before the 1700s. People have been successfully preventing some infectious diseases for hundreds of years with these general methods. Word also spread to England's colonies in North America, and then Lt. Gen. George Washington was paying attention.

Early during the Revolutionary War, American forces were sent north to drive the British Army out of the area around Quebec. Despite some early successes in this campaign, the Continental Army was defeated by winter weather, lack of supplies, and casualties, many of which were due to smallpox. Some historians have speculated that when the Continental Army was pinned down, laying siege to Quebec

City, Gov. Carleton sent prostitutes from the city infected with the virus to visit the American troops. If true, this could be an early example of biological warfare.

The Continental Army was defeated there and its remnants retreated south early in 1776. Washington was keenly aware of how smallpox was devastating the Army, prompting him to quietly order (so the British would not learn how sick his troops were) that all American troops be vaccinated. The program was successful, infection rates plummeted, and vaccinated troops fought at the Battles of Saratoga and Trenton, early victories for America.

In Washington's view the scourge of smallpox was worse than the British enemy and this mandate has been described "as important as any military measure Washington adopted during the war..."

Then, as now, a minority of Americans resisted vaccinations, and this is not a surprise since we prize individual freedoms so highly. But our courts have made it clear that citizens do not have a constitutionally protected right to harm their colleagues, their friends and people in their communities: One individual's right to a healthy life is greater than another individual's right to decline a vaccination.

The Supreme Court held in the landmark 1905 case *Jacobson v. Massachusetts* that states have the authority to order compulsory vaccination when there is a threat of epidemic. Justice John Harlan declared that nothing in the Constitution permits people to behave however they choose and "... real liberty for all could not exist ..." if people could act "... regardless of the injury that may be done to others."

So, where does that leave us regarding the current pandemic if some people will never be vaccinated? Over 700,000 Americans have died due to COVID-19 as of this writing, and many people who were hospitalized because of the virus have lingering health problems. When will this end?

The CEO of Moderna, Stéphane Bancel, recently said the pandemic will end "as of today, I assume in one year" in a recent interview. He pointed out that since the durability of COVID-19 vaccines depends on the age of the recipient, seniors will need annual boosters, while everyone else will benefit from boosters every three years. He referred to the activity of OC43, a less dangerous cousin of SARS-CoV-2, as an example.

OC43 tends to infect older people each year while younger people are infected once every three years. Bancel believes COVID-19 will follow the same path. He said that Moderna is testing a combination vaccine for the flu and COVID-19 as well

as a flu vaccine that has activity against four flu variants (rather than a single variant).

Happily, right now cases of COVID-19, hospitalizations and deaths are all starting to decline, and this may be due to increased vaccination and mask mandates. A former head of the Food and Drug Administration, Scott Gottlieb, believes that "this is the last major wave of infection."

Let us hope they are both correct.

Richard Gelinas, Ph.D., whose early work earned a Nobel prize, is a senior research scientist at the Institute for Systems Biology. He lives in Lakebay. Suggestions for further reading are at keypennews.org.

Phyllis Henry
COAST TO COAST



Saturday Night

Colleen was sitting on the steps in front of her brick house when my dad parked our green Dodge, and I rushed to see her. Her house was the biggest and nicest one in Lincoln, Iowa, very grand when compared to our wooden farmhouse.

We exchanged stories about our schools. She went to the town school while I attended a one-room rural school. We kept on chatting while we combed and brushed each other's hair, trying out hairstyles that would make us look older and more glamorous than our 13-year-old selves.

Saturday night was movie night, so we went to the center of town, passing in front of her dad's Allis-Chalmers farm equipment lot. My dad had bought a tractor from him. The big DX sign at my Uncle Harry's gas station lighted the middle of the one-block street. We looked through the big glass window and saw Aunt Lilly and Aunt Selma sitting on the cracked black sofa in the office. My mom was still buying groceries at Skare's Grocery next door, but soon she would be joining her sisters.

Farther down the street was the dance hall where weddings and anniversaries and other events were celebrated. Colleen's Uncle Sylvan was in a band there that played bouncy German music. Her grandma owned the building and she lived in an apartment on the second floor. Colleen and I often visited her but decided we didn't have time that night because the movie would start soon.

Across the street was the general merchandise store where almost everything was for sale: groceries, clothes, magazines, cold pop, dishes, appliances, overshoes, fabric and patterns. Colleen and I sat on the short sofa just inside the door where we could quietly reach the movie magazines in the magazine rack. Almost immediately the

store owner, Jake, asked us to leave because "some adults might want to use the bench to try on shoes."

When we left, we watched the Movie Man as he finished hanging the second huge canvas curtain on the wire suspended between the general merchandise store and Annie's restaurant-bar next door. With canvas curtains at the front and back of the lot, and the sides of the next-door buildings forming the other walls, the empty lot became the movie theater.

Usually, an old man came with the Movie Man to help with the curtains and run the projector, but tonight a young man was helping. He wore black high-top tennis shoes, and a pack of cigarettes was rolled up in the sleeve of his white T-shirt. A curl from his black pompadour dangled over his eyes. Did he look like Errol Flynn or Clark Gable or Cary Grant? We giggled and sneaked looks at him, wondering how we would ever be able to watch the movie if we had to get close to someone so cool.

Colleen dared me to speak to this matinee idol and I did. I bravely asked, "How old are you?" He answered with a wink, "Sweet 16 and never been kissed. Wanna kiss me?"

Shocked by our own daring, we rushed back to the general merchandise store and waited until the Movie Man was ready to take our dimes for admission. The gorgeous boy was running the projector, so we giggled and peeked at him but tried not to let him know we were looking.

Inside the "theater" rows of two-by-eight planks rested on cement blocks, creating backless benches for the movie. Roy Rogers fought the bad guys that night, and when one of the bad guys was about to shoot Roy, his dog, Bullet, leaped onto the back of the bad guy so Roy could ride away on Trigger.

Colleen's mom wanted her home immediately after the movie, so she left. I crossed the street to join my mom and her sisters in the garage waiting room, and in a few minutes my dad had finished his game of cards at the restaurant-bar. Annie rented a deck of cards to the farmers for 25 cents so they could play cards in one of the booths. The winner bought everyone a cigar or a beer or a candy bar. I asked my dad how he had done, and as usual he replied, "Came out about even."

On the ride home I imagined being Roy Rogers' wife, Dale Evans, wearing cream leather pants and jacket, galloping on my horse, Buttermilk, with the long fringes on my clothes flapping in the wind and my white cowboy hat framing my lovely smile. Saturday night was over but I'd had so much fun.

Award-winning columnist Phyllis Henry lives in Gig Harbor.

Phyllis Henry COAST TO COAST



What To Do About Mom?

Three meals a day are served in the dining room at the independent living facility where I live. Recently at lunchtime I noticed a new resident sitting alone. After I asked her if I could join her, I introduced myself and she told me her name. When I asked where she had lived before coming here, she started to answer, and then tears flowed. She hid her face with her napkin for a moment until she was able to talk.

She told me a variation of a story I have heard over and over since I moved into this place. The new resident (I'll call her Lily) was living near Boise, Idaho, when her husband, Carl, died two months earlier. Their children, let's call them Rob, John and Debbie, came for the funeral and stayed for a few days before they had to go back to work. Obviously, they had the late night discussion about "What if Mom falls in the night?" and "What if she has a stroke and no one rescues her?" Questions that loving children ask.

Debbie insisted that Lily visit her for a while, so Lily's clothes, make-up and toiletries were packed into the trunk of Debbie's Mazda before they drove to Debbie's home in Washington for a nice visit.

In the meantime, Rob and John packed into a large U-Haul the items necessary for Lily's new home in Washington and then immediately drove to Debbie's home. When she saw her sons, Lily was pleased, but much less pleased when they took her directly to the retirement home and told her she would be living there — because they were concerned about her safety, because meals would be provided so she would eat healthy food, because if she fell or was sick there would be people around to help her, because there were activities like bingo and book club and musicians so she wouldn't be lonely.

Stunned, Lily sat in a chair and watched her furniture being arranged in her new apartment. Her Victorian sofa was much too big, but Rob said he would buy a smaller love seat. The day ended with boxes piled in closets and in the corners of her bedroom, with an assurance from Debbie that she would be back the next weekend to "get her settled in." When Lily and I spoke, Debbie had stopped by to see her but so far hadn't found time to unpack the boxes.

People are living longer today, and they may need to be housed in apartments, but consider the following. (I'll call the

parent Mom because most of the elderly are women.) Absolutely let Mom choose the apartment. Does she want first floor, third floor, a balcony, kitchen, one or two bedrooms? Are there enough closets? She will probably live with this decision for many years.

Before moving, work with a floor plan while discussing where furniture will be placed, measuring each item before it is moved. Let her decide to give up the piano if it means she can't have her recliner. It's very important to let Mom decide what to pack. One woman told me her kids packed a 12-place setting of Haviland dishes and sterling silverware, which only take up cupboard space. In another case a daughter got rid of a much-read King James Bible, which had been a confirmation gift for her mother, and replaced the personal Bible with a nice leather-bound Revised Standard Version. Birthday flowers arrive but there is no vase. It's a bit chilly for a walk outside, but the heavy, cream-colored sweater is missing.

If Mom has a cat or dog, where should it live? Or can Mom have it in her apartment? In most places big dogs are discouraged, but lots of tiny fluffy dogs as well as all kinds of cats live with their owners in the kind of residences we are discussing. However, adopting a new animal to keep Mom company needs consideration. Whether inside or outside, dogs need to be walked. Is Mom's balance good enough to pick up dog poop? Where does the cat's litter box live?

Does she have a car? Is she a safe driver? Sure, a family member will drive her, but only at certain times. Does the facility have a bus or taxi service? Is it free?

Consider items she might need: a shower chair that can be raised and lowered, a toilet riser, a walker, even a wheelchair. In a building big enough to house around 100 people, halls are long and difficult to maneuver with a walker or crutches. Today many elderly people use power wheelchairs to move long distances. Some of these wheelchairs will easily park at a dining table.

If Mom has a computer, make certain she knows how to order from grocery stores and Amazon, and how to email or text you and her friends. Make certain the in-house Wi-Fi provides plenty of channels, especially movie channels. If not, arrange other providers.

Once Mom is settled into an independent living facility, what can her offspring bring her? Don't give her things that "sit around" — there is no extra space in these apartments. One friend complains that her daughter insists on bringing food; she has a bag in her closet full of crackers and chips and sodas. With three meals a day provided there is little need for extra

food. Gift a book you have read so you can discuss it with her or bring two servings of a favorite dessert to eat with coffee, creating a chance for you and your mom to talk and remember, and laugh.

Some elderly people really like independent living housing. They enjoy having their lives simplified. Others complain that they are in prison because their children don't want them around anymore.

My dad often said that if you get up in the morning and look in a mirror and there's somebody there, it's a good day.

Award-winning columnist Phyllis Henry lives in Gig Harbor.

Bob Perry TO MY WAY OF THINKING



It's My Right

Every day I hear people demanding their rights. It's my right to a living wage, affordable housing, health care, food, free education, high-speed internet — the list seems endless. And for our younger generations, does this unending stream of proclamations of "rights" undermine the true nature of "rights"?

Interestingly, these proclamations are rarely accompanied by proclamations of individual responsibility and obligations.

It seems today that many have lost sight of the fact that the incredible freedoms of our country are tied to the concept of individual rights and liberty, and so-called rights that impose an obligation on others are fundamentally not rights at all. While society may agree through taxation to provide certain benefits, these are not rights. Governments may decide to take possession of private property for public good, but this necessarily includes compensation (eminent domain laws) to comply with the rights of private property.

Conflating benefits approved by voters as rights is a very slippery slope.

Current events are causing us to focus on these issues and they are worthy of discussion — calm, reasoned and thoughtful discussion.

Debates over how to handle COVID-19 and its endless stream of current and future mutations are a raging issue today and probably will be for years to come. Do you have an obligation to protect yourself, or do I have an obligation to protect you? Can I be required to take medicine that may harm me at some statistical level to protect you from some potential statistical risk?

In 1905, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Jacobson v. Massachusetts* ruled on this

issue of individual rights versus societal rights regarding immunization, deciding that a state legislature (not the executive) has the power to mandate immunizations to protect the whole at the potential expense of the individual. Underlying this decision is the assumption that the legislature is expressing the will of the electorate — that the public, through its representatives, approves of the trade-off, and that if you don't like the acts of the legislature, you are free to vote them out or move somewhere else.

The Supreme Court just heard a case regarding abortion rights. Is *Roe v. Wade* a constitutionally defensible ruling by a prior court? Should there be a federal position on this issue or is this something best left to the states? Does the privacy right enable mothers to terminate pregnancy without the intervention of the state? If there are limits, do some fetuses have more rights than the women carrying them, or fewer rights than others (such as the result of rapists)?

Can I enact a wealth tax? A wealth tax simply takes your property. Can I decide you have saved too much money, and therefore take some of it? How does this square with your right of private property and the takings clause of the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution, which states that no "private property (shall) be taken for public use, without just compensation"? If you take \$100 from my savings account, are you required to replace it with \$100?

My hope is that our discussions as a community and society will lead to greater understanding and mutual respect. And this will lead to more reasoned and thoughtful recognition of our rights and our responsibilities.

My greatest fear is that our society is changing from a majority who achieve, contribute, take personal responsibility for their actions and life and create value to one where a significant group of people believe they are entitled to that which is not earned or deserved, making them devoid of individual responsibility.

My view is that the greatest gift my generation can give our younger generations is the clear understanding that they are entrusted with the individual responsibility to care for themselves and prosper. That the role of government is not to take and dole out, but to safeguard individual liberty and freedom to allow for individual achievement and the pursuit of happiness. That they truly hold their future in their hands. Anything less threatens the American dream.

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