

Memories of childhood stress

Statistics and experience tell us that as we age, our memory banks take on a new identity and serve us differently. The days of remembering chapters of text that we had read the night before as we crammed for exams are replaced by weak attempts at remembering where we put our car keys an hour earlier. A panicky search to find the eyeglasses that are perched on our noses helping us to see during the frantic hunt generally follows this little chore.

The reality is that we suffer from deficient memories for different reasons throughout our lives. Before the aging factor becomes undeniable, we find our memory banks failing during stress-filled working years, particularly when we are simultaneously raising teenage children. Stress is, without a doubt, a contributing factor to failing memories, although we recover from these events rather easily.

Nonetheless, as we get older, remembering in detail events that happened when we were 8 years old becomes easier to recall than where we put our wallet an hour ago. This brings me to the subject of childhood stress and obvious memory loss.

When we were children, we discovered mechanisms that made us feel safe. Whenever we did something that our parents considered "wrong," but that we probably did not consider at all, our memories became amazingly selective.

What we chose to remember during those challenging times could often mean the difference between a mild reprimand and possible corporal punishment that by today's standards might be tied up in a well-publicized court case for years.

Have no doubts, we learn at an early age that lying is an easy-way-out of the most awkward situations if we can get by with it. Our story today is about one of those memorable scenarios. It involves the recollections of a childhood altercation that ended up in a pugilistic battle between two 8-year-old boys, an event I remember with more clarity than if you asked me what I had for breakfast this morning. Hmmm . . . that is telling isn't it?

Anyway, my unnamed gang



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

of childhood ruffians had an area staked out on the school bus that was not quite at the back where the older boys sat, but just far enough in front of them where they couldn't easily pick on us. The important thing was that the four double seats we chose were far enough behind where the girls sat that we didn't have to put up with their constant nattering about how crude and uncivilized we were. Each of us had claimed a seat where we sat every day.

One day a new kid got on the bus and walked past the girls as he looked for somewhere to sit. He found an empty seat on the aisle in our area and sat down. We didn't tell him that he was sitting in Pookie Grossberg's seat because we wanted to see what would happen when the bus came to Pookie's stop.

When Pookie climbed aboard, he immediately saw the new kid in his seat. We all acted nonchalant and looked in every direction except Pookie's. He stood beside the kid and said, "You're sitting in my seat." Without batting an eye, the kid looked at Pookie and said, "I don't see anybody's name on it."

Well . . . that was an undeniable challenge, especially when the only empty seats were up front by the girls, or right behind the driver.

Understand that Pookie Grossberg was a master at avoiding violent confrontation, mainly because he got the tar knocked out of him every time he got in a fight. However, everyone on the bus was silent, and Pookie had no way of gracefully backing out without suffering total humiliation. Without thinking, Pookie dropped his books and punched the kid right in the nose.

In less than a heartbeat, the driver stopped the bus, and both boys fell in the aisle. Then a 12-year old boy, who was the bus monitor that week, grabbed both of them by the scruff of their

necks and dragged them up front to sit behind the driver until they arrived at school where they were escorted to the principal's office.

You might say that Pookie got the best of the altercation because he gave the new kid a bloody nose. But the new kid didn't have an opportunity to punch back because the bus stopped and the monitor intervened.

Nevertheless, Pookie and the new kid were both sent home to wait for the principal to call their fathers. As soon as Pookie's dad walked in the house Pookie told him that he got in a fight but he had good reason. He said that this new kid got on the bus and said bad things about Jewish people. Since Pookie was Jewish, he thought his father would be sympathetic.

Pookie's dad said that he would have a word with the boy's father after he talked to the principal. Sure enough, the principal called and told Pookie's father about the incident. His dad asked the principal for the boy's phone number, and proceeded to call and talk to the lad's father.

Pookie listened as his dad said that Pookie told him that the boy had made anti-Semitic remarks. Then he heard his father say, "So you agree that remarks like that should not be tolerated, but violence is not the answer." Not long after, his father hung up the phone.

"So, are you willing to tell this boy's father that his son made disparaging remarks about Jews?" Pookie's father asked. "Of course," Pookie replied. "There's no way I'm going to allow anybody to do that."

"You'll have your chance tomorrow when the four of us talk to the principal together," Pookie's father said. "I'm sure Rabbi Silverman will be interested in hearing about his son saying anything less than complimentary about Jews."

Needless to say, Pookie was rendered speechless. I also believe that corporal punishment and a long period of grounding were involved. It just goes to show you that selective memory or altered recollection, are often sources of childhood stress when you live in a system that you can't understand.



Midnight Sun
on the Wharf

Possum Merino Capes
Soft, Warm and Eco Friendly!

85 Brown St. Wickford • 295-1601 • Open 7 Days

Pearl Blossom Pendant

Silver or Gold.



J.H. Breakell & Co.

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

Exquisite handcrafted 14K and Sterling Silver Jewelry



128 SPRING SREET, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND 02840 | WWW.BREAKELL.COM | 401.849.0195
OPEN MONDAY - SATURDAY 9-5, SUNDAYS 12-5

BAKER'S PHARMACY
"YOUR COMPLETE PHARMACY"



BUSINESS HOURS
MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:30 AM TO 7:00 PM
SATURDAY 8 AM TO 6 PM
SUNDAY 8 AM TO 2PM

423-2800 • 53 NARRAGANSETT AVENUE

Benjamin Thomas Gallery

- Fine Art Photography
- Printing - Get your photos blown up or stretched on canvas
- Photo Restorations
- Commercial Photography

2 Ferry Wharf
Jamestown, RI

STORE HOURS

Mon/Tues: Closed
Wed-Sat: 10am - 6pm
Sun: 11am - 6pm

Store: (401) 560-0479
Cell: (617) 448-7477

Call for Appointments

www.benthomasgallery.com

ben@benthomasgallery.com



Visiting Nurse Services
of Newport and Bristol Counties

will hold FLU CLINICS at:

Jamestown Housing Authority

45 Pemberton Ave.

Friday, October 10 • 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Baker's Pharmacy

53 Narragansett Ave.

Thursday, October 30 • 9 - 11 a.m.

- Persons allergic to eggs cannot receive the flu vaccine.
- Please wear a short-sleeved shirt or loose clothing.
- Visiting Nurse Service of Newport and Bristol Counties will accept most insurances in payment.

For more information, call

Visiting Nurse Services of Newport and Bristol Counties
at 401-682-2100, ext. 470, or visit www.vnsri.com

The Original Yankee Steam-Up

New England Wireless & Steam Museum

The oldest engine show in New England celebrating a glorious engineering past.

Saturday, October 4th • Rain or Shine • 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Admission \$15 • Under 12 (with adult) \$5 • Free Parking

Amazing models on 60 foot steam & air model tables, 3 boilers, big & small steam engines, old gas engines, antique autos, trucks & motorcycles, Stanley steamers, steam launches, steam sawmill, renowned refreshments available and much more!

Old wireless station "PJ" ham radio: ssb, cw to PSk31.

Registered Exhibitor - Free Admission

news@news.org • (401) 885-0545 • www.news.org
1300 Frenchtown Road • East Greenwich, RI 02818