

**livfun** SPRING 2017

WILL THEY STILL  
LOVE ME?

NARCISSUS vs.  
STAGE FRIGHT

WHAT LIES  
BEHIND THE  
MASK?

# ACTING

The Importance of Role-Play in Life



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# livfun

SPRING 2017

ACTING ... *The Importance of Role-Play in Life*

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Dan Madsen  
Chairman & CEO, Leisure Care

## Letter From the Chairman & CEO

**The Way We All Fit Together**  
by Dan Madsen

The New Year is always a good time to reflect on the year gone by, what we've accomplished, and what we hope to accomplish this year. For 2017, we want to try something a little different.

Instead of spending time just at the beginning of the year in this kind of reflection, we are going to use the entire year as a learning experience. Through the pages of LIV FUN, we will talk about the human experience in terms of stages.

Author and popular blogger Mark Manson has an interesting take on these stages of our lives. According to Manson, life as we know it happens in four stages: Mimicry or Acting; Self-discovery, including learning our own Constraints; Commitment or Personal Mission; and Legacy or Giving Back. At each stage along the way we all learn certain lessons in order to move on to the next, and the successful completion of each stage sets the pattern for a happy and fulfilled life.

Manson's approach is somewhat simplistic, but it offers an interesting framework to talk about where we are and how we deal with the challenges in our lives.

At Leisure Care, we see parts of our company at each of the stages. We have some brand new communities in Stage One, mimicking the successful model we've used in our communities. Those communities build in opportunities for self-discovery, a Stage Two concept. Our tremendous staff exhibits the level of caring and commitment that is a hallmark of Stage Three. And the philanthropic efforts of our Three-Thirds Lifestyle and the One Eighty Foundation are emblematic of Stage Four.

Take, for example, the fantastic success of the past year's Pajama Party for Treehouse, which you can read about on page 32. This public demonstration of caring and support for our community partnership is one of the best parts of working with Leisure Care.

We hope you'll enjoy this year's LIV FUN issues – each issue, starting with this one, centers around one of the four stages. As we go through the year together, let's encourage each other to grow, learn, expand, and gain a greater understanding of who we are as individuals and how we all fit into the Leisure Care community.

**Dan Madsen**  
Chairman & CEO, Leisure Care



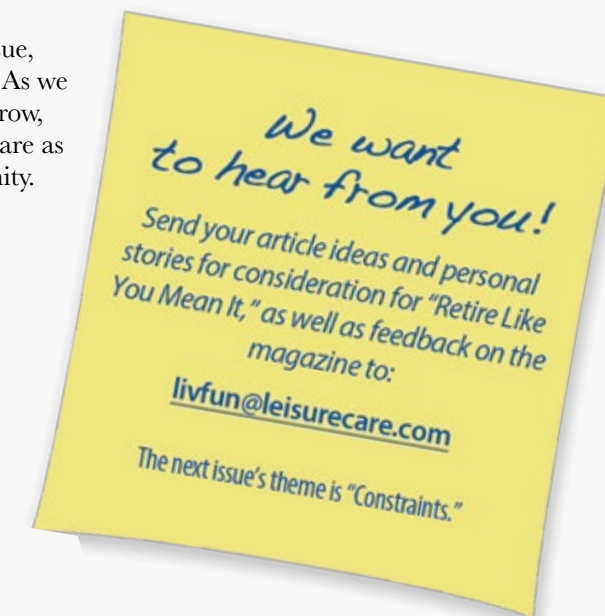
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## Style Wise

Expressing Your Unique Self

# Shearing Narcissus

Public speaking: The very thought brought up all her worst insecurities. Until this happened . . .

by Skye Moody

Novelist, essayist, photographer  
and world traveler

*“Alas,  
speaking  
with my back  
to an audience  
strikes me as,  
well, asinine.”*

© Rosanne Olson

Every public appearance feels like the first. Stomach lurches usually strike days or even weeks before the actual event, as, gripped with stage fright, I imagine standing metaphorically naked before an audience that expects me to enthrall them.

I recall the old Boy Scout motto: Be prepared.

Never a Boy Scout, being a girl, I was in fact thrown out of Brownies at age seven for some act of insubordination. Sure, I wore the uniform and beanie, but it was a ruse.

Some years ago, preparing for an important public appearance, eager to look the part of a first-time author delivering wisdom to her audience, I decide to visit a hair salon for some advice on what wisdom looks like.

“Do you think,” I ask the hairstylist, “I should cut off all my hair?”

It’s long, blonde and naturally wavy. A lot of fluff, which, attached to my petite physique, inevitably consigns me to the “Little Miss Princess” stereotype; not at all me.

The hair stylist backs off a yard or so and looks me over, head to foot, before shaking his head.

“Naw,” he says decisively, “you should keep the hair because you’ve really got nothing else.”

Really.

Before this, I’d been told on occasion that I was intelligent, beautiful; my photograph had appeared in magazines and newspapers; my ideas and opinions were quoted, and a stint on the *TODAY Show* drew offers of everything from posing nude for Penthouse (thanks, no) to writing another book about the exploitation of American workers. I was proclaimed a “real author,” and no one had ever told me that the only asset I possess is my hair.

Deeply stung, I succumb to a mere color tweak by the hairstylist, and then hurry home to wallow in this newfound “meh” identity. I am nothing but a tress, and not so glorious at that.

The upcoming presentation isn’t to Brownies or Boy Scouts. I figure a gaff or two will be overlooked. Yet I want to deliver something palpable, unforgettable; but driven by the hairstylist’s

curse, I fear my audience will take one look at my “meh-ness” and fall into group coma.

Maybe I was having my period that day, but the hair stylist’s words brought me to my knees, making me considerably smaller than I already was.

Just hours before the presentation, I obsess over what to wear on this “meh” little body to lend it a heft of importance, a certain stature and some height of brilliance. The Brownie uniform long ago discarded, I fret.

Then I remember a man who, on observing my clothed bum, had told me I could be a model for a certain brand of blue jeans. Maybe, despite the hairstylist’s disparaging analysis, I possess something he missed. In certain circles, a nice bum goes far. Alas, speaking with my back to an audience strikes me as, well, asinine. But that memory set me on a reckless sartorial path, starting with my tightest pair of faded blue denims. At least the folks backstage could glimpse my “model’s” bum.

What else would attract an audience? I slip on a scarlet velvet shirt, reminiscent of a Shakespearean actor, then trash the effect by unbuttoning it to the sternum between two “meh” bumps that can barely be found with a microscope. Shoes? Tallest platforms I own to add height, and finally, making the most of my hairstylist’s advice, I mousse the only special aspect of my being until it resembles a furry white rabbit caressing my head.

Thus assured that the audience will definitely notice me — I work in a few body moves to show off the scenic ass — I feel ready to confront the dragon. I dare not approach a mirror as I wait in the wings.

I am being introduced, about to walk onstage. A two-star general, I recall, has been harnessed to do the honors. I don’t think he has read my book, or even knows much about me, but he’s managing to hem and haw and entertain the audience. I can hear their obligatory tittering as, backstage, I tighten the strap on my platform shoe and ruffle the bunny hair. Then — too suddenly — it’s time.

From the backstage darkness, an arm appears; its hand grasps me and whisks me forward. In one swift jerk, I now stand alone on a titanic stage facing 3,015 men and women, all wearing the same uniform.

They are US Army Materiel soldiers, and their uniforms somewhat resembling jungles and swamps. A welcoming applause breaks out, and that’s when, with a sick gut, I remember that I’ve failed to prepare my talk.

At the time, being as green as those soldiers’ uniforms to speaking before audiences of any size, my youthful vanity fired by a sappy hairstylist’s shaming remark had detoured me from my life’s purpose.

I agreed to give this talk hoping to dispel popular stereotypes about this nation’s most poverty-stricken, exploited and disadvantaged people, the people whose life stories are featured in my book, the *raison d’être* of this appearance.

Yet, that slashing — if true? — remark by a hairstylist has thrown me off my mission into a quagmire of self-deprecation and sartorial folly.

The audience stops applauding and waits politely. An uncomfortable silence ensues.

Whoa there, Miss Tarnished Brownie, I tell myself. Time to face the dragon, and he isn’t the audience; he’s my brittle pride manifested in the form of a stranger whose life’s work is to make people look better than he thinks they do.

Despite its fuzzy fur garland, my brain ramps up. Words form. When I finish speaking from the heart about things nobody — let alone US soldiers — cares to hear about their own neglectful government, their own corrupt politicians, *our* own uncomfortable, intentional ignorance of other people’s suffering, the audience stuns me with cheers and a standing ovation. I don’t think even one of them noticed, or if they did, cared, that I wore a rabbit on my head instead of a beanie.

On the day I sit down to write the next book, fingers poised over keyboard, something feels wrong. As if in a trance, I rise from my desk, locate a pair of scissors, and cut off all my hair. ♦



# Entertain Your Brain

Books | Movies | Music

*Actors and authors,  
dancers and applauders ...  
we all have our roles to play  
in the drama of life.*

## BOOK REVIEWS

by Misha Stone / Readers' advisory librarian & Booklist Magazine blogger

*"The best actors do not let the wheels show."*

— Henry Fonda



### **Please Enjoy Your Happiness: A Memoir**

by Paul Brinkley-Rogers (Touchstone, \$25)

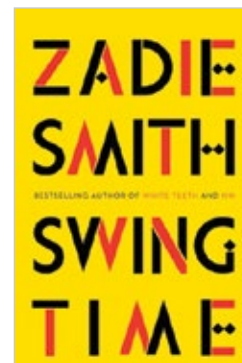
Who was the person in your life who taught you the most about love? Who was the person who recognized your true potential? This memoir is a tender meditation on how finding someone who believes in you before you believe in yourself can truly change your life. In 1959, journalist Paul Brinkley-Rogers was a 19-year-old British youth in the American Navy. While stationed in Japan, a local woman about 10 years his senior starts up a conversation when she notices him reading poetry in the bar where she works. Thus begins a romance of minds that he revisits through their conversations on art, film and poetry — and through her letters to him. While never his lover, Yukiko shares the intimate details of her life with him: her family's escape from Manchuria, the death of her daughter, and even the abusive gangster boyfriend hounding her. Theirs is a brief yet meaningful connection, as she was the one who encouraged Paul to go to college and become a writer. Fifty years may have passed, but words of wisdom and encouragement never die.



### **Summerlong**

by Peter S. Beagle (Tachyon Publications, \$15.95)

Beagle, the author best known for *The Last Unicorn*, weaves a more subtle magic in this novel set on a fictional island in the Pacific Northwest. Retired history professor Abe Aronson and flight attendant Joanna Delvechio have been lovers for most of their adult lives. While they live largely separate lives, when Joanna visits Abe's place on Gardner Island, their lives are tightly intertwined. At a restaurant on the island one night they notice an enigmatic young woman, Lioness, serving as their waitress. Learning that she has just arrived and needs a place to stay, they take her in. Lioness rarely speaks, so it takes some time for the mystery of her appearance in their lives to reveal itself, but when it does it unveils a story of epic proportions. Evocative of the mysterious beauty of the Northwest, Beagle's modern retelling of a Greek myth resonates with questions of love, belonging and fate.



### **Swing Time**

by Zadie Smith (Penguin, \$27)

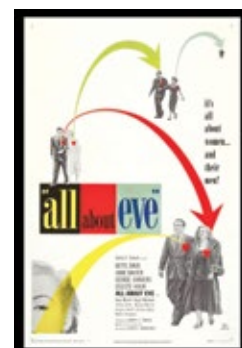
British author Smith hit the literary scene as a must-watch author with her debut, *White Teeth*, and has remained the talk of the town since. Her latest, told by an unnamed narrator, focuses on two bi-racial girls growing up in 1980's London whose shared love of dance brings them together. Tracey and her single mother live a charmed life where, despite their poverty, Tracey never wants for the latest toy or fashion, whereas the narrator's politically active mother pushes her daughter to want for greatness rather than things. Friendship between young women is a topic ripe for dissection as rivalry, deception and betrayal come into play and Smith rewinds the tape and fast forwards and zips back again as the story unfolds. Two girls obsessed with the dance moves of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers who pine for lives beyond their grubby estates are volleyed through the exigencies of chance, choice, nature and nurture. Smith offers her characters to the reader, with all of their promise and flaws and shared triumphs and tragedies as familiar as our own.

## MOVIE REVIEWS

by Robert Horton / Film critic for *Seattle Weekly*

*"People often become actresses because of something they dislike about themselves:*

*They pretend they are someone else."* — Bette Davis



### **All About Eve (1950)**

Margo Channing (Bette Davis) is celebrated as the diva of Broadway ... but she's about to meet her match. Not all great acting happens on stage, as proved by the arrival of Eve Harrington (Anne Baxter) — or whatever her name really is — who presents herself as Margo's biggest fan. Eve is quite the manipulative minx, climbing the ladder of the theater world after winning the trust of Margo's cynical but gullible circle. *All About Eve* is celebrated as one of the savviest portraits of show business, and it's also about the distance between the world of make-believe and the real-life demands of love and happiness. It's a complicated issue; even the calculating Eve seems sincere about how soul-stirring the art of onstage transformation can be. It all gets sorted out in some of the wittiest banter ever written for a movie. (DVD available on Netflix; available to stream on iTunes, YouTube, Amazon, Google Play and Vudu)



### **Postcards From the Edge (1990)**

The late Carrie Fisher penned this comedy-drama about Hollywood actress Suzanne Vale (Meryl Streep) who's been speeding in the fast lane too long. The big surprise about the film — based on Fisher's autobiographical novel — is how consistently droll a mental crack-up can be, as Suzanne goes into rehab and battles with her brassy mother (Shirley MacLaine). Mom is a famous showbiz trouser herself, rather more beloved than her daughter; this leads to considerable friction between the two of them, sometimes played out in song. Streep revels in the chance to play a serious role with a light touch, and director Mike Nichols crams the movie with cameos (Gene Hackman, Dennis Quaid, Rob Reiner, Annette Bening), reminding us of the wacky sleight of hand involved in the movie business. (DVD available on Netflix; available to stream on iTunes, YouTube, Amazon, Google Play and Vudu)

**Entertain Your Brain:** *Continued on page 40*

# Act Your Age

**“Adulting” is now a verb;  
and it’s about time we started doing it.**

**H**is shirt was button-down, blue-striped oxford; his khakis pleated in front; his loafers sturdy and brown. His hair was clearly dyed, and he was sporting a comb-over. The ladies denied his requests to dance, delivered while he shook his not overly generous but still present belly, his arms raised over his head. He was out with his buddies having a good time, catching some quirky live music at a place recommended by his cousin, or some such thing. He might have been in his mid-50s, maybe a very well-preserved 60.

And then, my brain screeched to a halt. *Oh, no*, I thought. *That guy is my age*. I looked down at my Converse All Stars, the ones with the laces with the pink stars on them, at my cutoffs; I looked at my band mates, at the audience in front of us.

*That guy is my age*, I thought again, and played the wrong chords, thrown off by mortal and existential angst.

“I don’t know what a woman my age is supposed to dress like,” said Paula a few days later. She was dressed in her usual punk/Goth style, all black and gray and boots made for running away from the law. “I think my handbag is meant to match my shoes.”

“We live our lives out of order now,” said Lillian, who after losing her tech job went to work at a juice bar. “I just needed to do something different.”

“This,” said Jo, the marathon runner, waving her hands in a circle around us, “is not what my age looks like. It’s just not.”

**I’d been talking with my friends about getting older.**

Some of my friends have kids who have graduated from college — kids I’ve seen hauling giant backpacks on their tiny bodies, kids whose hands I’ve held and walked to and from bus stops. Kids I’ve had dogpiled on my lap are now driving and getting jobs. My friends are getting divorced and remarrying and saying goodbye to their parents as time takes them. They are buying vacation homes. Some of my friends seem awfully grown up.

Others, the ones who did things a little differently, who never had kids or super-focused careers, are doing unexpected things, like going to get advanced degrees or starting families late or joining rock bands.

**That last one is me.**

When I look at pictures of my parents’ generation at my age, they seem so grown up. They had kids young; they were mortgaged and employed and had suits and matching tableware. I still have a little bit of my parents’ wedding china in my garage.

My weddings were tiny affairs, the first in Reno, the second on Maui. We didn’t register. We don’t have wedding china or flatware. We don’t even have enough chairs in our house. We live in a perpetual state of near grad student-ness of possessions — thrift store jeans, a nice couch bought on sale at zero interest for two years, a garage sale’s worth of household furnishings punctuated with acquisitions from Ikea.

**Act Your Age:** *Continued on page 41*

Out and About  
Journeys Completed or Contemplated

“His hair  
was clearly  
dyed, and he  
was sporting  
a comb-over.”

by Pam Mandel

Freelance travel writer and photographer





# Into the Spotlight

These seniors are taking to the stage in a big way.

by **Beverly Ingle**

San Antonio-based freelance writer



At some point in each of our lives, we've donned a mask — or eight — and experimented with a different personality or perspective. The mask might have been 180 degrees different from our true selves, or perhaps just a degree or two. The occasion for the mask may have been of our own doing; perhaps we wore a mask of unshakable confidence during the interview for a dream job or one of fierce determination during our turn at bat.

On other occasions during which we wore masks, the impetus wasn't our own. Like the time we donned a mask of steadfast calm during a heart-rending crisis — the passing of a parent or spouse, for example — because we knew we couldn't fall apart. Maybe we were put on the spot, forced into the spotlight or a situation in which we were far from comfortable, and the mask showed surprise or elation when we really were experiencing neither.

For all the shady connotations and suspicions attached to masks and those wearing them, they offer an unparalleled opportunity for discovery, reinvention and empathy. Rather than using them simply to hide who we are, we can use them to walk in someone else's shoes, try on a different personality, view life from a different perspective, and reinvent ourselves at a fundamental level. If we don't like the outcome, we can remove the mask and move on.

*“Like the time we  
donned a mask of  
steadfast calm during  
a heart-rending  
crisis ...”*







*“Yet rather than hoping to land younger parts, these budding actors were looking to leverage their maturity to secure roles that often went overlooked by other, longer-term actors.”*

*“I’m curious about other people. That’s the essence of my acting. I’m interested in what it would be like to be you.”*

— Meryl Streep

#### **Enter, Stage Left**

Wearing various masks is a tantalizing way of experimenting with lives, view-points and experiences that aren’t your own, and that is a fundamental part of the art of theater. For anyone who has fulfilled a role on stage or in a film, we know the thrill of transformation that occurs the moment we put on the character’s persona. In an instant we become Blanche in a production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* or the suspect in an episode of *Law & Order*. Even in situations in which the character is not larger than life, we can have the opportunity of experiencing the perspective of “Man #3” in the party scene of *The Nutcracker* ballet.

Daydreams of becoming an actor may seem more suited to childhood and young adult years. Yet some mature adults in California and elsewhere across the country are making those daydreams a reality for themselves *now*, when they not only have more time in which to do so, but also more confidence in themselves. Betty White was quoted during an interview in advance of her televised 91<sup>st</sup> birthday special saying, while pointing to her head, “You’re not 90 in here. You’re 90 everywhere else.” That’s the perspective of the budding actors looking to unleash their inner thespians as they sign up for presentations, seminars and acting classes in Los Angeles, New York, and numerous points in between.

Retirees are attending acting-oriented events in droves; such was the case at a “Showbiz After 60” presentation not long ago in Burbank, California. (Lamb, 2013) The number of registrants quickly exceeded the capacity of the original meeting room, and it was moved to a larger location. Those attendees, who fell squarely within the AARP demographic, were at the forefront of a surge in the number of seniors interested in — and actively pursuing — opportunities to break into acting. Yet rather than hoping to land younger parts, these budding actors were looking to leverage their maturity to secure roles that often went overlooked by other, longer-term actors.

#### **Wrinkles and Gray Hair Welcome**

Without a doubt, the acting business is ageist, and many older actors — particularly females — have voiced their displeasure loudly. However, the tide seems to be turning, and the natural signs of aging are not only welcome by casting directors, but encouraged. In an October 2014 blog post, actor and author Lee Gale Gruen writes about her foray into acting after retiring from a career as a probation officer:

*... (he) advised the seniors to let their hair grow out, get rid of the fake colors and audition for older roles. ‘You’ll book more work.’ I had been dyeing my hair blond since I was in my twenties. I didn’t even know what my natural color was. Slowly, my hair grew out to a snow-white hue. I kept it at chin length and let its natural curls have their way. The agent was right. With my new hairdo, I got more attention. (Gruen, 2014)*

The increasing interest in acting opportunities for mature adults garnered the attention of two of the largest organizations that represent actors, the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA). A partnership between the two resulted in an initiative to support senior performers, called National Joint (SAG/AFTRA) Senior Performers Committee. The committee’s purpose is to essentially help eliminate ageism in the acting business. As stated on its website, “Its primary aim is to increase equitable employment opportunities and work conditions for senior performers by promoting more open attitudes within the industry with respect to casting and the way in which seniors are portrayed in film, television and commercials.”

For an industry with a long history of discrimination, the American entertainment business seems to be making a concerted move toward egalitarianism, and at a good time too. We’ve heard time and again that aging Baby Boomers are the largest demographic group in America and that they will on average live longer than any generation before them. They are comfortable with who they are, and they will insist on seeing accurate, relatable depictions of people their age on screen.

**Behind the Masks:** *Continued on page 41*



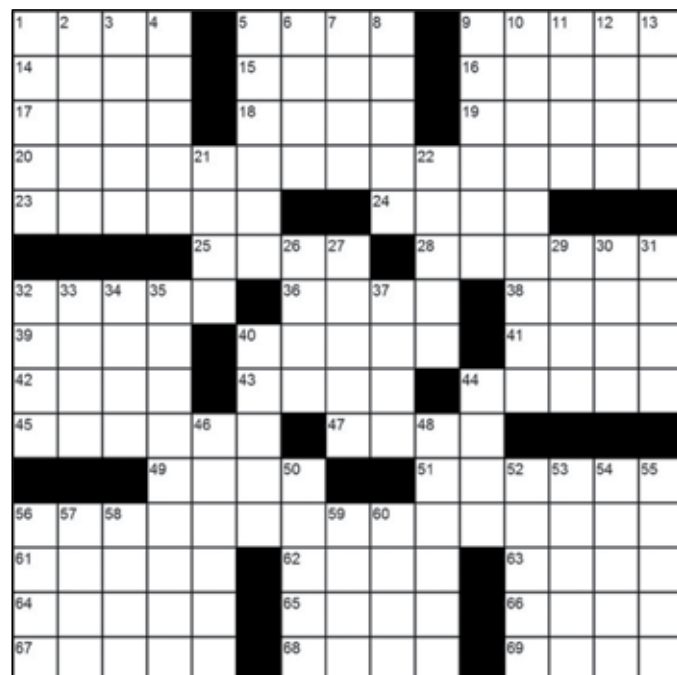
# LivFun Brain Games

Crossword & Sudoku

John Pearson, Puzzle Editor

## Crossword Puzzle

Acting Up



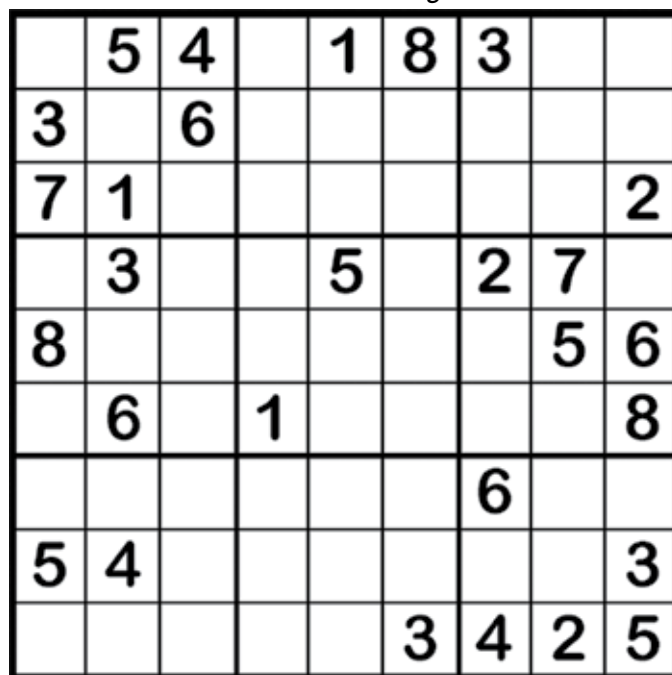
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### ACROSS

- 1 Window part, usually
- 5 Tons
- 9 Certain buggy users
- 14 One of four famous books
- 15 Dolt
- 16 Its nickname is La Superba
- 17 Not fer
- 18 Make one's own
- 19 It has a lookup table
- 20 First part of a Stanislavski quote
- 23 By the book
- 24 Soothe
- 25 Strong emotion
- 28 Rant
- 32 Something to remember
- 36 Popular modern tag
- 38 Fashionista Apfel
- 39 Before star or ranger
- 40 Second part of the quote
- 41 Organ control
- 42 On pins and needles
- 43 Valley denizen
- 44 Type of board
- 45 Composition or transportation
- 47 Ooze
- 49 Pear type
- 51 Face
- 56 Last part of the quote
- 61 Sulks
- 62 Peruse
- 63 Times
- 64 First name in fragrance
- 65 Stupor
- 66 Famous erupter
- 67 Record label
- 68 Rushed
- 69 Sophisticated one

## Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.



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DIFFICULTY ★★★★★

### DOWN

- 1 Blind components
- 2 Anything
- 3 One going downhill, usually
- 4 \_\_\_ Matisse
- 5 Layers
- 6 Pitcher
- 7 Adjutant
- 8 Flint, for example
- 9 Last name in tennis
- 10 Animal magnetism
- 11 Ancient Indian
- 12 Dirty
- 13 Give Caesar his due?
- 21 Repeat
- 22 Formal commitments
- 26 Lunch choice, maybe
- 27 Titled ones
- 29 Johnson or Moreno
- 30 Christian name?
- 31 Sports award
- 32 Alack's partner
- 33 Company image
- 34 Shortly
- 35 Storage units
- 37 Eye infection
- 40 Ecto suffix
- 44 Monumental
- 46 Makes a salad
- 48 Got away
- 50 Checks ID
- 52 Before strings or magnolias
- 53 Vital conduit
- 54 Piano type
- 55 Writing
- 56 Org. founded in Baghdad
- 57 Snack
- 58 Mandolin relative
- 59 Frog action
- 60 Enjoy inactivity

BRAIN GAMES ANSWERS ON PAGE 42

## Healthy U

Good Health 101 and Beyond



## What'd You Say?

If you have trouble hearing in a noisy room, the problem might not be in your ears.

by LIV FUN editorial staff

“Speak up. I can’t hear you.”

It’s a fact of life for many of us that it’s harder to hear now than it used to be. Throw in some additional background noise — like what you might find in a crowded dining room — and the problem often gets significantly worse. Now, some important new research tells us that the problem may not be in your ears at all.

“Seniors who struggle to make out what people are saying around the dinner table or on a noisy street may have perfectly ‘normal’ hearing,” writes Alan Mozes in WebMd. “The problem could actually be in the brain, a new study suggests.” (Mozes, 2016)

“Trouble processing conversations in a loud setting may indicate that the brain’s ability to quickly and easily process speech is diminished,” he continues.

The findings of the study, published in a recent issue of the *Journal of Neurophysiology*, demonstrate that our brains tend to get worse at processing sound as we age, especially when there are other noises in the background. This

could help explain why some people can hear the television in their living rooms just fine but can’t seem to make out conversations at the dinner table with a group of friends.

It also means that hearing aids may not necessarily solve the whole problem.

According to the article, brain scans of test subjects showed age-related nerve impairment in many people with hearing loss that makes it harder for the nerve cells to communicate with each other. So if turning up the hearing aid doesn’t help, what does? One possible solution is “a kind of physical therapy for hearing and speech recognition,” said study coauthor Jonathan Simon of the University of Maryland.

“There is — in theory, not yet in practice — a real possibility of restoring enough of the youthful aspects of the brain to help with this problem,” Simon explains.

Hearing therapy is a relatively new practice, and studies like these are going a long way to helping doctors understand — and alleviate — hear-

ing loss. Much more study is needed before hearing therapy is widely available, but there is great promise in what scientists are now learning.

In the meantime, there are some tricks you can use to help you be a better listener. Scientists have discovered that, in most people, our right ears are better at listening to speech, while our left ears are best at hearing music. Try turning your right ear slightly toward the speaker, and see if this helps. Another trick is facing your back to the wall when you are out in public; this helps the sound waves bounce off the walls and back toward your ear, and it also keeps out some of the background noise.

If you have hearing concerns, of course, make it a point to talk to your doctor soon. ♦

### Read more:

Mozes, Alan. (2016). “Having Trouble Hearing? Maybe It’s Not Your Ears.” Retrieved December 9, 2016, from [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com).



Money Matters  
Common Sense and Professional Advice

# Behind the Mask of a Successful Life

With self-awareness, we come to realize that our next role is to lead, inspire, and set the example of a life well-lived.

by James H. Lewis

Certified financial planner and owner, IDIC Financial

**D**o you remember how you smiled at that girl for the first time?

You were so nervous. Butterflies constantly moving inside your belly. Maybe even a nervous twitch in your leg or fingers.

It was all you could do to keep your composure and act like you had it together. *Maybe she won't notice*, you thought to yourself. Maybe, just maybe, if you keep flirting you can make it to the first date.

Eventually, you asked that girl out. Little did you know that she was also doing her best to keep up the charade. She was working so hard to be cool and collected, trying on that mask for perhaps the first time, the same way you were. The mask stayed on for

the first date, and maybe the second. By the third date, you both started to share a little more of yourselves, peeking out from behind the disguises. Only then did you share with each other how nervous you were at the start.

Over time, you both would reminisce, reminding each other how you were faking it until you made it. How the butterflies and nervousness seemed manageable under the guise of a calm and cool demeanor.

It was an epic lesson in acting, one of many you'd learn to master in the years to come.

Each role we play in life — brother, father, sister, mother, employee, boss, coworker and neighbor — is different,

but each also reflects back how we perceive what others want us to be. We do this in all aspects of our lives, particularly when it relates to our finances. We play the part of breadwinner, Santa Claus or caretaker. We choose to give to certain charities or save for the kind of retirement we one day imagine we should have. We become the business owner, boss or leader and assume the identity and the financial obligations, risks, rewards, and yes, the expectations that come with it.

And then one day we begin to realize that the mask we wear, or the role we assume, is more defined by our circumstances than by our true selves. We reach this wonderful stage in our

lives when we see ourselves more clearly. As our self-awareness expands, we become sure of who we are and what we want out of life.

It is this transformation that can bring us peace and fulfillment in life; blending experience and knowledge as we learn to move forward with more honesty. We begin braving the world barefaced and ready for what may come. At this stage, we may make drastic career changes or perhaps make bolder investments. Maybe we begin to be more generous, knowing our family's needs are met and our future is more secure. We begin to lean in to see our true selves, our strengths and our flaws.

Eventually, we realize that, yes, as humans we all have that tendency

*“What lies behind us and before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”*

— Oliver Wendell Holmes

to “suit up” to take on the roles we aspire to. There's no shame in that. In fact, there's great power in being able to accomplish it successfully. But now we understand that we are enough as we are — without the suits and masks and possessions.

Age is somehow a great equalizer in that the size of the house or the model year of the car doesn't have the same power it did a few years earlier. This can liberate us and make us truly free for perhaps the first time. Rather than our roles and situations defining our relationships, we get to decide how we engage with the world. We get to be vulnerable and realize that's OK. We learn to let go and be brave in the face of loss and change,

strengthened by our experiences of the past.

Every now and then maybe we should stop and take a look at those masks we used to wear ... not to chide ourselves for them, but to thank them for what they allowed us to accomplish. They are wonderful souvenirs of the journey of our lives.

Now is our time to lead and inspire others, and that is made easier when you can show your inner self, free of the façade of earlier years. Now, we can use our resources happily and wisely, in ways that truly bring us joy. And in doing so, we can teach those yet to arrive that the girl will say “yes,” and that it will all be just fine in the end. ♦





# The (Gender) Games We Play

When we recognize the influence of gender stereotypes, we can finally move past them and develop our own sense of acceptance.

by Brad Jensen

Lousy golfer, amateur chef and free-range writer

*“Most of us formed many of our social expectations through television and other media.”*



Imitation ... it's often said to be the sincerest form of flattery. It's how we begin our lives, watching and learning from those around us. We observe our parents and siblings, soaking in the way they make their way through their world. And we follow suit.

As we get a little older, our circle becomes a little bigger. With every interaction, our psyche is learning how to function in society as part of our journey to becoming autonomous, self-sufficient adults. We observe people in our immediate surroundings and see how they treat, and are treated by, others. All of this helps to create our expectations of social behaviors. It also helps to cement certain stereotypes, including those related to gender. Those stereotypes, if we aren't careful, can serve to limit our quest for autonomy and the happiness that comes with it.

### The Impact of Gender Stereotypes

At their core, gender stereotypes consist of shared beliefs about the characteristics and attributes associated with each sex. Women are commonly believed to have more communal, nurturing qualities, like expressiveness and kindness. Men are more often associated with traits like independence and aggressiveness. The trouble is, these stereotypes often describe not how men and women truly *are*, but how they *should be* in the minds of many people.

If children move through their formative years with specific "traditional" gender roles displayed in several aspects of their lives, a girl would probably not think to become a scientist, or a boy a nurse. Social proof bears this out. A recent study at Facebook demonstrates the importance of parental modeling on the choice of jobs; sons tend to follow their fathers' career choices, while daughters were far more likely to follow their mothers'. (Adamic and Filiz, 2016)

For example, the son with a father in the military is five times more likely to enter the armed forces. When fathers work in farming, fishing or forestry, their sons are 7.6 times more likely to enter the same profession. Even more telling, 8.5 percent of daughters with moms in nursing chose to follow that career path — at a frequency 3.75 times higher than other girls their age.

Parents aren't, of course, the only influence. Most of us formed many of our social expectations through television and other media. A dysfunctional relationship portrayed in a comedic light, such as a sitcom where the mom is a whining nag and the dad is an aggressive bully, can have a profound effect on a young mind that carries into adulthood. Researchers who study these things believe it's because children have a hard time realizing that the stereotype is exaggerated for effect rather than a reflection of real life. (Dietz, 1991)

*"A 'career' man might never admit his dream of quitting the corporate world to explore his passion as an artist, afraid of what it might do to his social standing at the golf club."*

### Autonomy vs. Conformity

As we age, the gender roles we've assimilated — from our own families, our social circle, and the media — play a role building our social circle in the hopes of finding validation and approval.

For example, a young woman may learn that she finds more social success when she hides her intelligence from men to whom she's attracted. It's a perfect storm, because it plays just as strongly into the other side of the gender coin — the one in which men seek satisfaction and acceptance by being the dominant ones, surrounded by more submissive personalities. Two subjectively unfavorable traits combine to produce short-term positive (though near-sighted) results for both players.

It happens in our wider circle, too. A working mom may succumb to pressure to join the PTO at school; she'll be more accepted by her social peers even though it means giving up time to work on her advanced degree. A "career" man might never admit his dream of quitting the corporate world to explore his passion as an artist, afraid of what it might do to his social standing at the golf club.

When gender stereotypes compel us to act like this, it's nearly impossible to gain the autonomy we seek. Instead, we end up assuming expected roles to make others happy rather than being true to ourselves. At best, this leads to a somewhat shallow existence where we miss our best chance for living with passion. In the extreme, situations like this can even result in depression or addiction. (Steger and Kashdan, 2009)





© Polka Dot Images

### The Personal Twist

Growing up, all the careers that interested me were on the humanities side of the house. Teaching, designing, arts, writing — these were all areas in which I had a great deal of interest, and a fair amount of aptitude, even though they are often considered more “female” careers. I didn’t care; this was where my passion moved me.

I was not interested in any of the traditionally “male” careers: programming, systems architecture, technical project management. It’s these careers (and ones related to them — leadership, management, entrepreneurship, sales, etc.) that are financially rewarded and highly regarded today.

In a delightful and often amusing twist, my wife and I embody the opposite of the traditional male/female career stereotypes. She’s a highly

successful technical manager who’s worked for a Fortune 100 company for more than a decade, and I work as a freelance writer from my home office. We’re both smart and accomplished at what we do. My wife, however, makes three times what I make.

This might sound like a recipe for disaster. Certainly, for many, it would be. I think a large part of the challenge for many couples is handling the inevitable social judgement that happens when traditional roles are thrown awry. Flipped gender expectations are most noticeable in situations where the norms are entrenched, like in a country club setting. We both love to golf and do enough of it that joining a club made financial sense for us. We meet a lot of new people out on the links, and they usually

*“Gender roles; they’re engrained in everything we do  
— that’s the dangerous part.”*

assume it’s MY success that affords us the opportunity to live where we do and play like we do. Then they find out it’s the other way around. We get a kick out of seeing their brains trying to process this.

For many couples, this constant social judgement would be enormously difficult. Maybe the man would feel the need to “explain” the situation, or the woman might be reluctant to admit her financial status for fear of being seen as less feminine. For us, we are keenly aware that our acceptance by others isn’t as important as it is to some, because we have a relationship that provides the acceptance we each seek. Getting to this point has been a journey, but certainly a rewarding one. We’re each other’s biggest fan.

We credit our success to a commitment to good communication and a strong sense of humor. We try not to take ourselves too seriously. At the same time, our marriage is not the first one for either of us, so we feel like we have everything at stake, everything to lose. With that as the basis, we work hard to make sure we’re 100 percent unified.

Society’s expectations can be heavy. Overcoming them — moving on from simply mimicking what we observe around us to reaching our potential as autonomous creatures — takes awareness and it takes work.

It’s only when we learn to develop ourselves *in spite of* what society says, rather than because of it, that we truly embrace that deepest acceptance of our own lives. ♦

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Dietz, W. H. (1991). “Children, Adolescents and Television.” *Current Problems in Pediatrics*, January 1991, pp. 8-31.

Steger, Michael F., and Kashdan, Todd B. (2009). “Depression and Everyday Social Activity, Belonging, and Well-Being.” *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, April 2009, pp. 289-300.

## Be Good To Yourself. Volunteer.

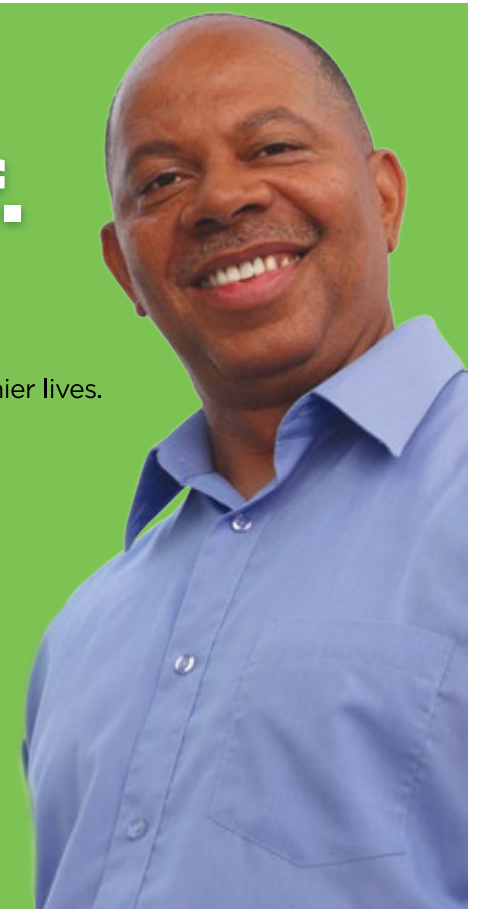
Research shows that people 55+ who volunteer lead stronger, healthier lives.

[GetInvolved.gov](https://www.getinvolved.gov)

[Facebook.com/SeniorCorps](https://www.facebook.com/SeniorCorps)



The three Senior Corps programs — RSVP, Senior Companions, Foster Grandparents are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that improves lives, strengthens communities and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering.







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## Advice for the Journey

Personal Advice and Expert Opinions



by Arica VanGelderens, LLMSW

Clinical social worker and therapist

**Question:** My nieces have always known me as the “cool” aunt, always ready to play with them as toddlers and always up for a good time as they grew older and reached adulthood. Every year since they were teenagers, my sister and I have taken them on a vacation to Florida. It’s been 15 years since the first vacation, and we have never missed a year. I have always felt lucky to have such a close relationship with them, especially because I never had children of my own. I’ve always been active, able to keep up with their vivacious personalities, and I pride myself on my ability to participate in anything and everything they have wanted to do over the years.

That is until this year, when I started having severe pain in my legs and back and was diagnosed with fibromyalgia. Sometimes the pain is unbearable, leaving me bedridden for days, and other times I feel hardly any pain, but side effects from the medication and chronic fatigue still affect my motivation and level of physical activity. I’ve found myself dreading the upcoming vacation. I feel like I would be letting my nieces and sister down if I decided to stay home, but I also would let them down if I went and couldn’t participate in anything because of my illness. I’ve started to feel like a shadow of my former self, and I am constantly worried about my health and my ability to enjoy the trip. How do I handle this situation?

**Answer:** It makes sense that you would feel anxiety and stress about leaving home with the symptoms you are experiencing. Dealing with chronic pain, fatigue, and the various side effects you mentioned from the medication is no small feat, especially when you are accustomed to a certain way of life that includes high levels of motivation and energy. These types of transitions are never easy, and it takes time to grieve what you feel you have lost. Be kind to and patient with your-

self, because harsh self-criticism and judgment only prolongs the grief. You are doing the best you can with what you have, just like you were before; it is just that the definition of “doing your best” has changed.

Imagine the tables were turned and it was your sister or one of your nieces who was in your position. Would you feel let down if they were unable to participate in all the same activities with you? My hunch is that you would accept them as they are and want to

do whatever was necessary to help them feel comfortable, both physically and mentally.

Reach out to your family about your anxiety; you may find that their response helps you decide whether to go on the vacation or stay home. It might also erase some of the dread you’re feeling. It is important to realize that you are the same person they have known and loved for their entire lives, and that does not change with the onset of illness. ♦



# Your Life Well Lived

Wellness Advice for Mind, Body and Spirit

## Just Say *Yes*

So often we  
shut down conversations  
without even meaning to.  
Here's how to stop.

by Nancy Gertz

Health and well-being coach  
in Boston

*“The real art  
of conversation  
is not only to say  
the right thing at  
the right place,  
but to leave unsaid  
the wrong thing at  
the tempting  
moment.”*

— Dorothy Nevill

In the words of Shakespeare, “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” On our own private stage, we live out this reality in every scene and every conversation.

We all want to be understood, and we want to be heard. We seek validation and real connection, even when we aren’t terribly aware of these basic drives. When we tell someone good news, we want them to be happy for us. When we tell someone of our sadness, it helps to hear a warm reply, “Yes, I hear you are sad.”

But many of our conversations are thwarted by these all-too-familiar responses: “You think that’s good? My grandson graduated with highest honors!” “I’m glad someone is happy.” “Must be nice.” “That’s nothing ... I need surgery next month!” “You don’t seem sad to me.”

Comments like these hijack good conversation and undermine our attempts at meaningful connections. We end up feeling angry, hurt, insulted, misunderstood, or any number of other well-worn forms of miserable.

### A Lesson From an Improv Artist

We can learn a lot about creating better conversations from the men and women who study acting. According to comic Tina Fey, improvisational theater offers us life-actors a treasure chest of director’s do’s and don’ts that we can use to hone our conversational craft.

In her book *Bossypants*, Fey lays out one essential rule for inspired improvisation. The secret to moving an improv scene forward, according to Fey, is surprisingly simple: Say “Yes” or “Yes, and ...” (Fey, 2011)

On the improv stage, if I tell you there is an (imaginary) apple in my hand, and you say, “No there isn’t!” then there is nothing more to add. The scene is dead. If I tell you there is an (imaginary) apple in my hand and you say, “Yes, that’s great; we ditched the apples when the boat sprung a leak, and now we need one to plug the hole!” then we have more to discover about each other and the story. The scene builds upward, and the characters go deeper.

On the personal stage, beginning any interaction with this “agreement” is a powerful way of avoiding judgment while expressing respect for the other person’s point of view. It helps you keep an open

and curious mind and build a real connection with the other person. (It doesn’t mean that you necessarily agree with their entire argument, just that you seek to respect and understand the other’s perspective from the start.)

### No Buts About It

It’s important to realize that just saying “yes” isn’t enough. Too often, we unthinkingly answer, “Yes, but ...” and think our message is getting through. It’s not.

When we hear, “Yes, but,” we hear disagreement and the opposite of validation. We lose trust in the other person’s ability to hear us.

If I say, “It’s a horrible day,” and you respond with, “Yes, but at least it’s better than yesterday,” your language acts as a subtle lever used to shift my perspective, instead of making me feel heard. I feel shut down, although the pressure is so subtle that I may not be aware of what made that happen. I might walk away feeling “off” but not sure why. Surprisingly, you may not be at all aware that you offended or hurt me.

Last week, my mom fell in her apartment. The doctor ordered an ambulance, and she was furious, insisting that she would not go. We spoke on the phone, and she kept repeating, “I hate this; I hate this.” I could have said, “Yes, but you have to let them take you to the hospital.” Instead, I said, “Yes, you hate this, and it’s no wonder. We all hate this, Mom. It’s horrible.”

I could tell she felt validated, and she began to calm down. Only then was I able to add the rest of the “and” — she hates this, it’s awful, *and* she needs to be evaluated at the hospital. She softened a little more, reluctantly agreed, and now she is rehabilitating a fractured hip. Mom needed to be understood and supported first before anyone was able to help solve her problem.

“Yes, and” are especially helpful when we are dealing with a challenge or new opportunity. “Yes, this is scary, and at the same time I am excited.” What a fresh contrast to, “Yes, I’d love to do this, but I’m scared.” Same feelings, different self-talk, more upside potential, and so much more opportunity for the scene to move forward. ♦

### Read more:

Fey, Tina. (2011). *Bossypants*. Reagan Arthur Books, a Little, Brown imprint. New York.



Retire Like You Mean It  
Your Life, Your Rules

# The Great LC Pajama Party

*Giving foster kids a childhood  
and a future ... and a comfortable night's sleep.*

by Traci Kuster

Leisure Care Marketing Director

If you are familiar with Leisure Care, whether as an employee, resident, friend or family member, you know that philanthropy has always been at the core of our value system. Giving back to the communities in which we serve and making a positive impact on all the lives we touch is our top priority. Leisure Care communities across the nation work year-round to do just this — from volunteering to food drives, monetary donations to giving trees — the impact the Leisure Care community has had on those around them is huge.



#### Treehouse and the Foster Care Community

Here in the Pacific Northwest, Leisure Care and our local retirement communities support numerous organizations, one of which is Treehouse, a non-profit that focuses on foster youth. Treehouse was founded in 1988 by a group of DSHS social workers who were tired of seeing the deprivation often faced by children in foster care. They started purchasing little things to help the children feel loved — like birthday presents and school supplies — funded by community bake sales and car washes.

Fast forward nearly three decades, and today, thanks to the support of tens of thousands of generous donors, Treehouse assists 7,000 youth in foster care each year through programs that help them succeed in school, fulfill key material needs, and provide important childhood experiences.

#### Treehouse focuses on four key service areas:

**Academic Support:** Education planning, monitoring, coaching and support services to help students in foster care overcome educational barriers and engage and invest in their education and their future.

**The Wearhouse:** A free store that provides youth in foster care with new and like-new clothing, shoes, school supplies, toys, and other items they need to feel confident and ready to learn in school.

**Little Wishes:** Financial support to provide youth in foster care with access to extracurricular and school activities and experiences essential to kids' social-emotional development and academic success.





**Holiday Magic:** A holiday gift-giving program where a gift is sent to youth in foster care across Washington State to help make their holiday bright.

One Eighty and Leisure Care have been long-time supporters of Treehouse, touching each of the four service areas above in different ways throughout the years — from employees serving on the Treehouse Board in a leadership capacity, to hosting supply and clothing drives, to tutoring and mentoring youth in preparation for graduation. The formation of the One Eighty Foundation in 2010 allowed us to extend our reach to Treehouse even further; in the past six years the Foundation has provided more than \$200,000 toward its mission of ensuring that foster youth in King County, Washington, graduate at the same rate as their peers.

### How the PJ Party Started

Come November each year, we turn our attention to the Wearhouse with one seemingly simple, yet hugely powerful, goal: to provide each child served by the Treehouse Wearhouse a new pair of cozy pajamas to call their own. Most of us take this comfort for granted — we have numerous pajamas and may even have a tradition of buying ourselves or our kids a new pair each Christmas. But for kids in foster care, this simple amenity is out of reach. Foster children are often

uprooted with no notice, having just minutes to pack their belongings in a pillowcase to move on to their next “home,” some literally with only the clothes on their backs. They awake in a strange new environment, once again reminded how much they are “different” from their peers.

Thirteen years ago two Leisure Care employees were hit with this fact head on while they were volunteering their time in the Wearhouse. On this day, a foster family was looking for something specific — pajamas — but there were none on the Wearhouse floor. The Leisure Care employees searched the backroom but came up empty — there were no pajamas to be found, and it was heartbreaking. From that moment on Leisure Care has made it our mission to supply the Wearhouse with enough pajamas for not only the winter season, but year-round, so no foster child is forced to go without this simple luxury. What started as a personal passion by two employees has grown into an annual company-wide event: The Pajama Party.

“For more than a dozen years now Leisure Care has been one of the primary providers of pajamas to Treehouse,” said Bre Grubbs, Vice President of New Business for Leisure Care and Treehouse Board Member. “Our contributions allow each foster parent that shops in the Wearhouse to be able to select new pajamas for their foster children at no cost, ensuring a warmer, cozier holiday.”

### Residents and Staff Get Into the Spirit

This year’s Pajama Party was held on November 14, and volunteers from the corporate office, as well as Leisure Care’s locally managed communities and our friend and vendor network, gathered at Treehouse to sort and inventory donated pajamas that would be available in the Wearhouse the next shopping day. It was a busy and fun day seeing our impact firsthand. But the real work began well before the actual party date in November as folks set out to collect pajamas and monetary donations from so many in our Leisure Care communities.

For the residents and staff at Fairwinds – Redmond, the efforts began as early as July with the formation of a sewing group. The weekly gathering provided an opportunity for residents to not only sew more than 50 pair of pajamas to donate to the Pajama Party, but it became a fun way to meet and make new friends. Their hand-made pajamas ranged in size from six months to teen, and the sewing group is now a regular weekly event on their social calendar. (Just think what this means for next year’s Pajama Party!)

The team at Washington Oakes in Everett also had a ton of fun collecting pajamas, hosting their own pajama party for residents and staff. Guests donned their favorite — and in some instances

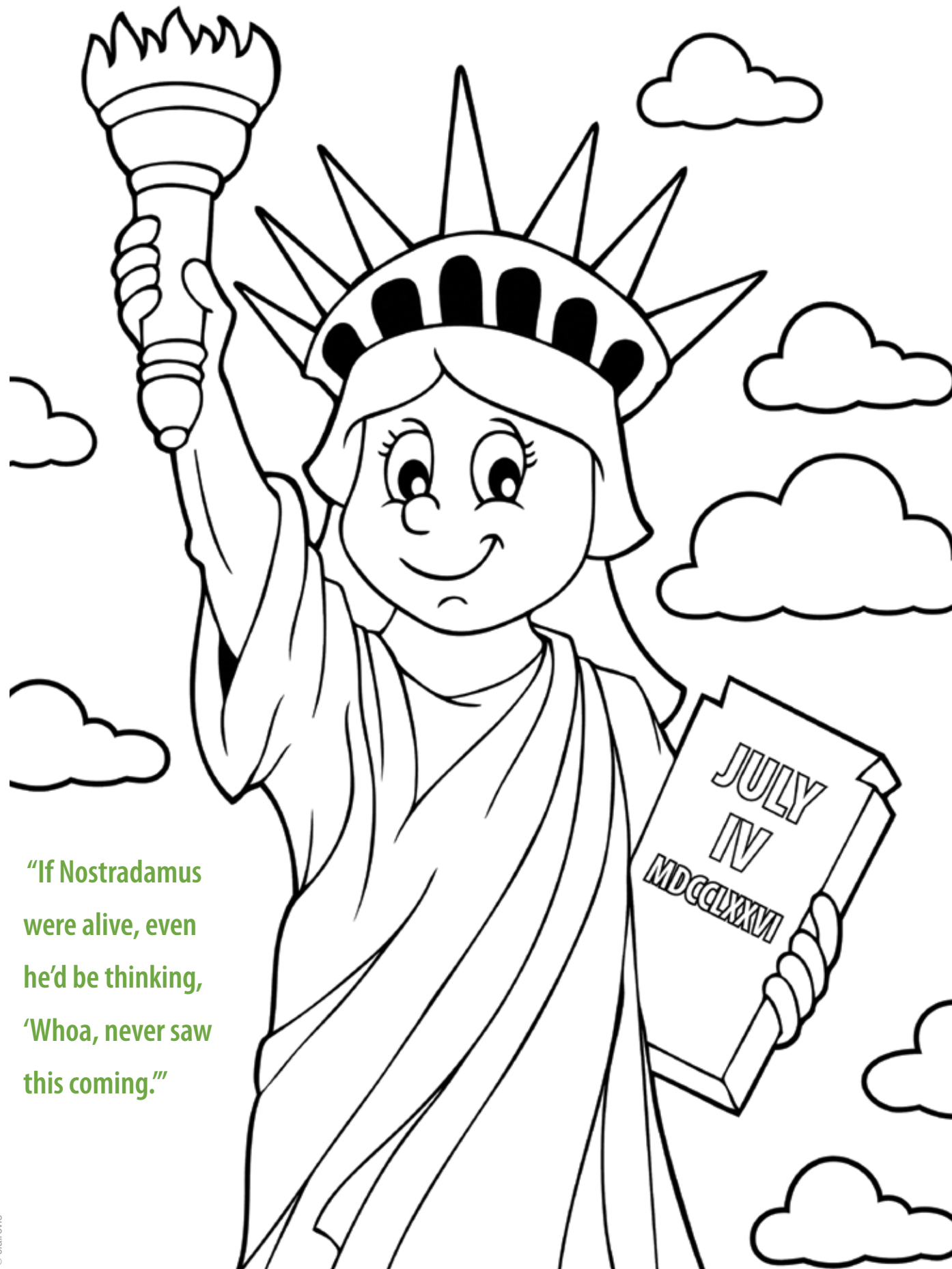
most creative — PJs, and awards were given for best dressed. A photo booth was setup so guests could capture the moment, and drawings were held throughout the evening for those who donated to the cause. Everyone agrees the event was a hit — not only was it fun, but it was rewarding as well.

Not to be outdone, Fairwinds – Brighton Court in Lynnwood hosted a BINGO Bash, as well as a Seahawks football game, serving beer and nachos and requiring a pair of pajamas or monetary donation as entry into the event. Needless to say it was well attended, as the residents and their guests rooted on their team in true “12’s” style.

After 13 years it is safe to say that the Pajama Party is one of the company’s most anticipated philanthropic initiatives. It allows staff, residents, friends and vendors to come together to impact a sector of our society that deserves nothing more than to live a normal childhood — attending school, playing sports, laughing with friends and preparing for college. Thank you to everyone who participated in this year’s Pajama Party. Because of you, foster kids are sleeping a bit more soundly ... and dreaming even bigger.

For more information on Treehouse, visit [www.treehouseforkids.org](http://www.treehouseforkids.org). ♦





"If Nostradamus were alive, even he'd be thinking, 'Whoa, never saw this coming.'"

© clarevix

# The Next Great American Coloring Book

It's never too late to learn something entirely new.

by Jeff Wozer  
Humorist and stand-up comedian

**L**ife currently feels like a foreign language: The Chicago Cubs are World Series champions; a reality TV celebrity with the hairstyle of a nimbus cloud now thumbs through J.Crew catalogs addressed to Sasha Obama or Current Occupant; and adult coloring books are the new bedrocks of national bestselling book lists.

If Nostradamus were alive, even he'd be thinking, "Whoa, never saw this coming."

But foreign languages can be learned. And after a life-long history of missing on profiting from the latest new things — Internet, cell phones, looting copper pipes from abandoned buildings — I've decided to speak the language of "trend" and pursue becoming a bestselling adult coloring book author.

To pull this off I'll need to convince myself I have the right stuff, as it were. A difficult task given my past history. Faking it until you make it has never been a strength. I'm more Jacques Clouseau than James Bond. Especially when it comes to professions.

There's no greater example than the time I masqueraded as a radio news director in the 1980s for WFAD in Middlebury, Vermont. The job lasted 11 months and 14 days. It came to a merciful end when former Democratic Party Presidential candidate Howard Dean visited the radio station unannounced. At the time he was running for lieutenant governor. But for reasons that escape me, I was in no mood to interview him, so, as any emerging, bare-knuckled journalist would do, I hid in the radio station's supply closet. It was a solid plan

until the on-air disc jockey, Sarah Spencer, rattled me out.

To this day the sight of Howard's shocked face as he opened the closet door to find me sitting on a spool of radio cable in the dark, eating Danon yogurt, still foams the brain red with embarrassment.

Three weeks later I moved to Vail, Colorado, to mimic a responsible adult as a ski bum.

But that was then, and this is now. It's never too late, I'm told, to start anew.

My quest to conquer the adult coloring book world brain-bloomed 19 days ago, when, at the insistence of my girlfriend, I accompanied her to a neighbor's coloring book party. Having nothing to compare this with, other than wilted childhood memories, I expected a weird evening of drunken adults, giddy with

**Coloring Book** *Continued on page 42*



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## Ethics and Spirituality

Reflections and Contemplations on Life and Living

# Sacrament and Ceremony

Those rituals we all perform have the power to transform us, even if we aren't aware. According to science, our human rituals may have deep psychological impacts ... and that makes them incredibly powerful.

by Elana Zaiman  
Rabbi, chaplain and writer in Seattle

*"You can study about it all you like, but studying about it won't take the place of doing it."*

The memory is still fresh, even after all these years. There I sat, in my rabbinical school interview at The Jewish Theological Seminary, taking my place at the table with professors, a student or two, and the Dean.

As an interviewee, I was asked questions about my application essays, my interest in becoming a rabbi, my ritual practice. In the Conservative movement, women were admitted to the rabbinate in 1984. In the year of my interview — 1988 — the acceptance of women in a rabbinic role was still painfully new. I was asked if when I prayed I wore a *tallit* (prayer shawl), traditionally male garb, but for women seeking admission to rabbinical school, also a requirement.

At the time, I didn't, and I replied something to the effect of, "I want to study more about this ritual before I take it on."

To this day I remember the Dean's reply so clearly. "You can study about it all you like, but studying about it won't take the place of doing it."

The Dean was onto something. Learning about the history and significance of a ritual was one thing; taking it on as a practice — in this case, wearing a prayer shawl on my body — was quite another.

Consider religious rituals, such as lighting the Sabbath candles, showing up to be part of a service for someone whose relative has just died, confession, communion, tracing the cross on one's body, hearing the *Adhan*, the Koran, facing Mecca on a prayer rug while engaging in prostrations.

Consider non-faith-based rituals, such as meditation, yoga, music or writing practice, and national rituals, such as standing to recite the National Anthem, observing Thanksgiving,

attending a 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks celebration. There's something about engaging in rituals that brings meaning into our lives.

Why do rituals work? What is it about human nature that causes us to crave rituals? Are rituals simply superstitious (like the athlete who wears his lucky socks or the teen who wears her lucky necklace), or is there more to it?

According to science, rituals may be more rational than they appear on the surface.

"Rituals performed after experiencing losses — from loved ones to lotteries — do alleviate grief, and rituals performed before high-pressure tasks — like singing in public — do in fact reduce anxiety and increase people's confidence," Francesca Gino and Michael Morton wrote in *Scientific American*.

"In a recent study conducted in Brazil, researchers studied people who perform *simpatias*: formulaic rituals that are used for solving problems, such as quitting smoking, curing asthma, and warding off bad luck. People perceive *simpatias* to be more effective depending on the number of steps involved, the repetition of procedures, and whether the steps are performed at a specified time," they wrote. (Gino and Morton, 2013)

In an increasingly confusing and complex world, engaging in rituals can become a way to identify — and strengthen — our work, our personal practice, and our national, family or religious identity.

When we throw holiday parties and participate in gift exchanges in our work environments; when we practice eating healthy food; when we join the Lakota tribe to protest the pipeline and participate in a traditional forgiveness ceremony; when we gather around our tables repeating family traditions that go

back generations; when we celebrate house warmings, birthdays, marriages or funerals, we participate in something much deeper than the surface actions. Rituals can give us the strength we need to move forward, can connect us to our past, present and future, and can give us a sense of belonging.

Understanding rituals from an academic standpoint cannot be the deciding factor as to whether to adopt a particular ritual. Take, for example, my putting on the *tallit*. Had I not adopted the ritual, I never would have grown comfortable wearing the *tallit* as a woman, no matter how many academic articles I read.

Over the years, with the help of talented artisans, I have envisioned several of my own prayer shawls. Two female friends contributed to my current prayer shawl. One found the white material embossed with leaves and wound the fringes; the other needlepointed the beadwork for the top of the shawl: a palm tree on either side, four women dancing between the palms, and a Hebrew quote from the biblical text floating between the dancing women that translates, "Listen God, my voice calls out, have compassion on me. Answer me."

These days, when I wrap myself in this prayer shawl, I am reminded of these women, I am reminded of biblical women, I am reminded of women throughout Jewish history, and I am reminded of my relationship with God as a woman. How rich this ritual has become. ♦

### Source:

Gino, Francesca, and Norton, Michael I. (2013). "Why Rituals Work." From *Scientific American*, retrieved December 8, 2016, at [www.scientificamerican.com](http://www.scientificamerican.com).





Clouds of Sils Maria (2014)

When a famous performer (Juliette Binoche) rehearses lines with her assistant (Kristen Stewart), it should be an easy matter of memorizing dialogue. But nothing is clear-cut in this mysterious meditation on identity, and the more these two run the lines, the more the definition between fiction and reality gets blurred. Binoche gives a full-blooded performance as someone who has truly defined her searching self by pretending to be other people her whole life, while Stewart deftly sketches a younger woman still identifying who she is (although we can never quite be sure about her). On the one hand, the world is changing — Binoche has a hilarious reaction to Stewart’s sober analysis of the deep meaning of Hollywood superhero movies — but then again, history is repeating itself, especially now that Binoche’s middle-aged actress is being asked to play older women in plays in which she once was the ingénue. Don’t expect concrete answers in this film by the gifted French filmmaker Olivier Assayas (*Something in the Air*), because that’s not the goal. The film might be saying that acting isn’t about defining something; it’s about accepting that some things are undefined — even identity. (Available to stream on iTunes, YouTube, Amazon, Google Play and Vudu)

MUSIC REVIEWS

by Franklin Soult / Freelance music journalist

“I think my fans will follow me into our combined old age. — Bonnie Raitt



Hamilton (Original Broadway Cast Recording, Album) — Various Artists, 2015

Whatever one thinks of the cast’s unexpected address to Vice President-elect Mike Pence at a post-election performance, the incident highlighted the unique cultural bridge created by this smash Broadway show. The extravaganza reframes Alexander Hamilton’s dramatic life story as a New York immigrant’s tale, told by a multiethnic cast performing rap-inspired show tunes. The audacious concept connects a new generation of Americans to our nation’s founding story, while providing patriots who might feel estranged from contemporary urban culture access to America’s latest sounds and styles. This theatrical leap of empathetic roleplaying wouldn’t rise to the level of inspiration without the plot’s dramatic rigor or the music’s broad accessibility. Together, they crystalize the panache and poetic density of rap with the precision we expect from a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, a forerunner explicitly acknowledged in the words and music alike.



The Bird & The Rifle (Album) — Lori McKenna, 2016

These songs roll from Lori McKenna’s aching alto so smoothly yet smartly, the veteran country songwriter seems to embody the album’s closing title, “If Whiskey Were a Woman.” True to that metaphor, the warmth in almost every song comes with a kick — usually a twist about failed connections between men and women, including the couplet, “If whiskey were a woman/She’d be nothing like me.” Despite the music’s intimacy, McKenna is indeed nothing like most of the women in her songs. Married for nearly 30 years to the father of her five children, this lifelong Massachusetts resident is engaging in imaginative playacting as surely as the professionals in *Hamilton*. Producer Dave Cobb abets the confessional illusion by lifting the songs with subtle swells, like an incoming tide that barely ruffles the surface. The power of the formula is summed up by the award-winning “Humble & Kind.” McKenna originally lent the song to Tim McGraw for a huge hit, resizing it here for her five greatest creations back home.



Greatest Hits Vol. II (Album) — Bob Dylan, 1971

If Bob Dylan deserved the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature, it wasn’t because the 75-year-old icon transformed lyrics into poetry — those two forms permanently diverged in history’s yellow wood long ago. Instead, Dylan’s language broke barriers with an array of imaginative devices that match any in the printed word since the birth of the prize. Compiled by Dylan himself shortly after the 1960s closed, this chronologically jumbled album shows that Dylan’s language was always in part about roleplaying. Like the “unreliable narrator” in a modern novel, Dylan keeps shifting perspectives, playing everything from an earnest protest leader (“A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall”) to a jaded wastrel (“Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues”), from a cryptic mystic (“All Along the Watchtower”) to a smooth seducer (“Lay Lady Lay”). Throughout, the earthiness and casual beauty of the music makes all those strutting guises simply sing. ♦

We are very comfortable, but it’s not like I imagine grown-up houses should be. I did other things. I traveled and married a foreigner and joined a rock band. “I should apologize to your husband,” said my bandmate Ed after teaching me how to use an effects pedal on my ukelele. This little block of electronics makes the sweet sound of my instrument sound like a hive of angry bees. “He’s going to wonder about the teenager he came home to.” “I used to see these old musicians hanging out at the bar, talking about music,” said my friend Carel. “I’d wonder who they were. And I realized ... we’re those guys.”

How is someone my age supposed to act, anyway?

People are comfortable letting their kids near me. I clean up pretty well for dinner parties and client meetings. I wear a helmet when I ride my bike, and I don’t jump the lights like I used to, but my helmet looks like half a watermelon; it’s childlike and silly, and that’s why I like it. I listen to my instincts when I travel. I stay out of places that feel dangerous; I am rife with common sense. I don’t smoke, I’m a modest drinker, and

my diet is OK. I pay my bills, wear a seat belt and take my vitamins. I have a mortgage and a front lawn and a troubled right knee. On paper, I look like an adult human. An unconventional one, but an adult nonetheless. One the same age as that guy at the show, dancing with his hands over his head. I wonder if he thought he was acting his age. I wonder if he thought I was acting mine. My family lost my stepfather, David, to cancer this summer. He loved classic rock and roll, the kind of stuff my band plays. I’d been playing for a year or so when he finally came to see us — my brothers and my mom came too, and they sat in my local bar, a place run by an aging metal head with a spectacular head of hair, one a guy his age has no business having, but there it is. I thought the family would head home early, but they stayed put for all three full-volume sets. “What did you think?” I asked David when it was all over. “What took you so long?” he asked. It is never too late to stop acting your age. ♦



Lights, Camera, Action!

Interested in putting on a new mask or two of your own? Even the smallest communities offer opportunities to try your hand at acting. Local and regional community theater, independent filmmakers, local television and radio stations, and universities are wonderful starting points. Yes, universities: Some have radio-television-film programs with student productions, and in others, someone has to act as if they have an illness or disease in order to train medical students. If the idea of trying acting makes you beyond uncomfortable, take heart. It’s not an uncommon feeling. In her blog post Gruen describes getting ready for her first audition. She had heard about actors being successful when they dressed for the part for which they

were auditioning, in a sense, wearing the character’s mask. She created an English spinster outfit complete with a long tweed skirt, high-necked blouse, horn-rimmed glasses, flat shoes and no makeup. With her mask in place, she felt the part and felt ready. What Gruen expected was far from her reality when she arrived for the audition. “When I entered the audition room that first time, I immediately wanted to bolt,” she wrote. “It was filled with actors ranging from their twenties to elderly, beautiful to homely, slender to portly, gruff to sophisticated. All of them, including those there to audition for the same role as I, were dressed in jeans and T-shirts.” While she didn’t get the part, she did get a boost of self-confidence and the thrill of trying on the English spinster mask.

If you’re feeling adventurous or restless, or just intrigued by the idea of trying on a new personality or perspective, consider dipping your toe into the acting pool and look for opportunities for presentations, acting classes and auditions in your area. You might discover a whole new version of you. ♦ Sources: Gregory, Kim Lamb. (2013). “Senior Citizen Hollywood Roles: ‘Showbiz After 60’ Helps Unleash Inner Thespians.” Retrieved on December 5, 2016, from [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com). Gruen, Lee Gale. (2014). “The Secret World of Showbiz Seniors.” Retrieved December 5, 2016, from <http://tinyurl.com/wise-showbiz>. Learn more about the National Joint Senior Performers Committee at <http://tinyurl.com/wise-act>.



**Coloring Book:** Continued from page 37

school-day nostalgia, attempting to pair wine with Elmer's glue.

But the only weirdness came from the initial shock of seeing nine partly to mostly gray-haired neighbors, two of whom work the courts for high-powered law firms, seated in ladder-back chairs around a large oval wooden table pressing Crayola crayons to coloring books. While my girlfriend gushed, "How fun!" I thought, *This, I'm guessing, is not what Dylan Thomas had in mind when he wrote, 'Do not go gentle into that good night.'*

There was no room at the table, however, for cynicism. No room at all. Especially not after hearing about Johanna Basford. Deemed the Elvis Presley of the adult coloring book industry, since 2013 this Scottish-born illustrator has sold more than 16 million coloring books in 24 different languages.

The ripples of her work have breached the breakwalls of logic: The planet currently suffers from a colored pencil shortage; during the first five months of 2016, Walmart reported \$100 million in adult coloring books sales; and upscale hotel chains now include coloring books as room amenities, creating the disconcerting visual of high-powered stock investors, the very people responsible for handling

our retirement portfolios, sitting in high-priced hotel rooms coloring My Little Pony.

How difficult can authoring a coloring book be? No story arc is required. Or at least none that I'm aware of. I can't imagine publishing a coloring book on, say, birds and being told by a fan during a coloring book signing, "I loved how you opened with 11 pages of songbirds and then, without warning, abruptly switched to birds of prey. Oh man, I never saw that coming."

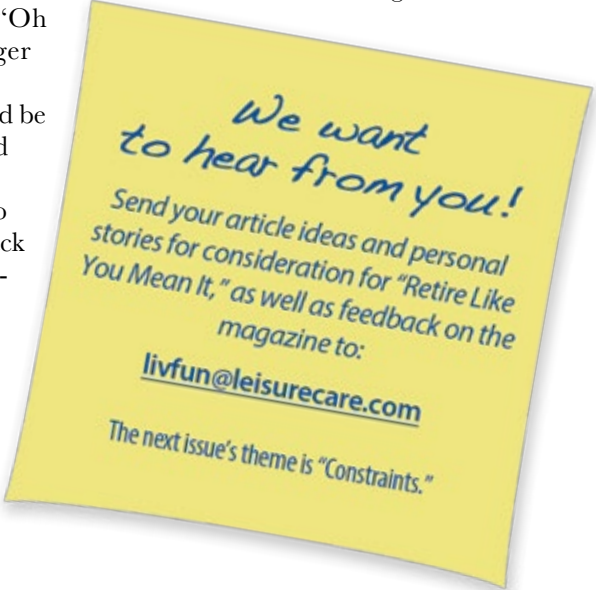
During the party one person had a coloring book on swear words. There was no attempt at narrative while building from mild disappointment ("Shucks" and "Oh jeez") to ending with raging-anger f-bombs. Very amateurish.

I'm sure any editor of note would be quick to rebuff me on the perceived ease behind publishing a coloring book. But I'm delusional enough to believe I can counterbalance my lack of insight by creating and dominating a new genre: the short story adult coloring book. Four pages at most. No more, no less. This would keep costs down. Maybe under two dollars. The right price for anyone regardless of budget constraints.

Once this niche has been cornered, then I branch out into

short story coloring book sub-genres: horror (It made me want to color with the lights on!); Goth (Black spares the mind of painstaking color decisions!); and self-help (The illustrations are already colored for you!).

And all books, regardless of theme, will encourage coloring outside of the lines. My "coloring without borders" style attracted quick ridicule during the party. Coloring books should provide escape from the adult curse of perfection, which stunts rather than exhorts. For coloring, as in life, is far more fun when mimicking the carefreeness of childhood, minus, of course, the after-taste of Elmer's glue. ♦



**BRAIN GAMES ANSWERS / From Page 18**

**Answers to Crossword Puzzle**

S	A	S	H		S	E	A	S		A	M	I	S	H
L	U	K	E		T	W	I	T		G	E	N	O	A
A	G	I	N		R	E	D	O		A	S	C	I	I
T	H	E	R	E	A	R	E	N	O	S	M	A	L	L
S	T	R	I	C	T				E	A	S	E		
					H	A	T	E		T	I	R	A	D
A	L	A	M	O		H	A	S	H		I	R	I	S
L	O	N	E		P	A	R	T	S		S	T	O	P
A	G	O	G		L	I	L	I		E	M	E	R	Y
S	O	N	A	T	A		S	E	E	P				
					B	O	S	C			V	I	S	A
O	N	L	Y		S	M	A	L	L	A	C	T	O	R
P	O	U	T	S		R	E	A	D		E	R	A	S
E	S	T	E	E		D	A	Z	E		E	T	N	A
C	H	E	S	S		S	P	E	D		L	A	D	Y

**Answers to Sudoku**

2	5	4	7	1	8	3	6	9
3	9	6	5	4	2	7	8	1
7	1	8	6	3	9	5	4	2
1	3	9	8	5	6	2	7	4
8	7	2	3	9	4	1	5	6
4	6	5	1	2	7	9	3	8
9	2	3	4	8	5	6	1	7
5	4	7	2	6	1	8	9	3
6	8	1	9	7	3	4	2	5



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