

Hair-raising encounters no fun

It has been said that we learn by our mistakes. From my experience in the area of self-improvement, I can only conclude I'm a slow learner, particularly when it comes to trying out new hair styles.

It would certainly help if my family made an effort to save me from myself when the irrational urge to have a perm strikes.

Instead, my husband, absentmindedly mutters, "it's your hair, dear, from behind the sports section. And the children are too busy zapping aliens to offer advice."

I've had about five perms in my life, each one a disaster, leaving my hair with all the shine and consistency of a brillo pad.

I shudder to think of the times I've sat numbly in front of a mirror, miserably contemplating the wire wool halo which was to have been "a loosely structured, shining mass of natural looking curls," and which won't grow out for at least a year.

In desperation, I would try to



KATE'S CORNER
Kate Gilderdale

think of suitably carefree replies to the inevitable cries of, "you've had a perm!" or "that certainly looks different," from all the people too polite to say, "how long will it be before you look normal again?"

On one particularly distressing occasion, I tried to salvage things by applying a color rinse to improve the condition; if not the style, of my crowning fuzz.

"Light Golden Brown," interacting totally with the perm, produced a horrid bluish-black hue; the overall effect being reminiscent of a Charles Addams cartoon character, which only

served to increase my despair and my friends barely concealed mirth.

On another occasion, I attempted to repair the damage with the help of a hair straightener. This chemical cocktail had to be poured through my hair six times while I leaned backwards over the sink.

It wasn't until I'd performed the necessary contortions that I read the last line of the instructions: "We strongly advise you to ask a friend to help you as this is almost impossible to do alone."

To my immense relief, when I fearfully removed the towel, not only did my hair remain attached to my scalp, it was also mercifully, wonderfully, undeniably straight.

I swore this was the last time I'd get sucked in, but I still couldn't kick the habit.

Three years ago, lulled by magazine articles about the "new, soft perms," I found just the look I wanted.

Filled with misplaced confidence, I presented the picture at one of the glitzy Toronto salons, where Justin told me it would be no problem at all to transform my dull, predictable style into something that would amaze my friends.

My husband, struggling to find words to cancel out the look of horror on his face as I emerged from the ill-fated encounter with Justin, inquired, with disbelief: "Is that how you wanted it?"

I explained, with a confidence that I was far from feeling, that it would look better when it "loosened up."

Fortunately, one of my relatives had the foresight to take a picture of this particular creation. Although it pains me to see it, I'll never throw it away. Every time I feel a perm coming on, all it takes is a quick glance and I'm cured.

Going straight has finally become a permanent way of life.

Kids teach mother a lesson

When our oldest daughter started school, we struggled constantly with a morning routine.

She moved in slow gear, I operated in high.

Finally, in exasperation I exploded. "What's wrong here," I said, "is all the hurry in me. Don't you realize what will happen if you're late?"

So it was a great relief when daughter No. 2, after only a few weeks in Kindergarten, began watching the clock with all the worry of a fast-track executive.

"Come on," she'd tell her sister, 10 minutes before the bus was due, "the big hand is straight up and the bus is coming!" With that, she'd rush out the door.

Genetic differences? Environmental changes? Why did daughter No. 2 seem to have more hurry in her? Thank goodness for small miracles, even if it doesn't last forever.

Then daughter No. 3 made me look at things another way.

I was taking her to the doctor one day on an extremely tight schedule. I knew if I was late for the first appointment, the rest of the day would be thrown off. My pulse was racing, as fast as my engine when from the back seat came a sweet, totally laid back "Hello Mommy."



ANOTHER WAY

Melodie Davis

It was her doctor appointment, but of course, at two years of age, what did she care about being late?

Suddenly I was glad my hurry, my stress and my uptightness had not rubbed off on her.

Another day, I was driving to work on a newly completed four-lane highway close to my office. I can get on it about a mile from my house and zoom efficiently to my destination in just under seven minutes.

We used to be hampered by gravel trucks chugging up a long grade in low gear. Sometimes, I'd find myself following one, all the while muttering angrily to myself. Then, I realized, hey, I could veer to the left and drive in the fast lane.

That same day, I drove to a lunch appointment across town. It took me past our church. Our congregation meets in a lovely,

old remodelled house, with a row of stately maples along the front of the lot.

Suddenly, I realized the trees were gone; cut to the ground.

I'd known, of course, that the death penalty had been pronounced a long time ago, to make way for a highway in front of the property. But a pain shot through my heart as though someone had cut it with a knife.

This may sound overly dramatic, but the pain was real. I was struck by my own inconsistency. Four lanes were great as long as they took the trees from someone else's site.

New trees will be planted, of course. And, just as surely, I suppose, little girls will some day hurry with all the fury of their harried mother.

They'll learn that if they're late

for school, they'll collect tardy points and come under the scowl of a teacher — later a boss. They'll learn to speed on highways and snap at their children.

But I also hope I'm teaching them to pull in at a park on a day full of errands and spend 30 minutes at the playground.

I hope they're learning that dishes will wait, but sunsets won't; that growing flowers in the garden make pulling weeds worthwhile and that taking a walk is good Sunday afternoon medicine.

We can't escape a certain amount of fast-lane living. But we can make choices to tame the hurry in us.

We can take five deep breaths at stoplights instead of letting the tension rise.

We can turn off the TV a half-hour early and take time to talk.

We can go sleigh-riding with the kids and enjoy a hot chocolate later. Or even participate in a little roughhousing on the floor.

We can get up 10 minutes early, spend some precious moments in solitude, talking with God to help control the "hurry" of the day.

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