

Stress is everywhere — you just have to look for it

In the '70s you had to be dressed for success, now if you're not stressed by success, you're a social outcast.

Since I couldn't convincingly claim overwhelming stress on the job or in the home, I started looking into plausible excuses for being stressed out. After all, I didn't want people to suspect the ghastly truth; that I wasn't about to crack up or burn out because I just didn't have the requisite amount of stress in my life.

Stress is everywhere though, you just have to look for it. Trying to determine which door will gain you admittance to someone's home is a good example. This is a task reminiscent of those nasty psychological tests they used to try and trip you up with when you went for job interviews at American multinational corporations.

Back in the old country, there's the front door which is for visitors, bill collectors, friends, neighbors and deliveries. The back door (or tradesmen's entrance as they jokingly call it in class-structured Britain) is actually reserved for family members and ejecting the cat.

Side doors, doors to the basement or sliding glass doors to the



KATE'S CORNER

Kate Gilderdale

backyard are a rarity and in any case are not used to usher in visitors. The front door, which you know is the front door because you can see it from the road, and because it's often at the front and centre of the house, is usually furnished with a bell or door knocker, unerringly proclaiming that this is where you come in.

Screen doors are pretty well unheard of, so you don't have to suffer the indignity of tugging desperately on one which you later discover has been permanently welded to its frame through years of disuse. By this time, you've also found out that the entire household was watching and enjoying your futile attempts to separate the one from the other, before greeting you with a chorus of "try the side door".

Then there's interview stress. The kind you get when you hear about a really interesting story, make an appointment with the subject and spend the next 20 minutes desperately trying to get him or her to say more than "I guess so" to every question you ask. To compound the problem, you take a photo of said subject and the camera eats the film, leaving you with egg on your face and a two-paragraph in-depth story.

Stress is endemic in our personal lives too; take the stress of buying a greeting card. Have you tried to find a simple, attractive card which just says "happy birthday" on it lately?

There were retirement cards, graduation cards, over the hill cards, cards of apology, welcome-to-your-new-home cards, cards for golfing fanatics of 65 and a huge variety of vulgar cards festooned with not very funny double entendres; but nothing which merely wished the recipient a happy birthday.

Perhaps the most stressful thing of the lot is trying to find pithy endings for articles on the stress of everyday living.

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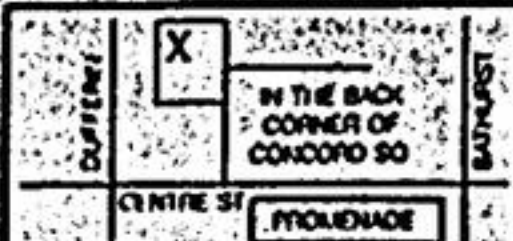
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