

YOUR CONNECTION

A Disability-Connections Newsletter

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INGENIOUS INVENTIONS b Marion Trimble

Not too long ago society's expectations of a person with a disability and their potential was pretty limiting. Mobility equipment inched along with adaptive aids slowly advancing in design and function. Then in 1990 the Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted opening up the world for the disabled to get out and enjoy their community and country. Part of this important law refers to equal access to transportation and public and commercial facilities. The demand began to increase for equipment that would provide a way to integrate into everyday life of travel, grocery shopping, camping, football games and other activities previously very limited for people with disabilities. The medical equipment industry began to see money in this new demand. As it always has been, profit is the real mother of invention. Money being the motivating factor led to more inventions, improvements and options of medical equipment than ever before. We began to see things like stair lifts, portable and permanent ramps, motorized lift chairs, mobility scooters, hand controls for vehicles and all kinds of computer technology as well as huge design improvements in power in manual chairs. These improvements in medical equipment have become so lucrative that new inventions develop constantly. I've included a small list of some of the most intriguing ones below.



IBOT STAIR-CLIMBING WHEELCHAIR

DEKA Research designed this for rough terrains but it can also climb stairs up and down with its self-balancing technology and even “stand”.



DYNA VOX EYE MAX

Dyna Vox EyeMax uses eye-tracking technology for computing, tv watching, reading and speak for people with limited mobility. It tracks users eye movements by blink or gazing.



American Dream or American Scheme?

By Marion Trimble

Buying a home is the American dream but for many not the American opportunity. Crisis like unexpected job layoffs, illnesses, divorce and other “life happens” experiences can leave you with a credit score so low banks laugh when they see it. But, it’s your dream anyway and you’re tired of paying rent which won’t secure your future. You spot a sign in the yard of a decent looking house with “Rent to Own” bad credit ok and an opportunity has come knocking on your door. Sometimes this scenario has a happy ending but, more often than not, it turns into just another “life happens” crisis.

The reason is communication from the buyer and the seller. Here’s a red flag right at the beginning of negotiations, there is no standard rent-to-own contract. Each owner can, and will, include or delete options for their advantage. The wording can be complex and is designed basically to meet the state regulations you live in but the owner can adapt it beyond that. For instance you need assurance in the contract that your rent money goes toward taxes, mortgage insurance and home owners insurance so three years down the road it’s not put in foreclosure. Look at the last appraisal and when the last inspection was done. Make it very clear in the contract who is responsible for what repairs.

Also, at the end of the contract (3 to 5 years) you must secure financing on your own, up to this point the portion of funds the landlord agreed to put toward your home is basically to cover the down payment. Unless something has been worked out with the seller or there’s a clause protecting you in the contract you’ve just lost your investment and probably your home. There are success stories that have worked out well but make sure you are making the best informed choice possible. Here is a list of pros and cons to think about.

PROS

- This transaction gives the buyer (the advantage) to lock in the price in advance, but if the home value goes down, he can choose to renegotiate the deal or move on.
- Buyers could also get the upper hand -- and sellers, the disadvantage -- if the home's value rises more than expected. Say the house is currently valued at





WAIT A MINUTE! By Marion Trimble

Why is everyone in America waiting incessantly in waiting rooms? There is waiting everywhere like doctors, dentists, insurance offices, hospital procedures etc. In most of these waiting periods are not just a 10 to 15 minute wait but anywhere from 40 minutes to over 2 hours. To make things worse all waiting rooms look alike. Old magazines, a TV in the corner, chairs shoved together so you can't move yours away from a sick person spewing cold or flu viruses on you. The TV is supposed to suck up our time but it does more harm than good by never having suitable viewing material for everyone's different taste. The various ages alone is a barrier to consensus. The noise can be an annoying background to someone who just needs some silence and is in pain. Elevator music is not much better and will put most people to sleep.

All of us crammed in one room look like we are watching a tennis match as our heads jerk up every time the door opens and a nurse or a business person calls the next person. We sit and read, try to tune out the annoying game shows on TV and fidget in the uncomfortable imitation leather seats while anxiously imaging 100 things we would rather be doing with this precious time we will never get back in our lifetime. I've even tried to be proactive and outsmart them by getting the very first appointment in the morning at 8 AM and it can still take another 45 minutes wait before they finally call me. Really? The same wait occurs for outpatient procedures that they warn you NOT to be late for. A 7 AM appointment can often be delayed up to and over two hours. I don't know what all the answers are but I have a few suggestions.

As far as improvements I think an update frequently from a "courteous" staff as to order of selection and how much longer it should be. Just acknowledgment of who you are and that you are not forgotten relieves the stress and anxiety. I also think they need a little incentive like for every 30 minutes past your appointment time 10% off of your office visit will be deducted. I bet when they see that 10% turn in the 40% they pay more attention to their scheduling and treat the customer with respect as they are the ones lining the pockets. And of course a variety of reading material that's not just based on the physician's hobbies and investments. Right now the burden is on the patient (the "consumer" if you will) and not the ones providing the service. In another area of business we would not tolerate this treatment in order to give them our money.

I wrote this before a Pandemic was even thought of but wonder now how things in the medical field will change. Will they reconsider scheduling patients so close or separate rooms for ill people or mandatory mask wearing? Decisions, as always, depends on money flow and who its flowing too. Hopefully the new normal will reflect that without humanity there will be no money for anyone.





Dealing with CORVID-19

By William Stork

Wheelchair/Power chair users tend to sit lower than most people that are standing, we can experience more exposure to saliva droplets when talking to people taller than us.

Many medical professionals have recommended observing a minimum of 6 ft. of distance to those around you to alleviate this risk. You may also consider wearing some type of face mask to protect yourself from getting “sprayed” by people talking to you. Medical face masks are in high demand right now, and not easy to get hold of. The facemask would catch any unintentional spraying of saliva from someone’s speech, sneeze or cough. A virus could go through the mask since it is not an N95 rated mask, however, a mask might be better than no protection at all. A face mask would also keep me from touching my mouth and nose, further preventing infection. It is important to limit hand-to-face contact as much as possible. Now another idea in dealing with our mental health during the current outbreak we are in.

It’s no secret that isolation can lead to a decline in physical health. Social isolation has been linked to higher blood pressure and cardiovascular disease, vulnerability to infection, and an overactive immune response.

Loneliness can affect your mental and emotional health as well as physical. Without enough social interaction, you may be at risk of:

- Cognitive decline
- Depression
- Anxiety

Social isolation can also get in the way of everyday functioning. It can throw off sleep patterns, disrupt focus, and affect both logical and verbal reasoning.

But it is possible to overcome the problems associated with isolation. Therapy can help you learn healthy coping skills for dealing with isolation while building the social skills that you need to meet other people. By taking it just one step at a time, you can finally break free of the feeling of isolation.

Do meaningful things! Constantly checking the latest COVID-19 updates is probably not productive for your mental health. Instead, engage in meaningful tasks. These can range from housework to reading to finally starting that project you've been unable to dig into. Staying engaged in the world allows us to use the newer, more logical parts of our brain, making it less likely we will dwell on what's out of our control.

If you have a pet, remember that this is a great time to rely on them for companionship. A little touch increases dopamine and serotonin, both of which help stabilize mood and relieve stress. In times of social distancing, petting your cat or dog might be especially comforting. Playing fetch, or if you can take them for a long walk.

An important time to keep your sense of humor. Keep sending messages to your friends. Do not stop watching really stupidly silly movies. It's okay to laugh at some parts of your situation, which may be extraordinary.

It is quite easy to be serious about everything right now. Of course, these times are profoundly serious. There are people who are sick and people who are dying. But if you look throughout history, the worst situations, the people who get through it feeling best from a mental health standpoint are those who keep their humor.

To joke with friends about being alone is an incredibly valuable thing. Humanity's ability to find humor in anything is one of its more valuable traits.

Reach out to those who might be worse off than you. Maybe you're afraid of feeling lonely. But you can probably think of a few people who might have it worse; maybe they have clinical depression or another diagnosed disorder, or they're just prone to lonely feelings. Make an effort to connect with them in a way you'd like to connect with others.

Think about that list of folks who may not have people that they get to talk to. Make sure you reach out, send a note, give them a call. One of the nice things right now, while some industries are quite busy, there are a lot of people who are less busy right now for better or worse. If you know people who might be struggling economically, reach out and let them know they are not alone. Reach out to people you know that are not alone. Give them a text or a phone message at first so they know they are connected to others.

Focus your energy outward the way you hope people check in with you, whether it's on your kids, a friend who's single and living alone, or a brother whose job might be hurting during this crisis.

It is reported that the virus is less likely to spread outside in open air and safe distance from people, so safely spend a lot of time there. If you see a friend or two while you are walking, hiking, or biking, that is also better than indoors. As long as you're giving yourself physical distance, you can be around [a friend] outside.

Also remember as we move toward warmer weather, you will have more opportunities to be outside and active, and you'll score more mood-boosting vitamin D from the sun.

As always please share your thoughts and ideas.

Happy mental health!

