



Pratt Connection

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Keep Your Fork

There was a young woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. So as she was getting her things 'in order,' she contacted her Pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes.

She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in.

Everything was in order and the Pastor was preparing to leave when the young woman suddenly remembered something very important to her.

'There's one more thing,' she said excitedly.

'What's that?' came the Pastor's reply.

'This is very important,' the woman continued. 'I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand.'

The Pastor stood looking at the young woman, not knowing quite what to say. 'That surprises you, doesn't it?' the young woman asked.

'Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request,' said the Pastor.

The young woman explained. 'My grandmother once told me this story, and from that time on I have always tried to pass along its message to those I love and those who are in need of encouragement. In all my years of attending socials and dinners, I always remember that when the

dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'Keep your fork.' It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming...like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance!'

So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder 'What's with the fork?' And then I want you to tell them, 'Keep your fork. The best is yet to come.'

The Pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the young woman good-bye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the young woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She had a better grasp of what heaven would be like than many people twice her age, with twice as much experience and knowledge. She KNEW that something better was coming.

At the funeral people were walking by the young woman's casket and they saw the cloak she was wearing and the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over, the Pastor heard the question, 'What's with the fork?' And over and over he smiled.

During his message, the Pastor told everyone of the conversation he had with the woman before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. He told everyone how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either.

He was right. So the next time you reach down for your fork let it remind you, ever so gently, that the best is yet to come...Friends are a very rare jewel, indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. Cherish the time you have, and the memories you share...being friends with someone is not an opportunity but a sweet responsibility.

And keep your fork.

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Holly's Household Corner



Washing Your Car?

Washing your car in the driveway is one of the most environmentally unfriendly household tasks you can do. According to the International Carwash Association, car owners typically use 80 to 140 gallons of water versus a commercial carwash that uses 45 gallons per vehicle; many use less because they recycle and reuse the rinse water.

In addition, the runoff from home-washed cars - a toxic mix of gasoline, oil, exhaust fume residue, and detergent - goes straight into storm drains and pollutes local rivers and streams. A commercial carwash is required to drain into sewer systems so the water is treated. If you still want to wash your car at home, wash it on grass so the runoff can be neutralized in the soil. Also consider using a waterless formula - there are several on the market - that's wiped on and buffed off.

Gardens and Greenhouses



"All About Asparagus"

May is the prime harvesting season for asparagus. A member of the lily family (along with onions, leeks, and garlic), the vegetable got its name from the Greek "asparagos," which means a sprout or shoot. It comes in several colors: green, the most common variety; white, which is grown without exposure to sunlight; and purple, which has a fruitier flavor than green or white asparagus.



Asparagus is a nutrient-dense food, high in folate (which helps produce and maintain new cells), and a good source of potassium, fiber, vitamin B6, vitamins A and C, and thiamin. It has no fat or cholesterol, and is low in sodium.

When shopping for asparagus, look for stalks that are rounded rather than fat or twisted; firm, thin stems with deep green or purplish closed tips; and the cut ends should not be too woody, although a little woodiness at the base prevents the stalk from drying out. Store asparagus in the refrigerator with the ends wrapped in a damp paper towel, and place it in the back of the refrigerator away from light, since folate is destroyed by exposure to air, heat or light. Use within 1-2 days after purchasing.

Want to Make a Difference?

May is Military Appreciation Month

It's always appropriate - but especially during May - to honor, remember, recognize, and appreciate all military personnel, those men and women who have served and those who now serve our country. It's equally important to honor military families by letting them know we're grateful for their sacrifices. The Military Appreciation Month Web site has a number of ideas for honoring our military; visit www.nmam.org.

If You're Job Hunting

Looking for a job has always required impeccable behavior on the part of the job seeker. But, says etiquette consultant Jodi R. R. Smith (www.manner-smith.com), the current rocky economic times make it all the more important that job seekers not overlook propriety in their search. Here are a few of Smith's suggestions:

Be professional, especially when communicating electronically. There are a lot of people out there crafting outrageous emails when they're inquiring about job openings, Smith says. Don't relax the old rules of job hunting and interviewing just because you're using modern modes of communication. As Smith says, an email that reads, "Dude, so what's this job about?" just isn't going to cut it.

Have an error-free résumé ready to go. When a recruiter calls, you should be able to email your résumé to him or her while you're talking.

Make sure you have a professional-sounding voicemail message on whatever phone number or numbers you give to recruiters and list on your résumé. You don't want a potential interviewer to call you and get a long, silly message you've designed for your friends' amusement.

Smile and be pleasant. Your disposition makes the first impression on interviewers. Extend kindness to everyone you meet - including receptionists and anyone else who may not be involved in the interview process. Be upbeat, but not phony.

TV Trouble

According to the Kaiser Foundation, 68 percent of eight- to 18-year-olds have a TV in their bedroom. Yet multiple studies have shown that having a television in a child's bedroom can lead to obesity, sleep problems, and poor school performance.

For example, a study by researchers at Johns Hopkins and Stanford University showed that children with TVs in their bedrooms scored significantly lower on school achievement tests than children without TVs in their bedrooms. Another study by the American Academy of Pediatrics indicates that having a television in the bedroom directly affected a child's quality of sleep, and heavy television viewing in any room made it harder for children to fall asleep and get a full night's sleep. And a number of researchers, including those at the Centers for Disease Control and the National Cancer Institute, have concluded that the more hours children watch television, the more likely they are to be obese.

Eating & Driving

We all know the dangers of drinking and driving, as well as the controversy over using cell phones on the road. Now a study at Brunel University in West London suggests that drivers who are eating or drinking (even nonalcoholic beverages) are twice as likely to have a crash as a driver who does neither.

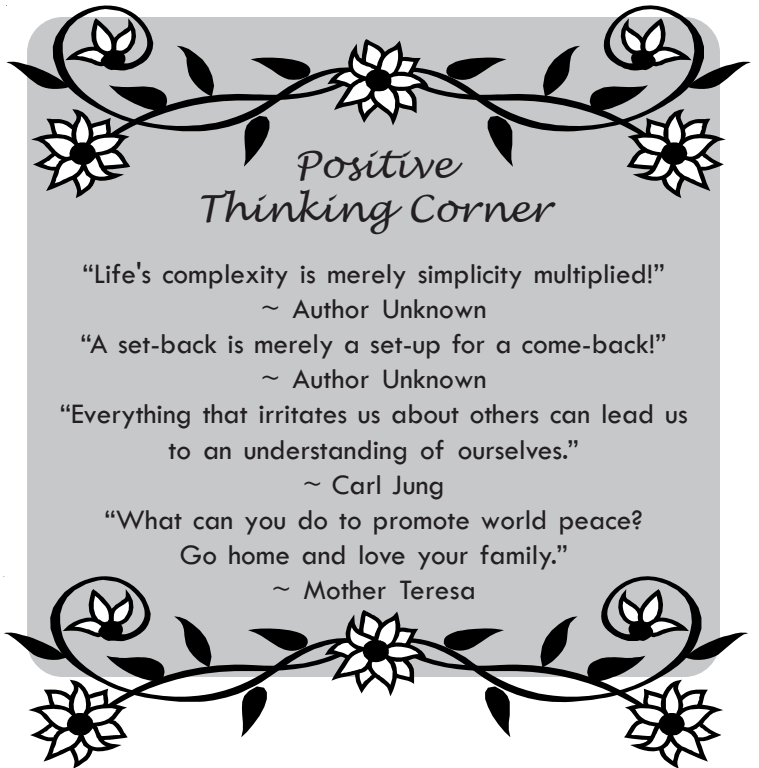
The Brunel study found that although many drivers who eat and drink try to compensate by driving more slowly, they were often unable to brake in time to avoid a collision. According to Hagerty Classic Insurance, the most dangerous foods are those that can spill or drip, such as uncovered drinks, fried chicken, jelly donuts, barbecue, and burgers with all the fixings. Uncovered hot coffee also creates a scalding hazard.

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Positive Thinking Corner

"Life's complexity is merely simplicity multiplied!"

~ Author Unknown

"A set-back is merely a set-up for a come-back!"

~ Author Unknown

"Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves."

~ Carl Jung

"What can you do to promote world peace?

Go home and love your family."

~ Mother Teresa

Beware of Warehouse Fees & Savings

Warehouse clubs. We've all been there - and most of us have carted out a giant container of something that, when we get home, we wonder what we were thinking at the time. How are we ever going to eat 10 pounds of dill pickles, and why did it seem like a good idea at the time we purchased them?

According to researchers Michael Norton and Leonard Lee in the Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge for Business Leaders, one in every 11 people in the United States and Canada buys something from Costco. Warehouse clubs, they say, are estimated to be a \$120 billion industry in the United States alone. Norton and Lee wanted to know why we go to these clubs and overbuy - especially items with prices that aren't really a bargain. Their explanation: The presence of the membership fees alone, regardless of whether there's an actual savings on products, creates a "fees/savings" link, which leads shoppers to spend more on "perceived great deals."

The researchers also found:

- When stores charge fees, consumers infer a "fees/savings" link because we believe the stores charge the fees in order to offer members better prices.
- The mere presence of fees leads to increased spending.
- Consumers were more likely to express a desire to shop at stores that charged fees than those that did not - even when products and savings were similar.