Joyful Musings

By Joy Birnbach Dunstan,MA, LPC, MAC

The Times They Are A'Changin'

My mom tells me the world feels like it is changing too fast for her to make sense of it anymore. I used to look at her like she'd dropped in from another planet. It all looked normal enough to me.

The drug culture of the '60s frightened her as she struggled with raising two adventurous teenagers. Magical mystery trips on exotic hallucinogens were way more frightening than the alcohol that flowed at her own teenage parties.

There is a constant barrage of news about abuse and violence. Mom grew up hearing news on the radio or reading about it in the newspaper in black and white. Seeing graphic video of these events in living color almost as they happen makes the world look much more scary than the world she grew up in.

And nowadays, technology is pretty much unavoidable. Mom has had a cell phone for years (my brother insists she carry one for emergencies), but she still can't retrieve her voicemail or program anyone's phone number. She wouldn't consider using a computer until she discovered online bridge. She's adapted some since then, but only minimally. She still doesn't surf the web or send personal emails (it takes forever to type using only two fingers), but even without calling her, I now rest easy knowing she's alive and well each day as I receive her many forwarded jokes and stories.

For years, I adapted and embraced a brave new world. Change was welcome and exciting. And for the most part, it still is. To a point. But I'm getting tired of it myself these days. The number of changes I've seen come and go is mind-boggling.

I once had a large collection of records (remember those?). Then everything went to cassette (I skipped right over the 8-track phase), and I industriously recorded my albums onto tape. That project wasn't even complete when CDs took over. Now I don't even bother owning music; I just "stream" audio from somewhere-out-there.

Years ago, I worked as a typesetter. That's a career that has gone obsolete in today's digitized world. How many of you worked a job that has gone the way of the dinosaur? With the increasing insanity in society these days, at least my career as a psychologist is not likely to go obsolete any time soon!

I've had a quote from Ogden Nash taped to my keyboard for many years: "Progress might have been all right once, but it has gone on too long." Oh, how true! There's only so much change and innovation a human being can accept and accommodate. Maybe that's the real reason we have limited life-spans.

There's a mounting number of new things that baffle me these days and make my head spin. It often feels like my head is full and just can't manage another "upgrade." When I visit the States,

newspapers are filled with ads for stuff I can't even identify. Pretty soon, the newspapers themselves are likely to disappear. I'm constantly asking my son what something is or getting his help to make it work. He looks at me like I just dropped in from another planet. I wonder how long it will still all look normal to him?

Editor's Note: Joy is a practicing psychotherapist in Riberas. She can be contacted at ***joy@dunstan.org***
or
765-4988
.