

And People Wonder Why We Left...

America's Most Stressful Cities

Few enjoy their commute. Just ask Stephen Dinwiddie, M.D., a psychiatrist at the University of Chicago.

"I think anybody who, like I do, commutes on the Kennedy on a daily basis knows exactly what stress is," he says, of his daily home-to-work commute on Chicago's expressway that extends from the Chicago Loop to O'Hare International Airport. "It takes anywhere from 30 minutes to several centuries—at least subjectively."

Article Controls

But more pressing factors make Chicago for the second year in a row the country's most stressful city. Crowding, poor air quality, a high 11% unemployment rate and free-falling home values have created a cocktail of constant worry affecting many in the Windy City.

[Read More...](#)

Don't Massage Me! (Not a

comedy with singin' and stuff)

Sometimes I can be a real jerk – very stubborn and closed-minded. I have a “chronic” back ache below my left shoulder and decided it was time to persue some relief. As my friends know, I am not huge into medicine and doctors... So, I decided to give Massage Therapy ad try.

A couple of years ago I gave Lisa a gift that included a 1-hour massage session and she seemed to enjoy it and benefit from the experience. I have never really, until now, decided to give it a try myself. But yesterday seemed like the right day to give it a go.

My appointment was for 3:45PM and at 2PM or so I started to get a bit anxious about it – strongly considering cancelling but compelled by my pain to follow-through. So, I told myself to get over my fear of the upcoming experience and “Just Do It” – Nike style.

Lisa and I got the diaper bag ready and headed out to the Chiropractic clinic where the massage theripist works. When we arrived I was asked to fill out some paperwork – which included asking for my personal info (name, address, etc) along with some “medical” questions... Was I tired, stressed... Did I suffer from any diagnosed diseases, etc... I filled it out and waited (with Lisa and Beeber) for a little bit when the lady came out and said she was ready for me. Ugh... I instantly had the feeling of regret. Now, I know a theraputic massage for most people would be a relaxing experience they would look forward to – but for me, this was the same as being called into the dentists chair. I was really having strong second (or third) thoughts.

So, I follow the lady back into a dimly lit room. In the room

was a massage table, some candles and oils, and a clock-radio which was playing some “relaxing” music. There was also what I would call a “Chinese Curtian”... Nothing Chinese about it really, just a little area to change. The massuse (is that spelled right?) told me to go behind the curtain and remove my clothing down to my underwear. umm...

Clearly she saw the expression on my face and added “you can keep your shorts on if you’re more comfortable”. I took a second and told her “I really prefer leave everything on”. She seemed a bit thrown by the request (this can’t be the first time someone wanted to leave their shirt on!?) and said that I can do whatever I am comfortable with but that some of the massage uses oils/lotions and that it would be harder for her to feel the muscle strain and work the muscles with my shirt (actually shirts) on. I said that I would be ok – not a big fan of oily stuff being rubbed into my skin anyhow.

After a little discussion of my pain I laid face-down in the massage table and the massage began. She started massaging my shoulders and immediately asked “are you wearing another shirt under this shirt?” (which I thought was obvious)... I told her I was and she expressed that it was going to be very difficult to give a good massage through two shirts because they would keep moving. Me, getting more anxious, just stated “oh, ok”... I wasn’t about to remove **any** shirts – I had intentionally put the 2nd shirt on as it is kind-of a security blanket for me.

Anyway, I glanced at the clock at this time and it was 3:47 – about 1 minute since the start of the massage. The massuse (seriously – is that right!?) suggested I keep my head down and relax – relax my arms, etc. She began to massage me again – my shoulders, my upper back... As this point it seemed like I was in there FOREVER and I started to get worried about Lisa and the Beebs. Were they ok in the waiting room? Was he driving mommy crazy – gettting into everything? I looked at the clock 3:49... Ugh. Only two minutes had gone by and I was really ready to get out of there!

She continued... I was a bit amazed when she finds a point on my back and says "this muscle is really tight" – yes, she was RIGHT on the spot of my pain. She started massaging the area below my left shoulder and it did feel like the pain was being "worked-out". I looked again at the clock... 3:50. ONE MINUTE! Time has stopped!

She once again very nicely reminded me that picking up my head to look at the clock is putting stress on my neck and that I should focus on relaxing. At this point I felt the need to get up and stretch. She says ok and I get up – ugh, 3:51... At this point I tell her "I'm good" and she looks a bit puzzled. I tell her I've had enough and am ready to go. She says she will not charge me for the full 30-minutes because "You only had about 5 minutes of massage".

I felt badly and told her I didn't mind paying full since it was my choice – she just gave me a total (much discounted) and we were done. Yea!

Here is the "I'm a jerk" part... I didn't really think about it at the time, but she is a Massage Therapist. Being her career, I am sure that she, like everyone else, likes to feel/know that they did a good job. I think I should have at least said something to let her know that it was just my personal issues – I am sure she was a fine MT.

I imagine it was like someone leaving in the middle of your show and that never feels good. Once again, Lisa was right. She KNEW I was going to have a problem and not want to take my shirt off and then not be able to relax for a massage. She pleaded with me before the massage to go with what I was told and not to "act like yourself". Like the time the doctor told me to take the stress test and I said "I am NOT drinking a radioactive solution – sorry!". Anyhow... So, I feel a bit badly about the whole thing. Not to mention that my back still hurts – and, when I thought about it in hindsight (dang hindsight!) the massage was actually helping the pain. Ugh!

I wish I wasn't such a jerk some times.

But at least I made another blog post. That is like 3 in a month – a record for me I am sure.

P.S. Thank you Lisa for putting up with all my “quirks”. I love you sooo much!

I Ain't As Good as I Once Was...

Not to quote Toby Keith, but... I today am feeling glum. Back-to-Back shows I have auditioned for and not been cast. ☹ Joseph and now Little Shop.

I am sure it will be a great show I was just so excited (with the hope) to be a part of it. I tried out for the voice of the plant and, well, someone else tried out who was better – that's theatre!

I am just a bit down realizing that never before Joseph had I auditioned for a musical and not made the cut and now... It is 2-in-a-row and I have to face the facts – I AIN'T AS GOOD AS I ONCE WAS. Ahh, growing older... ☹ In fact, the last musical I auditioned for and was cast in was Grease a FEW YEARS ago! Ugh!

Anyway, some great people auditioned and made Little Shop – some of our new friends from Hicksville auditioned and really did outstanding! AND THEY MADE IT!!! ☹

You can see the complete Little Shop cast list [here](#).

It is a real sad realization that my musical theatre “career”

has definately passed it's prime and very well might be over (eneded with *Grease!* – ugh!).

Oh well. I wish I had appreciated my God given talents more when I still had them; I was never very confident. It is ironic that I was never very satisfied with my singing in the past and now I only wish I could have my past talent back – eeche!!!

Acting wise I have lost a few steps too – I thought my reading for the voice of Audrey II went really well; though I know I stunk up the place with my “singing” of Love Changes Everything. Ugh... This stinks!

Ugh...

Something to Blog About!!

As you know I really don't blog too much... Er... At all! But I do have something to blog about today – MY GIRLS ARE HOME!!!
Waaaaahhhhhooooo!!

Our three little girls were with Grandma for a week (actually, a little over a week) as they are every summer. The girls really love going to Grandma's house and Lisa and I really enjoy the time we have to indulge in each other. This year Lisa and I got to do some really fun stuff too. We just had the greatest time together (with Beeber). But, the girls return home is always a joyous occasion – it is so great to have them home! With much of the summer still ahead of us I am sure we will have soooo much fun.

That is all – no mega-post from me... I just needed to get the excitement out – **THE GIRLS ARE HOME!!!!**

Come See Me Read Minds

This saturday night I will be “reading minds” at the little theatre.

<https://www.mywcct.com>

Come see it – AND BRING PEOPLE. Many audience participation. It will be LAME if not enough people are there!

The Race for the Comment

I was recently amused when a few of my blogging friends were talking about which post had the most comments. So, this morning I thought I would quickly look for a cool image (below) that everyone would have to comment on... I think I found one! What is the boy in this picture doing!?!?!



Now, after seeing the photo, [click here to hear a sound effect](#) that will answer the question – WHAT is the boy in this picture doing?

So Tired of Being So Tired.

It's near 4AM and I sit on my computer not so much by choice but as an effect of the trend that has been occurring in our house for what feels like the past 4 years... Kids waking me up all night.

Tonight we got home from a (amazing) production of The Lion in Winter and put ourselves to bed at around 1AM. Here is a time line since that point...

1AM – move Disney off the bed and onto the floor in our room, which used to be the only place (at home) she would sleep.

1:10AM – Disney wakes up and wants a special blankie, so I run downstairs and get it for her.

1:27 AM – Disney wants to sleep in her room (WOW!) so I carry her there and put her to bed.

1:49 AM – Disney wants milk so I run downstairs and get her some.

2AM – Disney wants to sleep in our room, so back on the floor she goes.

2:29 AM – Disney wants to sleep downstairs on the couch, so I carry her down.

2:42 AM – Disney wants a light on... I try to wait it out... She persists... Light on.

3:04 AM – Disney wants back upstairs. I get her and bring her back to our floor.

3:31 AM – Disney wants in our bed. I cannot sleep when she is there so I tell her no. She cries until 3:40 and wakes Christopher. I put her in our bed.

3:49 AM – Christopher is back to bed after being awoken by

Disney. Disney is now in our bed along with Lisa and Charity. No room for me to sleep.

3:55 AM – Unable to sleep from stress and kids in bed, I start this blog and think about the big day we have tomorrow...

I love the kids and I love everything about my life, but I realized today that I probably have not had a good night's sleep in 4+ years. Even on the rare occasion when a child is not waking me up, my body has been programmed not to sleep through the night – waking up at the sound of a feather hitting the ground. I really don't believe I have had more than 2 hours of uninterrupted sleep since 2004 and no more than 5 hours sleep total for a night since that time as well.

I have always prided myself on not needing much sleep – seeming to be able to function at a somewhat normal level with an amount of sleep that would leave others dragging... But I am starting to realize some negative health effects from my major sleep deprivation.

- I have gained over 50lbs in the PAST 2 YEARS, yet I eat no more than I have and exercise no less. In fact, I would guess I get more exercise as I run up-and-down stairs dozens of times per day.
- I have become clumsy at times – falling down the stairs, stubbing toes, etc... Which I never used to do.
- I have trouble concentrating at times. Where in the past I have been able to count on a laser focus – especially when there was an important task to be completed.
- I have lost some zest for my hobbies starting to see them more as chores that interfere with a possible chance for rest.

Now, I want to keep this all in perspective. I am far from a zombie, and I am **not** dragging through the days. On a daily basis my life is still the most wonderful and blessed of

lives. My family is simply the best, my friends second to none, and I simply love the gifts I have been given. Each day I still feel is the best one yet in my life.

Yes, I still live with the knowledge that I am the luckiest person on earth!

I guess this is just a life lesson to me – I have been wrong all my life. Sleep is not an awful consumer of time that deprives you of the joys and the accomplishments that can only be achieved and realized by being awake. *(You cannot 2x the quality/quantity of your life by eliminating [waste-of-time] sleep as I once thought in my younger years)*

I am just so tired of being so tired. It's 4:18AM now, time to find some place to lay down and see if I can't get at least 1 hour of decent sleep tonight. **SUPER FUN DAY TOMORROW – CHURCH, FAMILY BREAKFAST, BIRTHDAY PARTY, GIRL SCOUT EVENT** ☐
!! Wahooo!

UPDATE:

4:30 AM – Return to bed, Disney awakes cries to be covered with her blankie. Wakes Christopher. Fill Christopher's bottle, change his diaper, back to bed at 4:44.

5:09 AM – Disney cries as she does not have enough room on bed. I move to sliver on my side and have trouble sleeping. My last check of the clock and it is 6:18 AM.

7:23 AM – Christopher wakes up and wants bottle. Charity barks to go outside. I ignore her, she continues. Back to bed at 8:30 or so.

9:08 AM – Disney and Sammie wake up. It is time to get up for the day. Me and kids get up, I try and let Lisa sleep a bit since she no-doubt is disturbed by all the over-night action. She probably doesn't get much more as the chaos of the day has begun.

9:27 AM – I am finishing this blog. Time to get ready for our big fun day! ☐

I am so tired...

A New Sunday Tradition...

Basically all my life I have had a Sunday tradition... September through January anyway... **NFL FOOTBALL!!!**

And that my friends, has not changed. I love watching football, I really enjoy almost every aspect of the sport. Every Sunday in the fall my heart is pounding strong!

More recently our family has started the tradition of going to breakfast together. We have done this (almost) every Sunday for the past 2 years and it has been a great way to connect as a family and enjoy even more of the bonding time with the “fam” that I love. Breakfast with the family on Sunday is even sweeter than football...

Getting to sit down to a relaxed meal together and share our week is just a delight. We get much more family time than most other families to begin with, but more is always welcome! And, the Sunday breakfast time is extra special because it is a fixed time – it is our time. Much like Tuesday nights have become a Lisa-&-I tradition of “date night”. Yes, Tuesdays are equally cherished.

Anyway, back to Sunday...

Our new tradition is one that has been in the works for some time now... What is it? *To go to church!*

For a while my wife and I have been contemplating regularly

attending Sunday service and getting involved with a church. But this is a decision we did not take lightly. We wanted a church that felt right for us. One that was inviting and open – not judgmental and condescending.

I had a **terrible** experience with the (Catholic) church growing up – one that left deep wounds and filled me with much doubt. Not doubt about God but doubt about religion. And, not about the message of religion but of it's messengers. There are good people and not-so-good people in this world and unfortunately the same is true everywhere – even in the church. I met many good people I am sure in my childhood with the church. But it was the bad one(s) that filled my mind with an incurable pain.

However, for the past several months I had been carrying a terrible burden. Someone *I am not at all close with* had (unintentionally?) confided something to me – **something absolutely HORRIBLE** – and I did not know what to do with the knowledge I had been “forced” to receive. I was losing sleep and filled with an awful feeling of uncertainty as to what was the ‘right’ thing to do.

This was not the kind of thing you gossip and it was not the kind of story I wanted to pass-on or burden any of my friends with... Only [Lisa](#) knew what was on my mind. However, one other name kept coming to mind – very oddly it was the name of someone who I did not have a close relationship with...

Mark Pittman was one of the cast members in School House Rock Live! A show which I directed with my lovely wife. All casts bond, but I had no particular closeness to Mark; in fact he and I didn't really seem to gel. Not that he wasn't nice and not that he-and-I didn't get along... I was just much closer to other cast members.

Anyhow, Mark's name kept coming into my mind whenever I would think about this ‘event’. I do not know why... So, finally

after discussing it with Lisa, we decided to just go with it. I called Mark who is a pastor at [New Hope Community Church](#). we arranged to meet at his office the following day.

Mark admitted to me that he was as surprised to get a call from me as I was to have been calling on him. Nonetheless, here we were.

I had a lengthy discussion with Mark about the burden I was carrying and the solutions (in terms of faith). I had an almost immediate feeling of comfort come over me – even with the emotional/intense nature of the issue at hand. Mark gave me advice from the perspective of the bible; which in fact was exactly what I was seeking. I had confidence in what I had to do and a peace about the situation I had not been able to find on my own.

Mark also talked very briefly about church in general. I made a comment on my past experience and the fact that I just wasn't sure about my comfort level with the church concept – because of what had happened in the past.

Although he made the assumption (incorrectly) that my wounds were related to the teachings or the interpretations of the Catholic faith – I still felt healing occur as we engaged in a discussion about the church.

Afterwards my wife and I talked about the experience and both agreed that we should attend a service at New Hope.

The service itself was amazing. Full of energy, music, emotion, and message. The highlight of the service was a group of individuals coming on stage each with a cardboard that on one side they had written their personal struggle and on the other side their newly found saving... For example, one read "Addicted to Drugs" and then was turned over to reveal "Addicted to God's Love". This was all done to music and was very dramatic and moving. *Both Lisa and I had tears flowing from our eyes.*

So, yep. I think we've found a new Sunday tradition. *Or maybe I should say a new Sunday tradition found us...?* But I am happy to say that along with football (GO BEARS!!!), and breakfast, we will make attending Sunday service a part of our day.

THE IMPORTANT NOTE:

The kids also had a blast. Both learning about God's message and playing with other kids their age. Each child was in a separate room with other kids in their age group. I felt this was a much more productive way for the kids to be introduced to church (through fun interaction) – versus when I was young and basically sat BORED and listened to sermon after sermon that I did not understand nor did I care about... ***I WAS A KID; SITTING THERE WAS BORING!!***

Lisa – Look at what I can do!

Tuesday night is date night – where Lisa and I go out together. This week's night started a bit early with a trip to the medical center where I found out that my nasty Oscar-Night fall left me with no broken bone... But with a bleeding kidney. I will get an ultrasound on Thursday and hopefully all will be fine.

But something else happened tonight at our local dollar store. There was a song playing, I now cannot remember what it was (maybe Lisa will in a comment)... The “groove” got to me and as I rounded the corner of an isle I said to Lisa “Hey Lisa, look at this!” and I proceeded to do a silly dance. When I turned around, there was Lisa – staring at me. But it was not my Lisa. It was another Lisa. Yes, stranger than fiction there was an unknown lady behind me with a name tag

around her neck that read “Lisa”. She looked in stunned silence as apparently some strange man just told her to watch him do a little dance.

I quickly made a b-line for my Lisa and she began to wonder why I was in such a hurry to leave the store. Boy, was that embarrassing.

Somewhere on the web there is probably a blog post, by Lisa, about a strange event where some freaky lookin dude told her to “look at this” and then did a little dance for her. So, (other) Lisa, if you are reading this – now you know. You got an insider’s look at the kind of stupid nonsense my Lisa has to put up with daily! Ohhh. Poor Lisa.

The Newlywed Game – 10 Years Later!

This April 10 (2009) will mark the 10-year anniversary of my marriage to my wonderful wife, [Lisa](#). And, last night we got to celebrate a little bit early by joining our [local theatre](#) for a night of “That’s Amore” – a cute little game where couples answer questions about each other “Newlywed Game” style.

And my wife, who HATES getting up in front of people actually got on stage and joined me in the competition – and we won!

But, this isn’t really about the game...

The fact that my wife would get up on stage (looking smokin’ hot I might add) and participate in this event meant so much to me. I know how much she hates/fears being on stage and the

fact that she was willing to do this... I know it was because she, like me, will jump at any chance to show our love to each other.

For these past 10 years I have just been so blessed. Not only has Lisa given me complete marital bliss for the past 10 years, she (and God) have given me a wonderful family that has far exceeded my childhood dreams.

As I child I had a dream of getting married and having a family with many children; but the reality has been much sweeter than the dream ever was! Each day I wake up (even when it is to crying little ones) and think to myself how blessed my life is and how lucky I am to have my wife and kids.

A few people have chided me about not blogging enough. But the truth is, my blog would get boring to readers quickly. Really, aside from the occasional gripe about the theatre, all I ever feel like writing about is Lisa – my love for her and my love for the kids... And maybe now and then about my love for my friends.

BORING STUFF

Plus, I work on the computer – so when I get some “free” time the last thing I want to do is MORE on the computer. I want to spend wime with LISA, CHRISTOPHER, DISNEY, SAMANTHA, and TAYLOR!