

All about the Yaawwn

Is yawning contagious? Why is yawning contagious? Well, that subject was brought up as a comment in my last post. So I wondered if it would be a good topic to write about. As it turns out, I'm not really sure it is.

There are almost as many answers to the above question as there are scientists studying the phenomenon. And to put it quite bluntly, the studies were boring and made me yawn. But yes, it seems that for most people yawns are contagious. You can have a yearning to yawn by seeing someone yawn, hearing someone yawn and even reading about yawning. So if you feel like yawning while reading this post, it is because the word yawn is used a lot.

Some fun/interesting things I found out while looking up data on yawning:

- 1) Dogs yawn, dogs will yawn when they see people yawn.
- 2) Chimpanzees yawn.
- 3) It seems that most mammals yawn occasionally, but not all of them will yawn when they see other animals yawn.
- 4) Some birds yawn.
- 5) Snakes yawn after eating to get their jaws back in the right spot.
- 6) Contagious yawning may be linked to the flocking instinct of birds.
- 7) Too much yawning could indicate health problems.
- 8) Most people will yawn if tired.
- 9) Some people yawn if they are too hot.
- 10) Some athletes will yawn just before they need to exert themselves.

Now I think I'm done talking about yawning. I've yawned 4 times in the writing of this post. How many times did you yawn while reading it?

Now, I'm going to see if I can make my dog yawn.

Uh Oh, Snow!

There is a kink I did not foresee in my housebreaking-the-new-puppy plan – snow. We are currently getting nailed by a snowstorm – about 4 inches on the ground and much more expected. The snow engulfs our poor little shivering puppy, and I've had to shovel first every time before I take him out. It's quite challenging to find the time to go out and shovel and take the dog out, all while taking care of 4 kids – changing diapers, feeding lunch, breaking up fights, helping them do homework and Valentines... But today school was canceled, and this time it's actually been more of a good thing than a bad thing. The new puppy and the Valentine's projects are helping to ward off cabin fever, plus the older girls are helping to walk the puppy. Adding some fun to the snow storm is that my husband and I started watching [Storm of the Century](#) last night; which is an excellent scary movie that we watch every year during heavy snows. I'm looking forward to watching the second part of the movie tonight, but only if I make it through the dinner rush. My husband gets home from work around 5, and the kids are always starving by then, but it's nearly impossible to start dinner before he gets home with my 18-month-old underfoot. Complicating today's dinner rush is the fact that my husband will have to finish the shoveling when he gets home, and I also have to send him on an errand – stupid me didn't stock up on certain essentials before the storm hit. Most of the region is experiencing the same weather, so stay warm, stay dry, and most importantly – stay safe!!

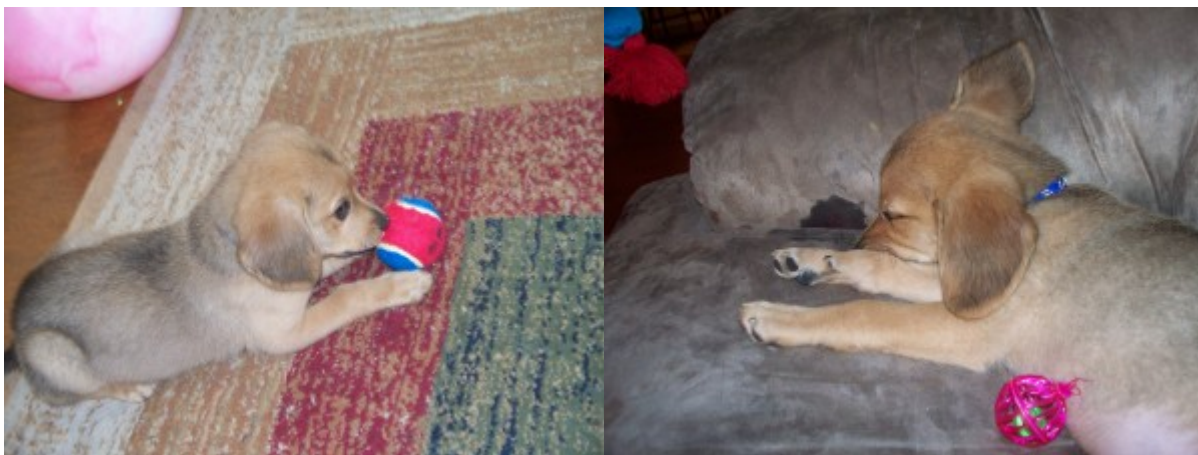
Introducing: ?

We don't know yet! We have a new addition to our family, but he doesn't have a name yet! It's hard for a family of 6 to all agree on the same name for a new puppy...

As you probably know, our beloved almost 12-year-old dog passed away a week before Christmas. If you know our family and how much we love animals, then it should come as no surprise to you that we are again a 2-dog household. It all started a few Saturdays ago when we decided to take the kids to the Humane Society, "just for fun". Yeah, right – I should have known better! How could I possibly think we'd be able to resist giving a cute homeless pet a loving home? We couldn't. We found a lab mix we all loved, and we went to lunch, talked it over, and decided to turn in an application. But another family turned in an application five minutes before us for the same dog! They said they would look over the apps and call us either Monday or Tuesday either way. Well, the entire week went by, and my husband called them every day because we had 3 anxious kids! Disney (who's 3) kept asking if we were going to take the 'vanilla dog' home; it was so cute! Finally they called on Friday to tell us that the dog had been adopted. We were disappointed but also kind of expecting it since we knew that another family wanted him. But that did it – now we officially wanted another dog. So Saturday on the way to the zoo, we stopped by another humane society and found another dog we really liked – she was a very unique looking dog, a black Lab / Basset Hound mix. She had the long, stocky body of a basset, complete with long ears, but she was all black like a lab – adorable. We didn't have our checkbook with us, so we had to come back Sunday to put down a deposit. When we came back Sunday, the dog got so

excited that she nipped my husband on the mouth – twice. Uh, oh. Can't do nipping on the face with 4 small kids, whether it was intentional or not, so we were back to square one. When we were there on Saturday, we had seen people come in with 2 teeny tiny puppies, so we decided to have a look. I was going to have to housebreak the Lab/Basset, so I figured if I was going to have to housebreak a dog, it might as well be a teeny tiny adorable puppy, right? Never mind that I'm potty training a 3-year-old, have a toddler to chase around, and two other kids to get to school. My days are so hectic, why not add to the chaos?

So here he is, how cute is this puppy?!?



He's a beagle / shepherd mix about 8 weeks old, and yes, he is as sweet as he looks! He just adores our dog Beesly, but she's not sure what to think yet – eventually they'll be friends I'm sure. Squawky the parrot was intrigued with him too, mostly because he has a little bell on his collar so we know where he is. The kids like the names Johnny and Buddy, but we're not taken with either of those. We liked the name Gizmo, especially because the kids have been into watching Gremlins lately, but the kids don't like the name. My husband and I also think the name "Hank Markdukas" is really cute – it's a reference to the movie I Love You Man. It's a funny movie, not one of our favorites or anything, but there is a funny running joke in the movie about a Hank Markdukas. We also like the name Michael Scott after the main character on

our favorite show, The Office, but of course the kids aren't thrilled about any of those names. This sounds like a good poll...

[poll id="15"]

The bottom line is, our cute little guy needs a name before he starts answering to "puppy". Yesterday I was feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of adding a puppy to my already hectic lifestyle, but it went well today, and he is incredibly adorable! I love to snuggle him; he is so soft and sweet. And the responsibility involved with him is different than the kids; there is much more instant gratification. Kids whine, cry, yell and fight, while puppies wiggle and snuggle. I love our new puppy! That reminds me of an Alan Jackson song – "I'm in love with you baby, and I don't even know your name"!

Sharing a smile

We are taught early in life that it is good to share. Most of us at that young age really don't want to share things that we consider ours. We will happily share things that don't belong to us, especially if the item belongs to an older sibling. ☐ Hopefully, as time goes by it gets easier to share things we have.

We can share our 'stuff' with others. Give money to the charity. Give items to various thrift shops. By food and sundries for a local soup kitchen or food pantry. Local agencies of many kinds ask for donations of money, food, clothing and even blood. Yes, we can share our stuff with others.

We can share our time with others. Volunteering at the above

locations is also a way of sharing. We can help our friends, neighbors and other members of our community by doing things for them, that they are unable to do by themselves. Our time is precious and it can be shared.

When we get closer to people (friends, family, loved ones) we often share our emotions. This can be difficult for some, but it can be very rewarding to both parties. Because of the nature of this sharing, it can, at times, cause pain and heartache. Emotional sharing opens many doorways to our souls.

But even when we have no 'stuff', time, or deep emotions to share, it can be easy and wonderful to share one last thing. With almost no effort on our part we can share a smile. Smiles, like yawns, can be infectious. Start a smile in a room and see how many others share your smile. Start laughing in a room and see how long it takes for that to make the rounds.

I've found that sharing smiles and laughter are some of the best things to share. It will make a lasting impression on those you meet, and generally that impression will be a good one.

□

A Super Weekend With Family Guy and A Robot

I had two days packed with fun and a little work. Saturday night, I arrived late for what was dubbed Michaelpalooza at the home of some of my new friends I made over the past year through the Village Players. While some of the revelers played some games, the rest of us were treated to two

hilarious... if not totally family-friendly spoofs of *Star Wars*.

The [Robot Chicken](#) (an animated series definitely best left to overnight television on Cartoon Network) episode was more of a spoof of the entire six films.

[Family Guy](#) actually had a previous spoof dealing with the original film. We watched the episode based upon *The Empire Strikes Back*. Several questions were raised by the episode.

One being why Lando Calrissian wore Han Solo's uniform at the end of the movie. And if you watch closely, he actually does.

Also, a very obscure factoid about the movie *Teen Wolf* (one of my favorites growing up... please skip the horrendous sequel) was alluded to. One which obviously missed the censors but I have it on good authority actually exists. If you are curious, you will have to do your own research because I do like to run a family-friendly blog. I will lead you to the crowd in the stands of the final basketball game.

Today, Super Bowl Sunday, I had to work, go to play practice for our dinner theatre coming up NEXT WEEKEND folks, and then went to our annual game bash full of fun, awesome friends, lots of laughs, and a new addition that I will let [taylhis](#) share... but he is adorable. In case you did not know.. the Saints defeated the Colts 31-17. Thoughts on the game? The ads? Da Who? Will we ever get beyond the Boobygate scandal and have quit having grandpa and company perform... although the drummer looked like he was not even thought of in the Pinball Wizard's heyday?

Words of Life

As I live life, talk with friends, watch movies, or live theater, I come across words that in some way touch my life.

That touch may only be for a second or two, but the results can be extraordinary.

Last night, I was humbled. People came down after the show to express their gratitude for our acting. My little performance received high praise from many people. As I said, I was humbled. This is a role, as late early this week, I did not feel was my best effort. I am very glad it pleased the audience. Those short "thank yous" meant a lot to me.

Over the course of my life, I've been fascinated with words and our ability to communicate many things with those words and how we say them. Written communication can never compete with the vocal/visual combination, but they do have some effect on the way I view things. If they didn't, I don't think I would be writing a blog.

Being able to communicate well is helpful in most situations. There are times that I wish my skills in this area were better, but I will take what I have. Of course I want to share the words that have touched my life in some way or another.

Around in the winter of 1983 and 1984 I started hearing the words "Hi Daddy" from a precocious 2 year old. Those two words changed my life. In her eyes, I was daddy from the time those words were uttered. According to the State, it took until 1985. I was able to hear those words from 3 other lovely young ladies over the past years too. Sometimes I wonder what I did to be able to hear those words with the love that is evident every time they say them.

Of course, other words from my family have also deeply touched me. Words like: "Father of the Bride", "Husband and Wife", "I love you." There have been sad words too. "I'm sorry we couldn't do more.", "We need to go to the hospital (or emergency room).", "We don't know.", "It was a heart attack.", "It was cancer."

And with my family there were also many movie quotes that are

used in our daily lives. Here are a few that I think are special.

This is my family. I found it, all on my own. Is little, and broken, but still good. Yeah, still good.

I always have a wonderful time, wherever I am, whomever I'm with.

No matter what happens tomorrow, or the rest of my life, I'm happy now because I love you.

Years ago my mother used to say to me, she'd say, "In this world, Elwood, you must be" – she always called me Elwood – "In this world, Elwood, you must be oh so smart or oh so pleasant." Well, for years I was smart. I recommend pleasant. You may quote me.

I'll give you a winter prediction: It's gonna be cold, it's gonna be grey, and it's gonna last you for the rest of your life.

I know. You know I know. I know you know I know. We know Henry knows. And Henry knows we know it. We're a knowledgeable family.

Words and how they are said make a difference. That is one reason I am careful with the words that come from my mouth, pen or keyboard.

There Comes a Time

When we heed a certain call

When the world must come together as one.

Twenty-five years ago, a group of the best-known pop, country, and r&b artists gathered at a recording studio following the American Music Awards to record a song that would raise money to help the millions of needy people in Africa. Singers like Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie, Bruce Springsteen, Ray Charles, Kenny Rogers, Harry Belafonte, Willie Nelson, and stars like Dan Aykroyd in all 43 superstars from numerous genres were part of U.S.A for Africa.

Recently, a large group of today's artists and some who have been around for a bit, gathered at the same recording studio to record an updated version of ["We are the World"](#) (including a hip-hop bit) to benefit the relief efforts of the devastation caused by the Haitian earthquakes. I don't see many repeaters aside from Janet, Tito, and Randy Jackson. Janet will be performing the solo parts recorded by her late brother. Today's pop stars like Miley Cyrus, the Jonas Brothers, Celine Dion, and Rob Thomas joined with Barbra Streisand, Tony Bennett, Harry Connick, Jr., Josh Groban plus Faith Evans, Gladys Knight and Vince Vaughn? An astonishing 78 artists on one recording... the ego in the studio must have been great. Hopefully not only will the recording be successful artistically but also help the relief effort in Haiti.

For those of you too young to remember the original or for those of us who have not seen the once (now twice) in a lifetime gathering here it is. The new version is set to be released during the Olympics on NBC.

A night off

I'm sitting here doing a lot of nothing. No rehearsal, no lines to memorize, chores that can be put off for a day or two. All of that is good, because I'm in desperate need to rest my throat a bit. I have one part in the show that I really have to force my voice a bit. Every rehearsal, I need some liquid to help sooth my throat. Part of this is the voice I use, and the other is my winter sinus problems. If it was just one of the two, my throat would be fine. So tonight I relax and maybe drink some hot tea.

Not much more to say. Life is boring, and for tonight that is good. ☐

:)

Wow – that last post was such a downer that I decided to write a little follow-up – I'm feeling better! I took forever in the shower, and my son is still napping! And the two girls have been playing together... funny how the house calms down when a certain little Kindergartner is at school. Coincidence or instigator? You tell me ☐

My little parakeet JJ likes the sound of running water, so my shower music today was supplied by a happy little bird – that was a mood lifter! I've been reaching into his cage as part of training to get him used to me, and he's been letting me touch him! So today I was touching his belly, and he started to close his eyes, and it occurred to me that we didn't have

to just do training – I could pet him! So today, I would say that JJ became a REAL pet – he enjoyed my company, let me pet him, and he cheered me up!

And now I get to sit here at the computer for a few minutes, and I actually get to have my glass of water next to me since there is no one to come drop things into it (one of my son's favorite activities is the put things in water, you'd think he'd appreciate his baths more than he does). And I treated myself to a piece of chocolate. Ah, a long hot shower, chocolate, and peace and quiet... what more could I want? Sorry about the grumpy post I made before ☐

My Job Is To Make People Miserable

My husband works from 9:30 to 5 on weekdays, which leaves me the job of holding down the fort. My kids are generally good kids, and they are adorable, so it should be a fun job. But I'm not having fun today. I've had 3 kids crying literally constantly today from 9-12:30. Taylor is 10, and she's home sick from school. She's the only one being good, but I can't give the poor kid a break because her sisters and brother are acting so crazy!! This is the 2nd Wednesday in a row that the kids have acted up – what is up with that?!? I have 5 minutes of peace right now because we got Sammie to Kindergarten and the baby is napping. I just need to blog about it because I feel like I'm going to explode!! The baby is getting over being sick, so if he's not being held, he's crying. I don't know what the deal is with 3-year-old Disney, she's usually pretty good, but today she is screaming about *everything*. And she has this loud, shrill, ear-splitting scream like you

wouldn't believe. In the meantime, Sammie was provoking everyone and starting fights with all 3 of her siblings; I was trying to referee, hold the baby, clean up his messes, change dirty diapers, and make lunch all at the same time. Now that I have some "peace", I feel worse – Disney has asked me 6 questions just in the short time it's taken me to write this. I'm trying not to snap at her, but I'm in a really bad mood. It would really help if I had my dog to snuggle, but she died in December and my other dog is too smelly to snuggle. I feel like I work really hard all day, and all I do is make people miserable. How can my husband get any work done with all the screaming in the house? It adds pressure to me to try to keep a suitable work environment for him. I am looking forward to a relaxing evening. No, wait. It's youth group night, which I normally enjoy, but to go try to teach a bunch of preteens after a day like today seems daunting. Not to mention that I have an extra group tonight since a fellow teacher had back surgery yesterday. I hope it went well for her...

I would cry but then I'll get another nosebleed – my nose has been bleeding a lot lately, stress maybe? I sure wish I could figure out a fun way to wind down to give me something to look forward to tonight, but my kids have been refusing to go to bed lately, and the little guy has been waking up all night with his illness.

Ok, that's my vent, sorry to be such a downer, but I thought writing about it would help. Dunno yet if I was right... Time to make the most of the baby's nap and get the garbage out and lunch cleaned up. If I'm lucky and he sleeps long enough, I just might get a nice long hot shower – but that's probably too much to ask.