

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“Making the Most of an Order Disorder”

Whether you call it OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), AR (Anal Retentive) or just NF (Neat Freakness), I’ve got it. You might be surprised that a humor guy is obsessed with neatness and order. And truth is “obsessed” may be the wrong word. I’m not *that* bad. Wait, no, my wife says I am. I stand corrected. (Note to self: *Don’t let wife see drafts of column.*)

At least I’m not as bad as a friend of mine who once told me, “I’m OCD or CDO – in alphabetical order like it should be.”

I think my order disorder came from my dad. In the Land of Tidy, he *was* the King. How did I know? He used to iron his boxer shorts. And while he was the *butt* of family jokes, had he ever been in a car accident, his nicely cleaned and pressed shorts would have thrilled his mother to no *end*.

Here’s another clue. He used a tape measure, calculator and Pythagoras’s Theorem to make sure each piece of luggage would fit tightly in the trunk of our Chevy Impala. Then, he’d comb every inch of the house to make sure the lights were off, the iron was unplugged and all the furniture lined up with true north.

The genetic connection is so strong that as I write this, I’m inclined to check the iron. Nah, I’m sure it’s off.

I’ll be right back.

I’ve struggled with my order disorder for years and while it’s a hassle to check the garage door, a second, third or even a fourth time, it does have its advantages.

For one, I’ll never miss a bill payment. I’ve got a great system using file folders for each day of the month. I simply put my bills in a folder one week before they’re due and voila, no late fees. Of course in order for this system to work, I have to check the folders every day. Unfortunately, I sometimes forget to do that. So, I developed another system using a note that says, “Check bill folder” which reminds me to put an entry on my computerized “to do” list reminding me to check the folder. That way, I can transfer that reminder to my daily handwritten to-do list and voila, I never miss a bill payment. See, it’s a great system.

Another benefit is that I don't tolerate clutter. Everything in its place. When I need the remote control, I know where it is. If I use the last three squares of toilet paper (which is my average usage ratio), another roll is right there. When I'm fixing a tasty gourmet meal, I know where to find every ingredient. That is, unless my wife unloaded the groceries and put the teriyaki marinade with the "m" foods instead of the "t" foods where it belongs. In that case, I might not be able to find it and have to substitute Worcestershire for teriyaki which I think we can all agree is a total disaster. But, those are the ups and downs of being married to someone who does not see the intrinsic value of an organizational schematic for the pantry, the spice drawer and vegetable crisper (green to the left, red to the right). Go figure.

Finally, my order disorder means that my house will never burn down because I left the iron on (In fact, I just checked and it's off). When we go on trips and I've made sure the light timer is on, none of the toilets are running and the pillows are positioned properly on the couch, I always check to make sure the iron is not just turned off, but unplugged. Then, I double check that I've checked it a couple of times since you never can be too sure.

I realize some may be paralyzed by order disorders and while I do feel a bit of anxiety when I can't remember if I locked the front door, there are always neighbors I can call who will check it for me. They're almost never annoyed when I call them back to make sure they did it. Well, except for the Johnsons.

If you tend to be more dis-ordered than ordered, be glad that there are those of us who are willing to proudly carry the order disorder banner for you...as long as it's ironed and evenly positioned on the pole.

Until next time, just humor me.

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Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He shows people how to have more FUN while preserving the integrity of the work they do and the lives they lead. For more information, visit www.RonCulberson.com.