

Reflection on Idiosyncrasies

By Karel Murray, CSP

I've been thinking about what makes us who we are. How do others really perceive us? My best mirror is my husband and my son. When they roll their eyes, I've gotten the distinct message that I'm doing something that might be a bit annoying, idiotic or unconscious.

Idiosyncrasies – we all have them. Usually it is a behavior that appears publically when you least expect it. Normally, I try to keep these challenges to myself because quite frankly I'm afraid someone will think I'm weird. However, as I age, I'm beginning to believe these behaviors are what have endeared me to my husband for over 36 years. At least that is what I keep telling myself.

According to Dictionary.com, idiosyncrasies are defined as follows:

id·i·o·syn·cra·sy

1. a characteristic, habit, mannerism, or the like, that is peculiar to an individual.
2. the physical constitution peculiar to an individual.
3. a peculiarity of the physical or the mental constitution, especially susceptibility toward drugs, food, etc.

A *characteristic* of mine is that I never wear dresses, even to black tie events. The reason - my body shape looks 100% better with the line of a slack. And, when I trip, no one will see my underwear. Don't ask...a trauma from my real estate days. When my husband and I received an invitation to a company event and the attire instructions stated that dresses were mandatory for women, I about blew a gasket! How dare anyone tell me what I must wear. Protocols are simply embedded habits and isn't my personal freedom of expression more important? We decided to test the system. I wore an incredibly beautiful silk outfit that billowed elegantly around the slacks (part of the garment) and Swarovski crystal jewelry while my husband wore his tux. We strode up to the door to the event where I received a glare from one of the event planners. She made the mistake of looking back at my husband with a "What's up with this?" type of look. Rick grinned back and said "Isn't she gorgeous tonight?" and pulled me through the doorway. I still feel her eyes burning into my neck.

A *habit* of mine is to eat the hot food first before ever touching the cooler items. I will actually evaluate my plate and determine the order of consumption to retain maximum heat. However, when it is all cold food, there is no process. Cold is cold...unless it is lukewarm and has mayonnaise in it - then my habit is to have my husband eat it to test it first so that I don't get sick.

A *mannerism* of mine is that my hands are in constant motion. My mother also shared this behavior. While I'm watching a movie with my husband, we will hold hands. However, within ten minutes, his thumb is clamping down on my thumb in order to still the constant motion. I don't even know I'm doing it. I think it is similar to a pregnant woman who doesn't know she is running

her hand over her enlarged belly. I choose to believe that I have so much energy, that it finally drifts out of my fingertips. Rick thinks it is just a spasm.

A physical constitution peculiar to me has to be the unexpected strength of my hands and arms. I wasn't raised on a farm nor have I lifted weights. But my grip is something to behold. If Rick had tried to run away from the alter, he wouldn't have had a chance. My son knew when I clutched his shirt as he tried to skitter past me and run outside, that his dance was over if my fingers met fabric. My guess is that somewhere on my tombstone, the inscription will read "That woman had a grip on her!".

But the ultimate idiosyncrasy where I am most susceptible is while shopping at the mall or riding in an elevator or escalator. I whistle – doesn't make any difference if it is classical or rock, pop or blues, my warbling whistle is always ready to burst out unexpected. Fortunately I'm in tune, but I'm not sure how many people like having the overhead music overridden by creative whistling trills.

I may have a few habits, mannerisms, and tendencies, but they make up the entire picture of who I am. I just have to learn to "stifle myself" a bit more and leave some of the more interesting things about me in the security and privacy of my own home.

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