

TODAY I STARTED THE BLAME/SHAME & PUT DOWN DIET. *... whoops. Guess I better watch myself here.*

PATRICK WADGE - PARENT

In early March the Social Inclusion Coordinating Group along with the Parent Council asked Patrick Wadge (father of Sophie in Grade 2) to track his efforts while attempting a Blame/Shame Put Down Diet. The following is his report....

Friday, March 17th

12:45 pm: Today I started the Blame/Shame Put Down Diet. I'm pretty stoked – as a marathon-running ectomorph, this will be the first diet I've ever undertaken in my life. And I don't even need to cut down on my potato chip intake. This is going to be a breeze! I'm not like all those mean jerks who are always putting down others. Those people are such ... uh ... whoops. Guess I better watch myself here.

10:15 pm: I passed my first test with flying colours! My wife and I went to our ballroom dancing lesson tonight. We've just started taking lessons so it's quite challenging. It was a group lesson – about 80 people of various skill levels practicing the cha-cha and the rumba. Primo opportunity for blaming and shaming, one would think. And yet, somehow, I managed to make it through without doing either. I do, however, suspect that most the other people were blaming and/or shaming me at some point. Next week I will bring them all a copy of the Diet.

Saturday, March 18th

5:00 pm: Today I was up in Squamish filming a video for the comedy group I perform with. A few of the ideas that came up were clearly squashed/put-down by others. Is that so wrong, or just part of the creative process? Personally, I think it's okay to ridicule ideas that are REALLY BAD (like Travis's ideas, and Brian's and Rob's) but decent ones like mine should be afforded the respect that they deserve.

11:00 pm: I almost made it ... So close. We went

out with a bunch of friends to a 'Supper Club' (whatever that is. What distinguishes a 'supper club' from a plain old 'restaurant'? Something to do with the décor? The live music? Or just the grossly inflated prices?) on Commercial Drive. No problems during the dinner but once the entertainment started ... The crushed velvet suits. The gold lamé trimming. The bouffant hair. I was impervious to it all. I even survived the playing of 'The Lady in Red'. But even I have my weaknesses. I finally snapped midway through the ultimate 'cheesy-love-songmontage' of all time; I think it was sometime during the segue from Copacabana to Sweet Caroline. I can not lie: I ridiculed the entire scene.

Sunday, March 19th

5:30 pm: I went to a piano concert with my parents today. There was some serious shaming going on when, as the big-shot-international-star pianist was about to strike the first note of Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata, two ladies in the FIRST row stood up and moved to different seats. The other 1500 of us were, in a word, AGHAST! In fact, I think a classical music performance is THE ultimate put-down opportunity of all time. A partial list of "shame-able" actions includes: unwrapping candies mid-performance, excessive coughing, clapping between movements (rather than waiting to the end of the entire piece), arriving late, leaving early, dropping programs ... I sit there for the entire event paralyzed with fear, convinced that I am annoying the person on either side of me by blinking too loudly.

Monday, March 20th

3:30 pm: Tried to squeeze in a trip to the library before picking Sophia up at school today. Found the book I was looking for and scurried to the check-out desk. Only one patron in front of me – perfect! But what’s this? The person in front of me is actually opening a new library account. She and the librarian are making small talk and stumbling through the electronic application form. Now this is interesting. In any other situation, this would strike me as charming: Isn’t that great. A person who obviously enjoys her job, assisting a charming, appreciative customer. In any other situation ... but in THIS situation ... I am FRANTIC! I am IRATE! And you better believe I am shaming: Who doesn’t own a library card at this point in Western Civilization? And how can this librarian NOT understand how to get a postal code entered into her unsightly, oversized computer? Thankfully, there was nobody with me to complain to so, officially, I didn’t cheat on the Diet – blaming THOUGHTS don’t count until next week. I am dreading next week.

6:45 pm: We went to a pot-luck in our co-housing community tonight. Afterwards, I totally put-down my neighbor for bringing lima bean salad. Lima bean salad, people! Surely, I get a free pass on this one.

Tuesday, March 21st

4:00 pm: Today, a friend of mine asked me to lead her class in a joke telling/creating presentation. Unfortunately, I didn’t realize until I got there that she teaches 6 to 8 year olds. So I quickly dusted off my best knock-knock (there’s an oxymoron if I ever heard one) and wacky-animal jokes. Gotta keep things squeaky clean ... or so I thought. The students, naturally, wanted to share some of their own jokes. It was a tad disconcerting when the first three jokes (all from a seven year old) included references to sudden bowel movements, King Kong’s ‘balls’, and shoving watermelons up one’s ... uh ... bum (little Danny used a somewhat ‘edgier’ term). My shaming and blaming encompassed the students, their teachers, the parents, the entire (non-Waldorf, rest assured) school pedagogy, the youth of today and society as a whole. I gotta admit though – that joke about King Kong’s balls was pretty amusing.

10:30 pm: Truthfully, I’m doing okay with week one on the Diet – not much ‘out-loud’ blaming and shaming. But isn’t that kind of a Canadian thing? We’re nice people right? We may have bad thoughts/opinions but we keep them to ourselves. But man, I am present to having A LOT of not-so-nice thoughts. Did I mention that I am dreading next week?

Wednesday, March 22nd

9:00 pm: The main thing I have seen this week is how my blaming and shaming of others is ALWAYS a function of my state of mind, my insecurities, my concerns. For example, most days, I am the world’s most passive driver. A nitro-glycerin-carrying semi-truck could cut me off and I’d wave them on with a smile and a thumbs-up. But today, late for a tutoring appointment, I rage (internally, mind you) at a sixteen-year old girl, ‘N’ firmly affixed to her back window, for NOT blowing through an amber light (thus denying me the opportunity to squeak through on the ‘not-quite-red-yet’). *@%\$&!! That’s going to cost me at least 26 seconds! Something I wouldn’t have normally even noticed, now leads me to furor and more blaming. Interesting ... Perhaps my blaming and shaming could act as a warning sign for when things are ‘out of whack’ in my life.

Tuesday, April 11th

4:45 pm: Well, it’s now almost three weeks later. My computer was ‘hijacked’ (by whom, and why? If someone has the technical ability to hijack my home computer, shouldn’t they be busy making millions for Google or Microsoft instead of spending time making my life miserable?) and it took this long to get it fixed. So now, half a month later, I need to come up with a snappy conclusion to my Blame/Shame Diet experience? Uh ... I’d love to say that my one-week diet has enabled me to deal with all life’s disappointments (e.g. computers crashing) and frustrations (e.g. three weeks without on-line banking) without further blaming and shaming. That would, however, be false.

But I do find myself blaming and shaming less, and reflecting on what it is about *me* that has me resort to such behaviour. I’m committed to doing better. And if I mess up every now and then ... well, surely you can’t blame me too harshly for that.

