

IN KEVIN'S WORDS

Mirrors



Kevin Holten

Under the category of taking things for granted, I wondered the other day, what would we do without a mirror? And how many times a day do we look in a mirror without really thinking about it?

Studies suggest the average woman checks her reflection around 8 to 34 times a day, sometimes reaching up to 38 or 57 times. And men check less frequently, averaging roughly 18 to 27 times a day.

Now, how do they know that? Beats me. I guess they hire people to call us up and ask us. And if we had to pay someone every time we used a mirror it'd really take a chunk out of the ole family budget.

Plus, that probably doesn't include the number of times we look at ourselves in a storefront or automobile window as we walk

by. And does that mean we are a narcissistic society? Does that mean we are addicted to our appearance?

So, what did the early man do? Did he look at his reflection in a pond?

Surprisingly, some mirrors have been around for a long time. The earliest man-made mirrors date back to around 6000 BCE in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey). They were crafted from polished obsidian (volcanic glass) by unknown Neolithic people.

The first modern silvered-glass mirror was invented in 1835 by German chemist Justus von Liebig, and since that allowed for widespread production of clear, affordable mirrors, mankind probably launched themselves into the narcissistic age.

Which leads me to think about the first Neolithic man or woman who first invented the mirror from volcanic glass. Did they get sick of bending over a pond to shave and come away from each shaving session with multiple cuts and ample blood loss? Finally saying to

themselves, "There's got to be a better way!"

And you've got to believe that once there were mirrors, that's when the concept of "fashion" really took hold because they'd naturally want to continue to upgrade their appearance. Plus, it also had to be the real origin of Fred Flintstone being nervous whenever Wilma said she and Betty were going to the mall.

For me, since I didn't really grow until my sophomore year in high school, just being able to look in the bathroom mirror took more time than I wanted to waste. And now, with each passing year I find myself looking in the mirror less to avoid bad news.

Fact is, if you think the mainstream media's headlines and soundbites are depressing, add looking in a mirror and it can send you spiraling into deep depression. So, the moral of that story is, cut out news and mirrors and you'll be twice as happy.

However, looking at it from a different perspective, John Lennon's life partner, Yoko Ono once said this about smiling in a mirror: "Do that every morning and you'll start to see a big difference in your life".

Comedian Steven Wright said, "I busted a mirror and got seven years bad luck, but my lawyer thinks he can get me five".

And just to show how media has changed in the last few decades, CBS News Anchor Walter Conkrite, talking about the role of the news media said, "Our job is only to hold up the mirror - to tell and show the public what has happened".

PARKER'S PERSPECTIVE

Some of the best observations are the simplest ones



Gaylon Wm. Parker

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The word "patriarchy" shouldn't hold much sway over people, because that paradigm is mostly untrue and, at the same time, understandable in its modest veracity. Sure, most of us grew up in a world where we were told to "respect our elders," but that doesn't mean they were even in the area code of always being correct—much less in the ballpark.

No, the process of growing up has every bit as much to do with finding our own paths and solutions as it does with making our own mistakes in our own inimitable ways. At all times, we try to limit the damage as much as possible and recognize when we err so we can learn from our missteps.

The parenting side of "the patriarchy" is a stickier wicket, because despite thousands of books on the subject, there is no set solution to raising children. As if you didn't know, they're all different—and it's shocking how dissimilar my daughter, Megan, is from our son, Logan. My ex-wife, Melinda, and I have discussed the topic many times and come to the conclusion that it should be impossible for two children to be so diametrically opposite one another, even though they were raised in the same house, under the same rules, provided the same guidance, and dis-

ciplined in almost exactly the same manner.

Oh yeah...talk to both of them, and the accusations about who's the "favorite" will come roaring out of their mouths. But even that falls short of the mark. Some children just figure out how to slide through the sonar net more easily, while others buck the trend in various states of rebellion. Still, that's part of the growth process in its own right, because the two tackled problems just as differently as they created them.

The same is true of my sister, Heather, and me: she was the "habitual line-stepper," and my approach was to hide in plain sight. Don't get me wrong—as I became an adult, I realized that my dad had a lot of buttons to push, and I had a fair number of fingers to use—but when I was a kid, the world was very "yes, sir/no, sir/three bags full, sir." My mom, meanwhile, was the observer and pointed out all the mines we were getting ready to step on before we hit the field (and we'd best listen or be blown up by our foolishness).

It's different when society tries to evaluate an entire generation of youths, and Megan managed to pull me out of that trap one day in a very simple way. How many times do you hear folks fret over the pervasiveness of cell phones and computer screens? The influence of pop culture on fragile young minds? The need for validation to be layered over every child lest their "feelings" be hurt by any perceived dismissal?

It happens a lot. And one of the most common tropes hack sociologists trot out is the need for "participation trophies." People in my parents' generation and my own have ridiculed their existence for years, citing the attainment of victory as the only thing worthy of

recognition. In track and field, for example, big meets award team points for first- through eighth-place finishes, and those lead to an overall win at the end of the events. I can honestly say I have no idea where my ribbons are (regardless of placing), and I'm not worried about it—but I sure never cared about an eighth-place ribbon.

Generally, such "awards" come in the color brown, and they're kind of icky in the first place, but they hand the silly things out whenever the coach goes to collect them after the 4x400m relay is run. If there weren't about 30 people competing in each event, they would be the participation trophy of track—but I digress.

I was spouting some malign criticism of participation trophies one day around Megan, and she stopped me dead in my tracks with an obvious observation I hadn't considered. She said, "You know, Dad, we didn't come up with those and never asked for them. I don't know anybody who displays them in their bedrooms or ever really cared to get one. Your generation was the one that invented them—we sure didn't—so it gets tiresome hearing about them as though we came up with the idea."

She is correct. When I played T-ball, we got this little plastic glove tacked to a stand that held a baseball everyone on the team signed, along with the year we played. That was it. But somewhere along the way, we screwed up and went in a different direction. So you know what I did? I recognized my error and apologized.

In this case, "the patriarchy" blew it—but what was most important is that she saw through it and helped me grow up a little bit more. Man, I wish I would have thought of it...

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Verizon Wireless proposes to construct 34-foot Public Lighting Structure with Telecommunications Antennas. The site is located near 3430 Chateau Road, Medora, Billings County, North Dakota 58645 (46°54'53.34" N / 103°32'48.85" W). The support structure height will be 34 feet above grade surface (AGS) and a total overall height of 34 feet AGS including all attachments. Public comments regarding potential effects on historic properties may be submitted within 30 days from the date of this publication to:

Terracon Consultants, Inc., Laura Kasan, 15080 A Circle, Omaha, NE 68144, 402-330-2202, laura.kasan@terracon.com.

4/23



Gaylon with his son, Logan, and daughter, Megan.