

Sunday, Feb. 18, 2007

Hello everyone,

Nice to see you all yesterday! It was fine weather, a little preview of spring.

NEW FACES

- ◆ Eleanor and Bernie Griffin joined us for the first time. Eleanor's stroke was just last October, and she's working very hard and doing remarkably well.
- ◆ Brian and his wife were there for the first time. Brian's stroke was 18 years ago. Unfortunately they left before I got their last name or details.
- ◆ Janie Patton has had two strokes, also late last year. Her daughter Ann and her grandson were there too. Janie's got a terrific optimistic outlook and sense of humor.

It was good to see you all, and keep up the good work! We know what you're going through, and wish you the best. Hope to see you again.

MIKE GORDON'S MEMORY MAGIC

Mike showed us some neat tricks for improving your memory. For memorizing lists of anything, you can assign ten simple words to the numbers 1-10: 1 = TIE, 2 = NOAH, 3 = MA, 4 = RYE, 5 = LAW, 6 = SHOE, 7 = COW, 8 = IVY, 9 = BEE, and 10 = TOES. Once you memorize this list, you can associate any other list with these words by making up dramatic, wild, colorful associations with them. For example, say you need to remember bread, soda, and coffee at the store. Item #1 is bread, 1 = TIE, so you can imagine a necktie cinched tightly around a loaf of bread, smashing it. Item #2 is soda, 2 = NOAH, so you can imagine Noah smacking the ark animals on the head with a bottle of soda. Item #3 is coffee, 3 = MA, so you can imagine your mom pouring scalding coffee on your head. These vivid images stick in your mind, so all you need to remember at the store is TIE, NOAH, and MA (which you already have memorized for 1, 2, and 3), and these wacky stories will remind you of what you need.

Phone numbers are similar. Just make up a wacky and dramatic story from the seven numbers which make up the phone number, and remembering the story will then play the numbers back to you.

For lists longer than 10 items, you can make up new words as combinations of the first ten. For example, 14 is 1, 4, or TIE, RYE, so you can use the word TIRE for the 14th item in a list.

For remembering names, Mike also uses associations. He used Sol as an example. He noticed Sol's beard, and imagined the sun (also known as Sol) catching Sol's beard on fire. Next time he sees Sol he'll think of Sol the sun catching his beard on fire, and remember the name Sol. A wacky, colorful image, which helps to cement the association of the name to the face. (I don't know what he'll do if Sol shaves though!)

Thank you, Mike! All we need to do now is memorize the ten words above, and we'll have memories like elephants. Mike says he puts these ten words on a little card on his dresser and reviews them every morning and night. A good idea!

OUR STORIES

We went around the room sharing our stories. I learn something new about my old friends every time we do this, and we get to exchange stories with the newcomers too. This is a great way for the newcomers to understand that others have been through this and things will be okay, too. Everyone can also learn new tips from others with similar experiences. We point out the great progress that individuals are making, but I want to emphasize that *everyone* has been working so hard and making such great progress in the face of terrible difficulties.

ANOTHER WARM-WATER POOL

I have been informed that the Fircrest facility in Shoreline has a warm-water pool and several public swims a day. Their number is 206-361-3655. They're only a few blocks from me, so now I have no more excuse!

STROKE CAN CURE SMOKING

Recently in the news: researchers have found that stroke damage to a part of the brain called the insula, just above the ear, can cause a person to "forget" about smoking addiction and make quitting much easier. Our member Roger Ferguson had this happen after his stroke. Scientists are interested, because this may lead to new methods of treating addiction in general. Having a stroke in order to quit smoking is a little extreme, but hey, whatever works! :-)

DONATED APHASIA VIDEO

I've been ordering some video tapes from the National Aphasia Association (www.aphasia.org) to show the group in the near future. They sent me one in French by accident, but told me to keep it, they would send the English version too. So I looked up a stroke group in Quebec and called them ("bonjour", they answered), and they were delighted to get the French version as a donation on behalf of the Young Adult Stroke Survivors. I've mailed the video to them, and it will go to good use. Ain't that great?

KITSAP CO. DISABLED FAIR

The DASH fair (Disability Awareness Starts Here) is coming up Friday Feb. 23 on the Kitsap Fairgrounds. This should be fun to attend, but they also need volunteers to help run the fair. If you're interested in volunteering, please call Michael Goodnow in Bremerton as soon as possible: 360-373-5206.

UW APHASIA CLINIC

I'm told that you should not let financial considerations stop you from attending the UW aphasia clinic this summer. Contact Nancy Alarcon at (206) 685-2212 to discuss possibilities if you are interested but deterred by the cost. Nancy will also be at our next meeting to tell us more about the clinic.

LOIS CORCORAN THANKS

Our old liaison at the American Heart Association, Lois Corcoran, tells me that she's recuperating well from her rotator cuff surgery and sends her thanks for all our tips on getting by one-handed.

OUR LIBRARY

Duane Retel, our group librarian, is keeping track of any material you want to lend or borrow. This includes books, videos, tapes, DVDs, etc. He has this all organized on a sheet, and will be circulating that each meeting. If there is anything you want to borrow or to lend, contact Duane at 206-772-5477 or dr_leterwood@comcast.net. Thanks to Bill and Cathy Kroft for a big book donation just this meeting.

WRITE DOWN YOUR STORIES

I'm gathering everyone's stroke story to compile into our own record book. We have enough remarkable experiences in our group to fill an encyclopedia! When you get a chance, write your story up in a few pages and get it to me. This is great practice for language abilities, too.

Next month Nancy Alarcon from the UW will tell us about the upcoming aphasia clinic this summer, and I will teach everyone how to meditate. I do this twice a day, and it's a great way to relax, lower your blood pressure, and improve mental functioning. See you then!

Gerrit