

Showered in thought

In my salad days, I used to look at showers as the necessary obligation between dirty and clean. My goal was to finish as quickly as possible, since it was taking up valuable time I could be using to get dirty again. My Grandma would often look at me and send me back into the shower to “get yourself clean right this time”.

Years later, as my various jobs grew in responsibility and complexity; I noticed a surprising change in my showering process. More and more, I would be using the time in the shower to sort through some nagging problem from work or to plan activities or events, both professional and personal.

These days, I find most of my best thinking gets accomplished during my showers. While the vagaries of Big Business are not my bugaboo anymore, the intricacies and details of writing provide me more than enough problems to solve in between shampoo and soap.

It's not so hard to imagine that many of you also find that time useful in “slowing down” the world and doing some progressive thinking for yourselves. As in brushing teeth, showering is such a practiced routine, we hardly need our brain to operate or, more exactly, to focus on those tasks. That means our minds are free for whatever they want, from daydreaming to problem solving.

I find it particularly valuable with my writing. For example, after finishing a couple chapters at today's trip to the beach, I had an annoying feeling I was missing some critical glue to bind the story tighter and get me to the next book. For whatever reason, I wandered in the chapters today. Though I normally like to write in a linear fashion, it was clear that the chapters I produced were not sequential. That missing glue was messing up my writing equilibrium.

After a workout and a quick lunch off the BBQ, I headed for the shower with no other goal than to get cleaned up to go out to a movie tonight. But, there in the midst of falling drops, my glue just popped into my head. It spread out, like a linen tablecloth settling on a dining table and completely covered my bridge between Book 2 and Book 3. As an added bonus, I realized I also had the topic for today's post.

Eagerly, almost impatiently, I dried and shaved (exercising some restraint on my excitement lest I have a more visible sign of my recent breakthrough). A few moments later, I jotted the skeleton of the solution down on my trusty "thought pad" (basically, just a normal 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 11 ruled pad), then brought up the word processor to tell you all about it (the finding a solution, not the solution itself...you'll have to buy Book 2 to find that out).

In the spirit of "everything in moderation", I have no plans to spend a couple hours a day under the shower, perhaps divining the secrets of life in the process. I think I enjoy the world more in my usual befuddled state.

Still, I'll bet if Grandma was still around she sure would be pleased how willingly and long I spend in the shower now!