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## ***Personal Defects***

By Paperitalo Staff

When I was in the seventh grade, we would occasionally be taken to the auditorium for a movie. I had been wearing glasses for several years by then, but found I could only get the movie to come into focus by tilting my glasses. You have probably seen people do this. Now, why I did not tell my Mother or Dad about this so that I could get a new prescription, I have no idea. Apparently I took this on as a personal defect that was my problem to solve. I remember being embarrassed about this and not adjusting my glasses until the lights went out, so my classmates would not make fun of me.

Obviously the above situation had a deep effect on me, for I still remember it 48 years later. It, and other such matters, are probably the reason my shrink can take vacations in the Bahamas. As the comedian Bill Engvall says he has told his children—“just bring me a list of all the screwy things I have had you do, I’ll sign it and you can save a lot of money as adults by not going to psychologists.”

The reality, though, is that many things in our childhood, suppressed and not, are affecting our behavior today as adults working in the industry. With age and the opportunity to see many different people in their work environment, I have been able to pick up on many of these anomalies.

You have them. You just don’t know it or often don’t recognize them. It may be a teacher impressed something on you that has affected your behavior. It could be a parent, as mentioned before. The point is, these almost invisible, pre-programmed responses affect your daily activities, some in a positive way, some in a negative way.

Take the one I started this column with. It may be one, that in the past, has caused me to be satisfied with living with the status quo, either personally or professionally, when I should have had the nerve to stand up and change things (for the better). For it is obvious there was a solution to my nearsightedness—new glasses. I assume the reason I did not pursue this is some sort of

unspoken reason why I did not want to incur any expense for my parents. However, what is important here, is this may have helped instill a satisfaction with things the way they are, something that is almost never good in our professional life.

Not much later, we were living on a farm. Dad worked away, and the sows were due to have little piggies in the winter. It was my job (I was 13 at the time) to get up in the middle of the night, help the sows if necessary and move the piglets to under heat lamps after they were born and I wiped them off. You know if a sow is going to have pigs in the next 12 hours if they have milk. I checked the four sows in the farrowing house that night and told my mother she did not need to get me up at 2 am (the time I normally got up for this activity)—no pigs were going to be born. It got down to near 0 F that night. All four had pigs. I had 38 dead piglets in the morning. To say this failure in responsibility has not affected me all my life would be a fantasy on my part. I cannot even begin to tell you the ramifications. However, anyone can see that it was one of those events with a strong impact.

So what childhood experiences are unconsciously affecting your behavior in your career, positively or negatively? Have you ever given this any thought? Can you articulate them? Once you can, you can improve your performance at work, indeed in all aspects of your daily life.

Safety failures often involve poor decisions or poor judgment. Perhaps a good topic for your next safety meeting? ##