

It Is What It Is

Category: Heat

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | August 2, 2023

I am not a drinker—not of water, juice, coffee or tea, or alcohol. My children and physician constantly remind me of this unhealthy habit, stressing that my body needs fluids, especially water, to function properly. I hear them, but I do not listen. I have even ignored them these past several months when the temperatures have risen to the high eighties and often middle nineties.

Yes, I am angry at myself for not staying hydrated at any time of year, especially during this heat wave. I stand up and feel faint; my skin has become dry and flaky; my hair has lost all sheen, even when I drown it in conditioner and creams; my mouth is always dry. I turn on the air conditioner to cool off my always hot apartment, but then I get chilled; I prefer the heat to the healthier coolness. When I lie on the couch to read, I find it hard to breathe in the heavy, oppressive air caused by the heat, but I do nothing to change the situation.

How I act during this period of heinous heat reflects my life's modus operandi: I do nothing to keep myself well. Following each of my five jaw surgeries, the maxillofacial surgeon gave me a mechanism to use to stretch my jaw; I never took it out of its plastic bag. After I fell last summer and fractured my pelvis, I attended one physical therapy session. Because I ignored the exercises, I suffer from intense muscle pain. I can only blame myself. I have atrocious eating habits, subsisting on too many dark chocolate M&Ms and too little protein. My mind tells me I am harming myself, but my stomach gets what it craves.

The heat has imprisoned me in my home, leaving me too much time to think. I dwell on the recent deaths—one expected and one sudden—of two friends. These tragedies have raised my internal heat, fueling the flames that my turn to die is rapidly approaching like a wildfire out of control. I go to sleep, sweating from fear—and heat—and vowing to change my ways. Every day, I disappoint myself.

This heat will eventually become a memory. But my self-directed heated discussions about adopting a healthier lifestyle will continue. At age 76, I feel incapable of change; my life is what it is, no matter what the thermometer reads.

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