



FYI ...

Another day, another flood of unsolicited emails. It is early, I am still meant to be feeling fresh. Somehow though, this undoes whatever good last night's kip might have done. My brain sags.

I steel myself to start. There is so much to sift and so little time. I engage my System One thinking,¹ scanning and deleting quickly, instinctively, my choices influenced by emotion more than logic. Guilt flashes past my frontal lobes, fleetingly, as a NICE update disappears from view. Reflection on lost opportunities to improve my performance is triggered but cancelled: I am already onto the next email, my finger poised above 'Delete'.

June 1st is International Children's Day. That missive disappears before I have even consciously noted its information.

I carry on, reminded of a recent *BMJ* letter about the energy cost of emails.² System Two thought (slower, more ruminative) is triggered in the background.¹ That letter quotes 50g of CO₂ emissions for a large email. Presumably most of those grams are mine? No, that would mean a lot of heavy breathing. Ones I pay for then? Yes, the recipient pays, presumably in internet and electricity charges.

I received one of those hostage notes from the Post Office only the other day. You know the ones: '*We have something for you but won't let you have it till you pay up*'. I always want to know what it is before I make my decision but they'll never say. So I end up paying the ransom, the parcel usually turning out to be something like cheap socks from a mean aunt. Worth less than the ransom anyway. How did we end up with a system of sending email messages that works the same way? No, how did we end up with a system of sending messages that is worse than that? With email, we don't even get the semblance of a choice: it just arrives.

By now, my inbox is looking almost as well tended as a National Trust border. All is neatly arranged and no more weeding to be done. There are even one or two left of those I should actually read.

I look up International Children's Day instead. It turns out to be followed hotly by International Sex Workers' Day on

the 2nd, and is not to be confused with Universal Children's Day, which happens in November. Before long I am engrossed with the myriad excitements of awareness days in June. Children's Day is not the only one to have the whiff of controversy between competing promoters. There is a Forgiveness Day on 26th which must be distinguished from another in July and a third in August. World Environment Day on the 5th is followed on the 15th by Global Wind Day, promoting the erection of wind farms across the landscape.

Lacking a sense of forgiveness for the many wind farms being concreted into our countryside like some strange architectural spam, I stand up. Turning to go for my first patient, I glimpse through the window the early rays of the sun. That reminds me of the earliest of awareness dates: the summer solstice.

The 21st is a Saturday this year. And druids don't do emails.

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REFERENCES

1. Kahneman D. *Thinking, fast and slow*. London: Penguin, 2012.
2. MacDonald BK. Avoiding thoughtless waste: consider the energy cost of emails in the NHS. *BMJ* 2014; **348**: g2823.

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