
“Now go look in the waiting room; it’s emetic. You haven’t spent any money on it for 15 years! There is a bunch of Take A Break magazines with Lady Di on the cover, old dog-eared paperbacks and a corner filled with broken toys you brought in from home and now covered in norovirus.”

Generation X

I am part of Generation X. A title that makes us sound like sad wannabe mysterious nerd types with no imagination. We are the forgotten generation. Not the narcissist baby-boomers intent on a life of indulgent self discovery, nor the ever-angry and entitled ‘TAKE ME SERIOUSLY’ millennials, who will never be as special as the parents told them they were.

No, we are the middle child that everyone ignored. Our parents couldn’t even be bothered to give us different names — my whole generation share only six firsts names — Susan, Kevin, Tracy, Mandy, Brian, and Keith. We have but a handful of faded Polaroid’s of our childhood kept in a shoebox. We left home at 17 and never went back; no one seemed to noticed or care. We only had three TV channels but it mattered little since the shows were garbage. Our only cocktail was snakebite and black. We had two genders and only two preferred pronouns, only two types of trousers: Farah or Wrangler. Risk-taking behaviour was the norm not the exception and work-life balance was not invented until 1999. Working hard was your only option.

How is it then we are doing OK in middle age? We laugh at videos of dogs smoking cigars while on skateboards on Facebook. We have tried not to helicopter the kids. Most of us don’t live in London so are well balanced and happy. We’ve been pretty successful in business. Less turned out to be more.

This brings me to your practices. Open your eyes. Your rooms are landfill sites. Old textbooks from University, unread and long out of date, piles of journals in sealed body bags, faded pictures of your children when they were angelic, all manner of Big Pharma tat such as stress balls, plastic joints, and broken clocks. Walls flap with long-forgotten laminated protocols you never read anyway and flu campaign posters from 1985. Your oversized executive chairs with gas has long since deflated and now just bumps into your desk that are heaving with out-of-date *MIMS* and *BNFs*.

And what’s in the filing cabinets? 10 kg of HRT leaflets! Look at the curtain screens:

material unknown, last wash unknown, pattern unknown. Those three-drawer units beside your desk containing old cassettes, a empty stethoscope box, paper clips, flat batteries, two broken dictaphones, a bottle of *Bell’s Whisky*, broken pens, and so on.

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There are faded reproduction landscapes on pastel walls of unknown colour and stained and worn carpets. The reception area is an M25 of clutter; you still have paper records dominating it while your staff are pressed into corners. You could spend £15 000 on back scanning (and this would be tax deductible) but you haven’t. Your working environment is out of control; it’s horrible, and it’s your fault.

We could wait for life to come to us, but it doesn’t. We need to seize the day! So get some black bin bags next Saturday and head to the surgery. Enrol the support of the staff too and throw all that rubbish out. Show absolutely no sentimentality and dispense with all your text books, journals and, if there is an ancient ‘library’, bin that too. It’s all online anyway. Strip the walls of every single poster. Drive the cabinets and three-drawer units to the local dump. Throw all the desk tidies, broken hole punches, rulers, and paperclips in the bin. Then pay to get ride of the paper records, paint the place white and grey and get nice new chairs. Regain control.

As Generation X always say: less is always more.

Des Spence,

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