

Dear Carol

Dear Carol,

My son, daughter-in-law and their two children will be coming next month for their annual vacation at my home. They live in Arizona and the heat is really awful so they love to come and spend time with me near the beach. I like to see them but their visit really disrupts my schedule and I'm not looking forward to the time they will be here. I live a quiet life, sleep as late as I want, enjoy coffee while I read the paper, have certain TV shows I watch during the day, lunch or shopping with friends and go to classes and meetings on a regular basis. My schedule is completely disrupted when they are here. I get tired and out of sorts, I am so happy when they leave. I do want them to come but I don't want to give away the life that I love. What can I do?

Grumbling Granny

Dear Granny,

Please talk to your family before they arrive and make it clear that you need some time to follow your own schedule, some quiet time and time alone. You may be surprised at how accommodating they may be. They may not need to include you in everything that they do. You can all agree to some schedules that will allow you to visit with friends, attend your activities and watch some of your favorite shows. You can work out a plan that will make their visits truly welcome. What is most important in your life, the love of your family and making memories that will last the year through or giving that attention to a newspaper or TV show? Spend your time on what is truly important in your life; you can rest up after they are gone.

Dear Carol,

I think my teenage son is using drugs. He sleeps late every morning. He is irritable and doesn't want to help around the house.

He spends all of his time on the telephone, playing video games in his room, texting his friends and ignoring the rest of the family as much as he can. If he isn't out with his friends he is shut up in his room. He used to be such a wonderful, loving son. He got good grades in school and has never gotten into trouble. I don't know what has brought about this change in him. I miss my boy.

Frightened Mom

Dear Mom,

Your son may just be showing signs of adolescence. It is normal for teens to draw away from their families, to spend time alone trying to figure out what is happening to their bodies and emotions and to turn to friends for validation. If you truly do think he is using drugs go to the Al anon website to see exactly what those signs are. Good luck, this may just be a phase.

Send questions to askcarolnow@gmail.com.

Carol is a Life Coach available for private consultation in person or on the phone. •



Political Penguin

By Duane Plank

Did you notice that last week I made it through the entire column without mentioning Sarah Palin, who is no longer the Governor of the vast wasteland that is Alaska? That was tough, showing great discipline, much like it is muy difficulto to write a sports column without mentioning Erin Andrews, who seems to have her own problems right about now. She, Palin, resigned her post a few days ago and has presumably spent the last couple of days baking brownies, being a "hockey-mom," and catching up on the Dr. Phil shows that she had been TiVo-ing while she was busy doing that political thing.

Meanwhile, out here in the Great Bankrupt State, it appears that Gov. Arnold and the state budgeteers finally came to some type of compromise that will narrow the \$26-billion-plus deficit that has submarined the California economy. Gov. Schwarzenegger was far from ecstatic with the final budget proposal, which was approved by Cali lawmakers after an arduous 20-hour session last Friday. Said the Governor: "I know that college students will now pay higher tuitions. I know that teachers will be laid off. I know that our state workers will get less money. But we have to do that. It is the only way to solve the problem and save our great state."

Hopefully, there is not a provision in the slash-and-burn budget that will affect the huge, huge salaries currently being paid to local newspaper group columnists.

Apparently the budget is rife with accounting shenanigans that will lessen the budget deficit, at least on paper. Much like the fine-tuning of your tax returns that your tax guy or gal does for you each spring before filing with our friends at the IRS. And reports on the budget impasse state that the new deal will "raid" the coffers of local governments. Robbing Peter to pay Paul?

The budget-busters did forsake two options to further close the billion-dollar chasm. They rejected a proposal that would have allowed new oil drilling off the coast of Cali for the first time in 40 years, and said nyet to a scheme that would have heisted \$1 billion in transportation funding from local governments.

Good for the hard-working folks who toiled on the budget deal. Still boning up on the specifics, but it's virtually guaranteed that there are a lot of disgruntled folks out there. But something had to be done. Time to move it forward.

Speaking of moving it forward, President Obama was really on the offensive last week, pushing his incredibly ambitious healthcare plan. Give this to the man--he seems to be everywhere, commenting on everything. The ex-community organizer from Illinois seems to enjoy being the point man on each and every issue. Which can be good and bad, depending.

The Prez addressed we the people last week, again trying to allay fears that his far-reaching healthcare overhaul was moving forward too quickly. "I'm rushed because I get letters every day from families that are being clobbered by healthcare costs," said the Commander-in-Chief at his primetime news conference.

Mr. Obama did take time out to phone Chicago White Sox pitcher Mark Buehrle and congratulate the hurler on tossing a perfect game last Thursday. But then it was back to work, pumping the healthcare plan. Which seems to be popular with about half of the folks out there. A recent Gallup Poll noted that 44 percent of those asked favored the plan, 50 percent were against it, and six percent were undecided. I am with the six percent, because I haven't taken the time to delve in to the specifics of the plan. So I can't say that I'm all that well-informed on the massive proposal.

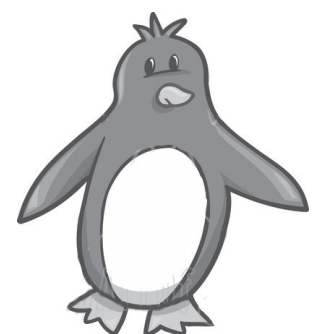
But doing nothing won't make the situation better, will it? We have all faced the frustrations of filling out myriad forms, repeatedly, when making a trip to visit the good old doc. Or paying those nasty little co-pays, right? Or waiting weeks for an appointment.

In reality, though, are we currently getting a fair shake? My recent trip to the colon doctor went as smooth as silk, at least the parts that I remember. Great service from the moment I entered the facility to the moment that I was put in the limo for the ride back to Gundo. Tiny polyp found, but haven't heard back from the doc, so presuming all is well. Presuming.

Again from the Prez: "If someone out there told you that there is a plan out there that is guaranteed to double your healthcare costs over the next 10 years, that's guaranteed to result in more Americans losing their healthcare, and that is by far the biggest contributor to our federal deficit—I think most people would be opposed to that." Continued Mr. Obama: "Well, that's the status quo. So, if we don't change, we can't expect a different result."

Remember, one of the definitions of insanity, attributed to the great Albert Einstein, is thus: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results." Seems to apply to the healthcare mess, doesn't it?

But being out in front of every issue isn't necessarily a positive for the Prez. Like when he blurted out a comment about Cambridge police Sergeant James Crowley, who was involved in the arrest of a black Harvard University professor. In a nutshell, Professor Henry Louis Gates was arrested for breaking into his own house. He reportedly couldn't get into his digs through the front door after returning home from a trip to China. He and his driver tried to gain entrance to the house, but the police were called by a neighbor who wasn't sure what was going on. Long story short, the police showed up, words were exchanged between Gates and Crowley, and the Professor was arrested. No charges were filed against Ginger or Marianne. The charges were later dropped, but the Prez, admitting he didn't know all the facts of the incident, had to weigh in, saying that the "Cambridge police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home." Not necessarily the case, sir. Sometimes it may be better to utter "no comment" than to try to have an answer to every query, every time. •



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- Dr. Harold Iseke

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