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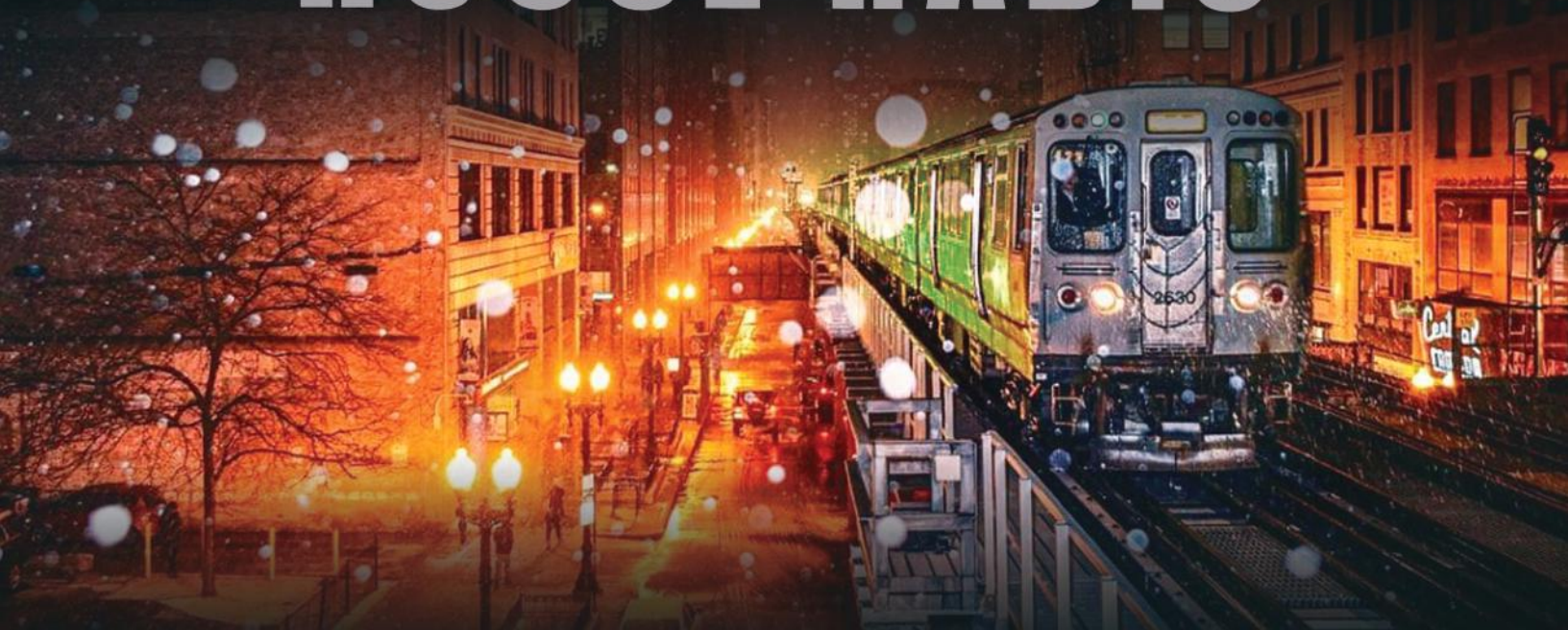




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# Why Should You Pay In Cash?

The banks are getting richer while you, I and small businesses are getting poorer.

Why should we pay cash everywhere we can with paper money instead of a credit card? Here's a run down.

Let's say I have a \$50 banknote in my pocket. I'm going to a restaurant and paying for dinner with it. The restaurant owner then uses the bill to pay for a service delivery. The delivery owner then uses the bill to pay one of his employees for reimbursement. The employee will then use the bill at the grocery store.

After an unlimited number of payments, it will still remain a \$50, which has fulfilled its purpose to everyone who used it for payment, and the bank has not made a penny from every cash payment transaction made.

## THIS IS WHY NOT USING CASH IS HURTING ALL OF US!

However, if I come to a restaurant and pay by credit card, then the bank fees for my payment transaction charged to the restaurant are 3%, so around \$1.50 and so will the fee be \$1.50 for each further payment transaction to the restaurant owner, or payments of the owner of the delivery service, grocery store, or card payments for whatever.

Therefore, after 30 transactions, the initial \$50 will become only \$5 and the remaining \$45 became the property of the bank, thanks to all digital transactions and fees. Not to mention the fees that add up on your charge card account that you will pay in interest!



Remember, especially in this holiday season, small businesses need your help and this is one way to help ourselves too. Pull small amounts of cash out at a time and use that instead of credit, etc.

When this is put into perspective, imagine what each retailer is paying on a monthly basis in fees at 3% per transaction through their POS machine. **It can be hundreds and thousands over time, just going to corporate bank owners in profit.**

If they have, for example, \$50,000 in sales & 90% are by credit card, they are paying \$1500 in fees in ONE Month. **\$18,000 in a year! That comes out of their income every month.**

That would go a long way to helping that small business provide for its family, staff and to help keep their costs down, and that they won't have to increase their prices. A Win-Win for them and definitely a WIN for you too!

THIS IS WHY NOT USING CASH IS HURTING ALL OF US!



# In CONCERT

## LOU GRAMM, CO-FOUNDER AND LEAD VOCALIST FOR FOREIGNER

**At 74 years of age, Lou Grammatico, aka Lou Gramm is still on top of his game. I dropped by the Arcada Theatre in St. Charles recently to catch this legendary rock n roll singer and songwriter performing in a limited concert series.**

If the name doesn't ring a bell, perhaps the band Foreigner will. Lou Gramm was co-founder and lead vocalist for Foreigner from 1976-1990, and again from 1992-2003. These were the classic hits years for Foreigner as they belted out hit after hit with such classics as "Juke Box Heroes", "Cold As Ice", "Long Long Way From Home", "Hot Blooded", and others. Many of these were released in their self titled LP in 1977. This evening, Lou Gramm and the Allstar Band provided top notch sound as I had yet to hear this arena type of sound set-up at the Arcada.



Picture yourself in 1981 as "Waiting For A Girl Like You" comes on the radio. Who wasn't singing along? Perhaps "I Want To Know What Love Is" was your favorite. Another slow sing-a-long.

The expression on fan's faces as I looked around the theatre was priceless. Nothing beats the original voice! In 1990, Lou left Foreigner due to creative differences with keyboard player Mick Jones. Mick Jones and Ian McDonald originally formed Foreigner in 1976 and Lou Gramm was recruited. Mick Jones was co-writer and co-producer on all their music as Lou Gramm was the writer. Apparently, with the changing times, Mick was experimenting with new sounds (keyboards) and wanted a new direction for the band. Lou Gramm was comfortable as is, and into the late 90s, a break-up seemed inevitable.

Lou Gramm created a separate contract with Atlantic Records so he can release songs he had written on the side. Mick wasn't pleased and eventually both parted ways. To add, in the late 90s, Lou Gramm was diagnosed with a brain tumor which was successfully removed through surgery but caused a few physical changes to his life.

**There is a You Tube interview which explains in detail. I was glad to catch this limited concert series. Lou Gramm will be headed for Las Vegas for a few limited engagements. The current line-up for the Allstar Band includes: Ben Gramm on drums, Tony Franklin on bass, Jeff Jacobs on keyboards, Alex Garcia on guitar, and Scott Gilman on saxophone. Thanks to Ron Onesti for providing this great event! You can see more pics and videos on boiMAGazine's Facebook Out "n" About page, hosted by yours truly.**



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## A Time Out- Destress - Healing- Reboot



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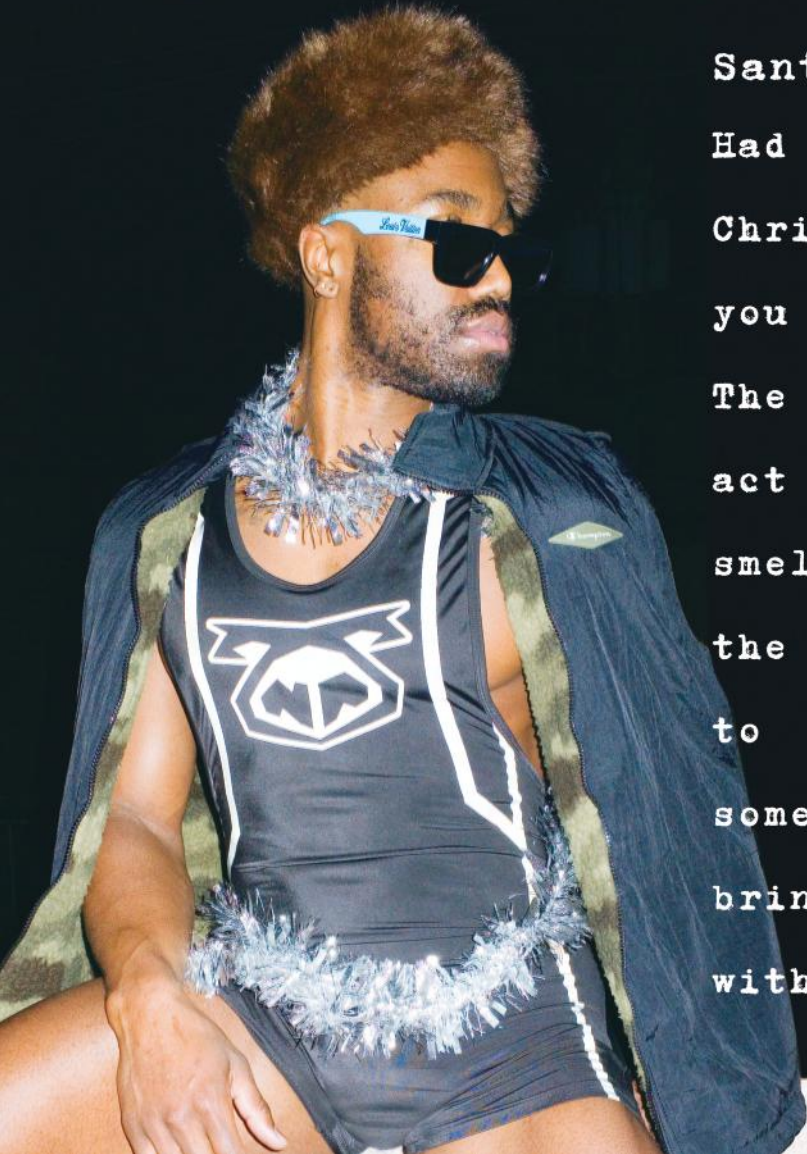
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# Delightful Goosebumps

Terence Steward II  
@stylesbytchi

When was the last time you fell in love with Christmas? How did your excitement for the first snowfall remain so innocent throughout the years? Imagine Christmas decided to skip a year - where would the elves express their gratitude if no toys are produced? Would Mrs. Claus find herself with another, Mr. Claus? Do the reindeer migrate to another pole and never return? Does

Santa find a new profession? Had there not been a Father Christmas in play, do you think you would have fallen in love? The precious and most sincere act on Earth is love; the smell, the taste, the feeling, the sound - no entity compares to love. Knowing you have something to look forward to brings a sense of satisfaction within surprise.



# 2024 HOLIDAY SCAM ALERT!

by Jack Santo

Have you ever Googled a company looking for their phone number for tech support? You'd think just because the phone number is listed at the top of a Google search page that it's legit, well guess again! Google doesn't weed out, or have any convenient way for us to report a scam from a search on Google. So the scam continues and because everyone is clicking on it, algorithms then list it at the top of the search! When calling, pay attention, if they sound like a foreign person trying to speak English, chances are they are NOT the help center for the company and they are running a scam! Do not give them your phone number or access to your computer!! Hang up immediately if you're being bated for more information than is necessary.

Also, if you need to call customer support to any retailer or company, make sure it's the real phone number that's listed on your bill or account. Remember, if you Google search for a customer service phone number, chances are that they are numbers to fake call centers pretending to be the company, or retailer in hopes to get your information.

Note that scammers will try to access your computer, so never ever give a customer support person or a help center a remote access to your computer! This is a RED Flag!

Scammers ask for money. Do not go out and buy them a gift card. Do not give them your credit card information or password.

Go directly to the company's website and make sure that you type it in correctly. One wrong letter can land you on a copy-cat scammers website and you'll think it's legit, but it's not! If you put your information in on the site, like login and password, now they will have all your information!

Holiday scams like this are running rampant. Including millions of dollars in online shopping and non-delivery scams.

Scammers take advantage of the holiday season to target you, whether you're shopping for gifts online, booking holiday travel, looking for seasonal work, or trying to donate to charities.

Over 75% of Americans experienced at least one type of holiday scam last year.

Here are a few of the most common scams that target you during the holiday season, how you can avoid them, and what you can do to stay safe, both on the phone and online.

## How Do Some Holiday Scams Work?

Holiday scams capitalize on the increase in online shopping, travel, and charitable giving during the holiday season by trying to trick you into giving up money, gift cards, and your personal information.

Social media ads that lead you to fake online stores. Fraudsters use ads on social media to try to get you to go to fake stores that steal your money, credit card details, or personal information.

They will send you fake missed delivery notification texts or emails. Scammers send fake text messages claiming that a package you're waiting for has been delayed or that you need to pay a fee before it can be delivered. Many give you a link to click on. Do NOT click on any text or email links. They can do serious damage to your phone or computer, plus steal all your information, or do worse and delete & demand payment for your data back.

Do not give your social security number to anyone over the phone. Most legit ones will ask for the last 4 digits of your social.

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# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## MENTAL HEALTH ALWAYS MATTERS!



by: Dr. Charla Waxman BS, MBA, EdD  
Director of Business Development at Lake Behavioral Hospital

**Domestic violence is multi-dimensional. It has many levels and there are many ways that it can occur. The cycle can be endless and, just like addiction, can be multi-generational both from a victim and perpetrator perspective.**

The holidays are approaching and the busy-ness of the season is upon us. With the hustle and bustle and friends and family come both good and bad. The stress, anxiety, happiness, togetherness, sense of loss, excitement and depression. Now is the time to put your mental health at the top of your holiday "to-do" list! Being physically healthy is important and being mentally healthy drives overall health.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness has documented that one in 5 of us will experience a mental health illness in our lifetime. The World Health Organization has indicated that the number of people living with anxiety and depression has been on the rise with the first outbreaks of COVID, and has not let up since. Mental illness is common and we should all know how to work toward staying healthy and why we need to do it. Let the holidays be the reason why you begin to being your best.

Everyone wants to feel better. We have all heard that "life gets in the way" and usually that means that work and family commitments, especially during holiday time take precedence before our health. If you don't really understand the benefits of mental health, there is a guarantee that when things get busy and challenging, mental health will get pushed aside.

Here are a few things improved mental health can do for you:

### **INCREASE PHYSICAL HEALTH.**

When you do not feel well mentally it may seem impossible to take good care of your body. The better you feel mentally, it is proven, the better overall health you will have.

**GET 'ER DONE!** The better you feel, the more you will get done. Mental health can improve clarity and focus and vision and direction.

**GET HAPPY!** Being mentally well can mean that you will just feel more satisfied with your life and have more resilience available when you need to be able to navigate tough times.

**BE AN INFLUENCER.** Mentally healthy people have better relationships and are better models for how to manage relationships.

Has this talk of mental health and its importance put you in a doubt-filled panic? No worries! Not only can mental health be developed over time, but even if you do have a mental illness that seems debilitating, know that, people can and do recover from mental health conditions.

As the saying goes; "Begin anywhere". Take some tiny steps until those become second nature and then add in some more elements of self-care.

Get going, though. Don't procrastinate. Take those baby steps. Make them doable and make them impactful.



Some ideas include. doing an affirmation before your feet even hit the floor. Try saying something like: "Today I will have a positive outlook."

Walk into every meeting with a smile. Take a deep breath before you make a decision.

Instead of blasting music in your car, have quiet time and let your mind wander.

Read affirmations for 5 minutes. Close your eyes and picture something beautiful and peaceful. Stand up and stretch. Get your blood flowing!

*Continued >>*

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

*Continued >>*

You will be surprised what little things like these suggestions will do for you. They don't take forever either. Five minutes or less, focusing on you and positive things around you can make all the difference in the world. What a great start! Once you have a few good practices routinely enhancing your day, think about incorporating some more ways to improve your mental status.

Here's a few more suggestions. Pick one or two and then move right down the list as things begin to change for you.

Be aware of why you feel the way that you do. Stay focused on you. If you understand why you are feeling glad, sad, or mad, you will be able to make sure that you think it through rather than act it out.

Be grateful and say thank you.

Be good to your physical self. Sleep, exercise, eat well. Drink water. We all know what is best for us. Make small changes.

Reduce negative influences. Have a social media free day once or twice a month. Stay away from the news once a week. Watch comedies. Revisit shows of your childhood. Listen to music that brings back good memories. Do an activity you love. Have a special friend day and plan to be together to just chat and reminisce. Volunteer and give back. Nothing can make you feel better!

Just say no. When you are overwhelmed, back away. Let people know you are managing stress and although you can't "do" now, you will let them know when you can support them.

Many of us have continued to work remotely post COVID. If you work at home, try not to do too much blending of space or time. Keep space for work separate from living space and guard your personal time.

Find your Joy! Plan a Joy day. Do something you love with exactly the person you want to spend that time with. Stick to this one. You will always have something positive to anticipate.

What would your grandmother tell you? Be patient. Be kind and remember that life is about making the next right decision!

## **Now Hear This!**

Sometimes our best efforts are not enough to thwart the external pressure, and we begin to slide backwards and lose our grip on our best health, and our best sense of our best self.

If you are thinking that you are helpless, hopeless or worthless (NAMI), feeling like living is too hard or ending your life is the answer, you are in 911 mode. If you are worried that you could hurt someone else, you are in 911 mode. These are emergencies. Get to your ER and ask for help. They will keep you safe and get you the next best referral.

If things are not feeling like an emergency, but you are feeling unwell, an ER could still be your answer. or call your local health department, 211 center or search online for a counselor that specializes in your kind of concerns. You know you.

Maybe it is a headache or stomachache, a sleepless night or withdrawal from friends that tells you things are not going well. React and respond. Reach out and ask for support. There's a lot of programs ready to help.

According to the National Council for Community Well-Being, feeling sad, down or depressed for more than 2 weeks is a good way to gauge your need for professional support.

Use this knowledge and also make note of whether substance use has begun or is increasing, whether your eating is out of control, or whether you are falling short of commitments at home and work. If you need support, and want to understand what that will look like for you, consider calling Lake Behavioral Hospital. They will provide you with a free, confidential assessment that can determine what kind of treatment will restore you to health. If needed, just call (855) 990-1900.



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# THE TELEVISION CORPORATE SQUEEZE

How Money Became The Main Character on American TV

## Enough To Make You Puke! Part 2

by: Mike at Night

**It's true, it's not just content preferences and technology that have shaped the contemporary TV landscape; the very structure of the industry has undergone a seismic shift. Much of what we see on network television today can be attributed to the insidious influence of media consolidation, a phenomenon where major corporations have gobbled up independent studios and networks, creating behemoth entities focused on maximizing profits above all else.**

This process was fueled by deregulation under the Reagan administration. In 1983, **President Reagan** and the **Federal Communications Commission** (FCC) implemented several key changes, including loosening ownership restrictions and eliminating the "fairness doctrine," a policy requiring broadcasters to present contrasting viewpoints on controversial issues. These changes opened the floodgates for media mergers and acquisitions, paving the way for the rise of mega-corporations like ViacomCBS, Disney, and Comcast.

With monopolies forming across the airwaves, the incentive to invest in quality, costly programming began to dwindle. Why gamble on an ambitious drama when cheap reality shows guaranteed consistent viewership and lucrative advertising deals? Why develop thought-provoking documentaries when endless reruns of sitcoms from yesteryear required minimal effort and generated significant revenue? This shift in priorities became the mantra of the corporate overlords: maximize profit at the expense of creativity and originality. The consequences of this corporate squeeze are evident in the programming we see today.

Low-budget reality shows dominate primetime schedules, with scripted dramas often watered down, formulaic offerings lacking the depth and artistry of their predecessors. News coverage leans towards sensationalism and partisan bias, sacrificing journalistic integrity for attention-grabbing headlines. Documentaries, once bastions of investigative journalism and social commentary, are now often commissioned by corporations themselves, pushing an agenda rather than exploring the complexities of real-world issues.

This isn't to say that every program on network TV is devoid of merit. Dedicated pockets of creativity still exist, and talented individuals continue to strive for quality within the confines of corporate mandates. However, the overarching dominance of profit-driven media conglomerates presents a clear and present danger to the diversity and quality of U.S.A. TV!.

The fight against this corporate stranglehold demands a multi-pronged approach. Reinstating stricter FCC regulations could curb further consolidation and encourage investment in diverse content.

Supporting independent media outlets and subscribing to streaming services dedicated to original programming can empower creators and offer alternatives to the mainstream monotony. And most importantly, viewers must engage in critical consumption, demanding better from the networks they patronize and holding them accountable for the content they provide.

If we demand more than mindless entertainment and manufactured drama, if we champion voices beyond the boardroom, then perhaps we can reclaim the flickering screen as a platform for stories that inform, inspire, and truly entertain.

Remember, the power to change the channel doesn't just lie in the remote; it resides in the choices we make as viewers and our collective demand for a richer, more meaningful television landscape.

UNTIL YOU PUKE

# COMMENTARY UNCENSORED



by: Screamin' Rachael

Recording Artist, Entrepreneur, Publisher, Music Mogul, House Music Icon, sometimes Controversial, with a dash of Opinionism for good

The opinions offered in this column are "uncensored" and are intended for "open dialog" and "entertainment purposes" only. Use of this column not intended to replace or be a substitute for any professional, financial, legal, advice or any other professional service. The opinions or views expressed in this column are those of the columnist, and not necessarily those of anyone else.

## HOW THE BITCH STOLE CHRISTMAS!

Well as The holiday season is finally here, and I'm happy to say that the song "Bitch" from my album **Disco 3000** is becoming a hit around the world!

That was a track I hesitated to release, of course American radio can't play it, but that doesn't stop Europe and other places going wild over it, and it's also a DJ club favorite. I think people seem to be happy letting that punk style anger OUT, probably because they are angry too!

Well we can all relate, at least a lot of us can. Barren style **Charlie Brown** Christmas trees with few presents if any. YES I'M ANGRY and even listening to the track makes me feel better! From what I see, dancers are going insane, some literally bare assed, seem to feel better too!

All and all it's been a good year especially for Trax Records, my label, and all the cool artists, but maybe it's okay even therapeutic to let anger out! I have been in various types of therapy including Gestalt. There was a big padded box in the doctor's office to kick and punch! Some people have disappointed me, so I'm letting them know I'm a BITCH! To quote my favorite **Joan Crawford** line in *Mommy Dearest*; "Don't fuck with me, fellas." This ain't my first time at the rodeo.

I loved my Space place punk days because I didn't give a crap about most things. I felt like society was making us self destruct. My band **Remote** played what we wanted to play!

Jumping around, rolling on stage, doing a cover of the classic "Eve of Destruction" ending in gun shots, still applies today! If you want to get into the Christmas spirit, Rachael style, try listening to **The Rotary Connection Christmas** album.



It has great songs about Santa getting high, and lots of fun psychedelic sounds! Yes, it's a favorite of mine!. Sometimes I try to always make lemonade out of lemons and look for the bright side of everything. But I am realizing that I need to bring some more edge back into my life. You see it's all around us. Almost everyone I know is broke. I wish I could write all the artists, and my friends, big checks, but I've got no ca\$h.

I had an accident, and have to take painkillers, so now I can't have any medication for anxiety! Things are happening really fast!

Great album reviews and preparing for the 40th Anniversary album collection. Things were going great for "Youth Communication" we finally have the money for students to paint a wall.

The theme of which was "Welcome Home" The students were so excited. I trusted we'd get a wall in uptown, and went with that theme. It's freezing out, and still no wall. So, yes I'm angry and my bitch side is showing. We might have to do the wall in spring but I refuse to let the kids down. Maybe we should teach them a course about punk music! They can let out their disappointment, and angst! After all that's what got me through a lot of tough times.

Well stockings may be empty this year, but even though I'm a bitch, I still have love for the many people who have not let me down. I'm still happy that the fans around the world love our music! If you look at the Trax Instagram page, you'll see, and hear lots of exciting stuff. Every time a stranger leaves a heart or good comment about my music, some of the ice that was building up around my heart melts.

I wish you all Happy Holidays, Kwanza, Christmas, Hanukkah, and what ever you celebrate.

I still think being a bitch, screaming out loud and punching things, might free you up a bit! LET IT ALL HANG OUT! Just sayin' and to all a good night.

- Rachael Cain

A photograph of three shirtless men in a locker room. The man in the center is a Black man with dark, wavy hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He has tattoos on his chest and arms. To his left is a man with a goatee, looking towards the center. To his right is a younger man with short brown hair, looking towards the center. The background consists of red lockers.

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# GETTING LET DOWN IS A TWO WAY STREET

by boiBOT, boiMAGazine's AI Assistant

**"Getting let down is a two way street" means that when someone feels disappointed or betrayed by another person, it's often because they themselves may have set unrealistic expectations or contributed to the situation through their own actions, not just solely the fault of the other person; essentially, both parties can play a role in creating the feeling of being let down.**

**Shared responsibility:** It suggests that when someone feels let down, they should also reflect on whether they contributed to the situation by having overly high expectations or not communicating clearly.

**Communication is key:** To avoid feeling constantly let down, open and honest communication with the other person about expectations and needs is crucial. Not through text messaging or emails, which can be misconstrued or misinterpreted.

**Self-reflection:** This phrase encourages self-awareness, prompting individuals to examine their own role in a situation where they feel disappointed.

**Example:** "I feel like I'm always getting let down by my friends, but I realized that sometimes I might be setting the bar too high for them, so it's a two-way street."

This year, I realized I was tired of feeling let down. I was tired of being frustrated by a partner's consistent unwillingness to communicate. I was tired of feeling disappointed by a family member's chronic anger. I was tired of feeling habitually unseen in a few one-sided friendships.

At first, my disappointment was simply anger: "I can't believe they still aren't meeting my simple needs after all this time, and after hundreds of conversations."

But after a while, I realized that my disappointment was, in some ways, a two way street. In order for someone to consistently let me down, I first needed to have held them up to an expectation they consistently weren't meeting.

Yes, their behavior was the problem, but my expectations of them were the problem, too.

Adjusting our expectations to reflect the reality of how others treat us is the key to stop being let down, start feeling at peace, and begin setting the boundaries we need to feel protected, respected, and well. In this article, we'll explore the three practical steps you can take to adjust your expectations in your relationships today.

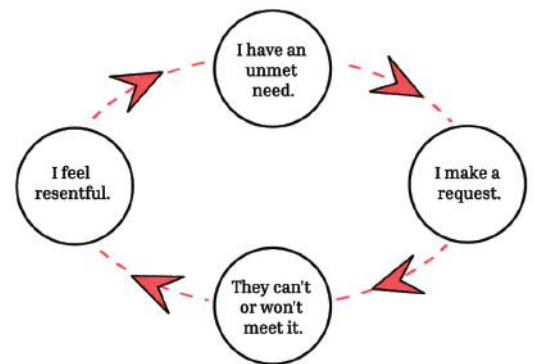
In order to effectively advocate for ourselves, we need to adjust our expectations of others to accurately reflect the reality of how they act; who they are; and what degree of emotional maturity they have.

Unfortunately, many of us have unrealistic expectations, based not on evidence, but wishful thinking alone, that others will suddenly change, which keeps us trapped in cycles of false hope.

Maybe you hold out hope that, after a lifetime of silent treatments, erratic moods, or dismissiveness, your parents will finally develop the emotional maturity required to see you, and love you fully.

Maybe you hold out hope that, after years of limited affection, your partner will finally be the emotionally expressive, physically attentive person you've always wished they would be.

Maybe you hold out hope that, despite thousands of one-sided conversations, your friend will finally get curious about you and your life.



False hope traps us in disheartening and painful cycles. We constantly want more from others, and we're constantly disappointed when they don't rise to the occasion. We secretly wish that this time will be different, even though they've shown us, time and time again, that it won't. We make the same requests repeatedly, ignoring the evidence that they're not, and haven't been, changing.

False hope is emotionally exhausting and energetically expensive. When people don't meet our hope-fueled expectations, we feel crushing disappointment. We get our hopes up, and grow more resentful with every revolution of the cycle.

When we expect others to change sometime in a nebulous and distant future, we aren't dealing with reality, and as a result, we don't protect ourselves the way we need to. Our job is to assess whether the situation, as it is now, meets our needs, and if not, to set boundaries accordingly

Perhaps you radically accept that the person isn't capable of a truly reciprocal exchange, and by letting yourself accept this, you find that you're able to appreciate their other qualities, like their humor, charismatic energy, or the shared activities you do together.

# Out 'n' About

by Jorge Suarez

## Chicago

Recently, I visited Ray Gavcus, owner of Martroy Electronics on the southside of Chicago. In my past, I have visited numerous electronic stores of all sorts, but this location is a goldmine.



Who could imagine this much equipment under one roof? Ray has been in the current location for 40 years. Prior to the current location at 6259 S. Kedzie, the business was a hop-skip-and a jump away for another decade plus.

This is like walking thru a museum of stereo equipment or eye candy to any stereo aficionado. This is old school as old school gets. I had to slowly maneuver through the aisles so as not to tip anything over. There are literally thousands of musical gadgets, items, antiques, of which many are being repaired, while others are for sale.

Countless aisles of tv monitors, musical instruments such as turntables, cassette decks, keyboards, amps and pre-amps, receivers, CD players, DAT machines, reel to reels, DJ mixers, CD players, speakers, and the list goes on.



The amount of speakers alone were beyond belief. Every name brand, old and new. A great place to buy your kids a starter set. A better place for dj's to upgrade and stereo equipment collectors to invest. You can search for hours and find equipment I wasn't aware that existed. I had to post a pic of a beautiful **Technics SL 1350** that I fell in love with. Unfortunately, it was being repaired for the owner.



This is a great place to introduce, or educate anyone on stereo equipment 101. There is in-house repairs. You can also recycle your electronics here. Check their website listed below for new equipment. Bring in your old equipment for repairs or cleaning. Such a great and friendly staff. You can find them on Facebook and Instagram.



Call and speak to **Jackie** or **Ray**. Onboard electronics experts **Danny, Joselito, Jesse** and **Joe** are the go-to team to repair your musical gear/equipment. I would love to return for a second review. While I spent most of my time walking thru the main floor, Ray mentioned there's a second floor as well as basement with more equipment.

Thanks to Ray and Jackie for the hospitality. Hopefully I can return in 2025 to explore more!

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# ASK CHAR

The views and/or advice expressed here are my personal opinions, based on my life experience, and don't necessarily reflect the opinions of any other individual or organization. Have a question? eMail me at [AskChar@boiMAG.com](mailto:AskChar@boiMAG.com)

Dear Char,

*"My family has differing political views and it is causing tension during gatherings. How can I navigate these differences without alienating anyone?"*

Dear Family Politics in Fremont,

Recent elections have proven that politics and family sometimes are usually not a good match. Congratulations to you for being the kind of family member who wants to manage it, and keep the peace. Kindness and thoughtfulness always "trump" (haha) conflict. Because political views have so much self-interest (not meant in a derogatory way), things can get heated in discussions. It gets personal! It would be easy to say that you can just avoid the people, places and issues that are politically charged, but when it's family and these are people you must see, spend time with, and care about, well, we have a quandary.

Conversational avoidance is an option. Chances are, though, you need to be ready for the relative who uses politics as a conversation starter, or as a means of creating entertaining conflict. So, let's look at this topic and find some ways to deal with political views and family gatherings.

You can be the one who excels at de-focusing tactics, being ready with topics that pull you in to each other vs out. For instance, has someone completed a special class, event or accomplished something amazing? Talk about that family excitement. Try funneling discussions toward fun memories.

Can you get outside after a meal or play a game together? Ask questions about the lives and daily interests of those you don't see often. Purchase one of those conversation starter card packs. Make sure you filter out any politics-related questions!

If you're a more direct and tackle-it-head-on kind of person, maybe arrange an agreement that politics is an off-limits discussion. If it still comes up, you can remind the person of the pre-arrangement for non-discussion, tell them you know how much the topic interests them, but you "just can't go there" or you just don't have the energy to discuss such a charged topic, or you can listen politely and not take the bait.

Here's something to consider: If there are kids old enough to carry on a political conversation, ask them what they think, and how they got the information they are sharing. What good role modeling for listening could occur in your family if people really talk and listen respectfully to each other. You know your family best.

## KEYS TO MAINTAIN **RELATIONSHIP** WITH FAMILY WHEN YOU HAVE DIFFERENT **POLITICAL VIEWS**

Here few more things that might save the day/ Don't engage in group discussions. This could cause one person to feel "ganged-up on" and lead to some very heated talk. Be noncommittal. Engage minimally. Hear them out and leave it at that. Make them the expert. Ask questions. Make sure you're sincere and that your body language and facial expressions tell the story of sincerity. Using responses like: "I never thought of it that way"; show interest and thought. Respect begets respect. Stay away from loud voices, posturing, sarcasm, catastrophizing, and any foul language. If you have a differing opinion, state it only if you know where your opinion will lead, and you are comfortable with that, if you know the person well enough to offer it, you think it can be heard without a big disagreement. and if you have the skills to offer it without arrogance. If there's any really important "don't" in this list it is "Don't make it a contest". No one needs to win here. Listen, learn, and maybe share. Close the conversation with, "You gave me a lot to think about." Anyway, hope this helps. **Listening to those you don't agree with takes practice. Keep at it. You've got this!**

# SMS STANDS FOR SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE, SO I THOUGHT!

by Mike at Night

**Lately, I've been bombarded with a flood of messages, primarily political ones, that keep appearing around the clock. My initial spam filter was free and functioned well for about a month, but then the political texts surged, mainly supporting Kamala Harris and criticizing Donald Trump. It's odd because during this period, I didn't receive a single message advocating for Trump or disparaging Kamala. Go figure!**

Eventually, I caved in and purchased an app called SMS Spam Stopper to help eliminate these bothersome texts. It worked for around two months, but somehow some messages slipped past the spam filter and started coming through again. I thought things would settle down after the election, but that's not the case. Now I'm getting text messages with questions designed to engage me, or solicit donations. It takes a lot of time to block all the numbers, so I gave up. I read online that while the texts are automated, there's a person on the other side if you respond, they're trying to verify a valid number, assess your support for their cause, and see if you'll make a cash donation. As a little experiment, I sent them the most repulsive, explicit image I could find as a response, and it seemed effective! I didn't receive any replies from that number. LOL!

They still trickle in occasionally, but at least now I can chuckle at my reply, knowing that some person in middle America received it, removed me from their list, and is probably having nightmares because of it!

Around the same time, I receive lengthy paragraphs of texts from a friend whose best buddy is Siri, who can effortlessly dictate a multitude of words into her iPhone and send them without so much as a blink of an eyelash. Well, if I had nothing better to do, it might be okay, but why not just call? These straightforward, stream-of-consciousness musings really deserve a one-on-one conversation instead. Unfortunately, my text-to-speech feature goes round and round, wasting time, before it circles back to waiting for me to input text, or when I say "Hey Siri"... she responds with "one sec..." and then "still on it..." and accomplishes absolutely nothing. I don't know what the issue is; I think Siri resents me for making her tell me a story, which she seems reluctant to do. However, if you persist, you can eventually coax out a brief story that abruptly stops.



Keep asking, and she'll finally finish it! It's crazy! No one would believe me until I demonstrated it in person! By the way, she has quite a few stories, but it takes ages to get them out of her!

I returned to the issue of long text messages. I had politely explained my problem with Siri and expressed my preference for phone calls, as I am often working or driving. Texting while working disrupts my concentration, and texting while driving is a definite no-go. Unfortunately, my message seemed to fall on deaf ears. One day, I woke up to an excessively long text message that began with a pointed accusation. I should have simply deleted it or sent it to my spam filter to avoid receiving more unwanted messages. Instead, I barely skimmed the first line before replying, "Stop Sending Me Long Texts! If you didn't get it before, now you do!"

**Naturally, this ignited a text argument, which I refused to engage in. It felt like the other person was trying to provoke me, much like a troll seeking to drag you into their negativity. Thankfully, I maintain my well-being, thanks to taking Ashwagandha and St. John's Wort daily, which helps me brush off such provocations and focus on the more important matters at hand.**

I turned to AI for objective reassurance, here's what AI-Gemini had to say on the topic: "Sending long text messages is generally considered inappropriate because it can overwhelm the recipient, disrupt their flow, and come across as demanding or overly expressive, particularly when concise communication is warranted. It's usually best to keep messages brief and to the point unless a longer explanation is necessary."

Numerous studies have demonstrated that texting can induce significant anxiety. Research also indicates that text communication can both enhance and hinder our relationships. Understanding how texting affects our relationships can help us maintain positive connections with loved ones while avoiding negative interactions. It is essential to be aware of common mistakes, such as engaging in lengthy text conversations and arguing through text.

Generally, your texts should not be too long. Ideally, aim for a length similar to that of a tweet. Lengthy texting exchanges can be frustrating for the recipients, especially if they are busy at work or trying to complete a project. However, there are situations where more in-depth conversations are appropriate via text. Just be cautious not to rely on text messaging as your primary communication method.

As for arguing by text, it should be obvious not to text when you're angry, yet many people still make this mistake. If you're feeling upset or have just had a disagreement, it's best to put your phone down. Not only will you likely regret what you type, but your message may also not be interpreted as you intended.

If texting is harming your relationship: If you frequently feel disappointed by someone's text responses, take some time to discuss it. While expressing your concerns may not lead to immediate changes, it will help you gain a better understanding of your partner's perspective.

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# SEXBOT TECH TRENDS

by Jack Santo

## ENVISIONING ROMANTIC INTERLUDES WITH SEXBOTS, PART THREE DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE ISSUES

**As sexbots become increasingly sophisticated, they are reshaping our understanding of romance, challenging traditional notions of emotional and physical intimacy.**

**The potential for emotional connections with SexBots stirs a profound debate. On one hand, advancements in AI enable these entities to simulate conversation and respond to human emotions, suggesting a superficial form of companionship is feasible.**

However, the depth and authenticity of these connections remain questionable. Genuine emotional intimacy requires mutual understanding and empathy, traits that AI, despite its strides, cannot truly possess. Can programmed responses, no matter how sophisticated, fulfill the emotional complexities and spontaneity inherent in human relationships? This question invites us to reassess the essence of emotional bonds and the unique qualities that make human connections irreplaceable.

Physical intimacy with SexBots introduces a radical shift in human sexuality. These machines offer an alternative to traditional human interaction, possibly serving as safe spaces for exploration and expression of sexuality without judgment or risk. However, this convenience



comes with potential psychological implications. Could reliance on SexBots for physical gratification lead to a diminishing ability to form and maintain deep, physical connections with humans? The impact of engaging with SexBots on our expectations, behaviors, and understanding of human sexuality is a critical area of exploration. It challenges us to consider how technology might shape our perceptions of intimacy, consent, and mutual satisfaction in relationships.

As SexBots continue to advance, they present new possibilities and challenges in the realms of romance and intimacy. The future of love with these robotic companions could redefine our understanding of relationships.

The next generation of SexBots promises to bring significant advancements in AI, enhancing their ability to simulate human emotions and responses more convincingly. Future SexBots could offer more personalized interactions.

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