

The Schmooze

Stories with a Yiddish Twist

HELP! I'M SUFFERING FROM
"TRANSIENT SMARTPHONE BLINDNESS*"

*London eye doctors have found several patients who went temporarily blind from constantly checking their smart phones in bed ("bet") at night. The solution: Make sure you use both ("beyde") eyes when looking at your phone screen in the dark.

by
Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe



Syosset, New York

Some terms:

The Yiddish word meaning "to suffer" is "laydn."

"Gazunthayt iz beser vi krankheit" means "health is better than illness."

"A farshlepte krenk" means "an unending annoyance—a chronic ailment."

"Redt zich ein a krenk" is an imaginary illness. The Internet is making things worse for this person. With just one click of a mouse, they're exposed to all kinds of illnesses that they convince themselves they have.

A STORY:

Samuel finally accumulated enough money to leave Russia and emigrate to New York where the rest of his “mishpoche” had preceded him years before.

The first thing he did, after going through Ellis Island, was to look up his older (“elter”) brother, Max. It saddened him to find his nearest relative “krank.” “Max, tell me,” Samuel asked gently, “what kind of sickness do you have?”

“Who knows?” answered Max. He shrugged. “Fancy names the doctors have for ‘altsding’ (everything). All I know is that I’ve been in ‘bet’ (bed) for three months and already it has cost me \$1,000.”

“What!” exclaimed Samuel. “Why back in Odessa you could have been sick on that kind of money for a whole ‘yor’ (year).”

Shown below are some unusual illnesses:

. LAYOFF LUST

The sudden desire to be sent away with a severance package, providing time at least to search for meaning and cultivate the soul—“di neshome.”

. SCANAXIETY

n. Mental disease felt while awaiting the results of a medical test (cat scan, pet scan, etc.)

. RINGXIETY

n. The confusion experienced by a group of people when a cell phone (“tselularer telefon”) rings and no one is sure whose phone it is; mistaking a faint sound for the

ringing of one's cell phone.

. NOSOPHOBIA

n. An abnormal fear of disease. Medical students' disease. It first gained attention in the mid-1960s after the publication of two articles from prominent psychiatric departments.

. QUARTERLIFE CRISIS

n. Feeling of confusion ("tsemishung"), anxiety, and self-doubt experienced by some people in their twenties after completing their education ("khinukh"). (It's a play on midlife crisis!)

. PLAYLIST ANXIETY

n. Anxiety felt by a person who fears what other people might think of the music on his or her digital music player. (You are what you listen to!)

. PERIMETER PARENTING ANXIETY

Fear that (the) parent won't step to the sidelines and encourage their kids to solve their own problems. Parents of students planning to attend New York Institute of Technology were advised during orientation sessions to practice "perimeter parenting."

. DEATHER ANXIETY

n. A person who believes that U. S. health care reform will lead to more deaths, particularly among the elderly ("alt").

. GOOGLE FEVER

Cartoonist, Glasbergen, wrote: "I'm using Google to find

that program we want to watch. Unfortunately, it has the same name as a rock band, a yoga pose, a cocktail, an urban legend, a blog, a movie, a wrestling move, a race-horse, a night club, a website, the winner of the 1982 Westminster dog show...”

- . **BANG\$T**

Profound financial anxiety. “Leo was so stricken with bang\$t that he crumpled up his A.T.M. receipts without looking at them.” See also: Castigate (condemn spending); explainditure (justifying spending); monetize (beg for funds). Thanks to Lizzie Skurnick (“That should be a Word”)

- . **AROPGEGANGEN FUN ZINEN”**

You’ve taken leave of your senses.

Aaron Lansky wrote, “It’s been almost a hundred years since my Galitsianer grandmother arrived at Ellis Island. If you’d told her then that one day his grandson would be invited to the White House, she might have believed her—for her, America was a land of unlimited opportunity. But if you told her that one day her language, Yiddish, would be honored in the White House, she would have thought you were aropgegangen fun zinen, that you’d taken leave of your senses.”

- . **CHALLAHTOSIS**

A temporary but painful condition brought upon by the prolonged ingestion and exposure to challah, especially following Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

(Marnie Winston-Macauley, “Marnie’s Guide to Unique Jewish Diseases)

. AD-O-PHOBIA

Fear that an ad in a Jewish publication will result in few, if any, replies.

Steve “Shecky” Platt got divorced when he was fifty. When he decided to start dating, he placed an ad in The Jewish Journal that said, “50-year-old Unemployed Loser. I do not like movies, music, dancing, theater, arts, literature, dining, vacations, cruises, or walks on the beach.” He received 183 responses.
(Source: Old Jews Telling Jokes” by Sam Hoffman with Eric Spiegelman)

. RESTAURANT MENU PHOBIA

Fear that you will not understand some of the offerings on the House “Specials” menu.

The Metropolitan Diary, (New York Times), April 18, 2005, contained a letter from Ed Martin:

Dear Diary:

I went with a friend to the Sparta Restaurant for lunch. My friend ordered a tuna on toast; no problem.

I noticed souvlaki on the special blackboard and asked for that.

The waitress said, “A Sue-what?”

I replied, “A souvlaki, It’s a Greek sandwich.”

She said with a shrug, “What do I know from Greek? I’m Jewish.”

Being the rare argumentative New Yorker, I answered back, “But this is a Greek restaurant; you should learn.”

She gave me a look of dismissal and said, “If I could learn, I’d be a doctor.”

UP-THE-DOWN-STAIRCASE PHOBIA

Fear that you’ll get a teaching position in a large NYC school and that you’ll receive the following two letters from parents:

Dear Teacher,

My son, Eric, uses the elevator at your high school. He informed me that the elevator is running EROTICALLY due to extreme heat in the machine room.....

Dear Teacher:

My son has been diagnosed with attention-deficit Disorder (ADD). For your information, in MY DAY we had a Yiddish word for it: “shpilkes.”

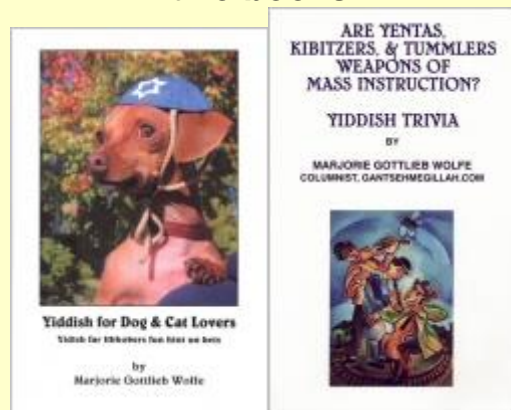
—
MARJORIE WOLFE is suffering from “What’s in A Name” Phobia. Inventive parents are creating new baby names. When her 7th grandchild—a boy—is born in October, she wonders if he’ll be named Noah, Liam, Mason, Jacob or William, five of the most popular names in 2016. She’s

fearful that he might be named “Llewyn” (from the Coen brothers’ movie, Inside Llewyn Davis) or “Wizdom.” Seattle hip-hop artist, Wisdom, would be thrilled.

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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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