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PULLING THE HOOK

While this wasn't anything that approached a *'Sophie's Choice'* type of decision – at the time it seemed pretty important to me. Last Saturday I was helping my son's friends disentangle her fishing net from a fishing lure. This was no ordinary lure – it was clearly designed by someone who thought that more is always better and why settle for just one hook when it's possible to include 12!

We were already running late and I was feeling a bit rushed. Every time I disengaged one of the hooks another would suddenly become possessed and would leap back into the mesh net leaving me to start over again. In this case practice did not make perfect – it made for frustration that culminated in my attempting to force matters --- a reckless decision driven home by the hook that became implanted straight into my thumb. It all happened in a flash. I didn't know which felt worse – the pain in my thumb or my loss of dignity from being so foolish!

For the uninitiated a fishing hook has a barb on the end that allows it to go in – but prevents it from coming out. Very ingenious and very effective. Now I am still late to drop the kids off and I have a hook stuck in my thumb. In such a situation there are only two choices. Cut the shank of the hook and push it through and out is typically the best choice --- but it doesn't work very well when the hook is angled straight down into your thumb. The other choice is to pull it back out the *'hard way'*. Unfortunately I knew that it would have to be this second choice. I called over my son-in-law, handed him the pliers and told him that this had to be a onetime effort. I didn't want to do this twice. He took control and with one quick pull what had to be done was done. Surprisingly the

pain was not at all proportional to amount of blood that dripped out of me in my subsequent rush to get it cleaned and bandaged.

Older people know all about making *'painful decisions'*.

Young people tend to look for and find ways to *'fix'* what is broken. There is time and opportunity to *'do over'* and give things another try when they go wrong. But older people know that with some things there are no *'second chances'* and that for other problems there is simply not enough time for a *'do-over'*.

As much as might try to plan and prepare we will still find ourselves in situations where there is no *'win-win'* solution. Sometimes there are only *'lose-lose'* solutions where the best we can do is to minimize the damage. These are the decisions that are the most painful.

What I have learned from my older friends is that when confronted with situations where there is no *'good'* solution – to pick a path and go forward boldly. There comes a time when *'action'* trumps *'inaction'* – and that is never more important when you have a painful decision to make. Because they have been around a while --- older people intuitively understand that healing cannot begin until after the pain has been inflicted. They know that putting off the pain does not eliminate the pain.

Sometimes – no matter how much we would like there to be a painless solution – we still have to just *'pull the hook'* and move on.

Age Well!

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