

#302

February 4, 2012

C SHARP

Last weekend I was practicing my saxophone when I realized that I couldn't play a low C sharp. This was strange. Over the years I have become pretty good at repairing various instruments so I sat down to figure out what was the matter --- and I soon found myself baffled. A saxophone get pretty complicated by having keys that function differently when pressed in combination with other keys. Everything was working just as it should --- and I was sure of it --- but I still couldn't get that low C#. In theory everything was fine – but the proof is in the pudding – and it just didn't play right.

I decided to look a another saxophone just to see if there was any difference. I was amazed to find that on this other saxophone the same fingering combination prescribed for a low C# lifted a pad about a quarter mile away at the far end of the horn --- in a place where it never even occurred to me to look for a problem. With nothing more than the flick of a finger a stuck pad was released and I was back in business!

You don't know what you don't know until you know it!

I was so convinced that I knew what I was doing that I didn't leave myself open to the possibility of the solution being somewhere else. In my mind the problem had to be with one of the 6-8 keys and pads I was working with --- it never occurred to me any other keys/pads could play a role at all.

How often do each of us close ourselves off to new ideas and new ways of looking at things because we think we already know it all? We tend to create 'comfort zones' where what we do and how we do it just makes sense. We get used to one computer program and really don't want all the frustration that can come with learning an entirely new system. We get used to having things in the same place in the grocery store and find it frustrating to have to go hunting for what we

want instead of picking it up in its 'usual' place. We crave the comfort of the known and avoid the new and strange.

Think for a minute just how hard it must be to get your head around the idea of moving to a retirement community! Now there are all kinds of questions and emotions that have to be dealt with: "Moving is too much work", "Does this mean that I am old?", "Will I fit in?", "Will I make new friends?", "Can I really afford it?", "What will the kids think?", "Will the house sell?", "Will we have enough space?", "What will we do with all our stuff?" and more and more and more.

When you look at this way you might wonder why anyone would choose to move to a retirement community. Why would they choose to leave the lifestyle they know to face the uncertainty of a new lifestyle? Change is never easy and as the story goes there is only one person who actually looks forward to change: A wet baby!

There are two reasons that most of will embrace change and it can be either but is oftentimes both reasons: We want to solve a problem or we want to seize an opportunity. Some people move to a retirement community to eliminate the problems of property management and of living alone. Some people move to retirement communities because they see how much fun and security that their friends have there. Of course for many people the decision is a combination of both --- solving a problem and choosing a new future!

But how can you know what you don't know? I know we don't want to look at retirement options the way I looked at fixing my saxophone. I knew that it wasn't working the way that it should and I was convinced I knew where the problem was. As long as I was looking in the wrong place it didn't matter if I had the skill to fix the problem – because I couldn't see the problem. The problem wasn't hidden – I was just looking in the wrong place.

While it might be a problem that takes you to the door of a retirement community --- it could well be the opportunity that it provides that brings you through that door. Of course I've met many people who live in denial that anything will ever happen to them and they move in for the great lifestyle – only

to find out at a later date that when a problem arises how glad they are to have made the decision.

How did I open my eyes to my saxophone problem? I finally realized that no matter how many times that I kept looking at the 'broken' saxophone that I was not going to see the problem. To see the problem I had to look beyond what I had in front of me and find something to compare it to. And when I did the problem became instantly clear and the solution obvious.

If you are retirement age and live at home the best way to broaden that view is to talk to someone who lives at a retirement community. Opening your eyes to other options doesn't mean that you need to take action. For some it confirms that they are already doing the right thing in staying at home – while for others it opens the door to future possibilities

Age Well!

Howard Chandler has worked in elder services for over 35 years and is Vice-President of Meredith Bay Colony Club along with being a Partner of White Mountain Eldercare Solutions. Your comments are always appreciated. chandler@metrocast.net and at chandler@meredithbaycolonyclub.org and on Facebook.