

April 21, 2014

My Psychotic Nerve

Malapropism - a confused use of words in which an appropriate word is replaced by one with a similar sound but ludicrously inappropriate meaning.

Last month, I was helping move some heavy tables in preparation for a seminar which was to be held in the chapel where I work. I was so focused on not injuring my bad ankle while moving the tables that I ended up twisting my lower spine and pinching my sciatic nerve.

As I spent the ensuing weeks walking funny, not sitting down and eating piles of ibuprofen, I realized that the world can be divided into two general categories of people: those who have had a sciatic nerve injury and those who haven't. For previously injured people, all I need to do is say "sciatic nerve" and I get knowing looks and commiseration. For those who never experienced the joy of sciatica, I get blank looks and a "so what?" response.

A nerve injury is not like a pulled muscle or joint injury. Those are merely painful episodes which generally resolve themselves in a timely, logical manner - either by healing or some sort of medical attention. A sciatic nerve injury sends excruciating pain down one or both legs, hurts no matter what - sitting, lying down, standing, are all painful - and takes forever to heal. I ate a ton of ibuprofen but I don't think it did any good. Finally, about a month after the injury, the pain started to subside. What a relief that was!

During my ordeal, I did very little except stand up as much as possible because that is what hurt the least. I started referring to my nerve injury as a psychotic nerve because it had a mind of its own. Nothing I could do would heal it faster or reduce the level of pain. Calling it a "psychotic nerve" was an intentional malapropism. I realized that I often use malapropisms on purpose. Many people I encounter in prison think I'm just plain stupid and don't know the difference between the words. The other day, as we were setting up the chapel for a veteran's meeting, I referred to them as "veterinarians" because I think malapropisms are amusing. My coworker thought I made a mistake and started teasing me which I thought was even funnier. So while he was laughing at me for my malapropism, I was laughing at him because he was not perceptive enough to realize I did it on purpose.

Anyway, to bring this pointless discourse to an anticlimactic end, my psychotic nerve is about 95 percent healed and I'm pretty much back to normal. Fortunately, I didn't have to see a psychologist to recover from my injury :)