

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

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Laughing At Myself, or, Confessions of a Caffeine Fiend

I think the ability to laugh at oneself is vital to happiness. There are things that make me laugh at myself and one of them is my love/hate relationship with caffeine.

I generally drink decaffeinated coffee because I like the taste of coffee but don't like the effects of daily intake of caffeine. I especially hate having to pee so much when I ingest caffeine. But I also love how caffeine makes me feel. I have boundless energy, am flooded with waves of optimism and view the world with rose-colored glasses. It varies from day to day whether I decide to go with or without caffeine. The last thing I want to do is ingest it every day and face the prospect of a caffeine headache if I get deprived of my daily dose of caffeine.

Another factor that enters into my calculation is that since coming to Stanley, I have gotten frequent migraine headaches. Often, I get 2 or 3 headaches per week. The only thing that seems to make them go away are the pills I take which have caffeine in them. Sometime\$ I go a couple of weeks without a headache, other times there is only a day or two between headaches. There's no rhyme or reason for the headaches. The biggest reason I do not ingest caffeine every day is that I'm afraid that if I do, the pills will no longer work to get rid of my headaches.

But that isn't what I intended to talk about. I watch how I act both with and without caffeine in my system and that's where laughing at myself comes in. Usually, I do not say very much unless I am conveying or receiving information. I do not do well engaging in small talk - the "how's the weather" type of conversation. Unless I have caffeine in my system. Then I become a motormouth. Generally, a few minutes or more after I take caffeine, I notice my mouth going at 90 miles an hour. I become the king of small talk. I listen to myself and it's as if someone else is doing the talking. I share this or that, I opine on various subjects or take an interest in what others have to say. And that's what I think is so funny. I either lack the energy or desire to chatter until I have caffeine in my system. But once I do, it's like someone hit the power switch and away I go.

Perhaps when I leave Stanley my headaches will stay behind and I'll also leave my caffeine fixation behind. But for now, I'll always have something to laugh at myself about.

What's your caffeine story?