

# I Just Have **1** Question

## Would You Mind Spelling That for Me?

### Part 2 of 4



by Doug Carpenter

If you didn't catch August's *I Just Have 1 Question* — which is still posted on-line at [www.after50news.com](http://www.after50news.com), this month's installment might be a little confusing. So let's see

if I can demystify it for you. It picks up where we left off with last month's introduction of a four-part funalysis [...by now you should know that I'm not afraid to make up words...] of the ABCs of the "New Normal." The latter half of our alphabuddies will get their respective moments in the spotlight in the October and November issues, but for now I hope you'll enjoy discovering the humor and heart behind...

## The ABCs of the "New Normal" Letters G through M



Some words have a way of spontaneously changing their meaning right under our noses.

[Coke: Refreshing beverage? Or mind-frying drug? Good to know at parties that may be serving both.] Over the years, "gigs" have gone from being the hard-to-come-by paid performance dates bands were always looking to book to the "side

hustles" underemployed but enterprising types lined up to make ends meet.

Today, they're the kind of gainful — if non-traditionally structured — employment that landed the pandemic-displaced workers who held them squarely in the middle of a messy policy battle over *if, how* and *what* employer benefits and/or government assistance they should be eligible for — particularly during the lockdown. [Obviously not the best time to get the band back together.]



Sure. I've been called "pig-headed" a time or two. And I'm definitely capable of being "as stubborn as a mule." [Just ask my wife.] I can't say, though, that I'm any too pleased to be considered part of a "herd" — even if the designation does come with immunity to an otherwise deadly disease. But we may as well get used to hearing it invoked as our "brand," considering how much work it took to corral it.



And speaking of immunity, who among us wouldn't want to be able to pull a card out of our pocket that

would get us out of a tight spot, or cure what ails us? Unfortunately, the "bitter pills" that life has always fed us and will *continue* to dispense aren't likely to get any easier to swallow any time soon. [But then, no one said they *would*, now *did* they?]



Social justice. Racial justice. Economic justice. Gender equity. Freedom of expression. Freedom of belief. Freedom from fear. So many causes. So many voices. So many diverse people with so many diverging views. During the "old" normal, people hungered passionately for a justice that does what *by definition* justice is *supposed* to do — treat them, and everyone else, equally and fairly. And going forward, those voices are only going to grow more passionate and audible.



As my Mom used to say, "It takes all kinds." Sure enough, it turns out she was right. But what she *didn't* warn me about is just how *many* "kinds" we would be called upon to co-exist with, and how challenging doing that respectfully and peaceably could be.

With all the unprecedented things [...*Wow* — That word really *is* hard to avoid...] that *have happened, are* *Continued on Page 11*



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**Would You Mind Spelling That for Me?**

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happening and will happen in the world around us, we're now required to process so much more information than we ever could've anticipated. And it obviously follows that all the different "kinds" of people around us will invariably do it in whatever way they, as they are entitled to, see fit.

Some people will "know" some things. Others will "know" others. And of course, you can always count on there being a few "know-it-alls" happily hanging around waiting for a chance to stir the pot. And just as inevitably, a lot of us will disagree over what's true and what isn't and try our best to sort out the facts from the opinions and the outright malarkey — hopefully civilly and without hostility.

However it plays out, we can survive the "know-thises," and the "know-thats," and even the "know-it-alls." But what we don't need [...and yet are bound to still be burdened with...] are any more "know-it-nots" — people who have zero interest in learning or becoming better informed about anything. [I thank you all for trying really hard not to be one of those.]

I truly wish all of these little alphabetical vignettes could project lively, optimistic visions of what the "New Normal" holds for us. But the reality is that recovering from the physical adversity so many of us have endured will not go as smoothly for some of us as for others. There already are and will yet be more who — although they were fortunate enough to have survived the Coronavirus — will continue to fight an on-going battle against what's commonly being called COVID-19 Long-Haulers' Syndrome. To any and all such medically-beset brothers and sisters that you may encounter,

please show patience and compassion. And count your blessings.



I also hope no one is disappointed that M isn't for "Mask." Apart from being waaay too predictable, it's also something we should all be geared up and ready to consign to the past. After all, how successful can we be at embracing the "new" normal with the "old normal" still hanging around our necks [...or, less attractively, from our ear.] Besides, the record turnaround time in which medical science developed the mRNA vaccine platform that makes so much of today's treatment and prevention possible was a truly

monumental achievement. And if that's not M-worthy, I don't know what is.

Well, we've reached the halfway point in our 26-letter journey through the ABCs of the "New Normal," with the remaining two installments scheduled to appear in *After 50's* October and November issues. Hope you can make it back here next month for Part 3. See you then.

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Throughout *After 50's* first 16 years, veteran WNY writer and columnist Doug Carpenter regularly shared his wry generational observations with readers as *Everyboomer*. He has now returned to write a uniquely-named new monthly humor/opinion column called *I Just Have 1 Question* — which he says he'll ask and then bravely try to answer... without, he fervently hopes, looking excessively foolish in the process. [We wish him luck.]



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