

Lessons in car care extend to personal relationships



JEANABABCOCK

Jeana@BabcockAutoCare.com

My dad is very ill. He is turning 64 this month and has always been a fanatic about eating right and exercising—his biggest goal really has been to be extremely healthy physically. If he were a car, he'd probably reach a million miles based on how he has taken care of himself in that regard.

But life has a way of throwing curve balls; we can never be sure of anything. Four years ago, Dad was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. This was a devastating diagnosis for someone with such awesome physical health, and whose life revolved around exercise and eating.

His health has slowly declined but in the past couple of months, the decline has sped up with dementia and confusion increasing significantly and his body wasting away—he is 6 feet tall but weighs only 130 pounds. This change in health made my dad consider other aspects of his life ... namely his relationship with my family and an urgent need to make amends.

You see, just before Dad was diagnosed, he came for a visit—at which time he was very unkind to my son. So much so that my son asked, "Why does Grandpa hate me?" Right then, I knew I needed to speak truth in love to my father on behalf of my son. Before then, I had never questioned my dad. If I did not agree with something he said or did, I was quiet out of respect. I suppose

that day my "mama bear" of protection needed to be heard because of the pain in my son's heart.

Unfortunately, my loving words fell on deaf ears, and bitterness against me rose in my father. Following that visit, our already poor relationship became further strained. There was very little communication between us, there was much bitterness in my dad's heart, and my heart has simply been broken.

Knowing his urgency and great desire to make amends, my husband and I flew Dad and his wife here for a visit last weekend. How horrible it was to see Dad in such poor health. My already broken heart shattered because of the lost time in our relationship. He was just a shell of his former self and was confused most of the time. But there were moments that we had together that you could see his heart swell with love for me and my children—and you could see and hear the regrets he had for his lack of relationship with us. It was a time for such love and forgiveness and I am so very grateful it happened before the Lord takes him home.

In honor of Dad and in recognizing national car care month, I want to share with you some lessons I've learned.

DO CHECK UPS BEFORE STUFF BREAKS

Prior to the fallout I had with Dad, things were not particularly good. There were cracks, brittleness, and corrosion in our relationship. We ignored them. Had we addressed problems as they came, we could have replaced bad things before they broke.

The same holds true for your vehicle. This is the time of year to do a good inspection to make sure your vehicle is ready to head into the winter months ahead. Here are some of the things that need to be checked:

Hoses and belts. Make sure they are not cracked, brittle, frayed, loose, or showing signs of excessive wear.

Battery. Test it to be sure it's healthy, and make sure the connections are clean, tight, and corrosion-free.

Brakes. Make sure the entire system is working well for best stopping on the upcoming winter roads.

Exhaust. Inspecting for leaks, damage, and broken supports is always wise.

HVAC. Proper heating and cooling performance is important for interior comfort and safety reasons (like defrosting your windows).

Steering and suspension. Inspect all components annually: shocks, struts, ball joints, tie rods, etc., to make sure you will be rolling safely.

Tires. Check pressure, tread, bulges, and bald spots for safety and increased gas mileage. Protect your new tires by making sure your vehicle is properly aligned.

Wipers and lights. With fewer daylight hours and snowy conditions, proper lighting and clear windshields are a must.

FLUSH TO KEEP EVERYTHING CLEAN AND PREVENT BUILDUPS

Sometimes in our relationships we need a good flush in the form of forgiveness and a clean heart. A little bitterness dirties your heart and as you ruminate on that bitterness, often times you find other yucky stuff to add to it, creating build-up and a dirtier heart. Flushing away the dirt



is as simple as saying you are sorry, asking for forgiveness, or extending forgiveness. Understanding the need for this, humbling yourself and starting the conversation is the first step.

Likewise, fluid gets a bit dirty in your vehicle from all of the cleaning and protection it provides. Over time, it gets dirtier and dirtier. If left unattended, it can get so dirty it leaves deposits where they shouldn't be, creating build-up along the areas it's supposed to be cleaning. The build-up then becomes so hard that regular flushing doesn't work and you'll need a more invasive procedure to chip away at it—or worse yet, you'll have to replace the part because it's too far gone to be repaired.

DO REPAIRS IN A TIMELY FASHION

With both vehicles and relationships, we have a choice. We can either fix a

problem as it becomes known, wait to fix it, or not fix it at all. The questions we must ask ourselves to make this decision are virtually the same:

What will it cost us? (In dollars or in pride)

What are the benefits of repair?

What happens if we wait?

What might happen if we don't fix it at all?

Ultimately, the decision is yours. There are people who can help you make it but it may not affect them as it affects you. We must take ownership of our decisions and either reap the rewards in good ones or suffer the consequences of our bad ones. For me, forgiving my dad and having some time to reconnect in love was one of the best decisions I have ever made.