

# GUEST EDITORIAL

## REBOOT

Rochelle Mozlin, O.D.

**So many** of you have called and sent e-mail messages over the past week. You can't imagine how much it means to have your friends rally around you when you are surrounded by pain, anger and fear. I am okay, and my family is okay. I do not have any family or friends who worked at the World Trade Center. I was not even in Manhattan on September 11. I was attending to "activities of daily living" at my suburban home, which is a good distance from New York City.

My children were sent home from school early with no explanation. The teachers were not prepared to tell the children, especially the youngest ones, that thousands of people had been killed by terrorists, and that their parents might not be coming home. We all retreated into family units and told our children what had happened in ways we hoped they would understand and help them cope. My job was relatively easy, since we suffered no losses. My children are older, and they seem to understand what has happened as well as implications for the future. I tried to prepare them to hear bad news when they returned to school the next day. Indeed, two students from the middle school have lost their fathers. I thought it was going to be much worse.

I prepared myself for bad news when I returned to work on Thursday. But again, the impact on the college community was far less than I would have expected. The upper floors of the college have many offices that face south and many stood at those windows on Tuesday morning. It's bad enough to have those images forever burned into my brain from TV. I can't imagine having

been there or watching it unfold. There is a Fire House directly opposite the rear entrance to our building, on 43rd Street. The door to the firehouse is up but there are no firetrucks there. I've been told they lost many men from their company. I can't bear to walk past there. I am lucky. I have not experienced nightmares. I have had difficulty sleeping and I am coping with my own version of ADD. Focusing on any task for more than 5 minutes has been very difficult if not impossible. But I am lucky. These symptoms are beginning to subside as my life begins to regain some sense of normalcy.

When I walked to the college from Grand Central Terminal on Thursday, I sensed the grief that has gripped the city. People were crying on the streets, no one was smiling and no one was walking very fast. Yes there are grand displays of patriotism and great effort and support at Ground Zero. But as I gazed south down the expansive avenues, which were devoid of traffic, I could see the giant cloud that was engulfing the southern tip of Manhattan and the psyche of every New Yorker. New York City remains a very different place.

The days after the attack on America were filled with the stories of the survivors. A husband would often use the stairwells to avoid being seen by management when he made his mid-morning foray to the gym. He got out because he knew the location of every stairwell in the building. A father fled the enveloping black cloud and found himself on the Staten Island Ferry. He spent the next 10 hours getting home. When he walked in the door, he realized he had never

called home and his family was sure he was dead. He has vowed never to return to lower Manhattan. A brother arrived at the World Trade Center late because he took his young daughter to school that day. Not one person from his company has emerged from the rubble.

These stories have spurred many people, including myself, to re-evaluate their lives. Suddenly the important things are much clearer. Today is the first day of the rest of my life and I want to make today count. I want to stay closer to home and spend more time with my family and friends. I have decided that it is time to reboot. Yes, I have simultaneously pushed those three buttons—control, alternate, and delete. It is time to gain greater control over my health and well-being. I will consider alternate life styles and life choices. And I will delete those patterns that have a negative impact on myself and my family.

I have already taken some small but very positive steps since rebooting. I purchased a good pair of walking sneakers and I have begun to explore my neighborhood on foot. Often I plug myself into audio books, choosing classics that I never got around to reading. I bought pedometers for myself and my children and we are engaged in a "step challenge," to see who clocks the most steps during the course of the day. My personal best is 8,636 steps. I spent a spectacular Sunday afternoon bike riding with my sons. I made an appointment to have my teeth cleaned. I bought a vegetarian cookbook, not because I have decided to become a vegetarian,

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but because I am determined to bring a more healthful diet to my family's dinner table. I no longer drink caffeinated beverages. I have pledged that I will not eat lunch at my desk and work through my lunch hour. I now use part of that time to run errands, visit the Mid-Manhattan library, or just explore midtown. Everyday I pick up the telephone and call someone I love.

Rebooting takes time, and I have decided that the time will come from the time I have previously devoted to optometry and my professional life. To do otherwise would fly in the face of my reboot philosophy. I will not cram more activities and a longer to-do list into my 24 hour day. I will do less and savor the time I have given myself to accomplish these tasks. Less is more. I am not retreating from optometric practice into the blissful retirement of a health nut. I enjoy my work as an optometric educator too much for that. But I am learning to say no. I will no longer commit myself to more than can reasonably fit on my optometric plate. I will say yes to those activities that please me or fit into my goals to learn and grow. I will continue to write for just those reasons. But the time I am devoting to rebooting will remain sacrosanct.

Many years ago my husband bought me a book entitled "Life's Little Instruction Book, 511 Reminders for a Happy and Rewarding Life."<sup>1</sup> Number 209 reads, "observe the speed limit." Yes, it is time for me to put on the brakes, smell a few roses, and focus on what is really important. Control, alternate, delete.

**Reference**

1. Brown HJ. Life's little instruction book, 511 reminders for a happy and rewarding life. Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 1991.

*Rochelle Mozlin, O.D., September 20, 2001.  
Today is my father's birthday.*