

Lefties in a Right Hand World

Have you ever wondered about your left-handed friends and relatives? Do they view the world a little differently? Do they march to a different drummer?

Biological and psychological explanations aside, southpaws have to cope in a right-handed world. More manufactured goods than you ever imagined are produced to accommodate the 85 to 90 percent of the population that is right handed . Left handers have to adapt.

Beginning when we first pick up scissors, lefties sense that life is unfair. Even an otherwise friendly crayon says, Crayola [written upside down] when looking at it grasped in the left hand. Look where the stamp is placed on an envelope, quite convenient for righties. The leftie wonders, “Am I in the wrong place?” Sure, there are boutiques specializing in left-handed objects (scissors, rulers, coffee mugs), but these are mere novelty items—sinister tokenism.

Where are the cameras with shutter releases and cars with ignition switches that can be activated with the left hand? Or how about dress shirts with the pocket where it is easily accessible to the left hand, or wrist watches with the stems on the left for dexterous southpaws?

Maybe lefties are supposed to use pocket watches, but if men’s trousers have a watch pocket, it is on the right. (The pant fly is also designed for right hand use.) The hip pocket with the button to secure one’s wallet, however is on the left. Does this make it easier for southpaws to spend money? Maybe “yes” for folding money, but not for coins. Just look where the coin slots are on vending machines and pay phones—situated for right hand use.

No wonder lefties may be gauche at dinner. Butter knives, serrated knives, dessert forks and ladles all work great—for the righteous. Even spoons are subtly biased. Yes, hold a spoon in your left hand and turn it over. The writing is upside down.

Shoot a shotgun left-handed and the casing ejects into your cheek. Lefties watch out for power saws of all types. They are not designed for us. Items like these may explain a study done several years ago. It indicated that southpaws do not live as long as the righteous.

“Interesting,” you may say, “but how does all this relate to hand surgery?” Well, this is one area where the score evens out. Because we lefties give our right hands a good workout every day in this right-handed world, a bandage or cast on our left hand still leaves us a dexterous and experienced hand free. Not so for righties, who may need to make quick friends with their newly discovered south paw while the north one is out of commission.

It is the same for surgeons. Lefties gradually learnt to use right-handed instruments, resulting in ambidextrous skills only dreamed of by the righteous. Furthermore, lefties make terrific first basemen. If you don’t understand why, ask a baseball nut.