



Ned Hickson

What an escaped hamster taught me about crisis management

When you find yourself force-feeding Pepto Bismol into your child's constipated hamster, you figure you've faced one of your greatest challenges as a parent. In fact, over the years, for us it has become the measuring stick by which all family crisis is measured:

"Our son backed the car into a tree? Well...I suppose it's still better than dealing with a constipated hamster..."

In fact, the only crisis that has come close — appropriately enough — involved the same hamster. It was a moment that began with a simple statement from my daughter.

"Dad, I can't find Squiggles." Those words, uttered just three nights after the constipation incident, transformed a quiet Wednesday evening into a full-scale hamster hunt.

Within minutes, our team was assembled around the kitchen table for a briefing.

"There's no telling how long he's been on the outside," I said. "There's a good chance he's already assumed a new identity — perhaps as a mouse or gerbil. Keep your eyes open."

A collective nod from the team.

"We're going to concentrate our efforts in the area between the guest room, hamster cage and attic," I said. "It's called cross-triangulation."

"I see, like the Bermuda

Triangle," my oldest daughter said.

I gave everyone their assignments, then dispersed the posse. "Let's go do some good!"

Excitedly, my then two-year-old son broke from the group and rushed through the kitchen with his flashlight — then promptly sat in our dog's water bowl.

Things pretty much went downhill from there.

What makes hamsters so hard to catch is that... well, they're small. And they can make themselves even smaller just by *thinking* about it.

They also have no bones and can run in excess of 70 mph. None of this is covered in the handbook, which portrays hamsters as funny, quizzical characters with special little pouches for storing

food on either side of their jaws.

What the book doesn't tell you is that those "little pouches" can actually stretch to accommodate food items much larger than the hamster itself, similar to an anaconda's ability to swallow the entire Budweiser draft horse team.

It was this thought that surfaced as I scooted belly-first through the crawlspace in our attic with a flashlight wedged between my teeth. I've never been keen on tight spaces, so when I caught the reflection of black eyes peering back at me from the insulation, I wasn't thrilled to discover that my rear end — which had slipped forward through the crawl space with minimal effort — was now meeting resistance similar to an ele-

phant backing into a shower stall.

In front of me, Squiggles was preparing his pouches for something really BIG.

"He's over here!" I called out in a tone my daughter mistakenly thought was a scream.

"Where are you?"

"Purgatory. Or the crawl space in our attic, I forget which."

"Can you see him?"

"Yes, and he looks hungry."

"Can you grab him?"

"Not exactly; I can't move."

Fortunately, I learned a couple of things during this

recovery mission. First, given a choice, hamsters prefer fruit rolls to fat rolls. I also learned that cooking spray is as effective as WD-40 when it comes to loosening grown men out of tight spaces.

And even though Squiggles is no longer with us, he lives on.

I don't mean in the walls.

I mean by helping me keep perspective with each family crisis.

Especially if there's Pepto Bismol involved.

Ned is a syndicated columnist with News Media Corporation. Write to him at nedhickson@icloud.com.

Florence Garden Club to host plant sale May 7

Florence Garden Club will hold its annual plant sale and raffle May 7, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Disabled American Veteran's building, 1715 21st St.

The plant sale, held the day before Mother's Day, offers hundreds of plants provided by club members in 4-inch and larger pots, priced from \$1.

Many are suitable as Mother's Day gifts.

Large plants, shrubs, vegetables and garden art will also be available for purchase, all well below retail prices.

In addition to plants, local merchants and restaurants have donated raffle prizes.

Tickets will be available at the door; winners don't have to be present.



COURTESY PHOTO

The annual Garden Club plant sale offers hundreds of plants ready to be added to gardens and flower beds.

All proceeds will provide scholarships to Siuslaw and Mapleton graduating seniors.

Last year, the club awarded scholarships totaling \$4,000. Scholarships are awarded to

seniors planning a post high school career in horticulture or a related field such as forestry or environmental sciences.

Since the club began the scholarship program in 1994, more than \$51,000 in scholarships has been awarded.

The Florence Garden club currently has more than 100 members. The club's mission statement is "...to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening and aid in the protection of native vegetation, birds, trees, horticulture and marine sciences through educational programs."

The club meets the second Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church, 3996 Highway 101 North.

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PRICE REDUCTION
Enjoy gated community living. Room for all your treasures. Spacious living room. Formal dining room or use as family room. Bdrms at opposite ends of the house
3 Bdrm, 2 Ba 1620 sqft
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NEW LISTING
Palm Harbor immaculate custom home. 38' x 45' garage w/RV parking & bonus craft/hobby workshop. Lots of upgrades
3 Bdrm, 2 1/2 Ba 2469 sqft
\$425,000 BH7230 ML#16361676

NEW LISTING
Wooded lot with native vegetation. Manufactured or stick built. Close to Sutton Lake
.49 acre
\$35,000 BH7227 ML#16646489

PRICE REDUCTION
Motivated seller to cash or prequalified buyers. Beautiful home inside & out. Upgrades throughout in this 3-5 bdrm very clean & neat home. 2 car garage & RV parking
3-5 Bdrm, 2 3/4 Ba 1756 sqft
\$214,900 BH7197 ML#16567076

PRICE REDUCTION
Recreational lakefront on Collard Lake .47 acre, old growth trees, seasonal creek, warm southern exposure. Canoe, kayak, paddleboat, swim, fish & picnic!
\$65,000 BH7098 ML#15124919

FEATURED LISTING
Siuslaw riverfront .36 acre lot in gated community of Shelter Cove. City water, sewer & power available. Minutes to town
\$169,000 BH7201 ML#16476715

NEW LISTING
Newer custom home on private .47 acre lot in upscale Heceta South. Trex deck with large front & back porch. Bonus room
2 Bdrm + den, 2 Ba 2005 sqft
\$393,500 BH7232 ML#16297575

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