

## The Changing Shrink

By Arthur Shapiro



A feeling of calm spread over my whole body. This place has always had that effect. I settled in, but something was different.

As I waited for my appointment with my therapist, I noticed the waiting room had changed. The peaceful paintings and photographs were gone. Abstract art was in their place. Abstract? It looked like someone had been sick on the walls. The sedate and comfortable furnishings had given way to loud, obnoxious décor.

Okay, so it's been six months since I last saw him, but what brought on these changes?

I used to walk into the waiting room and immediately felt calm, relaxed, and at home. Now, it looks like I wandered into a cross between a fun house and the set of a 1960s 'B' movie.

Just then, the door to his office opened, and a patient walked out. I have shirts older than her. She looked like she was in her 20s, not the age group I was used to seeing in this office. She smiled in the benign way a kid smiles at an old codger, which I am far from being.

At last, my therapist came out and ushered me in.

His office used to be serene and comfortable, but now it looks like a set from a teeny-bopper film, and it gives off the aura of someone trying to be what they are not.

His greeting to me was met with a WTF look on my face. "Doc, what happened? How did your practice turn into this... this... weird fun house."

As he ushered me to the most uncomfortable couch I had ever encountered, he explained that his practice had been doing poorly. Patients had left, a number had become seriously ill, and some had passed away. He needed to attract new clientele. But then he added the kicker.

"Look, my former patients just wore me out. I was sick and tired of hearing the same lame complaints about how their children have become difficult adults, the pain of aging, the worries, the money complaints, the sexual dysfunction problems. They were boring me to death."

“Hold on,” I nearly shouted. “That’s your damn job. That’s what you do. What’s wrong with you?”

He answered, “I’m tired of the senior kvetching and want more contemporary problems to deal with.”

I just looked at him, gave him the middle finger salute, and left.

As I slammed the door behind me, I could hear him shout that I still had to pay for this visit. “Try and collect, asshole!”