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Survival of the Fittest

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Survival of the Fittest

Howie Kaplan

While killing time in a nearby drugstore, Billy Smith glanced at something that immediately caught his eye. It was an umbrella, not just any umbrella, but a special one. Reading its packaging, Billy discovered that a consumer safety board had approved it as certifiably "Poke your eye-out proof." Billy immediately purchased the umbrella, and, confident that he had bought the safest item possible, exited the drugstore and opened the umbrella for no reason other than to try out his new toy. Billy crossed the street when suddenly the umbrella was caught up in a gust of wind. Billy glided across a four-lane highway and was hit head-on by a Mack truck. He died on impact, and that brand of umbrella now sports a "Do not operate in wind" sticker.

The aforementioned umbrella is just one more example of the stupidity of mankind. Because of the twenty percent of humanity that is barely smarter than your average speck of dust, many products now contain labels clearly designed for those barely above apes on the evolutionary ladder. Some popular labels are: "Caution! Coffee is hot!" (We owe thanks for this to the kind old lady who decided that placing a Styrofoam coffee cup between her legs would be a good idea!)

"Do not wear 3-D glasses outside of the theater!" (This is one of the often heard phrases in Disney World.)

"Keep rat poison out of reach of small children." (If ingested, kiss family and friends goodbye and call Poison Control.)

And, for those of us lacking common sense entirely, "Slippery when wet."

Then there is my personal favorite: "Do not operate toaster while in shower or wet."

Now, I don't mean to get off on a rant here, but let's digest the final example, shall we? First of all, if you are so hungry that you feel you should be making a Poptart while showering, perhaps you should spend more time eating and less time anti-bacterializing yourself. Secondly, if you feel that you are so busy you don't have time to separate showering and eating, perhaps you should learn time management. Fitting time into your schedule to eat would be a good idea. Finally, if you are toasting while soaking wet, you will probably remove the Poptart with a metal fork, thus electrocuting yourself anyway.

My point is that anyone who needs these labels to dictate the safety do's and don't's of simple everyday objects probably would have died through natural selection long ago. One great label commonly found on packages of dumbbells is "Caution! Heavy!" Oh, that's marketing genius in action! Perhaps it's time to trim the herd, to allow Darwin's laws to take their course.

Maybe, just maybe, it is cruel to say, "Let the morons die," but is that any crueller than making the entire world stoop to the level of guests on the *Jerry Springer Show*?

In a world like ours, where common sense has become uncommon, a label reading, "Caution! Do not place cap-gun near ears: may cause deafness!" not only wastes ink and paper but insults our intelligence. Safety stickers are self-perpetuating annoyances of the modern world.