



The Transition Network

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Feeling Older? Puleeze.

by Amy Epstein



This is a column about feet. My feet...and maybe your feet, if you're afflicted with any of a litany of foot problems such as bunions, fallen arches, hammer toes, plantar fasciitis or atrophy of the plantar fat pad. Of all the places to lose fat, it is simply cruel that it has to be on the soles of our feet. I can remember as a teenager, and through most of my adult life, being quite cavalier about my feet. I'd buy shoes primarily because they looked good. If they happened to be comfortable, so much the better. I should qualify that last statement a bit by saying that I never bought the towering 3" heels that you see in chic shoe store windows or, occasionally, on the feet

of someone in her 20's teetering down the street. When I did buy heels, they were usually between 1 and 2 inches.

Those days are long gone.

I have graduated into the land of sensible shoes in sensible shoe stores, like Eneslow, Harry's and Tip Top in Manhattan.

However, before I take you with me on a recent shopping excursion to Eneslow on East 79th and 2nd Avenue, I need to recount the reasons why I am fixated on making sure my feet are happy.

I have in my life succumbed to the appeal of jogging. I'm by no means a marathon runner but, historically, I've been able to run about a mile or two without collapsing. I didn't set any speed records and usually terrified small dogs if they were directly in my lumbering path.

Jogging, probably more than anything else, was responsible for a case of plantar fasciitis in my right heel, which made even walking painful.

Both because of the plantar fasciitis and a bonus development in my left knee of a torn meniscus, I made an appointment to see my sports medicine doctor at The Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) who gave me a prescription for a pair of orthotics. I subsequently made an appointment with an office at HSS for the fitting.

After I paid what I deemed an exorbitant amount of money for the pair of orthotics that probably would have fed a family of 4 in Malawi for 6 months, I found that I could only



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wear them in my sneakers, since none of my other shoes had the depth sufficient to accommodate them. So mostly they sat in my sneakers and in my closet.

During a two-week trip to Ireland this past September, I managed to fracture the 3rd metatarsal in my left foot. I'm not exactly sure how I managed to do that but I believe it was the consequence of wearing new shoes with an over-the-counter arch support I inserted (supposedly to help my plantar fasciitis) and doing a lot of walking through medieval stone courtyards, bog lands and other quintessentially charming Irish settings with less-than-ideal footpaths.

The stress fracture was found in an MRI ordered by the podiatrist I see on the Upper West Side, who subsequently told me I needed to be in an "ankle cam walker" for 6 weeks. You know what those are. They're the big gray boots you'll occasionally see someone in as she gingerly tries to maneuver her way around sidewalk crowds, supermarket lines and the general press of New York City humanity, all the while trying to maintain her dignity and balance.

As soon as I graduated out of the cam walker, I took my barely-used pair of orthotics and went to the Eneslow store on 2nd Avenue and East 79 Street recommended by several of my TTN friends who live on the Upper East Side. There I was waited on by Abdoule, whose business card says he is a "Board Certified Pedorthist". After trying on 10 pairs of what can only be described as 'comfy-orthotic-friendly' shoes, from which the sensibilities of a typical 20-year old would have recoiled, I bought a pair. They're by a company called Finn Comfort. They're black, have laces and a rocker bottom, which Abdoule says is better for walking and standing.

I'm still getting used to them but, at this writing, I'm happy to report that my plantar fasciitis doesn't hurt when I wear them. And yesterday, my pedometer says I walked 12,540 steps.

The moral of the story is: fashion is not as important as happy feet. I'm embroidering that on a small throw pillow.

