

## Is Coffee worth this much stress? Is my Stress Test a metaphor for what the US is going through?



The very best thing about Kaiser Redwood City is Sheri's Java Shack. The treadmill in the cardiac stress test room? Not so much. :-)

Ah, the indignities suffered by the 60 year old male! Actually, most probably don't get to go through a cardiac stress test unless there's likely an issue, and unfortunately, some don't discover they should have until they've permanently rented an underground residence. I don't plan to be that guy.

Far as I knew I didn't have any heart issues, but this was one more stop along the path of trying to figure out why I've got the breathing issues I do. Since there is a very direct linkage between pulmonary (lung) and cardiac (heart) performance, this was the final test needed to show if there was something about my heart that might be the root cause of things. I'd previously had a fairly extensive mapping of my heart done using sonography and know all sorts of scary-sounding but OK things about my body's most-important muscle.

I was a bit concerned how I'd do on the test, since my riding's been limited lately and the past 4 days were spent in Phoenix at a bike industry gig, where I ate too much bad food and the only exercise I got was yesterday morning when I finally talked myself into checking out the hotel's fitness room. There I got to face all sorts of unfamiliar DETs (devices of torture) being used by people who knew what they were doing. That last part- people knowing what they were doing there- was a problem. It might have been nice, the day before my stress test, to find out how a treadmill actually works, but there was no way to "play" with one without revealing the truth- that I didn't know how a treadmill worked. That's right, I've never been on one before. Oh sure, metaphorically, I've been on the endless treadmill of life for a very long time!

So instead of using a treadmill, I opted for a recumbent-style exercise bike complete with video screen and computer-controlled pedal resistance. IT WAS NOT AT ALL LIKE YOUR OWN BIKE ON A WHAOO KICKR!!! In fact, I quickly realized I needed to set an amount of time that I would be tortured and head for that goal. The seating position was not comfortable at all; I had to literally push myself up off of it with my hands from time to time. And worse, there was no display of wattage! Just variable resistance that changed with grade and a hand control. Nice images of climbing the Col de Columbiere in France though. But if I'd had any guts (meaning, willingness to really embarrass myself by asking someone how to use a simple treadmill), I would have been better prepared for this morning's test.

Stress? How about trying to get home from Phoenix at a reasonable hour when flights are being delayed due to low visibility at SFO? 10pm arrival home changed to about 11:30pm. Could have been worse.

Worse? How about having a stress test at the exact same time as the inauguration?

Even worse? How about having to pass by your favorite coffee place because you're not allowed to eat or drink two hours before the test? The flip side of that is knowing there's a reward at the end. Assuming you pass the stress test. Otherwise you might be getting fed your non-drug-of-choice through an IV while someone's reworking your heart's plumbing.

As it turned out, everything's just fine with the heart. Better than fine. Even the blood pressure was good. The doc was probably in that "So why were you scheduled for this?" mode. I'm almost sure of it, because after saying that everything looked great, he mentioned the only way to check further would be with a catheter and some more extremely-invasive stuff. At that point I'm wondering if he's testing to see if I'm paranoid and looking for things that don't exist.

So yes mom, I'm fine, better than fine actually. Just still working on fixing the breathing issue, which might simply need a different set of asthma meds.