

# ALASBO

## News Link...



A newsletter publication of Alaska Association of School Business Officials

ALASBO News Link  
is published for the members of the Alaska  
Association of School Business Officials  
and its affiliate members.

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*Would you like to receive this newsletter by print,  
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at the above address.*

## President's Message

Luke Fulp, Kodiak

In our accounting courses, we learned that LIFO was a method for tracking inventory, an abbreviation for "last in, first out". At ALASBO Summer Leadership, held July 22-24 in Fairbanks, we learned that LIFO meant something entirely different.

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Mike Jacoby, Executive Director for Illinois ASBO, facilitated a Life Orientations (LIFO) training on Saturday, July 23rd. During this training, the executive board, along with several members of ALASBO from around the state, examined our level of influence as school business leaders. We did this through analyzing our own behavior and communication styles, given both favorable and unfavorable scenarios. Based on this foundation of self-knowledge, the program offered powerful strategies to enable us to be more productive and more influential when dealing with others.

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By participating in several skill building activities, our group quickly became adept at identifying different communications styles and matching that preferred communication with others as a part of a bridging process. This individualized training was just one highlight of the action-packed weekend. Logowear was another, but that's neither here nor there!

Born out of Melody Douglas' time on the ASBO executive board, this summer meeting has been a great addition to our organization. It gives us an opportunity to set goals; plan for future events; and especially with the addition of leadership trainings such as LIFO, become more effective leaders.

I want to give a special thanks to Robin Mullins and Amy Lujan for making this an event to remember. The weekend was full of tremendous opportunities thanks to their planning and coordination.

Lastly, I encourage all of you to continue to be active members of ALASBO. Both you and your school district stand to gain from quality events such as the one held in Fairbanks.



## **Executive Director's Message**

*Amy Lujan, ALASBO Executive Director*

Echoing Luke's message, we had a great conference in Fairbanks! We greatly appreciate the support of our vendors, who made the event possible at a very low cost to our members: Frontline/AESOP; American Fidelity; Alaska Communications and OCE North America. Three of these vendors had representatives at Friday night's opening dinner and several participated in Saturday and Sunday events as well.

The Dick Swarner family and National CooperativeRX also played a role in bringing more ALASBO members to the event this year, through sponsorship of the Shaping the Future leadership grant. Recipients of this \$500 grant were: Lee Ann Andrew, Southwest Region

Schools, Martha Morgan, Kuspuk School District and Cathi Wojtanek, Nome Public Schools.

In addition to the LIFO leadership training, we made good progress on planning our annual conference! It's rather like sausage making, but we reviewed evaluations and suggestions received throughout the year and have a great line-up of sessions in the works for December – just around the corner!

In the meantime, another great opportunity is still available for ALASBO members to attend the ASBO International Annual Conference in Seattle, September 16-19! This is the closest that the conference will likely be to Alaska for many years. In addition to the great professional development opportunities described below and available for review on the ASBO website, ALASBO members will be coordinating some fun events for our own networking and information sharing. So, register now at [www.asbointl.org](http://www.asbointl.org)!

I know that ALASBO members are busy preparing for the new school year, and likewise ALASBO leadership is working on preparing to support you in the upcoming year through professional development and legislative efforts.

If you have questions about any ALASBO program, please do not hesitate to contact me at [alasbo@gci.net](mailto:alasbo@gci.net), or 907-500-9086. You'll also find useful information at: [www.alasbo.org](http://www.alasbo.org).

## **ALASBO Bridges to the Future Recipient**

Congratulations to Lee Ann Andrew of Southwest Region School District, who has received a Bridges to the Future award from ASBO International to attend the 2011 ASBO Annual Meeting in Seattle. This award is sponsored by Met Life and is open to ASBO members who have been in the school business profession in a supervisory role for less than five years. Twenty recipients were selected to receive the \$2,000 award.

*Good job, Lee Ann!*



## ALASBO OASIS Support Project

*Dennis Niedermeyer, Honorary Member*

This is a notice that due to budget cuts, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development has notified ALASBO that as of July 1, 2011 is no longer able to fund the ALASBO OASIS Support Project. In the past, Department funding allowed ALASBO to provide training, software, and assistance along with data file review and editing services to all Alaska school districts for the fall OASIS data submittal.

The Department has indicated they will be providing some form of support and training directly. Please direct all question related to this coming Fall Oasis to either Peggy Corazza or Mindy Lobaugh at the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development ([peggy.corazza@alaska.gov](mailto:peggy.corazza@alaska.gov) or [mindy.lobaugh@alaska.gov](mailto:mindy.lobaugh@alaska.gov)).

ALASBO will continue to provide quality training and technical assistance on OASIS and many other topics to Alaska school districts though its annual conference, School Business Academy, Summer Leadership Conference and other opportunities throughout the year.

## P-CARD UPDATE

*Amy Lujan, ALASBO Executive Director*

**In June 2011, the IASBO P-card program distributed nearly \$1.6 million in rebates, and \$79,968 of that went to the eight participating Alaska school districts! Why should your district miss out?**

### What's a P-Card?

P-card stands for procurement card. In this program, it's a Mastercard controlled by your school district that can be issued to a person or a department. The district administrator can also control the daily, weekly and transaction limits, and even the types of items that can be purchased on each card.

### How is the Program Set Up?

Illinois ASBO (IASBO) originated this program and has allowed other state affiliates such as ALASBO to become involved. IASBO provides assistance with setting up the program and with issues that arise. Bank of Montreal, which owns Harris Bank in Chicago, is the card issuer.

By participating in the IASBO program, Alaskan districts take advantage of the negotiating power of a much larger group of districts. Many aspects of the program have been customized to school districts.



There are NO annual fees! Rebates come through IASBO annually, in the spring. They're currently 1% or more of transaction volume, depending on the billing cycle selected. In past years, ALASBO retained 25% of the rebate and the school district receives 75%. This year, ALASBO's percentage will decrease as district purchasing volume grows.

District administrators are trained in Details Online, a system that enables them to monitor card activity in real time.

### What are the Benefits?

In addition to the rebates, the p-card program can save money. Management studies have shown that purchase orders and high check volumes are extremely costly. Many districts also struggle to deal with vendors that don't accept PO's, small dollar purchases and last-minute items for maintenance, travel, and special events. Properly managed p-cards can solve many of these headaches and save costs, with fewer PO's, fewer checks, and real-time monitoring of expenditures.

If your district already has a credit card, why not switch to a p-card, with no annual fees and a rebate? Alaskan districts that can pay utility bills and even a few other large-volume vendors with the p-card can generate large rebates quickly, with even a limited program.

### How Can I Sign Up?

Further information and links are at [www.alasbo.org](http://www.alasbo.org), under resources-downloads. The application process does require a Board resolution (since you are applying for credit) and several weeks for bank approval, so get started now! There will be several sessions at the Annual Conference in December for those interested in starting a p-card program.

### ***Send Us Your Pictures!***

*Here's your chance to get your photos into this year's annual conference slide show! Send in your pictures of school sites, activities, and you, the ALASBO members enjoying Alaska! Sent them to: yodean.armour@klawockschool.com.*

# **ALASBO**



## **Member Spotlight**

*Martha Morgan, Kuspuk School District*

### ***Tell us about your school district***

Kuspuk School District is on the Kuskokwim River in southwest Alaska. Kuspuk serves a total of 9 schools at 6 village sites, with a total student count of 345.

### ***How long have you been in school business?***

I have been with Kuspuk School District for 18 years.

### ***How did you get into this business?***

I started out in the Purchasing/Accounts payable department and did that for 4 years, then Payroll for 12 years, and now I'm Business Manager.

### ***What do you like best about your job?***

I enjoy working with my coworkers along with the people that come and go through out the years. It's also great to know that I am a big part of our young people's growth in the community. They may not know it, but we as business office staff are a big part of that.

### ***What advice do you have for those new to school business?***

I encourage you to attend the annual ALASBO conference and don't hesitate to call on other business officials. They are always willing to help when you need it.

### ***How have you benefited from membership in ALASBO?***

There is tons of great information that is very useful in our business department and there is always something new to learn. I've benefited from meeting people who are in similar situations to us. I enjoy the power lunches throughout the year; there is always helpful information. Thanks you guys!

### ***What do you like to do for fun?***

I love to go on boat rides, snow machine rides, berry picking, fish cutting, hunting for moose, go out camping with family and to play basketball of course.

### ***If you could visit anyplace in the world, where would you go and why?***

I would love to go on a family vacation to just somewhere the sun is shining right now. We've had too much rain this summer and hardly any sunshine.

### ***Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know?***

I make slideshows when I have the time and decorate cakes.

### ***What is your proudest accomplishment?***

My four kids. I have three sons: Patrick, Wayne and Riley and one daughter, Skye. This year my husband and I celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Also, I'm proud that I am still here with the district after 18 years.

## **School Business Official of the Year Nomination**

The nomination form for the prestigious School Business Official of the Year award will be available very soon on our website and via email. Nominations will be accepted through October 31.

The School Business Official of the Year award is a peer recognition program. Annually, a panel of previous recipients selects a deserving individual from the nominees submitted based upon their recognized outstanding service, innovative plan design and implementation, and the use of exemplary business practices within school business management.

The award recipient is announced at the ALASBO Annual Conference in December. Please consider nominating a deserving colleague for this award!



## Asking the Next Question

David Arp, Sitka School District

Early on in my career I learned a strategy that I have carried with me throughout my personal and professional life. I had been working for a small investment company trading bonds. For a couple of weeks I had been working closely with an assistant from one of the firms we traded with. I came in early on a Friday morning, dialed his number and was informed by his supervisor that the assistant was let go the previous night. The news came as a bit of a surprise to me because I thought the guy was doing a solid job. When I pressed the supervisor on what happened he explained, "We all liked him and he was a good worker but he just couldn't grasp the concept of asking the next question."

In trading, information is everything. Pieces of information are often called "color" because each trade is perceived as a picture. As you gather more information more of the picture gets filled, or colored, in. The goal is then to gather enough of the color to complete the picture to the point you can make an informed and profitable trade. The art of asking the right questions in order to extract the relevant information is an integral part of the process.



The process when asking the next question is to inquire of both yourself and the individual, "What is everyone's ultimate goal behind this question or concern?" Start by isolating the true underlying issue. Then take a step back, look at the picture in its entirety, and try to visualize everyone's ideal outcome. This is the hard part. Visualizing what you want is typically pretty easy but visualizing what others want can get much more difficult. Finally, prepare a roadmap to lead you that ideal outcome. It may sound complicated but once you've gotten used to the strategy the problems and outcomes begin to identify themselves with greater ease. This concept seems obvious in an environment such as the markets where things can change on a dime. However, it took me a couple of months to realize its value when I started my career as a school business official.

I find that very few people in the District see the organizational details to the extent that we in the business office are required to. This revelation occurred to me about four months after I took the job as Business Manager. An upset employee contacted me claiming that the business office was withholding leave credit on the end of year paycheck for a significant number of employees. (*Note: this description of the event is significantly filtered*). The employee referred to the last round of negotiations stating that changes had been made to correct this specific issue as it had occurred in the past. They were adamant that we were not living up to our end of the arrangement. Being new to the position I panicked and spent about a week or so researching the issue. I tore apart payroll records and past negotiated agreements, reviewed meeting notes, and stirred up a significant number of my coworkers. Eventually, I concluded that everything was correct from the District's end and the employee(s) had earned all of the leave they were entitled.

I scheduled another meeting with the individual and provided evidence showing receipt of all the entitled leave. The employee responded by producing a final pay stub and asking, "Well then how come nothing showed up on my final pay stub under pay period accrued?" A quick look revealed that we had a faulty setting in the payroll system that had caused the remaining balance of the leave to be accrued in the previous check! The employee never looked at the annual total, just the monthly accrual. If I had asked the employee from the start, "What makes you believe you're not receiving your leave?" I would have understood all of this and saved everyone a lot of trouble! In retrospect it was a valuable experience because I did end up learning a lot, but the lesson would have so much better without all the drama.

A final cautionary piece of advice: while this method has proven effective for me, people should be prepared when using it. There will be times when you ask the next question and the answer is something you would have rather not known! I think this is what people mean when they refer to the value of experience...



## Change Your Self-Talk

Mark "Tenacious" Towers

Your self-talk never ends. It is 24/7. It is more powerful than any other person in your life could be. It is the self-talk (the Voice of Judgment) in your head that is a constant stream of thoughts, words, perceptions and judgments that you make about yourself. Since we (as humans) may be the only animal that can think about our thinking, it is important to address these 60,000 plus cognitions that you have each day. This self-talk (VOJ) is a key determinant of your behavior, your physical health, your ability to make peace with yourself and your resiliency. This article is about how to turn your inner critic into a positive coach.



There are only three tools that you have in your "tool bag" to deal with your reality each day—your talent, your motivation and your self-talk. Positive and enabling self-talk helps you better utilize your talents and helps keep your internal drive in high gear. Below are some tools for bettering your life:

**1. Display small signs (such as Post-It Notes) in conspicuous places that read—"Change Your Self-Talk."** These conscious reminders will enable you to become more aware of your Voj. As Fritz Perls, a great psychotherapist, once said, "Awareness, in and of itself, can be curative." Your self-talk can be a stroll down a delightful garden path or it can be a trip to a garbage dump. Awareness is the first step when "flipping" your self-talk from critic to coach.

**2. Your mind is an incredibly high-powered computer and it determines who and what you become.** When you become aware that

you are engaging in negative self-talk, say to yourself, "Delete! Delete!" These words wipe away the negativity. Then re-program your computer's VOJ with something as simple as "I like myself and I can handle anything that comes my way!" Don't continually castigate yourself. Norman Cousins said, "Life is an exercise in forgiveness." This includes forgiving the one person who will never leave you and that is you! Coach yourself as you would coach a best friend who needed your support.

**3. Start your day correctly.** Dr. George Sheehan, a marathon runner, cardiologist and author, began each day with this inner coaching: "Today is the day of the big event!" Now, that's setting up your day for excitement, positive expectations and joy. Similarly, this is my personal early morning favorite: "Charge! It's a great day to be alive!" Early morning coaching is superb "psychological armor" for facing the challenges that lie before you.

**4. "Plug in" what works.** Below are some examples of "good coaching" used by highly successful people that you can use to replace your inner critic. Choose one from the list and repeat it 5-7 times to yourself with meaning and emotion!

- "I cannot fail. I can only learn and grow!"
- "I have choice."
- "When things get crazy, I love it even more!"

A very successful athlete stresses the importance of using positive self-talk and simultaneously visualizing success by making a full-color mental movie in her mind—she sees herself as performing well. Indeed, you must coach yourself to perform at a very high level, too. As Henry Ford once said, "Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right either way." Choose the "I can" path!

**5. Dealing with the down side.** In life, only three "bad" things can happen to you—mishaps, setbacks and tragedies. You can readily deal with the first two and you will know it when you are experiencing a tragedy. Don't "catastrophize" small things and turn "minors" into "majors." When you catch yourself doing this, use this self-talk: "That's NBD—No Big Deal!" This ability to re-focus pays high dividends. Worry is negative goal setting. Furthermore, your body listens and takes cues from your self-talk. Keeping this construct of mishaps, setbacks and tragedies in mind will help you keep your worry and your stress in check.

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6. **Learn the lesson of the canoe.** A canoe leaves some ripples behind it as it glides through the river. The ripples that are left behind are called the *wake*. The wake is a trail that soon dissipates into nothing but a fleeting memory—much like your past as you navigate through life. Consider this: focusing on your past is much like expecting the wake of the canoe to propel the canoe forward. This, of course, is nonsense.

Happiness now means focusing on your present, moving forward like a beautiful, well-balanced canoe and not letting the wake (your past and the self-limiting thoughts that often accompany it) be the main focus in your life. Some research indicates that nearly 77 percent of your self-talk can be negative! Be the canoe—not the wake. Keep paddling. Ultimately, great lives (like yours) are defined by two words—Press Onward.

7. **Realize that there is no quick fix.** Your self-talk is a constant companion that needs to be monitored and addressed. After reading this article, don't say to yourself, "I'll try to get better at dealing with my self-talk." Say, "I will get better at it." Take control. Be vigilant and turn that inner critic into a positive coach.

## ASBO Conference is Well Worth Attending!

*Pam Roope, Wrangell City Schools*

**Fun** and **educational** - those are the words that come to mind when I think about the ASBO International conference.

I was able to **attend** my first **ASBO** conference in Orlando in 2010. That was a fun and warm place to visit and the professional development was great.

If you are thinking about attending the ASBO conference, I would like to encourage you to attend. It was amazing how many people attend from different countries. In the very first session I went to, I met people from the United Kingdom, Canada, New York and Australia.

The sessions I attended were presented very well and there was good discussion of the issues. There were sessions on budgeting, school safety, food service, and working together, which sound s like "the usual". What

made them really interesting were the presenters from other countries and their solutions and issues. Some of the issues are similar to ours, and some we may never encounter, but somehow meeting other people who have the same experiences is encouraging.

I came away with a bigger and better vision of all the people who work in education and who are willing to share their ideas and solutions. One of the more interesting sessions for me was on going "green". Listening to all the ideas and strategies people have put into place was a wonderful way to begin thinking about how our little school might move in that direction. There were teaching ideas for student involvement and maintenance ideas. It covered the whole scale, things as simple as turning off lights to save electricity, to as complicated as installing solar panels.

If you attend the ASBO International conference, you will enjoy the experience and come away **refreshed** and with some **new ideas**. I have "bolded" and "enlarged" the important words in this article. If you are like me and have very little time for reading, just hit the highlights. Trust me: you will enjoy every minute of the ASBO conference!



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## Your Moment of EXCEL Zen

Ever been working with a spreadsheet and you want to perform a function, you know you've done it in the past, but just can't remember how? Frustrating! You can waste some time Googling for the answer or, you can do as I and create your own little help file. I keep a Notepad file on my desktop with those handy but rarely used functions. Quick and easy, you can pop it open, have that "Oh yes, I knew that!" moment and get on with your work.

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Here are some of mine:

#### 1: Toggle the display of formulas

When you need to see what's going on under the hood of a worksheet, you may want to turn on Excel's formula display. There's a convoluted way to do this via Excel options (and Excel 2007 offers the Show Formulas button in the Formula Auditing group of the Formulas tab - if you want to remember that). But you can toggle the display on the fly just by pressing [Ctrl] ~. If you select a cell whose formula you want to troubleshoot before turning on the display, Excel will also show you the dependent cells for the formula.

#### 2: Convert a formula to its results

Sometimes, you may need to replace a formula with its results - either to preserve a static value or to optimize your sheet by reducing calculations. There's a pretty simple trick for this, but a word of warning: Be sure you really want to wipe out a formula before you do it. (There could be undesirable consequences.) In fact, a good practice is to create a backup copy of the workbook as a safety net in case things go awry. To convert a formula, click in its cell and press [F2] to enable in-cell editing. Next, press [F9] to calculate the formula and display its results. Then, hit [Enter], and your formula will be replaced by the value it produced.

You can also copy the formula and use Paste Special | Values to paste the results somewhere else, leaving the formula intact in its original location.

#### 3: Create a copy of an existing worksheet

Excel offers an efficient way to copy a worksheet, either within the current book or into a different one - handy when you need to start a new sheet that includes some or all of the data and/or formatting of an existing sheet. It works like this:

1. Right-click on the sheet tab of the sheet you want to copy.
2. Choose Move Or Copy.
3. Select the Create A Copy check box in the bottom-left corner of the Move Or Copy dialog box.
4. Choose a different workbook, if desired, from the To Book drop-down list. (That other workbook must be open to show up in the list.) You can also select New Workbook.
5. In the Before Sheet list box, specify where you want the copied sheet to go within the specified workbook.
6. Click OK.

#### 4: Start a new line within a cell

This may seem beyond simplistic - until the day you can't remember how to do it. If you need to create a multiple-line entry in a cell, you can't just press [Enter] to insert a line break, since that will propel you into the next cell. Instead, you have to press [Alt][Enter].

#### 5: Unhide hidden rows or columns

From time to time, someone will send me a worksheet with hidden rows or columns. I usually don't need to see the data, so of course I forget how to unhide it on the rare occasions when I do need to see it. It's easy, though: Highlight the row above and the row below the hidden row(s) - or the column to the left and to the right of the hidden column(s). Then, you can reveal the data in various ways:

- Press [Shift][Ctrl]0 (that's a zero).
- Right-click the selection and choose Unhide.
- Choose Column (or Row) from the Format menu and then select Unhide.

In Excel 2007, go to the Cells group on the Home tab, click Format, choose Hide & Unhide, and select Unhide Rows or Unhide Columns.



#### 6: Enter a fraction in a cell

Say you type 1/4 in a cell, wanting to enter the fraction one-fourth. Ordinarily, Excel will turn the value into a date - 4-Jan. To prevent that, just preface your entry with a zero and a space: 0 1/4. Excel will leave your fraction alone. Without the zero, you'll see 1/4/2009 (or whatever year you happen to be in) in the Formula bar. With the zero, you'll see 0.25.

#### 7: Simultaneously copy data into noncontiguous cells

To copy data from one cell into adjacent cells, you just drag the cell's fill handle across the cells where you want the copied data to appear. But sometimes, you'll need to copy data into cells

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that are scattered around the worksheet. The most efficient way to handle that task is to copy the desired data, hold down [Ctrl], and select all the other cells where you want to paste the data. Then, press [Ctrl]V and Excel will insert the copied data into each of the selected cells.

#### 8: Simultaneously enter data into noncontiguous cells

Similar to the previous trick, you can save time when you need to enter the same data into cells that aren't next to each other. Start by holding down the Ctrl key and selecting all the cells into which you want to enter data. Then, type your data and press [Ctrl][Enter]. Excel will insert the data into all of the cells in the noncontiguous selection.

#### 9: Enter text in the same location in multiple worksheets

This may not come up all that often, but it's a cool trick when you need it. Let's say that you're entering month names as column headers at the top of a sheet - and you want them to appear on your other sheets as well. Click in the cell where you'll be entering January. Then hold down [Ctrl] and click on the sheet tabs of the other sheets where you want the month names to appear. This will group the sheets so that what you do now affects all of them.

Go ahead and type January. Then (another cool trick coming...), drag the cell's fill handle to the right across the next 11 cells. Excel recognizes that January is the first item in a built-in series, so it will insert the rest of the month names for you.

To complete the process, right-click on one of the selected sheet tabs and choose Ungroup Sheets from the shortcut menu. If you check those sheets, you'll see your month names have been entered in all of them.

#### 10: Transpose data from a row to a column, or vice-versa

Once in a while, I'll set up a worksheet using one structure that seems to make sense, only to realize it would make a whole lot more sense if the rows were columns and the columns were rows. And apparently I'm not alone in this befuddlement, because Excel provides a Transpose option to facilitate the necessary flip-flopping of data:

1. Select the range of cells you want to transpose and click Copy or press [Ctrl]C.
2. Click in a new location (not overlapping your selection).

3. Go to Edit | Paste Special and select the Transpose check box. In Excel 2007, click Paste in the Clipboard group of the Home tab and select Transpose.

4. You can then delete your original, wrong-structured data.

## Mark Your Calendars!



## Upcoming Events

### 2011 ALASBO

- **September 16-19 – ASBO International Annual Conference – Seattle**
- **December 4-7 – ALASBO Annual Conference – Anchorage**

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### *Thoughts to Ponder...*

If you're not familiar with the work of Steven Wright, he's the guy who once said: "I woke up one morning and all of my stuff had been stolen... and replaced by exact duplicates." His mind sees things differently than we do -- to our amazement and amusement. Here are some more of his gems.

- I'd kill for a Nobel Peace Prize.
- Borrow money from pessimists - they don't expect it back.
- Half the people you know are below average.
- 99% of lawyers give the rest a bad name.
- 42.7% of all statistics are made up on the spot.
- A conscience is what hurts when all your other parts feel so good.
- A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.
- If you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.
- All those who believe in psycho kineses, raise my hand.
- The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.
- I almost had a psychic girlfriend but she left me before we met.
- OK, so what's the speed of dark?
- How do you tell when you're out of invisible ink?
- If everything seems to be going well you have obviously overlooked something.
- Depression is merely anger without enthusiasm.
- When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.
- Ambition is a poor excuse for not having enough sense to be lazy.