



A series for seniors by Ruth Gerzon from Eastern Bay Villages.



grey matters by Ruth Gerzon

learning has no age limit

The saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" is a patent lie.

Offer a dog food as reward and he or she will quickly learn. This goes for humans too. If it is in our interest to learn something new we will do it. That's just as well since, as we get older, we inevitably have to find new ways to cope with isolation, disability or a lower income. Technophobes, take a deep breath and read on.

The internet is changing rapidly and every year I come across new ways it can enhance my life. I can now drive fearlessly in new city suburbs, no longer annoying Auckland drivers by slowing down to read street signs.

Google Maps is far better than any human navigator. It clearly knows I am forgetful, repeating instructions often, and never gets upset when I ignore its advice. For that I can almost forgive the fact that it has me under surveillance.

I have always been a fan of new technology, though I still only use about one 10th of the capacity of my smartphone. The free meditation app (Insight Timer) soothes me, with Messenger I can talk, message and send photos to friends all over the world for free. I can read local and international papers, listen to fascinating talks on any subject in

the world on TedX. This is way better than the offerings on TV.

Most recently, I have followed the compelling true crime podcast, The Teacher's Pet, produced by The Australian. Last week I heard that this example of journalism at its best will soon see the alleged perpetrator in court.

I love the look, feel and heft of books, and our local library, but I confess that my other true technology love is my Kindle. I can carry 100 books wherever I go. I can enlarge the print to read in any size that suits and, when I fall asleep and drop it, the Kindle does not break and even knows where I left off.

Technophobia began with the dawn of the industrial revolution and remains with us. But its consequences now are more severe, as old technology (think letters, landlines) is becoming expensive or unsustainable. Without being able to use new technology, people face being cut off from others completely.

Luckily, technology is becoming cheaper and easier to use. A smartphone and a mere \$16 a month enables you to bank, navigate, order your shopping, listen to radio, read papers, communicate with friends, and much more. That's way more versatile and cheaper than a landline.

Best of all, seniors making this journey have others as guides. Jack Hallett, vice president of our local SeniorNet, tells me it is a relaxed, friendly organisation with the aim of helping you gain confidence to use your electronic device.

They provide information, advice and training sessions on smartphones, tablets and computers at their wheelchair-accessible premises behind the Goulstone Road tennis courts (Ph 308 0564).

If you don't have a smartphone, tablet or computer, or if you have one but can't make it do what you want, I suggest you make a New Year's resolution to learn some new tricks in 2019. Here's some carrots to get you motivated:

STAYING IN TOUCH: A senior couple talk to family members on their laptop computer. Photo supplied

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ways the internet can improve your life

- You can avoid a painful trip to the bank after your hips give you gyp
- You can watch your grandchildren in Perth open the Christmas presents you sent
- You can order your groceries on line and get them delivered
- You can find out what is happening in your community, in New Zealand or around the world.
- You can keep learning about anything that interests you, and pick up new interests by surfing the net.
- You can meet people with obsessions like yours.
- You can meet new people while doing a good deed: English learners all over the world are seeking English speakers to practice their English (www.italki.com).

If you speak te reo Maori then you are bound to have whanau in the cities who would like to talk to you on Skype.

- You can take a trip down memory lane – see the cars you used to drive, listen to the music of the 50s and 60s, laugh at the clothes you wore when young.
- You can watch a million funny cat videos on YouTube.
- You can buy new or second-hand goods from Trade Me or sell your spare goods when downsizing.
- You can find consumer reviews and compare prices before you buy.

Not yet convinced? Try this, from my husband, an intrepid motorcyclist: "You can pay your speeding tickets on line without your wife knowing."

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