

What took you so long?

I'm sure you men face challenges in public restrooms too. I can't speak to that, having never been in a men's restroom--except for the time I mistook *senor* for *senorita* at a Mexican restaurant. But I'm certain we women face a whole lot more.

Men imagine this, I'm carrying two shopping bags and a very large purse, made heavier by the fact that it is holding everything my son and husband don't want to carry. I'm standing in a line about twelve feet long. From here I have an excellent view of my husband and son going directly into the men's room. Then I see them coming out. My line hasn't moved. There are TWO of them. They smile and wave and head to the mall food court for slushies and cheeseburgers.

I make small talk with the other women on the journey. I plan a week's worth of menus and write a grocery list. My line inches along. I practice patience. I practice deep breathing and then I realize that a public restroom might not be the best place to do that.

When I finally get my turn, I haul my purse and shopping bags into a stall the size of a pencil box. Did I mention the door opens IN? That means I have to pin myself against the back wall, snug beside A TOILET, attempting to swing the door by my body and my belongings in order to close it. That's when I discover the latch doesn't LATCH.

I put my purse and shopping bags on the floor—the floor of a PUBLIC RESTROOM. Then I disrobe while holding the door closed—with MY HEAD!

There's a wide variety of flushing mechanisms in public restrooms. And today I've come across the most challenging system; the one that flushes while the user is still seated. I startle easily, and this is not a good time to jump.

I redress while balancing on one foot and holding the door closed with the other knee. Then I drag myself and all my belongings out and set them down on the floor in front of the sink. It's wet. No, it's muddy. I hope I don't have to return anything in my bags.

I've heard one should wash one's hands for as long as it takes to sing a relaxed chorus of Happy Birthday. Unfortunately the faucet shuts off after three seconds, having been designed specifically to save water and prevent women from singing Happy Birthday in the bathroom.

I am determined. There is a hot faucet and a cold faucet. Why? Do they cook in here? I hold the button on top of the hot faucet with my left elbow while I wash my right hand in hot water--very hot water. I don't feel like singing anymore. Then I lean on the cold faucet with my right elbow. I wash my left hand in ice cold water. At least the water running down my right arm is warm.

When I finish, I'm not sure if my hands are clean or not. But I do know my pants are wet. So are my sleeves. That's okay. I'll dry off using the high-tech, motion-activated air dryer. I wave my hands in front of it like I'm doing a magic trick. Nothing happens. I dance around and wave some more. It doesn't see me. Then another woman reaches over and calmly pushes the button. Oh.

I stand there drying my pants and my sleeves. And then, because dryers take longer than paper towels, and I want to get out of there, I wipe my hands on my shirt. Why not?

Men, do you see what we go through? Then, I pick up my wet purse and soggy shopping bags and drag out of the RESTroom feeling anything but restED, only to have

my dear husband, the love of my life, my partner and best friend of 20 years, say,
“WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?”

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