

# *I'm A Frayed Knot!*

By Phylis Clay Sparks

Three ropes walked into a bar, and one rope ordered a beer. The bartender responded by saying, "We don't serve ropes in here!"

The second rope asked for a beer, and the bartender repeated, "Didn't you hear me? We don't serve ropes in here!"

The third rope disappeared for a moment, tied himself into a knot, frayed it, fluffed it at the ends, and returned to the bar in his knot disguise. The bartender said, "Hey, we don't serve ropes in here, and aren't you a rope?!"

The rope replied, "No, I'm a frayed knot!"

The bartender said, "Oh. That's different. What will you have?"

Many of us have become experts at tying ourselves into frayed knots and our disguise includes tension in our faces, lines carved into our foreheads, dark circles under our eyes, slumped shoulders, unsmiling and rigid mouths, and curt answers in response to questions.

Why do we tie ourselves up into these self-destructive disguises? Fear and worry do it every time. And perhaps the biggest fear that ties our insides into frayed knots is the fear of change and worry about what change means for the future.

If you have your head in the clouds or live in a cave, perhaps you haven't noticed the way our world is changing at warp speed. Well, it is. Our country's relationship with the rest of the world is changing, circumstances change, our bodies change, stuff happens. And unless we learn to embrace change rather than resist it, we will be miserable. With the political campaign coming up, we may have to brace ourselves for a lot of hot rhetoric and ugliness while at the same time adjusting our lifestyles to accommodate 40% food price increases, the bloated gas pump and job instability. This is a good time to think about flexibility of attitude and willingness to accept change.

Wherever you are in the years of your life, pay attention to what you're thinking, the words coming out of your mouth, the beliefs you have bought into, and the habits that have you trapped. Take a look at your habit patterns and consistent routines. Oscar Wilde said, "Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative." If you have tied yourself into a frayed knot, change something. Stop getting up at 6:05, and get up at 5:06 instead (that would give you a slot for the meditation or reflection time that you haven't made time for!). Get out early and walk. Take a different route to work. Sit and stare at a beautiful sunset. Walk in the rain. Read to the blind. Teach a child something you're good at doing. Give your talents away. Give your love away. Praise someone. Take a cooking class. Savor life. Stop letting this changing world take charge of your life experience.

I've noticed that people who come into my office with a problem are always in a *getting* mode. They are trying to *get* happy, *get* their spouses to change, *get* better jobs, *get* more money, *get* someone to come to their senses, *get* enlightened, *get* healthy, *get* out of depression, and on and on. Step out of the *getting* mode and ask yourself "What can I *bring* to this situation?" When you bring your best self to whatever is happening, you revive your creative energy and begin to use your mind in a constructive way. This simple reversal will help you untie the frayed knot inside so that you can once again be your best self.

Another simple suggestion is to move off your position. When you position yourself in a rigid opinion, you anchor yourself. When you anchor yourself, you become stationary, rigid, unbendable, and inflexible. You set up expectations and assumptions and place conditions upon whatever it is you are positioning yourself for or against. Positioning is polarizing, and to

polarize is to deliberately set up a *competing* viewpoint or attitude. Try understanding someone else's point of view. Try becoming flexible. Move off your position and see how quickly the internal knots untie themselves.

These suggestions are simple—not always easy. But to maintain a sense of inner peace so that you feel good more of the time, you must be willing to become flexible, face change with ease, and learn to do things differently. When you do your true self will come forward with spiritual poise and confidence to create a life of joy—free of destructive disguises.

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