

NEWS YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CROWS

On a recent trip to New Orleans I was walking in the late afternoon with friends and a big flock of black crows flew overhead and landed in the trees. According to my friend Joel, a flock of crows is not a flock of crows, it is a murder of crows. Yes, you heard right a “murder” of crows. This sent my mind racing back to the 1963 Alfred Hitchcock movie, *The Birds*, starring Tippi Hedren. In case you haven’t seen this scary horror classic, Tippi’s character gets attacked by birds and soon the entire town is under attack.

It was a horror film but it did put the scare in me, just like the famous movie *Jaws*, forever making me nervous about swimming in the ocean.

IN THIS ISSUE

**BLOG- WHAT YOU NEED
TO KNOW ABOUT
CROWS**

**RECYCLE ADVICE FOR
THE MONTH**

**SOME USEFUL LIFE
PHRASES AND MANTRAS**

**BLOG- COMMERCIALS
THAT BUG ME AND HOW
THEY ARE HOGWASH**

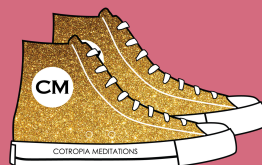


And, I have been attacked by a wild turkey in Marfa, so I am not out of line about giving crows a wide berth. But maybe crows are getting a bad rap. In case you don't know, crows allegedly are one of the smartest birds on the planet and never forget a face. Another reason not to piss them off.

A recent study found crows have the brain power to solve higher-order tasks and can reason cause and effect. They also hold grudges. Researchers in Seattle revealed that captured crows remember the faces of their abductors. Even though years had passed since they saw the threatening human, the crows in the experiment would taunt their captor and dive-bomb him.

When those crows flew over us in New Orleans, I hurried past but then started wondering, in a weird way, about superstitions concerning crows and why a flock of them is called a murder?

Seems like crows and their cousin, ravens, have appeared in a number of different mythologies throughout the ages. Crows and ravens are part of the same family but are not the same. Ravens are bigger. In Celtic mythology the crow and raven were sometimes seen as a harbinger of death and in those tales, witches and sorcerers believed they could turn themselves into crows and fly away escaping capture. Some thought if a crow appeared it showed bad luck or death was coming.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

I like the Native American folklore better since they view the crow as good luck. Native Americans considered them clever tricksters. Crows have a lot going on in their crow brains. Research shows that when one crow dies, the murder (group) will surround the deceased bird. They don't only seem to mourn their dead fellow crow, but the murder of crows will band together and chase predators in a behavior called mobbing. Maybe that is why they are called a murder?

Other interesting facts about crows include they have been observed playing games while flying. They will stand on anthills and let the ants climb on them and rub the ants into their feathers. This behavior is called anting and is used to ward off parasites. Ants can also cause birds to get drunk from the formic acid released from the ant's bodies. So if you are on a deserted island and went to get drunk, look for ants.

Crows and ravens have been a part of mythology and folklore for many ancient peoples. In Greek mythology crows are associated with Apollo, the god of prophecy. They are said to be a symbol of bad luck and were the god's messengers in the mortal world. According to the myth, Apollo sent a white crow to spy on his lover Coronis.

When the crow brought back the news that Coronis was unfaithful, Apollo scorched the crow in his fury and turned the feathers black and that is why crows and ravens are black today.



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Consider the Hebrew version, in the Book of Genesis, Noah releases a raven from the ark after the great flood to test whether the waters have receded (Gen. 8:6-7). According to the Law of Moses, ravens are forbidden for food.

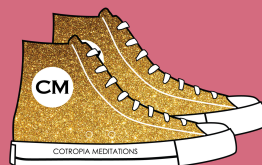
In the Islamic version, a raven is mentioned as the creature who taught Cain how to bury his murdered brother. The story, as presented in the Quran, states that Cain, having murdered Abel, didn't know how to dispose of his brother's body. He looked up and saw two crows, one dead and one alive. The alive one was digging a hole to bury his dead mate, giving him the idea of what to do.

In the Hindu version, the Hindu deity Shani is often represented as being mounted on a giant black crow. Crows are also considered ancestors in Hinduism and the practice of offering food to crows is still in vogue. The raven is the national bird of Bhutan and it adorns the royal hat.

In the North American Pacific version, the crow and raven are considered a trickster god.

In modern times, authors have incorporated the raven or crow. Perhaps one of the best known is Edgar Allan Poe's poem "The Raven" where the bird is a supernatural messenger. In the 1960s TV show, "The Munsters" instead of a cuckoo clock in the Munsters' home, their clock has a black raven named Charlie that sounds off.

So, maybe those crow's feet I have are a sign of the power of Crows. Who knows...



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RECYCLE ADVICE OF THE MONTH

Turn your wine cap into miniature furniture.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

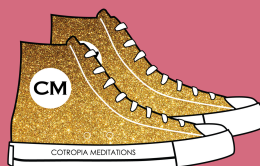
SOME USEFUL LIFE PHRASES AND MANTRAS

The first one is very handy and it comes from my boyfriend Tom. When I am bugging him about a decision or an answer to my question, he responds: Let me focus on it. This is a wonderful way of “kicking the can down the road”, avoiding being pressured into an answer you may later regret and it doesn’t—at least on its face--seems like the avoidance trick that it is. A very very handy tool.

Lawyers have for years used the handy “It Depends”. This works well since in life it always seems to depend on the particular facts and this phrase once again buys you time to reflect before being trapped into an answer.

Beggars Can’t Be Choosers. While this is a very old phrase, it comes in handy when you are thinking, “You Ungrateful Jerk”, you can instead say sweetly, Beggars Can’t Be Choosers.

For the New Age thinkers, they love mantras to address change such as You Are Right Where You Need to Be or the Universe has Your Best Interest At Heart. I prefer this one: Change Makes My Nostrils Flare. In other words, change is scary and we hate it but, in the end, get excited about change because if you don’t except change, you rust. And if you think about it, getting old is refusing to change, becoming hard-headed and rusting.



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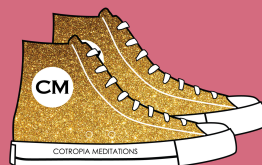
COMMERCIALS THAT BUG ME AND HOW THEY ARE HOGWASH

There is a Geico insurance commercial that has a group of young adults and several Boomer adults. One of the Boomers asks the female young adult what she is studying in college and the response is “art school”. The Boomer then asks, “ How are you going to make money?” and the eye rolls begin. Next the commercial gleefully sings: “We can’t prevent you from becoming your parents, but Geico can save you money.” Wait, Is this is a bad thing? “Was that an improper question? Ok, maybe a little Debbie Downer, but still, very few artists make money. Reality often times conflicts with “Finding Your Passion”. The entire “Finding you Passion” concept is great but flawed.



If you have the drive, all out commitment, perverseness, a trust fund or the ability to survive without a lot of money, then go for it. I admire people who do. But for most of us, the commitment and drive or trust fund is missing. We get a degree in our passion and boom—no job. It is terrible. Perhaps we should make our passion our advocacy, and not our vocation. Science has proven having

a passion/hobby extends your life and makes you happy, just don’t expect it to pay your mortgage. I can see the eye rolls now while this is being read, “Ok Boomer! Have a Terrible Day.” Another commercial that bugs me is Liberty Mutual Insurance. They have a catchy sing song phrase that says, “Liberty Mutual Liberty Mutual, only pay for what you need.” Who the @@ are you kidding? The state requires you to have liability



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coverage and if there is a lien, the bank requires comp and collision coverage. What is it that you can decide you don't need? Maybe you pass on having uninsured motorist coverage, but that cost is minimal. Any insurance company, not just Liberty Mutual, will let you buy only liability coverage and not the comp and collision so what are they talking about? I think **nothingness**.



Likewise if Liberty Mutual is talking about homeowners insurance—it isn't clear in the sing song refrain—the mortgage company is not going to let you choose what you need. Or maybe better said: The state of Texas and your mortgage/loan is going to dictate what insurance you need. You can deceive yourself that you have a choice but again—you are fooling yourself. I do have to hand it to the ad agency that came up with this commercial. I assume it touches an emotional cord in people that they have some control and Liberty Mutual is going to sing to you about it so you can feel special because Liberty Mutual recognizes you have “control”. Ok if this makes you feel better fine, but I like the old timey phrase—**Hogwash**.

Ok Boomer Carla, why are you being so prickly? I promise to stop letting those commercials bug me but I will start saying **Hogwash**. I like the way it feels when I say it. In case you are wondering about the origins of **Hogwash**, it is from the mid-15th century meaning pig and a liquid or food waste from a kitchen. It may seem to describe giving a hog a good scrub, but it really is another word for nonsense. It means something that is not true or something that doesn't make sense. Something that is considered **Hogwash** is confused. I rest my case.

