

Conundrums

By Sheila Johnson

There are two words (when placed together) in our vocabulary that we instinctively use to veil our true emotions at the time of a sudden or negative event. Because our brain works 24/7 to send protective and life-saving messages to the rest of our body, those two words – “oh no” – when thought or spoken, seem to give us enough time to safely enter the reality of oh yes, it is true.

‘Splat’! I’ve dropped the last egg I have that was to be used for my cookie recipe. Oh no! Oh yes, I’m going to have to get dressed, brush my teeth, do something with this hair on my head, and borrow an egg from the neighbor or go to the store and buy some more.

Oh no! My back tire is flat! I knew I should have filled it with air before the weather turned cold! Oh yes, it is flat as a pancake and I will have to call AAA, or ask my neighbor or friend or relative to help me change the tire!

Oh no! The fire alarm is going off! Oh yes, I forgot to set the timer on the stove. Please don’t tell my children. They will think I can no longer take care of myself and ship me off somewhere I don’t want to go!

Oh no! Another typhoon, another earthquake, another hurricane, or another tornado has hit! Oh yes, lives will be lost, hearts broken, families torn apart forever.

Oh no! My pager is beeping and it’s a code blue. Oh yes, Sheila. You are going to have to stop what you are doing, shift your mind into prayer mode, drive to the hospital and comfort the bereaved.

Pop, pop, pop! Oh no! Another young person is shot dead in the midst of a gang war. Oh yes, we will all feel the initial shock. Some will shake their heads and be sad for a few minutes, others will blame it on the “system” and experience brief anger, and a very few will face the realities of a broken society and actually work for change.

Oh no! He’s rocking back and forth, slurring his words, falling to the floor—he’s having a stroke! Oh yes, Sheila. You must try to help him up, you must call 911, and you must try to get him dressed. Call his children and his aging mother and his siblings. Oh yes, Sheila. Every family birthday, every holiday, every mention of an exotic trip will bring memories – some good, some bad – of a man who touched the lives of so many, and yet refused to practice self-care. Oh no! There you go again replaying a sad memory! Oh yes! Here I go again – tearing up, smiling, being grateful for the good times and the three children we had together with joy and gladness! Oh no Sheila! You’ve let your stubborn guard down and you are embracing the healing process.

Oh no? Oh Yes!