
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everybody:

In case you have not noticed, today is Friday – the 13th. So far, so good. But the day is young! Do you know where that superstition came from? We did a little checking, and there is a lot of conjecture but no real answers. Seems that some people have considered Friday the 13th bad luck since 1307 when a lot of Knights Templar met a gruesome fate, others say it was not until the 14th century when *The Canterbury Tales* appeared. Still others say there are few references before 1907 when a popular novel was published in the U.S., entitled *Friday, the Thirteenth*, where an unscrupulous broker takes advantage of the superstition to create a Wall Street panic on a Friday the 13th. In Spanish-speaking countries, instead of Friday, Tuesday the 13th is considered a day of bad luck. In Italy Friday the 17th is considered a day of bad luck. In fact, in Italy, 13 is generally considered a lucky number. Now listen to this: According to the Stress Management Center and Phobia Institute in Asheville, North Carolina, something like 17 to 21 million people in the U.S. are so paralyzed with fear of this day that they avoid their normal routines in doing business, taking flights or even getting out of bed. The Institute estimates \$800-\$900 million is lost in business on Friday the 13th. A Dutch Centre for Insurance Statistics says that there are a lot fewer accidents and reports of fire and theft on Friday the 13th because people are more careful or they just stay home. Guess I'm just not that superstitious – I've just been going about my regular business, and I hope all of you are doing the same.

This week brings another commemoration – September 11. I don't think anyone here in the U.S. needs an explanation of the significance of that date. The attacks on September 11, 2001 changed our country, and the rest of the world, forever, and I'm not so sure all these changes have been for the good. Now it's a federal production – literally – to get on an airplane. It's getting that way to attend NFL football games – small, clear bags are now required in the stadiums. So many details in our lives have been changed as a result of Sept. 11. If you leave the borders of the Lower 48 – you need a passport. You can't bring your own food and drinks on airplanes anymore and they x-ray us AND our luggage. After 9/11 the Department of Homeland Security was created, along with over 263 government organizations that were established or reorganized. Our innocence has been taken and now we are more on alert and suspicious of things we may have never noticed before. Some people are hesitant to fly or travel far from home. People report that they pay more attention to those around them in a crowd.

But I think there have been a few good changes. Records show that since 9/11 a lot more people have volunteered to help fire and police departments in case of a disaster, and the number of people who do volunteer work has risen to nearly 29 percent, up from around 20 percent before the attacks. Some honor military, police, firefighters, and other service people and remember to thank them. A lot of people now realize that life can never be taken for granted. Eyes have been opened to the big world that exists outside the safety of our country, to the fact that America is not invincible. We have examined what freedom really means. I think one of the biggest changes that the attacks wrought was a reminder that we should not wait to say "I love you" to our loved ones.

Which brings me to a close, with my thanks to each and every member of the OJJ family, in every office and facility, for all you do every day, to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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