

"Fear of the Unknown"

"Fear of the unknown" is a common expression, but when one really thinks about it, "fear of the unknown" does not make sense. It is a puzzling that we actually assume we know anything about the unknown. The reality is that we absolutely know nothing about the next second, minute, hour, day or year of our existence. We all know that at any moment our lives can be completely altered in a very wonderful or an incredibly terrible fashion. Many of us have experienced this personally and every day we hear about people whose lives are spun into a completely different orbit of wonderful happiness or excruciating pain.

In spite of the fact that we live our lives in a constant state of unknowing, we go to bed every night assuming we will get up the next morning and proceed with our daily routine. We get into our cars and drive into the perilous paths of rush hour traffic believing we will eventually arrive at our destination. We distract ourselves calling a family member or friend presuming they are fine, even if they do not answer our call. We also assume we will not become a "statistic," thus validating the foolishness of using a cell phone in rush hour traffic.

We are NOT afraid of the unknown. We fearlessly face the unknown with every breath because of what we "think" we know. We are also "afraid" of the unknown because of what we "think" we know. This can certainly keep us safe when we use our fear to carefully evaluate our decisions, and therefore, tread into the unknown being informed and cautious. This helps us make better personal, social, relational and financial decisions.

Fear of what we "think" we know can also plague us with ideas or phobias about consequences and outcomes that may or may not be realistic. Fearful thoughts of the unknown can cause us to fear and even avoid many activities.

I often remind myself that an elevator will not plunge to the ground just because I enter, or that a plane will crash just because I am a passenger. However, a recent tragic airline accident could create uncertainty. I may become more anxious and apprehensive about what I "think" I know about flying. These feelings of anxiety and fear could influence me so that I could become cynical and pessimistic about flying. The negativity could feed on itself producing thoughts of doom, and I could become "grounded." I would lose the healthy balance of optimistic thinking and pessimistic thinking that facilitates the best possible outcome. Transportation!

Fear of what we "think" about the unknown is influenced by many circumstances. During the good times the "glass is always half full," and we assume good things. During the bad times the "glass is always half empty," and we assume bad things. Fortunately and unfortunately, our assumptions can become "self-fulfilling prophecies." It can mean the difference between being "grounded" and "flying."