

The Duck in the Bottle

Francine went to a wise person in search of wisdom. The wise person sent her on a journey.

“Climb to the top of that mountain in the distance. At the peak, you will find a cabin, and in the cabin you will find a bottle, and in the bottle you will find a duck. Get the duck out of the bottle without harming the duck or the bottle, and in the process you will find wisdom. I will come to visit you in a week!”

Francine set off on her search. Indeed, she made it to the top of the mountain and found a cabin. Inside the cabin was a bottle with a duck inside. But how to get the duck out of the bottle without harming either was puzzling to say the least. Days of worry and confusion began turning into frustration and anger. By the end of one week, Francine was stressed and anxious.

The wise person stopped by, noticed the duck was still in the bottle, and said, “I will give you another week. Then I will come to check on you.”

But a week later, poor Francine was full of even more worry, anxiety, stress, and anger. She had even begun to doubt her abilities. A seemingly impossible puzzle was sitting beside her, quacking at her and no answer remotely in sight. The duck was still in the bottle. The wise person stopped by, saw Francine’s situation, and asked about wisdom. Francine said she still hadn’t figured out what to do about the duck and the bottle. The wise person realized that Francine needed more time to figure out the puzzle.

When the wise person returned at the end of the third week, Francine was sitting outside, humming and enjoying the view from the mountain top. She was peaceful and content. The wise person, noticing that the duck was sitting by her side and still inside the bottle, asked Francine, “What have you learned?” Francine replied, “I’ve learned that wisdom knows that this is not my duck, not my bottle, and not my problem!”

We often have to remind ourselves that while we care for other people, some of their problems are not ours, no matter how much they want to give them to us.