

Done with the last tongue surgery...plus, the contrary child and the sideways-thinking washcloths

By Holly Lisle

Friday I was first in line in the outpatient OR. The folks were good, the surgery was brief (for me—I slept through the whole thing), and I came out with the bottom half of my face swollen to twice its normal and my tongue looking like it lost a fight with a tiger.

It's Monday, and I'm creeping toward feeling human again. This surgery didn't hurt anywhere near as much as the first three, but it was and is still not picnic.

I spent my awake time knitting myself some washcloths.



Sideways-Thinking Washcloths

They don't look like normal washcloths to you? They're not. They are washcloths evolved from a lifetime of thinking sideways.

When I was fifteen, I read an article in one of my mother's women's magazines (probably Redbook—that's the only one for which I remember the title) that declared that women should never smile too broadly, or let their eyes crinkle when they

smiled, or in any way stretch their faces, because this would cause wrinkles.

I remember looking at my mother, and then at my father, and thinking that my father looked younger than my mother, even though he wasn't.

And I thought, "What does he do that she doesn't?"

And I thought, "He shaves."

I'd watched him shave. Watched him stretch and contort his face into weird expressions while trying to get the elusive hairs beneath the blade of the razor. And I thought, "Every time he does that, he's exercising the muscles of his face. THAT's why he looks younger."

So I decided that I would do that. Oh, not shave. But exercise my face muscles. Every time I took a shower from then on, I made sure my face fought the washcloth. I scrubbed my skin with as much muscle behind it as I could bring to bear, and tightened each muscle in my face to keep it from moving when the washcloth attacked.

Forty years later, I still do this. I have some laugh lines, but the muscles of my face are still in good shape, and I think for fifty-five, I've held up all right.

But regular washcloths are too soft and timid. I wanted something with some bite to it. A few years ago, I discovered cones of dishcloth cotton, and started making myself washcloths out of those.

And one day, I bumped the loofah-on-a-stick of the edge of the tub one time too many, and said *the hell with this*, and decided I was going to make my washcloths twice as long, so I could use them as back scrubbers as well as face scrubbers.

Now I can scrub my back by holding the ends of my washcloth. My shoulders get nice range of motion exercises. My face still

fights the washcloth. And I don't have any annoying junk in my shower to trip over, knock off, or otherwise annoy myself with.

So this is weird, right? But human beings are tool-makers, and learning to think sideways is the process of learning to imagine and create your own tools, and your own improved reality.

With that said, then, I'm starting the rebuild of the **How To Think Sideways: Career Survival School for Writers** class today.

Once I get it done, I'm going to do an early, very limited debug release at the old price. If you want to get in on that, make sure you're on the early-bird announcement list.

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