

The Frog in Hot Water

Don't be the frog.

Genre: Concepts, Human Behaviour, Life, Society



An old idiom that is not literally true but reveals a real-world truth.

Here is an idiom you are likely to hear at least once in your life. "The frog in hot water". An expression that refers to an experiment where frogs were placed in room temperature water that is gradually brought to a boil, but instead of jumping out to save themselves when the water reaches boiling point, they don't.



According to the expression, the frog doesn't realise the temperature is increasing slowly but steadily.



For some reason, the frogs don't jump to get out of the pot – they stay and when it is too late, they're cooked. They don't realise the water is getting hotter because the temperature increase is so gradual. The water eventually grows to a boil – gradually and slowly – but when the frog notices, it's too late to escape.

Okay, if this all sounds gross, mean, or harsh – we apologise. While it seems odd that someone would even want to boil frogs, the story of a frog in boiling water is a powerful analogy when applied to our lives. (To be sure, however, don't use this lesson to boil frogs. We love frogs. They're cute.)

Origins of an Idiom

While the origins of this idiom are hard to uncover, it was likely popularised by a series of experiments run by scientists in the 19th century. These studies attempted to determine how frogs reacted to changes in their environment and whether gradual changes like changing water temperatures would activate their survival instincts.



During the 19th century, at the dawn of the scientific age, scientists (known as "natural philosophers") began to experiment on frogs to see how they would react to changing environments, like increased temperatures.

These experiments produced mixed results at the time, but modern research has shown that frogs are actually pretty smart. They know when water is too hot and will leave as soon as it reaches a certain heat. Like people, to survive, they need to know when an environment is too extreme for them to live in. So, in other words, frogs will jump before the water reaches boiling point, thank goodness!



Thankfully, real-life frogs realise the water is getting too hot and will jump before the water reaches boiling point.

But, people, unlike frogs, can often go along with a situation that reaches boiling point and instead of jumping out of the pot, they are metaphorically boiled.

Metaphors that are True

When it comes to myths and metaphors, their literal truth isn't usually the most crucial aspect of the story. Sometimes, factual virility isn't even the point. When we hear idioms, myths, and metaphors, we often understand that they are telling us something true about how to live our lives. They are conveying a lesson we need to learn., if we are wise enough to listen.

In the case of the frog in hot water, it doesn't matter if actual frogs jump, stay, or lean back comfortably like they're in a hot tub. What matters is the meaning of the story.



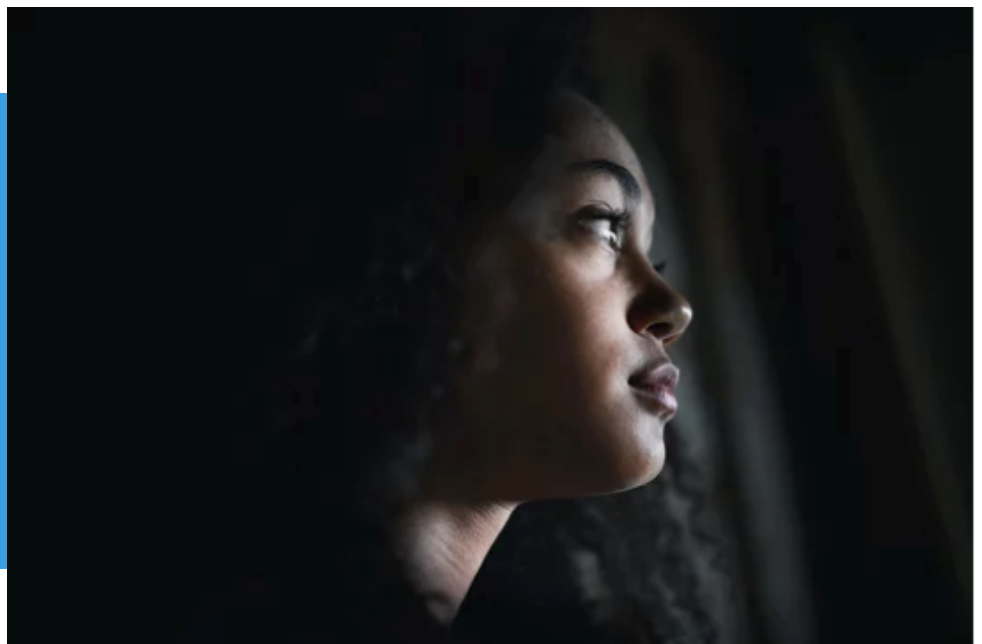
The frog in hot water metaphor compels us to think about our own lives and behaviour, as well as what is happening around us.

In the frog in hot water example: The story is a metaphor, a perfect analogy of how things can go awry if we are not alert to the small, tiny but not insignificant changes that occur in our lives and in the world around us.

In that way, the frog being boiled alive because the water temperature changed gradually can reflect how small changes in our lives or in the world around us often go unnoticed. This can be due to comfort, complacency, or being distracted. But the truth is, we often ignore the problems or changes in our lives (or in our community) until they are so large that we are forced to notice.



It is not until we are uncomfortable that we are confronted with problems that we may have been ignoring for a very long time.



Let's say you have a tiny little crack in the front windshield of your car. At first, it's just a dot from where the rock hit. However, if you leave it there, every small bump in the road might make that little dot stretch out. Eventually, leave it long enough, and you'll have multiple giant, extra-long cracks all across your windshield. That's no fun – and far more expensive, speaking from experience.

Instead of a windshield, think of emotional health. Sometimes changes in our thoughts and feelings can be minor. A slight sadness when you start the day, decreased enthusiasm for things you used to enjoy, or a more pessimistic outlook towards things in general. These can all feel minor when they first appear – maybe we are just tired from a long and busy weekend? But over time, they can become more serious – until we realise, they early warning signs weren't just inconsequential feelings, they were signs that we need to change something in our life. We may need to change our behaviour, what we're striving for or even those we're hanging around. We can no longer just follow the herd.

Should We Stay Out of Hot Water?

The frog in hot water is meant to teach us to pay attention to the small, but not insignificant changes in our lives. Pay attention, so that they don't grow to be large cracks in our metaphorical windshield (i.e. so big they overwhelm us, resulting in fear, anger or despair).



**By the time you realise
that you are in hot
water, it can feel like it
is too late to jump.**

It also encourages us to reflect on what is happening in our lives. Do we like where we are in life because it is good for us or because it is comfortable? Do we feel like we're on the right track – following passions, hanging out with people we care for, people that care for us, enjoying our time – or are we just ignoring problems in hopes they'll go away? Most of all, are we doing something just because everyone else is doing it, even if it may not be best for us? These questions are important to ask everywhere in life, at any time.



We need to ask ourselves whether we're doing what is best for us or whether we are like a frog in hot water.



Sometimes comfort, like room temperature water, can encourage us to ignore problems or even not enable us to see new opportunities. We don't even realise we're in the hot pot to begin with. Personal growth (even wisdom) comes from trying something new, changing course, or taking a leap of faith to do what others are not doing. This can be scary, but as the frog in hot water shows, sometimes staying in the same place is even riskier than hopping into fresh waters.

As creatures of habit, it is difficult to get ourselves out of the daily humdrum. But the more humdrum and predictable our lives, the less growth we will experience. So, to stay in hot water, or to leap? That is for you to decide.

 **Good to Think About**



1..What is the moral of the expression, "A frog in hot water"?


2. Why do people use the expression?

3. Why are myths useful to our lives even though they may not literally be true?

4. Can you think of a story that illustrates a "frog in hot water"? If so, outline the main details or plot line of the story.

Key Vocabulary

- idiom
- expression
- instinct
- metaphorical
- myths
- analogy
- complacency
- distracted
- opportunity
- predictable



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