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I checked myself in to a psychiatric hospital – now, I'm grateful for my breakdown

Illustrating the beauty in London's churches eventually drew one author and journalist out of his depression

By John-Paul Flintoff

18 October 2022 • 4:00pm



The nurses took away anything I might use to harm myself, and I was put on what nobody officially calls “suicide watch”: every 15 minutes someone checked I was OK.

I hadn't been sectioned. I checked into a psychiatric hospital voluntarily. But I was churning with emotion: shame, at finding myself there; guilt, for the effect on my wife and teenage daughter; and self-pity, that my life seemed to have fallen apart. I was also convinced my closest friends would never again want anything to do with me, and that my life was effectively over.

Though expecting to stay for a week I had forgotten my toothbrush. But I did bring pens and a sketchbook. Lying on my bed, I drew the view from my third-floor window. I would stay longer than a week, and came to know that view very well.

My [breakdown](#) happened in 2018. A succession of traumatic events starting in 2014 - two deaths in two months, then two people close to me having major health scares - led to a loss of confidence in the world and in myself. Then lost work, and a disastrous collapse in my income.

In the few years since, I've noticed that [poor mental health](#) is no longer a taboo topic - and thank goodness, because one person in four will suffer. Only this morning, I received an email from someone “struggling to work out what might be a mental illness, or what might just be ‘life problems’”. But statistics can give a false sense of clarity. What even is “bad mental health?”



'There was no single turning point when I suddenly became unwell. I had been miserable for a long time' | CREDIT: Andrew Crowley

For me, it included isolating, waking in the early hours with panic, feeling overwhelmed successively by waves of sadness, anger, lethargy. My wife found a psychiatrist, who asked if I wanted to come into hospital and prescribed medication for anxiety and depression. I eagerly accepted both. But there was no single turning point when I suddenly became unwell. I had been miserable for a long time. Many people feel miserable.

In my first group therapy session at the hospital, I was so overwhelmed that I burst into tears. I covered my face - ashamed, I suppose. Back in my room, I drew myself sobbing, with my face covered. Don't ask me why I drew it - I don't know.

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Then I drew a page packed with speech bubbles, each one crammed with indecipherable letters - representing the obsessive negative thoughts that swirled around my mind.

When I showed my psychiatrist some of these pictures. She said: “Keep doing it. It will help.”



Left, a picture drawn during his stay in hospital and right, painted after recovery | CREDIT: Andrew Crowley

I should explain that - until then - drawing was strictly a hobby. I was a writer. I'd worked for a couple of decades as a relatively successful journalist on national papers and magazines. I'd [published five books](#), in 16 languages.

I was lucky to hit rock bottom, because only then was I finally able to tell my wife that I wished I wasn't alive. It was an excruciating conversation - in the moments beforehand I felt as if it might actually kill me to say those words - but it was OK. And it led to me getting help.

My wife had health insurance, so I went private. I was an inpatient for two weeks, and a day patient for six weeks more. For an hour a week, there was art therapy.

For most of the year after I came out of hospital, I wandered around in a daze. And I do mean wandered. As well as drawing, my psychiatrist told me to exercise. "It will do more for you than the medication and the therapy combined," she said.

I went for [epic walks around London](#), where I live. For a break I sat in parks, or if the weather was bad I'd go into churches instead of cafes, because in cafes I had to pay for

the coffee to sit down.

Poor mental health is sometimes compared with a broken leg: “It’s painful, but you’ll get over it.” The difference, in my experience, is that the person with the pain thinks they are despicable and worthless precisely because they are in pain. This causes the pain to increase, and then the self-flagellation... and so on, until I found myself at the bottom of a deep dark hole.

Sometimes I hated myself so much. I knew I had to stop the obsessive self-critical thinking, but how? Happily, my friends didn’t abandon me and nor did my family. And when I was with them, I could put those thoughts aside. But most of the time I was on my own - and that was terrible.

When it got too much, I phoned [Samaritans](#). Calling them for the first time was hard (“I’ve become the sort of person who calls Samaritans! I’m such a failure!”), but it helped.

I had no intention of doing anything stupid but I had ceased to trust my brain. One day, months after leaving hospital, I found myself crossing a bridge. I panicked: what if I went mad, and jumped? The solution: stare intensely at the pavement and ignore all peripheral vision. I made it, and each tiny success of that kind gradually increased my self-confidence.

I carried on drawing. Slowly, I was noticing the world and finding the beauty in it - not *seeing* the beauty but actively finding it.



'When it got too much, I phoned Samaritans. Calling them for the first time was hard' | CREDIT: Andrew Crowley

A lot of that beauty was in the churches where I stopped to sit down - particularly Holy Trinity, Sloane Square decorated by the Pre-Raphaelites William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. I drew that. I drew myself kneeling in prayer. I drew myself bathed in the fragmented, colourful light cast by the stained-glass windows.

The churches were mostly empty, but occasionally I met people who were friendly, without being all over me (I hadn't been brought up religious). I picked up leaflets containing prayers, and found that by reciting them again and again I could silence the self-critical thoughts. I flicked through the Bibles on lecterns and enjoyed reading the Psalms, in which King David addresses to God his various, shifting moods of ecstasy and gnashing of teeth.

I thought it would be fun to illustrate a modern psalter - combining vignettes of daily life with biblical content and an elaborately-patterned border. My literary agent (and friend) suggested I should also write my own psalms.

As with the drawings I made in hospital, I don't know where the words or the pictures came from. They just arrived. All I had to do was be honest - flippant, doomy, or

whatever else I happened to feel. I think of the poems and the drawings as a kind of gift. I have no more reason to be proud of them than to be proud of being tall or left-handed.

In summary: I'm grateful. Grateful to have been relatively successful as a writer. Grateful to have had a breakdown. Grateful to have drawn my way out of it. Grateful to have sat in churches. Grateful to William Morris. Grateful to King David. Grateful to my family. To my agent and my publisher. The Daily Telegraph editor who asked me to write this... You get the idea.

Believe it or not, I hate to talk - or write - about my breakdown and recovery. I get no joy recalling how miserable I was, and it always leaves me feeling exhausted. But I'll continue to do it for as long as I'm asked, because I'm haunted by the people who came into hospital having attempted suicide. If even one person can be assured by my experience that the worst times will pass, that there really is something to look forward to and they don't need to end it all, then my job is done.

[Psalms for The City](#) by John-Paul Flintoff will be published by SPCK on October 27

Do you need mental health help? Numbers to call

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ALL COMMENTS 88

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NB

Nick Barnes 1 DAY AGO

📌 PINNED

Great read and just very helpful illustration of a personal journey from despair to recovery. Please keep on keeping-on and big thanks for sharing this with us today.. I identify with so much but every journey has its own wonders

LIKE 54

FLAG

JC

Jacki Crawford 1 DAY AGO

📌 PINNED

I wish John-Paul the best and I hope to take some of his story onboard. I too am suffering depression, I worked hard, long days in the motor trade and then one day in January 22 I broke. I was sent home crying and spent the next 4 days crying. I attempted to go back to work, to the job I loved, but spent the the journey there crying down the phone to my daughter as I was terrified. I was sent home and haven't been back since. I was given a different antidepressant and told to come back to the Dr in a week. I spent over 16 hours a day asleep, day after day and I was still exhausted. I am still terrified to go anywhere and having now had 6 weeks of counselling, my counsellor has insisted and I have spoken to my GP and upped my drugs. I can't see the light, I don't want to live but I don't want to leave my children and grandchildren. Depression is a wicked illness and I hope I can get on like John-Paul.

Asking for help is the best thing a person can do.

11 REPLIES LIKE 90

FLAG

LW

Liberty Walker 22 HRS AGO

Thank you for sharing your story. The black hole of mental health breakdown is one I have stared into and sometimes fallen into. It's only the love of Christ and the love from my husband and family that have pulled me out. Better days are impossible to picture when you can't see anything but darkness, but hold on, somewhere a ray of light will show you the way out.

LIKE 4

FLAG

CA

Caroline Assheton 1 DAY AGO

The bridge thing mentioned is 'a perilous-thought-system'.

LIKE 0

FLAG

ST

Stanley Townsend 1 DAY AGO

I have struggled with depression since I was about five years old, and at sixty years old I am still no better. Perhaps I have been lucky enough to have not attempted suicide...

LIKE 3

FLAG

MB

Mabel Burlington 1 DAY AGO

Everyone has a breaking point. He was fortunate in able to have the means to go private.

LIKE 7

FLAG

AB

Aphra Behn 1 DAY AGO

I'm so very glad you're feeling better, this was really illuminating to read as my mother suffered from depression and anxiety, and so do some of my daughter's friends, but if you haven't experienced this except in very minor and transient ways it's hard to understand the darkness and feelings of being overwhelmed. Your drawings are wonderful - are you a self-taught artist or did you have some training? They are beautiful, I can quite see why being able to create them helped. Good luck for the future, you are brave to write in this way.

LIKE 5

FLAG

PE

Pat Eardley 1 DAY AGO

To Andrew, who wrote, " I do not understand what it is that makes essentially lucky middle class people drop their mental trousers in public"

Firstly I would say that John-Paul hasn't been lucky and secondly I would have thought it were obvious that the article is highlighting his new book, 'Psalms for the City', published by SPCK, a christian publishing house.

I wish every success with the publication and continued recovery to good health for John-Paul who is probably temporarily exhausted.

LIKE 5

FLAG

KW

Keira Watson 1 DAY AGO

Mental health is awful, debilitating and has such a profound effect on life. It saddens me that even in todays society, where understanding is supposed to be far better, it's not truly understood. People can be so judgemental and rude towards those struggling. I myself have Complex PTSD, severe anxiety, depression and anorexia. I have struggled for 20 years and still haven't received adequate support. This writer is simply pointing out that those suffering can be helped as long as they can afford private care.

3 REPLIES LIKE 5

FLAG

RH

Richard Hannam 1 DAY AGOReply to **Keira Watson**

What would that support need to be?

1 REPLY LIKE 1

FLAG

KW

Keira Watson 1 DAY AGOReply to **Richard Hannam**

At this point, even the most basic MH support. A psychiatrist and a CPN. Instead, I am forced to fight for everything and anything, including therapy. Decent support should not be a thing for only those who can afford private care.

1 REPLY LIKE 0

FLAG

CA

Caroline Assheton 1 DAY AGOReply to **Keira Watson**

Perhaps you could join Sane? They offer help.

LIKE 0

FLAG

FW

Fiona webber 1 DAY AGO

Commendable of you to share your experience Mr Flintoff to give others hope they might get through similar despair. Bravo to you.

However, I think comments for such articles should NOT be allowed. It just takes some snivelling, snarling, snide, sneering, spiteful people to undo all your hard work. They of course usually live perfect lives in some utopian bliss, which makes it a conundrum as to why they even click on such self-help articles in the first place, let alone comment negatively.

1 REPLY LIKE 4

FLAG

KW

Keira Watson 1 DAY AGOReply to **Fiona webber**

Why shouldn't comments be allowed? I'm sorry but I disagree. We have Freedom of Speech. As stated in my comment, I suffer with very poor mental health and even I believe that comments should be allowed. If someone chooses to put themselves out there, they do so knowing the risk of negativity.

LIKE 2

FLAG

CA

C A H 1 DAY AGO

John,

I'm really glad you're back.

One thing that struck me was how Christian settings and materials seemed to play a part in all of this.

You're careful to safer personal and scientific grounds the minute you can. But you were drawn to those places and words. I would investigate that if I were you. Honestly and thoroughly.

1 REPLY LIKE 1

FLAG

MG

Martin Gutkowski 1 DAY AGOReply to **C A H**

You can find beautiful paintings of all manner of mythical creations from Thor to fairies and unicorns. If I suggested that you investigate them honestly and thoroughly, do you think it would change your knowledge that they don't exist?

LIKE 0

FLAG

JW

James Williams 1 DAY AGO

Excellent!

LIKE 1

FLAG

JW

James Wyburd 1 DAY AGO

I really do not see why my earlier & essentially kind-hearted comment seems to have been removed, unless the cancel culture has now reached the DT; please read it and make up your own minds - before it is removed again!!

"Life can be nasty, unfair and lonely. Also we make mistakes which we ought to forget but don't because we are too hard on ourselves. Yet - and I really don't want to be unkind - I do not understand what it is that makes essentially lucky middle class people drop their mental trousers in public. The best prescription for the inescapable black moments of life is to think of others not oneself. Is that so difficult?"

6 REPLIES LIKE 4

FLAG

ED

Emma Dixon 1 DAY AGOReply to **James Wyburd**

I disagreed with your comment but I don't think for a moment it should have been removed.

LIKE 2

FLAG

ED

Emma Dixon 1 DAY AGOReply to **James Wyburd**

And my comment asking where the reasonable comments from last night have gone has also been removed! Why?

LIKE 1

FLAG

AH

Andrew Hotston 1 DAY AGOReply to **James Wyburd**

"I do not understand what it is that makes essentially lucky middle class people drop their mental trousers in public" - one of the most insightful, honest and funny comments I've read for ages.

LIKE 0

FLAG

SG

Saucy Gadget 1 DAY AGOReply to **James Wyburd**

All mentally unwell people are very self obsessed and look inwards instead of looking outwards - in my experience

1 REPLY LIKE 1

FLAG

KW

Keira Watson 1 DAY AGOReply to **Saucy Gadget**

I am "mentally unwell" and I have NEVER been self obsessed. What a rude, judgemental comment. I'm deeply offended

LIKE 3

FLAG

RS

Roger Salwey 1 DAY AGOReply to **James Wyburd**

Poor mental health, like cancer afflicts people from all backgrounds. Yes, the author was lucky to have to a supportive family and access to private health care but it doesn't diminish the fact that he was suffering from an acute mental health crisis. From personal experience, it was reassuring to hear of people diagnosed with cancer got through it and gave me strength and hope that my loved one might be lucky enough to recover. It was a really scary time and my middle class background was of irrelevance Mrs S

LIKE 4

FLAG

DL

Deborah Lingham 1 DAY AGO

I'm glad you are in a better place now. You were fortunate to be able to access private care. So many who are struggling are forced to pay for private counselling they can't afford or to use the NHS and its laughable solution of 6 CBT sessions after languishing on a waiting list first. Six sessions to unpack what for many has accumulated from years of pain and anguish. Such a sad state of affairs.

LIKE 5

FLAG

AH

Andrew Hotston 1 DAY AGO

I think there should be a medal awarded to every soul who is unfortunate enough to suffer mental illness or cancer but who resists the urge to write a book or blog about it.

Keep Calm and Carry On has been replaced by Let Everyone Know All About Your Problems.

7 REPLIES LIKE 4

FLAG

AV

Anthony Vesely 1 DAY AGOReply to **Andrew Hotston**

I don't think it's "let everyone know about your problems", more like "there is a way out, it will pass".

2 REPLIES LIKE 6

FLAG

AL

Anne Laidler 1 DAY AGOReply to **Anthony Vesely**

I agree. It's a beacon of hope to those in darkness. I think Andrew Hotson is being a little unkind.

LIKE 1

FLAG

AH

Andrew Hotston 1 DAY AGOReply to **Anthony Vesely**

"There is a way out, it will pass"? By checking yourself into a private hospital and then writing a book? How many of us have those options?!

LIKE 1

FLAG

JF

julie foster 1 DAY AGOReply to **Andrew Hotston**

Scroll past the articles you do not approve of - many of us find them insightful and interesting!

1 REPLY LIKE 0

FLAG

SG

Saucy Gadget 1 DAY AGOReply to **Andrew Hotston**

People with mental elf issues LOVE to talk . I think it helps them deal with whatever is going on in their head (because their own brain cannot deal with it)

LIKE 0

FLAG

AH

Andrew Hotston 1 DAY AGOReply to **julie foster**

And turn the DT into a series of echo chambers?

It's no coincidence that the rise in mental illness has been accompanied by a decline in people's ability to cope with opinions they disagree with.

LIKE 1

FLAG

MB

Mabel Burlington 1 DAY AGOReply to **Andrew Hotston**

I could have collected my medal until a year or 2 ago. I suffered puerperal psychosis in 1993 and had ect. I never told a soul and in fact it was kept off my work record as there was such a stigma about it back then. In fact, puerperal psychosis has an excellent recovery prognosis. It is one of those things that strikes with neither rhyme nor reason and then will not recur unless the sufferer has another baby. In fact i went on to have 4 more babies and it did not recur. I told my 1993 born baby about it only last year. I have worked safely with babies and young children 40 odd years now but people still associate psychotic with axe murderers and such like. Which is why i keep it on the QT . I still don't hear this condition widely talked about though i believe it affects 1 in 500 new mums.

LIKE 1

FLAG

KR

Kate Robertson 1 DAY AGO

Although we have great sympathy for such internal anguish to suggest mental illness was taboo is laughable

Any emotion that isn't gleeful happiness is now a mental health condition and young people particularly seen unable to take on board any stress disappointment and fear without resorting to the word anxiety

And what of the millions without private health insurance to take time off to depress and wander

Not much hope if you have bills to pay with dull work

3 REPLIES LIKE 12

FLAG

GR

GR RR 1 DAY AGOReply to **Kate Robertson**

I would recommend any of the books by the amazing psychiatrist prof Thomas Szasz, especially his blockbuster "The myth of mental illness"

1 REPLY LIKE 2

FLAG

KR

Kate Robertson 1 DAY AGOReply to **GR RR**

I have read several books on psychology and like most people have struggled with depression at various points in my life

It is a fascinating subject. For myself the chemical or maybe hormonal would be better term seems the most prescient cause and in that respect I know it does not last

For those who cannot get out of the slough it must be challenging to say the least

I have had too many suicides amongst family friends and most dreadfully in school peers of my children past few years

LIKE 1

FLAG

MB

Mabel Burlington 1 DAY AGOReply to **Kate Robertson**

Maybe not taboo - but definitely a stigma. My experience with psychosis is told above and i do still think there is a stigma surrounding psychosis and suicide. My friend's brother is schizophrenic but i know my friend tells very few people about him. When my mum committed suicide back in 87, i told very few folks. And i still dont really. To the few people i have told, i am always keen to impress on them she was suffering a psychosomatic illness and was in chronic pain. (Of psychological origin but felt real to her) I dont want people to have the impression she was flakey i suppose. We do still think that about people who can't cope with life, as you say in your post. So there is a stigma still there today. I do agree with you that folks are too quick to self allocate a label though - and not to recognise normal ups and downs vs pathological mental health conditions.

LIKE 0

FLAG

PS

Paul Scott 1 DAY AGO

I'm going to have a wild guess that comments are all about people letting us know about their problems.

LIKE 3

FLAG

RM

Roger Melly 1 DAY AGO

Really it's mental illness or emotional illness, not 'health'. No other illness is termed as such.

1 REPLY LIKE 3

FLAG

CL

Count Lazlo 1 DAY AGOReply to **Roger Melly**

Good point. Can you imagine an alcoholic informing you that they have liver health issues?
Somewhat optimistic, I fear.

LIKE 4

FLAG

JB

James Bonar 1 DAY AGO

I cannot understand how one can publicly be 'grateful for my breakdown'.

3 REPLIES LIKE 4

FLAG

RM

Roger Melly 1 DAY AGOReply to **James Bonar**

When you've had a breakdown you'll understand.

LIKE 17

FLAG

AH

Andrew Hotston 1 DAY AGOReply to **James Bonar**

It provides the excuse for an article in a national newspaper to promote his book!

Comment removed once. Not allowed to state the obvious in the DT any more!

LIKE 0

FLAG

KR

Kate Robertson 1 DAY AGOReply to **James Bonar**

Maybe a reset and a successful outcome rather

LIKE 0

FLAG

JC

joy crump 1 DAY AGO

Booked yourself in. I take it was a private clinic.

Try getting mental health care on the NHS.

2 REPLIES LIKE 21

FLAG

NB

Norma Barrell 1 DAY AGOReply to **joy crump**

Quite. The pointlessness of "Mental Health week" when no one can even call their GP easily.

LIKE 19

FLAG

JG

Jo Griffiths-Eyton 1 DAY AGOReply to **joy crump**

Maybe pointless to you but talk to people who have faced cancer about "Chemo Brain". Rarely mentioned, certainly not understood, but probably it is suffered by a surprising number. A very pertinent article and comments if you had, or have, it.

LIKE 2

FLAG

JH

Jacqui Harrison 1 DAY AGO

I wish him well and a continued recovery. When youthful resilience goes the world can seem a harrowing place and it becomes harder to cope with feelings of being overwhelmed by it all.

LIKE 23

FLAG

MX

Mxxx Xxxx 1 DAY AGO

One can only deal with so much sometimes. Good to hear you've found your strand to pull on and get you out of the mire.

LIKE 15

FLAG

FF

FTANG FTANG 1 DAY AGO

As a child..yes a child as I was 15..I worked summers at Cane Hill and later at Netherne Hospital. These were Bromley Area Health Authority secure psychiatric hospitals in leafy Coulsdon, Surrey. As a grammar boy and ward orderly over 3 years I saw a lot. These were actual psychiatric patients with various troubles including very troubled schizophrenia patients.

I find the warblings of the relatively well off mentally even more troubling. It distracts from those sent for "care in the community".

What a desperate mess mental health is in the UK and the US too

3 REPLIES LIKE 16

FLAG

1

SHOW OLDER REPLIES

AH

Andrew Hotston 1 DAY AGOReply to **Roger Salwey**

Good treatment does, though, Rog.

1 REPLY LIKE 3

FLAG

RS

Roger Salwey 1 DAY AGOReply to **Andrew Hotston**

Agreed, as with all illnesses

LIKE 0

FLAG

PM

P M Bosworth 1 DAY AGO

Thank you John-Paul for writing this article, which will resonate with many people. You sound like a brave person and your drawings are very good too. Wishing you all the best in your recovery.

LIKE 24

FLAG

BS

brian shevlane 1 DAY AGO

John-Paul describes his story which may not be similar to every other trajectory. He and other comment adders have conclusions about their downfall, these may also be incorrect. We are ashamed if our being shows any weakness mental or physical. For most the antidepressive medications work, please remember there are 2 types of that medication, SSRI and SNRI. Don't spurn them even should they be taken for life. Older people take medications to survive e.g. blood pressure, blood thinning. For those poor souls outside the solutions of anti-depressives electrical shock treatment has results. Thank you for your public frankness John-Paul.

1 REPLY LIKE 15

FLAG

AH

Andrew Hotston 1 DAY AGOReply to **brian shevlane**

Can't believe you're promoting dependence on drugs that have serious side effects.

LIKE 0

FLAG

JF

John Francis 1 DAY AGO

Interesting similarities between Jean-Paul's painting and Van Gogh's work in Arles.

LIKE 4

FLAG

VD

Vincent D'Laney 1 DAY AGO

Last year I had two nervous breakdowns and two six week stints in psychiatric hospitals. many things brought them on, loss of life meaning, fears for the future of my children, spiritual wasteland. The writer whom God, in my view, is calling writes honestly about this taboo of mental health.

2 REPLIES LIKE 40

FLAG

MP

MG Pimlico 1 DAY AGOReply to **Vincent D'Laney**

I'm glad I had therapy for years especially in my 20s ... I always took and still take my MH seriously and it's stood me in good stead to be structured about it.

LIKE 8

FLAG

AH

Andrew Hotston 1 DAY AGOReply to **Vincent D'Laney**

There is no taboo of mental health, as the publication this article clearly demonstrates.

LIKE 1

FLAG

CM

Charli McCann 1 DAY AGO

Thank you so very much for sharing. I can relate to this so much. I was diagnosed as being bipolar and PTSD after many years of attempted suicides and completely losing my mind.

I too am not religious but in those darkest hours I found reading passages from the Bible and pamphlets very soothing. I cannot explain why.

I am now in a much better place and for once have nothing but praise for the NHS in my area, who quite literally saved my life

I am very open and honest about how I am and know my trigger points now. It has changed me, but in a really positive way.

Advice? Please talk to someone, no matter how difficult it is. It's the first step (and the hardest) to getting on the road to recovery.

LIKE 29

FLAG

BH

Ben Hughes 1 DAY AGO

It will be interesting to read comments that get posted in response to this article. Many people truly do believe that it should simply be a case of one just having to 'pull yourself together,' ignoring entirely that the brain, just like any other organ in the body, is prone to disease. It's just gone 9pm on 18 October. Back tomorrow to see what's said (and the level of ignorance disclosed). And thank you Paul, for sharing your story. It will help others who may not realise exactly what they might be going through, and hopefully push them in the direction of seeking help.

6 REPLIES LIKE 32

FLAG

4

SHOW OLDER REPLIES

TT

Telegraph Telegraph 1 DAY AGOReply to **Ben Hughes**

I genuinely do not think the 'disease' model is a helpful analogy. Yes, the brain can get a disease like dementia - that is a physical thing but mental health to my mind is different.

It is something that is not disease-linked but has emotional, spiritual, social, life causes getting better is not a result of a pill but of changes in the way one can perceive and prioritise life experiences that have caused damage to one's ego and one's sense of self and one's soul. We don't put enough focus on things that are most valuable to our selves - we are busy trying to work, make a living, survive and neglect the other non-material parts of our lives.

Any mind can 'crack' given a certain set of pressures applied consistently. We need to look carefully at how we create societies, how we organise our environment and so on. What we give 'value' --- right now aggression in business often leads to financial reward and a so-called 'easy life' - is that a good way to structure society and are those people happy or mentally healthy at 'ease' with themselves?

Can we look at different ways of valuing people? Can we ensure that all people have the opportunity to thrive, to express their potential and feel valued? Can we support but in a balanced way through both competition and cooperation? We are complex beings - and what one person can withstand another can not and yet the 'failure' will thrive in a different environment.

A breakdown in mental health is not a normal thing - it is perhaps because of unhealthy pressures being applied either in childhood or adulthood. Although no-one knows exactly what the cause is as yet love, loving kindness is a great healer but why? There is so much to learn - and I think it goes far beyond a 'disease' model.

LIKE 2

FLAG

TT

Telegraph Telegraph 1 DAY AGO

Reply to

Apologies, I wrote a long post and have just seen yours - which already talked about that!

LIKE 0

FLAG

AB

Alain Bollack 1 DAY AGO

Previous post written by Claire Cantor (wife of subscriber Alain Bollack)

1 REPLY LIKE 1

FLAG

ED

Emma Dixon 1 DAY AGOReply to **Alain Bollack**

Good for you, Claire. I think many people struggled in COVID even if they didn't want to admit it.

LIKE 3

FLAG

AB

Alain Bollack 1 DAY AGO

Thankyou for writing his honest and open article. I too struggled in Covid, and honestly never thought I would get out of my black hole. Like you I have a very nasty inner critical voice. I forced myself to keep going with work (freelance writer) and walked ALOT!. I have come through it and today can celebrate an article in The Telegraph too. So life is definitely worth sticking around for.

1 REPLY LIKE 22

FLAG

ES

Even Stevens 1 DAY AGOReply to **Alain Bollack**

Hi Alain

Regarding your critical inner voice, have you read The Chimp Paradox by Prof Steve Peters. It changed my life and I'm far from alone in that. I hope you find it helpful too if you read it.

LIKE 0

FLAG

BE

Brian Evans 1 DAY AGO

I am glad you are better.

However be grateful for Private cover that helped to save you too.

Others sad to say have been so let down.

Prayer is powerful .I think it is vastly overlooked.

Good wishes to you.

Mrs E.

LIKE 16

FLAG

KM

Kate Mehanna 1 DAY AGO

Thank you so much for sharing. I know where you're coming from. I've been there myself for two years. Not quite back yet but feeling much better. Your ending sentence have me hope.

LIKE 17

FLAG

JH

Jade Hortense 1 DAY AGO

Thank you for writing this article. It will give other people hope that they too can find pleasure in life again.

LIKE 33

FLAG

PF

Potteringisgood forthesoul 1 DAY AGO

Moving article. Onwards and upwards John-Paul

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ED

Emma Dixon 2 DAYS AGO

Interesting article. I'm not religious either but I find churches very soothing. All the best to you, John-Paul.

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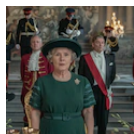
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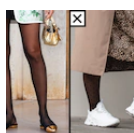
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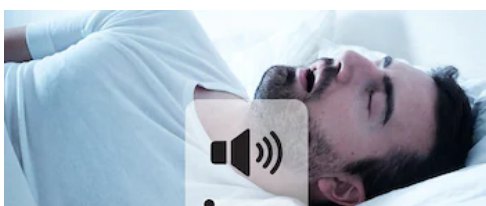
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