

# *A Thought For Today...*

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***“A Thought For Today”***

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***All proceeds in aid of our work with families and  
young people.***

*To all the residents of*

*Youth Support House*

*without whose courage our groups would  
not exist. May they heal their past and  
move on to a bright future ...*



## *Preface*

*This book is a collection of the daily readings used in our morning groups at Youth Support. The passages can be read alone or in discussion and provide food for thought - provoking personal reactions rather than providing complete arguments.*

*You will not find the pronouncements of the famous or quotations of philosophers but rather simple comments made by people like us - everyday situations and common dilemmas.*

*The language is kept simple - not to deny the intelligence of the reader - but because we are not after a 'head trip' - involving deep thought and concentration - but rather we are appealing to feelings, spontaneity and the language of the heart...*



*Suggested preamble to morning group ...*

*“ Good morning ....*

*This is a new day and a new chance to  
make the best of our lives.*

*Living with other people is often  
difficult and sometimes our problems  
can seem impossible to cope with.*

*Today gives us a new chance to help  
one another and to change our  
attitudes so that our problems become  
more manageable and we can begin to  
enjoy our lives again.”*



*January 1st*

## ***Challenge of a New Year.....***

Each year is a new beginning - a new opportunity for change and improvement in our lives.

We can reflect on past mistakes ..... but not dwell on them too deeply in a self - punishing way ..... rather make use of them in a resolve to do things differently and move forward positively in the new year.

*January 2nd*

## ***Knowing ourselves ...***

There is a saying -

*“Knowing others is wisdom, knowing yourself  
is enlightenment”*

This may be difficult to understand - but the  
gist of it is that to know ourselves is perhaps  
the most important piece of knowledge.

With each group and each session we can get  
to know ourselves better .

*January 3rd*

## *Space to learn.....*

*Do you allow yourself space to learn and listen rather than have your mind full of opinions ?*

A 'know all' came to learn about meditation, but it was obvious from his attitude that he was more interested in impressing others with his knowledge than in listening to what was said.

The teacher offered him tea and poured his visitor's cup full and then kept on pouring .

'Know all' watched the cup overflowing until he could no longer keep quiet .. "The cup is over-full! no more will go in" he said.

The teacher replied - "like this cup, you are so full of your own opinions - how can you learn?"

*January 4th*

## ***A willing mind ....***

*Nothing is impossible to a willing mind.*

Often we feel defeated in life - things have not gone our way and we seem to always meet brick walls or people who put us down - but we need to keep faith in ourselves and not lose confidence.

If we can keep a positive attitude we will find that we can succeed.

*January 5th*

## ***Safe boundaries...***

Sometimes we can get ourselves into situations when we want to rebel, to be out of control of others and break free.

If we make this too much of a habit we can end up without control in our lives - and this can make us insecure.

Think of a child and the amount of control that child needs in order to have boundaries, security and a feeling that somebody cares.

*January 6th*

## ***Living in the present....***

When times are hard it is important to live in the present, not in the future or in the past.

By living in the present we are in full contact with ourselves and our environment, there are no regrets over the past and no fears or worries for the future.

*January 7th*

## ***Loss and gain ...***

Losses can be very painful ... but we need also see that they can be opportunities for change and gain.

It is like throwing out all the old clothes in our wardrobes - to make space for the new ones ... in the same way we need to clear our minds of all the old 'stuck' thoughts to make way for new ways of thinking.

Loss is an opportunity for gain.

*January 8th*

## ***Patience ...***

A Chinese saying ...

*“Patience, the essential quality of man”*

Do you have the patience to wait for something worthwhile .. or do you need to have things NOW!

Often the better things are worth waiting for and working for.

*January 9th*

## **Words ...**

Words can have powerful impacts which we may not always realise. Some words sound unpleasant and derogatory .

How would you describe someone sleeping in an armchair? You could say they are tired or lethargic and that would not judge them - but if you said they were lazy - that would out them down.

We need to think about what words we use.

*January 10th*

## ***Accepting limitations ...***

*We will never learn unless we are ready to  
accept ourselves with our limitations.*

We need to accept that we are capable in some directions and limited in others , then we can truly appreciate and develop our capabilities.

*January 11th*

## ***Putting others down...***

When we feel bad about ourselves - It is very easy to drag others down to our level.

Think of the person who decides they are too fat and wants to diet ..... and then spends time trying to get their friends to eat more - 'have that last slice of cake' ....

In the hope that if others are fatter, it will make them look thinner.

We can make ourselves look better by putting others down and making others look bad - but this does nothing for us at all! Such destructiveness eventually leaves us feeling worse and having no real friends - we drive them all away.

*January 12th*

## ***The Hero inside...***

*A song says ' ... look for the Hero inside  
yourself .....* '

Are you able to find a hero inside - part of you  
that can be strong and have the courage to face  
the world?

*January 13th*

## ***Coping with bullies...***

Some people like to intimidate others ..

If you have been brought up to feel scared of others strength .. to be bullied at school perhaps .. it can be easy to get that feeling back again when others try to put you down.

We do not have to let ourselves be hurt.

A Chinese saying - *“Power of mind is infinite while muscle is limited”* Their hurtful words do not have to get to us.

Or - in words we may have chanted as children.....

*“Sticks and stones can break my bones .. but words will never hurt me”*

*January 14th*

## ***Losing face?..***

How do we react to intimidation -

- we could show our fear and cower away, giving the aggressor more power over us.

- we could get aggressive and try to intimidate them back, which might put us in danger.

- or we could show that we may take the easy route and let them *seem* to get their way, while we prevent them from ‘getting to us’ mentally.

Self preservation is more important than  
‘keeping up appearances’.

*January 15th*

## ***Any price?***

Some people are so afraid to admit to their problems in front of others that they cannot let themselves benefit from sharing and supporting each other in groups.

Or perhaps their pride stops them from facing their difficulties, accepting them and being able to change.

Is their pain and distress not hurting them enough for them to accept recovery at any price?

Admitting we are in pain is no disgrace - in order to heal our wounds - we first have to see them - and accept them.

*January 16th*

***Softness triumphs over hardness ;  
feebleness over strength.***

What is more flexible is always better than  
that which is immovable.

This is the principle of controlling things by  
going along with them rather than meeting  
clashes head on.

*January 17th*

***What are my body's needs?***

Today I will listen to my body's needs  
and not ignore them

*January 18th*

## ***Loss of control ...***

A lot of what we do in life involves a balance between - doing it all ourselves and therefore keeping tight control on our affairs - or , on the other hand, reaching out and letting others help us - which inevitably means that we lose some control over what happens.

Being at either extreme will bring us problems and in this, as in many other aspects of a 'happy' lifestyle, we do need to find balance.

Can you let go of your need to control and accept help?

*January 19th*

## ***Acceptance of self -***

I need to be aware of my good qualities.

Often they become hidden under my problems and I can criticise myself too much. I need to understand myself, both my difficulties and my good points so that I can accept myself as I am.

*January 20th*

***Someone else will 'fix it' ...***

It is easy to be stubborn and think that we can solve all our problems without making any changes in ourselves - wanting someone else to fix our problems - everything will be fine if I get a new flat, or plenty of money, or a new boyfriend / girlfriend.

Change comes from accepting the need for help and accepting our need to change.

*January 21st*

## ***Priorities .....***

How often do we find that we are ‘too busy’ to come to a group, or ‘too tired’ to think about ourselves, to attend sessions? Getting better, changing and becoming free of our problems involves regular work and commitment.

Going to a group when we are tired, busy and do not want to be involved can make us more relaxed, more effective in our lives.

*January 22nd*

***JUST FOR TODAY .....***

I will adjust myself to what *is*.....

and not try to adjust everything to my own  
desires

*January 23rd*

***Not the only ones...***

Sometimes we think that our problems are worse than anybody else's .....

In groups we can learn that other people may have problems that make ours seem small ..... yet they are facing them with courage and are coping with growing confidence.

We can then find reasons to be grateful for what we have rather than resentful of what we do not have. ..

*January 24th*

## ***Images .....***

If someone took a photograph of me today,  
how would I look?

Would I show a face lined with worry and  
carrying the troubles of the world on my  
shoulders? Or would I show a happy face  
looking positively to the future?

If we resolve to “put a good face” on our  
problems this can reduce their effect on our  
lives.

*January 25th*

## ***Remembering to smile..***

When you walk down the street, do people say  
“Cheer up love, it might never happen?”

This used to happen to me all the time until I  
realised two things;

one: I must be looking very sour and serious,  
wallowing in my worries,

and two: “it might never happen” .....

..... so why had I ruined today with worry  
about tomorrow?

Can I live today and smile to the world?

*January 26th*

## ***Fault finding .....***

Sometimes we think that we have a fault and try to eliminate it by making resolutions and efforts of will power.

It is easier to change by replacing bad feelings with their opposites - substitute a positive for a negative.

Replace faults with something better.

If I find I am constantly critical - I will find something to praise.

*January 27th*

## ***Reasonable goals...***

To adapt ourselves with a quiet mind to what is possible and attainable, therein lies happiness.

Setting our goals too high can lead to frustration and resentment. Clinging to what 'ought to be' can prevent us from seeing and finding a balance in our lives.

*January 28th*

## ***Living a lie ...***

When we start living a lie we can be so caught up in our stories that we cannot break free.

A group member once said “I feel like as if I am in a barrel rolling down hill and with each lie I tell it rolls faster - until I am trapped in the barrel and can’t put an arm or leg out for fear of it being snapped off .. I wish I could stop and face the truth .. it would be such a relief not to lie to my family or to myself...”

Are you stuck in a barrel?

*January 29th*

## ***Accepting who we are ...***

Sandra was upset because ever since her mother had died, her father kept going out with younger and younger women - now he was going out with a girl of her own age and she was ashamed of her friends finding out.

She went to talk to a friend about it and cried with shame about her 'perverted' father. He's sick .. why can't he grow up? But as she spoke, she began to feel sorry for her father, he was trying to reach for his youth and for the love he had lost .. he was afraid of growing old alone ... he tried to go back to a previous time of his life and so made himself look a fool rather than growing up gracefully.

Can we see that other people may have problems which deserve our sympathy rather than our anger?

*January 30th*

## ***Loving my Body .....***

Today I will not abuse my body - either indirectly by withholding food, rest or warmth .. or directly in any form of self harm. I will accept it the way it is and not want it to be taller, shorter, thinner, stronger, or of a different complexion.

I will nourish and nurture it as a loved part of myself.

*January 31st*

***Control your emotion or it will  
control you...***

It is not bad to have aggressive feelings at times - we all do , it is part of human nature.

When we acknowledge these feelings we no longer have to pretend to feel differently. We can learn to accept these moods.

What is harmful to us ... is to let angry feelings dictate our nature - if we unleash our aggression and anger onto someone else , it makes them react back to us in the same angry hostile way.

*February 1st*

***Troubles can be opportunities..***

Troubles can be opportunities to grow, to  
make us better, not bitter.

Rightly used, we can learn by our mistakes,  
take disappointments as they come , while  
looking at what we might learn from them.

*February 2nd*

## ***Old patterns ...***

George had a mother who was a model. She was physically beautiful and her career made her both vain and self centred and also took up all her time so that she had little to spend with George. In the end she rejected him and sent him to live with his grandparents.

As an adult George continued to be rejected by women and could not find a stable happy relationship.

When he came into groups he realised that he always tried to go out with beautiful but cold women who themselves could not make relationships. He was let down again and again - but the problem was in the kind of women he pursued, not in the fact that he was unlikeable or unlovable.

Do we set ourselves up for rejection?

*February 3rd*

***I am loveable ...***

I am loveable just the way I am -  
some people will see that,  
other people may not.

Today I will see my good points, I will love  
myself as I am, warts and all.

*February 4th*

## ***My own life ...***

Margaret's mother was a 'no frills' woman who had been married in her work clothes in a break from her office routine. Margaret wanted a white wedding and fought her parents strong opposition to 'wasting money' by making 'too much of a fuss' in her plans.

Her natural reaction was to feel guilty that she had broken with her parents wishes .. after all she had been programmed as a child into this 'script' and here she was breaking her programming. ..But with the support of her friends she managed to rewrite her 'script' and have her own needs and wishes met.

Can I lead my own life or am I forever walking in my parents shadow?

*February 5th*

***Responsibility for our  
own actions ....***

When there are people around us who are hurting us, ..... when someone close is behaving badly, being violent, taking drugs, getting into trouble .....

do we feel responsible for them and try to put things right ?

- or can we let them take responsibility for their own actions and get on with our own lives?

*February 6th*

## ***Buried alive!***

An article in the newspaper told of two minor criminals in some distant country who were sentenced to be buried up to their necks in sand for a week in punishment for their crimes.

Sometimes we can feel buried by our problems ..... it is then worth thinking - why do I let my problems bury me?

I have not committed any crime!

Then I can dig myself out of my hole and with the sand out of my eyes I can see my way to living again.....

*February 7th*

## ***Deadlines ...***

When I began writing these readings - I tried to write to a deadline ... I had set myself a time by which I wanted them finished and I tried to push myself to get the writing done.

I then realised that the time I had given myself was too short and I pushed harder to write quicker. ... this made it harder to write what I wanted to say .. it was all getting strained and I lost the enjoyment of writing down my favourite passages.

So I stopped completely .. I threw out my deadlines and I decided to just write when I wanted to and when I had something to say ...

... the work then got done better and quicker because I had 'let go' and relaxed.

*February 8th*

***Freedom can be denied to us in  
many ways.....***

Hostages and prisoners hope and pray day after day for physical freedom from their cells - they have no control over their confinement.

We can make ourselves prisoners of our thoughts, fears and pain ..... but we are fortunate that we can release ourselves from this mental prison -

Why deny ourselves the freedom that others hold so dear?

*February 9th*

## ***No need to fight ....***

If we feel wronged and downtrodden we can become angry and defensive, continuously fighting a war with life and not able to see that not everyone is our enemy -

We don't have to fight and defend ourselves all the time.

There are times when we may need to stand up and fight for our rights .....

... but there are also times when it is better to make peace and the battle is not worth entering into.

*February 10th*

## ***No Absolutes .....***

In life, all is not completely right or wrong.

Can I compromise and accept that even though  
things may not be perfect and exactly as I  
would want them to be

..... there is still some good mixed with the  
bad.

*February 11th*

## ***Extremes ...***

Do I always go to extremes?

Loving or hating rather than liking? I need to remember that there is a middle ground and my life might be more comfortable if I found it more often.

Then I might be able to keep more friends rather than rejecting them as soon as they did something I did not like.

*February 12th*

***Do we expect too much from our  
relationships?***

What do we want from our friends and  
relationships?

Love, companionship, support, money, a  
dancing partner, a good cook?

Perhaps this is more than one person can  
supply. Maybe we cannot get all our needs  
met by one person.

*February 13th*

***“Once bitten .....  
Twice shy ....”***

If we have been hurt and rejected in the past it is hard to trust again.

If we are not careful we can find that we expect each new friend to be perfect, totally trustworthy and fulfilling our every need.

We hero-worship them and .... when we find out that they too are human after all ..... do have faults and may let us down ;

- we reject them completely
- we ourselves become the losers.

*February 14th*

## ***Valentines ...***

On Valentine's day we are often ready to talk of love, give cards and expect people to be a little bit more romantic than at other times of the year ...

Can we be kind and loving at other times of the year?

Do we have to wait for the excuse of Valentine's day before we can tell someone how we feel about them?

*February 15th*

## ***Absolute, complete trust ....***

If we always go looking for absolute trust we will never find it.

When we place complete trust in those who cannot be completely trustworthy , we are setting ourselves up to be continually let down

..

... and we will prove to ourselves over and over again that nobody in the world is worthy of our trust .....

*February 16th*

***Letting others be themselves .....***

Suffocating closeness and rejection can be just  
as harmful.

Do we let our loved ones be themselves?

Can we be there for them without needing to  
dominate and control their lives?

*February 17th*

## ***Defence Tactics ..***

Tactics, which we might use to defend and protect ourselves as children, might not work when we grow up.

They may actually be harmful in the adult world. Being lost and helpless; attention seeking; not sharing our true feelings are examples of this.

Are you aware of others?

*February 18th*

## ***Asking for help...***

Can I ask for attention or for help in a straightforward way without manipulating people?

Or do I have to make them feel sorry for me, draw attention to how ill I feel or other tactics?

People will genuinely be kinder and want to help me if I don't make them feel "used" in the process.

*February 19th*

***Self worth ... self belief ...***

We become what we believe ourselves to be.

If I believe in myself, ...If I believe I am a  
worthwhile valued person,

..... that is also how others will see me.

*February 20th*

## ***Breaking down ...***

A psychiatrist once said “Never waste a good breakdown” .. What he meant was that when all seems lost and we have surrendered - stopped trying to hold on to a hopeless situation - we then have the opportunity for change and for rebuilding our lives.

We no longer have to pretend everything is OK - we can face our difficulties and move on.

*February 21st*

## ***Secrets out...***

When we have been hiding the truth, perhaps even hiding from ourselves - it can be a relief to get things out in the open.

Perhaps for years we have denied our problems and not wanted to face the truth - but denial blocks any movement.

Facing the truth will allow us to move forward and heal our pain.

*February 22nd*

## ***Remembering to laugh ...***

When times are hard we can forget how to laugh or smile. We can take ourselves too seriously and we lose perspective on our lives.

Humour is a great defuser of anger and conflict.

Can you get off your high horse and laugh at yourself sometimes?

*February 23rd*

## ***The mighty ant .....***

In a martial arts contest a little six year old girl beat a boy twice her size. Her technique was good but the most important thing was that she believed in herself.

If we believe in ourselves we can overcome our problems and they will stop towering over us like monsters.

*February 24th*

## ***Making a good start ....***

When we “get out of bed the wrong side” everything seems to go wrong. We feel bad about ourselves, its a bad day.

In reality no day is bad, it is our attitude that makes us feel no good can come of it.

With a positive attitude we can make each day a good day.

*February 25th*

***Bad things can happen to good  
people ...***

If people hurt me, it's not my fault.

If I suffer misfortune or bad luck it is not  
because I deserve it.

Bad things can happen to good people.

*February 26th*

***A flexible attitude ....***

If we are too rigid in approaching our problems we may break under the strain.

But if we keep a flexible attitude we will have the resilience to weather the storm.

*February 27th*

## ***Losing ourselves ...***

As children, as adolescents and even as adults, we may spend a lot of time rebelling, looking for freedom, breaking out, and wanting to be independent and do our own thing.

When we look for independence we need at the same time to have some degree of outside boundaries or control so that we feel secure otherwise we can lose ourselves.

I need to know you are there for me so that I can safely leave, knowing you will be there when I return.

*February 28th*

## ***Being Honest ....***

If someone dislikes me, or resents something I have done, I ought to give some thought to whether this is partly my own fault.

Was it something I did or said to hurt them?

If I am honest with myself, I will find I have more friends and I can be a better friend to myself.

*February 29th*

## ***Leap Year Day ...***

This is a special day - it only comes once  
every four years.

It is our chance to have another opportunity to  
change and grow - let us make the most of  
this gift of a precious day..

*March 1st*

## ***Loving yourself ....***

To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong  
romance.

I will not wait for someone else to love me - I  
will love myself and all else will follow.

*March 2nd*

## ***Avoiding hurt .....***

Hurting others often means I hurt myself.

Thinking before I let off criticism or hurtful words will help me to avoid saying something I may later regret.

Acting impatiently and angrily will not help anyone.

**THINK.**

*March 3rd*

## ***Leaving Fear Behind ...***

Just for today I will be unafraid.

When I was a child there were many situations  
that made me fearful - now I know that I can  
ask for help and protection.

I am not alone.

I do not have to feel fear alone.

*March 4th*

***A problem shared ..***

Sharing experiences with others helps us find  
new and better ways to deal with our  
difficulties.

Most problems are not unique .. others have  
had them too ..

There is no need to face them alone.

*March 5th*

## ***Basic needs ....***

In AA (alcoholics anonymous) .. there is a reminder .... to look to the basic needs of the body in order to help recovery. We cannot get well physically or mentally if we ignore the basic needs of hunger, warmth and rest.....

**H.A.L.T.**

Don't get .....

**HUNGRY;  
ANGRY;  
LONELY;  
TIRED...**

Today I will listen to my body's needs and not ignore them.

*March 6th*

***A fair evaluation ...***

I need to be aware of my good qualities.

Often they become hidden under my problems  
and I can criticise myself too much.

I need to understand myself both my  
difficulties and my good points so that I can  
accept myself as I am.

*March 7th*

## ***Acceptance ...***

Many of the 'twelve step' fellowships based on AA principles use a version of

*'Just for Today' ....*

Just for today ..... I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust everything to my own desires.

*March 8th*

## ***Getting it in perspective ...***

Sometimes we think that our problems are worse than anybody else's.

In groups we can learn that other people may have problems that make ours seem small, yet they are facing them with courage and are coping with growing confidence.

We can then use the experiences of others to find reasons to be grateful that our troubles are not worse and can be coped with.

*March 9th*

## ***Fear of loss..***

If we have experienced loss and disappointment in our lives - it can make us wary and fearful that we will lose more ....

A lost love affair can make us wary of entering another - in case we lose that too.. We stop getting close to people in case they should leave us. Sometimes the fear of loss can lead us to provoke it - make it happen - it is easier to know you have left me than to wake each day in fear that you might leave.

What loss are we most afraid of ?

Has it happened yet?

Turn the fear to a positive in  
“at least I still have .....”

*March 10th*

***Being good to myself ....***

Today I will be good to myself.

I will care for my body.

I will do something purely for enjoyment and I  
will not feel guilty for it.

I deserve good things!

I deserve to be treated well!

*March 11th*

## ***The good listener ...***

Am I a good listener?

In groups we can be impatient if others speak too much. We think that they have nothing useful to say, that they are stupid, or that what they say has nothing to do with us. They are taking up our valuable group time .. in which we could say something much more important.

Keeping my lips closed and my ears open can help me to learn new ways of looking at things ..... and we can learn unexpected things from people who we might not usually give the time to listen to.

*March 12th*

## ***Odious comparisons....***

Comparing my life with that of others and feeling resentment about my circumstances can make me feel full of self pity.

If I feel what I am doing is right I do not need to worry about how others see me. I can like myself.

*March 13th*

## ***Gangster's paradise***

“We’ve been spending most our lives, living  
in a gangster’s paradise ...”

So sings Coolio - referring to Ghetto kids in  
America - but in many ways this applies to  
many of us - we can create a ‘Ghetto’ type  
situation for ourselves.

When we are used to coping with abuse -  
when we live in a situation of hurt or be hurt ...  
it is difficult to break free - we grow up  
thinking this is normal.

Can we realise that life does not have to be  
like that?

*March 14th*

***Letting others hurt us...***

Nothing and nobody has the power to hurt my feelings unless I let them.

I will not be dependent on the admiration of others but will give myself the praise I deserve.

*March 15th*

## ***Liking myself ....***

It is unrealistic to expect everyone to like me.

With such expectation I set myself up to fail  
and give myself an excuse to blame that  
failure on others.

I cannot change other people,

..... but I can change my own attitudes.

*March 16th*

## ***Not just a shell...***

Sometimes when we feel bad, it can be hard to talk, difficult to put feelings into words ... then our bodies can speak for us .... we have a headache ... we feel sick ... we can't breathe very well.

If a really hurtful event happens .. it can be hard to accept ... we cannot take it in ... we can't 'swallow' the truth. Physically we may go off our food, can't eat or make ourselves sick.

When I make my body sick ... what feelings am I not facing up to?

I will not deprive my body of essential nourishment. For by doing so I am denying myself, I am not accepting who I am.

*March 17th*

## ***The Rainbow ...***

Did you know this is St Patrick's day? The thought conjures up pictures of Leprechauns with their crock of gold at the end of the rainbow ...

Maybe we don't have to always expect good things to be 'Somewhere over the rainbow..' .. we can find good in any day.

We can find our reward in today instead of waiting for some unknown tomorrow...

*March 18th*

## ***Putting a foot in it...***

There are a lot of sayings about speaking out when a little thought could have saved us from saying the wrong thing.

Words can hurt and it is easy to wound with a casual remark or angry outburst .. but difficult to mend our mistake.

‘Least said, soonest mended’ might be a useful phrase to hold on to.

*March 19th*

***‘Putting up with ...’***

Why do we accept things that trouble us when we could do something about them?

Acceptance does not mean ‘putting up with’ pain and hurt - or continuing the hurt by self harming.

Today I will stop wallowing in self pity and take a positive view of my life.

*March 20th*

## ***Quicksand...***

Do you panic when an unpaid bill comes through the letter box? Do you rush to do something ... just anything as soon as you are faced with a dilemma ...?

Rushing around in a panic grasping at probable solutions can dig us into a deeper hole .. like a man sinking in quicksand .. going in deeper as he struggles..

Letting go - relaxing and allowing someone to help pull you out can stop your head from disappearing under the mud.

Can you give yourself the space to let go?

*March 21st*

## ***Delight in Spring ...***

Today is the first day of spring .. a time of new life .. especially in the countryside. Blossom on trees and lambs in the fields ...

In the town we may not see such clean fresh views .. but there will be signs of spring if we look .. perhaps a little shoot pushing out from a crack in the pavement, or one of those poor pruned city trees growing a new fresh leaf which is not dirtied by the city dust.

We too can feel fresh and new even in hard times .. we can have the determination of that little city shoot to shake off the dust of yesterday and grow fresh and strong....

*March 22nd*

## ***Taking it out on ...***

When we are upset we may take it out on the nearest person. We do not really hold any grudge or animosity against them - they may have done nothing to deserve our anger, crying or abuse... Perhaps we take it out on our brothers and sisters, perhaps on our children...

We need to remember that they may not understand why they are being used this way and our children may feel as we did ... why is mummy angry with us? .. what have we done wrong? .. if I had been better Mummy or Daddy would not be upset.

... it must be my fault.

*March 23rd*

## ***Courtesy and politeness ...***

Courtesy towards others is a useful tool to cultivate.

A quiet response to an angry attack takes the wind out of others sails.

What can we lose by trying it?

Courtesy that I show to others increases my own dignity and self respect.

*March 24th*

***A better tomorrow ...***

Condemning ourselves for mistakes we have made is just as bad as condemning others for theirs. Why add the pain of guilt and blame to the hurt we already experience?

We cannot really make judgements, not even of ourselves.

We hope for the wisdom to build a better tomorrow on the mistakes and experiences of yesterday.

*March 25th*

***A new day ....***

This day belongs to me.

I can do wonderful things with it, creative things, including putting some order in my surroundings and in my mind.

I will not waste a moment of this day worrying about yesterdays nor will I let worry about tomorrow cross my mind.

*March 26th*

## ***Taking stock ....***

If I were to sit down and think about my life as though I was thinking about someone else or reading about it in a book - how would it look to me?

Have I said things or done things in haste anger or desperation that made my situation worse? Are there things I regret?

We learn from experience and by making up our minds not to repeat past mistakes.

*March 27th*

## ***Courage ....***

It is easy to complain and wallow in self pity  
- it takes courage to realise that we do have  
the power and the ability to climb out of the  
hurtful situation we are living in if we will  
only use that ability.

“...Courage to change the things we can”

*March 28th*

## ***It's not fair!***

How often have you heard children scream that at each other. Brothers and sisters fighting over a toy or a treat ... his one's bigger than mine .. but I wanted to go to the cinema .. it's not fair ! - he always gets to choose what we do ....

We all lead different lives - some of us have more pain than others .. some of us have more job satisfaction, more money, more children ..

Whatever our situations we will be more likely to find satisfaction and a sense of peace if we can accept our lot in life instead of saying 'it's not fair'.

Once we accept our difficulties and our lives, we will be able to make changes for the better.

*March 29th*

## ***Waiting...***

A waitress was working hard, rushing around waiting at all the tables - but when some prosperous looking customers came in the manageress always would jump in and serve them, hoping for a big tip.

Eventually the waitress could stand no more and said - 'Look, if you want to wait at my tables - then choose one and stick with it and take pot luck at the tips like I do'.

Life has it's ups and downs - we need to accept the good times and the bad - not expect everything to be wonderful all the time.

*March 30th*

## ***Associations***

We all have associations of things from our past - people, things, situations, sensations which evoke emotional memories for us.

We need to take care not to bring bad associations from the past to hurt us in our present - but there are also good associations.

We all have pleasant memories - maybe just some small events - perhaps just a memory of a perfume or the taste of a favourite meal - or the feel of being held. We can use these associations to make us feel good - to hold us through difficult moments.

What pleasant memories can bring a good feeling into our lives today?

*March 31st*

***My rights ...***

I have the right to want what I want and to feel  
the way I feel.

I may not choose to act on those feelings or  
desires but I won't hide them from myself.

They are part of me.

*April 1st*

*One day at a time ...*

*Just for today.....*

I will live through this day only and not tackle  
all my problems at once.

*April 2nd*

## ***Tailored to fit ...***

A good suit or a dress is tailored to fit the person. It is not often that we can fit into our friends clothes comfortably - we need to have our own sizes.

It is the same when it comes to lifestyles - what suits you will not necessarily suit me.

Do you find your own style in life - or are you wearing other people's cast offs?

*April 3rd*

## ***Acceptance...***

Today I will practise acceptance -

I will accept myself as I am.

I will accept my body - the parts I like and the  
parts I dislike.

What do I like best about myself? What do I  
dislike about myself? Both are parts of me..  
I cannot deny either...

*April 4th*

## ***Peace of mind...***

Serenity and peace of mind is always available to me, but it is my job to seek it where it can be found.

Accepting the things I cannot change - taking responsibility for those I can change - that is the path to serenity.

*April 5th*

## ***A destructive jealousy...***

Sheila's jealousy of her sister nearly destroyed her life.

The sister was handicapped and grew up in a wheelchair. This meant that naturally her parents had to spend a lot of time caring for her. Sheila felt neglected and jealous. She started getting into trouble to get attention from her parents. One night her boyfriend stole a car - he was 14 and could not drive. They crashed and Sheila's leg was crushed beneath the overturned car. For months it looked as if she might not walk again. She was angry and resentful - but as time passed she realised how lucky she had been not to have been wheelchair bound like her sister.

Can we accept the good in our lives instead of being jealous of what others may have?

*April 6th*

## ***Asking for help ...***

When we are desperate enough to ask for help with our problems, we will not expect it to come in the form of easy solutions - it is not a case of someone else taking away the pain , of someone 'doing it for us' or 'putting things right'.

Getting help means working together, someone alongside giving encouragement.

We must each play a part and work on solving our own problems.

*April 7th*

## ***Keeping a flexible attitude ....***

A famous psychiatrist once said that the best way to keep mentally well in the face of problems is to maintain flexibility in your approach to life. Those who stubbornly stick to a rigid viewpoint are more likely to ‘crack’ under the strain.

Softness triumphs over hardness.

Feebleness over strength.

What is more flexible is always better than that which is immovable.

This is the principle of controlling things by going along with them rather than meeting clashes head on.

*April 8th*

***The right to be wrong ...***

I have the right to be wrong!

It is easy to criticise - I know I cannot always be right - if I were, I would not be human.

Being wrong and admitting it to myself is an exercise in achieving balance.

*April 9th*

## ***Different lives..***

If I have not had the same experiences as you -  
can I understand and help you?

We have all felt pain in different ways.

Experiences can differ , but we can share each  
other's hurt.

*April 10th*

## ***Space to be...***

We all need space - physical space to breathe and exist .. mental space to think and develop - emotional space to feel and know ourselves.

Just as isolation can destroy us as people , so over-closeness can suffocate and block our ability to feel.

*April 11th*

## ***Being there..***

A group member once said .. “I am never stuck in a situation ... I am there because I want to be”

Another member who had suffered a lot of pain became very angry “how dare you suggest I want to suffer..”.

It is easy to blame others for our predicaments and to assume that we do not have the power to change ourselves or our situation.

I can decide to move on.

*April 12th*

## ***Balance...***

Balance is the key to healthy living.

It is easy to go to excess - in overeating, drinking too much or other overindulgence. It is also just as easy to go to the opposite extreme - starvation diets, making a point by cutting out something completely.

When we have been deprived of something .. perhaps by being poor , or short of food or not being able to afford new clothes ... it can be hard to keep a balance and spend wisely when we do get what we want. Think of the lottery winners who waste their millions on throw away luxuries and then maybe spend their old age in poverty.

Can we achieve balance in our desires?

*April 13th*

## ***Permission not to choose ...***

Sometimes we are faced with making important decisions. It can be difficult to choose which way to turn - too much depends on us making the right choice - and we can become confused by trying to force a decision.

In that circumstance it can sometimes be best to stand back and admit that .. we just cannot make the choice .. it is not the right time .. or the facts are not clear enough in our minds.

We can give ourselves permission not to make an agonising choice.

*April 14th*

## ***Parent Voices ...***

We have different voices in our heads that can tell us what to do at various times.

Sometimes it can feel like we have a little child inside - telling us to just do what we want and forget about the consequences ..... Other times we can have a firm 'adult' voice telling us what would be best .. and other times it can feel just as if we have a parent in our head nagging at us to do the right thing.

These voices are all part of us ... we need to learn which voice should be listened to and which told to shut up! Nobody wants a nagging parent destroying their confidence .. but a caring parent can show us the way...

*April 15th*

## ***Keeping our eyes open..***

Lessons can be learned in unexpected situations .. if we keep our eyes open. No situation is too mundane or boring and no individual too stupid to teach us something - all it takes is for us to open our minds and listen.

*April 16th*

***‘What goes around, comes around..’***

When we feel wronged or let down by others - or outraged by some injustice, it can be difficult to ‘let go’ and not ruin our own lives by hanging on to resentment and the feeling that we need to ‘get even’.

This is a worthless exercise which just serves to drag us down to the lowest level.

There is a saying in America .. ‘What goes around, comes around..’ In other words, in the end people get what they deserve .. they get what they ‘ask for’ without our intervention.

*April 17th*

## ***Facing ourselves ...***

So often we run away from reality.

We deny the truth, we feel guilty and instead of looking our faults and mistakes full in the face, we lie to ourselves and live in denial.

Can I face my self?

*April 18th*

## ***Self Love ..***

An empty vessel has nothing to give.

If we are empty of love we must first fill our hearts and love ourselves before we can care for or love another.

It says in the Bible 'Love thy neighbour, as thyself' - to do that you must love yourself first.

*April 19th*

## ***Being good to myself ...***

In what small way can I be good to myself today. Perhaps I can take a long hot bath and give myself that time all to myself. Perhaps I can go for a walk and enjoy the day without feeling guilty about spending time on myself.

Perhaps I can buy myself a little treat -  
something just for me.

That is the beginning of self value.

*April 20th*

## ***Marathon ....***

This is the time of year when the London Marathon takes place and weeks before dozens of people are up early in the morning , pounding the streets with gritted teeth.

It is wonderful if you enjoy sport and running to be able to compete in such an event ... but often people drive themselves to run and exercise too hard so that the enjoyment is lost.

Life can be a marathon, there always seems to be one more mile to run and you do not know how you can keep going ... the satisfaction of knowing that you can 'do it' is worth the effort - but we need to keep a balance and not set ourselves unreachable goals.

If I set myself the goal of running a short distance from Greenwich to the Isle of Dogs .. my achievement in getting there is just as important as that of the winner who makes it the whole way to Westminster Bridge.

*April 21st*

## ***Taking Care....***

Taking care of ourselves, being good to ourselves is essential for our well being. If we do not care for our own welfare, then why should others care for us?

Sometimes being good to myself can mean allowing myself to avoid harmful situations. Not putting myself in danger by taking risks.

Valuing my self enough to want to take precautions - such as wearing a seat-belt in the car - avoiding dangerous walks home.

What risk have I put myself to lately which could have been avoided if I cared enough about myself?

*April 22nd*

***Easy come easy go...***

When life seems hard and we seem not to be getting anywhere .. it is useful to remember that if a thing is worthwhile getting, then it is worth working for and waiting for.

Often people look at long standing group members and say ‘I want what you have .. I want to be like you .. to be happy and content .. to feel good about myself’

They are impatient and forget that it takes time to grow emotionally and to acquire strength and confidence.

*April 23rd*

## ***Learning Quietly ....***

We learn more in silence than in speech.

People sometimes come to groups eager to speak and to show that they have a lot to contribute to others. They make a lot of noise but go away from the group with no more than what they came with. By talking all the time , they did not have time to listen, so could gain nothing new.

*April 24th*

## *Self Value...*

Getting better, improving how we feel about ourselves and our surroundings - improving in confidence .. these are things which we have to measure up for ourselves. We are all different individuals and *only we* can know how our inner feelings may have changed.

Gaining in self worth is not a competition. We don't measure it up against the next person - we cannot make ourselves feel better by putting someone else down. We cannot rise up by trampling on others.

*April 25th*

## ***The child within ...***

If as children we have not had enough love and attention .. we grow up with our inner child feeling lost and unloved.

The child within us needs our love and we can provide that love ourselves. We can be the good parent that child never had.

Let us learn to listen to the child voices inside us, to hear their needs, their pain and to nurture them with our love.

*April 26th*

## ***Avoid destructiveness..***

It is easier to pull someone down than to build them up. Have you ever tried to pull someone down off a chair or off a ladder or step? How much more difficult is it to lift them back up?

It takes time to build a skyscraper - but seconds to destroy a tall building.

It is the same with our emotions and our personalities. It takes time to build confidence and self worth - it can be a matter of seconds or a passing remark that cuts someone to the core and destroys their self confidence.

*April 27th*

## ***Forgetting how to dance..***

In an episode of 'Babylon 5' - a sci-fi fantasy - a forceful, usually fierce character was shown crying holding his shoes in his hand. He said his shoes did not fit any more ... but that was not what made him cry. What was sad was the fact that he did not need them any more because he had forgotten how to dance ...

Do we spend all our time thinking of serious things, working out what we *should* be doing rather than taking enjoyment in our lives?

Have we forgotten how to dance?

*April 28th*

***I'm looking good..***

Who are you looking good for?

Do you ever feel that you need to dress up nicely, or look smart to impress someone? There may be other times when you want to make yourself look especially attractive to compete with a rival - or you may want people to like you, so you dress to please them.

Do you ever dress up to make your *self* feel good? - Not for anyone else - Just for yourself?

*April 29th*

## ***Many losses..***

Loss can come in many forms - loss of a loved one, death of a parent, child; loss of home, loss of health.

Other losses are smaller daily events but they can pile one on another to make the feeling worse and we can end up feeling we have lost everything ... there is nothing worthwhile left in our lives.

If we can 'detach' from this swamping feeling, step back and look at each loss separately .. we can defuse the situation .. take away the power of loss to dominate our lives.

Take one loss at a time.

*April 30th*

## ***Humility without humiliation..***

Humility is a valuable tool. With humility I can accept who I am and who others are. I can allow myself not to be perfect and to accept that others are also not perfect.

My imperfections can be an opportunity for change. I can be wise enough to know that I can learn and grow emotionally each day.

Humility must not be confused with humiliation - which happens when we allow others to put us down, to tell us we are worthless, to 'rub our noses' in our mistakes. Humiliation is bowing down to the values of others - of bullies - of abusers.

Humility is proudly accepting our own values.

*May 1st*

## ***Inner Beauty ...***

It is said that 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. When we really love someone, we see the good in them. Small defects are not important to us ..

True beauty is internal .... you do not have to look like a model to have beautiful thoughts. You do not have to be wearing good clothes for people to care for you or for you to be caring to them.

*May 2nd*

## ***Fear fuels anger...***

Anger can be a cover for other emotions ... sometimes anger and aggression can stem from fear.. If we are fearful and do not understand a situation - what should we do, how should we react, what is required of us .. what do they want of me? The fear can easily turn to anger and a wish to 'fight back' - which only makes the situation worse.

Instead of letting fear take over ... being anxious about what to do ... ask for help ... ask what you should do .. ask for guidance.

Facing fears diminishes them.

*May 3rd*

## ***Forbidden feelings...***

.. perhaps as children our parents did not want us to be angry ... or sad ... or jealous .. or happy.

Most families have a 'forbidden emotion'

What is yours?

*May 4th*

## ***Keeping up appearances..***

A woman once had a garden swing which was getting wet in the rain and damaged by frost every winter. She kept painting it to make it look better and cover up the flaws. One summer she sat her daughter on it .. and it gave way letting the little girl fall to the floor. “Mummy, the swing is rotten all through and it looked like new!”

Sometimes we can spend so much of our time keeping up appearances, that we do not realise how bad things have become.

Getting better is not about making ourselves look good on the outside - but it is about healing the hurt deep inside...

*May 5th*

***Pleasure in surroundings ....***

When we have been hurt and we are finding life difficult, it can be hard to see that there are good things around us too.

We need to open our eyes to the little things which can give us pleasure - such as a beautiful sky, flowers, bird song, music or children laughing.

What can we appreciate in our lives that we have been blind to?

*May 6th*

## ***Joy in what is possible ...***

As children we are often taught to aim high in life, to do well and to succeed.

If we look at what others are doing we can end up feeling that we have to achieve what they achieve, and we make a goal for ourselves of what we *should* be and what we *should* do.

This usually results in our being dissatisfied with our own achievements because they are never as good as we think they should be.

Can we let ourselves enjoy what we *can* achieve .. rather than what we think we *should*?

*May 7th*

## ***Acting tough....***

A girl once said “I have to act tough when I meet people, to show them they can’t take advantage of me. I don’t want them thinking I am some soft pushover who they can bully, or use.”

Another replied “I was like that but then I realised that the acting tough was not just protecting me from the bad people who wanted to hurt me .. it was also keeping away the good people who might want to care for me.

..... Can’t you see that by stopping the hurt getting to you ... you are also stopping the love?”

*May 8th*

## ***Agony aunts ...***

Some people act like agony aunts in magazines .. They are always having people come to them with problems. They sit listening to others all the time and can be full of sympathy and little helpful remarks. On the bus the woman sitting next to her tells her about her daughter running away .. the next door neighbour cries on her shoulder when her husband leaves ...

Dealing with others problems can stop us seeing our own ..

Are we so caught up in others troubles that we do not have time for ours?

*May 9th*

## ***Positive thoughts...***

Positive thoughts lead to positive feelings and actions. We grow in strength when we turn a positive into a negative.

Resentment to gratitude ..

Vengeance to forgiveness and acceptance ...

*May 10th*

## ***Blinkers ...***

Race horses sometimes are made to wear blinkers which stop them from looking sideways or being distracted by sights in the crowd when they are racing.

Sometimes we need blinkers to stop us being distracted by everything going on around us.

We need to focus our attention on *one thing at a time* .. so that we are not swamped by all our problems at once.

*May 11th*

***A wise man knows his failings.***

If we do not know where our weaknesses are,  
we cannot do anything to help us grow  
stronger.

To train for sport we need to know which  
areas to concentrate on ... am I a poor runner  
and need to train at jogging? .. am I stiff and  
awkward so need flexibility exercises ... are  
my muscles weak and need weight training?

If planning to take an exam .. we need to know  
which bits of information are missing ... the  
things we need to learn ... it is much more  
useful to realise what we don't know than to  
concentrate on what we already know.

Knowing ourselves is the first step to change  
and growth.

*May 12th*

***Small words with big meanings..***

A group member once said that the morning group was very important to her and that she particularly liked the readings which were short and to the point.

She said that the readings were like her loved one who did not often say much but what he did say was valuable and important to her.

Small words can have big meanings.

*May 13th*

## ***Unconditional love...***

When we truly love someone .. there are no conditions attached.

We love our children just as much when they are spotty, dirty, when they don't do so well at school. This is the way we need to be loved ourselves. Did we ever feel as children that we had to draw the best picture in school, play the best football, do the best needlework, pass the spelling test ... or whatever it might be to please our parents ... otherwise they may not love us?.

Do we give unconditional love? ... or are there strings attached?

*May 14th*

## ***Laugh at yourself***

When was the last time you were able to laugh at yourself or at your predicament?

We all go through a lot of pain in life and some days we can feel taken over by our troubles. ... in the face of so many serious things it can sometimes feel wrong to have a happy moment, a smile. It feels like laughing at a funeral.

How can you be cheerful in the midst of such pain?

Laughter is a great defuser of situations. We all need to laugh .. and we need to laugh at ourselves - to just sometimes not take ourselves so seriously.

What can you laugh about in yourself today?

*May 15th*

## ***Our Treasures..***

It says in the Bible ... “Where your treasure is .. there will your heart be also”.

When we have been deprived of certain things in our lives, it can be too easy to imagine that true happiness lies in acquiring that bit which was missing. If we were homeless, wanting a wonderful house ... if we were short of food , to make sure we could eat the best meals, in enormous amounts .... if we were poor , to have lots of money.

It is important to remember that even if we do deserve and need these material things ... there are other things of value in our lives which can be much more important and should not become trampled on in our search for ‘our rights’.

How do we value love, friendship,  
companions, caring ...

*May 16th*

***The past is past ..***

We hear people in groups say that ‘The past is past ..’ and they want to leave it there .. not talk about it any more, forget the pain of past events.

Certainly the past is past ... but it is also part of who we are - we can learn from it and move forward.

*May 17th*

## ***Power Struggles ...***

Families can be happy, supportive and loving  
.... families can also be conflict zones ...  
individuals 'ganging up' and using one family  
member against the other.

Our families provide the stage where we learn  
the power struggles and tactics which we use  
to 'control' our lives and friends as we grow  
up.

What 'power struggles' were there in your  
family?

*May 18th*

## ***Negative thoughts ..***

Negative thoughts diminish us.

Hatred, resentment pull us down and destroy our personalities. We become bitter, we become consumed by our dislike and hatred of others, we place blame for our condition on others and therefore cannot move on.

We become stuck in the mire of our negative thoughts.

Just for today ... leave aside negative thoughts and concentrate on positive alternatives.

*May 19th*

## ***Forgive yourself ...***

We talk of forgiving others , but in reality we can only forgive ourselves.

We need to accept our mistakes, to realise we are not perfect. If we hold guilt and blame within ourselves and cannot accept our own imperfections .. the blame will turn on others and destroy our friendships and our relationships.

*May 20th*

## ***Who am I?***

I have many roles .. I am a woman or a man; a  
child or an adult;  
Perhaps ..... I am a son or daughter ;  
I am a mother or father;  
I am a husband or wife;  
I may be a teacher or pupil.....

We take on different roles at different times,  
as our circumstances change and depending on  
who we are with.

How do I act differently in my various roles?

Who is the real me?

*May 21st*

## ***Pay Back...***

If you do me a favour , do I feel I have to pay  
you one back ?

Can I accept good things, favours,  
compliments .. without feeling that I have to  
even things up by paying back .. or doing  
something better and so keeping ahead. I don't  
want to be indebted to you .. I prefer you to be  
indebted to me.

Can I value myself enough to just accept  
'positive strokes'. I deserve them.

*May 22nd*

## ***Living up to parents expectations...***

Our parents have their expectations of who we will be, what we will do. Sometimes these are similar to our own expectations .. but often they are not, they are based on what they would have liked for themselves, or for another brother or sister.

We are all individuals and we cannot live up to others expectations of us .. we can only live up to our own.

What are our own values?  
Can we live up to them?

*May 23rd*

## ***Free to love ..***

If we want people to like us , we can try to gain their attention and admiration by doing things for them. We want to be needed, we make them depend on us so that they will never want to be without us.

When we tie a loved one to us in this way it can make that person feel squashed, tied down and over dependant. Instead of love , they can begin to resent having to ‘need’ you. They can end up ‘hating the hand that feeds them’

We have to leave people with the freedom to love and care for each other.

If you love somebody .. set them free..

*May 24th*

## ***Approval ..***

In the comedy film 'Cool Runnings' about the Jamaican bob sleigh team - John Candy says about the Olympic Medal "If you are not good enough without it .. you will never be good enough with it".

This sentiment is true in our daily lives also. Do we need approval from others? Do we need to strive for outside goals or can we value ourselves?

*May 25th*

## ***Give yourself a break ...***

Have you been in a situation when you are struggling to finish a piece of work .. maybe painting a wall .. or washing the floor , or writing letters ... and you are tired ... irritable .. snappy .. but you won't let yourself stop .. you have to drive yourself to finish the job. In that state you are no good to anyone .. least of all yourself.

It is then better to stop working - leave the job even if you do feel guilty about it .. and set yourself more reasonable goals

Give yourself a break and then your body and mind will be able to recover. The job will be done much better after you have been 'good to yourself'.

*May 26th*

## ***Moaning Minnie ...***

Have you ever met one of those people who  
moans about everything ?

When something goes wrong .. instead of  
doing something about it .. they moan. 'I'm  
tired .. I need a cup of tea' they moan ... you  
make them one 'Oh I can't have it with milk'  
they moan ... 'My cup is leaking' they moan...  
and so it goes on.

They never dream of making the tea, getting  
the milk, finding a new cup .. this would  
deprive them the opportunity of a moan.

We can all get into a 'moaning' situation at  
times - moaning gets us nowhere - positive  
attitude and action stops the moaning minnies.

*May 27th*

## ***Keep the good ...***

When a marriage or relationship comes to an end, when friends fall out or when perhaps a partner leaves, we can hurt ourselves thinking about how we have wasted our lives on this worthless person who has walked out on us ... how stupid we have been to believe their lies ... what an idiot for not seeing that they were having an affair .... There are many ways that we can punish ourselves and make ourselves believe that there was nothing good in these wasted years.

People change, relationships change ... after the 'grief' of the break-up, keep hold of the good times as pleasant memories and stop blaming yourself for wasted time...

*May 28th*

## ***Losing your temper.***

A famous musician once said that “..One problem with losing your temper is that you lose it at moments when you don’t choose to!”

If we let our temper get the better of us, we are out of control.. we may think that we are demonstrating strong , powerful emotion and that we are in control of the situation ... but the truth is that it is our anger and our temper that is in control .. not us!

Let us not be slaves of our emotions.

*May 29th*

## ***Respect ...***

A teacher did not like a particular girl in the class and kept picking on her.

One day the girl's father was very ill and she had to wait for the doctor to come to their home. She arrived at school late and as she came into the room the teacher rather than allowing her to give an explanation - shouted angrily at her .. 'I'm putting you on report for being late!'. She burst into tears and ran out.

The teacher went to the head and demanded the disrespectful girl be suspended until she apologised - which she refused to do saying 'the teacher shows me no respect - she showed me up in front of my friends .. I will not respect her until she respects me..'

To deserve respect we must earn it.

*May 30th*

## ***Gallows Humour***

Have you ever met a person who despite their handicap or disability is always making you laugh? Perhaps a woman with a big nose who makes jokes about ugly people or a fat man who quivers like a jelly?

Or those who make light of their emotional problems ... the alcoholic making jokes about drunks or telling funny stories about the predicaments they have been in?

How about making jokes at others expense?

The bottom line is that these jokes are not funny - they are a denial of the true hurt behind these events - they are a defence against seeing how much pain and perhaps embarrassment was attached to getting drunk, being unattractive .. feeling bad about themselves.

*May 31st*

## ***Encouraging ...***

Some of us have more courage than others ..  
many of us need courage to face each day, to  
get up, to go to work, to face our problems, to  
cope with our grief...

We gain from each others example .. if you  
can do it, so can I .. if I can do it , so can you.

Encouraging others will help us to gain  
courage for ourselves.

*June 1st*

## ***A family history..***

Families have their own values and ideals. They also have a history .. a pattern for the way family life should be. Perhaps successful father with a wife who stays at home .... or maybe a family with strong women who hold the family together. There are also roles for each individual .. the daughter has her place, so does the son ..etc. etc.

As we grow up and move away from home, we need to form our own families ... we may not have the same values as our parents. We may not fit in the family roles .. we may not want to be the people our parents want us to be.

Breaking the family mould can be difficult but is the first step to being ourselves.

*June 2nd*

## ***New words ...***

I was very annoyed and upset when I lost a whole section of my writing on the computer.

It was an important section of work and I cursed the computer , the man who sold it to me, the company that made it.. and when I calmed down a bit .. I was annoyed with myself for not keeping a second copy of my notes. In the end I had to write it all again.

My re write came out much better than the first version. I put in new ideas and was able to think things through better the second time.

If I had not lost the original, I would never have improved -I would have been stuck with the 'old version'.

We need to look at the positive side of things and grasp opportunities for change - as they say .. 'every cloud has a silver lining...'

*June 3rd*

## ***Loss of constancy ...***

We can feel secure when we believe that everything around us is constant and unchanging. But when we believe things to be permanent - we close our minds - lose our flexibility and cannot change ourselves.

This belief is challenged all the time as we see things around us are not permanent - people close to us may die - we experience losses.

To cope with loss we need to accept that things do change - life is a constant scene of change and we need to let go and allow ourselves to be flexible.

*June 4th*

## ***Savings Bank ...***

When I was upset and going through a bad patch, I realised that I used to save up all my resentments, all the times I felt angry with someone, all the times I thought I had been let down... I let them seethe inside me until I was so full of resentment that it would erupt out of me in a big row and I would 'hurt everyone back'.

If instead of concentrating on the bad feelings and hurts, we look at the positive feelings .. we can save up all the good times, the times when people were nice to us, the little loving events that we could otherwise forget ...

We can build up a wonderful store of 'good feelings' which will be our nest egg for a rainy day.

*June 5th*

## ***Power of parent***

Scripture is full of references to respect for our elders and ‘Honour thy parents’. Parents are very powerful figures emotionally and it can be hard to separate the parental voices in our heads from our parents as human beings.

Sometimes when we attempt to separate from our parent messages and be independent, we can over react and rebel, rejecting all our ‘parent’ values rather than being able to choose - we ‘throw the baby out with the bath water’.

We can maintain respect for other viewpoints while being able to say “This is not for me”.

*June 6th*

## ***Trimming the bull's horns...***

A bull with enormous sharp horns, will try to dominate and control by barging through life, charging everyone with his horns. He will not bother to learn any other approach .. he is strong and he concentrates only on force.

If that bull has his horns trimmed .. he will have to look for other ways to behave, other solutions to his problems.

Sometimes perhaps we need to let go of our habitual and 'favourite' solutions. We need to change our approach and learn new tactics.

*June 7th*

## ***White knuckle concentration..***

If we concentrate too hard on what we want, we can waste a great deal of energy by trying to force a result. We become so afraid of failure that we cannot let go or stand back and see things in perspective.

Goals can become unrealistic and rigid and we cannot allow ourselves to 'get real'.

True success comes from completing realistic goals - striving to reach unrealistic targets will always leave us with a sense of failure.

*June 8th*

## ***In your debt...***

In films, the grateful character tells the hero that he is forever 'in his debt'. Do we do things for each other in order to tie them to us .. to place them in debt?

We can hope that we can find happiness in doing things for others without 'owning them' or putting them in our debt.

*June 9th*

## ***Constructive complaints?***

At work, or at school or in our homes we can come up against people who are always ready to complain about the way other people do things. 'Oh Mum! You've shrunk my best jumper. I never wash it in the machine' .. 'I don't like the way your sister cooks the chicken. I like mine crisp' ... No 'thank you' for doing it anyway or an offer to help.

Sometimes it can be even worse tale telling ... 'Did you know that the cleaner washed the floor with bleach while you were away .. I know you don't like that so I thought I should tell you'.

How much better it would be if instead of making destructive remarks .. we could be helpful? Like 'I've noticed that your oven seems not to crisp the chicken .. can I show you how I do it?'

*June 10th*

## ***Shadows ...***

There is an ancient Greek story about a boy who was brought up in a cave - it had an opening high up which cast light on one of the walls. When the people above walked by - their shadows appeared on the wall opposite.

The boy looked at the shadows moving and thought that was life - he knew no different.

If we have been hurt or abused most of our lives - we know no different - are we able to see life as it really is - or are we just looking at shadows?

Life is not all shade and sadness ...

*June 11th*

***A unique human being ...***

If I truly value myself, I will appreciate myself for what I am, not for how I measure up to other people. I will value the way I am different and special .. not just how I compare with my 'heroes'

Can I appreciate my uniqueness?

*June 12th*

## ***One hand clapping...***

There is a Buddhist saying that talks of the sound of 'one hand clapping'.

Just as the action of clapping needs two hands, so many actions and deeds cannot be performed by a single individual - we need others.

However much we have been hurt and however much we may want to hide ourselves away from other human beings; we need to realise that one , alone, is incomplete.

*June 13th*

***Hate the action , not the person...***

As children, we are often criticised and are told we are naughty, bad ...

We may have done something wrong and felt our parents disapproval, but really it is our actions which were wrong, naughty .. not ourselves.

Let us take care not to confuse our dislike of someone's actions with dislike of the person.

I might hate the way you ..... snore, .... drink, ..... shout, ..... but I don't hate you!

*June 14th*

## ***Where is the control...***

Some people believe that their lives are controlled by outside forces .. others believe they have control within themselves.

Children have little control of their lives .. they believe in magic and fate and the strength of their parents. As we mature we realise that control also comes from within and we take responsibility for our lives and for our actions.

Where is your control ?

*June 15th*

## ***Moon held in a bucket ...***

A Zen (Buddhist) Nun went to get water from a well one night. As she carried her bucket of water, she saw the reflection of the full moon on the water.

She said “The moon is being held in the bucket...”

Sometimes it is good to look at something from another perspective.

Can you look at a problem from another direction?

*June 16th*

## ***Questions and answers...***

Some questions don't want answers We don't  
want to know and face truth...

We can go to one person after another asking  
our questions over and over again until we  
hear what we want to hear.

..... is that honest?

*June 17th*

## ***Our own mistakes ...***

Can we stop our loved ones from harming themselves?

We all learn from our mistakes ..but however much we care for someone we cannot stop them from making their own errors.

We can never totally protect others from the knocks of life - we each have to live life for ourselves.

As they say in AA - 'Live and let live...'

*June 18th*

## ***Language..***

When someone is angry, or drunk, or out of control they often say things they do not mean and if we respond to their tirades, we can end up saying things that we may later regret.

Trying to talk to someone in this state is impossible - we expect them to understand us and respond .. but they are unable to ... trying to push them to understand only makes things worse...

The best tactic is to pretend they are speaking a foreign language .. we don't understand them and they don't understand us ... just let the noise continue .. do not even try to argue and wait for things to calm down, or for them to sober up .. then you can communicate.

*June 19th*

## ***Letting go...***

If I am so afraid of letting go that I cannot ask for help ... I will never be able to solve my problems.

I will be like a man desperately clinging to a ledge - stuck in my fear - unable to let go of my tiny hand hold - while there is a fireman below me with a ladder - holding out his hand to lead me to safety.

*June 20th*

## ***How important is it?***

When we are surrounded by serious problems ... we can often lose perspective and imagine that everything we are involved in is a massive problem.

A small disagreement with a neighbour becomes an important matter of principle .... someone has not emptied the bin or done the washing up - and we take it as a personal insult.

We make mountains out of molehills.

Stop and think .... How important is it?

Do I really have to waste my valuable time and energy in getting upset about such a small matter .... why not just leave it alone?

*June 21st*

## ***Geographical cure.***

When we do not want to face up to our problems , we can find all sorts of excuses to divert the responsibility .

.... Oh if only I had a nicer boyfriend .... if only I went to a different school ... if only my children would behave themselves .... if only I had a nice house ... if only I lived in a better area.

People often take ‘the geographical cure’ - moving to a better place where they imagine their problems will be solved ....

only to find that their real problems travel with them....

*June 22nd*

## ***Love the one you're with...***

When we are dissatisfied with our lives we can forever be looking at what others have and imagining how better things would be if we had their opportunities. The grass looks greener on the other side of the fence.

By doing this we are denying all the good in our lives, all the good qualities of our friends, relationships, family .... we are saying - 'You don't count .. I want something better'. Of course it is right to strive to improve our lives .. but not at the expense of throwing away what we have.

As the song says 'Love the one you're with ..'

*June 23rd*

## ***Listen to your heart...***

When I have a difficult problem to solve, I can spend ages tearing myself apart trying to work things out, worrying in case I get things wrong, agonising over the consequences of what I might do.

Often there is no 'right path' no perfect solution and if I choose your way instead of mine .. I will never feel right about it.

The 'right way' is that which makes us feel comfortable ..

I must ask myself 'can I live with that?'

*June 24th*

## ***Tell others your needs..***

When we are close to someone .. we expect them to know how we feel, what we want .. and we can be very hurt when they seem not to appreciate our feelings and do something which upsets us.

Even our closest friends are not 'psychic' ... they cannot read our minds and we have no right to expect them to.

If we don't tell them what we want .. or what we need .. then how can we expect them to fulfil our needs?

*June 25th*

## ***Jealousy...***

Jealousy can be a very destructive emotion but is also a natural part of life. I can be jealous of someone having more attention than me, or having better clothes, or a more handsome boyfriend ... That's OK and we can talk or joke about it ... We can all find things to be jealous about to some extent.

Jealousy can get out of hand when it becomes destructive envy - I want what you have and if I can't have it then I will make sure you can't have it either ...

... like a little child who breaks their toy rather than let their brother play with it.

Can we be realistic and face our jealousies?

*June 26th*

***My feelings ...***

I'm not responsible for the way you feel ...

.... so I won't feel guilty about it.

But I am responsible for the way I feel.

.... and I won't blame you for it.

*June 27th*

## ***Finding our own 'peace'***

When we are troubled and worried and everything seems to be out of control ... we need to stop and allow some calm into our lives.

Allow patience and stillness to take over from anxiety and frantic activity.

*June 28th*

## ***Depression covering anger...***

Sometimes one emotion can hide another.  
There are some feelings which we may be  
afraid of showing and as we grow up we learn  
to hide one behind another.

I may feel angry, bitter , neglected ... I may  
want to shout out at the world ...

Where am I!  
What about me!

But people do not like angry pushy people ...  
perhaps they can be nice to depressed and  
helpless people .. so we keep our anger inside  
and show our 'sad face' to the world.

*June 29th*

## ***Keeping hope alive...***

Our greatest asset can be hope...

Hope for the future .. hope for a good ending to our problems ... hope for the light at the end of the tunnel. It is hope that keeps us going when all seems lost.

We need to help each other to keep hope alive and to avoid the trap of hopelessness and helplessness.

*June 30th*

## ***Dreams and fantasy.***

We all need dreams and hopes for the future.

Sometimes fantasy can be an escape, .. a tactic we use to avoid reality and facing the truth .. diverting off to something unrealistic and unattainable .. but fantasies can trap us in ‘...if only’ ... situations.

I’ll enjoy my dreams and hopes while coping with my reality.

*July 1st*

## ***We all have choices...***

Sometimes it may seem we do not and we can feel trapped and stuck.

Sometimes we avoid seeing a way out , maybe we are to afraid to change or to move ..... ‘the devil you know’ seems better than ‘the devil you don’t know’.

If we are honest with ourselves, we will realise that we do have choices even though we may not want to face them.

*July 2nd*

***I want to be alone..***

When I feel hurt, I may want to hide myself away, to go off on my own and just be with myself. People are just too much for me to face.

We all need time to ourselves to reflect on how we feel .. but we also need human contact, we need to share our burden with others and learn to trust.

Isolation will increase our pain - sharing shows us we are not alone - someone else understands.

*July 3rd*

## ***Scoring Points..***

Do you ever find yourself scoring points off other people? Perhaps you think .. “I’ll be nice to you if you’re nice to me ..” ... keeping the score even.

That sort of attitude does not help us to develop new friendships, to be genuine with people and to grow as individuals - it traps us in a joyless world where we cannot spontaneously enjoy the company of others.

*July 4th*

## ***The door mat ...***

If I let you walk all over me.

If I let you hurt me and continue to take it over and over again without showing you the depth of my pain ....

... then I am taking responsibility for your life, I am denying you the consequences of your actions ... I am treating you like a child and I am enabling you to continue to hurt me.

We will both be stuck in a continuous cycle - a destructive game of hurting each other.

*July 5th*

## ***Getting hurt..***

In the words of the song .. “You can’t hurt me  
now...”

No body has the power to hurt us unless we  
allow them to.

We give people power over us.

If we feel confident enough and good about  
ourselves we can take away that power and  
stop the hurt.

*July 6th*

## ***Don't cry...***

10cc sang “.. Big boys don't cry ...”

Sometimes we can fall into the trap of thinking that we need to be strong and strong people don't cry. We cannot show our weakness to others for fear of being hurt .. and so we hide our feelings away.

Having feelings and showing feelings is not a sign of weakness .. it is a sign that we are alive .. we are human ..we are normal. And showing our feelings to others can be a sign of strength .. a sign that we have the courage to face our feelings .. fears and hurts

... and we are not afraid to share them with others.

*July 7th*

## ***Giving Advice ..***

Some of us love to give advice. We often do so with the best intentions but we can be offended when our advice is not taken.

We can never know all the circumstances of someone else's problems and forcing someone into taking our advice can have disastrous consequences - pushing a decision perhaps that someone is not ready to make.

We need to support others in their decisions - not make them for them.

*July 8th*

***The courage to go on living....***

Sometimes life can seem not worth living, we get depressed and we look for a way out - escaping into a dream world, or withdrawing and cutting ourselves off from life. ....

Facing our fears and carrying on with our lives - facing our responsibilities day by day - that takes courage and persistence.

*July 9th*

## ***Playing “Yes .. But”***

Do we sometimes ask questions that we really know the answers to? - Perhaps answers that we do not want to hear?

Do we ask advice only to counter the answer with “Yes, ..but..” and greet the alternative suggestions with ... “yes but” .... “ yes but..”

Are we not really wanting help ....just attention?

*July 10th*

## ***Taking own responsibility...***

We cannot take responsibility for others or for their actions.

When we feel embarrassed by someone else's behaviour or try to cover up for their mistakes ... we take their responsibilities on our own shoulders ... this has two consequences ..

..... we do not allow others to shoulder their own responsibilities..

.... and we neglect our own responsibilities.

*July 11th*

## ***Minding your own business...***

Sometimes we are so caught up in other people, what they are doing, what trouble they are getting into .. are they drinking .. are they taking drugs .. are they getting into debt? ... that we fail to see what we are neglecting.

Look to your own obligations before considering those of others.

*July 12th*

## ***Talking down to...***

When someone is in trouble , particularly a younger person or child - we may think we know better, .... we would not have got into that mess .... we can end up ‘talking down’ to them ... we do not really appreciate their hurt and we may seem dismissive.

It is important to comfort and support and allow a loved one in pain to act weak, defenceless and ‘child like’ but we need to continue to value them in their pain and not appear to be dismissive or put them down.

*July 13th*

## ***Saying what we mean...***

When we are being manipulative and trying to make someone do what we want .. sometimes we can end up making threats and saying hurtful things that we do not really mean.

We may threaten to leave ... and then in fear we may beg them to stay....

Next time we may be serious .... but who will believe us when we have cried 'wolf' so often?

Do you say what you mean and mean what you say?

*July 14th*

## ***Help lines...***

How can we make sure that we get help and support between groups?

A group can become a very important source of support and help, but we need to find ways to keep us going when we leave the group, when our counsellors are on holiday , when we are alone.

Telephone numbers of groups members are important ... but if nobody answers .. use your imagination .. what would she have said if she had answered the 'phone .. what would your therapist say .. what would the group be telling you?

We ourselves have the answers to most of our questions.

*July 15th*

***I need you ...***

I need you ...

Because no one can stand completely alone

...and because you are the mirror in which I  
can see myself...

*July 16th*

## ***Congratulations ...***

Today let us take the time to congratulate ourselves for being in the group .. or for being in therapy.

It takes a lot of courage to enter a group and to work on ourselves. Being in therapy does not mean that we have bigger problems than others, or that we have made a mess of our lives, or that we are bad in some way or maybe that we have a mental problem ... it means that we have the courage to admit we need help rather than pretend we can cope without help.

There are a lot of people out there who have problems they don't own up to and who could change places with me ... but they will have to wait in line - I am keeping my group!

*July 17th*

## ***Deserved pain...***

When someone hurts you do you feel you  
deserve it?

Nobody deserves to be hurt, but sometimes  
when we feel bad about ourselves we can feel  
that if someone hurts us, it is because of  
something we have done, it must be justified.

We try to make sense of the illogical. There is  
no reason - we don't deserve the pain....

*July 18th*

## ***Is it fate?...***

Some of us go through life believing that we have no control of our destinies... that everything that happens is down to fate.

If we have a bad day, it is due to our bad luck. If we fail an exam it is not because we did not work hard enough .. it is down to fate. .. If we burn the dinner .. it is not because we were distracted , it is fate again.

We do not have to be buffeted around by forces outside ourselves; we can take control of our lives.

What can I control in my world?

*July 19th*

## ***The bottomless box ...***

I had an important piece of work to do which involved filling in sheets of information .. the blank sheets were in a pile and the completed sheets went into a big box.

At the start the box seemed far too big and however hard I worked it never seemed to fill. I wanted to hurry , work harder, and was depressed by the box still looking empty.

As the days and weeks passed it did eventually fill and I finished the work - even though I had almost lost hope at times.

One day at a time .. one thing at a time .. this saying becomes more important every day as I find that more and more of my problems are solved bit by bit.

*July 20th*

## ***Wearing armour...***

When we hide ourselves from others, when we conceal our feelings and try to be strong ... it is as if we are wearing armour to protect ourselves from human contact.

But armour does not only protect - it blocks us feeling reality - can you hug someone encased in metal? Can you feel a kiss through chain mail?

What kind of armour do I wear ?

*July 21st*

## ***Dead Flowers ...***

In my house we never threw out dead flowers.

It always seemed that we needed to hold on to any little bit of good, a present, flowers .. just in case there should never be any more good times. The Easter eggs sat uneaten on the shelf until next year .. the Christmas decorations were there until Easter .. chocolates stayed in their pretty boxes for months.

Keeping old flowers means that there is no room in the vase for new ones ..

Can we accept and be ready for change?  
Can we throw out the dead flowers and make room for the new?

*July 22nd*

## ***Over indulgence***

If we have been deprived of something in our early lives .. it can lead us to go ‘over the top’ in trying to set things right.

We can want everything for our children which we never had ourselves and we can be overindulgent and shower them with presents and good things.

Of course it is good to treat and spoil our children . and to ‘spoil’ ourselves .. but we need to keep a sense of balance so that we can appreciate good things .

Appreciate the taste of the cake .. without it making us sick..

*July 23rd*

## ***Warm fuzzies...***

In the Warm Fuzzie tale .. the story goes that everyone has a bag of warm little fuzzies that they can give to others to make them feel good and happy. There is no bottom to the bag .. no limit on the number of warm fuzzies, so everyone feels good and generous ... until someone comes and puts a doubt in people's mind .. that the supply will run out .. so everyone becomes mean and jealous of their warm fuzzies .....

Do I give warm fuzzies freely - or am I mean and hold back feelings?

Do I give love and affection freely?

*July 24th*

## ***Generosity...***

Some of us can be generous with others while withholding good things from ourselves. We do not allow ourselves treats or indulgences - that does not seem quite right.

To value ourselves, we must also be able to treat and spoil ourselves - we are worth it...

Generosity begins at home.

*July 25th*

## ***Respect yourself...***

When we care for others, we need to make sure that we also care for ourselves...

If we do not have self respect we neglect our own needs.

It is like a mother who gets her children smart for school, polishes their shoes, irons their shirts .. and goes out herself with dirty worn shoes, a crumpled blouse and dishevelled hair .. because she has no time for herself.

Do you deserve your respect?

If I do not respect myself, nobody else will.

*July 26th*

## ***Good intentions.....***

It is said that .. “the path to hell is paved with good intentions”

Sometimes we mean well but we do not stop to think what the consequences of our actions will be. We do not consider others feelings.

Are my actions worthy of my good intentions?

*July 27th*

## ***Courage and fear...***

To show courage does not mean that you do not have fear - it means you have found a way of overcoming it.

*July 28th*

***Making other plans...***

John Lennon sang “Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans...”

Planning tomorrow, regretting yesterday  
leaves us little energy for actual living.

Do you live ‘in today’ ?

*July 29th*

## ***Misplaced loyalty?***

When we have a low opinion of ourselves, we may feel that we cannot manage without a partner, that we perhaps need a man in our lives ... or that we need to have someone live with us.

In this frame of mind, we may choose a partner for the wrong reasons .. and may end up tied to someone who is not good for us. Perhaps we do not believe that we deserve someone better .. or that our needs matter at all.

Do I find myself trapped in harmful relationships?

*July 30th*

***A head case ...***

Once someone gave me a series of quotations which they thought would be good for our daily readings - all learned literary remarks made by famous men and women. .. They would have been great for a University seminar, we could have discussed the meaning of this and that statement ....

But where would the significance have been for us?

We need to look inside our hearts .. not our heads.

*July 31st*

## ***Impressions ...***

Every now and then we may have a group member who tries desperately to impress ..

They try to say all the right things .. to be *Oh so intelligent* and perceptive in their remarks ..

Every statement is well thought out .. they could be a therapist or teacher rather than ‘someone like us..’.

Usually such a person is desperate to defend their real selves .. they do not want to show us how they feel, that they too are vulnerable and hurt.

As they grow to trust the group, they may be more able to show us who they really are and to make more genuine contributions.

Do you hide behind words?

*August 1st*

## ***Facing up to...***

A girl left her home and moved away with a new boyfriend without telling her best friend that she was going.

She later said that she realised that what she was doing was wrong - she felt uncomfortable and guilty , but she could not face up to it. Talking to someone, telling her friend would have stopped her running away from her 'conscience'

Sharing helps us face the truth.

*August 2nd*

## ***Respect ...***

A young woman kept coming to groups unwashed and not properly dressed.

Someone complained - “It’s not right; ... It shows the way she thinks of us - that she can’t be bothered to get dressed to meet with us. She doesn’t respect us..”

Her friend said .. “No, ... she doesn’t respect herself ”

*August 3rd*

## ***Sabotage...***

It often happens that when someone has made a good recovery, come to groups and is doing very well in their programme .. they will suddenly become quite disturbed again as the time comes for them to start moving on.

During therapy those of us who have had a lot of difficulty coping, will get a lot of support from other people. This may be something that we have never had before and we are afraid that when we get 'better' people will once more lose interest in us. By becoming upset and disturbed again we hope to keep people around us .. we are afraid to move on - so we 'sabotage' ourselves.

Let us develop the trust that people *care for us*  
- not for our problems.

*August 4th*

## ***Another's plight ...***

Have you ever found that someone else's problems might make you start crying uncontrollably, out of all proportion perhaps to their plight.

And you think, why am I crying? This person does not mean that much to me ..

Perhaps we are out of touch with our real feelings or we have not allowed ourselves to realise our own sadness.

Perhaps we are crying for ourselves.

*August 5th*

## ***Gossip ..***

Gossip can be very destructive.

When we do not really want to talk about ourselves, it can be easy to chat away and talk about a third person, someone who cannot defend themselves and who may not ever know you gossiped about them.

But gossip can get distorted, little bends in the truth can become magnified into a big lie and people can be very hurt by the untrue things that fly around.

Let us stop to think - how would I like it if someone said that about me?

*August 6th*

## ***Tunnel Vision***

When we are worried about something, we can lose perspective. We think only of the problem, we might not eat, we don't sleep very well and we are like someone with tunnel vision only seeing a tiny part of our lives - just looking at that little spot.

Stop looking through a tunnel and become aware of the wider view of life.

*August 7th*

## ***False hopes ...***

Sometimes we cling to false hopes, we refuse to see that a situation is harmful to us .. that we need to make changes and discard the hurtful aspects of our lives ...instead we try to make them right or shut our minds off from the truth or the action we need to take.

Then we cling to false hopes, hopes that 'things will change' rather than accepting that it is ourselves that need to change.

*August 8th*

## ***A 'Fair Weather' Friend?***

Some friends can seem to be caring and committed to us when things are going well and we are happy and contented .. having a good time together.

But when things start going wrong, we may be sad and depressed, we may be ill or we may not have the money to go out and enjoy ourselves .. they find other things to do and other people to be with.

Are we sometimes fair weather friends?

*August 9th*

## ***No Fear!***

In America there is a brand of surfing and sporting clothing with a motif decorating them saying - “NO FEAR!”.

How often in life could we do with a tea shirt saying - no fear - we could wear it as a shield against the fears we face each day ..

Perhaps we could go through today imagining we are wearing that sign in front of us

... and feel NO FEAR!

*August 10th*

## ***He didn't mean it ...***

“He didn't mean it .. he will change some day  
.. Oh God how he used to love me so..”

These are the words of a song by the folk singer Tom Paxton .... but how many times have we said very similar words or had similar thoughts. It need not be a woman hurt by a man ... the feelings are applicable to both sexes, young or old ..

Someone hurts us, they say sorry, we believe them .. and they do the same again .... The important thing though is not that THEY do the same again .. but that WE do the same again .. We continue to go back again and again into a harmful situation.

Can I value myself enough to say - I don't deserve excuses, I don't deserve apologies - I just deserve to be treated well!..”

*August 11th*

## ***Stick with the winners ...***

In the twelve step programmes there is a saying 'stick with the winners' ..

When we are troubled and are trying to sort ourselves out, we need to be careful that we do not take on new problems from other group members. It is good to want to help others and to take an interest in their difficulties, we do need to identify and share ... but we must realise that we ourselves are vulnerable and we cannot take on more pain.

We need to give ourselves time to grow strong and recover from our own difficulties before we can help others.

*August 12th*

***Tell it how it is ...***

Do you sometimes feel irritable and impatient with someone .. they get on your nerves and you snap at them. Perhaps you have a problem with them which you don't talk about. Maybe they have hurt you and you don't say. Perhaps you are uncomfortable with your relationship but don't want to face up to it.

In these circumstances we can blame all our discomfort on the other person ..

Do you take responsibility for how you feel?

*August 13th*

***Our road ...***

It is said that every man chooses his own road.

It is also true that the road does not have to be  
blindly followed. There can be turnings and  
cross-roads.

We have the power to change our direction.

*August 14th*

## ***What did she say?***

Ellen was very upset one day because of a conversation she overheard through a crack in a door. ‘I heard them say that my sister told lies about me to my boyfriend’

She decided not to speak to her sister, refused to see her and hung up the phone when she rang. She gave her boyfriend the cold shoulder until he insisted on knowing why. ‘Well, you should not have believed all those lies my sister told you .. how could you believe such a thing?!’ ‘What thing?’ Gradually the whole thing came out in the open. The sister had not told him any lies. Perhaps the others made it up .. perhaps Ellen misheard .. she may never know .. but she learned important lessons ...

If you are upset about something you think someone has said or done .. check it out with them first - and don't listen at doorways!.

*August 15th*

## ***Is it pride?***

Is it pride or conceit which makes us try to shoulder all our problems alone rather than accept help?

Are we conceited when we refuse to accept we may have a problem we can deal with?

Can we hold our heads up with pride when we conquer that difficulty?

*August 16th*

## ***The right people ...***

I once knew a girl who had been abused by her father ... she ran away from home with a boyfriend who hurt her .... She had no experience of 'good men' in her life - so she had no way of knowing how to choose a good companion.

Choosing the right people, the right friends who will be good for us rather than hurt us can be impossible without an example to guide us.

Can we provide examples for each other?

*August 17th*

## ***One Trick Pony...***

Paul Simon's song talks of a 'one trick pony'.

Are you a 'one trick pony' ... someone who has one favourite saying to come out with in groups .. one idea that becomes so familiar that you forget it's real meaning .. a pat statement that you bring out without any conviction or feeling ...

Are you someone who uses the same excuse all the time ..?

How about learning some new tricks?

*August 18th*

## ***Dramatic lies...***

Once a group member told a dreadful tale of her past life - which everyone sympathised with. As time went by it became clear that she had not been telling the truth. She continued to tell stories sometimes of herself, sometimes affecting others, but always something dramatic to get everyone's attention.

On a lesser scale we all may at times exaggerate or bend the truth to gain sympathy or attention - or to add some drama...

We can then become lost in our own lies.

... Unable to see the truth while others cannot see the real 'me'.

*August 19th*

## ***Things change ...***

Have you ever walked down a street or gone to a part of town which used to be familiar to you and thought - how it has changed? Or maybe thought of what you were doing last time you were there - what your lifestyle used to be and how your life has changed?

It can be hard to see change in ourselves when it happens gradually, day by day, but someone who has not seen us for a while , will see it right away.

We all change and adapt to different circumstances, different ages and the changing world around us.

Seeing simple everyday changes can help us realise how change is possible in therapy - we are capable of change!

*August 20th*

## ***Building walls ...***

People are always building walls and fences to keep others out. The first thing someone does when they have a piece of land or a home of their own is to put fences round the garden - make sure other people, or their dogs or their children cannot come in.

This is a sad situation when the walls stop all visitors or when we build walls around our feelings so that nobody can come in and share feelings with us.

Do we live in isolation behind the walls we build? How about helping each other tear them down?

*August 21st*

***‘All over the place’...***

A woman once lost the job that she had been in ever since she left school. She did not know what to do , she felt insecure and lost.

She felt uncomfortable when she was at home and went out to visit friends or go shopping - but as soon as she got there she felt a panic and had to leave .. wherever she was, she felt she should be somewhere else ....she was ‘all over the place’.

When we lose our security we can feel as if we lose ourselves - it is as if bits of us are attached to our home, our work, our children, our pets .. each part of our lives .. and the loss of one part can upset the balance.

By finding ourselves in the group we can stop ourselves ‘falling apart’.

*August 22nd*

## ***Sleeping Beauty ...***

In the fairy story, sleeping beauty is given gifts by the fairies who come to her christening ..

If you had three wishes ... what would you *really* choose?

Perhaps it would not be wealth or fortune ..

Maybe it would be something that you have already - but have not appreciated.

*August 23rd*

## ***A Duck's back...***

Water slides off a duck's back without the duck getting wet.

Can we do that with nasty remarks and hurt that people throw at us?

If we could detach from other people's hurtful behaviour and throw it off like water off a duck's back - we would not react in ways which might in the end cause us more pain.

*August 24th*

## ***Keeping centred...***

When problems overcome us it is often the case that we try and do everything at once .. our energy becomes dispersed in a whole load of tasks and we end up so tired out that we cannot cope.

If instead we can keep our concentration on one thing .. we can keep our energy and strength centred on that one task and we will find we have the power to complete that task and then go on to and cope with the next.

*August 25th*

## ***All for nothing ...***

When something goes wrong it is easy to blame ourselves or to think that we could have prevented it.

Laura had worked very hard to make a good home for her children, faced a lot of troubles and struggled bravely through many years of hardship. She had two lovely children who she was justly proud of. When one of them was seventeen, he was killed in a car accident. In her grief Laura sobbed that after all the effort, it was *all for nothing*, she had not been able to protect her son.

We must not let bad things wipe out the good that has come before.

*August 26th*

## ***I am a rock***

The song says ... “ I am a rock , I am an Island, and a rock can feel no pain .. and an Island never cries....”

Sometimes we try to isolate ourselves from others to avoid pain - if we do not allow ourselves feelings for others, then we cannot be hurt when we lose them ...

But avoidance and isolation leaves us empty and deprives ourselves of the warmth that comes from human contact...

We are abusing ourselves...

*August 27th*

## ***Can you hear me ?***

Communication is a two way process...

There are those who talk a lot - who are always telling people things ..telling others what to do .. making a lot of noise in groups...

They are like radio transmitters permanently left on ..

But for communication we need to receive as well as transmit ... we need to hear what others are saying....

Can you hear me?

*August 28th*

## ***Hurting the one you love ...***

It is true that we often hurt the one we love the most ...

When we are in pain - we sometimes need to strike out ... to yell, to cry, to hurt someone else .. perhaps so that someone will realise how much we are hurting inside.

Our loved ones are there for us, seeming to be ready and willing punch bags to take our outcries. We can feel safer with someone who cares, safe that they will not reject us when they see our hurt.

Are we being fair?

*August 29th*

## ***Precious moments ...***

Sometimes we can lose the opportunity of rejoicing in the success or good fortune of others ..

We can be deprived of these precious moments when nervousness, shyness, embarrassment or fear stops us telling each other how we feel, how we appreciate what someone has done, how we care for each other.

Today let us resolve not to waste any more such opportunities.

*August 30th*

## ***Restoring respect ...***

When we continually take away other people's responsibility.. we make them lose respect for themselves .. how can they value themselves if we do not even think them capable of 'tying their own shoelaces'?

By giving back responsibility - we are giving back self respect.

*August 31st*

## ***Instant satisfaction...***

It is not only the Rolling Stones that complain that they 'Can't get no satisfaction ..'

Some of us want instant satisfaction and get very despondent and impatient incapable of waiting for richer rewards.

Let us appreciate the little we may gain today and not discount it in favour of imagined greater gains tomorrow.

*September 1st*

## ***Tears of a clown...***

Have you ever noticed how often comics or people who make us laugh - lead really tragic lives. Many suffer from depression - quite a few have committed suicide.

These people are hiding behind their jokes and laughter, are scared to show their true selves.

Stop to ask .. what is under the laugh?

*September 2nd*

## ***Dog treat jar...***

In a friend's kitchen I noticed a 'Dog treat jar'  
- a container of chews, biscuits and treats to  
give the dog to make it feel good.

I wonder why we don't have 'human treat  
jars'?

Would it be used in your home?

Do you value yourself enough to give yourself  
treats?

*September 3rd*

## ***Down to earth...***

Sometimes we get fanciful ideas, we want everything about us to be perfect and we think we are a cut above some of our friends.

Very often we find a newcomer to the groups saying that - this is all very interesting ... but I'm not like the rest of you .. I don't have the sort of problems you all have.

As one young girl tersely but aptly put it ...  
“She thinks her shit don't smell”..

*September 4th*

## ***The last to know...***

Sometimes we can be the last to know that we have a problem.

It might be something mundane like having body odour or bad breath. ... Or it might be something like our wife or husband having an affair .. or our boyfriend being unfaithful ..

Perhaps we have a drink or drug problem and do not realise it ...

These things are often obvious to those around us but they either don't tell us .. or we fail to listen..

Can we see ourselves as others see us?

*September 5th*

## ***Similarities, not differences...***

In the AA groups they have a saying ‘Look for the similarities, not the differences..’

To gain from a group, to allow ourselves to ‘get better’ - we need to identify with others.

It is always easy to see how we are different from others .. our problems are not the same..

But can we see the similarities?

*September 6th*

## ***Getting through the day...***

Have you ever said to yourself .. I don't know  
how I am going to get through today?

The tasks and troubles of the day seem to  
stretch impenetrably before us leaving no  
room to breathe.

Then all we can do is to take one task at a  
time. Just plunge in and get on with it and  
before you know it you will find yourself at  
the end of the day...

... having conquered your hurdles one at a  
time.

*September 7th*

## ***Freedom to ...***

Sometimes I think I want to be free from everything and everybody - free from pain, free from work, free from other people.

.. But then I think .. maybe it is not so important to be *free from* .. but *free to*..

Free to enjoy the things I like .. free to be who I really am .. free to feel what I want to feel .. free to love...

*September 8th*

***Even monkeys fall out of trees...***

Even the most able of us can make mistakes.

It is no shame to admit our mistakes - or to acknowledge our problems. Owning a problem and asking for help does not mean we are weak or incompetent ...

It means we are being realistic and facing up to the truth.

*September 9th*

***Stillness brings answers...***

Sometimes we are so busy rushing around, trying to put things right, doing everything for everybody...

Our minds jump like startled rabbits from one problem to another - not being able to concentrate and get things in perspective.

Stopping and thinking .. allowing some calm and peace into our lives can help us find better solutions.

*September 10th*

***Priceless moments ...***

Every day of this year is precious.

I will value the good ... and also the bad times  
for they are both part of me

... and have made me what I am.

*September 11th*

## ***A snake?***

Ann got up in the middle of the night to feed her baby. As she approached the child she saw a snake curled around near the leg of the cot.

She screamed 'HELP! A snake!' .. the light came on .. and she saw .. it was just a piece of dressing gown cord .. just a rope!

When we have been used to facing problems day after day.. we can get into a state when we are anxious and afraid and tend to see everything in front of us as insurmountable problems.

In a moment of calm we may be able to see that the difficult we face is actually not so bad .. it is something we can cope with.

**Remember - it is just a rope!**

*September 12th*

## ***At peace with myself ..***

Most of us look for peace and calm in our lives .. but how often are we at peace with ourselves?

When we have a problem which we do not face up to .. when we lie to ourselves about our feelings ... we cannot be at peace inside.

Knowing ourselves and accepting ourselves can help us to be at peace.

*September 13th*

## ***Take the heat out ...***

When we are too emotionally involved in a conflict or argument we cannot think straight and may make irrational decisions.

If we can get help, or take professional advice  
- we take the heat out of situation and allow things to proceed more rationally.

Can we hand over and allow others to help us?

*September 14th*

## ***Through a window ...***

I was sitting in the window of a cafe , looking at the people going by in the street outside.

It made me think how easy it was to sit back and just look at life, observing these people's lives without getting involved.

Are you looking at life through the protection of a glass window? - or are you getting involved and allowing yourself to feel?

*September 15th*

## ***When it's gone ...***

Sometimes we only truly value something  
when it's gone ...

When someone leaves, we realise how much  
they did for us and how much we miss them ..  
the little things that irritated us seem  
insignificant and we seem left with a big hole  
in our lives thinking of all the good points  
which we did not appreciate before.

Let us hope that we can appreciate good things  
while we have them rather than after their loss.

*September 16th*

## ***The real me ...***

We are often afraid to show others who we really are - they may not like what they see.

But unless we take the risk of letting down our defences a little no one will ever know us at all.

*September 17th*

## ***Worry guts ..***

I used to be a real worry guts .. the sort of person who could feel they were drowning in a glass of water.

Then, as I began to understand myself, to go to groups and to detach and let go of some of my worries .. I began to relax a little. I could enjoy my day without worrying about the consequences of every little thing I did.

I stopped spoiling today with the fear of tomorrow.

*September 18th*

## ***Keeping hope alive ...***

When I was a child, I used to play on an abandoned railway which had a long tunnel in it. As you walked into the tunnel you could only see a tiny spot of light ... at the middle there was a part where the tunnel had a bend and there was no light at all .. it was scary ..

but if you kept walking and hoping .. eventually a little light appeared at the end and gradually this opened up and you could see where you were.

Let us have hope to carry us through the dark parts of life and the strength and confidence to keep walking, knowing that the light will come.

*September 19th*

## ***That Bad?***

“How was I that bad .. that he had to leave me..” so said a young woman whose boyfriend had left her for someone else.

This could equally have been said by a young man disappointed by a loved one - or by a parent losing a child ...

when we lose someone we care for .. it is easy to blame ourselves ..they would not have left if we had acted differently ... if only we had loved them more .. maybe we would not have lost them ...

Can we accept that we are not to blame, we are not bad, losses happen, people leave ...

Pain is not something which is deserved ...  
Good people get hurt.

*September 20th*

## ***Value ...***

I was walking past a flower stall and admiring the flowers, thinking wistfully - 'why doesn't anyone ever buy me flowers?' and I wondered - why don't I buy myself some flowers??

Can we value ourselves as much as we would like others to value us?

*September 21st*

## ***Why worry?***

Pat's husband was always coming home late. She would wait up late into the night .. looking out of the window, watching for the lights of his car .. wondering how long to wait before contacting hospitals to see if he had an accident .. wondering if he had been taken ill, had got into a fight ....

One night she decided to 'let go' .. it was no use worrying any more .. it was his responsibility to come home or not. She fell asleep and had the best night's rest for years.

When he came back at 5am he shook her awake ... 'What's happened!' he shouted 'How could you fall asleep .. don't you care any more!'

Worrying is not the same as 'caring'.

*September 22nd*

## ***Open for business?***

The neon sign at the front of the shop said  
'open'.

It made me wonder how often our hearts and  
minds are 'open' to receive new ideas and to  
be willing to change.

Are you 'open for business'?

*September 23rd*

## ***United in pain ...***

Some people do not like to admit their problems .. or if they have troubles theirs are 'different' , a cut above everyone else.

When a tragedy happens it affects all of us in the same way. Mothers who have lost a child will feel the same pain whether they are a princess or a pauper, a politician or a cleaning lady. A train crash or a bomb blowing up innocent people will cut across classes and barriers with the same sort of loss.

Pain brings us together and gives us a chance to understand and help one another.

*September 24th*

## *Slipping and sliding ...*

However much we may have worked hard on our recovery and however much progress we may have made in changing our lives .. there will be days when we seem to slip back to square one.

We may act and feel just as we did in the ‘old days’ - if we stopped drinking, we may feel as if we were drinking again - if we were hurt and afraid - we may feel all the old fears coming back.

These times are upsetting, but they pass quite quickly. They happen to all of us - and can be a reminder of just how bad we used to feel and how we need to keep working on ourselves to keep moving forward and keep our new lifestyles.

*September 25th*

## ***Old friends ...***

As I change and grow and as I recover from my problems and past traumas, I will find that my attitudes and my lifestyle will alter.

Some of my old habits and old friends will not fit in with this lifestyle - I may see that some so called friends were pulling me down or using me .. some will not like my new self because they cannot exploit me any more.

If they cannot change with me, I need to say good bye to them and leave them behind.

*September 26th*

***If it fits ...***

There is a saying .. if it fits wear it ..

Some people are always trying to be what they are not, or want to look different ... We think it would be good to be thinner - to perhaps wear a size ten dress instead of a twelve .. or a twelve instead of a fourteen .. and so we squeeze ourselves into the wrong size in the hope that people will think us thinner - with the result that we look and feel uncomfortable and all the bulges show. Whereas if we accept ourselves as we are and wear the right size, we actually look better.

Can we accept and be comfortable with ourselves?

*September 27th*

## *A cluttered mind ...*

If we have our minds full of worries about what we did not do yesterday .. and what we must do by tomorrow .. and how much we need to have done by the end of the week ..we will have our minds so cluttered up that we will not be able to effectively do anything at all today.

By living one day at a time, we can get on with today unhindered by tomorrow or yesterday.

*September 28th*

## ***Get it straight ...***

When Joe was angry he would tell everyone to 'get it straight' ... 'sort themselves out'... In his anger he wanted to fix everyone else and never looked at his part in the argument.

Usually when there is a row .. we need to look at ourselves too .. what is our part in this?

We can never get anyone else straight .. we can only straighten ourselves out.

*September 29th*

## ***Just a bin ...***

A man got into a continuing argument with his son over stupid little things in the house. Why could the son not help .. why should he always carry the rubbish bin out when a fit young lad could do it? He looked at the bin with resentment every day - it became the focus of his bad feelings about himself. Sometimes his wife would sneak down and empty the bin herself to keep the peace. Most times he knew there would be rows and that he would eventually carry it out anyway.

Eventually the man started to sort his life out and to change his attitude .. he then realised how much of his resentment was tied up in this 'bin' .. with his change of attitude he stopped fussing and if the bin needed emptying - he emptied it - he stopped seeing it as war zone or battle of wills - and saw it as 'just a bin'.

*September 30th*

## ***The right reasons ...***

When we are afraid and lacking in confidence, we can give in to other people too much, we then feel downtrodden and worthless.

Why do I always give way to others, get up for other people on the bus, stand aside in doorways and let the other go first .. is it because I want to .. or because I think they are better than me?

Do I give you the last piece of cake because I care for you .. or because I think I don't deserve it?

It is not so much what we do - but why we do it that needs looking at .. what are our motives? Are we doing things for the right reasons?

*October 1st*

## ***Over reacting ...***

Sometimes we can over react to a situation or to something someone does...

When that happens think .. ‘what does this remind me of?’ ‘Who has made me feel this way before’...

We are reacting to our past experiences - not to the present.

*October 2nd*

## ***Believing...***

Belief is a very strong force - From ancient times evil people have realised the power of the will and of beliefs and have used this power against people in voodoo and witchcraft etc. - we can use this same power positively to make us feel better.

You have the power.

Do you believe in yourself?

*October 3rd*

## ***‘Helpful’ friends ...***

Do you have a ‘friend’ who asks ‘how are things’ and sits back eagerly waiting for you to pour out your problems?

Or when you go out feeling OK .. Do you meet that woman who says ‘sympathetically’ .... “Oh my dear you do look pale..”

There are people who delight in other’s problems ...

They want you to have a problem so that they can appear to be helpful - then they can feel needed - when you are well and OK - they lose their role in life ...

*October 4th*

## ***Time...***

“You never have any time for me ..” - How many times have we heard people say that? Or perhaps said it ourselves.

.. But do we give ourselves precious time to do things we like, to make decisions, to just have some space?

Do you have time for yourself ?

*October 5th*

## ***Magic pictures....***

Have you ever been given one of those cards with a special 3D picture in it?

Life is sometimes like a magic 3d picture. If you get bogged down in the detail .. peer closely at each little bit - you cannot see the picture. But if you relax, stop staring intently at the coloured dots and let your eyes de-focus then the picture leaps out at you from the page and you can see beautiful images you never knew were there.

*October 6th*

***No one can take it from me...***

No one can take away a good feeling, a loving memory, a pleasant emotion - unless we let them.

The good positive emotions will stay with me and help me through the dark moments of my life.

*October 7th*

***With a little help....***

“I can make it with a little help from my friends...” A simple statement, but a true comfort in times of stress.

Unfortunately we often hesitate from holding out a hand to the friends who can give help and support - what stops us?

*October 8th*

## ***Strength to cry...***

It takes more strength to cry than to hide our emotions. We might think that being strong means not showing pain, not showing we are hurt, not crying ....

But acknowledging our weaknesses and having the courage to show others our tears .. that takes real strength of character.

*October 9th*

## ***Behaving like children ...***

If we go around treating people like children -  
they will behave like children ...

When we take away their responsibilities they  
become irresponsible.

No body can 'grow up' if we do not give them  
trust to grow.

Do we allow those close to us to take  
responsibilities for themselves? Do we trust  
them to take charge of their lives?

*October 10th*

## ***Odious comparisons ...***

It can be destructive and harmful to compare one person with another.

Do you remember childhood messages of ‘Your brother would not have done it that way?’ or ‘When your mother was a child, she could sew so nicely ...’ Odious comparisons - selecting one individual for praise over another.

We are all unique human beings. In reality everyone has their good points ... they are not better ... or worse ....just different.

*October 11th*

## ***Follow your ideals...***

Just as it is impossible to make others follow our ideals - similarly we cannot live by others principles.

Each of us needs to decide on our own values, and principles we wish to live by.

*October 12th*

## ***In touch with feelings ...***

Have you ever been listening to someone telling a rather sad story and you realise that you are feeling sad yourself and the story is making you cry?

Perhaps you cry harder and longer than the story deserves .. the sadness in someone else has sparked off the sadness in yourself.

Maybe you could not give yourself permission to cry for yourself - but you could cry for someone else.

Can you allow yourself to cry?

*October 13th*

## ***Measuring our achievements...***

How do we measure our achievements? I may want to be a good mother or successful at my job.

You may want to be happy .... he may want to be good husband .... she may want to earn money and not want to have children.

For some people it is right that they should have lots of children ...for others this would be a disaster ... Some aim for a home in the country, others would hate being out of town.

We all have different life styles and different goals to live up to.

*October 14th*

***Think before you speak ...***

There is a very terse saying which I have heard in Scotland .. “Is that your mouth or are you breaking it in for an idiot?”

How often do we say something which we later regret? Let us hope to learn to think before we speak and not make stupid mistakes.

*October 15th*

## ***Emotional investment...***

When we trust someone and show them how we feel, we are making an emotional investment in that relationship.

It is rather like a financial investment .. when we put all our money in a savings account - expecting it to be safe and to grow in value.

When making an emotional investment it is even more important to trust that our emotions are secure and well looked after ... if so .. the 'value' does increase and we grow as people ... strengthened by the security of a good relationship.

*October 16th*

## ***Someone else's shoes...***

It is hard to completely identify with the suffering of others and to feel as they do ....  
but we can imagine ourselves in someone else's shoes and then we can 'empathise' with their situation.

Empathy is not the same as 'sympathy'. Often people do not want our sympathy .. but they do need our understanding.

*October 17th*

***I want what you have...***

A new group member became frustrated after a few sessions and said “It’s all very well talking .. but I want what you’ve got”

The reply was .. perhaps you will have .. in time.

... it took us time to get where we are today.

*October 18th*

## ***Parent, Adult, Child...***

It is useful sometimes to imagine that we have different parts to our personalities... sometimes we are like a child ... sometimes we are like an adult .. and sometimes we can act in a parental type of manner.

When I boss you about and tell you what you ought to be doing .. I could be like my 'parent' ... when I am playful and loving and show my emotions I am being child like .... and when I am thinking and working things out logically .. I am being an 'adult'.

Do we always act in the right way for a particular situation?

*October 19th*

## ***Hope and faith...***

When all seems hopeless we can regain strength and hope by clinging to little things we can have faith in ..

Like the fact that we know the sun is going to come up again - that there will be a new morning.

Think of other examples of little things we can rely on.

*October 20th*

## ***Inner Friend?***

Do you have an inner critic? - a little nagging voice inside which seems not to let you get away with anything and criticises your every move?

This voice is under our control - we can tell it to be quiet - we can stop listening ..

More importantly - if we value ourselves and care about ourselves - we can turn that inner moaner and critic into an inner friend who can comfort and praise.

*October 21st*

## ***“Knowings ...”***

To some people ‘knowing’ something is stronger than ‘believing’.

Knowledge is more concrete and finite whereas belief is more of an opinion. Rastafarians refer to their convictions not as beliefs , but as ‘knowings’.

Do you believe in yourself or do you truly know yourself?

*October 22nd*

***All sorts ...***

A cactus will grow well in hot desert where there is little rain , whereas an Iris likes damp cool climate and to grow with it's 'feet in water' and an alpine rose only lives on the highest mountains.

It takes all sorts to make a world.

Therefore our needs are all different - my needs are not the same as yours - so , unless I can tell you my needs, how will you know how to fulfil them?

*October 23rd*

## ***Power of emotion ...***

Emotions are powerful forces.

If we are out of tune with our emotions and fail to realise how we feel - or hide our true feelings ... the result can be physical illness.

Have you ever had a stress headache? Have you ever felt fear and had stomach pain or felt 'sick with worry'. When did someone last give you a 'pain in the neck'?

Asthma can be sign that 'they won't let me breathe' - emotional suffocation.

What does your body tell you about your feelings?

*October 24th*

## ***Unquestioning love...***

When I was a child, if I was upset about something, I would go and talk to my dog.

She was always there for me .. she would love me and be pleased to see me no matter how I was feeling or what I had done .. she didn't care if I had been in trouble with my mother or had a row with my sister, or maybe had problems at school ... she did not judge .. she just cared for me.

Can we give that unquestioning care to our friends?

... Can we give it to ourselves?

*October 25th*

## ***Rejoice in new life...***

If you are a parent - you have done a great thing - bringing someone into the world - creating a new, unique human being.

That brings responsibility - not just the responsibility of being there for them and bringing them up or making sure they are cared for ...

It also brings the responsibility of letting them be themselves ....

*October 26th*

## ***The Mask ...***

We all have a mask which we wear to stop people seeing how we really feel about things - some of us wear the mask very rarely or just at times of severe stress - keeping feelings bottled up which might hurt others.

Other people wear the mask nearly all the time and hardly ever show others how they feel - they keep all their hurt and pain inside - they don't show their anger - so their feelings turn inward and fester into resentment and rejection - a feeling that nobody cares about them anyway.

What mask am I wearing today?

Could I risk taking it off?

*October 27th*

## ***Using others ...***

Have you ever seen someone being friendly to another just because of what they could get out of the situation?

.... like the little infant school girl who will be friends with teacher's pet to get more attention  
.. or the little boy who will pretend to be friends with the child with the train set he wants to play with?

.. and then that child gets 'dumped' when someone more exciting comes on the scene.

Has that happened to you?

Do we do that to people?

*October 28th*

## ***Positive Affirmation...***

We often forget to praise and give support to those near us.

We assume that they will know that we care and that we think they are doing well - but they may in fact be feeling quite undervalued and unappreciated.

It does not take long to say “Hey, I really liked the way you did that!” ...or “Thanks for making me that cup of tea, I really needed it” .. or “I’m so glad you came to the dentist with me .. I couldn’t have gone without you”.

Positive affirmation - showing someone we appreciate them takes so little effort but the value is immeasurable.

When did we last say something like that?

*October 29th*

## ***Getting ideas above your station.***

As children we are taught that we need to 'deserve' our position in life - perhaps that children should be kept 'in their place' maybe even 'seen and not heard'. We can end up feeling we are 'not worthy'. Not bright enough for that school .. not good enough to be invited to that party .. not handsome or pretty enough to go out on that date .. not trendy enough for that club.

There are all sorts of values and stumbling blocks. It is easy to be completely deflated and put down by someone saying you are out of line .. you have ideas above your station. But how do we judge what our station is?

Confidence and ambition is about going one more stop - changing our station. 'Our station' is whatever we want it to be.

.. The choice is ours.

*October 30th*

## ***This is me ...***

I once knew a girl who had beautiful long hair which she took great pride in. Her mother thought that long hair was inconvenient in the summer and anyway she herself had always had short hair ... so she cut her daughter's hair.

She did not mean to be cruel but her daughter was very upset. Short hair might have suited the mother , but it did not suit the daughter .. it did not fit her image of herself. Her hair was part of her identity and she felt she had lost an important part of herself.

We all need ways in which we can say to the world "this is me!".

"... I am a unique human being. I am not the same as you, my needs are not the same as yours ... I am me!"

*October 31st*

## ***Halloween ...***

Halloween celebrations are becoming quite common now ... harmless fun in most cases ..  
but why do many of us like to have 'fun'  
frightening each other - or scaring children?

Does it help to have our fears brought out into  
the open in the form of a game or joke - rather  
than hiding our 'skeletons' in the cupboard  
where they can continue to frighten us?

What 'skeletons' can we expose and 'get rid  
of' this year?

*November 1st*

## ***An inheritance?***

Katy's mother was upset when her daughter got pregnant - she thought she was too young and wanted the baby adopted - a baby would ruin her life but adoption would give her another chance.

Katy wanted to keep the baby. A family row developed during which there was a lot of crying. ...Eventually mother admitted a secret. When she was young she was forced to have her baby adopted .. she said it had been for the best .. but she was still mourning that loss.

On the face of it Katy's mum was wanting the best for her daughter ..giving her opportunities .. but the truth was that she was making her daughter go through the same pain which she had .. 'why should she get away with it?'

Can we truly examine our motives when we want to impose a decision 'for the best'?

*November 2nd*

## ***Fear of competition...***

Tony was so afraid of failing or being shown up that he could not face any type of competition. He had so little self confidence and self worth that he wanted to score points off people all the time - putting them down, making unpleasant critical remarks to make himself feel superior but if it came to standing up to them or competing in any way, he would opt out. He was like a boxer who boasts about being the best and criticising his opponents but will never step into the ring to prove himself.

If our only source of value is putting others down - we will never have any sense of true achievement. Valuing ourselves means we have the confidence to enter the ring and truly participate in life - sometimes winning and sometimes losing -

... but always being ourselves.

*November 3rd*

## ***Self Worth - My Size ...***

I once heard someone say ..‘Self worth comes in any size’.

We don't have to judge our worth by our size, weight, height or our looks. There are many different aspects to value - we need to choose our own guidelines.

There are advantages and disadvantages to every body shape and form - you may be tall enough to look over hedges where I cannot see - but can you ever look someone in the eye like I can - and do you really like only seeing the top of my head?

Can we find value in our own selves rather than trying to measure up to others?

*November 4th*

## ***Fixed opinions ...***

A little boy was on holiday from his infant school. His mother picked him up and as they were walking home she said ‘What would you like to do in your holiday?’ He said that he wanted to go and make castles at the seaside.

Mother explained that it was winter and they only went to the sea in summer .. it would be too cold. He started to cry and said this was not a proper holiday.

The following day it snowed. He took his bucket and spade and enjoyed him self tremendously in the garden making castles with the fallen snow.

Sometimes we need to adapt our needs to the reality around us. can we be flexible and find enjoyment in unexpected circumstances?

*November 5th*

## ***Guy Fawkes ...***

What can this day teach us? On Guy Fawkes night many of us make fires and burn old furniture and things we may have been wanting to throw out.

When I was going through hard times, I wrote a daily diary of all my problems and sad feelings ... one Guy Fawkes night I took my diary and threw it on the fire .. those problems were a thing of the past - I did not want to dwell on them any longer .. the fire 'got rid of them' for me and allowed me to move on to other things.

Are we ready to move on?

*November 6th*

## ***Preserving the good ...***

Yesterday we looked at the value of throwing out what we no longer needed from our pasts - to enable us to move on.

As a child I remember once dressing the Guy for the fire - in one of my father's best shirts!

Can we keep a balance between what should be thrown out and what we should keep from our pasts?

*November 7th*

## ***School Play ...***

A woman was once so afraid that people might see her imperfections .. that she tried to make her children behave like little angels so that everyone would think she was the perfect mother.

When her little boy was in his school play she sat tense and nervous among the other mothers hoping that he would not make any mistakes.

She was so caught up in her own fears and worries that she did not notice that the other mothers were smiling with pride even when their children got their lines wrong. She missed all the enjoyment of seeing her child perform with his little friends. Afterwards she could not even remember the story ...

Does our need for perfection interfere with our enjoyment of life?

*November 8th*

## ***'Little mother'...***

Suzie was the oldest child in the family and she spent a lot of time looking after her brothers and sisters. The family joked about it and called her 'little mother'. For Suzie it was no joke though .. she looked after everyone including her mum because it made her feel good and needed - but at the same time she was missing out on her childhood ... and who was there for her?

Do we spend too much time making ourselves wanted and needed?

Who is there for you?

*November 9th*

## ***Imperfections...***

Perfection can be unnerving and scary. Have you ever been in a room with a white carpet that you are almost afraid to walk on? Or the sort of room which is so tidy that you are scared to eat in case you should spill crumbs on the perfect floor?

Sometimes we are more comfortable with imperfections and we may like people because of their imperfections rather than despite them.

“I could not allow myself to be imperfect in front of my mother. She seemed so perfect herself - I could not talk to her - it might give myself away. My father was OK because he was not so perfect, he was more of a human being so I could show a bit of myself to him”.

Can you accept your own imperfections?

*November 10th*

## ***Not my problem...***

When others are upset with me and disapprove of what I am doing .... I need to think - is this really my problem? or does it belong to someone else?

If we are centre stage we highlight our own deficiencies and problems - how do I please mum, dad, how do I measure up to what my friends want - am I keeping everyone happy?

If instead we put others in the spotlight, we can see what their problems are - Mum cannot cope with me leaving home because *she* is lonely and has a bad relationship with Dad - My boyfriend can't cope with me talking to men because of *his* insecurities.

Are you suffering from someone else's problems?

*November 11th*

## ***New fears...***

Sometimes we can be afraid of entering new situations. We lack confidence and each new situation brings it's own new fears.

In reality though - there are no new fears.  
Every time we feel fear , we are re-experiencing old fears from our childhood.

New fears feed old fears.

Let us hope for the insight to recognise old fears and realise that now we are 'all grown up' we can defeat those fears and face the future unafraid.

*November 12th*

## ***Best defence?***

There is a saying that .. the best defence is attack. When we use this tactic, we may often find that we are attacking the very people who we would not wish to hurt - striking out against those who try to get close to us to stop them breaching our defences.

We may launch an emotional attack to defend ourselves when we are hurt.

Why punish and attack those that we love?

*November 13th*

## ***Body language?***

We get ideas about how people feel about us by watching their body language, the way they move, their posture, the way they look at us.

Unfortunately we can be wrong and misjudge others - feel they are angry or upset with us when nothing could be farther from the truth.

Misinterpreting clues can result from spotting a gesture, a look, a phrase used by someone else in our past - perhaps in a painful situation.

When we spot that clue again we wrongly associate it with the harmful and painful experience and jump to wrong conclusions.

We need to be aware of the way we feel and the emotions engendered by others - so that we can work out for ourselves whether our responses are accurate or false.

*November 14th*

## ***Needing people...***

If we have been hurt and rejected by others - it can leave us having to be self sufficient - we decide that we don't need anyone and can live in isolation.

The result of that self sufficiency - of not needing people, can be to drive others away - they can sense our not needing them and can interpret that as not wanting them.

Can you show someone you need them today?

*November 15th*

## ***Differences...***

Differences can be threatening. We don't know how to judge people who are different from us and who live by different standards - that makes us insecure.

Insecurity breeds fear of someone different - we don't understand 'how they tick'.

In the same way we can be afraid of change - if we become different as people how will we cope with that new person.

Let us hope to see change and difference as healthy, exciting variety in life and not as fearful unpredictability.

*November 16th*

## ***Stripping the power away...***

When we are confronted by overpowering emotions, or when people are intimidating us, it is important to take away their power - to strip away their ability to reduce us to trembling wrecks.

Imagine being in court - intimidated by the judge or a pushy barrister - imagine them as children or better still as without their clothes -

... their is no power and intimidation left in the 'naked judge'.

*November 17th*

## ***Is it a problem?***

A little child once said that their biggest problem in life was that it was not yet Christmas. This would not be a problem to an adult - but it bothered the child.

Sometimes we can get all stewed up about some fairly unimportant thing and make ourselves worry and fret needlessly.

Is the problem worrying us today a real problem - or an imagined problem?

*November 18th*

## ***Down a peg...***

When certain people assume too much power over us we need to mentally take them down a peg and bring reality back into the situation.

Parents particularly can appear 'larger than life' in our minds - we retain the picture of them that we had when we were small - and we were entirely dependant on them.

To enable ourselves to get the power back from our inner parent and to allow ourselves to be adult and independent we need to remember that our parents are just human beings like ourselves.

Can you look at your mother as just another woman - or your father as just another man?

*November 19th*

## ***Courage to live ...***

A group member said .. “When a friend committed suicide, at first I found myself thinking about how brave she must have been to face death .. how much courage it needed to do what she did.

Then, as I began to get over the shock, I realised how angry I was with her for giving up her life, for throwing away the gift of life which others fight so hard for .. I also thought how selfish it could be to hurt everyone who loved her that way .. when she had a choice not to do that.

I realised that it takes more courage to face life .. than to end it”.

*November 20th*

## ***Happy Unbirthday ...***

Some of us forget how to have fun. In our families we may have been conditioned to believe that it is not quite right to enjoy yourself and that you need ‘an excuse’ to have fun.

In the story books Alice goes to the mad hatter’s tea party where they celebrate an ‘unbirthday’. They sing ...” A very happy unbirthday to you .. and you...”

We can all have unbirthdays to celebrate on 364 days of the year - (and have our real birthdays on the other day).

Can you give yourself permission to have fun?

*November 21st*

## ***Protecting others?***

When Sarah's husband left, her mother told her to keep it quiet and not let Grandmother know - it would upset her too much. When Gran found out she was pleased to know the truth - 'I never thought he was any good for you anyway', she said. Gran was able to cope with the truth - it was her daughter who could not face facts.

Sometimes we hide from reality - telling ourselves that we are protecting others from the truth - that the truth would only hurt and that perhaps our family and friends would not be able to cope with the truth.

If we are honest - we will realise that we have been lying to ourselves and that we are really doing it for ourselves.

*November 22nd*

## ***Rebuilding ...***

The phoenix is a mythical golden bird which is supposed to rise from the ashes of its burning old carcass.

Perhaps we can only grow and change if we let go and accept the loss of our 'old selves' - then maybe the new person can emerge from the ashes of our old lives.

In order to rebuild - you have to demolish first and clear the site - or simply - 'to make an omelette you have to break eggs!'.  
.

*November 23rd*

## ***Fearing others ...***

Sometimes we can be nervous and shy in the presence of someone new. Something about them or about the situation makes us fearful and we just want to 'run away'.

It is useful to consider that if you are afraid of someone - it is possible that they are more afraid of you. Your anxiety and angry defence to fear can make them fearful.

In that situation - why not make a friendly remark or try to put the other person at ease ... the effect will calm you too.

*November 24th*

## ***Living through others ...***

Some parents over-identify with their children - they want everything for them which maybe they did not have when they were young - but sometimes with the result that they live through their children rather than living their own lives or letting their children be themselves.

Do we make our children responsible for our lives and happiness?

*November 25th*

## ***False props ...***

Some people are very dependant on lucky charms and mascots.

A student would never go into an exam without her lucky charm in her pocket. One morning she screamed and cried at her mother when she mislaid it before a test, she panicked believing she was sure to fail.

Her mother patiently sat her down and told her that she did not need to believe in her charms and lucky symbols .. she was the one who had studied and she was the one who deserved to pass. The mascots made no difference.

She reluctantly went into the exam - and passed with flying colours ...

Can you believe in yourself and not need to rely on outside props to boost your confidence?

*November 26th*

## ***A common goal ...***

We may not get on with all the people in our groups. In everyday life we may have different outlooks and come from different backgrounds.

This does not mean that we cannot help each other. Whatever our opinions and personalities, we are united in a common goal to get our lives sorted out and to 'recover' from our problems.

*November 27th*

## ***Dignity ...***

When we are angry and upset we can say and do hurtful things which we would later regret. We are often harder on the people closest to us - particularly if we feel hurt ourselves and sometimes when we fly off the handle we can do a lot of damage.

Whatever someone has done or however we imagine they have slighted us, rubbing their noses in the dirt will not help them or us.

When we are angry and tell someone off - particularly a child - we must let them keep their dignity and thus their self esteem.

Can you keep your dignity and let others keep theirs?

*November 28th*

## ***Meeting the challenge ...***

We come up against the need for change  
throughout our lives.

A recent news item told the story of George  
Dawson in America who though uneducated  
throughout his life - had at the age of 92 years  
decided to learn to read and write.

His quote to the television interviewers was

“A wise man will change ....”

Can we meet the challenge of change?

*November 29th*

## ***Seeing ourselves ...***

We never really see ourselves as others do.  
Most of the time we only see a mirror image -  
which is after all back to front!

When we look at the man or the woman in the  
mirror - do we like what we see?

And when we hear someone describe what we  
are like - do we recognise ourselves?

*November 30th*

## ***Finding our own way ...***

When we are recovering from a painful experience, from drug addiction, from alcoholism, from the death of someone close .. or the many other troubles which life might bring, we each find our own way out ..

Some use the twelve step programmes, some people find religion supports them .. others find peace in some means of meditation.

There is no single solution and no 'correct' path - we each go along the route which makes us feel comfortable and supported.

Can I go my own way and respect the choice of others?

*December 1st*

## ***Holding ...***

We all need someone to hold us - physical holding is important but emotional holding is even more necessary for us to grow into secure happy adults.

If nobody is there to hold us , we can lose ourselves.

Can you find your inner child and hold him or her yourself?

*December 2nd*

## ***Boundaries ...***

A comic once made a joke about someone wearing socks to stop his feet from fraying at the ends ...

We all need boundaries to stop us from 'fraying at the ends' - we need to know how far we can go - we need the security of knowing where we are.

Without boundaries we have no security and we risk having our world fall apart.

*December 3rd*

## ***A beautiful child...***

If we have a low self esteem we sometimes look back on our lives and feel that nobody has ever loved us - that we were unlovable, unwanted children.

Have you ever come across a photograph of yourself as a child and looked with surprise on an attractive, beautiful little person who you would just love to pick up hold and adore.

Are you surprised you were that child?

Can you now love that little child?

*December 4th*

## ***New-found freedom...***

When we have been through a long period of hardship or pain - perhaps we have come through an abusive relationship or a marriage that went wrong or maybe we have been confined or restricted in some way - our natural reaction is to over-react to the relief or new-found freedom.

This is a normal reaction - to feel a kid again - to go through a repeat adolescence - we face our changed conditions by testing out - 'going bananas' and then settling down to new boundaries and values.

Can we keep a sense of balance at such times of change so that we are not harmed by our behaviour and end up in a worse situation than before?

*December 5th*

## ***A sense of timing...***

... there is a time for all things.

Sometimes it is hard to wait for what we want  
- to need everything NOW and not have the  
patience to bide our time.

The most worthwhile rewards often do take  
time to achieve.

Can you wait for your time?

*December 6th*

## ***What's the point?***

Why?, What's the point? ... Why should I bother? ... We have all said this at some time or another when we are fed up and feel depressed and hopeless.

What does it matter if I get better , if I sort out my life?

Or - putting the blame on someone else - who cares about me anyway?

*We* are the point - *our lives* are the point and it is *us* who need to find value in ourselves. We need to care - not someone else.

Can I care enough about myself to find the point?

*December 7th*

## ***Betrayal ...***

We can get into the habit of being betrayed ....

If we have been badly hurt or let down by someone we care for, we can easily put ourselves in situations where we set ourselves up to be betrayed again.

Can we see that to be betrayed by someone we loved means that *they* did not deserve our love - not that *we* did not deserve to be loved.

*December 8th*

## ***Like father .. like son?***

Are we like our parents? And are our children like us?

Have you ever had the experience as a child of feeling it unfair that you were not allowed to do what your parents did? Our parents are supposed to be examples to us but sometimes when we copy them we get into trouble.

Maybe parents smoke or drink and children can't .. children get into trouble if they stay up late like adults do.

Later as teenagers - there may be conflicts because parents cannot accept that their children are becoming adults and are doing the things they did at that age.

Can we accept our own faults in our children - can our parents accept their faults in us?

*December 9th*

## ***Same old story ...***

A girl in a group once said ... “I thought all men were bastards .. every time I got into a relationship with a man .. he would use me and hurt me and let me down. Each time I would be flattered that a man was asking me out and so I would go overboard, do everything for him .. make myself a doormat really and loose my self respect.. when he dumped me I felt used and crushed”.

“After a long time I realised that it was all partly my fault .. I would let myself be flattered and taken in by these men .. I would go out with the men who were obvious bastards and not really give much time to the ‘nice’ men. I could not see that while I was hurting and upset with myself .. but now I can see my part in the situation”.

We have the choice not to enter abusive relationships.

*December 10th*

## ***Change ...***

Change is essential to growth. The major point of therapy is to help people to change.

However when we change - the people around us and close to us will find it hard to adjust to the 'new person'. We need to understand this and give them a little time and support to adapt to our new attitudes.

Can we make change in our lives without throwing out everything in our 'old' world - can we be selective and keep the 'good' and valuable relationships and attitudes and discard the 'bad'?

*December 11th*

## ***Lies ...***

When we have been used to living a lie, to covering up our actions or feelings .. how do we know which parts of our lives are real and which are not?

Which of our feelings are true and which are covering for some other emotion. How do we know which of our memories and experiences are real and which are fantasies we have comforted ourselves with in the past?

Coming out of 'denial' and facing life can be a difficult and painful process - we need the strength to hold on to the truth and not hide back behind our lies and defences.

*December 12th*

## ***New stories ...***

When we have been confused and upset by life .. perhaps living in fear or under the pain of an addiction - or maybe just trying to hide our behaviour or feelings from others - we begin to lie and make up stories about our lives -

...no I have not been drinking ... no I don't gamble ...I am not avoiding food ... I have not really been manipulating people ... I always tell the truth ... how dare you suggest that I....

And when we change and begin to recover .. we stop telling so many lies .. in fact we can get very indignant and angry with anyone who does not believe our new truth telling.

Even a liar could be telling the truth ...

... but how would anyone know?

*December 13th*

***“But I’m not well ...”***

Have you ever heard a mother say something like ... “He was so difficult, would not do what I said .. I got so angry with him and told him off badly ... later when I put him to bed I noticed he had a high temperature ... how could I have told him off when he really was ill .. I feel so guilty now.”

People saying things like this can leave us with the idea as we grow up that being ill can be an excuse .. a way out of things .. the child could not help doing naughty things because he was ill ... maybe we cannot help saying hurtful things if we are feeling unwell ... perhaps we can avoid dealing with difficult things in our lives if we are ill and ‘incapable’?

Perhaps we cannot help falling ill - but do we *use* illness as a way of avoiding?

*December 14th*

## ***Covert messages...***

The tone of a communication is very important - we need to be careful to have our real meaning understood.

This is particularly important when we are children - then we can pick up very easily the hint that our mother may be telling Dad off for drinking - but at the same time seeming to like the 'manly' way he behaves. Or perhaps father being angry that his son got into trouble for fighting at school - while a little smile gives away that he is quite pleased his son 'stuck up for himself'.

Do we really say what is in our minds?

Are we giving hidden messages?

*December 15th*

## ***Whose problem?***

When I get angry with you it is often because you are doing the sort of things which I hate to see myself doing.

I get upset with my daughter when she makes the same mistakes I did. You irritate me when you make the same excuses as I do.

The way we react to people can tell us a lot about ourselves ... who were you annoyed at today?

*December 16th*

## ***Positive Images***

When we are feeling down , we tend to see everything around us as depressing and negative.

It is useful to think of something good, something which we would like to have , some situation which we would like to attain, and to keep that positive image fixed in our minds.

Yes, we can do this .. yes, we can have this ...  
or this is where I will be when all this is over

...

If you aim for a positive goal, you have the power to reach it...

*December 17th*

## ***What we don't know ...***

Someone once said that 'it is what we don't know that controls us'

I wondered what that meant for me.

Then I thought about my fear , my lack of confidence .. and I thought maybe the unknown scares me and fear of not knowing if I can cope with the future controls me and stops me making changes.

What are we afraid of knowing?

*December 18th*

## ***What if ?..***

What if I miss my bus .. what if I am late for work .. what if I am walking to work and a ladder falls on my head .....

... what if my boyfriend leaves me ... what if I burn the dinner .. what if my children don't love me ... what if my wife has an affair...

Our lives can be full of 'what ifs' which can stop us doing things, stop us changing and moving forward.

Can I stop my 'what ifs' making me live in fear?

*December 19th*

## ***Mourning ...***

How do we mourn losses - everyone has their different manner - we need to find our own way to understand and say goodbye.

There was a story in the newspapers about the family of woman climber killed in the Himalayas. The husband took his children to the scene of her death. He came in for a lot of criticism taking children climbing in such a remote area. But he went there to make contact - to help the children understand.

We need to make contact with our losses - to understand and mourn them - so that we can then move on.

*December 20th*

## ***Doing it their way...***

Do you ever look over someone's shoulder while they are doing a job? Saying - can't you do this or just do that .. move that couch a bit to the left ... I think if you had gone through the high street the traffic would not have been so bad ... I would not have told him that way  
..... etc. .. etc.. ..etc.

Not letting others find their own way, maybe learning from their mistakes .... or maybe finding a better way than yours.

Can you let go and let others do it their way?

*December 21st*

## ***The Winter Solstice ...***

This is the shortest day of the year. From now on we can look forward to summer and the long nights of winter will gradually become shorter and shorter.

It is like that when we have been going through hard times. Things might still look very dark and hopeless but the light is there and gradually gets stronger and warmer bit by bit .. often so slowly that we hardly notice the change .. but we need to believe that the change is there.

*December 22nd*

## ***Accepting change ...***

When we feel insecure and hurt, we can be very afraid of change - we grasp onto what we have and see change as a new threat to our security. We are scared stiff of letting go and allowing change to happen.

In order to live life fully and to allow ourselves to recover from the hurt of our pasts, we need to let go and accept change.

*December 23rd*

## ***Clamouring for attention ...***

Sometimes it seems that everyone is clamouring for attention - children want feeding - the house needs cleaning - mother wants her shopping done - work needs attention - everything has to be done 'yesterday' and nobody is giving me any space - no body is letting me breathe.

Then I need to stop and think - why am I letting life get to me like this? Why am I allowing people to push me around? Why don't I allow myself space?

We can all set our own boundaries, our own limits. If we feel crushed and pressured - it is usually our own fault.

Can we give ourselves space - so that others do too?

*December 24th*

## ***Christmas Eve ...***

When things are hard we can expect celebrations to be days when ‘everything will be all right’. We pin so much on making sure everything is perfect .. mum and dad won’t row today ... uncle won’t get drunk ... We will have the best decorations and the nicest tree so that everyone will think our family is fine ...

A girl told this story “Dad stopped drinking at the end of November one year and we were all so pleased we went and bought a big Christmas tree ... a few days later he came home drunk and fell over the tree smashing it .. in the morning he was so sorry he said he would never drink again and he bought a bigger tree ... the same thing happened .. it was smashed again. That year we had five trees .. He could not see that it was actions - not promises and trees that we wanted!”

*December 25th*

## ***Christmas Day...***

Everyone has great expectations of Christmas  
... families happy together .. but is it always  
like that?

Perhaps if we expect too much of a day - we  
are bound to be disappointed ..

.. whereas if we take the day as it comes .. we  
will find fresh surprises and happiness in  
unexpected circumstances.

*December 26th*

## ***Boxing Day ..***

A group member once said .. “When I was a child, we always had to do things for other people on Christmas Day .. have dinner with grandparents .. take presents to the poor ... go to church for my mother .. pretend we liked all our presents .. just keeping other people happy .. And I always felt that Boxing Day was my own little Christmas when I could have the day for myself and not do what others wanted.”

Someone replied .. “Yes, that’s true for me too .. but I realise now that I can get enjoyment and make space for myself even while I am doing things for others .. the day does not have to be all one thing or the other.”

Can we take pleasure in the enjoyment of others?

*December 27th*

## *A Sting in the tail ...*

“You are looking well, .. a bit of extra weight suits you ..”

“I see you’ve bought a new coat ... it’s sensible to get something warm .. you don’t want to be a slave to fashion do you?”

“What a good idea to have your hair permed .. you need to have a good style when you have your colouring...”

Do you know someone like this? A friend who loses no opportunity to put you down ... Someone who seems to be helpful or friendly .. but really takes away your confidence?

What tactics could we use to protect ourselves from this subtle hurt?

*December 28th*

## ***Positive Attitude...***

There is an advert on television where a little boy is getting ready for his school sports day. He is nervous .. but his father tells him to keep thinking PMA .. Positive Mental Attitude.

.. So he goes out and wins .. the sack race.

We may have more important challenges facing us today ... Believe you can do it -  
Keep a positive attitude and

...Just do it!

*December 29th*

***What we don't know can't hurt  
us...***

There is a saying ... “What we don't know  
can't hurt us ...” Is this true?

Why bother with the truth anyway? We can  
use a saying like this as an excuse for not  
telling the truth. Why should we tell someone  
the truth and risk hurting them when a lie  
would cover up and keep them happy?

Being part of a lie and living a lie can hurt us  
..as most of us have learned the hard way..

Who are we really trying to fool?

*December 30th*

## ***Another Holiday ...***

A young boy said in a meeting .. “I look forward to the New Year holiday period because it is another chance to have a go at a happy time ...”

“My mother was an alcoholic and every Christmas I hoped she would stay sober for the holiday .. but she did not .. so I waited for New Year to have a family celebration ..and she would get drunk again .. I wished my life away between one holiday and the next .. Chinese New Year .. Valentine’s .. then I stopped expecting one day to be different and started to notice the good times we had between special days..”

*December 31st*

## ***Ring out the old...***

The end of the year can be cause for relief -  
that we have survived the troubles of that year,  
... or of joy in our accomplishments .

No year is all good or all bad.  
... just like any day of that year - it is what we  
make of it.

And as we 'ring out the old' .... we also 'ring  
in the new' ...

## BACK COVER

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