**Difficult Times, Hidden Emotions and Hope**

Times are Hard. Fear Abounds. Frustrations are rife – though there is always light ahead. In the Greek myth, Pandora’s Box contained many ‘special’ gifts of hardships and illnesses, hidden there as a punishment to mankind from Zeus, king of the Gods. Pandora’s curiosity got the better of her, she opened the box, and out came all the hardships to beset the world – so she closed it again quickly. Trapped inside, however, was a beautiful moth called Hope, which she eventually released to bring support and lift peoples’ spirits. The prospect of immunisation against illness – the promise of an external relief from our situation - and an eventual end to restrictions - is giving society hope.

But where does hope really come from? In reality, it is always there, deep inside our being. If we understand how we are experiencing the world, then fears and worries can melt away, to be replaced by hope.

Understanding that we are always coping with loss and change – big and small – and so are always journeying through shock, denial, anger, guilt, bargaining and depression on the way to acceptance ([www.healthandself.care](http://www.healthandself.care) pp 115-125 and 179). The understanding brings us growth. Understanding that the weather is not the sky, the ever blue sunny sky above (<https://somersetrecoverycollege.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Dealing-with-Uncomfortable-Thoughts-Feelings-Booklet.pdf.pagespeed.ce.Q3fRnexhmg.pdf> )

Understanding that there are no such things as Difficult People – just People in Difficulties - because we all externalise our hurts at times. People never hit out unless they hurt inside. Just to complicate things, sometimes, we displace one emotion into another: Eric Berne said that there are four key emotions – Sadness, Anger, Fear and Happiness. Most families ‘allow’ expression of only three – one may be taboo – hence displacement into inappropriate feelings. One remains hidden in many families. What does this mean? It means that although my surface emotion is anger – actually it’s because I’m frightened (not uncommon in the doctor’s surgery or Emergency Department). Or – things are really distressing, but I smile happily – as a mask for inner distress. “We don’t do anger in our family” is a famili-ar script some of us know well. (Actually, everyone needs to learn skills of managing conflict safely and effectively)

Understanding that fear and worry cause adrenaline to run in our veins – and that exercise is a great burn off for worry, fear and distress. ‘Exercise’ (a word that frightens some of us) doesn’t have to mean Gym or Lycra – any activity works – ten repetitions of standing up and sitting down, running on the spot or star jumps (youth, joints and pelvic floor permitting) are sufficient to burn off surface adrenaline.

Understanding that once we have burnt off the surface adrenaline, we can then slow our breathing – just five slow deep abdominal breaths will put our operating system onto the rest, digest and repair parasympathetic setting of stillness. At which point of stillness, we can ask ourselves ‘What is it that I now know, that I need to do next?’

And from Inner Stillness, we find answers – and Hope returns!

Till next time, Go Well!

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