

The inner self:

I met Brian today. He is a 45 old man today suffering from depression. He is a brave chap, declining to go on anti-depressants and preferring, he says, to feel the truth about himself and to see if he can do something about it. We spoke about a number of issues but the most telling one he said was the metaphor I used to help describe what was happening to him.

It emerged that there are three parts to him – the largest part is taken up by his depressed self. His depressed self has taken over about 70% of his life. The next largest part is taken up by what we called his grey self, which constituted about 25% of his life. His joyful self takes up the smallest part, which is just about 5% of his personality.

The everyday truth for Brian is that he only rarely feels happy or content. Rarely does the weight of his depressed self lift from him. Brian described himself as being trapped in an empty prison from which there seems to be no escape.

There were two approaches I took with Brian, which I believed were critical. The first was to help Brian to personify his different selves. In this instance, I asked him to consider that there were three people at work. To cartoon it, they were Mr. Depressed, Mr. Grey, and Mr. Happy. “The truth”, I said to Brian, “is that most of your internal monologue has been driven by Mr. Dark, while Mr. Happy hardly gets a word in”. Brian wondered if Mr. Happy even existed, so rarely did he hear him or feel his presence.

However, when we looked at his life we discovered that there were activities and moments in any given week when the inner voice and experience of Mr. Happy is revealed. There were times when he could make contact with Mr. Happy, but they were rare. So I drew this picture for him:

MR. DARK 70%

MR. GREY 25%

MR.
HAPPY
5%

Mr. Happy was trapped deep inside of Brian’s self, invisible and barely audible. However the task we set was coined in military language. Brian’s mission was to go

into his character and rescue his happy self, which had been abandoned behind enemy lines.

However to succeed in his mission he was faced with learning how to recognise and deal with the tactics employed by Mr. Dark and Mr. Grey that made this mission hazardous.

Mr. Darks' repetitive comments were things such as "There is no escape"; "The situation is hopeless"; "You will never succeed, because you are permanently depressed". "You have tried on a number of occasions on this mission and its useless".

Mr. Dark's repetitive monologue, which took up 70% of his mental space, interfered with the possibility of other messages getting through. Mr. Dark had just about convinced Brian that his happy self was dead and not worth rescuing.

I asked Brian what his happy self would say if he found his voice. Brian responded instantly "Don't give up! I am still here". And this became his focus.

I gave him a couple of simple tasks. The first was to simply recognise the different voices competing for 'air-time', to recognise that Mr. Dark's voice is *not* his true voice but simply depressiveness speaking. More importantly though, I invited him to notice when the voice of his happier self breaks through the static of everyday greyness. Our goal here was to make and keep contact with that joyful self, even if just for a few moments per day.

I emphasised for him that our True Nature is to be content - that his true nature was to be happy. One of the extraordinary things about nature is that it feels good about itself when in flow. A dog laying in the sun, a tree bending in the breeze, a wave rolling onto the beach, a bird gliding on the wind, a child cooing in the pram, a woman singing in the garden, a man concentrated at his work. No one's true nature is to be agitated or hopeless.

When a depressive self does inhabit us it is crucial that we do not give up hope on the joyful self that is tapped behind enemy lines. Our rescue mission may take weeks, months, or even years but we must not give up. A crackling voice breaks through the static on our radiophone and calls out again: "Do not forget me! Don't give up".