

Life Can Be Difficult!

Once we truly know that life is difficult – once we truly understand and accept it – then life is no longer difficult.

(M. Scott Peck)

I expect you are wondering why a New Year message from Radiant Living Manchester that should be uplifting and optimistic is entitled *Life Can Be Difficult!* Well, please bear with me while I do my best to persuade you that accepting this basic truth about life on Planet Earth could save you a lot of angst throughout 2026.

A while ago now, I chipped a molar, and when I went to the dentist, he told me he thought the only realistic option was to remove the tooth because it was cracked. For the rest of that day – well really the whole week if I am honest – I felt terribly upset and anxious. Just the thought of having that tooth extracted triggered some pretty traumatic memories of past painful experiences at the dentist. Eventually, I decided my tooth would be fine for a little longer, but then, I still had to deal with the alarm left in my body.

In an attempt to calm myself down, I started listening to podcasts by various spiritual teachers whom I admire, and that was how I came across a short talk by the wonderful Eckhart Tolle. Eckhart explained that life on this planet was often difficult for everyone and that accepting that basic fact of life could actually help us to stay calmer when facing any major challenge in our own lives.

These days, whenever my personality-self gets into an anxious or self-pitying mood, I have learnt the hard way that it does not help at all to tell myself off by saying something like, ‘Don’t be such a cry-baby. Don’t make such a fuss.’ (Words my adoptive mother said to me often when I was still very little). Criticising our anxious or angry inner child when he or she is playing up in any way just adds fuel to the flames of fear or anger.

Rather than judging ourselves harshly or even telling ourselves off when we lose it, it is far, far better to reassure the part of ourselves who is anxious or annoyed that we understand where they are coming from. We also need to let our distressed inner child know that we will lovingly and unconditionally support them through whatever they are afraid of facing in the year ahead.

The very best action to take whenever we are upset for any reason at all is to pause so that we can wrap our triggered inner child in the infinitely comforting and healing energy of unconditional self-compassion.

Now I do have to warn you that doing this is not some kind of magic solution to living in such a challenging world as ours. So our core goal in life in 2026 should not be to avoid all challenging situations – they will come from time to time despite our best efforts to avoid them. Rather, one of our key goals throughout 2026 should be to support ourselves 100 percent through any challenges that may come our way.

This definitely does not mean falling into a moaning and groaning victimhood state of consciousness in which we keep saying to ourselves: ‘Why is this happening to *me*? Life is so unfair!’ No! Whenever we feel personally attacked, in any kind of pain, or aggrieved over anything in the year ahead, it will be so helpful to pause and remind ourselves that sh*t happens in this world and no one who has ever-lived on Planet Earth has had a completely easy and care-free life.

Moreover, when we look back from a totally safe distance on the big challenges we have faced in our own life, we can usually see how they really assisted us to cultivate incredibly useful core qualities - such as courage, inner peace and above all compassion.

Looking back on my recent tooth panic, I can already see how it pushed me to read a really helpful, if somewhat over-long book called *The Anxiety Prescription* by Dr Russell Kennedy. Dr Kennedy emphasises that anxiety is actually alarm going off somewhere in our body and that it is really hard to resolve this horrible feeling with positive thinking because feelings are so much more energetically charged than thoughts.

Dr Kennedy suggests that the most effective way to calm ourselves down when our body is alarmed is to stay gently focussed on the uncomfortable feelings in our body whilst lovingly reassuring our frightened inner child that this moment now, he/she is perfectly safe.

Well, I think that is enough about dealing with any scary challenges that just might come our way in 2026. So let me change tack here and conclude this New

Year message with just a few thoughts about living joyfully come what may in the year ahead. According to *A Course in Miracles*, *God's Will for us is perfect happiness*. Now when I first read that lesson title over 20 years ago, I have to admit it made no sense to me. I was so used to being anxious and quite depressed most of the time that I could not even imagine a God that wished me nothing but happiness.

However, having practised *A Course in Miracles* for over two decades now, I am beginning to see that I constantly sabotage my own well-being by worrying about a fearful future that is not real. My 'frightening future' is just a crazy fantasy in my egoic mind. My life seems to be difficult from time to time not so much because of external circumstances but because my ego is always trying to convince me that some terrible event is lurking just around the corner. If I really focus on keeping my awareness on 'this present moment', I can usually begin to feel much more at ease and even joyful as I slow down enough to begin to notice all the incredible beauty and amazing kindness in my immediate environment.

Yes, life here can be difficult, but this planet is also incredibly beautiful! Moreover, so many unbelievably loving kind and generous human beings live on it. So in 2026, maybe you would like to join me in accepting that life is challenging for everyone at times, but more crucially, keep rejoicing that this Planet is a breathtakingly beautiful and generous place to stay for a little while and so we all have so much to be grateful for as yet another New Year gets into full swing.

Peggy Foster
January 2026