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ISSUE 01

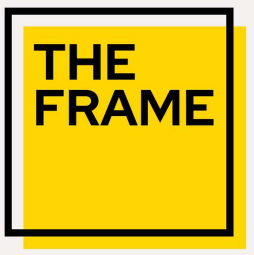


THE FRAME



THE FRAME

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Welcome to The Frame

Thank for you for downloading our very first issue.

To start, a story - in 1996, I went to see a band called Lush play at Camden Town's Electric Ballroom in London. I'd never heard of them before that night, but as I spent the evening transfixed by lead singer and guitarist Miki Berenyi and inhaling an incomprehensible amount of second-hand cigarette (etc) smoke, I decided that whatever image I'd be trying to cultivate to this point (probably best described as tragedy meets Dawson's Creek meets the Gap) was now out, and the indescribably cool indie/punk aesthetic of this crowd was now who I was going to be.

As the band headed off stage and we hustled our way into the cool spring evening and the streets outside, I bought myself a t-shirt and what I now know to be called a 'fanzine' - an independent magazine populated by writers, artists and people with apparently very strong opinions on the disastrous decline of rock music. I think I read it back to front and back again a hundred times, and I suspect my very sudden disinterest in Nirvana and very sudden fanaticism of Pearl Jam may be in large part attributable to whoever wrote the article 'Eddie vs. Kurt: Real Music vs MTV Angst'.

In the time since, I've made some questionable hair and life choices - unfortunately none of which involved going grey very gradually, as seems to be happening to me now - and was diagnosed with ADHD well into middle age. My training as a counsellor took in books written by psychotherapists, theorists and psychologists and I've been lucky enough to train alongside some brilliant minds, and learned from some brilliant people. But what I've learned from these experiences, more than anything, is that the gap between mental health experience and mental health treatment is absolutely cavernous, and that the shared experience and the human voice is where much of the cure lies.

Seeing you are not alone.
Knowing are not uniquely condemned.
Discovering there is a way out.

And so, the idea of the magazine you're reading right now was born.

The Frame is intended to be a platform for you; a mental health fanzine for the digital age, featuring whatever expression of sadness and success and everything in-between is your experience. I've been absolutely overwhelmed by the responses to my calls for submissions - the level of talent and expression out there in the world is extraordinary, and the articles contained in this issue are presented in (mostly) unedited form, for better or for worse, to respect the efforts, talents and cadence of those who have contributed.

So please enjoy this first issue. It's been painstakingly put together during a time I was also training for a 24-mile charity hike which included climbing three mountains, running three websites, chairing two charity ADHD support groups, and then... you know... my full-time job. There'll likely be formatting issues and spelling mistakes and probably a whole lot of other stuff wrong with it. Please accept my apologies that I'm not going to apologise for them.

If you have any thoughts or comments about the fanzine, or anything you'd like to contribute, please email theframefanzine@post.com. There's a number of features that didn't make it into this edition and there's always room for voices of value.

Thanks for reading!

David L
Editor, The Frame

*And when it falls apart, she cries
Doesn't think to look inside
She just covers up her eyes
Doesn't see her own disguise
- 'For Love' by Lush*

The Frame has been edited, designed and compiled by David Levy
Twitter: [@adhdcounselling](https://twitter.com/adhdcounselling), [@theframefanzine](https://twitter.com/theframefanzine)
Instagram: [@adhdcounselling.uk](https://www.instagram.com/adhdcounselling.uk), [@theframefanzine](https://www.instagram.com/theframefanzine)

Grateful thanks to our contributors for this issue Katy Lees, Robert Craig, Sterling Pohlmann, CJ Bell, Arnfrid Beier, Di, James Lindsay, Connor X. Thompson, Connor Galliard, Arthur Cole, David M. Giles, Vic Grimes, Sharin Ali, S. Rupsha Mitra, to those who submitted but weren't published this time, and to those who wish to remain anonymous.

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KATY LEES
(THEY/THEM)



What do you do?

I'm a person-centred psychotherapist in private practice. I specialise in seeing trans and queer clients, particularly those who are neurodivergent and those who have experienced trauma. I'm also a writer, and my book *The Trans Guide to Mental Health and Well-Being* is out now.

How long have you been doing it?

I completed my MSc in Person-Centred and Experiential Psychotherapy in 2018, and I started my private practice in 2019.

Where did you study?

I'm based in the North East, but I studied in the Midlands and I work exclusively online.

Why did you end up as a therapist?

I knew from a young age that I wanted to be a therapist, and luckily my love for the vocation has only grown with time! I was always particularly interested in hearing the stories of people who aren't usually encouraged to talk about how they feel. It's still one of my favourite parts of the job, and a real privilege.

What's the most important skill for a therapist, do you think?

I find that my most used skill is my boundary setting. The safety that comes when clients feel supported by well-communicated boundaries in their lives, modelled by me, and in the therapeutic relationship can lead to some amazing work.

What's the book you recommend the most?

It's a cliché, but I'd be lost without *The Carl Rogers Reader* by Howard Kirschenbaum - it's a book I always find myself coming back to. If I can cheekily suggest a second book, I turn to *How to Understand Your Gender* by Meg-John Barker and Alex Iantaffi a lot when working with trans, non-binary, and gender questioning clients.

What do you do when you're not being a therapist?

You can usually find me caring for my fiancée, reading SFF novels, baking, trying to learn Japanese, and knitting (badly).

Tell us a random fact about yourself.

I have seven tattoos and counting.

What you'd like people to know...

Trans rights are human rights!



Katy Lees is a psychotherapist and author whose book 'The Trans Guide to Mental Health and Well-Being' is out now.

You can find Katy online at www.iamkatylees.com or on Instagram and Twitter at @iamkatylees

WHY (I THINK) MY THERAPIST LIED

Words
David Levy

It's not long after beginning the final stage of training to become a counsellor that the sheer enormity of the task ahead of you really sinks in. In addition to the classes, reading, group sessions and the assignments, there's the parts of the learning that lie outside of the normal learning experience - the client work, the supervision, the time needed to try and unpack the often impactful and personally resonant topics of learning, and the mandatory personal therapy of your own.

I thought I would take some proactive action on that final point. Required for the entire two-and-a-bit years of my training, I decided to get the ball rolling before the course even started, settling into a therapeutic relationship I enjoyed with someone who allowed me to explore my apprehension about the course ahead of me.



"FACTS IN THERAPY TAKE A BACK SEAT TO TIMING AND TO ADAPTABILITY; TO EMPATHY AND PRESENCE AND CHOOSING EXACTLY THE RIGHT MOMENT TO MAKE THAT CAREFULLY OBSERVED AND HARD-HITTING OBSERVATION."

Unfortunately, it was only once classes began that what constituted what kind of a therapist we could see were communicated – not the kind I was seeing - and I was off to find another counsellor, this time one who had to fall within pretty narrow parameters in terms of their qualifications, training, modality and length of practice.

It just so happened that the only suitable candidate I could find worked just a short journey away from where I lived, and so began a two-year-and-a-bit relationship, whether I liked it or not.

We were not a match, certainly not at the beginning. She stood for none of my nonsense and propensity to waffle, (likely evidenced in this article) and at times it seemed as though we almost spoke different languages, often taking the momentum out of the conversation.

She challenged me in ways I initially pushed back on, but later came to appreciate. In time, the good parts of our relationship allowed me to explore the darkest corners of my lived experience and she treated the delicateness of the silence between my revelations and hopes for validation with care and sensitivity. She helped me foster dignity, objectivity, perspective and taught me many things I find myself parroting to my clients today. She was patient and human and a number of words I'm not sure I would have used to describe myself before our work, but certainly have done afterwards.

However, her most notable intervention was one I'm not sure, to this day, she meant deliberately. It created a heated conversation that lasted nearly a year and a half.

I was talking about something – I can't remember what exactly, but the metaphor will probably give you, the reader, a good idea of the gist – and remarked how I felt like Wile E. Coyote chasing Road Runner; always looking for a way to catch something which constantly evaded me and unable to take a moment to pause and ask myself why it was going to work this time having not done so countless times before, often at painful cost.

"I don't know who they are," she replied.

On the off-chance you, the reader, also don't know who I was talking about, I think it's important just to put her statement into perspective. Wile E. Coyote and Road Runner are world-famous cartoon characters known by children and grown-ups for generations. A fixture of morning television when I was growing up in the 1980s, they first appeared in 1949 and since in countless spin-offs, films, products and comic books, and have been translated into more than 150 languages. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, they featured frequently in adverts for Plymouth cars in North America, a time when my Canadian therapist had a young child and the choice of just a few television channels. Her children have had children. I'm not saying it's impossible she didn't know who I was talking about, but I never believed it for a moment, and she stuck to her guns until the end of our relationship.

"You know," I replied, confused. "The cartoon characters."

"Sorry, no. I've never heard of them." She continued, and this is the important bit, "Can you please explain?"

This article is in part about why therapists sometimes withhold, misdirect, or have to protect the parameters of their role. It's a necessary part of the job, and sometimes a very difficult one. The role of self-disclosure is a contentious topic among therapists of different modalities, but I believe that if chosen carefully, it can be a powerful tool. It's also a lot broader than just talking about a similar childhood experience or whether or not you've seen a cartoon – every fibre of our personhood says something about us and has to be carefully considered; every action, word and movement we make.

It was driving home from the session later that evening when it suddenly all made sense.

Whether or not she knew what I was referencing in that moment, my therapist had seen someone trying to explain how they were feeling by giving it away, using a cartoon instead of an “I feel...” sentence in an attempt to keep whatever emotion I was trying to convey at arm's length. Her therapeutic misdirection had given me ownership of it, and I was excited to talk about my no doubt brilliant realisation the next time I saw her.

As the week went on, I would find myself smiling at flashbacks of how easily I had been fooled by what I was sure was no more than a slight of hand trick. I made a mental note, eager to try this simple but effective technique when I began working with clients of my own. Thoughts would come to me of us laughing together knowingly during our next session, talking about how great those cartoons were and how we really both preferred Duck Dodgers in the 24th Century.

Alas, no. When I returned a week later, what I was met with was denial.

“A tactic? I'm not sure why you would think I would do that. I'm not here to manipulate you.”

“Oh come on, why else would you pretend not to know who they were?”



**"EVERY FIBRE OF OUR
PERSONHOOD SAYS
SOMETHING ABOUT US AND
HAS TO BE CAREFULLY
CONSIDERED"**

“OK fine, you don't know who they are. What about Bugs Bunny, do you know who that is?”

“David, you seem angry...”

And other, less comical, versions of this. In my angry moments, it felt evasive and dismissive. In my more rational ones, it felt just disconnected from the authenticity on which I placed a great deal of value. For a year and a half.

It frustrated me then, and it frustrates me even now, all these years later.





PICK OF THE PODS

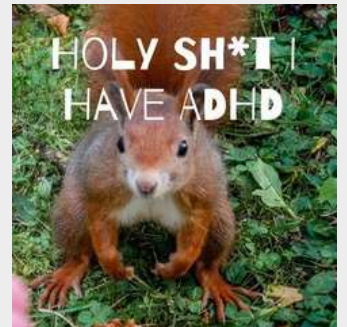
The best Podcasts for your ears and your minds

Holy Sh*t I Have ADHD

Robbie McDonald and Jordan Lane are two writers who share the experience of discovering they have ADHD in midlife. Holy Sh*t I Have ADHD is a funny, vulnerable, relatable and raw look into the double-edged sword of getting an entirely new understanding of your life when you're already halfway through it.



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Where Should We Begin? with Esther Perel

Legendary therapist and TED-talker Esther Perel returns for another series of 'Where Should We Begin?', her couples therapy podcast featuring real sessions from real people going through real problems. Perel has nothing to prove and everything to lose by putting herself out there in such a raw, unfiltered way, but clearly trusts her insight – and well she should, her work is the gold standard.

 @estherperelofficial
 @estherperel



GETTING BETTER BY ROBERT CRAIG

So are you better? -everyone

Before we tackle that question, let's look at the issues at hand when trying to do a personal depression inventory:

Depression as identity - Am I a depressed person or am I a person with depression? I have lived with depression for decades. Sometimes it's once or twice a year, other times it's the whole package all year long. Regardless, it's been a part of my life long enough that sometimes it's hard to know where it starts and ends. I have removed pretty much every stressor in my life. A leave of absence from work, no daily commute, nothing to raise my blood pressure.

One of the issues I've identified with my psychologist is that I hold onto my depression, and I have trouble visualizing myself without depression. Right now, depression is my full time job. ECT three times a week, day program three days a week, psychiatrist appointments and psychologist appointments, as well as the face-it foundation group. It's an awful lot of time spent talking about and treating my depression.

How do you measure depression?

How are you feeling? Sad? Down? Depressed? Is it the feeling of depression or is it something more easily measured? If we look at my current PHQ9 score, that's a 20 - severe - Warrants active treatment with psychotherapy, medications, or combination. If you want to go by the HAMD, it's 17 points - Moderate depression. If you compared those to two months ago, you'd likely see much higher numbers back then. So technically, I'm a certain amount of better.

Does that track with what we're hoping to see?

How do you measure progress?

When talking about treatments and potential outcomes, most meds (and ECT) consider effectiveness to be a 50% lessening of the symptoms. I've never gotten a straight answer on whether or not that's cumulative - in other words are two effective treatments likely to equal 100% improvement? So I guess we're looking at those scores above to see if they're improved by 50% or more.

So, how are you?

But to answer the question, I really don't know. I feel that I have more "bright" days than dark, and overall my mood has certainly stabilized - a by-product of one of my meds, to be sure. But has the depression lessened? Yes? Somewhat? I still feel it in my chest, in my bones, and in my head. But even then, what will I feel when I get out into the "real world" again? And how far do we have to go down the rabbit hole to be sure we've done enough? If this were a tumour, we could inspect to see that it's all gone. If there were blood tests to be done, we would know when things were back within the "normal" range. But since it's an emotion, a mood, a feeling, a state of mind, it's much harder to say.

In the perspective of suicidal ideation, that's certainly reduced - but I still have days where I would prefer not to exist. I still go to sleep at night wondering if tonight I'll pass in my sleep and finish this adventure. But I don't spend my sleepless hours trying to come up with a plan, if that's any consolation. So I guess I still have a ways to go.

Robert Craig is a 53-year-old professional writer and voice actor from Minneapolis, Minnesota. His hobbies range from being a Vespa enthusiast to his obsession with cross-stitching.

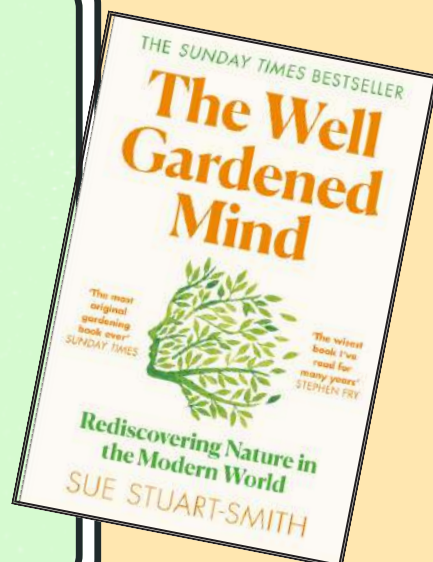
Robert writes about his mental health journey on his blog <https://ascarletd.blog>

The Well Gardened Mind by Sue Stuart-Smith

'Fascinating ... Extends the awareness - backed up by compendious and elegant research - of how mentally enriching it is to swap screen for green ... [She] renders a very special service with this book' - Observer

Originally released in 2020 and now in paperback, psychotherapist and author Sue Stuart-Smith's brilliant book explores in moving and analytical depth the restorative importance of our connection with nature. A really beautiful and inspiring piece.

£9.99, paperback
HarperCollins Publishers
ISBN: 9780008000735
Pages: 352

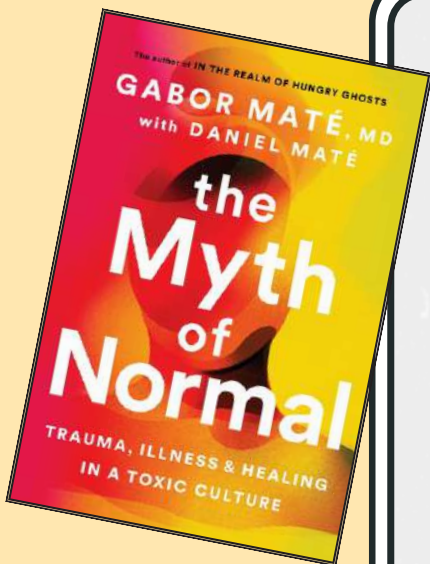


The Myth of Normal by Gabor Maté (with Daniel Maté)

Gripping ... a powerful call for change in how we live with, love, understand, treat, and think about each other — Rebecca Solnit, author of Men Explaining Everything To Me

The legendary Gabor Maté's latest (co-written with his son Daniel) asks what 'normal' really means in a world where 70% of Americans are on prescription drugs, and the constant demands of daily life affect us beyond our conscious understanding. Far from a baseless critique of modern society, Dr Maté's trademark compassion and insight suggests all is not yet lost, and hope exists for us all.

£21.99, hardback
Vermilion
ISBN: 978-1785042713
Pages: 576



What we're reading...

got a book you want to recommend or review?
email: theframefanzine@post.com



the daddy issue.

Words by Anonymous

Where the term originates is uncertain, but it could date back to Freud's 'Father Complex' which is a group of unconscious associations with the father or a father figure. For Men's Health Month, I'd like to discuss how "daddy issues" can affect men too. Based on conversations and experiences I have had throughout my life, and despite being a woman, I hope to capture these with some accuracy - without getting too scientific. I just want to be real.

I wanted to write this when I first listened to Kendrick Lamar's new album 'Mr Morale & the Big Steppers' but I didn't feel like I had a purpose because I was only going to write it for myself. The track that inspired me was 'Father Time' which quite naturally and effortlessly addresses some of the "daddy issues" that men can experience. I never really thought about it before

but I was instantly in agreement and thankful to Kendrick for bringing this to the attention of the generations of fans he has as said "daddy issues" are often attributed to women alone. I happened to be messaging a friend at the time, who encouraged me to write this regardless of purpose and who agreed with the concept.

Admittedly, I hate the term and do feel offended when somebody explains away something I have experienced or the way I behave with "daddy issues". As a woman, I want to acknowledge that the relationship I have with my dad is very complicated and although I like when he is present, I do see how his absence has impacted my life in so many ways. But for now, "let's give the women a break, grown men with daddy issues" (Lamar, 2022).

I am constantly aware of how "daddy issues" have affected the men and boys around me too.

When discussing the urge to write about this with my friend, he felt that a lot of men had “daddy issues” that are buried and “that is probably fundamental to why a lot of guys play up” - his words, not mine!

Sadly, I have witnessed this in friends, family and students, from many different backgrounds but mostly white British, black Caribbean or some sort of mix. Ironically, two friends of mine recently asked why it’s so common in our culture for fathers to be absent - one is Italian and one is Indian Mauritian. I couldn’t answer.

My uncle and other positive male figures kept me occupied enough to not “feel” my dad’s absence when I was young so I feel lucky about that. I never asked questions and plenty of my friends were in a similar situation - it was so “normal”, that those with dads around weren’t even phased by those of us whose dads were not. Heartbreakingly, I have witnessed the effects of absent dads on some of the children in my life. They often feel deep sadness and blame themselves as they do not understand the reasons behind their dads’ absences. I question whether their experience is different to mine because I was a girl. But my biggest question is “why wouldn’t they want to be in their beautiful child’s life Luckily?” Luckily, they too have positive male figures who distract them from these heart-breaking thoughts.

However, many of my father friends are deliberately present in their children’s lives and express their confusion about fathers who are not. They strive to be a positive force in their children’s lives either because their dad inspired them or because they want to be a better father than theirs.

“...it was so “normal”, that those with dads around weren’t even phased by those of us whose dads were not...”

If these boys feel like they have nobody to turn to, anything can happen. They grow into teenagers who can turn to crime because they are vulnerable, or want to support their mother, or simply do not have a positive male role model to guide them in the right direction. Kendrick said “Learn shit ‘bout bein’ a man and disguise it as bein’ gangsta” and it can become a cycle. A friend of mine turned to a life of crime as a teenager and into his early 20s and has acknowledged his father’s absence as a contributing factor. He does have a step dad but, naturally and quite commonly, they initially had a strained relationship which could have further contributed to his decision to turn to crime. Unlike many, he has left that lifestyle in the past and now has a good relationship with his step father.

Continued on pg. 40

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in sickness and in health

by Sterling Pohlmann



My wife, Maggie, and I both have mental health issues.

She has major depressive disorder and I have schizoaffective disorder. Each of us is a caretaker for the other. Because of the support we give each other, we do better together than we ever did apart. Maggie also has lupus. She has been on anti-inflammatories for years because of it. With her health issues, we spent many a night in the ER. One day she seemed off. She complained of abdominal pain, which was common for her, but this was different. She refused to move, she just wanted to be left alone. She didn't want to go to the hospital. I demanded she let me take her. We arrived at the hospital and waited for the doctor.

The doctor ran a CT scan and some blood work. He was looking for an elevation white blood cells due to infection, and signs of inflammation which would confirm if she had appendicitis but didn't find any because of her anti-inflammatory and auto-immune medications. Seeing nothing he came back in with test results and discharge papers and said it was probably just her lupus. I yelled like I hadn't since my Army days that "If I take her home and she dies of septic shock after her appendix bursts plan on never practicing medicine again. I will have your license." Security came in, the Doctor said "Due an ultrasound. Just do the test and send them home when it comes back clear." And he left. Maggie just wanted to go home and was mad at my outburst.

The doctor came in almost as soon as my wife got back in the room from the scan. He said her appendix needed to be taken out immediately. She was gowned up and rushed straight into an OR. When they remove an organ it is placed on a dish, often for further testing. When they set hers in the dish it burst. Had we gone home it would have burst inside her and she would have gone into sepsis.

By being a support to and advocate for my wife, I may have saved her life. Support isn't just nice to have, it doesn't just help you reach your potential, it can oftentimes be the difference between life and death.

Support For Mental Health

Because of this instance, my wife was not only grateful, but she trusted me more. Because both of us deal with suicidal ideation, we have an agreement that we will reach out for help before following through with any plans. One day, after I had finished my 12-hour shift at a call centre, I got a call from her. She said she was going to take all of my meds, two medications of a 90 day supply. It terrified me that she was so close to following through with her plan. She said she would wait for me to get home, she wanted to go to a hospital. She was admitted and stayed in for 10 days.

I reached out to a childhood friend of mine, Milo, who worked with me. He talked me down over our team chat, as I was spiralling myself. He found my cubicle, gave me fresh coffee, a chocolate bar, hugged me, and then left. He hugged me until all those pieces of me that were fragmenting like broken pottery were put back together. I fought back a surprise rush of tears while on a call. It doesn't take moving heaven and earth to support someone, sometimes all it takes is a simple cup of coffee and a warm hug.

The Art of Support

In Japan, there is a long tradition of using gold to repair broken pottery. It fills cracks but sometimes is used to make whole what was once shattered. It is called Kintsugi. My wife and I support each other in that same way. I leave an imprint of myself in-between her broken shards and vice versa.

We put back the broken shards with the best we have to offer to make what was once seemingly destroyed not only whole again, but more beautiful than before leaving sacred scars memorializing our journey and celebrating our triumphs over our challenges.

Seek out those who offer their gold to fit your broken pieces back together. Seek the support that you need, that you deserve, and those people will make even the harshest winds calm. Those are the people who make life worth living. Many hands make the heavy burden light. You may need someone's support, but maybe someone else needs your helping hands as well.

Sterling Pohlmann is an Army veteran, musician, and writer living in the western United States.

Sterling's work can be found at sterlingpohlmann.com or on Patreon at patreon.com/sterlingpohlmann



@writeratwork1



joy

ME IN THERAPY #40: ENS CAUSA SUI

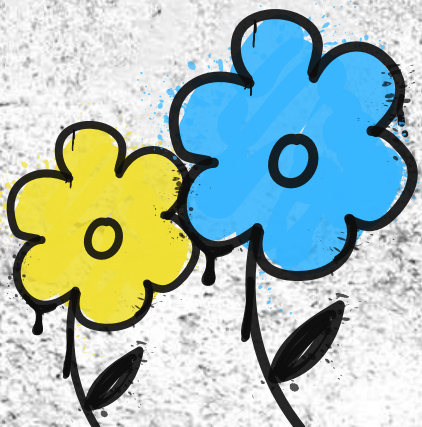
TODAY I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT MY DIFFICULTIES WITH FOCUSING ON TASKS AND FINISHING WHAT I START. I MADE A LIST OF LIFE HACKS FOR SOLVING THIS.

SO... I COUNT 37 ITEMS ON THIS LIST. THAT IS CORRECT.

CAN YOU PICK ONE ITEM FROM THIS LIST, THAT WILL HAVE A BIG IMPACT, TO DO THIS WEEK?

OK LOOK.

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Long read



Dr. D and Me

by Arnfrid Beier

Let me introduce you to Dr.D, a friend, my colleague, a kind guy whose smile made you think he was happy, until he wasn't.

There was something he had to show me, a case study. I was surprised but couldn't resist. 'I know you will take me seriously.'

I sensed pain. No smile. He seemed older. This case study was a confession, emotional, disturbing, shocking. I read every word.

It went straight into his pain. Words fell from his lips, depression meaninglessness isolation death suicide. 'Books are written about such things,' he said. I felt helpless.

He thought it was better to be dead. I wasn't born to be happy. It's bad luck, my fate. His eyes were dead. I felt helpless. Oh, the power our own subjective models have over our lives.

The energy we'll use to defend how things are, even if it stops us living, what a waste. If you don't know any better, you are a prisoner of not knowing.

I felt angry. Words that 'knew better' yet couldn't do anything.

All I could do was listening. Who was he Dr.D, my colleague, a friend? Who was I? How could he trust me? I was just a human being. Like him, vulnerable.

I was one step away from bye-bye Dr.D, when he smiled. Where would I be without you? Thank you so much!

I stayed. Even with doubts Freud might have reassured me. 'It is a very remarkable thing that the [Unconscious] of one human being can react upon that of another, without passing through the [Conscious].

It didn't bother me that Freud's statement wasn't based on scientific evidence, his name made it real and Casement adds weight to it.

He links projective identification with unconscious communication. 'It is especially relevant, when what is being communicated is beyond words, relating to unspeakable experiences or to pre-verbal experience.'

I wondered if there was any 'projective identification' to me from Dr.D, or whether it was a simple relational act. He was a therapeutic counsellor and knew these things, so I left it.

I saw him as a troubled colleague, but when he smiled I was confused. Was it real? He was like a student, making light of a hangover.

I wasn't far off. He'd been taking anti-depressants, but only for a couple of days, was a bit dopey, couldn't put words together.

Part 2

You feel out of it, I said, yet you came. 'I wanted to show I am serious.' A great deal of energy channelled into containing his distress. Were things about to change?

A swallow doesn't make a summer, and a smile doesn't make a therapeutic relationship, I thought. One thing for sure, Dr.D became a client, my client. I treated him like one, it had to be so and I simply followed the 'so'.

My new 'client' was tasting a freedom he'd only read about in books. My heart stopped, how could a counsellor betray his true self, hiding it behind a smile? Warm so world 'loves' him?

Emotions and past hurt, unbearable and thus deliberately forgotten, were banned from 'his' here and now. When he had to cope with the past it was shoved away in a dark corner and kept secret.

The here and now was a place to him, another country, England. Germany, the past, didn't fit the way he wanted it to be. He dreaded his fate under Fascism.

It would have been dark.

How do you carve an identity from rigid rules, out of 'one' way, never questioned? Could he have stood against it? Even with its shadow on the present, personified by his mother, it was a little hell. I listened.

Continued on pg. 41

1 in 10 people in the UK

ARE EXPECTED TO EXPERIENCE POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES.

In the UK, that's around **6,665,000 people** who may develop PTSD or Complex-PTSD in their lifetime, yet it is still an incredibly misunderstood, often misdiagnosed and stigmatised condition.

What causes Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a condition that some people develop after **experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event or events.**

Trauma can be a result of anything which causes **fear, helplessness or horror** - for example a road traffic accident, being told you have a life-threatening illness, assault, childhood abuse, domestic abuse, burglary, witnessing a suicide or attempted suicide, natural disasters, traumatic childbirth, military combat, miscarriage & ectopic pregnancy, or serious injury.

The Symptoms of PTSD

PTSD and C-PTSD can cause a wide variety of physical, mental and emotional symptoms which can have a significant impact on your daily life.

Re-experiencing is the most typical symptom of PTSD & C-PTSD. This is when you **involuntarily and vividly relives** the traumatic event perhaps in the form of flashbacks or vivid nightmares.

You may **avoid situations, people or places** that remind you of the trauma, or avoiding talking to anyone about your experience - this may make you change your routines and make you feel emotionally numb or cut off from the world.

You may be **always on alert, jumpy and easily startled** and on the lookout for danger. This may mean you have difficulty concentrating and sleeping (despite being exhausted) and you might suddenly become angry or irritable.

Your emotions and the way you think about yourself and others may change. You may feel that nowhere is safe, that you can't trust anyone, have difficulty feeling positive emotions or feel guilt and blame about the trauma.

Find out more about the causes, symptoms and treatments available for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at PTSD UK, the ONLY charity in the UK dedicated to supporting EVERYONE affected by PTSD and C-PTSD, no matter the trauma that caused it.

PTSDuk.org




@PTSDUKcharity



@PTSD_UK

PRECIPITATION



Words by Di
@Dizzy7Honey 

‘As I stood on the precipice I felt the weight of my past pushing me closer to the edge.’

The day began as they usually do for me. I slept till mid-morning until my thoughts prodded me awake with the normal deluge of dark contemplation and brutal put downs. I was awake and wishing I could return to an unconscious state.

Sleep was a refuge for me, it never let me down and I could nap all day and still sleep at night. The general consensus from other people was that I was 'so lucky'. I would still sleep with all the ruminations of the day buzzing in my head, for all I knew it continued as I slept.

I considered staying in bed with the duvet over my head and pretend I was on a raft in the middle of the ocean with no one to interrupt my thoughts or to try and silence the chaos going on inside. I will not lie, I thought about it. I always do but life and time moves on, with or without me, and so for today I decided to go with it.

I crawled from the sanctuary of my bed and went to the bathroom, today my morning ritual consisted of brushing my teeth and gargling some mouthwash. This was a step further than yesterday and two better than the day before. I made coffee and sat with my hands wrapped around the cup, stealing warmth from it. I always seemed to be cold, no matter the temperature.

I crossed the room and switched on the PC. I waited and glared at the screen while the CPU came alive with clicks and pops then the usual screensaver appeared. Taken from the top of a snow capped mountain by some intrepid climber who had decided to leave their backpack in the foreground, dwarfed by the spectacle surrounding it. The bright orange bag stole my focus and I stared at it, wishing I could so easily release myself from the burden I carried and set it down. Not sure I would have wanted the whole world to view it but then it would have appeared so much bigger and totally obliterated the true beauty of the mountains and lake below. I was now so weighed down with regret and sorrow I could not focus on what lay before me. I have climbed many a mountain but never this one, the stamina required would be beyond me.



I spent the next hour or so answering emails and getting the less important things out of the way. I didn't have any steadfast plans today so there was nowhere I needed to be, no one I needed to see and nothing important I needed to do. I realise that having no purpose was not ideal for me. At the end of this day I expected to have achieved very little however a part of me would consider this a day wasted. That's the part of me that would make tomorrow so much worse, it would negate me, belittle me and pour scorn on me and my wasted day. My own worst enemy.

I switched off the pc, got up from the chair and opened the blinds. The sun burst through, initially blinding me then warming me, I squinting a little then I turned away and walked into the kitchen. The fridge was buzzing loudly and I opened the door and looked inside. In the door there was milk, fresh orange and one single bottle of cider. I stared at it for a while, unable to remember buying it or why it was even there. I reached in and paused, I believe I was going for the juice but my hand closed around the cold glass neck and I took the bottle out and set it on the counter. I flipped the top off and walked to the door, unlocking it and then sitting down on the cold concrete step.

The sun did not deceive through the window it was equally warm without the glass barrier. I sat there, lifted the bottle to my lips and drank the cider, it bubbled up in my mouth and I swirled it around before swallowing it down. It was exquisite and decadent in equal measure.

One of my neighbours passed by with a dog, he waved and smiled so I did the same. I wondered if he judged me, sitting here drinking cider, alone on a Wednesday morning. **His judgement would never be as harsh as my own.** Maybe he didn't give it a second thought or maybe he was envious. I felt good, albeit a little naughty, breaking the rules, unconventional. Nothing was happening, my thoughts were still, silent, contemplative but nothing else. I stared at the bottle like it was a magic potion.

I was content. It doesn't sound like a big deal but it was an alien concept to me. This very small, insignificant moment was not just joyful or uplifting, it was almost euphoric. When you have stood at the bottom of that mountain this must be what it felt like at the summit. Taking a photo for someone else's screensaver.

So today, because of the sweet cider, the warm sun and that brief, exhilarating moment; I am marking down a point in the win column, regardless of what else the day brings. I had succeeded today. Not only had I managed to fool my neighbour with a wave and a fake smile, I had tricked myself, for a few minutes at least. My mind had found a tiny moment of calm, cool water in its tumultuous sea.

It left as quickly as it had arrived, a single cloud appeared and the gloom descended, my brow furrowed and I closed my eyes. Then as I stood on the precipice I felt the weight of my past push me closer to the edge.

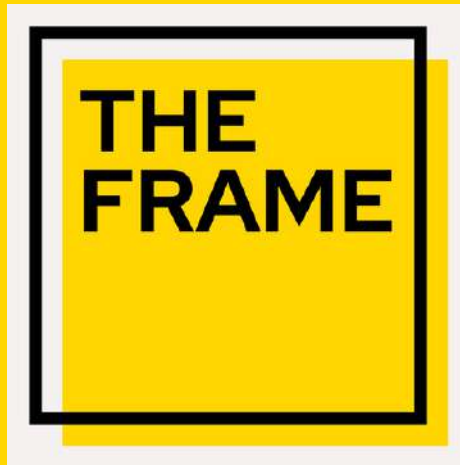
Today, I pushed back.

Di is from Lanarkshire, Scotland.

Di wrote this story "as I believe that when you are struggling mentally you have to acknowledge the small victories, the tiny seconds of calm when you feel like you may be in the eye of the storm. It helps to be mindful of these moments."

Di is on Twitter @Dizzy7Honey





The Frame needs you!

This fanzine relies on the contributions of the people that read it, whether it's in the form of art, poetry, photography, essays, articles or personal experiences - as long as it's mental health related, and:

- An original piece.
- 2,000 words or less.
- In any language, but includes an English-language version.
- Ensures confidentiality and anonymity.
- Doesn't discriminate against any protected characteristic.

To submit a piece for a future issue, please email to

theframefanzine@post.com

Along with

- The name you'd like used as author.
- A short piece of biographical information.
- Any social media accounts or websites you'd like added to your bio.

Copyright for all materials submitted are maintained by the creators and The Frame accepts no responsibility for submissions which result in complaint or action.

How to Make Mental Illness



Your Ally, Not Your Enemy

Words By James L.



@jameslindsay23



@jameslindsay23



@jameslindsay_23



[linkedin.com/in/james-lindsay-414b6630/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/james-lindsay-414b6630/)

Honestly guys, when I was first told I was mentally ill back in 2016, I did not take it very well at all. I was completely in denial and felt devastated, angry, embarrassed, annoyed, sad and generally pi**ed off. It does feel really unfair and like life has dealt you a bad hand, but it doesn't have to be that way.

Even though it feels like what's happening to you is unique (and it is in a lot of ways), the truth is that billions of people around the world are either experiencing it as well, or they might do at some point in their lifetime.

My initial attitude was to bury it deep and avoid talking about it, but that didn't help me or anyone else. It has taken me a while, but now it is something I accept is part of me and probably will be for a long time, possibly the rest of my life. Thankfully, I have now made peace with that and decided to befriend my mental illness, which it turns out is like a weight off my shoulders.

The first thing that helped me was reading books that were about the author's experience of mental illness (try reading 'Reasons to Stay Alive' by Matt Haig, then thank me later). After this, I realised the power of sharing and started blogging about my own struggles. This led to more open and honest conversations with friends and family that were full of positivity.

I also figured out that the more I can learn from and understand my condition, then ultimately this is what will lead to me being in the driving seat instead of the passenger, rather than the other way around.

The internet is certainly a useful tool when it comes to gathering useful info and practical advice around mental health, but real life and in-person experiences are some of the most valuable as well in my experience. For example, I am part of a football group that includes other guys who have the same diagnosis as me (schizoaffective disorder).

This helps me in many ways, as I am able to not only tell them things that I find help me manage my condition, but I am also able to get help and emotional support from them if I am ever struggling. I would recommend seeking out this type of peer support in whatever way works for you, it could be a running group or it could be a book club, help is out there in many forms.

If you're someone who has a job or is studying, my opinion is that it is more beneficial to tell them about any mental ill health you're experiencing, rather than keeping to yourself. It is their obligation to help you work to the best of your ability, so by telling them what's going on, you give them the opportunity to suggest any adjustments or further support they can offer. I heard a really good example of this from a police officer recently, who told me that at the start of his regular 121 meeting with his manager, rather than asking "how's things", they share how they are feeling on a scale of 1 to 10. This means that after saying the number, there is more chance to explain the reason behind the number. For example "I am a 4 today because my pet dog is unwell and I am worried about her".



James is 31 years old and lives with his girlfriend in Watford, Hertfordshire. He works as Fundraising & Marketing Officer for Hertfordshire Mind Network, a local mental health charity.

James has written many blogs about his experience with mental illness and has also appeared on several podcasts to talk about the subject. He wants to use his lived experience to help others and is very passionate about raising awareness and ending stigma.

Writing is another thing that I believe allows you to feel in control and provides a lovely bit of therapy too. This can come in many forms such as a diary/journal, which is a healthy outlet that lets you articulate your feelings and make more sense of what's going on in your head. You can keep your writing private, or if you felt comfortable publicising it then maybe dabble in posting it online. I personally find this helpful because it has resulted in me connecting with helpful and nice new people, as well as getting great feedback which can justify your content, or you might learn new things or discover other perspectives!

Lastly, it is worth me mentioning that since I have had my mental illness experience, I have discovered that I am better off when I ask for help, rather than keeping things to myself. I know it can be hard to reach out, but personally I realised that not sharing what is going on inside your head will not lead to any improvements, things might stay the same or they could even become worse. In my opinion, the more people you share with, the more allies you are likely to gain. Your friends and family will show you love, empathy, understanding, compassion, and will generally do their best to make your situation better (like all good family and friends do). Just imagine if someone you are close to opened up to you about their mental health, wouldn't you want to do everything in your power to help them out?

So I am not saying that everyone with mental illness should embrace it and befriend it if they would rather not, or don't feel comfortable doing so. But in my experience, this attitude has made me the most happy and satisfied with myself. I think we all have the potential to use it as a strength rather than a weakness.

A Bad Day

by Connor X. Thompson



When the world caves down at your feet. The fog grows so thick you don't know if you'll ever make it out. It feels like your drowning, water filling up your lungs and pouring out your eyes, burning as it rolls down your skin. No matter how much you cry, no matter how hard you scream, nobody listens. You speak a language nobody else seems to be able to understand. No matter how hard you try, your fingers grasp at the edge of the cliff, begging to be able to pull yourself up, but your nails just scrap against the ground, and you fall even further down.

Giving up seems like the only option. The only way to escape. The only way to make it all end.

Your friends listen from the next room, hearing your cries and pleas for help. They worry about you. I know they do. They pull at the locked door to your mind, trying to break in, trying to use every single key you've ever given them, but somehow, none of them fit the lock anymore. You're too deafened by the sounds of your own cries to hear their attempts to let themselves in.

Your mind swirls with delusions of abandonment. Scratching at the walls of your brain and whispering harsh lies into your ears. Your friends no longer care. They've all given up on you. They're so tired of dealing with your dramatic wails. You're lost and alone, and the light at the end of the tunnel flickers, until the power dies out completely and you realise it was never an exit at all, just a mirage of false hope.

Falling into bad habits, self-destructive hobbies to punish your mind for the pain it's caused you. Medications don't help anymore. The cycle continues, mind drowning in thoughts of worthlessness, worsening as the condition of your bedroom deteriorates but there's no energy left in your exhausted body to clean any more. Your family yells at you from the next room to tidy things up. Your room is an embarrassment to them. What if others were to see the state you're in?

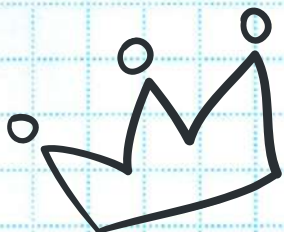
You start slowly, picking up the shattered pieces of your mind and gluing them together with whatever you can find. You realise quickly that it wasn't just a bad day. It was a bad week. A bad month. A bad year. You've lost more than you feel you could ever save, but you keep pushing forward and fighting until the light slowly fills the room. You fight until your loved ones find the right key, the right combination, and come bursting through the door to hold you in their arms.

You fight so you can live once more.



THE FRAME
.....
POETRY
.....
SUBMISSIONS





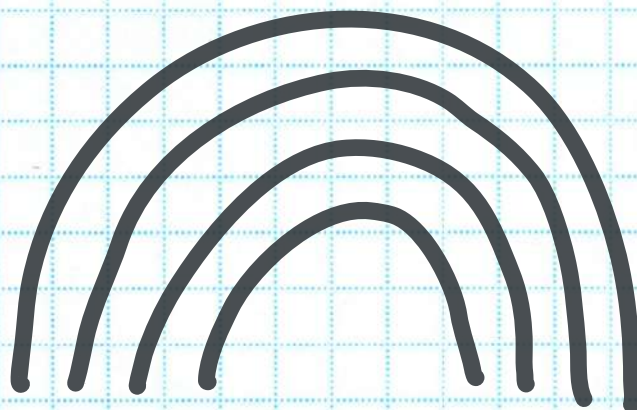
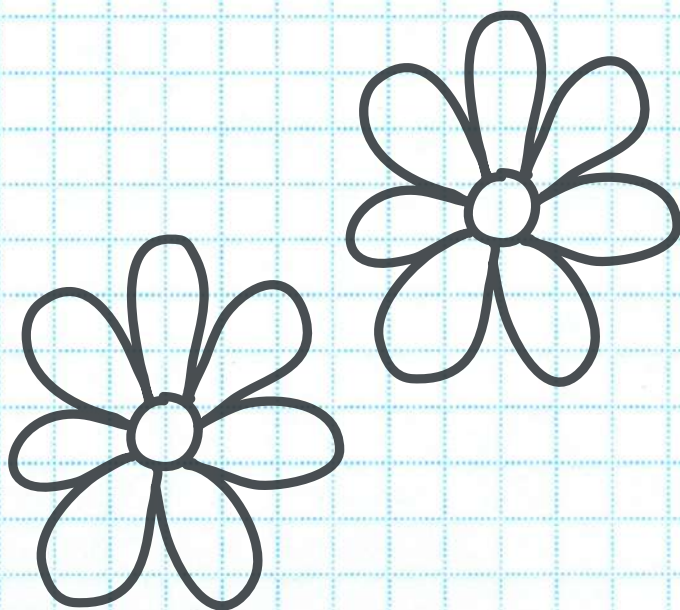
Slow Doom

roguish notions that have betrayed the road
doom shall never be perished, never be slowed
a revered eidolon
leaving little to thaw upon
a brain that gnaws and gnaws, always foregone

brainless wit
disembodied gleam
thinking on all the people lost
distracted in sunbeams
a fine dust that settles in the roots
something lifeless is growing
shrinking as the sun shoots

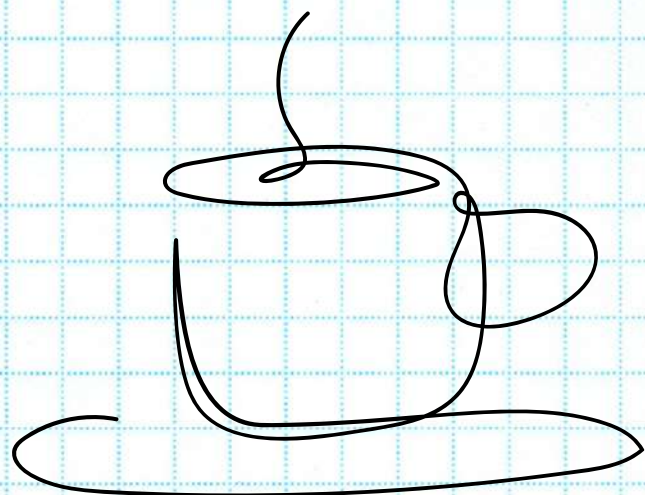
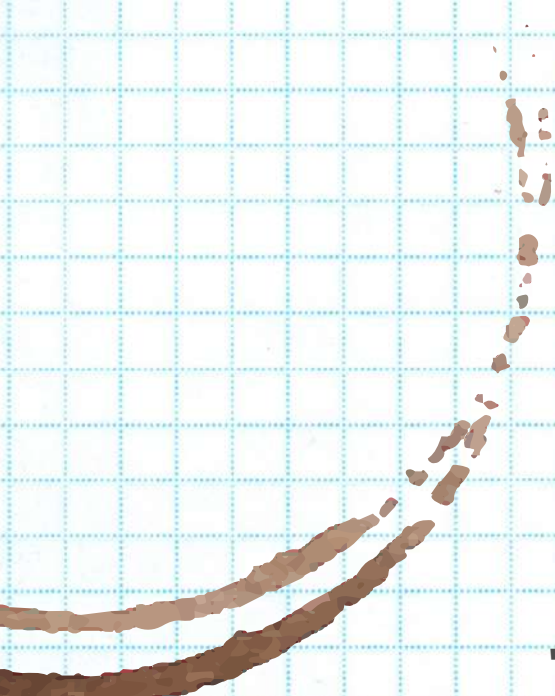
all of the clouds bundle
into a storm that now
breathes air into
some years of grief and dismay
tackling shore-fronts
with shamed feelings put to bay

with time slowed
hope torpedoed
life and light all truncated
i am trying to see into a hollow hole
trying to bypass years of preparation
to reach into a punctured paradise
lines around the edges ruptured
nothing left in dreams to slumber



by Connor Galliard

Connor is a 21-year old studying creative writing



'The Black Dog of Depression'

Their minds are on a tightrope, a balancing act for life,
many teeter on the brink, constantly battling against strife.

The 'Black Dog' a companion, gnawing at their mind,
growling, barking, baring teeth, so desperate to unbind.

In silence they suffer, stigmatised, fighting all alone,
depressing clouds hovering, journeys into the unknown.

He's an equal opportunity mongrel, devoid of any feeling,
hi-jacking minds, of any class, to him life has no meaning.
Hopelessness, guilt, emptiness, are traits of the 'Black Dog'

emptying minds of normality, a shrouding negative fog,
Isolation, loss of appetite, self-medication sometimes rife,

a 'Black Dog' to unleash, in an effort for a normal life.

We must all understand, this 'Black Dog' of depression
it's an illness not a weakness, a miserable life obsession.

Always on the prowl, indiscriminately ruining lives,

a 'Black Dog' is compassionless and will never forgive.

by Arthur Cole

Seeing that it's world mental health day, there will be men/women,
service personnel, and many others, who are suffering with
depression, P.T.S.D, mental illness, and loneliness. I would like you all
to spare a thought for these over the next week. I penned this
poem to show their plight'

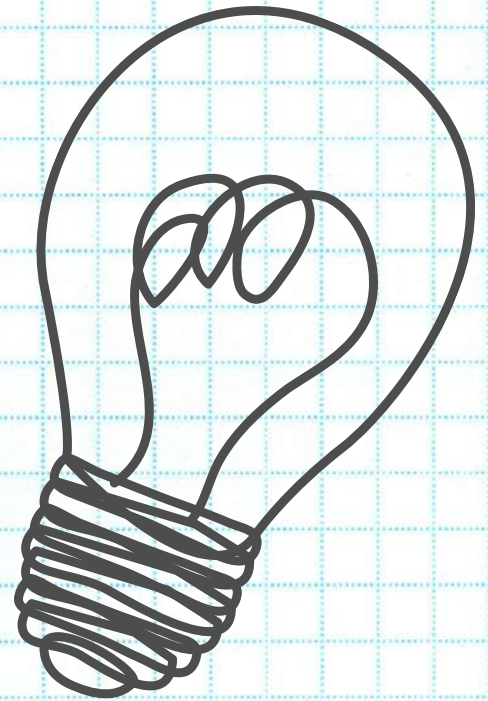
Underachiever

Underachiever, dare to weep
The goals of old are dead and cold
The future looks too bleak.
And the fear at night is all that holds you tight.
For behind your eyes are things to which you'll never speak.
Stoicism is your religion now, stone-faced in its creed.
The chains of failures past hold you back. The only failure left to scream.
Of all the things you wish you'd done
Of all the things you'll never be.

So you eat your daily bread.
There's an indent in your seat.
A pile of books yet left unread
In one drawer a broken man's dreams.

But I say to you you'll rise again.
Dare once more to be
To rage and rage at life's cruel play
To weep at its beauty.

Life is not over yet, the road lies long before thee.
I tell you this underachiever
For underachiever you are me.



by David M. Giles

David is on Twitter @ErebusGreyMage

What would I miss

I would miss finding happiness with my wife.
I would miss getting married.
Something I never thought I would do.
I would miss being an uncle to two wonderful nephews.

I would miss my wife getting pregnant.
Even though we lost it early.
A very heart breaking moment.
I would miss being forty.

I would miss Tottenham Hotspur doing well.
A runner up place and third.
I would miss my dad retiring.
He worked tirelessly all his working life.

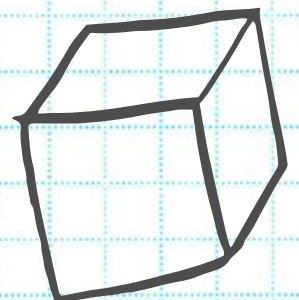
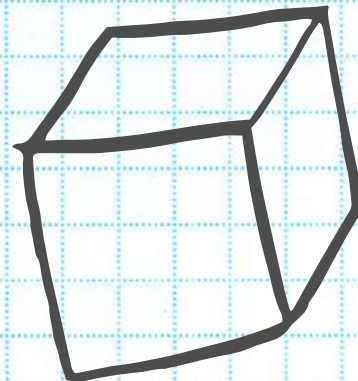
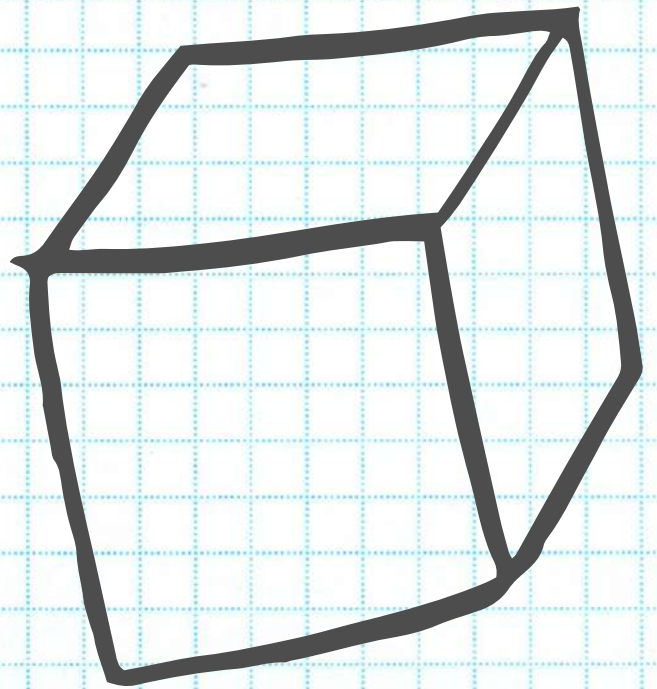
I would miss my new hobby.
Genealogy finding all about my ancestors.
I would miss making new friends.
I would miss doing DNA tests for genealogy.

I would miss my mother and fathers 70th birthdays.
I would miss connecting with god in a way.
I would miss the finale of White Hart Lane.
I would miss a great circus.

I would miss seeing the V festival.
I would miss seeing Madness live twice.
I would miss getting a tattoo.
I would miss seeing Spurs new stadium.

I do talk about spurs a lot in this poem.
I would miss going viral on TikTok.
I wouldn't miss Covid.
What a torrid time.

Most of all I would miss family and friends.
And break their hearts.
If I had taken my life that day.
Life is hard but surviving is the greatest battle.



by Vic Grimes

David is on TikTok @vitostefanojr

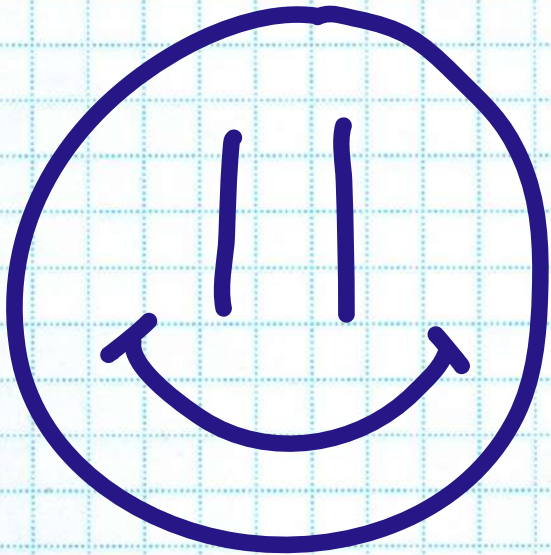
by Sharin Ali

Sharin F. Ali is a biracial poet and multimedia artist. Born to an Indo-Filipino father and European-Canadian mother, her unique upbringing heavily influences her work. She currently resides in Surrey, B.C.

Sharin is on Instagram @sharinwrites

Medication

This medication makes my subconscious tell me stories while I sleep
every night
I lay abandoned and bruised
like the sun before it rises
left to lick its wounds
in the promise it needs to bring the morning
I lay in bed mourning all the relationships lost
and I don't know whose fault it is anymore
but I regret not saying 'I love you'
even though
I know it means nothing.



I love you
rolls off my tongue
and down the sides of this house
and into the gutter
where I lay waiting...

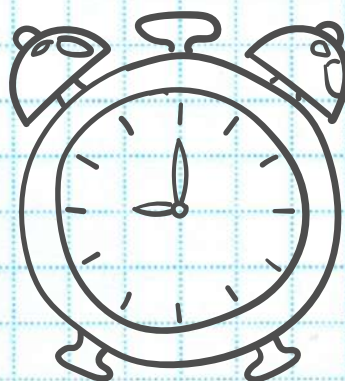
for when I will wake up
and shake this sadness from my head instead
i think about sticking my head through the wall
in hopes of seeing the other side
and re-balance the chemicals in my brain again.

Maybe I can be normal again
and try to have a life like you
and everyone else.

To be a little late, always

There's no known end to procrastinating, and the unrestrained imagination,
Travelling far flung
Out of wooden doorway frames, trapping the winds,
The scented jasmine rinsed skin of the cooling zephyr
Of a mildly molten day.
Trying to capture the light, the fleece of levity in corners of dusk – yellowed and
grey.
As the saying is – you can never say, you will winnow tomorrow, *
But how can the heart not leap into
Thinking – how it is like to be always, a little late.
To be grimly twisted and to awaken
To inferences afterwards, when the pain has stashed itself to the ground as
Suspended dust, and
Down the lane of life where the conclusion thrives
Like the plaque of rust on old wardrobes –
The realisation creaks as a sleek slow repentance.
Why is it yet so assuring to be slipping away as playing hookey,
To play the absentee, the one always arriving late.

*Chowdaiah of Ferrymen.



**THE
FRAME**

NEXT ISSUE

AVAILABLE 2ND JANUARY 2023

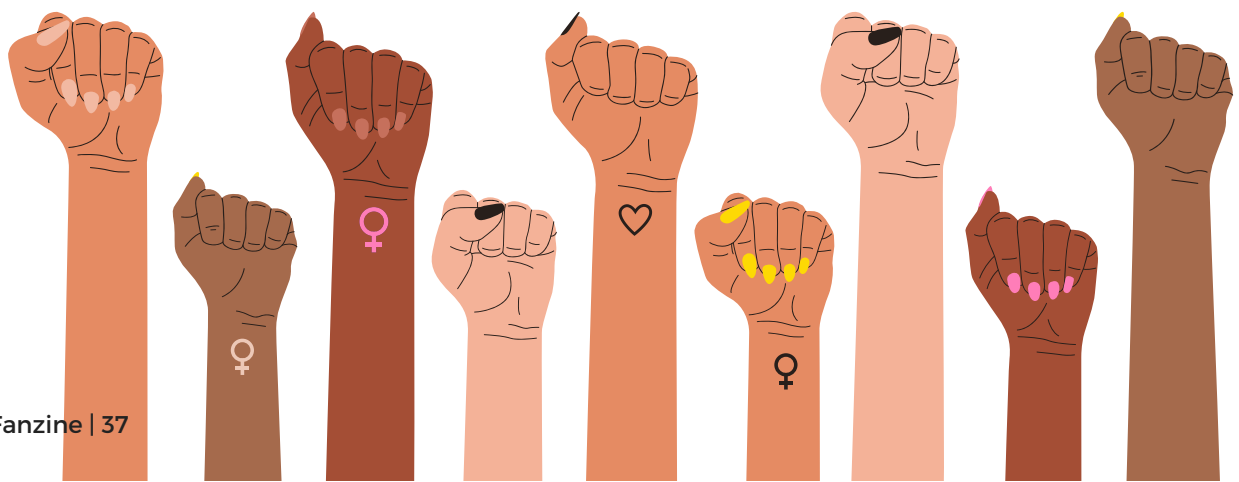
ALL ABOUT...

WOMEN AND MENTAL HEALTH

**GOT THOUGHTS YOU WANT TO
CONTRIBUTE? ARTICLES?**

POEMS? STORIES? ART?

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A

ADHD Counselling



ADHD Information, resources, and listings for ADHD-specialist counsellors and events.

www.adhdcounselling.uk

ADHD UK



ADHD UK was founded in 2020 with a mission to help those affected by ADHD – either those that have the condition or people close to them: family, friends, employers, and co-workers.

www.adhduk.co.uk

M

Anxiety UK



Charity providing support if you have been diagnosed with an anxiety condition.

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Mind



Charity offering information and advice to people with mental health problems and lobbies government and local authorities on their behalf.

www.mind.org.uk

N

Neurodiverse Counselling



Neurodiverse Information, resources, and listings for Neurodiverse-specialist counsellors and events.

www.neurodiversecounselling.co.uk

P

PTSD UK



PTSD UK is the only charity in the UK dedicated to raising awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder – no matter the trauma that caused it.

www.ptsduk.org

Note from the editor:

This page is ultimately designed to be a comprehensive worldwide list of mental health charities and services.

Unfortunately, time got the better of me here and I didn't manage to populate this page as much as I would have liked to. More will be added as the issues continue.

If you have any suggestions for additions, please email theframefanzine@post.com.

'Why (I Think) My Therapist Lied'

Cont. from pg. 9

As the course came to an end and my qualification was confirmed, I was left with the question about whether to voluntarily continue in therapy, and it wasn't a tough decision. In the spirit of our disconnect, much was discussed around the 'loss' of our relationship, about grief and about my experiences and growth during the time we had been working together. I never connected to the sadness. I was glad to be ending, and told her as much (with a little more conviction than I had intended, as I remember). As we approached our final minutes, she asked if there was any last thing I wanted to say before we parted.

"Yes," I replied "You did know who they were, didn't you?"

She smiled.

"I thought that might come up," she said, bearing her look down on me. She turned her head to the side, a curiously unsubtle action she did at least half a dozen times each session to glance at a clock that was clearly put in the wrong place.

"That's our time."

I was trained to consider my words and actions carefully and a crucial part of my work with clients is to help them out of black and white thinking to embrace the grey; the goodness in bad and the drawbacks of well-intentioned action. I will often reflect to clients who present two supposedly opposite sides of a disagreement or thought that both viewpoints can be true.

When I was doing that training, one of my tutors said "there are no prizes for the right answers in therapy" and it took a while for me to work out what I thought that meant – essentially, that facts in therapy take a back seat to timing and to adaptability; to empathy and presence and choosing exactly the right moment to make that carefully observed and hard-hitting observation. That you already need to be thinking on multiple levels with clients, and being an emotional archaeologist helps no one, least of all the person looking to you for help. The most important thing I can be is human.

My therapist successfully held her ground and helped me express my anger. But in her permanence she became inhuman, and as I continued my training, my intention to be exactly that with my clients only strengthened. Clients often come to therapy expecting answers and expertise, counsellors seemingly occupying similar spaces in their minds to doctors or other specialists who operate a symptom/medication model. But in this instance it wasn't her expertise I was seeking, it was her normalcy.

It has its necessary place in the world, but the most successful therapeutic work is done in partnership as equals and with an ability to bear fallibility, the underlying subtext of a parent/child relationship replaced by one which promotes adulthood. It is working through this process that can define the work and its success. A lot of therapists become therapists for a reason – "wounded healers" the same tutor once said – and the importance of being human in the room is perhaps best embodied by this parable:

"A guy's walking down the street when he falls in a hole. The walls are steep and he can't get out.

A doctor passes by and the guy shouts up, "Hey you. Can you help me out?" The doctor writes a prescription, throws it down in the hole and moves on.

Then a religious man comes along and the guy shouts up, "Father, I'm down in this hole can you help me out?" The man writes out a prayer, throws it down in the hole and moves on.

Some time passes. It's getting dark and cold and the guy is losing hope. Faintly in the distance, he hears a voice calling his name and he calls out, drawing the voice closer until someone he recognises is staring down into the hole below.

"Hey Joe!" the man calls out. "It's me, can you help me out?"

And the friend jumps in the hole.

Our guy says, "Are you stupid? What did you do that for? Now we're both stuck down here."

"Yeah," the friend says. "But I've been down here before, and I know the way out."

'The Daddy Issue'

Cont. from pg. 15

Whether there was an absent father or an emotionally detached “tough love” dad, it can impact the mental health of the child leading into adulthood. I can't imagine not feeling as though I cannot express myself because “man should never show feelings” (Lamar, 2022). I'm relieved that things are changing and more and more men feel safe and supported enough to express their emotions. We still have a long way to go.

I could go into the science of this but hope this at least triggered these thoughts in your mind like Kendrick did for me. Next time you hear “daddy issues” hopefully the stereotype of being associated with women is not the most prevalent.

Mental health issues, crime or just an ordinary person who becomes a great dad (or just a great person!) - the possibilities and outcomes are endless because everyone's situation is different and uniquely complicated. I still get questioned about why I bother with my dad but I don't think everyone realises that it's not an obligation - I care and I do it for myself. Or perhaps, it's my own “daddy issues”.

A woman with daddy (and mummy) issues.



Dr D. and Me.

Continued from pg. 20

She had a 'self'. If her mind was made up, nothing could be done. We children knew where we stood. She gave us a sense of security. It was a 'false' sense of security! Dr.D, my client now, was on to something.

Life had to be given form, nothing random. Was this the 'One Way' of the Third Reich, still controlling her psyche or was it her true self coming to the fore? Or was it just me, a teenager, trying to be deep? Go on, Dr.D, I'm here.

If everything were written down, it would be a novel, beyond therapy maybe bringing suppressed psychical material to the surface.

Dr.D and his siblings were kept down by their mother. He escaped to England, spoke English and gave up his mother-tongue, only for guilt and shame to emerge and haunt him.

Being a German felt like a curse, followed me around, tortured me, he said.

The English were friendly, fair, they never badmouthed Germans. That made me more ashamed of who I was.

It became unbearable. I nearly ran back to Germany. There was safety in that old herd. Nobody noticed you. He breathed, but I stayed.

Dr.D leant towards me, confidingly. 'I kicked the Past out of my precious present,' and, as if giving away a secret, he whispered.

Part 3

I've learnt something. 'It's not about getting the feeling out of the mind, or hiding it, but about experiencing it with acceptance.'

Dr.D was gone; the client was back. 'I am in Plato's Cave, but I don't know how to get out. That is what I am 'experiencing', and with 'acceptance', exactly as you say. But it hurts. I'm stuck. Shadows scare me. Are you leading me on, Carl Rogers?'

'You cannot escape from Plato's Cave,' I explained, 'because in this case, by accepting suffering Plato's Cave, you are unconsciously rejecting your freedom from it. You have to reject 'acceptance' in this instance. Think again!'

For a split second, Dr.D was back, even laughed. Had I read him wrongly?

Was that contempt?

How could he? I did my best to walk with him! Was he finding it funny?

Calling me Carl Rogers? He was not himself. Or was it me, unable to cope. My own Internal Supervisor put me back on dry land.

I bent over. He was drowning, fighting against 'Scylla and Charybdis'. That's how bad it was.

He then used this 'Scylla and Charybdis' metaphor when he tried to describe what had capsized his boat.

My Internal Supervisor brought me down to earth, reminded me he was taking anti-depressants.

Felt like quicksand, he was crying so much he couldn't breathe, sinking. I laid my hand on his shoulder, let him cry, seemed to help.

He had to go through his pain, acknowledge it for what it was, a living part of him, the 'subjective model of how things are' for him or rather his ego, not his true self. This was the moment Polonius entered the stage.

'This above all, to thine own self be true. And it must follow, as the night the day. Thou canst not then be false to any man?' 'Even to the man you are yourself.'

He'd stopped crying.

Was he clambering out of the quicksand all by himself? Yes. Step by step out of Plato's Cave, a place of fear, dark and certain. What a hotch-potch of classical references. I'd have used Disney if it would help.

We met a few times and it flowed. We entered a place of more life-oriented skills. Counselling was still there but more of an echo.

We had become explorers. Close allies, caring for each other, sharing what we discovered; the wilderness of life, nowhere to go, forwards, backwards, round and round in circles, no path to follow, small steps.

Part 4

One time Dr.D noticed the frame on my wall containing words so large they shouted. My God, he said.

'Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.' Don't take any notice, I said, let's carry on. No rest for the wicked. That's only Jung.

My client was back as Dr.D, talking about Jung and his words. That 'fate' bit is something. We shook hands like mountain climbers having reached the top.

The stage was empty. All counselled out.

We sat, all that listening, caring, attention, affection, appreciation and love seeming to have put the client back together – in new ways?

These were Rollo May's ideas, they came back. They had life. Maybe not for speech, I felt them.

That was the last time I saw that client. We could have carried on forever, as both of us knew Plato's Cave. We both had needed to step outside.

So now, the problem was with my car, or rather my brain, it was full of my client, I bumped it.

You know that shudder of adrenalin when you've had a narrow escape?

My means of escape was just the car door. I was free from the 'me' inside myself.

Dr.D was me. I was the client, I was the counsellor and I was the supervisor. I had put 'fate' to the test by looking at it.

Part 5

This is all about my mum's preserving jars, and life. She was a sensitive soul who fervently resisted decomposition of any perishable substances, which drove her to preserve all sorts of things in sealed Kilner jars, from rhubarb to plumbs, blackberries and tomatoes to cucumbers, beans, apples, and even sauerkraut in brine. The cellar was bursting with preserved food and we were never short of tasty desserts during the dark winter months.

Food that won't last, does well in a preserving jar, as we know. It may change a bit, but not much. We love the taste when it is ready to eat. What's more, its early death, the conversion to compost, is delayed for months. Wouldn't it be marvellous if we, us bipeds I mean, could do something similar? Take mum for example, with her heart problems when she was still alive. Just imagine, she could have lived much longer in a preserving jar, ending up with a slightly shrivelled look, that's true, but reaching an age not heard of before.

I often wondered what she saw in a cellar full of preserving jars bursting with berries and veggies cooped up in sealed bottles. What was she thinking? That life can be preserved in a Kilner jar by being placed on a dark shelf in the cellar? And the cupboard opened from time to time to sample a taste? I could

Part 6

Kick myself, never thought to ask her. Then it was too late. There must have been more to it than simply feeding the family with tasty desserts until Easter. She got me going. Typical of her, she was such a strong personality. Even from six foot under, she held power over me. 'Do things change more slowly when we bottle them in Kilner jars and place them in a dark cupboard to be enjoyed later? Or, to take it a step further, can we halt change altogether in a Kilner jar?' I could hear her voice all the time, echoing around my head, always firing the same questions at the mystery of life. Or was it me, to save my soul? 'Life is a mystery!' I shouted to myself, hoping it would stop me going round the bend.

It was me! Had to be! Busying my brain till it hurt, because the day was longer than I could bear, not to save my soul, to be honest. Anyway, mum was dead, and I didn't believe in any sort of triggers, wordy ones above all and from other people, especially dead ones. I did believe in the power of Kilner jars though, if only to show how fond I was of mum. Living deep in me, in her second home, so to speak, she was a constant reminder of those hallowed Kilner seasons.

Now I'm lost. Where was I? What did I just say? Maybe it's time for you to go and see a counsellor, Dr. Dryer, I heard a voice. Mine of course, but so far away it sounded like someone else's. You may be right, I replied trying to stay cool, really should see one. You are not frightened of shrinks, are you, the far away voice teased. Why should I, am one myself, I shouted. Mind you, the other voice came back cheering, it hasn't exactly made you a 'fully functioning person', has it? Woof! Where did that come from?

The counsellor I went to see was a friendly older lady who listened with her whole self, not just with her ears, and she heard me, my God did she hear me! All of me, from head to foot and back again. It wasn't long before I felt like an old Steiff doll, full of mum's stuffing that had to be pulled out firmly but gently, to make sure the casing wouldn't collapse into an empty space. I hardly noticed the counsellor holding a paper handkerchief to my face, tussling with a stream of tears. And yet, there was nothing I could see, only emptiness. The maw of fate! MY fate?

Speak of trauma! It came in big clouds, and I mean big, big and black, making me blind all at once, and deaf, which I hadn't really deserved, considering the nice guy I am deep down. Even the counsellor found it unfair, that's how nice she was and I heard her singing, so sweetly it drove me mad. I didn't know.

Part 7

Where to put myself, that was the worst of all, just rolled around on the floor, with terrible stomach ache, then my stomach burst open and I gave birth to my mother, her shadow, dressed in a mantel of fog, dancing in bright moonlight, until I was dead.

Well, I did come back alive and kicking. Maybe it was more like blowing a fuse and erring around in the dark, bad enough of course, and it did take a long time before I got classified as a trauma-survivor in the world of counselling.

Fancy that! A trauma-survivor! The long and short of it is Missus Hubknecht was just the right counsellor for me. Her very presence brought understanding.

'Therapy brings to mind what we shouldn't preserve.' Not her words at all, but she nodded a warm smile when I said them out aloud, as if we could read each other's minds. Her words were road signs. I was the walker.

As the landscape opened up, the first thing I saw were mum's Kilner jars. From rhubarb to apples and sauerkraut, the whole lot! The sweetness of apples, the bitterness of sauerkraut, the tart and tangy rhubarb! Mum's feelings! My God! Yes! They were mum's feelings, feelings she had held back all her life, hidden inside her, in the cellar her psyche had become, full of Kilner jars preserving things, her feelings, emotions, dreams and thoughts, hopes and unresolved problems, that could only be kept in the dark. And she, poor mum, didn't have a clue what she was doing. Things just happened. Is that why your heart stood still, Mum, giving you pain and so many problems? Why didn't I know? Tears flowed down my face. A man shedding tears, not feeling ashamed, that was me. Missus Hubknecht valued my vulnerability, quietly, nobly.

With mum colonising much of my emotional world, I lived under the elusion she had all the problems. How stupid of me! The truth was my own psyche had become a Kilner jar too, a preserving glass bottle with my mother in it, and I had no idea how all that could have happened. From the moment I was born, every contact with mum fed my whole being, flashing subliminal messages into my unconscious. When I was a 'grown-up' person, my mama lived in every cell of my body. Head and heart were in her hands. MY head and heart!

'Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.' From then on, he became a Jungian, well not immediately, but his upside-down mental health began to shake.

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BOTTLED IT
ALL UP”

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