

### The house of peace

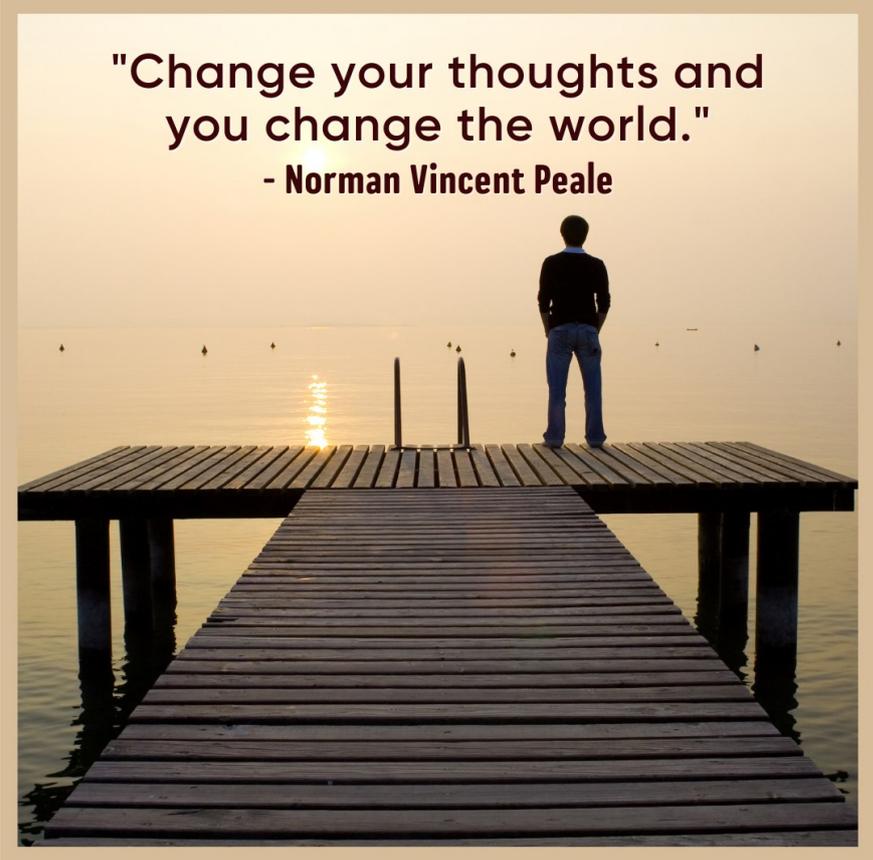
There was once a retired official named Zhang who was patriarch of an enormous family. Nine generations living together. There was utter harmony in the family, it was said there was never an argument. The men never competed, the women were never jealous, the children never snatched each others toys, even the dogs never took another one's bones.

News of this reached the Emperor and he went to see for himself. "Honoured elder," said the Emperor, "what is the secret to the peace in your home?"

Now, Zhang was elderly and weak and was speechless before the Emperor. He motioned for his great grand child to help him write a response to the Emperor.

At first, as the word began to appear, they saw the word for a "knife's edge" and everyone was startled. Then the old man added the word "heart" below that, and everyone then knew what he had written : forbear.

**Forbearance:** the quality of being patient and tolerant towards other people. Self-controlled.



"Change your thoughts and  
you change the world."

- Norman Vincent Peale

"You are always one decision  
away from a totally different Life."

*Boom Sumo*

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## Grow

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"Tomorrow, is the first blank page of the 365 page book. Write a good one."

"Everyone in my life is there to lift me up; and not to bring me down."

"It always seems impossible until it is done."

*Nelson Mandela*

"Wisely, and slow. They stumble that run fast."

*Shakespeare*

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## Spend 10 minutes gardening every day.

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Work off stress, improve your heart health, top up your immune system and give your mental health a boost by spending some time working in your garden every single day. Ten minutes gardening is enough to begin to reap the benefits. Chances are that once you've completed those 10 minutes, you'll find yourself happily staying in the garden for longer.

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## Time

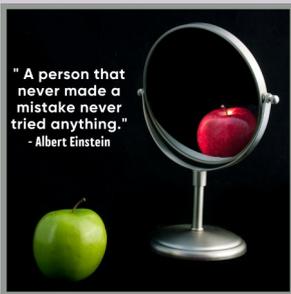
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We are governed by time. It dictates so much of our lives. From the time we get up to the time we go to bed, our decisions are made according to the clock on the wall. We are penalised when we become inattentive, the alarm slept through, the bus missed and we spend the day trying to catch up on the time we have lost. Most of us spend our lives behaving as though our time is limitless. It is only as we grow older that we realise time is indeed moving on. The grey hair in the mirror, the lined face reminds us that we are not as young as we thought we were.

Grow's meeting takes place once a week and lasts two hours. Sometimes we need the judgement of Solomon to decide how this time is properly spent. It is an issue that comes up regularly. A large meeting makes this management of time even harder. Should we move from one person to another in our "allotted" time, or do we allow extra time depending on the need of a particular Grower? Clearly we need to use our common sense and as we grow in confidence we understand what is the best decision. We must always remember it is not just our decision to make, but a joint one by the rest of the group.

However, we must also try our best to reach each person in the meeting in an authentic way. This is where quality can rival time and be victorious. A couple of words that bring comfort can stay with a Grower throughout the week. Time is indeed finite, but consolation in the darkness is eternal.

*Maria*



“People, even more than things, have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed and redeemed. Never throw out anyone.”

*Audrey Hepburn*



“Great people are those who make others feel that they, too, can become great.”

*Mark Twain*

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## Perfection

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Writing a piece for the Grow Newsletter, is a privilege. However, like all privileges it comes with responsibility. After a lifetime of living with mental illness, I understand the power of words. This is highlighted when these words are printed, and taking premium space in our Newsletter. Even so, one of the many important things I have learned through Grow is the tyranny of Perfection. A lack of confidence seems to be an integral part of bad mental health. It's the old chicken and egg question, which comes first? A lack of self belief contributing to mental illness, or mental illness exacerbating low self esteem. Regardless, they do appear to be intrinsically linked.

Under the 12 Stages of Decline, the third step reminds us that we compared ourselves too much with others. Indeed nothing good can ever come of it. Usually we see traits, strengths and abilities in abundance in our chosen subject of comparison. Sometimes, our comparison is to help us feel better and we minimise the other person so we can feel better about ourselves. Either way it is a futile task. It is like we are looking in the mirror and expecting someone else to be reflected in it.

Instead we need to remember Grow's reading on Personal Value. We do indeed have a unique part to play in this world that no-one else can fill. As we apply this to ourselves, we also apply it to everyone we meet. In this way we rid ourselves of the idea that we are in competition with anyone. We do not have to use anyone else as a template for the human being we should or need to be. We can be ordinary, and do what other ordinary people do. It is our willingness to be ordinary that opens the door to the beginning. Released from the pressure of perfection, we are free to express the uniqueness contained in all of us.

*Maria*

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## O&R and Leadership Meetings

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- O&R Friday 17th Dec at 7.00pm.
- Leadership Meetings every 2nd week, Wednesday 11.00am.

Check with Area Co-ordinator for further details .

"The two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why."

*Mark Twain*



"Keep your face always toward the sunshine—and shadows will fall behind."

*Walt Whitman*

"Time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life.."

*Steve Jobs*

## Every Dog Has His Day

I reckon everyone has a day in their life where they shined, excelled or won. Maybe they were a hero for a day. Even if it is a hero with a small "h". Maybe a perfect day. A treasured memory.

I had one such day when I was 14. I was not good socially, in sports or academically. No source of self esteem until this day, though this is still a humble enough story.

It was summer, 1984, my sister had business in Dun Laoghaire and I tagged along with my cheap fishing rod to fish from the pier. I did not have much time as my sister's errand would take less than an hour.

I had no bait, so before going on the pier I searched the tidal rocks for bait. I managed to get a few periwinkles and used their meat for bait.

I walked down the pier past other fishermen (who had all the right tackle and bait) and found a free spot. My reel was broken, so I could not cast my line and tackle any distance. However I had read in a book that fishing along the wall of a pier can be good, as there is food and shelter along the wall. So I just dropped the line down and waited. Very soon there were little taps on the line. I struck, hoping to set the hook. But nothing. I reeled in, and there was a small crab grasping on to the bait. So I put him on the hook, using him as bait! I dropped him down into the weedy depths. Again I did not wait long. This time there were strong jerks on the line and rod tip. I struck hard and set the hook. The fish was on and it felt big!

It took a while to fight him in. All the commotion attracted a number of the other fishermen. Eventually I got the fish to the pier. It was a flounder which usually do not grow very big. But this one was a monster, a little over two and a half pounds. These older men were impressed. They helped me land the fish. It was a beauty. Then they asked me what bait I was using. I said crab. I mentioned that it is good to fish along the pier wall, like I was an expert. It was a wonder to see all these older men who had been casting far with expensive tackle and now dropping their lines down along the pier. At this stage my sister came back and I had to leave.

But that evening was magic, like a dream. My mother cooked the fish and there was enough to feed the whole family. Even though I was just sitting at my usual spot at the kitchen table, I felt I was sitting in the place of honor! And I floated in my seat. It was good to see everyone eating their fill.

*Jonathan*

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Grow

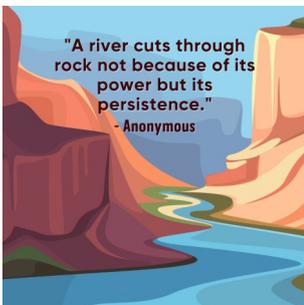
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"Happiness is not readymade. It comes from your actions."

*The Dalai Lama*

"If you look at what you have in life, you will always have more. If you look at what you don't have in life you'll never have enough."

*Oprah Winfrey*



"We are what we repletely do. Therefore excellence is not an act but a habit."

*Aristotle*

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## Poetry John O' Donohue

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This is the time to be slow,  
Lie low to the wall  
Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let  
The wire brush of doubt  
Scrape from your heart  
All sense of yourself  
And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,  
Time will come good;  
And you will find your feet  
Again on fresh pastures of promise,  
Where the air will be kind  
And blushed with beginning.

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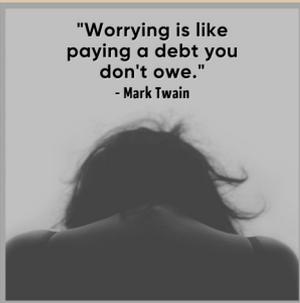
## Growers Art-Jonathan

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"Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently."

*Henry Ford*



"Rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life."

*J.K.Rowling*

"It is hard if I have to.  
It's easy, if I want to."

*Anon*

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## The Donkey in the pit. A parable on pain and gain

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I once asked an elderly wise person whom I used to approach for advice, "Where do you get such good judgment from?" He answered, "Good judgment comes from bad experience." He related to me the following story, which had a profound effect on me.

One day, a donkey fell into a pit. The animal cried and whined for hours while his owner tried to figure out what to do. Finally, the farmer decided that since the animal was old, and the pit needed to be covered up anyway, he'd just bury the old donkey right there. He got a shovel and started filling in the pit. The donkey kept up its wailing, but then fell silent. After an hour of furious shoveling, the farmer paused to rest. To his amazement, he saw his old donkey jump out of the pit and trot away!

At first, when the donkey realized what was happening, he cried even more piteously. But then the wise animal hit on a plan. As each spadeful of dirt hit his back, the donkey would shake it off and take a step up on the growing mound of earth. Eventually, the mound grew high enough for him to jump out of the pit.

Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the pit well is to shake it off and take a step up. We can get out of the deepest pits by not stopping and never giving up. Just shake it off and take a step up.

Try it, it works!

*Yaakov Lieder*

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## Filming a Grow Meeting

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Early morning on Nov 17th in the Limerick office Grow recorded a Grow meeting to be posted on the Grow website. This will give an idea of how a Grow meeting works and feels. Eight Growers took the roles of Area Coordinator, Organizer, Recorder, Leader, new comer and a Grower returning after a break. Progress reports were shared, problems brought up. Quickly the group bonded, and cameras forgotten. Soon the meeting came natural and spontaneous. Thanks to all Growers that participated. We look forward to the final piece to be posted online.

"Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick, don't lose faith."

*Steve Jobs*

"Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion."

*Mohammad Ali*

"Why settle for all or nothing."

When you can have all and nothing."

*Tao*

"I like flaws. I think they make things interesting."

*Sarah Dessen*

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## Eastern Regional Team News

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- New posters and leaflets available from AC. We encourage Growers to place them around their area. To pass the message to others in need.
- Many face to face meetings resumed. We will keep people updated with any change in covid protocol.
- Unfortunately the Christmas dinner in Wynns Hotel was cancelled due to covid risk.
- We encourage Growers who have not yet used Zoom to not to be afraid of technology or to ask for help. You will quickly get the hang of it. The benefits are great and keeps us connected in these uncertain times.
- John, Clare, and Assumpta had a very successful "end of year 12th step" for the Eastern and Midlands regions on the 29th Nov. Memory photos sent in and shared, there was song requests and sing along.
- CEP's a great success. Thanks Niamh for all your work getting Grow's message out there.
- Hopefully we can spread this newsletter to all regions in the coming year.
- We would like to take this opportunity to wish all Growers and their families a very happy and peaceful Christmas and the best in life, love and happiness in the new year.

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## Group News

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Some groups are being run on Zoom for the foreseeable future due to Covid 19. For links contact Area Coordinators. Some groups have reopened face to face.

- Monday, Arklow, Bridge Christian Community Centre—10.00am Face to Face
- Monday, Balbriggan Community Centre—2.00pm Face to Face
- Monday, Tallaght Village, Priory—7.00pm Face to Face
- Monday coffee morning, all welcome—11.00am Zoom
- Tuesday, Navan, Our Lady's Hospital—11.00am Face to Face
- Tuesday, online group—7.00pm Zoom
- Wednesday, Wicklow Town, De La Salle Pastoral Centre—2.30pm Face to Face
- Wednesday, Blackrock—7.00pm Zoom
- Wednesday, Knocklyon, Iona Centre—7.00pm Face to Face
- Wednesday, Trim, Family Resource Centre—1.00pm Face to Face.
- Thursday, online group—7.00pm Zoom
- Thursday, North Dublin, North East—7.00pm Zoom
- Thursday, Ballyfermot, Parish Pastoral Centre, Kylemore Rd,—7.30 Face to Face
- Friday, online group—7.00pm Zoom
- Bray and Clane in recess.



## Exercise Your Mind

"There is no wealth but life."

*John Ruskin*

"Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations."

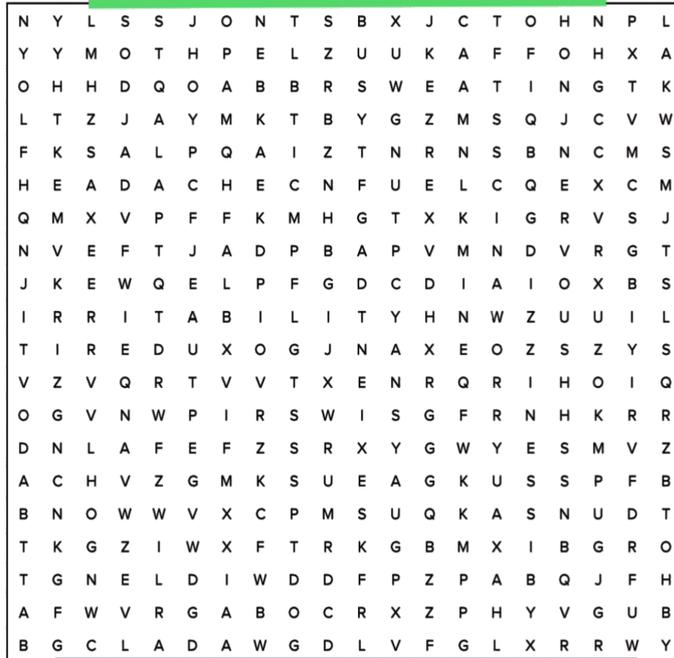
*Anon*

"An aim in life is the only fortune worth finding."

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

### CAN YOU FIND THESE SYMPTOMS OF STRESS?

Search up, down, forward, and diagonally to find the hidden words.



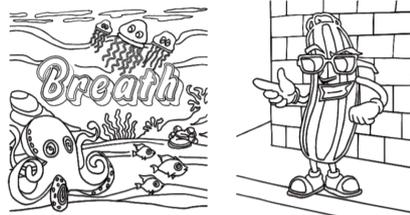
- |              |             |          |
|--------------|-------------|----------|
| ANGER        | DIZZINESS   | HEADACHE |
| IRRITABILITY | NERVOUS     | PAIN     |
| SHAKING      | STOMACHACHE | SWEATING |
| TENSION      | TIRED       | WORRY    |

### PICTURE RIDDLES ABOUT STRESS

Challenge yourself to identify the common phrases in these pictures.



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Answers next page



## Grow

"Change your thoughts and you change the world."

Norman Vincent Peale

"I am who I am today because of the choices I made yesterday."

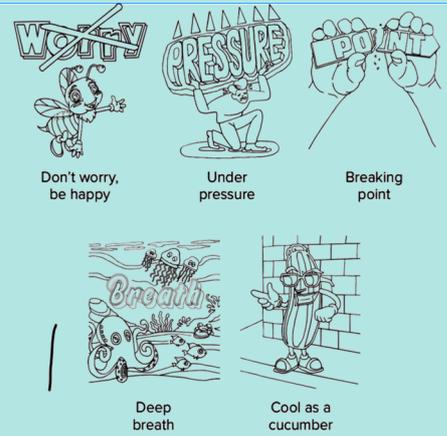
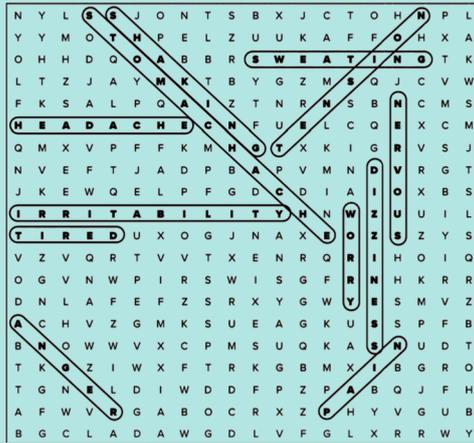
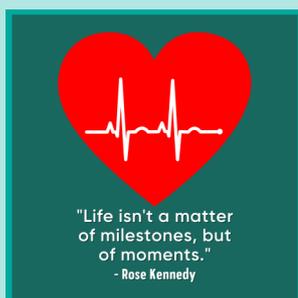
Eleanor Roosevelt

"Never regret anything in your life, it cannot be changed, undone or forgotten. So take it as a lesson learned and move on."

Anon

"Life is too short to wait."

Tom Van Nuenen



## Are you stressless or stressful or somewhere in between?

Let's have a brief look at stress with some Grow Wisdom added in.

**Story:** I was a child when I was savagely attacked by a huge Alsatian. I was on a message to bring home a "bottle" of milk. The dog was owned by the shopkeeper - a guard dog. The dog was out loose when I got to the shop. I blanked out to what happened next.

**Feelings:** Waves of mental fear, anxiety, and stress, still surface in my body from time to time. That attack happened more than sixty years ago! Thankfully those waves are mostly ripples now - although, with an occasional wave.

I was told

- a detective came and shot the dog on the spot with a single shot.
- the owner's protests didn't stop the dog being killed.
- the owner said, "the dog is entitled to his first bite"! BUT he had bitten before!

**Stressor:** So, there, you have it .... Dogs can be my stressor, even now. But especially if I meet a fierce looking one while I'm out walking alone, e.g., a Rottweiler. Growing up, there was usually a small dog at home, e.g., a terrier. When I got married, we had a Labrador, a Border Collie and then five dogs! I was always comfortable with them. Their wagging tails tell me they are my friends - my best friends. I love when they snuggle up beside me. They all played their part in helping me recover.

**What is stress?** Stress is our body's reaction to feeling threatened or feeling under pressure. Stress is very common. Good stress can help us achieve day to day activities, and meet the demands of home, work, and family life. Too much stress can affect our mood, our body, and our relationships - especially when we feel out of control. It can make us feel anxious and irritable and affect our self-esteem. Experiencing a lot of stress over a long period of time can also lead to a feeling of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion, often called burnout. I think we've all experienced stress and anxiety with Covid-19 which has been around for nearly two years now. We also have the extra financial pressure, this time of year - the media try to pressure us, to spend, spend, spend on what we don't always need for Christmas.

**What stresses you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signs of stress:** The first signs of being stressed are physical, such as tiredness, headaches, or an upset stomach. When we feel stressed, we can find it hard to sleep or eat well. Not eating nutritious food and lack of sleep can both affect our physical health. This can make us feel more stressed emotionally.

**Hormones:** When we feel anxious, our bodies release hormones called **cortisol** and **adrenaline**. These are the body's automatic way of getting the body ready to

"If life can remove someone you never dreamed of losing, it can replace them with someone you never dreamt of having."

*Rachel Wolchin*

"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

Ferris Bueller's day off

"The only people we think of as normal are those we don't know very well."

*Sigmund Freud*

respond to a threat. This is called the 'fight, flight or freeze' response. If you're often stressed, then you're most likely making a lot of these hormones. Catching them early can stop you feeling physically unwell and can protect your health in the longer term. Sometimes, the answer can be as simple as taking yourself out of a stressful situation.

**What helps?** There are measures we can take to limit our exposure to stress. Check out some tips that follow that can help. Add your own below\*\*\*.

- **Weekly Grow Meeting:** Remember our weekly Grow meeting and the twelfth step (e.g., a walk, a movie) are great supports. If you're finding it difficult to bring yourself to go, remember – "I can compel my muscles and limbs to act rightly inspite of my feelings" page 24 " The Grow Program Book".

- **Break up big tasks:** We do this at our weekly meeting. If a task seems overwhelming and hard to start, breaking it down into smaller parts helps. Commend yourself when you finish it. Example, tackle clutter, one drawer or one box at a time. Remember – "Give yourself a pat on the back for each little victory" page 32 "The Grow Program Book".

- **Plan:** When planning any upcoming stressful days or events, making a to-do list, a list of the things you need to bring, and checking out the journey or route you need to make on a map or bus timetable – can really help lower stress.

- **Be more active:** Meet up with members of your local group for a walk in the countryside or on the beach. Being active can help you to burn off nervous energy. It won't necessarily make your stress disappear, but it can make it less intense. A chat on the way and a cuppa afterwards can be a great tonic.

- **Make a Budget:** This is an important time of year to review our finances. If money is tight, making a budget of income and expenditure can help us keep within budget. Getting into debt can be stressful. I have learnt that loans are expensive.

\*\*\* **What do I find helps?** -----

How did you get on with the two puzzles.

I hope this short article on stress reminds you that you can have some control over stress.

Remember, that you have the support of your group, and you are not alone in coping with stress.

My hope for us all as we approach Christmas is that we all experience "the best in life, love and happiness" page 100 The Grow Program Book.

With my very best wishes, Stay Safe, George.

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## Glendalough 12 Step

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Eleven members of the Arklow and Wicklow Grow groups came together for a 12th Step on Saturday 13th November. We took full advantage of the beautiful Autumn day by taking a walk in the magical surroundings of Glendalough, singing as we walked and pausing to take photos, before heading to the hotel for a well-earned lunch! It was a joyful occasion, an opportunity to catch up and pull Christmas crackers with friends, admire the skill of the member who entertained us by playing the spoons, and enjoy food prepared by someone else! It was a bit early for Santy to make an appearance but we were blessed by the company of angel on our walk, captured by one of the members quick with her camera!



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## Marie's Testimony

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One morning I put the television on which would be very rare for me to do. An item on Grow was being discussed which caught my attention. I followed through and found a group in Ballyfermot which is where I am originally from and proud of it.

So, what happened to my mind? I was a person who embraced life, I was comfortable in my own company as I was with friends. Seven years ago I was made redundant from my work. It was a shock as there was no warning. It floored me but I tried to gain employment and was successful to get a six month contract with Dept. of Social Welfare. After that nothing. I knew my age was against me. My self worth hit the floor, what was I to do with myself? I could not sleep and loss my appetite hence loss of weight and no energy. I really felt my life was over. I sought medical help and was put on medication to restore my appetite and sleep as we all know lack of sleep is not good. I felt I was a different person the old Marie who embraced life and would always do a course in the Autumn months was gone.

But, like us all I had gone through a lot in my personal life. A marriage breakdown, the loss of my lovely home due to my Ex's irresponsibility was the worst. My two lovely boys were heart-broken as was I. I kept the youngest in the same school which was in a different area to where we lived. Which he cycled the seven miles there and back each day. My eldest had just started a two year course in college.

When I see programs on the television about the Famine years and the evictions believe me I knew what they felt. To be turfed out of your home is horrendous, the shame, you walk around with your head low as if you have committed an awful crime. But, I gained employment and my two boys have turned out well with good jobs. They are happy and kind and caring people. So I will give myself a pat on the back, but I wished they had easier years growing up because they had to become adults before their time.

I took the plunge and went to a Grow meeting in Ballyfermot as I knew I needed to learn that I was not the only one who was feeling the way I felt. It was the best thing I did and my only regret was that I did not know about it sooner. I was made so welcome and the reception was second to none. I have to mention Stan and Ethel especially, their years of wisdom with Grow is worthy of a degree in mental health.

With the help of my Grow family I have gone on a bus to town which was a real achievement for me as the Grow Program book says "Never say I can't if the thing in question is an ordinary and good thing". Do the ordinary thing you fear. The meetings have helped me so much. I am off all medication nearly two years now. I am feeling so much better but could not have reached it without my wonderful friends in Grow.

Another of my favorites is "Don't cultivate weeds". I try not to give them energy. I am still growing and I have set backs and when I do I think of what my fellow growers would say and their encouragement spurns me on.

Grow has the ability to reach people and I am so glad I reached out. Thank you Grow.