

The Black Nosed Buddha

On the consequences of jealousy and possessiveness

A nun who was searching for enlightenment made a wooden statue of Buddha and covered it with gold leaf. It was very pretty and she carried it with her wherever she went.

Years passed, and still carrying her Buddha, the nun settled down in a small country temple where there were many statues of Buddha each having it's own shrine.

The Nun burned incense before her golden Buddha each day, but not liking the idea of her perfume straying to the other statues, she devised a funnel through which the smoke would ascend to her statue only.

This blackened the nose of the golden statue and made it especially ugly.

A Zen Story

"The most miserable people are those who only care about themselves, understand only their own troubles and see only their own perspective."



**"We don't receive wisdom;
we must discover it
for ourselves
after a long journey that
no one can take for us
or spare us."**

**"Never mistake
knowledge for wisdom.
One helps you make a living;
the other helps you make a life."**

The first step toward getting somewhere is to decide you are not going to stay where you are.
- JP Morgan



"All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us."

"Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere."

Albert Einstein

Learn 10 new words every day

Think learning new words is just for kids? Think again. Improving your vocabulary as an adult can have some incredible benefits. In fact, research has found that boosting your word bank can improve your brain's processing speed, expand your ability to think abstractly and help you communicate and connect with others.

An easy way to learn new words is to use a dictionary. Every day turn to a random page and learn 10 new words from that page. When you've learned them underline them. To make this exercise fun enlist the help of a loved one to test you on the words and their meanings. You'll be more eloquent in no time.

Hope

To write about hope during these, it would seem hopeless times, feels almost a Sisyphean task. The normality we took for granted has become a distant memory. Almost a year under Covid and its restrictions, there is an undoubted sense of grief for the liberation we believed would always be there. Going to non-essential work, maskless, sitting next to our fellow passengers instead of an empty seat with a yellow sticker sounds like a utopian dream. Meeting a friend for coffee, going to the cinema, shopping for fun things instead of food, rendered impossible. Social distancing for a tactile person, me included, feels as though an unmeltable ice block has been constructed around us.

But here's the good part. For those of us who have lived with mental illness, we have endured our own pandemic- restricted by the blackness of depression, living within our own lockdown numerous times. We are professionals at freedom denied. More painful in fact, as we have to watch those around us enjoying a world we no longer feel a part of. Our experience has strengthened, not weakened us. We know bleak emptiness, but we also know nothing lasts, and the joy of returning to the world when depression lifts. We will exercise patience as we wait out the end of Covid, and rejoining the world as we knew it. Mental illness has taught us that resurgence is not just probable, but inevitable. Hope is immortal, out of sight sometimes, but never dead. Like Sisyphus we must continue to push the rock up the hill until we reach the top.

Maria

"You are worthy of the love, joy and support you try and give others."

Karen Salmansohn

"Remember why you started..."

Stay close to anything that makes you glad you are alive.

- Hafez

"Don't be so quick to believe what you hear because lies spread quicker than the truth."

Step 10- We took our responsible and caring place in society

When I was asked to write about Step 10, I knew it would not be easy. However, clearly this is a step concerned primarily with growth. At first it would seem we are being pressurized, the word "Responsibility", can activate the fear response in our minds and bodies. Our first instinct is to recoil, to run from the demand step 10 contains. The suffering of mental illness is overwhelming, during a crisis all of our energy, emotional and physical is expended on surviving. From the outset it would seem as though we are doing nothing. We are in fact engaged in the business of moving closer to recovery. The person who appears to be doing nothing is the most essential part of me. She is the one who makes Step 10 a challenge I welcome, rather than a threat I must escape.

With the support of my Grow group, I am invited to allow the suggestion that I do have Personal Value. By respecting and believing in me, I begin to feel that I too have gifts to share. The voice that said, "I am incompetent, inadequate", is replaced with one that reminds me that the only failure is in not trying.

Because of what I have learned in Grow and its peer support, Step 10 is not only possible but essential. We are indeed connecting links between persons, with one person's recovery helping the next person in the chain. In Grow, we believe that the easiest way to make a task impossible is to keep putting it off. I began this piece by saying that it would be hard, but it is in the beginning that we triumph. We give ourselves and others the encouragement that is needed to begin a task, and realise it was not as hard as we initially thought. Step 10 is an invitation to not only show up, but participate. In the participation is the discovery that we had something to contribute all along.

Maria



"It isn't where you come from. It's where you are going that counts."

Ella Fitzgerald

"It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters."

Epictetus

"Don't be afraid to change. You may lose **something** good but you may gain something better."

"At the end of the day what really matters is that your loved ones are well, you've done your best and that you're thankful for all you have."

Letting Go

In the film 'Frozen' Elsa learns to sing 'let it go' and lives happily ever after – a lot can happen in a 100 minute film! I choose not to be jealous of Elsa, but I probably had to go to 100 Grow meetings, just to discover how much baggage I needed to let go of. Perhaps the problem is that we watch the film 'Frozen' and believe that letting go is a one-off decision. Once we've made that decision all will be well.

In reality life is an ongoing process of accumulating and discarding baggage. We get over the upset of one soured friendship, when another friendship sours. Yet we need to find the courage to keep trying to connect with people. We overcome one physical health problem, enjoy a period of excellent health, then another ache or pain flares up. All the while we're getting older, so we need to let go of whatever youthful vigour we once had.

Perhaps most frustrating is that as we grow older, we keep discovering baggage from our childhood that we didn't even know existed. It's hard to let go of something we don't even know exists! Grow has taught me that letting go is a life-long process. It's not just a one off event – a song that only needs to be sung once and then everything is permanently fixed.

The Serenity Prayer is a useful guide. Letting go of the things I cannot change, enables me to focus on what I can. This requires wisdom. The good news is I need never be bored. Developing wisdom is a never ending journey. Even if I lived to a hundred I won't develop perfect wisdom. But that's okay – I've no wish to live a life that can fit into a 100 minute Disney film. There's nothing cartoonish about real life!

John





"I know that inner wisdom is more precious than wealth. The more you spend it the more you gain."

Oprah Winfrey



Grow Like a Blossoming Flower

The grow conference was like a blossoming flower,
 Resembling recovery with positivity and change with power.
 Check in then the AGM reflected hard work has been done,
 Opening ceremony and workshops as a shining light had just shone.
 Like in a valley of despair when deep down you feel you can't cope,
 A flower can bloom once there is soil as Patrick was selling his book called hope.
 Great testimony was a voice in poor mental health that you can break the chain,
 A flower will blossom again even through the storm of the cold, wind and rain.
 The meal and dance with birthday celebrations and a choir who sang a song the rose,
 With chat and sing song in the lobby and you'd sense the camaraderie as a river flows.
 A flower starts as a bud means you'll have to start again through strife and tribulations,
 We thank all involved for the grow conference and 49 years in Ireland celebrations.
 So remember when you're down in your deepest, darkest, loneliest hour,
 In grow you will grow and bloom again just like a blossoming flower.

Patrick Clifford

Eastern Regional Team News

- Trish has offered to take on the role of Treasurer of Eastern Regional team. Denis welcomed Trish and we are glad she is on board.
- Izabela has established a Polish group. The group is slow but positive. Izabela is looking for Polish speaking seasoned Growers to help with the new group.
- Volunteers received a leather bound Grow journal for all their hard work.
- Wayne continues to support the virtual walk. They are now passing through Nigeria. Well done.
- The Weekly Coffee Morning at 11am on Mondays has proved to be a great success. Thanks to John and Izabela.
- The film "The Jazz Singer" was shown on the Cinema Night by Zoom. Thanks to John and Izabela. Enjoyed by all.
- Izabela announced her good news to be a mother again. Congratulations. Rachel Farrell will take on the role of temporary replacement. We wish her well in her support role.
- The Board and Management of Grow are encouraging Growers to apply for positions in Grow as they become available and advertised on the Grow website and on the national newsletter.
- Speech Craft is a great success. Thanks to Denis and Jeannette.
- No news on face to face meetings. We will be kept updated through our area coordinators.
- The Storytelling night went well with over 40 people logging on.



"Just because a decision hurts, doesn't mean it is the wrong decision."

"The older I get, the more I realise I don't want to be around drama, conflict or stress. I want a cosy home, good food, and surrounded by happy people."

Face Masks

Face masks have become a way of life for the last year. They play an important part in preventing the spread of covid. We wear them in shops, on public transport and on busy streets. But they can cause some alienation. Especially for those living alone whose only human contact in every few days is to go to the shops.

We are hidden behind our masks, as others are hidden from us. It is hard to tell facial expressions. There is an absence of smiles. (though I have seen masks with smiles printed on them). We only see eyes and often we see fear in those eyes. People are afraid of the virus and of catching it from others. There is anxiety and everybody is in a hurry. People are moving away from each other. Glasses steaming up, if you wear glasses, compounds the isolation. We may even not recognise people we kinda know, hidden as they are. And when meeting people for the first time it is hard to know if you are making that connection just going by voice alone.

On the other hand, people that suffer from anxiety when out and about may find being hidden behind a mask reduces anxiety

and breathing through a mask is like breathing into a bag, it calms their anxiety and panic.

Now it is positive to go shopping. We get our necessities and we get out and about. Some fresh air and exercise.

What can we do to reduce our isolation and alienation? Most cashiers in shops and supermarkets are friendly enough. And as they are scanning our groceries we can engage in some kindly chat. It is probably wise to avoid talking about covid. But there are plenty of other topics, from the weather, the football match, the bird singing that morning etc. Also as we make our way to and from the shops we can say hello to passers by. You can tell who is up for a greeting, there is eye contact. You will find yourselves giving a nod of the head and exchanging a cheery hello. Another way to help with connection and communion is to keep in friendly contact with family, friends and fellow growers over the phone and by attending your weekly grow ZOOM meeting.

It is good to keep in mind that this too will pass.

Wayne

Whatever you tell
yourself today
will either
lift you up
or tear you down.

"Opportunities
don't happen; you
create them."



A Little Kindness

A long time ago I was in hospital, Tallaght Psychiatric Hospital. 10 months in, out 3, and back in 2 at this stage. I guess the nurses knew me. I was struggling. Swinging from depression to psychosis. One night the suicidal urge came on strong. I am an introvert, and it was like my introversion caved in on itself, collapsing like a black hole. I was in bed and it being around 11.30. I think. The ward was dark and quiet.

In my past experience when you look for help at night the nurses want you to go back to bed and not cause a disturbance. But I got out of bed and went to the Nurses station. I stood in the doorway and explained to the nurse John how I was. To my surprise he invited me in. I took a seat.

John offered me a cup of tea and put the kettle on. John was not rushing me. He struck up a conversation and quick enough we were talking about fishing. I got offered a biscuit. Another nurse I will call Kevin was working on some paperwork. However he too looked up often and joined in. The biscuit and the cuppa were nice. I felt calm and safe. I smiled and nearly laughed.

I enjoyed that simple talk and the cup of tea on that dark night. After 20 minutes, I guess, I said I felt better and returned to my bed. I quickly fell asleep. That night is a cherished memory.

Jon

Group News

Groups are being run on Zoom for the foreseeable future due to Covid 19 restrictions. For links contact Area Coordinators. For info on reopening of face to face meetings refer to the Grow website, www.grow.ie for further updates.

- Monday, Arklow—5.00pm
- Monday, Tallaght/Dunlavin—7.00pm
- Monday coffee morning, all welcome—11.00am
- Tuesday, new group 1—7.00pm
- Tuesday, Polish specking group—12.00pm. Contact Izabela 0868223680
- Tuesday, North Dublin—7.00pm
- Wednesday, Wicklow—2.30pm
- Wednesday, Blackrock—7.00pm
- Wednesday, Knocklyon—7.00pm
- Wednesday, North Dublin—12pm
- Thursday, Ballyfermot/Mt Argus/Aungier str—7.00pm
- Thursday, North Dublin—7.00pm
- Friday, new group 2—7.00pm
- Bray and Clane in recess.
- Wellness group. Open to all. Growers or not. Tuesday 2.30.
- National 12 Step on zoom, last Friday of each month.
- North Dublin. Last Monday of the Month 7.00pm Discuss the program
- North Dublin once monthly. Info meeting for new members

**"You don't have to
be great to start.
But you have to
start to be great."
- Zig Ziglar**

"If someone treats you badly, just remember that there is something wrong in them, not you. Normal people don't go around destroying other human beings."

**"Conflict is
inevitable but combat
is optional."**

Max Lucado

The Hero's Journey

The hero's journey is not an invention but an observation. It is a recognition of a beautiful design, a set of principles that govern the conduct of life and the world of storytelling the way physics and chemistry govern the physical world.

The hero or heroine is often seen as a great warrior. However the warrior is only one of the faces of the hero who, can also be pacifist, mother, pilgrim, fool, nurse, saviour, artist, saint and even those touched by mental illness.

At heart, despite it's infinite variety, the hero's story is always a journey. A heroine leaves her ordinary world to venture into a challenging, unfamiliar world. It may be an outward journey to an actual place, a labyrinth, a dark forest or a distant city. But there are many stories that take the heroine on an inward journey, one of the heart, spirit or tortured mind. As in any good story the heroine grows and changes, journeying from one set of being to the next: from despair to hope, weakness to strength, folly to wisdom, fear to love and immaturity to maturity. The protagonist of every story is the heroine of the journey even if the path leads only into her own mind or into the realm of relationships.

The journey may be larger than life or as humble as going to the shops for a litre of milk. Were we

gather our courage to cross the threshold of our safe house.

Then to negotiate our way pass the nosey neighbour and pass the gang of youths Give alms to the charity collector, don our mask, exchange kind words with the cashier and return with the prize to our partner who likes milk in their coffee. And feeling better for the journey.

In the beginning the ordinary world of the hero is often unhappy, meaningless, fearful or dark. Often the pain is so great the hero is finally motivated beyond the fear to seek healing and a better life. The journey begins.

A wise woman or old man is met, maybe a counsellor or priest. This mentor prepares the hero to face the unknown. The fear, the sadness, the shadow. However, ultimately the hero has to face the unknown alone. When the hero commits to the journey the adventure really begins. Life will present the hero with many tests, trials and ordeals. It is the only way to grow. Kindness, courage and wisdom are forged. It may be a long journey where dragons are slain or healed. You will meet helpful allies.

The journey twists and turns like a labyrinth. In the innermost cave you will meet your own ego. Your fear. Only you alone can go there. There will be highs and times when the hero hits rock

"Intelligence
without wisdom
brings destruction."

Erol Dzan



"Do not listen with
the intent to reply.
But with the intent
to understand."

Mix a little foolishness
with your prudence. It's
good to be silly at the
right moment.

- Horace

bottom. There will be black
moments and clinks of light.
There will be initiation and
eventually rebirth. From the little
self to the larger SELF where one
does not live for one's self alone.
The hero journeys through
darkness and delusion to truth.
The hero becomes a new being.

The heroine returns with a gift to
her community. Compassion,
gratitude and new wisdom. They
have a chance to give back.
They too can be a guide and

mentor. They are now the wise
woman.

We often don't start a hero. The
word hero is Greek from the root
that means "to protect and to
serve". A hero is a person who is
willing to sacrifice his own needs
on behalf of others. It is a state of
consciousness that with luck,
blessings, determination and
realisation we will grow into.

Jonathan

Out Beyond Ideas of Wrongdoing

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
There is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
The world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*
Doesn't make any sense.

Rumi

O&R and Leadership Meetings

- O&R Friday 9th April at 7.00pm. Please let your Area Coordinator know which representatives of your group will be in attendance.
- O&R Friday 11th June at 7.00pm.
- Leadership Meetings every 2nd week, Wednesday 11.00am.

"He who gets up in the morning is rewarded by God."

Polish Proverb

**Pain is the
doorway
to wisdom
and truth.**

- Keith Miller

**"Never let
your fear
decide
your future."**

"Middle age is when the best exercise is one of discretion."

"Patience is bitter but it's fruit is sweet."

Aristotle

Assertiveness

1. Assertiveness by its definition is a skill consisting of effective communication about one's wants, needs, positions and boundaries with others, while simultaneously respecting their thoughts, wishes and boundaries. Assertiveness is based on respect. The definition sounds very understandable and easy to follow. Is it really that easy to be assertive in life?

I see assertiveness as a two layered process built of expression and implementation. After the decision was made: YES!!! I want to be a more assertive person, next step needs to be taken. Talking about needs, wants, positions and boundaries could be embarrassing and extremely difficult for a person who is not used to it. So assertiveness is a process where we learn how to speak up, a process that could be truly rewarding. Every GROW meeting and report on progress or problem solving can be an opportunity for everybody to make one step towards becoming an assertive person. A person, who is able to express themselves. Practicing awareness during the report on progress/problem solving can also be helpful in getting the directions and balance right – e.g. be polite not rude while expressing emotions and firm not aggressive when expressing needs. When speaking about needs and wants that have been learnt – a person needs to learn how to execute certain behaviour from themselves and others. The implementation of that can be difficult however if we only speak about something and the action doesn't follow – assertiveness is not achieved. Taking small challenges as often as possible leads to changing in thinking, feeling, behaviour and improving relationships. Sometimes taking action is impossible immediately and takes time. My favourite example would be the one of Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison. He could not take actions to achieve his goals, but focused on them and prepared the background for many changes that followed worldwide. The message was simple: never give up!!!"

Anon

2. "In my life, I've often toggled between being a doormat and being too aggressive. I'd bottle up my feelings and wishes, and then suddenly burst out in anger and brutal honesty. I would be devastated as when I ended up unnecessarily destroying relationships and my own self-esteem.

It is hard learning how to say how I feel without including a bucketload of emotions and expectations loaded up with it, but when I do say what I mean without a) harshness or b) a demand for instant reciprocation, I find this simple, quiet action creates a very healing space, where dynamics can change for the better, and both people involved in the interaction end up happier.

"The best asset is a clean conscience."

Polish Proverb

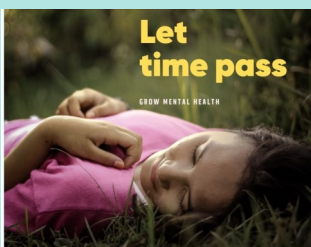
**"A loving heart
is the truest
wisdom."**

- Charles Dickens

**Storms
make
trees
take
deeper
roots.**

- Dolly Parton

"Who's talking the truth does not use a lot of words."



Assertiveness is a skill I'm still struggling to learn after all these years: I know it makes for a calmer mind and safer relationships, so I've committed myself to putting a more concentrated effort into learning how to use this valuable skill better on a daily basis.

Deara Lalita

3. Assertiveness is a learned communication skill. It is refreshing to witness it being used which unfortunately, is not everybody's talent. I have seen professionals on chat shows or live debates turn defensive or even aggressive in an effort to get their point across.

A friendly conversation can change quickly into an argument as raw nerves are touched and people fall into disagreement as the tempo rises in the exchange. Sometimes the shock of a perceived insult can result in a person becoming quiet, walking away in a huff. This behaviour can lead to confusion and perhaps loss of friendship. All reactions are a response which may or may not be helpful.

When a conversation doesn't lead to hostility it cannot be assumed that all participants are necessarily assertive. A 'yes' person can be frustrating by acting agreeable with their usual response '*I don't mind*'. This is passive and whilst someone may appear laid-back most of the time – they do have an opinion but are aiming to please – *to not rock the boat*. This leads to an imbalance, paving the way for a more dominant person to take control.

With so many different personalities it is important for all of us to strive towards assertiveness. Those with strong assertive skills are often people who negotiate and mediate between rival groups during war and division. State ambassadors, diplomats and even trade union reps., need to have this skill.

Teachers and politicians hopefully acquire this tactful approach. However, it is also extremely important in our everyday transactions, e.g., in family, in friendships and even at the supermarket checkout.

Bridget. Mt Argus

Share your Story

Grow Mental Health is currently compiling a book of recovery stories for publication. If you have been in Grow for a while and would like to help by telling your story please contact your Area Coordinator or email Mike at mikeahwatts@gmail.com or ring 0863352368 and you will be sent an information leaflet.

A Testimony by W

Hi my name is W. I was born in 1971, first child of 4. My mam and dad were only 17 & 18 when I was born. For the first 3 years we didn't have a place to call home, we lived with both sets of grandparents and an aunt in Dublin before we got a home. It was about half mile from my dad's parents in a small village in W. At that time my sister had come along so the family was taking shape apart from that my mam was over the moon getting her home and having her family in it. My younger brother arrived a year later and life for me was good as a child. We didn't have a whole lot but who did in 70's & 80's. My anxiety started in primary school. It was only in the last couple of years that my parents learned about the mental and physical abuse that one teacher did to us. We were told "we were useless" and beaten with canes and boxed on the back of our heads. We thought this was normal until we went to secondary school in a big town to see what normal school really was. By then I had given up on school and I was knocked down by a car, that didn't help either. I felt worthless. I was in a low class but I loved History.

That's where my grandad came in. After school I would walk up to his house to listen to all his history stories and nan fussing over me. Then dad told me grandad was dying of cancer and grandad wanted me to stay over. I was a good grandson and he was a great grandad so I guess he just wanted my company. Grandad died and nan never got over it, she just gave up. She got sick. She went into hospital but the cancer had gone to far, she died too. I had lost 2 very important people in my life. When my nan died I went into my first depression.

My mam was with me when the doctor suggested I be hospitalised but my mam said "NO". I was working with my mam at this stage. I worked there for 14 good years but my anxiety was getting worse and worse. I was at doctors and hospitals thinking my heart was coming out of my chest, sweating profusely and couldn't sit still. This continued for few more years. I met my partner who effectively became my wife. We had our first child and we then had our daughter and our last child was a boy. I then developed a drug problem. I suppose it was to hide everything but it only made matters worse. My relationship with my partner broke down and seeing my son at weekends that should've been enough for me to give up the drugs. I made my mam, dad and partner cry yet I was still doing drugs. I crashed my car and not even that was the wake up call. That happened one Saturday night. I had taken so much drugs, called to the drug dealer's house and he told me I had enough. It was then that a train hit me, for the first time in my life a drug dealer told me I had enough. I knew I hit the bottom so I started to help myself.

My partner took me back. It was the toughest thing to do to get off drugs believe me. At the time there was no mental health services in W. If you got sick you went into hospital. So I did a lot on my own. Then my head melted again. This time I had enough. I walked out to the pier in W. I cried for the mile walk from my house. I didn't want to die. I wanted the pain in my head to stop. I knew my family wanted me. I just couldn't stop the demons in my head but for whatever reason when I stood on the edge of the pier I couldn't let go. I can't swim and only thing that kept me there was it was going to take 5mins for me to die and I hated water so I turned around and carried on.

One day I had 37 panic attacks. A pilot scheme started in W a few months after my "Walk on the dark side". It was Mindfulness and CBT. I did them but my mind was still very negative. I was willing to try anything, so I did a course called inner child care. It went on for 3 years. It was the toughest thing I ever did. I went into a big depression this time. One night I took an overdose but I had time to think. I rang the ambulance. When I came out of hospital and went back to see my own doctor he said to me, "have you ever heard of GROW?"

I was willing to try anything so I rang the number and a lovely lady called Izabela answered the phone and told me that they were setting up a group in W. I went along thinking like all the groups that I had been to it will go on for few weeks and I be back to square one. I nearly had to be carried into my first meeting. I wasn't sure at first but by week 3 I liked it and stayed. After about 2 months Izabela asked would I be organizer for the group and I said yes. This was from a man who couldn't get out of the bed a couple of months earlier. Then after a year it was coming up to GROW's 50th anniversary in Ireland. There was a virtual walk from Sydney Australia where Grow mental health started to Limerick, Ireland. I put my name forward to lead the eastern region. It was a great success and I got to go to the Australian Embassy. Our eastern region walking group is still going on. Why GROW works for me is first it is a confidential, 12 step programme. The best people to help you with any issues are the very people who are with you in the room. With people who suffer just like you. I got help and hope from the day I walked into that room. And from the books I opened and the people I met. It was always Hope that Grow gave me and as Growers we give each other the hope for our task and to come back next week. Even if it is to get out of bed in the mornings. Thanks for reading