

The Black Door

There's a Middle Eastern story of a spy who had been captured and sentenced to death by a general of the Persian army. The general had fallen upon a strange and rather bizarre custom. He permitted the condemned person to make a choice. He could either face the firing squad or pass through the black door. As the moment of execution drew near, the general ordered the spy to be brought before him for a short, final interview, the primary purpose of which was to receive the answer of the doomed man to the question: "Which shall it be - the firing squad or the black door?" This was not an easy question, and the prisoner hesitated, but soon he made it known that he much preferred the firing squad. Not long thereafter, a volley of shots in the courtyard announced the grim sentence had been fulfilled.

The general, staring at his boots, turned to his aide and said, "You see how it is with men; they will always prefer the known way to the unknown. It is characteristic of people to be afraid of the undefined. And yet I gave him his choice." "What lies behind the black door?" asked the aide. "Freedom," replied the general, "and I've known only a few men brave enough to take it."



letting go

At some point, you just have to let go and move on. It might be the hardest thing in the world to do, but you have to summon all of the strength you possibly can to finally let go. Some people and things just aren't going to be meant for you, no matter how much you wish they were. Some jobs and situations just won't work out, no matter how much you hoped they would... But, know that it's okay for things to not work out. Nobody's life is a straight line that makes perfect sense. Everybody has twists and turns, and everyone has to turn around every now and then. So when you find yourself wishing and hoping things out of your control would change, summon all of your strength to let go and start heading in a new direction because it'll lead you closer to your true path.

- Nikki Banas

If I wait for
someone to
validate my
existence, it will
mean that I'm
shortcoming
myself

Zanele Muholi

A good traveller
has no fixed plans
and is not intent on
arriving.

Lao Tzu

It is imperative
that every human
being's freedom
and human rights
are respected all
over the world.

*Johanna
Siguroardottir*

The wise man is
one who, knows
what he does not
know.

Lao Tzu

Try 10 minutes of Bopping

Put on your favourite music, fire up a playlist of your favorite songs or turn on the radio for music and dance for ten minutes. Dancing is not only a fantastic method of cardio, studies have shown that is also fantastic at shifting low moods and encouraging feelings of joy. So turn up the music and get bopping.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

It's a phenomenon in common usage today. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association added PTSD to the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The key to understanding the scientific basis and clinical expression of PTSD is the concept of trauma.

In its initial DSM formulation, a traumatic event was conceptualised as a catastrophic stressor that was outside the range of human experience. PTSD is unique among psychiatric diagnosis because of the great importance placed on the traumatic stressor. One cannot make a PTSD diagnosis unless the patient has actually met the 'Stressor Criterion'. In other words the person has been exposed to an incident that is traumatic.

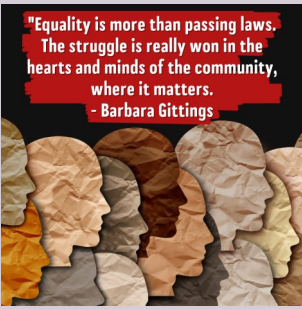
Clinical experience however, has shown that there are individual differences regarding the capacity to cope with catastrophic stressors. Such observations have prompted the recognition that trauma, like pain, is not an external phenomenon that can be completely objectified. Like pain, the traumatic experience is filtered through cognitive and emotional processes before it can be appraised as an extreme threat.

Because of these individual differences in the appraisal process, different people appear to have different trauma thresholds – some more protected from and some more vulnerable to PTSD.

For people who do develop post traumatic disorder, the traumatic event remains sometimes for a decade, sometimes for a lifetime. The flashbacks can become a dominating force that retains its power to evoke panic, terror, dread, grief or despair.

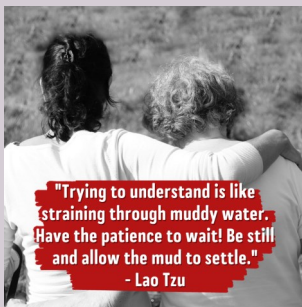
The most successful interventions are cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and medication. Excellent results have been obtained with CBT approaches such as Prolonged Exposure (PE), and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT).

Maria



To the mind that is still the whole universe surrenders.

Lao Tzu



I live by letting things happen.

Dogen

Gardening for the soul versus Chelsea flower show perfection

During lockdowns, in order to obey Covid rules, I met up with some fellow Growers outside: for a walk in the local park. Admiring it's beauty got us talking about the Chelsea Flower Show. We marvelled at how people willingly spend tons of money employing gardening experts to create some unnatural version of the Garden of Eden.

We mused on how, even if we had tons of time and money, we lack the expertise to re-create Eden. Should we just concrete over our gardens or learn to accept those resilient weeds?

Or could we learn the art of imperfect gardening – making step by step slow improvements. In gardening we learn that our efforts can blossom alongside (rather than instead of) weeds – just like our goodness can blossom alongside our dark side.

In striving for more flowers and fewer weeds we accept our money limits and that excess chemical spraying is not what the universe or local water supply needs.

As we journey through life we can learn and practice cultivating what is good in us. We strive to reign in our tendency towards rampant weediness. However our weeds/flaws will always be with us. The key is to acknowledge their existence. So as we build on what will grow/flower, the weeds become a smaller part of our soul garden.

Perhaps on the days we are drained from energy sapping depression it is wise to focus more on the flowers we cultivated, now feeding busy bees. Such gratitude will enable us to continue gardening our soul.

We may never develop the work ethic of busy bees – but we can give them some more flowers to feed on – everything is connected . . .

Peter, South East

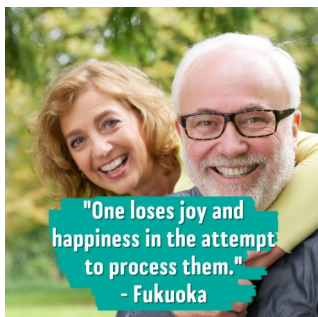
Organiser & Recorder and Leadership Meetings

- O&R Wednesday 14th Sept at 7.00 pm. Zoom.
- O&R Wednesday 26th Oct at 7.00 pm Zoom
- O&R Wednesday 7th Dec at 7.00 pm Zoom
- Leadership Meetings in recess for now,

Steps 5 by Peter, South East

And when they played they really played. And when they worked they really worked.

Dr Seuss



Be content with what you have, rejoice in the way things are. When you realise there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you.

Lao Tzu

Bring your whole self to the experience. Because the more we do that, the more that people get to see that, the more comfortable everybody's gonna be with it.

Bozoma Saint John

We tackled our weaknesses and failures.

Someone (Con Keogh?) once said that the path to humility is paved with humiliations. This idea really resonated with me after experiencing one particularly humiliating setback. I was beginning to slide into that toxic feeling of chronic self-pity when by accident I heard a famous person talking about their experience of dealing with setbacks. The person used all the 'right words' about the need to take personal responsibility, but their tone of voice suggested unresolved self-pity. Listening, I thought 'God, I hope I don't sound like that to my friends'. Then I remembered one friend's advice: 'Life isn't fair, but it is a mix of lucky and unlucky breaks. There's a danger that if we obsess over our bad luck, we won't even notice the good luck opportunities staring us in the face'.

It can be a struggle to take responsibility for my own mistakes, when a slippery voice in my mind will say 'it wasn't that bad, they're overreacting, who really cares?' Perhaps that slippery voice feels it's trying to protect my fragile self-image. But in reality the (often painful) truth will set us free. My wrong doings merely proves I'm human, but my ability to learn from past mistakes shows I'm capable of developing some moral back-bone. There are times when I am let down and hurt by others. At such times I need to remind myself that I have also hurt people and that truly happy people don't deliberately hurt others. Self-pity takes me into a dark hole where I end up hurting both myself and others. Letting go requires acknowledging painful feelings. It's certainly not easy. But is that any better way of getting back on the road to health and happiness?

Thank you John

Grow East region would like to wish John Farren Area Coordinator a fond farewell and best wishes in his retirement from Grow. John began as a 'Fieldworker' with Grow in the Midlands region back in 2007. Over the course of this time John was involved and indeed has been central to many services and initiatives rolled out by Grow in the Midlands and East regions. John ran many of the Grow groups in the Dublin area in recent years and has also been the key worker for the Arbour Hill Prison weekly Grow meeting. John will be staying on in various voluntary capacities with Grow and we extend our very best wishes to him and his family in his retirement.

When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everyone will respect you.

Lao Tzu

Wherever you are, it's the place you need to be.

Maxime Lagace

Rest and be kind, you don't have to prove anything.

Jack Kerouac



Active Listening

The subject of Active Listening came up in our Grow Meeting recently. What do we mean by Active Listening? It is probably easier to understand when we think of it's opposite. Lip service listening is when we 'appear' to be listening, but are in fact waiting for our turn to speak. We are rehearsing what we are going to talk about when we have the 'The Floor'. However, only when we are committed fully to hearing the other person can we truly say we are active listeners. It is then we can hear what our Grow friend is saying or maybe what they are not saying.

You can learn a lot about yourself at a Grow meeting. Real Communication is not about ego. It is not a competition to be the smartest person in the room, by giving the best response. It is about tailoring your response in the most beneficial way.

Active listening is about the communicator and needs total attention from the receiver. When we show our vulnerability in the meeting we need to know it is heard fully and respectfully. Nothing will silence a Grower as much as looking at a member who is clearly disinterested in what they are saying.

We are called in Grow to carry the Program not the person. It is only through concentration that we learn the most beneficial part of the Program for the speaker. Grow is a mutual support Group. In order for that mutuality to work we give freely of ourselves when we really listen. Our turn will come to speak, but until then we must be patient and compassionate. The comfort of knowing that we have been acknowledged is an integral part of our meeting.

The recorder sheet asks, 'Can you truly say our meeting was a meaningful, growthful, encounter of persons?' Unless we have given each person our full attention, we cannot honestly answer in the affirmative.

Maria

Submitting Material for the Newsletter

Please submit poems and articles as a Word document or Rich Text Format if possible and also send pictures to your Area Coordinator by **Oct the 31st** for the Winter newsletter. It's great to see such wisdom and creativity among Growers.

Visiting My Aunt

Wherever you are
be there totally.

Eckhart Tolle

Relax. Nothing is
missing.

Maxime Lagace

Relax. Nothing is
under control.

Adi Da

Everything that
happens to you is a
form of instruction if
you pay attention.

Robert Greene

Sometimes the
hardest part isn't
letting go but
rather learning to
start over.

Nicole Sobon

At 91 the trick is to avoid falling
I visit to offer help and company
How does one chat to a 91 year old?
Maybe the poetry book in the corner can
help . . .

Poetry, her eyes brighten with memories
of school
"Does the book have the poem . . .
. . . oh how does it start again?
. . . Oh yes, now I remember –
'The boy stood on the burning deck'."

I look at her quizzically
Wondering what the . . . is she on about
Yet she has an elephant's memory . . .

So I overcome my inner Luddite
And embrace the all-knowing Mr Google
In this hour of need He does not let me
down
Up pops an epic poem of self-sacrificing
valour
Or a Spike Milligan send up
Mr Google befuddles me with choices

I show the former to my aunt
Her face brightens with recognition
"Yes, that's it" she says
And reads a near forgotten cherished
memory.

Her emotion and excitement are
contagious.
And so I wonder
when I am 91
what is it
that will move
and excite
me?

Peter, South East

Thank you Tesco

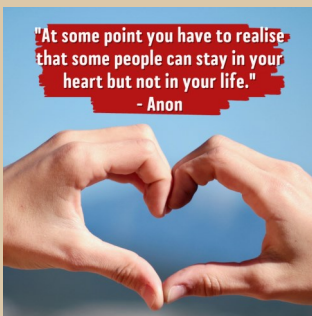
Wayne and Trish receiving a
generous cheque from Tesco in
Wicklow for €541.61 on August
Monday 15th, from their charity
fund. So important all Tesco
shoppers to put your blue chips
to your chosen charity.





Insanity: holding on to things you cannot change.
Let Go

Anon



Feel the feeling but don't become the emotion. Witness it. Allow it. Release it.

Crystal Andrus

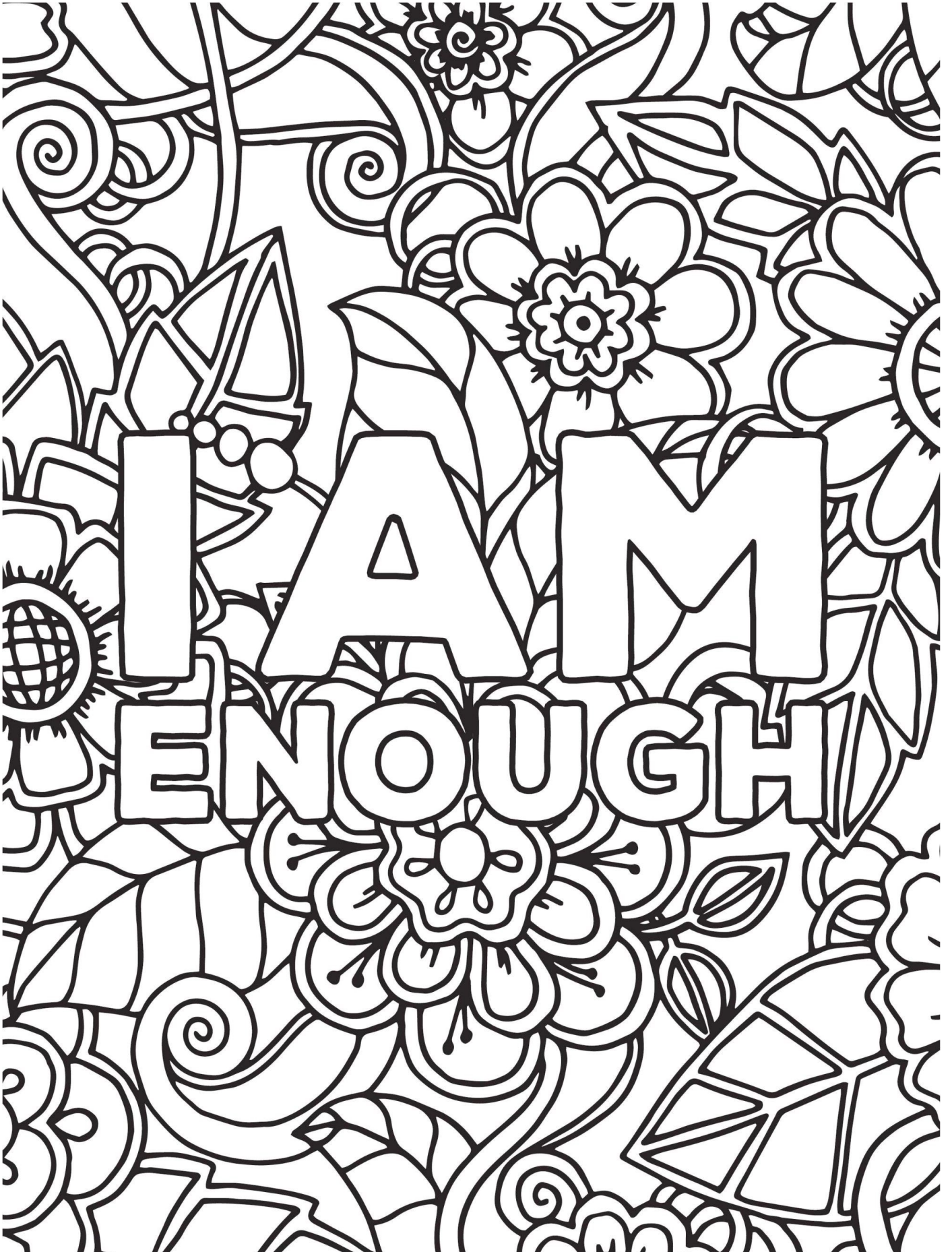
Eastern Regional Team News

- Talks going on in regards to introducing the Grow program to the Traveler community in Wicklow.
- It was decided to have group support for the Aungier Street and Bray groups. They would benefit from a seasoned group supporter. Both Jonathan and Lorraine have agreed to help these groups over the next few months.
- There was a general discussion on leaflets/posters etc. to Primary Care Centers/ GP's.
- It was discussed to encourage seasoned Grow members to help support other groups over and above their own Grow meeting. Out of pocket expenses would be paid by Grow. Growers can put their names forward to their AC or their Regional Team.

Group News

Some groups are being run on Zoom for the foreseeable future. For links contact Area Coordinators. Some groups have reopened in person.

- Monday, Arklow, Arus Lorcaín, Castlepark—10.00am in person
- Monday, - 7.00pm Zoom.
- Monday, Balbriggan Community Centre—2.00pm in person
- Monday, Tallaght Village, Dominican Priory—7.00pm in person
- Tuesday, Whitefriar Str, Carmelite Centre, 56 Aungier str, Dublin 2 - 6.30pm in person
- Tuesday, Raheny, Capuchin Friary, Grange— 7.00pm in person
- Tuesday, online group—7.00pm Zoom
- Tuesday, Newbridge, Parish Centre, Station Rd—7.30pm in person
- Wednesday, Wicklow Town, St. Patrick's Church Pastoral Centre—2.30pm in person
- Wednesday, Blackrock/Dun Laoghaire—7.00pm Zoom
- Wednesday, Knocklyon, Iona Centre—7.00pm in person
- Thursday, online group—7.00pm Zoom
- Thursday, Introduction to Grow, Family Resource Centre, Athy - 7.00pm in person
- Thursday, Ballyfermot, Parish Pastoral Centre, Kylemore Rd, -7.30 in person
- Friday, online group—7.00pm Zoom



If you dance and
be free and not
embarrassed, you
can rule the world.

Amy Poehler

**You don't have to
be pretty. You
don't owe
prettiness to
anyone. Prettiness
is not rent you pay
for occupying a
space marked
"female".**

Erin McKean

Women have
discovered that
they cannot rely on
men's chivalry to
give them justice.

Helen Keller

Kin and Kindness

Do you kin me, Wales.

I kin ye, Bonnie Bee.

To them love and understanding was the same thing. Granma said you couldn't love something you did not understand; nor could you love people, nor God, if you didn't understand the person or God. Grandpa and grandma had an understanding and so they had a love. Granma said the understanding run deeper as the years went on. They called it Kin. Grandpa said before his time "kinsfolk" meant any folks you had an understanding with, so it meant loved folks. But people got selfish and brought it down to mean just blood relatives; but that actually it was never meant to mean that.

Grandpa said when he was a little boy his Pa had a friend who oftentimes hung around their cabin. He said it was an old Cherokee called 'Coon Jack, and he was continually distempered and cantankerous. He couldn't figure out what his Pa saw in old 'Coon Jack. He said they went irregular to a little church house down in the hollow. One Saturday it was testifying time, when the folks would stand up, as they felt the lord called on them, and testify as to their sins and how much they loved the Lord. Grandpa said at this testifying time, Coon Jack stood up and said, "I hear tell they's some in here been talking about me behind my back. I want ye to know that I'm awares. I know what's the matter with ye; ye're jealous because the Deacon Board put me in charge of the key to the songbook box. Well, let me tell ye; any of ye don't like it, I got the difference right here in my pocket." Grandpa said shore enough, Coon Jack lifted his deer shirt and showed a pistol handle. He was stomping mad.

Grandpa said the church was full of hard men, including his Pa, who would soon as not shoot you if the weather changed, but nobody raised an eyebrow. He said his Pa stood up and said, "Coon Jack, every man here admires the way you have handled the Key to the songbook box. Best handling ever been done. If words has been mistook to cause you discomfort, I here and now state the sorrow of every man present". Coon Jack set down, total mollified and contented, as was everybody else.

On the way home, Grandpa asked his Pa why Coon Jack could get away with such talk, and Grandpa said he got to laughing about Coon Jack acting so important over the key to the songbook box. He said his Pa told him, "Son, don't laugh at Coon Jack. Ye see, when the Cherokee was forced to give up his home and go to the Nations, Coon Jack was young, and he hid out in these mountains, and fought to hold on. When the war 'tween the States come, he saw maybe he could fight that same guvmint and get back the lands and homes. He fought hard. Both times he lost. When the war ended, the politicians set in, trying to git what was left. Coon Jack fought and run and hid and fought some more. All he has got now is the key to the songbook box. And if Coon Jack seems cantankerous ... well, there ain't nothing left for Coon Jack to fight. He never knowed nothing else."

Grandpa said, he come might near crying fer Coon Jack. He said after that, it didn't matter what Coon Jack said, or did...he loved him, because he understood him. Such was Kin.

The Education of Little Tree

New to Leadership

I encourage women to step up. Don't wait for someone to ask you.

Reese Witherspoon

Women are leaders everywhere you look—from the CEO who runs a fortune 500 company to the housewife who raises her children and heads her household. Our country is built by strong women, and we will continue to break down walls and defy stereotypes

Nancy Pelosi

Before I came to Grow, I had no leadership experience at all. I was more of an Omega male rather than an Alpha male. I remember those first few months in Grow. I was nervous about leading a meeting. For me it was a Big Deal. Eventually I was asked. I can't remember much, but what I do remember was it went well, a lot better than I thought it would. I was surprised. I had tapped into a whole new area inside of me that I did not know even existed.

I also remember that I was not thanked or praised for leading the meeting that particular night. (Usually, the person that leads are thanked.) I suppose the seasoned Growers just forgot; it was an ordinary meeting for them. I didn't mind, I knew I did Ok. On the way home I walked with some of the way with two of the Growers from the meeting. I could not keep it in, I had to ask. How did I do? I got some praise and a couple of well dones. I knew I didn't do great, I did ok, but that was great for me! I walked the rest of the way home an inch or two taller. I had grown.

However, the big challenge for me was taking on the role of Organiser. It took the role of leadership further. Not just for one night but for a couple of years. I dodged the role for 7 years. Eventually it was my turn, so to speak. I was more nervous taking on this role. It was more responsibility. A few hours before each meeting I would start to get anxious. But each night I would cycle down, get the milk for the tea and some biscuits, and open up the room. The anxiety would lessen. And when my fellow Growers came, and the friendly chat began my nerves would calm. I would ask someone to lead. The meeting would get underway.

I found I could lead in a kindly and gentle way. Our group had always been strong when it came to meeting in the week for a social get together. I would give it some thought and would come up with a couple of ideas for the social, a film or Gallery etc. Sometimes the group would come up with their own ideas. Often the meeting could lead itself and only needed a nudge here and there.

Taking on the role of organiser was another feather in my cap. I am still not naturally a leader. I often let others take on that role. But I know I take on leadership if needed. It rounded me out as a person, I guess. It gave me satisfaction that I fulfilled my responsibilities as an organiser. I did my best. I did an ok job. That was great for me.

Jonathan

Ignore the glass ceiling and do your work. If you are focusing on the glass ceiling, focusing on what you don't have, focusing on limitations then you will be limited.

Ava Duvernay

Champions keep playing until they get it right..

Billie Jean King



Once I learned to like me more than others did, then I didn't have to worry about being the funniest or the most popular or the prettiest. I was the best me and I only ever try to be that.

Issa Rae

Is your lifestyle good for your mental health?

Question - How are you living your life? (That's the question I ask myself when I hear the word "lifestyle".)

I believe life is for living. I've learned, by trial and error, the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. When I take care and control of my body - Step 7 Grow Program - I am confident that I am on the right path.

Two words, **balance** and **moderation** help me check in with myself, now and again, on how I am living my life. I've learned that there are some key areas in my life that I need to keep an eye on to help keep me healthy. They include sleep, healthy eating, movement (exercise), relaxation, support, fun, a hobby. The list is not exhaustive nor in any particular order. But I believe when we are sleeping well the rest of our life falls into place.

What areas of your life do you live out that help keep you healthy and well? How are you taking care and control of your body? Make a note below, of some of those areas that actually help you -

It's good to make time for yourself and to check in with yourself occasionally. When I review my own lifestyle, I am mostly on track. However, I do become aware of some areas or habits that sometimes mightn't be the best for me, e.g., Staying up too late watching e.g., Netflix, then, staying in bed too long!

Routine is important for me. **Planning** is part of my routine. However, I can be **flexible** to choose what I am doing. I can easily change my plans which drives some of my more organised family members mad!

If you have a good friend or family member as a supporter they can help affirm what's going well with you or suggest some change for the better in other areas you mightn't be doing too well in. For example, are you-eating well? - making time to switch off?

Grow has helped me live a healthier lifestyle. So also, has WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Planning). When I began working and I needed to improve my social skills, I found a book, by Dale Carnegie in the library, called "*How to win friends and influence people*". It was first published in 1936 and has been revised since. I still find it useful.

I grew up in a family where alcohol was a problem. I found it hard to get in touch with my emotions. It felt like they were frozen. Imagine my delight when I saw a book called "*Fully HUMAN, fully ALIVE*" in 1976. **I wanted some of that!!** Marriage and children soon awakened my emotions.

Fast forward 25 years and I was bullied at work. I developed **PTSD** (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and **OCD** (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). I have faced many challenges. I like to believe my lifestyle has a spiritual dimension. In some of my most difficult times, I have felt there is someone looking after me. Yes, I've been challenged but somehow find hope to carry on. I can identify with the poem "Footprints in the Sand". My family and supporters "carried" me at times to whom I am grateful.

I wish you well on your journey. I hope this article helps you with your lifestyle.

I wish everyone the very best in life, love and happiness (Affirmation of good).

George

Finbarr's Testimony

While I have many happy childhood memories, as far back as I can remember I felt anxious and fearful, and I disliked myself because of it. I was very self-critical and felt an urgent need to be perfect. At school I was regarded as a swot and was not popular.

Much later, after my father died, my mother confided in me that, when she was pregnant with me, she would sit evening after evening, peering out the window, fretting anxiously, waiting for my Dad to come home from the pub. I should say, I don't have a single memory of ever having seen my father drunk, or of him getting angry because of drink.

For me, adolescence was an agony of anxiety and self-criticism. I sometimes worried that I would go mad. My father joined Alcoholics Anonymous when I was 17. He never took another drink until his death 11 years later. I used to devour his AA literature and found it consoling and full of hope.

In college, I struggled with anxiety and feelings of self-disgust and I was eventually hospitalised with a diagnosis of depression. After discharge, slowly and painfully I pulled myself together, finished my studies and, with my father's help, got a job. Gradually I developed confidence in my ability to do my job. 25 years later, during a period of intense stress, I was hospitalised again, with a diagnosis of depression as before.

After discharge from hospital, I joined Grow. I felt that the simple, practical tasks were exactly what I needed as I tended to over analyse everything. The first year was tough and medication definitely helped me. "Feelings are not facts" was my watchword and still is. I was able to accept Grow feedback because I knew Grow people were speaking from experience. I recall one moment of feedback that shifted my thinking in a more positive direction and allowed me to see that real recovery was happening. My feelings gradually settled down and I found myself spontaneously lively from time to time and then, eventually, most of the time. I still find the Grow practical tasks a great help. It is wonderful to be in the presence of people who once experienced mental anguish and are now obviously well, and living life to the full. Having opened the box of fear in therapy and learning to deal with it with Grow's help, these days I feel a great lightness deep down, although that journey was tough. I am gradually letting go of the need for perfection. If it is worth doing, it is worth doing badly at first. I am more aware of feelings as a kind of internal weather through whose changes I can live day by day. In fact, I had a short lived recurrence of intense symptoms in the middle of the covid lockdown. However, having now absorbed the wisdom of Grow, I recognised what was happening quickly and, with medical help, got back on track quickly. My life is mostly orderly, even if not always relaxed and serene. I find that the fellowship of Grow helps me to accept the downs and enjoy the ups of life.

Life has left me with some vulnerabilities but also gifts. I have been supported by many loving people along the way: friends, family, professionals and Grow. I don't look to the future with anxiety. Life now is better than it has ever been and I feel a deep conviction that the best is yet to come.