

# **The Visible Woman**

**A Collection of Blogs on  
Self-Help**

**By Irene Brankin**

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# Juggling the **STRESS** balls!

By Irene Brankin



I thought I'd talk about stress as it is so prevalent these days everywhere (and in my life too!). So how do you cope with the stress in your life?

I am sure that like most of us, you find that it is okay in the short-term and usually occurs when you are stepping out of your comfort zone. It can even be beneficial in that you are able to applaud yourself afterwards for how you coped with it ..... whatever it was.

## What is stress?

Quite simply, stress is a response by the body and mind to the pressure that can't be managed. It is a psychological and physiological/behavioural reaction that you suffer when you see a lack of balance between the demands placed upon you and your ability to meet these demands. This can bring on the flight or fear reaction.

# Put stressors into perspective

You can also put things into perspective by constructive self-talk:

I can manage  
I can cope  
Everything will be fine  
What's the worst thing that can happen?  
And so on

These will help to dispute your cognitive distortions, eg. 'I've not finished my tasks indoors or at work so I must be a useless person. Most of us find that we've added to our stress by blowing things up out of proportion. I am sure you will know what I am referring to here!!

Something else that can happen is when you have the feeling of wanting to deal with your stress, this determination can disappear when something else happens so you simply decide not to do anything about it at all!! It can be much easier to fret away, or tell all and sundry about the pressure you are under, can't it? You can be the centre of attention and your drama queen can come out!

"put things into perspective  
by constructive self-talk."

# Solutions

Here are some of my suggestions (love to hear your ones too) and these have enabled me to cope at times too –

- Take a breather by putting music on, singing, dancing, closing your eyes and breathe into yourself or get yourself outside in the fresh air.
- Any kind of exercise is good to get you out of your head and those lovely endorphins will come into play.
- Simply say out loud 'stop', take a deep breath and relax.
- Having a good cry or rant can take the pressure off enough to allow you to see the bigger picture.
- Choose a word to say over repeatedly for say 2-3 minutes twice a day e.g. 'one' and do that.
- Move your body by relaxing it from head to toe, close your eyes and ask for help.
- Write down what you see are all your stressors – people, events, work, situations, family.....
- See the reality of them as you may be 'making a mountain out of a molehill'.
- Practically see what you can cope with or resolve.
- Find out where you can get help for what's left.

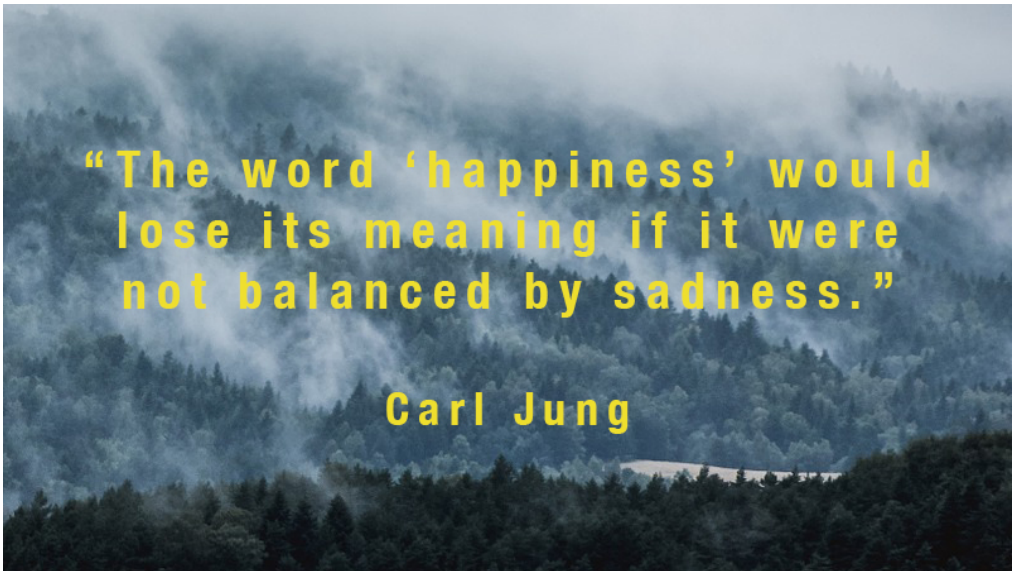
# Choice

The bottom line is stress management is about Choice – knowing and seeing you have a choice. It's also prevention. When you are so overwhelmed, you can forget about having a choice.

I wonder what you do in order to manage your juggling of the stress balls and I'd love to hear from you.

# Permission to be sad...

By Irene Brankin



“The word ‘happiness’ would  
lose its meaning if it were  
not balanced by sadness.”

Carl Jung

Do you know those times in the day or week or month or year when you become aware of a feeling(s) of **sadness** and you don't know what it's about or where it's come from? As it is part of the human condition, I am sure you have in some way or another. This feeling can be a fleeting moment or even a long spell of time.

What's it all about?

I don't know what it is for you and I know that I can spend ages racking my brain as to what it's all about. You see for me when I find out what's causing it, I can then say to myself ‘**Oh, that's why**’, but it doesn't always help – the **knowing** that is!!

I go through everything that could possibly be the reason –

I've been beating myself up  
I didn't do something or another  
I've been pretty horrible to someone  
Just seen or heard that someone has died or been injured  
I'm getting older, weigh too much, too many wrinkles  
Watching life's horror story unravelling on TV  
I'm tired  
I'm lonely  
I'm ill  
I miss the old excitement in my life  
Or

.....

You can add any of your own here as I could go on and on!!



And sometimes you can't find a reason. It is how it is – I am Sad. And it is fine to be Sad and I am giving you permission to allow yourself to be with your sadness.

## Being a Mirror

You see, sadness is rarely allowed in our world. I truly understand when family and friends (not just me) want to know why I am sad. They care about me. And sometimes it can be too much for them and they want me to be back to **'the me without the sadness'**. My sadness can tap into theirs – I am a mirror – and so I may choose to smile for their sake. I am sure you know what I am talking about.

I have seen it, not just with adults, but sometimes when children try to share their sadness, some can be told to **'not be silly'**, **'what have you to be sad about?'** or being repeatedly asked **'what is wrong with you'** and so on - even when they are being held in a loving, warm way (and, of course, many are not).

*"sadness is rarely allowed in our world"*

## Permission

I want you to give yourself permission to allow your sadness to be here (whenever it is around). I am allowing mine to have the space it needs. I am accepting and honouring that this is what I am feeling right now. **Who knows or cares what it is all about?** This is how it is and I am connecting with myself and what is happening inside. You see then I can allow it to be when I do this.

I want to add, of course, that I could have put any other title at the top of this blog – permission to have fun, be angry, laugh, cry, be scared..... – and the same could apply!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

# Out of sorts

By Irene Brankin

# Out of Sorts

Today, I am feeling 'out of sorts' so my blog is about that and tiredness as that is what is happening today.

What am I doing about it?

I have cancelled an appointment with my Acupuncturist and I am returning to my bed to rest and feel cosy and warm. I am taking time out!



## Tiredness

Here, I am talking about the tiredness that can come from a reason – late nights (good and bad); exercising; worrying; too much TV/computers; dealing with too many issues..... Some of you may know why you are tired and you'll be compassionate with yourself – even praise yourself for still going through the motions of using your energy appropriately.

I'm saying 'well done' to me right now that I've decided to cancel and go back to bed.

Some of you may find out that tiredness isn't always a boring place. It can be a signal that it's time to take care of yourself.

The taking time to rest (be) and time to do whatever is important, and choosing to leave anything else for when you are more able is what is important.

# Rut = a shallow grave

Now I want to bring in the fact that there is the tiredness that comes from not stretching yourself in any shape or form – no exercise – same numbing ruts (remember it means a shallow grave) – no excitement – no adventure – no fun and laughter – just the same plain, old boring routine.

Yes, your routine or ruts can become so boring that you want to scream or run away or shut yourself in a room and not come out. Or you over-eat or over-drink or any number of other things you know you do.

You can become despondent and non-communicative – only responding to life when it speaks to you. You just have no energy to give out and everything seems grey and boring. People and life pass you by as they move on. Now I am sure that this doesn't apply to you – or does it?

## Ebb and flow

I wonder what would happen if you looked at you in the mirror with compassion and love and invited you out to play in the colour of life's rainbow – whatever one you choose?

This time it may be one of the more restful colours you choose. You see, you need those resting times to breathe in to AND if you stay too long then they can become boring – become your cage, your prison that saps your energy. Remember it is about you choosing your colour!

Some questions for you:

What do the colours of the rainbow mean for you?  
How do you give yourself the fuel for your energy to  
engage with the world?  
In other words, how do you take care of you and go with  
the ebb and flow of life?

It may be that you choose to come on one of my next [Residential Retreats!!!](#)

# **‘I Don’t Care’**

**By Irene Brankin**



## Wake-up Call

You may or may not know that I wrote a book called 'I Don't Care – the Art of Divine Indifference' – well I did! Anyway, I am bringing it up here in this blog as I see it as a wake-up call to all of you who know in your hearts that life is slowly (or even quickly) passing you by.

As a psychologist, I have worked with countless women who have spent, it seems, most of their life caring for others in one form or another, and fulfilling roles that have somehow been taken on by them - and not always of their choosing. They have then all but forgotten what it is that truly inspires and motivates them. Or even who they are any more!! Am I speaking to you? Or you may be able to relate to what I'm next going to say.

## The Caged Tiger

Do you ever feel that you have become trapped in a prison of routine and the mundane?

That you are simply going through the motions and not fully present to yourself or life?

If you have, as I have, then you will know of what I named my 'caged tiger'. This was the part of me that paced up and down in my inner cage, or slept, or on the odd occasion, roared above and beyond whatever it was that was causing my need to be angry and lash out with my tongue at all and sundry. Not a pretty sight, I can assure you!!

# Loneliness

By Irene Brankin



## Admitting to Loneliness

Here I am once again blogging on a topic we don't normally talk about so let's go.

“you need to be able to talk to someone rather than being isolated”

## Isolation

When you don't have that human interaction, which is a fundamental need for us all, right from the word go when we come into the world, our experience of pain is more pronounced. Yes, I can hear all you animal lovers that animals give us so much too – I've not forgotten that! Nowadays some hospitals and homes allow dogs, in particular, in so people can stroke them and receive comfort. And you need to be able to talk to someone rather than being isolated. That isolation can make you feel that you are an outsider looking in on the world's happenings whether good, bad or indifferent – particularly with what's going on at the moment.



# Interesting Findings

After 20 years of research, an American Cardiologist found that no other factor in medicine 'not diet, smoking, exercise, stress, genetics, drugs, surgery' affects our health, quality and length of life more than feeling loved and cared for. I would say that this very interesting and important finding has been ignored too often, wouldn't you? I've not heard many shout it from the rooftops! I have to say thanks to Isaac George for drawing my attention to this information.

I remember many moons ago when I was doing research on depression for one of my degrees, time and time again I found that one of the main support mechanisms was the interaction with others. It was being able to share and talk with someone and feel that they could lean on them even for a little while.

## Aloneness and Loneliness

One thing to remember is that there is a difference between loneliness and choosing to be alone. When it's the latter, you can draw our strength from those times of perhaps being quiet, writing, painting, pottering around the garden or house, having a good cry or scream, watching TV or simply 'being'. You like our own company as well as the company of others so you have a choice.

## Stepping out

There are those who have no respite from their loneliness perhaps through bereavement, divorce, poor health or those whose family are no longer around. And it can be so, so difficult for some of you when feeling lonely to be brave and do something about it as your home is your place of comfort and it can be your prison. It takes a lot of courage and I applaud you when you take it on board to make the first step outside your comfort zone and particularly go along to some activity on your own.

# Spectrum

Most of us feel lonely at some time in our life. I know I have at different times, and have particularly in the past when I was ill. It's perfectly normal and you needn't feel ashamed of the feeling – it's all part of the spectrum of pain, sadness, fear, joy, love and faith.

Sometimes just to keep going in life can be an extraordinary feat in itself and demonstrates the human resilience. I can't believe at times what people have had to overcome in their lives (including myself). As I've said above, it's an act of courage to confront our fear of living, taking one day at a time and carrying on anyway. Few of us truly acknowledge and appreciate ourselves for doing this.

Life is not easy, let's be honest and it is amazing when unexpected things happen and we feel vibrant and alive.

I want to finish with - keep extending yourself with acceptance, gentle understanding and compassion – stop judging yourself. Your loneliness is your loneliness and when you are ready, you will do something about it.

Go Well and if you want someone to accompany you on your journey for a wee while then contact me to book a session.

# Thank you for reading.

If my words touch you and you want to know that you really matter, then visit my [website](#) or [contact me](#) and let's see how I can do that for you.

A handwritten signature in white ink on a dark teal background. The signature appears to be "Sene" followed by a small flourish or mark.