

The power of a good (short) wallow

It's all very well telling ourselves there's no such thing as failure, only feedback, but some feedback hurts



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

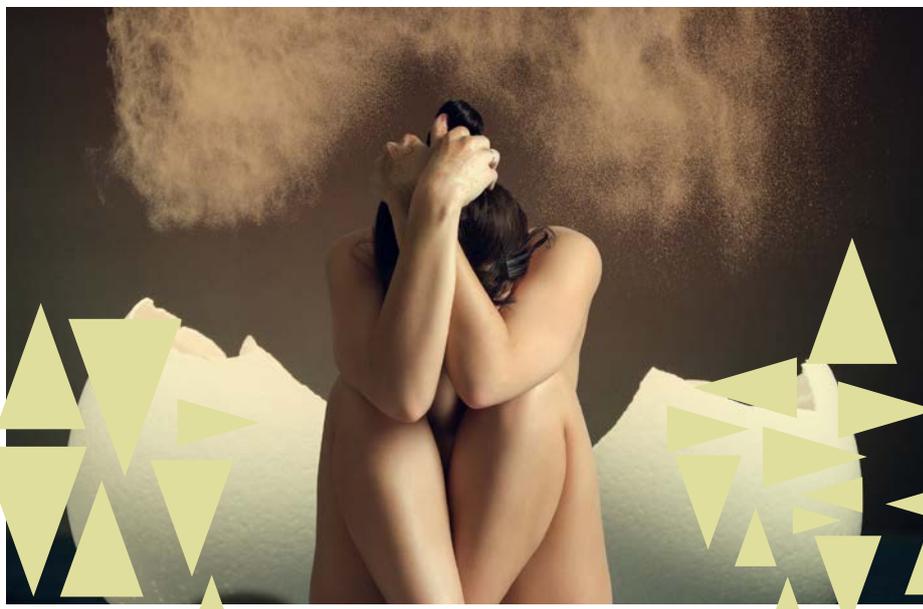
When I first came across NLP, around 2004, I was already qualified as a life coach and loved the emphasis on resourceful states and circles of excellence. I was also filled with self-loathing when not actively coaching or yogaing myself into feeling better. So until I read Joseph O'Connor's wonderful NLP handbook and devoured the page on wallowing, I thought NLP wasn't for me.

It's all very well telling ourselves there's no such thing as failure, only feedback, but some feedback *hurts*.

Similarly, knowing with every cell in our bodies that where there's a discrepancy between someone's words and actions, believe the actions (or as Maya Angelou put it, 'When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time'), we can *still* want to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Studies show that rejection shows up in the brain as if it were physical pain. Taking care of ourselves when we're in that less than resourceful state is a healthy thing to do. We can then regroup and look for the information within that feedback and adjust our approach accordingly.

Boosting our self-care in these moments (or minutes or hours or however



long it takes) means we're better able to set healthy boundaries, assert ourselves appropriately and do so with an open, loving heart.

Pain, disappointment, rejection, fear, hurt, sadness and other feelings we often judge as 'negative' are information too – they can be an enormous gift when we're able to stay with them and harvest them rather than trying to rush through to feeling better.

Notice what your body wants to do

When we're stressed, anxious or hurt we often curl up, making ourselves small. While comforting, this is also sending signals to the brain that we're in potential danger. It's wonderful knowing that we can change our physiology with our posture but before we rush into those expansive 'power poses' Amy Cuddy has written and spoken about so eloquently, how does it feel to let your body guide you? Just for a few minutes? Maybe grab a blanket or duvet or cushion for extra comfort?

Breathe Obviously, we're breathing 24/7 or we wouldn't be alive but as you hold your duvet/blanket/cushion, take a few complete breaths and let yourself feel however you feel.

Notice your thoughts Mindfulness of

thought is easier when we've worked with mindfulness of the breath and body but, again, potentially transformative. Simply noticing our thoughts is another of those simple but not easy practices. Byron Katie's *The Work* is a wonderful process of asking ourselves four simple questions around whether our thoughts are true or not.

Choose not to get distracted It's so easy to stop after one conscious breath or 'not have time' to reflect on what's happening and actually start processing it. Sometimes, losing ourselves in a good book, film or cheesy TV programme might be exactly what we need but when we're able to sit with our pain and learn from it, we can transform our lives.

Ask yourself what you need right now Once you've shown yourself some self-compassion by paying attention to that hurt, vulnerable part of yourself and breathing consciously, embodying the pain and being curious rather than judging your feelings, notice what you need as the feelings – as all feelings ultimately do when we stop trying to suppress them – change. Movement? A hug? Some kind of action? Support? Keep asking yourself what you need and as often as possible, give yourself this care you so deserve. ■

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