



Mid-year Blues 2022 Platitude Crusaders; Drama mongers and 'woe is me' traders *with a plot twist!*



'Oh come on, it could be a lot worse!'

'Don't complain, all you need is a positive attitude!'

'Arg, things will get better.'

'You have to learn to role with the punches'

'it is what it is'

'It comes with the territory'

'All in a day's work'

We have all heard the platitudes, we have all told someone these glib phrases, in the hope that the words will place a plaster over a bullet wound. When the reality is, we are still living in tough times. When I was a child, my aunt would tell me to 'pull myself up by my bootstraps!'. What does that even mean? Well, 40 years later and as a coach with a lifetime of experience, I can assure you that is as impossible as it sounds. What is needed however, is an intentional and committed process to lift ourselves and our spirits out of a funk.



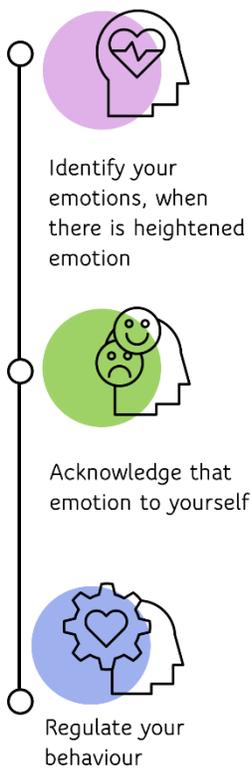
So, we have made it to halfway through this year, to be lashed with load shedding, petrol hikes, low business confidence index and natural and unnatural disasters. Whilst we may have been freed from our masks we are not freed of the fear of that omnipresent virus and to top it off; it is a brutally cold winter so far! We have worked half our year, and so many of us are feeling depleted.

I see this every year around this time of the year, and somehow this year it feels worse. There is an overall feeling of malaise amongst most of the people I speak to. A glumness, that sits heavily on us.

Whilst I certainly don't have all the answers, I can as a person with my own struggles and of course as an unconventional coach; share my feelings and thoughts on how we can lift ourselves out of this, one step at a time.



- 1) Recognise that it is okay, not to be okay! I very often encounter people who speak to me during coaching about serious things that are worrying them, and then almost immediately dismiss the worry with a justification or a platitude of; 'oh well, it could be worse!' Acknowledging that you are not okay, is the first step.
- 2) Avoid berating or shaming yourself for not being okay. We live in a world where we expect ourselves to live up to the social media ideal of happiness. I believe happiness looks very different for each person, so comparison is a waste of time. Again, I so often hear people exclaiming; 'I have so much to be grateful for, why am I complaining' or 'so many people have it so much worse than I do, I have no right to complain'. This is a form of self-blame and self-shaming. All we accomplish with this process, is making ourselves feel worse. Yes, there is a very important place for gratitude and thankfulness for the good in your life.



- 3) Allow for time to process. Yes, I am saying we need to find the time and space to sit in the discomfort of where we find ourselves. So often I hear people express how they don't really know the full reason they are feeling glum and whilst we may not be able to pinpoint it exactly, taking time to reflect on the reality is helpful.
- 4) One way that I find that helps me is to speak openly about what I am feeling to a trusted person. (By trusted, I mean a person who has your best interests at heart, who will suspend judgement when actively listening to you and who will resist the temptation to solve your issues on your behalf.) Find a person you can make yourself vulnerable to, in a safe space. It is often during this process of speaking; we work things out for ourselves. This safe space should be devoid of:
 - a. Platitude Crusaders: Avoid the pitfalls of engaging with a Platitude Crusader who upholds the gravity of Toxic Positivity!
 - b. Drama mongers and 'woe is me' traders: This group of people are often not there to listen to you, rather they use your feelings as currency to spread their negativity.
- 5) Okay, so we have chatted, we have realised (or not) why we feel the way we do, what next?

The formula to regulating our behaviour sounds simple, however it is not necessarily so. The first step of identifying our emotions when there are heightened emotions is the first hurdle. Often, we cannot put our finger on the exact feelings behind the emotion, however sitting with the emotion is a good start. Acknowledging those feelings and the emotion to yourself, and not denying it (as we so often do) is the second step. Look it in the eye and call it out for what it is, when this is done, we can better regulate our behaviour.

Twist in the plot!

As with many old wives' tales, there is an element of truth in the platitudes! Whilst we often use them as default statements when we feel anxious and overwhelmed, most have an element of helpfulness in them:

'Oh come on, it could be a lot worse!' I spoke to a client at the beginning of Covid and he made this remark. His thoughts were that this would be worse if it were a hemorrhagic virus, along the lines of Ebola! That made sense and certainly gave me a little perspective! Although Covid was certainly bad enough.

'Don't complain, all you need is a positive attitude!' Well yes; I am always an advocate for a positive attitude. The trick is to believe it and not just say it! Remember, ACTION changes situations, not just a positive attitude!

'Arg, things will get better.' When action is taken in the right direction, things will improve. Inactivity and a stalled mindset will not get us moving.

'You have to learn to role with the punches' This is a nod to resilience. Yes, we do need to take the good with the bad, and resilience is key.

'It is what it is' Accepting the reality that you work within, is helpful actually. Denying the reality of the situation could impede decision making towards a positive outcome.

'It comes with the territory' Most definitely, when we have selected a certain profession, there are stresses and strains associated with, and particular to, that profession. Again, it is learning the correct coping mechanisms that will help us on those tough days.

'All in a day's work' I will leave this one where it is! I think we get the idea xxx