

Dealing with Uncomfortable Thoughts and Feelings

A Self-Awareness Guide

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Introduction

As human beings we feel a range of emotions, some we like and some we don't.

We all like to feel good feelings like peace, joy, safety and contentment. Sometimes people share with us that they just want to feel *normal*.

The fear of not having control of our feelings stresses a lot of us. Many of us are trying to avoid feeling negative or bad, but we don't seem to know how.

We all have experienced feeling low in mood, anxious, frustrated or angry. Some of our thoughts can get quite overwhelming and terrifying at times.

In this self-help guide, we want to share what may help you deal with your most unbearable thoughts and feelings with more ease.



We won't be giving you any tools or strategies. Instead, we want to guide you to your innate resilience. You can think of this as a resource of wellbeing that is available to all of us.

We also won't ask you to *think positive*. Let's face it, sometimes we just can't. We can try and force ourselves to think positive, but it is impossible to be in that frame of mind all the time. Here we share an understanding that thoughts and feelings aren't constant but change naturally.

Why is this guide suitable for all?

All human beings function the same way. We all have thoughts and feelings, have certain habits, likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. On the surface, we may seem different and unique but we have a lot in common.

Here are a few examples

- Our mood goes up and down
- Our thoughts appear very real to us
- We feel uncomfortable or distressed when we get unpleasant thoughts
- We all get entangled in our emotions
- We find ourselves reacting to challenges in life
- At any time, a vast range of experiences is available to us
- None of us is immune from mental health difficulties

We invite you to be curious and see what makes sense to you. We sincerely hope the guide helps you with your recovery or challenging times and re-connects you to your wellbeing.

There are three things we share with you here

- The metaphor of the sky (your true self that never changes) and weather (your ever-changing human experience)
- Dealing with uncomfortable thoughts & feelings
- You may be lost, but you aren't broken.



How to use the guide

When reading this guide, we suggest that you pause and take the time to reflect as often as you need. Let the essence of what we are sharing come to you gently.

Please do not try hard to understand all the information from your first reading. It doesn't matter if you cannot concentrate on the information here for too long. That's fine. Take a break and come back to it again. We recommend reading small sections at a time.

After reading once, we suggest you read the guide as many times as you can, as often as you need to. Keep it easily accessible to you if that helps.

Dealing with uncomfortable thoughts and feelings

Thoughts and feelings seem to be intertwined. A thought may not be well-formed, it may be invisible or unconscious. Every feeling brings with it a certain energy that seems to have the power to uplift us or pull us down.

And when we feel an emotion, say anxiety, we don't just feel it in our head. We feel it in our mind and body. We call it having a full-blown experience or immersion, something we can't seem to escape.

It may seem that it is up to us to think positive and give up thinking what's negative. But we have little control over what thoughts or feelings come to us at any moment.



Do what you need to do for your wellbeing and enjoyment of life. What we know from our experience is that trying to control unpleasant feelings can easily become a tedious job, the power of the mind being such that you still may not win!

So, what is the best way to deal with uncomfortable thoughts and feelings?

Know that you do not need to believe, take seriously or give them much attention. They certainly can appear real to us, but they only represent a personal reality that keeps changing.

We begin to feel at ease and resilient when we let go of the need to control our uncomfortable thoughts and feelings and realise that we don't have to follow or act on them.

This happens gradually with time when we begin to understand the nature of the mind and thoughts.

The metaphor of the sky and weather

"This too shall pass" – you may have heard that phrase before, from those that care for you and want to give you hope. It is a positive and hopeful statement. It may seem empty and meaningless, but it sums up what is true of the human experience.

We share with people the metaphor of the sky and weather and why those are, in a way, akin to our true self and our ever-changing human experience.

The sky is always there, is constant. However, the clouds in the sky are not permanent and are always on the move. Sometimes the clouds floating past are white and fluffy, and sometimes they are grey storm clouds that lead to rain and thunderstorm. But, the bad weather always changes in its own time, by itself, revealing a blue sky and the warmth of the sun again.

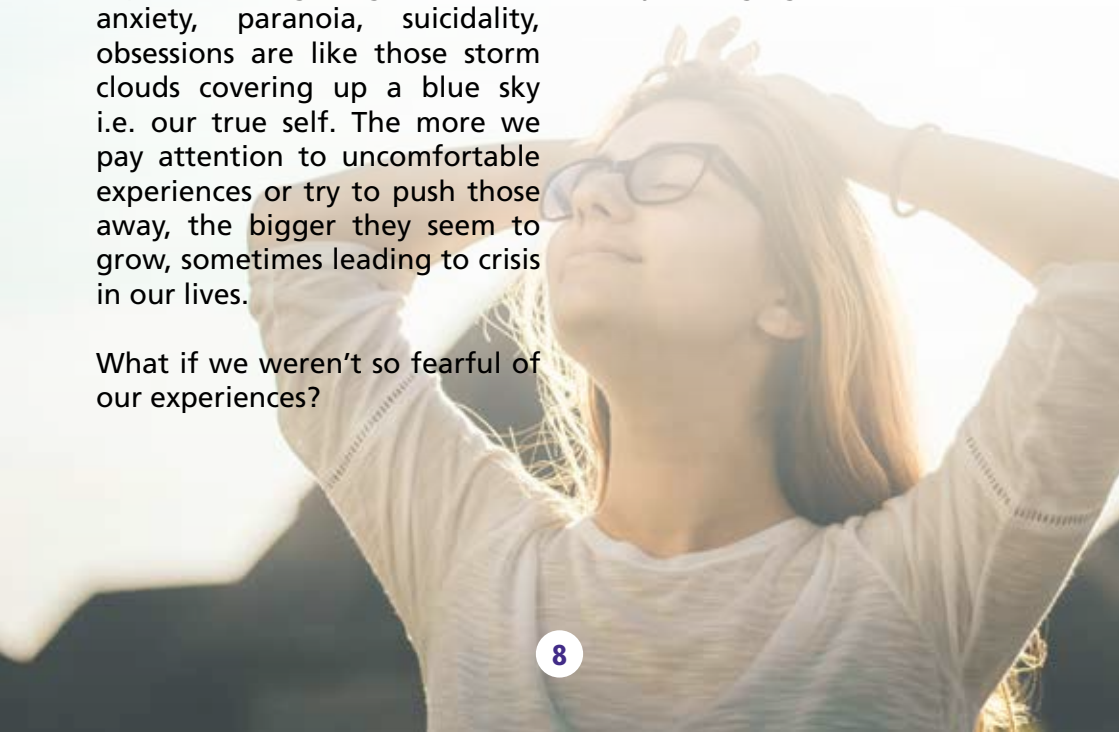
The nature of the human experience can be compared to the nature of weather outside. Our thoughts and feelings are like clouds in the sky. Let's imagine for a moment that the blue sky is our true nature or true self. Some of our uncomfortable emotional experiences e.g. anger, sadness, anxiety, paranoia, suicidality, obsessions are like those storm clouds covering up a blue sky i.e. our true self. The more we pay attention to uncomfortable experiences or try to push those away, the bigger they seem to grow, sometimes leading to crisis in our lives.

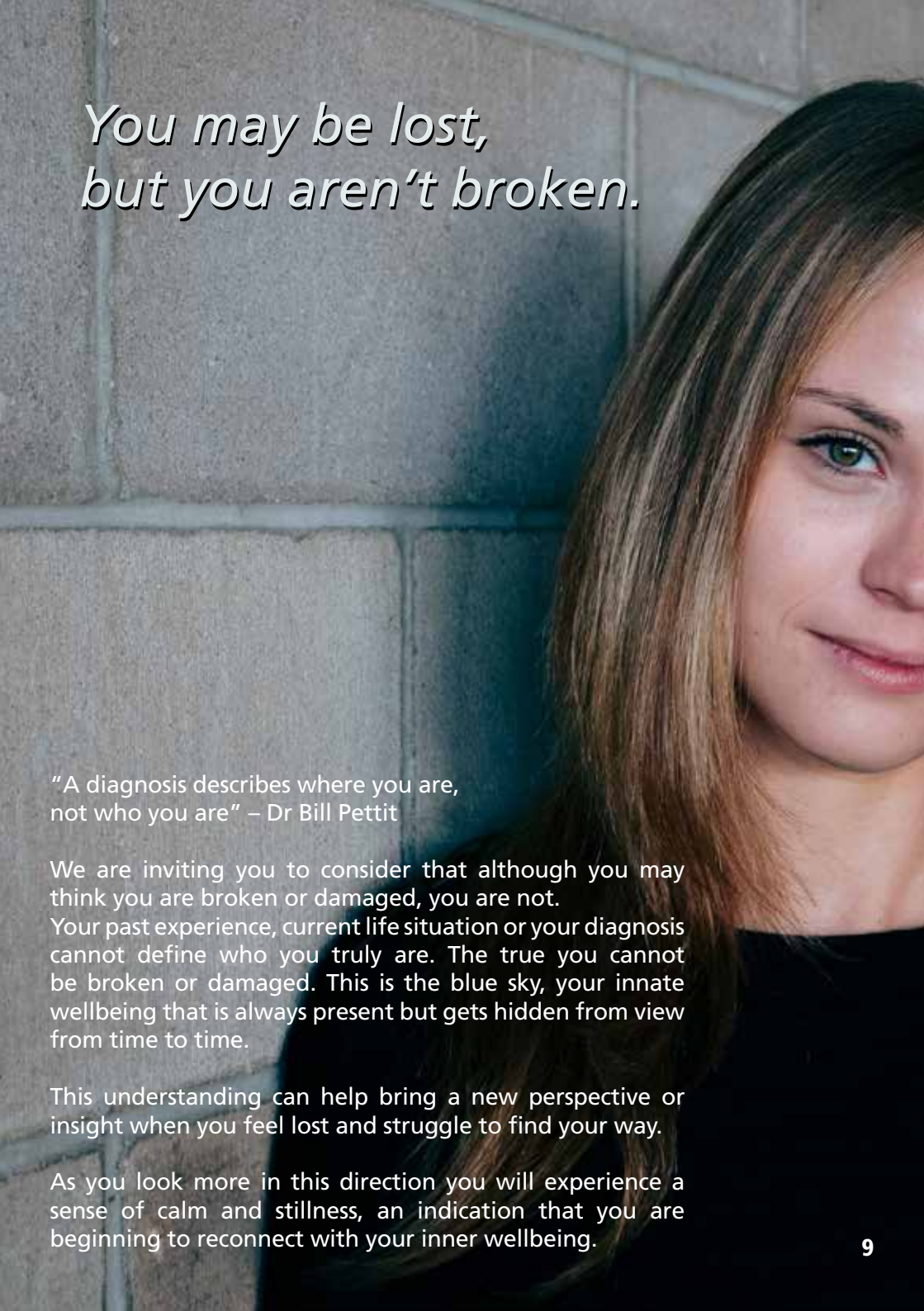
What if we weren't so fearful of our experiences?

What if we knew – who we indeed are, our true nature, cannot be affected by even the most unpleasant of experiences?

We will eventually feel clarity as our thoughts will have moved on. In the place of stale & hopeless thoughts, fresh & hopeful thoughts will appear. We will start to experience that positive thoughts and feelings come naturally. We experience our own resilience as we get a glimpse of our blue sky, a feeling of stillness and quiet – the very essence of wellbeing.

Reflect on this, place your attention on what is constant rather than what's transient and always changing.





*You may be lost,
but you aren't broken.*

"A diagnosis describes where you are,
not who you are" – Dr Bill Pettit

We are inviting you to consider that although you may think you are broken or damaged, you are not.

Your past experience, current life situation or your diagnosis cannot define who you truly are. The true you cannot be broken or damaged. This is the blue sky, your innate wellbeing that is always present but gets hidden from view from time to time.

This understanding can help bring a new perspective or insight when you feel lost and struggle to find your way.

As you look more in this direction you will experience a sense of calm and stillness, an indication that you are beginning to reconnect with your inner wellbeing.

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This leaflet is available in other formats, including easy read summary versions upon request. If this would be helpful to you, please speak to a member of staff.

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