



When you reach rock bottom

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Maybe towards the end of the day, every day, you slump onto the sofa, holding your head in your hands, and whisper to yourself, “When will life give me a break?”.

Maybe you crawl into bed at night, despondent and exhausted, thinking I cannot take another day like today.

Maybe you wake up in the morning still bone tired as if you had no sleep at all, wishing you had not woken up at all.

Maybe you wake up in the early hours with a sense of foreboding and dread of the day ahead, feeling a bit paralysed and unable to get out of bed.

Maybe you curl up on the bathroom floor sobbing your heart out as your despair seeps through your body and you feel the pain crumbling your bones.

Maybe you have stopped caring about the day ahead because it is just too overwhelming to care.

“Everyone has a story or a struggle that will break your heart. And, if we’re really paying attention, most people have a story that will bring us to our knees.” Brene Brown: 2023

Almost everyone, and dare I say it, everyone, faces challenges in their lives at some point that can feel insurmountable. Even healthy people with good self-esteem and confidence are likely to go through a period in their life (perhaps even more than once) when they feel like they are barely hanging on. For some people the answer is to increase effort. For some people it is to rest and take time out. For some people it is to struggle through the days putting one foot in front of the other at a slower than normal pace. And for some people, the only option they see, is to remove themselves from life.

What do you do if you find yourself in such a place?

1. Contrary to human tendency, often a good idea is to surrender to what is. Just let go. Accept what is. When you accept what you are experiencing and don't fight it, sometimes a peace can descend from which it is easier to move forward.
2. Don't beat yourself up for what you are feeling and think to yourself what a failure you must be to have let yourself get into such a state. You are not a failure. You have not made a mess of your life. Everything has just become too much for you, and you need to stop what you were doing, regroup, and preferably get some human support and help.
3. When we are going through life shattering experiences (this is more than just change or challenge), it is natural to want to isolate from others, but it is not always a good idea. Human beings need people. And you don't have to be an extrovert to enjoy the company of others. When you isolate yourself, it is possible that you can work through what is distressing you. However, it is more likely to result in you ruminating on negative thoughts and images, and to narrow your focus, when you would be better off being exposed to more options and choices and possibilities and the thoughts of different people. Even if you just go to the shops, try and get out and be with other people.
4. I am going to say it, although it shouldn't need saying. Look after your physical health. If you think a problem has a physical cause then go and have a medical checkup. That way your health can be dealt with if something is the problem. Also, you want to do the basics right: eat well, hydrate, exercise, and get enough sleep.
5. Lean on your support network. You may feel like you don't have the energy to do anything, but even if you just send a message or text to a friend saying you need help, or you need to talk, do it. There is something about sharing pain with someone that lessens it a bit. There is also a fairly universal experience that talking to someone who is caring and actively listening to what you are saying helps take away some of the agony.
6. Set small goals and do one each day. Do more if you can. And I mean small goals such as: go for a walk, phone a friend, go to the shops, clean out a drawer, do a puzzle, watch a video or movie.
7. If you are really struggling, are suicidal, and have been feeling things just cannot go any lower, then seek professional help. If you need someone to drive you to see a mental health professional because you are that stuck, then ask someone. If you have been feeling very down and stuck for a long time then you almost definitely will need some professional help. And don't be embarrassed to reach out. The people you see around you who seem exceptionally successful and as if they have their life altogether, have more than likely been in the same place as you at one time or another.

One of the ways in which our mind tricks us is that at a given point in time we tend to think that what we are currently experiencing is what we will always experience. When things are going well, it feels

like they always will. When things are going badly it feels like every day forever more will be a struggle. And when things are going truly horribly, it feels like we may never know happiness again. If you are in such a space, then I know you probably don't want to hear this or you won't believe this, but I am telling you that your situation will change. What you feel right now is not what you will always feel. Things will change. They will get better. If you need to get help, then please understand that everyone needs help at some point. Usually often at many points in life. Also understand that you are not a burden, there are plenty of people out there who would love to help you. It is your birthright to be happy so claim it, and if you need professional help then go and get it.