

RECOVERY FROM BREAKDOWN

I want to pass on here a lesson which I have had to learn on recovering more than once from depression and nervous breakdown. When in the depths of the pit you do not just feel gloomy; you lose all inner energy, indeed the very capacity to think. Inside you is total deadness. But if (and this may require medical assistance) you do not lose your nerve but stick with it, as time goes by you discover that the world has not come to an end. Thoughts begin to well up, one by one, in your brain. It becomes possible to recognise them and 'process' them - I would suggest at this stage by writing them down somewhere such as in a notebook if you can manage it. As you process each one, you release it and so make space for another to arrive. Little by little, the pace at which thoughts arise begins to grow, as does your ability to process them. You may begin to find other ways of processing your thoughts - use a pad or diary, perhaps, to start listing things you would like to do when you recover. Gradually your mind returns to life. A new 'you' emerges, better able to cope with the problems of life than the 'you' you knew before.

Should it ever become your lot to pass through such an experience you will learn at least one priceless lesson. You will learn how to listen to your inner self, by which I think I mean your unconscious, as though your life depended on it.

On recovery you can allow the process to continue. You can go on spending time each day listening to your unconscious, that now familiar voice from deep within, and processing the thoughts that spring up. Your channels for doing that processing will have grown in number by now. Your notebook may turn into a regular journal - a smart volume carefully chosen, that you can feel good about and take a pride in. You may perhaps want to read and re-read previous entries and add comments to them. You may have a 'DO' list of things you want to do today - phone calls to make, letters to write, shopping to buy, people to see and so forth. You may have another such list for long term projects. As each item is done you cross it off, gaining enormous satisfaction when you end one sheet and start another. (All this is of course open to those who have never hit rock bottom, but they may find it a little harder to get started. There is more than one route to self-knowledge.)

Further, way beyond using your thoughts negatively as a defence or recovery mechanism, you can use them positively as instruments of creativity. If you are like me you may find an urge to write something - a letter perhaps, a new paragraph for an article, or a few lines of software to add to a program I am working on. Others may find a fresh approach to a hobby, to an intractable problem at work, or to a difficult relationship. Whatever it is, what you will be doing I call *creative thinking*. It is a process of listening to your inmost self and acting on what you hear. To do it you need to spend time each day, waiting to see what comes.

Martin Mosse,
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