

Welcome to the spring issue of 'The Village'

As lockdown continues our 'virtual village' has certainly lived up to its name. It's been wonderful to see so many of you joining our virtual Coffee Catch-ups and Mid-week Meet-ups (with thanks to our guest speakers) – they're a wonderful way to stay connected during this challenging time.

In this issue, we look at the state of 'languishing', something many of us may be experiencing during lockdown. We also look at ways to overcome this feeling and create more purpose and joy in our lives. On that note, see our 'breathing tips' on page 2.

Amazingly, Christmas is less than three months away, so I'd like to wish you all a happy and joyful season – and I hope to catch up with you in person at our Christmas shared morning tea.



Bonnie Robinson
CEO

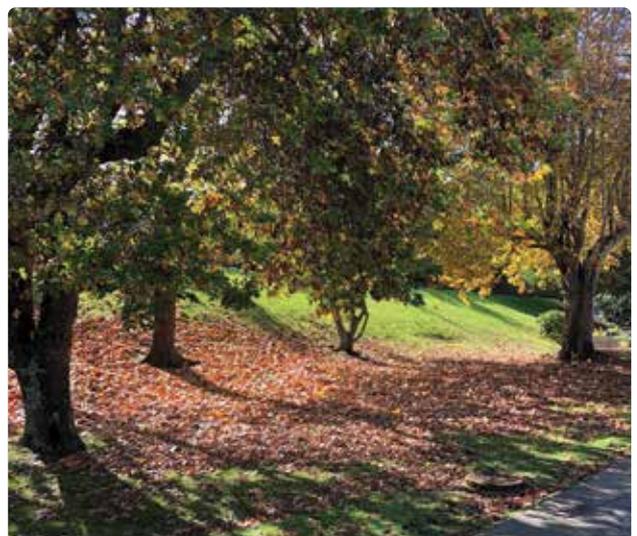


From 'anguish' to 'languish' – and how to avoid it

It turns out there's a name for the way many of us are feeling this year – that feeling of just being somewhat joyless and aimless. It's called 'languishing'.

Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness that can dull your motivation and focus. It can feel as if you're just muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield.

According to Adam Grant, an organisational psychologist and author, languishing has replaced the feelings of intense fear that most of us experienced in 2020. "As we've starting getting vaccinated, that sense of dread has started to ease," he says. "But the pandemic has dragged on, and the acute state of anguish has given way to languish."



“Languishing fits somewhere between depression and flourishing,” says Bonnie Robinson, CEO. “Simply put, it’s the absence of wellbeing. You don’t have symptoms of mental illness, but you’re not the picture of mental health

either - you’re not functioning at full capacity.”

“Some older people struggle with having less purpose in life as they retire from work and children leave home, which already increases the

risk of languishing,” she adds. “When that’s combined with being locked down in your home or village with fewer opportunities for connection, joy and spontaneity, I expect there are many older people in a state of languish right now.”



“ It may feel difficult to create a sense of purpose right now,” says Bonnie. “Start by focusing on one small goal at a time. Aim for some small wins, like the tiny triumph of figuring out a puzzle or walking just a little further every day. Choose a just-manageable difficulty – and try to stretch yourself with a slightly more challenging goal each day. ”

So what can we do about it? Adam Grant suggests that getting into a state of “flow” may help. Flow is that elusive state of absorption when you’re doing a meaningful challenge, when your sense of time, place

and self melts away.

Studies show that people who became more immersed in projects and had a strong sense of purpose managed to maintain their pre-pandemic happiness.

Setting and mastering small, daily goals can go

a long way towards rediscovering some of your energy and enthusiasm for life – and before you know it, you’ll find yourself starting to flourish again.

From an article by Adam Grant, organisational psychologist and author of “Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know” and the host of the TED podcast, WorkLife.

Breathing your way through stress

Many of us have found going through such a long lockdown very stressful. One simple and free tool we can all use to manage stress is our breath. If you feel overwhelmed, slowing your breath down will slow the ‘chatter’ in your mind.

One easy-to-remember tool is the ‘STOP’ method...

S is for ‘STOP’ what you are doing.

T is for take a breath and then another breath.

O is for Observe – tune into thoughts that are stressful in your mind,

acknowledge them and then choose not to follow any thoughts that don’t feel good.

P is for proceed once you are feeling better.

Choose to let go, drop your shoulders, open your chest and try to drop your jaw, as we often hold tension here.

Another helpful tool is called ‘the mountain’. When feeling overwhelmed, try to become a ‘mountain’ that isn’t moved by the chaos that may be happening around you. The mountain remains ‘calm, still and at peace’.

Getting to know Nidhal Alattar, VVE member



Nidhal Alattar

Nidhal joined VVE in 2018 and is one of our longest standing members. She and her husband immigrated to New Zealand 24 years ago from Iraq to give their children a better life and more security. "It was a considerable change but we adapted and I now have four Iraqi-Kiwi children!!" she says.

She has enjoyed meeting other seniors at our monthly Coffee & Catch-up sessions and Information Mornings and has especially enjoyed the Safe & Strong and Mindfulness programmes. "Robyn and Parvin who take the classes are so supportive," she says. "Lee is also wonderful and I know she's only a phone call away."

Nidhal has appreciated the benefits of our social network even more in lockdown. "While I miss attending the weekly classes, it has been wonderful to continue with everything at home," she says. "The exercise videos, quizzes and recipes are interesting and I look forward to receiving the weekly newsletters. It has really helped during lockdown!"



Armchair travels with Brian & Jenny Jones

Brian and Jenny Jones were among the lucky few to travel to Adelaide for a very special 3,000km train journey to commemorate the 90th birthday of the Ghan train.

"The Ghan train is almost a kilometre long and it takes two large powerful engines to pull it," explains Brian. "We enjoyed sitting in our cabin watching the countryside go by, and chatting in the lounge with our fellow travellers."

Brian recalls that the first night of their trip was particularly memorable. The passengers were invited to the restaurant car for a very 'posh' dinner with a glass of local wine. After dinner they could feel the train slowing down and there, in the middle of nowhere, were hundreds of chairs facing a large stage where three local bands were playing.

"90 candles were lit on a large birthday cake and everyone sang "Happy Birthday to the Ghan train" at the top of their voices as all the bands played together," says Brian. "Then, after almost two hours



of dancing, there was a 'big bang' as the passengers were treated a grand display of fireworks."

"The next morning we embarked on the remainder of our journey up to Darwin, which included a coach trip around Alice Springs and a boat ride through the Katherine Gorge," he says. "But nothing measured up to the party in the desert - a party we will never forget."

Meeting up with Brett Johnstone, prison chaplain

'Mid-week Meet-ups' is a new online speaker series introduced during lockdown to keep our members informed and connected. In our first Mid-week Meet-up on 15 September, prison chaplain Brett Johnstone shared his experiences of working at Mt Eden Corrections Facility, in an environment where 'lockdown' happens every day.

For three days a week, Brett works as the chaplain, and on the other two days, he oversees the 300 or so volunteers who help out at the prison. "Mt Eden is a remand prison, which means it takes men who are awaiting trial," he explained. "There are about one thousand men there at any one time: men who are at all stages of life and they're there for an average of 28 days."

A key part of Brett's role is talking to the men about what they've done and why. **"We're here to listen, talk and ask questions,"** he says. **"Prison is an opportunity to reflect. Often the men have feelings of remorse, and sometime there are issues of forgiveness for what they've done, so we talk about that. For many of the prisoners, their upbringing was not good, so there are questions around 'how do I get past that and move on?'"**

The chaplaincy team also includes volunteers who work with prisoners of different faith backgrounds, including helping Māori prisoners who often have deep spiritual issues which can



be complex and intergenerational," he explains. "We're also here to assist if someone dies or has a bereavement in the family while they're in prison. We'll sit with the men, maybe share a prayer with them and talk about the person they've lost."

"Someone once said to me that in pastoral care, it's good to have a poor memory so that people can keep telling you their story," says Brett. "We enable people to tell their story in confidence and that helps them to feel better about themselves."

If you missed Brett's talk, you can view it via this YouTube link: <https://bit.ly/VVEBrett>

Events coming up...

› Coffee & Catch-up by Zoom

Tuesday mornings at 10.30am

- Bring your home baking and cuppa to your computer on Tuesday morning!
- Your home by Zoom

› Mid-week Meet-ups by Zoom

Wednesday mornings at 10.30am

- Our weekly online speaker series continues through lockdown.
- Your home by Zoom

Join us for 'virtual' catch-ups during lockdown.

