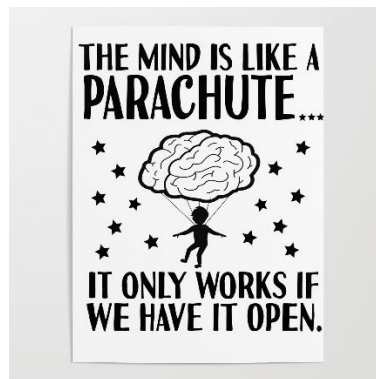




O is for Openness

Openness

Well this is fun, locked up with my family, partner working from home, daughter working and studying at home, me in the garden shed, literally. To add to this because of my age (onto second free bus pass), combined with metastatic prostate cancer and a DVT in my leg I am deemed to be high risk and need to be "shielded." I don't feel like I need "Shielding" and as a result regard myself as being under house arrest. But all of this disclosure has nothing to do with Openness in the Enabling Environment sense. No indeed it is something far more demanding, especially in the environment of ever more claustrophobic restrictions. Trying to remain open to ideas, feedback and "holding up the mirror to myself" is a real challenge as I become more envious of those of you out and about on your one-hour exercise walk, run, jog or cycle ride. As far as I am concerned, you're an over privileged bunch of self-satisfied people who have no idea how privileged you are. You can see I am coping with the prospect of being under house arrest till June the 14th, at least, really well! But when frustrated the anger that bubbles away as resentment finds its way to the surface and gets expressed in one way or another. It is that sort of underlying bubbling away of the "dark and tricky stuff" that leads to some form of acting out. Worst of all it closes my mind to feedback and possibilities.



It is at these times that well intended acts of kindness can be rejected. Not because they are not recognised for what they are but because they can be rejected. When I find I lose control and feel constrained and confined against my will, or my choice, I cast around for things I can control. Being able to reject things is one way I can control things, even if I do not really want to. "No thank you I do not want a sticky bun", I really do, but hey it's a sacrifice worth making for some self-respect. I'm in charge, at least for a moment.



So while I am fighting to believe that my house and garden are a bearable prison for at least another eight weeks I am trying my best to be "open". I know that being isolated is keeping me safe from COVID-19 but it's a bitter pill. Not as crap as going through chemotherapy granted, but being sturdy enough to hear a friend telling me that I am a whingeing sod and that I should count my blessings as I have so much is difficult to hear. However she was right. That trap of self-pity waits in the wings to try and fool me that I am worse off than everyone else. Patently a fantasy, but these things sneak up on me and I have to pay attention to myself and catch myself being tempted down the "poor me and sod you" alleyway.

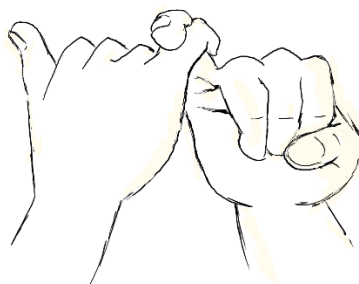
It's a sobering thought; all of the people working and living in what were already containing and restraining environments, prison, Approved Premise, mental hospital. I've worked and managed in all these environments and know how debilitating this can be when operational situations demand a command and control regime. Everything takes longer, the mundane everyday becomes the all day and it's draining.



Trying to stay human and trying to remember the person you are about to unlock or confront is an individual with a whole story attached to them and needs to have that recognised, is one of the greatest demands that can be asked of you. It is probably not felt to be helpful when someone like me comes along or sends messages about remembering to keep being enabling and to try and keep an enabling environment going. There you are up to your arse in crocodiles,



with a methadone queue that takes all day to do and here I am saying "remember to be open to feedback and ideas". However, I'm a voice that won't go away as making the effort to stay open and make the effort to keep the relationships at the heart of the work is what ultimately will get us all out of this current malaise intact. If you promise to keep open to ideas and feedback; if you keep asking "how are we doing" I promise to hear all your suggestions made in frustration and irritation about where I can stick enabling environments and will consider them, seriously.



In the meantime, I remain in my shed, with no Wi-Fi (gripe gripe gripe) and watch in admiration as you go beyond anything that anyone ever expected you to have to do. It is, you are breath-taking. Stay in touch.

