

Life Isn't All Positivity & Avoiding Discomfort Is Not The Answer

BY ALYSON GROLL

I was out with a friend this past weekend and as we said our goodbyes, she said to me, "I only want to be around positivity."

I wasn't sure how to respond to this statement. I stood there for a moment processing what she had just said to me, and then went on my way without acknowledging her comment. As I drove home I began to feel very frustrated. I thought to myself, what does that even mean? How am I supposed to respond to that?

Life isn't all positivity. In fact, it is much more often filled with challenge and discomfort, than ease and joy. Ignoring and avoiding the parts of our reality that evoke discomfort is not the answer to our problems.

To be a whole and healthy person physically, mentally, and spiritually, we must explore and accept our entire reality – the full spectrum of what we consider "positive" and "negative" – and allow these things to affect us emotionally. We must express the emotions that we are feeling. The human experience involves exploring our entire emotional terrain.

The unrealistic idea that if we ignore the reality of our present worlds – inner and outer – and suppress our natural instinctual emotional responses to challenge and pain, in favour of positivity, is a detrimental concept on several levels. It sets up the conditions that can easily create a society of individuals who feel shame simply for experiencing their humanness; for showing up in relationship authentically

with pain, anger, and other so-called “negative” emotions.

I cannot count how many articles I have read about how we can “choose happiness,” and if we are not feeling joy, this is somehow our fault and somehow this makes us a less desirable person to be around. We are not only forced to contain and suppress our difficult emotions, but we are now feeling shame for even having them.

It has been my experience that perpetual positivity makes it impossible to have authentic, empathetic relationships. If I maintain this persona of positivity, I feel unseen and unmet. How can I enjoy a relationship if I am constantly required to monitor and filter all that I share?

This expectation creates pressure to show up in a particular manner at all times and makes it impossible to develop any kind of closeness and trust in the relationship. When I am asked how I am, shall I lie if things are not going well? How can I speak my truth if I am going to be judged for speaking it?

With each exchange, I am left wondering if I have said the wrong thing – and I’m feeling uncomfortable and unfulfilled as I have not been allowed to show up authentically. Perhaps this idea of positivity isn’t such a good idea after all?

The real intimacy of relationships builds from the place of being vulnerable, sharing our pain, showing up as we are, and feeling met and accepted by another, and then reciprocating this. We cannot dictate how others’ show up in relationship.

Healthy relationship is about creating the space so another can show up authentically and feel accepted and received with empathy. If we are to have any hope as a species, this is a necessity.

Everyone experiences pain; it is a part of the human experience. What makes our pain even more painful and intolerable is feeling afraid to share it, and feeling shame for even having it. This leaves us feeling alone, overwhelmed and often hopeless.

We are afraid to show up in our truth as we may make others uncomfortable, or worse, we will be left feeling exposed and judged, instead of seen and met in this difficult place.

As emotionally healthy adults, it is our responsibility to work to develop our capacity to be present to other's pain and suffering without this experience becoming overwhelming for us. It is a necessary capacity to develop in order to have authentic and fulfilling relationships.

And the thing is, the more we can express our struggle and pain and be seen and met by another, the more capacity we have to show up and witness another in pain without getting overwhelmed. It is a reciprocal relationship.

I submit that the reason most cannot tolerate others' pain and are so often pushing this pursuit of positivity is because they are carrying so much of their own suppressed emotions they simply have no room, no capacity to be present to other's pain. What would happen if we all felt safe to speak our truth without fear of judgment and shame – knowing we would be received with empathy and love and we all actually did so, and this burden of carrying our pain all alone was relieved?

Perhaps we would then create a circle of support and empathy where all individuals feel seen and heard, and met with empathy, instead of suffering in silence. What a world that would be – a world I would like to live in. What about you?

I challenge you today to help me co-create this kind of world. I challenge you to be vulnerable and to share your pain with someone you trust today. Notice how it feels. And then show up for another's suffering, holding space for their revealing.

How does it feel to witness another's pain when your pain has been witnessed and received with empathy? Does it make it any easier? Does it create a bridge of connectedness between you and another?

Perhaps even more critical to explore is the way that perpetual positivity prevents us from developing a fully formed relationship with ourselves. If I am only willing to acknowledge the positive aspects of my life and the feelings that flow from them, how can I have an authentic relationship with all of my own aspects?

How can ignoring and suppressing aspects of my reality be a healthy and intelligent way to develop self-awareness, navigate my life, and evolve into more desirable ways of being and doing?

How can I know what is and what is not serving me if I avoid acknowledging and feeling any discomfort I experience?

How can I choose adaptive coping mechanisms to manage my stress and overwhelm, if I refuse to acknowledge that I am stressed and overwhelmed?

How can I determine my needs, and set boundaries that protect my well-being and that ensure my needs get met?

How can I improve my life if I don't acknowledge and reflect

on what isn't working?

All of these essential aspects of life require one to look at their whole life experience – both negative and positive – and acknowledge, embrace, and process all the associated emotions. We simply cannot know ourselves, and grow and transform within, any other way.

Photo by [Hazzel Silva](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Heart Howl (Mantra)

Our deepest desire, and most vital need, is to be seen and met just as we are by another. This is a gift we can give to anyone, at any time, by simply being present with empathy. Let us all reveal ourselves in all our colours, and know we will be met.

For more self-study, [The Urban Howl](#) recommends [52 Ways to Live a Kick-Ass Life: BS-Free Wisdom to Ignite Your Inner Badass and Live the Life You Deserve](#) .

Sip a little more:

The Spirituality Of Humanness

No Blame, No Shame When Transforming Soul Pain

"I whole-heartedly believe in
being a full spectrum human.
Embracing the rage, grace, love,
and heartache with hands
always extended whispering,
"More!"

SHANNON CROSSMAN

THEURBANHOWL.COM



#PERPETUALPOSITIVITY

HOWL WITH US

ON [FACEBOOK](#), [INSTAGRAM](#), [TWITTER](#) & [PINTEREST](#).

SPREAD THE MAGIC: