

Motivational Nonsense

Self help blogging from a Rebellious Nobody

By Ina Disguise

Copyright 2016 Ina Disguise

A GOAL IS A DREAM WITH A DEADLINE

One thing since my family disaster in the form of both parents getting dementia has been the death of the personal deadline. I should be concerned about this, since I have traditionally been fond of work deadlines as a method of avoiding the rest of my life.

I am going to fly in the face of any motivator and tell you the truth – deadlines are no good for quality. I have got much further since I abandoned the deadline. I do things when I feel like it, for as long as I feel like it and the rest of my time is pretty much eaten up by 24/7 responsibility for my mother and her property.

The fact that I am trapped in the house by her illness and the lack of support has meant that I have no distractions in the form of looking after or enjoying myself, and so I feel I can afford the luxury of time. Some of the first batch were being thought about for over a year before they were actually completed, and I can honestly say this has made my work better.

The work went into the 3rd dimension only after a personal crisis brought about by an event outlined vaguely in Best Scandal Ever. Finding out that I cannot expect even the smallest amount of respect from a desk jockey agent when trying to help somebody basically caused me to decide that nothing mattered, and the removal of time and the restraint of ambition has meant I have all the time in the world to perfect this one thing that I can confidently say is unique to me.

So much for your standard motivational garbage then. A disaster of rejection has led to me finally doing what I probably should have done in the first place – ignore everyone and do whatever I feel, whenever I feel like doing it.

NEGATIVE FEELINGS ARE HELPFUL

TwistyHeadedMan is staying in my spare room at the moment, he is extremely helpful when I am lost in my creative funk, which both last year and this became oppressive in June/July. I guess I have a touch of seasonally affective disorder, since I seem to become unpleasantly obsessed with work during the summer, when I really should be out in the gardens.

Last night, I got him to take a look at my post on Wolfe. 'Grumpy but positive' I said, is that OK?

'That's how you always are.' he said. I really am turning into my father.

It is often very difficult to find a positive spin to put on an extended period of unadulterated misery, especially when it involved binning two years of hard work, but I have found over the years that it is sometimes wise to be floored by the punches rather than rolling with them. Were I to publish my classical academic work as Ina, I would at least get a few people to read it now, as opposed to sweating blood over an ignored epic under my own equally ridiculous name. World events since 2011 have proved that the academic book is not only necessary, but essential whether the object of my devotional work likes it or not. (see other posts)

I could look on it, rather angrily as four wasted years that could have been easily avoided, but it is no big deal. I am well used to being underestimated. Ten years ago I was involved in a corporate scandal. The company involved simply could not believe that one scruffy woman would have the audacity to call them out. Since then I have lived an extremely quiet life, but I learned a lot.

Back in the days of my feverish research into the raw food movement, I used to become irritated at the insistence on positivity circulated by the more popular speakers. Positivity is all very well if you do not require your brain to be engaged on critical pursuits, but it is as useful as a chocolate teapot when you need to be more strategic or analytic. It is almost used as a weapon – J P Sears has a rather good video on New Age spiritualism which concurs with this view. Please allow me to let you in on an apparent secret – no feelings are truly unnecessary:

1. Grief is fine, and if you ignore it it comes back and bites you in the ass. It lasts as long as you decide it needs to.

2. Jealousy is a mammalian construct, any owner of multiple dogs or cats will tell you it is not exclusive to humans and is inbuilt for survival. Whilst it is not much fun experiencing it, and I personally have chosen to reject it as useless, it is not unnatural to protect yourself from pain.
3. Sadness, often misdiagnosed as depression, is entirely natural. Depression needs to be clarified by definition as irrational sadness, often physical in nature, and can be alleviated first by dietary means, and then by simply giving yourself the time to pinpoint your repressed anger.
4. Anger is fine. It is much better to allow some flash fury than pretend to maintain your cool and become depressed later. And so on. My work as Ina depends on the ego, particularly the wounded ego. If I was to pretend that everything was fine, Ina would not exist and no work would get done at all. All feelings are fine, all feelings are productive. Nothing in your life should be wasted.

STICKING OUT FROM THE CROWD

Today's entry is on an entirely different subject, although I hope readers of the previous entries have given some thought to moving their money.

I had to do a lot of temporary contract work throughout university and afterwards, not only because I was older than everyone else, having had a previous career, but also because my pesky mother point blank refused to go to the doctor to deal with her heart problem and my father already had dementia by that point. I was a late baby.

I could not help noticing that every office that I worked in seemed to contain a den of bitches, male and female, who seemed to regard me as bit of an alien.

Being a loner, this did not upset me as much as it might, however I came to believe after a few different offices that there was something seriously wrong with me, which made me retreat into my shell somewhat after having worked extremely hard to scratch my way to the top of my previous male-dominated career.

Employment agencies presented a range of similar problems. The women who decided whether to put you forward for jobs were completely different animals from me, and could not seem to wrap their heads around the idea that someone who had run their own successful businesses had retrained.

This meant that the education that I had spent time and money on was pretty much meaningless in terms of gaining suitable employment from these people, and so I was scuppered on both counts. Nevertheless, I managed in my obsessive, compulsive way to keep myself in work by spending 7am to 11pm looking for jobs whether I needed them or not. This went on for about 6 years.

My last job was as a banking consultant, a job which paid unusually well but involved working 3pm to midnight, six days a week. Not satisfied with the idea that this was a result, I took on another two jobs, one as a government research interviewer, one as a corporate researcher. I viewed this, after the years of gypsy wandering, as the prudent way to go, so at one point I was making calls over breakfast, visiting people in their homes at lunchtime, feeding my father in the hospice, and then racing across the city to the bank to work until midnight.

Since I had always had quite a lot of control over my lot prior to gaining my additional education, it did not occur to me that there were rules associated with working in banks which had not been in place elsewhere. I had had a couple of problems with large companies previously, when I had taken it upon myself to suggest changes which would save the company money and waste. You are not supposed to do this. You are supposed to be so petrified of losing your job that you say nothing even as several hundred, or in one case thousands of pounds per hour are being squandered right in front of you. It was at one of these companies I was jokingly referred to as 'the economist who hates money.' I could explain why, but that would be another lengthy story. I would rather be referred to as 'the geek that hates waste,' to be honest.

Anyway, back to the bank. I was in a room alongside probably two hundred people, all earning a fairly vast amount of money, ranging from 1000 to 3000GBP per week and doing fairly basic clerical work. As the deadlines were quite tight, I can confirm that it was fairly hard work, however I have worked as hard for minimum wage, if not harder. The problem arose when one of the printers broke down, and the entire room was left to cope with a vast amount of paperwork and only one functional printer. As you can imagine, the queue for this printer became hot and very unpleasant extremely quickly, and so I took it upon myself to go to the project manager and request another printer.

A few minutes after I had done this, the well dressed and obviously well heeled team that I was working in expressed shock that I had done this. Hadn't I gone to the supervisor? I was not supposed to talk to the manager. I was also comparatively scruffy and regarded as something of an exotic flower in this team, since I did things other than banking for a living. They were impressively shocked.

I don't mean to sound quite such a grumpy old lady, but since I have been making this same point since I was quite young, it is not strictly an age issue.

What on earth has happened to the world? The 1950s working generation were the most economically successful generation in world history. Nobody is ever going to match the achievements in their lifetime. People like my parents had choices, of where to work and how to work, and got respect for what they did that would be scoffed at now, and yet we are less efficient than ever. We pretend that technology has made all things possible, and everything more efficient, and yet in productive terms, and in progressive terms, we have actually declined in efficiency.

The 'blame' and 'yes sir' culture is what caused the Bernie Madoff situation in banking. Guys in suits shaking hands with other guys in suits and not actually examining what they were doing. And why oh why has nobody joined the dots about the banking crisis which immediately followed? They talk about the problems with sub-prime lending but nobody dares mention that this happened at exactly the same time as the Madoff scandal. Far be it from me to point out that the bankers were following orders, and have been made scapegoats to the alleged crisis, but to me the real issue was the cultural issue, of stupid employing stupid and doing business with crooked.

If, like me, you stick out from the crowd. If, like me, you don't like waste and you don't believe that your level of oiliness should determine success above your level of actual talent, then do not be ashamed of it. You may never be rich in today's cultural climate, but perhaps you are made for better things.

INTROVERSION IMPROVES CONFIDENCE

Do you ever find yourself saying what you think people want to hear? Do you cringe at what you have said and wonder why you felt you had to say it? Are you the hardest worked life and soul of the party you know? Do you regard yourself as over-reactive and try to compensate with over-generosity or putting even more work into making people like you? Do you ever fall victim to 'running your mouth?' If you answer yes to any or all of these things you may be an extrovert introvert.

An extrovert-introvert is basically an introvert who chooses to appear as an extrovert. This may be for a variety of reasons. Work was mine. Head chefs in particular, may think that they are necessarily loud, big personalities who dominate the space they are in because it is expedient for the purposes of getting the job done under pressure. eg. Gordon Ramsay, Marco Pierre White etc. Some of the best chefs I have met, however, were actually shy, quiet people who worked to greater technical specification and gained more respect from the art itself. eg. Anton Mossiman, Andrew Fairlie.

I remember when I was very young, saying that I could not cope with any more crowds as I was getting tired from having to be six or seven people. Quite apart from the callow and impressionable youth, I was expressing my introversion. Living in a very large house, I had always had the luxury of several hours a day with no-one bothering me, which I would spend reading or making things, since music was frowned upon, but that is another story.

If you frequently find yourself beating yourself up over stuff you have said or done, it may be time to admit to yourself that you actually prefer your own company and spending some time ALONE. It is almost certainly better for your health than constantly tripping over an overactive tongue, and may save you future problems with your existing relationships. I certainly found that after I became a recluse, the people who wanted to see me badly enough to seek me out, were doing so to get some sort of guidance that I had no idea I was providing. You are nearly always stronger/brighter/quicker than you think.

After ten years away from my old friends when travelling, I was astonished to find that the vast majority of them had done nothing apart from seek validation

from each other since I had left. This seemed to me to be very sad. Now, as an unashamed introvert, having distanced myself even from them, I achieve a lot more and am better rested and considerably more confident than I ever was as a bad tempered, brusque chef who was always in charge.

It is wise to conduct a cost benefit analysis, and figure out if you can squeeze yourself some time alone. Make it a priority and find out who you really are. I can tell you that almost all of the time, you are better off without the advice of even the most well-meaning friend, and you are certainly better off without the warped role playing advice of your family.

WIDELY SPREAD LIES

Anyone can be anything they want – no, they cannot. Life is a series of trade-offs, for a variety of reasons associated with their mental capacity, commitments outside work including geography, family and social. People select the best available option, they do not get to choose from a wide variety of options in many cases.

Avoid negative people to get further in life – unless you choose to be alone most of the time, this is not really possible. Negative people can be helpful in unexpected ways. Where would Eeyore be if Winnie the Pooh, piglet and Robin acted like that?

You cannot avoid your family – yes you can. My mother's children certainly aren't people I would choose to associate with. They are greedy, irresponsible, dishonest nasty people and I refuse to parent people who are quite a bit older than I am.

Your destiny is your responsibility – this goes with anyone can be anything they want. It is a lie. See previous answer.

Friends are important – no, they are a nice-to-have. They are expensive, time consuming and assume undue influence on your life.

Love conquers all – no it does not.

To give is better than to receive – again not true. As someone who has spent most of her life being told that it is somehow unacceptable to give away my work for a variety of reasons by a variety of unworthy people, I can tell you that giving is often used as a reason for making you feel bad.

It is selfish or negative not to capitulate to a majority in a social situation – nope. I had to again put my foot down today as I was being railroaded. Even working from a chair in your own home involves standing up for yourself, apparently.

Karma – this does not exist. Bad people will probably not ‘get what’s coming to them,’ and as I have hopefully begun to demonstrate, bad people are not necessarily bad if they are simply not doing what you want them to do.

Famous people are special, separate from the rest of the population, more attractive and more pleasant than the rest of the world – no, definitely not.

Celebrity ain’t what it used to be, and there does not appear to be a school for gracious stars to tell them how to handle themselves.

Superficially, we seem to be creating a heavily Americanized culture of what I would term obese superficiality, in which we tell each other the same lies every day. Not everyone is going to reach their star, and it is just as well because if they did, it would not be worth reaching. Talent takes work, for most people, and there is a world of difference between someone creating a persona and someone actually having the quality they would like you to believe that they have.

So, what to do when you discover that no part of your life is going to be even slightly pleasant? Change direction. Sometimes the direction will be unclear, sometimes the goal will be blurry, not everything will work out. All you can do is try. I once made the point to a group of students that the emphasis on lending money to small businesses was somewhat spurious, and led to thousands of people a year losing their future prospects to failed ideas. If you reconsider your ideas, generally there is a cheaper way of starting out on almost any project. To demonstrate my point, I started a business with ten pounds, and by the end of four weeks had made eleven hundred.

Flexibility and determination is a lot more important than capital investment. Not believing the bullshit you are fed is more important than blindly believing anything in the hope of gain. Never assume that anything is as it appears, and you will not only become a more critical thinker, but a happier person and then, and only then, we can all get along much better and not sit posting the lies of the powerless rather than actually getting a life.

KINDNESS IS A SIN

Businesses do not exist to take care of people, they exist to extract money and provide something that the customer wants. The businesses that tell you that they are taking care of you are often the worst of the lot. Take the cuddly advertisements for chemical companies, which often use childlike graphics to persuade you that they are doing something good for you, your family and your immediate environment whilst doing the exact opposite.

Until this point in global history, governments have been, with the exception of very unusual circumstances, bigger and in possession of better credit than businesses, and people have trusted them to take care of their welfare. TTIP and TIPP seek to reverse that. I foresee several developing nations collapsing entirely, jobs going to the ASEAN nations whilst America and Europe become rather backward regions where most of the population exist at the mercy of the very few. This will be enhanced by modifying education and the media to enable people to genuinely believe that money means merit. A scanty look at the people you know will tell you that the smart ones are not the same as the rich ones. It is a matter of priorities as well as your ability to look convincing when you say yes to anything said to you.

As I have mentioned in several previous articles, it is in your hands. You as the consumer, could reverse this progress tomorrow if you stopped feeding the companies large enough to control governments. You probably won't do it.

Why? Because you have a busy life, scraping your living from your employer, who requires you to say yes in order to pay for the roof over your head etc etc.

This makes, for example, going to the supermarket more convenient, which in itself precludes you from starting a grocer's, deli, goods store etc because everyone else is, like you, going to the supermarket to hand over their money to the same people. It is as much a question of convenience as it is belief.

It is not complicated to think that if you do enrich smaller businesses, it puts them in a position where the barriers to entry to compete with larger businesses in a hugely monopolistic situation are more manageable. I would like to know what happened to Anti-trust laws, now only non-cronies appear to be prosecuted for creating situations in which small versions of large supermarkets, for example, put successful corner shops out of business. Another example was Remax, who had the employees pay for over-expansion to reduce their competition. We all live in an inherently corrupt society, where we are told that

we have no power because we have little money and we sit back and believe it whilst sustaining a system that cannot work well for us.

In the event that you have a problem, the simple answer is to pick up your wallet and go elsewhere. That is the nature of capitalism. There is now no other way of rebelling against a system that does not suit us, because we allowed businesses to become bigger than government, and the trade agreements that America is conning our middle management politicians into signing will nail this to the wall. Never trust a corporatist. America is a corporatist country. Mussolini had very interesting things to say about corporatism, feel free to look it up yourself.

In contrast, I wake up with a list of things I would like to do to help people every morning. Many of those things make no sense to anyone but me. I do not think that it is odd to do this, it would take more effort not to. I explained this to many of my friends before I removed them from my life. Why did I remove them? I was told that this was a crazy way to live, that you should always consider yourself first. When it comes to parting with my money I understand this, but not when it comes to giving people what they actually want.

What everyone, no matter how scatty, longs for is a sense of becoming what they dream of being. There is no shame in asking for what you want, however oddly this is presented. There is shame in rejecting what you want when it is offered to you.

My personal system of responsibility is entirely different from someone who has other wishes, for their children's future, or a new car, or their parents to be neatly tidied away rather than free to make a mess, keep them awake and generally tell them they are awful. My responsibility is to the soul. I think there should be more people like me, and less corporations who exist to take your money, your future opportunities and those of your children for their own growth, in order to dictate the future of a declining planet. I am goddess of my own personal religion. I do not ask anyone to join it, but I do care to point out that my crazy, kind little niche is a lot more pleasant than the current future of the Western world. I do not play by the rules, because the rules are wrong in the first place. Dreams are real. Reality is transient. I plan to remain defiantly kind, even if it means my inability to tug my forelock or respect the cash means that I will be financially poor.

WHY AREN'T YOU HAPPY?

Getting the work out in time for the Supermoon was very tiring, however I stayed awake for 44 out of 48 hours to do it, because although I am not at all superstitious or into astrology, the theory with a lunar event is that it causes change. Very possibly this change is entirely in your imagination, but what the hell, let's have some of that. The icon is also based on the idea of switching polarity, and so far, it seems to be working, because I am losing my fear of self-exposure to my pre-determined and rather limited extent. (I do not intend to embarrass Wolfe by becoming a public figure) I did crawl back under my stone with some relief, however, after a couple of chaotic days ensuring that there were new items to put out in the next couple of issues of Tatler.

Many years ago I retrieved a copy of 'I'm OK, you're OK' from the box room and I have to say, I found it one of the most helpful self-help titles that I have ever read. Transactional analysis, carried to its logical extent even when dealing with your own emotions, is extremely helpful. In recent years, however, I have noticed a flaw in the motivation market, stemming quite possibly from a misunderstanding of how the 'I'm OK' part really works.

You are supposed to self-examine before you decide that you are OK. It is not sufficient to simply decide that your wish to make a billion bucks/get promoted/marry at least four times/stop speaking to people you don't like is OK.

If you aren't happy in the first place, no amount of weight loss, money, women/men, moving on from unfinished business is going to help. Happiness is very much a decision that you make. The difference in Eastern philosophy and Western is said to stem from this decision – Western philosophy, and in fact economics, stems from the premise that you spend your life seeking happiness, where Eastern stems from the premise that you are born with happiness, and your duty is to preserve and protect that happiness.

From an economic perspective, you can see why Western economies have performed better, and you can also see why you just aren't happy. Happiness does not keep you shopping to make yourself feel better or replace all those belongings that you lost when moving on from that unfortunate person you got tired of. Many of the thoughtless masses suffer from this inbuilt sense of something missing, since they have been educated, particularly in recent years, to purchase rather than create things that make them happy.

Persuading us that we are unhappy with our appearance means that we spend money on clothing, surgery, makeup, diets etc. Persuading us that we are unhappy with our partner can mean that we spend money on cars, houses, meeting a new partner, socialising, and changing our appearance. Can you see how this works? Happiness is bad for the economy. Introspection is, therefore, also bad for the economy, because we cannot have people self examining to the point where their happiness means that all those lovely purchases, and all these charming new people become meaningless.

My grandmother apparently used to joke that 'man must strive,' an open ended but meaningful statement which covered everything from seeking work to nagging. What we should really strive for is the sense of inner contentment that we lack through the constant bombardment of reasons why our adequacy could be improved by the next new person/object/bit of gossip rather than the development of our inner self or skillset.

In my case, the very thing I was so ashamed of, having romantic feelings, is now the thing that defines me and in a huge respect develops me as a person, despite there being no positive outcome to look forward to. Paradoxically, the thing that should make me unhappy, is now the thing I will be most known for, in my anonymous way, and despite the constant driving sense of stress, the current path leads to a better developed outcome. This idea makes me happy. When I compare it to the happiness of your average, thoughtless, high earning couple, destined to divorce when he spots a younger model, or she spots a sugar daddy, I wonder to myself whether I am not far luckier than they are, despite my limited, lonely and despondent life.

Why aren't you happy?

PASSIVE AGGRESSION AND SELF ESTEEM

A few years back, my boss at the time told me that I was a very unusual woman, because what I wanted was always absolutely clear to him. He had difficulties with his comparatively feminine wife, because she would flirt around the topic and he would be expected to guess. I replied that as a former head chef, who had worked my way up in the industry when women were a tiny minority, and as someone who has habitually avoided other women in the course of my life because of my family, I had something of an advantage in that respect.

Women are guilty of expecting themselves and each other to compromise, which is why they tend not to have been as good at perfectionist roles in the past.

Relationships that I have had with women have always involved a lot of social jostling, which I have never had to worry about with my male friendships.

Where men will talk about sport and how attractive women are (regardless of their own attractiveness) women use minute social interactions to tell each other who is boss, often playing dirty over very small things to get the edge. If this is the type of power that they seek, they can take weeks or months to batter you with information that you did not want, faux flattery included.

Ironically my sick friend, male, is the most feminine dude I have ever come across, with a side order of passive aggression. He is blissfully unaware of this, because when he is not spiralling off course, he is a helpful person and reasonably good company. The problems seem to arise on a time basis, not really associating with anything that is actually going on. I have learned over the years to escape this part of the relationship by opting out until it goes away. To give you an example of this – one time I admired a large well dressed lady we had spotted, he assured me that I was tiny in comparison, and later on the same week when I was unusually well dressed in a public place suggested that I was far bigger. This is very minor stuff, but when you rarely see anyone, it really affects you. Currently he has decided to use my home as a stick to beat me with, which means I do not feel like inviting him back. Since I never get to go anywhere, I do not feel like having my home (and impending loss of fertility) assaulted so that he can get his jollies, whatever they are.

Passive aggression takes many forms, and can be very subtle. I, being of a rather exuberant nature, do not really have time for it anymore, having fallen victim to

it in the past. The gradual wearing down of your confidence and general self-esteem is even harder to take than your siblings getting in your face and assuring you that you are worthless even as you out earn and out work them. I used to be very laid back, but since this has led to, in some cases, years of misery and doubt about doing anything at all, I am now more careful about extricating myself at the first few signs of trouble. I also avoid messages if I think they are likely to rock my little boat. I can only imagine how upset I would be if I got a 'Who are you?' from Wolfe, rather than his taking the time to actually do some background research.

By far the biggest problem with passive aggression is that the perpetrator rarely has anything to replace your perfectly adequate judgement with. They just want to be on top, with no actual content whatsoever. It would not be so bad if they had fun, complex and intelligent contributions to make to your life, but in my experience, they never do. They are inevitably far more lost than you are, which is why they sought their little bit of power in the first place.

I suppose that this ties in with all those memes suggesting that you should rid yourself of negativity. With my creative hat on, this is no use to me. I like constructive discussion, if there is a useful idea, I want to hear it. If something isn't working, even if I am rather annoyed at wasting a month, I need to put it away and think about how to improve it. By all means, get rid of the passive aggressive behaviour, get rid of the abusive people, get rid of the jealous and unusually moronic. Keep the ones that are just a bit down, however, because they tend to be quite useful, and they probably need you.

BEWARE OF POSITIVE PEOPLE

Today I have an example of why I have a problem with all those memes that suggest that Team America are to hang together, cheer everything on each other's behalf and AVOID NEGATIVE PEOPLE. I have several cliquey groups of low denomination authors who regularly validate each other on every topic from contempt for the poor to 'authors must write in only one genre.' I kid you not, the culture of self-congratulation stifles creativity to such an extent that they actually try to tell you what to write to be in with the cool kids.

There is nothing wrong with writing rotten romances, or hackneyed mysteries over and over again, provided you can find an audience, or find a catchy way of engaging your audience. Two self-published authors that I know of became millionaires simply by adding their email address to their work and requesting that their readers email them when they found any errors. They simply ploughed the time they should have spent editing into relevant forums, investing in marketing and generally getting their name out. Personally, I would not recommend this, since at least one science fiction author I know writes books that are effectively unreadable, and then entreats a massive number of other authors to become beta readers, ignoring any attempts at editing and repeatedly requesting positive reviews. (I am afraid that after only one attempt at beta reading, when I discovered that my editing notes were longer than her text, I had to leave this exclusive gang.)

The problem with positivity, or even your closest friend absent-mindedly saying yes to everything and avoiding giving an opinion for fear that you will not like them any more, is that one day, they will let the mask slip and your poor fragile ego, which you have been relying on to get the job done, will temporarily shatter and it is not until you find some way of assuaging your angst that you can get writing again. This is kind of what happened with the original academic essays I was attempting to talk to Wolfe about. As it happens, it is probably just as well, since my reconnected synapses are having a lot more fun than they used to, but losing your sense of self, and in my case, my maudlin and cynical seriousness, could be pretty damaging, depending on what you are trying to do.

It is also not a good idea, unless you are in an actual team situation, to go shattering egos on a frequent basis, since the ego you are shattering may be the one that ultimately makes yours fly higher. As a creative chef, I was quite keen on the whole 'leave your ego at home and rely on mine' scenario, but now that I

am in a situation where I work alone, I am becoming quite phobic about any interruption to the flow at all. It is simply easier to just avoid people altogether. The loneliness means that I get more work done, and can employ a lot more stamina since there is no deadline.

The most recent attempted attack by a writer was on the grounds of my work being free, which is hysterical. Asking a modern author in a market where 400k books are being published every year, to charge for their early work is a bit like telling a singer to make sure everyone knows they can sing, but not to actually prove it unless they have a thousand bucks in their hot little hand. It just won't work. You can choose to pay for marketing, or you can choose to network with yet more people, but the actual problem with an unknown is the number of clicks you are asking the customer to make to get your product. In my case, the nature of the project being extremely personal, (I really write for an audience of one, in the case of the Best Ever series) I do not feel I would want to charge. Besides which, my stories lead people back to look at my artwork. Interestingly, the artists that I have shared the project with love the idea. The only people who seem to have a problem with it are the very same low denomination authors that club together in miserable cliques, reviewing each other's work and wondering why the numbers are not improving.

So, I am, ironically, developing a bit of a temperament, in the course of escaping the results of a family-induced state of utter misery. Most of the time I am happier than I was before, but my temper is probably worse, since I cannot tolerate rocks in the river, so to speak. I am not entirely happy with this, but perhaps with time I will be less fragile and my love of growth through dissent will return. In other words, the old adage of 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger,' which has been something of a central theme in the past, will perhaps be reduced to the size of a mere tributary.

STRANGER IN A HAT DISEASE

I come from a country which suffers from this to a ridiculous degree, as a way of preventing people from developing any pride or 'giving themselves airs'. It is a form of low self esteem which is particularly prevalent with people who wish to avoid responsibility. I cannot tell you how stultifying it is when it is a national characteristic.

Another form of it is small person's disease. I don't mean that the sufferers are small in stature, they are small in outlook. Some people don't get it until they get older, some people always suffered from it.

Stranger in a hat disease

In this form, the sufferer refuses to listen to any new information unless it is conveyed via a television set, or physically attractive stranger in the case of many men. Any information imparted from people that they know is instantly refuted, making it pretty much impossible to converse at all, in some cases, since they will argue with anything you say. Elderly people get suckered into this one, even when all the evidence points to you knowing exactly what you are talking about. ie. You have a postgraduate degree in the subject, versus a minor celebrity mentioning it on TV.

There is no known cure. You are doomed to being disrespected as a seven year old child for the rest of your life with a sufferer of this problem.

eg. "No, of course it isn't autumn, it is spring."

"Would you like me to find a stranger in a hat to tell you what month it is?"

Small person's disease

This is the one all motivational speakers seek to cure, in a myriad of expensive and time consuming ways. This is the assumption that anyone in a public arena or position of any power whatsoever is different from you, special, untouchable and morally superior. Even if the celebrity in question has committed a murder, they are still deserving of a mysterious form of worship that makes anything they do of considerably more importance than actually doing anything yourself. This one is more dangerous, since the sufferer abdicates all responsibility for their progress and self worth, in favour of accepting a perceptive state where everyone is luckier/better/more important than they are, and end up playing hours and hours of Candy Crush Saga, Farmville etc., whilst seeking validation from a

group of similar peers. If challenged, they become fearful and retreat into these futile pursuits, effectively becoming a form of zombie. The idea of actually challenging anyone with any status at all is effectively rendered to mean the challenger is in a state of insanity. This is what befell most of my friends after the Wolfe saga started, since I can see no reason why I am not just as important/talented/capable/worthy of being loved as someone on the grounds of a few hundred youtube videos. Many would say considerably more so, despite my aversion to fame.

This is the kind of problem that causes civilisations to crumble unnoticed, since nobody accepts their ability to actually do anything, no matter how small.

This is the reasoning behind the Better Person Project. If everybody spent ten minutes a day inputting information from wherever they were, it would be considerably easier for people looking for more worthwhile ways to spend their time to actually find those things. As I have said, until the artwork moves, I am unable to redesign the site, so it is a bit clunky at the moment, but perfectly usable.

It applies just as readily to your daily life. What exactly stops you from taking your ten minute walk, reading for an hour a day in a subject of interest, perhaps doing a few blogged reviews etc? As someone who does not get out because of my caring, I recommend you do so, just in case you are unlucky enough to end up in the same miserable position I am in. Failing that, you can easily change the world if you stop telling yourself you cannot. Such is the nature of the world. If you do nothing, you only have yourselves to blame and all those excuses will look very silly indeed.

PROBLEMS WITH MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKING

So, now that I have given you a rough guide to why Wolfe is not such a bad guy after all, (see previous posts) I would now like to go into the problems of the methodology of American motivational speaking.

Strong elements from the past also render it extremely weak for the following broad reasons:

Plain English – motivational speaking is popular because of the homely tenor of delivery – speakers such as Earl Shoaff were poorly educated guys who took to network marketing to earn some extra buttons in the early part of their life. Jim Rohn himself was basically a sales trainer for Herbalife in the latter part of his career. I cannot imagine the level of worship that he enjoyed being replicated in Europe, for a number of very good cultural reasons. Whilst I have no problem with imaginative and non-patronising explanations for things – I once used doughnuts to explain the main theories in social philosophy, for example, sticking with a formula which worked sixty years ago is extremely limiting. I watched Wolfe in the early part of his career becoming extremely frustrated with the apathy he was confronted with as he tried to grow various early versions of his model. (kudos to Wolfe for leaving this material online for me to gawk at) Since then, he has found other ways around the problem. Suffice to say, the world has changed considerably since the Dale Carnegie/Earl Shoaff golden era of smartly dressed and respectful audiences writing down every word their chosen guru says. Today's audience is more focused on education and a level of information provision that Shoaff and Rohn simply did not have to worry about. So, the answer here is to develop a more advanced methodology which includes a little tragedy with the optimism and present a more balanced and believable picture than in the past.

The rich are too rich – One of the more interesting features of Rohn, in this case, is that he does not bother to present himself as a particularly nice person, the grin that does not reach his cold dead eyes is particularly marked. His assertion that we should wish to leave the 90/95/97 percent behind simply does not suit modern thinking – economically speaking, people are now well aware that having a tiny percentage of extremely rich people at the expense of everyone else is not a feature of a healthy society. So, rather than a 'forget the negatives and affirm

yourself to wealth' approach, today's speakers would be well advised to shoot for an informative way to implore the audience to collectively raise their personal bar of achievement. I had a look at *The Secret* a few years back, and it was so despicable in its approach that I was unable to continue with it. Reality check – people are starving to death and we all hate banks – social capital is the future, not leaving people behind to die whilst we roll about in our money. Interestingly, economic anthropology shows that we are thinking more consciously about others in the west as our countries are richer – third world experiments show a far more dog-eat-dog mentality. So, unless you plan to market to a developing nation – try to show some sign of ethical values.

Plagiarism – keeping a journal of things to make you richer is a very bad idea unless you plan to reference everything extremely carefully. It is considered to be acceptable in oratory, because obviously it is impossible to reference every line you say in the course of delivering information. It is, however, relatively simple to paraphrase, and equally easy to mention the source of your great ideas. Rohn's premise of journal keeping, and using anecdotal material to get your point across is just not going to cut it for the future. Instead, it is again quite easy to pepper your material with useful or otherwise stimulating information and heartfelt goodwill to your fellow humans.

The pyramid must die – This is a personal observation – it is time to kill the pyramid – the one percent sit at the top of it. There are other formulations, from the time of the Medici, which I am able to go into, but will save this for a different post or possibly book. If you are employing or being told to employ your affirmations or motivational techniques as part of a sales scheme in which you are on the lower ranks of yet another layered network, just get out of it and find some ideas of your own. You are not onto a winner in the vast majority of cases.

Stop hitching your wagon to other people – I have witnessed life coaches and motivational speakers alike who speak in almost religious terms about their inspiration. I think I have demonstrated from my non-relationship with Wolfe that it is entirely unnecessary to worship your inspiration. It is entirely possible to see people for what they are, admire them for the good bits, and kick them in the ass for the bad. It is called, amusingly, being objective. Objective objectification, in my case, presumably, given my ongoing project. I do this mainly because I want him to get what he wants from his life, but this does not mean that I have any responsibility for his success or failure, that is entirely up to him. My direction is parallel, rather being on the same wagon trail. The point is that there is no answer – you should be shooting for your own path, not dragging

your heels on someone else's. Which brings me on to my final point for this evening –

Original Material – despite the many problems I would love to get my teeth into, (alas I am not a 22 year old beach bunny) Wolfe's use of whimsy kept me listening to him for several weeks before I realised why it sounded so familiar, and yet so odd. His timing is impeccable, just when you are thinking you have heard enough about premium spirulina, along comes some random wildness that shocks you back into your chair. Whilst this is to be applauded, it is important to self-generate something that is completely your own. You need to wallow happily in your own filth, to a certain extent, to be producing something that you are so comfortable with that you own your topic, whether you are writing, or speaking. Being confident is not about following a model, it is about making use of a model for your own purposes. It is imperative that any keen audience get some sense of acceptance. Bringing a sense of dignity to your audience whilst raising their consciousness may seem like a return to an evangelical approach, but it is perfectly possible to instill pride, and make use of it, in an audience which has been lulled into defeat by an increasingly oppressive meritocratic approach. This does not mean that you start every speech with tales of poverty and anecdotes of failure, as used by Zig Ziglar, but it does mean that you remove the barriers from an increasingly cynical and browbeaten public.

SO YOU WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

Do you really want to be successful? I am beginning to wonder if I really want to be successful. I used to care, and now I am not at all sure.

Until my father was ill, and my mother unaware that she was not really well enough to take care of him, all I cared about was getting ahead. It did not really matter how I managed it, it is a family failing that we rate financial and work related worth above anything else. The reason for this is fairly simple – my father was uncommunicative and yet went from being a school truant to having a successful business and restoring a beautiful house, which we then proceeded to run into the ground until I restored it all over again fifty years later whilst looking after him and mother.

In the course of my early 'getting ahead' journey, I got to my version of the top of my career in five years, created several businesses before capitulating to my family's delusions of middle class grandeur and stupidly attempting to switch career in my early thirties.

Studies have shown that large breasted women are considered to be less able at work. Pair this with a riot of curls and cripplingly tough work ethic, and even I can see why insecure employers preferred the nearest spotty boy. Alongside this, I am guilty of becoming bored easily and attempting to solve problems which nobody else has either noticed, or been bothered by as long as the mortgage is being paid at the end of the month.

I am a pain in the ass, and what's worse is that it is not safe for a standard thoughtless male manager to assume that I would rather be in bed with some tiresome guy making babies than working. My appearance is extremely misleading. I suppose that this should be in the past tense, since I no longer care or have time.

Right now, success depends on my doing sufficient writing and sewing. I am currently having difficulty moving due to severe pain from binge working on the Sheep in Wolf's Clothing Collection. A little attention is a dangerous thing with me, because I am inclined to set deadlines nobody else would set, just to express wishes nobody cares about. I am determined not to write unless I feel like it, however, as I very much took to heart the quotation from Agatha Christie that she knew she was a writer when she was writing material that she did not like to a deadline. Particularly with the Best Ever books, this is not a good idea.

I tried a couple of massages this week, and this morning by the time they had made it to the right shoulder I was in floods of tears. By the time they had finished I could barely move, and have been in considerable pain all day. All because I was trying to create a new tagline, which is not even for my benefit, since any money made by the artwork is to be ploughed into the Better Person Project. Why was I even bothering? It is not like I could have expected anything but disparagement from my audience of one, and not even because of any actual thoughts in his head. So I was crippling myself to defeat someone else's daddy issues. If the object of one's affection does not like himself, it is highly unlikely that he will ever like you.

It is not the first time I have overworked on someone else's issues, for no real reason. It is part of my own madness that I create abstract non-communication in an effort to encourage self-healing. I have no idea why I do it, I just know that I have to, so I might as well do something with it. Such is the nature of creation. Often your hands know what your brain doesn't, so rolling with it is a short cut.

Anyway, at least my emotional state has tangible benefits in the form of the books and objects, and I am marginally more confident that what might appear to be an exercise in futility, might actually have a point, since evidently I am pretty good at failing now.

I just wish that sewing was not quite so bad for you, and that the driving force behind it was not quite so miserable. I see many people who turn their misery into success psychosis, and I wonder if it is not better to be mediocre and happy?

SELF-IMAGE AND YOUR OUTLOOK

Today has been the last day in Malta, and we took a day tour to Valletta, the capital of Malta. Despite the continuing pain, I just about managed the clambering about, and we had a reasonably good last day.

A young Italian footballer was also on the tour, stinking of alcohol from last night, and became fixated on my ample ass. Twisty was quite annoyed with this, since the very young man expressed his admiration by glowering at my bottom and making comments behind his hand.

“Don’t worry about it, he is a chubby chaser, they are all the same.” I said.

Twisty appeared to doubt this, and stared him down in a grumpy way.

“No seriously, I have been through this more times than you can count. I could get annoyed and assume that he has a problem with large bottoms, but I know from experience that he would be the first one drooling all over me given half a chance.”

The rest of the day was spent dodging this guy staring at me and trying to catch my eye, until eventually I found myself hiding behind the tour guide. I am flattered that he did not instead choose to chase the equally chubby young lady sitting at the back of the bus, who probably had no idea that we had a major fan of rotundity on board.

“Perhaps my future is to be the somewhat geriatric wife of a famous footballer, unless some enormous and somewhat flashier chick gets there first.”

For the ladies out there that don’t know, because I am well aware, especially since writing the books, that there are plenty out there that do not know, men are pretty laid back about female appearance. Even the ones that pretend they want a trophy are just clueless little boys that associate shiny cars, playing expensive sport, and pricey clothing with success. Their assertion that you need to be a skinny blonde bimbo is all front. Men like variety, and there is no telling what they like from one day to the next. Your attractiveness is really determined by your self image.

Much the same thing can be said for men, otherwise there would be no Har Mar Superstar, Weird Al, Marilyn Manson or Keith Lemon. Women quite like to see

confidence, whether that consists of sheer cheek or actual proficiency is of little consequence. Broadly speaking, it is a question of advertising and figuring out the details later.

This can also be said of success. The Pedro on the Beach Story, which has a penniless and lazy fisherman bemused by a millionaire suggesting that he multiply his earnings in order to do nothing, which is what he is doing in the first place, is something we should all take very seriously in a world with dwindling resources.

Whilst there is no glory in poverty, there is no genuine dignity in your delusion of success. Happiness is something you should cultivate regardless.

SELF LIMITING MANTRAS

Continuing my series on motivational topics, here are a few more backwards-ass suggestions for people delivering motivational material, often written off as smug/pompous/dishonest 'idiots' by an increasingly cynical and downtrodden public:

I'm not good enough

Yeah, that is a great excuse. Nice, vague, covers all angles. Of course you are, and if you are not, then you need to break your goal into manageable chunks and take it one step at a time. There are times when you can only spend ten minutes a day on your goal, whatever that happens to be, You owe it to yourself to have no regrets later.

I'm too fat

From experience, you probably got fat because you neglected yourself in favour of other people, or some imaginary idea that being a good citizen involved tasting every product that was advertised to you. How often have you watched an advert and wondered how the very slim model possibly gets away with eating pizza/chocolate/take out food etc? Every item you eat and every choice that you make is causing the problem. I am more aware than most that speaking up for yourself, sleeping sufficiently, taking time for your health, relaxing is considerably more difficult and seems like less of a priority than whatever else you are doing, whether that is work or other people. Although it seems easier to shut up and eat something before rushing headlong towards your next appointment, you really need to get selfish to solve that issue. Some people need to be rejected, some tasks need to be postponed and you need to stop hearing the insults that are preventing you from getting your romantic/professional/alternative goals fulfilled. It is too easy to assume that you will lose weight and your life will change. It won't, so you might as well get on with it before you are sitting in a chair wondering where your life went and why you didn't do whatever it is that you wanted to do. Most people would rather deal with a fat, considerate and thoughtful person than a selfish, thoughtless go-ahead bore. If they can't manage it, they aren't worth your time anyway.

I'm too old

This situation is unlikely to change so either you disregard this thought, or take up dominoes instead of whatever you were planning to do.

I don't have enough money

As I have mentioned in previous posts, this is a question of using your imagination to rethink your plans. I have not come across an idea yet that could not have been off the ground cheaper and faster.

I don't have time

Either your aim is not important to you, in which case why are you even thinking about it, or it is, and you will make time. This is the most lame excuse of the lot. Again it is a question of breaking down your plan into manageable chunks.

People like me don't get to do that

Inadequacy is a boring excuse. You are adequate. Start from there.

They won't listen to me anyway

Yeah, people are often assholes. It is time you stopped listening to them. Get rid of them and do your own thing.

It's too big a risk

Compared with finding yourself in a care home with no visitors? If you rethink your plans, you will come up with a way of reducing your risk to a manageable level. If your priority is reducing risk, you need to take this into account and change your plans accordingly.

What if?

Yeah, you will be saying this a lot if you don't do something about developing your life the way you want it.

It's alright for him/her – He/she is better/more handsome/more intelligent/has contacts/more education than I do

They started out earlier than you. So what?

That stuff only applies to America

While I concur that they are obsessed with money, self-development is not really about money. I don't plan to charge for anything I do until I have a sufficiently solid core from which to radiate. This takes time. There are many ways to build your little castle in the air. It is really up to you how you go about marketing and developing your particular product. You do not have to turn into a brainwashed clone to engage in personal growth.

He/she is a scammer

Yeah this is another good non-specific excuse. It is unclear why it is used so often, when speakers do relatively innocuous things (like selling health food or courses) This is really not a good reason to stop you from doing anything to help yourself.

Hope that helps.

CREATIVE FUNK AND BLOCKAGES

Writer's block means that you are either processing something, have yet to experience something necessary to your development, or simply have too much to worry about. It is not something that you should ever put yourself in the position of fearing. As someone who has many creative strands to my work, I usually deal with it by using one of the others, whether that is making cartoons, games, artwork or helping other people work through their stuff.

Chatting to a friend earlier this evening, we were discussing why he does not seem to want to promote his acclaimed work. It turns out that bad experiences from his past prevent him, on the grounds that he is somehow jinxed. This, coupled with having had successful projects hijacked, has led to a creative block that has been extremely frustrating for me as the viewer, and extremely limiting for him. Despite this, he has managed several small projects, but is suffocated by what I can only describe as a sense of despondence and fear of success.

In this case, it is film-maker's and graphic novelist's block, rather than writer's block. He, in common with another film-maker I have had dealings with, limits himself by not effectively working around the blockage. This is an intermittent, rather than a constant, problem, and in the meantime I take the rather selfish approach of involving him in my stuff (he does all the photography for the store, and is creating the covers for this year's crop of books.) I feel quite bad about this, however, as his time would be better spent generating more of his own work and starting new strands, in a holistic development. You often find, on your downtime from one area that you work in, that you unexpectedly grow in a new direction.

I have many authors on my friend's lists, and barely a day goes by that someone does not complain of being blocked, or that they feel guilty that they have not written that day. In comparison, I frequently do not write for months at a time, and feel nothing at all about it. As I have previously mentioned, Agatha Christie said that she knew she was a professional writer because she wrote things she did not like, at times she did not want to write. I have no plans to be in this position. Deadlines are helpful, but you do not become better by hammering out pulp. I am lucky enough to be feeling quite vital at the moment, but should this change, I have a game to construct and some artwork to do.

It often does not look as if you are doing anything at all, when your work is creative, and then you look back on your day and you have written a press release, researched another couple of textures, absorbed some patterns and shapes, tidied your workspace, sorted some materials for another day. If you look on your writer's block in a similar way, your brain does need time to store information, process it, and proceed to output mode. You can try scribbling tasklists and notes to yourself in the meantime, to try to speed up this process, but it will happen by itself eventually. Mindmapping was a useful technique I used at university, and it certainly helps a lot with business plans and presentations. Plotting the thought bubbles sometimes makes things a lot clearer.

Negative events often cause you to remain in this state of blockage or funk for several years, when you could just break it down into neat chunks. I was very aware throughout this particular creative period, of what was going on, because I had seen it all before. Years ago, I might have bothered to meet Wolfe, on the assumption that there was some magical source of the waterfall of emotion, but even two years of personal misery did not deter me from the creative outcome, thankfully.

Be aware, as a creative person, that the bad things that happen to you are probably even more useful to you than the nice things. Relentless positivity is for insecure, easily threatened people that are unwilling to develop in a realistic way. The bad years, you will find, provide a more stable footing for your growth in the good ones, if you teach yourself to look on it the right way. My friend can now make well regarded film with minimal money, due to the horrific things that have happened to him. If I can just get him past this unwillingness to shout about it – there is no reason why he cannot expand on this if he wants to. It has taken probably the whole fifteen years I have known him for me to understand why he strangles himself with the hostile form of self-doubt that prevents us finishing certain projects. Which brings me to my final point – unfinished projects should not be binned – it is possible that your brain awaits a future event to teach you what you need to know. Growth is not always a smooth process, but it gets a lot smoother when you learn to protect yourself from shock, and that no material is bad material when you are a creative flower.

FAT FRUMP

The advantages of being a fat frump are manifold and varied. Having been a fat frump from the age of four, I can tell you that the first thing that my condition fosters is a very healthy disrespect for vanity. People look the way they choose to look. The way they choose to prioritise their lives is often highly amusing. The most insulting ones are similar to the people who, whilst clearly starting to dement, criticise you for your slow, aged parent whilst mouthing that you must be an angel for putting up with it.

At first it was quite hard. The sense of divorce from the anorexic and the fit drunk (sisters) was quite confusing as a child. I tried very hard to fit in, between bouts of misery and sticking my head in a book or sewing, both of which, of course, meant that nobody could see me to criticise me any further. This meant that I had an unusually advanced reading age, and was communicating far better with my teachers than my peers at a very early age.

On the minus side, the snide comments, particularly as I was a very fast runner, from some teachers were not pleasant and came as a bit of a shock. When I was still ignoring this, I was considerably healthier than I ended up, taking up smoking in an effort to stop eating at 15. Despite my efforts, I was still an enormous 140lb in my teenage years. This would be quite acceptable now, but then it was considered outside.

After a particularly brutal and violent relationship in my late teens, I swiftly lost a considerable amount of weight hill running, as I lived in the country at the time. I then discovered the nature of envy, as my sisters still found fault with the idea that anyone would have seen my enormous rump ascending a hill on Seil Island, which is pretty remote in places. I then learned that bitches are bitches no matter what you do, so you might as well enjoy your lunch.

In terms of boyfriends, I have never been at all short of male attention when I wanted it, big or small. I am not the kind of person that you look at and immediately assess their weight. During my raw period, I shed 150lb, and the people that I interviewed on a yearly basis did not notice, which delighted me no end. There is nothing worse, when shedding your skin, than people telling you how crap you looked the last time they saw you. I was somewhat heartened by

this idea that people see tits, eyes, hair and your general vibe long before they notice your giant thighs. I guess I come from the right country.

Also, I am precluded from going out with sexist wankers who think they need to be seen with someone their friends will fancy. This is good, because it attracts nice people who value your company. Whilst many of my relationships have been disastrous, this has not been because of my size, and I note from many beautiful women that I probably have a lower cheat rate than they do, precisely because of this.

I do like clothing, and this is a problem. Oprah once complained of the five sizes in her wardrobe, and I have to admit that this becomes oppressive. When you have shed a person worth of weight over and over again, you become disinclined to give your clothes away every time you don't fit them, because chances are you will have another blink of sunshine in the form of fitting them at some point. So you become a kind of collector.

Yes it is tiring, but when you have to fell the odd tree, as I have to, the level of strength is quite helpful, and your general invisibility is a nice thing too, because you do not bore the pants off people taking hours to get ready. Personally, I find I am more outward looking than I am in my thinner moments, and the level of neurosis displayed by some of the readers that did not understand Kira makes me pat myself on the back. Life is much easier when you don't have to worry about your appearance because you look crap anyway.

All in all, apart from the obvious damage to your health, being a fat old frump is not too bad. You get a lot of work done, and little interference from people who aren't listening to you. I once experimented with size whilst dealing with people in an academic setting, and it was as if I had lost 100lb worth of respect.

Suddenly sex entered their tiny minds, and it all got quite tiresome.

It does get uncomfortable eventually, and as I explained to Twisty recently, eating whatever you want becomes quite depressing when you know it is because your life is over. Then the whole cycle starts again, until someone obliterates your hope, or some feather blows past in the wind, and you rediscover the joy of your cloak of fat. Then you remove a host of emotional problems that nobody wanted to hear you talk about anyway, and you shut up. Life is always easier when your romantic mouth is so full of food that you cannot speak.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Let me tell you a story, today, about my sister. Not the off-the-planet crazy one, but her sidekick, the drunk. She is fifty five years old, and has nothing positive to contribute to the world. If asked about any subject at all, she becomes aggressive and defensive, and will not lift a finger for anyone unless there is a self-serving reason for doing so.

Many years ago, when I was still a child, she told me to 'get as much as I could' because I wasn't in the will, as it was made in 1964. Little did she know, that neither was she. My father took pains to tell me that his money had been amassed purely for my mother's benefit, and that she was to have as much fun as possible. The year that my sister told me this, my mother told me that I was 'to look after her once they were gone, as she wouldn't be able to cope.' And so the world turns. The selfless must care for the selfish.

Several years later, and this particular sister was telling me that I could not possibly understand her dilemmas on life, as 'my life changes every day.' This is true, if I want to change something, I do not tend to see obstacles in the way of my changing it. It may take a long time, or, as in the case of Wolfe, be improbable, but nothing is out of reach as far as I am concerned, even now. (in case he drops in on one of his in-a-binges, this aside does not relate to meeting him in person as I would regard this as a waste of my time)

My sister has been in a constant rut since she was fifteen years old. She will do almost anything to avoid thinking for herself, and seems to believe that her rut is not only righteous, but a source of comfort. She is one of the unhappiest people I have ever met, despite having amassed quite a bit of money by staying in stable but mind numbing jobs which require a plodding non-initiative based approach. In short, the drunk is a screaming, poisonous bore.

This stability, and the effects of long term drinking, has led to her becoming a bitter, vindictive and malicious person who imposes her very narrow view of the world on anyone she perceives as weaker than herself. In the company of the narcissist serial bully, she is extremely dangerous, since she believes whatever she hears from the stronger personality, and carries out her deranged instructions. One of their many complaints about me began with 'my elderly mother is extremely well looked after.' This as they dumped my unwell mother back at our home and called in a complaint implying that my eldest sister's

inability to look after her was all my fault and that I should somehow be punished.

The lack of rationality aside, these women are both extremely unhappy, despite having comfortable and unrestricted lives. When I compare them with my own extremely constricted situation and frequent hardships whilst looking after my mother, I wonder why their freedom seems to go with such intense unhappiness that they must spend quite so much of their time inventing fantasy complaints about the life of my mother and I. Considering this liberty and affluence, I fear having nothing to strive for. Would it turn me into a bitter, grasping and nasty waste of space, clawing at the air in a deranged search for meaning in my life?

This week, I suggested to her that she might be happier moving away from the rest of the family and getting a life of her own. Her immediate reaction to this is likely to be that I am being manipulative. How she could manage to find manipulation in my stating clearly that this is what she should do, to free herself of the influence of the very spoilt and vindictive eldest sister, with the worry and spite that goes with it, I do not know, but I am entirely confident that she will complain to anyone that will listen that I have suggested that she simply go and seek happiness elsewhere instead of interfering with our lives for the benefit of nobody.

The likely outcome is that nobody will challenge this stupidity, and she will remain a thorn in our side, stopping us from doing anything remotely pleasant, for my mother's remaining years. This is extremely tiresome. Her rut is now gaping wide enough for us all to fall into it.

If you are unhappy, you affect everyone. Make it happen.

About the Author

Ina Disguise is the pen name of a former research worker, industrial explorer and general polymath, who dedicates her entire workload to David Wolfe, health guru, a source of tremendous annoyance to him, and tremendous amusement for her. You will find her blog, updated two to three times a week on her website alongside her artwork and fiction publications, many of which are also free. <http://inadisguise.com/>