Self-Care: Some Prescriptions for Calm Living

(Revised 2014)

Dr. Gerard Blanche

Published by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) as an article for the School Guidance Handbook

Table of Contents

Summary

Ever felt stressed? Or, in contemporary parlance, stressed-out? While this article is basically about stress or, more accurately, stress-management, you'll notice that I've kept stress out of the title. This is because I want you to focus on *what you can do* about stress and stressors in your life, rather than on abstract concepts of stress. Hence the article is a bit prescriptive but, I hope, practical in the suggestions, reflections and exercises I outline. These come from lived experience, both personal and professional, during my years as teacher, guidance counsellor, and psychologist. I adorn the general content of my stall with observations from historical figures, and with relevant citations from academic research. Those who work in the broad fields of education, counselling, and psychology constitute the audience I know best, and from whom I've learnt most. What I set out here reflects, I hope, some of that learning and its practical applications. If readers from other fields dip in and find it useful, well that's a bonus.

Key words

Self-care, mindfulness, solution-focussed, calmness, mental health

Introduction: How did I get myself into this?

When I was asked to write the original of this article in late Autumn 2007, I groaned inwardly. (Indeed, truth to tell, I reacted similarly when I was asked if I would do this 2014 revision!) Oh, no, not six weeks before Christmas! Now, here was a real and immediate case of how I was to care for this carer. One thing I've learned from all those years of assertiveness practice is to recognise my internal hesitation on the heels of a request. When it's clear that it's to be 'No', it's relatively easy to say so. No, I definitely do not want to take part in a bungee-jumping competition, regardless of how deserving the charity is. When it's clear that it's to be 'Yes', as when you ask, Do you think you could eat a box of Milk Tray? I don't experience an instant's hesitation. But when it's, "*Would you write an article in the next four weeks and have it ready by mid-December?"* then " *it's Hmm, I'd like to but ….*" The cogs in my brain started whirring and reminded me that the thing to do now is to ask for time, Give me an hour, a week, forever, and I'll think about it and get back to you. Don't yield to the pressure (maybe self-inflicted) to say Yes or No right away. The editor agreed and we had a little laugh of recognition at what I was up to. So I thought about it and got back within a week, as promised. The week gave me time to set out my stall and these were the terms I offered: I'd do it if the deadline were extended; if I could riff it up with an offbeat rather than a formal academic rhythm; and, finally, if what rolled off the presses were to give the editor heartburn she could shred it and I wouldn't sue. Agreed, she said, and we were rolling.

Perhaps you recognise yourself in this little vignette. You sometimes say Yes to students, parents, colleagues, management, etc. when you really want to say No. You want the world to think you're a good egg, or you don't want the guilt, or you want to build up a few credits to be used later when you want something from that other person, or maybe (sorry about this now) you just lack the bottle to say No. Regardless of the reason or the motive, the upshot is that you may become a doormat, a dogsbody, acquiescent to everybody's needs but your own, hence unhappy and resentful. And how caring is that of yourself?

There's a tidal wave of material on the topic of stress in the popular and scientific press. It comes in under various headings like self-care, stress management, meditation, relaxation, time management & goal-setting, mindfulness, and on and on. Google any or all of these headings and start counting the sites. I could – but I won't! - inflict on you a list of 'what to do and when'. Allow me, instead, to share a few useful things I've learned from my time on this planet about personal and professional care: some reflections, if you like, on scaffolding a 'life' and not just that part of it we call 'work'.

Keep it Simple

Let's use a broad brush-stroke and assert that *self-caring is an ongoing creative process*. As such, you won't fulfil its possibilities by the occasional hot stones massage or a periodic lavender paraffin manicure. Occasional treats, reliefs, and short-term boosts help, of course, but for self-care to be truly effective, it needs to be made part of the infrastructure of your life.

You know very well from personal experience, or from colleagues, the pressures and satisfactions of various work situations. And let's count our blessings before we contemplate our woes. Many people enjoy some or all aspects of their jobs. Their jobs meet many of their needs. In fact, a self-caring thing would be to weigh such gratifications as ballast against the days when you feel like telling the world, '*That's it, I'm out of here, goodbye, I'm going to do a Shirley Valentine*'.

Self-caring works best when it's kept simple – a small number of well-placed struts to hold the scaffolding steady. The pursuit of happiness is a case in point. How to increase and maintain personal happiness is powered up by the following: (1) pausing now and then to count your blessings; (2) performing kind acts (which can jump-start a chain of desirable social consequences); and (3) reframing situations in a positive light (Lyubomirsky, 2005).

Accentuate the Positive

Cultivating a positive outlook is also good for our relationships. Srivastava (2006) suggests that having at least one optimist (i.e., someone with an abiding inclination to expect positive outcomes) in a relationship is likely to lead to longer and more fulfilling relationships. Dorothy Rowe (2003) observes that happiness cannot be achieved in isolation. It's a by-product of doing what we want to do; something that happens when work or relationships fulfil us; when we do what we believe is important.

The Nike advertisement urges, Just do it! And courtesy of Dr. Tony Bates this phrase: '*Action precedes motivation*'. This means that it's more productive to start doing things in your life in an effort to feel better, than waiting to feel better before you start doing things. It's much easier to act your way into a feeling than it is to feel your way into an action. So get out there, even if you don't feel like it, because you don't know what you may see, hear or experience, when you take the plunge, that may interest or energise you.

Waiting for something to happen instead of getting on and making it happen may involve a long wait. I like the Chinese proverb quoted in one of Paul Theroux's (1988) books: "*A peasant must stand a long time on a hillside with his mouth open before a roast duck flies in*".

A useful exercise is the *Seven Day Challenge*: for a period of seven days start each morning by asking yourself questions such as the following, and committing yourself to really exploring them – *In my life right now what am I happy about? What* else *could I be happy about? What am I grateful for? What* else *could I be grateful for? What do I enjoy? What* else *could I enjoy?* And so on.

And don't forget the other side of the coin: Anne Michaels (1997) wrote, '*I see that I must give what I most need'*. If, for example, I want joy in my life, I need to be a source of joy myself, I need to give joy. A giver, not just a taker.

Focus on what Matters

Living as we do in an increasingly litigious society, all professionals should have an eye to the train coming down the tracks in case it stops to offload negligence or malpractice suits. There are so many i's to be dotted and t's to be crossed that some professionals grimly joke about getting out before being found out. Alleviating the attendant stress, and building a sense of professional self-confidence, can be assisted by:

- being a member of a professional association & adhering to its code of ethics;
- consulting with colleagues, and endeavouring to build a support system;
- participating in supervision;
- engaging in relevant CPD activities;
- knowing the scientific bases of your counselling and psychometric work;
- recognising the limits of your competence and referring cases to superiors or specialist services where appropriate;
- remaining open to feedback from students, clients and colleagues, mindful of Benjamin Franklin's (1706-1790) dictum: '*Those things that hurt, instruct'*.

Share what you can't carry, and insist on not carrying alone what's too burdensome or inappropriate. Be humble enough to admit that you may sometimes need help with that heavy load. Give up the idea that you can (or have to) handle everything alone. Also, think about how receptive, or otherwise, you are to accepting available, or offered, help or care. Do you feel guilty, or embarrassed, about availing of it? Do you resist or shrug off others' attempts to care? And what are these reactions all about?

Always, always, keep notes of *what*, *why*, and *when* you did, or tried to do, X. Getting stuff out of your head and down on paper is both a relieving and clarifying exercise; plus you have a record. As they say, *If you think it, ink it.* Writing it out, or of course discussing it, gets it out of '*here'* and puts it out '*there'* where you can see it, think about it, shift about and reconfigure the pieces, plan around it, and so on. Francis Bacon's (1561- 1626) famous quote is worth another turn here: *Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.*

Look up and down the tracks so you don't get run over by randomly running trains. Legal people talk about the notion of '*foreseeability'*, i.e., certain things can be foreseen and hence precautions ought to be taken. *Duty of care* implies that practitioners be alert to that train coming down the tracks, use foresight, and react prudently.

Keep a log of how you spend your time. This can be useful in at least two ways: (1) it can suffice as Exhibit A when someone asks you (yet again!), *But what do you do exactly as* (for example) *a guidance counsellor?* (2) it can reveal patterns in your routines that bear review, amendment, elimination, etc.

Norman Vincent Peale advised: *"Plan your work and work your plan. Lack of system produces that 'I'm swamped' feeling"*. Time management!

Regrets, I've had a few!

It's commonplace to experience regret about this, that and the other from time to time, to wish we hadn't made mistakes, etc., *"if only I hadn't", "if only I wasn't", "if only I could've"*. We won't always get things right, but instead of berating ourselves for mucking things up, being indiscreet, impulsive, etc., and because we won't always be 'perfect', a useful strategy, courtesy of Declan Coyle (from a workshop I took with him some years ago), is NTT (next-time thinking). Ask: *What could I/you do differently next time*?

An interesting question, posed by King & Hicks (2007), asks if it is good, or bad, for us psychologically to reflect on our regrets. On the face of it dwelling on *what might have been* seems like a recipe for distress and unhappiness. But these authors demur. They use the constructs of '*possible selves'* (e.g., what I wanted to happen) and '*lost possible selves'* (e.g., what I failed to achieve). They suggest that an adult's capacity to confront lost goals (lost possible selves), while it may trigger some unhappiness and regret, is also an indicator of maturity because it increases a person's capacity for sympathy, humility, and empathy; it confirms something for you about yourself that you've lived through and survived some difficult times; it may even help you see the silver lining in the loss. It reminds me of an observation by the Dalai Lama who said that sometimes not getting what you want is a wonderful stroke of luck!

Beware of Expectations

The moral embedded in the famous Robert Rosenthal experiment is that the performance of others – as well as of ourselves – will rise or fall in line with our expectations. Our early carers set the tone for these expectations through scripting, shaping, and conditioning. What were your parents' expectations of you? And what are you, yourself, now bequeathing to your children, students, and clients? Much of the rhythm of social life is impacted by expectations; they can have liberating or imprisoning effects. The comedian Bill Cosby said: *I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.*

Cultivating an attitude of positive expectancy is a key to personal success and happiness, and to higher self-esteem, with obvious interpersonal spin-offs. Brian Tracy, the motivational speaker**,** declares that whatever you expect *with confidence* – good or bad – is likely to happen. He suggests that a 'good outcome' can be encouraged by the following, admittedly corny, addendum to your morning prayers: "*I believe that something wonderful is going to happen to me today*". Makes me blush even to write it, but try it, it could propel you (and

others maybe) into a happy day. And if it doesn't work, what harm? Probably you didn't believe with enough confidence that it would!

Worry, Worry, Worry! Well, no, try not to.

Frequently we worry rather than work; we worry about doing poorly, worry about getting behind, worry about being overloaded and not knowing where to start – in other words, spending our time worrying rather than working. Of course, 'working' or getting down to work requires clear objectives, good time management and organisational skills, and so on, but when all that's accounted for, you still need to put your step on the first rung of the ladder, and then you're on the road to somewhere.

Norman Mailer (1923-2007) wrote: "*I've always thought that everything you learn is done by fighting your fear*". (*The Deer Park* 1955/1997).

Brian Tracy offers us *The Worry Buster*:

- *Step 1:* when you have something on your mind, define it clearly in writing. What exactly is it I'm worried about? Accurate diagnosis is 50% of the cure.
- *Step 2:* once you've defined it clearly, determine the *Worst Possible Outcome*. What is the worst possible thing that could happen? Make it so concrete that the realities – and options – become clearer. People who worry they have cancer, but don't have a check-up, exacerbate their condition by living with the worry rather than dealing with a known reality. Much anxiety and stress comes from not knowing, from *imagining*, or indeed from expending energy on erecting 'not wanting to see' defences.
- *Step 3:* resolve to accept the worst should it occur. This isn't fatalistic, just acceptance of a reality that 'what can't be cured must be endured'.
- *Step 4:* begin immediately to ensure the worst doesn't happen. You've now accepted it might happen and that you'll live with it if it does, but you're also going to try to *not* let it happen.

As Hamlet said (or Shakespeare really): "…*take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them*".

Leahy (2005) coins the term '*health perfectionism'* where every physical discomfort or imperfection is interpreted as a sign of disease. With access to a virtual infinite stream of information via the internet it's easy to get immersed in one's ailment, over-diagnose, misdiagnose, indeed even self-prescribe. Information overload often results in intensifying fears about health.

US President Teddy Roosevelt (1858-1919) is credited with the following: *Do what you can, where you are, with what you have, and don't worry about the rest.*

Focus on the Solution not on the Problem

You are undoubtedly familiar with Solution-Focussed Brief Therapy (SFBT) in which the primary focus is on the nature of the solution rather than on the nature of the problem. It's mainly, then, a solution-building rather than a problem-solving approach. People don't want their problems, they want solutions to their problems.

The 'problem' with problem-talk, according to SFBT, is that it reinforces a problem-focus, it likely enlarges the problem in the client's perception, also it traps the counsellor-client exchange in talking about *more of the same* that clearly isn't working, and, critically, it doesn't identify client resources that might foster change.

Most of you have access to how SFBT works, so I'll take just one small example here of an exercise, courtesy of Chris Iveson, from a workshop I attended with him some time ago. This exercise, called *Transfer of Skills Exercise*, is designed to focus on the last-mentioned point above, viz., *identifying resources in oneself or others that might foster change:*

A. Think of an area in which you feel competent -

- on a scale of 1-10 rate your competence in that area;
- use 20 adjectives to describe that competency.

B. Think of an area in which you do *not* feel competent, but *would like to be* –

- on a scale of 1-10 rate where you are;
- see if you can *increase your position on the scale* by transferring some of the skills and personal qualities, identified in A, to B.

Lifestyle and Mental Health

According to Walsh (2011) health professionals have significantly underestimated the importance of lifestyle for mental health. He identifies the principal therapeutic lifestyle changes (TLCs) as: exercise, nutrition and diet, time in nature, relationships, recreation, relaxation and stress management, religious or spiritual involvement, and service to others. "*Lifestyle factors can be potent in determining both physical and mental health. In modern affluent societies, the diseases exacting the greatest mortality and morbidity – such as cardiovascular disorders, obesity, diabetes, and cancer - are now strongly determined by lifestyle"* (p. 579).

Walsh goes on to say that differences in just four lifestyle factors – smoking, physical activity, alcohol intake, and diet – exert a major impact on mortality. He quotes from research published in 2008 (see p.376 of Walsh for citation) that concluded that "*even small differences in lifestyle can make a major difference in health status*".

In one of his wonderful books Robert Macfarlane (2007) says: "*What was it that W.H. Murray had written? 'Find beauty; be still!"*

Think Straight

We know how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interlocked in a spinning cycle: the *thought I'm not good enough* may trigger a *feeling I feel miserable* which in turn may trigger an *action* such as giving up, snapping at others, excessive drinking, etc, etc. Albert Ellis (1913-2007), the grandfather of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), said that if you want to change the emotional consequences of an event, you have to change your beliefs about it. He helped us realise that we need to put aside irrational expectations, deal with realistic things in a rational way, and get on with it. And if we are to succeed at something we must first *believe* that we can.

Ellis was fond of this quote from the Greek sage and Stoic philosopher Epictetus (died 135 AD)*: Men are disturbed not by things but by the views which they take of them.*

CBT, as you know, has highlighted the infamous *Seven Types of Thinking Errors* of which 'limitation thinking' is an example. Self-limiting beliefs don't exist in reality, of course, only in our minds.

The following is an example of how to counter *limitation-thinking*:

- You ask someone to do something and s/he says s/he can't. A typical response is *Why not*?

- *Why not*? invites the other person to dwell on all the reasons why s/he *can't* do it, which makes it even more difficult to do it.

- If, instead of *Why not*? you ask *What would happen if you did do it*? you're inviting him or her to think about the possibility of actually doing it.

- If the person thinks about this question, s/he will start to imagine doing it, and that's a big first step to actually doing it.

In Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Lucio says to Isabella (Act I Scene 5): *"Our doubts are traitors/And make us lose the good/We oft might win/By fearing to attempt"*.

The American jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841-1935) remarked that the great tragedy of many people's lives is that they die with their music still in them. They're not, as George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) said he wanted to be by the time he died, "*all used up*".

Be Conscious of Choices

Paul Wilson (*The Little Book of Calm* 1999**)** states: "*Whether you recognise them or not, you usually have choices. The art is to recognise them. Because when you can see your choices you will feel free"*. Some people focus mainly on the choices they don't have and dissipate their energies in victimhood; counting their crosses and losses instead of their blessings; hence they miss out on the possibilities of building upon what they actually *do* have.

Relaxation and/or meditation workshops (days, weekends, etc.) offer beneficial time-outs from the rush and crush of daily life. They encourage us to sift through the cluttered agendas of our lives and sort the essentials (the priorities, maybe) from the non-essentials (what can be consigned to a 'To Do Sometime If Ever' list).

Michael Cunningham (1995) wrote that we can find ourselves "*Working ourselves to death to keep ourselves alive*".

Choices emerge when we stop running, pause, and take stock. 'Taking stock' involves staying in/with the present moment. For example the *Mindfulness* movement asks: *How much of you is present at this moment?* A big part of you may be elsewhere (the past, the future) struggling with something that preoccupies you, or that occupies your memory or your imagination.

John O'Donohue (1997) wrote: "*Time and again we miss out on the great treasures of our lives because we are so restless. In our minds we are always elsewhere. We are seldom in the place where we stand and in the time that is now"*.

You may find it helpful to consider the following 5 Step Plan for cutting though the pack-ice:

1. Recognise what upsets/distresses you.
2. Commit to changing the things you can (Solution Focussed Brief Therapy techniques may be very useful here).
3. Change your attitude if you can't change the situation (*re-view* and *re-frame*).
4. Use a healthy exercise and diet plan.
5. Make space for doing some things that give you a buzz.

Also, examine any perfectionistic tendencies in yourself; they're certain to gum up the works. If your best has to be *the* best, you're inviting heartache and maybe heart attack. Remember too that perfectionists can be made doormats of by others who flatter with, "*I know you can do this better than me*". Let go of the idea that your worth is determined by your achievements and accomplishments, and cultivate a realistic view of any need you may have for other people's approval.

Mindfulness

You know you're '*hot*' when TIME magazine features you on its front cover, and so with mindfulness (Pickert, 2014); her article takes as its anchor the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn (2013) and his earlier research. According to TIME:

> *"At one level, the techniques associated with the philosophy are intended to help practitioners quiet a busy mind, becoming more aware of the present moment and less caught up in what happened earlier or what's to come …. If distraction is the pre-eminent condition of our age, then mindfulness, in the eyes of its enthusiasts, is the most logical response …. Though meditation is considered an essential means of achieving mindfulness, the ultimate goal is simply to give your attention fully to what you're doing* (p. 38)."

If practice doesn't always necessarily make perfect, things like meditation, yoga, sitting in silence, and mindfulness exercises are designed to improve our attention-giving and focussing against a backdrop of a deluge of distracting stimuli and instant news and information that ultimately exhaust and frazzle people. Even a long sentence like you've just read is irritating!

What we all need, of course, is mental space rather than mental clutter, space in which to mull over things, to turn things over and sideways in our heads, to consider and re-consider, etc, without the constant aggravation of deadlines and time-pressures. There's so much noise in modern life! Even so much light pollution that in much of Western Europe it's hard to see the dazzling night sky in all its splendour. Small wonder that in order to 'see' we often have to close our eyes.

Pay Attention!

If the old tenet remains true that you can only *fully* attend to one thing at a time, and if, say, you suffer anxiety or pain but choose (for a little while, at least) to focus on something else (e.g., imagining yourself walking along the bank of a rippling river, or through a dappled woodland) where does your anxiety or pain 'go' for the duration? Not away *away*, of course, but perhaps 'out of sight, out of mind' for a bit, thus alerting you to the possibility of creating some space in your thinking for something other than the pain or the anxiety.

The renowned Scottish psychiatrist, R.D. Laing (1927-1989) toured Canada a few years before he died. The workshops and seminars he gave were video-recorded. He described a particular encounter as follows: one day he found himself exchanging amusing anecdotes and stories with a patient he was treating for depression. At the end of the fifty minutes the patient bounded jauntily to the door, happy as the proverbial Larry, then stopped as if stunned, turned back to Laing and, struck by the thought that he might not have got his money's worth, said, "*But I came in here to talk about my depression*!", to which Laing replied, "*Think about this: where was your depression for the last fifty minutes while we focussed on something else?"*

Mental and physical well-being go hand-in hand, of course. An old Indian saying goes (so I'm told): *If you want to see what your thoughts were like yesterday, look at your body today. If you want to see what your body will be like tomorrow, look at your thoughts today.*

Calm Yourself

Anthony de Mello (1931-1987) says that our attitudes are the 'control centre' of our lives. All of us have 'attitudes', of course, and we know that they underpin our behaviour. For example, a '*must win every argument*' attitude may mean pumping up the volume with shouting, glaring, threatening gestures, and worse. You'll know that you're in a power struggle if you become angry in response to a behaviour with which you're presented. You have a choice - get into it, or stay out of it. Colleagues, parents, managers, students, etc, may entice us '*into it*', but the cost may be horrible. It may become a tit-for-tat saving face/losing face struggle. The escalating situation may trigger things said or deeds done that echo forever. What's more, the other party may glean some satisfaction (or more) from goading us into an indiscretion.

E. M. Forster (1879-1970) wrote: "*There's never any knowing which of our actions won't have things hanging on them forever*". (*Where Angels Fear to Tread* 1905).

Tactically clever individuals know not to stir the pot too vigorously. Where possible they avoid confrontation, believing that it makes bad situations worse and enemies out of antagonists. They never, as they say, light a fire they can't put out. Some wise ***Anon***. said: *People with clenched fists cannot shake hands.*

The claim of John F. Kennedy to be a great American president rests on a single strength, according to Freedman (2000), viz, he knew when to quit (in reference to the Bay of Pigs fiasco). Kennedy himself wrote (*The Saturday Evening Post* 1960): "*Keep strong, if possible. In any case, keep cool. Have unlimited patience. Never corner an opponent and always assist him to save his face. Put yourself in his shoes – so as to see things through his eyes. Avoid self-righteousness like the devil – nothing is so blinding*".

Every guidance counsellor knows about using *I-messages* instead of *You-messages* for communicating displeasure or dissatisfaction with another's behaviour. They also know about *Active Listening* for defusing angry outbursts and red-hot emotions. The *Principled Negotiation* model for reaching constructive agreement (where you have a problem with another person) runs as follows:

1. Separate the person from the problem. Ask: *What is the problem between us*?
2. Try to empathise, i.e., establish the other's reality without getting snagged on whether or not it's 'objectively' true.
3. Avoid blaming the other party; it only prompts resistance, defensiveness and sulks.
4. Practise non-defensive listening (also known as taking it on the chin).
5. Acknowledge the other's feelings without necessarily accepting responsibility for the grievance.
6. Distinguish between *interests* and *positions*; our positions may be different but our interests may be similar – and that may be a good place to start.

Resolving fraught situations (especially those where you can't change the person and you can't change the situation) may mean you have to change something in *yourself* – your expectations of others, your level of tolerance, your style of communicating (e.g., *asking* instead of *ordering*). This is humbling but honest.

Accept what you Cannot Change

Beryl Bainbridge (1998) wrote: *"I must bear and forbear and not wish things to be other than they are"*.

Acceptance and allied attitudes, are fundamental to a Buddhist approach to self-care, according to Nirbhay Singh (in Murray 2002):

- *Acceptance*: recognise that some people and things will be as they are.
- *Non-judging*: get beyond thinking of people and situations as good or bad. Achieve a more neutral, observant state.
- *Patience*: set a steady pace. Think before acting. Avoid quick or automatic reactions.
- *A Beginner's Mind*: open your mind. Listen to and learn from others.
- *Trust*: start by trusting people. Only distrust them when you have a valid reason to do so.
- *Non-striving*: focus less on the future and more on the present moment and the job in hand.
- *Letting Go*: know when to rest, to withdraw or to stop, and allow yourself to do so.

Acceptance, according to Rose Tremain (1999), is the harshest lesson life teaches, and the one most important to learn.

And finally …

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) wrote: *I have resolved that from this day on, I will do all the business I can honestly, have all the fun I can reasonably, do all the good I can willingly, and save my digestion by thinking pleasantly.*

Biography

Gerard Blanche holds doctoral-level qualifications in both educational and counselling psychology. He is now retired but, in a previous life, was a second-level teacher and a guidance counsellor for four years before going to America to study for his MSc and PhD in psychology. His principal work as a psychologist was with the City of Dublin VEC (now City of Dublin ETB) Psychological Service. He was also a part-time lecturer in psychology at Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, and NUI Maynooth. For many years he was also involved with counsellor-training with NUI Maynooth.

References

Bainbridge, B. (1998). *Master Georgie.* New York: Carroll and Graf.

Cunningham, M. (1995). *Flesh and Blood.* New York: Picador.

Freedman, L. (2000). *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos and Vietnam*. Oxford: OUP.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full Catastrophe Living: How to cope with stress, pain and illness using mindfulness meditation*. New York: Bantam/Random House.

King, L. & Hicks, J. (2007). Whatever Happened to "What Might have Been"? Regrets, Happiness, and Maturity. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 62, 7, pp. 625-636.

Leahy, R. (2005*). The Worry Cure: Seven Steps to Stop Worry Stopping You.* New York: Three Rivers Press.

Lyubomirsky, S. (2005). *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 111- 131.

Macfarlane, R. (2007). *The Wild Places* London: Granta.

Michaels, A. (1997). *Fugitive Pieces* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Murray, B. (2002). Sound body, strong researcher. *APA Monitor*, July/August, p. 61.

0'Donohue, J. (1997*). Anam Chara* London: Bantam.

Pickert, K. (2014). The Art of Being Mindful. *TIME* (February 3rd) pp. 38-42.

Rowe, D. (2003). 3rd ed., *Depression: The Way out of Your Prison*. London: Routledge.

Srivastava, S. (2006). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 9, No. 1.

Theroux, P. (1988*). Riding the Iron Rooster: By Train through China*. London: Putnam.

Tremain, R. (1999). *Music and Silence* London: Chatto and Windus.

Walsh, R. (2011). Lifestyle and Mental Health. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 66, 7, 579 -592.

Wilson, P. (1999). *The Little Book of Calm.* London: Penguin.