

# WellBeing

IS CREATING YOUR BEST LIFE

Let it go  
The myth of  
multitasking

*become brave  
& free*

Discover your  
unencumbered mind

**Nature's  
collagen  
boosters**

The antidotes  
to toxic positivity

**Foods to  
keep you  
calm**



*the chemistry of  
staying up when  
you're down*

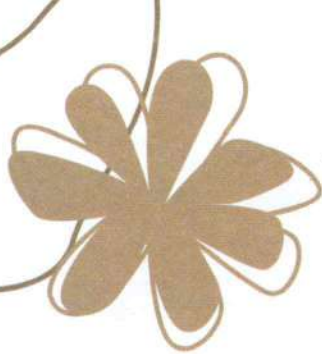
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# Being up while down

*You know that feeling when one part of your life is in a flat tailspin while another part is soaring to great heights? We are complex beings and capable of experiencing all the emotional seasons in one day like rain on a sunny day. Of course, this can be disorienting and draining, but the trick is knowing how to deal with life when we feel torn in two, feeling both good, bad and just a bit mixed up.*

Words MARIE ROWLAND

**H**ave you ever laughed out loud at something funny while feeling desperately upset about a situation going on in your life? Or when asked how you are, have you unconsciously answered, "Up and down." While that response may sound contradictory, even confusing, it can actually act as a very accurate assessment of how you are feeling in that moment. It might be that you're feeling really good about home life but are all at sea at work. At a deeper emotional level, you could be feeling a sense of loss that comes with heartbreak or grief, but also feel really energised and comforted by what's ahead or knowing you have other bonds of love.

In psychology, there is a therapeutic process called "parts therapy". It is where the client can break down and name the different emotional parts within them rather than be defined by one feeling. And the therapeutic language is recognisable to all of us as we use it every day without even thinking about it. "There is a part of me that is super-excited to be starting over but there is another part of me that's really scared." The human condition means we can hold discordant, even opposing emotions within us. It is like being at traffic lights where the red and green lights turn on at the same time. Sometimes this can cause a traffic jam inside us and we simply can't deal with the conflicting emotions.

These contradictory feelings can be unhelpful, causing us to get stuck.

But, in actual fact, this is what it is to be human. And it's part of life. Further, these uncomfortable and disorienting feelings can serve you. By distilling or separating your emotions based on the different external triggers you can accept your situation and work out ways to deal with the clashing aspects of life. Life is not a case of one emotional size fits all.

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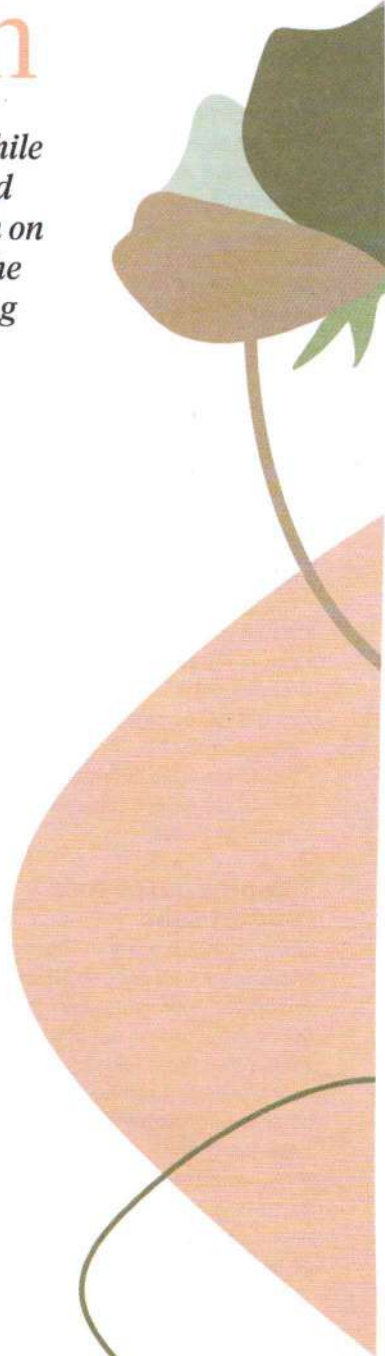
*... sometimes the heart see-saws up and down, but over time an equilibrium can be found.*

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## **Weathering the emotional sunshower**

Understanding the divergent parts of yourself helps you cope with the myriad pitfalls that beset you throughout

life. At some point we are all going to encounter a major, even a catastrophic, situation like a separation, a health setback or a job upheaval, and of course this usually disrupts all parts of life. When a bad event clouds the good parts of your life the good parts become the collateral damage. It is important to take stock of yourself so this doesn't occur. We tend to become consumed and defined by a situation that may be going on in our life, allowing it to overshadow the positive parts that could compensate for that crisis. That one feeling of anxiety or despair effectively infects the good feelings that exist in other areas of life which, if reviewed separately, could provide the antidote or equaliser. It is helpful to think about this from the point of view that we all have experienced rain while the sun is shining. While we dislike but tolerate getting wet, we can still enjoy the warmth from the rays of light.







### Falling apart

You may have used the phrase “I’m falling apart,” which provides a visceral image of your internal state. We feel that all parts of ourselves are in free fall or disintegration, but in actual fact it may only be one or two parts that are in that panicked or desperate state. Yet we allow the whole internal structure to fall apart. That doesn’t need to be the case.

So how do you compartmentalise or quarantine the part that is distressed so that you can give oxygen to the parts that are working well, which could in fact sustain you through a difficult time? For example, someone going through a painful or protracted separation can still find emotional nourishment through their children, grateful that they were the joyous gifts of this now defunct union. Perspective can assist in how you hold these opposing emotions of grief and love. It is a balancing act, and sometimes the heart see-saws up and down, but over time an equilibrium can be found.

It sounds hard, but there is a way to carry on and take control of or uphold the other parts of your life that you have some governance over. For instance, losing a job is a destabilising event, but this doesn’t preclude you from appreciating and optimising those aspects of your life

that are going well or can bring respite. Of course there is grief and loss to contend with, but have you noticed that those who have been through challenging events can find solace and inspiration by drawing on the other parts of self where they have control, such as their fitness and health where literally great strides are made?

### Survive to thrive

When you can successfully create emotional delineation, you can enjoy or relish that part that is doing well, and this is a confidence booster, helping us to remain optimistic about life. This propagates creativity and drive, and new possibilities may open up which otherwise would have not been explored. One part of the self may be going through pain but other parts are discovering hope, success and even enjoyment. You may then say, “This part of life is crap but I’m really finding happiness in this other part.”

In fact, that setback can actually be the making of you. It can bring about much-needed change or renewal that you never thought about before catastrophe struck. Now this is not denial or deflection of that pain, but rather being resourceful and looking to redefine your life based on the new conditions presented to you. It is possible to

acknowledge and even verbalise how sad or disappointed you are about one aspect of your life, while recognising that you are in the process of growth in another part. Training your attention on what is good in your life is a critical survival mechanism which helps to stave off despair or hopelessness. Surviving well effectively becomes thriving. Often we don’t know what we have inside us until we are tested. We tend to be complacent about the positive things until other parts of our world fall apart.

It is useful and even liberating to acknowledge that one part of your life can be difficult, but that doesn’t mean the wheels fall off the other parts. Necessity is the mother of invention, and in fact it can be exhilarating to know that you are capable of things you never believed possible. Life has so many moving parts and sometimes they don’t all move together in synchronicity. The trick is to move the parts that are available to you.

### Inside out

Disney studio Pixar makes kids’ movies, but nowadays movies like *Toy Story* actually tell parables or are morality tales examining the human condition, helping both little and big people to deal with even the big issues like death or loss. One such movie was the 2015 release *Inside Out*. Essentially it was the story of an 11-year-old girl, Riley, who unhappily moves cities with her family, depicting the subsequent fallout she experiences as she comes to terms with her new life. But this is where the story becomes a little complicated in its narrative — her five core emotions of fear, anger, joy, disgust and sadness are all personified by characters in her head battling it out. Carl Jung, the founding theorist and proponent of the subconscious mind, would have a field day with this one.

Essentially, this movie teaches kids (and adults) that we all have emotions inside us and at times they are in conflict with each other causing pain and confusion. However, it illustrates how you can find a way to accept and accommodate all these emotions simultaneously, understanding that each one plays a role in creating a sense of self as you form your own understanding of the world.

It also shows children who are often shielded from the harsh realities of life that this modern notion of always being positive and remaining upbeat is not realistic or even healthy. It is OK to experience and express anger and sadness; in fact it is critical for our sense of wellbeing. Without knowing despair, how can you truly relish joy? Without feeling fear, how can you display courage? Emotions may be discordant but they can coexist.

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*By allowing yourself to register these as legitimate emotions you can then arm yourself with the tools to evolve, maybe solve and live with your situation.*

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Whether a child or an adult, when you can name and acknowledge all the varying emotional parts of yourself, then you are better equipped to bring healing and integration to the whole self. Instead of suppressing or denying those parts that hurt you, such as loss, you seek to own them. By allowing yourself to register these as legitimate emotions you can then arm yourself with the tools to evolve, maybe solve and live with your situation. The core self remains intact even if we remain unresolved. We come to accept that life is a work in progress; it always changes, and how we feel also ebbs and flows according to what life delivers us.

### Emotional gridlock

So what happens when one part of your being is full steam ahead while another part is stuck in reverse? How can you find resolution when you feel this internal division not knowing how to come or go? This is a form of emotional gridlock where you feel confusion and inner disharmony. The trick is to distil your emotions but to find a pathway to harmony, even stillness. How can you be up and down without getting emotionally dizzy?

The "Four Aces" approach can help with those internal ups and downs.

#### Accept

- Accept that life is full of ups and downs.
- Accept the part of your life that is not working and embrace and celebrate the parts that are.
- Accept that it is OK to have this dissonance.

#### Assess

- Assess what is in your control and let go of what isn't.
- Assess the best course of action at the time to cope with the difficult part of your life.
- Assess who are the right people (therapists, friends) to help you manage the part of you that's down.

#### Adapt

- Adapt to your internal situation by acknowledging it.
- Adapt to your circumstances with coping techniques such as breathing, meditating or exercising.
- Adapt to holding opposing feelings without resistance.

#### Adopt

- Adopt a perspective that is helpful to your sense of wellbeing.
- Adopt an approach where you count your blessings every day.
- Adopt the notion of emotional fluidity, knowing that emotional discomfort is impermanent.

### Disintegrate, reintegrate

At one point or another, your life is going to be out of kilter. In fact, there are so few moments in life when everything is in balance, if you blink you'll miss them. Like the perfect yoga pose, we all aspire to achieving them but inevitably we fall out of position having to start over. Perfection is an unattainable dream and a bit boring as well. Besides, if we don't fall, we don't learn how to pick ourselves up.

The father of psychology Carl Jung developed the concept of integration where all parts of the self, both conscious and unconscious, meld in perfect union. This unity in thought, emotion and action where psychological harmony is achieved is tantamount to a Zen-like state which Buddhist monks might attain but mere mortals can only hope to strive for. This is where the notion of equanimity is helpful. To regard both good and bad with same countenance or temperament without allowing it to change your disposition makes for the perfect integrated person. But at times we all disintegrate when parts of our life crumble. It is OK to be vulnerable, to cry and even to despair, but you must always hold on to the parts of life that are hopeful, bring joy and provide that all-important sense of purpose and meaning.

As life has its ups and downs, so too does your internal experience. These inner ups and downs or dissonant feelings can coexist if you allow yourself to accept that this is all part of the human condition. Instead of resisting, avoiding or suppressing it, if you simply accept and embrace that this is life then you can reconcile the good with the bad.

Perhaps the greatest comfort is knowing that your internal malaise is impermanent, and in time those painful emotions will give way to lightness. There will always be a reprieve. Holding onto the good while tolerating the bad is the balancing act we do every day.

One consolation is embodied in the poetically simple but profound Persian saying, "*This too shall pass.*"

*Marie Rowland is a writer and psychotherapist in private practice based in Manly on Sydney's Northern Beaches. For more information go to [talking-matters.com](http://talking-matters.com).*

