



Reaching out can be the hardest thing

Life has been plodding on, mainly average days, nothing of note happening but sometimes that is how life is. What I hadn't expected was bad days creeping in, the lights had dimmed and the world started to look grey. Normal things started to feel really difficult, interacting with family and colleagues felt too hard and took a lot out of me, simple tasks felt too overwhelming and I struggled to make any decisions. Things started to feel too much and it became easier to stay in my own head, not sharing how I was really feeling and shutting myself off from the world.



Pretending to be OK

I have become an expert in pretending that things are OK, but inside I feel like a fraud. Surely everyone can see that I'm not doing well, I feel like people can see right through me, but no one questions me, they ask 'how are you?' and I reply 'fine' and we move on. We all know the saying that 'it is OK to not be OK' but when you're not feeling OK, it is not easy to share and tell someone. A sense of shame and judgment keeps me from opening up and sharing how I really feel with those close to me, I tell myself that this will pass but the black dog had well and truly settled on my chest, physically making it so hard to breathe and constantly swallowing down sadness to appear OK on the outside.

Reaching out

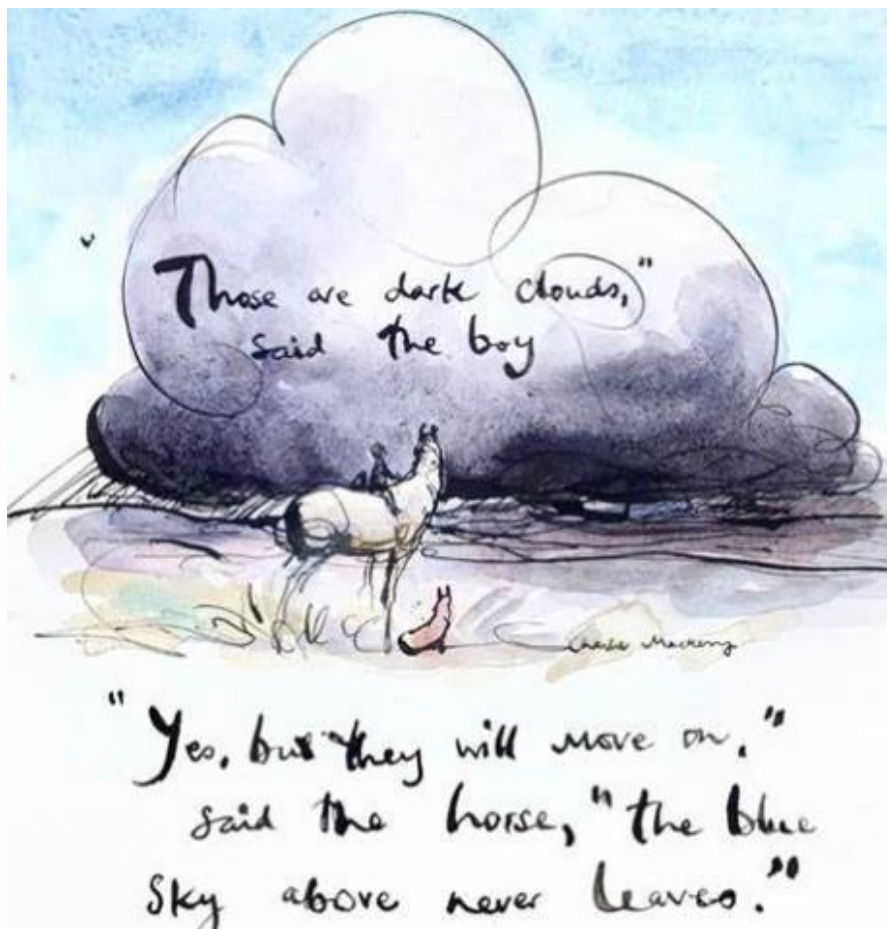
The day I reached out and told someone how I was feeling wasn't planned. It was a Monday morning, the world was once again grey and it got progressively worse. I couldn't recall the last time I had had a day that was just average, it was bad day after bad day and I knew that I couldn't carry on pushing it down. I debated with myself about whether I needed to reach out to someone, convincing myself that it wasn't that bad and surely it would pass. I knew that I did need to share how I was feeling with someone but I was fearful of being judged. So I knew it needed to be someone I didn't know, someone who was paid to listen. I still didn't feel comfortable to make contact with the mental health team but as soon as I did it, it did feel like a weight had been lifted, they took control, booking my assessment, which thankfully was a couple of days later.

Moving forward

It is too early to say that things are better. The blackness of that Monday morning is a bit lighter, it's more a murky grey today as I am writing this. Talking to a professional



who really listened and delved into how I was feeling was very difficult and in some ways opened up trauma that I had been pushing down and just trying to get on with. I felt exhausted sharing how I had been feeling, it was the first time I acknowledged how much I had been pretending to be OK. She helped me recognise that I need some space to explore things and I have been referred for therapy which starts this week. If I hadn't reached out for help that day, I don't think I would feel that glimmer, so I am glad that I did seek help and open up. It helped to know that I didn't have to wait a long time for support and I was treated with care and compassion. It definitely wasn't easy to do but I am glad I did. It has given me a small glimmer of hope that, with support, I can start to see the colours again.



Charlie Mackesy, The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse

The author of this article wishes to remain anonymous