Sample Translation "Stay Calm and Carry On" by Sacha Bachim
By Deborah Langton

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH
myth #1 : Good mental health means not being a head case
myth#2 : Where there's a will, there's a way
myth#3 : It's the time of year
myth#4 : The male is stronger
myth#5 : It's normal at that age
myth#6 : Success makes us happy
myth#7 : Strokes of fate make us unhappy
myth#8 : Everything was better in the old days
myth#9 : We're born resilient
myth#10 : We already know what's missing

MYTHS ABOUT SOCIAL NORMS
myth #11 : Work comes before pleasure
myth #12 : Self-praise stinks
myth #13 : I mustn't miss a thing
myth #14 : Giving up booze is no help either
myth #15 : Plan every step we take
myth #16 : All dreams are just daydreams
myth #17 : We are creatures of habit
myth #18 : Always stick to your values
myth #19 : Never leave until tomorrow what you can do today
myth #20 : Always forwards, never backwards

MYTHS ABOUT FEELINGS
myth #21 : Feelings never lie
myth #22 : Feelings are what's happening right now
myth #23 : Worrying matters
myth #24 : Feelings are useless
myth #25 : Stress helps us perform
myth #26 : Addressing it only makes things worse
myth #27 : Acceptance means surrender
myth #28 : Grief has five stages
myth #29 : Once traumatised, forever traumatised
myth #30 : Emotions self-regulate

MYTHS ABOUT SELF-HELP
myth #31 : Just think positively

myth #32 : When anxious, seek distraction
myth #33 : Recovery only comes with care
myth #34 : Nobody has time for selfcare after all
myth #35 : Belt and braces works best
myth #36 : Count sheep to get to sleep
myth #37 : Repression is bad
myth #38 : Self-censorship shows self-discipline
myth #39 : Medication isn’t the answer – or is it?
myth #40 : Therapy is for people with no friends

MYTHS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY
myth #41 : Love is the cure-all
myth #42 : In a good relationship we always want the same things
myth #43 : Our partner is a lightning conductor
myth #44 : Trust is good, control is better
myth #45 : Love needs no words
myth #46 : Whoever shouts loudest is right
myth #47 : A happy family never quarrels
myth #48 : Being a parent is a full-time job
myhth #49 : Punishment is a must
myth #50 : Friendship is for life

AFTERWORD
Acknowledgements
Bibliography

Foreword

Spinach is rich in iron and makes you strong
Swimming after eating is dangerous
Hair grows more quickly if regularly cut
In our sleep we often swallow spiders
Schnapps is good for the digestion
Cracking your knuckles causes arthritis
If you swallow chewing gum it stays in the body for seven years
Your nails carry on growing after you die
Reading in a bad light damages your eyes
You can believe everything in a book with 'Fact-Checked' on the cover

Above are popular assumptions now known to be myths
(apart from the final statement, which is 100% accurate!)

Once I'd finished writing 'Therapy To Go', I thought that was it. Whatever my readers needed to know of my thinking on mental health and psychotherapy was in that book. The cupboard was bare and so I could set aside, with a clear conscience, my short career as an author and focus on my practice. No way would I be writing another book! But then I remembered about spinach…and swimming after a meal and all the other half-truths and tall stories we've grown up with.

Myths are deeply rooted in our society. They permeate our different cultures, shape our beliefs and influence our thoughts, feelings and actions, often without us even noticing. There are all sorts of false assumptions and preconceived ideas about the psyche and they can become a dogma that shapes the way we see ourselves and society. This kind of dogma can foment unfounded insecurity, concern and anxiety and contribute to false expectations of ourselves, our fellow creatures or of the future, and cause us repeatedly to fall into damaging behaviour patterns. Myths can deprive us of our freedom and quality of life. But if we can expose these distorted doctrines and question them, then we can free ourselves of such chains.

And so I've written another book after all… . But this time it's not about what you should know but about the nonsense you should now stop believing. And because I'm still very much a therapist, I offer my readers a practical exercise from the field of psychotherapy at the end of every chapter. Together let's hold the fact-checker magnifying glass over fifty common assumptions that we can definitively explode for the superfluous myths they are!

Myth #6: Success brings happiness

In gleeful anticipation of the fat annual bonus, you swing your feet up on the mahogany desk and revel in lighting a cigar.

In a designer dress or suit, you glide across the red carpet, surrounded by adoring fans clamouring for your autograph as you bask in the flash of lights that only celeb photographers can create.

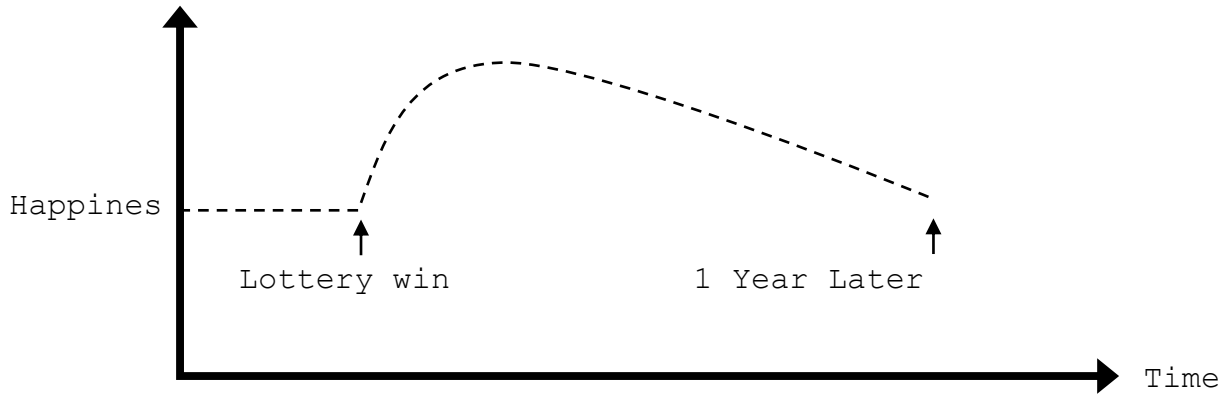
Cheered on by the roaring crowd, you push your body to the limit to be first across the line …

Success is fantastic, isn't it?

When we set and achieve goals, we feel both pride and satisfaction. Success can help our self-confidence, boost our self-esteem and motivate us to further self-development. In the eternal quest for happiness many people find striving for success is the only route ahead. But is it really so? The more successful we are, the happier we are?

Studies show that feelings of happiness and satisfaction derived from professional, financial or sporting success can fade quite quickly with time. The Hedonistic Treadmill Theory shows that people like this tend to react less to positive events and successes and find themselves levelling off relatively quickly to their previous state of happiness (Eysenck, 1990). This means that the initial boost in happiness is only temporary. Over time such new and exciting events lose their attraction.

Most lottery winners report a surge of happiness directly after receiving the news but studies also show that these feelings normalise over time and actually return to their previous level (Brickman et al, 1978).



A lottery win may bring a short-term sense of financial security and comfort but this sudden wealth can bring with it fresh challenges and new problems.

Even sportsmen and women find the elation of a gold medal can quickly fade away. After years of highly-focused training, reaching the ultimate goal can result in feelings of emptiness and loss, or lack of direction. Describing the emotional problems faced by some after taking part in Olympic events (Howells & Lucassen, 2018) led to the concept of 'Post-Olympic-Blues'. Paradoxically success can lead to a sense of dissatisfaction. It's almost like a drug in that we feel we have to achieve more and more in order to feel good, so we find ourselves constantly questing for the next 'rush' of success but in doing so we miss out on moments of happiness in the present.

The pressure and strain of constantly striving for, and maintaining, success can lead to stress, burn-out and that sense of emptiness. If reality is only limping along behind the expectations we've pinned on all this success, then we can end up profoundly disappointed. Many people notice that in spite of achieving the goals they've set themselves, they still have the same sense of insecurity as before. So they may have the good degree, the fat salary, a blue tick on Instagram but still say they get more than butterflies if they have to speak in public. Lots of high-flyers suffer from 'imposter syndrome' and feel they don't really deserve their success, talents or achievements and might at any moment be exposed as tricksters or fraudsters

Even material wealth is no guarantee of happiness as it is closely linked to the process known as social comparison. If someone feels they are in a better financial position than their peers, this can indeed lead to a higher happiness rating. But it's definitely the case that if someone is constantly comparing themselves with those who have 'done well' financially, then they may also experience dissatisfaction and frustration (Anderson et al, 2012). Those who define their self-worth by means of material possessions and social comparison tend to the less happy. So success is no magic solution to life's problems.

Striving for success is a human characteristic that has always motivated and driven us on. Of course we can, and should, be pleased when we reach our goals and are rewarded with recognition or prosperity. But if reaching the summit of that mountain known as 'success' becomes the only thing in our lives, then it can feel pretty lonely up there.

Exercise #6: Back to the Future

Inspired by Lazarus and his research into Multimodal Therapy (1971) and 'time projection' I want now to propose a visualisation exercise in which you imagine yourself to have travelled to a future in which you feel happy.

- Find a peaceful spot where you won't be disturbed. Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing.
- Imagine that you can now travel to a future time in which you are happy. Take time to visualise yourself in this future reality.

- Let your senses work. What can you see around you? What can you hear? Are there any particular smells?
- Who else is in your life? What relationships have you established or strengthened? Take time to experience special moments with loved ones.
- What kind of activities, hobbies or passions fill your life? What do you do on a regular basis to give yourself feelings of joy and fulfilment?
- Feel the joy and satisfaction of this future life. Allow yourself to absorb these positive feelings.
- Now travel back to the present and open your eyes.

So how much did the happiness experienced in that visualisation have to do with success? What would you need right now to help you feel closer to realising that visualisation of an ideal future?

Myth #9: We're born resilient

There are people who remain composed even when hit by the worst fates imaginable while others go to pieces at the slightest hint of stress. The former appear to keep the same pulse rate even when disaster strikes and calmly proceed to save children and pets from the rubble of a natural catastrophe while others practically have a nervous collapse if they miss the first five minutes of their favourite crime show.

People tend to make decisions in accordance with their ability to deal with demanding situations. We're all carved from different kinds of wood or, to put it more scientifically, have our own genetic make-up. Is that why one person becomes an elite soldier and another a yoga teacher?

It has been proven that some people have innate characteristics and capabilities that make them better able to withstand stress and traumatic events. On that basis it can be argued that resilience is determined by our genetic composition. But that is only a small part of the whole story.

Resilience is about our ability to cope with difficult situations in our lives, to adapt and recover from setbacks.

Studies show that loving and stable relationships with parents or carers in our early years, as well as a supportive environment, play a significant role in the development of resilience (Werner, 1992). Over time additional factors, such as education, a wide social circle and access to resources can all contribute to fostering resilience. Research shows that resilience is something dynamic that develops over the course of time and is influenced by a combination of factors.

If our own genetic code is not already programmed with how resilient we might later become, then that means that we ourselves can influence it and make a difference. As parents, teachers or youth workers you, too, can actively guide children towards developing their resilience as they grow up:

- Create a loving and supportive environment. A strong attachment to reliable carers makes a substantial contribution to a firm foundation for resilience.
- Help children develop social skills and empathy and they in turn will then learn to build positive relationships as well as to seek support if they need it
- Support children in learning how to identify a problem, find solutions and make their own decisions so that they are able to deal with their own challenges.
- Encourage children to be optimistic and to believe in themselves. Praise their efforts and successes and help them learn from mistakes.
- Help children to recognise and understand emotions and so deal with them in a measured way, so that when in a difficult situation they can regulate their feelings.
- Give children the opportunity to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own actions in order to develop independence.

Even if our children haven't been dealt the best hand when it comes to their genetic make-up, all is not lost!
So how does it look for us? What if we're among those who grew up under conditions that did not foster our sense of resilience or other modes of self-protection? Can we as parents still make ourselves resilient and stay that way? Current studies prove the value of resilience training based on cognitive behaviour therapy and mindfulness (Joyce et al., 2018). A range of capabilities that contribute to resilience can definitely be learned.

Exercise #9: The Road to Resilience

The American Psychiatric Association guide entitled 'The Road to Resilience' presents ten steps to developing resilience ourselves:

1. Strengthen your own social contacts. Maintain relationships with friends and family. Be there for others. And don't hesitate to ask other people for help and to accept what they offer.
2. Don't see every crisis as an insurmountable problem. Even if we can't change certain situations, we can at least decide how we are going to handle them.
3. Accept changes: if you manage to accept what you can't influence, it becomes easier to focus on how to make the best of the current circumstances.
4. Set yourself realistic goals. Work towards them step-by-step. Set yourselves interim goals and value every milestone.
5. Act with resolve. When faced with a crisis, don't allow helplessness to take you over. Fight back and take your own initiatives.

6. Look at crises as an opportunity for self-development. Try to learn more about yourself from problematic situations so that you can face future difficulties with new strength and let yourself grow.
7. Cherish yourself. Have faith in your own ability and expertise and keep a positive self-image.
8. Keep your eye on the long-term. Don't lose sight of the big picture. Always look at any situation in context.
9. And keep a sense of healthy optimism. Believe that good things can happen. Focus on what you wish for in life and not on what you're fearful of.
10. Look after yourself. Pay attention to what does you good. Keep yourself physically fit and be sure to have fun and do those things that relax you.

If you really want to be proactive about building your own resilience, be sure to go through these ten points from time to time, looking out for those still needing some work.
Your capacity for endurance wasn't set in stone at birth. Make efforts to strengthen and maintain your own resilience. But that doesn't mean you have to become an elite soldier. Yoga teachers are often especially resilient, too.

Myth #24: Feelings are useless

Love life not going right? Fed up? What's the point of all that?
Insecurity? Tension? Who needs them?
Jealousy and envy? Waste of time!
Anger and rage? Gives you bellyache!
Revulsion and disgust? Yuk!
Sometimes it's really hard to comprehend why nature has equipped us with what seem like unnecessary extras, these annoying, even insidious feelings. All we want to do is live our lives in peace but these things sneak up on us! And mostly in situations in which we can really do without those kind of feelings. For example, we might be busy with a piece of work so important that the slightest error would have dire consequences, so we don't dare give in to anything so stupid as stress.
So it's no surprise that we try, consciously or unconsciously, to push our feelings aside (the negative ones at least) and ignore them or even declare war on them. The drawback with all these strategies is that the feelings don't disappear but are sometimes even reinforced.
In fact, feelings are not only extra ballast but also a fundamental aspect of the human experience. Negative feelings play a central role in our physical, psychological and social development.

Every emotion has a specific function:

- Stress is an indicator that something is very important and mobilises all the inner resources we need in order to cope with a challenge.
- Sorrow enables us to process loss and painful events in life. It helps us appreciate the importance of relationships and experiences.

- Sadness tells us that something is missing and prompts us to scrap unachievable goals.
- Fear shows us potential dangers and threats, helping us to take appropriate action and prepare for fight or flight.
- Rage helps us set limits, ward off threats and defend our interests. It can also drive us to make changes.
- Revulsion highlights any potentially unsanitary situation and prevents us from ingesting harmful substances.
- Jealousy makes clear to us the importance of a relationship and reminds us of those things we wouldn't want to lose.
- Guilt points out to us wrongdoing and so motivates us to make amends or to avoid such conduct in the future.
- Shame serves to protect us from social rejection and encourages us to adhere to social norms and expectations.

Our understanding of these functions enables us better to accept negative feelings and to climb out of the downward spiral in which we would otherwise get caught.

- If you notice negative feelings increasingly weighing on you, make a conscious attempt to identify their underlying function.
- Ask yourself whether this function is really being fulfilled in the current situation. Is your fear warning you of a real danger or is it being provoked by an irrational judgement? Do your feelings of guilt really mean that you are in fact guilty or do you only feel so? Is your rage commensurate with the situation and is it really helping you to defend your rights or is it just making you even more dissatisfied?
- Accept all, or part of, the feelings that you recognise as actually fulfilling a function.
- Consider as dysfunctional those feelings that are not helping you defend yourself from danger or not helping your quality of life and be sure gradually to disengage from them.

Feelings can be burdensome and often very unpleasant. Whether we like it or not, they're part of us. By addressing them, however, we can better understand whatever message they're sending us and react in an appropriate way. So who needs all this emotional chaos, you're saying? Just the thought of unpacking your innermost feelings puts you on edge? Great – time to get started! What does all this nervous tension mean?

Exercise #24: The Team of Inner Feelings

Sometimes we experience different feelings all at once. This makes it difficult to identify the appropriate underlying function. Inspired by the concept of 'inner teams' (Schulz von Thun, 2011) I'd suggest the following exercise:

- Imagine you're in a room and all your own different feelings are gathering there as members of 'The Team of Inner Feelings'.

- Identify each member of the team and give them names.
- In your imagination call out the name of each team member. Observe what it looks and feels like and how it behaves.
- Ask each member of the team why they are in this 'inner team' and what their function is. Listen carefully and understand their perspective.
- Encourage the members to talk and work together. Ask them how they can contribute to improving your well-being and decision-making.
- Thank every member of your 'inner team' for their contributions. Imagine how they are working in harmony towards a common goal.
- Take time to consider any new findings and how you can apply these to your daily life.

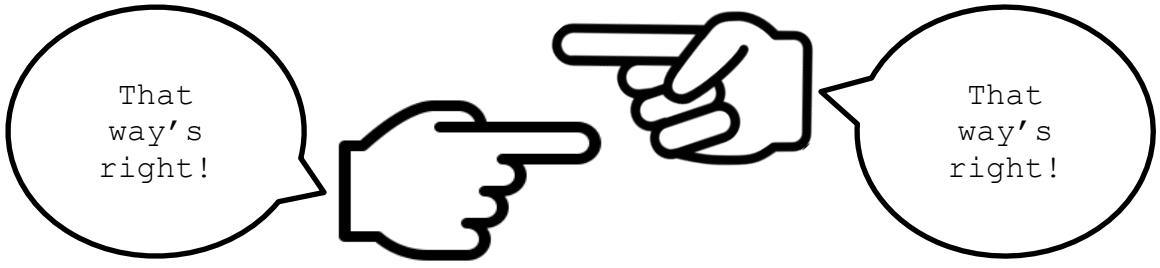
Myth #46: Whoever shouts loudest is right

Being right is a great feeling.

If we're able to argue or demonstrate that we are right, we feel clever and competent. This can be fun, pure and simple, but it can also give us a feeling of mastery, all the more so if we've succeeded in persuading someone to share our opinion. Whether this assumption about 'being right' is justified is debatable.

Studies show that people have a natural inclination not to question new assumptions and instead simply seek out information that will confirm their existing beliefs. This is known as 'confirmation bias' and makes it difficult for us to deal with opinions different from our own, particularly among family and friends (Klayman, 1995). If we deliberately seek out and select confirmatory information and ignore anything contradicting our own ideas, we can develop a disproportionate confidence in our own biased convictions.

Objective reality is, admittedly, interpreted through our own personal filter which is in itself determined by upbringing, socialisation, values and beliefs. We don't see anything with one hundred per cent objectivity but from our own subjective standpoint. This means that someone with an opposing opinion on something we consider glaringly obvious can, with justification, hold a very different view. If two people are facing one another and are both supposed to be pointing right, they'll both actually be right even though they'll be pointing in opposite directions.



Processing confirmed beliefs requires less cognitive effort and is an agreeable exercise in a way that carrying out demanding analyses of contradictory information isn't (Westen et al., 2006). It has been seen that if someone acknowledges the different opinion of another, the brain activity in the prefrontal cortex, so the part of the brain that processes information, automatically decreases. What actually happens is that the brain responds with emotional stress to information that contradict our own beliefs. Conflicting opinions are, therefore, processed in less detail and place us under pressure.

Among friends and family the constant focus on 'being right' can be turn into real power struggles and even a trench warfare mentality, all because the individuals concerned think only in terms of winning or losing and never try to grasp how others see things.

The concept of 'mansplaining' describes the way men tend to explain things, mostly to women, with the preconceived idea that the woman does not understand in spite of the fact she may have knowledge and experience in the field. Such explanations are usually patronising and assume that women, because of their gender, possess less knowledge or capability in the matter. It must be emphasised, however, that not all men indulge in 'mansplaining' and that the phenomenon is not restricted to men alone.

Even when there are human or neurological reasons for someone's inability to avoid confirmation-bias and accept other views and standpoints, we must nonetheless attempt to do so and break out of the 'I'm always right' syndrome, or not go there in the first place

- Face anyone with different opinions respectfully and speak to them at eye-level. The same applies when talking to your children. Try to rein in your need to be right and your wish for others to think the same. Remain composed and be aware of your tone and body language.

- When you are about to go into a conversation, suppress any impulse to 'tune out' or to have pre-prepared counterarguments to hand in the belief that it will not go the way you want.

- Show a genuine interest in the thoughts and feelings of your interlocutor and practice active listening. Ask open questions in order to learn more about their point of view.

- Choose empathetic language and use, for example, expressions such as 'I understand how you feel' or 'I can see why you think that'. This will demonstrate that you are actively trying to put yourself in their position.

- Make a conscious effort to take in their perspective even if it differs from yours. Imagine being in their position and try to understand their thinking before you express your own. This can help prevent an escalation of any conflict.

- Weigh up how much it matters to you to insist on being right in this particular discussion. Break the mould and give in to someone else for once if you think it will enhance that relationship.

The ability to accept another viewpoint is an important element in a successful relationship. In taking time to understand and show empathy with your partner's viewpoint, you can actually strengthen the attachment and deepen the feeling of trust.

Just believe I'm right. Or don't. That's okay, too.

Myth #48: Being a parent is a full-time job

The alarm goes off at 6am. But you were woken at five because one of your children couldn't find the favourite soft toy. After the regular wrestling match to get them all dressed, you do the last-minute drop-off at school and nursery. You're just arriving at work, stressed out, only to be stopped in your tracks by the call that one of the offspring has a high temperature. You decide to call in sick yourself and spend the day entertaining your fractious child. In the evening you face the exhausting round of 'Tidy your room', 'Eat your greens', 'Brush your teeth' and spend ages getting them all actually into bed, an action that demands fifteen stories, ten drinks of water and twenty cuddles… a normal day for a parent?

No wonder many parents are under the impression that everything in their lives revolves around the raising, nurturing and entertainment of their children to the exclusion of all else. And society, too, now seems to expect the needs of youngsters to be placed above everything.

At the end of the day, parents are only parents. They're women, men, partners, friends and work colleagues, all with their own wishes, goals, plans, passions and hobbies. Those parents who do not identify themselves exclusively as parents should not be automatically considered uncaring. On the contrary, those parents who also care for their own needs are often better able to show patience and to react appropriately to their children's. And parents are important role models. If children can see that their parents pay attention to their own well-being, then they will learn that it's important for all of us to make a conscious effort to look after ourselves.

Well, that's fine but how to put it into practice with two screaming kids clinging to your sides, your house a mess and you nodding off every evening in front of the telly? Bringing

in outside help costs time and money. Creating a bit of headroom means lowering one's sights. Here are a few strategies that can help parents:

- Review on a regular basis which activities really matter. Does it have to be home-cooked food all the time? Can a take-away or meal out reduce the burden? Can you afford some paid help with the chores? Can you cut out some non-essential tasks and appointments? Do the children really have to be signed up for dozens of sporting and free time activities?

- Seek out some time each day for little rituals that will give you a short break from being a parent. This could be 15 minutes every morning when you make time just for yourself and enjoy a coffee before the family wake. Or on your familiar journey to work, take in a podcast, some music or an audiobook, or give close friends a call for a chat.

- Block out regular spots in your calendar that are to be used for activities that are nothing to do with your role as a parent. Talk this over with your partner and arrange to take it in turns. Don't hesitate to seek help from family, friends, or a babysitter in order to get some down-time either just for you or as a couple.

- Try and spend more time with your children when you can actually be open and attentive, not making a shopping list or playing around with your mobile. Sometimes less is more. If children can see their parents have other genuine interests, it might just be that they will be less demanding.

- Identify situations in your parental role that you find wearing, annoying or boring and change them to make them pleasant. Go for long walks with the buggy or take a good book to the playground. Plan in regular 'playdates' with other parents so that you see other adults. If you don't really know other parents, then try some of the events that are available to parents and children and make some new contacts.

- If certain activities and games do little for you, remember you don't have to force yourself to do them. Perhaps these could be left for other members of the family to pick up. Suggest activities that both you and your child will enjoy. When we do something that gives us pleasure, we can be more attentive and genuine.

- Say 'no' to your children – unless you're needed for an emergency, of course! Even very young kids can learn that parents cannot be called upon at every moment. For example, simply explain that you want to finish the page in your book before devoting yourself to them once more.

Parents agree on one thing. It's hard to think of a better and more fulfilling role in life! But to do the job with joy, perseverance and dedication, parents need a feeling of balance.

Children do not need perfect parents who sacrifice themselves for their families. They just need parents who feel okay.

Exercise #48: The Role Profile

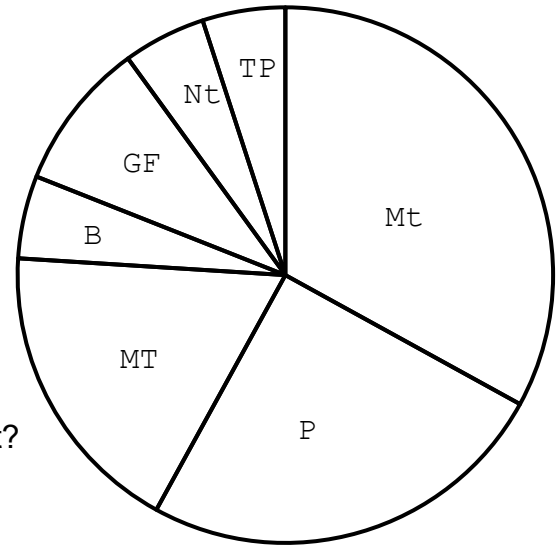
There are times when one part of our lives takes up so much space that we, consciously or unconsciously, put everything else to one side. This means our self-image will be reduced to one single role.

The following exercise can help open up our horizons again and make us more aware of the different roles in life.

1. List all the roles you have in your life. For example, daughter or son to your parents, sister or brother to your siblings, partner to your partner, mother or father to your children, a friend to your friends, a colleague to your colleagues. Other examples of roles might occur in your title or profession, in your specialist knowledge, or in your engagement elsewhere, or in a role that has come your way in the pursuit of a hobby or interest.
2. Seek out those roles that mean the most to you and put a percentage on how much of your self-image they occupy (the total can’t be more than 100, of course!).
3. Draw a pie-chart and mark in the individual roles. The size of each slice of pie should reflect how much or little that role plays in your self-image.

One example might look like this:

Mother (Mt) : 33%
Partner (P) : 25%
Maths Teacher (MT) : 18%
Biker (B) : 5%
Good friend (GF) : 9%
Night Owl (Nt) : 5%
Tennis player (TP) : 5%



So what do you conclude from your pie-chart?
Does this distribution match the reality you really want?
If not, what could you change?