

What Are The Brutal Facts Of Your Reality?

Kate Ashley-Norman explores these words: 'You have to have faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, yet you must confront the brutal facts of your current reality'. She says belief and determination will keep the light at the end of the tunnel in sight no matter what problems you are hitting in the here and now.

I write this towards the end of January having returned from the funeral of a friend, writes Kate Ashley-Norman.

January is always a month with the highest death rate (with February not too far behind).

Hope and optimism

It's not my desire to cast gloom but to provide an illustration of how hope and optimism – and the subsequent destruction of hope and optimism – are actually damaging. However, a healthy dose of realism can help you dig into depths of resilience you may never have known existed before.

It reminds me of a passage in Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*. While interned at a Nazi concentration camp, he remarked how the weakest and sickest would hold out for Christmas and the New Year, fervently believing that rescue would come. Then when January clicked in with no sign of any end to their imprisonment, they gave up hope – and that loss of hope invariably led to their death. There were more deaths in January, than in any other month.

The Stockdale Paradox

Similarly, the Stockdale Paradox highlights how realism rather than hope helped Vietnam veteran Jim Stockdale survive eight years and brutal torture



when he was held captive by the Viet Cong. Stockdale survived by dealing with each day as it came – and knowing that the experience would benefit him in the long run.

When asked about those who didn't survive, he replied: "Oh, that's easy. The optimists. They were the ones who said, 'We're going to be out by Christmas'. And Christmas would come and Christmas would go. Then they'd say, 'We're going to be out by Easter'. And Easter would come and Easter would go. And then by Thanksgiving. And then it would be Christmas again. And they'd eventually die of a broken heart."

What does this have with fenestration, you ask?

There may be some of you struggling with the never-ending gloomy days of the winter and/or are fed up with the vacuous empty optimism of our politicians as we hurtle towards yet another general election.

The gurus tell us to be positive and to 'visualise' the end we so

desperately want. But as we all know, when life chucks its googlies, there is absolutely nothing we can do about it except to react in a way that is more beneficial to you, rather than leading you down a path of either gloom or self-delusion.

That realism is encapsulated by these final words of Stockdale's: "You have to have faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, while at the same time, you must confront the brutal facts of your current reality, whatever that might be."

There are thousands of businesses out there facing the brutal reality of the current economic crisis and goodness knows what joys the election will bring. In these dark days, it is easy to get despondent, yet hard love will get you through. Prepare for the worst, hope for the best and make sure that every day continues to be a lesson learnt. **1**

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