

It's Not Back, Just Present



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People sometimes personalize a familiar and painful mood or perspective as “*it*” and dread its return when it is absent. This dread may reveal their assumption that *it* is an inherent and permanent condition of the world, and that during transitory periods of relief it is always lurking somewhere, waiting to return. It is as though *it* is there even when it is not. When it comes back it is therefore back to stay, which is depressing and sometimes terrifying. *In fact, depression is due to the assumption of permanence rather than the dreaded condition itself.* The dreaded condition may be quite real and painful but, fortunately, the notion of permanence is practically, philosophically, and scientifically insupportable. It is therefore possible to talk most people out of at least their dread if not their distaste for whatever their *it* happens

to be. This benefit derives from the insight that it's not back, it's just present sometimes. The difference is depression.

Nobody regards a hangover, a case of flu, or an ingrown toenail as permanent and these unpleasant events are therefore not depressing. This is because we understand the origin and normal course of these conditions, whereas the true nature of our own moods and perspectives often escapes us. On examination, our moods and perspectives are usually more elementary and always more transitory than we intuitively assume. The fact that we can dread an emotional or cognitive condition demonstrates that it is absent while the dreading is going on, and that it is therefore not permanent when it is present. In the comforting light of impermanence a bad day is just a bad day and not an ongoing catastrophe. This apparently philosophical insight has a major therapeutic effect when I can induce it, which I usually can. Of course, this necessary insight also leads to existential angst, which must be accepted, sublimated, or suppressed. And then there is the dreaded emotional or cognitive condition itself, which must be dismantled and undermined. Call me.

Relief, Recovery, Resolution

For adult men and women and for adolescent males

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