



John Hannah, 40, Actor

It's very fluid and the feeling of not being able to cope comes and goes - it's just part of me, like having an allergy to being happy all the time. But I constantly feel embarrassed about it. Even now, while I think its important to recognise it and talk about it, at the same time I don't want to go into any details because I'm conscious that it can be taken out of context and used against me. **Society has a 'lock em up and throw away the keys' kind of attitude to mental illness. There's a huge social stigma which we are all subject to.**

One of the worst things you can hear is for a friend to say "that's exactly what happened to me" - because no two things are exactly the same. Therapy is useful because you're talking to someone who is neutral. The period of therapy I went through lasted less than a year and it was all I needed at the time. I needed to put what I was going through in context. And

just like having a cold, when it was gone, it was gone.

Being down has its own positive colours too. Often out of these moods come ideas and thoughts - it's a very creative energy. To be able to have the ups and appreciate the ups you need to have the downs. It's not necessarily the end of the world though it may feel like it at the time.

FACT: In a recent survey by MIND 57% of respondents said they felt they had recovered or were coping with their mental health problems. (Mind, 2001)