



#STAYPOSITIVE

It is okay to not be okay

bodyshop columnist Tim Kelly opens up about the impact of living through the pandemic during winter and the importance of staying connected with others ... and with your own feelings.

The fog all around me, the dark nights and dark mornings never seem to end. The perpetual spinning of a world of gloom gnaws at my head. Stay positive, I tell myself, stay up, keep moving, keep doing, keep smiling, set goals ... CRACK ON.

A year of working harder than ever, goals aimed for and hit, up earlier and out in the fresh air, the joys of riding a mountain bike. Last year we were blessed with gorgeous weather, and the time to spend in it. A positive on the horizon – coming out of Covid? Whereas now, we have endless fog and darkness as I look out of my window. Will it ever end?

The weather will change, and so will you. Last year has caused a sea of change in people, both positive and negative. The effect on those in the motor trade, as well as on their families, has been immense.

Home schooling, are you open for business, are you shut? Can you pay the bills, the staff, do we furlough? Meanwhile, insurers still think you can work for the labour rates you were getting before Covid, in complete ignorance of the impact of the current cycle of work. A mad busy two weeks, then a trickle of work, we're open for business, sorry we are shut, we're open again, but do we have staff?

Those rates barely cover operational costs and that is what's really depressing. So, insurers, please get your heads around the need to create sustainable relationships. You are helping businesses to go bust.

A year of working flat out to keep the wheels spinning can be exhausting. I can honestly say that I was knackered by the time it got to Christmas and needed a break. So, make sure you look after

yourselves, take some time for yourselves – go for a walk, take a mental time-out, get lost in a good book or a film. I would like to have said “bugger off somewhere warm”. Oh, bugger!

In general, I am a positive, upbeat person, though I did suffer a bout of depression around seven years ago. When things are destabilised in your life, work, personal, it can seriously turn your world upside down. You can feel down and not even know the reason why. The foundations you were used to have gone, and life appears to have gone bonkers. I think it is clear that would sum up “life” for most people last year and moving into this year.

Last year brought personal challenges like no other for mine and my partner's families, and those changes are ongoing. As if the world going to hell in a handcart was not bad enough, it can always get worse, just when you think the universe is done dumping crap on you...

At the start of January I lost a close, life-long friend to Covid-19. Just 50 years old, fit and healthy, three kids and a lovely family. To my mate “Rammy”, sending you and your family love.

That was my rock bottom, many a tear was shed. I spoke with friends and colleagues and kept busy, or tried to. Then a former work colleague rang last week just to check up on me – I was very, very touched (thank you, you know who you are).

So, I am now feeling upbeat and regaining my mojo. If you know someone in the industry who is feeling down, give them a call, ask them how they're doing and let them know it's okay to not be okay. You just might make a massive difference by doing so.

Tim Kelly is founder of motorclaimguru.co.uk and an expert in insurance and assessing vehicles, a consumer advocate and bodyshop consultant whose goal is to change the industry and put repairers back in control of their profits.