

Bringing back the nervous breakdown – Vince Little

In our generation this was the term used - in a general sense - to describe an acute or sudden onset of a mental health issue.

As a child I witnessed an event of this kind on several occasions, affecting my mother. The doctor, and the family members present, all agreed that this was a **Nervous Breakdown**. The signs were uncontrollable sobbing, an overwhelming loss of presence and mental exhaustion, the latter being more of a symptom or the way my mother described her feelings. Whatever a **Nervous Breakdown** might be, to a child it was bewildering and distressing to witness.

Now, after training in psychology and counselling I am better able to accept the current position on what may be happening for people who experience what used to be called a **Nervous Breakdown**. The event has nothing to do with physical nerves but has everything to do with a person's mental capacity to cope.

This is a broad term that describes a range of mental health conditions, such as Panic Attacks, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Acute Stress Disorder, and Major Depression. Even in today's language it is not uncommon to hear people say that they are on the verge of a **Nervous Breakdown**.

In the workplace, family and social environment this may be a response to the pressures that go with all of the issues within those settings. It can be very stressful and overwhelming for some people when trying to deal with those issues and that is when something in their mental resilience seems to *snap*.

An author, whose book was recently reviewed in the **Weekend Australian**, suggested that maybe we should bring back this term in order to simplify the lay person's understanding of mental health issues and to remove the stigma of depression. The latter term is now used so widely that we seem no longer to recognise the simple feelings of having an *off day* or feeling *a bit down*. People generally seem to identify with a more serious problem of having depression in much the same way as people tend to say they have the flu rather than a cold which has a less serious nature.

The way we view our problems may be the key to how well we can deal with them! So, it is suggested that if we reduce the pressures of life and resolving issues as they arise, we will reduce the risk of having a **Nervous Breakdown** and all that goes with it.

- Vince Little