

So today I wanna talk some about um what I would call New Age cliches Uh sayings uh self-help cliches um and how they're just so often bullshit And not just bullshit but actually harmful and I think we should get rid of them So the first one that I think is the worst offender is when someone says um "It is what it is It is what it is." And it's an anno- this annoying aphorism Um gets repeated a lot It's in social media I I looked it up did a Google search There was a instance where You remember when uh Cheney accidentally shot this 78-year-old guy on a hunting trip And uh Bush's press secretary is questioned about it and she finally says "Look it is what it is It's time to move on." Um it's a trite throwaway line that you see in social media and that appears to have a uh positive intention behind it It it's I think a banal platitude but it's meant to soothe someone's suffering Ostensibly it's meant to encourage a a kind of more mature acceptance of a painful or disappointing reality The message is sort of the subtext is "Look Forget your feelings on the matter Forget your complaining Stop whining Just buck up and face the immutable fact that whatever's causing you pain is unchangeable because ultimately it is what it is." Now here's the problem with this This invitation to be grown up unfortunately robs the sufferer of his or her right to suffer See it's an attitude that makes self-compassion very difficult The psychological truth of the matter is that when we feel helpless or injured or disappointed or you know impaled by something we can't control we actually need the space and permission to experience that distress and pain We have a perfectly legitimate and healthy need to complain to feel sorry for ourselves We often need to mourn something a loss uh and make claims on the world for sympathy and help And most certainly we should not feel any kind of urgency to move on Instead the aphorism "It is what it is," it actually privileges a sort of dismissive stoicism and discounts our negative uh or painful feelings which don't go away but continue to haunt and torment us anyway Now here's another variation on the theme A a second cliché is some variation of "It was meant to be," or "It wasn't meant to be." And this could apply to a positive uh situation or more often it's an a negative one but the positive one version might be you know we we met we became friends Uh later we got married I guess it was meant to be But it's more often offered as a palliative to help someone to help comfort someone who's suffering a loss or disappointment as in "Well our relationship wasn't meant to be I guess." Or um "I didn't get the job It just wasn't meant to be." As if there's some quasi-cosmic inevitability at play And not only does this such a cliché deny that people have a great uh measure of uh urgency and choice and personal responsibility when it comes to things that disappoint them and how they respond to life's losses and challenges but like "It is what it is," this aphorism discounts someone's pain I I shouldn't feel hurt or disappointed or rejection after all if the loss I suffered was part of a greater plan And like most uh banal um self-help aphorisms the effort to deny suffering usually fails to work and leaves the person having somehow to metabolize feelings of loss or guilt privately without any expectations of empathy or support So let's stop with this facile self-help jargon and offer others and ourselves the right to suffer in our own damn way and time Telling someone the equivalent of don't cry over spilt milk doesn't put the milk back in the carton but just makes people feel guilty and embarrassed about spilling it