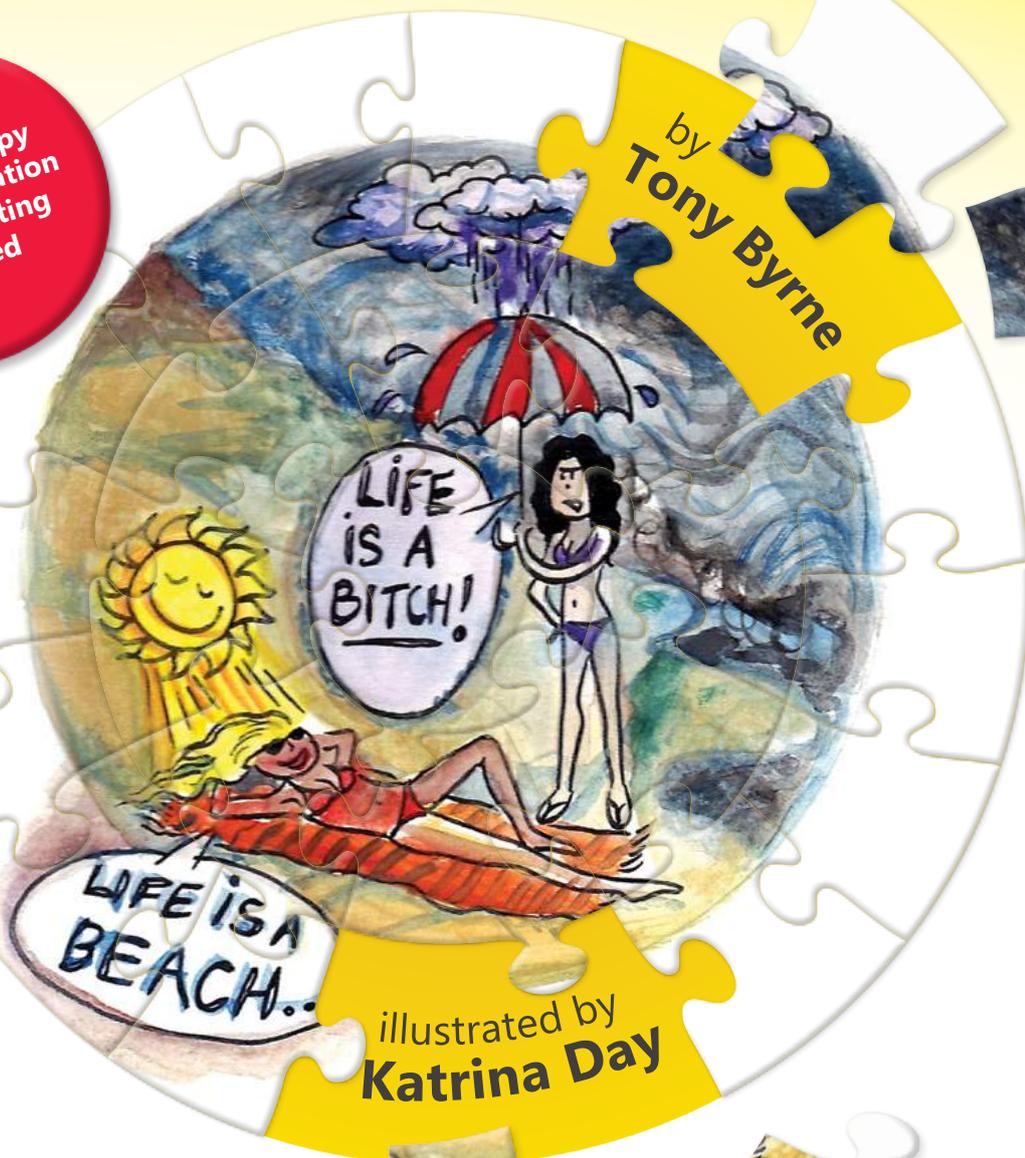


10 Jigsaw Pieces to Wellbeing[®]

Hypnotherapy
CD for relaxation
& goal setting
included

by
Tony Byrne



illustrated by
Katrina Day

Essential reading for teenagers, parents, teachers, therapists
or anyone wishing to improve their wellbeing.



KAT



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to Wellbeing[©]**

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Author **Tony Byrne**

Illustrated by
Katrina Day

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10 Jigsaw Pieces to Wellbeing®



Printed in Australia by Newspaper House Printing Ltd.

Published by Treetops Therapy Ltd.

First Printing 2016

ISBN-978-0-9942201-0-3

Genre: Wellbeing and emotional self-help

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The Australian Counselling Association

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To be distributed in New York, London, Paris, St Petersburg, Ulaan Baatar, Mandalay, Kathmandu, Vancouver, Lilongwe, La Paz, Jaipur, Kilkenny, Luang Prabang, Reykjavik, Kilmore East.

Chapter Content

DEDICATION &
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

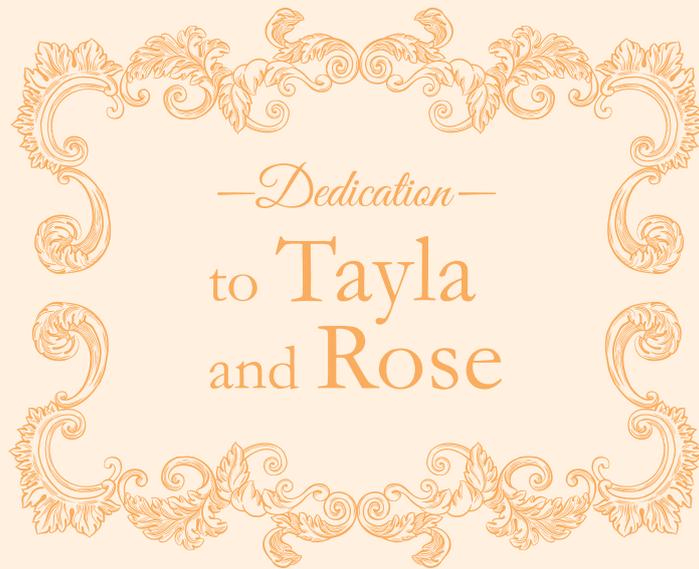
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—Dedication—
to Tayla
and Rose

Thank you to my two beautiful daughters for simply being you.

Acknowledgements

MUCH gratitude to Annie Goble for her proof reading and editing contribution despite her commitment to running the farm.

The greatest appreciation to Lindy Pappas for her superb computer and organisational skills, smiles and words of encouragement.

Thank you Lesley Noto and Tanya Marton, a simple, compassionate sentence can ignite and confirm such sparks of self-belief.

To my teachers of long ago, Dr Gabe Phillips and Claire Taubert. What an honour to have been mentored, nurtured, inspired and challenged by you as I entered into the fields of psychotherapy and counselling.

Many thanks to Jacqui Simms and MCRAG (Mitchell Community Resources and Advocacy Group) for the grant and support that created this book.

To the thousands of clients, in the schools where I have served as a counsellor and in my private practice; thank you for sharing your stories and allowing me into your private worlds.

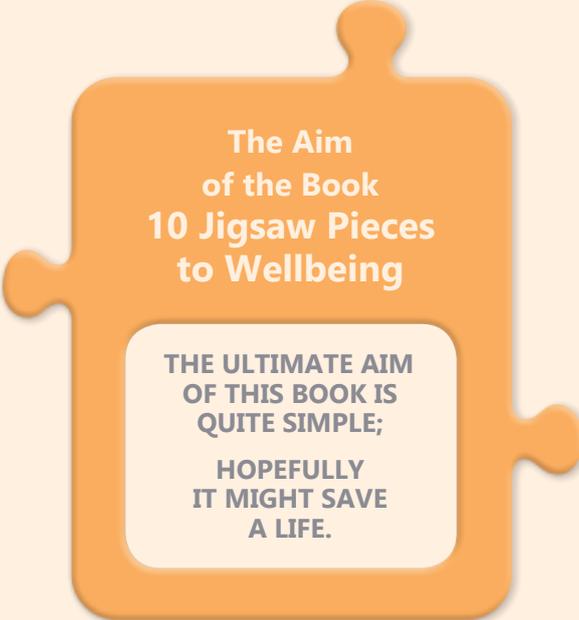
Thanks to Ian Blyth and his editorial team, and Richard Reid, but specially Paul Mackay and the production team from Newspaper House.

Appreciate your recording work, Ethan Tremlett for the CD.

How fortunate was I to run into such a talented artist as Katrina Day, an old soul, with a youthful face and such creative depth.

And lastly to life itself: to the ups and the downs, the good and the bad, the lovable and the difficult, to the ever unfathomable and to that which is grasped.





**The Aim
of the Book
10 Jigsaw Pieces
to Wellbeing**

**THE ULTIMATE AIM
OF THIS BOOK IS
QUITE SIMPLE;
HOPEFULLY
IT MIGHT SAVE
A LIFE.**

THE book was written initially as a tool for my high school students. Its aims were to normalise therapy and reduce the stigma behind seeking help, to show how reaching out for help is a positive action. The book's use and application can be used by any who wish to gain insight to the therapeutic process while enhancing their own wellbeing.

Thus I have no hesitation in recommending, 10 Jigsaw Pieces To Wellbeing to:

- High school students
- University students
- TAFE students
- To teachers and lecturers
- To the parents of all those students, teachers and lecturers (Plus the entire extended family including those living outside Australia).
- Any training or apprenticeship student
- To school counsellors and therapists of all persuasion
- To the parents of those counsellors... You get the idea... The book is open to whoever wishes to read it and is interested in change and wellbeing.

But In Particular

- To those who maybe blocked, stuck and caught up in heavy energy and seek direction to something lighter (Look at page 7).





INTRODUCTION

THE last thing I ever thought I'd end up being was a school counsellor. To listen to students grumble all day long about their problems. OMG! After all I was a rugby union man and coach with an attitude of-when life knocks you down with a hard tackle, get back up but harder and meaner.

Somewhere along life's rather unpredictable pathway and after stubbing my toes on unexpected obstacles I must have grown up. By that, I mean I allowed myself to be vulnerable. I became curious about why and how I behaved and sought greater awareness about myself and about others. My rigidity, need for control, my black and white view of the world became apparent and then severely challenged as I started to study in the field of psychotherapy and healing.

I trained for 4 years as a Gestalt therapist, gained a Master's degree in counselling, graduated as a clinical hypnotherapist. I studied, for over 14 years, the amazing work of family systems and continue to study and to practice as a counsellor and psychotherapist. I am also a Reiki practitioner; a technique that uses energy as a means to heal.

Therapy can be like stepping off a cliff and finding that you can float. It involves courage, trust and insight and the ability to form a relationship. The process of therapy is rather like putting together the separated pieces of a jigsaw. Once the puzzle is finished and clear, healing and moving on with life in a productive and meaningful way is possible. A fragmented and incomplete picture leaves a state of confusion, as though something is missing.

Therapy then, like life itself, is a jigsaw puzzle. Some jigsaws are quick and easy to complete while others are complicated and may take a lifetime especially when pieces remain hidden. The Ah ha moment, the release of emotional pain to contentedness, is a journey.

This book will help to bring the variety of therapeutic approaches that I have used, for many years, with hundreds of adolescents and adults, to an easily accessible place of understanding. When an individual becomes aware, they are empowered and that allows for options. Too often we go round and round on a seemingly inescapable ride of self-torment characterised by: anger, guilt, depression, anxiety, self-doubt, hopelessness, self-loathing, grief, shame, blame and so on.

The courage it takes to seek change, through therapy, is far deeper than that of the sporting or military stereotypes of bravery. Self-examination requires one to really look at oneself, to dismantle defensive walls that have protected (and jailed), to acknowledge wounds, to reassess, to question, to step out of our comfort zone and to be vulnerable, honest and authentic. A sobering reality is that the suicide rate of soldiers serving in Afghanistan is far higher than those killed in action. Psychological wounds run deep and are real. The state of mental health of our adolescents in Australia and other Western Nations is frightening.

1 in 4, 16 to 24-year-olds have a mental illness.

This statistic is quoted in the 2010 Youth Mental Health Aid book from a National Survey taken in 2007 in Australia. (Recent stats are finding similar rates in much younger students. 1 in 5 adults have an ongoing mental illness especially in the elderly in Australia. 1 in 3 Canadians will experience a mental health illness and 1 in 2 in Australia).

Imagine in a class of 28 students, primary or secondary school, the potential is to have between 3 and 7 students suffering depression and or anxiety. In addition (just to make it fair) 1 in every 5 or 6 teachers at a school could be suffering alongside. Conditions like anxiety and depression are simply an illness yet we often view them with such stigma. I don't!



How wonderful to see people like Anthony, The Blue Wiggle, acknowledge publicly his battle with depression. I expect he would be familiar with therapy. I expect the term mental illness contributes to the stigma. A more accurate label for those experiencing anxiety or depression might be renamed as feeling mega-crappy. This might reduce the social shudder produced by the word 'mental'.

These statistics explain why I work as a counsellor and psychotherapist in my mixed secondary school. Not so long ago a welfare team in a school, business-corporation, or armed service etc. was unheard of.

Governments, educational and medical institutions are coming on board and understanding that the human mind is delicate and fragile. It is also capable of incredible change and resolve. How often I have seen a depressed, angry or anxious teenager, sometimes self-mutilating, transform into a fun loving and productive individual; full of the joys of life.

What obstacles do our youth face in school?

The same as in life outside the boundary of the school gate. I think I have seen every human situation and issue in my counselling sessions: family break up, terminal illness, murder, suicidal intent, hearts broken as relationships end, unexpected pregnancies, exam stress, sexuality issues, accidental killings, the trauma from bush fires, bullying, sexual abuse, war, hearing voices, drug use, deep depression, abject anxiety, self-mutilation, sexually transmitted diseases, psychotic and obsessive compulsive behaviours and many, many other conditions and scenarios.

I have learnt it takes courage to open up to a stranger; to trust that your individuality, pain and life story will be held with respect, understanding, confidentiality and compassion.

I recall John. An intelligent 14 year-old I first met when he was in Year 8. Our initial meetings went quite well but he ended counselling after a couple of sessions. I often saw him around school and his eyes flashed contempt at my greetings of "hi ya!" or "good day!"

Four years later John knocked on my door and the first thing he said to me was that, in Year 8, he thought I was a complete and utter idiot.

I assured him that I probably was but that I was curious as to what I had done to gain this status of idiot. He replied that I had simply said something that was truthful, those 4 years ago. I asked him what I had said and he replied.

*"You told me back then
I was struggling emotionally."*

I apologised and said I was sorry and that I had been insensitive. He said,

*"No! You were right. It's just took me
sometime to realise that I needed help."*

That is what I mean by courage; the ability to seek help in a climate often surrounded by shame, guilt, denial and confusion. Every student of psychology will be familiar with the work of psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson. (See chart on PG. VI) He is famous for pointing out that in the course of a lifetime we will experience 8 major crises linked to a particular age or stage of life. (Of course there will be many more additional traumas and difficulties).

Most of us are familiar with the term mid-life crisis - when Dad's trip to Bunnings to buy a paint brush results in his return in a brand new, red coloured sports car. In order to get through each crisis we need to give up firmly held illusions that no longer serve us.

For the infant, it is the realisation that their parents are not their personal possessions, an extension of themselves whose sole purpose is to serve the needs of the baby. The little one learns to trust that they will still be nurtured through separation. If the maternal ability to look after the baby is compromised, the baby learns mistrust and a belief, adopted throughout their life that the world is inconsistent, unsafe and unpredictable. Therapy is able to address these emotional blocks, established at such a vulnerable age, or indeed at any age.

The teenager must define and establish a solid sense of who they are. They need to give up the false belief that they are all powerful, immortal, that the world revolves around them and must learn independence and responsibility for deriving their own set of values; to cut the apron strings that may still attach them to parents who are as flawed and imperfect as every human is. The gaining of competence rather than a deeply embedded sense of inferiority is the adolescent goal.



The final crisis, as we look over our life and face death, is accepting death, ill health and regrets with grace and dignity as opposed to looking over a wasted life and awaiting death's cold hand with dread and despair. The mere fact of aging, beginning at the moment of conception, exposes us to major developmental obstacles that are easier to negotiate with help.

Two things came out of that meeting with John. The first was my deep respect for those who seek help. The second was a growing desire that had been developing in me, that I could have handed John something more concrete at our first meeting; a tool to help his deep discomfort, something to normalise what felt so difficult and different.

And the proverbial penny dropped. Why not write a book that I could hand to students about counselling and therapy without all the psycho jargon or bombastic, academic technicality that can blind simple understanding, a book that would inform parents, teachers and students alike. A supportive text that simplified the process of therapy and highlighted the roots of emotional pain and the ways to heal.

'*10 Jigsaw Pieces to Wellbeing*' is not a book about miraculous, self-help cures and gaining an instant state of joyful bliss (although it might be) rather, the content is a reflection of therapies that can help ease the torment that, at times, comes into our life.

I know how certain interventions have profoundly changed my mental anguish for the better. The book draws from a wide range of counselling models, some well-known in the therapeutic community and some not so well known, but often steeped in ancient wisdom. I am familiar with these and have used them in cooperation with my clients. They work! However, what appeals and is effective for one client may not resonate with another. That is why I have 10 therapeutic approaches, 10 chapters that stand alone as jigsaws in their complete entirety. However, all 10 chapters form part of one greater jigsaw.

A completed jigsaw puzzle has the end result of bringing immense satisfaction to those who have worked on it. Just as one jigsaw is completed another can be started anew or typically in life, many jigsaw games are played simultaneously. Some are completed with ease and some are quite horrific and seem to defeat us.

The chart
(right)
highlights that
at every life stage
there are potential
difficulties that must be
met and overcome
in order to lead a
productive life.



Erikson's 8 Life Stages of Personality and Social Development

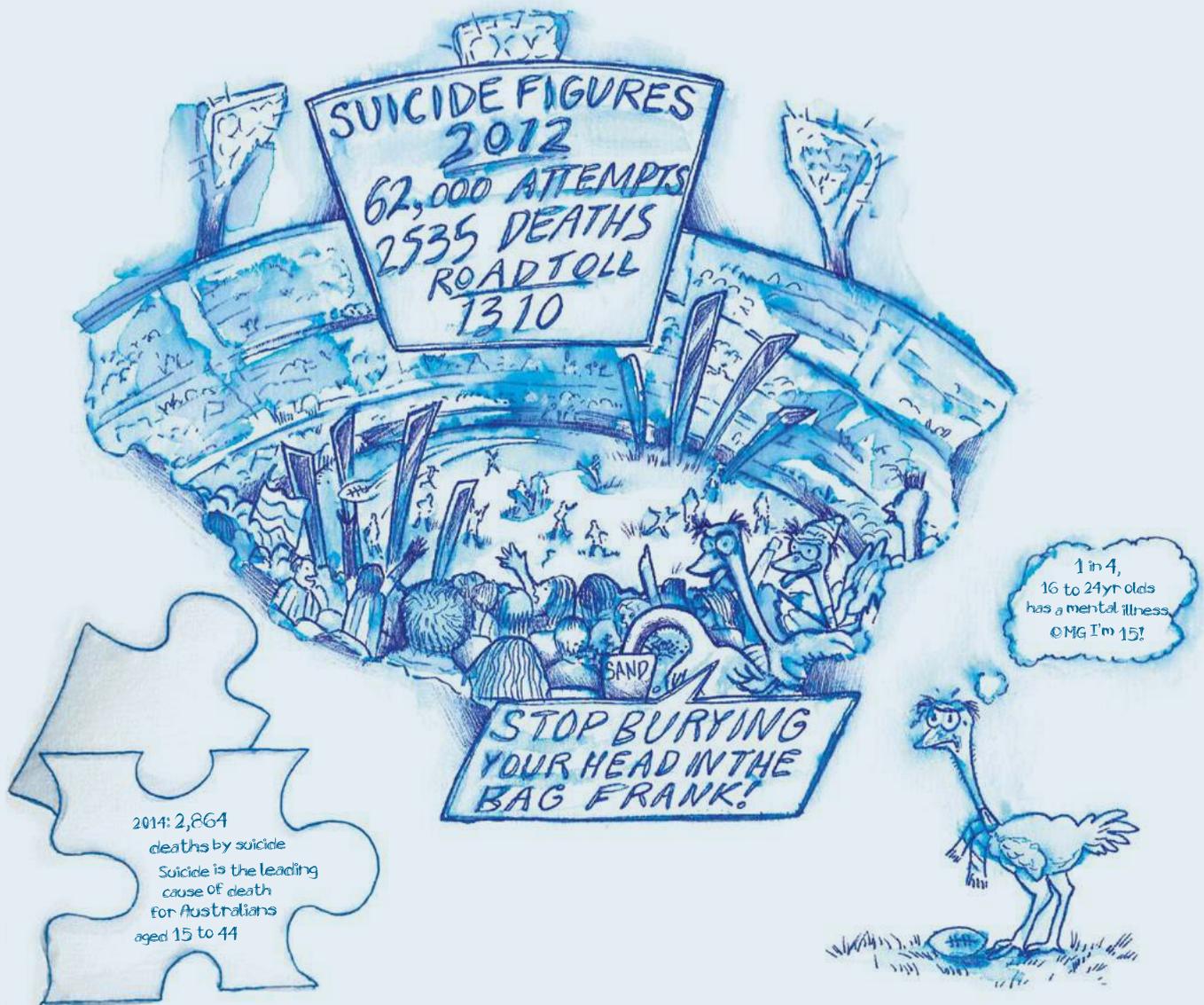
Chart highlights how we all face emotional and social challenges throughout life.

At each stage of life, by successfully learning and experiencing important skills (trust versus mistrust at 0-1 year of age) a positive virtue such as the ability to hope is gained. Repeated, negative experiences at this life stage results in developing a sense of mistrust and that is taken into the personality. And so as the mistrusting and suspicious baby grows into a child, teenager and adult, a distinct distance and a sense of being unsafe is created towards family members, teachers, friends, authority figures, lovers and life in general.

When trust is commonly experienced, through a nurturing environment, positive traits such as joy and optimism will be absorbed into the personality. Like a missing jigsaw piece, one remains incomplete until the piece is found and installed. This is possible through therapy. In other words the child, teenager or adult, sitting in the counselling room, begins to learn trust through the interactions with a therapist, who adopts an accepting, friendly, respectful and non-judgemental attitude towards the client. A strange experience, very unfamiliar to someone who finds difficulty opening up to another person.

Life-Stage lessons in learning about	Age	Positive aspect acquired	Important factors contributing to a positive experience
TRUST V'S MISTRUST	Infancy	Hope	Strongly dependent on ability of mother to nurture. Inability to trust resulting in fear and that the world is not safe.
AUTONOMY & INDEPENDENCE VS SHAME/DOUBT	18 months to 3 years	Will	Positive encouragement and experiences in toilet training, walking and exploring through grasping objects. Not yelling at the toddler in frustration.
INITIATIVE VS GUILT	Play age 3-6	Purpose	Letting the child dress him/herself and make choices. This requires endless patience by the caretakers and allowing the experience of accomplishment.
DEDICATION VS INFERIORITY	Primary School 6-12	Competence	Learning self-confidence in the classroom. Teacher's role vital in highlighting strengths as child will compare itself to other's achievements.
IDENTITY VS ROLE CONFUSION	Adolescent	Accepting self and others	If parents allow teenager to explore and identify occupation, gender roles, politics, religion, a strong sense of self-worth and identity is formed.
INTIMACY VS ISOLATION	Late teens To early adulthood	Unconditional Love	Love relationships and partnerships get established as children are born and work becomes purposeful otherwise loneliness and isolation occurs.
CONTRIBUTOR TO LIFE VS STAGNATION	Middle adulthood 35-64	Care	Content with life, work, children or family and your place in the world or regretful about life decisions and feeling stuck, useless and powerless.
AT PEACE WITH SELF VS DESPAIR	Late Adulthood 65+	Wisdom	A time to reflect and look over one's life with a sense of achievement and satisfaction or if little fulfilment found, especially in middle adulthood, a sense of despair and possible fear of death.





WE all need help at some stage: financial, practical, educational and most importantly emotional. The first step, when in distress, one would think would be to reach out to others but this is not an easy task by any means. The high suicide rate in Australia and levels of mental illness in both young and elderly indicate that something is amiss in our Lucky Country. 10 Jigsaw Pieces to Wellbeing is a resource that encourages self-responsibility. This means being bold enough to admit that sometimes coping with life is difficult and that you need help.

This book gives a window into the world of therapy and points to the great variety of approaches that exist and can be readily accessed. When mental illness hits or life becomes unbearable we have options; hopefully more original than the mythical coping skill of the ostrich that refuses to face life by burying its head in the sand.

I hope you find the book informative as new insights open up new possibilities where, love, peace and compassion can be a part of your everyday experience. The book is aimed at a wide audience but in particular students at high school and higher education, parents, teachers and therapist. In fact, it is open to anyone but in particular to those attempting to seek help but may feel stigmatised by the process of therapy.

To protect client confidentiality names, ages, and gender have been disguised. Sometimes a model, that mirrors common client problems, has been used rather than citing an actual case study.

Enjoy the splendid cartoons that Kat has created through her deep sensitivity and creativity.

Warmest regards,

Tony Byrne



Chapter 1

Loving those who hate you

IN many ways we humans remain a savage beast. We are plagued by that primitive part of our brain known as the reptilian brain. We behave just like the many kangaroos that inhabit the bush land and pastures around my house. They remain tense, sitting upright on their haunches and tail, sniffing and listening for the slightest smell or sound that might bring them a grizzly death. Even in a relaxed state the males take turns at fighting while the females and young roos continually try to outdo each other in the mob's never ending pecking order for acceptance and status.

I have seen many similarities between these animals and humans at work and play in the school setting. An unkind remark or a threatening gesture can ignite the human brain into a primitive state of fight, flight, or simply freezing on the spot. The resulting adrenaline rush can feel as though another is out to symbolically kill us. No wonder I hear the word hate used by so many in my counselling room.

The school itself can become a place of hatred as though it is out to get us. Teachers and students become vicious monsters, bullies, despicable killers and best friends turncoat traitors.

Even the counsellor, through the process of transference can become the object of hate, mistrust or perceived as uncaring and cruel.

Transference is as it sounds. We transfer our thoughts, real or imagined onto someone else. The teacher who had a dominant, controlling parent may see the school principal in a similar light and when asked by the boss to do an extra recess duty (as staff may be absent that day) the teacher feels huge resentment. A simple request becomes an act of persecution and an emotion of dislike is harvested toward the principal.

Work becomes a difficult environment to face and stress results. Mental illness is not too far away.

In this chapter

- Find meaning and your life will have a purpose.
- Don't let other people or situations drive your emotional response so that it becomes forever fixed in heavy energy.
- Recognise the characteristics that make up light and heavy energy.
- Have the courage to seek help when experiencing heavy energy.

Influenced by Dr Viktor Frankl and Logotherapy.

Whenever I hear the word hate used in counselling sessions, as in "I hate my life," or "I hate my father," or most commonly, "I hate school and my teachers hate me," I look at the eyes of the speaker. Most times I see sadness, frustration, anxiety or anger there (rarely hate). Sometimes tears well up in the client when I point this out as if my spoken observation of, "Your eyes look so lost and sad," allows a dam of emotion to finally release its water.

So what to do with a person who feels hated or who expresses hate?

In many ways a wonderful opportunity for self-growth appears when this profound experience surfaces. I respond by trying to empower the person who feels a victim.

When others hate you or your life goes in a direction you don't like one often enters into a state of what I term, light or heavy energy.

(See the characteristics of light and heavy energy on PG 7)

Circumstances can throw up terrible things: cancer, fatal accidents, relationship break ups and so forth. The reality is we are subject to fate, at the mercy of others or negative events but we have a choice in how we respond to the ill fortune that may blow in our direction. The choice is between staying a victim and reacting as one or being a victim and not reacting as one.

Victimisation by its very nature suggests there is no freewill or choice and thus, no incentive to try and change what can't be undone.

I am reminded of a wonderful doctor and psychotherapist, Viktor Frankl. He lost his mother, father, brother and wife in the Nazi run concentration camps. He survived because he was lucky and because he never hated those who persecuted him. Many who survived the camps would not escape the psychological horror. I sometimes share with my clients the story of how Viktor Frankl founded Logotherapy, while in the Death Camps.



One day, after witnessing a prisoner being subjected to a terrible beating by the guards, Viktor came to the conclusion that if he was to survive **he** needed to change. All around him was utter despair, murder on a vast scale and a total sense of hopelessness. Imagine, at Auschwitz, watching frightened, innocent and confused children, disembarking from train wagons, walking hand in hand along the short muddy pathway from platform to gas-chamber, unaware that they had only minutes to live, while countless prisoners observing this scene knowing full well the fate of the children (and if separated from their own children how their minds must have suffered unspeakable torment).

Viktor's dilemma was how do you find a solution when none is available and no one can possibly save you? So he turned his mind inward and focused on those he loved. In particular, his wife and even though he did not know whether she was alive or dead the love he had for her would not die. It lived in him and was real, something no one could take away or steal. He also thought of his family and knew he was bonded to them, through love, forever, whether they were alive or dead.

He then realised he had the capacity for love no matter the external circumstances. Viktor saw that if he became a creature of hate or traumatised and vanquished by evil, the love he was capable of giving for others and towards himself would vanish. Viktor found that when you give meaning to life you overcome the negative aspects that exist around you. Living with meaning gives one a purpose. The everyday brutality still existed but internally Dr Frankl's heart held onto his ability to love; to embrace compassion.

He also experienced love in the hell of the concentration camp and states how moved he was when a starving prisoner shared his meagre bread ration with a dying inmate. The conclusion that Frankl drew from such acts of unselfish love was that, when suffering takes place, we can turn our back on others or open up our hearts. Love for him became something spiritual, something that could never be destroyed by the cruel regime of Nazi oppression and intolerance and so the purpose of his life now had meaning. When your life has meaning you then have hope and a reason to live.

Logotherapy means the therapy of meaning and is taken from the Greek word Logos; to mean. Dr Frankl's therapy has three parts:

- ① There is meaning to living and we need to search for it.
- ② Meaning can be found through experiencing something or encountering someone. In Dr Frankl's case, the experience of love he had for his wife connected him to his capacity to love. He was a creature of love, able to give and receive love and no one could take that away from him. The ability to love became the whole purpose of life. To love and be loved. Others may find meaning in what they do especially when it becomes a passion, or in meeting wonderful people or hearing music, seeing art or simply being close to a friend or family member.
- ③ That through suffering we are actually given an opportunity to give meaning to our life. Deep suffering forces us to find our life's purpose. In a famous comment about how he survived the barbarism of the Nazi's he said that in the camps he never forgot any good deed done to him but that he never carried a grudge for a bad one. He also added that there was never any need to be ashamed of tears because tears bore witness to a human being's courage, the courage to suffer and overcome hate.

You can choose to be a victim and feel hated and powerless. You can choose to feel nothing (desensitise). You can choose to feel love and find emotional freedom. You can be like those who hate you and hate back.

A tit for tat reaction that nations and cultures commonly play out and which keeps the human race from advancing towards enlightenment. You can choose to seek help for trauma. You can choose to end your life. We have a choice although in the fog of deep despair it is not obvious.

A rather remarkable teacher, who lived two thousand years ago, said, 'Love your enemy!' When someone hits you on the cheek present the other one rather than fight back. Many clients want to vomit at the thought of loving someone who hates them. They might even point out that



Jesus ended up on the cross in extreme pain while their Dad works in the post office. Good points! So let's progress.

Counselling is about working on you. You can't force change in those around you unless you want to become a control freak or bully. There is a wonderful theory called The Paradoxical Theory of Change that states that if we stop actively trying to change people and situations but rather work on ourselves, paradoxically (paradox means self-contradictory but true) others are more likely to change.

For example, if a teacher always nags about the untidy state of the classroom and nothing changes then the nagging isn't working. If the teacher stopped the nagging and simply started picking up rubbish off the floor students are more likely to keep the classroom clean or even help the teacher tidy up.

Again, paradoxically a good way to get a class to be silent is for the teacher to say nothing, to be still, rather than shouting for silence.

To have empathy means to try and step in the shoes of another and experience how they view the world. It involves a softening of the heart. You can be sure that a person who hates feels hated, a person who resents is resented and a person who can't give love finds it hard to accept love. A person who judges feels judged.

What happens when we love the person who hates us? We take away the power they have over us and this is what Dr Frankl realised in the appalling conditions of the concentration camp. By looking at the blue sky behind iron bars or barbed wire, a prisoner could experience freedom; the freedom of choosing to take joy from nature.

This requires a turning in, a determination to choose something positive and to not allow the hate of others to invade the privacy and sanctuary of one's mind.

By turning to love we learn to accept ourselves for who we are not for how others want us to feel. Love produces a sense of joy and peace and we feel light energy. Hate keeps us bound to the heavy energy associated with anger, resentment, revenge and fear. Those who hate you want you to respond negatively. Frankl pointed out how even in the moment of death, such as being lined up against a wall facing a firing squad, one had the choice to die well, with dignity and love in one's heart. Choice demands courage often when there seems to be no hope.

Imagine going through life constantly looking for approval from others. This creates a response that continually has you moving from feeling high to feeling low. Look at the diagram below.

Person (A) is constantly seeking approval but when it is not given that person collapses. When it is achieved emotions go through the roof. There's little emotional balance only extremes of highs and lows.

Person (B) walks confidently through life. When things go well it's no big deal. Fortunately when life becomes difficult it's no big deal either. The middle road of self-confidence is maintained by the realisation that whatever happens in life, the views of others are secondary to the peace and self-acceptance that person B experiences. By being in harmony with oneself, outside achievements or setbacks hardly dent the ego. There are fewer extremes of emotions and a greater ability to cope with the ups and downs of life.



The key to not over reacting to how life treats you is to not give set-backs or negativity any importance or significant place in your mind and heart. If you seek the approval of people throughout your life you will forever be at the mercy and whim of their expectations and worldview. By adding a loving equation to the picture you might see that their attitude towards you is actually a reflection of their own world. When you can accept yourself for being exactly who you are you learn self-approval.

Take a quick test

- Do you accept your height, body shape, looks, hair colour and texture or do you desire to be what you are not?**
- Are you happy with your physical appearance?**
- This like or dislike where does it come from?**
- Is it located internally, externally or is it found in both places?**

Sometimes hatred is so self-imposed that we totally distort our reality and perception; like those suffering from anorexia.

We know that someone who has been terribly abused finds peace when they do not take responsibility for the actions of others. They let go of any self-imposed guilt and shame. This is not about forgiving but rather saying, *“When you treat me unjustly I leave your negative actions with you. These behaviours are your responsibility.”* A self-loving attitude from one who has been hated might include the following statement, *“I am in charge of me just as you are in charge of you.”* When we choose kindness in our life we are first kind to ourselves and that allows us an emotional freedom.

A student who is being bullied and has self-respect and self-worth will find help because they know the actions of bullies are wrong. They will seek out a teacher, counsellor, parent or friend who will take the appropriate action to stop the bully. The bullied student does not feel guilty about such positive action in getting help. Run of the mill comments such as ‘dobber’ make little impact. Like Person B, the opinions of others don’t produce sharp highs and lows of emotional response.

When life doesn’t go the way we want it to, it hurts! It can feel like there is no choice, no hope and that the pain will never go. Sometimes it needs a lot of time and gentle support from friends, family, professionals and of course self to heal. Or we have a choice to let the arrow of hurt pierce the heart. The effect of this is that the heart is forced to lie in a state of **RIP** - literally Ripped in Pieces. This is the realm of depression, anxiety, anger, fear, hate and grief.

Why?

Simply because we have responded to the negativity of others, or a life event, with negativity. Sometimes we try to control the situation or person. If they are nasty to us we become nastier. If they fight us we’ll fight back harder, more viciously and our reptilian brain lights up and takes over.

We can suffer in silent desperation. Hold on to unexpressed grudges and replay the tormentor’s words or actions over and over again. This torture often plays its vicious game at night and one can be awake for hours suffering with worry, have vengeful thoughts and be fearful. Day after day, night after night this repetition takes place until sleep deprived and emotionally drained something has to give. Often the end result is poor health; both physical and mental.

I have close contact with the school nurse because emotional issues are often picked up in the body. Tense muscles, aching gut, a heavy heart, headaches can all be symptoms of emotional pain.

I remember laughing out loud when I read the reflective words of one of John Marsden’s adolescent characters in his novel, *Tomorrow When The War Began*. *“Why do we call it butterflies in the stomach?”* queried a teenager about the physical symptoms of anxiety, *“when it’s more like elephants mating!”*

Many who suffer emotionally don’t know how to reach out for support. Imagine a crying baby who is distressed. Its mother, father or a loved one picks it up and offers comfort. The baby feels acknowledged, soothing can begin and trust is reinforced when it instinctively reaches out. Now imagine what happens when a baby cries hour after hour and no one responds. Eventually the baby learns not to seek support, learns to stop crying and realises that in order to protect itself, a turning in, a self-soothing is required because loved ones cannot be relied upon to respond.



The ability to trust has been soundly damaged when a baby finds its needs are not met through reaching out. Horror stories from former communist run Romanian orphanages report that babies who were fed but not held or spoken to withdrew and died. These babies were unable to speak out and be heard and so gave up.

There is little internal support for the baby who has yet to develop the cognitive abilities to analyse, differentiate and understand perspective. The brain becomes hard wired and meaning is fixed and rigid. The developing teenage brain is designed to find meaning. The task for adolescence is to discover who they are and what it is they value. Imagine a horse wearing blinkers; its view is narrowed. How many of us follow a limited direction because of our self-imposed blinkers? Take away the blinkers and the world opens up to new horizons. A positive life experience helps to remove the blinkers and to allow for meaningful possibilities rather than keep them firmly attached.

Sometimes students tell me that they find adult intervention ineffectual, such as after reporting being bullied it still continues. There is a belief that nothing can change the situation and like a red rag to an angry bull it will only make the bullying worse. This mind set is not uncommon. In other words, like the neglected baby, they give up trusting life and the belief that another human can hold and support their pain. This is where persistence and the benefits of cognitive therapies come into their own and will be explored in the next chapter.

For many teenagers, though, there is a loving, family connection. If the culture of a family or school sees counselling and seeking support for a personal issue as cool, then it's far easier to approach the necessary people. If the culture is one that views reaching out for help, as a sign of individual weakness then the counsellor will be difficult to approach. One fun loving Year 12 student who got a lot out of our first meeting, stated that he would have attended sessions years earlier but thought you had to be crazy or really mentally disturbed to seek help.

Therapists regularly see other therapists, through a process called supervision, for support and advice and because they can be impacted emotionally by the suffering of their clients. A good therapist also seeks therapy.

Change, which is a key aspect of therapy, is a must for survival on many levels. Yet change often starts from within as Dr Frankl realised.

If trusting someone is difficult then this may be your first task; to find someone to open up to. Again it may feel like stepping off a steep cliff; terrifying for those scared of heights or of opening up about their internal pain.

An inability to change is a feature of heavy energy. An ability to be flexible with a readiness to change is a feature of light energy. Look at the features (PG 7) that define light and heavy energy and track your position on it. Are you suffering in heavy energy or do you feel at peace and joyful?

Try observing the evening news and you'll see heavy energy reported from around the world: in wars, poverty, in institutions that abuse the innocent, in self-righteous politicians, in world leaders who sprout hate. But look deeper and you'll see light energy in people's smiles, in the resilience of rebuilding shattered lives and communities, in simple actions of kindness, in the faces of playing children.

I didn't get the following when I was a teenager but I do now. After the end of World War II, a Polish resistance fighter challenged Mahatma Gandhi on his philosophy of non-violent resistance.

"What should we have done?"
said the former partisan.

*"Laid down our arms, given up the fight
and be slaughtered while the German's destroyed
our families and homes?"*

To which Gandhi gently replied.
"Yes!"

So what does this chapter offer?

Hopefully you will never experience the horror of war and human brutality at its worse. However, in Australia and where ever those who flee from persecution find refuge, the experiences that Viktor Frankl witnessed, live on.

Logotherapy stresses the ability to find positive meaning from difficult life circumstances and that allows for hope and choice when none appears available.

I recently discovered that Viktor Frankl's wife survived the concentration camp only to die a few weeks after liberation. At this point Viktor contemplated suicide – facing the choice of death or finding a purpose. Fortunately he chose the latter.



Look at the Case Study below

**When adversity occurs as it will and does to everyone
we can enter the realm of light or heavy energy.
When you recognise that you are in heavy energy
maybe it is time to reach out?**



Case Study 1
SASHA
Male, Aged 15



Presenting Symptoms

- Sasha's father died in a workplace accident when Sasha was 14.
- Sasha is from an ethnic group that clashes with some students from the main stream Australian group at school. He is in a gang.
- At school, Sasha punched a boy from a rival 'gang'. This other boy teased him about the fact that his Father had died. This boy claims Sasha is a bully.
- Sasha hates school, feels hated by the 'Skids' and hates this other boy who insulted his father's memory. There are frequent suspensions and truancy and he has been 'told' to go to counselling or leave school.
- Sasha is outwardly angry and aggressive to teachers and other students.

Therapy (Sasha after 6 Months of counselling)

- Sasha recognised he needed support, accepted his anger & slowly trusts me.
- Like an onion, he peels away the layers that lie below the anger. Unresolved grief held in for his father is gradually expressed. Sasha's feeling of rejection and abandonment found refuge in the 'safety' of his anger and gang.
- Looked at Sasha's passion for cars and motorbikes and linked him into a course that is meaningful. He finds meaning in his love of family, girlfriend, his ambition to do well in life & saw how his behaviour limited him.
- Had Sasha meet up with the boy who insulted his father. This boy was very apologetic to Sasha. Both boys loved motor racing & ended up shaking hands.
- Sasha began to focus on a meaningful career & acknowledged heavy energy.
- Realised that being in heavy energy dishonoured his Dad's memory and how hate only produced more hate. Sasha moved towards light energy.



Light Energy

In
Light Energy
you are often:
happy, at peace, joyful,
kind, cheerful, smile
a lot, feel optimistic
and good about
yourself.

You get light energy because you:

- Know you can't control life or others and don't want to
- Realise You can only change you
- Can let go of hurts, anger, frustrations, hate, revenge
- Don't blame life or others
- Don't judge others harshly and can forgive
- Don't judge yourself harshly
- Don't need to be right and can say, "I was wrong!"
- Can show compassion to those who hate you without being their victim
- Show kindness without wanting a reward
- Accept life as it is
- Don't exclude others
- Know we are all connected despite different religions, races, cultures, sex
- Know when you are sad, angry, hurt, anxious and can talk about your pain
- Accept yourself for who you are not what others want you to be
- Don't agree with what others say until you question how you really feel
- Allow others to have totally different points of view from yours



HEAVY Energy

In
HEAVY ENERGY
you can be:
anxious, depressed,
angry, resentful, hateful,
enraged, jealous, fearful,
pessimistic, dejected,
and feel hopeless and
helpless.

You are in heavy energy when you:

- Need to control people and situations
- Manipulate others either aggressively or with charm and smiles
- Speak badly about others and act all self-righteous
- Lose and fall out with friends
- Can't forgive and hold onto grudges.
- Use drugs, alcohol or find other addictions to give you a sense of purpose or emotional feeling
- Judge others harshly
- Judge yourself harshly
- Do and say unkind things
- Gossip
- Blame others but never look at your own actions/play the martyr
- Can't say sorry but expect apologies
- Stay in a victim role and say how bad people are and how terrible life is
- Boast and brag about your achievements
- Find it hard to sleep and relax
- Are not very aware of your actions, emotions and behaviour
- Distrust those people and cultures that are different to yours





"Finding meaning in your life helps
towards light energy"



Chapter 2

Mind Shifting

In this chapter

- You can't change what happens to you but you can always change your thinking and your belief about an event.
- Apply the ABCDE to change your emotional and behavioural response.

Influenced by: Dr Albert Ellis and Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy and Dr Aaron Beck and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.

MIND shifting stems from the therapeutic approach of cognitive therapies, which are arguably the most commonly used techniques facilitated by therapists. Some primary and secondary schools have even adopted cognitive cultures to teach resilience among the student body and subject courses are designed around its content.

So what is a cognitive approach?

Picture a rather lanky male student sitting on a park bench at a university in the USA in the 1930s. His name is Dr Albert Ellis and he's not the most attractive male on campus and he knows it.

He is also the founder of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT). Poor Albert is desperate for a girlfriend and he has a cunning plan. Every day he sits on a campus bench, around lunchtime, eating his sandwiches. Maybe because his rather plain appearance poses no threat to the female students, they tend to eat their lunch at the same bench.

Albert engages them in conversation normally about the weather. This breaks down the awkward barrier that can surface when you are trying to chat someone up. He then makes a witty comment and the female politely laughs. He has broken down her reserves. Just as she is about to head off Albert asks the unsuspecting girl if she would like to go on a date with him that night.

Poor Albert!

He kept a record of his misses. In fact there are 99 of them. 99 rejections from often red-faced ladies who in their wildest dreams would not go out with such a nerdy looking guy like Albert. Occasionally he would get a really uncharitable retort of, 'Get lost Creep!' but mostly he got grimaced smiles that made it quite clear he was not in the same league from the women he sought love.

Now such rejections would have dented the self-esteem of many an aspiring Romeo but not Albert. With each rejection he grew more determined to secure a date. One day, a pretty female undergraduate sat next to him and asked if he minded if she had her lunch with him. 'Of course not!' he replied and that night he went on his first date with the woman who would eventually be his wife.

Now I don't know how accurate that story is but it was told to me several years ago by a close friend of Albert Ellis who worked alongside him at The Ellis Institute in New York.

I was doing a week's course on REBT and the guest speaker was this American university professor, Albert's buddy. He explained that the girl Albert dated fell in love with Albert's charm and intelligence. For Albert's part, he was actually carrying out a social experiment. His hypothesis is that it's not the action that causes social distress but how you view it. Albert brushed off rejection time and again where as you or I might have gone into deep depression about our failings and personal inadequacies. A cognitive approach therefore teaches the client how to cope with the knock backs of life and recognise what causes the blocks to good mental health. Albert's thinking was based on self-esteem; just because I get rejected repeatedly doesn't mean I won't get a date or that I'm worthless or unlovable. This mind shift enabled him to tolerate rejection.

The REBT course was fun for various reasons and because the cognitive approach is very into logical, deductive and rational type problem solving, often associated with male patterns of thinking; being a bloke it made sense to me. Some therapies are more feeling orientated or look at deeply hidden subconscious matter that can be difficult to locate. I remember one cognitive lecturer being very scathing of therapies that took years of client time when REBT



could produce effective healing in relatively few sessions. My favourite day was when we practiced Shame Attacks in Melbourne.

If you see a man or women in the street or park, pulling on a dog lead with a yellow banana attached to it, then you can be sure that you are watching a cognitive therapist in the midst of their training.

A Shame Attack consists of placing yourself in a situation that produces an embarrassing reaction and learning to tolerate the shame it produces. You are required to shame yourself in front of an unsuspecting public. Let me introduce you to Simon, one of the participants on my course, and explain how he shamed himself one April afternoon in Melbourne.

Simon had a really challenging Shame Attack Assignment. He was 42, slim, bearded, wore John Lennon rounded spectacles and worked as a school principal.

His Shame Attack took place on the tourist tram that circled the centre of Melbourne. Just before the tram arrived at its destination, at the top of his voice, he would yell out the name of the stop to the bemusement of startled passengers. As new passengers got on, to the tune of Jingle Bells he would sing:

Melbourne's great

I can't wait, to shop and have some lunch

Melbourne's fun, in the sun

Munch, munch, munch, munch, munch.

Simon didn't actually complete a full tram circuit of central Melbourne because he was asked to get off by the driver who obviously didn't appreciate the free concert.

Now what was the point of Simon's Shame Attack? Well! It was to highlight the main principle that underlies cognitive therapy that states:

It's not actions that determine emotional distress but the value you give to the belief about the action.

The Shame Attack taught us that although the actions were embarrassing, if we got over the thought that they were shameful actions we could actually carry out the actions and so change our behaviour and the emotions attached to the thoughts behind doing Shame Attacks.

Much of human behaviour is determined by the emotional emphasis we put on an event happening. If we get rejected in love we can respond with anger, grief or depression. The key message then is: if you change your thinking about a problem then the emotional intensity of a problem is greatly reduced, say from being deeply depressed to a milder state such as sadness or experiencing a shift from crippling anxiety to mild worry or hopefully to experiencing no sadness or worry at all.

Now it's time to learn your **ABC** or more precisely your **ABCDE**.

Below is a brief explanation of each stage of the **ABCDE** theory so central to cognitive therapy. Let's look at the first part: the ABC.

A

= ACTION

B

= BELIEF

C

= CONSEQUENCE

A

=ACTION

B

=BELIEF

C

=CONSEQUENCE

CASE 1

My girlfriend/boyfriend of one year dumps me for one of my friends

- How dare they betray me. love is forever
- Life is so unfair
- Everyone will think I'm a loser
- My heart's broken
- I'll never find another love
- How will I spend my weekends now
- I'll never get over this

- Depression
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Despair
- Low self-esteem
- Grief
- Jump off a bridge or under a car
- Drink heaps of alcohol to help heal pain
- Excessive crying
- Over eating
- Seeking revenge

CASE 2

I scored poorly in my Year 12 Exams

- I'm dumb
- My life is over
- I'll never get a job
- My parents will kill me

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Helplessness
- Frustration
- Stay in bed for days

CASE 3

My parents have just announced they are getting divorced

- I'm heart broken
- Everyone will know
- Where will I live and with whom
- I'll have to leave school
- It's my fault

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Shame
- Guilt
- Grief
- Panic
- Blaming one's parent
- Withdrawing

FAULTY or illogical thinking occurs when we attach the **A** (the Action) with the **C** (the Consequence). It is not the action that causes us deep distress but the way we process, through our thinking the actions that lead to distress. It is not **A** that causes **C** but **B** that causes **C** and this is known as the **BC** connection. (Apologies to mathematic and formulae phobics).

Our beliefs about the actions cause us emotional distress. This can be proven scientifically because if an action caused the problem surely we would all respond in the same way. The reality is as humans we respond so differently, so individually to the action or event.



I remember at university waiting in the college bar for two friends to celebrate their results of an important exam they had taken. Both had received the final grades and as they walked into the bar one had the gloomiest expression (Big John, the brainiest student at University-he was 6 foot 5) and Little John whose face was ecstatic with joy. (He was also 6 foot 5 but was nicknamed 'little' because he had little enthusiasm for study and in 4 years at college hardly attended a lecture).

Big John had scored a 93% and was as miserable as sin and Little John had scored 56% on the same exam, passing by one mark and he declared himself a genius and I believe in that long night of celebration must have compared himself to Einstein about 100 times.

Big John however had 'failed' by 2 marks to get the A+ status that would have really put him at genius level. The same action (passing an exam) but two totally different responses.

We now need to understand the role of D and E.

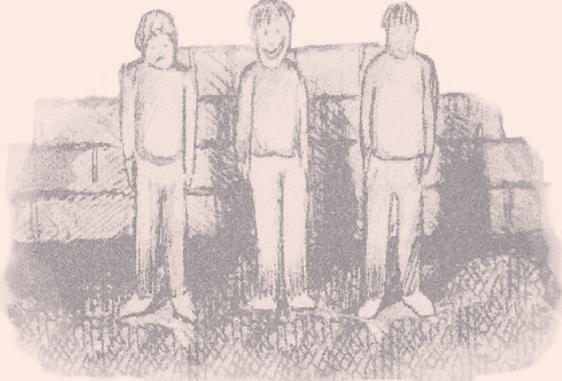
D = Disputing

E = Evolved Emotion

When we dispute or challenge our beliefs a more positive emotional response will emerge and our emotional distress will be greatly reduced.

D then challenges **B**.

By looking at Case 1, 2 and 3 we can see how **D** and **E** come into play. Take a look below:

A	B	C	D	E
ACTION	BELIEF	CONSEQUENCE	DISPUTE THE BELIEF	EVOLVED EMOTION
<p>CASE 1 Dumped</p> 	<p>I will never find a love like this again. I'm Simply unlovable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depressed • Angry • Jealous • Despair • Low self-esteem • Grief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is it written life is fair? • Do you think you are the only one ever to get dumped? • If the relationship was so good why did it end? Was it that great? • Who says you'll never love again? • Relationship break ups are painful. That's life! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadness instead of depression. • Annoyance instead of anger and jealousy. • A relief that it happened before a baby was born or you got married. • Accepting that its better to have loved and lost than never loved at all.

IN Case One, by disputing the original, faulty thinking, one can arrive at a healthier place. Of course it's a shame the relationship is over but that is the nature of relationships.

Why stay with someone who betrays you?

Where is it written that somebody who loves you can't or won't find love somewhere else?

By disputing **rigid beliefs** we allow our self the flexibility of thought to move on with life instead of staying locked into depression and heartache.



A	B	C	D	E
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ACTION	BELIEF	CONSEQUENCE	DISPUTE THE BELIEF	EVOLVED EMOTION
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CASE 2

Did poorly in Year 12 leaving Certificate

I'm an utter failure and I'll continue to fail in everything I do. I have let everybody down including myself.

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Helpless
- Frustration
- Guilt
- Shame
- Little motivation

- Who said you failed you just got a low grade?
- Maybe you're not suited to academics
- Maybe you didn't put much effort into your studies
- Many successful people didn't finish Yr 12
- You can always re-sit
- What an opportunity to travel
- Find a course that you actually like
- You are in the same situation as thousands of others
- Self pity never helped anyone

- Disappointed not depressed or riddled with guilt
- Motivated to look for alternate opportunities
- A chance to learn that effort and hard work are a part of life
- Hope
- Motivation to move on with life

WHEN a pathway is closed there is an opportunity to find new direction. The black and white thinker only sees one way ahead, while the flexible mind finds opportunities everywhere.

One of the world's richest men, Richard Branson, the founder of the Virgin Empire, was a school dropout who made his fortune by selling T shirts with the logo - *I Don't Go to University*. Every great inventor fails numerous times before success graces them with a breakthrough discovery.



CASE 3 is a real heartbreak for many young people; the divorce of their parents. Disputing can seem clumsy when there is so much pain. Disputing that nearly 50% of all marriages fail or that the parental break up is not the child's fault hardly offers comfort. We need to locate the root cause of their suffering. The counsellor will gently explore these primary emotional themes around depression, shame, anxiety that are often voiced as: I don't think I can survive the heartache, I feel so lonely, I have no hope, I hate the uncertainty, I feel unloved, everything is my fault, I feel so angry at my parent's selfishness, I can't stand the loss, I'm so worried for Mum and Dad and don't know how they'll cope, I want them to get back together, I hate my parents.

This is painful stuff!

However, when one feels heard and pain is acknowledged, time will often soften the deepest hurt. I believe one needs to be in the right space to heal. For some this process and realisation may occur in a matter of hours for others a lifetime. Between my youngest client and my oldest there is a 70-year age difference as my elder client bravely comes to terms with the devastating impact the Second World War had upon her.

Below are two columns. The **rigid beliefs** in the left hand column keep one in emotional pain. The right hand column disputes the illogical belief and offers a more flexible and healthier belief pattern.

RIGID BELIEFS Leading to Emotional Pain: Demands about self and others	FLEXIBLE BELIEFS leading to a more positive and happier life which dispute rigid beliefs about self and others
A) I must be perfect and if I'm not I can't stand it.	Such thoughts of needing to be perfect lead to anxiety, depression shame and guilt. I'd rather be myself.
B) I need approval from my parents, teachers and peer group and when I don't get it it's terrible.	I don't think badly about myself if I make a mistake. Being independent is important to me even if you don't get me.
C) If I'm no good at anything I might as well give up.	If I messed up at least I tried. Where is the proof that I'm no good at anything? I need to find what I am good at.
D) Other people should treat me fairly.	I have no control over how others behave, think, feel or choose to treat me.
ILLOGICAL DEMANDS about the world & life	REALISTIC DEMANDS
A) I should be able to do what I want and if I can't it isn't fair.	Get over yourself. Where is it written life is fair?
B) Why should society tell me what to do or order me about?	By following rules we create a safer and just world. E.g. stopping at a red light/being quiet in class so everyone can learn.
C) I must have life go as I want, when I want it. The rules of life don't apply to me.	I must learn to cope with my frustration. Jail is full of people who think they are entitled to do and have what they want.
D) I can't be stuffed doing homework/the garden/taking the bins out now, I'll do it at the last moment.	Short term pain long term gain often applies in life. If I do it now it's out of the way and I can relax.
E) Reacting aggressively/tearfully immediately something happens that I don't like. I can't stand it when something goes badly and the world is unjust.	The ability to be patient results in getting what I desire. Like Albert Ellis sitting on the bench asking for dates and continually getting knocked back.
F) I have no control over anything, good or bad, so I might as well give up. If it's not fun, like homework, why bother doing it.	In order to be successful I'll have to do some planning now even though it's not much fun and boring. Again, I need to cope with my frustration.
G) The world and life should go exactly as I want it to and when it doesn't I can't stand it.	Realising that the world can be cruel and unjust but I don't have to become a victim because it is.
H) I'll avoid anything that is too difficult.	I'll be persistent and tolerant of others even when things get tough.



Certain themes emerge:

- ① When we place heavy **demands on our self** and set high expectations for our lives, there is a tendency to experience anxiety, depression, shame and guilt as we inevitably fall of our artificial perch of success.
- ② When we place high **demands on others** to treat us well we create a response of anger and rage in us when they let us down, as they will because they are only human. There is a tendency to violence in extreme cases but more commonly passive-aggressive behaviour. If a friend somehow upsets us we may respond with a look (The Greasies) or turn away as they approach (Passive-Aggression).
- ③ When we **demand that the world and life** should run smoothly, be predictable and safe we become unable to cope when it bites us. The inability to be resilient often leads to self-pity and frustration. There is a tendency to withdraw from life through addictions, putting things off, running away or fighting against those in authority. This is the realm of the professional victim.

Notice how **rigid thinkers** use certain words like **should** and **must**. (Things **must** go my way, I **should** expect to get what I want). Dispute this rigidity by saying,

Why **must** things go your way?

Why **should** you get you want?

Rigid thinkers say **unfair** a lot, "That's **not fair!** We got homework tonight." Challenge them with, "Get over it, whoever said life was fair. Plus, everyone in your class received it. Students get homework."

They make statements like "**I can't stand it! I can't do that!**" so they don't have to take any responsibility. They rarely leave their comfort zone and to get out of doing something, that requires effort, they'll claim the task is impossible to do so they learn how to avoid and learn self-imposed helplessness. Insist they use the word **won't!** Rather than **can't!** I won't do my homework rather than I can't do my homework implies they have a choice.

They use the term, "**It's awful!**" and catastrophise and really believe it's **awful** when they don't get their way. Why is it awful when you don't get what you want? It's your inability to cope with your frustration and your demands on life and others that's the real problem.

Imagine if Albert Ellis, as he sat on his bench, had been overcome with the negativity of the **rigid** thinker. After his first or second refusal, let alone his ninety-ninth, from the female students, he could have gone into believing that life was **unfair**, that he **couldn't stand** rejection that it was **awful** because he was not good looking. He might have **catastrophised** the situation and rigidly believed that life was terrible and entered into self-pity, anger and frustration, believing that the world **should** go the way he wanted it to when he wanted it.

But he didn't.

Instead he disputed these **rigid** beliefs, remained emotionally grounded until he got a date. To use an old cliché: after falling down, he got back up, dusted himself off and continued on his merry way.

We can't begin to make change until we are aware of what needs to change. That is the role of the therapist who observes behaviour or rigid beliefs that are often out of the client's awareness. The skill is in letting the client become aware of what holds them back without alienating them so that they never come through the counselling door again. You can see how shame plays a very large role in determining our behaviour and beliefs. That is why Shame Attacks and surviving them allows us to become more flexible. We can survive shame but need to be conscious of how we impose it upon ourselves.

Below are 3 typical patterns of **rigid thinkers** and their opposites, flexible thinkers.

The 3 negative characters are called:

- The Set In Stone character
- The Life is a Bitch and then you Die Character
- The Horror Show Character

The 3 positive characters are known as:

- The Stone Cutter Character
- The Life's an Adventure Character
- The Peaceful Character





EVERY half decent novel, film or drama needs interesting characters. A great storyteller highlights how a character changes and often struggles with change. It makes for interesting viewing as we observe, say the hero or heroine, overcoming their inner demons and transforming their life.

Fictional characters such as Scrooge or The Beast (In Beauty and the Beast) may not be real characters but they are based on people with rigid and inflexible mindsets. The great news is that they changed from being quite unlikeable to pleasant and much happier characters.

See if
you can
recognise
aspects
of yourself
in the
following





The Set In Stone Character needs to mind shift into The Stone Cutter Character

The Set In Stone Guy

This guy is a total judge. Everyone is either good or bad and those who do bad things need to be punished.

However, Set In Stone is equally hard on himself and quite unforgiving if he fails. He is often angry but also anxious when things go wrong.

Set in Stone sees the world in black and white, there is no compromise or grey area in this guy's mind.

A fanatic through and through, also a perfectionist and if things aren't 100% right there is a tendency to give up and feel self-hatred, although this is often denied, resulting in projecting anger and hate at others.

Criticism and gossip are common traits.

If someone offends this guy then they are an enemy for life and if their names are mentioned or he meets them, Set in Stone Guy gets outraged.

People can't change is his belief; just like a leopard can't change its spots.

The Stone Cutter Dude

Stone Cutter is a laid back kind of guy. If people make mistakes, so what! They can learn from those experiences.

Stone Cutter looks for the good in everyone including himself. No one is seen as stupid, unlovable, worthless or a failure. Stone Cutter knows that it is your thoughts that create unworthiness so looks at people in a balanced and kind way. If you have a negative, judgemental thought, change it, is his attitude.

Stone Cutter doesn't need or want to be perfect but tries hard anyway at doing the best he can do.

He accepts people and situations for themselves. He refuses to think in absolute terms (that someone or thing is totally bad/good/evil/brilliant) and is tolerant of difference.

Stone Cutter is able to discuss issues logically and calmly and when he comes across black and white thinkers he slowly chips away at their rigidity by disputing illogical beliefs with compassion, patience and common sense responses.





The Life is a Bitch and Then You Die Character needs to mind shift into The Life is An Adventure Character

The Life is A Bitch Girl

This character is pure doom and gloom, glass half empty. What's the point of life she asks because you know you're going to die and during your miserable life you are totally controlled by outside forces.

Everything is negative, negative, negative and over generalised. Things will never change it's always going to be awful. The past is just depressing and the future is just as bleak. Others are always to blame and this only creates further frustration and powerlessness.

The bad stuff is continually replayed in conversations and reinforced by the news. She has a pessimistic outlook on everything. If this character travels, she hates it because she can't adapt to change or the disgusting foreign food, climate and culture that are so different to what she is used to.

A very angry person who's bound to get chronic diarrhoea on holiday and won't we all know about it and who's to blame.

The Life Is An Adventure chick

This girl takes firm responsibility for her life. She gets off her backside and takes the necessary action. If things get tough (like losing her passport) she is able to adapt and learns to remain calm in a difficult situation.

She is optimistic and hopeful and lives in the present moment, enjoying life and dealing with whatever life throws up. She learns from tough experiences to see that the purpose of life has meaning and value.

She is not afraid of life or travel and can put what is not good in its rightful place. If she has a car accident she is not concerned about the damage done to the vehicle and is delighted everyone is safe.

She is solution orientated and laughs and smiles a lot. When overseas she tries the local foods, tries to say hello in the local language and is in wonder and awe at the local architecture, dress, customs and scenery. If she gets Delhi Belly it's just part of the whole experience.



The Horror Show Character Needs to Mind shift to The Peaceful Solution Character

The Horror Show Freak

This character thinks people are out to get him because he can read their minds. He believes that he is being persecuted and that others hate him. He doesn't check out the facts or see it is he who is inadequate and projects his low self-esteem on to others whom he falsely imagines are out to damage him somehow.

He creates impossible expectations (that everyone should like him and understand him) and when these are not realised he comes crashing down believing the world is plotting against him. He uses fear, anger and anxiety to justify his actions. If I'm scared or anxious of something, then I'll avoid it, or if I'm angry, I'm justified in yelling at you because then you'll have to listen to me and I'm right anyway because my emotions tell me so.

He might commit a terrible crime, like murder and feel OK about it because his jealousy or anger justified his action. He takes little responsibility for his behaviour and so doesn't feel guilty, about negative actions; his denial protects him from unpleasant thoughts or actions.

He rarely seeks help because counsellors are for weak people and besides he doesn't have any problems; it's everyone else who is the problem.

The Peaceful Type

This peaceful character accepts the difficulties that life throws in his direction but understands that life sometimes isn't fair.

While he would prefer certain things not to happen he accepts misfortune as a part of life. He has the amazing ability to sum up the other person's point of view, he can step in the shoes of the other and as a result is slow to anger and stress. He is not threatened by others and can remain calm while around him everyone loses their cool.

He would make a great detective investigating and checking out what is really going on before reaching a conclusion. He is able to remain impartial and others see him as trustworthy. He takes responsibility for his emotions and can say, 'I feel anxious!' (sad or angry), rather than 'you make me angry!'

Problems can always be solved and he's not afraid or shamed to seek help. He is happy to seek change and doesn't need to force others to be like him.



THE reality is that many of us are stuck in rigid mind-sets. When we are unaware of how unhappy this makes us we often descend into a place of desperation and that is usually the point when individuals reach out for professional help.

Mind shifting recognises that thinking determines our feelings. We don't always have the power over events but we do have the power to change our thoughts about the

event, which then allows for choice in our emotional response.

It is not the event that causes unhealthy emotions like anger, jealousy, anxiety or hate but our attitude to events. If you're not convinced try your own Shame Attack and experience your mind shift as you learn to accept and tolerate unpleasant situations. The ability to mind shift opens up a whole new world.

THE TOP 5 SCHOOL/UNI CAMPUS/WORK PLACE SHAME ATTACKS

1

Go to school/uni/work wearing odd shoes and socks on your feet.
(Liable to get a detention if done at school though).

2

Shave off your eyebrows. Shaving off just one is doubly shameful.

3

Tell someone, you really fancy or just plain like, that you love him or her in front of lots people through poetry or song.

4

Give a teacher/lecturer/boss an apple and place it on their desk with a positive affirmation such as **"You're the best."**
(If done at school might get a detention unless the teacher likes you or is hungry).

5

Do a rap dance (or better still a ballet dance) while people line up at the tuck shop/canteen with a sign saying how much you love school/uni/work.



Chapter 3

Parental Snakes & Ladders, Traps & Daggers

In this chapter

- Recognise that how you were raised greatly influences your emotional and behavioural patterns.
- Once patterns are recognised it is possible to change the dysfunctional elements that don't help you or others.
- Climb the ladders that lead to healthy functioning in the family and avoid the snakes.

Influenced by Family Therapy.

IF you thought families were havens of safety; well, you had better think again. Families ought to come with a health warning or at least a 'beware before buying' sign attached somewhere in the birth canal. Unfortunately, as formal reading lessons are four or five years away, the innocent baby lands unsuspectingly into a real life family game of snakes and ladders.

We are often products of the environment we grow up in and children readily accept the values of their parents. Adolescence is that important time when we challenge the world that we know, and a drift away from parents is actually quite healthy.

On the other hand, there can be an over dependency on the peer group, as the teenager

leaves the influence of the family, to be immersed into the prevailing culture of teenage music, fashion lifestyle etc. Teen years are about establishing a sense of identity, (who am I?) and connecting with the group or groups that you feel you belong in. Developmentally, the task is to have a real sense of your values and what makes you tick.

With understanding parents, teachers and friends, this journey is made easier. With limited external support, transition into a free-thinking and independent being, fully confident and self-accepting, can be difficult.

The following tables highlight a list of what parenting can do to the personality and formation of a child.



HOW THE PARENT ACTS TOWARDS THE CHILD

THE EFFECT ON THE CHILD AND POSSIBLE PERSONALITY DISORDER

HOW THE CHILD RESPONDS WHAT THE CHILD TAKES INTO ADULTHOOD

Mum/Dad are cold and distant and may fail to bond with their baby. They withdraw their love. They can be violent: verbally, emotionally and physically.

The Child Feels Hated The Schizoid Personality

There is an internal belief that they are damaged and that something is profoundly wrong with them. The World is an unsafe place and people can't really be trusted. Hostility is projected onto others who in turn see the child as being aggressive. There is a tendency for the child to intellectualise rather than speak from the heart. The child appears cold and distant.

The parents are like children themselves placing their needs above the child's wellbeing. The adults may take drugs openly or be addicted to gambling or high risk-taking behaviour. They depend on the child for emotional support as they are emotional immature as parents. The child makes them (the adult) feel complete and worthwhile and becomes a parent figure through meeting the unmet emotional needs of the adults.

The Abandoned Child The Oral Personality

The child learns to feel self-worth through supporting others and so loses the ability to explore its own needs and wishes. The child believes it can live life without any need for help or it can become the opposite and behave in a clingy and over-dependant manner. They seek inner gratification through food, chocolate, exercise, drugs etc. to meet their emotional needs. They may take jobs that serve others but are often out of touch and find relationships difficult. There is an expectancy & internal rage at being let down. They smile a lot and say they are fine but beneath the happy façade is a frightened and lost child that stays with them into adulthood.

The adult views their child as an extension of them self and does not allow independence. Children must follow the beliefs and patterns of the parents: religion, education and work choice. The child is not allowed to disagree. The child is literally joined at the parental hip with no freedom to move independently.

The Owned Child The Symbiotic Personality

The child finds it hard to find an identity and becomes a follower in life. While loving the parents there is an underlying feeling of deep resentment. These children are not assertive and tend to agree with everyone but struggle to know who they are and what their needs and goals are.

The parents use the child to fulfil what the parent couldn't. Maybe through playing well in a sport or getting to university. They either place the child on a pedestal, constantly singing the praises and achievements of their idealised child or/and pour out and vent rage and humiliation when the child fails to meet parental expectation. A stereotype would be the 5-year-old performing on the catwalk at a beauty pageant for Mum.

The Used Child The Narcissistic Personality

This child is like a pumped up balloon that eventually bursts before being mended and re-inflated again. A false self is created that believes it is better than others and so people are looked down upon or they are idolised. The child finds fault with most things and people (even their idols) and despite their grandiosity are very fragile and deflate into depression.

Parents are highly disciplined and strict with the child. They demand the child self-monitor its behaviour and insist on many hours of homework/tidiness/being quiet around adults. They have high expectations and are often high achievers in their chosen field. They find it difficult to give praise.

The Defeated Child The Masochistic Personality

The child learns to be a perfectionist displaying great self-control. They tend to become over controlling with others and rigid in their beliefs. When they fail they suffer from terrible guilt and feel they need to be punished and humiliated thus displaying masochistic characteristics. They can become fundamental in their view of the world, finding little tolerance towards other lifestyles or cultures. A stereotype would be religious fanatics who starve themselves or carry out painful penances because they are not worthy or a Judge paying to be whipped in a brothel.

The adult sexually abuses the child or the child is encouraged to dress sexy or sexual jokes and comments are directed their way by the parent. The child is over sexualised.

The Exploited Child The Histrionic Personality

This child confuses being sexual with love. There is a tendency for high drama and in adult relationships they blame the partner for letting them down and trying to manipulate them. They constantly push loved ones away but become desperate when they leave. There is often huge unexpressed rage, histrionics and grief. They dress sexually or use their bodies to enhance their sexuality and appear confident and in control. In reality, they are desperate for love and protection and tend to make their partners a substitute for their parents, needing to be constantly looked after and nurtured. Of course this is not the role of the partner and screaming, walking out and hysteria occur when feelings of being let down, misunderstood and betrayed surface.

The parents are disgusted with anything to do with sex which is seen as dirty and evil. Spare the rod and spoil the child prevails. Pleasure is difficult to embrace.

The Disciplined Child The Oedipal-Obsessive-Compulsive Personality

The child learns to deny its sexual urges and curiosity and these are suppressed. This individual needs to control the world around them and becomes frightened and anxious when it can't.

O.K. I know what you are thinking. Your parents have ruined your life and are the root cause of all your disgruntlement. Just because you follow Dad's footy team or you have been grounded for a month for running up the phone bill, when your parents were not even aware you possessed a mobile, does not mean you have a personality disorder. In fact many therapists, when they come to study mental health, are convinced that they too suffer from each affliction they come across.

The categories highlight the potential game of snakes and ladders that can be played out in the family or in fact in any relationship, be it between couples; work colleagues; teacher and students or simply whenever there is contact with another human.

Being aware of the snake, (the slippery slide into negative patterns of relating) and by focusing on the antidote, the ladder, (the climb to positive behaviours) allows a greater chance of relational harmony.

When we habitually get swallowed by the snake we descend into a trap of dark daggers. The more cuts we receive the sharper the pain in which wounds are continually opened and exposed to mental infection and toxicity.

What are the chief relational ingredients of human snakes and ladders; the highs and the lows found in the board game of real life family dynamics?

Most are common sense approaches to treating each other with respect. Sometimes adults need reminding that with teenagers, it is the adult that needs to take the lead in restoring peace. Don't argue with a teenager until their brain is fully formed (late teens or early twenties) because your rational approach may well be met with monosyllabic grunts of "Why?" or "It isn't fair!" and anyway you won't win the disagreement. Some teenagers will simply argue for the sake of it without any recall to logic or rationale.

The idea behind this family game of snakes and ladders is to see the benefits of climbing the ladder as opposed to being swallowed by the snake. How many marriages could be saved, addictions avoided, conflicts reduced, a spirit of compromise flourish, if we realised there was a choice between sliding down a snake or climbing up a ladder?

This is why counselling and psychotherapy needs to play an increasing role in an ever growing and complex society. Law courts, legal and police structures are totally inadequate institutions to dealing with the pain and delicate patterns played out in the family. Major institutions, including the media, play a daily blame game: family lawyers pit one family member against another; out of touch judges have little insight outside the narrow confines of the law, in certain areas entire communities despise the police.

No wonder divorce rates, drug use and youth alienation is on the increase. Education around and about the family must be a priority: accessible, affordable and what is most challenging viewed from a position of compassion and not disdain nor self-righteous judgment, with the ability to fathom the deeper layers of behaviour that institutions rarely understand.

In the following boxed sections notice patterns and games your family play (every family regardless of wealth and status will recognise degrees of behaviour). If you are inclined to landing on snakes then help and support is needed. With the first snake notice how much the critic plays in your life and how much you need to become the assertive democrat?

Be considerate to all family members as negative patterns are often formed generations back (The content of the next chapter).



THE FIRST SNAKE

The Critic

THE Critic constantly criticises. Good behaviour and deeds are not noticed and expectations are too high and unrealistic.

The Critic is always trying to correct the other so that eventually they get worn down. The personality is often attacked rather than the behaviour. Stating, **"You're lazy!"** rather than naming the action of the other, leads to defensiveness on the one being told off.

Criticism is telling someone they are wrong but maybe understood as **"I don't care how you feel,"** when I tell you off. How do you destroy a child's healthy ego or self-esteem? Through constant criticism.

Criticism can be viewed as the fangs of the snake; toxic and destructive when unleashed.

THE FIRST LADDER

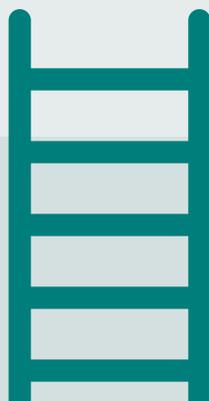
The Assertive Democrat

A relationship is not about controlling another, hopefully, it's about support and compromise. Being assertive means getting your point across without the other feeling criticised or continually nagged. Corrective feedback reduces resistance and avoidance. It involves **'I'** statements rather than blaming, **'YOU'** statements. If you say to someone:

"You are lazy!" or **"You are hopeless!"** you have immediately attacked them. Instead say, **"I feel angry because I had to tidy up the mess on the floor again. Can you help me with this because it's a problem for me?"**

Notice in this statement: No criticism, just asking for cooperation and saying that for you there is a problem and can the other come to the party.

The Assertive Democrat allows for more than one view or solution to exist in a relationship and searches for compromise. Ideals and expectations are not imposed. If starting a new relationship watch out for the Critic. You don't need a control freak in your life.



THE SECOND SNAKE

Fuelling the Fire

IN relationships we tend to train each other to habitually act and react. **Yes! Really!** Have you noticed that when an argument is **'full on'** it tends to head in a predictable pattern? It might end when one cries, one storms off, one locks themselves in a room, one sulks or remains distant for days, whoever yells loudest wins or there is physical violence.

We mould each other to act in certain ways. Even with violence, there can be a pattern of remorse and promises of reforming only to be repeated again with the next argument. With loved ones we are less inhibited so yelling and swearing maybe **'normal'**. If I don't get what I want or unless you see my point of view I'll scream the house down.

A common cause of conflict is when adults demand the teenager's room be spotless. Butt out parents and let the adolescent manage their own room. If the pigsty becomes just that, well! You don't have to live in it and eventually the penny will drop as your child realises that maybe healthy sanitation is the most sensible course. The same goes for homework: it belongs to the child not the parent and if it's not completed then the child must take the responsibility for their lack of action. Notice how over protectiveness adds fuel to the fire.

THE SECOND LADDER

Dousing the fire

THIS ladder requires recognition of your conflict pattern. If violence is involved immediate professional help is needed ranging from police action to counselling intervention. Cycles can be broken but it takes awareness of what is happening.

Look at patterns in your family. Are you repeating patterns (yelling, violence, withdrawing) that you witnessed as a child and playing them out on your own kids?

Sometimes an understanding of the power struggle is needed. With adolescents, it is the parents who must draw on deep reserves of patience; after all they have the power and may need to be firm but flexible.

Admitting that you have no idea of how to stop the conflict might be the necessary first step in seeking outside help.

One of the most helpful fire retardants is the ability to say, **"I'm sorry!"** that hopefully comes with the graciousness of accepting the apology and letting bygones be bygones. Rather than repeating the pattern of conflict, letting go of the issue is vital otherwise, like the smouldering ash that reignites the bush fire, it starts all over again.

THE THIRD SNAKE

I **need** to know your every move

THOSE who fall into this trap value instant and unquestioning obedience from others. Rules are important and the world would be chaotic without agreement.

However, if the attitude of this snake is adopted the likely outcome is to create resentment often leading to outright hostility from the one feeling controlled. The colonial attitude of 'I rule therefore I know better' led to the eventual fall of most Empires.

Teenagers need firm guidance but better to be involved as to the reason why the rule has been imposed. With partners, the need to control the other is a sure sign of a toxic relationship and jealousy is an ugly beast.

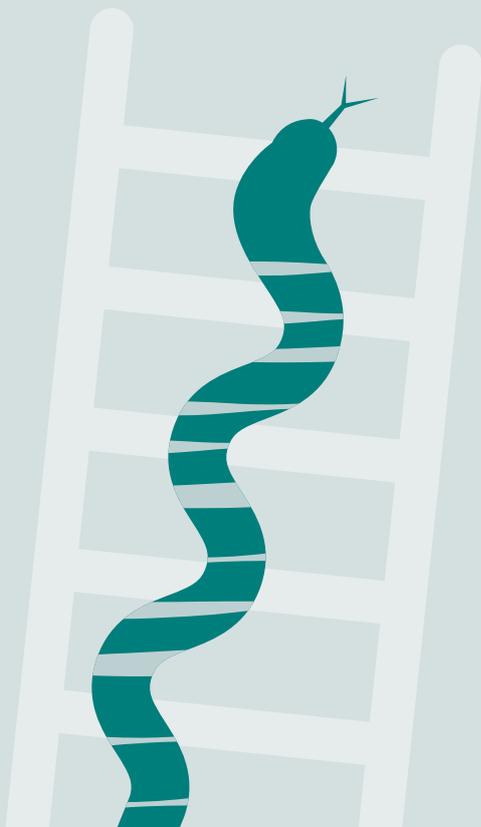
On the other hand, out of sight and out of mind can be equally questionable. Balance and negotiation are constant features that help in the smooth running of family life.

THE THIRD LADDER

Trust

AT the end of the day what control do we really have over our life? Trust will be broken at times and the key here is to rebuild after being let down. Of course it is heart breaking if a partner or child breaks a trust but the responsibility ultimately lies with the action of the one who broke that bond.

How we react is our responsibility.



THE FOURTH SNAKE

You did that **deliberately**

HAVE you ever waited up half the night for a partner or adolescent who was supposed to be back at a set hour? Several hours have elapsed since the expected deadline. You have paced the floor, unable to sleep, fearing the worst, unable to make contact. Then they stumble through the door, oblivious to your tormented minds mixture of relief and rage. They greet you cheerfully with a huge smile. (Then all hell breaks loose).

They simply hadn't put themselves in your shoes or been able to read your mind (I thought you were murdered or maybe having an affair) and realistically how could they?

This snake demands that the other can read your mind. "**You selfish individual, you let me down,**" is the thought behind the anger.

THE FOURTH LADDER

Sorry! It wasn't on purpose

Don't take it personally! Sure you feel hurt and neglected but patience and firmness around your expectations can wait until the morning. You didn't cause the situation but with a calm approach and the assertive "**I feel annoyed because I was concerned that you might have been in danger,**" will have more chance of being heard than the line of, "**You inconsiderate, selfish Blip! Blip! Blip! Blip!**"

Relationship building takes repeated communication but kindness and understanding from both sides is essential. More bees caught with honey than vinegar applies to letting go of grudges and getting what you desire through understanding.

Using open questions starting with: how and what, allows an opening rather than an instant condemning. E.g. "**What do you think it might be like for me when you come home so late?**" If they don't know then you can explain exactly how you felt. Your concern rather than anger might then be exposed and hopefully elicit a positive response.

A
family game
of snakes
& ladders



THE FIFTH SNAKE

Saving our loved ones from everything unpleasant

WE can't protect our loved ones from the disappointments and loss that life will throw our way. For many teenagers a vital step in growing up is learning that actions have consequences. We live in an over protected, western mentality framework, thinking we are somehow immune from the 'awful world' that exists out there.

The bubble wrap approach to life creates false expectations and we often find it easier to lash out at those closest to us rather than accept, what is! When we get 'bitten and swallowed' by unpleasant experiences.

Acceptance of life, as it is, goes a long way to building resilience. E.g. if you don't work towards exams/apprenticeship you won't do as well. Effort and hard work help rather than hinder.

Relationships break down and first loves rarely last the course of time. Sometimes these lessons have to be experienced before the penny drops.

When awful things happen families can sometimes turn on each other rather like the psychological experiments on rats that, when provoked and stressed by scientists, attacked each other.

THE FIFTH LADDER

Taking personal responsibility and accepting life as it is

LEARNING to live with disappointments and accepting that things won't always go our way is simply a part of life.

All too often we look to blame those we love the most when they are our greatest source of comfort and understanding. By taking responsibility for both our positive and negative life experiences we learn balance and gain maturity instead of sinking into self-pity and victim-hood and attacking those closest to us.

THE SIXTH SNAKE

I'll live **through** you and be your servant

WHEN you live for someone else you adopt the martyr scenario. Through you, I will find my self-worth. Of course the magic that arises from deep intimacy is akin to an almost spiritual connection. This is love. Love is not becoming so focused on the other that your own needs be they social, educational or recreational simply get lost.

The role of the mother, wife is still a double-edged sword in that the expectation from loved ones is that you will be at my beck and call. When this role is taken on blindly, there is a tendency to exhaustion and burn out.

Likewise an adolescent who can't detach from the parent during adolescence finds it hard to get a sense of who they are.

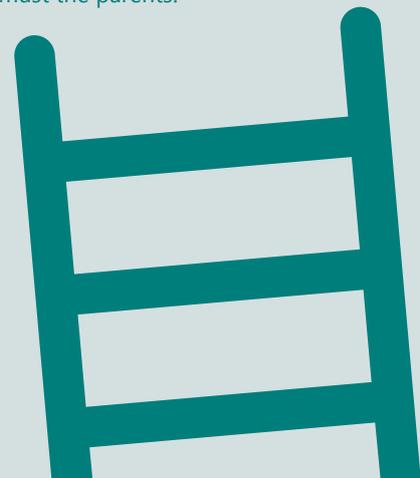
THE SIXTH LADDER

I am I and you are you but we are still in a team

BY learning self-care we come to see that balance creates a healthier family environment. Assertive skills such as **"I feel like the hired help because all I seem to do is pick up, clean, cook etc."** will open the door for healthier exploration of role allocation and who does what. A family is a team and some roles are designated by stereotypes but when the family pulls together in the same direction tensions are reduced.

Of course we are individuals and as such need to assert our uniqueness and like a sports team each player may have different roles but they still need to play together. This involves regular communication or team meetings.

Children have 49% DNA of the mother and 49% DNA of the father. They look like the biological parent. However, they are not the parent and must be allowed to enjoy their individuality, as must the parents.



THE following psychological experiment highlights how human behaviour might come from a place of 'good' intention but the consequences of such action can be suffocating and toxic.

The research involved a large family of monkeys who were placed in a spacious enclosure.

In their cage was a pole and on top of it sat a bunch of delicious bananas. Following natural instinct the primates soon climbed up the pole to reach out for an easily accessible and delightful treat. However, just before they were about to grasp the bananas a powerful jet of water was unleashed on them. While this wasn't painful it certainly frightened them. After repeated, unsuccessful attempts to reach the prize, the by now saturated monkeys gave up trying.

Then the experiment got really interesting. One of the monkeys was removed and replaced by another who had not experienced the hosing down. Naturally when this new member of the group saw the fruit there was immediate excitement and the monkey went to climb the pole. At this the rest of the clan became agitated and pulled the newcomer down.

Harsh warning cries rose from the entire group expressing Danger! Danger! Danger! Only this time there was no hose, squirting water and the most recent inmate didn't experience a drenching. What was peculiar was how this monkey heeded the warning of the group and retreated down the pole empty handed.

Gradually all the monkeys who had witnessed the initial water punishment were replaced by those who hadn't. The newest monkeys wanted to take the bananas but were held back by the troop although none of them had actually been soaked by water.

What does this tell us about their actions and by close DNA association-our human behaviour too? That maybe we have an inbuilt gene that is actually very controlling. Anyone who goes against the norm becomes a threat and individuality is stifled. Out of well-intentioned fear those closest to us may inhibit our growth and true potential.

In families where severe mental disorders exist and a parent or child displays behaviour, that is bizarre, there is a tendency to shun and isolate. People with certain personality disorders are

not easy to be around as they swing from loving individuals to hostility, sometimes in the blink of an eye.

If illness of the mind can be viewed as illness in the same light as say cancer or any type of physical disorder, compassion and pragmatism can be applied. That is the right help and support can be established. I have often seen highly distressed students and upon meeting parents have found it is parental health that needs addressing. Medical and therapeutic interventions can then be put in to place for the sake of the whole family.

If one member of the family is in emotional distress then all the members suffer. I really encourage the student or parent, who witnesses the daily emotional struggle of a family member, to seek professional help whether at school, referral through a GP or phone call to a charity. The high rates of mental illness (especially depression and anxiety) in our communities, only serves to remind us that we humans are fragile and sensitive to the complexities of life.

Hopefully most of us will be truly nurtured by family. The reality is that the family has the potential to harvest the seeds of dysfunction for generations. This is the topic of the next chapter and for me the introduction to a psychotherapy that utterly changed the way I view my own life and therapeutic practice.



Chapter 4

The Hidden Dynamics of a Family System

In this chapter

- When family members are excluded or forgotten or terrible secrets are hidden, dysfunctional patterns surface again and again in the family.
- The excluded may result from divorce, abortion, illness, adoption, war, sexual abuse, murder, early deaths, suicide, a difficult fate and so forth.
- When the excluded are brought back into memory and given a place in the family the whole system relaxes and those who carry the burden of the excluded are free.
- When feeling burdened by life but can't explain why, a systemic entanglement may be at play.

Influenced by Bert Hellinger and Family Systems (Orders of love/Soul movements).

IN 2002 I experienced the most moving and peculiar sight I have ever witnessed in therapy. A psychologist, Dr Gabe Phillips, invited me to attend a Systemic Constellation workshop in the Botanical Gardens at Melbourne that ran for several days.

I found myself sitting in a large circle of about 100 people, therapists of all persuasions: psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, family therapists, counsellors, general practitioners, and so on. We had assembled to see the work stemming from the ideas of a German psychotherapist called Bert Hellinger. A Dutch couple, Peter and Otaline were conducting the workshop.

Peter asked if anyone had an issue they would like to work on? This was a therapeutic gathering and by issue Peter meant personal problem. There was no way I was going to put my hand in the air and volunteer in front of so many strangers. I looked around the spacious room as several people raised their hands indicating they would like to work. Peter acknowledged these people and

after some time said he was drawn energetically to work with a tall gentleman sitting close to me.

Peter asked this guy to sit in the empty chair beside his. The facilitator explained that what was happening now was to find, through a form of therapeutic interview, the exact nature of the predicament for his client. He explained that what we tend to think is the cause of the problem often is not.

The client explained that his life was a mess, he felt out of control, as his family appeared to be falling apart. He became visibly upset, teary and his words were mumbled and barely audible. His daughter, always a rebel and hot headed, was a drug addict and the resulting tension had brought an emotional gulf between him and his wife. He was very angry at his daughter's selfish and indulgent lifestyle. He held her to account for all of the dysfunction in his family. Peter was very respectful toward the client but told him that he needed the facts about the family rather than an emotional interpretation and explanation as to who was to blame for the tensions in the family.



Peter wanted to know the following sort of information:

- > Who belonged in the immediate family?
- > The extended family?
- > Were there divorces?
- > Had anyone died young?
- > Were there any terminations, early deaths or suicides?
- > Had anyone had a heavy fate such as being in war or murdered?
- > Was there a black sheep in the family; someone who had brought shame on the family?
- > Who had experienced trauma?
- > Were there significant romantic attachments, engagements that did not result in marriage?
- > Were there emigrations or migrations where family members were separated?
- > Were there stillbirths or miscarriages?

Peter was basically saying, who is in your family that may have been left out, experienced difficulties, who has been excluded? Who had a place but now doesn't? A family system includes a wide sphere of people, including former lovers and the terminated. A bond exists among family even when we deny that bond and all have a right to belong and to be acknowledged.

The client was rather annoyed at this line of questioning because he wanted to talk about his teenage daughter who had a heroin problem and his wife who wanted to leave him. No one had been left out or ignored from his family, explained the man and then in an almost throwaway line said that his wife's mother had an older sister who had died at an early age in a mental institution. Apparently she had killed herself but he wasn't sure about the exact details as his wife's family was Catholic and there was a lot of shame and taboo around suicide and mental illness. Then matter of fact Peter exclaimed,

"We may have found the excluded member!"

What happened next was remarkable.

Peter asked the client to pick from the circled audience, people to represent the following members of the family. Peter stated it really

didn't matter who was chosen as the result would be the same. The following were selected:

- A male participant to represent the client
- A female participant to represent his daughter
- A representative to play his wife
- Two audience members, one to represent his wife's mother and another for his wife's father
- Another member of the circle to represent his daughter's Great Aunt who had committed suicide in the institution

The representatives stood in the centre of our large group looking rather lost. Peter then informed the client to position each by standing behind them and to move them with his hands on their shoulders, into a position in the circle where he thought they might belong in proximity to each other. Peter stated that the client was not to spend ages in thinking where each should be placed but to just trust his instinct.

After a couple of minutes the client had set up his 'family members' on the floor. Some faced each other while others looked away. Peter then told us that an energy field had been set up and that each representative should concentrate on any feelings in their bodies, such as a stiff arm or a sore leg, to be aware of emotions they might have towards each other and to whom they felt drawn to and to whom they felt distant from or even if they had an urge to move in a particular direction.

I must confess that at this point I hadn't any inkling as to what was happening; a lot of confused strangers pretending to be a part of a family standing inside in a big audience of seated people. And then the most spectacular phenomena occurred. The representatives in the circle started reacting towards each other in very real ways. For instance, Otaline (Peter's fellow facilitator) had stepped into the circle to assist Peter and she pointed to the client's representative. The representative's face, as he stared at his wife, literally shone with what can only be described as pure love. Peter asked the client's representative what he felt towards his wife.

"I just adore her!"

Peter turned to the seated client and said,
"How is it to hear that?"



"That's exactly how it is,"
replied the client.

Peter instructed the wife's representative (who was facing away from the client's representative), *"Look at your husband."* She did and an expression of contempt crossed her face. *"What do you feel when you look at your husband?"*

"I despise him!"

At this stage the client spoke up and told all the gathering that was exactly how his wife acted towards him in 'real' life. The poor man had tears in his eyes.

Peter and Otaline asked the representatives to move where they felt most comfortable. Everyone saw the client's daughter move straight to her great aunt (The women who had been institutionalized). The daughter had a huge smile on her face and looked at ease as she approached and then held hands and embraced with her great aunt. Peter asked the daughter to say to the great aunt, *"I never forgot you."* The daughter's representative said this but added, *"Yes it feels true. I feel great love for her."*

The client then spoke up in complaint to Peter.

"My daughter never met this women, her Grandmother's sister, none of us did. How can she remember her? How can this representative of my daughter feel these things?"

As I sat in the circle I was wondering this too and Peter explained. When someone is forgotten in the family system, or there is a terrible secret, or someone is deliberately excluded or spoken of badly the younger generation may blindly follow the fate of the older generation. It is not a conscious following. It is a bond, an unconscious, binding loyalty that remembers the forgotten family member by reliving the trauma or experiencing the fate of the excluded member. In this case the great aunt who had brought shame to the family. Your daughter, Peter added, is following a similar fate, carrying the burden of this forgotten family member. The representative is simply picking up on this energy.

Through the actions of the representatives certain patterns emerged. The client loved his wife but his wife really resented, even hated her husband. The wife's mother and father shared the same pattern. The representative for the daughter was very bonded to her great aunt and the great aunt looked kindly on her grandniece.

Peter asked the great aunt to say to the grandniece, *"My fate was heavy and I killed myself."* The representative for the great aunt replied that those words didn't feel quite right and it was more like,

*"I was so alone and misunderstood.
I couldn't stay."*

Peter then brought in a male and female to represent the mother and father of the two sisters. The whole group looked on in awe as the dynamics of these parents (the great-grandparents of the client's daughter) were played out. The father was harsh towards the daughter who was institutionalised and was happy for her to be put away. Her shame was the family's shame. (We never knew what her 'crime' of shame was but it offended the father). The great-grandmother watched her husband with pure hate, as her daughter was condemned to a mental institution. Peter's words to her were *"I wasn't strong enough to stop your father and so I hated him internally."*

The great-grandfather was asked to reply, *"I thought I was doing my duty but I let you down dear daughter."*

At this all of the female representatives sighed deeply and visibly softened and some shed tears. The great aunt answered back spontaneously, *"I thought you didn't want me father but now I see that your eyes love me."* The father nodded at this.

The work continued for another half-hour and Peter gave words of healing to the representatives such as, *"I carried this resentment for you although it was not mine to carry."*

The client's daughter, so bonded to her great aunt, was told she did not need to carry her great aunt's burden anymore.

"My burden is not yours to carry," said the great aunt to her great niece. *"Honour me by living well."* When these healing words were said every one of the female representatives smiled and their resentment to the husbands lifted.

Eventually, through healing statements, Peter had all the family facing each other with love in their eyes. At this stage Peter invited the client to take the place of the man who had been his representative. He held his 'wife's' hand and the couple looked at their 'daughter' in love. The daughter looked up at her parents in love. At this stage Peter announced that the work was over. The client shook the hand of each representative who had taken part and then sat next to Peter.



My mouth was wide open. Many of the spectators were visibly moved. *What had just taken place?* Peter explained.

It was not acting or psychodrama or hypnotherapy or brain washing that we had witnessed but a systemic family constellation. He explained that when people are excluded from the family, later generations, often the most vulnerable, (the children) carry the same fate of that distant relative. Over the next few days many more constellations were conducted.

A German man was reunited with his Father (a Luftwaffe pilot shot down and killed over France in 1944) in the circle. I was chosen by this client to represent his father, the dead pilot. As soon as I was placed into my position by the client, I picked up these incredible feelings. This is the mystery of the work. How can a representative take on and experience emotions of people they have never met, and in this case, was dead?

I have been in hundreds of constellations and it always surprises me when I feel the emotional and physical sensations of people I don't know. Time and again the client will say to me, after the session, that my representation was exactly how their father, brother, lover, son, uncle, husband, etc. spoke or behaved. I remember walking with a limp once, playing a grandfather and the relative whose constellation was being conducted said that this man had polio. These coincidences are very common for representatives.

I felt what it was like to be a Nazi as I represented this German man's father. I felt great pride in Germany and despite hating the war thought that a new world order would bring about a utopian world, a better place for all. I didn't feel evil but I did experience a feeling of being very powerful (of course this was a misguided ideology but it gave me an understanding of the loyalty a Nazi had for his country and party and that whatever side you are on people can kill with a good conscience believing their cause is right). More importantly the pilot, who was killed before meeting his son, who was born only a month before his father's death, embraced his child. The Father felt enormous pride towards his boy.

The issue for the son, now in his late 50's had been a feeling of being lost throughout his life, like a boat with a broken rudder, steering through life without a father. The client found it difficult to relate to men and searched for a

mother figure in his relationships with women. Fathers teach boys how to be men and in turn men learn how to treat women respectfully and appropriately.

Peter explained. *"It is a difficult fate growing up without a parent and that experience of feeling stranded in life is not uncommon."* By meeting his father the German man became more grounded feeling he had a right to belong. It was a very moving experience when the father and son hugged each other and the son felt the intensity of love coming from the father he had just met.

Many more constellations were set up and the common theme that emerged was that of connecting excluded family members back to their family. Time and again, we saw that issues like: depression, anxiety, anger, suicidal intent, hopelessness, are carried by current members of the family but that the origins lay in the traumas of past generations.

On the third day, in the afternoon, Peter asked if anyone had a problem they would like to work on. I felt my hand go up and I experienced an intense need to work on something that had surfaced for me. Several other hands emerged but Peter said he felt energetically drawn to work with me.

As Peter interviewed me I told him that I felt a lot of anger towards my father and although I loved him I didn't like him. This resentment had festered in me for many years although I never told anyone in the family. Peter asked about my family circumstances and I replied I had quite a privileged upbringing. I had travelled a lot, living in several countries (Dad was a diplomat) and had attended boarding school from the age of 7. And then almost without realising its importance I mentioned that I had been adopted. Peter grew very interested in this.

He explained we only ever have the right biological parents for us otherwise we would never have received life. He also pointed out that while great love exists between parents who adopt children, the reality is they are not the biological parents and this needs to be acknowledged. If this occurs, the family system relaxes because there is a recognition that the children came at a cost to the biological family.

I had met my biological mother in my early 30's in England just before immigrating to Australia. She came from a mining community but in her words had escaped its predictable path of early marriage and childbirth plus *"its lack of*



academic and cultural stimulation” and ‘*escaped*’ to London to train as a nurse. There she met my father, a research scientist and pharmacist, at the hospital she trained at in the late 1950’s. He was working on the contraceptive pill (it was still a few years away from being made available to the public) and apparently, quite unethically, asked my mother to take it. She did so but one night after dining out at a Japanese restaurant she became ill and vomited. This must have undone the effects of the pill and I was conceived (I do love sushi and owe a lot to Japanese food).

My biological mother told me that she didn’t want to marry my father. She also told me that she went back for a visit to the mining community and although obviously pregnant no one appeared to notice. She felt isolated with little chance of support. Never the less she gave birth to me in London and for 3 months tried to keep me but was not emotionally or financially able to do so and so I was placed into an orphanage. (At the time of trying to find my Mother I was by coincidence living close by to that orphanage without realising I had once lived there).

Peter then set up my constellation. Mum and Dad (who brought me up) were very bonded and in love, as was made quite obvious from the people who represented them. My representative felt quite comfortable seeing them but very isolated and removed from them. When Peter brought in my birth mother and placed her opposite Mum it was like Guy Fawkes Night in England. Fireworks simply exploded everywhere and the two female representatives yelled and shouted at each other. My birth mother blamed Mum for stealing me away from her and Mum (who is one of the calmest people I have ever met) screamed out that my birth mother was an unfit mother.

At this point Peter brought to my awareness the anger of these two women and how that unexpressed anger was what I carried and projected towards Dad. Peter then brought in my biological father. The representative for this man and my representative immediately felt a close connection and they asked to stand together. My long lost father said how he felt so proud of me and my representative just beamed delight at being in his company. Dad who brought me up looked at this scene with a smile on his face. My biological mother however seemed lost in her grief and Peter called it a madness, a grief that was unbearable for her. Her only recourse was to reject me.

Peter asked her representative to be happy for me especially around the connection to my birth father in the constellation. This was hard for her to do. The ending of the constellation was that I felt at last a real bond with my birth father and subsequently the anger I felt towards my adopted father quickly faded and has never returned. I honoured my biological mother in that she gave me life and I recognised how little support she had when I was born. She will always have a place in my heart although she wants no contact with me.

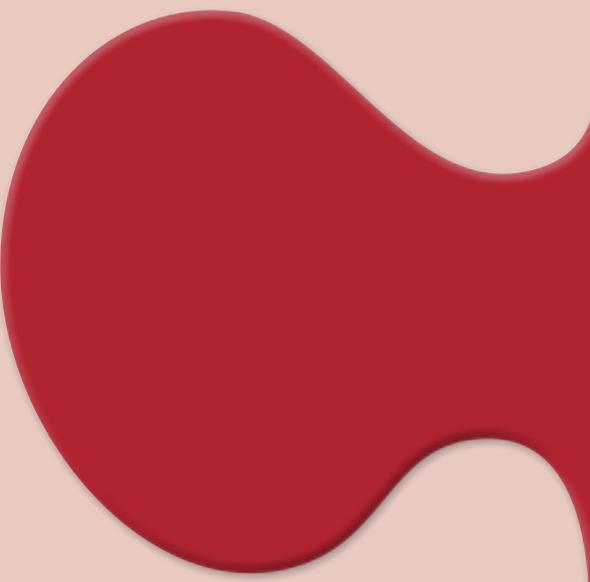
Peter explained that I had carried the anger for my two mothers and the excluded member of the family system was my birth father. To this day I have still not been able to contact him although I feel a great love and connection to him. This work allows for change in you, when often a new, internal perception arises that makes coping easier, more able to accept what has happened without blame and judgment. The essence of constellation work is not to carry what belongs to others. Peter also stated that a family constellation only untangles a part of the complex puzzle that families are inevitably drawn into through living life. We heal bit by bit or rather like the analogy of the jigsaw, once one piece is correctly placed work starts on another.

At the conclusion of a constellation a different scene emerges than at the start. When representatives are initially placed in the circle, by the client, the hidden family dynamics tend to surface and loyalties and exclusions become apparent. At the end of a constellation the representatives are more connected and the excluded brought back. This is a very simplified explanation of very complex work but it gives an understanding of the high cost that is paid when we turn our back on a family member.

For the client, the image at the end of the constellation (such as representatives facing each other in love) is where the healing takes place and is a powerful picture to draw on over the weeks and months after a constellation has taken place. This healing image works in the soul or heart and not in the analytical headspace of the mind. After a constellation, clients are advised to let emotional shifts surface from within rather than endlessly talking about the experience.

This work is known by several names: Orders of Love, Family Constellations, Movements of the Soul. The themes that emerge around families are as follows: (PG 34 - 37).





THAT
EVERY
MEMBER OF
THE FAMILY HAS
A RIGHT TO
BELONG

HOW often do we exclude family members due to divorce, mental illness, criminal activity, jealousy, rage and so forth?

How often is an unmentionable family secret hidden from view?

Constellation work doesn't look to blame family members although this is common in clients e.g. "My husband is a terrible person/ my mother in law is evil." The work has taught me that those family members that are condemned, ostracised, hated, ridiculed and as a consequence, have been excluded, are the ones that need a place of belonging in the family.

They are the ones that the Therapist's attention is drawn to. The more a family member is put down as being undesirable, the greater the interest in this person. This approach does not excuse, say a father who has committed incest, or a parent who has murdered their partner. On the contrary the representative is called to take responsibility for such deeds. When this occurs the whole family system relaxes and can move on. When a family member is vilified and excluded out of mind and heart, it is often the weakest in the family, the children who carry the fate of the missing relative. They carry an emotional burden that does not belong to them.

We as humans want to blame and condemn. Sometimes in this work you come across pure evil where a perpetrator shows no remorse or a family member is unwilling to acknowledge an action and take responsibility for the devastating effect of that action. Only then are these members not given a place. However, this work calls for deep reserves of compassion, a non-judgemental attitude that allows for all members of a family to exist and belong. Time and again the constellation work shows that those who have abused physically or sexually

were also abused. When this is seen a greater understanding comes into play and highlights the generational aspect of suffering in which there are many victims. The work attempts to halt the energy that commonly turns victim into perpetrator and to release the crippling, negative emotions commonly carried by the victim. The challenge is to give the perpetrator a place in the family system, which requires love, not at the surface level of consciousness but at a deeper level that sees good and bad as part of a whole.

It is the consciousness that allowed Nelson Mandela to openly embrace the people and system that had cruelly jailed him for so many years. By relinquishing the cycle of hate and seeing the never-ending cycle of perpetrator-victim-perpetrator-victim he established a peaceful transition to South Africa based on inclusion rather than exclusion. How often does a divorced parent put down the other parent? This only hurts the most vulnerable, the children, who always have the right mother and father for them simply because they gave them life. How often are we jealous of a partner's former lover when they came before us? When we acknowledge their place without conditions or judgment the present relationship benefits.

This work is embedded in a deeper level of consciousness, an order of belonging, that acknowledges all who came before us and that any exclusion of a member, due to self-righteousness, indignation or emotional outrage by another member, does not serve the family.



THAT WHAT IS! Is!

FAMILY constellations are not about fairy story endings.

IT is a window into often-horrendous family and traumatic life situations.

I have been in constellations involving the Holocaust and war. The consequence of such past brutality has present consequences, a burden not only on the survivors but on their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of both perpetrator and victim.

In many of these concentration camp constellations, the representatives for the dead relatives just stare up into space (time and again this scenario happens) and the thought is that the representatives feel pulled to look up at the very spot where the poisonous gas pellets were dropped from the roof into the chamber below. Acceptance of a difficult fate is so hard. Some like Viktor Frankl learnt to find meaning through suffering, some collapse mentally unable to cope with the devastating loss and grief but some become like the perpetrator. They become strong, warlike, vowing never to be victims. They attack through military recourse (Just like their former enemies). This pattern of perpetrator attacking victim and victim attacking perpetrator sets up an endless cycle that carries through the generations; impossible to escape unless a new consciousness emerges.

This is why constellation work accepts every fate without blaming or taking sides. It acknowledges the harshness because it happened, it is a deeper level of acceptance of what is and sees how an individual is just one piece in a massive jigsaw. All too frequently a cycle of blame and attack and defending is played out in family dynamics and

every attack is backed up with a sense of self-righteousness and justification. The cycle stops when one side realises the destructive patterns that are being played out. It takes great courage, insight and love to relinquish the human instinct to hurt someone who has hurt you. Excluding someone from the family system or on a societal level actually serves a purpose; It unites the group. Think of religions that keep out unbelievers, countries that go to war with their neighbours, sports teams who bond against rivals, families who exclude through divorce, ideologies that spread incompatibility. When we believe we have more right to exist, that we are better and superior, we enter a limited mindset that allows intolerance to breed. It's how the media and legal systems work, where blame is often cited as people are excluded or vilified and even entire countries and cultures are labelled in a bad light; rather than seeing we are all connected. Think of how at school, the excluded student or staff member is almost always despised by the majority. Having a communal target unites those in the mainstream group. It takes courage to speak out and to accept the excluded member as having an equal right to belong. When we look down our noses at these people, we may feel sympathy for them but wouldn't dream of associating with them because they are somehow different and not quite one of us.

Constellations allow us to see clearly the effect of intolerant behaviour on others and once seen and felt allows for the mending of bridges. But first, what is! Must be acknowledged.



THOSE
WHO
COME
FIRST
COME
FIRST

You hurt me so
I'll hurt you.

The endless cycle of;
Perpetrator
Victim
Perpetrator
Victim



I often use this systemic law (or rightful place of order) in counselling, with students who express hatred, contempt or sit in judgment of a parent or family member.

Time and again I have seen how the student is caught up in a blind loyalty, expressing disdain about one parent while supporting another. Both parents give life and unless this is acknowledged and honoured by the child, it is hard for them to gain a sense of self or place in the family. Rather, the offspring become the 'Big One' and the parent 'The Little One'. Such role reversals neither help the parent or the child.

It is not uncommon to find family systems where the men don't really like the females and vice versa. Often this stems back to an initial hurt way back through the generations and sides are formed. Constellation work can find where the initial hurt occurred and restore a healthy balance between husband and wife and parents and children rather than along the lines of male versus females.

Sometimes all you may get from a parent is life. But what a gift and what a miracle and when accepted in that light, it allows the parent to be big and the child to take the rightful place of being the small one. It allows for the process of softening, gratitude and finding love and respect in the family rather than harshness and condemnation that comes at a price for the one carrying such a burden. When everyone knows their place in the family the system is

at peace. Children who see their parents enjoy each other's company and express their love to each other relax and realise their parents came before them. They are not in competition with their parents. In essence the parents place themselves before the children because that relationship came before the children. However, this order changes when parent's separate and new partners come on the scene. The biological bond of the child to the biological parent takes precedence over the new partner. Much unhappiness comes when the new partner tries to be the parent or places themselves in importance above the strong bond already in existence between biological parent and child.

It is not uncommon to find children identifying with the former lovers of their parents and, as a consequence, resenting one of their biological parents. This blind identification, by the child for a past lover, needs to be broken when the dynamic is exposed in a family constellation. This is usually done by the parent reminding their child that this relationship is not their business and for the parent to acknowledge, if they have really broken from the emotional attachment of a past love or whether their current partner honours the former partner's place. A bond always remains even if love stays or fades.





A BALANCE OF GIVE AND TAKE

THIS is an interesting systemic order and its comprehension can serve both family and organizations.

When one gives too much or takes too little or takes too much and gives too little, in a relationship, or at work, the system is out of kilter. The relationship may well break down. For instance, a young medical student has spent the last few years engrossed in her studies. Her husband has put his own career on hold as he looks after the children and stays at home. Soon after the wife qualifies she leaves the husband. From a systemic point of view the relationship was out of balance. When one gives too much it is hard for the other person to pay back such a one sided contribution and on a systemic level can't be repaid.

If a family member is excluded (say a father) another (a son or daughter or even a grandchild) may follow the same fate to bring balance to the system. Likewise if a family member has a difficult fate, out of a blind and often unconscious love and to satisfy a systemic balance, a similar fate (or unexplained emotional feelings) can be experienced by another member in the family system.

It's a strange way of looking at balance but in constellation work it is far healthier for both parties to give and receive constantly otherwise we become beholden to the other and that in itself is a burden. It is also important to include sympathetically all those who belong to the family system keeping a place of compassion for them or at least respect. If terrible things have happened in the family it may be appropriate to say to the excluded member "without you I would not have had life." or "despite everything I will remember you but leave you with your fate." Such attitudes acknowledge 'what is' and restore a balance through inclusion.

At work, an employer who gives little back to the employees will soon find a disgruntled workforce and 'sickies' and 'go slows' will sabotage productivity. A balance is needed whereby a worker feels part of the system and appreciated through a mutual exchange of give and take.





What do you carry
from the family
system?

SO how do family constellations work?

Below are some common questions that I asked initially when exposed to constellation work.

If I set my family up in a constellation how can total strangers (representatives) speak as my relatives?

Members of the family that are dead can speak in a family constellation.

How is this possible?

Is this work magic?

What are the benefits of setting up a family constellation?

How can I make contact with someone who understands this work and can help my family?

Many books have been written on this topic and much research carried out. Here we enter the realm of Carl Jung and the Collective Conscience in which we are all deeply connected to each other as human beings. It belongs to the fields of physics, energy, and universal laws and has a place in the ideas of Cambridge biochemist, Dr Rupert Sheldrake, and his research in parapsychology. The psychiatrist, Ivan Boszormenyi-Negy, uses the term Morphic Fields to explain the hidden dynamics found in the family system. Its roots are tied in phenomenology: on what is experienced and observed rather than logically explained; whereby a person can pick up the emotions, thoughts and bodily sensations through simply being next to someone.

A General Practitioner and Gestalt Therapist, Dr Patrick Kavanagh, gave a simpler explanation to me. He was one of the first facilitators to run constellation workshops in Australia. He brought to my attention the forces that govern schools of fish or flocks of birds that turn in a particular direction, on mass, in an instant. The communication is not verbal but stems from a deeper connection, an instinctive understanding, something that we humans have possibly neglected as we have become more dependent on the rational and analytical.

In order to answer my questions I sent an email to Dr Chris Walsh, a psychiatrist who is leading the way forward, in Australia, through his many workshops and deep understanding and connection to constellation work. I will leave you with his reply:



Dear Tony,

... I think you are asking the wrong questions. They are impossible to answer in a brief way to people who don't know the work. So I will give you a little spiel to help:

We can easily be affected by difficulties that occurred in our family up to 3 or 4 generations back. Migrations, major traumas and early deaths are examples of events that can significantly affect families and their members for several generations. When you are affected in this way, you are not usually aware of it and normal therapy can't usually effectively address these problems. When not adequately resolved at the time that they occurred, these issues from the past can cause interpersonal difficulties both within and outside the present day family. They can also cause symptoms such as anxiety or depression. When this happens we are in a sense carrying something that doesn't really belong to us but rather to someone else in our extended family. It may even be someone we have never met.

We can address these types of issues by attending a family constellation workshop. Usually there are 8 to 20 people at one of these workshops that last from one to two days. Other family members don't need to be there. In these workshops you ask some of the workshop participants to represent family members. You then place them in relation to each other, in such a way that you have a map of people's relationships in connection with whatever issue you have asked to be dealt with. The workshop facilitator will then work with the representatives to clarify the issue. In this process he/she may bring in new representatives for people from earlier generations. This method then creates a map where we can clearly see how the effect of past events flows down through the generations and ultimately affects us in the here and now. This work then involves simple rituals that restore a healthy order within the family so that you no longer have to carry something that doesn't belong to you.

As well as helping to resolve immediate issues these workshops are very helpful because most participants find it very reassuring when they clearly see that every family has some significant difficulties. They no longer feel isolated and inadequate. Moreover these workshops show people how they can feel as if they belong in a respectful and healthy way without having to give up their individuality. You can find family constellation workshops listed on the Internet at sites such as www.constellationflow.com ... when someone has experienced the work these questions can be dealt with.

I hope this helps Tony
Cheers, **Chris.**



The healing statements associated with this work are simple but profound.

A daughter (aged 19) set up her parents in a constellation. She had been estranged from her father since the age of 10. Her mother hated the father and had allowed the daughter no contact with him for many years. The daughter wanted to explore her negativity towards her father and the conflict between her mother and father.

Yet when she set up her parents in the constellation circle she saw, through the representatives, how deeply connected they had been (the representatives eyes grew misty as they flirted outrageously with each other and were very obviously in love). That image contrasted sharply with the so-called established story of a terrible, unfeeling father expressed routinely by the anger and acrimony of the mother. The work also revealed how the mother had projected on to her ex-husband the hatred from the female line for a past male relative who had abused the mother as a girl. The father was identified with the abuser and the females disliked him intensely.

The facilitator asked the former partners to say to each other:

“What a shame we split! You were so dear to me. I loved you so much. How wonderful our daughter is. When I look in her eyes I see how she was conceived from our love.”

These healing words go straight to the love hidden behind the pain that was expressed in anger, resentment and hate. The story the daughter believed about her father was just that: a story! Constellation work is not interested in the stories we falsely believe to be true and regularly sprout about each other; which often only represents the surface feelings. Constellation work is interested in who is missing from the family. It looks to who is carrying the burden of another member. It is not tricked into accepting an explanation that condemns a family member; it looks beyond that to see how love can flow again before it was blocked. The father had been identified as the mother’s abuser and both mother and daughter grew to hate the father. The father had not abused his wife but carried an identification (for the females in the family) of the abuser. The daughter had suffered greatly because deep down she was bonded in love to her father but had to deny this when she aligned with her mother.

In the constellation the mother spoke to her abuser and he accepted responsibility for his actions. The mother was able to let go of her projected anger onto her former husband. After this constellation, the daughter and her father found each other again; for them the entanglement was untangled.

It is a peculiar thought that present day emotional or physical problems may have their origins in our extended family tree. It places awareness on the potential consequences of excluding or forgetting family members. The impact of such traumatic events, such as a stillbirth or a relative caught up in a distant military conflict, may impact family members over generations.

It shows how grief, rage, fear, anxiety, depression and many other emotions, as well as thoughts, life styles and behaviours can be passed down the family line much like the inherited genetic material in our DNA.

Constellation work is widely practiced and accepted in Europe and the USA not only in the therapeutic community but also in major business corporations where it is recognised how systemic based disharmony impacts production. The work is making inroads in Australia, South Africa, Chile, Argentina, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong. There may come a day when family law courts, schools, parliaments, armies, the Vatican, the United Nations etc set up constellations to explore and solve issues at the deeper levels of consciousness, where love is exposed and serves to unite us.



Chapter 5

Me, Myself, I But Which Ego?

In this chapter

- We have many personalities or ego parts that we are not aware of.
- The ego part that is suffering (maybe a part that is forever 4 years old and surfaces when emotional triggers are pressed) can be brought out into the open and the issue addressed. Other ego parts like: strength, courage, happiness, kindness, wisdom can help the part that is in distress. Ego parts like to help.
- Learn to recognise which ego part or personality you are in.

*Influenced by Dr Gordon Emmerson
and Ego State Therapy and Gestalt Therapy.*

THE word ego comes from Latin and means I. Ego then means, self, something we all have and can relate to. Have you heard comments such as *“He loves himself so much”* an ingenuous comment that in Australian terminology suggests someone is *“Up themselves”* or viewed from another perspective they have a healthy and confident sense of ego. The band, Skyhooks, sang the praises of self by declaring, *“Ego is not a dirty word.”* (When I first heard the song I thought they were singing, *“Eagle is not a dirty word”*). A sense of self, lies at the very heart of what it is to be human, indeed it forms our personality and how we relate to others. How we view the world.

A question arises as to whether we are born with an ego in place or if it is formed through the people and experiences we have. If I had not been adopted, I may have well grown up in a mining town in the North of England, working under ground one mile deep and five miles out to sea, hacking at coal with a pick-axe or automated drill. My political and world view would have been forged by my working class background, access to education and close-knit mining community.

However, when I was adopted, Mum and Dad, whisked me off to West Africa and I grew up in the Cameroons (where Dad was a Colonial Administrator) until boarding school took me back to England. My environment was typically middle class and no doubt I was influenced by those values. An emphasis was placed on education and although no scholar, I somehow managed to get to university (only 5% of my age group received a degree back in the 1970's). I taught in Malawi, in South East Africa for some years, obtained several more university degrees and travelled the world. My daughters attend private school in Melbourne and value education. My 'posh' middle class English accent would have been totally alien in the midst of the mining community and replaced with a wonderful thick

'Geordie' accent. If I had not been adopted two questions arise.

Would I have been who I am today?

Would my personality be the same?

This of course is an unknown.

What is known is that our understanding of ego has changed and continues to change.

Take the phrase:

“I really hate myself!”

Look at two parts: the I and the **myself**. Are these two different selves? The I judgemental of the **myself**. There is a clear split, an ego or self split and this separation of self is what interests therapists. If one is split or divided against oneself then we become fragmented. If we are fragmented then how many parts of ourselves are there? We are all familiar with the term, split personalities, when an individual displays many varied personality types. One split may be violent and self-harming and another may be a religious fanatic and another, a sexually permissive flirt. These types of personality disorders are rare and complex and not dealt with in this chapter but Ego State Psychologist and Gestalt Therapist Dr Gordon Emerson suggests that we have many Ego states, possibly hundreds but are only aware of a few of them. (More later on). Ego states and personality splits are very different creatures.

Sigmund Freud (The founder of psychoanalysis) made ego famous through his understanding that the ego (self) is constantly being pulled between wanting to do the right thing and being led astray by basic animal desires that we could label morally doubtful.

Imagine on your left shoulder you have a little angel, playing a harp, complete with a halo that shines translucent, advising you to be good, hard working and responsible. On the right shoulder is a little devil drinking a bottle of whisky and



smoking a cigarette telling you to go out and have fun because life is short. The pull, between these opposing forces, is what contributes to mental illness. Freud uses the term ID for the devil and that represents all the so-called naughty things in the world (half of which tend to be illegal) and gets us into all sorts of trouble.

The angel or Superego represents moral authority such as religious values, the laws of a country or school rules. If the ID tells you not to bother with homework for a month you can be sure the Superego is sending you strong guilt messages. The Ego has to make sense of both influences and normally resolves the situation by doing some homework so as not to feel too guilty. By following the ID a student would soon come to grief as pure self-indulgence clashes with

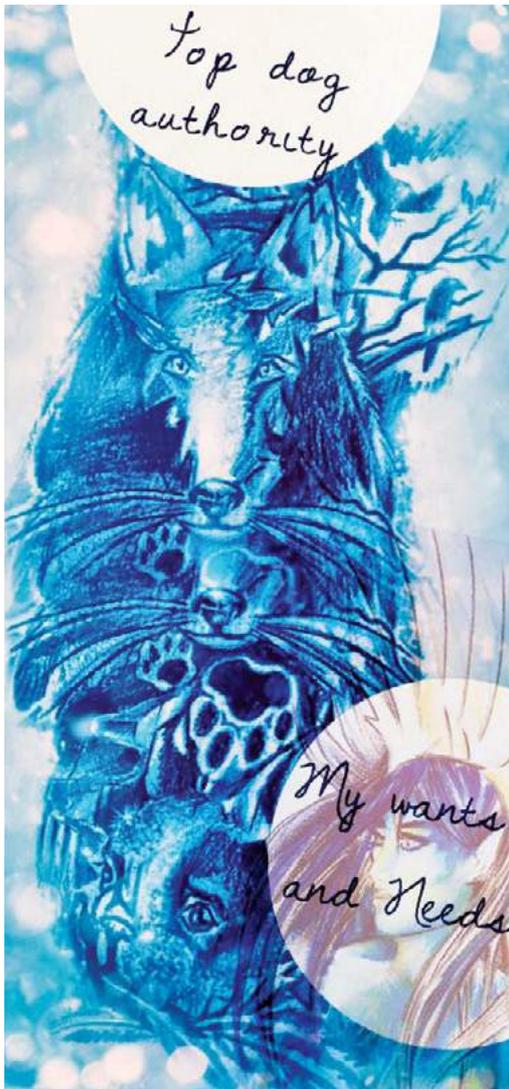
the rules imposed by society but the student may adopt an Ego that doesn't value homework because it's not relevant to what they want to do or achieve in life. Even here the Superego will change tact and put pressure on the Ego by saying, *"If you want to be a rock star or a footy player you had better practice hard and put in greater effort into achieving goals."*

When the ID, Ego and Superego are out of balance we suffer. Freud believed we are born with the ID, a basic desire to be nourished and nurtured as can be seen by a baby who will soon let you know when it is hungry. Anxiety results when the needs of the ID are not met but the developing Ego learns to balance the sensible Superego with the instinctive ID.



SUPER EGO - EGO - ID

LATER therapists stated Freud's model of self was too simple. They believed, as we mature we have a clear sense of what it means to be an adult, an adolescent and a child yet the truth is we can easily switch between these three states. Have you noticed how sometimes you can be extremely mature and at others you can behave like a toddler having a major hissy fit? If an adult speaks to their partner from the state of adult mode but their partner is in adolescent mode then an interesting communication process will occur. If a teenager is in adult mode and speaks to a parent who is in child mode an equally interesting scenario might take place.



For example:

(Adult parent in child mode)
"I want an ice cream!"

(Teenage daughter in parent mode)
"You are about to have lunch and anyway you need to lose some weight."

(Adult)
"I want an ice cream. It's not fair you always get what you want and I'm not fat. You're mean saying that."

(Teenager)
"I'm warning you if you have an ice cream you'll only regret it in 10 minutes and you know I'm right."

(Adult. Sulking)
"You think you know everything."

(Teenager: Waving a finger in parents direction)
"Well in this instance I most certainly do."

(Adult)
"Well I'm bigger than you and besides I've got lots of money. So there! Ms Bossy Boots"
(and sticks tongue out at daughter).

(Teenager)
"I give up!"

We all have the potential to slip into roles. In the above instance problems occur when the mismatched roles are habitually played out. A teenager can't be a parent to its parent or a parent forever the child to its child. However, changing states has its advantages and if the adult enters the adolescent mode to talk to the teenager the teenager may feel understood but if the adult stayed in the teenage role, permanently, then things would just be odd. A child loves it when an adult enters into child mode and plays with them but the child relies upon the adult to switch back to parent or big person role. This model shows that we do have the capacity to adapt and change.

Rigidity and an unquestioning mind go hand in hand. One in five Australians do not belong to a religion and the majority of Christians that identify as Catholic or Protestant, class themselves as non-practicing (2013 Australian survey) an indication perhaps that the existence of a God is questioned as education increases. The higher our level of study, the less connection and belief in institutional religions.



Education challenges us to stretch our minds so that we don't simply take on board what we are told. When we question and no longer accept what was once comfortable and acceptable, part of us changes too. The self then is always in a state of flux as new things are learnt. Throughout history and very evident on the world stage today is an ever present conflict between forces desperate to stop new ideas forming and being realised and those trying to challenge the status quo or existing order. This parallel battle is also played out in our heads.

We are continually building new experiences and thus new selves. Early influences play an important role in the formation of ego. We know that babies in the womb are affected by the mother's emotional state at the time of pregnancy. It is as if the unborn child picks up emotions through its cells and many enlightened therapist work not only with the mind but also at the body level too. If the mother was highly anxious during her pregnancy and drank alcohol to cope, this felt sense of worry could be passed onto her unborn child. The stressed, unborn child can surface at any age and overwhelm its adult self. As you can imagine, finding the root of an issue such as this requires insightful exploration by the therapist and client.

An activity I use, to understand ego formation, is to bring in an awareness of our **Top Dog** and our **Under Dog**. We all have these animals inside us as they battle for dominance and recognition.

The Top Dog is like Freud's Superego. It is the voice of reason. It is sensible, parental like but authoritarian. It makes strict demands on us but only because they are in our best interest. For instance, when you were a little toddler and you strayed close to an open fireplace an adult would almost certainly warn you about the dangers and deadly consequence of fire; the same applies around swimming pools and crossing the road. Their stern warnings were scary but life-saving. A 2-year-old heading towards the edge of a steep cliff would be unlikely to get a parental message like this:

"That's probably not a good idea darling, heading in that direction because in seconds there will be severe consequences resulting in a long term hospitalisation stay or your imminent death. I strongly advise an immediate assessment of your current situation."

On the contrary parents will overreact, yelling, panicking, expressing F sounding swear words, snatching you from the jaws of death as their messages of "listen to me, I'm right I know better," are established. I remember on holiday in Thailand my eldest daughter, Tayla who was 4 at the time, had taken off her inflated 'floaties' from her arms and wandered into the swimming pool. My wife and I had taken our eyes off her for the briefest of moments. I glimpsed her head sinking below the water's surface, straight down to the bottom of the pool. I rescued her in an instant but the panic I felt and the lecture I gave her afterwards about armband safety was quite intense.

The messages adults give the young are about important life lessons and stay fixed in their developing brains. We eagerly follow the rules of our parents and significant adults in our lives because, when little, parents are all knowing and wise and we feel safe and obey. (OK! I know a two or three year olds every other word is "Why?") Our sense of self is developed through those closest around us and we simply accept that what they say is correct. Look how easily German school children were brainwashed in the classroom through songs, books and films as teachers taught that Jews and gypsies were an inferior sub species. The Top Dog keeps us in our place and uses the rigid 'shoulds' and 'musts'. You must follow this rule because I say so.

The Under Dog is that part of our self that starts to question. It challenges the beliefs that were imposed upon it when young and this mechanism of challenging is a very important trait of being a teenager. One Year 10 student saw me in counselling because she didn't want to go to church every Sunday with the family. She wasn't sure she believed in God and she found the service extremely boring. Her parents were strict churchgoers and not attending mass was unthinkable. There were many arguments at home and she was torn between doing what was expected of her and voicing her opinion.

This student was caught between the Top Dog of "I must go to mass because it's sinful if I don't and I'll hurt my parent's feelings" to that of The Under Dog's "I don't want to go." The Under Dog is the part of us that truly understands our wants, needs and desires and is authentic to us.

When it clashes with the Top Dog the self is pulled between the two canines not knowing what to do or how to be. To speak one's mind and to be true to our values is not easy but it comes at an emotional cost when we hold back.



Humans, on an evolutionary level, are still basically herd animals; followers of the pack and led by the most 'worthy'. Strays are seen as a threat (Think of artists and other creative types, those who think outside the box, visionaries whose initial ideas are ridiculed and rejected). They don't have an easy time of it.

Many psychological studies have been conducted that show we would rather conform than be singled out. Mind speak is the symptom of agreeing with whatever the opinion of the group is rather than voicing what you really want. I recall how this was demonstrated at University by a lovely social science professor. Many of us disagreed with him that as students we were followers and insisted that we would and could do or say what we determined. The next day, half way through his lecture everyone stood up suddenly and started clapping. I, and a few of those around me looked astonished but we in turn quickly stood up too and started to clap. Lots of laughter followed. I was even more confused especially as everyone was looking at me.

The professor explained that he had plotted, with the majority of the class that at an agreed signal 95% of the students would suddenly stand up. (Unfortunately I wasn't in on the planning of this cunning experiment). He made his point that we may think we act independently but in reality humans are easily manipulated and controlled. (Think of societies like North Korea where the option of not towing the party line is imprisonment or death). After my initial embarrassment I came to appreciate that questioning our actions requires discipline and insight.

I get clients to draw a picture of a Top Dog and inside its body to write down rules that they follow but which may no longer serve them. For instance, I had a student who wanted to give up his sport to concentrate on acting. He played Aussie Rules Football. All the males in his family played or had played and loved the game. However, this client had realised that he actually didn't enjoy footy and wanted to concentrate on drama and getting into the school play. His wants and needs (his Under Dog) clashed with the Top Dog. I got him to draw his Under Dog and write in the dog's body his desire to act. This picture was placed in his right pocket. In his left pocket was a picture of the Top Dog and written on it was the word 'footy'. By literally carrying the dogs around with him, for a few days, he soon came to the conclusion that acting was

going to take priority. He stopped playing footy (a great relief for him) and landed a lead role in the school production that year.

It is important to recognise the usefulness but rigidity of the authoritarian Top Dog (stopping at a red light in the car is a useful rule to follow). Yet if we simply follow the wants and passions of the Under Dog we may find our life soon spirals out of control through a self-centred, hedonistic attitude of . . .

Me! Me! Me!

The Year 10 student who didn't want to go to church reached a compromise. Once a month she would go to worship with Mum and Dad and her many brothers and sisters. Her parents weren't totally happy and neither was she completely but she understood, as did they that as she grew older, she would have more freedom in deciding what her values were rather than having them imposed.

The developing field and growing popularity of Ego State Therapy involves a process of mapping our various states. Dr Gordon Emmerson, an authority in this area, believes that unless you speak to and acknowledge the troubled ego state then resolving an issue will be difficult, as you haven't addressed the problem or solution with the state that needs help.

I will give an example of how this works. A client comes to see a therapist because in the middle of Christmas shopping the client has a full on panic attack.

The client saw a pair of expensive red leather high-heeled shoes she really liked. Suddenly she was consumed with wanting to buy them. She felt excited! Now, only one ego state can function or surface at any one time and in this moment the client was in an ego state we will name **Excitement**. (You can give an ego state any name e.g. Fred, Mary or even a colour blue, purple but this state we'll agree to call **excitement**).

Suddenly a voice rose inside her head and like a loud clash of thunder brought her to her senses (as a different ego state took over) saying,

*"Buying those shoes is so extravagant!
You don't need them!"*

We'll call this state, **Cautious Buyer**. In an instant **Excitement** retorts with *"But I want them!"*

"Well you mustn't buy them. Money doesn't grow on trees," counters **Cautious Buyer**. You can see the Id and Superego scenario being played out here.



The dilemma for this individual is feeling torn between wanting something and feeling good but moments later feeling bad. However, for this person it doesn't simply stop here. The client starts to shake, becomes teary, fearful and thinks insanity has overtaken her.

In therapy, the client, through the process of hypnotherapy, recounts what happened on the day of the panic attack. The ego state therapist is interested in the ego states the client experiences and asks to speak to these states.

Therapist:

*"Can I speak to the part of you called **Excitement**?"*

If the part agrees a conversation can take place. The therapist asks how **Excitement** feels.

Client:

"I feel young and happy and wonderful and free."

Therapist:

"Can you give an age to this feeling?"

Client:

"I feel like I'm 4 or 5. I feel so happy like it's Christmas day."

Often the client will speak with a distinctive voice and mannerisms of each particular state. In this case the client spoke with the voice of the 5 year old, she was smiling and literally jumping up and down in her chair while rubbing her hands with glee.

The therapist writes down all of the characteristics of **Excitement** e.g., fun loving, young, like those of an unburdened child on Christmas Day. The therapist then explores the client's relationship with **Cautious Buyer**. When this ego state is explored a new set of characteristics are likely to emerge. In this case, the client speaks and acts in a careful manner, seems older when suddenly the client starts to tremble. The therapist asks the client what state is now being experienced and observes subtle changes in the client's voice, facial movements and general demeanour.

Therapist:

*"Am I talking to **Cautious Buyer**, **Anxiety** or someone else?"*

Client:

"Someone else!"

Therapist:

"Can you give a name to that someone else please?"

After-a-time, the client or state speaks up. (States are mainly formed in childhood, a few formed in adolescence and fewer still in adulthood. Therefore patience, politeness and kindness are required. The therapist is very respectful to all states and often uses please and thank you). *"What do you call yourself?"*

Client:

*"**Scared!**"*

The therapist can see that the client has entered a very difficult state, possibly one initiated through trauma. The therapist may call another ego state to support **Scared**. The therapist asks if there is a state willing to help and support **Scared**. A voice arises from the client. The ego state that is willing to help the client emerges as **Very brave**. It's interesting to see that when the client locates **Very Brave** the client's back gets straighter, the voice is stronger and the face looks determined and purposeful.

Therapist:

*"What's it like for **Scared** to hear that **Very Brave** will help and support."*

Client:

It feels much better I feel less scared.

So far the therapist has spoken to or acknowledged 4 ego states: **Excitement**, **Cautious Buyer**, **Scared**, and **Very Brave**. The client was very aware of the first two ego states but the last two were out of her conscious awareness. It may be that this client experienced something traumatic when younger. The subconscious stores away all memories and states.

For this client, the simple act of desiring an object, in a shop window, brought to the surface an ego state that she was not familiar with (**Scared**) and this triggered a panic attack. The act of shopping and the debate over whether to purchase the shoes activated an ego state of fear. In this case, the client eventually recalled a childhood memory (while still in her induced trance) of her father yelling at her mother, on Christmas Day. Her mother, she recalled, was wearing an expensive, brand new pair of high-heeled shoes, red in colour that her angry father didn't approve of. The client was five years old at the time and the shouting terrified her. Years later this ego state was triggered, while Christmas shopping, when she spied a beautiful pair of red high-heeled shoes.



But what are ego states?

They are a mixture of emotions, logic, thought, sensations, personality, feelings and experiences that surface into an ego state. We only experience one state at a time but they can switch very rapidly.

Right now! In this very moment notice how you feel. Are you: relaxed, frustrated, withdrawn, angry, controlling, courageous, sensible, resentful, timid etc? These are perfectly normal states of being but we are familiar with only a handful of them; on average about 30. The most common being happy, sad, calm, tired, angry, curious, greedy, generous, fun loving, anxious, bored, complaining, love and so forth.

In reality we have hundreds of ego states. The less obvious are deeply hidden so an acutely shy person may well have a stand-up comedian, joke telling and highly confident ego state hidden away inside the subconscious that loves to perform in public.

At school, in the course of a day, a student may feel motivated, bored, excited, fearful, angered, loved or hated depending on what is happening. Each state has its own identity and characteristics and when we are aware of our states we can negotiate everyday activities fairly easily, knowing which state to bring up when needed. If an unexpected occurrence happens, such as an outbreak of fire in the science labs we may be surprised at how we react. We might be amused, sensible, willing to help, or feel concerned or terrified. When we are aware of our states we get a much better idea of our personality and learn how to adapt to lots of different situations.

If we are completely high-jacked by a state we suffer. Sometimes a student is brought into see me, in my counselling room, or arrives of their own accord in a highly distressed state and emotionally overwhelmed. While acknowledging the state I will try and get the distressed student to switch to another more supportive state often by saying something quite out of context like, *“Do you know how much a dozen eggs cost?”*

The student may look at me in utter disbelief while their shopping state takes over. Then I'll ask them to breathe deeply and this action can initiate a less hysterical state that is rational enough to know the price of a dozen eggs.

Remember! Each state has a clear identity. Most importantly these states want you, to do well and thrive but a state that is experiencing fear or

extreme anger cannot support you unless it agrees to reduce the intensity of that emotion. Other helpful states need to be brought into assist such as compassion, kindness, relaxation, patience, acceptance or courage to help the struggling ego state. To talk to a state (such as **acceptance**) I simply say to the client, *“I'd like to chat with the part of you that can accept what is happening for you.”* Then a part that accepts the reality of the feelings and the situation hopefully emerges without crumbling into fear. It may take some time for the client to find this state but it is likely to be lurking in the psyche somewhere.

You can try and access a supportive state by yourself. If you are feeling lazy and can't be bothered to do something see if you can find a part of you called **Will Power** or **Highly Motivated**. They are in you and you might have to remind yourself of the last time they surfaced and helped you (remember a time when you were so motivated and how that helped you get the outcome you wanted). You may have to negotiate with **Lazy** so that all parties get heard. It's a process of real self-talk with your contrasting selves.

Each state will talk from its given quality. Fear, when it feels supported by courage and compassion, or even acceptance may be willing to become less intense as it faces up to the trigger that initiated its appearance. The states can talk to each other but may not even be aware of the existence of some e.g. fear may not be aware of the courage state. The therapist therefore helps to locate states and asks them to communicate with each other positively (Which they nearly always want to do).

The aim of working with ego parts then is to locate the states that are holding pain, anger or frustration. Notice if they are being black and white and refusing to look for real solutions. How are parts restricting the enjoyment of life? The miserly ego state (one that may hate to spend money or share lollies etc) is an interesting one and often befriends anxiety. Some ego states are friendly to each other and some dislike each other. The aim is to get them all onside.

You can't get rid of ego states so you have to accept them and appreciate there is a reason for their existence. They like to think they are needed. Miserly ego states, that are quite tight fisted and appear mean-spirited, like to be acknowledged that by not spending money, for example, they are being responsible. By being a disciplined saver, one day, a deposit for a car or house will be made



possible (but the purchase of a sensible car not some flashy sports car). When the ego state of **I like To Spend** acknowledges **Miserly's** qualities and when **Miserly** can see that life actually needs a little enjoyment and that involves spending money, both ego states relax.

Compromise reduces ego parts battling for control and allows a more positive frame of mind and peaceful coexistence when the parts recognise and appreciate each other. States like to be respected and seen as helpful and having a place and purpose. When we recognise our states and allow egos to communicate with each other we increase our awareness that we are made up of many parts. How often do we enthusiastically buy something only to feel guilty about it afterwards or eat something unhealthy and regret it moments later?

Below is an example of a typical ego state session with a student

MARY was in Year 12 and saw me at the start of Term 2. She was not sleeping and displayed high anxiety levels. The cause of her problem was her inability to study. Her parents were aware of her difficulty and were concerned themselves.

It didn't take too long to establish that Mary was a perfectionist and also the product of highly anxious parents who were high achievers. Mary was obviously bright but like some perfectionists, if she couldn't get top marks she unconsciously chose to fail. Several ego states came forth from Mary: **The Perfectionist**, **The Little Girl Wanting to Please**, **The High Achiever**, **The Nag** that continually told her to work hard. As the counselling session went on two more ego states surfaced that were out of her awareness and were actually undermining her good study habits. One was the **Secret Rebel**. All her life Mary had done the right thing. She had won many prizes for her academic achievements, was a school leader and considered very mature and sensible. **The Rebel** was a part of her that rebelled against all these 'positive' aspects. **The Rebel** looked at her fellow students who appeared to be having so much more fun, going to parties, starting romantic relationships while boring Mary had her head stuck in a book. Mary admitted she was starting to like **The Rebel** and had her first cigarette a couple of weeks ago. The part of Mary that was called **Sensible** did not like **The Rebel** at all.

The other ego state that was revealed to Mary came as a shock and called itself **Stupid**. This part

expressed a firm belief that Mary was anything but a high achiever and in fact not very clever and this part was very timid, teary and powerless. We traced this state's formation to an incident in primary school when a teacher had commented on a piece of Mary's hand writing as not being very tidy. Mary internalised this comment as: at my very core I'm stupid and a fake. Thus **Stupid** was created but locked away in her subconscious. Unfortunately, it resurfaced night after night, out of her subconscious and started to attack her belief in her academic ability.

Eventually, all the ego states agreed to help Mary and to communicate with each other. **Stupid** acknowledged that you can't know everything and agreed to become smaller in size and committed to being only a very little bit stupid instead of exaggerating its status. **Rebel** was brought in and given a place of respect by **Perfectionism** who realised that balance was actually a very sensible way towards achieving goals and Mary started to attend the odd party without feeling her old friend, **Guilty**.

Mary became more relaxed, slept better and did well in her final exams ending up in a very prestigious university. By becoming aware of her ego parts Mary was able to see how they could support but also undermine her. These states will surface again and again in our lives but when we recognise them they don't overtake us by surprise or overwhelm us.

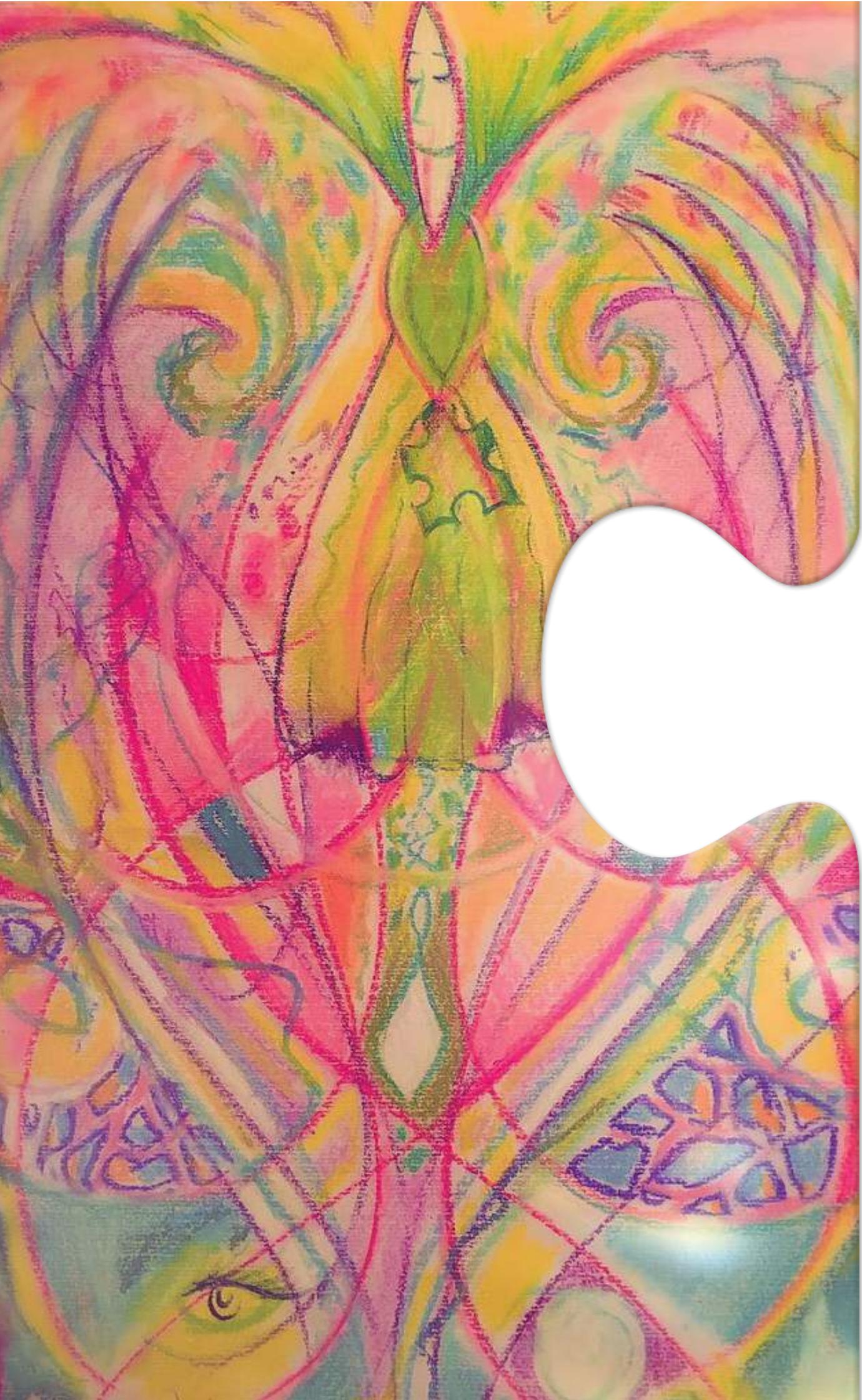
By becoming familiar with our ego states we get to know our many selves. That in turn allows us to lead emotionally healthier lives in good times and during difficult moments. When we get pigeon holed or labelled in a particular way we tend to act up to that narrow frame of reference as though it were set in stone. By accessing our ego states we can be so many things. The embarrassed adult dancer, with two left feet, can access and experience the part that is free of self-restraint and shame. It might mean going back to childhood, when a less self-conscious part roamed around the house, totally naked, dancing and swaying happily to the sound of music. You just need to make contact with that confident dancing ego state (that may be very hidden), acknowledge it and ask for its help. Ego states love to help when seen and asked.

Ego State Therapists are trained specifically in this area. The benefit of this type of therapy is that problems are often revealed in a short space of time and the ego state that is suffering is treated directly.



Who are you
right now?





Chapter 6

If You Don't Like Your Story; Change It!

THESE is a famous story (nearly two and a half thousand years old) of how Alexander the Great tamed the mighty stallion Bucephalus. This magnificent but wild horse had been sold to Alexander's father, King Philip of Macedonia, who probably regretted paying such a vast sum for what was turning out to be a rash investment.

As splendid a piece of horseflesh as Bucephalus was, there was one slight problem; nobody could actually ride him. The most skilled equestrians were unceremoniously thrown off this noble steed's back, time and again. The horse snorted his contempt at the many fallen riders as it paced, in an agitated state, around the fenced arena. Nervous warriors kept well back from the enclosure feeling shamed and dishonoured by the ferocity of this devil that bucked and reared menacingly before their eyes.

The accepted story was that Bucephalus was untameable, damaged goods and likely to kill any unfortunate rider who was stupid enough to try and break him in. A characteristic of Alexander's life was that time and again he refused to be labelled by people who told him stories about what was and was not possible.

Alexander stepped into the ring and asked permission from the King to try to ride this most unmanageable of beasts. Hardened soldiers' sniggered their contempt at such foolhardiness at the fact that they, with all their experience, had failed to subdue this animal, while Alexander, a boy of 13, presumed to try and achieve what was not possible. The King agreed helped by the fact that Alexander said he would buy the horse from his Father if he failed (the pocket money for royal children must have been pretty good in those days).

The surrounding audience saw this pimply and scrawny boy talk for a while to the horse and lead him around rather like taking a dog for a walk.

In this chapter

- When we look over our life and don't like what we see, change the story.
- There is always an alternative way of viewing things. Don't get stuck in a rigid narrative about life.
- The person is never the problem, the problem is the problem.
- By taking responsibility for our lives we become emotionally mature and no longer act as victims.
- Our patterns of emotional and behavioural responses require internal observation and insight. When we are aware of how we react to people and situations we have the ability to change if we so desire.

Influenced by;

- Michael White and David Epston and Narrative therapy.
- Dr Fritz Perls and Gestalt Therapy.
- Steve de Shazer & Insoo Kim Berg and Solution focused Brief Therapy.

An impatient voice yelled out from the intrigued crowd for Alexander to mount up. Promptly and with simply agility the boy sprung up onto the horse's back and rode him. The horse was perfectly calm.

What was the nature of this horse?

What was the true story?

Was it an unbreakable, dangerous beast or a disciplined and highly desirable horse?



The two descriptions are both accurate. The transformation of the horse's behaviour was not miraculous but resulted in clever observation on Alexander's part. He noticed that when Bucephalus spied the shadow of the rider on his back and heard the flapping sound of the rider's cloak, the result for the terrified animal was panic. Alexander turned the horse's head into the sun so his shadow was not visible to it and removed his cloak before mounting. These actions enabled him to gain the horses trust. Alexander saw that the horse was not the problem but how to ride it was the problem. He simply adopted a different perspective from the mainstream crowd.

Another event in Alexander's life highlights how stories can be challenged and changed. In the ancient city of Gordium, placed on an ox cart, was a giant ball of rope. Legend had it that whoever could untie the entangled knot would rule Asia. Of course the knot was impossible to untie and many had tried but all had failed dismally. Now Alexander, who often thought outside the square, came face to face with The Gordian knot in 333 BC. The story of the knot was set in stone, it simply couldn't be unfastened and as Alexander looked at the complex mass of rope before him he smiled. He withdrew his sword from its scabbard and in a handful of strokes had torn the knot to shreds; he also went on to rule huge chunks of Asia. Alexander, through his actions, was writing his own story.

There is a therapy called Narrative Therapy developed by Michael White and David Epston that states: **The person is never the problem. The person has a problem.** All too often we are confronted by problems and we associate ourselves as being the problem. We label ourselves with a black and white sticker that is forever attached to us.

Alexander could quite easily have said to himself that if others had failed to solve the problem of riding Bucephalus or untying the Gordian Knot then that was the reality. However, clever Alex perceived that the horse was not the problem, the presenting emotional state of the animal and riding it were the problems.

People often see themselves as the problem and this takes away from their ability to change and thus rewrite a new storyline. For example they say:

"I eat copious amounts of chocolate therefore I have no will power."

"I have depression therefore I am a sad and lonely person."

"I am a nasty person because I lie and manipulate."

"I am a violent person and my inability to control my temper proves it."

"My parents separated when I was a child and I will never trust again."

"The world is a terribly sad and frightening place and I am terrified of living in it."

"I am totally controlled by other people and have no confidence in myself."

"I am such an anxious person that I fear going to work and meeting people"

"I didn't do well at school therefore I'm stupid."

"I'm not good looking enough and can't attract a partner."

"I can't live because I see no hope for the future."

All of us have probably experienced some aspects of the above. We can easily adopt a false belief that there is something the matter with us and that we are dysfunctional, faulty or have turned out wrong. The reality is that in all of the above examples a story becomes established and we start to believe that story. We act out set roles because that is who we believe we are. It becomes accepted as fact. Remember! The person is not the problem. The person has a problem. Therefore how do we solve the problem?

Not too long ago it was accepted that the world was flat and if you set sail you would sooner or later fall off the edge and plunge to your death. There was also the established belief and story that the sun rotated around the earth and poor fellows like Galileo were imprisoned for stating the earth actually rotated around the sun.

You can't deny that in life suffering takes place but what we humans tend to do is to see our life story through a very narrow lens. Suffering



does exist but so do good times. Balance is an essential requirement that gets lost in our personal stories. We may not be clever at some things but perfectly expert at others. Many times I have asked groups of students and adults to list 5 positive characteristics and 5 negative characteristics that they attribute to themselves. Without fail the majority, easily pick and list their less desirable qualities and struggle to find their positive attributes. We give ourselves a hard time but we also give our family members and others an equally distorted frame of reference.

“He’s stupid and he’s got ADHD.”

“She’s a bitch and has no friends.”

“He’s violent and hits people.”

“That family are troublemakers and argumentative.”

If you believe that you are the problem: argumentative and anti-social, depressed, anxious, unlovable then more than likely that’s how you will be. If these behaviours have been enforced by parents, school, your peer group, the police and legal system you internalise the problem, and start to believe that is all you are, *“I’m an angry person therefore I’ll act in that manner.”*

We too easily identify with a limited self-image and therefore become powerless. If the person who has anger believes that is who they are, how can they possibly change? When you see that acting out of anger is problematic for yourself and others then the problem becomes the problem and not you. This attitude encourages self-determination; it empowers one and leads to a sense of having control over the problem. Bucephalus was not an angry horse. That was not the problem. The problem was how to ride him and make him a useful and wonderful beast to appreciate and feel proud to be seen on.

My youngest daughter came to our family through adoption. She had always known she had another mother and father who under very difficult and extreme circumstances were not able to look after her. To date we have no means of contacting her biological parents. I remember when she was 4, I was chatting to her about how she came to be my adopted daughter and how I first saw her in her foster home, just before her first birthday and how I instantly felt such an intense love for her.

Part of me had the engrained story of how tragic it was for this beautiful little girl not to have her real mum and dad around. However, she saw things from a very different perspective. *“Hang on!”* she told me when I explained that she had another Mum and Dad. *“You mean they couldn’t look after me and you and Mum took me in. How lucky am I to be loved by you both and by my older sister who is not even my sister. I’m the luckiest girl in the world.”*

I of course told her that our family was the lucky one for having her as our daughter.

When we change the story or a certain view or perspective we get a very different outcome and experience.

For people who face the deep dread of anxiety or the crushing hopelessness of depression it is too easy to state *“I am depressed!”* or *“I am anxious!”*

It is healthier to state that currently I am living with anxiety or I am experiencing depression at this particular moment. Depression and anxiety are then placed in the context of being the problem rather than you being the problem.

You may ask,

“How will I go about getting rid of depression and anxiety?”

The answer is in seeing that the problem is anxiety and depression you are not the problem. Have you heard people say of another, *“He’s depressed, he’s angry, she’s a control freak.”* We then view people as being that.

It’s very hard to relate to someone if you label them as bad, or angry; something that legal, media, educational and other institutions thrive on. It’s more compassionate to view those who suffer from poor mental health as human beings who have a problem. Sadly, statistics show that most of us shun people with mental illness.

If one believes that truth is mere perspective then we are free to invent a story that helps rather than hinders us. Look at how lawyers in a court can come from totally different points of view. A killing may be interpreted by the prosecuting lawyer as a vicious murder but by the defence as a legitimate action of self-defence although the action, the taking of life, is the same. When you construct your own story and challenge fixed assumptions about yourself, you don’t even have to justify the change.



Dr Fritz Perls, (1883-1970), a psychiatrist and founder of Gestalt Therapy was interested in the concept of self-responsibility. He urged his patients to take ownership for their own lives and their own healing and wrote the following verse:

I do my thing and you do your thing

**I am not in this world to live up to
your expectations**

**And you are not in this world to live
up to mine**

You are you and I am I

**And if by chance we find each other,
it's beautiful.**

If not, it can't be helped.

This poem at first sight may appear rather selfish. However, the statement is warning us that by not being authentic to our needs we continually give away parts of ourselves to please others. How often do we adapt our story to meet the requirements and desires of others? The selfless act of being there for people and organisations might appear charitable, at first, but if it is not done with an absolute willingness on our part, resentment and irritation slowly develops like listening to the sound of a leaking tap.

In life it helps to be true to ourselves. You might ask: am I in a job I love, a relationship that nurtures or following courses that I relate to? (If not why not?) People who don't feel they have the power to rewrite their story (by leaving boring jobs, travelling the world, following a creative direction, being in a loving and supportive relationship etc.) give endless excuses about needing financial, practical or emotional security that inhibits change. It takes courage to write up and add a new chapter of a story but also requires an awareness of what you truly want from life. You are the sole author of your real life story and once that is realised problems can be faced and addressed.

Samantha was a very successful athlete and at 17 represented her sport at both state and national levels. I helped her face her anxiety, depression and her relentless perfectionism. She often had to rewrite her story. She came to see me one day in tears, very down and fed up. She explained that at a recent Saturday night teenage

party she felt excluded and alienated from her peer group. As the night wore on the party-goers got increasing drunk and silly. People started to make out with each other and in Samantha's words do "*disgusting things outside in the garden.*" When she refused to join in the drinking and casual sex she was ridiculed by some as being "*up herself*" and "*frigid.*"

Samantha told me that she was sober because she didn't like alcohol and had a state trial in a couple of days. After continuous put-downs she rang her Mum who collected her from the noisy party. Samantha told me that she felt friendless, a misfit who couldn't relate to her friends at school. That was her story.

In our session Samantha rewrote this sad version. Far from being a social reject she saw that her refusal to get drunk, at the party, was a form of strength. She was a star athlete who would not compromise the health of her body simply because that was what some teenagers at parties did. She refused to engage in sexual acts with strangers and started to see that this was a virtue, a sign of real independence and integrity.

She separated herself from the herd mentality of teenage thinking that stated to have a good time at a party you must get off your face with drink and drugs and then get off with someone you didn't know. She saw she had much in common with other sports people and started to explore these friendships. The fact that she had been invited to the party, in the first place, highlighted the fact that people respected her. She also heard several people openly admit in the following weeks that they felt ashamed by some of the antics they got up to at that party.

By changing the story from the first script of frigid teenager and social reject to a new script and image that saw her as a healthy, free-thinking and strongly willed sports star with an ability to make her own decisions, a happier and emotionally stable Samantha emerged. She was not the problem.

All she did was rewrite the story.

In the following table you will see behaviours and patterns that we all use when meeting and communicating with others. They are placed on a continuum, on the same line but are polar opposites. When used appropriately they serve us well but when used out of awareness they can land us into all sorts of trouble.



THE 7 POLARITIES OF RELATING

- 1) ACCEPTING QUESTIONING
- 2) DEFLECTING DEEPENING
- 3) HOLDING IN EXPRESSING
- 4) PROJECTING OWNING
- 5) SELF-CONSCIOUS SPONTANEITY
- 6) ATTACHED AT THE HIP DIFFERENTIATION
- 7) NUMBING OUT HYPERSENSITIVITY

THERE are many ways by which we can change our story but it requires some insight into how we act with other people or in situations. For example, (look at 5 above) a chronically shy person who hides away from the rest of the world needs to find times when they acted with **spontaneity** when they didn't censor their actions through endless self-criticism, terrified of doing anything that might draw attention to their actions.

They might recall when they had a belly aching fit of laughter or clapped enthusiastically at a show or sporting performance. This breaks the 'shy' person's limited view of themselves.

We have many sides to our personality or ego states but they may be well hidden as we favour one pattern over the other e.g. shyness rather than spontaneity. The more we open ourselves up to our full potential the more adventurous becomes our story. We can be: kind and cruel, bossy and timid, noisy and quiet, intelligent and dumb, boring and funny and so on. We severely limit our life story by labelling ourselves as a particular personality even though we may favour and identify with being introverted over being extroverted but we are quite capable of being both.

Identify and recognise your day-to-day patterns. If you become permanently stuck at either end of each of the 7 polarities you become very rigid. The idea of the dotted line is to see why and how we become stuck at one end or the other. By constantly moving along the line we learn

flexibility and gain greater self-awareness about ourselves in regards to what limits and what enhances our life story.

1) ACCEPTING QUESTIONING

Look at the line between accepting and questioning. If one stays firmly fixed at the accepting end or at the questioning end then life will be full of problems as one is unable to travel between accepting and questioning.

Accepting means believing everything you are told. Think of the tens of thousands who have died in religious wars between Catholic, Protestant, Muslims and Hindus for a start. Those who killed in the name of God or were martyred believed righteously in their faith as being the true faith. If individuals had questioned they might have seen that persecuting each other was wrong and that loving ones enemy was and is a major tenant of all of their religions. It is dangerous to accept without questioning for then we become easily manipulated, rigid and at worst fanatical.

However, if we always questioned, nothing would ever get accomplished and acceptance would be impossible, resulting in a restless and unsatisfying existence. Continually questioning is actually a way of avoiding issues and can be dangerous. If the traffic lights turn red it doesn't pay to question whether you should run the light. How readily do you accept what others say and how often do you question?



2) DEFLECTING DEEPENING

DEFLECTING is the process of brushing something off as not being important. Boys in particular do this when a knee is scraped and bloodied during sport. There may be tears in their eyes but as a friend or coach puts an arm around them they sweep the helping hand aside as they limp off to the sideline. Deflecting avoids vulnerability and shields us from emotional pain. It's a reluctance to get in touch with how we really feel. It's often characterised by: endless talking, laughing, joking, particularly the use of black humour, focusing on the needs of others and changing the subject.

Deepening allows you to actually stay with what is happening. It accepts the good and bad, the up and down of life, the pain and joy. It makes you real to be around and allows for the disclosure and release of emotional pain. It is the ability to say, *"I love you!"*

There is a danger when one is unable to selectively choose when and where to deepen. The line from some parents that their children are their best friends is not a healthy deepening contact and children do well to deflect such offers of friendship with *"Thanks Mum or Dad, I've already got my own friends."*

Deflection and deepening both have a valid place in healthy communication. A couple, where one partner continually deflects and is unable to deepen, may well find that the relationship needs outside help to allow for a more balanced approach to relating. An analogy of a cricket match can be used when one partner strives to bowl, through delivering the ball of intimacy (that allows deepening) while the other blocks it away like a batsman defending vulnerable emotional stumps.

3) HOLDING IN EXPRESSING

WHEN people habitually hold in what would be better let out or expressed, their bodies become rigid: hunched shoulders and slightly stooped back, as though all their energy is turned inward. They seem to be carrying all the problems of the world on their shoulders and this literally weights them down. Speech is slow and laboured and depression is common. Tiredness is produced through repeatedly contracting their muscles; this contributes to their anxiety and they are often unaware of their restricted bodily movements, they literally look stiff.

The opposite polarity, expression, is the ability to share and let out what is happening for you. It is a crucial aspect in therapy. Yet everything in balance because the extreme form of expressing becomes impulsiveness and if we feel entitled to express for instance, anger whenever we want, road rage and conflict are not far away. Have you noticed individuals who just talk endlessly and go on and on and on without sensitivity to the fact they are boring everyone else to distraction. Holding in anger has its usefulness and by holding it in, fights and violence can be avoided. However, unexpressed anger commonly turns to a state of depression.

Awareness! Awareness! Awareness!

When we become aware of how we act we can simply change the behaviour that lands us in trouble and replace it with a better option.

4) PROJECTION OWNING

PROJECTION occurs when we have little awareness or insight about ourselves. For example, our self-concept may be that we are a really nice person who gets on with everyone. The reality might be that we get upset by a colleague, or friend, because we are jealous of them or feel threatened by their ability. We project our hostility on to them but disown this quality in us because we are such a wonderful and kind person. But let's face it! There is a bitch and a bastard in all of us lurking around at some level. We don't like to admit our aggression so we project it on to the other person. We believe that they are not nice and are probably jealous of us. We see them as being aggressive when really we are being quite nasty. Likewise we may fall in love with someone and project onto him or her that they love us. How many stories have been written about unrequited love? I see much projection around clients who hate being criticised but are, in fact, very critical of everything and everybody.

Owning requires that we take back what we impose on others. Institutions are often projected as being hateful, brilliant, kind, spiritually fulfilling when these are simply aspects of ourselves. When we own both our positive and negative qualities we become empowered and take real ownership for how we really feel and want to live and lead our lives. Someone who continually complains that work or school is a horrible place has the responsibility of deciding to stay or go or do something about the situation. Those who don't own their own stuff but project it, fall easily into victim-hood and are quite happy to let everyone know how badly institutions and people are mistreating them.



There is a huge gulf between being a real victim and the perception of being a victim. Partners who blame each other need to own what they contribute to the conflict; be very weary of someone who cannot own or denies any role in creating relational disharmony. When they do own their part in such conflict the relationship may well improve. By not owning our feelings, both negative and positive, we are in danger of becoming self-pitying, powerless and at the mercy of people and organizations and will find it difficult to accept the self-responsibility needed in order to change our story.

5) SELF-CONSCIOUS SPONTANEITY

EXCESSIVE self-consciousness can be characterized by obsession about one's own thoughts, feelings, looks and behaviour and constant worry about how others may see us. It involves stopping ourselves doing things through endlessly monitoring our actions.

It avoids any real relational contact. A very shy person feels overwhelmed and chronically embarrassed, at the thought of talking to unfamiliar people or attending parties. One literally stops oneself from fully embracing life. This is where shame attacks (mentioned in Chapter 2) and not taking yourself so seriously come into their own.

I have in my counselling room the 'Insult Ball'. It is a soft, squashy ball and is used to get the client into a spontaneous frame of mind. The soft ball has no respect for anyone and its aim is to insult the person it hits. I get the client to throw it at me and they have to insult me. It is very hard for some clients to do this especially when they hate drawing attention to themselves (shame is easily triggered) or feel the need to get things right. When they throw the ball at me they might say, "*You've got a big nose.*" Although I feel the painful truth of this, I point out how the ball (like the insult) has bounced off me. I then get to throw the ball back with returned insult such as "*I may have a big nose but at least I speak!*" (Obviously I have to be careful and judge if a client is emotionally able to handle the Insult Ball). This tends to up the insults and interestingly enough the shared laughter. The exercise teaches us that it's OK to chill and mock ourselves.

The reality is that most people are too concerned with themselves wondering (especially teenagers) how others may view them. The good news then is that if people are too busy being so self-obsessed, they really don't have time to be that interested in you; unless of course they fancy you. Another common feature of self-consciousness involves the use of headphones, seen everywhere, which draws us away from communicating with others by withdrawal into a safe, internal world.

Be very aware of the inner judge and its ability to stop you in your tracks. It can high-jack the story you wish to live with shaming and over-protection, thus destroying self-confidence. The opposite polarity to self-consciousness, spontaneity, allows for a lot of fun and freedom in life. But when constantly displayed it may be a mask used to avoid pain. At its worst spontaneity can be seen in impulse disorders, mania and anti-social behaviour and a need to avoid feelings of boredom, fear, neediness, sadness etc?

We all need times of self-reflection and to take a good hard look at our self in the mirror. If my actions are getting me into trouble with authority or in relationships how does my spontaneity help? Have I confused the joy of living with a need for immediate gratification; that demands I must have what I want right now. This sense of entitlement is one of the ills of a modern and material society. Impatience and frustration and the inability to tolerate waiting (such as drinking alcohol at 18 rather than 13) are common challenges.

At my university, in the 1970's, streaking was the rage (running naked in a public place). This craze was rife in the UK and the USA. There was even a song called 'The Streak' which made the number one spot in the UK in 1974 and number three in America. Running nude across my college campus was silly, fun, hilarious, spontaneous madness that just happened without any planning? When a voice at the end of a lecture or after a night in the college bar yelled "*STREAKER!*" sure enough we'd see an individual or group running in their birthday suits. If the mood arose other students would join in.

I feel today, at universities, as a more conservative and serious mindset prevails on campus, that the spontaneity of streaking is truly a phenomenon from the past (maybe it's just as well).



6) JOINED AT THE HIP ... DIFFERENTIATION

BEING joined at the hip is when we merge with someone or an institution and our identity becomes lost. You can see this in couples that finish off each other's sentences and instead of seeing two people a joint single image appears or in love making when individuals literally become one and for a moment are joined.

Stalin's Communist Russia and Hitler's Nazi ideology demanded citizens be joined at the hip with the State; individuality always coming second to the needs and goals of the Party. It is why millions were sacrificed time and again for the 'common good' and any outward sign of disagreement saw one exiled to a gulag in Siberia or a concentration camp. Some groups were considered so inferior, such as Jews and same sex attracted people that they were exterminated and not even allowed the possibility to be joined at the hip.

Religious orders, in the past, demanded strict dress codes and oaths of allegiance until nuns and priests started to express their individuality, gave up the cassocks and habits and started to dress in a manner that reflected individuality. In Western society there is a noticeable decline in conformity and deference to institutional religions and a move to an individual search for spiritual meaning. We are learning to think for ourselves as the process of differentiation occurs and we leave the safety of being joined at the hip.

When we express differentiation, the ability to pick out what feels right for us, from the expectation of the other, opposition can be expected. It explains why Catholic priests are being excommunicated as they challenge the laws that forbid clerical marriage, female ordination of priests and gay marriage. Separation can be a difficult process for someone who leaves school, steps out of a relationship or retires from work, if they closely identified and bonded with the organization or person, so much so, that by leaving them they feel absolutely lost.

In families, having a sense of your individuality is important; for parents as well as their off spring. Difficulties occur when parents think children are extensions of themselves or children cannot break out of the parental influence. Teenagers need to establish their own set of values, career choices, friends and interests through the process of differentiating from parents. Also parents need to allow their children to gradually leave them, as the children learn independence and the ability to think for themselves.

It is a precarious balancing act at times, when say, the friends of a teenager may be viewed in a very poor light by parents. However, when parents are viewed as the big ones and children the little ones, differentiation has already taken place allowing the parent to be just that; the parent. Sadly, when the parent tries to become the best friend of their child, the process of being joined at the hip is manifested and the boundaries of differentiation get blurred.

Those heavily involved in the drug scene often become joined at the hip with the 'druggie' crowd and its values but they also differentiate from the laws of mainstream society by rejecting existing laws. The regular user of heroin, ice or cocaine; however, soon loses their individuality as they become lost in the needs and destructive pull of their addiction. When an addict says no to drugs they again experience differentiation. If you are asked to take drugs or joy ride in the car of someone under the influence of alcohol, a choice around being joined at the hip and differentiation emerges. It is a decision that could literally save your life or put an end to your story.

7) NUMBING OUT ... HYPERSENSITIVITY

NUMBING out is a shutting down of the senses into a state of being frozen; a very common reaction to severe trauma. Trauma recovery requires great patience, courage and insight as there is a reason the mind and body closes down. It doesn't want to remember or relive unpleasant experiences. Numbing out involves a freezing, such as when rabbits get caught in the beam of a car's headlights at night and are unable to move. Interestingly enough, animals that experience trauma (being hunted by another animal) go into fight, flight or freeze mode. The energy they exert by fighting back or running away somehow stops them becoming traumatised. When they freeze and the danger passes, they tremble as though this allows the shock to work its way out of them and feeling better they hop along their merry way. Traumas such as sexual abuse, a life threatening attack, a car accident or caught up in a bush fire can be life changing. Trauma recovery programmes are widely available for those that shut down and help is important in reframing and reclaiming a life hindered by a horrific occurrence. It is very difficult to even contemplate reframing a storyline from a traumatised state.



IF YOU DON'T
LIKE YOUR STORY
CHANGE YOUR BOOK





Boredom and switching off are other forms of numbing out and when in long, drawn out meetings, that seem to be going nowhere, I cope by planning my next holiday and transport myself to some tropical paradise or ancient ruin. Numbing out has its rightful place; however, the person that is continually bored may need to become more open, interested and sensitive to that which takes away from boredom like a hobby or sporting interest.

At the other end of the scale is hypersensitivity: acute over reaction and dramatisation. Hypochondriacs tend to be ultra-sensitive to every ailment known to medicine and even then they can invent illnesses yet undiscovered. Behind this condition lies the anxiety that seems to be constant.

Hysterical behaviour resulting from an innocent comment or action is wearing on those who have to witness the intense emotional reaction. I remember as a teenager absolutely losing it at home when I was asked to do the washing up after dinner one night. I shouted that no one understood me and I got teary all because I wanted to watch a TV show. In these cases there is a delicate trigger (in teenagers an abundant mass of hormones running riot) that contributes to such a reaction. The inability to deal with constant frustration, trauma or perceived threat, without support, is a lonely internal journey. The aftermath of the hypersensitive reaction often sees a person sinking into self-pity and embarrassment at the inability to regulate emotions; reinforcing the victim role. When I view horrible pictures of starving, war affected children or victims of tsunamis, I notice how I tend to drift from hypersensitivity to numbing out to putting the TV images out of my mind completely as I get on with cooking dinner or walking the dog. However, those caught up in trauma are unable to walk away: sometimes they become the unseen, the invisible walking wounded.



THIS chapter has suggested that you don't have to be stuck rigidly in the past. By changing perspective a new story can emerge that states you are not the problem the problem is the problem. However, unless we have some awareness of our patterns of relating and how others relate to us (Remember Alexander's sensitivity to Bucephalus) we have the potential to be trapped in a limited world, rather like a goldfish swimming around in a circular glass bowl, repeating the same circuit, over and over again. Awareness of our patterns of behaviour and a belief that we can rewrite our story can take the goldfish into the wide, open ocean; which may be too scary a place for many who prefer the confines of their bowl.

A further step in writing our story is taken from the pages of Solution Focused Brief Therapy. This visualising therapy states that the key to story writing is to know what you want in life. It makes little sense in dwelling on the past as that period of your life is over. It requires you take responsibility for creating your own story because you are the expert on the goals and solutions you want for your life; not some therapist or other well-meaning people.

The client's imagination is used through the use of the Miracle Question that is structured like this:

Suppose you woke up one morning and by some miracle everything you ever wanted, everything good you could ever imagine for yourself, had actually happened-your life had turned out exactly the way you wanted it.

With your eyes closed think about the following questions now:

What will you notice around you that let you know the miracle had happened?

What will you see?

What will you hear?

What will you feel inside yourself?

What will be different?

This approach takes people out of the need to address the problem and to focus on achieving what they want. In other words it's an attitude summed up as: What would your life be like if you no longer had the problem? While the initial difficulties may remain this approach allows for the possibility of change (the rewriting of a story) and maybe that is the miracle.



Chapter 7

Self-Hypnosis to Getting What You Want

ON August 6th, 2005, Pippa Plaisted had a 45-minute breast cancer operation at the Lister Hospital in London. What was remarkable about this procedure was that she received no anaesthesia and as her nervous surgeon made the first agonising cut into the patient's flesh an even more spectacular phenomena occurred; she felt no pain. Hypnotherapist, Charles Montigue, had put this brave lady into a hypnotic trance, his thumb rested on her forehead for the entirety of the surgery.

In 2004, Dr John Butler, the Director of the Hypnotherapy Training Institute of Britain, had his hernia operation filmed also under no anaesthesia. (This operation can be viewed on U Tube in all its bloody and fascinatingly gory detail). Throughout, he felt his insides being pulled and tugged and although he described it as an odd sensation, it was not painful. His surgeon, Dr Tom Hennigan commented on the event as amazing.

Pippa's surgery involved being put into trance by someone else. In the case of John Butler he had administered his own hypnotherapy. The technique of self-hypnosis is a process that anyone can use.

The benefits of hypnosis are many, varied and a great aid to establishing good mental health through changing established responses associated with anxiety, depression, jealousy, anger and so forth. Hypnosis improves performance in sport and study, increases self-confidence, helps to break addictive behaviours and can even find your misplaced phone or keys. The application of this simple, yet widely misunderstood art, are only limited by ones imagination. By learning a few basic techniques we can all learn to self-hypnotise. If you have willing friends or family members you can try out your newly acquired skills on them as well as on yourself. It is especially useful for reaching states of deep relaxation and reducing stress.

In this chapter

- We may want to change on the surface or conscious level but until the subconscious is reached change may be difficult to achieve.
- Self-hypnosis is a relatively easy tool by which to set goals and induce relaxation.
- Hypnosis changes the neural pathways in the brain that allows for new perspectives, emotional and behavioural responses to form.

Influenced by ancient Hindu practices used in India but brought to the attention of Western medicine in 1770 by Dr Franz Mesmer and used by a wide range of therapists such as Dr Milton H. Ericson a highly regarded and inspirational psychiatrist and hypnotherapist of the 20th century.

Small steps first! At a recent gathering of hypnotherapists I heard many experienced professionals, recognise the great skill, self-confidence and learning it takes to implement things such as hypo-anaesthesia (Leave that to the experts). However, step-by-step instructions on how to reach a trance state and to access the channels that allow for change (for getting what you want) can be used by you, the reader.

So what is hypnotism?

Here are 10 interesting insights:

- 1) Hypnosis was used by the Ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans in medical procedures and religious ceremonies. A 3000-year-old papyrus, found in a tomb in Egypt, records the use of hypnotism. Many tribal cultures use this process to induce trance states, allowing fascinating feats to take place like walking on hot coals or placing hands into boiling oil and remaining scar and pain free.
- 2) In the 1840's the Catholic Church officially declared that hypnosis was not the work of Satan.
- 3) We enter hypnotic states several times a day. Have you ever driven a car or been a passenger on a train or plane and you suddenly realise you have reached your destination without remembering the details of the trip. (What state was driving the car?) When watching TV or reading we can slip into that deeply relaxed state and enter trance. I often do this when following the weather for my region (Victoria). I find I've eagerly observed Queensland's forecast but suddenly I'm aware I've been daydreaming and missed Melbourne's forecast completely, as the Northern Territory's isobars loom large on my TV screen and I come out



of my daydream or trance state. The hypnotic condition is that wonderful feeling we experience between being not quite fully awake in the morning, yet knowingly, treasuring those precious moments of contentment before we have to get up.

- 4) The unconscious or subconscious is the part of the brain accessed through hypnotism. The conscious part of the brain, the thoughts and actions we are aware of, is jealously guarded by an invisible soldier whose job is to stop ideas getting into the subconscious. It's as though once a thought or belief is stored away in the subconscious it remains hidden like a poor forsaken prisoner condemned to a life sentence in a dungeon far underground. Once in you don't get out. We may have the conscious intention and willingness to give up chocolate and tell ourselves it is fattening but unless you convince the subconscious, that chocolate is bad, giving up will be very difficult.

Only when the body and mind are deeply relaxed does the soldier sleep and this is when suggestions can be brought into the unconscious. A suggestion might be "*Chocolate tastes yucky and makes you fat and spotty.*" If the subconscious changes and believes this suggestion then giving up or reducing your intake of this beautiful substance is greater than just using your conscious will power. The subconscious belief, that chocolate is delicious and impossible to give up, has been firmly established and stored away in the back of the mind as a very young child and explains, as you pass the supermarket aisle that houses mountains of chocolates, how easy it is to cave in (as you literally enter the world and associated will power of a little child) and buy what you know is not particularly healthy.

- 5) You cannot be hypnotized if you don't want to be. It works really well on highly suggestible people and as such they are the best candidates for hypnotism. Stage show hypnotist choose very carefully those they select on stage. These are often extroverts (or people pleasers) who run around clucking like chickens while flapping their arms. A hypnoterapist can't do anything that goes against your moral values and beliefs. Most people can be hypnotized but if you clearly state you don't want to or don't believe in hypnotism then fine; there's

less chance of it working for you because that is your wish. If you don't want to give up smoking you won't unless the conscious desire is strong. Hypnotherapy aids you in achieving goals especially if they are confronting and challenging. The motivation for change must be there.

- 6) Hypnotherapy is recognised by the Australian Medical Board and many private health funds cover its use. It is being increasingly sort after in dental practices, in childbirth clinics and as already seen in operations.
- 7) Hypnosis works on suggestion. The more positive the suggestion the better one feels. By surrounding your house with optimistic affirmations and cheerful objects (notice how flowers and plants brighten up a space) a greater sense of wellbeing is created. Wearing bright coloured clothes rather than gloomy black, all helps to build a picture that reinforces a happier mind-set.
- 8) Between 1843 and 1846 a Scottish surgeon Dr. Esdaille, based in Bengal, India, performed over 400 operations ranging from amputations to the removal of cancerous tumours. He only used 'Mental Anaesthesia' and none of his patients reported feeling any pain. Furthermore, no one died on the operating table. In World War 1 soldiers and nurses used hypnosis to treat wounded soldiers when pain-killers and anaesthetics were in short supply.
- 9) Police forces use hypnosis to help witnesses recall lost information and precise details that have skipped their conscious mind.
- 10) There are distinct physical markers that occur when under hypnosis. Breathing changes and is deeper, eyes flutter and rapid eye movement is experienced. The muscles in the face and jaw relax- there is a general softening of the body and muscles can twitch. Swallowing is very common. Sometimes lacrimation takes places when the eyes produce tears. The pulse rate slows and the tummy can rumble. The client's voice will often change particularly when regressed back into childhood as it adopts the mannerisms and state of that child. The hypnoterapist watches for these physical signs to determine when the client is in a hypnotic state. And in the brain, new neural pathways are formed allowing for different ways of thinking, experiencing, acting and behaving to occur.





HYPNOTHERAPY then is centred on bringing about a deep state of relaxation.

Once that state is reached the subconscious can be accessed. It is in this realm where many hidden aspects live and surface at the most inconvenient of times, for instance, a student who panics every time they have a test or exam. This repeated behaviour results in poor performance, difficulty concentrating, loss of self-esteem and a continuation of anxiety attacks when the same situation occurs.

By accessing the unconscious part of the mind, the therapist will allow the client a more positive experience by suggesting that exams no longer hold such power over the client. A guided visualization may be utilised, whereby the client imagines themselves in the examination room but with a smile on their face, feeling perfectly at ease. This is a totally new sensation for the client, replacing the former anxiety with a peaceful state and can literally be experienced in the body and the mind. By feeling new associations (calm instead of panic), that differ from past experiences, a permanent change occurs. This new state might be strengthened by positive reinforcements that suggest:

- You are a success simply for being you and not dependent on any exam or test result.
- Or by linking objects (to a state of wellbeing), so that when the client sees a light bulb or a desk or holds a pen, in the exam room, they relax further and feel confident and good about themselves.

Suggestions to increase self-esteem are always added in the session. This all takes place in the Kingdom of the Subconscious that incidentally finds it difficult to distinguish between truth and fact. If the brain has been rewired to find examinations less demanding and stressful, then that is what the client will experience. By repeating the hypnotherapy, over several sessions, new behaviours and patterns are greatly reinforced.

Using hypnotherapy requires some discipline and if there is an initial set back, a willingness and belief in the process and in one's ability to change and get a desirable outcome is vital. It has been estimated that any change in behavioural patterns requires a minimum of a month although I have often hypnotised long term and hardened smokers who have given up cigarettes

after a lifetime of smoking in just one session with absolutely no side effects or withdrawal symptoms after they stop. The key here is the commitment to change. There is a great prayer around change called the Serenity Prayer that allows for a new direction but in a realistic and healthy manner:

**God grant me the serenity to
accept the things I cannot change**

**The courage to change the
things I can and**

The wisdom to know the difference.

The wisdom mentioned above acknowledges that most change is possible but the hard fact of life is that it may be a difficult and thorny path before achievement is possible and goals are reached. It is the prayer adopted by Alcoholics Anonymous that stress one day at a time in achieving objectives. Patience, self-awareness and support are important ingredients in any change as is the ability to let go of self-pity, blame and hopelessness.

There are 9 stages or steps involving the hypnotic session and the process can take from 20 minutes to over an hour. Some hypnotherapist, who know their clients well and have established good rapport, can put their patients in trance in a matter of seconds. Each step builds upon the other as follows:

- ① Preparation
- ② Induction
- ③ Relaxation
- ④ Deepening
- ⑤ Suggestion
- ⑥ Visualisation
- ⑦ Ego Strengthening
- ⑧ Post hypnotic suggestion
- ⑨ Termination

① PREPARATION

YOU need to be in the right frame of mind to do hypnosis on yourself. A quiet area at home or in nature is best. I prefer to sit but with a straight back, as hypnosis is not about sleeping but rather being alert but in a trance state. However, many prefer to lie down with hands at their side. Don't cross legs or fold arms as the blood supply may become restricted. The golden rule is to be in an environment that supports you to chill out. Breathing deeply allows an automatic entry into



this calm state. Have a clear intention as to what you wish to get from the hypnosis (e.g. a reduction in anxiety, more confidence when public speaking, recovery from a broken heart etc.). Have a clear plan of the steps you will take. Record a taped script or be so familiar with the process and steps involved, in self-hypnosis, that it naturally flows in your mind. (I have included a hypnotic script and CD in this chapter that you can follow and listen to or simply remember and play it out in your mind's eye). I like to go into self-hypnosis when travelling by plane and although in a confined and crowded space, I find the rhythmic humming of the engine an excellent tool to induce trance.

② INDUCTION

INDUCTION is the key that allows you to enter hypnosis. In the stereotype, melodramatic scenario, it is when a moustached man in top hat and tails swings his fob watch on dangling chain in front of a hapless victim. The idea here is to narrow concentration and to focus on relatively few things. That is, the voice and accompanying suggestions of the hypnotherapist. An induction may require that the client stare at a spot on the wall with 100% concentration while noticing how heavy the eyelids are. Another common induction is to draw attention to a hand and to realise how light it is. The arm is then allowed to rise up in a slow, floating motion and touch the face. The mind is being taught to accept the hypnotic suggestion but also experiencing that indeed the hand or arm does feel light. It's like telling someone not to think of a red elephant or to draw attention to their blinking. When attention is brought to a suggestion we tend to respond.

③ RELAXATION

WHEN the body is relaxed, the conscious mind switches off and the soldier guarding and monitoring the conscious state goes to sleep. That means that the subconscious is open to take in suggestion without being scrutinised and challenged by the alert and ever present sentry. New ways of behaving can then be placed into the unconscious mind through suggestion and visual images. Relaxation is a simple process of calming the entire body through commands. For example when you say, *"notice how clenched that jaw is and now relax that part,"* as we relax the muscles around the jaw we immediately feel the soothing benefits. The entire body is scanned, starting from the head down or from the feet up.

The hypnotist is careful not to personalise each muscle or body part so would say, *"relax that right shoulder,"* rather than say, *"relax your right shoulder."* Desensitising helps establish a trance state. By learning to be calm a person who experiences anxiety, for instances, is teaching the brain new ways of being. Thus new neural pathways in the brain start to change resulting in new behavioural and emotional experiences.

④ DEEPENING

THE idea of producing a trance state is to reach a level of deep relaxation but not sleep. It is understood that clients may still take in suggestions when asleep but the goal is to reach a level that is not as deep as sleep. How you reach the level that is most suitable for the client or yourself, takes time, practice and experience. By deepening we literally take the hypnotised person into a more profound state of rest. This is easily done, by suggesting that the client go down a staircase or travel in an elevator from the top floor to the basement; counting down slowly from ten through to one as each floor or step is reached.

⑤ SUGGESTIONS

KEEP suggestions in the present tense, *"I am a non-smoker,"* rather than, *"I will be a non-smoker,"* as this changes the perception and experience of being a non-smoker to fit the actual present moment experience rather than a vague occurrence, taking place in a distant time. Use positive comments such as, *"You are successful in everything you do,"* and link this to an actual event where success has been experienced such as when a high score in a test was achieved or a race won. *"You are now a non-smoker and you are successful. You score highly in tests and win races thus proving your success."* Suggestions reshape the former concept of how one thought themselves to be; thus, stating that someone is a non-smoker is in stark contrast to being a smoker.

⑥ VISUALISATION

BY creating an image or place where you or your client can travel to in the hypnotic trance, creates an opportunity where the five senses can be utilized to strengthen the experience of hypnotic suggestion. Suggest to the 'non-smoker' that they are in a beautiful green field where they are able to smell the brightly coloured flowers because their sense of smell has improved, as they no longer smoke. Tame animals come to greet them because the former disgusting cigarette smell that lingered



on the hair, clothes and fingers has disappeared because they are now smoke-free. Animals and people are now attracted to them. Ask them to feel the soft ground beneath their feet and experience how healthy the lungs are as they walk, full of breath, in this most beautiful setting of nature.

You are teaching the client (or yourself) to anticipate success through exposure to positive visual and sensual experiences. Metaphors are used often in hypnotherapy, as they seem to appeal to the subconscious mind, e.g. as a non-smoker you are fresh, pure and clean as the mountain water found in a Himalayan Lake. (Make sure the setting is one that you/the client can relate to. If there is a fear of water don't use the sea or a lake).

Remember in childhood how you would transport yourself to magical worlds, through play and the hours drifted away. That is rather like the experience of hypnosis and clients commonly think they have been in trance for maybe 10 minutes when the actual time was an hour.

7 EGO-STRENGTHENING

IMAGINE how an actor feels as the audience claps enthusiastic adulation after a performance or simply when someone tells you that you are simply marvellous. Your ego gets a boost and you feel great. The subconscious relishes praise and positive recognition. Reminding it that it is strong, kind, determined, powerful, all help it to achieve whatever goal you wish to reach. When one has a positive self-image it is far easier to face anxieties and other problems. Ego strengthening can be compared with getting the right amount of sleep and food. When one is physically fit and well fed a long hike is possible. If one is starving and malnourished, the thought of an arduous trek results in the likelihood of failure, even before a step has been taken. A healthy ego creates the optimum chance for success and so ego-strengthening statements are included in the hypnotic session.

8 POST HYPNOTIC SUGGESTIONS

THESE are suggestions, made in trance, to be used after the main hypnotic session has ended whereby a key word or visual cue may be used to direct an action or desired outcome. An example of a post hypnotic suggestion might be, for someone wanting to give up smoking, that every time they smell cigarette smoke or see a packet they feel nauseous and repelled by such smells and sights. A commonly used sentence states that every morning when you wake up you feel more

and more confident in your ability to achieve your goals. Even when the client has woken out of trance, just after the termination of the session, they are still highly open to suggestions.

9 TERMINATION

COMING out of the trance requires the use of a slightly different voice than that used throughout the session. A calm, slow paced voice, without much variation in tone and expression but clear is the ideal requirement for hypnotising.

In ending your session use a quicker paced voice, deeper and excited.

Numbers are used to 'wake' up from trance *"I will count from one to five and by the time I reach five your eyes will be open and you will be very relaxed as your senses observe everything around you."* Shaking arms and feet further helps differentiate the zone between being in a trance state and being fully present and alert in the here and now.

The steps involved in a hypnotherapy session serve as a guide into the workings of this unique form of therapy. Professionally trained therapists have the ability to skip stages and use many different techniques and strategies to achieve innumerable outcomes through their expertise and creativity. However, one can use these guides for self-hypnosis.

By knowing what you wish to achieve you can use the steps to write out a script and then tape it. You can listen to your own motivational words and reach a hypnotised state as often as you require. Or you can simply remember the sequence of steps and place yourself in trance without the need of a script or pre-recording by the simple process of internal self-talk.

This requires enormous concentration and I find it much easier to make my own scripts or listen to CD's of which there are an infinite number available online, at clinics and specialised shops and of course my own CD which reflects the following script. Listen to it regularly and notice the benefits that soon emerge.

The following is a typical hypnotherapy script. It has two goals. The first is to create a state of relaxation, a wonderful gift for the stressed body and mind. The second component will allow one to visualise whatever you want to achieve. The script has been left deliberately vague so that you can use it time and again and instil new goals, as the moment requires.

A hypnotic script for deep relaxation and for goal setting:



PREPARATION

Do not listen to this CD while driving or engaging in any physical activity where lack of concentration may endanger your wellbeing. Find a quiet space, free from distraction. Lie down or sit down with legs and arms unfolded. Have a clear intention of what goal or future outcome would be desirable for you.

INDUCTION

WITH your eyes wide-open take a deep breath into your belly button. A deep refreshing breath... notice that when you breathe in deeply the chest muscles tighten and when you breathe out the tummy and chest relax and those shoulders sink down into a state of deep relaxation. Focus on your next 3 breaths as you breathe through your nose.

Breath One... (Slowly in and out).

Breath Two...

Breath Three...

Now as you breathe in notice the coolness of the air on your upper lip, breathe in... and... breathe out.

Notice that when you breathe out the air is slightly warmer on the upper lip. Breathe in... and breathe out...

Good! Well observed.

Now find a spot on the ceiling or wall (or if outdoors focus on something in the distance) a small object for those eyes to concentrate upon. Keep your full attention on that spot, focus... focus... focus. Notice how those eyes start to strain as you bring your entire will power and focus on staring at the spot.

Now close the eyes... Breathe deeply into that stomach... notice the stomach rise and fall... notice the warmth and cool air flow on the top lip.

Now open those eyes and stare at that same spot again. All of the concentration on that single spot, stare... good... focus... those eyelids feeling heavy but keep the eyes open... Notice how heavy those eyelids are... like a dead weight forming on the top of the eyelids, tired eyelids, even if you want to close those tired eyelids keep the eyes open... now roll the eyes into the back of the head so that it becomes impossible to move them any further back... good... tired eyes... Now stare at that same spot and on the count of one you can close

those eyes and descend into deep relaxation.

Three... stare at that spot

Two... Stare at the spot

One... Close those eyes now! Good!

Eyes closed and relaxed but those eye lids sealed up unable to open... eyelids sealed up by concrete while the closed eyes stay relaxed.

RELAXATION

BREATHE deeply into that belly button and every time you breathe you will relax, further and further, deeper and deeper sinking down into a wonderful state of deep relaxation so that the shoulders feel lighter, the eyes float in deep relaxation, closed, firmly locked in as you sink further and further on each and every wonderful breath. Let go and drift down!

Imagine above your head is a golden ball and from and around this ball shines a healing and wonderful golden light, an all knowing, all wise, kind and warm and compassionate light. And this light flows down from the ball to the top of your head... like a slow flowing molten river, at just the right temperature for you and massages the top of the scalp... like millions of golden fingers, spreading warmth... golden light fingers massaging the scalp... moving to the temples... slowly and expertly massaging... now moving around the jaw, the golden light penetrating the skin and muscles of the jaw, warm and massaging so that the jaw... muscles and facial bones relax and the jaw drops into a state of total relaxation, sinking, deeper and deeper into a glorious state of calm, tension free, deep peace. The light travelling to the back of the head, to the neck, light massaging deep into the skin, any knots in the muscles evaporate, the neck muscles, smooth and calm, sinking into a wonderful state of deep relaxation. The entire head aglow in a golden light of calmness. A wonderful massaging sensation, on top of the head, penetrating inside the skull so that the brain feels a deep sense of peace and tranquillity as the golden light, relaxes, relaxes, relaxes and you let go.

The light now travels along the shoulders. So much tension held in the shoulders. Release all tension... Millions of golden light fingers massaging their warmth to dissolve any hidden tightness, tense free... Shoulder muscles give way, surrender and to the massaging light. Any knots disappear as tension lifts out of the muscular



system replaced by a deep sensation of pure relaxation, deeper and deeper, letting go as you sink further and further into a tranquil state of peace. Sinking into a deep state of bliss.

Now travelling along the left arm, this golden light massaging the upper arm, the elbow moving down along to the wrist and into the fingers, one by one. The light entering the palm and pressing those points that are expertly touched and relax the entire body, finding the right pressure points in the palm bringing instant and deep relief. The entire left arm sinking and floating into deep relaxation

The light now moving down from the right shoulder to the upper arm... the golden warmth penetrating skin and muscle, soothing and smoothing away any resistance like a river that smooths river boulders. The bones turning to a warm liquid as the golden light penetrates, deep and warm... moving to the elbow, forearm, gently massaging the wrist, the fingers. The light flowing into the palm of the right hand and pressing those points that when pressed correspond to other body parts resulting in a deep sense of wellbeing. The entire right arm sinks, floating into a deep, deep relaxed state.

And any noises you may hear only further add to your deepening state, drifting further and further into a beautiful trance like state. Breathe deep into that belly button and with every outward breath you flow deeper and deeper in to a wonderful state of calm and serenity.

The light now located at the top of the spine. Travelling down slowly like molten lava, that is at exactly the right temperature... the ultimate deep, deep sensation of peace and relaxation. As the light covers each disc, the disc gives way into a state of deep relaxation as warmth and peacefulness flows over and through each disc. And the heat spreads from the spine into the chest and through the belly. A wonderful light healing and wise, massaging and cleansing the lungs and heart, and stomach relaxing those stomach muscles and all the internal organs and the golden light spreading along the entire back, spreading out as millions of light, golden fingers massage the entire back, knowing instinctively where to place the golden fingers of warmth at exactly the right spots that bring that wonderful sensation of a deep, deep massage. The entire upper torso, the chest and back bathed in light and letting go now, letting go of all stresses, as the upper body sinks into a deep and peaceful state of tranquillity.

The light now surrounding the hips, letting the hips relax as the deep heat massages away any aches and pains. Travelling down the left leg, the thigh, the knee, the calf, the ankle, letting go of any tension and sinking into deep relaxation. The warmth spreading on top of the left foot, into each toe so that each toe, starting with the little toe stretches and comes back to relax, each toe stretches and relaxes... And the light pressing the sole of the left foot knowing exactly where to press. The entire left leg sinking now into a deep state of relaxation.

The light now flowing from the right hip into the thigh any knots simply fade... Any stiffness or resistance expertly massaged away, flowing, warmth, behind the knee, in front of the knee, along the calf the lower leg. Warm, golden light washing over the ankle, the upper foot and moving to the sole of the right foot... pressing in deeply to ease any tension... knowing exactly which point to press on. The entire right leg now sinking into a deep state of relaxation.

The entire body now floating on a golden cloud, suspended in perfect relaxation, peace and calm as you drift away into a state of total harmony with the golden light.

DEEPENING

NOW imagine you are standing at the top of a staircase. The staircase can be of made and designed from your own imagination. A simple staircase or as elaborate as you wish. There are 10 steps on this staircase and when I tell you to go down the staircase a magical event takes place. With each step you go down you will be 10% more relaxed than you are at the previous step, so that by the time you step off the bottom step, you will be 100% more relaxed than at the top of the staircase.

- Step 10 So calm... so calm, so deeply relaxed
- Step 9 ...
- Step 8 ...
- Step 7 Deeply, deeply relaxed as you descend into a state of deep peace and tranquillity.
- Step 6 ...
- Step 5 Already 50% more relaxed than at the top...
- Step 4 ...
- Step 3 Utter peace and calmness



Step 2

Step 1

100% deeper and more relaxed than at the top of the stairs.

(For further deepening you can use the elevator deepener below)

In front of you, you will see a door. The door opens. Pass through it and find yourself inside an elevator. On the control panel inside the lift you will see 10 lights representing the descent to 10 floors below you. As you pass each floor you will find yourself becoming 10% deeper and more relaxed with every floor you pass.

Floor 10 ...

Floor 9 The doors open and two people get on.

Floor 8 ...

Floor 7 ...

Floor 6 Three people get on and one person gets out.

Floor 5 So relaxed and calm.

Floor 4 ...

Floor 3 Doors open, four people get out.

Floor 2 ...

Floor 1 ...

The door opens and you step out of the elevator. 200% more relaxed than at the top of the stairs.

Suggestion and Visualisation:

AS you step out of the elevator you find yourself in the most beautiful natural surroundings. A place of nature that fits entirely with your perfect perception of natural beauty. Maybe you find yourself in a tropical beach paradise, hearing the gentle, transparent sea flow in and out upon golden sand. The transparent blue of the water filling you with a deep peace and joy. Palm trees and tropical flowers sway in a gentle breeze and you feel the soft sand give slightly beneath your feet.

Or you make prefer to be beside a flowing waterfall, swimming in a clear pool surrounded by the most magnificent vegetation. Tame birds and animals are seen and heard.

Or maybe you feel comfortable in a snowy mountain setting where majestic peaks are circled by golden eagles. Forests, lakes and pastures lie at

the foothills and animals graze, peacefully in rich green pastures.

Or perhaps you have chosen the beauty of a desert where true silence and wisdom are found.

Now chose a place where you feel at peace. (Pause for 20 seconds).

Notice the colour of the sky.

Feel the gentle wind against your face and golden sun on your skin. Walk around and experience your place of wonder.

Reach out and touch the vegetation.

Use your senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing to explore your world and to take in its beauty and peace... Walk around and discover this peaceful world (**Explore for 1- 5 minutes**).

As you explore this place of natural beauty you notice a chair and a table. Go and sit on the chair... Good! ... On the table you see a pen and a piece of paper. Now on this piece of paper write down the goal you wish to achieve. Make the goal simple and clear. Easy to define. Take your time as you write down your goal.

(Wait 30 seconds while the goal is written down).

On the table you see a golden box. Open the box and place your paper inside it... Good... Inside the golden box lies your dream, your ambition, your goal.

This golden treasure box reflects the light of the golden sun that reinforces the power to achieving your goal. You achieve your goal because it is firmly in place, safe and sound and strongly protected by the golden box. **The golden box of your subconscious.** As the sun's power energizes the golden treasure box, so you, in turn are energized, motivated in reaching your goal... in successfully achieving what you set out to achieve. This golden box remains on this table, in this place of nature, constant like the sun that reflects off the golden box... energising it.

And energizing you with its strength and power and motivation and determination into knowing that what you have written will come about.

What you dream for will come about. The Law of Attraction states that what you desire and have as a goal will be attracted to your thoughts. And will come into being. Dream now that your goal or dream has been achieved. Feel the emotion in your heart... now...



Self Hypnosis Gives you what you desire



Like the sun looking down, rise up into the air and look down on yourself with your goal having been successfully achieved. Picture the successful outcome now and visualise the successful outcome in your thoughts. Notice what you do as you stare down at yourself...notice the positive emotions you feel...Look at your face and see the pride and contentment that comes with achieving that goal.

Let the subconscious force work to bring forth your wishes. It's that simple. Believe and all things come into being. You attract, through your belief, that which you desire.

Just as the sun is constant and can be relied upon to rise up, every morning. Without fail... so reliable... your stated goal can be relied upon to come forth, rising up like the rising sun... your goal rises and shines.

There is a big blue balloon near the table with a basket attached beneath it and a golden thread anchors the balloon to the ground. Place the golden treasure box into the basket and cut the golden thread with a pair of golden scissors that are next to the balloon. Now watch your stated goal rise up to the distant sun, getting more energised, the closer the balloon rises to the sun.

Just as you have energised your subconscious brain onto a path of energy and power in successfully bringing forth what you desire.

Your written goal and your positive qualities are now energised by the sun. Notice how the gold of the box shines in the golden rays of the sun. Your qualities of determination and persistence adding strength and power and wisdom on the road of success to reaching your goal.

EGO STRENGTHENING

AND tonight when you go to sleep you will have dreams and they will be of a learning nature whether you remember them or not. You feel increasingly optimistic as you realise that throughout your life you have reached and achieved so many goals. Learning to walk, to talk, to read and write all came naturally and were mastered by you. The goal you set, successfully achieved like all the other accomplishments you have mastered; even without thinking about it: like your ability to walk and talk and write which is proof that your set intention to master a goal results in success... Your goal will come naturally and be obtainable because you have a proven



track record of success. When you put your mind to achieving and getting what you want you are successful and this has been proven in so many ways. You learnt a language, your native language, because you have a wonderful persistent character whether you are aware of your achievements or not there are many. You obtain your goals easily, naturally and overcome challenges like the time you learnt to walk, read and write, swim, ride a bicycle and many other challenges that you naturally strove to master so successfully. You are a winner and you always have been. This goal, like past goals you set for yourself, are well within your capability, achievability, reachable because you are naturally successful and have a track record of achievement of getting what you desire. What you desire truly comes about.

POST-HYPNOTIC SUGGESTIONS

THE Sun's rays energize and power your self-belief, motivation and desire to obtain and achieve what you wish to achieve. Every time you look at the goal you have written down you are recharged with the energy that a waterfall contains, flowing towards the achievement of your goal with purpose, motivation and self-belief. Just as a river has many tributaries there are many paths in getting what you want. In fact, when you see the colour blue, like the blue sky, a blue car, blue jeans, a blue balloon, you will feel empowered in achieving what you wish to achieve and motivated towards reaching your goal. Like a car journey, you reach your goal as you travel on the road to success reaching your destination as you have done countless times when you travel on the road to success by car by foot or by thought.

TERMINATION: (WAKING UP FROM TRANCE)

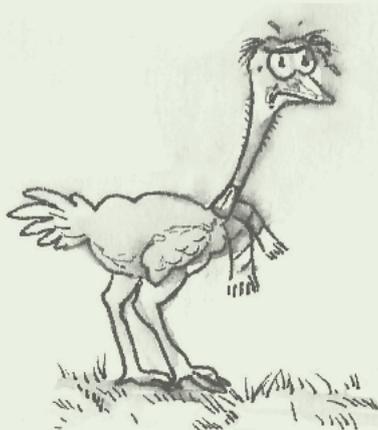
AND in the morning when you wake up you will feel relaxed, confident that the goal you set for yourself is quite achievable and is yours for the taking. You fully realise that the subconscious can bring about whatever you truly believe is possible. You let go of all doubt.

In a moment I will count up from one to **five**. When I say five your eyes will open, you will feel deeply relaxed, confident in achieving your goal, believing fully in the intellectual power of your subconscious, in its natural capabilities to help you successfully accomplish your stated goal.

(Voice becomes louder and progressively faster)

- One:** Energy surges around your feet and hands spreading to your legs and arms.
- Two:** This energy now swirls inside your stomach and chest.
- Three:** Your blood pressure returning to that which is normal for you.
- Four:** Your heart rate returning to that which is normal for you.
- Five:** Energy swirling inside your head, eyes open and you look around.

Now how about buying a box, you could even paint it gold with some blue on it. Inside the box have your goal written down on a piece of paper. Every time you look at the box or read the contents inside you can be sure of reaching your goal.



SOME problems need to be left to the professionals and mental health issues such as schizophrenia or trauma are not appropriate for the amateur to treat. Self-hypnosis is extremely useful for relaxation, increasing low self-esteem, enhancing creativity, and motivating one towards achieving desired goals. It is an excellent tool in reducing anxiety as new pathways in the brain are reformed every time they hear the positive suggestions of a hypnotic session. A visit to a hypnotherapist is of course a great starting point in learning about this powerful therapy.



Chapter 8

Peace Through Meditation

In this chapter

- Keeping the mind centred in the present moment keeps us grounded.
- When our thoughts wander to the past depression can occur.
- When our thoughts travel to the future anxiety can result.
- Many beneficial side effects from this activity include: a deep sense of calm and peace, gaining valuable insights, coping in difficult times, reduction in high blood pressure.
- A sense of being at peace with everything without needing to judge.

Influenced by ancient traditions as long ago as 15,000 years. However, it is an integral part of Buddhist philosophy and practice that was established 2,500 years ago.

THERE is a wonderful story of a Buddhist monk who displays a sense of serenity under difficult circumstances.

Long ago, somewhere in South East Asia, stood a monastery on the edge of a village. The people led a simple but industrious life spending many hours in the surrounding rice paddies and vegetable gardens. Like most rural communities gossip and intrigue stood alongside a people that were bonded strongly by their spiritual beliefs in: compassion, karma, respect for all life, prayer, reincarnation and acts of charity.

The abbot of the monastery was a well-respected and revered man. All the more shocking when one of his pupils, a teenage girl, became pregnant and pointed her accusatory finger at her teacher and spiritual guide, the abbot, as being the father.

The community was outraged and the monk was stripped of his position and forced to live in isolation away from the village. He was shunned and despised but was able to construct a hut in which to live. Through the generosity of some of the monks he was given rice and seeds to plant on vacant land. On the day his child was born, the mother with her entire family walked to his humble dwelling and she promptly placed the infant in his arms. He was told in no uncertain terms that the child was his responsibility and the mother and her extended family departed with the former monk literally left holding the baby; a tiny girl.

For two years he nurtured and loved his little daughter. He fed, washed, clothed and played with her. He named her Little Gift. The locals saw how the child thrived in the company of this man who displayed undying love and compassion through his songs and smiles. The abbot was a gifted musician and played drums and flute made from the bamboo trees that grew nearby. Then one day a strange occurrence took place. The mother arrived at his home with a young man. She fell on her knees and begged the abbot's

forgiveness. You see, she explained, the youth at her side was the baby's father and her lover.

To protect the biological father from shame and scandal she had falsely accused the monk. Both parents now realised the enormity of their moral deception and felt bonded to their child that they had abandoned. The monk kissed the smiling toddler and handed her to his mother.

When this fact became widely known, the former abbot was returned to his position back at the monastery. At a public gathering of the monks he was asked why he didn't defend himself against the false accusation and try to save his reputation. His reply was simply. *"I didn't need to. I already knew the truth. Plus I had received a gift."*

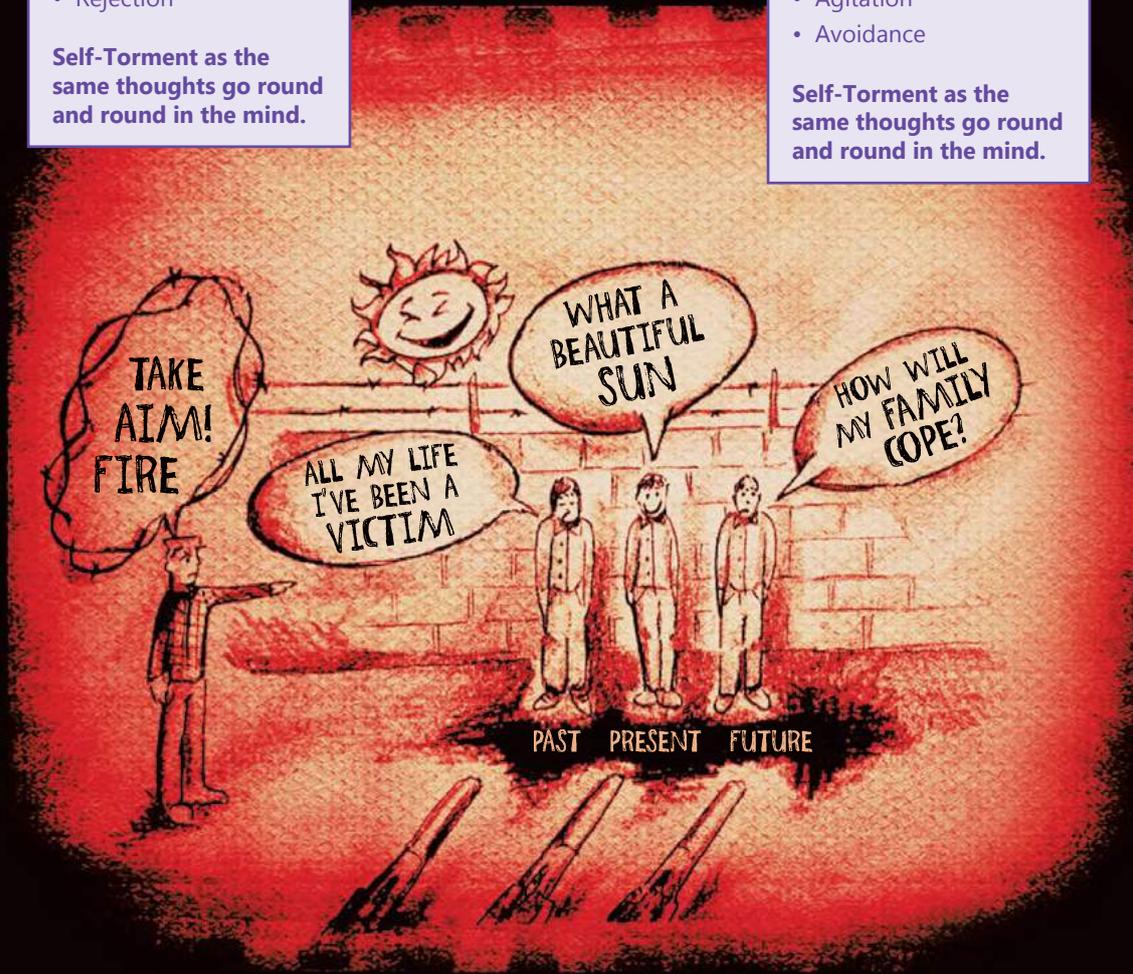
I was blown away when I first heard this tale. Despite the malicious gossip, innuendo and fall from grace, the abbot simply accepted what was. I respected his ability to stay fully in the present moment so that his emotional reaction was not linked to worrying about what others might be thinking or sinking into self-pity. He became neither victim nor aggressor staying in a state of peace and acceptance. As an abbot he carried out his duties to the best of his abilities and as an unexpected father he gave love and compassion to a fellow human that would not have survived without him. He was above self-righteous outrage, indignation and felt no desire to blame or run away from circumstance.

Many of us inflict the most awful self-imposed torture when we let our minds wander into the past or the future rather than staying with the present moment. The monk did not let his mind travel to the past by dwelling on his time spent at the monastery. He did not sink into depression at the unfairness of the situation or torment himself as to how his future might be. He simply enjoyed the moment and saw the baby as a gift. From his suffering an opportunity presented itself to allow for the flow of love and compassion.



Put simply, when our thoughts are centred in our past we allow for the possibility and experience of depression and when they go into the future, for anxiety to occur. By staying in the present moment, even in awful situations, we find that we can cope; however, if our

thoughts are constantly turning to the past or thinking about what might happen in the future we start to literally torture ourselves. The following diagram looks at the relationship between living in the past, present moment and the future.



Meditation has been around for thousands of years and is often part of spiritual practice that allows for the quietening of the mind and contemplation. While there are many types of meditative practices, this chapter will give you the essential ingredients that will transform your life; if that is your wish. Of all the jigsaw pieces in this book, it is the easiest to embrace but like all paradoxes its simplicity demands discipline and committed practice, not for a week or a month but for a lifetime, in order to fully benefit. By discipline I mean regularly using this tool so that it becomes an instinctive part of every moment and movement.

Meditation does bring enormous change in stilling the tormented mind. Has the world ever been a still and harmonious place? Is humanity capable of an existence of calm, happy and joyous experiences? Nature is quite brutal and harsh and a student of history knows that human savagery has only increased with each passing century. Empires come and go, religious institutions fall from grace or flourish with exuberant expectation from followers and as for political ideology, well the less said the better! Maybe you and I can't change the environment around us (The hate, the anger, the belief that one group is superior to another) but we can change ourselves and we are of the world.

One of the certainties of life then is that suffering in some way, form or shape will hit us. How we survive it, (and of course there is no guarantee that we will) depends largely on our internal functioning. The sole purpose of meditation is to focus attention on the present moment. That is all that is required to bring a troubled mind into a state of calm. Anyone can do meditation and gain access to the knowledge and practice of this ancient art.

Now you could fly out to Bali and spend a small fortune in the serenity of a compound with palm covered huts and plunge pool to learn inner peace or you could read this chapter and practice its pure simplicity in the privacy of your toilet; if you so desire. (Um! A difficult choice, ultimately depending on your finances).

Meditation works by calming down our nervous system, our fight or flight responses. We have already seen in previous chapters how people react to life circumstances in many different ways. Those whose minds are in torment will react badly to a situation that is perceived as being difficult, be it from losing a mobile phone, through to

experiencing a divorce. Imagine how the lost phone has the potential to spread a firestorm of panic in the unsettled mind. The peaceful mind simply accepts the loss and does what is humanly possible to find the phone. A tormented mind's inner dialogue states, "*My life as I knew it is over!*" and "*How will I survive without my phone?*" Panic, grief, anxiety overflow the nervous system so that the incident literally becomes a matter of life and death. Distortion then takes over and the lost phone causes immense psychological suffering.

The monk's perception starts to make sense when we realise we have absolutely no control of life and events (even though we believe we do). We may try to assert make believe control and impose an order that comforts us by sending our kids to the right school or finding the dream job or partner but that is all make believe. The ultimate reality is that we our born and we will die; death is as natural as living, yet with all our medical expertise (and thank God for pain relief and antibiotics etc) we at best only extend our lives by a few years. Compared to the life span of the universe we hardly rate a blink. Birth and death are ultimately out of our control.

Meditation then can't really begin until you give up the belief that you can control what passes in your mind. Through letting go of the numerous thoughts that enter the mind during meditation and giving up control of any outcome (Simply going with the flow) paradoxically, an outcome of peace, acceptance, clarity and calm often results. We learn to see the ridiculousness of attachment to possessions, people and events. Nothing lasts! This doesn't mean we lose our ability to love and appreciate the finer things in life it means that any lifelong attachment to them, as being permanent, is simply an illusion. Like life and death everything starts and ends.

We all know the control freaks and perfectionists who strive for the ultimate prize yet how often does the illusion of achievement quickly fade? If we base happiness on things, events, achievements or people we are at their mercy; our sense of approval and self-worth coming from outside of us. By living in the present moment all concept of time, responsibilities, pressure, ideologies, deadlines, expectations just vanish. You are only concerned by the actual present moment that can't be grasped; it is simply always there. There is no future time (where we find all our anxiety) and the past has gone (where we store all of life's disappointments).



The present moment requires that you simply experience what is in that present moment. Judgments of that experience are let go. Which brings us to the question of what it is that we focus our attention on? The simple answer is we focus on the experience of our breath. Breathing in and breathing out. That is all there is to it; an awareness of a function that has always been with us.

Most of us live our lives out of awareness. We carry out our day-to-day activities on autopilot following predictable patterns and routines. When this predictability is compromised we experience extreme discomfort and that is often the time we approach therapists, doctors, friends and family because we can't cope.

When we experience depression or anxiety or are overwhelmed by difficult circumstances, we have a great opportunity to learn through that suffering. This being that a place of peace can exist in the present moment; getting there is the struggle.

The process of meditation requires a process of letting go and paying attention. Letting go of whatever thoughts enter our conscious mind and paying attention to our breathing.

Look at the practice chart. Read through it once or twice and then find a quiet spot and sit down. Start out with a daily practice of 5 minutes and gradually build up your time over the coming days and weeks.

THE MEDITATION	
The Practice	Comments
<p>1) Sit in a chair, straight back with hands on your knees.</p> <p>2) Close your eyelids.</p> <p>3) Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose.</p>	<p>When you close your eyelids the brain automatically relaxes. You have been doing this forever even in your Mother's womb. The sensation of relaxing maybe out of your awareness. As you close the eyelids notice how the eyes, face, jaw, shoulders, chest, simply relax.</p>
<p>4) Concentrate on your right foot. Notice your toes and heel. Feel the part that places most pressure on the floor.</p> <p>5) Bring attention to the left foot. Notice the placement of toes, middle of the foot, heel.</p> <p>6) Compare how the right foot feels in relationship to the left foot.</p>	<p>Don't judge how the feet feel. If comfortable or in discomfort simple notice the sensation. Meditation does not judge good, bad, right or wrong. It simple focuses attention. Really notice the feet and how they make contact with your skin, sock, shoe, the surface of the floor.</p> <p>(30 seconds to 1 minute on this exercise)</p>
<p>7) Now draw your focus to your sense of hearing. Listen like you have never listened before to noises close to you (In the room or space you are in) and away from you. Hear the sound of traffic, the wind, birds, people talking, your stomach etc.</p>	<p>100% concentration and focus on just listening. Again, don't judge what you hear simply accept what you hear then move on to another sound. If you get distracted, that's OK, simply realise your concentration has wandered and come back to your sense of hearing.</p> <p>(1 to 5 minutes on this exercise)</p>
<p>8) Bring your attention to your breathing. Breathing in and then breathing out through your nose.</p>	<p>Every breath you take should be deep: slow and deep into the belly button. Try and breathe like that for the rest of your life.</p> <p>(1 Minute spent on this activity)</p>
<p>9) Now bring all of your focus on the outer breath. Listen to the sound it makes and feel the sensation. Breathe in but full concentration is on the OUTER BREATH.</p>	<p>Don't judge the sensation as good or bad right or wrong just notice the sensation of the outer breath-that's all. Any distractions, such as the mind travelling to the past or future or feelings of joy or boredom; notice them and let them go.</p> <p>(5 minute to 60 minutes)</p>
<p>10) Go through the day concentrating on the benefits of deeper breathing.</p>	<p>Feel the peace, calm and serenity. If you have a question or problem let the solution arise naturally from within.</p>



The simple process (on PG 74) can transform your life if practiced daily. I try and do at least a 20 minute meditation a day and if lucky two 20 minute sessions one in the morning and one in the evening. If I'm unsettled for some reason, I really concentrate on my breathing and use my 5 senses to ground and focus my attention. I'll look at the colour of the sky, feel the wind in my face if I'm outside, feel my clothes against my skin, touch my skin or hair and really notice the texture like it's the first time I've ever done that, taste some food so my mind and focus is really curious. I'll use my sense of smell; as you can imagine there will be different reactions depending what is on offer in the environment although the idea is to simply notice what you smell without making a fuss or being phased by it. I don't judge good, bad, right or wrong I simply focus, observe and let go of judgment. If I'm feeling anxious I may notice the anxiety really reducing or maybe it stays at the same level or it might even increase in intensity. I don't judge the experience I simply follow the process of the meditation:

Focusing all my attention in the present moment, focusing on my breath, letting go of judgment.

A few years ago I attended some Stillness Meditation sessions run by a lovely female psychotherapist, Pauline McKinnon. As a young woman, she was crippled by anxiety to the point that she suffered agoraphobia. For years she simply could not leave the confines of her house without experiencing tremendous fear and anxiety. Assisted by her good friend and mentor, psychiatrist Dr. Ainslie Meares, she promoted Stillness Meditation Therapy. Simply by keeping the mind still she overcame the limitations imposed by her debilitating condition and helped thousands of others to conquer the fear of their wandering minds. In her book, *In Stillness Conquer Fear* - she writes:

If you want to help me, please don't teach me what you have already learned from others.

Teach me something you have learned yourself.

An excellent point! I know through reducing my own anxiety levels and through the hundreds of clients I have seen in therapy the effectiveness of meditation, when practiced regularly. Just as we brush our teeth, daily, to aid dental health, meditation is a powerful tool in addressing and combating depression and anxiety and finding a place of deep calm throughout life's journey.

While there are many forms of meditation the simple techniques shown here are all you need to transform your life. You don't have to get caught up in the complexities of breathing through right or left nostrils or to go to expensive workshops overseas in inaccessible locations. Meditation is a simple process of concentrating focus, in this example, on the outward breath.

A simple meditation to decrease levels of anxiety or depression (often located in the chest, tummy or jaw) is to imagine the feeling going into a cube of ice. Give the cube a colour such as black. Now picture the ice cube melting under a warm yellow sun. When the cube has turned to water focus on the colour yellow flowing in you and notice if a change occurs.

The advantages of meditation are many:

- By being in the present moment you are not restricted by what you were in the past or constrained by how you perceive you need to be in the future.
- It helps prevent relapse into depression.
- It reduces anxiety.
- It significantly reduces the effects of panic attacks and can stop the re-occurrence.
- We learn to accept the ups and downs of life as we learn to regulate our emotional responses.
- We sleep better and have dreams that can assist us with solving our problems. (The content of the next chapter).
- It helps with many mental health problems and conditions such as: addictive behaviour, psychosis, borderline personality disorders etc.
- It regenerates new brain cell and improves the ability to concentrate and focus.
- It reduces extremes of behaviours associated with aggression and victimisation.
- It slows down the aging process.
- It helps with pain management.
- It can improve overall performance in sport.
- It improves relationships as we learn to regulate our more negative emotional responses.
- It opens up friendships with like-minded people.
- It helps combat the material, alienating aspects of our modern world.
- It can help ease the symptoms associated with diseases such as cancer.



- It alters firmly held perceptions of how the world is and allows for change.
- It creates a peaceful mindset that fosters compassion for self and others.
- It can increase our capacity to love and allows for a less judgemental attitude.
- It gives a purpose and structure to our day.

Sometimes when I meditate I'll have an affirmation, a positive statement that I recite every so often. The idea behind this is that the subconscious part of the brain, through hearing the constant repetition, learns to incorporate the statement as being true which in turn changes our actions, beliefs and behaviour. This is a process of acceptance and also letting go of control by believing in the healing power of the subconscious mind to bring about positive change.

My favourite sayings are:

- I accept life as it is and I let go of fear.
- I learn from every experience.
- I send love especially to those difficult to love.
- I turn my problems over to my subconscious knowing an answer will be found.
- I love myself.
- I allow loving, human contact, joy and peace to enter my life.

In many ways, by letting go in meditation, we actually build up our self-worth and self-esteem. (A paradox of releasing but at the same time of gaining something). A mind that observes everything then lets go allows this process to occur and also for clarity to emerge when we feel stuck. Below is a list I came across (but whose source I have lost) of the close relationship that letting go and building up allows in creating a more confident us.

- 1) By **letting go** of what people think of us we **build up** authenticity (being you).
- 2) By **letting go** of perfectionism we **build up** self-compassion for what we do.
- 3) By **letting go** of feeling numb and powerlessness we **build up** resilience.

- 4) By **letting go** of feeling left out, not having the latest gadgets or worrying about being poor we **build up** gratitude and joy.
- 5) By **letting go** of comparison we **build up** creativity and imagination.
- 6) By **letting go** of certainty and needing to control people, events and the future we **build up** intuition and trusting so that you can learn from life and events.
- 7) By **letting go** of exhaustion as a status symbol and being busy as evidence of self-worth we **build up** play, fun and rest into our lives.
- 8) By **letting go** of anxiety as an accepted part of life we **build up** calm and stillness.
- 9) By **letting go** of self-doubt and following meaningless career paths, relationship status, other people's expectations we **build up** meaningful work.
- 10) By **letting go** of needing to be cool and always in control we **build up** laughter, lightness and a sense of the silliness of life.

The benefits of meditation, I imagine, are quite limitless and go on and on like the vast expanse of the universe. One can see how the Buddhist abbot, through his understanding of meditation, was able to accept the circumstances in which he found himself. By being in the present moment, the condemnation by others, meant little compared to his innate compassion and insight. The peace, serenity and calm he literally lived in (moment by ever present moment) enabled him to love and nurture not only himself but also a defenceless baby. There was no need to attack or defend, to get caught up in past or future mindsets, to be depressed or anxious.

The aim is not to be like the monk, for that is simply impossible but to regularly use the tool of meditation to gain the many benefits it opens up for us. Meditation was a routine that the abbot would have known well and used daily as a part of his spiritual practice.

A simple meditation exercise to guide focus. It can also be used to reach a rapid state of trance in hypnosis. Keep repeating slowly until a deep state of relaxation occurs.

Close your eyes and simple say to yourself:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1) Relax those ankles | 3) Relax those hips | 5) Relax the heart | 7) Relax the jaw |
| 2) Relax those knees | 4) Relax that abdomen | 6) Relax the lungs | 8) Relax the head |

When deeply relaxed let go of all thoughts and concentrate only on the breathing. If using a positive affirmation repeat it every so often and then focus on the breath.



Chapter 9

The Insights of Our Dreams

In this chapter

- Interpreting our dreams can highlight important messages coming from the subconscious.
- Dreams can guide, inspire, warn, confirm and comfort us in times when we feel unsure.
- Only the dreamer can fully understand the symbols and meanings of the dream.
- Dreams help solve everyday problems.
- The dream world connects us to a greater collective consciousness.

Influenced by ancient cultures but in modern times by psychoanalysts such as Dr Sigmund Freud and Dr Carl Jung. Gestalt Therapy and Dr Fritz Perls.

DREAMS are nothing more than the electrical impulses fired in the brain that produce illogical and irrational illusions. On the other hand look at the comments below from a host of esteemed sources:

You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us and the world will live as one.

(John Lennon)

Judge of your natural character by what you do in your dreams.
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

All human beings are also dream beings. Dreaming ties all mankind together.

(Jack Kerouac)

Yet it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top.
(Virginia Wolf)

We are such stuff as dreams are made on.

(William Shakespeare)

A ruffled mind makes a restless pillow.
(Charlotte Bronte)

A dream which is not interpreted is like a letter which is not read.
(The Talmud)

A dream is a microscope through which we look at the hidden occurrences in our soul.
(Erich Fromm)

Dreams are often profound when they seem most crazy.
(Sigmund Freud)

The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities.
(Sigmund Freud)

If we meditate on a dream sufficiently long and thoroughly, if we carry it around with us and turn it over and over something almost always comes out of it.
(Carl Jung)

Now if my contention is right, which I believe of course it is, all the different parts of the dream are fragments of our personality.
(Fritz Perls)

For some, dreams are keys that unlock the secrets to the subconscious. By interpreting dreams an opportunity exists to help guide us when we feel stuck, directionless or simply troubled.

I once had a dream in which I invented a tool, made out of wood. Its purpose was to help explain the process of meditation to the uninitiated. When I awoke I sketched the design and that day made a very unprofessional model with scraps of wood found in my shed. What delights me is that 'my invention' has assisted countless clients in

grasping the importance of staying in the present moment and points out how we torment ourselves by stirring up past memories or worrying about the future.

A lever on my design, rather like a gear stick in a car, helps remind the client to focus on the inward and outward breath when pushed up and down. When pulled to the left or the right, it reminds the client that they are either in the past or the future and need to focus on the present moment.



That dream was an inspirational dream. I have also had dreams that have helped with my anxiety. I had to make a presentation and was totally stuck on how to present it and what material I should use. In my sleeping state, a Eureka moment simply appeared and I knew with great clarity and relief exactly what I should say and included it in the presentation.

At first sight some dreams seem to make little sense, or as Freud called them 'crazy' dreams. By being patient and following a simple process dreams can actually start to make sense. Some therapists work solely with dreams but only you can actually interpret the dream's deeper meaning. For instance, if a large dog appeared in a dream what might that symbolise? For some a dog might sum up the qualities of loyalty and companionship, for others the need for control and discipline, yet for those who have been bitten or attacked a more menacing association might be apparent. Therefore what is relevant to me will more than likely have a totally different meaning to you.

Don't hold on to one explanation or interpretation immediately. Allow yourself the luxury of flexibility in understanding your dreams. It is rather like painting a picture; it takes time before the final image emerges. The reality is that we may dream between four to six times a night, from a brief few seconds to more than 40 minutes. We may dream in total up to two hours per night.

This chiefly occurs in REM (Rapid Eye Movement sleep time) when the brain is as active as if it were awake. REM takes up about 20-25% of total sleep time, occurring about 4-5 times a night and last longest just before we finally wake up. We forget almost 90%-95% of our dreams. That is why it is important, if you wish to record your dreams, to have a pen and log book next to

the bed and write down the content as soon as you wake, otherwise you are likely to forget the details.

A key aspect of our dreaming is that of projection. That is the process of attributing parts of our personality to someone else or some object. A teacher reported this dream to his therapist:

A scary and fiery dragon lives in a castle and everyday flies out and scares the innocent people who live in the village below the castle walls. The dragon feels unhappy. An interpretation reveals an angry teacher (represented by the dragon) terrorising students. The school is the castle and the village the classroom. The teacher may not like to admit bullying behaviour but the subconscious mind is drawing attention to the unresolved anger of the teacher and the frightening effect of his behaviour upon the students. The therapist and client can now work on why this man is so angry and unhappy. We often project aspects of ourselves that are not pleasant because we like to believe we are squeaky clean.

Our dreams, however, allow us to experience the uncensored parts of us that we tend to hide away and deny.

Dream work, I believe, reflects the mental state of the person at the time of dreaming. When in love, dreams often highlight the joy and happiness associated with that emotional condition. Likewise, if going through a stressful time, the content of our dreams and the emotions that co-exist often mirror our daily struggles.

Interpretation of dreams allows for greater insight and possible ways to assist one in overcoming difficulties. The following steps will help in analysing them. Studying our dreams opens the door to greater self-knowledge and often highlights the conflict or uneasiness between the parts of us that are in disagreement or confusion.

Steps in Understanding Our Dreams

- RECORDING THE DREAM
- THE FEATURES IN THE DREAM
- INTERPRETING THE DREAM
- THE ENDING OF THE DREAM AND FUTURE DIRECTION

RECORDING THE DREAM

Write down the content of the dream as soon as you awake.

Use key words rather than long explanations that capture the essence of the dream. Have a note pad next to the bed.

Note the emotions that you experienced in all parts of the dream.

Later that day or the next day, write down the dream in the present tense as though everything happens right now.

HIGHLIGHT KEY FEATURES THAT MAKE UP THE DREAM

Key Features are often:

- Time of day or night
- People
- Buildings
- Nature (Forest, lake, desert, volcanoes etc)
- Animals
- Our age and sex
- Colour
- Body parts
- Abstract shapes
- Texture of surfaces
- Temperature and weather
- Bizarre happenings (Chatting to aliens)
- Movements: flying, stuck, running away, running towards,
- Emotions (Getting to the emotions is really important. Notice if you are happy, sad, disappointed, scared, fearful, anxious, determined, cruel, compassionate etc.)

INTERPRETING THE DREAM

Start to make associations especially with what is going on in your life at present and with all aspects of the dream.

Look at possible projections.

Imagine that you are potentially every feature in the dream e.g. people, animals, the sky, rocks anything that appears in the dream.

What is your relationship with the key features, symbols and characters?

ONE OF MY DREAMS

(A large rock appears on a sandy beach. I view the rock from high up. I fly above this scene because I am a bird. I love the sensation of flight and freedom)

Now I define the details of the rock (I find these characteristics by pretending I am the rock). I am round, strong, confident, as tall as a double storey house. Then I imagine that I am the sand but this time I can't connect with any feelings or characteristics of the sand.

However, when I view the sand as a symbol, I connect to the Biblical passage that states a house built on sand has shaky foundations.

When I view myself as the bird I feel free and full of energy and I notice how stuck the rock is compared to my independence in the sky.

I then ask myself what is going on in my personal life that might have some similarities with the dream. And then I get it.

I am like the rock, strong and confident. However I am stuck in shaky ground and I immediately think about the relationship with my work environment. I feel stuck at work. I want to be like the bird and break free and move away in another direction.

Useful questions that help with interpretation of the dream are:

- What is the dream trying to tell me?
- What is missing in my life?
- Is the dream trying to bring some balance in my life?
- What is the Universe asking of me?

HOW DOES THE DREAM END? IS THE ENDING GUIDING YOU TO SOMETHING?

Pay attention to the start of the dream but in particular the ending. Notice the last sentence or image as they can give a direction for guidance. Sometimes the dream has no clear direction but simply meditating, while breathing deeply, allows for an understanding that develops with time.

The ending of my dream (featuring the rock, sand and flying sensation) was of seeing a bird fly away. As I ponder this scene I realise that I am unhappy at my work. I want to fly away and this fits with my actual reality. I now set down on paper all the potential options I have that have surfaced from the dream. I write down every possible outcome even if it seems weird.

- Resign from work
- Write a book
- Look for another job
- Travel for a year
- Change aspects of my work that I don't like but stay put
- Reduce my working hours
- Take up a hobby or passion that I have always wanted to do
- Do nothing and see how I feel
- Go and live near a beach on a Pacific Island

In this case, I reduced my hours and gave up a particular position of responsibility. That set me free for I loved my work; I just needed some changes whereas previously I felt stuck and unable to move. The reduced hours enabled me to 'fly' in new and exciting directions.

Sometimes, no matter how hard or patient you are, if the message of the dream seems impossible to locate. Don't worry! Let the dream go and just like a bus, another will arrive shortly heading in the same direction, with the subconscious message waiting to be unfolded.

Characters and features found in our dreams can be looked upon as allies in the search to find meaning. What role do characters play for example? Are they trying to: warn us? Scold us? Inform us? Teach us? Hurt us? Love us? Guilt us? What exactly is their role?

Be curious and take your time to explore every option over days and weeks if needed. The feeling of flying and the bird in my dream had several roles. Its chief function was its ability to move which contrasted sharply with the static rock. Its obvious freedom and ability to travel allowed for the subconscious mind to highlight that movement in the dream and the feeling of being able to move, was a key feature of the dream. How many of us get stuck in occupations, roles, relationships, etc that are literally tying us down to one spot? We can make all sorts of excuses to stay rooted in our present circumstance (Mortgage and school fee payments to feeling safe and secure). When we have done something that goes against our moral code, such as stealing or cheating or deny what we really desire, it is in sleep and in our dreams and nightmares that we feel the consequences of our actions or inaction. As Charlotte Bronte's quote states: A ruffled mind makes a restless pillow.

On the right is a detailed interpretation of a client's dream from start to finish following the process. The client is female, a psychologist, divorced with no children aged 42.

RECORDING THE DREAM

I am in a room full of people. I'm very popular and happy and talkative. I'm flirting with a couple of men and we are all having fun. I feel very content with life. We are all dressed like rescue service people (a mixed uniform of ambulance and fire brigade). The room is small, has the feeling of being a place where people socialise and come together. The double door to the room has frosted glass so you can't see out.

We are called to breakfast and I joke with the men and say, "sit next to me." They smile. We are suddenly in the breakfast room. Very sterile and functional with a plastic table and chairs but water is all over the floor which surprises me. Places are set and I sit at the top of the table. The men I was flirting with look embarrassed and sit at the other end but I'm not too disappointed. I feel I'm in charge and a couple of other men sit next to me.

I'm looking forward to eggs and bacon. The food is served in a huge, oversized, silver coloured cauldron (saucepan). I'm the last to serve myself and I notice all the eggs and bacon are gone and there are just a few beans left and I feel disappointed and less connected to everyone.

There is a small courtyard outside the breakfast room connected by big French doors. I see a woman sitting in the courtyard. Her head is slumped over her knees that have been drawn up to her body. It is raining outside. She looks miserable, isolated and sad.

A man clearly in authority enters the breakfast room. He is angry that the doctor is not looking after the sick people. I notice people are ill; they look pale and are very quiet. I'm concerned and realise I'm not in charge or even noticed.

The doctor is young, newly trained and seems nervous and slightly afraid of the man in authority. The doctor examines a big, muscular man and asks him to open his mouth and proceeds to examine the content of the patient's mouth. He acknowledges that the man is sick. I feel unsure as what to do, what role or function or even place I have. No one acknowledges me. The man in authority says in a wise and thoughtful way. "Yes! I can see that he's sick. Illness is everywhere." I feel relieved this fact has been acknowledged.

The features in the dream:

- **Emotional states and feelings:**
(happy, content, flirting, accepted, popular, disappointed, ignored, lonely & relieved)
- **First room**
- **Flirting with 2 men**
- **Dressed as rescuers**
- **Frosted glass door**
- **Breakfast room**
- **Water on the floor**
- **Egg and Bacon**
- **The cauldron/giant saucepan**
- **Sad women sitting down**
- **Man in authority**
- **Young Doctor**
- **Sick muscular man**
- **Unsure of my role**
- **Man in authority: "I can see that he's sick."**



*Postcards from your
Subconscious*



You will notice that the previous hospital dream and the dream of the stuck rock on the beach are really different dreams following the same theme; dreams about a workplace and confusion about what to do.

Knowing where you fit in each frame or segment of a dream takes time and sometimes a degree of patience to comprehend although the interpretations came quickly for the women in the hospital dream. When the client placed herself in the position of the isolated, sick women, sitting outside in the rain, she felt an immediate connection with that part and assimilated that image as an unhappy aspect of herself.

When she tried to feel whether the man in authority was a part of her she felt it definitely wasn't and easily saw the connection with another work colleague; the hospital administrator. The symbol of egg and bacon as representing a happy and rewarding workplace made sense to her whereas for someone who dislikes bacon or for a vegetarian, the interpretation might have been entirely different. That is why only the dreamer can truly interpret his or her own dreams.

Have fun exploring your dreams. The more you record dreams the greater their significance in your life. I expect very few people are in touch with their dreams but once you are a whole new world of exploration opens up for you.

REMEMBER THE SEQUENCE FOR UNDERSTANDING YOUR DREAMS

- RECORDING THE DREAM
- THE FEATURES OF THE DREAM
- INTERPRETING THE DREAM
- THE END OF THE DREAM AND FUTURE DIRECTION

RECORDING THE DREAM:

THE FEATURES OF THE DREAM:

INTERPRETING THE DREAM:

THE END OF THE DREAM AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Chapter 10

Is There Something Bigger Than Just Little Old Me?

FOR many people it takes immense courage to seek help. Emotions such as grief and anger are like huge walls that imprison our fragile minds in a never-ending cycle of torment. To come face to face with our hurts, our tragedies, our torture requires absolute acceptance of circumstances. From the parents who have lost a child to the teenager who wakes up in utter dread due to their anxiety, once an acceptance of that situation or condition is absorbed, seeking help, letting go and moving on, becomes possible. As Viktor Frankl stated, we are creatures that need to find a meaning or purpose in order to make sense of our existence.

What happens when events are beyond the ability to find meaningful connections such as the death of a 10-year-old child resulting from cancer or the suicide of a loved one or the inexplicable fall into deep depression or the tragic aftermath of a bushfire?

Is there a meaning or purpose to suffering? This chapter (Apart from Chapter 4 on family systems) is the WEIRD chapter. It challenges you, the reader, to look beyond the limits of your known perception and to consider possibilities that many would consider belong in the realm of fantasy. The challenge reminds me of the oft-quoted Star Trek line, “It’s life Jim! But not as we know it.” It is not my intention to force ideas of religion upon anyone or convert people to any form of ideology. My aim is to show, through the following examples, that there are things “out there” that can help our mental anguish but these things are very confronting because they are outside the limits of human comprehension.

In fact, they shouldn’t be all that confronting when we consider that all the world religions speak of spirits, angels, afterlife and so forth; we tend not to blink an eye at these teachings. Wasn’t the world’s scariest film, *The Exorcist*, a real life occurrence based on the theme of

In this chapter

- A spiritual dimension can guide us into compassionate and loving beings rather than being egotistical and self-centred.
- A spiritual element in our lives allows for meaning, hope, purpose, acceptance and faith.
- There are many paths that allow for spiritual connections.
- When there is more than just us we feel expanded and able to cope with suffering and the inevitability of death. Death is not an end but a process through which we pass.
- A spiritual path opens up possibilities rather than closes them down.
- Acceptance of the unacceptable becomes easier.
- Through prayer and access to the subconscious we can attract what we desire into our life.
- Our spiritual journey is an individual exploration but helped by like-minded people.

Influenced by;

- *The mysteries of the Universe and the great unknown.*
- *Dr Brian Weiss and past life regression work through hypnosis.*
- *Reiki established in 1922 by Mikao Usui from ancient Tibetan healing sources.*
- *Dr Joseph Murphy founder of: The Power Of The Subconscious Mind Movement.*
- *The Bible.*

demonic possession of a little girl? Spirituality comes in many guises and for those who believe in something bigger than themselves, much comfort can be found when we are at a loss to explain why suffering and difficulties occur.

The fact is it is easier to negotiate the ups and especially the downs of life when we see a bigger picture; maybe there is a purpose to suffering. Qualities such as hope, faith, compassion, love and purpose emerge and jigsaw pieces form into a clearer, meaningful picture. In troubled times it is difficult to accept that suffering and hardship may serve a function. From our despair, gifts and insights may surprisingly spring up by replacing a former concept of ourselves as hapless victims, exposed to the stinging whiplash imposed by a cruel, uncaring and emotionless Universe.



I'll start off with the story of a psychiatrist, Dr Brian Weiss.

In 1980 one of his patients named Catherine was to totally change the way he viewed therapy. Up till then he was a very successful but conservative doctor. He had attended the most prestigious universities and was Head of Psychiatry at the famous Mt Sinai Medical Centre in Florida. An intellectual and committed scientist he had published many articles on psychopharmacology and was an expert on how medicines and chemicals affected the brain and impacted a person's behaviour. At that time (before his spiritual transformation) he described himself as very black and white, logic driven with little interest in mystical or spiritual experiences. But Catherine was to change all that.

She presented to him with acute anxiety and phobias (she was very scared of water) and had terrible nightmares. After a year and a half she had made little progress with him. Dr Weiss tried hypnotherapy and asked her to find the source of her worry. Incredibly she went to a past life that existed almost 3,000 years ago. She was caught up in a natural disaster, a flood and suffered greatly. Over the course of time he directed her to other past lives and events. She suffered many tragedies, even being murdered by a present partner in one former lifetime. She experienced every conceivable tragedy a human can experience as both a male and female. She also experienced lives of great happiness. In all she recorded 86 past lives.

Catherine's terrible anxiety gradually reduced as she faced the trauma of her past. Furthermore, Dr Weiss checked out historical details that matched her to specific times and places. In many instances she wore the correct clothes, ate the sort of food for that era and described the architecture in accurate detail although she possessed no knowledge of such facts before the hypnotherapy sessions. But that is not what changed both their lives.



One day, while in a hypnotic trance, Catherine spoke in a voice and mannerisms that were clearly not hers. (After the hypnotherapy sessions Catherine had no memory of these voices). However, Dr Weiss did as he had recorded them. The voices he believed were channelled through her by some unknown force or entity. They gave messages of wisdom and spoke about the mysteries of life, death, afterlife and reincarnation. Brian Weiss identified several different voices with their own distinct characteristics and called them Master Spirits. They left these powerful messages that are recorded on the Internet;

Everything is energy. This is the world of spirit and humans in physical form are greatly restricted by the confines of the body. However, through activities such as meditation we can learn about deeper, more spiritual states within us.

There are many planes or levels of existence and our physical presence on Earth is but one level in which the soul learns valuable lessons around love, compassion, charity, faith, hope, patience etc. Energy joins all matter both spiritual and physical. We are on a journey in which the aim is to reach a higher level of consciousness.

The fear of death has no place in those who understand that life is endless. We never die but are constantly reborn. We are surrounded by the spirit world that guides us in this life (through dreams, intuition) and at death we enter this spirit realm of pure energy. It is at this plane or level of consciousness that we may decide to come back to Earth so that new lessons can be learnt. We need to learn to accept that every experience, on Earth, is for our spiritual growth.

The Masters gave valuable descriptions about how to live a more enlightened life on Earth. The messages are beautiful in their wisdom and reflect many of the basic but fundamental teachings of many religions. Some of the key teachings that we can personally apply are:

To forgive the past and learn from it. People are always changing so don't hold on to a limited and negative view of others or indeed yourself. Live in the present moment. Trust your intuition and live the life that you feel is right for you regardless of the direction others may wish you to go.

Happiness is internal so don't expect to get it from other people or objects. If you depend on others for your wellbeing you become very vulnerable and open to hurt. Trusting in your ability to find happiness and a direction in life gives you power rather than being at the beck and call of others.

Acts of violence, cruelty, and deception don't go unnoticed. You will need to atone for these behaviours if not in this life then in another. This is commonly known as karma.

Independence is one of the most important lessons in life, not from loving relationships but from attachments to material things and ideologies that harm us and others. There is a big difference between loving someone and being dependent upon someone. We also need to hold on lightly to opinions and expectations so that we don't become brainwashed into a single viewpoint but are able to see the bigger picture; an opinion or a belief can be understood but also let go.

Patience is the key to many gains. We can't rush life or control it. It just happens. Patience leads to greater wisdom, spiritual growth and inner peace. Patience accepts that destiny and fate unfold in their own time and place, not as we would have it unfold.

Those who treat us badly do so because it is their insecurities that lead them to their actions. We are not such terrible or bad people and if you were not on the receiving end of their neurotic behaviours then someone else would be. Don't take their negativity personally. It is their inability to find compassion or love that is the problem not you.

A life that is filled with pain and difficulties, full of trauma and broken relationships allows for the greatest learning. In particular, the opportunity to let go of hate and hurt and to learn the true meaning of unconditional love. In other words, forgiving those who hate or persecute you.

Through giving we receive far more. What is the point of gaining riches at the expense of others? Our reward is in doing but without expecting anything in return. When we learn to give up our vices we don't carry them into another life. The ability to forgive, to be kind, to not seek revenge are all key lessons.

These were some of the key messages passed through Catherine and given to Brian Weiss. So what did he do with this new information?



At first nothing!

He was a renowned and respected doctor. If he went around preaching such nonsense his colleagues would think he was 'nuts' and his medical reputation would be shot to pieces. He sat on this knowledge for several years but kept a detailed record of his sessions with Catherine. He treated more and more patients with past life regression until he came to the opinion that for four out of ten clients, their mental anguish was caught up in a past life experience.

Finally he published his book, *Many Lives, Many Masters*, and to his surprise he found a community of like-minded people, in many fields of professional life, who embraced, fully accepted and appreciated his work. Today he writes insightful books and gives numerous seminars. The message he espouses is not hateful or negative; he doesn't have a cult of indoctrinated followers. He simply says that we have nothing to fear from death and that the ability to love through the ups and downs of life is what really matters.

Many professional therapists would be very threatened by any allegiance to Dr Weiss and his belief in reincarnation. (Most Westerners would laugh at the idea of rebirth I suspect). However, if his message reaches you, changes your life for the better then what does it matter what others think? Again the key element here is how you, the individual, choose to incorporate into your life something that is bigger than you. The experience of Dr Weiss opens up opportunities to see that suffering allows for a pathway that takes us away from the traditional pitfalls of depression, anxiety, victimisation and self-pity. It allows for tolerance and compassion rather than retribution and anger. It also poses the question: what can I learn from this experience that will add to the quality of my life? For his patient, Catherine, it ended years of torment from anxiety, depression and phobias.

Several years ago I accompanied a friend to the farming countryside around Ararat, in Western Victoria. I was interested in seeing this part of the world and she was happy for a driving companion. My friend, Olivia, was attending a two-day workshop in Reiki run by a lovely German woman well into her seventies. We arrived at the rather run down property where eight other participants were also gathered. I explained to Elsie, the elderly teacher that I wasn't staying for the training and I didn't know what Reiki was and only came to

explore the countryside. In a wonderful German accent she said:

*"Darlink man! Don't vun away!
You are more zan welcome to zit vid us
for ze morning zession."*

I again explained that I didn't know what Reiki was and that as this was not a beginner's session I didn't feel I had a right to sit in.

"Nonsense! She exclaimed. "Veel See!"

And so I found myself in a wooden cabin, surrounded by crystal objects and candles and other alternative new age paraphernalia feeling awkward as I sat in a small circle of unfamiliar faces. What happened next was one of those life-changing moments.

Elsie showed me a picture of a man (a client of hers). She asked me to look carefully at the picture and then she handed me a small cushion. She explained the man was seeing her for a medical condition and asked me to imagine that the cushion was the man. I was instructed to close my eyes and let my hands simply wander over the cushion (imagining it was the man's body). Elsie asked me to see if I could locate the man's illness. I was puzzled by what she meant and she must have read my body language and facial expressions. She said,

*"Just let ze hands guide you to ze place
where ze illness is located in ze body."*

Now I have been trained in the phenomenological approach. That basically means that we can pick up phenomena, such as emotions or thoughts in our body and mind that belong to others. For instance, if I have a client and I ask them how they feel and they reply, *"I'm going really well!"* I may experience a terrible sadness behind my eyes or a pressing in of my chest that feels like anxiety. If I share my physical state often the client will express, that even though they stated they were OK, they actually feel sadness and anxiety. My body somehow picked up on their unexpressed emotional condition. Of course it's important to check out that this is the actual experience of the client and not simply my experience.

So as my hands moved over the pillow I soon pictured the body of a man from the form of that cushion. I noticed that my hands were drawn to the man's genitals and I had this urge to lift them up and place one hand under the scrotum.



This was purely a phenomenological movement. I remember feeling very embarrassed. No one in the group knew what I was feeling or experiencing. Elsie asked me to open my eyes and said.

*“Veel darlink! Vat can you report?
Vat did you feel? Vat ver your hands drawn to?”*

I was thinking to myself. I can't tell everyone my hand was cupping some guy's balls. I felt so self-conscious. However, a basic rule in phenomenological training is that if you have a gut feeling go with it. This takes courage but if you come from a position of not knowing why you experienced what you did but simply share your experience it might have an impact on the one hearing it. So I told the group my hands felt drawn to this man's testicles, I wanted to lift them up and place my warm hands in that spot. There was a snigger from one bloke but to my surprise everyone else focused intently on what I had said. Elsie spoke up.

“Very interesting darlink! You zee zis client of mine has prostate cancer and your hands ver drawn to zat part of ze body ver de disease is. Very interesting darlink!”

I didn't know what to make of it. Elsie then showed us a picture of another man, young and very fit looking. We all had a pillow on our knees now and she asked us to close our eyes. She asked each participant to move their hands to where they thought the physical problem of this man was. My pillow became the representative of this man. Very soon my hands were drawn to his heart and my hands felt warm. After a while Elsie asked all the participants to open their eyes at the same time. All of us had our hands on the man's heart. It was extraordinary, especially when she revealed that this client of hers had a heart condition. I felt like some guru with magical powers but Elsie soon put a stop to my grandiose feelings.

She explained that Reiki was a healing energy that passed through us and into the clients. Needless to say I stayed at her property for the weekend and received my first ever training in Reiki. She refused to call herself a Master in Reiki (something most trainers do) because Elsie claimed she was not a master. The energy she worked with was far more knowledgeable than she. She described this energy as a universal force or a life force and it had great potential to heal. The Chinese call it Chi.

At the end of the course people paid her what they thought the experience was worth or what they could afford. Money was placed anonymously into a jar left discretely on a side table; there was no monetary push or indoctrination of any kind. What I noticed about Elsie was how happy she was. It was contagious. She was very spiritual and very respectful of religious belief when it promoted love and compassion. She had little time for rigid religious structures and anything that excluded ones right to belong to the human race.

The experience for me highlighted the limitations of my knowledge and drew my attention to the vastness of what lay outside my consciousness. When I perform Reiki, people experience different things but often they feel heat flowing from my hands into their bodies. Reiki is used to heal both mental and physical ailments but also it can create a feeling of deep peace, relaxation and contentment.

Is healing through energy: a spiritual intervention, a naturally occurring phenomenon explained by quantum physics and universal magnetic forces or pure mumbo jumbo? A few years ago acupuncture was considered to be a novelty more akin to the lifestyle of chanting hippies and gurus. Nowadays it is well regarded and sits 'fairly' comfortably alongside Western medical practices.

In the early 1990's my wife and I were living in England and we were told that we had very little chance of conceiving a baby naturally. My and her internal plumbing was blocked and sluggish. (Not quite how the doctors put it but how I understood things to be). We were involved in a TV documentary about infertility and our first attempt at IVF was filmed (It failed).

On returning to Australia a remarkable GP who knew about energy medicine explained that our chi or internal energy was blocked. He used acupuncture on both of us to let the blocked chi flow and heal.

Despite the doctors in England saying that having a baby without IVF techniques was virtually impossible, within a few weeks of finishing acupuncture my wife became pregnant and on July 15th, 1997 our beautiful baby daughter, Tayla was born.

Again, an open mind is a door to so many possibilities.



The philosophical teachings of Reiki also include the following five Reiki principles on how to live a healthy life and to increase internal energy:



one

JUST FOR TODAY I WILL NOT BE ANGRY

Anger at self, others, the world creates energy blocks. Reiki removes anger which for most of us builds up on a daily basis. When we let go of anger we may have peace of mind.

two

JUST FOR TODAY I WILL NOT WORRY

While anger deals with past and present events, worry is found in the future and torments the mind. Letting go of anxiety and stress brings healing to the body.

three

JUST FOR TODAY I WILL BE GRATEFUL

Learning to be grateful for even the smallest thing creates not only a positive mindset for ourselves but this energy flows through to others: through our smiles, when we say thank you, when we forgive, through charitable actions. Being thankful gives us a joyful spirit.

four

JUST FOR TODAY I WILL DO MY WORK HONESTLY

Working honestly for yourself and others creates a sense of satisfaction. Greed creates a spiteful and manipulative character that interrupts the internal energy. Working honestly brings about a sense of deep fulfilment to the soul.

five

JUST FOR TODAY I WILL BE KIND TO EVERY LIVING THING

By learning to honour parents, friendships, animals and even those you don't like, negative energy is reduced. Being kind allows for the growth of character.

Whether you do or don't believe in the power of energy healing, the five Reiki principals bring tremendous gifts. They are not evil in nature, the message and practice doesn't hurt anyone and they are open to all who wish to use them.

Healing Jigsaw pieces come in many forms. One of the most therapeutic pieces literally comes in every, colour, shape and size and that is the wellbeing that animals give us. Imagine having a horse for a counsellor?

Around the globe an organisation called EAGALA (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association) is growing. Therapy is carried out through the use of horses. These remarkable creatures are very sensitive to the emotions that humans carry. If you have ever ridden a horse and feel nervous the horse soon picks up on that. It may respond in similar fashion and act in an anxious manner making it somewhat scary to ride. If a rider is confident and calm, this message is quickly passed through to the horse. Herd animals have a particular sense of place or pecking order. If they feel you are more dominant they acknowledge your place and respond placidly. If they feel they are more dominant they are likely to try and boss you about. If you are cruel they will react with fear or aggression.

EAGALA has used horses in the following way. Instead of riding them a person or a group of people on foot are put into an arena with them. By controlling your emotional response the animal will respond in a particular way. Imagine there is a child with huge unresolved anger. He has been expelled from numerous schools and is a nightmare at home, totally out of control and already has a police record for anti-social behaviour.

There are several ways horses could potentially work with this child. A horse with a similar temperament will be placed in the riding ring with the youth. The more the child displays anger, the greater the horse's reaction and it rears and bucks. (A rather scary situation when you are face to face with such a beast). The boy, by regulating and controlling his negative emotion and allowing his anger or rage to decrease also allows the corresponding emotion in the horse to reduce). If the boy is calm the horse is calm and relaxed.

The child learns to reduce his angry outbursts and as a result tames the horse. Of course the horse is also taming the boy. The boy also learns to look after the horse and so the needs of the animal



come first through grooming and feeding it. Horses are quite intimidating creatures that kick and bite. To learn to love a horse, gain its trust and love requires an attitude of giving and receiving. This process has softened the hearts of many hardened individuals and so called 'lost causes'.

Prisoners have been given the opportunity to undertake equine therapy. A group, of say five or six people have to work together to lead the horse through a simple obstacle course. If the inmates work cooperatively, with each other, the horse develops trust and has more chance of going through the wooden posts and around the tyres that have been set up. (A difficult task especially as the horse is not attached to a rope or halter and cannot be led). The horse needs to engage with the prisoners and follow them. It is very confusing for the horse. Often the prisoners start off with great intentions of getting the horse through the course as quickly and as smoothly as possible. When this doesn't happen (Have you heard the saying you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink?) they tend to get frustrated, argue and fall out with each other. They have at this stage lost all hope of directing the horse. Only by being cooperative, learning patience and overcoming frustration is this task possible; skills that many in jail lack.

Those who have autism connect in a very special way to horses and animals in general. Many with Autism find it difficult to relate to other human beings but in the presence of an animal, a bond often develops and emotional expression and an out-pouring of love is possible. Horses have a remarkable healing effect on those that suffer from depression. They somehow sense the internal pain of the sufferer and don't judge the condition. This allows for the sadness and despair to be drawn out of the client through patting and hugging the animal.

This therapeutic work is intuitive and requires us to get out of our headspace and discard logic. Rather like the practice of meditation, when we leave behind the analytical mechanisms and overcrowded thinking brain, hidden paths open up.

Many years ago I rode across the Highlands of Scotland from east coast to west on a horse. It took eight days and only once did I cross over a tarmac road somewhere near Loch Ness. One misty morning my sturdy Highland Pony suddenly stopped dead in its tracks. I was in a picturesque valley, a fast flowing mountain

stream rushed and bubbled nearby and majestic hills rose up everywhere.

I suddenly lost interest in the surrounding nature as I urged my stubborn horse to walk on; all in vain despite threats of turning it into canned dog food or glue. It simply refused to budge. In frustration I jumped off and led it forward by the reins for about half a metre, before I sank up to my knees in a swampy pond. A bog, hidden by heather, lay all around me. The horse knew the ground was not suitable for riding. Very soon I learnt to trust the instinct and intuition of my four-legged friend. Whenever my horse stopped abruptly I put down my reins and let the horse slowly but surely guide me around the dangers of marshy and swampy terrain.

Numerous studies have shown how cats and dogs have added to the overall mental and physical health of their owners. Simply by stroking your pet, beneficial chemicals are released that lower blood pressure and bring about a deep sense of peace and calm for both owner and pet. It is a mutually satisfying relationship. I imagine, for some, snakes and scorpions have the same effect. Interestingly enough, the way to cure arachnophobia (the fear of spiders) is through gradual exposure to them so that by the time you appreciate how cute a redback or a hairy huntsman really are, as they playfully crawl up and down your arm, you will know you are truly cured of your irrational anxiety, over these adorable and widely feared but misunderstood creatures. (Or maybe not!)

As we humans become more evolved as a species and see the interconnectedness of all things, will we view animals as more than simply lower forms of life? Psychopaths (those who repeatedly kill and hurt without any conscience) often tortured animals when they were children. We need animals to survive and some are a part of the food chain. Maybe, when animals are no longer hunted for no other reason than the pleasure of killing, the human psyche will have advanced a step further into a greater level of consciousness. Some animals have much to teach us in the way we nurture and regard them. Without our connection to them our mental health would definitely be poorer.

Trusting in a Higher Power (God, Universal Energy, A Collective Conscience, Divine Order, Creative Intelligence) is very challenging. The scientific approach around proven cause



HE
AINT
HEAVY...HE'S
MY BROTHER



SOME HURDLES ARE BIGGER
THAN OTHERS

and effect has little patience for phenomena that cannot be explained. I was attending a conference at a university recently, on student welfare and mental health and sat next to a therapist I vaguely knew and had met occasionally at such gatherings. The lecture ended and we started to speak and out of the blue she made a remarkable disclosure. She said that during the seminar her left arm was tingling and she had picked up information that she felt might be important to me. I was lost as to what she was talking about but I told her I would be interested to know what she wished to reveal. Now this lady knew nothing of my personal life or family circumstances and my inflated ego might have thought she was trying to pick me up; this lady was happily married.

She then proceeded to tell me in precise detail matters of a very personal nature that were causing me a lot of anxiety at the time. How she knew what my issues were astounded me but she then added some solutions that might help with my particular problems. She was so accurate in defining my personal issues and her advice, as to what to do, was really helpful. Far from me treating her as some kind of weird nutcase I was profoundly grateful for her comforting words and accurate description of my dilemma. I asked her if she knew someone who knew me and so had access to some very personal details of mine. She stated that she didn't. What she said next was remarkable.

This kind woman told me that ever since she was a little girl she had been able to pick up messages concerning other people. She explained the messages as being from angels. She saw the very odd look I gave her. Before I could speak she said that she knew what I was thinking but thought that I could handle what she was saying. Because she was so accurate in describing my life situation I found I couldn't judge her. Her gift was a type of psychic power and she had picked up messages all her life but kept very quiet about it as many people would not understand. Without going into my personal problems all I know is that she summed up the exact nature of them and her advice in how to deal and approach them really helped me and made sense to me.

Again there is no logic or scientific reasoning as to how and why she had such a gift. Rather like my Highland pony, she had an intuition that was out of my reach. Her messages were not harmful, she didn't try to convince me to believe her

and I realised that her openness to me required great personal courage on her part as I could have responded in a way that might have totally humiliated her.

I have come to see that there are people among us who possess psychic gifts. Prophets and saints from the Bible, the Koran and in other holy books were often misunderstood by those around them because they experienced a different level of consciousness. Some suffered greatly as their insights and spiritual guidance was rejected, by an audience that were simply on a different page, both in terms of their spiritual and emotional development. That is why so many of them were martyred or driven out from mainstream society. Look at someone like Jesus who at his death was basically abandoned, apart from his mother and a few friends. His life message; preaching love and compassion, seemingly misunderstood and discarded. In every sense he died a failure on the cross and his teaching of love and inclusiveness is still a struggle for humanity.

A fundamental Christian teaching is **don't kill**: but we do! We justify and believe in our right to defend ourselves and look after our national interests. Higher-level consciousness and spiritual teaching, time and again, see the human spirit as connected rather than set up in deadly opposition. If every military combatant refused to kill there would be no war.

I have had clients who have been greatly comforted by mediums who have been able to contact the spirits of dead relatives. The prevailing message for those suffering grief is that the dead are fine. It is the living, those who remain, that suffer greatly and require support from other humans. Again, who am I to judge the validity of such experiences?

The power of prayer is as ancient as early man's ability to communicate. Many self-help books have been written on the theme of the Law of Attraction and the Great Universal Secret which is: If you pray for something to happen and have an absolute belief your prayer will be answered and connect to the outcome on a feeling level; then it will be. This is the very definition of blind faith. You don't know why you believe your prayer will be answered but it will.

The power of the subconscious mind is so powerful that if you visualise an outcome or meditate on receiving what you want, universal forces then allow for that to happen. All holy books preach the same message: Ask and you



shall receive. Asking requires an attitude of acknowledging that you wish for change. If you have depression, anxiety or want to travel overseas simply focus and visualise on a positive outcome in which you see yourself free of anxiety, depression or in a castle in Germany.

The work of Dr Joseph Murphy, the founder of the Power Of The Subconscious Mind Movement, has a following of philosophers, psychotherapists, doctors, clergy, scientists, psychologist, writers and so forth in many countries around the world. In his book, The Power Of The Subconscious Mind he writes:

Prayers are answered when the individual's subconscious mind responds to the mental picture or thought in his or her mind. This law of belief is the secret operating principle in all religions of the world. It is the hidden reason for their psychological truth. The Buddhist, The Christians, The Moslem and The Jew may all get answers to their prayers, in spite of the enormous differences among their stated beliefs. How can this be? The answer is it is not because of the particular creed, religion, affiliation, ritual, ceremony, formula, liturgy, incantation, sacrifices, or offerings, but solely because of belief or mental acceptance and receptivity about that for which they pray. (PG XVIII, 2008)

In other words if you pray, have faith in the outcome, your prayer will be answered. Dr Murphy goes further and states that it is the untapped power of your subconscious that delivers what you desire out of life.

Strict adherence to a particular dogma, doctrine or belief limits the possibility of seeing what may be around the next corner. A blinkered horse only views what lies in front of it; thus its journey is predictable and protected. Its obscured vision hides any negative influences that may threaten its sense of safety but it lives and races in a cocoon without the freedom to wander where it wishes. It is an existence controlled by others.

An un-blinkered person has the benefit of seeing a full 360-degrees and can decide on all the many possible directions in which to head. Much mental illness is caused when we feel restricted or trapped by life and by our own narrow perspective. There are numerous approaches that aid wellbeing. For many, the way out of anxiety, depression, hopelessness and despair lie in seeking a positive, purposeful and rewarding existence. Sometimes that can be found in knowing that there is something out there that is bigger than just little old us; a mysterious and inexplicable force, but capable of guiding us on the remarkable path of self-discovery in the vastness of the unfathomable Universe.

3 PARTS TO A VISUAL PRAYER USING THE SUBCONSCIOUS

PART 1

NAME the problem you would like solved.

PART 2

GIVE that problem over to your subconscious (to God/a Higher Authority). Let the subconscious work out the solution to your problem. Don't use force or analytical reasoning to try and solve the issue. Trust in something higher and believe the problem will be solved without any intervention on your part. Have faith that what you ask for will come forth. Let go of any doubt or negative thoughts that might undermine the prayer.

PART 3

AT night just before you fade into sleep visualise a successful outcome to your problem as though your prayer has been answered. Feel the positive emotions associated with a good outcome.



Chapter 11

10 Healing Actions

FROM the 10 Jigsaw Pieces To Wellbeing, I have drawn out 10 essential actions that lead to good mental health. Each, on their own, are helpful actions but combined they become

powerful agents in combating the helplessness that many may experience at certain stages in life. Only a brief summary is given to each as the content is dealt with in the chapters of the book.

The actions are as follows:

ACTION ONE

**Accepting
what is**

ACTION TWO

**Taking
responsibility**

ACTION THREE

Letting go

ACTION FOUR

**Fostering love and
compassion**

ACTION FIVE

**Changing
perspective**

ACTION SIX

**Practicing
empathy**

ACTION SEVEN

**Praying and
asking for**

ACTION EIGHT

**Living in the
present moment**

ACTION NINE

**Including not
excluding**

ACTION TEN:

Being authentic

SURRENDER TO THE TEN HEALING ACTIONS



ACTION ONE

Accepting what is

WHEN we accept that a relationship has ended, a loved one has died, that we are struggling emotionally, that we have an addiction, we no longer have to pretend or hide. The full weight of the situation can now hit with all its ferocity. Accepting life and fate, as it is, can leave us exposed and emotionally vulnerable but also real and in a place where if we reach out for help we can find it. When we are in denial we cannot heal, we fool ourselves.

ACTION TWO

Taking responsibility

THIS is a most fundamental action that requires real insight. If we are sick emotionally or physically we need to seek out the best course of action for ourselves. Therapy requires that the client change and this can be hard work. The professional victim rarely takes ownership and lacks the resilience to redirect their life. Expecting others to save you, time and again, is an abandonment of responsibility. How we decide to live our life will depend on many circumstances, we may be wealthy or poor, that is often out of our control but taking charge of our happiness and finding a purpose to our life requires that we are in the driving seat not someone else; otherwise we become a passenger, there at the beck and call of the driver. We take responsibility by admitting both our negative and positive attributes. We practice accountability when we say "sorry!" for undesirable actions.

ACTION THREE

Letting go

WHEN we hold on to all our disappointments, regrets, heartaches, failures, broken promises, betrayals, relationship breakdowns, traumas etc we become embedded in the heaviness and downside of life. This is the realm of anger, resentment, blame, grudges, revenge, spite, murder, jealousy, unrelenting sorrow, exclusion and is a bitter pill. By letting go of our hurts we can experience an enormous release of burden that no longer has to be carried. Like opposing soldiers, who were once deadly enemies but who meet and reconcile many years after the war, a level of peace can be found. Letting go releases you from the chains of negativity and victim-hood. Letting go stops us blaming others and the world for misfortunes and allows the possibility of moving on and access to good mental health and often, by association, betters physical health.



ACTION FOUR

Fostering love and compassion

WHEN Nelson Mandela was released from jail after 27 years of incarceration and became the leader of South Africa he could have imprisoned and executed those responsible. He didn't follow this action. He forgave and his action was contagious and informed the world that despite his dreadful hardship, love and compassion were the real seeds of revolution. In the prayer, The Our Father, the line-forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us - again states true understanding of love. The inability to love and show compassion breeds a hardness that is often expressed in anger and intolerance. Australia has the world's second highest rate of litigation after the USA. Are we becoming a nation of vindictive and disgruntled people? When we have the ability to love others, regardless of who they are, we become free of negativity, happier and kinder people.

ACTION FIVE

Changing perspective

THE ability to be flexible and understand an opposing view, without feeling threatened, is a major trait of emotional intelligence. You don't have to give up your beliefs or moral compass but simply recognise that not everyone is on the same page. The process of adaptation and change lies at the heart of evolutionary survival. Relationships, in all forms, require that you shift your perspective at times otherwise rigidity and conflict inevitably occur. Throughout history, humans have and continue to form new and often exciting ideas on the nature of everything from disease to religion to the untapped potential of the brain. By allowing a challenge to set beliefs, to be a routine part of your psychological makeup, you open up inner gifts such as curiosity and creativity that are essential in creating stimulating and exciting lives. This expands us rather than closes us down. The body changes every day, why can't your thinking?

ACTION SIX

Practicing empathy

TO be empathic requires we step into the shoes of another person, which is quite impossible. We can never be that other person. Yet look at the reaction of parents when their child is hurt and starts to cry. Immediately they feel the pain of their offspring as they comfort and soothe. This is a biological pull, an unconditional love but also a deep understanding that a helpless being is struggling. Likewise, with puppies and kittens we tend to enter the lovey-dovey, cutesy world of melting heart and adorability for the little creatures. However, real empathy also requires a respect for the most despicable and those on the fringes of society; not those we love already. Try chatting to a homeless person or drug addict as they ask for money on the street rather than turn away with your prejudice, pity or self-righteousness; it's not easy. By having empathy for those less fortunate, we gain a real appreciation of how lucky we are. When we practice empathy we don't have to be in competition with our partners, friends, family members or work colleagues. We grow as people when we learn to have sympathy and withhold judgments and condemnation.



ACTION SEVEN

Praying and asking for

WHEN we pray we acknowledge something bigger than just us. If we are all there is to existence the world starts and ends with us. It is a limited horizon that exists in a miniscule timeframe. Prayer takes many forms: Appreciating the wonder of a tree, a child's smile, the stars at night can all be prayerful moments. Acknowledging mystery, grace and searching for a purpose are ingredients of prayer. The increase of meditation indicates a spiritual search that seems indicative of human nature. It is no surprise that the happiest groups of people are those from religious orders in particular Buddhist monks and Catholic nuns. Prayer is like having a constant companion at your side that hears everything, every detail of your life. There are many books written on the theme of asking and receiving through prayer. The story of the Australian women who prayed for love only to end up running an orphanage, in Asia, can be interpreted as a prayer answered. Her heart opened to those abandoned children who in turn taught her the lessons of love.

ACTION EIGHT

Living in the present moment

IT is difficult to define the present moment because it is so fleeting, maybe impossible to capture. However, when we focus our attention onto that briefest of moments we find we can cope with whatever life throws up at us. The past can only be remembered and the future only anticipated yet living in the hell or the glory days of the past makes no sense; it is over. Likewise, why worry about what has not yet taken place? When we live in the Here and Now we become grounded and present ourselves. When we observe without judgment we learn compassion.



ACTION NINE

Including and not excluding

THIS is such a hard action to follow because our human nature divides us up into groups: the nuclear family, the extended family, our nationality, our religious or non-religious allegiance, our education, our job, our hobbies and so forth. There is a membership and entry requirement for most groups and if you don't have access to it; you are excluded. This process strengthens the bonds of the group through establishing a common identity. Dysfunctional families often come together when a family member is excluded due to divorce or through the condemnation of an act that is unacceptable to the group. The group blames and ostracises, through a self-righteous attitude of we are right and the outsider is wrong. The excluded family member may well need to take responsibility for certain actions but they still belong to the family system. When this is not acknowledged the same patterns repeat generation after generation. A deeper level of consciousness is one that sees us as all being connected. This level of insight is rare and is a meta level of consciousness, not the surface kind that is found in groups who exclude, often with great conviction; think of the Nazi's and certain religious groups. All had or have a revered leader, a creed that they follow faithfully, an initiation ceremony, symbols, uniforms and sacred books and yet all have killed with an absolute justification and belief in the right of their group's cause and values. A soul, meta, humanitarian or spiritual consciousness recognises that as humans we all have a right to belong. When this layer of insight is accessed, however, the world often becomes a lonelier place as one's eyes are open to the massive inequalities that exist all around us. To be inclusive is not easy and starts with our own sense of inner acceptance. Do we even like who we are? How do we reject ourselves? Do we allow for the acceptance of all? How can you have love and acceptance for others if you don't truly love and accept yourself?

ACTION TEN

Being Authentic

THIS is an action that may take a lifetime of daily contemplation and practice. We have many egos and personality styles which are used in numerous situations but the essence of being authentic, being really true to ourselves, brings an inner sense of peace and satisfaction that what we are doing and how we act, is totally acceptable to us. It is a place of contentment because it is based in love and doesn't hurt others. If you find yourself in a job or relationship or situation where you feel ill at ease, experiencing negativity and disillusionment then self-examination is required. This process can be explored with the help of an outsider (a therapist/spiritual guide etc) one who is free from your prejudice or distortion but has your wellbeing as the focus of their attention.

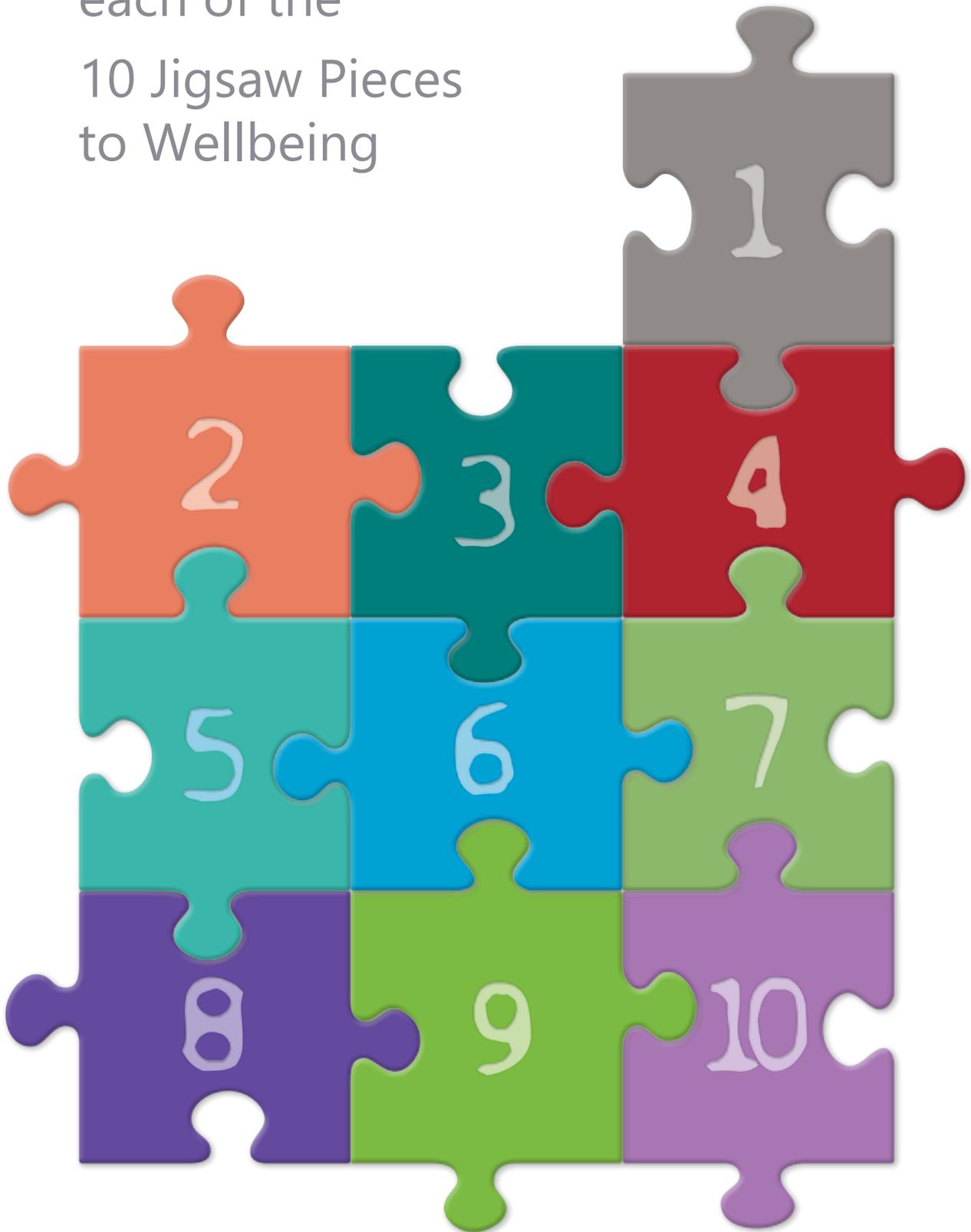
AS any Olympian, professional musician or expert in their field will tell you, competence takes practice through constant repetition. The 10 healing actions are lifetime actions that require nurturing and attention. When life is going well we may lose interest in them but their

adaptation into daily life is truly life changing. When we come across difficulties, as we all do, their place becomes paramount. Professional therapists and healers are trained in helping us to find these valuable resources when they feel lost, unavailable or as yet unrecognisable to us.



Chapter 12

Worksheets for
each of the
10 Jigsaw Pieces
to Wellbeing



CHAPTER 1
Notes

CHAPTER 2

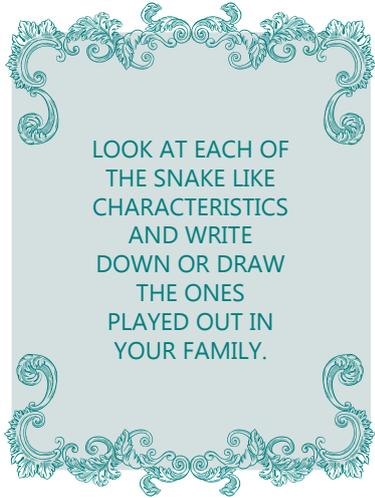
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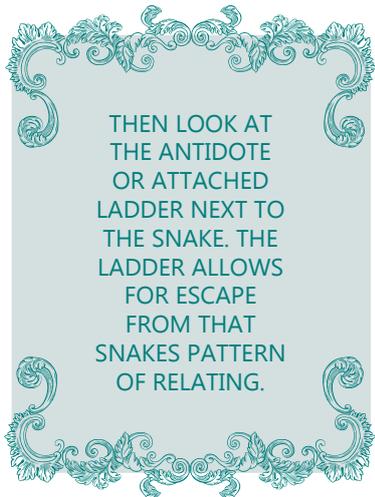
CHAPTER 3

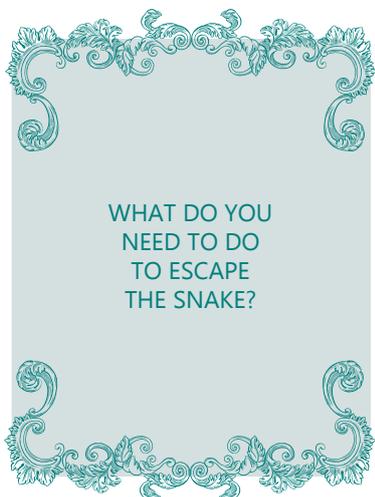
Notes

CHAPTER 3

Parental snakes and ladders, traps and daggers







CHAPTER 4

Notes

CHAPTER 4

The hidden dynamics of a family system



IN YOUR FAMILY, GOING BACK TO GRANDPARENTS
AND EVEN GREAT GRANDPARENTS WHO WAS:

EXCLUDED, DIED EARLY, WENT TO WAR, SUFFERED AN ILLNESS, WAS THE BLACK
SHEEP, HAD A HEAVY FATE, COMMITTED SUICIDE, KEPT A TERRIBLE SECRET,
DIVORCED, ADOPTED, ABUSED ETC.

HOW MIGHT THESE UNRESOLVED ISSUES KEEP BEING REPLAYED AND BY WHOM?

RESPECTING FATE AND HONOURING THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE YOU
(SUCH AS YOUR PARENTS) HELPS UNTIE FAMILY ENTANGLEMENTS.



DRAW YOUR FAMILY TREE

CHAPTER 5

Notes

CHAPTER 5

Me! Myself! I! But which ego?



IN THE COURSE OF A DAY LIST HOW MANY EGO PARTS YOU HAVE PLAYED OUT

☐ Identify which ones support and are friendly to each other or in opposition to each other. Remember they want to help you.

☐ Notice emotions and states such as: **SAD, HAPPY, FRUSTRATED, FEARFUL, TIMID, CONFIDENT, AMBITIOUS, SHY, CONFIDENT, RUDE, LUSTFUL, LOVING, LAZY, OPINIONATED, ANGRY, JEALOUS, WISE, ANXIOUS, CURIOUS** and so on.

☐ Learn to ask states to cooperate with each other and when to be dominant and when to increase or reduce their intensity and influence.

☐ Think of a problem where ego parts help, hinder or are maybe unrecognised.

USING CIRCLES IDENTIFY YOUR "EGO PARTS" AND HOW THEY HELP OR HINDER YOU.

SEE IF YOU CAN GIVE AN AGE TO EACH PART. DOES THE EGO PART FEEL YOUNG, OLD OR YOUR PRESENT AGE?

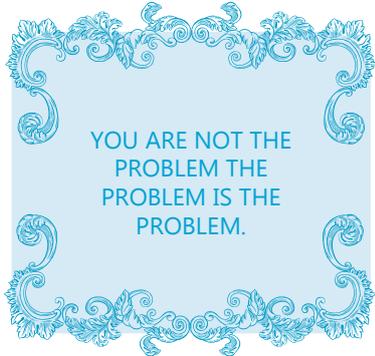


CHAPTER 6

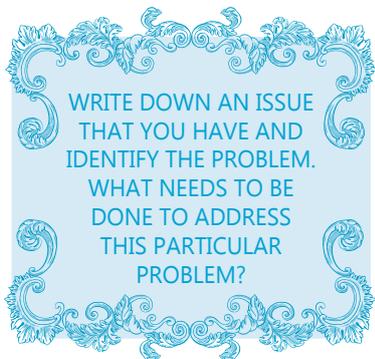
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CHAPTER 6

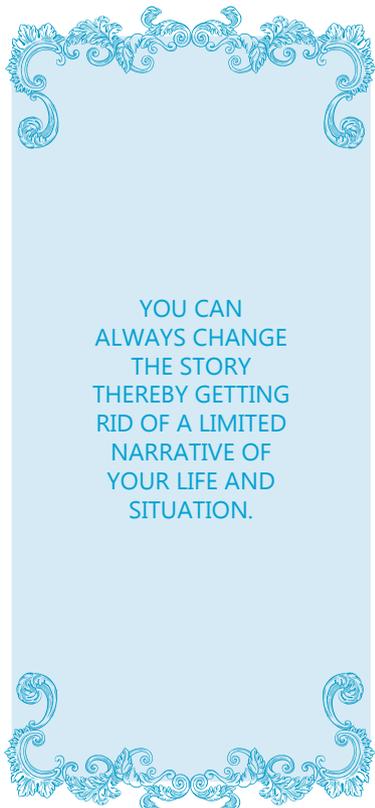
If you don't like your story; change it!



NAME THE PROBLEM



HOW CAN THE PROBLEM BE SOLVED?



HOW DO YOUR 7 WAYS OF RELATING HELP OR HINDER THE PROBLEM? IDENTIFY WHICH ONES YOU ARE USING IN REGARDS TO THE PROBLEM.

THE 7 POLARITIES OF RELATING:

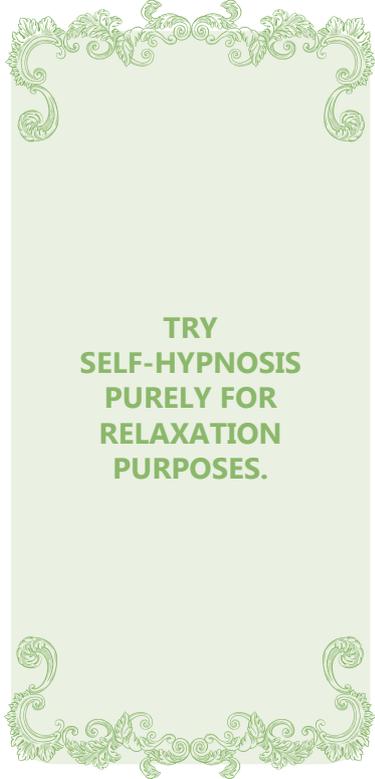
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<input type="radio"/> DEFLECTING	<input type="radio"/> DEEPENING
<input type="radio"/> HOLDING IN	<input type="radio"/> EXPRESSING
<input type="radio"/> PROJECTING	<input type="radio"/> OWNING
<input type="radio"/> SELF-CONSCIOUS	<input type="radio"/> SPONTANEITY
<input type="radio"/> ATTACHED AT THE HIP	<input type="radio"/> DIFFERENTIATION
<input type="radio"/> NUMBING OUT	<input type="radio"/> HYPERSENSITIVITY

CHAPTER 7

Notes

CHAPTER 7

Self-hypnosis to getting what you want



DESCRIBE YOUR IDEAL NATURAL
SETTING IN WHICH TO RELAX.

WHAT GOAL DO YOU WISH TO VISUALISE IN YOUR STATE OF HYPNOSIS?
WRITE IT OUT.



WHEN IN THAT RELAXED
STATE VISUALISE THE
GOAL YOU HAVE SET.

- Visualise yourself being successful in what you wish for. Use all your senses and positive emotions as you achieve what you desire.

THE PROCESS TO SELF-HYPNOSIS:

- 1 PREPARATION**
- 2 INDUCTION**
- 3 RELAXATION**
- 4 DEEPENING**
- 5 SUGGESTION**
- 6 VISUALISATION**
- 7 EGO STRENGTHENING**
- 8 POST HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION**
- 9 TERMINATION**

CHAPTER 8

Notes

CHAPTER 8

Peace through meditation



- See if you can build up and include 2 sessions a day.
- Remember the secret to meditation is to focus on your breath.
- If a thought or distraction takes away your focus-that's OK - let it go and return to your breathing.
- Let judgements of any sort go.
- Accept the emotion you are feeling then return to your breathing.
- Incorporate meditation when walking, talking, eating and carrying out activities.

OVER THE NEXT 30 DAYS KEEP A LOG OF HOW MANY MINUTES YOU PRACTICED EACH DAY AND NOTICE THE CHANGE IN YOU AT THE END OF THE MONTH.

(E.g. Day 1 = 5 mins, Day 2 = 10 mins, etc).

DAY 1 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 11 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 21 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
DAY 2 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 12 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 22 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
DAY 3 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 13 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 23 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
DAY 4 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 14 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 24 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
DAY 5 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 15 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 25 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
DAY 6 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 16 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 26 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
DAY 7 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 17 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 27 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
DAY 8 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 18 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 28 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
DAY 9 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 19 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 29 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
DAY 10 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 20 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	DAY 30 = <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>

WHAT EFFECT HAS THE MEDITATION PRACTICE HAD ON YOU OVER THE LAST 30 DAYS?

CHAPTER 8
Notes

CHAPTER 10

Notes



Chapter 13 Therapist, healers and helpers! Who does what?

THERE are a multitude of people and professions that can assist someone with mental health issues and there are many different approaches in techniques and therapy. Each profession can be defensive of its own approach and at times hostile, often through a lack of understanding, of the therapeutic value and gifts of other practitioners. What they all have in common is a desire to help those in distress. Time and again statistics show little evidence that one approach is in any way superior to another. Much depends on the relationship between client and practitioner in the establishment of good mental health and a belief that therapeutic interventions are helpful.

If a client relates to the one who is helping them and sees virtue in the therapy adopted by that therapist, helper or healer, then change for the better is most promising. A common goal shared by all in the helping professions is that of establishing insights in the one who is experiencing difficulty. Real change occurs in the subconscious, therefore when a client experiences a more positive outlook and feels emotionally healed, you can guarantee that a significant shift has taken place in the complex workings of the subconscious mind.

To the right is a very brief list and definition of professions and groups that can help alleviate the symptoms of mental illness.



PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

A very broad term covering many therapies from Gestalt Therapy through to Art Therapy. Training is typically from three to five years and all Psychotherapists undertake their own therapy so that there is an awareness of what they themselves might bring to the therapist-client relationship. Psychotherapists have membership to the association or professional body they were trained by but commonly belong to PACFA (Psychotherapist and Counsellors Federation of Australia) and ARCAP (Australian Registration of Counsellors and Psychotherapists). A list of associate members can be found on their website. Psychiatrists and Psychologists can train as psychotherapists. Psychotherapists explore deeply hidden issues in the client's life that impacts on present functioning with an emphasis on self-healing. The term psychotherapy means therapy of the mind.

PSYCHIATRISTS

THESE are doctors who have at least five years additional training (after obtaining their medical degree) before qualifying as psychiatrists. They may specialize in particular areas of mental health and in a variety of settings such as adolescent health, prisons and hospitals. They can prescribe drugs unlike psychotherapists, counsellors and psychologists and deal with complex issues such as schizophrenia. Psychiatrists are members of the professional body known as FRANZCP (Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists). The term psychiatrist means medical treatment of the soul or soul physician.

PSYCHOLOGISTS

PSYCHOLOGISTS come in all varieties: sports psychologists, forensic psychologists, organisational psychologists, environmental psychologists, community psychologists, industrial psychologists and so on. Those trained in clinical counselling psychology train for an extra two years after their initial degree, which places a strong emphasis on experimental research and statistical data. Psychologists are trained in a variety of therapeutic approaches but in particular CBT with an emphasis on the cognitive and behavioural functioning of clients. Psychologists belong to MAPS (Members of the Australian Psychology Society). The term psychology means study of the mind.

COUNSELLORS

THERE was a time when a few weeks training would qualify you as a counsellor. Organizations like the ACA (Australian Counselling Association) have sharpened up training requirements so that today counsellors are highly qualified persons, graduating with degrees at Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral levels. Counsellors can be skilled in fields such as Family Therapy and much counselling crosses over into psychotherapy training. Social workers and occupational therapists are also trained in counselling skills. A distinction that might be made between counsellors and other therapists is that counselling is relatively short-term, teaches social skills and how to achieve goals. However, this distinction between other therapists is disappearing as counsellors increasingly specialize in particular areas such as drug and alcohol addiction therapy and trauma recovery.

CLINICAL HYPNOTHERAPISTS

RECOGNISED government courses normally follow a two year training firstly in Certificate IV and then with a diploma. Anyone can be a hypnotherapist but many therapists become qualified in hypnotherapy because it is such a useful tool in reaching the subconscious. Hypnotherapy can be used for a wide array of issues ranging from addictions to exploring past and even future lives. Hypnotherapy involves an element of counselling to determine the causes that lie behind issues such as obesity, anxiety, phobias etc. Reputable practitioners belong to organizations such as the AHA (Australian Hypnotherapist Association) or the AACHP (The Australian Association of Clinical Hypnotherapists and Psychotherapists). The word hypnosis comes from the Greek word sleep.

LIFE COACHES

ONE of the fastest growing sectors in the helping industry has been the establishment of a life coach to assist individuals as well as members of organizations. Qualification is through Certificate IV and diploma and the job of the life coach is to motivate through finding ones true values in life. Much work is around goal setting and living a life that feels right for you.

ALTERNATIVE THERAPISTS

THIS is an area that has some 'professional' therapists in a state of constant anxiety. Many alternative therapies cannot be subjected to rigorous scientific research because the experience of the client is subjective. How can one measure faith or a belief in the afterlife? Remember, professional 'experts' are often only knowledgeable in the limitations of their own particular field. I have met many people, for instance, who have been regressed to former life times and have found this experience therapeutic and healing. Yet this type of accessible therapy may be very challenging for those who practice from a western framework designed on a western medical viewpoint of mental health. Thus Medicare and bulk billing would not cover the healing and perhaps spiritual journey into a patient's previous lifetimes.

I would advise caution, questions and curiosity when one visits a psychic just as I would if I visited a doctor if I felt I hadn't been heard, understood or misdiagnosed. High Street treatments in Reiki or acupuncture are commonplace and their growing strength (they can be found in hospitals and medical centres to assist with pain management and stress reduction) suggests that they continue to exist because they meet a need. A week or two at a Buddhist monastery would be like taking a course in the underlying principles of psychological counselling. This two and a half thousand-year-old philosophy teaches many of the lessons embedded in psychotherapeutic courses such as learning acceptance and peace through mindfulness. There are so many alternative healing paths: yoga, massage, kinesiology, meditation, tai-chi, Chinese medicine and many spiritual directions to take and churches to belong to, that it can be like a maze to find which path sets you free from your troubles.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

WHAT a support it is to have loving friends and family and their role, when life becomes difficult, certainly can help one on the road to recovery. However, they are not independent from you and their loyalty can take away from the issues one faces and the wisdom or interventions needed to heal. For example, a best mate saying you are better off divorcing your partner and hopes the ex rots in hell, may be at a loss to see how such aggression may come back to hurt you, unless the deeper emotions such as grief and systemic bonds are understood. Friends and family are rarely impartial whereas an outside helper may see the bigger picture. The use of the Internet by yourself or with someone else is helpful in giving information about mental illness and also links to amazing organisations such as Beyond Blue, The Black Dog Institute, Lifeline, Kids Help line and Headspace.

AT the end of the day, it is you who must take ultimate responsibility for your wellbeing. This book, shows a multiple and varied approach to the field of therapy. It is a start and if I had time I could have written 100 jigsaw pieces to wellbeing

or even a thousand. My most important message is that if you are struggling emotionally seek help. There is no shame in reaching out; it takes immense courage to face our demons and when we do it is a sign of enormous emotional intelligence.





Chapter 14

The Art Gallery

Browse through the pictures produced by artist Katrina Day. They have been used to bring the text of the book, **10 Jigsaw Pieces To Wellbeing®**, to a visual and artistically creative level. There is truth in the proverb that a picture paints a thousand words.

Hi I'm Katrina Day and I created the artwork.

EVER since I can remember I've always been able to draw, paint and do creative things. I taught myself and had the ability to create art. I can't be defined or boxed in and I've lived my life like that thus far. Often clients commission me to draw a portrait of them or their house or their animals. I can capture the soul of the person, animal or object that makes the picture come alive for them. I've done thousands of tattoos over fifteen years; some very complex. It is a big responsibility to give the customer what they want.

I get my inspiration for my art from the way I look at the world, especially when I'm in nature. Everything I look at is defined through shapes and colours as though the object is alive and has a life force. I'm a country girl at heart and enjoy any sort of forest and natural setting. Just me in the forest, by water enlivens my spirit. I enjoy people's company and learning about them; I see all people and life, as presents, having something to teach me.

I'm a typical artist and I don't follow convention. I'm so fortunate! I work when I want to work or feel inspired. I live in a loft in a barn surrounded by pictures, paints, canvases, brushes, art books and nick-knacks of nature. I'm also surrounded by lots of mechanical devices such as boats, tractors, cars, trucks, often in bits and pieces. My brothers and Dad are keen mechanics.

I'm so lucky I have my art and this was always appreciated by my art teachers and family who have let me be me. Mum is creative and my great grandmother was a still life painter.

At school I was a square peg in a round hole. I always believed in my art and that was my soul direction.

I hope my illustrations, as humble as they are will help. In my 34 years I've seen a lot of what life can throw at people; I've been honoured with the stories they often tell me about themselves as I work on creative endeavours with them. I've seen their joy, suffering and hope.

My art is often commissioned to reflect their fortune or misfortune. I hope my illustrations offer healing, peace and a hopeful way forward.

The pictures in this book
are dedicated
in loving memory to
my dear friend
Matthew David Colliver
1981 - 2014
My artwork is intended
to encourage those in
darkness to reach out
to live in light energy



1 in 4,
16 to 24yr olds
has a mental illness
OMG I'm 15!

2014: 2,864
deaths by suicide
Suicide is the leading
cause of death
for Australians
aged 15 to 44











Parental snakes and ladders: Traps and daggers

WHILE families can be havens of security and love they can also be viewed as organisations that, when dysfunctional, can cause major problems in the fragile formation of a child's personality.

The parents, who withdraw their love and are violent, damage the young child's ability to trust that the world is safe. This produces a belief that the child is flawed and hated or even unlovable. Thus the Schizoid Personality is formed. The Oral Personality emerges in the child that has to become the parent to the parent due to the inability by the parents to look after their offspring due to maybe drug taking or emotional immaturity that sees them reaching out to the child to fulfil adult needs rather than the other way around. We are all familiar with the Narcissistic Personality when the child is placed on a pedestal by parents whose unaccomplished dreams are fostered onto the children they worship and push with adoration and rage to meet their grandiose and unrealistic expectations. The child grows up with a belief in its superior abilities loathing the less able and worshipping those beings that are superior but it all comes crashing down when the over protected and inflated bubble is burst by the realities of life and depression is experienced and betrayal is seen even in those they once hero worshipped. There is the Masochistic Personality (the defeated Child), the Histrionic Personality (the exploited child), the Oedipal-Obsessive-Compulsive Personality (the disciplined child), the Symbiotic Personality (the owned child) and so on.

However the game of snakes and ladders that is played out in most families have rules of common sense. The snakes represent descent into dysfunction and the ladders the rising up into healthy relating within the family.

It is the parents who steer the ship of family dynamics. Their understanding of the rules of family snakes and ladders is important. Parents take note & good luck!

THE RULES THAT APPLY TO GOING DOWN THE SNAKES AND ADD TO FAMILY DISHARMONY ARE:

- Treating and viewing your children as your best friends.
- Constant criticism rather than corrective feedback.
- Repeating conflict through pressing the same old triggers and repeating the patterns that fuel the flames of discord.
- Expecting unquestionable obedience as opposed to building trust and guidance.
- The inability to say sorry and believing actions or inactions are done deliberately to annoy you.
- Over protection that stops children from taking responsibility. (E.g. homework is the domain of the child not the parent).
- Living through your children and playing the martyr and servant role.
- The inability to work as a family team each with their own function.
- Out of sight/out of mind-giving too much freedom to your children too soon.





The Endless Cycle of Conflict

THIS picture highlights the innocence of babies intermingled with the symbolic axes of destruction. It also depicts the roots of endless conflict found in friendships, in families, between countries and also at a personal and deeply internal level within ourselves. To understand why war, hatred, blame, cruelty, the committing of terrible atrocities are carried out with full justification and self-righteousness, an understanding of the levels of conscience is required. The work of German psychotherapist, Bert Hellinger, and his deep insights into systemic entanglements has transformed the way many psychiatrists, psychotherapists, psychologists, counsellors, healers, organisational consultants, patients and clients etc have come to view the causes of and release from endless discord, embedded in a belief that one group has more right to exist than another.

The First Level of Conscience:

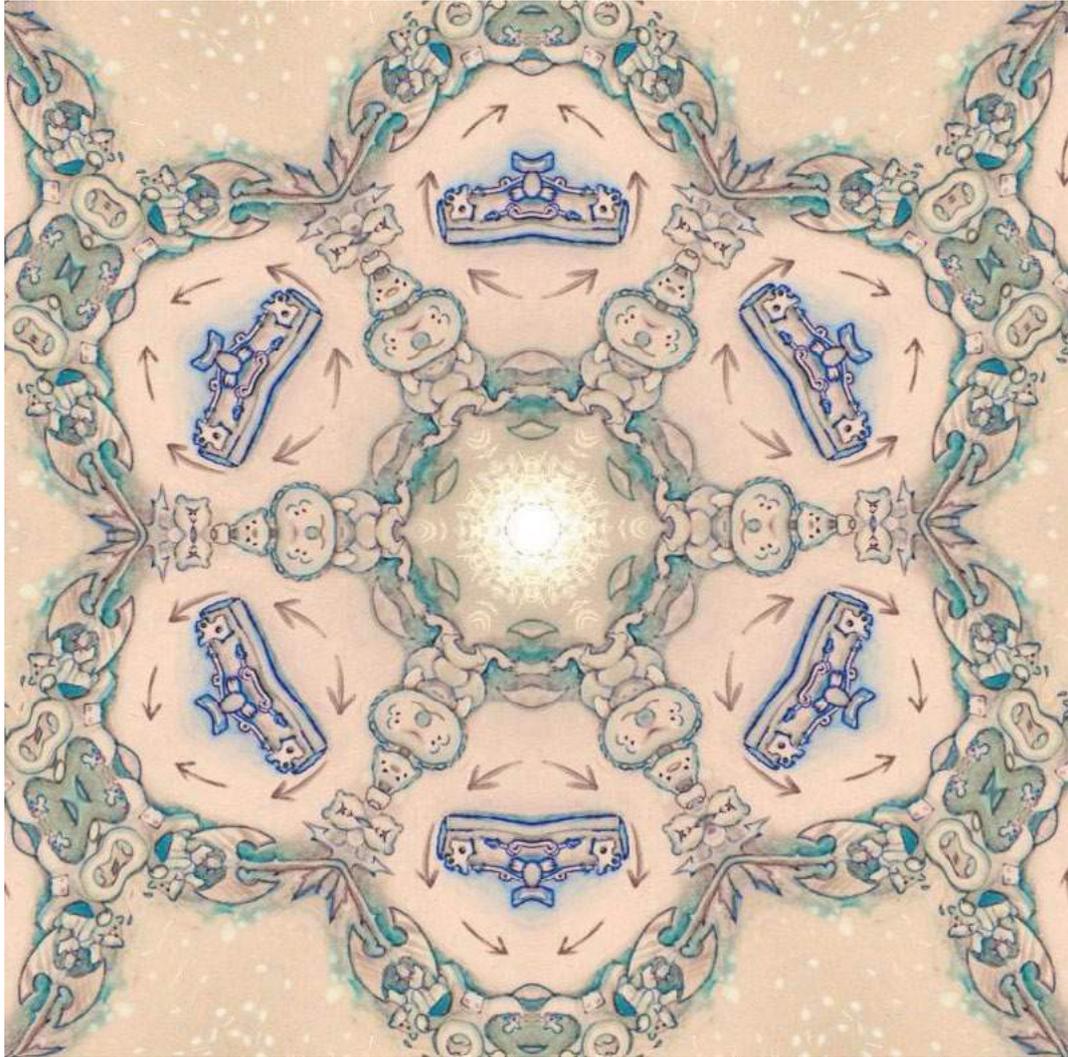
This is the bond that ties us to our family, country, religion, sports club, partner etc. It binds the Mafia as strongly as it binds members of the Catholic clergy. It understands set rules. Those that go against the rules and the group are often excluded and the group feels stronger as a result. It explains the bond Jews feel in Israel and how justified they feel in bombing the Palestinians in Gaza even when innocent women and children are killed. It is justified by the thought that states, "If you hurt me, I'll hurt you." Likewise the bond of the Palestinians in Gaza, launches missiles into Tel Aviv and kills more innocents. They say, "Because you killed my children I'll kill yours." At a micro level, the parent who is vilified and kept away from the children, because a divorce has taken place, strengthens the family bond of those who do the excluding. Having a common enemy commonly unites a dysfunctional group into a state of self-righteousness, false innocence and justification of actions.

The Second Level of Conscience:

This systemic level of conscience calls for balance. It is not a moral conscience and does not distinguish between good or bad, right or wrong. If a family member has been excluded or met a terrible fate this pattern is repeated again and again in the family system. Another member unconsciously carries the burden, often the most vulnerable, the children. Balance requires a measure of giving, receiving and acknowledging. A blind, unconscious loyalty says "I will carry your burden" in an attempt to address an initial wound.

The Third Level of Conscience:

This deep Meta 'healing' level understands the effects of exclusion, terrible fates and family secrets. It understands how a perpetrator attacks a victim and when the victim fights back the victim in turn becomes a perpetrator. It excludes no one neither perpetrator nor victim. It is interested in systemic dynamics and not surface stories embedded in blame and displays of innocence. It seeks to connect and accept "what is!" by giving a place to everyone whatever their fate. It is a challenging concept for those who wish for revenge and so in turn harbour the energy of the perpetrator.







IF YOU DON'T
LIKE YOUR STORY
CHANGE YOUR BOOK



Self-Hypnosis to Achieving Goals

YOU may not realise it but you put yourself into hypnotic trance many times during the course of the day. Every time you get lost in that often-magical world when time just slips away as you travel in a car, read a book, watch TV or when engaged in a creative activity. Notice how children playing become totally absorbed in that world of fantasy oblivious to what is going on around them. A feeling of contentment and timelessness prevails. This is the state of trance.

Anyone can hypnotise himself or herself. It is a useful tool for establishing deep relaxation and achieving goals. A visit to a hypnotherapist is an ideal first move to get an understanding of the process and what is appropriate and inappropriate. Highly skilled hypnotherapists have put themselves and patients into trance during surgical procedures without the need for any pain medication or anaesthetic.

Hypnosis is used to reach the domain of the subconscious where change in our thoughts, actions, beliefs and behaviour occurs. However, the analytical conscious mind likes to guard against what goes into the subconscious mind. It is like a sentry but when the mind and body are relaxed it goes to sleep and suggestions that may not have got through to the subconscious can now do so without being scrutinised and rejected by the conscious mind.

Before you start your self-hypnosis keep your stated goal simple and in the present tense such as for a smoker wishing to quit: I am a non-smoker. I feel healthy and smell nice, (or for someone struggling with exam anxiety) I remember everything I study. I remain clam and clear headed in the examination room.

A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS NOW BEGINS

1. Preparation: Know your goal and find a peaceful place to sit down.
2. Induction: A method to induce trance e.g. staring at a spot on the wall.
3. Relaxation: Progressively relax all the muscles in the body from head to toe.
4. Deepening: Go down a staircase getting more relaxed with each step of decent.
5. Suggestion: Go to a beautiful place of nature and state your goal.
6. Visualisation: Imagine the goal happening and being a part of your life.
7. Ego Strengthening: State all of your positive qualities to help achieve the goal.
8. Post hypnotic suggestion: Link a colour or object that reinforces achieving your goal (to use when you have finished the hypnosis) in everyday life.
9. Termination: count from 1-10 in a louder than normal voice to come out of trance.

Self-hypnosis is wonderful for removing creative blocks, for motivation when a task (such as homework) is being avoided, for controlling pain in the body, for reaching a deep place of peace and relaxation, increasing self-esteem, making public presentations a piece of cake, improving performances in sport and for helping towards a healthier life through changing what we eat. It can also transport you to a scenic paradise where you can totally chill out and indulge in pure relaxation.



Peace Through Meditation

THE Victorian painter John Ruskin believed that everyone should draw regardless of their talent. The point to this activity is in using our powers of observation.

When one sketches, say a tree, one is forced to really take note of what is seen. There is a sense of slowing down and concentrating on phenomena that was totally out of the artist's knowledge. The structure, texture, colours of branches, leaves, the bark becomes clearer. It challenges preconceived notions of what was.

Look at the back of your hand. Really observe the lines and colour of the skin. Look at the fingers, nails and be curious about what you see. This may be the first time you have ever really looked at your hands. What is the purpose of this function? It slows us down; it focuses our attention on observing and brings us in to the present moment. A sense of tranquillity and peace can emerge.

When the mind travels to the past and we are troubled there is a tendency to depression. We may experience regret, sadness and be overwhelmed by what has happened. When our mind travels to the future there is a link to anxiety. What if this happens? What if I'm all alone?

Although there are many techniques to meditation, at its most basic it requires the ability to focus. It requires us to really take note of what is witnessed through all our senses: hearing, touch, taste, smell and seeing. There is another sense that comes in to its own when one is still enough and that is the sense of knowing. This intuitive sense comes with time and patience. At its deepest level it is a knowing of our life's purpose; in effect a comprehension of the meaning of life (which in Buddhist philosophy is that nothing lasts or is permanent).

A MEDITATION PRACTICE THAT IS VERY ACCESSIBLE IS AS FOLLOWS

- Find a quiet place to sit or lie down.
- Relax the body by progressively thinking then responding to: Relaxing those ankles, relaxing those feet, relaxing those legs, relaxing those hips, relaxing that stomach, relaxing those lungs, relaxing the heart, relaxing the shoulders, relaxing the back of the head, relaxing the jaw, relaxing the head.
- Breathe slowly but deeply into the belly button.
- At first focus on everything you hear: bodily grumbles, your breathing then extend the hearing to sounds near you and then far away.
- Next concentrate on your outward breath.
- Any thoughts you have or sounds you hear observe them and let them go and return to concentrating on the outward breath.
- Any emotions you have simply notice them and return to concentrating on the breathing. Most importantly do not judge anything picked up by your senses as being good, bad, right or wrong. All you have to do is observe, let go, and concentrate on the breathing; especially the outward breath.



Dreams

ALL great therapists have placed an importance on the process of dreaming: Freud, Jung, Perls, Erikson.

While they differed in aspects of theoretical content, what they all understood was that the function of dreams provided evidence of the powerful workings of the subconscious mind. Dreams take place during sleep when the conscious and highly analytical part of the personality is switched off.

It is in the subconscious where all our desires, fears and unresolved issues live. What the conscious part of us may repress, the dream state brings into full awareness. What remains hidden in the waking hours is released in sleep. However, just because dreams remain disguised or irrational does not mean they don't have important messages to convey. The more complex the nature and structure of the dream the more revealing they are when deciphered.

Therapists who work with dreams assist the patient in unravelling the meaning and nature of their dreams with the intention that when understood, a clearer direction leading to greater emotional harmony is produced. It is the client who needs to make connections with the material that appears in their dream because what may appear threatening for one person may be a source of comfort for another. It's rather like being served up brussels sprouts; delicious for some a nightmare for others. Dreams are subjective and can only really be interpreted by you, the owner of the dream.

The content of the dream may well be projections or aspects of you and your emotional state so be open to every part or feature that appears. A smooth running stream may represent contentment if you are at peace but below the surface of calm may lie hidden horrors if you are in emotional strife.

A STRUCTURE THAT HELPS TO UNDERSTAND DREAMS COMES IN 4 PARTS

- i) Recording The Dream: Write it down as you awake or you'll forget it and keep it in the present tense. "I run, scared, down a dark ally."
- ii) The Features Of The Dream: This includes every part of the dream all the images, actions and most importantly emotions.
- iii) Interpreting The Dream: The first few times this is made easier with a therapist who asks questions that open up the content and nature to reveal often hidden layers. A question might be "What is going on in your life right now that makes sense in the dream?"
- iv) The End Of The Dream And Future Direction: Often dreams will end with a final sentence or significant event that can be used as a guide.

You dream every night. What a valuable resource to open up and use in deepening the rich tapestry of your life. Or do you simply sleep your life away, unaware?



*Postcards from your
Subconscious*



Something Bigger than Little Old Me!

HAVING a horse for a therapist may seem rather odd especially if the animal has no formal qualification to start with. However, around the world there is a growing awareness that animals have the ability to bring emotional soothing to those in distress. We know the close and reliant relationship between a blind person and their dog is more than just practical coexistence between human and beast; the bond goes deeper to that of love, trust, faithfulness and grief when separation occurs.

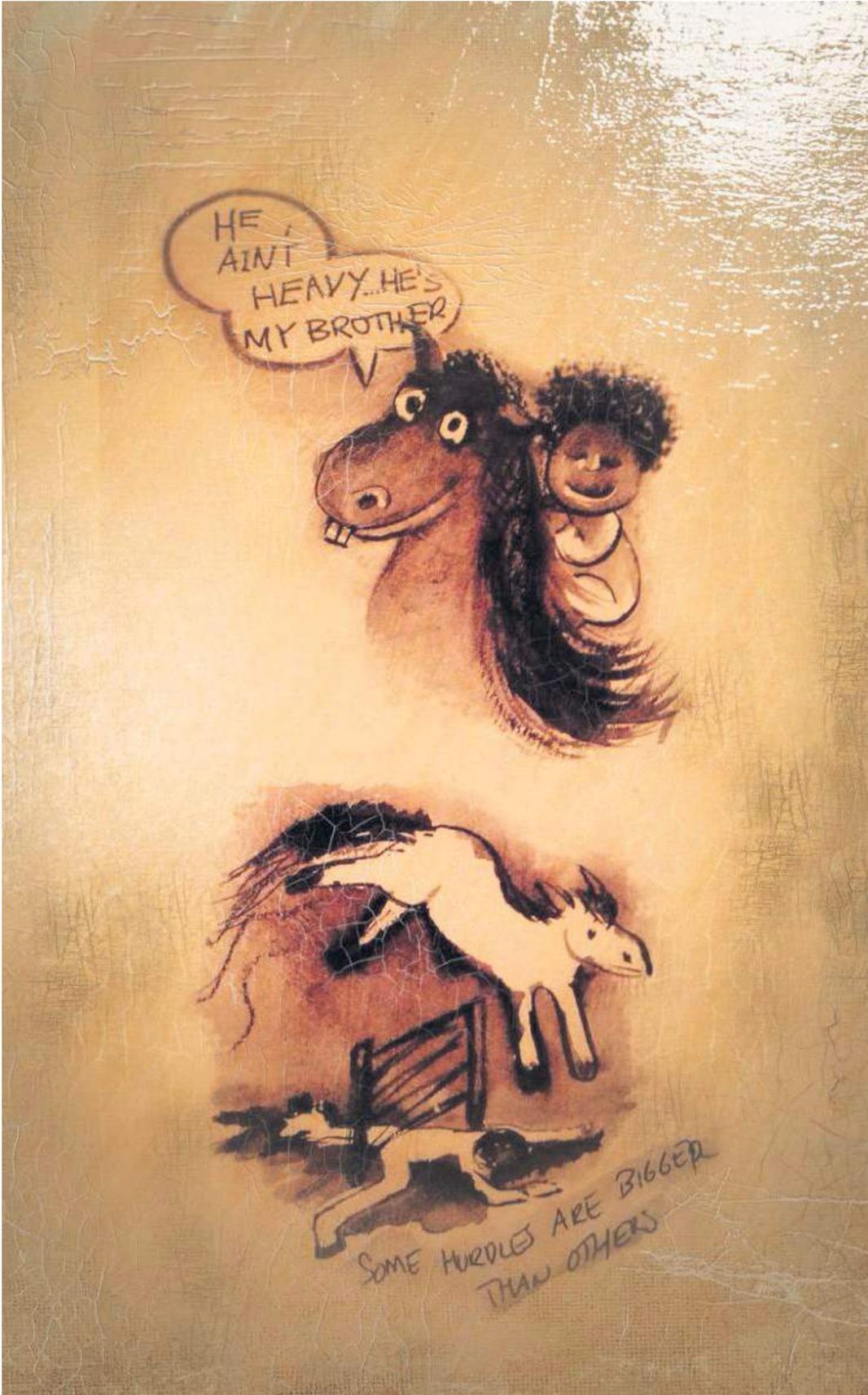
Horses have been used to help children who have difficulty in regulating emotions. Place an angry teenager with an angry horse and teach the adolescence that through being calm they still the horse. Animals have a calming effect on those with autism. In return the animal may be smothered with hugs and kisses rarely given to humans.

Having an open mind as to what helps alleviate mental anguish is in itself a wonderfully supportive step. Take the case of Dr Brian Weiss, a renowned psychiatrist who studied at the most elite centres of learning and practiced medicine at the esteemed Mount Sinai hospital in Florida. He was a scientist through and through, a black and white, cause and effect kind of guy. Then his life changed in the 1980's when hypnotising a patient, Catherine, for acute anxiety and phobias as she went into past lives. Not only that, spirit voices channelled through Catherine, gave Dr Weiss messages about the purpose of life and an understanding of reincarnation and death. Poor Dr Weiss! What was he to do? If he spoke to his colleagues they may have locked him up in the psychiatric institution where he worked. He kept quiet for many years until he finally published his findings in his book, *Many Lives, Many Masters*. Strangely enough, his book became a bestseller and many therapists in treating mental disorders now use the spiritual aspect of his work.

When we acknowledge something bigger than us: such as the instinctive wisdom of animals, a belief in reincarnation, healing through energy and a spiritual dimension or simply the powerful workings of the subconscious mind to give us what we want, we start to look at the world and ourselves in a new light.

An open mind does not mean blind acceptance of alternative approaches. On the contrary, scepticism grounds one in staying within the realms of reality. It requires us to look at the possibility of manipulation, brainwashing and fantasy. Brian Weiss was not converted overnight. His work with thousands of patients tested under empirical conditions and his connection with like-minded souls opened up his mind to mystical possibilities.

The happiest people in the world are reported to be Pacific Islanders from one of the poorest nations in the world, Vanuatu, Buddhist monks and Catholic nuns. Makes you think!



Healing Actions

THERE are many actions we can take to help ourselves when we feel emotionally overwhelmed by the unfathomable complexity called life. For starters, the following 10 actions can certainly assist in the transformation that is often required to move out of a negative existence into a more positive state:

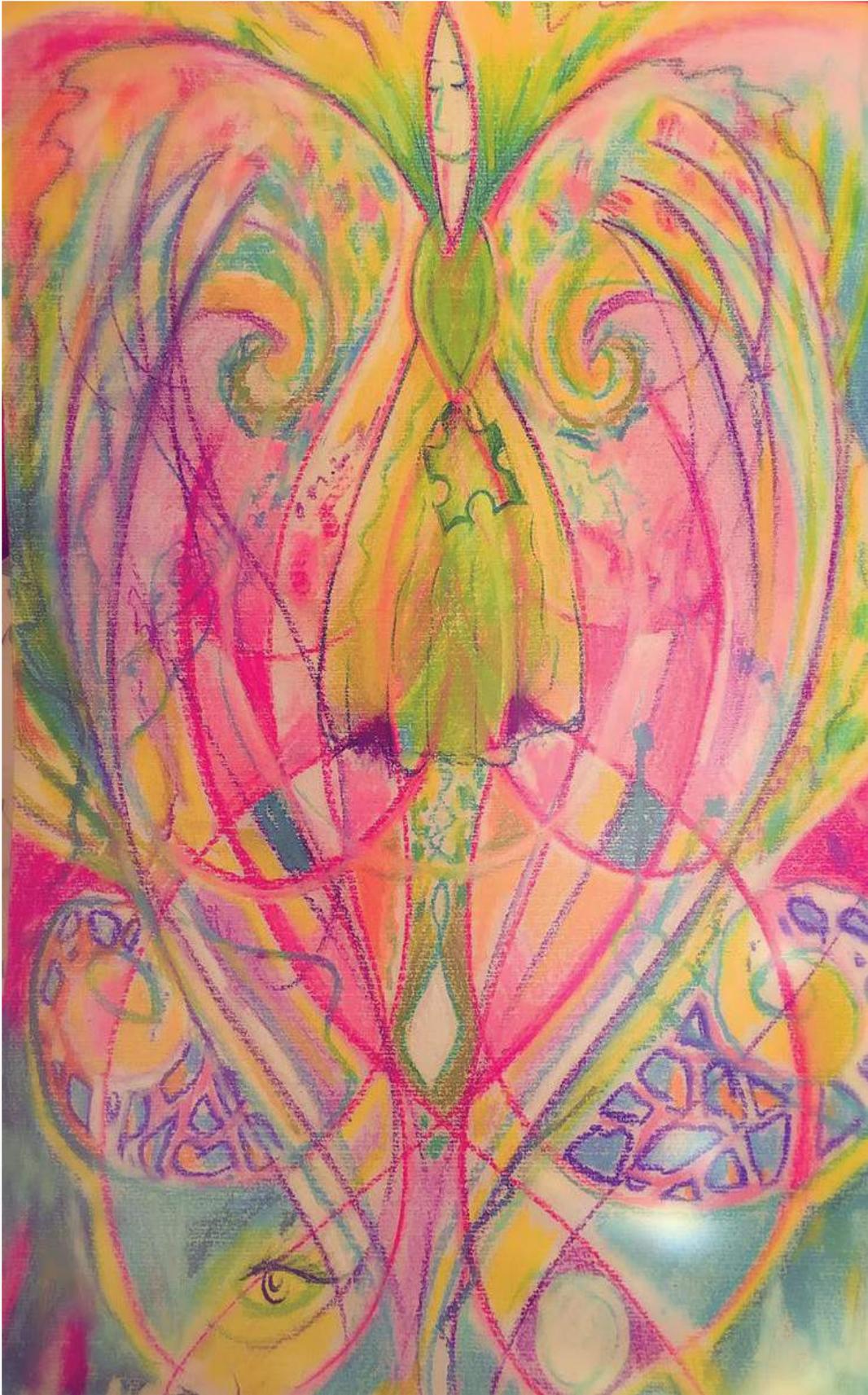
- 1. Taking responsibility!**
- 2. Being authentic!**
- 3. Practicing empathy!**
- 4. Living in the present moment!**
- 5. Praying & Asking!**
- 6. Accepting what is!**
- 7. Letting go!**
- 8. Changing perspective!**
- 9. Including not excluding!**
- 10. Fostering love & compassion!**

Working on us requires daily practice and a lifetime commitment to change. The rewards that come from healing actions are that love flows and a peaceful existence may be experienced.

Imagine if Adolf Hitler had embraced just some of the healing actions above. Let us not forget that he was a man of great charisma, beloved by millions not only in Germany but also around the world. He brought a sense of pride to the German people who had experienced humiliation after the First World War and financial destitution as a result of the Great Depression of the 1920's. He was the answer to their prayers and at first he delivered as he built up Germany into an economic powerhouse and military superpower.

Arguably, his greatest flaw was the inability to include races he thought inferior and so he excluded and brought wholesale slaughter to those he thought had no right to be a part of his glorious Third Reich. His inability to foster love and practice empathy for others was lost in self-love, self-delusion and self-righteousness. He could not let go of: hate towards Jews and Communists, rejection by his father, resentment and anger at Germany's defeat in 1918, which led ultimately to his own destruction and by association the death of 60,000,000 human beings caught up in the tangled mess of WW 2. Even as the Russians approached his Bunker in 1945 he took no responsibility for his actions and blamed his generals and the German people for betraying him. So vindictive was he that he demanded every German citizen die and believed they deserved this fate. If Hitler had simply enjoyed the present moment, indulging in his love of painting rather than planning a futuristic and inglorious Third Reich, (that was supposed to last a thousand years), what suffering might have been avoided? If he had prayed to something bigger than himself and learnt to be humble and had the ability to change perspective and say, "I'm Wrong! I'm Sorry!"

What a different world millions would have lived in!



Chambers Gallery



6 - 8pm

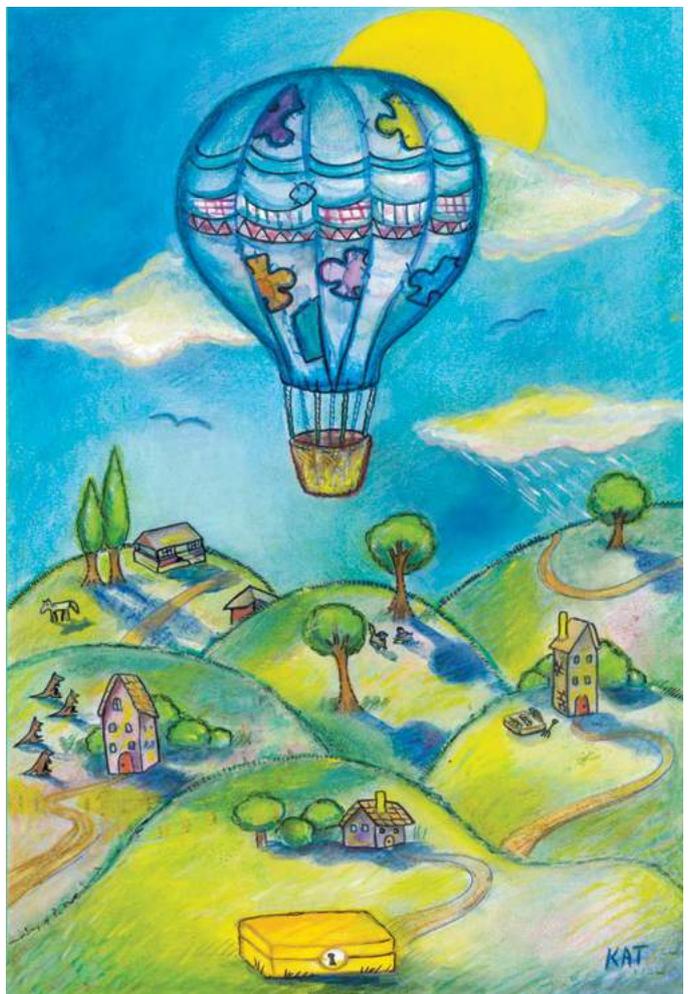
Friday 16 January 2015

Friday 23 January 2015

Friday 30 January 2015

Friday 6 February 2015

Chamber's Gallery
113 High Street Broadford



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TONY BYRNE works as a **psychotherapist, counsellor and clinical hypnotherapist**. He is the Director of Treetops Therapy Centre where he runs his private practice as well as working in the capacity of school counsellor in a rural, mixed secondary school. He is also a practitioner of Reiki and has a very eclectic view to therapy.



TONY BYRNE - AUTHOR OF 10 JIGSAW PIECES TO WELLBEING.

Tony was trained initially as a teacher and worked in a remote bush school in Malawi, from 1983-1985. He came late to therapy but in 2002 entered into a 4 year Gestalt Therapy course. He has a Masters in Counselling and is currently undertaking a Doctorate in Metaphysical Sciences. His therapeutic influences and interests are in: Family Systems based on the work of Bert Hellinger, the Regression Therapy of psychiatrist Dr. Brian Weiss and Ego State Therapy. All of these approaches are reflected in his book '10 Jigsaw Pieces to Wellbeing'. Born in England and initially raised in The Cameroons, in West Africa, Tony is somewhat of a gypsy having lived in 10 countries on 4 continents (5 if you count Israel as being in Asia). The best thing I have ever accomplished in life, he cites, was having children followed by his love of travelling, playing Neil Young songs on the guitar, snow skiing, horse riding (lately in Iceland and Mongolia) and living in the countryside (Kilmore East) with his constant companion and shadow, Asher, the Golden Retriever.



KATRINA DAY - ILLUSTRATION ARTIST FOR 10 JIGSAW PIECES TO WELLBEING.

KATRINA DAY is a **multi-talented artist**. She draws her inspiration from her inner world where fantasy, shape, colour and form blend with her love of nature. Her accolades and prizes recognize her accomplishments and skill in body art, formal portraiture, painting, sculpture and illustrating. She lives in Wandong and loves the close proximity to the Australian bush.

Katrina cannot conceive a life without creativity and Art has given her the gifts of self-belief, resilience and purpose that can be lacking in our material and status driven world. She strongly believes in the power of art to heal.



10 Jigsaw Pieces to Wellbeing[®]

10 Jigsaw Pieces To Wellbeing is a book for those who wish for change in their life. One in two people in Australia will suffer from a diagnosable mental illness often accompanied with a deep-rooted sense of shame around a misguided belief that they are weak. Initially written to aid Tony Byrne's clients, at secondary school, the book is an equally valuable resource in the hands of parents, teachers and therapists alike.

The chapters cover conventional methods of treatment such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy through to complex entanglements embedded in families through exploring Systemic Family Therapy. The chapters on meditation and hypnotherapy give practical exercises that allow for new neural pathways to be forged in the brain thus changing former concepts that limit growth and wellbeing. The simple but profound artwork captures the key concepts that allow for change.

10 Jigsaw Pieces to Wellbeing[®] Published 2016
By Tony Byrne & Illustrated by Katrina Day