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A latticework of motifs

by Peter Warne

This month we are putting the spotlight on another of our established artists: Christine Robinson. She hails from Adelaide, but has lived in the Tweed Valley and been exhibiting at the Nimbin Artists Gallery over a period of about 14 years.

Christine has an easily recognisable style, partly because of the recurring themes that appear in her subject matter. However if one takes the time to really get immersed in her work, one finds that it's all a matter of strong contrasts and layer upon layer of paint and meaning and an atmosphere that belongs to the world of dreams.

Looking over her works, I found myself initially attracted to a style which was reminiscent of Chinese embroidery, with figures arranged in a latticework of motifs including cats, birds, and cottage dwelling women, in landscapes populated with houses, as well as trees, hills and the occasional houseboat. The logic of the dream world is used, for example, in the management of gravity, whereby we see round hills that stand up like half a basketball and have trees and houses on them placed in a perpendicular manner, on the top or sides of the hill, like pins in a pincushion.

Closer examination reveals that there is considerably more than this tapestry effect going on. There's a world of imagination, where the unknown is not so much lurking behind the foreground landscape, as peeping through it. The birds, trees and other figures now become the



'Being mindful of the hours'

shapes emerging from the formless chaos behind. In fact, Christine explained that most of her works start with a riot of colours, forms and textures right across the canvas, and from there she discovers the figures which present themselves to her, and which she delineates in precise detail. This unconscious world pulsates in the background,



sometimes hardly restrained, sometimes breaking out in a burst of intense colour.

Then when we go back to the more

formally controlled works, the foreground figures and patterns become chinks and openings through which we glimpse the turbulence of the unconscious. The independent patterning of the shapes of birds and cats, as though

they've been cut out of a piece of batik cloth, seems to reflect the patterning which that particular shape brought with it from the dream world in the background.

A number of the paintings are night landscapes, where instead of the fiery energy of the dream world, we find another sort of potential - the potential of blackness. When I studied painting, I was taught to avoid black because it creates a dead patch in a painting. In Christine's paintings blackness has an energy all of its own, another version of the void from which all forms arise.

So the contrasts that characterise Christine's work include: brilliant vibrant colours vs black, day vs night, a pulsating, barely controllable energy in the background vs a more delicately controlled and patterned foreground, naivety vs sophistication, with all these juxtaposed in a mood of playful whimsy.

Nimbin Artists Gallery is currently presenting a feature on the works of Christine Robinson, so come along and see a good selection which will give you an idea of the scope of her work. As well as full-scale paintings, prints and cards are available, so there is something for everybody's budget.

www.nimbinartistsgallery.com.au



A piece of Paradise



'Dawn Paradise' by Maureen Whittaker

"A Piece of Paradise" is the current exhibition at Blue Knob Hall Gallery and will be running until Sunday 13th September.

The painting, sculpture, and mixed media pieces in this exhibition certainly represent a piece of paradise that the contributing artists have found in their surroundings and imaginations.

We each have a piece of paradise that we have found in our travels, in our gardens or in our hearts. The artists who are exhibiting their work at Blue Knob Hall Gallery continue to surprise and delight with their interpretations of the themes that they are given.

Artists & Friends lunch

The next Artists and Friends lunch will be held on Thursday 27th August at 12.30pm with a main meal which includes dessert for \$18 (vegetarian) or \$23 (non-vegetarian meat dish). Please contact the gallery on 6689-7449 if you would like to come. We look forward to seeing you.



Individual journeys of exploration at Roxy Gallery

Above: 'Midnight Rose' by Tara Planet

Left: 'At home with Emma' by Philippa Leader

Right: 'Prophet' by Ann Belle

Roxy Gallery hosts wild women

The high quality exhibitions being held at the Roxy Gallery, Kyogle are delighting, intriguing and inspiring visitors to the space, and the next exhibition promises to keep the high standards alive with works that investigate human and other animal forms.

'Three Wild Women' is an exhibition by three established women artists living in our region. Ann Belle, Tara Planet and

Philippa Leader are connected through their individual journeys in exploring the world of painting and interests in art history.

Philippa Leader has been working on a new body of work that concentrates on depicting nudes in a contemporary domestic environment based on the Ignudi frescoes by Michelangelo, in the Sistine Chapel ceiling, the Vatican.

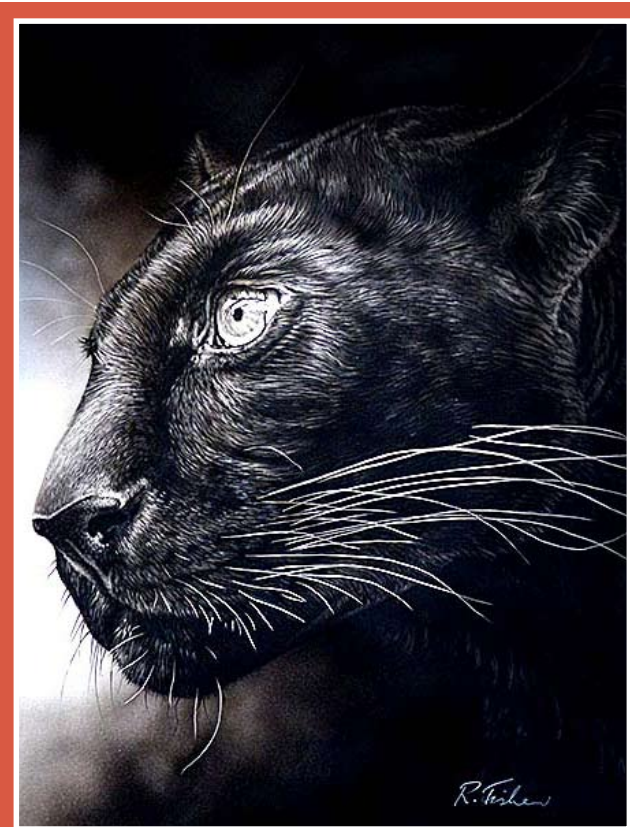
Ann Belle's works reflect on her lifelong interest in the works of Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung where she portrays ideas of genetic shared human memory, comparative mythology, personality types and the relationship between the subconscious and the conscious mind.

Tara Planet's work picks up on the patterning of forms both natural and

organic.

All three women bring to this exhibition a high standard of works that are not just figurative studies but investigations into the environments in which these figures are placed.

Regional comedian, writer and identity S Sorensen will officially open 'Three Wild Women' on Friday 7th August from 6pm.



Serpentine Gallery – community art

Signs of Habitation

Helen Creed is exhibiting a new collection of her art in Lismore this month.

Helen says about her work: "When my daughter was three, she had a book called 'A house is a house for me'. It played with the notion of house, so that the house of a tube of toothpaste is a cardboard box, and in turn the tube of toothpaste is home to the toothpaste (I don't know if anyone asked the toothpaste if it was at all aspirational).

"Although I am doing my bit and providing housing for both good and bad bacteria, finding a house for me doesn't seem to be as cut and dried. My work looks at what might constitute a house for me, just who I might be sharing it with, and what are the signs of habitation."

'Signs of Habitation' is on exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery, 17a Bridge Street, Lismore, until 11th August.

Community Art Prize

This is the second year that the Serpentine Arts Gallery is hosting this competition.

The theme this year is 'Place'. A \$300 prize is being offered for the best entry, and \$85 art supplies vouchers are being offered as



'Man and the Landscape', mixed media by Helen Creed

additional prizes.

The competition is open to all residents of the Northern Rivers. Painters, photographers and sculptors are all welcome to enter. 'Place' is open to your interpretation.

Get your entry to the

Serpentine Arts Gallery by Monday 10th August to enter. For more details and entry conditions, see: www.serpentinearts.org.au

The exhibition will run from 12th August to 1st September, with the opening night on Friday 14th August,

6-8pm, when the winners will be announced.

Special thanks to Summerland Credit Union, Premier Art & Framing, Northern Rivers Drawing & Drafting Supplies, and Lismore Visitor Information Centre.

Trifecta of awards

Nimbin wildlife artist Rikki Fisher has been a major award winner for three consecutive years in the International Society of Scratchboard Artists' annual competition.

As a new member in 2013, Rikki's first entry won Gold in the Open category of the competition, held in Vancouver, Canada. This was an especially sweet victory as it was only her fourth attempt at scratchboard.

In 2014, upon meeting ISSA's strict guidelines, Rikki was accredited as a Master Scratchboard Artist (MSA). In the same year she entered the Master category and won Bronze.

Now in 2015 at the 4th Annual ISSA exhibition held in Maryland, USA, Rikki again won Bronze for her piece entitled 'Dark Intent' (above).

To see more of Rikki's artworks, visit: www.rikkifisher.com

Plant of the month

Prickly Alyxia *Alyxia ruscifolia*



by Richard Burer

This prickly-leaved shrub occurs in all types of rainforest.

It is easily identified with its broad ovate leaves in whorls of three to six leaflets with a sharp stiff pointed tip.

Keep a lookout this August for the small white fragrant flowers which cover this small shrub, which grows to around a couple of metres. It's one of a few species where its orange fruits cover the tree whilst the tree produces flowers for its next harvest.

In the garden and on your biodiversity planting projects, I've found this species to be hardy with slowish growth rates. I have one in the garden that's taken several years to fruit, and it's healthy and happy as an understory plant.

In full sun I've found them to grow compact and to look quite interesting, though they can discolour a little. To grow your own, pick the fresh orange fruit, clean off the flesh and sow. They are slow to start, but definitely a rewarding plant to grow.



by Stewart James

Politicians generally approve mines with the promise that mining offers a huge injection into the economy. Money, jobs, and investment! Well, maybe it does initially, but at what cost and for how long before it stuffs our environment completely? We should consider this first: "There is going to be no economy without an environment".

I believe the likely approval of the Shenhua Watermark coal mine in the Liverpool Plains by the NSW government once again represents an abject failure of our system of government and democracy. When politicians act in ways that are harmful and destructive, dismissive and not in our or the environment's best interest, something is seriously wrong. Case in point, this filthy proposed 3,000-acre Chinese-owned coal mine, smack bang in the middle of prime agricultural land, arguably the best in the country!

The proposed Shenhua Watermark coal mine is making many conservative Australians absolutely furious and politically active against decision-makers in the coalition governments they usually back. I believe it has the potential to be the straw that breaks the camel's back; for people to finally declare "enough is enough". A lot of people have had a gutful, and they are livid.

The previous state Labor government gave the initial approval of this mining licence. Ian McDonald was the mining minister at the time and the government pocketed



\$300M by giving the approval. When governments have such a vested interest in mines being approved they should stand aside from the approval process, which should be run independently.

The federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt recently gave his approval with what he says are extremely tough environmental conditions. Mike Baird's NSW government has the authority to give the final government approval of the mine, expected later this year.

Leaving aside the doubtful economic future for coal, here are some of the key risks of the proposed mine:

The area to be mined has sacred grinding groove rocks (ancient marks in stone from sharpening axes) that Shenhua claims it will remove and then roll back and re-seat when the mine is rehabilitated. Traditional custodians maintain that will destroy an important part of Aboriginal culture.

Scientists are predicting that the mine will decimate the local koala population. The mine is predicted to clear 847 hectares of koala habitat. Shenhua reported it will encourage the koalas to move away naturally. Are they going to shake the trees before

dozing them away? Any koalas that don't move on will be forcibly removed and relocated, causing often fatal stress to the animal.

The floodplain aquifers are less than one kilometer from the mine. The aquifers on the Liverpool floodplain are only 20 meters below the surface. The mine plans show that Shenhua will excavate down to a depth of 300m, that is 240m below the surrounding groundwater aquifers. This is madness to put these fertile soils and water to such a potential risk. Crazy and criminal!

Our PM recently said he believes that this mine and agriculture can co-exist. But how? How can you grow clean green crops within 100m of a 35 sq. km, 300m deep open cut coal mine? Imagine the dust. Some of the crops that are grown on the Liverpool Plains are chickpeas, wheat, sorghum and maize. It would be impractical if not impossible to wash these crops of the coal dust. The local agricultural industry will be brought to its knees if this mine goes ahead – the farmers will lose their water to irrigate, and no-one would want to buy and eat the coal dust-covered crop.

Shenhua hopes to start construction on the mine early next year. A lot of different organisations and groups oppose the mine, including the NSW Farmers Federation. Please consider what you can do to stop the mine proceeding, by supporting these groups. Call into one of your local environment centres in Nimbin, Casino or Lismore for more info and to get involved.

Koala Kolumn

by Lorraine Vass

I received a lovely surprise recently, a letter from Chris Gulaptis, Member for Clarence telling me that I was to receive a Service Recognition Award for serving as a trustee of the Broadwater Koala Reserve for the past 12 years or so. In fact three of the Reserve's Board members received "long service" awards, the other two are Betty Archer, Treasurer and Jenny McDonald, Secretary, both of whom have served much, much longer terms than my modest 12 years.

Perhaps you're wondering where the Broadwater Koala Reserve is – well, Broadwater obviously, known for its sugar mill, at the southern approach to the village on the western side of the Pacific Highway. The Reserve is a shady and scenic picnic spot; just the place for northward bound motorists to stop for a cuppa and to stretch their legs.

Beyond the attractive landscaping, tables and mown grass where cars draw off the busy road are nearly three hectares of good koala habitat, which have served koalas ranging the area from Rileys Hill down to the Broadwater National Park for time immemorial.

When the site was privately owned, the Mid-Richmond Lions

Club maintained it as a Koala Sanctuary, delighting residents and tourists alike.

In 1989 however the owner put the land on the market at an asking price of \$60,000. Locals feared that the stately Forest Red Gums would go and the ground sold for housing.

The Lower Richmond Friends of the Koala was established in June of the same year. The first meeting's hot topic was how to raise sufficient money to make a bid for the Sanctuary. Letters were written to over 50 movers and shakers across the country seeking financial assistance. Richmond River Shire Council as it was then was lobbied to change the zoning to preserve the trees. School children at Broadwater and Woodburn also took up their pens, flooding the NSW Environment Minister of the day, Tim Moore, with pleas for the land to be acquired by the government so that Broadwater's koalas would be protected forever.

The campaign succeeded. In July 1990 Don Page announced that contracts had been exchanged, the land would undergo 'formal assessment' to establish its future

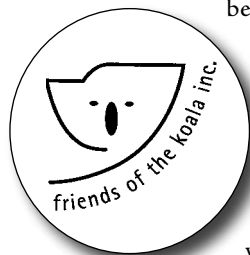
use and following approval by the then Minister for Natural Resources, Ian Causley (now Chairman of NSW Sugar), would be declared a reservation under the Crown Lands Act 1989.

But that was not the end of the story. In November 1990 the Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council lodged a land claim over the area. Friends of the Koala wrote to the Land Council telling them of the battle that had been waged to preserve the treed site for the koalas. The two parties met in early 1991 and the claim was amended. The Broadwater Koala Reserve for Environmental Protection and Public Recreation was notified on 30 August 1991.

Perhaps the Lower Richmond Friend of the Koala group's overriding objective had been achieved because around that time it seems to have wound up, absorbed by the recently incorporated Friends of the Koala we are today.

Broadwater – Riley's Hill was and continues to be a major focus for koala activity in the Richmond Valley Shire. Along with Evans Head – Doonbah and the township of Coraki it was home to the important source populations found between the Richmond and Evans Rivers in historical times.

Long-term residents claim they don't see as many koalas on the Lower Richmond as they did in the old days but they still persist.



Similarly, few koalas are reported in the Reserve although there's evidence of them passing through. Sadly it's not only Ballina's koalas that need to be protected from the Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade, many of Richmond Valley's koalas will also be impacted as well.

For those who keep their eye on these things, koalas are on the move again and admissions have surged.

We never cease to be amazed at some of the crazy places koalas end up but we reckon 'Razor Bob' took the cake last month. A young male, he somehow got inside the razor wire at the Dunoon Essential Energy sub-station, pacing back and forth in the wire for at least two hours before his rescue could be affected. With two Essential Energy workers on one side of the fence and Friends of the Koala's trusty rescuer on the other (well away from potential electrocution)



'Razor Bob' on the wire and in care

the wire was prised open and blocked one end. A stressed Razor Bob was flagged to the opening and brought in. Rather surprisingly, the vet could not find a scratch on him. A few days later we released him in a beautiful spot out of the village.

Until next time, happy koala spotting.

To report a koala in trouble, or a sighting (live or dead), please ring Friends of the Koala's 24/7 Rescue Hotline: (02) 6622-1233. For information about koalas, their food trees and how you can assist koala conservation, visit: www.friendsofthekoala.org or email: info@friendsofthekoala.org or phone 6622-1233. Please follow us on Facebook. To report environmental incidents, including removal of koala habitat ring the 24/7 Office of Environment & Heritage Enviro Line: 131 555.

Keep watch for weeds

by Triny Roe

Australia hosts a range of exotic plants, any number of which have a bad name in various circles. They earn the moniker 'weeds'. Some people wage a war against them. Others welcome the development of a fecund biomass. Whatever your attitude there is no denying that some species, disassociated from their original ecosystems, can behave in wild and wanton ways, overgrowing the original vegetation and dominating their new bioregions. The list is long.

But what about Australian plants wrecking havoc in other parts of the world?

In the same way that new species came to Australia without their natural predators to keep their population in balance, Australian natives exported overseas also went on their journey without their specialised growth inhibitors.

The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council lists 14 Australian species as environmental weeds. Among them is paperbark tea tree, *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, first planted there in the early 1900's. Famous for growing in coastal swamps, it was introduced to help dry out the Everglades, promoting opportunities for residential development and reducing mosquitos. Paperbark now covers hundreds of thousands of hectares. Happy in its new home, this tree produces thousands of viable seeds, many more than at home in Australia. Paperbark has spread like wildfire, altering ecosystems and disrupting

hydrological cycles. It is declared noxious in six states in the USA. The introduction of a weevil and a psyllid from Australia has been introduced to help control its spread.

Umbrella tree, *Schefflera actinophylla*, is also on the list in Florida, with particular mention there of root problems. In Hawaii it is seriously invasive. On Oahu they call it the octopus tree. Umbrella tree is epiphytic and can germinate in the forks of branches of trees and on the trunks of palms as well as in soil. This tree, which hails from North Queensland has naturalised, particularly on the Ko'olau Mountains on the eastern side of Oahu. Seed is spread by birds.

Umbrella tree is also considered invasive in the Caribbean and Fiji. Other cooler regions of the USA don't report it as a problem and hail it as a hardy pot plant. In Australia it is listed as an environmental weed in SE Qld and NSW.

India has a problem with black wattle, *Acacia mearnsii*, native to south-eastern Australia. Introduced into the Western Ghats for reforestation, it did its job, and more. With self fertilising flowers and seeds which can remain viable for 50 years, it is also threatens native plant communities in Hawaii and South Africa where it is cultivated for tannin.

Even within Australia plenty of natives have disrupted ecosystems when planted out of range. Tea tree, *Leptospermum laevigatum*, from the east coast infests coastal heathland in Victoria and WA. Red-flowering paperbark, *Melaleuca hypericifolia* and bracelet honey-myrtle,



An Umbrella Tree makes a good pot plant

M. armillaris, planted in a camping ground, now dominate the regrowth after fires in the surrounding bush.

Western Australian bluebell, *Billardiera heterophylla*, changed the species mix in ecosystems on the Mornington Peninsula. It is now banned in SA. 20 plants indigenous to WA including hakeas, melaleucas and acacias are listed as being weeds in other parts of WA.

Weeds can enter countries in ways unexpected. In 2006 to 2007 India imported 62 million tonnes of wheat from 10 different countries. Shipments from Australia and other countries were found to be contaminated with several noxious weed species. Much of this wheat was for planting as opposed to milling.

Nursery stock, seed stock, stock feed, manures for fertilising and other gardening and farming materials all have potential for transporting 'weeds' to new locations. Inspect your land regularly for new and unusual plants popping up.

Reassessing giant devil's fig

by Geoff Dawe

Giant devil's fig (GDF) is offered currently as an example of why the war on "weeds" needs to continue. GDF grows rapidly, spreads rampantly and has thorns that make working with it, difficult.

However, that view is disconnected from a wider view that because of the environmental disaster of land clearing in Australia, and the need for carbon to be soil sequestered, the rapid growth of biomass can be seen as part of the process of healing air, water and soil; the bases of life.

Because European civilization is only based on short-term exploitation and rarely in reciprocity, this long-term need to arrest the degradation of air, water and soil, is not entertained. Instead, the comparative short-term view of the need to preserve iconic native species currently takes precedence over the need to preserve the bases of life.

Concern with what species occupy environmental niches is in the long-term, on the edge of a dead planet, a secondary consideration.

The human ability of compassion for other species is a very powerful attribute, but if it is not balanced with a long-term view taking account of aetiology or causes of habitat loss, sentimentality



can be mistaken for compassion.

One might assume that if the Earth has "consciousness" that automatically amends environmental disasters, then it may have strategies in an attempt to defeat humans who continue to land-clear Australia with conventional bush regeneration methods in apparent disregard that land-clearing is a major ecological disaster. Humans living on this land mass have degraded soils to the extent that most farms have only 2-3 per cent organic matter, even though it is known that approximately 10 percent organic matter levels deliver optimum benefits for plants and animals dwelling on it.

The society has a widespread pathological resistance in returning organic matter to soils in urban lands, through

rural, to even that of forestry. Speculatively, it might be assumed that as soil organic matter levels reduce, vegetation will change to accommodate the changed environmental conditions. More than that, it may be the case that the "consciousness" of the Earth; the Gaia principle, which is really just the operation of logical principles, in regard to degrading soils ensures vegetation that is more prickly or thorny to discourage attempts by animals to unduly tax existing vegetation. In the case of humans: to land-clear. Thus lantana freely breaks human skin, increasingly, so does the coral tree, and even more so, GDF.

The usual unscientific finger pointing at exotics applies to GDF. It is said to block native regeneration. This

presumes it is scientifically known that after major land clearing in rapid leaching and erosion-prone sub-tropical zones, nature "prefers" that the original vegetation goes back straight away rather than goes through a gradual process of repair with plant succession. Scientifically, this is not known, but nature appears to do it with succession.

With sub-tropical chemical-free bush regeneration, it is noticed that rainforest germination is retarded in areas where the herbaceous layer, particularly grasses, is strong. Instead, maximum natural regeneration appears where the herbaceous layer is not strong because of the appearance of mid-height vegetation that shades the ground. We can assume GDF is here for that purpose along with other mid-story exotics such as groundsel bush, privet and lantana. As a "by the way", biologist Tim Low in *The New Nature: Winners and Losers in Wild Australia*, reports "32 bird species use lantana in Queensland alone." Tim regards lantana now as a keystone species.

GDF removal along with all exotics, for war's sake; that is, hatred of what is being warred with because a search for the entity's beauty or offering is incomplete, is aimless activity that always leads to long-term degradation.



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Cravings for consciousness

Addiction: the quest for unconsciousness.

A substance or behaviour could be seen to be craved for its ability to remove us consciously from our present, imperfect situation.

This leaves us unconscious to varying degrees, and depletes our ability to improve that situation. Different people require different means of achieving this, hence the wide range of addictions employed.

Craving this escape from a disagreeable state underlies the addiction, giving all addictions something in common.

A secondary element of dependence arises from the physiological effects of the substance or behaviour. As the body and mind grow used to the comfort of the escape provided, there is an adjustment required



by David Ward
Life action coach

to revert to life without that escape. Even short breaks involve a recovery period, with symptoms of exhaustion, irritability, disillusionment, etc. Thus physical cravings emerge,

further entrenching the habits.

Practices that awaken and develop the consciousness allow us to see the cost of our addictions, financially, physically, emotionally and spiritually and also to make wise choices based on these findings. Approaching the issue of addiction from this angle is potentially more rewarding and straightforward than going head to head with the substances or behaviours themselves, unaided by the consciousness.

Developing this aspect of myself was a direct route to achieving a healthy state of being, allowing me to recognise and avoid all that didn't serve me. Miraculously, my personal range of addictions subsided and became instantaneously obsolete, never to be

craved again. Despite the intensity of the adjustment, it became crystal clear that all my addictive needs were behind me, and I was now completely free to build my consciousness and my health; to build my life.

For nine years now, the evidence tells me that this rewards-based approach has given me complete freedom. The possibility that it could work for others has led me to develop my Vital Choices program, based on the concept that awakened consciousness can provide a key to freedom from addiction and all its related issues.

For more information contact David Ward, freedom from addiction specialist and well-being consultant, on 0447-820-510 or visit: www.vitalchoiceslifecoaching.com

Taking the p#ss!

Mookxamitosis

by Brendan (Mookx) Hanley

I should be pissed off, but that would be piss weak. Piss poor in fact. So I'm taking the piss instead!

For the past year and a bit, since being diagnosed with prostate cancer while still at Bentley... my life has been dominated by urine. I've had so many accidents and incidents, procedures, mishaps, infections, injections, detections, corrections, resurrections, cross-sections, redirections and rejections... not to mention catheter inspections... my dick has been handled by more people than a bong at a music festival. It's been like "Pass the Percy"... a new adult party game. There's not a gram of dignity left!

But getting back to being pissed off... or not actually... Last Thursday was my 73rd birthday. I awoke very close to my birth time (7.04 am), my thighs and pubic area covered in blood and the sheets down there looking like something out of 'Rambo', my pillow and top sheet, face and arm looking gory too. (The cannula had come out of my wrist overnight as well!)

I was in a ward on the top floor of Lismore Hospital, having been rescued from a fate worse than fate by a brilliant doctor the previous evening. He performed an emergency Supra Pubic Catheter insertion on me... in a makeshift space near the Ambulance Bay, where I had just been wheeled in... morphed off my trolley. Right in front of my bleary eyes, he instantly relieved the intense agony and my subterranean terror of the unknown... in a matter of minutes. All this had come about due to an earlier ill-fated procedure that had left me bleeding heaps from the penis and unable to pee for over 12 hours. Sorry if I put you off your brekky, but it's my party and I'll whinge if I want to!

Anyway I lay there in my bloody little corner when three young docs on the 'Surgical Review' team arrived and said, "We've got a birthday present for



you! We're sending you home!"

"Sweet!" says I... and it's been sweet ever since. It's as if one of the absolute worst days of my life never happened. It all changed in an instant. The birth time... the blood... the three wise docs... it's all there... it's obviously a re-birth! I'm a born-again pissant! A friend just told me my age 73 goes $7+3=10=1$ in numerology. New beginning! So there ya go!

When Meg (coming to my aid yet again) and I got to the elevator on the way out, there were two clown doctors waiting for the lift. One had a ukulele, so Meg told him it was my birthday and they sang me *Happy Birthday* there in the corridor. I applauded and told the guy, "I taught the clown doctors to play the uke at some workshops during a big C.D. convention held at Mimosa Park twenty odd years ago!"

He lit up. "Mookie! I was there. I remember you! At the Channon... yeah!" My re-birthday had just been musically blessed by a couple of passing angels disguised as clowns. Off to a good start.

And it's all good... because I'm currently inspired with a Rock Opera which I have delusions of producing locally. Working on it already... started scripting... already have the interest of a few good, crucial people and I'm gathering and writing songs. It's called 'Marijuana Australiana' of course, and

will feature heaps of my "herbal" songs as well as other appropriate material. It's intended to be an overt, outright pitch for Medical Cannabis. We need a united-front, high-profile, modern and professional-looking shop-front in town and funds to be able to supply the wondrous healing balm to patients of all kinds... at minimal cost. We need lots of the right sort of publicity. This musical project will hopefully be a big part of a positive and effective PR agenda.

At the moment I've actually literally staked my life on Cannabis Oil, which I have adopted as the main "big gun" in dealing with my cancer diagnosis. You can buy it online and other places. I pay \$220 for 2ml. It's \$2.20 per drop. A lot of people can't afford that, so changes need to happen. More next month!

That was a bit of a side-step from the urinary eulogy, so back to taking the piss. I know why they call old age "second childhood" now. I've actually even been wearing nappies at times lately. More like pads I guess. But it's like this... when they're cranking cameras and catheters and whipping wires, wiggles and whatsits in and out of your willy, month after month after month... sometimes all the body bits just give up and lie down on the job... and you wee yourself in Woolies. How's that for dignity?

The other bummer is the catheter itself. There are bits that plug into each other... and a tap and pipes in between. They love to come undone... anywhere, any time... and cause you to stand there red-faced with both hands down your trackies, fiddling as hard as you can to stop the fucker from leaking down your leg onto the floor! Who's the old wanker in the health food lane?

There are countless stories in Wee World... this has been one of them.

DUH! of the Month: They're wondering why there are more and more sharks coming close to shore, while they're scouring the oceans of all life... which includes shark food... with the Supertrawlers.

Restoration from desk sitting through Feldenkrais

by Bent Shaub

Part One

Lifestyle changes usually have immediate and lasting effects on a person's health.

As children, we spend time developing our sense of proprioception and spatial distance when playing. We explore three-dimensional space while following our interests. Throughout life, desires create direction. Self-awareness is a captain to guide the body/mind/spirit vessel towards dreams. A Feldenkrais practice fosters wise captains.

Desk sitting for a career is a fundamental lifestyle change which impacts health. Without moving around, nor the need to explore in three dimensions, there's less need

for the muscles that propel us. Muscles in the eyes no longer need the precision of depth perception. The overall energy consumed is less when sedentary. What energy is used is much more concentrated on balancing the upper body in a still position, having the arms reaching in front, often tilting the head down to read.

These activities are fine in moderation, but prolonged desk sitting can be a limiting factor to a healthy life. Pre-existing conditions such as low-back pain, foot trouble, tight hamstrings or eye fatigue can make working at a desk problematic.

Muscles are generally designed to act on limbs (legs/arms) or to stabilize the spine. Using muscles for their

purpose promotes a healthy nervous system; intention leads to clear and accurate action. Improper sitting mechanics will greatly affect longevity of enjoying one's job as well as their life if not careful to change as required by their health not job. If you or someone you know sits daily, there is a middle ground between giving up on your health and quitting your job.

This middle ground has components which different people respond to proportionally based on their body, posture, habits, goals and needs. Different equipment, frequent postural changes, restoring movements and learning how to sit effectively can lead to increased comfort.

A drop in comfort when

computing leads to not wanting to move as much and trouble concentrating, which leads to less quality work. Comfort leads to higher employee morale from less physical strain and working enjoyably in addition to the obvious financial rewards from productivity. Comfort taken seriously leads to gains for all involved: quality of work, its quantity, enjoyment of producing work, and freedom to do what one wants when finished working (thus leading to wanting to keep one's job).

For those interested in direct experience with improved movement, starting Thursday 20th August, I'm teaching a ten-week Feldenkrais series Computer at Your Computer. This



course will explore movements that can restore wholeness and playful capabilities to those with sitting lifestyles.

As a software programmer since 2000 who fractured his pelvis, a few ribs and neck in a car accident in 1998 at age 20, I am experienced in knowing how to navigate the body jungle that gets denser as details learnt in childhood get buried under

deadlines. The course will include doing movements, learning how to alter your physical environment to suit your specific needs, and a chance to discover emotional connections between work and posture.

Local Feldenkrais classes:
• Mullumbimby: Feldenkrais Collective (6 people) 104 Stuart Street, Thursdays 6pm.
• South Lismore: Silvercloud Studios (20 people) 14 Foleys Road, Thursday mornings.

Cost is \$15/class if buying five or more, \$18/class casually; get two classes free when buying all ten. Register by email: Brent@EmbodimentToday.com or texting 0404-429-271 or show up and hope there's space.

Natural law

by Helene Collard

We are on the cusp of a major universal ending. During the next little while, some things in life will die, whilst others will be born. You may have had recent insights of some things going 'full circle' and this too is symbolic of the current cyclical environment.

Further supporting these energies, is the arrival of the Mayan New Year (July 26). The time immediately before and after any new year is ripe for letting go of the old and embracing a new beginning.

For many, the completed Chinese Year of the Horse involved growth

in the areas of empowerment and self-confidence. Not to be confused with ego, this process is about self-enabling through letting go of fear, in order to express more of who we naturally are. This is empowerment.

The new beginning supports further development and integration in empowerment and self-confidence. This in turn, will create a new feeling within, from which to consider, and make, routine and important choices. As a result, many of us will witness decision-making, from ourselves and/or others, that will surprise or even shock – mostly because the

*"I am self-sovereign as are you.
I acknowledge the ancestors,
mine and yours,
past and present.
You are all my relations.
All is One."*

decisions defied what we had come to expect.

The New Year will support the manifestation of important aspirations, that featured in our visions some time ago. There is a sense of prosperity and abundance, and a giant step forward in a worthwhile desire. Consider options carefully and make decisions on merit, rather than sentiment.

The following philosophical points are here for your contemplation. These are essential for the flourishing of our collective community. Sit with them and consider, if and how

they fit into your daily and wider understanding of life.

Interconnectedness – everything is relational, nothing exists in isolation

Interdependence – all things are mutually dependent

Initiation – appropriate ceremonies, rituals, tests or periods of instruction that impart knowledge and support the embodiment of wisdom

Understanding and accepting life from this philosophical foundation, brings meaning into our interpretation of our day-to-day world. From these solid foundations, we can begin to rebuild law, life, community service and governance, to resonate with the heart.

You can be certain that this universal cyclical event is truly blessed, and necessary for our collective evolution.



Helene Collard has a Bachelor of Trauma & Healing and is a Reiki Master-Teacher. Helene is currently offering Reiki treatments and also workshops for professionals and carers in the area of Secondary Trauma & Self-care. For more information, email: hmcollard@gmail.com

Refusal may offend

One thing that permaculturalists and our cousins, the environmental scientists, have in common, is that we are often accused of bias.

Environmental science counters this with rigorous standards as to the collection of hard data before coming to tentative conclusions. The consequence is that environmental science can be a painstaking task undertaken in the face of rapidly changing parameters, and piecemeal in a world awash with political and corporate agendas.

A child of any species born in the world today is one born into a world irrevocably marked by human presence. The work of her fellows is writ large all around her. From the tonnes of space-junk strung out across the diamond-studded sky, to the oxygen canisters piled on the world's highest peak, like strange tattoos in the snow. From the cable-logged hillsides of once unimaginably biodiverse forests, to the sprawling urban monstrosities of the world's largest cities, this is bias if ever there was any.

Her world is one drowning in the piles and piles of money made from the extraction of ancient graveyards. Inheritance squandered, legacies combusted, this is literally pay dirt. Whether she sits on top of the pile, or buried underneath it, or if she waits for scraps somehow at the fringes, she cannot remain untouched by the now-global reach of western industrial militarised capitalism,

which posits itself at the centre of normalcy, the "great equaliser". (As in, "equally extinct"?)

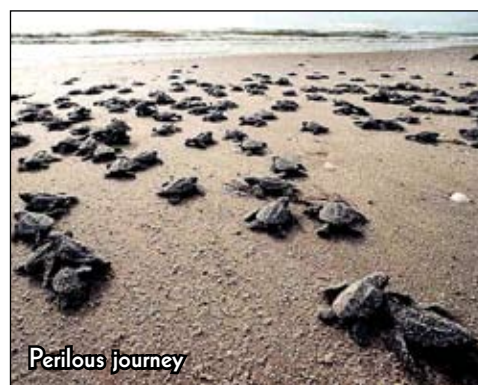
She will have no say about the thousands of square kilometres of shimmering tarmac, the internal combustion engine, the existence of skyscrapers, or polyethylene terephthalate. She will have no say about the extraction or enrichment of uranium, the explosion of nuclear weapons in war-torn deserts, or in island idylls. If she is human, she will have no say about taxation, or work. Her education will prepare her for the legitimate workforce, in which she might do anything from painting nails to clipping dogs, or sending bags and bags of rubbish through checkouts. Anything that pushes the money upstairs.

If she performs well academically, she might be able to defend the structure of the industrial-military-capitalist complex as a lawyer, or teach the ideology of the industrial-military-capitalist complex as a teacher, or espouse and expand on the industrial-military-capitalist complex as a financier or a politician.

But her education will not prepare her for a life of prayer, or love. It will not teach her reverence.

It's our job, then, to be biased.

We must be ideologically and actively ecocentric, to counter the biocide that is inherent in so many facets of our



expansion. As permaculturalists, we don't wait to painstakingly generate hard data on environmental collapse and run the risk of being too late, or ignored. But we can draw on our colleagues who do, and on the wisdom of generations of earth-keepers, to generate hard solutions, and hard alternatives, to the industrial-military-capitalist complex, in a time-scale keeping with the urgency of the task.

For many decades, environmental scientists refused to interfere with the organisms they studied. They left thousands of turtle hatchlings to perish in the hot sun, because it was better to "let nature take its course". And then they realised that the course of nature was so altered by human activity, and the declines of all species of turtles so consistent, that it was necessary to not only "do no harm" but to take opportunities in the course of their work to actively support and enhance biological processes. It is now common practice to carry armloads of turtle



Permaculture Principles

with Anastasia Guise

hatchlings to the shoreline, thus saving them the perilous journey across the sand.

So are they biased?

You see, the winners write history, and they write the losers out. What is our modern world but layer after layer of bias – the bias of the victorious.

I've always wanted to print a t-shirt. The front will read 'Unapologetic Ecocentric'. On the back of the t-shirt I'll write: 'Please don't ask me to adopt your industrial-military-capitalist version of normalcy, as refusal may offend'. But then, I never was good at brevity.

Yep. Verbose and biased.

NB Definition of "hard" – as in concrete (or hempcrete); reliable

www.communitypermaculture.com.au

Birth and Beyond



by Kirrah Holborn
'Traditional Wisdom'

What does a placenta do all day?

The placenta is an incredible organ that helps an unborn baby to grow and thrive. It performs the functions of the digestive system, immune system, kidneys, liver, skin and lungs while the baby is inside the womb of its mother. It allows the baby to extract all the nourishment it needs from the mother's blood and then sends any waste back to the mother to be excreted through her breath and urine. Dr Sarah Buckley (2005) puts it simply by saying not only is the mother breathing and eating for the baby, but she is peeing for him too! The baby cannot regulate

its own temperature and so it sends its excess heat to the mother's circulatory system to help cool down (this explains why pregnant women are that bit warmer!).

All of these amazing functions are performed continuously by the placenta while the baby grows inside its mother. The placenta also functions for some minutes after birth and by delaying the cutting of the cord, it helps the baby transition to breathing on its own and receive its full blood volume (including iron and stem cells).

Delayed cord clamping not only allows the transfusion of blood to the baby, it also makes it easier and safer for the mother to birth (due to its reduced size). This helps the uterus to contract effectively and can help reduce the risk of postpartum hemorrhage. It's a win-win to leave the placenta attached to the baby until it is birthed.

The placenta is revered in many cultures around the world

Many cultures (even today) place much significance on burying the placenta. In New Zealand, the Maori traditionally bury the placenta on tribal land which helps

the child to establish a personal and spiritual connection to the land. The Navajo will bury the placenta to ensure the child will always return home. Cambodians believe that a child will stay safe as long as they stay near to where their placenta was buried (Buckley 2012). The people of the Pacific Islands bury the placenta in the garden to ensure that the child will grow into a good gardener (Enning 2011).

In Turkey, if parents want their child to be well educated, they may throw the umbilical cord over a schoolyard wall (Buckley 2012). Australian Aborigines may make necklaces from the umbilical cord for the children to wear to protect them from diseases, while in Yemen, the placenta is left on the rooftops for birds to eat. This is believed to help the love between the new parents to grow (Enning 2011).

Lotus birth

Lotus birth is a new ritual for humans. This is the practice of leaving the placenta attached to the baby until the umbilical cord dries and separates naturally around 3-10 days after birth. It is believed that this can allow a more gentle transition for the baby. Some mothers report their baby is more calm and at ease as a result



from having a lotus birth. To help preserve the placenta and reduce the smell, it can be salted and dried rosemary or lavender essential oil can be added. It is then wrapped in a nappy and changed daily.

Placenta consumption

According to the 1916 Lancet, there are reports as far back as 1556 of people consuming their placenta. There was a belief that it helped with production of milk. Modern accounts of placentaphagy report similar benefits. In 1935, there are also reports of Italian women eating their placenta to aid lactation and to prevent after-pains (Ploss).

In the 19th century, pharmacies in China, South America and Eastern Europe produced placenta remedies. Up until the end of the 19th century, it was quite common

for European pharmacies to sell placenta powder. Still today in China, women make money by selling their placenta to pharmacies (Enning, 2011).

Enning (2011) states that according to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), the placenta is considered a powerful medicine that is full of vital force. Raven Lang, a TCM midwife, recommends women consume their placenta to aid in recovery from birth and prevent postpartum depression.

These are just a snippet of some of the many and varied beliefs and customs surrounding the placenta. It is an incredible organ that your body has made. It's nice to think about what you might like to do to honour this organ that has sustained and grown your baby for nine months. If you'd like to experience the benefits of placenta encapsulation, please get in touch.

Kirrah Holborn provides pregnancy and postpartum support in the Northern Rivers. She runs monthly holistic antenatal classes, gives nurturing pregnancy massages and provides safe and reliable placenta services. For the chance to win a pregnancy massage text your name and email to 0429-308-851 or visit: www.traditionalwisdom.com.au

Technology for the Aquarian Age

by Siri Shakti Kaur

I'm a yogi, a Kundalini yogi. I practise this powerful technology because it gives me the understanding and openness that is needed for the shift in consciousness that is coming with the Aquarian Age. This is the age of information. Already we are seeing levels of information that were never dreamed of just 30 years ago. And it is there for all of us to access, not just the few who control what is given to the masses.

The problem is that there's so much information how can you tell what is true? In the information age you can no longer just trust the source of the news. Instead there is a need to be connected to something greater, a higher truth, the truth of the heart. That's why I practise kundalini yoga and meditation. This powerful technique helps me to train my mind to be more intuitive. It allows me to be free of the monkey chatter of the thinking mind and allow my heart to lead the way.

I recently read an article from *The Guardian* about the end of capitalism; that it is inevitable, brought about by the technological shift that allows information to all. Within this new information-rich age we will find new ways of working, where a spirit of abundance will drive us forward, creating new opportunities for sharing, that we will find a new understanding of the world and truth.

If this is to be so, it is not just the access to information that supports this change, but a shift in consciousness of society as a whole. The shift in consciousness is what gives us the power to utilise the information technology for the greater good. But how do you shift a collective conscious from a sense of poverty to one of abundance, from



"The truth was a mirror in the hands of God. It fell, and broke into pieces. Everybody took a piece of it, and they looked at it and thought they had the truth."
~ Rumi

each to their own and survival of the fittest to caring for all?

It is clear that the practice of yoga and meditation and embracing a compassionate life is an integral part of this conscious shift. For me it has been kundalini yoga that has been the tool that has given me awareness and trust in my Self. Through regular practice I have been able to let go of fear and anxiety and open my heart to embrace compassion and truth.

In the spirit of compassion, I will be holding an AmnesTEA fundraising class on Thursday 27th August to raise funds and support human rights. The class will be a 'by donation' class with all funds raised supporting the important work of Amnesty International. A four-week beginners' course is also commencing in August. All Siri Shakti Yoga classes are held at the Inner Light Centre in Keen Street Lismore.

For information about the AmnesTEA fundraiser or other Siri Shakti Yoga classes, phone 0431-094-483 or email: sirishaktiyoga2@gmail.com

Neuro transmitters and Bowen therapy

Hi all, hope you are all embracing your thermal underwear on this cold morning. Long johns are so good for keeping out the cold, although I notice there are still a few farm type blokes living in my area that are running around in singlets and the dreaded, so bad for you, thongs. They breed 'em tough round here.

Some years ago I was forced to have a knee replacement. I can't say it was an absolute disaster because the titanium aerals in my knee are still happily tuning into radio Nim-FM and there is no pain.

At the time, due to unforeseen circumstances, the pain was appalling. I was extremely depressed and very angry with the system in a large hospital that no longer allows nursing staff time to treat their patients as anything more than a piece of meat that better hurry up and leave.

I was also angry with the surgeon, who had dared to exhibit a blatantly arrogant and uncaring persona towards moi in the operating room, at a time when I was too nonplussed and weak to take him to task for his dreadful behaviour.

Six weeks later, knowing that I was in danger of losing every good friend I had, due to my less than attractive performances of late, I stomped off to the chiropractor with my walking stick shedding sparks of rage across the footpath.

A few precise little adjustments later, performed by a very clever man, who unfortunately has moved to an area where his talents will bring him more people, I limped quietly away. An almost pain free, calm and centred buddhist being.

No longer was the surgeon in danger of receiving a visit from the Mafiosa and the cheques in the hospital letterbox were once again safely protected from unexpected, explosive destruction.



by Tonia Haynes
Dip Bowen Therapy, Cert Remedial Massage, Advanced Pranic Healer

How is it possible that in half an hour I could change from a raging, grieving, constipated, neurotic woman to a person of reasonable sanity?

It was because the luvly chiropractor lad kick-started the neuro transmitter chemicals in my brain, spine and digestive system that bring about feelings of peace and calm. There are a few of them and they have long and complicated names. But in this case the neuro transmitter dopamine assisted me to forgive the medical system for treating me like a dope and gave me hope for a better future, while the neuro transmitter serotonin lifted my mood.

I then went home and hugged the dog, which released the cuddle neuro transmitter, oxytocin and made me feel loved.

Apparently romantic love causes the same chemical neuro transmitters to release as a cocaine hit, making us feel ten foot tall and bullet proof. And similar to withdrawal from addictive drugs,

when romantic love is gone we go through the same withdrawals. No wonder we feel like cat's poo (small and stinky) when we are rejected by someone we've decided at the time is that special, one off, who we will never find again.

As to rejection, being rejected by another slows down our heart to below baseline. So considering we live in a society where rejection is prevalent in plague like proportions and we are apparently hard-wired to fear rejection, we are slowly killing each other off every day.

I could waffle on all day about this stuff because these days the information is coming through thick and fast from them who knows, but as usual the editor won't let me. He has a paper to print.

Enough to say that in my work, my ultimate desire is to make my clients feel better. Not only physically but mentally and emotionally. Bowen Therapy and the other techniques I use have the ability to kick start the neuro transmitters mentioned above, by clearing the blockages that make us hold our breath 'til we're blue. Just like that very special chiropractor.

Plus my clients receive the nurture without the added worry of falling in love.

One last word. I found out years later that the surgeon in question was having a rough time when he opened my leg. Two weeks before, his wife had left him. So the poor bloke was suffering from dopamine neuro transmitter withdrawal.

All the same, if he had said sadly, "Sorry for treating you so badly, but my wife just left me." I would have replied. "Awww you poor boy, after this is over come over for cuppa and a chat. I'm a good listener. I'll let you have a five minute whinge.

"Love, light and laughter.
Phone for an appointment at my clinic in Nimbin: 02 6689-0240, mobile: 0439-794-420.

Magic potions, hypnotherapy and memory

by Dr Elizabeth McCardell

Sometimes, but thankfully not often, I see a client bounding down my stairs to my consulting room starry eyed and full of expectation that I will hypnotize them and they will remember something or other from their distant past. I say to them, first, I've run out of magic potion and secondly, neither memory nor hypnosis operates like that.

I know of a therapist who keeps a drawer full of beautiful wands, and I'm quite disposed to getting one because they're rather fun. They are, though, utterly useless for clinical hypnotherapy. This is not magic the thing we do. It is inspired and intuitive science, but science nevertheless. In other words, there is a huge body of sound, peer reviewed, research and literature on the subject of hypnosis and memory. Our repertoire does not include wands, potions, and incantations.

Memory is not a photographic cache from which one can miraculously extract this and that. It is context dependent and co-emergent with situation, time, space, and people involved. It is not possible to drag out a memory that you've actually never remembered.

During the 90s there was a fad for using therapy, particularly hypnotherapy to tap "repressed" memories.

This idea is based on the belief that all symptoms are based on past experiences, forgetting that we make meaning of our world in a continual, here and now, process that isn't locked in the past but is continually reinforced by the way we see ourselves. Symptoms are accessible to our present state of mind, and changeable so we don't need to dig out old photographs of our past in order to get well.

Age regression hypnosis has sometimes been used by some very unscrupulous people to crack open what was at best misguided, but worse, dangerous to health, family cohesion and mental stability; in other words, not therapeutic at all. In the latter part of the 90s newspapers, magazines and courtrooms were full of accounts of "remembered" Satanic rituals and rapes with demonic weaponry, or visitations and medical experiments by aliens. But these so-called memories were mostly implanted in the minds of the patient and the therapists, who did this false memory retrieval work, developed a following of who claimed to have very similar "memories". The problem was, and is, that these so-called "memories", or "confabulations" felt genuine, even though they were not anything historically based, nor possible.

For instance, I had this idea that I saw Zeppelin airships flying over Nedlands, the

Perth suburb I grew up in. Zeppelins were invented in the latter years of the 19th/early 20th century and used in the First World War. There is absolutely no way I could've seen such a thing when growing up in the 50s and 60s, though my feelings of anxiety and terror were real. I can only surmise that I dreamt it. My father had a book on balloons, and my imaginative self loved looking at that.

Trauma specialists note that things aren't forgotten; they may be blocked from full consciousness, but the very presence of symptoms such as nightmares, trigger responses, agitation, etc shows how the trauma is remembered: in the physicality of our being. Uncovering memories are not found to be all that useful in the healing process. The brain does us a service in blocking out the extremely unpleasant. Such memories may very rarely emerge later, but in the meantime we have an amnesia for the particulars of the event for a reason (our mental well being), while retaining a global knowledge of the trauma.

We may remember bits and pieces of something that happened a long time ago, but it is not possible to corroborate such memories for the truth of the matter. Hypnosis does not reveal truth, just like a magic potion cannot be a truth serum. We do not have any means to locate in the here and now

something that happened a long time ago. Hypnosis can only work with symptoms and change how we see and feel those and thereby free ourselves from them.

I am not in the business of confabulating a person's history. I am only interested in helping a person feel more whole and better about themselves, whether this is giving up smoking, restoring a better diet, better sleep, a much more relaxed sense of well being, less pain, happier relationships, more confidence, etc. I don't put ideas into a person's head, I merely use the images, words, and thinking style presented to me. I endeavour to keep what I say clean and untampered with from my own way of seeing the world. I am literally using what they have given me in ways to change negative patterns of thought, addictions, recursive thinking, etc. Curiously, and this was told to me by my teachers when I first started working as a therapist, a patient gives you much of what you need to work therapeutically with them. Quite often the solution is found in the first sentence. It's there to be incorporated in a healing process. Hypnotherapy, counselling and psychotherapy are all very good at working with what is present now and allows the patient to move more confidently forward without being held prisoner to the past.

Sleep...

by Brigid Beckett

Around a third of adults experience sleep deprivation, either occasionally or persistently. This frustrating condition leads to tiredness and decrease in functioning and wellbeing during the day. As well as increasing health problems, both physical and mental. The immune system in particular is compromised. Recent research shows that sleeping for less than 6 hours increases the risk of premature death.

In Chinese medicine sleep is recognised as important to replenish kidney energy, the jing, our deepest form of energy. It is the constitutional energy we are born with, and is difficult to replenish. Depleting it leads to serious consequences. Lack of sleep depletes kidney yin, creating a cycle with worsening insomnia, palpitations and anxiety. Long term there can be serious consequences such as auto-immune disease or increased likelihood of genetic conditions manifesting.

Insomnia is caused by a disturbance of the shen. The shen is the most rarified form of qi which resides in the heart. The kidney and heart are closely linked. The kidney (water) keeps heart fire in check, while in turn heart fire stops water stagnating and fluids



accumulating.

The shen (heart) and jing (kidney) work together for clear consciousness. Shen, being light and rarified, needs yin and blood to anchor it. Common causes for kidney yin damage include lack of sleep, night shifts, serious or prolonged illness, worry and stress, too much coffee and other stimulents.

The heart shen itself is strengthened and balanced by emotional and spiritual connection. Particularly the universal connection of ourselves to everything that exists. This aspect cannot be ignored for longterm health of the shen.

Heart and kidney yin deficiency leads to light sleep, frequent waking, feeling hot and restless, sometimes waking with palpitations or panic attacks. The tiredness caused by yin deficiency involves restlessness or anxiety, tired but wired, setting up an exhausting cycle.

There are different causes of insomnia as defined by Chinese medicine. In practice more than one may exist together as long term conditions tend to be complicated.

One common result of heart fire or heart yin deficiency can be phlegm heat. This phlegm is described as the insubstantial type that mists the orifices of the heart. The insomnia in this pattern has fitful disturbed sleep, sometimes early waking round 4am. There may also be palpitations, anxiety, woolly headedness, chest discomfort or indigestion.

Another common pattern is liver qi constraint. Usually from emotional turmoil, stress and lack of relaxation

this pattern creates heat or fire which disturbs the shen. Alcohol and rich heating foods will worsen this insomnia. There can be restlessness, difficulty falling asleep, dream disturbed sleep. But most typical of this pattern is waking between 2 and 4am. The pattern is always worse with stress. Frequently there will be other health issues from qi constraint as all body systems are affected, eg digestive problems, menstrual disturbance, irritability, headaches, tight shoulders, feelings of constriction in chest or throat.

The heat of this pattern longterm will damage yin, causing overlap with kidney and yin deficiency insomnia.

There are also insomnia types not involving heat. One is blood deficiency, where the shen is not anchored because of insufficient blood. Usually the main problem is falling asleep or dream disturbed sleep. Often the blood deficiency is from the spleen not producing blood, so there is associated fatigue, poor appetite or digestive weakness, sometimes dizziness.

Chinese medicine is well placed to deal with insomnia. Insomnia often has complex causes and in many cases has become chronic. Therefore patience is needed to find the root cause, find the underlying imbalances and turn the pattern around. For good health and happiness it is essential to overcome insomnia.

Acupuncture and herbs have proved to be a valuable tool in helping people overcome this common, frustrating and debilitating condition.

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