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Photo: Julie Marsh

# Helping wildlife in drought

The drought continues to tighten its grip in NSW, causing more hardship for farmers and livestock. Our native wildlife is also suffering greatly, especially now the breeding season has begun. WIRES Northern Rivers is receiving an increase in calls for wildlife in trouble.

**There are things we all can do to help.**

Providing fresh clean drinking water that is replaced each day is vital. Shallow dishes such as glazed ceramic pot plant saucers can be placed under shrubbery for small mammals, lizards and frogs and also in a protected position on a higher platform for birds. Remember to include a rock or stick so that the smaller animals and birds can get out easily. You will be amazed at how quickly word gets out and how many different species will utilise this life saving water.

WIRES do not recommend feeding birds as an unbalanced or incorrect diet will cause health problems, even more so when birds feed it to their growing chicks. Increasing the natural food in your gardens is more beneficial.

Most birds feed their chicks insects, which are a complete food package. Keeping a quiet corner of your garden watered with a sprinkler for a short period each day will encourage a range of insects and provide easier digging for bandicoots. Flowering trees and shrubs can be watered with grey water to encourage fresh blossoms. Keep a compost heap and turn it over every few days to expose the myriad of insects and worms. Don't use insecticides or rodent baits.

Wallabies and kangaroos may venture in closer to houses and road sides seeking some green pick. As always, keep domestic pets contained and take

care driving on roads, particularly at dusk and dawn.

Many native animals drown in cattle water troughs. They will try to access the water but if they fall in they cannot get back out. A simple solution to this is to put in a stick or hang a rope from the edge of the trough so that any animal that fall in can climb back out.

Please spare a thought for our amazing and diverse wildlife who also struggle to survive during these difficult times.

An all-volunteer organisation, WIRES relies heavily on the generosity of caring people for support. All donations \$2 and over are tax deductible. Now is also a great time to join WIRES and start learning to be a wildlife rescuer. Our 24-hour hotline is for all rescue, advice or membership calls in the Northern Rivers – call 6628-1898 or go to: <http://wiresnr.org/Helping.html> to find out how you can help.

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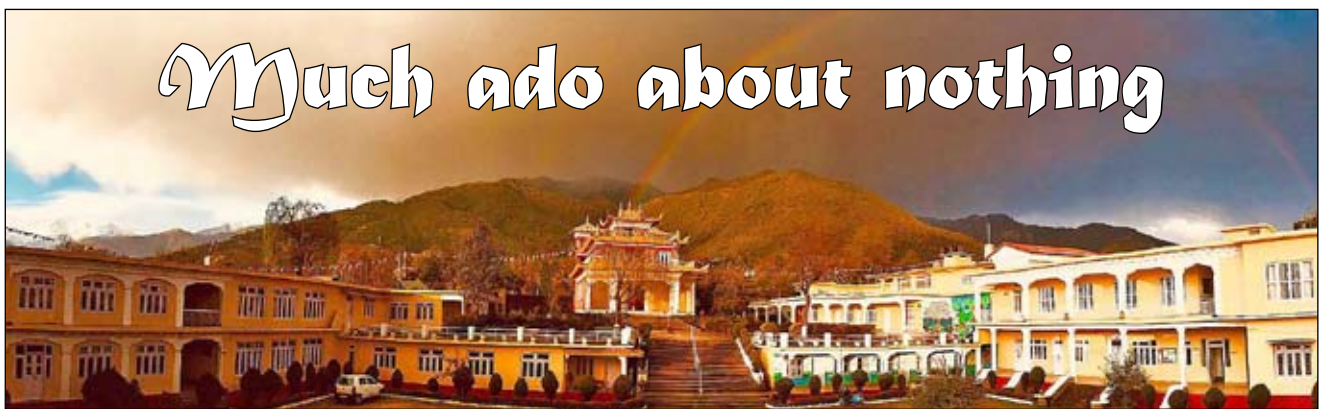
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# Much ado about nothing

by Simon Thomas

“Are you out of your mind?” A friend asked me when I announced that I intended to sit down and shut up for four long weeks at the Deer Park rainy season meditation retreat in the Indian Himalaya. “Do you realise that you have to get up early, be on time for sessions and,” shock horror, “do what you're told?”

Why would a free spirit like myself subject himself to the borderline torture of sitting still many hours per day, punctuated with bouts of slow walking, silent meals, and shunning of communication? More to the point, what is *mind* anyway, and was I really in it in the first place? That was one thing I was hoping to investigate.

“Just sit comfortably and notice your breath coming in and out,” the instructor told me. “When your mind wanders, bring it back to the breath again.” I soon discovered that this task is easier said than done. For starters, sitting still has never been my strong point; had I been born 20 years later, I would have been put on Ritalin for sure. However, the combination of peer pressure and pride helped to keep my

act together for those tedious sessions, and like Horton the elephant, I sat, and I sat, and I sat, and I sat.

At first, I found myself buffeted from past to future like a ping pong ball, revealing in shocking detail what an out of control train wreck my mind had become. One minute you are noticing the air going in through your nostrils, the next you are sipping coffee with Audrey Hepburn by the Eiffel Tower. I began to notice how intensely I crave entertainment; anything to get away from actually being in the present moment.

For a change, my pig-headed determination had some benefit, and after a few days of extreme discomfort and irritation, the assault of unwanted thoughts died down, I was beginning to win the war of attrition. I noticed just how useless 90% of those projections really are, be they hopes and fears, or obsession with a past that can't be changed. *Why are these intruders squatting on the prime real estate of my day to day experience?* I wondered.

As my ability to simply rest in the moment stabilised, the natural waves of thought swelling through my mind became more of a side-show than a

distraction, impotent of their usual power to absorb my full attention. As my concentration on what was going on before me increased, sensual experiences gained an intoxicating new power, even when I was not on the cushion. Just eating a normal meal became a new world of aroma, flavour, and texture, while colours bloomed with unusual intensity, and boredom was overtaken by a deep sense of contentment.

In my new-found clarity, some of my old compulsions just faded into the woodwork, left behind like toys which no longer interest a child. When I finally emerged from my self-imposed internet exile, I decided to check the news – an activity which I suspected had been sucking up way too much of my time of late. I decided to open a news site and check the first article which caught my eye, as a litmus test of whether I had wasted much of the past couple of years. I turned on my phone, and up came the list of stories. The first one I saw carried the following headline; “German police rescue man from baby squirrel,” so I turned the phone back off.

Looks like I am going to have a lot more time on my hands!

# Caring for orphan koala joeys

*Koala Kolumn*

by Susannah Keogh,  
Care co-ordinator

Anika (pictured, right) is one of Friends of the Koala's special orphan joey carers and as we are often asked about what this entails, we asked Anika to tell us her story:

"I volunteered in the wildlife hospital with koalas for four years, learning much about them and also how to handle them with care. I kept asking questions and the hospital manager thought she could get rid of me by saying I could become a carer, so with her 24/7 help I jumped into it. By that time I had been rescuing koalas for about five years and anyone interested in becoming an orphan joey carer will need to have some basic knowledge, a trusted network of experienced carers to call 24/7, to attend all workshops and keep asking questions.

A typical day for a carer starts at 5.30am when I prepare for the last feeds of the night, feed the joey(s) and make sure their bedding is clean, warm and dry, so they can go to sleep. That's when our job starts: washing the pouches and bedding,

cleaning and sterilizing the bottles, teats and syringes that I have used that day, and making up fresh milk for the next 24 hours.

If the joey is small, there will be another feed around 10-11am, and if the joey is big enough it will probably sleep until 2-3pm and I will have a bit of time to myself. They will need fresh leaf for the afternoon, so we'll go out and cut it (sometimes a two hour round trip). After the first afternoon feed we get rid of yesterday's leaf, clean the leaf pots and put fresh leaf in. (Hopefully I'll have time to feed the rest of the family before the evening feeds start). Most of the time we 'feed by demand' which means the joey will let us know when it wants a feed. This can be every two hours in the evening and 3-4 hourly through the night. Of course there will be play time too – usually anywhere between 11pm - 2am, and before we know it, it's 5.30 again! This is a 'normal' day, as on 'special' days we drive to the wildlife hospital for a check-up or treatment, which



takes another minimum 3 to 4 hours out of our day.

The best thing about being an orphan joey carer is knowing that you are making a difference to every single individual that comes into your care, getting to know their personalities, seeing them grow up, getting better and stronger and moving on to the next enclosure. And apart from the animal side of it, I have found some amazing friends amongst the carers. We feel the same, understand the pain, forgive any mistakes, help each other out and are always there for each other.



sometimes up to a year or more – as we have a 'one mum' policy. You will need to know their food: ie. your leaf species, and get it fresh every day, even when it's bucketing down or go out at 5am on those really hot days! If you care for koala joeys, a few things will be over-rated especially sleep and a social life. You will need to think about your commitment, be prepared to make long hours and live like a zombie – but OMG when it comes to a release... That's the very best part of it all! It makes everything worthwhile."

The worst thing about being a joey carer is losing them or having to watch them not thriving. Sometimes I wish I could carry their pain or discomfort. With all the equipment available to the vets, and all the tests that can be done, sometimes the joey has an issue that we don't know about. You won't know until weeks or months

later when all of a sudden something is not quite right and they die in your care.

Another challenge is that koala carers all get to the stage where our shoulders go bad from cutting the leaf, every single day, big sticks and at least 5-6 per koala per day.

If you decide to be a joey carer you will need to commit for a long time –

For information about koalas and conservation, or to book a tour, please visit: [www.friendsofthekoala.org](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org) or email: [info@friendsofthekoala.org](mailto:info@friendsofthekoala.org)  
Follow us on Facebook.  
To report environmental incidents, including removal of koala habitat, ring the 24/7 Office of Environment & Heritage Enviro Line: 13-15-55.



The Kyogle crew

## Meeting votes for new Kyogle group

by Sarah Antill

There's an old Irish saying: "Ar scáth a chéile, a mhaireann na daoine". Literally it means "In the shadow of each other, the people survive". It reminds me of the English saying, "We're all in this together".

Both seem relevant, considering the unprecedented environmental challenges we all face, and the inability of our politicians to sort things out.

Seventeen people from a range of community organisations gathered in Kyogle on Saturday, August 25 to discuss joining forces in a possible Kyogle environment group. The idea arose from a late-night huddle of Kyogleans on the pavement outside the KMI hall, after the NEFA forests

information night last June.

The aim of Saturday's meeting was to share thoughts about what a Kyogle environment group might do, and what it might look like. An important underlying idea was make it easier for Kyogle's several environmentally active groups to work together, and to give concerned locals - whether affiliated with existing groups or not - ways to address a broad range of issues using a variety of approaches.

After nearly two hours of 'robust' discussion, at 2.20pm those present voted to form a 'group, yet to be named, to facilitate and support everyone working to protect the biosphere and planet'. The plan is to help existing groups share

information, skills and resources, and to support those groups in ways most useful to them.

If you are a group working in any way to protect Earth's vital Life-support systems – for example healthy soils and land, clean air and water, forests and biodiversity, stable climate and so on – our new yet-to-be-named group would love to hear from you. If you're:

- working to reduce consumption or waste
  - helping people access healthy organic food
  - engaged with regenerative farming
  - doing bush regen
  - politically active in support of environmentally-friendly policies, or against destructive ones, etc
- We'd love to start a

conversation about how we can help you help the planet. Finding skills? Sharing resources? Combined events or campaigns?

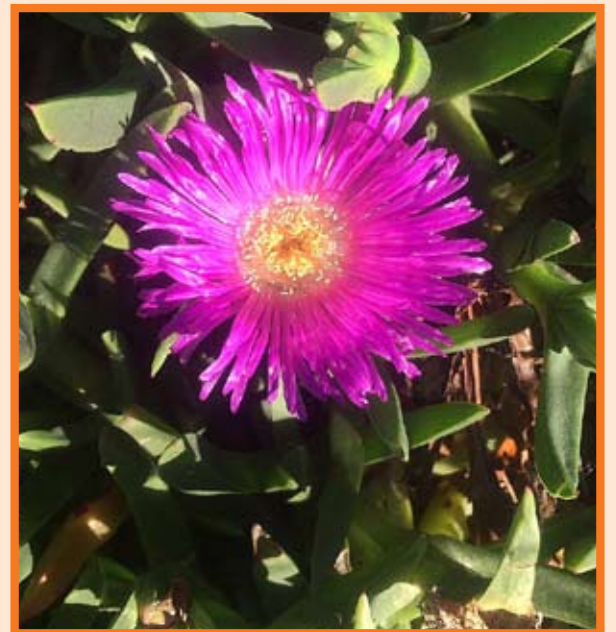
If you would like to help us, we'd definitely love to hear from you.

There will be a meeting on Saturday 29th September, at noon in the the Kyogle Memorial Institute Banquet Room (aka the Supper Room) to thrash out who's going to do what and how, and to move this thing to the next stage.

For more information, contact Sarah on 0458-936-736, or email: [sarahantill@optusnet.com.au](mailto:sarahantill@optusnet.com.au) to be put on the email list.

Thanks to everyone who was there on Saturday for such good ideas and debate. All in this together.

## Plant of the month



### Pigs Face *Carpobrotus glaucescens*

by Richard Burer,  
Bush regenerator

Folks, it's Spring now, and it's a great time to leave the hills and check the beach out before summer madness descends.

Pictured is an old friend *Carpobrotus glaucescens*, commonly known as pigs face, a coastal and estuarine creeping herb common along our local coastline.

It's a robust plant

found on sand dunes and exposed to the sea, and it's particularly hardy and resilient.

I was always heartened by its easy propagation and fast growth rates on the sand dune rehabilitation projects over the years, and its bright flowers warming the soul upon arrival at the beach.

Pigs face has bright pink flowers followed by edible fruits that are purple when ripe.

# Beyond the myth of genetic determinism?

When you are viewing through a microscope and observing the contents of a cell, you can realise that the individual parts of the cell are busy at work fulfilling their specialised functions in what appears to be mysterious ways.

As you investigate how cells function, at some stage you realise how important the environment is to the functioning of each cell. When uniformly genetically identical stem cells are placed into a culture dish with conditions that support muscle growth, then muscle cells evolve from the undifferentiated cells.

If the environmental culture is manipulated, then bone cells can be produced, and if the environmental culture is again changed then fat cells can be produced.

So while each of the cells in these experiments was genetically identical, the fate of the cells was not predetermined by genetics, but was dependent upon the surrounding environmental conditions.

So while there is a common myth, not only in the general



by Cameron Storey

population, but often taught in medical institutions and perpetuated by doctors, that the fate of cells is controlled by the DNA and genes of the cells, these experiments pioneered by Dr. Bruce Lipton showed that it was not the genes but the cultured environments that were controlling the fate of the cells.

Like many great discoveries throughout history, many of the established authorities were and are often against this new biological paradigm.

When you look at yourself in the mirror you may see one singular entity but each person is actually a

complex (multiple occupancy) community of around 70 trillion living cells. Every cell has all of the functions of your entire body.

Every cell has a musculoskeletal system, a respiratory system, a nervous system, an immune system, a circulatory system and endocrine system, etc. So both the macroscopic person and the microscopic cells mirror each other.

This is important because the research on the biology and function of cells can be utilised to understand the health and disease process in human beings.

If doctors use the outdated model of the genes controlling the dysfunction/disease of body cells, they are disregarding the research that the environment plays a prominent part in the dysfunction/disease process.

When Dr. Lipton expanded into studying quantum physics, he realised that it was related to the operation and function of cells and that the outdated model was the Newtonian model of cell function.

After Charles Darwin's

observations that the traits of the parents dictate the traits of the offspring, the identification of chromosomes (c.1900), genes (c. 1940s) and DNA (1953) gave rise to genetic determinism.

When people realise they didn't pick their genes and can't change them, they start to feel powerless and that they are victims of their genes.

When the Human Genome Project revealed, in 2001, that we carry a paltry 30,000 genes, the late Dr Paul Silverman (degrees in parasitology, immunology and genetics) pointed out that this suggested that, in many cases, genes are tweaked or even trumped by a myriad of other influences, including environmental, tissue, and cytoplasmic factors.

He said, "We need to re-evaluate the doctrine of genetic determinism and the supremacy of the gene in predicting disease."

*The Dharma Centre and Medicinal Gardens is available for overnight accommodation on AirBnB. Call (02) 6689-7120 or Facebook Dharma Centre - Lillfield*

# Don't forget Nepal

by Helen Simpson

Still waiting for monsoon to finish... the road to Bolgaun is always destroyed by landslides every rainy season.

Once rains stop and the road is repaired with an excavator, materials can be transported up to the village, then construction of the final house 12 can commence, thus completing the first stage of this rebuild project.

The holy festival of Dashain is on the full moon in October, and then absolutely no work happens for two weeks or more. So, we are aiming for mid to late November

This last house will be a workshop for the main builders of the village, and any volunteers to complete their training in earthquake resistant earthbag construction.

We will also be painting the 12 houses, so volunteers are welcome (if not wanting to build) to add their artistic touches.

We can really only build this last house with another \$3000, and that should cover paint as well.



This will be the last opportunity to participate in this project, and so far volunteers have gained much from their time in the village.

Anyone interested in partaking in the experience phone Helen on 02 6689-1417 and leave a message, or email: [helensim7@gmail.com](mailto:helensim7@gmail.com)

This five to seven day workshop in the village will include earthbag construction, and mud and straw rendering techniques, and access to other projects using round designs etc. in and around Kathmandu at a cost of \$250.

All donated money goes directly into the houses and all volunteers are totally self-funded.

Donations can be made to the Nimbin Nepal Relief Fund, Summerland Credit Union BSB 728-728 Account 22305642. (Sorry, not tax deductible.)



## Food Matters

by Neil Amor

The Nimbin Organic Food Co-op isn't just about good food. We also stock an ever-increasing range of locally produced Herbal Tonics and Body Oils.

Amanda (pictured) is behind a range of natural products under the name of SkyHouse Apothecary that nourish the body inside and out.

After studying naturopathy in Sydney, Amanda found her home here in 1994, and the following year joined the Apothecary, right in the heart of Nimbin.

A believer of a healthy mind and natural health, and wishing to combine food and medicine, led to the development of a range of herbal syrups that currently include digestive, immune boost and heart circulation, with more to come.

Amanda wished to avoid skin products with chemical additives, and set about producing nourishing face oils that provide nutrition to your skin. Additionally, a

range of perfumes featuring essential oils is also available.

SkyHouse Apothecary products can be found in Lismore, the Channon and Bangalow on market days, and at the Nimbin Organic Food Co-op seven days a week.

Here's a favourite combo of Amanda's.

### Seed crackers

3 cups of seeds (any combo of sesame/sunflower/pumpkin), 1 cup chia or linseed, 3 cups water.

Mix thoroughly and allow to thicken. Spread as thinly as desired on a baking tray with baking paper. Bake for about 1 hour, but turn over after 1/2 hour, should be firm enough by then. Score to make cutting easier.

### Beetroot hommus

Bake or steam 2-3 beetroot. Chop and put in a food processor. Add to taste: tahini/salt and pepper/lemon or lime juice/olive oil/cumin. Blend all together. Place in bowl and dip in crackers. Yum!

# A different perspective

## Animal Talk

by Donna Connolly

Ever wondered what your animals are trying to tell you? I believe a better question is "How do they think, how can we understand them better?"

Here's some insights that have come to me "straight from the horse's mouth" so to speak.

Animals live in the present moment. They don't work with the concept of linear time (as this is purely a human invention).

Understanding this basic principle, allows us to "hear them better." They may talk in terms of seasons, or use a particular incident, that can help you create a timeline.

For example a question may be "When did a behavior start and why?" Possible answers: it was hot, and we had been to the beach, there were loud bangs.

How I may receive this message is via a movie clip of the events.

There may be smells, feelings, tastes etc or on occasion, I can "become them" in that moment. So I can portray in human terms how the animal experienced the event. Including the sensorial emotion.

I never know how I will receive messages, and I am conscience of not heavily interpreting. Or having preconceived notions. As truth is always better than what I could ever imagine.

## How people can get more from their animal communication experience?

Not every session produces yogi-like insights - lower your expectations and allow your animals to communicate from the heart. Accept them for who they are, and their sweet messages that they have decided to share with you... It maybe the simplest joy of their favourite toy...



Don't treat the session as an interrogation - go into it with love, respect and a fully functioning sense of humour. It is really precious to witness an animal's wisdom and insights being honoured.

Be open to "Animal Speak" and perceptions - sometimes they refer to humans as two-legs and I have a gorgeous client, who refers to her supplementary greens as her "vital".

Animals find us to be curious creatures... Finding humour in us wanting to mask our true selves and essence with weird smells and clothes.

They see themselves as perfect, and quite often question why we see imperfections, issues and problems first and foremost.

They are the embodiment of the attitude of gratitude! Have you ever seen a dog who has just received a big juicy bone? "Best day ever!"

Please embrace their quirky ways. It is what makes them so unique, loveable and sweet. Don't focus on their faults. See them as a perfect work in progress,



as we all are.

I was recently asked to write a paragraph about animal grief for an upcoming book. I thought I'd share it:

## Do animals grieve?

Yes, absolutely. Although animals live in the moment, they still have heart and soul attachments with humans and animals.

As individuals, they express themselves uniquely. Some require love and affection while others require space and reflection.

What I do know is that when they transition, their souls are still contactable and they still exist in our lives as guardian angels. Love really is eternal.

Thank you to everyone who sent through suggestions for the perfect place. Stay tuned, I believe I have found it! Classes and workshops coming soon. The best way to connect with me is via email or text.

Email: [rivergem88@gmail.com](mailto:rivergem88@gmail.com)  
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# Behaviour and communication

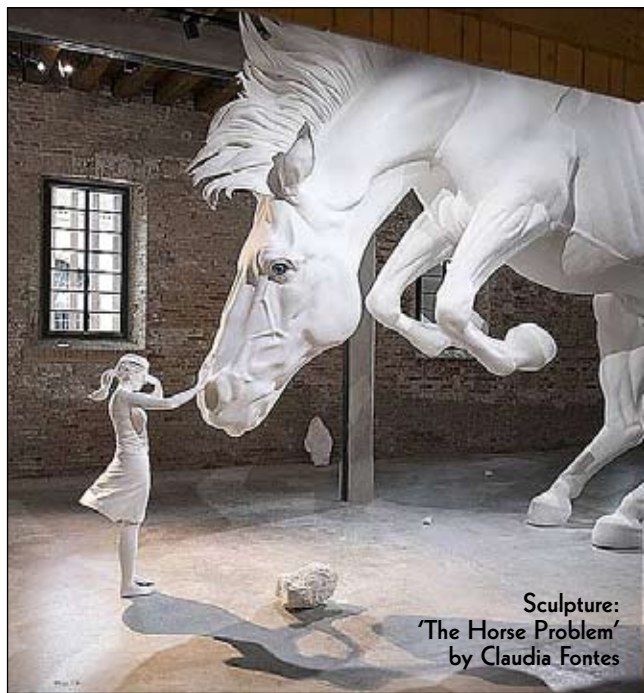
by Les Rees,  
Equine naturopath

I recently had a couple of very negative comments on my Facebook page made by persons who had misread the meaning of a remark I made to someone who had commented on a post I shared.

It began to get out of hand after I explained that my comments were not directed at them, but it was too late as the genie had been released from the bottle and I ended up removing the post and its comments from my site because the continuing disagreement was getting nowhere and, so far as I'm concerned, it's simplest just to agree to disagree and walk away.

I'm telling you this because it made me realise that behavioural problems are often linked with poor communication born out of the desire to feel important, and I have to ask myself to consider the impact this can have on the animals in our care.

Our treatment of animals can have devastating consequences creating significant behavioural changes that arise from defensive mechanisms and it's something we all need to be aware of if we are to create a happy life for them. If animals are to trust us, they need to be nurtured not berated.



Sculpture:  
'The Horse Problem'  
by Claudia Fontes

I have a dog who has worked out that people say "f\*\*k" when they're annoyed. He reacts by hiding around the corner looking anguished. This reaction came about because a regular visitor to our house used to tell him to f\*\*k off in an abusive way when our dog tried to communicate with him.

The man hadn't realised that it could cause our dog to be upset. Unfortunately he saw the dog as "just an animal", and I have to ask myself how many of us actually consider what it would be like to be on the receiving end of our bad behaviour. All too often, we

just don't notice because we are too busy looking after our own selfish interests.

Try doing this with 500Kg of horse and see where that gets you! There are so many beautiful horses ruined by people that aren't suited to owning them. They aren't machines for us to abuse in order to gain reflected glory, they are noble intelligent creatures that can develop amazing relationships with humans when they trust us.

Abuse can take many forms, like expecting them to perform when we have given too little information concerning our expectations. They don't speak the same language as we do and their

behaviour is governed by a different set of requirements for survival, so it's important to look at training through the eyes of the horse. If we continually bombard them using bad communication skills, they either shut down or blow up, and neither is a desirable option.

It's very important to reward good behaviour immediately by releasing pressure as soon as you get the desired response. If you ask a horse to move forward and keep nagging it with your leg after it has done so, you will confuse it. This generally leads to more severe forms of increased pressure and it won't be long before the horse starts behaving badly.

Unfortunately, it is common to see this at horse shows when the riders put their egos ahead of their horses, and it isn't uncommon to see the whips come out and the poor horses are on the receiving end from bad tempered riders whose egos have been deflated.

Communication is about being open to seeing the world from others' eyes and acting on what we see there in a positive manner. That way we can build a future based on trust, love and shared desires to work together as equals.

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## Breathing

by Suzy Maloney B.Eq.Sc.

Breath is the constant rhythm of life, but mostly we're unconscious of it. The importance of breathing consciously is recognised when meditating or doing yoga, and it's just as important when we're with horses.

Breathing rapidly and shallow signals stress and possible danger, while breathing slowly and deeply signals rest and safety. Because horses are flight animals their awareness of breath is more attuned than ours. They pick up on any and all subtle signs that may indicate possible danger, and this includes our breath.

When I am with horses, I now automatically reduce my heart rate and slow my breathing. This has developed naturally over many years of working with horses that are stressed and need calming. People often say that once I arrive their horses are much calmer. I see this as a gift that I can give to the horses. They would prefer to be in a relaxed state, and if I can help them find that it gives pleasure to both of us.

Recently I did a lot of scuba diving. It had been six years since I'd been diving, and in the past I always ran out of air first, resulting in the end of the dive. This time it was all different. I used so little air that the workers at the dive shop started commenting on it and telling other people. I did one dive with four professional dive instructors and



Suzy and Banjo

they all used more air than me. It was quite astonishing and I was not doing it deliberately.

In fact, at first I had no idea why it was happening. Then I thought of my horse work and the years of calming myself and reducing my breathing rate when I'm with them. I realised that when I went under water I entered the same state that I do when I'm with horses. In a way this is my meditation state. Everything slows down and I am fully in the present.

Being aware of the breath is useful for everyone when they're around horses. Most people are aware of that moment when you're on a scared horse and the horse finally takes a deep breath. Then we know the scare is over and everything will be ok. It's such a relief and we instantly relax.

We can also do this in the opposite direction. If you're on a spooky horse

you can take a deep breath and exhale audibly, allowing your whole body to relax as you do so. This is just pure magic for the horse. They have the same reaction as us, they think everything must be OK now and they relax.

I also use the breath when riding. When I want to do a downward transition, I take a deep breath and exhale as I ask the horse to slow down. If you exhale just before you use the rein aid, then over time the horse takes this as the cue and will stop just from the breath. I love this in a horse.

In the meantime, while they're learning this, the breath is useful as a preparation for the downward transition. It alerts the horse to what's coming so they can prepare for it, plus creates relaxation which helps enormously with getting a soft downward transition.

And then you can also do the opposite. As you pick up the reins to move off you can breathe inwards, this lifts your energy and helps to send the horse forward. Initially you may need to back it up with a leg aid. After a while horses will feel this and move off from the breath, lifted energy and focus.

Using your breath consciously while riding helps to bring you into the present moment, and it's only there that you can effectively communicate with a horse. This is a subtle skill that has enormous benefits for both of you.

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# The one who manipulates the gaslight

I recently watched the 1944 remake of the mystery-thriller *Gaslight*, about a man who tries to send his wife mad by constantly distorting her reality and suggesting that her experiences are false. Things go missing: a picture on the wall comes and goes, a cameo brooch goes missing, there are bumps and bangs, and the gaslight flickers apparently without reason. Her husband controls her, while apparently loving her, in order to keep her "safe".

As the film rolls on we see this abusive, self-centred shifty narcissist take things, hide them, cut her off from family, undermine her, while threatening her with the visitation of doctors to have her diagnosed insane, in order to find and steal some rare rubies. But, like the flickering gaslight, this woman has some awareness that something is out of kilter, but what?

Gaslighting is a popular term of a co-dependent dysfunctional relationship, not a diagnostic one. It is a relationship that may occur in partnerships, cults, even countries, where the gaslighter attempts to control the sense of reality of the other person, or people. Quite a lot has now been

identified regarding the cues to look for in a gaslighting scenario and how it feels to be gaslighted, but little is known about those who gaslight. This is what I intend to explore here. In the next month's article, I'll explore the gaslighter's strategies for keeping the gaslighted under thumb.

The gaslighted is anxious regarding the shifting realities, she doesn't know if she's loved or not because her abuser turns assurances on an off (I'm using "she" even though anyone can be the victim), she feels unsafe, yet told things to the contrary. She may experience digestive problems (something in the relationship cannot be swallowed), her skin becomes itchy and dry almost like a protective layer to the turmoil of un-understood occurrences, she cramps up, she can't sleep, etc.

We all need safety and security, and somewhere we can be accepted as we are. The gaslighter disrupts all this. Why, though, does he do it? The more insecure the gaslighted becomes, the more she clings to him, and that is his gain. He likes it that his partner needs him because he needs her to need him to feel validated. In this most vulnerable place, he



by Dr Elizabeth McCardell  
 M. Couns., PhD

(this is not gender specific) plays with her neediness: treating her occasionally with mildness and even superficial kindness or remorse, to give the gaslighted false hope.

In these circumstances, the victim might think: "Maybe he's really not that bad," or "Maybe things are going to get better," or "Maybe I'll stay, things are looking up," but the gaslighted should not believe any of it.

Gaslighters have an insatiable need to control others because of a deep-seated anxiety of abandonment. Maybe one of his parents used their child as a weapon against the other parent, all the while saying something like, "If you love me, you'll hate your other father/mother," where love is endlessly conditional. For an protected child growing up,

there are few options but to go along with this.

Things are 100% right or 100% wrong, for authoritarian gaslighters. They seek to control, dominate, and take advantage of another individual, or a group, or even an entire society. By maintaining and intensifying an incessant stream of lies and coercions, the gaslighter keeps the gaslighted in a constant state of insecurity, doubt, and fear. The gaslighter can then exploit their victims at will, for the augmentation of their power and personal esteem.

All gaslighters think they are not the problem and everyone else is. Gaslighters are practically impossible to get into therapy. If they do attend, it is to tell the therapist that their partner is the problem and if the therapist insists, then, apparently, the therapist is incompetent. In other words, they have no capacity for self-reflection, and if that relationship finishes, the gaslighter will move on to someone new. For the gaslighted, their only real option is to be free and find their own feet in the world and for potential partners to be vigilant about what's happening from the start.

[dr\\_mccardell@yahoo.com](mailto:dr_mccardell@yahoo.com)

# Preventing postnatal depression

One of the more common questions I get asked from pregnant women is "How can I prevent postnatal depression?"

If you type 'postnatal' into google, some of the suggested phrases are 'postnatal depression', 'postnatal anxiety' and 'postnatal depletion'. It's not very positive is it?

I've heard some people refer to their symptoms as 'having postnatal', suggesting that the word postnatal has become synonymous with postnatal depression. When postnatal simply refers to the time after the baby arrives. This can be a very happy time with the right support!

The immediate time after birth is a huge time of transition. The new mother will most likely be experiencing sleep deprivation, huge hormonal adjustments and an identity transformation.

Many people have heard of 'the baby blues' as it can affect up to 80% of new mothers. Usual onset is around days three to five after the birth and can include symptoms of teariness, irritability, nervousness and feeling extra emotional.

With help and support from a partner, family or friends it normally resolves quite quickly. If these symptoms continue past two weeks after birth, it is considered a sign of something more serious.

Postpartum depression can have similar symptoms to the baby blues, however, they persist for longer than two weeks after birth and can occur any time in the first year postpartum. Symptoms often include; sadness, feeling empty or hopeless, feeling exhausted, loss of interest in self care, anxiety, overwhelm and loss of pleasure in life.



## Birth and Beyond

by Kirrah Stewart, Doula wisdom

Unfortunately, postpartum depression effects around one in seven women.

### How does someone know if they have postnatal depression?

The most widely used tool to screen for depression is the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale. This is something that can be done online or with a health care provider. If you suspect someone you know may be experiencing postnatal depression, please encourage them to seek help from a trained health care professional.

These are useful websites: [www.panda.org.au](http://www.panda.org.au) and: [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

If you know someone who has just had a baby, it's a good idea to keep checking in regularly. You can ask simple questions like: how have you been feeling over the last two weeks? Do you have good support? Have you had any issues? How can I be helpful?

### Here are some suggestions to help with improving mental wellbeing:

- Try to eat a healthy diet including fresh fruit and vegetables;
- Try to do some exercise. Even just a

gentle walk in fresh air and sunshine can help so much;

- Try to find ways to get more sleep. You can try napping when the baby sleeps if possible or enlist help from others so you can have a rest;
- Ask for help with housework, cleaning and meal preparation. This is extra important during the first six weeks postpartum so you can have proper time for healing;
- Try to be social. Reach out to other mothers or your friends and family;
- Make some time to do things you like, for example; a walk in nature, have a bath, read a book;
- Spend time with your partner (if you have one) to nurture your relationship;
- Meditate and do some deep breathing;
- Discuss your feelings and try to come up with solutions;
- See a naturopath and see if you may need to supplement with iron, B-group vitamins, calcium, magnesium or fish oils;
- Switch off from social media and have designated 'screen free time';
- Take things one step at a time.

Many people get back to me saying they wish they were more prepared for postpartum. I really believe having support is so essential. It's important to ask for help and learn to say yes when people offer. Try to get good habits in place like healthy eating and enjoying oxytocin boosting activities that help you feel more peace and joy.

*If you want to feel more confident about birth and postpartum, please get in contact to receive your natural birth checklist which will help you feel more prepared. Visit [www.doulawisdom.com/natural-birth-checklist](http://www.doulawisdom.com/natural-birth-checklist) or contact Kirrah on 0429-308-851 or: [kirrah@doulawisdom.com](mailto:kirrah@doulawisdom.com)*

# Indigestion

This month I am prompted by the number of people on medications for indigestion to write about this condition, as well as the number of advertisements around for indigestion medications, which suggests that this is a common problem.

Indigestion is sometimes referred to as heartburn or reflux. It is usually a description of discomfort in the upper abdomen or stomach, sometimes extending to a burning sensation in the chest. Often there are other digestive symptoms as well, for example bloating.

The common occurrence of this complaint can often be put down to poor diet, as well as other bad eating habits such as irregular meals and eating while under pressure. Foods that can cause or worsen this problem are sweet, cold, fried, fatty and overly rich foods, as well as just too much food, overtaxing



by Brigid Beckett

digestion.

Tea, green tea in particular, can help alleviate symptoms, also having wine with meals, common in some cultures. A small amount of bitter tasting food or drink with meals can help in the same way.

Some common medications can cause indigestion as a side effect, particularly anti-inflammatories and antibiotics.

People can be predisposed constitutionally to a 'nervous stomach' in which case they will have had indigestion and stomach discomfort as a long term problem. In terms of Chinese medicine diagnosis, this is due to the common pattern of liver qi stagnation. This stops the normal flow of qi, causing it to stagnate and rise.

Often the symptoms, which include

burping, sighing and nausea are worse when the person is upset and worse first thing in the morning. Acupuncture works well to move qi in this pattern. Stress reduction, appropriate exercise and avoiding tension during meals is also important.

Another pattern causing indigestion and related symptoms is phlegm damp. Accompanying symptoms are sluggishness and heaviness, tiredness and sometimes mucous problems. This pattern is also well treated with acupuncture but may take a little longer to respond, and diet also plays an important part. Phlegm forming foods include dairy, processed carbohydrates, sweet, rich and fatty or fried foods – junk foods specifically.

If it is too hard to restrict these foods completely, this is when the afore mentioned bitter foods may help, such as green tea, wine, mustard, horseradish, pesto, garlic chutney. Other beneficial foods are rye, sourdough, onions, pumpkin, oats, celery, beans, spices - for example, nutmeg, cardamom, cloves, dill, coriander, basil, ginger.

People commonly are using over the counter medications for heartburn, indigestion and reflux. They usually belong to the groups of proton pump inhibitors to decrease acidity, such as Nexium, or histamine blockers such as Zantac. These are not without side effects, especially if used long term.

They may be prescribed by a doctor to help heal erosions of the esophagus caused by reflux. However, these should heal within a month or two at the most.

Long-term use, especially when self-prescribing, carries a number of risks, some serious. Side effects include kidney or liver problems, diarrhea, increased risk of bone fractures, low vitamin B12 or low magnesium, headache, dizziness, and auto-immune disease.

Chinese medicine is a very good alternative to these medications either to treat symptoms or prevent recurrence.

Brigid Beckett is a registered acupuncturist working at Lismore Community Acupuncture. She can be contacted on 0431-702-560.

## Big bodies coping with bad backs

Our skeletal structure is just that, skeletal, which means it's skinny. And between the hips, pelvis and lower ribs there is little holding us together in the way of bones except a few vertebrae and their associated nerves, which travel to many different areas of the body. Mostly, we are held upright by muscles and a netlike structure called connective tissue

Large amounts of fat overloads muscles and connective tissue, which in turn displaces vertebrae and pinches the associated nerves. In fact, every kilo of excess weight on the stomach creates seven kilos of extra weight on the spine. Hence, sore backs, necks, shoulders and limbs.

There have been myriads written about what to eat to stay healthy. Sadly these days the five food groups are a tad suspect, due to the growing and preparation practices of the only animal I know that is

inclined to shit in its own nest.

All I can say is, if you are continually hungry and also crave sugar, your body is attempting to send you a message to give it better nutrition. For example, if you are low in the B group, which the liver needs in order to perform its five hundred different functions, it may read as though sweets are a good idea.

If you love dairy, take note that we lose the function to break down dairy products around the age of seven years, so all dairy just turns to fat, no matter how much calcium it contains. Conversely, goat milk products are easily digested and are also high in calcium.

If you are often tired, or suffering from arthritic pain, you may be lacking in trace elements, minerals or iron, or all three.

If you have trouble keeping your weight down, it may be due to a lack of the sixteen amino acids, (full protein) we



by Tonia Haynes

need to build cells and muscle. Our bodies produce eight amino acids; the other eight come from what we eat. So protein awareness is a good idea, particularly if one is a vegetarian. A tip: rice combined with chick peas and sesame seeds returns full protein.

Green veges are excellent because the chlorophyll they contain is very close in cellular structure to human blood and they create an alkaline environment that blasts away fat.

As to our favourite: good old acid-building carbohydrates...

bread, pasta, pastry. Mostly they turn into fat in order to protect the body from an overload of acid because disease just adores an acid environment.

It is one of my personal puzzles and all too dreary that we live in a world where the things that are bad for you taste the best. Ask any kid. They know.

Bowen therapy, which has been my favourite type of body work for twenty odd years, is excellent for removing muscular and skeletal pain from big bodies, because it targets with precision and minimum discomfort, the areas that need release.

There are five different methods of Bowen therapy and I have knowledge of them all, so if you have tried Bowen in the past with little result, it may be that the method used did not cater to your individual needs.

Phone for an appointment in Nimbin. 0439-794-420.

Love, light and giggles..

## Have you strained your lower back?

Have you strained your lower back or pinched the sciatic nerve?

Do you suffer pain that can run all the way down from your back to your toes and do you have a tingling or numb feeling? You can experience a consistent burning, pulling or aching sensation, and it can be mild or severe. It can also keep you awake at night if you sleep on that side.

A lot of men experience this pain due to driving with their wallet in their back pocket, and this compresses and aggravates the nerve. Pregnant women may too.

The sciatic nerve is the thickest nerve in the body. It really consists of two nerves the tibial and common peroneal bound together by a sheath. It begins from the L3-L4 area in the spine.

Damage to the L3-L4 area may be caused by a disc protrusion or bulging disc. You probably feel nerve

compression there and the pain can travel into your gluteal region between the piriformis muscle and another muscle called the superior gemellus. Then the nerve enters the back of the thigh and divides behind the knee. It goes down behind the calf and into the feet and toes, and pain and numbness can be felt in any of these areas.

In my experience most people's sciatic nerve is caught under the piriformis muscle because it can become very tight and difficult to release, even by physios and massage therapists.

It could also be because the pelvis is out of alignment, and even can be caused the jaw being imbalanced too.

There are tests that I can do to see if the pain is acute, sub acute or chronic and your body and nerve is treated in different ways to give relief. I can test your body in various ways to see where the nerve is compromised. Help is



by Sonia Barton

available to relieve that pain or even make it disappear. How would that feel?

Bulging discs are another area that need a lot of attention and healing. Did you know that your discs can be damaged through dehydration? Most people who are in their 40's and 50's suffer pain in their lower back, sometimes caused by a bulging disc. If we don't drink enough water on a daily basis, like two litres, then our bodies take water from our muscles and bones to supply the kidney, heart, brain and liver, which are the organs that keep us alive. The spinal discs lose

their structure, elasticity and lubricating liquid and become more brittle.

The body will even take water from the discs in our spine if desperate for water, therefore the discs compress and nerves begin to touch one another and the pain begins. But don't despair, we can rehydrate our whole body in six months if we drink at least two litres of fresh water every day. Yes, it takes six months to rehydrate when your body is dehydrated and in pain. And it's good to stay active too during this time.

Bowen therapy can help you in all the areas mentioned above. If you're in pain you can google "Bowen therapy sciatica" or "Bowen therapy lower back pain" and you will find many results showing ways we can help you with this gentle and healing therapy.

Sonia Barton is a Bowen Therapist and Reiki Master. Phone 0431-911-329, Email: soniabarton@yahoo.com www.BowenEnergyWork.com.au

## NATURAL LAW

Life has found a lighter place for many, which has brought welcome relief.

A new window has opened and glorious rays of golden light beam through. Allow the warmth and joy of the new experiences appearing in your life to wash over you and fill you up.

Whilst soaking up the goodness, it is important that you make time to listen. Sit alone in nature, don't take your phone, don't take a book, just be. Listen.

Doing this regularly will provide space to hear your own wisdom. Humans have consulted healers and wise-ones for thousands of years, however, this external support must be matched by regular self-care routines to be effective in creating and maintaining wellbeing. Listen to the answers within.

Our entire existence is made up of a complex web of relationships. Some relationships may feel draining, rather than life-giving or nourishing. Sometimes we need to give a relationship space, yet sometimes things can change if we choose to listen to the (sometimes hidden) messages a person communicates.

Making mistakes is an inevitable part of life, however, tidying up those mistakes is another thing entirely. No-one can turn back time, but anyone can say "I'm sorry I did that" or "I'm sorry my actions hurt you".

Being accountable clears the air and releases the elephant in the room, which creates space for more love. Sounds good to me.

If you are wanting some guidance and support with self-care, a Reiki treatment is gentle, yet powerfully clearing, bringing key themes to light whilst



by Helene Collard

instilling a sense of peace. If this sounds like what you're after, I'd love to hear from you. Contact Helene 0405-656-797 or: yemayacentre@gmail.com

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Helene has a Bachelor of Trauma & Healing (Law & Justice), is a Reiki Master and currently practices and teaches Reiki in Lismore.

Helene's approach to wellbeing is focused in personal growth, and she has been writing Natural Law and delivering wellbeing workshops since 2008. For information, enquiries and bookings visit: [www.yemayacentre.com.au](http://www.yemayacentre.com.au) or phone 0405-656-797.