

DIANBUNG GARDENS WORKSHOPS

April 9 – May 15 Growing Abundance
April 10 Essential Botany for Gardeners
April 16 Planning Year-round Food Supply
April 16 Composts and Compost Teas
April 23 Organic Soil Care
May 1 Apothecary Gardens
May 7-8 Tropical Tubers – Garden-to-Table
May 14-15 Preserves and Ferments
May 18-19 Natural Dyes: advanced techniques
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Fermentation Festival bubbles up again

by Eric Smith

Save the date for Blue Knob's 6th annual Fermentation Festival.

Come and join us at the Blue Knob Hall and Farmers Market on Saturday 11th May from 8.30am to noon, and sample some of the local fermented food and drinks.

This year's theme is Ferment for the Future!

There will be a great line-up of talks from several local ferment experts sharing their knowledge about how to make, store and use some of the many delicious ferments using all the nutritious local food we can grow in our region.

Local fermenters will be selling their wares at the markets so come along and have a taste of the wonderful world of fermentation.

You can go to the Blue Knob Farmers Market



Fermentation Festival Facebook page and keep up to date with all the details. There will also be an update of the event in the next

NGT.

People can also contact James Creagh on 0490-504-639 or email: jamescreagh@hotmail.com

Organisers James Creagh, Gillian Tubbs, Deborah Perry and Eric Smith in Deborah's fermentation-laden pantry

Big rewards volunteering with koalas

Koala Kolumn

by Linda Swankie

Before moving to Australia from the UK in 2016, I had visited Lismore, and Friends of the Koala, several times.

Having been extremely impressed with the amazing amount of work done by a small, volunteer organisation, I knew that when I moved here I wanted to contribute as much as possible.

Since becoming a volunteer, I have learned so much about koalas and the threats facing them, and have been shocked at how little the government is doing to help them.

Indeed, it seems intent on hastening the demise of this iconic marsupial by facilitating widespread removal of trees. Loss of habitat is the critical factor to the future of koalas in the wild. Although disease, car hits and dog attacks are important threats to koalas, these are all by-products of habitat loss.

You don't need any special skills or qualifications to become a volunteer at FOK, just a passion for koalas and a few spare hours a week. When I first started volunteering I helped out on afternoon shifts, where I cleaned and disinfected the runs and provided fresh leaf for the koalas.

As the vast majority of koalas at FOK are being prepared for release back into the wild, they cannot become humanised, so volunteers are not allowed to touch them.

However, just being close to these animals and knowing that you are contributing not only to the welfare of individual animals, but to the survival of the species as a whole, is a rare privilege.

Some animals are in care for many months and you get to know their individual personalities. Some are very quiet and gentle, some a bit sassy, some don't like being in care so can be a bit grumpy. Of course, you aren't supposed to have favourites, but everyone seems to have a soft spot for a particular koala.

As I've become more involved with FOK I have learned how to administer medicines and supplements; how to recognise the often subtle signs that urgent veterinary intervention is required; how to handle and rescue koalas and assess their immediate requirements and how to care for orphaned koala joeys.

I have also learnt other transferable skills such as how to supervise other volunteers, deliver education and lead tours. However, one of the most important things I have learned is to love and admire these beautiful creatures and passionately advocate for their protection

and future survival.

Some days as a volunteer can be very hard, particularly when rescuing koalas that have to be euthanased. I recently picked up a koala that had been found lying face down on the ground. It was so wasted it didn't even have the energy to lift up its head, and a juvenile was in such a bad state that he was in advanced organ failure.

Although heartbreaking, there was nothing that could be done for either of them except get them to a vet straight away to be euthanased to end their suffering.

Unfortunately, there seem to have been quite a few similar cases recently, with the hot, dry weather exacerbating the problems. I have heard some criticism of FOK for euthanasing koalas, but if you saw the extent of the suffering that we see on an almost daily basis you would have to agree it is the only option.

All our koalas are seen by a vet experienced in koala

treatment and, ultimately, it is the decision of the vet on whether to euthanase or not based on the welfare of the individual animal. It is never a decision that is taken lightly. All us volunteers have bad days where we have a good cry but we get up, dust ourselves down and keep going because we know the koalas need us.

It's not all doom and gloom though, and the good days more than compensate for the bad. Special moments include the first sight of a young joey emerging from its mother's pouch when in care, such as with Pearl and Oyster, or successfully releasing a koala back into the wild where it belongs after many months in treatment, such as the lovely Orla. I'll tell you their stories next time.

PS. We always need more volunteers!

To report a koala in trouble, or a sighting, phone (02) 6622-1233. More info is at: www.friendsofthekoala.org



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Hunt for the wild banana

by Triny Roe

I seed them here, I seed them there. I seed them everywhere!

Seeded bananas (*Musa* species).... top of the Northern Rivers weedys' hit list this season. Spread by bats, birds, possums and rodents, this is another environmental weed species that thrives in the lush sub-tropics of the Northern Rivers. It is found in disturbed areas, on roadsides, creek banks, in backyards and forests.

Apart from displacement of native species, the biggest problem with seeded bananas is their potential as a host for bunchy top. This serious viral disease is a threat to backyard bananas as well as the Australian banana industry. "We eat five million a day!"

In the 1920s bunchy top almost wiped out the Australian banana industry. Regulations dictate purchase of banana suckers only from certified disease free sources to reduce the spread of this and other banana diseases. Bunchy top is present in NE-NSW and SE-Qld.

Bunchy top is spread primarily by aphids. They feed on the banana sap and in doing so pick up the virus and then spit or slobber when feeding on the next



banana tree, thus infecting it. Messy eaters! The aphids can only fly a short way by themselves but can take advantage of a light wind to travel a long distance. And they don't need males to breed! The females give birth to two to four live young each day.

Bunchy top disease manifests as narrow flat yellow leaves. The leaves exhibit a morse code pattern of spots and dashes where the infected cells have lost their pigment. The fruit, if there are any, will be deformed.

Bunchy top can also be spread by humans. Non-licensed distribution of banana suckers can introduce infected material to new locations. A permit, which is free, must be applied for

if you wish to grow bananas and suckers purchased from accredited suppliers.

The regional priority weed is eradicate. At this stage seeded banana is not everywhere throughout the Northern Rivers though there are a few valleys harbouring solid infestations. One of the hot spots is along Gungas Road and Mulgum Creek, north of Nimbin.

Creek banks are a favourite habit, as seed soaking promotes germination which can be slow to initiate.

Rous Country Council weed officers recently inspected properties in the valley and mapped the position of established clumps and single specimens. With the landholder's permission, they have offered

to return to drill them. A one-time concerted whole valley effort is set to have a big impact on this pest species.

Follow-up by landholders and local Landcare groups will be a lot easier, dealing only with small seedlings which will continue to germinate for several years. One year's weed, seven year's seed, or more! So follow up, follow up, follow up.

Mechanical rather than chemical removal is another option, particularly when they are small. A mattock or a garden fork can prise out the young corms. Large established clumps are harder to deal with and may require machinery.

Ensure any fruit is bagged as these can contain up to 18,000 viable seeds per bunch. Call Rous County Council on (02) 6623-3800 to arrange disposal.

Call them on the same number if you wish to report sightings of the wild banana. A tell-tale sign is 'did you, or someone else, plant it there?' If it just appeared, chances are it's a rogue.

Commercial bananas, such as lady-finger and cavendish are hybrids of seeded bananas and are propagated vegetatively.

And don't forget your groundsel – it's flowering now. Get on to it.

Plant of the month



Tamarind tree *Tamarindus indica*

by Richard Burer,
Bush regenerator

It's taken over 20 years, but our Tamarind tree is finally flowering and it's flowers are stunning.

Tamarindus indica is a leguminous tree indigenous to Africa and is fairly well naturalised in many countries including India, where it reaches back several thousand years BC.

Tamarind produces a pod with edible pulp that features in many cuisines of the world and is very much central to Indian food and culture. India is the largest producer in the world.

At home in Nimbin,

I have found this tree to grow 0.5 m a year, its attractive edible foliage a nice contrast in the garden.

As mentioned, the flowers are stunning and it's quite common as a street tree in Brisbane, where it often produces an abundance of pods in that hot baking roadside.

Those who remember Jim's food-for-life market van at The Channon and Nimbin markets will remember the delicious fresh tamarind chutney they served with their samosas back in the day – I'll never forget that sour fresh tang of the Tamarind.

Fun'raiser a success in many ways

by Chibo Mertineit

The Tuntable Falls community fundraiser, in the beautifully decorated hall, was a fun night with great entertainment, yummy food, bonfire, nice crowd.

The dress-up theme was "Tribal" and the tripods/tipi frames were echoing this well, supported by special lighting.

It was wonderful to see the community coming together to support a young Tuntable Falls Community member,



and enjoying themselves late into the night.

There was a great line-up of excellent musicians – how lucky are we to be surrounded

by such talent. A big Thank You for their generous input.

Another highlight of the night was the draw of the raffle which was made possible by so many donated prizes from individuals and shop owners in Nimbin.

A big Thank You to all for their generous donations.

How blessed we are to live in such a caring community while the world out there is getting more heartless, greedy and self absorbed.

Christina Chester (pictured),

who initiated and organised the event, was very happy with the outcome of the night.

She would like to thank everyone again, especially her great helpers Dionne, Nadine, Andrew, Zeem, crew and all which made this event possible.

If you missed out on the night, you can still donate money to the Summerland Credit Union account: BSB 728-728, A/C 22323042 'Pavo'. The account will be open until 30th April.

Real estate – the way you like it

The month of April marks the fourth birthday of the opening of Nimbin Hills Real Estate, and that's truly worth celebrating!

Local Nimbin estate agent of over 40 years John Wilcox, licensee and employer of 10 locals, has seen all the changes and trends – from the sales of large farms in the primarily dairying community, to the growth of multiple occupancy dwellings and their associated bush-craft building methods, to the New-Age sustainable and often architect-built residences on acreage and new or cleverly refurbished village residences of today.

"You could easily become complacent in a place like Nimbin, which largely sells itself on the back of its location, beauty and iconic status," John said. "But the mark of how you're performing in your service to any postcode is what your clients think of you after the deal is done."

So, in their third year of operation, the



team collectively decided to enter what is currently Australia's No 1 digital real estate ratings indicator Rate My Agent.

In both 2017 and 2018 the firm held the local records for listings and sales, but hadn't formalised their achievements. So in 2018, and at their first attempt, the team has fittingly won the award for Agency of the Year – Nimbin 2019.

"The award is based purely on the voice of the people," John said. Clients are invited to write a truthful testimonial and star rating of the service given by

the agency. The process is transparent, non-compulsory, and entirely beyond the control of the sales agents.

Nimbin Hills' motto for some time has been "More Listings, More Sales, More Happy Clients". The first two claims are easily substantiated. John leads this successful team with 1000 personal sales, being the top listing agent in Nimbin for 25 years, and the top sales agent for Nimbin in a 10-year run.

But the last claim has always been subjective, until now – it's official! The people of Nimbin have spoken, and congratulations go to the team at Nimbin Hills Real Estate for their ongoing commitment to our town and providing an essential service to the many home owners, business people and tenants of Nimbin and surrounds.

And if those testimonials are any indication, their professional service always comes with a smile. Just the way we like it!



by Kerry Hagan

March garden club meeting saw us at the home of Pete and Boua in Lilian Rock.

Although they have only been in the Northern Rivers a few short months, Pete and Boua have already come a long way towards self sufficiency.

Growing many varieties of Asian vegetables and herbs, their early efforts are truly inspiring.

Showers didn't dampen anyone's enthusiasm as we donned Wellies and brollies to have a good look at various turmeric varieties, a vast and colourful array of chillies and even water vegetables growing in the dam.

We were then treated to Boua's culinary skills as we sampled traditional Lao dishes, utilising their wonderful produce.

Thanks Pete and Boua.

Our April meeting is on Saturday 13th April at the home of Saskia, 3 Swift Road, Coffee Camp, 2-4 pm. Please bring a plate, cup and chair.

Visitors most welcome.

Sexuality – razor's edge towards healing

by Cameron Storey

Western society, in general, has a negative view of sexual secretions.

Eastern practices, and ayurveda in particular, view sexual secretions as valuable materials requiring time to build up. In Ayurvedic medicine the seven bodily tissues (dhatus) are: 1) plasma, 2) blood, 3) muscle and skin, 4) fat, 5) bone, 6) bone marrow and nerve tissue and 7) reproductive fluids which contains the most ojas (refined by-product of digestion).

After you eat, a 30-day process of building ojas begins, continues, and is released as each level of tissue is manufactured adding vigour and vitality. The accumulation of ojas is stored in the heart and nourishes the subtle energy within the body. Since reproductive fluid is the penultimate stage preceding storage, excessive sex, especially climaxing, can deplete ojas in sperm, ovum and in the heart.

In a study at the State University of New York researchers discovered that women whose vaginas were exposed to semen showed significantly better mood and less depression than women who used condoms during sex or women who had no sex at all. This study highlights some important

factors: vaginal tissue is highly absorptive, and richly endowed with blood and lymph vessels, which can absorb seminal fluid that contains around 50 compounds including testosterone, prostaglandins, luteinizing hormone, follicle stimulating hormone, endorphins, estrogen, prolactin, oxytocin, thyropin-releasing hormone and serotonin making it highly valuable.

Only 3% of semen is sperm. But as with anything, at what stage does a good thing become detrimental?

Meanwhile a 2003 study from China found "that men who abstained from ejaculation for seven days showed a peak rise in serum testosterone of 145 %. Scores of studies have demonstrated that low testosterone levels are associated with a variety of symptoms, including flagging libido, abdominal obesity, loss of muscle strength and tone, fatigue, and erectile dysfunction." Abstaining from ejaculation is also a factor in yoga under the heading Brahmacharaya (conduct consistent with Brahma) or non-indulgence in sexual activity.

While Brahmacharaya can also mean celibacy, and there is a place for this at some stages in life to deepen inward focus, celibacy can also cause imbalances in both body and mind. The Catholic Church is a prime



What chakra level motivates your need for sex?

example: a report in 2004 in the US found more than 4,000 Roman Catholic priests had faced sexual abuse allegations in the last 50 years, in cases involving more than 10,000 children and, in Australia, between 1980 and 2015, 4,444 people alleged incidents of child sexual abuse relating to 93 Catholic Church authorities, taking place in more than 1,000 institutions.

Sexual energy is a powerful driving force not easily contained and transformed. Each one of us

is primarily here due to the laws of attraction between our parents. Sexual energy is versatile and can be channelled through any of the chakras. So some people use sexual energy for survival or as a weapon (1st chakra), some for procreation/recreation (2nd chakra), some for consumption – to obtain meals, house, money, lifestyle, jobs (3rd chakra), some people use it for love and enhancing connection to others (4th chakra), some channel it into verbal expression (5th Chakra), some for inner vision (6th chakra), some for the divine only (7th chakra) and endless combinations thereof. Sexuality is still one of the largest commodities world-wide.

BTW – Moon day cycles (menstruation cycles) may be called so due to the correspondence time to the lunar cycle: the average length of a menstrual cycle is 29 days and the lunar cycle is 29.5 days. While the full moon has been credited with arrival of menstrual cycles science found no correlation between the lunar phases and the menstrual cycle start of the period after analysing more than 7.5 million cycles against lunar phases.

The average length of time that world-wide couples spent having sex of 5.4 minutes says several things: 1) male selfishness dominates the

act as male orgasm is usually much quicker, 2) female arousal through foreplay has barely been achieved, 3) balance has not been achieved by either person, 4) males would tend to get addicted over time, 5) females would tend to be frustrated over time, and 6) both partners are oblivious to subtle energies and secretions.

Sexuality involves the cooperation of the parasympathetic nervous system which controls erection through relaxation and the sympathetic nervous system that controls ejaculation via the fight/flight response. Too much stress can be one of the causes of both erectile dysfunction (ED) and premature ejaculation (PE) two of the most common problems.

The spectrum of sexuality involves understanding each person's: physiology, psychology, social conditioning, religious conditioning, educational conditioning, breeding conditioning, male/female power plays, ego construction, tantric teachings and then most formless aspects which explains why sexual explorations and healing can end in disaster physically, emotionally, financially, intellectually and karmically.

Phone Cameron on (02) 6689-7120 or FB: "Dharma Centre Lillifield"

Towards higher consciousness

As I travel through this journey of life, I am called to share my knowledge to as many people as I can and as I write a book to extend that further, I would like to share some of what I am learning with you.

I read a quote today that said: "There is higher consciousness. Everything else is mind games." Is it all in our minds, you ask? Studies in consciousness could be interpreted that way. The ancient scriptures interpret consciousness in three levels:

1) The intellectual mind, ie the thinking cognitive faculty that is very useful of course in the world of things.

2) The intuitive mind, where we are able to realise the connections between things, and

3) The transpersonal mind or the awareness of the undivided unity of all things.

Our left brain hemisphere focuses on the details whilst our right brain is responsible for global connectivity, so where does transpersonal mind exist? Clearly in its definition it is beyond the personality, and many measures of mind have been found to exist beyond the brain, maybe in the realm of collective consciousness.

Experiments in rats and salamanders where sections of brain were removed, even minced and put back, didn't prevent them from finding their way through a maze again, although maybe more slowly! Memory was found to be more like information patterns distributed within the surrounding electromagnetic



In the moment
Dr Jacqueline Boustany,
Medicine woman

field, which the brain can interpret as objects through a mathematical Fourier transform.

When we take into account that we only process 40% of visual inputs and our symbolic brain works on images and sound/feeling impressions, most of what we are thinking is filled in.

So at least in the world of things, our interpretation isn't necessarily what is. There's more to say about the essential nature of our object reality, but for now remember it's 99.99999% space. So what of our contemplation of space, our awareness of spaciousness, is this the key to accessing the transpersonal field of mind?

This experience has been given many names, trying to explain that experience in the world of objects, but most of us, if not all of us have had the experience of being, just being in the now, where we are one with all phenomena and know it is beyond words.

Even the concept of linear time disappears, being in one time which can be interpreted as the 4th Dimension of space-time, where space expands exponentially, beyond the material reality of 3D.

Stepping into this spaciousness unlocks the tightness we often carry, unravels the nodes of the thoughts we often trip over, to uncover the blissful ground state of being. Is this not why we take drugs, alcohol, create art, sing, dance, even shop, to reach this moment of enlightenment.

So why not do it now? Right now. Wherever you are. This moment is yours. It can't be anyone else's, as time is relative. So take this one now. Breathe...

Feel the space inside and out. Where you are right now. What is around you, above you, below you. Take your time. Even more important, what is going on within your internal space.

No need to explain, interpret, run away, shut down, don't even have to like it. Just awareness of what is. Acknowledgment of how you feel about it.

A simple enough practice. Not always easy though. Even harder to maintain. Takes practice, they tell me, but all good things come with time, or in this case no-time. Being in this space not only enhances your health, your mind, your emotional wellbeing, it also extends to those around you, in our symbiotic world of co-regulation.

Just imagine that brave new world we could co-inhabit. To be honest, I believe it's the only way we will ever really transcend the limitations of this reality. And as ex-UK prime minister Benjamin Disraeli said, "This is no place to stop, between ape and angel."

Past life regression

by Auralia Rose

Adam came to me as a man in his fifties who had always felt that something was not quite right in his life. I found Adam to be a friendly, intelligent, articulate man.

Despite his abilities and talents, he was not able to connect meaningfully with the people he wanted to and felt something always held him back. Despite having had several relationships, he remained single.

He is generally confident and happy, but for over 20 years has had unexplainable periods where he suddenly experiences anxiety and fearfulness and loses confidence.

He also experienced long-standing pain and tension under the left ribs that defied any medical diagnosis.

His mother had been emotionally dependent on him since childhood. He loved her dearly but often felt the burden of her emotional needs.

During the session, Adam regressed to a time where he lived simply in a small sparse room behind a shop. He earned a few coins juggling balls during market days in his village. His mother was a washer-woman who lived elsewhere and sometimes came to visit. Occasionally he would throw her a few coins.

About ten years later he found himself in an elevated position as part of the 12th century King Stephen's royal court during the time known as The Anarchy. He developed



King Stephen

a strong bond of mutual affection with the King, going into battle where he experienced a quick and violent death after a sword passed through his left side.

Adam suddenly gasped during the session as he felt the sensation of the piercing sword. I guided him to detach and view the scene as if he were watching it in a movie, assuring him he would not feel or experience any pain or trauma. It is not necessary or advisable to re-experience painful memories on any level during a PLR.

In reviewing his past life Adam recognised his mother from that life and his present life mother as the same soul. He felt guilt for not looking after his mother in that life very well, paying her little attention, sometimes throwing her a few coins.

In this life his soul wanted to make up, to be a better son, to have a closer relationship. He realised in this life he and his mother were mutually dependent on each other – she needed him to meet her emotional needs and he needed to make amends for the past.

Souls have a great love for one another, and tend to reincarnate together to help

one another on their soul's journey.

Immediately after the session, the pain in Adam's left side had greatly diminished. The area held trapped emotions of fear and panic, as well as guilt as he felt he had let the King down by being killed. Adam was able to release all that during the session.

He also felt he had carried the guilt and strong feelings he had for the King with him into this life and it had prevented him from forming a lasting relationship. He felt now the energy had been released that he could now attract a lasting relationship.

Following up with Adam later, he told me he has gone through some deep inner changes, his rib pain is gone and he feels much stronger and more self-reliant than he ever has before.

He believes his energies are clear now and life is full with new opportunities that were not available to him before his PLR session.

Adam has offered to share his experience with readers to demonstrate just how effective and powerful PLR can be.

Contact Auralia on 0422-481-007, email: auralia_rose@hotmail.com Web: www.auraliarosewellbeing.com

Lessons of Equus

by Les Rees

I've always enjoyed being around horses, and I owe much to those who have been my friends, teachers and soul mates. They have taken me on a journey into the language of Equus that has enriched my life.

One of the stand outs was Charlie, a 16.3hh TB horse. When he joined our family he was mentally shut down, he'd go through the motions of everyday life as if on a treadmill, until something upset him and he would suddenly blow up for no apparent reason.

He'd spend more time on two legs than on four, narrowly missing my head each time he reared up, and riding him wasn't much better. It was terrifying for me at the time but I'm not really a quitter and so I persevered trying to show him that he could trust me.

The first day I rode him I decided that I would jump him over a low log. I hadn't anticipated that he would take a massive jump and it threw me backwards causing me to snatch the bit in his mouth.

He became really upset and put in some massive bucks which left me on the ground licking my wounds. That was my first lesson!

At that time a friend was

holding an event at her stables with a specialist dressage instructor and she offered space for Charlie and me to have a lesson. I didn't have a float at the time so I had to ride him there which wasn't great for someone feeling somewhat battered and bruised on a horse that was likely to blow up at any moment.

The instructor saw Charlie's potential and offered to buy him from me, but intuition told me that there was something deeper going on with this amazing horse, he needed to trust humans again and I needed him to show me how to find a way to earn his trust.

The ride home was full of hurdles, it poured with rain and I had to ride this potentially dangerous horse home, several cars splashed water over him and he was getting agitated, so I rode him up onto a bank which had a steep drop down to the road.

As we rode around a bend, there was an enormous cherry picker which was towering over the road. I couldn't get off or turn around so I asked Charlie to look after me.

What amazed me was that when the chips were down, he took over and courageously walked past without incident; every



Les and Charlie

muscle in his body felt that he was about to explode but he held it together to get us safely back home.

This was my second lesson, I chose to trust him and he rewarded me by ensuring my safety.

The journey ahead was to be full of challenges but we learned to trust one another and I can honestly say that Charlie turned out to be an empathetic teacher both to me and the other horses.

When I brought two traumatised ponies home, Charlie would always be present during their handling, and if I was doing anything wrong he would let me know.

He befriended, protected

and initiated great games to play, helping them to adjust to life in their new home.

Charlie changed my life by showing me how hard horses work to communicate with us. He had a wonderful sense of fun, a huge personality and a heart of pure gold.

Even more importantly, he put me on the path to learning the language of Equus and enriched the lives of all who knew him and will remain forever in my heart.

*Les Rees is an Equine Naturopath and Sports Therapist, trading as Horsetail Herbs
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Phone 0437-586-705*

Forgive yourself

by Suzy Maloney

There's a wonderful expression, 'you don't know what you don't know'. Sometimes we do things that hurt others because we simply don't know. I did things that hurt horses for many years because I didn't know. I believed what everyone told me and felt that if I improved my horse skills everything would fall into place. I used bits, spurs and whips, and I loved my horses. I really loved them, and believed I was giving them the best life. I worked hard to achieve my equine goals and expected the same of my horses. They did as I asked and I assumed that was because they were happy. If someone had told me I was hurting my horses I would have been insulted. My horses had the best of everything and I would never intentionally do anything to hurt them.

To accept that bits are a pain based method of horse control, one has to accept that they've been hurting their horses. No-one wants to see that they've been causing pain to their horses at the exact same time that they feel the most pleasure, when riding. It just doesn't fit; the brain rejects such an idea. And horse people

love their horses, it's their passion, their obsession, they would never hurt them.

To allow this thought to take root in your brain is a challenge, and results in a huge sense of guilt. Guilt for the hundreds of hours of pain we have inflicted on our loved ones. If we do realise that we've been causing pain, we can then choose to stop doing it. Then we have to forgive ourselves. We must forgive ourselves because we didn't know. We didn't do it deliberately. Using a metal rod inside a horses' mouth is so normal in this world.

My lightbulb moment came after riding in a cross-under bitless bridle for a few weeks. I wasn't convinced it was the way to go; it was something new I wanted to try out. I'd been using it on a few horses and was also using bits. I still wasn't thinking of the horse and how it was for them, I was thinking about how effective the bitless bridle might be to get the horses to do as I asked. I was interested in results. This is pretty normal in the horse world.

I was riding my main dressage horse in the bitless bridle. I'd been having lessons on him with my German dressage instructor for over a year. He was doing well but he



Suzy and Darcy

never achieved full softness through his neck in the canter, he always held some tightness. One day I was riding in the bitless and popped him into a canter. It was my first canter in the bitless and I had no idea what would happen. He cantered effortlessly with the most relaxed neck I'd ever seen, fully collected, light in my hand and as soft as butter. All of a sudden I realised what the bit had been doing to him. I'd been getting harsher and harsher bits in an effort to 'fix' the problem. Then with the bitless he just did it! I started crying, with tears racing down my cheeks we cantered around and around with me saying "I'm so

sorry, I didn't know". In that moment I understood. And the guilt was enormous, the things I'd done, the bits I'd used, the pain I'd caused, and all for nothing.

I made the decision to stop using bits. Then I began the work of forgiving myself. It wasn't easy, but it was worth it. If you're sitting on the fence at the moment, but are scared to step over, I encourage you to do it. Remember you didn't know, you didn't really understand, and forgive yourself.

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Beyond the Rainbow

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Seven keys to achieving a natural birth

Doula Wisdom

by Kirrah Stewart

While many aspects of your birthing experience will be a surprise, there are some key components that are good to understand. Take time to learn about the seven fundamentals that help labour to progress more naturally.

1. A safe space to birth

Where you choose to give birth will have a big impact on your experience. Labour is usually shorter and flows more smoothly when women feel safe and undisturbed. The best environment for labour is private, warm, dark and quiet. Wherever you are, you need to feel safe in order to release the right hormones; oxytocin and endorphins.

2. Understand the birthing hormones

Oxytocin

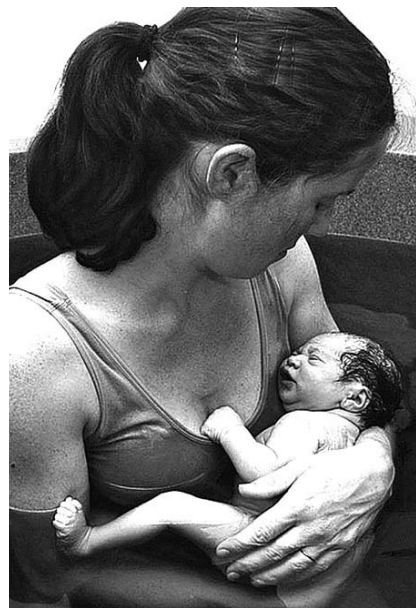
You may have heard of oxytocin by its more common name 'the love hormone'. It helps your uterus to contract and cervix to dilate. It will be released more effectively if you feel safe. Other things that can boost oxytocin are being massaged, being lovingly supported and labouring in a dark, warm, private space.

Adrenalin

You probably have heard of adrenalin as the 'fight or flight' hormone. It is released if you feel scared, worried, are thinking too much or are cold. It inhibits the release of oxytocin which means if you are feeling stressed, labour can become more painful, slow down or even stop, until you feel safe again. Fear creates tension in the body and this tension can create unnecessary pain.

Endorphins

You may know endorphins for their pain-



relieving qualities. This magical hormone helps take the edge off labour so you can enjoy birthing your baby. Endorphins help you feel calm and blissful and contribute to you losing track of time. They are most effectively released when you feel safe and your space is quiet (so make sure your support people don't talk too much.)

3. Why warmth is important

A warm environment means your body can relax more easily. We tend to clench up when we are cold. Being cold also releases adrenalin which can slow down labour. Warmth is very important after the baby is born as well. It helps oxytocin to be released so the placenta can be safely birthed.

4. Dim lighting helps birth progress

Low lighting encourages the hormones oxytocin and endorphins to be released. These hormones are very important in natural birth. Being in a dimly lit room allows you to focus within during

contractions. It creates a relaxing space that isn't too over stimulating.

5. Your support team

Choose your support people with care. Having too many people in the birth space can slow your labour. Make sure that the people you have invited to your birth know about honouring the birthing space and know what their role is. The last thing you want is to feel 'watched'. People that are positive and helpful can make all the difference. If you don't feel comfortable with your care provider, it's more than ok to ask for someone else to support you.

6. Stay hydrated

Giving birth is physically demanding. You probably won't feel like eating when in active labour but it's important to keep up your fluids. Water, coconut water and diluted juice are good options to help you stay hydrated and also provide a little energy to your muscles. It is your right to eat and drink in labour if you want to (despite what the hospital policies may be).

7. Have a 'toolkit' of options

If you're wanting a natural birth, it's a good idea to look into what remedies and therapies are useful. You may like a TENS machine, birth ball, aromatherapy, music, to learn breathing techniques, to be active in labour and to know helpful acupressure points and hip squeezing techniques. There are lots of helpful suggestions to provide comfort and support. I highly recommend downloading the natural birth checklist at www.doulawisdom.com

If you want to feel more confident about birth and postpartum, you can download the natural birth checklist at www.doulawisdom.com or contact Kirrah on 0429-308-851 or email: kirrah@doulawisdom.com

Shifting sands of knowing

A few weeks ago I had to have some dental surgery with a prosthodontist and could not have my customary nitrous oxide as usually administered by my own dentist (they didn't provide it), alongside the local anaesthetic. And so I used the opportunity to observe my perceptions and thoughts, which, by the way, I always do anyway – with gas and without it. I noticed that I managed the experience in the same way as I do when administered the gas. Interesting, eh.

I noticed, once again, that I could experientially separate my body from my mind. I call it, "doing a Descartes". The dental surgery involved the trimming of gum, drilling of bone, and excavating of an old crown. The whole operation sounded like bumps, scrapes, knocks, drills: crude and primitive, like road works done on anaesthetized gum. My mind, on the other hand, could occupy itself with other things. I remembered the minutiae, the particularity of fine work required in the doing of this level of surgery and how the process might look from the perspective of the dentist as he works on

a tiny spot in a landscape already fairly small. I then brought my attention to how odd bodily perception is in the way it exaggerates its own experiences so that the things in the mouth of particular focus in dentistry seem gigantic while things to do with the smallest toe of the left foot are utterly insignificant.

How to marry the knowing of the surgery with the perception of knocks and bangs, with my eyes shut, given that these ways of knowing really do shift from one thing to the next? And is there any marriage to be had? Might what we call knowing just be a sequence or Samsara of shifting sands.

Eyes open and I saw the prosthodontist with mask and eye magnifier on, looking very professional and sort of distant from the corpus that I am. Eyes closed and I re-entered the way of perception and sensations and ideas and dreams, and, as I have done in the past, observed how it's in this space that hypnosis works so very well. It is also in this space that whole bodies of philosophy were born. Descartes observed himself as he ensconced himself in a baker's oven



by Dr Elizabeth McCardell

because, the poor man, he was wracked with pains all through his body and it was in this inhibited space that he could think. He experienced his body and his cognitive knowing as operating, apparently, separately. Imagine if he was a dancer, though. Perhaps there'd be a philosophical tradition based on Chorea ergo sum (Dance therefore am) where the self is fluid and flowing and just dance.

Psychologically, awareness of the shifting realms of cognition and perception is really useful because by putting awareness on this fluidity, the landscape of the mind shifts from one stuck place to go wherever the person wants to take it. Many mental health issues share the characteristic of iteration, of repeated

thoughts that go around and around, getting nowhere, but causing increasing degrees of emotional pain. How good it is then to be able to move on.

I told an acquaintance of my time in the dentist chair, shifting my awareness from this and that and how I didn't have the nitrous oxide I preferred and she said, why not next time I try self-hypnosis. I basically fell gibbering on the carpet, after all this is part of my profession, this is part of the work I do. The quality of the observations I did in the dental session I've just related is classic hypnosis: you are putting your awarenesses differently, you are not focusing on the thing being done to you at an emotional level but noticing multiple levels of awareness, you are allowing yourself to be present in the shifting sands of knowing and the whole thing is quite pleasant and life changing.

Scientes ergo sum (Knowing, therefore am). This is the marriage of disparate engagements (perceptions, sensations, dreams, thoughts, ideas); the ergo sum (therefore am) is that which observes all that we are and the integral "me".

Liver disharmonies

In Chinese Medicine patterns of illness that include mental, emotional and physical symptoms are due to disharmonies within and between organ and meridian systems.

Liver disharmonies are arguably the most pervasive in our society, which is why I am again writing about this subject. The liver controls the flow of qi and is affected by, and in turn affects, emotions.

It can be helpful to consider liver pathology both individually and in wider society, and to think about harnessing useful healthy liver energy.

In individuals, liver pathology is very common because of this influence on and by emotions. The role of the liver is to move and spread qi evenly around the body; therefore all organs and meridians are affected when the qi is not flowing. Spleen, stomach, gallbladder, intestines and uterus are especially affected.

There are the specific liver pathology patterns commonly seen.

One pattern is liver yang rising. In this pattern there is usually a deficiency of liver or kidney yin. Yin is grounding, moistening and cooling. A deficiency allows yang to rise. This is a common cause of headaches often throbbing and severe, dizziness, deafness or eye problems. Emotionally, outbursts of anger are often seen and at the extreme, it can lead to manic behaviour.

Liver qi constraint is another pattern, it is very common. Symptoms include depression, moodiness, cold hands and feet, feelings of abdominal distension or bloating, feeling of a lump in the



by Brigid Beckett

throat, insomnia, tight neck and shoulders, irregular periods or PMS.

Anything that is worsened by stress and emotional upset is likely to involve the liver. Out of control emotions, mood swings, anger, resentment, lack of insight and blaming are pointers of liver pathology. Repressed anger is likely to cause liver qi constraint, while vented anger causes liver yang to rise.

The hun is the mental/spiritual aspect of the liver. It is responsible for dreams, vision, wisdom, creativity and ideas. If it is not strong, depression can result. However, if it is out of balance with the shen, the mind/heart energy, there will be chaotic thinking or manic behaviour.

In society, pathological liver energy can be seen when groups or influential individuals foster the above mentioned blame, anger and resentment. Either being influenced by them, or responding to them with anger and frustration, causes a dysfunctional society.

To counter a world where there is plenty of obvious liver dysfunction,

it is useful to look at the positive qualities of the liver.

In classic Chinese medicine the liver association is the Universal Mother, this is the energy seen in Quan Yin, Mother Mary and other compassionate deities. Compassion comes from the heart, which is needed to direct the hun's vision. The energy is essentially female.

As well as compassion, another quality from a strong and functioning liver is finding strength in adversity, including the strength needed when there appears to be no end in sight or no light at the end of the tunnel. Images associated with the liver in Chinese Medicine include the Ox, a symbol of strength and patience.

These attributes arise from a healthy liver. They are possible with a calm mind. Practices of meditation and qi moving exercise such as yoga, tai chi and qigong are all helpful. Setting aside times to be quietly in nature will also contribute. Acupuncture is very effective in ensuring a smooth flow of qi.

In terms of the politicians, leaders such as Jacinda Ardern and Nelson Mandela exemplify the positive qualities mentioned above – steadfastness in adversity, having the strength to choose love over hate, unity over division and having a vision for society.

It would be nice if we had an election campaign where some of these qualities were seen. Failing that we can keep healthy and make our best contribution by cultivating these qualities whenever we can.

Brigid Beckett is a fully registered practitioner working at Lismore Community Acupuncture. Phone 0431-702-560.

NATURAL LAW

Change is always a constant, sometimes it feels harsh and unpredictable, where life feels intense and out of control.

At other times, change feels comfortable and easier to embrace – when we attune to the source energy of all life, we strengthen our deep knowing that we beat as one with all existence and that everything has a purpose in the grand scheme.

Life is a profound mystery that has stirred the musings of hearts and minds for eons. Searching for deeper understandings of profound love, great sorrow and everything in-between. What is it all about and how do we navigate through it?

As a custodian of the Reiki teachings, I can share the perspective from this healing system. Inbuilt in the Reiki healing system is the importance of improving oneself. The Grandfather of Reiki, Usui Sensei said, "There has to be a rise in consciousness in order for true healing to occur."

Therefore, commitment to personal development increases our capacity to self-reflect and own responsibility for how we treat ourselves and others. This practice is the basic foundation to living in harmony – with ourselves, people, the land, animals, plants, waterways, skyways and the ancestors (spirit world). We must go within, before we go out.

My work with Reiki is geared towards supporting a Client to experience a rise in consciousness – we have a chat before the treatment to identify what the themes are, and then the treatment is customised to clear what has been named and promote positive growth. It's a



by Helene Collard

truly powerful process.

If you would like a supportive tune-up, or to move through something heavy, or perhaps gain clarity on what's playing out, I'd love to hear from you.

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Animal talk

by Donna Connelly

This month's article is dedicated to darling Chloe. One of the gentlest souls to grace the earth, spreading sweetness, love and light wherever she went.

Photo is shared with permission from Chloe's soulmate and guardian.

It is important to honour the grieving process, allowing us and our animals to express ourselves fully at this time.

I touched on this subject last June from the point of view of the soul transitioning and from the capacity of being a soul midwife.

This part of my role, conducting Animal Communication and Reiki treatments during an animal's final hours, benefits not only the animal but the human as well. This allows the process to be a peaceful one with no unanswered questions or regrets.

It is without a doubt, the saddest time in a pet guardian's life, and needs to be accepted as such.

I have heard people say "they are just animals, get over it".

In my humble opinion and experience, there is no such thing as 'just an animal'.

Each animal is unique and special, and in a lot of cases that animal is the most constant source of love in their human's life. (Some dogs and cats can live into their teens and twenties whilst birds can live for decades).

Quite often the animal is the filter

that the human processes all their life decisions through, such as how long they can be away from the house at any given time, including day trips and holidays.

Decisions around these outings or trips are a lot easier to say yes to if your furry companion can come too, then there's no guilt.

How can you help your human friend if they have to say goodbye to their best friend?

It is important to note each person will process their grief differently. These are broad guidelines and come from personal experience of my own pets passing and being witness to other people's processing:

- Just hold space for them. Allow them to talk about anything, even if it doesn't make sense, there will often be tears in inappropriate places;
- Don't avoid the subject or avoid acknowledging the animal (or the animals' name);
- Check in regularly;
- Ask if they need anything, sometimes there are practicalities involved. Perhaps you can help in this capacity;
- Don't try and take over, it is important that the guardians are sure of their decisions, so there are no regrets later. By all means allow them to talk it through with you;
- Help the person organise a memorial garden or ceremony, something to honour the animal's life and their time together;
- Last but not least. No judgement



or unnecessary opinions.

Grief seems to come in waves. And in the early days, there is a sort of numbness that seems to have a self-preservation quality to it. Then there is a bit of anger, questioning, unbelievable sadness, memories and flashbacks, good and bad.

It really is a deep process that has its own timing, there will always be an emptiness and a yearning to have more time with them.

Allow the tears to come when they need to and only surround yourself with people and animals who have your best interests at heart.

It is important to remember the good times and the wonderful memories that you have made

together.

By all means allow another furred friend into your life, make sure you are not trying to replace the one you have just lost. And see the new relationship with fresh eyes and understand the new soul's individual nature.

I find hanging out with other animals really healing. As animals recognise grief and will assist you with lightening your spirit and mending your heart. Animals are amazing healers.

Also, expect visitations from your friend. It may be in dream state, you can feel them, smell them or just feel their presence.

Another question I am often asked is: 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. When they transition, their souls are still contactable and they still exist in our lives as guardian angels.

How can you assist a grieving animal?

- Be with them as much as possible;
- Take them for walks, engage with them;
- Accept that their eating habits may change for a while;
- Leave something of the animal or humans clothing/blankets close by so they can snuggle up to them;
- Shower them with love, but don't pity them;
- Try and get them to play, do some of their favorite things;
- Understand that you are both grieving and be kind to one another.

Animals are proof that love really is eternal.

We will be at a few expos in April: Ipswich on the 6th, at Evans Head 13-14th and Byron Bay on the 27th.

You are welcome to connect with us beforehand to pre-book a Reiki treatment or Reading.

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