

An alternative to fossil gas derivatives

by Daniel John

At Doubtful Creek in 2013, face-to-face with Goliath, the sheer intensity was palpable.

I was screaming as loud as I could, directly into their sunglasses, "Don't give me that 'job' shit!" That was my individual response to our government's mercenaries as they dutifully expelled us off our birth-land, making way for the penetration of our mother earth and her ancient fossilised gas.

Much later, as the mud dried, tinea healed, bones realigned, emotions processed, memories remembered and we somehow un-blockaded what was left of our minds, a recurring question kept bubbling to the surface: Who the frack needs this gas anyway?

In August 2013, Gladstone, Queensland seemed like an appropriate departure port for my detachment from Australia's domestic gas complex (see NGT Aug 2013, p.4). So began my private and cathartic investigations to find out what or who was on the other end of that fossilised gas supply-chain, which so effectively ripped through my heart (but inspired Bentley).

By the middle of 2014, I'd saved my own funds to visit two sample sites in South East Asia, 'case studies' I guess you'd call them. My study sites were in Indonesia and the Philippines, and they demonstrated to me how traditional ways of trading energy are being overtaken or colonised by liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

For thousands of years, the people

in these places (and possibly all the world's urban population) have been using charcoal as their principal source of domestic cooking energy. Charcoal is a form of processed biomass, typically made from forest trees. And charcoal, alongside the woods, kerosenes, and whale fats of our collective past, has been the most traditional human energy economy in the world, for a very, very long time.

Literally within a few years, the importation of LPG has become a normal part of daily life for families throughout Asia. Indeed, who in their right mind could resist the sheer convenience and utter effectiveness of having one's very own hand-held bottle of liquid energy, literally on-tap? For the average citizen, it's becoming as critical for daily living as a mobile phone (communication on-tap). I could see clearly how completely dependent we have collectively become, and are becoming, on such gaseous energy – to the point of psychopathic 'up-stream' governments satisfying their parasitic sponsors. But does it need to be a fossil gas?

The problem with hand-making traditional charcoal is that the process releases a lot of gases from the wood, such as hydrogen and carbon monoxide (see photo). The technical term for this process is 'pyrolysis', but that word just means thermal decomposition: 'thermal' as in 'accelerated and controlled' and 'decomposition' as in the way wood decomposes in the garden. These released gasses (let's call them biogas)



Daniel John with the Belonio stove

are a natural part of all wood-like material (let's call that biomass). And biogas burns with the same convenient and smokeless flame as LPG.

Somewhere on my journeys in 2014, I found a humble agricultural engineer, a Filipino professor, by the name of Alexis Belonio. Over many painstaking years of persisting "where others have stopped short of success", Belonio developed an easy and reliable method for getting biogas out of a very common form of biomass in Asia: rice husks. His invention works with a uniquely proportioned husk column, thoughtfully augmented with a cooking stove assembly. The stove immediately ignites the biogas as it is released from the rice husks. This is the only such innovation, readily available to consumers, that I am aware of. I wondered if this is what Chomsky would call "the threat of a good example?"



Traditional charcoal production

As 2015 unfolds, I'm trialling the broader retail viability of this new Belonio cooking stove. To me, this is the 'down-stream' end of a long supply-chain, which links me back to my 'up-stream' home, a long way from my current residence in Palawan, southern Philippines. On my daily walks, I quietly commune with common folk, and I'm motivated by a few people's intense curiosity for biogas and the Belonio stove. But unfortunately, I'm more often faced with the all-too-familiar pragmatic disinterest of everyday people just "doing their job".

I don't pretend to be seriously challenging an entire fossil fuels supply-chain with one unpopular invention. It is however fun, supplying an alternative for those who care enough to look. As Scott Ludlam writes in *greenagenda.org.au* "It's not as though we don't know what to do: people all over the world are doing it."

My journeys along a fossil fuel supply-chain have also blessed me with a 'stream of consciousness' flowing from the sacred Northern Rivers and you, her 'up-stream' protectors, all the way 'down-stream' to innovators like Belonio, who in their own unique ways are also confronting Goliath.

Please visit my website: danieljohnpeterson.com and let me know your thoughts. It can get lonely this far down-stream, so drop me a line! You might even have your own connections in Asia or other rice-growing areas, who themselves may like to distribute Belonio cooking stoves.

NB: This article is not intended to directly correlate coal seam gas with common LPG; rather simply account for the author's engagement with fossil gas derivatives, and refer to one alternative.

<http://greenagenda.org.au/2015/03/the-oldest-game-in-town/>

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Nine ways to stay healthy this winter

by Robin Stein, Homeopath

The approach of winter is the time to fill your pantry with natural goodies to quickly eradicate any virus or secondary bacterial infection.

1) An acidic body is an unhealthy body, wide open to infection. Those who are acidic will get any virus circulating and find it difficult to recover. Alkalisating the body is of vital importance if you want to remain healthy while winter infections are circulating. The pH of the human body is slightly alkaline at 7.35. Food that makes the body acidic include meat, coffee, refined cane sugar and wheat flour, cooked brassicas like cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage etc.

Squeeze the juice of half a lemon into half a cup of water and add half teaspoon of Sodium BiCarbonate. Drink this mix daily for three consecutive days and then stop. Any longer and you'll become too alkaline and it will make you feel as though you are on the point of collapse. But if you do it for only three days whenever you feel you have a virus, you'll recover fast.

2) Vitamin C with BioFlavonoids. Many Vitamin C powders are synthetic and they do not contain BioFlavonoids which are imperative if we want to be well and stay healthy. I buy a natural C powder with Hesperidin. If you feel you have contracted a virus, take one heaped teaspoon of your C Powder hourly until stools begin to soften and then stop (because softer stools are a sign that you have alkalisated the body fully and should not continue).

3) Echinacea Tincture. I swear by Echinacea to remove a virus very quickly. The dose on the bottle is one teaspoon in water three times daily, but if I am getting a virus, I take that teaspoon in water 5 or 6 times, or hourly as soon as I feel the dryness at the back of my throat.

4) Hydrogen Peroxide 3%. Peroxide is a fabulous remedy to keep in a First Aid Kit because it will heal many infections. To treat an ear ache, which often accompanies a virus, lie on your side and put one drop of peroxide into your ear. It will fizz and pop, which is why it's such an easy remedy to give kids. Once it has stopped fizzing, turn over and do the other ear. It works the same way to remove a build up of ear wax. And it doesn't hurt if you put it on an open wound. Use Peroxide to gargle if you have a sore throat or an infected tooth.

5) Water. Our body contains 70% water and if we permit it to become dehydrated, our organs shrivel, including the brain. The body needs around 2 litres of pure, filtered water daily, to which you have added a pebble of Celtic Sea Salt or any other good salt like Himalayan Salt. This is important because the filtering process removes all the alkaline minerals, leaving the water acidic.

Drinking water is even more important when we have a virus because the body uses it to remove inflammation and damaged cells. It is also important as a way of replacing minerals lost through a runny nose, sweating and sneezing. The general weakness felt with a virus is partly caused by this loss

of minerals, and unfortunately, the rehydration salts provided by pharmacies do not replace 'all' our required minerals. Store bought water does not contain any of these minerals and Sodium BiCarbonate is used as a preservative, making the water unsafe to drink constantly.

6) Double D Eucalyptus Oil. This particular brand of eucalyptus does not contain heavy metals so it is quite safe to add to inhalations and natural cough mixtures. To make up an inhalation, put one teaspoon of Eucalyptus Oil into a bowl, put a towel over your head, pour half a bowl of boiling water over the Eucalyptus Oil, close your eyes, close out the outside air with your towel and breathe as deeply as possible through your nose in order to clear your head. Repeat three times a day. It is very helpful prior to sleep.

To make up a cough mixture with eucalyptus, pour two cups of very hot, but not boiling water into a thermos flask. Add a teaspoon of Double D Eucalyptus Oil and quarter of a cup of Echinacea Liquid, a quarter cup of honey and the juice of one large lemon. Mix together well and sip this mixture slowly throughout the day and night. It will break up congestion in lungs and sinuses very quickly and will also reduce the need to cough.

7) Saline Flush. Cold tablets dry out mucus membranes, enabling a secondary infection to walk right in. Instead, make up a saline flush to clear nasal cavities with a dropper bottle, a small amount of boiled and cooled water, and about 1/8 teaspoon of good salt. Put a couple



of drops into each nostril and sniff it backwards. If you have a sore throat, gargle with it frequently to prevent the tissues of your nose and throat from drying. Flush your nose and throat as often as required to keep them comfortable.

8) An OLBAS inhaler. Any virus can begin just like a dose of Hay Fever, with constant sneezing and blowing the nose. Sneezing inflames nasal tissues and they swell and then close off our ability to breathe through the nose. If this occurs, put the tip of an Olbas inhaler into one nostril and close off the other nostril. Inhale several times. Swap sides and do this every ten minutes until your nose clears. It will not take long. It works even better if you have flushed your nasal passages with saline.

9) Be sensible. In the more than 50 years that I've been a healer, so many

of my patients find it impossible to be sensible while they are infected by a virus that I thought it necessary to remind you that a virus will weaken the body considerably. In the past few years alone, so many patients have refused to stop their daily 10-20k runs, or their gym classes while they have a virus. Then their simple virus has become Bronchitis or Pneumonia which has then taken many months to resolve. Surely it's not rocket science.

Robin Stein is an award winning natural healer and intuitive homeopath who heals people, animals and the earth. She's written many books and lectures about staying healthy in the face of so much pollution. Her latest books are about her 95% success over 30 years assisting infertile couples to conceive naturally. Robin can be contacted by email: robinstein@gmail.com

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ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

Friday 5th June, 6-9pm
Freowin Harper

Freowin's covers are crowd-pleasers. Great vocals and a master of ivory-tinkling.

Saturday 6th June, 6-9pm
Doug & Biskit

Prominent Nimbin duo who know how to harmonise and entertain.

Friday 12th June, 6-9pm
Sara McCafferty

A singer/songwriter with soaring vocals whose songs have a beautiful message.

Saturday 13th June, 6-9pm
Sarah Stando

With amazing vocals and expressive songs, Sarah melds all types of musical styles.

Wednesday 17th June, 7-11pm
Open Mic Night

Bring your axe, your tunes and your groove, and put your name on the board.

Friday 19th June, 6-9pm
The Cruise Brothers

Piano and bass renditions of the best of the American songbook of familiar jazz tunes.

Saturday 20th June, 6-9pm
Brommers

Performing a range of covers from the 60's to now, plus a host of tasty originals.

Friday 26th June, 6-9pm
Minus One

Electro-acoustic duo using a rich blend of instrumentation and vocal harmonies.

Saturday 27th June, 6-9pm
Dave Barbara

Solo acoustic singer/songwriter with a swag of smooth and funky originals and covers.



by Stewart James, President

In 2011 or so, a small group of concerned Northern Rivers residents formed regarding the unconventional gas mining that was about to sweep the region. Seven years before, some exploration wells had been punched into the ground. This mining was seen by many as a kind of salvation: a clean, green, cheap energy source – great for the environment and everyone, providing jobs and investment so greatly needed in this region.

This was an unusual group, made up of all sorts; men, women, farmers, tree changers, sea changers, hippies, conservative and liberal types, business people, and self employed - and little did they know at this time that the diversity within the group was one of its greatest strengths.

They were starting to question the authoritative structures that surrounded them, like “God, Government and the Gas”, and the more they questioned, the more the sad and ugly truth came to light. Government and corporations couldn’t be trusted to act in the public interest. This realisation made this group even more determined to resist the status quo.

In those early days, the invasive and industrial nature of a gasfield was a difficult concept to comprehend. What was going to take place below and above the ground? What would this activity look like, and what effects would it have? And it was even harder to wake others out of their complacent slumber. I think it’s fair to say most of us had become way too comfortable living our lives



and trusting “those politicians we elected would represent us and our wishes”.

Then came the stark realisation this was far from the truth. The anecdotal evidence from Qld was that the industry was ruinous, but the NSW government assured the public that the industry in this state operates under the strictest legal conditions in Australia and possibly the world. We were facing a massive crisis and a failure in our democracy.

This group, which grew over time, was about to be transformed from their normal daily reality into critical thinkers, researchers, scientists, people managers, strategic thinkers, actors, activists, protestors, protectors, film and documentary makers and community leaders. Though they didn’t realise it, they were embarking on a truly life-changing journey. For some this journey made twists and turns into despair and elation. The highs and lows were, and are, stark for many.

This relatively small group of protestors had a big fight on its hands but the ranks swelled hugely over time. Some of us could see a unique relationship forming. It was a fantastic model of collaboration – between partners who weren’t just

echo chambers of each other. We all became pretty good at conflict – we saw it as a way of thinking aloud as a group. This required a lot of patience and a lot of energy.

The more I reflect on this, the more I think this community campaigning is a kind of love – because you don’t commit that kind of energy and time if you don’t really care. We didn’t enjoy fighting or arguing but we became very good at it and it propelled and honed our strategy. Some people thought of protectors as crack-pots and extremists; whereas now they are viewed by most as people passionately devoted to our precious environment.

We have created a complex network of allies. More than ever we need to recognise that our campaign is going to involve arguments, and yes, we are going to have a lot of rows with our neighbours, our colleagues and friends. But we are going to be very good at managing this conflict. We are going to take on the naysayers, because they will make our argument better and stronger.

We have immense persistence, incredible patience, and an absolute determination not to be blind and not to be silent.

Plant of the month

Tea Tree *Melaleuca alternifolia*



by Richard Burer

Revered by the Bundjalung nation of the northern rivers, Tea Tree was a very important cultural plant.

Tea Tree was used to treat wounds with poultices, and crushed leaves for inhaling in the treatment of colds. The anti-fungal properties of *Melaleuca alternifolia* was very important, particularly when living in swampy places, where Tea Tree is endemic.

Melaleuca alternifolia is a small tree that grows to several metres where it enjoys seasonal wet feet.

It also grows happily in drier areas, and thrives in full sun or in the understory.

Whilst big areas are now under broad acre production on the Northern Rivers, it wasn’t so long ago that wild harvesting of Tea Tree on private land to distill your own oil was a simple, viable, clean and ethical product.

In Nimbin, I have friends in a community who have an ageing paddock of Tea Tree that has grown well and could easily be chain sawed and the regrowth harvested and distilled. Those wanting to grow their own will find this an easy tree to grow.

Koala Kolumn

by Lorraine Vass

I don’t know about you, but I have to admit to feeling more than a bit overwhelmed by the sheer craziness of burning native forest wood and even planted native wood to generate electricity.

Last month’s Kolumn included a photo of Flossie, the koala that had been displaced by the removal of a planted windbreak on a macadamia orchard at Rous Mill. The windbreak, primarily Flooded Gums (a secondary koala food tree) as well as a few Forest Reds was chipped to provide biomass fuel for the cogeneration power plant at the Broadwater Sugar Mill.

The plant is also receiving biomass fuel from joint-venture plantations in the region. One known to me, at Wyrallah, is at present being “thinned” to the extent that approximately three-quarters of the planted Dunn’s White Gum (*Eucalyptus dunnii*) will be removed. While this species is not an acknowledged koala food tree, koalas certainly eat it. Indeed, use of the 15 ha plantation by koalas is well known in the district.

While I have no argument with

local sugarcane waste fuelling the co-generation of steam and electricity, it was always clear that timber industry ‘waste’ would be required for the plant’s viability. So, what’s waste in this context? Forget about offcuts and residue, we’re talking about native trees that have become surplus to landowners’ requirements.

On the basis of this local experience, why wouldn’t we believe that the inclusion of ‘waste’ from native forest logging as a biomass fuel in the Renewable Energy Target (RET) will result in whole trees being burned for electricity? Why wouldn’t we believe that the native forest logging industry and others will up the ante on native forests to provide the biomass fuel needed regardless of other environmental outcomes? After all using native forest wood as biomass fuel for biomass power is extremely inefficient. A small amount of electricity requires a lot of wood.

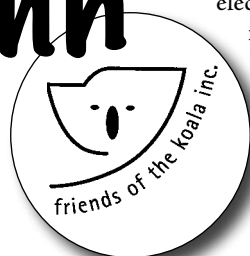
The RET’s purpose is to encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions yet

burning native forest biomass for electricity generation will result in significant depletion of forest carbon stocks and will increase carbon emissions by at least 1.5 times more than burning coal. How can that be a solution to climate change?

I’m sure NGT readers are familiar with the arguments for not including native forest biomass in the RET. The one that matters most to Friends of the Koala is that our koalas and other native wildlife will pay the price. We all need to be voicing our concerns to those three crucial crossbench senators who can put a stop to this crazy proposition that very few of us support.

I never cease to be amazed by our precious koalas. Healthy animals spend most of their time so high in the canopy that most of us are blissfully unaware of their presence. To see a koala climb the trunk of a large tree or even a telegraph pole for that matter, is to wonder how they do it.

Hauling their solid bodies needs tremendous strength. Clearly their shoulders and upper body are very powerful. But there’s more to it than that – the palms of their hands (fore paws) and the soles of their feet (hind paws) have tough, granular skin, which gives good purchase.



4-year old Greco, clearly a koala with a message, seen recently in Lismore’s Rotary Drive

Hands are relatively large, with the first and second digits opposed to the third, fourth and fifth. This adaptation is for grasping branches and provides a powerful hold around a branch. Anyone who has captured a koala that’s got a good hold on a branch or even a cage knows just how strong their grip is and the difficulty disengagement presents.

Hands and feet are also very strong. Their digits are long with large rounded pads at the tip of

each finger and toe. They have long, strongly curved and very sharp claws except the big toe; quite extraordinary for its overall body size. If a koala is climbing a tree larger than its arm reach then they use their claws like crampons – dug right into the surface. Sharp claws are also an advantage with smooth barked trees that become slippery after rain. The second and third toes are fused together. Those claws are used more for grooming.

Being relatively heavy and stocky in shape and without a tail, koalas climb using power and intelligence rather than agility. So, if you do see a koala on the ground for any length of time, or even low in a tree, think of why it’s there. It may well be so weak that it simply cannot climb to where it wants and needs to be. Until next time, happy koala spotting.

To report a koala in trouble, or a sighting (live or dead), please ring Friends of the Koala’s 24/7 Rescue Hotline: (02) 6622-1233. For information about koalas, their food trees and how you can assist koala conservation, visit: www.friendsofthekoala.org or email: info@friendsofthekoala.org or phone 6622-1233. To report environmental incidents, including removal of koala habitat, phone the 24/7 Office of Environment & Heritage Enviro Line: 13-1555.

Worst of the worst weeds

by Triny Roe

WONS - Weeds of National Significance – the worst of all the weeds, the most invasive, most easily spread and cause the most damage to the environment, agriculture, health and our way of life. 32 plants are on the list. The Northern Rivers is host to many of them, though there are a few exceptions, like *Parkinsonia aculeata*.

The species claims the title of Worst of the Worst weeds. Also known as Jerusalem thorn or jelly bean tree, this shrubby tree grows to 8 metres. The drooping stems are adorned with double or triple thorns 5-20 mm long. It has fragrant yellow-orange flowers.

A member of the pea family, parkinsonia was introduced to Australia around the turn of the last century as an ornamental and shade tree. Like many other species from tropical and sub-tropical Central America, it escaped the garden and naturalised here. Left alone, parkinsonia can form dense, impenetrable thickets several kilometres wide. It infests pastures, wetlands, watercourses, disturbed areas and roadsides in Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia. There is also a patch in western NSW and one in South Australia.

Not currently found in the Northern Rivers, it would happily grow here if introduced. It can tolerate a range of soils from sandy to clay, grows from sea level to 1500 metres, but won't survive where the temperature drops below -6°. It can withstand salinity, drought and periods of water-logging. During drought it will shed its leaves while the stems turn bright green and continue



with photosynthesis.

Estimated to cover a total land area of 800,000 hectares, parkinsonia will spread downstream carried by flood waters. The floating seed pods can travel huge distances. Seed can also be transported to other catchments and regions via mud on vehicles or animals or contaminated soil. Parkinsonia can produce 5,000 to 13,000 seeds in a mature tree, so there is huge potential for progeny. In moist areas it seeds prolifically.

It costs a lot to control parkinsonia once it becomes established. Non-chemical methods include hand weeding when plants are small (watch out for the thorns) or deep ploughing and bulldozing for mature entrenched infestations. Efforts to prevent further spread of parkinsonia prioritise early identification of new occurrences and rapid response.

Another WONS is *Lantana camara*. This scratchy scrambling shrub occupies 4 million hectares of Australia, including the Northern Rivers. Arriving in Australia in 1841, by the 1860s it was already causing problems around Brisbane and Sydney. Now firmly established on most of the east coast of Australia, it invades pastures,

creek and riverbanks, roadsides and disturbed areas. Able to climb up and smother mature trees, lantana can displace native vegetation. It also has a distinct competitive advantage in producing a chemical which prevents the germination of other seedlings. Another prolific seeder with around 12,000 seeds per year, lantana can be introduced to new sites by birds.

Mechanical removal of lantana is fairly easy. The roots are shallow and it does not regrow from root fragments like some other weeds, though pieces of stem laying on the ground can take root in moist conditions. After removal, ensure ground cover is replaced to protect the soil. In bush regeneration gradual removal will encourage natural recruitment. Follow up is critical. Regular maintenance keeps lantana under control. Establishing a dense canopy will prevent its reoccurrence.

There are plenty of weeds which can pop up in new locations, carried there by wind, water, animals, vehicles and people. Identify new species as they appear on your block, assess their nature and determine what management may be required to avoid a huge workload down the track.

Happy Weeding.

Unrequited Need

by Geoff Dawe

Humans have with technologies played with such things as the coiffing of hair, the artificial scenting of bodies, the wearing of clothes of status, means of artificially transporting themselves with minimal use of feet, and living in dwellings well beyond that which is necessary for shelter. None of it was essentially real.

It was not real in the sense that unlike the other animals, humans had with excessive technologies, removed themselves from the scheme of life where animals were more than benign in their effects on the planet: animals aided the Earth's well-being. With the excessive use of technologies humans were obviously engaged in destroying the planetary support base and placing themselves in terms of the wellbeing of the planet, on a lower level than the other animals.

It was not unreal that an animal that had a particular facility to produce amazing technologies would attempt to play with them. It was unreal that despite the existence of human rationality that aided in production of technologies,

rationality was turned off in a conspiracy of silence and at an epidemic level, to largely ignore the long-term damaging effects of technologies.

It made plain that humanity had psychological barriers that it was necessary to move beyond, if it was to live in harmony with, and on, the Earth.

Exceptional sociability does not automatically appear in the civilized adult human because they are inhumanly raised as infants. It was established by Harry Harlow that infant rhesus monkeys removed from their mothers, had difficulty moving from a wire-framed, cloth-covered, artificially warmed, surrogate "mother" to a similar artificial contrivance offering milk but no warmth.

Despite this information, it is common behaviour with the civilized, to bring the new baby home from the hospital and isolate it in a bassinet or in another room in the early, and most impressionable part of its life. Likewise, the necessity for almost continual bodily contact for human infants, especially in the twelve-month period after birth is barely understood. There



is for example, policing to ensure babies travel in cars in baby carry capsules. In effect, there is concern for the physical or material wellbeing of the infant, as though it is devoid of psychic or social needs.

It can be expected that a newly born baby in a room by itself, will go through human continuum instincts equivalent to a baby being abandoned. Primal therapist, Dr. Arthur Janov writes in his book Prisoners of Pain, "An infant left to cry it out in the crib is in Pain. He is terrified and alone in the dark."

The instincts of babies not in secure attachment demand that they cry for a while in an attempt to attract a caregiver, but after a certain period the crying stops. Civilized humans have thought this produces a "good" baby.

It is more likely that if no caregiver has appeared after a certain period of time, a more desperate survival instinct "kicks in" where the baby shuts up as an evolutionary survival strategy so as not to attract a predator to its cries, since it appears no caregiver is present.

The infant's crying for the touch of another body is so much a need, that if the comforting body is too often absent, it is in danger of conceiving that its needs will not be met, and of adopting natural psychological strategies by which the pain of bodily deprivation will not be felt. So can begin the disconnection from feeling.

Thus, according to Dr. Janov, can begin the half-life of neurosis in which needs, despite chasing them one's whole life, cannot be met.



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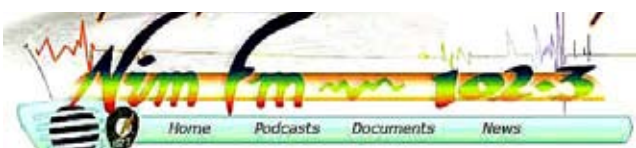
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The essence of an addictive substance

Tobacco in regular consumption sustains a nicotine level in the blood, continued use becomes an essential act to secure normality. Constant use maintains a reality, a structured, concocted reality, with an underlying fear of the present moment, which must be avoided at all costs.

The ability to adjust reality becomes a habit. As soon as levels in the blood and brain begin to deplete, struggle sets in, another dose becomes an urgent requirement, especially if the brain is actively processing emotions, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Clearly the nicotine is taking the place of some natural brain chemicals and processes. What was

once an enjoyable indulgence, has now become a stand in for those natural functions, along with a range of unpleasant side effects.

If you've ever secretly watched a smoker, you'll have noticed that grimace and that tensing of the body with each inhalation, its only defence against this un-natural input. If you no longer wish to smoke habitually, just bring your body back into the discussion, it has a natural aversion to toxic fumes.

If you want to stop consuming alcohol or caffeine, again, consult your body, it will go for water every time, given the choice. Along with oxygen and nutrients, this is what it runs on most effectively, without



by David Ward

the negative side effects.

You've simply gotten out of step with yourself; convenient, alternative shortcuts have presented themselves and firmly taken root, cutting the bodies voice out of the conversation.

A gentle unravelling process is all that is required to bring your body back on line. Its hard to imagine, but the body will adjust and actually sigh

with relief as you let go of that sugar, caffeine, tobacco, cannabis, alcohol, preferably in that order, the golden rule is to start with the little things and work your way up. Starting with the deeper habits like cannabis, alcohol or opiates can create a tendency to rely on the shallower dependencies as unhelpful supports, unwittingly prolonging the addictive cycle.

The re-introduction of basic nutrients, water and oxygen combined with a range of age-old practices that work magic, allows the body to regain its voice once again.

To understand how the Vital Choices method can initiate this transition, phone David on 0447-820-510.

Me and the Millsies

Mookxamitosis

by Brendan (Mookx) Hanley

Thursday Island is the dot on the "I" of Cape York Peninsula. It is sort of the "capital" of all the other Torres Strait islands. I flew up there in 1972 with a sailor mate called Paul, who had talked me into looking for a pearling lugger we might buy, renovate and sail away in. I wrote 'Thursday Island Melody' from that experience.

Later, in 1974, I recorded it at AAV in Melbourne, put 'Write Me a Song to Sing' on the B side, got covers printed and pressed hundreds of 45 vinyls which were mailed to every Oz radio station I could find an address for (to no avail I might add!) Also sent a few copies to a man called Ted Loban, who was then Thursday Island Administrator... a TI local who had lost an arm in WWII. I sat next to him on the plane from Cairns to Horn Island on my way up and we got chatting. A wonderful man.

The record was distributed on our own 'Full Moon' label as an awareness and fund-raising project for the Aboriginal and Island Women's Association. Despite a brilliant line-up of top Melbourne musicians (who all donated their time to the project) and a great rendition/recording, I blew any chances of it ever getting anywhere by the full-on notes I wrote for the jacket. In those days they would have been seen as extremely radical (blatantly honest). It was a rave about how our Indigenous people have been mistreated since day one and that basically nothing has changed all that much. It was way too much for the early 70s.

Fortunately, thanks to Ted Loban, one copy ended up in the hands of the Mills sisters, Rita, Ina and Cessa, TI's iconic singing grannies. They added the songs to



their performance repertoire and also submitted them as entries to a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands talent quest... which they won!

This was the major launch event in their career. It set them up nationally and internationally for bigger, better and wider audiences.

A few years later I got a phone call from my dear friend Soozah. She was just home from the National Folk Festival in Canberra where she had been in the audience at a Mills sisters concert, which she loved. It seems they sang my two songs, after which Rita announced that they loved what had happened to their careers – their lives in fact – and that they felt they owed an enormous debt (including royalties) to someone out in the world they had never even seen or met. Also that if anyone in the audience knew the person who wrote those songs, would they please ask him to get in touch with them.

A couple of years later I'm walking barefoot around the grassy-green Maleny showgrounds at the last festival to be held there before the move to Woodford. I come down the hill in the middle and begin to mingle with the throng, going where I'm going. Suddenly I see up

ahead of me, like ships in full sail, three Big Mama Island women... fuzzy wuzzy hair... big, voluminous, colourful dresses printed with huge hibiscus and frangipani flowers. You couldn't miss 'em at midnight in a blackout down a coal mine! Such a wonderful, eye-catching sight. Although I had never met them, I knew who they were right away, even from behind!

I came up astern of the trio and sang "Oh Paul and me, went up to Thursday Island... and sat around at night and sang a song!" They turned around to me... those three smiles all at once... the faces... the bigness... the energy was unbelievable. One of 'em said, "Is you de man?"

"Is de man!" said I, and then they got me... sandwiched in a giant Island hug-from-heaven that I will remember and cherish to my dying day. It was instant family. We raved for a bit, then arranged to meet later that night – which was New Year's Eve – after our respective gigs.

Accordingly, we all converged on a big, round, white plastic table in the Guinness tent, sometime after midnight, and sang our hearts out till near sunrise. We must've sung those two songs a dozen times along with everything from 'Pearly Shells' to 'Under

the Boardwalk'. It was a great night... also never to be forgotten. As we sang, the crowd got bigger and bigger. We had maybe 15 or so people sitting around the table, which was totally covered in empty plastic Guinness beakers. Beyond that, people were thronging around us 10 to 15 deep... a couple of hundred of 'em... singing along, coming and going till early morn.

In those days I always wore my hair in a pigtail at the back, and that night I also had a red headband. The next day rumours were flying around about the Mills Sisters' amazing jam last night with Willy Nelson. No wonder we pulled a crowd.

Since those days, I have returned to TI once and I have performed with the Millsies on several occasions, including being the first Gubbis to be allowed to appear on the Maleny/Woodford Goori/Murri stage (pictured). I wrote other songs for them, which they duly recorded. Sadly, Rita and Cessa have since passed on. They left a progeny of over 100 between them: sons and daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren. A veritable TI Tribe.

They deserve a book and a movie. Their story is a true Australian legend.

Stand up for Native Vegetation Act

by Janine Kitson

Courage is needed in rural and urban communities across NSW to stand up and oppose the strident calls to repeal the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* – one of NSW’s most important nature protection laws. On the eve of the NSW State election, Premier Baird confirmed he would throw out this important environmental law. He also announced that he would remove the land clearing requirement that requires improvement or maintenance of environmental outcomes; increase support for the government’s flawed biodiversity offsets; and shift the approval for vegetation clearing onto the planning system. There remain concerns that other environmental protections will be replaced including the *Threatened Species Conservation Act*, and parts of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*. The *Native Vegetation Act* has been critical in saving habitat for many

endangered native animals such as the koala, wombat and echidna. It has also ensured that the land is not degraded to a point where agriculture becomes unviable due to salinity, soil erosion and catchment damage. Native vegetation provides important shelter and shade for stock; habitat for birds and pest controlling and pollinating insects. The *Native Vegetation Act* was implemented to stop massive land clearing that caused extinction for many species. Despite koala numbers halving in the last 20 years alone, the Baird Government seems determined to intensify the extinction crisis rather than ensure the protection of native species. The Baird Government promises to replace the *Native Vegetation Act* with ‘something else’, whatever that is – Baird has yet to indicate that it will be based on the latest in conservation research. There are real fears that NSW will return to the days of broad-scale land clearing that

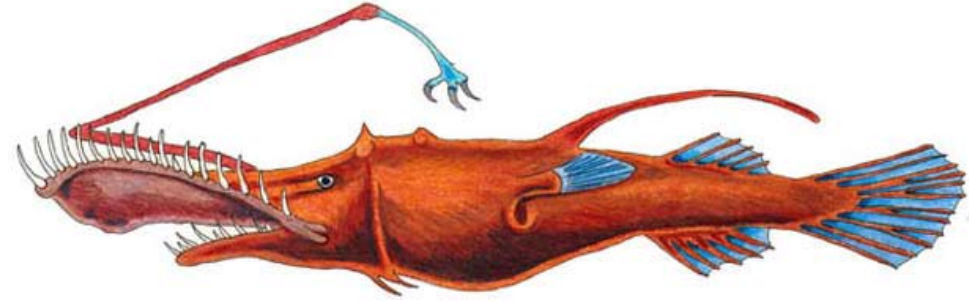
many – in both city and country areas – fought to end over decades. In the first five years after the land clearing laws were in place, over 265,000 animals like wombats and echidnas were saved. On the one hand the government is establishing a \$100 million survival fund to stop a ‘race to extinction’, yet at the same time it is prepared to allow the single biggest threat to native species – the broadscale clearing of native vegetation – to happen by repealing the *Native Vegetation Act*. NSW National Parks Association CEO Kevin Evans said, “The Coalition has a poor record on nature conservation over the past four years, so the community has little faith that protections will be maintained or improved in the new law.” In Queensland, where native vegetation clearing rules were significantly weakened in 2014, 275,000 hectares were cleared from Queensland in the last financial year,



which was a tripling of land clearing rates since 2010. Kevin Evans says, “This should send alarm bells ringing to what we can expect in NSW with the Native Vegetation Act repealed.” “Seventy-five percent of the State’s land resources and extracted water are already used by agriculture whilst land protected for nature represents less than 9%. Nature needs half, not less than 10%. There

are 970 plants and animals listed as threatened with extinction in NSW. Loss of habitat is one of the primary threats implicated in this appalling record. For more information on how to support the *Native Vegetation Act*, visit the websites of Nature Conservation Council of NSW: www.nature.org.au and the National Parks Association of NSW: www.npansw.org.au

Winning design



What does *Lasiognathus saccostomus* and a passive-solar home have in common? Clue: *Lasiognathus saccostomus* is a fish found in the depths of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, and is one of the strangest and most specialised creatures in the world. It has a fishing pole attached to its head, with a luminescent lure ending in two hooked barbs used to secure prey. Still don’t know? The answer is winning design. In the case of saccostomus, otherwise known as the Wolftrap Seadevil, this winning design has ensured this incredible creature’s survival over thousands of years. Its little fishing line

and glowing lure provides the perfect mechanism to entrap prey at depths where no light penetrates. In addition, its unusual raised lateral line, like body braille, is hypersensitive to minute changes in water pressure, giving the creature continuous detailed information on its ocean surroundings. A passive-solar home is a term used to describe a huge diversity of thoughtfully and skilfully designed houses, which seek to maximise the natural attributes of a landscape whilst minimising the home’s environmental impact. More often than not, passive solar homes are fully integrated into



Permaculture Principles
with Anastasia Guise

their surroundings, ideally creating seamless flows between woodlots and orchards, forests and streams, between the kitchen garden and kitchen table. The home is at the core of a permaculture system and is necessarily a multifunctional space with an enormous potential to intercept and store energy. Clever design is the difference between having heating bills or none, healthy or sick occupants, shaded cool interiors in summer or an unliveable furnace at the mercy of an angry sun.

Some standard design features of passive solar homes in the Southern Hemisphere are a north-facing aspect to maximise winter sun, and restricted western-facing windows to limit summer exposure. Verandas and pergolas which allow for seasonal outdoor or transition areas are common, as are insulative and ethical building materials such as strawbale, cob, rammed earth, stone, hemp and sawment, as well as recent innovative biopods as earthships and their counterparts. Importantly, like each of the earth’s creatures magnificently shaped by the Universe’s masterpotter, Time, every passive-solar home is unique, built in response to its environment, and the dreams of its occupants. Winning design is sometimes achieved by doing, and doing again. It might be useful to define design goals at the beginning of a build or renovation. Ask yourself, or your family, what does “home” mean? It might be a place of sanctuary, or a place to hide, a place to establish a clean resource base, or a launching pad in which to contribute to a wider world; definitions which all call for very different things. For those of us privileged enough to squat for a while and spin ourselves a web out of sunlight and clay, the very least we can do is take a note from nature and strive for a winning design.

Natural law

by Helene Collard

The energies in mid to late May brought a level of difficulty and dissonance. This was to show us where we need to ‘pull up our socks’, and, to learn lessons in giving space and letting go. Ultimately, the purpose for our existence is love. When we embody love and go about our day in a state of tenderness, the world changes – we change. In June, practice doing routine tasks in a physical-mental-emotional-state of tenderness. Rake the leaves, apply your moisturiser, prepare dinner, be at work, drive somewhere, eat and drink, be with your children, be with your partner, be with yourself – tenderly.

Tenderness is defined as ‘gentleness and kindness’. Other words for tenderness include: affection, fondness, love, devotion, warmth, kind-heartedness, etc. Choosing to embody a state of tenderness will not necessarily change what you do each day, however, it will absolutely change HOW you experience what you do, and, how you feel. The road we take each day matters. How we get there, matters. Remember the saying ‘It’s the journey not the destination’? During June, apply your efforts toward being tender with your thoughts, yourself, and your other interactions. Our conscious efforts to embody tenderness supports us to understand ourselves more deeply, including our unique and important

gifts. This in turn, will invite an unprecedented opportunity for cooperation. Being in a state of tenderness will transform the vibrations that reverberate throughout the interconnected web of life. When we as a people can sustain individual states of tenderness, this will be the time where self-governance can prosper. This is because self-governance requires each member to know, and accept, their place and vital role, which in turn, creates high-levels of cooperation and less ego-response. The reality of self-governance is closer that you think. Practice tenderness; it is the way forward. Practice stillness and meditation as part of your daily routine. I was reading the results of a recent study where a protein in the blood that indicates stress, was significantly reduced in participants that practiced a singing meditation (Kirtan Kriya) for 12 minutes daily. The point I’m making here, is 12



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

minutes a day of focused meditation – whatever form works for you – can make a real difference in reducing mental-physical-emotional stress, which will absolutely support your tenderness practice. If you are unfamiliar with meditation, find a class, learn from a friend or read a book/website to get you started. There are countless ways to meditate, so it may also involve trying a few techniques before you find the right one for you. So in June, combine meditation with tenderness, and enjoy the magic you create. Helene Collard has a Bachelor of Trauma & Healing and is a Reiki Master-Teacher. She lives in the NSW Northern Rivers area with her life partner, Mirek and their two young children. Helene is currently offering workshops for professionals and carers in the area of Secondary Trauma & Self-care. For more information, email: hmcollard@gmail.com



The Healing Arts Collective emerged from Artemis Medicinals around February this year.

Still located in the Nimbin Community Centre, five women are now holding this space: Fiona Maunder, Spiral Lamborgini, Tina Featherfoot, Anne Walker and most recently Betti Wille wish to contribute to the community's well-being, each one bringing her own unique healing practice to the collective.

Come and check us out. Bookings are possible through the registration book outside our space.

On Monday, 22nd June between 10am and 2pm, we will be holding the next community open clinic, in collaboration with Herbalists

Without Borders people's clinic.

We're offering free 30-minute treatments or consultations for everyone who is holding a Health Care Card. Donations are welcome.

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We also sell locally-produced Healing Balms, Skin Care and Tea Medica products. See you there.

Yoga for your soul

by Siri Shakti Kaur



Kundalini Yoga is yoga for your soul. Once reserved only for the Masters of Kundalini Yoga, this powerful practice was brought to the west in 1969 by Yogi Bhaan. Finding himself in LA, Yogi Bhaan (pictured) had two options: he could sell himself and his yoga to the wealthy Beverley Hills crowd or take this yoga to those who really needed it, the hippy fringe. His choice was clear, and he began teaching Kundalini Yoga to the LA hippies. His aim was to create teachers, not collect students, and Kundalini Yoga is now taught around the world.

A powerful technology, the practice utilises the breath, yoga postures, mudra and mantra in a kriya based practice, a prescribed set of exercises teamed with chanting and pranayam (breath meditation) to bring you back to your true Self, your Sat Naam. Kundalini literally means the hair of the beloved, and in Sikh traditions it is said that the hair is the power of the universe, coiled at the base of the spine, and that through this practice the hair can be uncoiled to raise up the spines and out through the tenth gate, your crown chakra, to connect you with the Infinite.

In this connection we are all One.

Regular Kundalini Yoga classes are held in Lismore at the Inner Light Centre at 131 Keen Street, led by Siri Shakti Kaur who is a KRI Certified Kundalini Yoga teacher. As well as regular classes on Thursday nights and Friday mornings, Siri Shakti also holds short courses and workshops. She will be holding a workshop to mark the Winter Solstice on Sunday 21st June at the Inner Light Centre. For details and bookings for the Winter Solstice workshop contact Siri Shakti on 0431-094-483, or visit: sirishaktiyoga.com.au for information about regular classes and upcoming courses.

Free your shoulders and hands with Feldenkrais and sticks

by Brent Shaub

Sticks for the hands are tools for learning about the fingers, hands, wrists, elbows and shoulders.

Sticks come in different shapes and sizes to meet different needs. Thick sticks fill the palm, allowing curling into a steady hold at the base of the fingers, allow the palm to close gently around the stick's circumference. A gentle yet firm grip creates a clarity to the larger joints of the elbow and shoulder. With proper placement, the shoulder blade itself can slide down from the weight with no interference through the smaller joints. When improperly placed, there is contracting in the upper forearm, part of the palm or top of the shoulder.

Thin sticks allow for precise articulating of the distal finger phalanges. When holding a stick, it's clear how moving just one finger affects all others. Consciously having one finger drive while the others ride, readily helps coordination of effort, the ability to switch off and receive, as well as awareness of movement propagation through an object. When all five digits are in contact, effects of finger movements on the wrist become clearer. A frequent result of a properly balanced position is an increase in space in the carpal tunnel. Small articulations of the fingers and thumb on a stick can reduce unneeded contraction in these sensitive digits. The ability to perform delicate, precise touching is essential to enjoyment.

Sideways wrist movements happen when tipping the ends of the stick downward and upward. After just a few, suggestions for better placements of the fingers become clear. During repositioning, the surface of the bark can be explored, looking for stability while being sensitive so as to not damage the stick nor chaff one's fingers. Many details of the fourteen finger and thumb joints emerge. During exploration, senses have become focused; mental chatter, more distant.

Once a suitable position is found, slight rotations of the stick along the long axis – it doesn't move in space but turns like a pencil in a sharpener – introduce



questions to forearms. Rotation can be created from any specific finger/thumb or combinations thereof. Rotating by moving the hand as a whole requests a different organization and provides different information to the wrists, elbow and shoulder blade. Rotating so the stick's ends come closer to and farther away from the body while parallel to the ground asks different questions. Combinations of both can do wonders to free the scapula on down: a wonderful relief from typing at a computer.

Seeing additional sticks on the ground allows a chance to ponder which is preferred. Various sizes, lengths, textures, weight, dryness, dampness, smells – sensory food – develop a versatile memory bank. Over time, knowledge of which sticks will beneficially affect desired areas lead to confidence in decision-making and safe movement that interacts with nature. My personal experience has shown that stick placement in my fingers communicates to my wrist and the fronts and back of my shoulders; weight affects my palm and tops and bottoms of my shoulders; while the stick's knots and irregularities relay information mostly to my forearms and elbows.

After walking for thirty minutes with one in each hand, I've reached town. I place the sticks on the ground unobtrusively and hope to greet them later. They can help me unwind any tension I may have accumulated throughout the day. Thanks to them, now my arms feel lithe and available. I can feel my feet in every step and how stepping leads to its opposite arm swinging forward. It's been nice having engaged these parts of myself, before the day has begun, outside in fresh air, with something freely available.

To hear a recording of how to use sticks to improve your enjoyment of life, visit: <http://moveEasier.com.au/sticks>

Birth and Beyond



by Kirrah Holborn
'Traditional Wisdom'

When you have a baby, you'll need to make a decision on what to do with your placenta.

I've heard many mothers regretfully tell me they didn't even look at their placenta after birth and how they wish they had. It is a fascinating organ that you grew and that nurtured your baby. I'm passionate about sharing information so that you know that you have options and you can make the choice that is right for you.

There are as so many differing beliefs and customs around what 'should' be done with the placenta after birth. Some cultures believe it needs to be buried, some people dehydrate the cord as a keepsake for the child and placentaphagy and placenta encapsulation is becoming increasingly popular.

In many western countries, the placenta is considered clinical waste and many women leave their placentas at the hospital to be disposed of. Birth is all about the baby and the placenta may be given little thought at the time.

If the mother wishes to take her placenta home, she is more than welcome to. It is usually placed in a plastic bag

and then into a bucket.

You can plant it!

If you decide you'd like to do something with your placenta, burying it under a special tree is easy and can be a nice ceremonial process. If it is buried under a fruit or flowering tree, then each year it is a reminder of the organ that nurtured and helped your baby grow. Kids usually love picking flowers or eating the fruit from 'their special tree'. If you are renting, you can always plant the tree in a big pot so it can be moved to your next place. I've heard countless stories of women with their children's placenta's still in their freezer at home- waiting for the right time or place to bury it. There is a sense of respect for the placenta and a desire to honour its role in the pregnancy and birthing journey. Burial is one such way!

You can keep it attached!

Have you heard about lotus birth? This is the practice of leaving the placenta attached to the baby until the cord naturally falls off in its own time (without cutting it). This usually happens in a few days to a week. Some people believe there is a spiritual connection between the placenta and baby and that it's best to allow the baby to choose the time to let go of the organ that sustained it. Once the cord has fallen off the baby, the placenta is usually buried.

You can eat it!

Get over the 'eww' factor and read on! More and more women are choosing to



consume their placenta. There are many ways to go about this. Placenta encapsulation has become the more socially preferred method and is becoming increasingly popular by the day. This is a process that turns the placenta into capsules that look and taste like other vitamins or minerals. The placenta contains many beneficial nutrients, hormones and vitamins that can help the new mother.

Scientific studies have been published that link placenta consumption with increased milk production. Advocates of placenta encapsulation have found that ingesting the placenta also helps improve moods, balance emotions, increase energy, reduce bleeding, boost iron levels and aid in a quicker recovery from birth. Further research needs to be done to scientifically validate the anecdotal evidence.

In my personal experience, the majority of women who have tried placenta encapsulation have enjoyed many positive benefits and then become enthusiastic to recommend it to their friends. Testimonials often include

comments like:

"The capsules are having a really positive effect on my mood."

"I have excellent energy levels."

"I'm amazed at how fast I have recovered after giving birth."

"My milk is abundant."

Placenta encapsulation is particularly worthwhile to consider if you are low in iron, have had previous postnatal depression or have had low milk supply in the past. New motherhood brings many challenges, so why not make this time a little easier?

Even if you're not ready to decide what you want to do with your placenta yet, I recommend making a plan to keep your placenta so that you can keep your options open and avoid any 'placenta regrets'.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have about placentas. Please make contact!

Kirrah is a pregnancy masseuse, childbirth educator and placenta encapsulator helping women and families in the northern rivers area. For more information, visit: www.traditionalwisdom.com.au

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Unbinding through metaphor

In 1997, I was in Nanjing in China to give a paper at a conference on aging in the 21st century, and to do a special acupuncture course. We had a holiday as well, travelling outside Nanjing to Wuxi and Shanghai, which was wonderful.

It was autumn and the trees were changing colour. Mists rose across the valleys and over the great Yangtze River and settled in the little hollows between houses. I noticed that some of the little trees in the parks and along the streets were bound in rope, apparently to shape them so as to represent the perfection of Tao (which is supposedly a philosophy of change). It struck me then, as it does every time I think about it, that forcing nature to follow our conception of nature's way is nonsense. Nature does her thing, whether or not it fits with how we philosophise her to be.

Binding young trees is akin to binding women's feet and though the latter is no longer seen as legitimate practice, the former is accepted blindly. This got me thinking, what else do we accept blindly and turn into an artefact that goes against nature? Millions of things go against nature, where the principle is antithetical to change. Our very capacity for making our lives miserable is one of them. Addictions, bad



by Dr Elizabeth McCardell

habits, anxiety and feelings of hopelessness are bound up states, needing to be unbound.

Metaphor, by its very nature, unbinds when given the chance to. The etymology of metaphor is interesting. From the Greek, meta-foreign means "to bring beyond", to express something that is "beyond" an immediate logical understanding on the emotional and imaginative dimension. It is a figure of speech which makes an implicit, implied or hidden comparison between two things or objects that are not apparently similar at all, but which have some characteristics common between them.

Metaphor takes us beyond mere words to an understanding beyond the beyond. It is like a door opening to a different level of being, health and hope. This is

a literal truth.

Metaphors change the way our brains work. Neurological experiments in recent years have shown that when an imaginative image is evoked the part of the brain getting a sense of the image is sparked. For example, take the metaphor, "the woman had a velvety voice" and the brain's sensory cortex is roused, but to the words, "the woman had a nice voice," there is no special activity there.

To the words, "wine dark sea" the part of the brain concerned with taste and smell are activated, but "the sea was deep" doesn't. The metaphorical phrase, "hacking like an old steam train" (as long time smokers tend to do) kicks off the auditory centres of the brain. "Hanging by the skin of its teeth," evokes the proprioceptive receptors in the brain (responsible for allowing us to know the sense of our body in space), whereas "nearly falling off" doesn't.

And so on. These are mere words on a page, mere black lines and dots and lots of white space, but nevertheless evoke so much more. The capacity of humans to experience way beyond the immediate is extraordinary, an extraordinariness that can take us much further than we sometimes think.

So metaphors not only beautifully lubricate our engagement with thoughts,

ideas and a capacity to share experiences, they also embody that engagement for us in order to know the meaning of something with our whole selves, and, further allow us to let go of preconceived ideas about ourselves, and let change happen.

Knowing something beyond the mere bone-bare description of them is why metaphors are an extremely effective tool in psychotherapy and, more particularly, in clinical hypnotherapy. In the state of hypnosis, which is a relaxed yet focussed one, the mind is open to experience, or not (and the choice is always with the client), the shifting perceptions that effectively undo the fixed ideas the person has about themselves.

A lot of psychological problems and pain syndromes are iterative, in the sense that the person experiencing them feels that the problems are just going over and over and over in their heads.

Using metaphor, that takes the mind and experiencing body beyond the logical space that the problem occupies into a landscape of multiple possibilities frees the person wonderfully. Thus the artfulness of metaphor has a splendid healing capacity.

The tao of the human landscape can be fluid, flexible, adaptive and open to whatever life throws up: unbound and rather exciting.

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Tight and painful neck

by Brigid Beckett

Tight and painful neck and upper body is an uncomfortable and common experience, and one that people often look to acupuncture to relieve. Related symptoms of headaches, tingling fingers and disturbed sleep can add to the discomfort. There are a number of reasons to why this is such frequent and sometimes persistent problem.

Anatomically, the neck is the bridge between the head and body and must be strong enough to support the weight of the head. But a conflicting need is flexibility, as the neck needs a range of movement and needs to respond quickly to stimuli to look or listen.

The payoff is a weakness in vertebrae at the base of the neck where degenerative changes often happen. Also problems of the thoracic spine often cause neck tightness.

Most cases of stiff and sore necks respond quickly to acupuncture. For those that are recurrent, it is important to look further for the cause.

All the yang meridians begin or end on the head. The governing vessel, gallbladder and bladder meridians are most often involved in neck pain. The gallbladder and its yin partner the liver are the neck channels involved with emotional symptoms. The neck and shoulders can often be felt tightening in a direct response to emotional turmoil. Continual stress will cause the muscles of the neck and upper body to be in a persistently tight condition. Headaches, sometimes migraines, are often seen in this pattern of qi constraint.

Another cause of persistent or recurrent neck pain and stiffness is blood deficiency. Blood is needed for elasticity and lubrication of joints. In the pattern of blood deficiency the pain is better with rest, worse with movement and worse with cold. Also often worse for massage and manipulation. There may be other symptoms. Again associated headaches are common, also weakness, tiredness, dryness, insomnia, anxiety and dizziness.

Blood deficiency may be caused by poor diet. It can also be the result of spleen (digestive qi) deficiency as blood is produced from the nutritive qi of the spleen. As milk is a form of blood breast feeding can also cause blood deficiency.

A pattern which overlaps with blood deficiency is yin deficiency. Yin deficiency is more common in older people but can also be produced by prolonged use of medications such as cortisone or anti-inflammatories. It

can also occur after prolonged illness, or from overwork or shiftwork or may be constitutional. Because it overlaps with blood deficiency the symptoms will be the same but stiffness and rigidity can be more severe. There will often also be heat signs such as night sweats and hot feet.

The neck is often exposed to wind, cold and damp. The neck is the part of the body exposed to cold and draughts overnight, which can cause an acute sore stiff neck on waking. Sometimes the wind cold attack causes other symptoms including headache, fever or chills and nausea.

If this pattern is left to become chronic the element of damp will predominate, leading to persistent soreness and heaviness. Often worse with cold and wet weather.

The neck joins the head and chest. Metaphysically the head is the home of the intellect and the thorax the seat of emotions. It is said that a disconnect between what someone is thinking and feeling can result in neck problems. Anger may be involved, for example if someone is feeling angry but thinks it is not right to show or acknowledge that emotion.

Any of these patterns can be successfully treated with acupuncture. Whether it is a sudden onset from cold or strain, or a problem that has caused suffering for decades, identifying the cause and treating appropriately will give relief to neck pain and discomfort.

Contact Brigid on 0431-702-560