

Aries

Mars continues journeying through adventurous Sagittarius until mid-February when he enters Capricorn the day before Mercury goes retrograde. Use the Mercury retrograde period for completing unfinished projects and re-envisioning your future steps. Venus enters Aries on February 8 (until March 6) activating your need for personal space and autonomy.

Taurus

This is the time of the year where you are receiving the rewards and results of your activities from the last nine months. Use the Mercury retrograde phase (February 17 – March 10) to reflect on what has worked well and which parts need changing. Think out of the square, question set boundaries and limits and orientate yourself towards a renewed vision for the future.

Gemini

Use the Mercury retrograde phase from February 17 until March 10 to take care of old business and finish the jobs you started. There may be communication problems especially concerning your career path and life direction. Use this period to consider whether you are on track with your goals and plans for the future. You can make the necessary changes once Mercury moves direct again.

Cancer

There are things that need to be brought to an end and now the time has arrived when you can do this more easily. There is support by the cosmos to review old attachments. Use the Mercury retrograde period (Feb 17 – March 10) to re-examine your beliefs about the world, your morals and ethics. Maybe it is time for formulating a new code that you might want to live by.

Leo

Relationships with others are either more challenging or liberating during this period. The Full Moon in your Sun sign on February 9 highlights the Leonine need for creative expression and shining your light. Use the Mercury retrograde period (Feb 17 – March 10) for finding out if you are getting and/or giving your fair share in a relationship.

Virgo

Issues of work, service and health are emphasised during this period. A job might end or a new one may begin. Whatever the case, there is a necessity for re-organising your daily life and routine. Use the Mercury retrograde period (February 17 – March 10) for re-negotiation of your written and unwritten contracts with others.

February

The occurrences of the past month have deeply changed the lives of many people. Astrologically, it correlates with a rare Saturn/Pluto conjunction in Capricorn combined with a powerful Lunar Eclipse on January 11/12; it was followed by a New Moon in Aquarius on January 25. Collectively we are experiencing the ending of an entire era preceding a new beginning that will remain the leading theme for the rest of the year. However, in order to face the future, and start working sensibly and creatively with the 'New Normal' we have to draw from our past. Our accomplished successes and advancements as well as our failures and shortcoming have to be equally assessed. Aquarian power of thought, which differs from the mainstream and supercedes set boundaries and limitations, can help with gaining fresh knowledge and innovative insights on how the decisions of the past still impact our current lives. At best, Aquarians are progressive thinkers who can make brave, optimistic choices in a spirit of community motivated by a vision of a better and fairer world. The image for Aquarius is the Waterbearer who pours the waters of life (inspiration) onto Earth. On the downside they might live too much in the head and are too detached from other people's reality. It is a fixed sign and Aquarius can stubbornly insist on his/her view being the only valid one! They achieve balance when they integrate the heart-felt passion and warmth from the opposite sign, Leo. Leo is the sign of leadership and helps to ground Aquarian ideas by generating sufficient emotional energy for earthing a worthwhile cause.

The Full Moon, which peaks on February 9 at Leo-Aquarius, highlights where we dare to be different and express our authentic self but also remember we are all part of a larger whole. Small shifts can result in large-scale effects; everybody's contribution plays a part in humanity's evolution. The Leo Moon invites us to shine our light and live our truth while the spiritual task of Aquarius is the attainment of unity in diversity, where everyone's uniqueness is honoured and included. Leo amplifies the cosmic call to think, relate, and act from the heart. The Full Moon makes a supportive trine to outspoken Mars in Sagittarius indicating that we can rise to a challenge if we feel motivated and inspired. Venus, the planet of love and cosmic relationship factor, enters Aries – another fire sign – on February 8, just

hours before the Full Moon. She conjoins Chiron and the Black Moon Lilith, both in Aries, activating themes around closeness versus distance and vulnerability versus trust. How can we maintain our personal space without fearing rejection? Early relationship wounds can be brought to awareness, integrated and healed. On the other hand, sparks can fly to clean the air because Venus in Aries in combination with Lilith, is less willing to compromise for the sake of

keeping the peace. Lilith can activate hidden rage, but also the courage to make the changes we always wanted to do.

All planets are in forward motion until February 17 when Mercury turns retrograde (until March 10). We are supported in moving forward with our plans, ideas and projects until then. While retrograde, Mercury invites us to listen to our intuition and investigate what has been buried or overlooked during the past weeks and months. Retrograde periods are associated with setbacks and delays, but are necessary slowdowns giving us time to reflect, repair, and revision. They encourage us to complete unfinished business, and eliminate what is preventing us from reaching our goals.

The New Moon on February 24 in early Pisces forms a supportive sextile with Mars in Capricorn conjoining the South Node. This New Moon falls not only in the last sign of the zodiac but also during a Mercury retrograde period, also in Pisces. Instead of forming intentions and plans for the future, the energy of the moment is much more subdued and directed towards examining our subconscious motivation and suppressed desires, making sure that our ambitions are based on something meaningful. Mars in Capricorn acts responsibly but can be dominating when feeling threatened. Mars forms an exact square with Chiron and Lilith, indicating a call for equality in relationships as issues of power imbalance have to be addressed.

Navigation by the Stars: Your Year Ahead: Plans, Directions, Concerns for 2020; contact Tina on 0457-903-957, email: star-loom@hotmail.com

Next 1 day Workshops: 'Decoding Sun, Moon and Ascendant in the Natal Chart', Saturday, February 29th, 2020, 10am – 4pm, at the Lillifield Community Centre, 4505 Kyogle Road, Wadeville, \$70; conc \$60; 'Australian Bush Flower Essences Course', Two Saturdays, March 14th and 28th, 10am – 4pm, at the Lillifield Community Centre, For all bookings and info, contact 0457-903-957 or email: star-loom@hotmail.com

Libra

The Mercury retrograde period (February 17 – March 10) is useful for re-organising your workspace. You might need to make adjustments to your daily routine as things might not work out as planned. Retrograde periods are associated with slowdowns giving you extra time to reflect, repair, and revise. This is a good period for attending to the needs of body, mind and soul.

Scorpio

Your home-life is going through an important process of liberation and transformation. It is a good moment in time to create space for new developments and let go of ideas which have become too fixed. Use the Mercury retrograde period (February 17 – March 10) for seeking out new inspiration. Withdraw, recapture, play for a while and replenish.

Sagittarius

This is a great moment in time for starting a new course of learning or teaching others your special field of expertise. In any case you need to find outlets for communicating and sharing your ideas. Use the Mercury retrograde period (February 17 – March 10) for re-examining beliefs that you inherited from your family and for removing stagnant energy from your home environment, especially if you feel stuck in a rut!

Capricorn

Mars enters your Sun sign mid-month and will remain until March 30. This is a long period of extra energy at your disposal. Proceed with care and use the Mercury retrograde period (Feb 17 – March 10) for improving your communication with others. Create some quiet time to gain clarity for the path ahead

Aquarius

As an independent thinker you have the ability to network information and ideas. Your non-conformist attitudes might challenge others but can be put to good use when taking the right approach. Use the Mercury retrograde period (Feb 17 – March 10) for taking a look at what you hold dear and what you really value in life. This is your inner guide speaking!

Pisces

This is the end and beginning of your yearly solar cycle. Therefore, use the Mercury retrograde period (February 17 – March 10) for completing unfinished projects and taking stock of the last 12 months. Release what has lost its meaning and keep what has proven its value. What part of yourself that you haven't allowed to come out before, would you like to express?



Rail-serviced paradise lost

by Alain Dubois

Escaping Joh Bjelke-Petersen's oppressive regime, I crossed Queensland's border in the eighties ameliorating my life-threatening prognosis.

Transport's a concern when facing ill-health, disability or just getting older. A real alternative to deadly roadway was crucial; my carer couldn't drive.

Arriving in Brunswick Heads sunshine, a complimentary taxi

or minibus transferred us from the Gold Coast Motorail at Mullumbimby.

Living near Burringbar rail station meant beaches, friends, family and Lismore services were accessible, including affordable trips to Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne's amenities and events.

Tweed and Byron locals, observing increasing 'tree-changers' and visitors, felt regular, small 'commuter' services were due.

The seemingly idyllic country

life featuring rail-based transport became nightmarish.

The Greiner government's sacking of hundreds and sabotaging viable and popular Brisbane and Murwillumbah Motorail services in 1990 was diabolical. XPTs with half the seating capacity, devoid of options, lowered patronage. Poorly-timed services and fewer stops ruined local trips.

It's absolute nonsense that Australia's third-most visited region adjoining Australia's fastest growing region hasn't enough traffic volume for rail connection. Projected \$billions of loss in road freight

revenue is a main reason.

Centralised government and Sydney's throng never thought about regions. 22 councils and 70% of northern NSW residents voted for secession in 1967.

Australia signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007. This means people with disabilities (including many medical conditions), i.e. 24% of our region, must have means to access needs equally with others, just as wealthier car owner/drivers are able to do. Rail catered for us in the seventies.

It's appalling, with visual loss and

narcolepsy, I'm forced to drive to medical appointments in Byron and Brisbane, when rail lines exist nearby. I haven't enjoyed Byron or Bangalow markets in about 20 years.

It's condescending when people say buses or expensive restrictive chaperoned services will suffice.

There are people who do know what is appropriate, viable and necessary in preventing further decent into darkening ages, but they're not in our governments.

It's absolutely necessary we don't give essential services to profiting corporations or negligent governments to meddle with.

Healing happens



by Marilyn Devlin

When fear transforms into possibility... it's a gloriously liberating experience.

I've had a bit of a thing with 'doctors'... left over remnants from my early years. It happened long ago and I was really small, so lots of the memories have remained unconscious. The summer of my third birthday... my life changed. Entering lots of doctors.

During my two years training as a coach in Tantric-based methodologies, we did a lot of digging. Personal digging into our self. Lots of breath-work and somatic practices... day after day, after day.

I had no desire to be a 'coach'. I'm already trained in other wellness modalities. But there was something about the word Tantra... that created curiosity in me, and had for years. But I was too embarrassed to pursue it. Why? My conditioning. Eons of conditioning... ugh!

I'd often pondered, like many others: "There's gotta be something more..." when it came to intimate connections. I'd never considered myself 'prudish', never conventional... I was a thinker, liked to think for myself. I didn't see the conditioning that so deeply affected me. Taking on others' beliefs as my own.

Add in religion, and it can get a pretty messy mix.

Tantra – for those not in the field, is mostly considered to be about sex. But it's way more than that. What my gut informed me was this path held the possibility of great healing. And being a BIG healing girl... I ventured forward.

I've written about it before... so won't repeat it again. But it's been a huge journey. Diving deep inside of me. Shining the torch on those hidden corners. Why? To heal. To find the self I lost so long ago. To be reunited with who I really am. It's easy to get lost along the way.

Who teaches us to be our own uniquely wondrous Self? Who guides us in our brilliance, our magnificence... the original core of YOU, that's a wonder beyond words. Unique... never to be repeated. Perfect... just as it is. Purposeful... here to add its brilliance. Given everything you'll ever need.

No... it's not been our way, at least collectively.

Tantric-based principles for me have been about finding me, discovering the beautiful soft and sensual, gloriously wondrous me breathing beneath all the separation and pain; the confusion, shock and abandonment. The forgetting.

Yes, it's a journey.

Those early years with doctors... scarred me in ways I never knew. There was (and is) little awareness of trauma. We were taught 'to get on with it'. I recall them telling us (I was four) as we were finally released from hospital (after a year!) "You're normal now... you can do anything"... as I learned to manage this new iron thing on my little leg.

That was our way... pretend, pretend. Work hard, be a hero. Don't accept defeat... climb the highest mountain. All sounds good eh? Really it's not. We learn to hide, to pretend... to be something we're not. We try to 'fit in'... be like everyone else. We learn to create a mask, a personality that everything is hidden behind.

As years pass... we forget. We forget what we put in those stores. So when they're released... they can be shocking. Unbelievable. We remember what was. And underneath these shocks and traumas... lies the original you. And s/he's so beautiful. So perfectly made. So brilliantly gorgeous.

I went for a skin scan 'cause something had caught my eye. It was a traumatic experience for me... gave me lots to think about. One week later I got the call. I know they don't call unless it's 'something'. After taking the call the most miraculous thing happened... at first my old friend Fear... jumped up immediately.

And then the miracle of my healing, a powerful sense of possibility arose and filled my space entirely... illuminating me for hours. It was super Magickal. Healing happens... I've always believed that.

Nimbin Trivia Time

by Eclectus

1. This member of one of the biggest sixties psychedelic rock bands described the band's leader as a "psychopath", and a "lunatic", but also said "I miss him so much for his artistry." He described money as "like fertiliser. When spread around, things grow; when it's hoarded, it stinks" and successfully sued fellow band members to prevent the band's music being sold to advertise Cadillacs. Who is he, and what band was he in?
2. What is the oldest thing on Earth?
3. Who is the current holder of the Newcombe Medal, awarded annually to Australia's most outstanding elite tennis player and ambassador for the sport?
4. One of the earliest stories depicting conflict with extraterrestrials was first serialised in magazine form in 1897 before publication as a novel in 1898. It has never been out of print and has had at least 25 sequels published by other authors. Adaptations include: 15 movies; 15 radio shows; nine comic books; seven games; six TV shows; five musical works; two theatre productions; two web stories and a set of trading cards. What is the title of the original work and who wrote it?
5. In December 2019 Sanna Marin, Prime Minister of Finland became the youngest serving world leader at 34. However, she only held the title for less than a month. Who took over the title and which country do they lead?
6. What is Chateaubriand?
7. Who was Cyrus the Great?
8. How many countries can you name that contain the letter Z? Be careful... there are some that have changed name in recent years.
9. The Nimbin Rocks are dramatic volcanic landscape. What is the earliest recorded ascent of Cathedral Rock, as European settlers christened the most massive, fenestrated peak?
10. Gayfeather, Love in the Mist, Powder Puff and Quaker Ladies, are they 19th century English novels, dances, flowers, period-piece movies or Romantic era paintings?



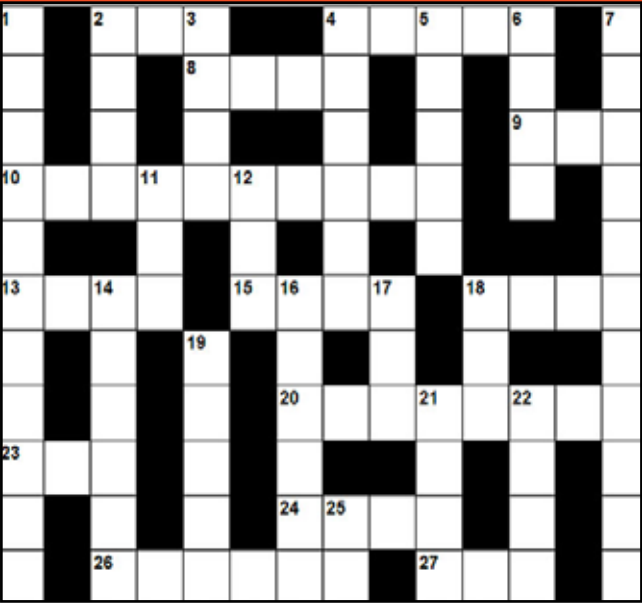
Photo by Jeff Katz, courtesy Guardian Australia

- Answers
1. John Densmore, the Doors' drummer.
 2. The oldest thing on Earth is a grain of silicon carbide extracted from a fragment of the Murchison meteorite which fell to Earth on 28 September 1969. It is believed to be 7 billion years old. The Solar System is only 4.6 billion years old.
 3. Ash Barty, world number one in women's tennis, won the 2019 award for the third consecutive year.
 4. The War of the Worlds by H. G. Wells.
 5. Sebastian Kurz, aged 33, has been the Chancellor of Austria since early last month. He is not without some experience, however, having already served 18 months as Chancellor from 2017 to 2019.
 6. Chateaubriand is a classic French dish prepared with the centre cut of beef tenderloin from the short loin. It is roasted between the two end pieces of the tenderloin which burn but protect the centre cut. It is traditionally served with Chateaubriand sauce (white wine, shallots, demi-glace, butter, tarragon, and lemon juice) and mushrooms on a warmed oaken plank.
 7. In 550BC, Cyrus the Great founded the Achaemenid dynasty which ruled the First Persian Empire. Characterised by author and historian Tom Holland as the world's first superpower, the Persians, like modern superpowers, discovered that it sometimes takes more than might to achieve conquest when the Greeks, not once but twice, repelled invasion by the most formidable array of armed forces ever seen at the time.
 8. There are eleven: Azerbaijan; Belize; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Brazil; Czechia; Mozambique; New Zealand; Tanzania; Venezuela; Zambia and Zimbabwe.
 9. Cathedral Rock was first climbed by Mr. E. G. Walker of Grafton in 1927, a practice to be discouraged, given the deep spiritual significance of the area to the Bundjalung people.
 10. Flowers.

Nimbin Crossword

2020-2

by 5ync



Across

2. Company?
4. Release? Photos or songs collected
8. Frozen snowman
9. Too much information
10. Things like this
13. Mail?
15. Homosexuals
18. Automobiles
20. French president
23. Business registration number (init.)
24. For all time?
26. See (22 down).
27. Often used to complete (10 across)

Down

1. An empty part of (10 across) (5,6)
2. Liking (someone)?
3. Ears (of corn)
4. Fight, disturbance
5. Monster
6. Self-referential
7. A part of (10 across) you fill
11. Turf
12. Hairpiece
14. Magical kingdom behind the wardrobe
16. Russet, Pippin, Fuji, Braeburn, Bramley, Granny Smith...
17. Total
18. Special effects? (init.)
19. Thespian
21. Criminal?
22. Direction of this solution
25. Against (abbr.)

Solution: Page 34

Has Your Hot Water System Been Checked Lately?

Ever Heard Of A Sacrificial Anode?

A sacrificial anode is a vital part of your water system, and having it inspected can be the difference between an efficiently working system and a costly replacement.

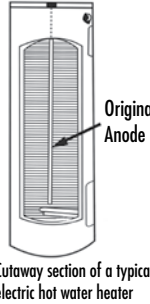
Manufacturers recommend that you maintain the anode in your system in order to prevent damage from rust + corrosion. After its 5th birthday – warranty expires.

THE ANODE IN YOUR SYSTEM SHOULD NEVER BE ALLOWED TO CORRODE AWAY, WHATEVER TYPE OR BRAND OF SYSTEM YOU HAVE – Solar, Electric, Gas or Heat Pumps.

FOR A LIMITED TIME we will check your anode in your area free of charge.

“REMEMBER, YOU CAN'T LOSE. NO ANODE REPLACEMENT, NO CHARGE”
Comes with a 5 year warranty
Make your Hot Water System last for 30 years without replacement.


AUSSIE ANODES
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1300 166 673



“Feeling safe was imperative for me. Marilyn creates and holds a very safe space to feel, explore and integrate feelings and emotions. Her intuitive sense of what I need allows me to merge with challenging emotions in a gentle, integrative way.”

Jane Halliday – Feel the Difference
Marilyn Devlin... Transformational Coaching
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Preschool hops into

Nimbin Early Learning Centre

We have now returned from the Christmas break and are looking forward to new adventures for 2020. We hope everyone in the community had a lovely break.

On our return we found a giant frog in the toilet which sparked an interest to us all, and focused our craft around frogs.

We learnt the life cycle of a frog; we made our very own pond craft with frogs and lily pads.

We are busy organising our next excursion, so watch this space to find out where we are off to next.

Please feel free to call the Centre on (02) 6689-0142. We are open Monday to Friday 8.30am-5pm.



Air-purifying plants for the household

The world according to
Magenta Appel-Pye

Having moved from an old mouldy, dusty house to a new one, I now face the problem of off-gassing. To remediate the issue, I have been learning about air-purifying plants.

One of the best is mother-in-law's tongue, aka snake plant or viper's bowstring hemp, or *Sansevieria trifasciata*. This easy-to-grow succulent has recently come back into fashion and for good reason. With its long, upright, sword-shaped variegated leaves they are a striking focal point and great for narrow spaces. Some have a pretty yellow outline. They tolerate drought and low light levels, but best of all it is one of the few plants that emit oxygen at night.

As recommended, I put two pots (of about 15 spears in each) in my bedroom



and I slept better than I have for years! They also help pull formaldehyde and VOCs out of the air. However, they're not called snake plants for nothing. They have a very sharp tip which could

be very unpleasant if it got in your eye, so I simply trimmed every spike and now they're not so scary.

NASA scientists recommend five air-purifying plants in your bedroom for 75% better air quality. I added two excellent air-purifying plants, the peace lily and a philodendron. Both are easy to grow and tolerate dryness. I asked around for cuttings and people were very generous.

As pots are expensive to buy, I scavenged whatever I could find at garage sales, op shops and the fabulous tip shop. Basically, any container can be used. Either drill a hole in it, or put the cheap plastic pot inside.

Best of all you can water your indoor plants with the water you save from household use. Just remember what kills most indoor plants, particularly these hardy ones, is overwatering, so only water them when they dry out, about once a week. Give them a go.

After a week in Vienna getting more culture than a blue-vein cheese, we pack our bags and scoot across the country to the once independent, Princely Archdiocese of Salzburg.

Have I mentioned that Austrians have a bit of a phobia about being mistaken for Australians when they're travelling? A range of travel bags have a map of Australia with the words "There are NO kangaroos in Austria!" printed on them. Strange.

Anyway, back to Salzburg. This is the town where they filmed The Sound of Music and they're still living on that past glory with special tours, which we have been avoiding like the proverbial Bubonic.

On our first full day in Salzburg we left town and caught a bus to Berchtesgaden, just over the border in Germany and nestled between four or five massive snow-covered peaks. Just outside Berchtesgaden is 'Eagle's Nest', a fortified mansion/castle perched on a mountain peak, where Adolf used to hang out with his crew.

These days they have falconry displays up there and I wonder if the falconers wear their SS uniforms when they do it. Our Airbnb hostess (Martina) tells us that a wide fascist streak lies just below the surface in many Austrians, particularly here in the more isolated areas of the Alps.

So there we were, wandering around poking our noses into every nook and cranny when we accidentally stumbled upon an awesome traditional Mayday festival because, bugger me, it was May 1st.

Everyone was dressed in either lederhosen, long socks and green felt hats, or skirts, aprons, waistcoats and bosoms. They'd cut down a sizeable pine tree and raised it purely with long poles and manpower. Once it was vertical and secure, a sozzled priest blessed it and all who would attempt to scale it, and then the virile, young men tore off their white shirts and threw themselves at the pole.



Highest climber wins the biggest bosom! It's traditional.

Lots of non-traditional gym-mats were around the base to catch the also-rans as they fell like drunken rain from heaven. Because naturally there was beer. Rivers of it gurgling happily down thirsty throats. We were the only tourists present, but luckily I was in traditional dress (military brown shirt), and we both had a seriously fantastic time. Was I inebriated? Hell yes!

Took a walk along the banks of a snow-fed mountain stream with water so clear and clean we could have been in New Zealand. Pure water – absolutely nothing can match it. Pigged out on Bratwurst and cabbage back in Salzburg, as one does on Mayday. We only managed to drag ourselves away because we didn't want to miss the last bus back to Austria.

Next day, we catch the funicular railway up to the mighty fortress on the hill. It's now a museum and theatre space, but back in the day it was a salt storage treasure-house, and remains today as the largest, best preserved medieval castle in Der Welt!

And when those jolly Prince-Archbishops weren't pulling wings

off butterflies or legs off peasants, they were building pleasure palaces to titillate the ladies, because they had so much cash they couldn't spend it quickly enough. And all that cash came from... salt!

And so first thing next morning we're back in the mountains at Hallein, descending into the depths of the oldest salt-mine on the planet. 7000 years ago, the Celts lived here and were mining salt for themselves and their kinfolk. We descended to the lower mine levels in the time-honoured manner of banister sliding, secure in the knowledge that any splinters were picked up by someone else's bum 1000 years ago.

At the lowest level we came across the pièce de resistance. An original Celtic miner, who'd died down there and over time had been reabsorbed into the rock-salt! He'd been rediscovered and partially excavated so that his head, half an arm and a foot protruded from solid rock. He was mummified from the salt, and I was amazed at the quality of his teeth; all there and appearing in fine condition. Pre-sugar diet I guess.

Back outside, the weather was very cold with a yellow avalanche warning. I knew I should have packed snow shoes.

When the trauma becomes so commonplace that we stop considering it trauma, we move into a new phase, a type of stress disorder, a national continuous traumatic stress disorder.

- Here is your checklist: are you suffering from any of these thoughts or behaviours?
- Are you irritable, agitated, hostile, self destructive or hyper vigilant? Are you isolating yourself from others?
 - Are you experiencing nightmares or sleeplessness?
 - Are you feeling a sense of emotional detachment?

Perhaps it's just me. I hope it is.

For me, the more I listen to the world's scientists assure me we have no time to waste, that mining thermal coal has to stop now – while simultaneously the government is assuring me we can't stop mining coal, in fact we should all adopt a pet piece of coal and give it a cute name like Waikiki or Maui – the more incensed I become.

Perhaps I just need cognitive behavioural therapy and drugs, or maybe what I really need is a responsible government that

Revenge of the Loon

by Laurence Axtens



responds to scientific advice.

So if perchance you are diagnosed with stress disorder, ask yourself this: is it actually you, or are you just responding as anyone would who is actually sane?



Aunty Maj and Uncle Norm

She says

If that's all he does, consider yourself lucky! Uncle Norm has such bad table manners I dare not take him to a restaurant. He's so messy, and shares it around, that I can't wear white when dining with him.

To start a meal, he applies salt and pepper. The pepper always gets up his nose and makes him sneeze. He doesn't cover his mouth or nose, so I have to duck and cover my plate. He refuses to use the serviette, so over the years I have trained him to turn away and direct the spray elsewhere.

He talks non-stop, food going everywhere, which he then picks up off the table, with his fingers, and re-inserts into his maw. He inhales his food, like he's smoking a cigarette and, inevitably, at least once every meal, chokes. He turns red, then purple.

I ask him if he wants me to hit him on the back, but he usually declines because he knows that I get so angry from this daily scenario that I hit a bit harder than perhaps I should. I'm sure choking to death will be his fate. But does this slow him down? No! He shovels it in even faster to make up time, still entrenched in his childhood habit of the first to finish wins.

Norm transforms his food into a gooey substance that hangs over everything in his vicinity like ghoulish ectoplasm. The dog waits below, drooling in anticipation for the droppings.

When he finishes, Norm licks his plate clean, then puts his knife and fork on it facing in opposite directions. It's annoying having to pick them up to put them in the dishwasher because I always get a dirty end. He says it's a cultural thing. I didn't believe him until I dined with his family and saw them all do it, but why would you?

I understand why King Louis XIV of France banned pointed knives at his table, insisting on blunt tips, in the hope that it would stop dinner guests from picking their teeth with their knife-points, and also reduce dinner-time stabbings. Fair dinkum.

Food habits are entrenched from childhood, so your boyfriend probably isn't going to change. I suggest you eat in front of the TV with the sport on or, if you have the stomach for it, the news. That will shut him up.

Table manners

Dear SSHS

My boyfriend talks while he's eating. I've pointed out that it's bad manners but he still does it. It's disgusting. What to do?

– S. Pittles, Nimmitabel, NSW

HE says

Dear Ms Pittles, if you're looking for sympathy you won't find it here. I'm afraid my cultural and social background is such that I have little regard for all the rules and regulations the bourgeoisie seem to attach to the simple and pleasurable act of feeding one's face.

Table manners and etiquette were invented by the aristocracy and the rich to set them apart from the hoi polloi. It was their way of saying, look at us, we have plenty of food and don't have to worry where our next meal is coming from.

We can take our time and eat every course slowly with a different knife, fork and spoon.

The poor underclass never had these luxuries. On the rare occasions they were lucky enough to eat a hearty meal, they ate with gusto and joy and didn't hold back.

The pleasure of simply being able to eat prompted people to tell rowdy stories and jokes, all the more enjoyable when done with a gob full of grub.

My guess here is that you and your boyfriend come from different cultural backgrounds. You have obviously been taught that eating, or should I say dining, is something to be done under strict rules.

It's only one step away from defecating, and therefore must be carried out discreetly with a minimum of animation. Your boyfriend, on the other hand, is normal.

Your parents did you no favours bringing you up to be a stuck-up little prude. I suggest you pull the carrot out of your arse and lighten up.

Starve yourself for a couple of days, then both go to a fast food joint and order up big on burgers and fries. Wash it down with plenty of gassy soft drink, and let rip.

You'll never look back!

"The world was my oyster but I used the wrong fork." – Oscar Wilde

Send your relationship problems to:
normanappel@westnet.com.au

Dialogues

by S Sorrensen

You look well.

It's an alcohol flush.

No, seriously; you look good.

No, seriously; it's an alcohol flush, rosy cheeks and all.

Very funny. Have a seat, S. Lovely day, eh? You ordered lunch yet?

Yes.

I ordered the seafood penne. They do a great seafood penne here with burnt-sage butter and hemp seed. You should try it.

I'm a vegetarian, so...

Vegetarian? You weren't a vegetarian last time I saw you. You were on the sado or kato or keto or whatever-it-is diet. Lots of meat, no pasta.

I eat pasta now. The ketogenic diet made me constipated.

Is that why you gave it up?

No. I found out two of the Kardashians were endorsing it.

So? They look... pretty.

It's like Scott Morrison talking climate action, or Trump creating a peace plan. You just know, because it's them, it's a con.

So, vegetarian. A New Year's resolution? It's February and you're still vego. Well done.

Actually, I'm a recent convert.

Since when?

Since I ordered lunch. But I've been thinking about it since New Year's Eve. It's hard to do something meaningful in a world that's in a death spiral. I mean, what to do when the land is burning, the seas are dying...

Vego or carnivore, you are an empowered being, S. Your mind can change the world.

Oh really? Is that Facebook? Bruce Lipton. But it's true.

I am not a shining light. Happiness does not flow from me. I do not love and approve of myself. That self-affirming crap is for self-obsessives and happy couples. There is no kombucha on a dead planet.



'Sound of Silence' sculpture by Robert Maddox-Harle



I hate Facebook.

Oh, I see... Relationship problems, huh?

Yes. No... Yes.

Oh. Sorry.

Change is the essential process of all existence. Facebook?

Spock. Star Trek, season three, 'Let That Be Your Last Battlefield'.

Um, okay... Been watching the tennis? How good is Barty?

I don't care about the tennis. There's a virus that's gonna get us, you know.

Come on, S. It's a beautiful summer's day and no-one's coughing on us. Your negativity is manifesting externally. The physical world is a response of the observer.

Facebook?

Deepak Chopra.

What? So, my emotional distress caused government inaction on climate change?

Well. Sort of. What did you order?

Coopers Sparkling Ale, with a chilled glass and ice.

For lunch?

Well, it's hardly breakfast fare, is it? And no living beings were murdered for my culinary pleasure. Do you know the seas will

empty of life by 2040?

Jeez, S. Listen. Yesterday, I had a router that just stopped working.

Obviously, worse things happen – I might have lost my phone – but that was the world I created. With my negativity. But today, with my positivity re-affirmed and because I deserve it, I have created this: a perfect day to be enjoyed by all.

Except prawns.

You really are a negative presence, you know. No wonder your world is in a death spiral. And, for your information, the prawns here are sourced locally. I don't eat imported prawns.

What have you got against foreign prawns? Isn't eating foreign prawns the best thing you can do for local prawns?

Very funny. I'm into supporting the local industry.

Have you seen their river? A near-dead puddle dribbling its way to smelly retirement in Ballina.

Jeez, no wonder she... Oh, here's my lunch. Um, you reckon...

Yeah. I'll sit over there.

Sound of Silence

The sentinel stands listening patiently, peacefully waiting, silence is not the absence of sound but the absence of cacophony.

The ubiquitous noise of modern life, televisions screaming from dawn to dark phones' piezo buzz pulsing endlessly sirens screaming the night apart barking of dogs incessant the mindless chatter of people.

The sentinel is calm, listening to the universe as it hums its harmonies serenaded by the music of the spheres, the vastness attenuates the terror of terrestrial gibberish.

The sentinel is a healing stone a Wi-Fi hot spot tuning in the silence of the universe for all to hear!

– Robert Maddox-Harle

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Meet Australia's nomadic novelist

Leaving the corporate world behind her, Jenn J. McLeod is fulfilling her lifelong ambition to write novels and travel Australia in a fifth-wheeler caravan.

Jenn's career as a novelist began at 50, after a sea-change saw her leave Sydney's corporate world to buy a small-town café on the NSW mid-north coast. In 2008 she opened a dog-friendly B&B, which is when she found the time to start working towards the dream of publication.

Her debut novel, *House for all Seasons* was the #5 top-selling debut fiction novel in 2013.

Since 2013 she's had six novels published and is touring the country to champion her 'paddock to print' philosophy.

Jenn's heart-warming tales of Australian country life weave intricate tapestries of friendship, family, love and contemporary issues.

"I want every book to be a journey, for me and for my readers," Jenn says.

After she ran out of friends and family to fictionalise, she sold up and headed off in search of small country towns and characters to write about, and according to Jenn, the Northern Rivers has plenty of both. She's putting down temporary roots in Kyogle to do some promotional

events in Kyogle, Casino and Lismore in between editing her next novel.

"Sometimes my work requires I sit in one place for a while to focus," Jenn said. "The view from my window in Kyogle right now is very inspiring for this small-town storyteller."

When not writing to deadline, Jenn is posting travel pics on Facebook and Instagram, and peddling her 'paddock to print' philosophy, which involves visiting bookshops and libraries across regional Australia supporting home-grown storytellers and local library services.

Jenn is touring the Richmond Valley and Northern Rivers regions during February and March with an entertaining and enlightening audio/visual presentation (and Q&A) for readers, aspiring writers, or those



interested in the writing and publishing process.

You can get your books autographed by Jenn at the Casino Library on Tuesday, 11th February, 10.30am-noon, or at Lismore Library on Friday, 14th February, 2-3pm. Find out more about her at: jennjmcLeod.com

Damned lies and statistics

by Bob Dooley

Last month's front page of NGT included a caption box that stated: "Liberals cut the NSW RFS budget by 75.2%."

NSW Labor, the firefighters' union and the Young Greens have all claimed funding for the state's firefighters has been slashed, quoting varying numbers to support their case.

NSW Labor Leader Jodi McKay said in November, "[The] government's budget papers show that Fire and Rescue NSW and the Rural Fire Service combined are facing a \$40 million budget cut."

Her figure was arrived at by comparing initial NSW State Budget estimates for the coming financial year, 2019-20, with revised estimates for the last. However, these numbers are not a like-for-like comparison.

For one thing, one-off outlays in 2018-19 complicate the comparison.

The revised budget figures for the RFS showed a big outlay of capital expenditure in 2018-19 because the Government spent \$26.3 million on three new planes, including a large air tanker.

Revised estimates for recurrent funding in 2018-19 was also particularly high due to a change in workers compensation arrangements for both RFS

Doesn't stack up

and FRNSW.

Also, the initial 2019-20 figures do not show top-up payments made as needed by the NSW State Government, including disaster spending, that the Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue have received throughout the year.

Experts consulted by ABC/RMIT Fact Check said budget outcomes inevitably varied from the initial estimates, meaning it was too early to say if funding had been cut.

ABC/RMIT Fact Check concluded that Ms McKay's claim "Doesn't stack up".

Anyway, those initial budget estimates are now out of date. In the half-yearly budget review released in December, the NSW Rural Fire Service will be receiving "a record \$541 million" in 2019-20.

expenses budget for 2019/20 is indeed \$12.9 million less than the eventual amount that was allocated in 2018/19. However, it is also correct that the budget for 2019/20 did have more recurrent funding allocated to FRNSW than the budget for 2018/19.

AAP FactCheck concluded the claim that \$12.9 million has been cut from the FRNSW recurrent budget is "ambiguous".

NPWS

The other key pillar of fire fighting, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, has also been hit by budget cuts of more than \$200 million in funding cuts by the NSW Coalition Government since 2016.

Arguably as a result, the total area treated with hazard reduction burns has reportedly been reduced by an average of 26%.

With fire services also subjected to budget cuts of varying degrees in Queensland and Victoria, together with the impact of savings still to be found for the NSW Government's Labour Expense Cap, people are justifiably concerned about the appearance of political penny-pinching in a season of catastrophic emergencies.

However, relying on Budget estimates to accurately quantify expenditure on emergency services is fraught with difficulties.

FACT CHECK CORRECTION #2 – We recently shared a post on our Facebook page about wombats allegedly herding other animals to shelter into their fire-proof burrows during the bushfires. These stories quickly went viral, whetting our appetite for good news after the horrors of the bushfire crisis, which we duly shared. However the accounts are not entirely accurate, and we have been reprimanded by Facebook fact-check police. Wombats do not heroically round up helpless animals during a bushfire and lead them to safety. But more research is needed on the fascinating interactions that take place in wombat burrows, particularly during fire. Our apologies to the wombats and to our readers and followers on Facebook.



Nimbin Headers



by Liam Terry

Opportunities to play soccer

The Nimbin Headers Football Club offers exciting opportunities for young players to get into the local grassroots game.

From MiniRoos Soccer for youngsters taking their first steps in the game, to Futsal and Social Soccer in the off-season for those looking to try something new, the Nimbin Headers provide opportunities for all.

MiniRoos and youth football has changed in recent years. New formats have been introduced to increase touches of the ball, improve confidence and assist in all stages of a young player's development.

Small-sided formats such as 5v5 and 7v7 and Rondo are at the forefront of miniroos soccer within our club, with all youth soccer at Football Far North Coast (FFNC) now offering a 9v9 format before moving to 11v11.

Youth football leagues in the Lismore region are from 7–16 years.

The NSW Government is helping kids get active with the Active Kids program, which



Juniors Nimbin Headers V South Lismore

provides two \$100 vouchers for parents, guardians and carers of school-enrolled children to use towards sport and active recreation costs each year, so please get this done before signing your children up.

In men's and women's soccer, the FNCF has over nine leagues offering opportunities to get involved at every level of the game. So "get your boots on" ... it's that simple!

Sign-on day

The Nimbin Headers 2020 Sign-on Day will be held at the Headers fields on Saturday 15th February from noon, with a free BBQ, music and sign-on assistance.



2019 2nd division Grand Final between Nimbin Headers and Uki Pythons

At 2pm, a Juniors game will be the curtain-raiser for the annual Women's Mimi Shield game kicking off at 3.15pm, followed by the Men's game at 4.30pm. All welcome.

You can visit the Nimbin Headers website for more information, or visit us on Facebook.

See the FFNC website for more information about other clubs and general information about soccer on the Far North Coast.

Volunteers

Volunteers make the game happen. Without the time, dedication, and commitment

volunteers demonstrate each and every week across our region, Clubs and Leagues simply would not exist.

These people are the unsung heroes that make the grassroots game thrive week-in week-out, and the success of the game across the region really is testament to their hard work and dedication.

At the Nimbin Headers, we recognise the hugely important role that our volunteers, players and most importantly our wonderful supporters play to help us achieve our main objective, which is simply to allow people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy the wonderful game of football.



Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

by I Paddlalot

In January, seven intrepid paddlers signed up to traverse the mellow and tranquil waters of Simpsons Creek at Brunswick Heads.

There was no need to

worry about sunburn today as a much-appreciated southerly change had bought with it low cloud and very welcome misty rain for the journey ahead.

A rising tide made for crystal clear water and easy paddling.

A thoroughly enjoyable four-hour journey was had by all.

Visitors are welcome on our walks. There is a small fee of \$10 for insurance purposes for non-members.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Walks programme

Sunday 9th February Goanna Headland, Evans Head

Leader: Megan 0415-063-302

Grade: 2-3 **Meet:** 9am Chinaman's Beach car park. Two beautiful coastal walks, each year we come here and we never tire of this wonderful spot and a nice coffee afterwards. Goanna Headland walk will be followed (after lunch at the beach) by a walk through Dirrawong reserve. Each walk is about 1.5 hours **Bring:** water, lunch and a hat.

Fri 21st – Mon 24th February Woody Head National Park Campground, near Iluka

Leader: Peter Moyle 0412-656-498

Grade: 2-3 **Meet:** at Woody Head. The club has booked the group camping area for the three nights: Fri, Sat, Sun. You can come for all three nights or one or two, whatever suits. Even if not staying Sunday night, as it is booked no rush to pack up and all day adventures can be had. All you need do is confirm your attendance with Peter and pay him on arrival.

This is a private area with its own camp kitchen and shady campsites, ideal for a weekend away. Bring your camping gear,

firewood supplied. Bring your kayak or canoe, as we are planning a trip on the Esk River a short drive away. If interested in the paddle and do not have watercraft, let Peter know and he may be able to assist. Nearby are the World Heritage rainforest and gorgeous coastal walks; always lots to do. **Cost:** Camping \$17 per person per night. Full shower/toilet facilities. Annual NP pass or \$8 per day for vehicle.

Sunday 8th March Terania Creek Basin to Gracie's Spire, Nightcap National Park

Leader: Judy Hales, who knows this area well. Register with Peter 0412 656 498

Grade: 4 Mostly off track, there will be some slippery rocks and rough walking particularly after rain. We will walk through wild, rugged rainforest, the site of the historic battle to save this precious patch of pristine forest. Plenty of lush rainforest and hopefully plenty of water over the falls. This is one of the gems of this World Heritage-listed area. **Meet:** at 9.30am at the picnic area at the end of Terania Creek Road 15km from The Channon.

Bring: the usual, hat, drinking water, lunch and good bushwalking boots or shoes.

Get out of your mind and into your body

by Sensei Rachel Whiting

Nimbin's local Goju-ryu Karate dojo is re-opening its doors so you can get fit, de-stress, and sweat it all out!

'Go-ju' karate uniquely balances 'hard-soft' (direct action and flowing energy) in its training.

Based on traditional spiritual foundations, TOGK is a mind-body-spirit practice improving physical strength, inner stillness, and the ability to respond rather than react to life.

Ultimately over many years, this results in self-mastery and overall strength of character.

So if you are looking for ways to learn self-defence, connect with others, and develop your spirit with qualities of focus, resilience, assertiveness, self-confidence and calm, come and try out a class.

You will be improving your flexibility, balance, strength, and co-ordination while releasing the damaging stress chemicals of cortisol.

What better way to end the working week! Did you know that strong cardio exercise actually repairs and stimulates new growth of your brain's neurons and plasticity which help learning and clarity of mind?

Other great stuff is happening in your brain when you exercise, such as the release of endorphins.

As most know, endorphins help minimise pain (phew!) and can lead to a feeling of euphoria, a common feeling amongst Nimbin karate students after class.

Serotonin and dopamine are other chemicals in your brain responsible for making you feel good. These are produced by cardio exercise and can decrease depression and anger, improve mood and long-term memory. Great natural medicine!



I have 30 year's experience, and am a friendly, centred, humble, yet confident and capable instructor. My approach is firm, yet supportive and encouraging.

I began karate at age 14 as a shy and timid teen. Traditional karate helped me to find my voice and personal power, and to stand my ground.

It is this foundation that drives my passion to share these skills with students.

I hope to meet you this year to train alongside us! Classes for 2020 have just commenced, and are run during school terms:

- Seniors (12 yrs – 55 yrs+) Monday and Friday 4.35-6pm at Nimbin School Hall, \$15/class
 - Juniors (5-11 yrs) Monday and Friday 3.25-4.20pm at Nimbin School Hall, \$12/class; and Tuesday 4-5pm at Dunoon Community Hall, \$12/class
 - Homeschool Class (5-11 yrs) Friday 10.30-11.30am at Uniting Church Hall, Lismore
- Contact Rachel for more info or to register, phone 0427-778-837, email: togka.rw@gmail.com FB: 'TOGK', IG: 'Karateforthespirit'



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