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Nurturing **POTENTIAL**

in Education - Personal Growth - Health - Relationships - Business



Major theme:

NOTIONS, POTIONS & NOSTRUMS

Business:

A Star Performance

Language:

The Two-Edged Sword

Education:

Curriculum Development

Beliefs:

Faulty Assumptions

Nurturing POTENTIAL

Vol 2, No.2

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and Nostrums

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There is within each of us a potential for greatness. And greatness is not measured by objective achievement alone, but needs to take its starting point into account. An Irish proverb says: Praise the ripe field not the green corn. And to Oliver Cromwell is attributed: "None climbs so high as he who knows not whither he is going." To which we would add: it doesn't matter how far you have come or where you wish to go, you can always get there from here.

The aim of Nurturing Potential is to provide signposts, to suggest less-travelled footpaths, to open up new vistas and new territories, and to recommend different maps for familiar territories. To this end we will be providing serious and light-hearted material, for we believe the frivolous can be as didactic as the academic.

Your bouquets and brickbats will be equally welcome. Even more appreciated will be your contributions by way of articles, comments and suggestions. And do not neglect the Letters' page.

Many of the most important things in life have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

**To see a World in a grain of sand,
And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour
[William Blake]**

**There are two things to aim at in life: first to get what you want and, after that, to enjoy it. Only the wisest of mankind achieve the second.
[Logan Pearsall Smith]**

**The toughest thing about success is that you've got to keep on being a success. Talent is only a starting point in this business.
[Irving Berlin]**

It is the space inside the bowl that makes the bowl useful.

— Nurturing — POTENTIAL

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Notions, Potions & Nostrums

Remedies ancient and modern



Many people have some technique, prescription or product that they swear by, which they extol as being a nostrum, elixir or cure for all ills. Here are some of ours taken from the much larger selection published in our online edition. The inclusion of any specific remedy in this section does not imply unqualified acceptance by Nurturing Potential, merely that we believe it has contributed to the body of knowledge in this area and, indeed, we offer and invite sceptical responses.

SELF MASSAGE

Practising simple self-massage techniques on a regular basis, even if only for a few minutes at a time, two or three times a week, will help to tone the body, relieve tension, ease muscular strain, and generally improve one's health. What is not always appreciated, however, is that even when you are in good health, practising self-massage will help to maintain health and prevent susceptibility to illness or disease.

It is, after all, a quite natural reaction, when feeling tension or discomfort in the neck or shoulders, for example, to rub the back of the neck, or rotate the shoulders. Gentle friction at the side of the head, below the hairline and above the eyes, can be relaxing when you are "headachy". Squeezing the calf muscles or stroking the arm, perhaps using baby oil or talcum powder, is also beneficial when arm or leg muscles are feeling strained. Pressing and rotating the fists into the small of the back, or above the buttocks, can ease backache and tiredness.

This is not to suggest that such self-massage is a cure for all muscular problems that may derive from physical or emotional causes. It is not. And if symptoms persist despite any of the techniques described here or in accompanying articles, then professional help has to be sought. But very often a simple ache or bodily dysfunction can be eased considerably by self-manipulation. Because massage stimulates blood flow it will relax tense muscles and relieve pain.

There are available, these days, a variety of simple massage tools that help people to "reach the spots that hands alone will not reach", both electrical and manual.

Unfortunately there are also a lot of people and companies designing a whole variety of tools, seats, and other devices that will separate the gullible from their money, and that sooner or later find their way into cupboards or attics, never to be used again.

It is no part of our brief to extol the virtues of any of these devices. But we do believe that the primary device of all – the hands – may be taught techniques that will produce positive results. And self-massage, using the hands, can perform a dual function: if the massage is slow and gentle, it will be effective in relieving tension and relaxing the body; if it is performed quickly and firmly it will be invigorating, reducing fatigue and revitalizing the body.

A word of warning: if the skin is particularly tender, or if pain in a specific spot is particularly fierce, self-massage should either not be attempted or should be used extremely gently, without much pressure.

Article on this subject: *Rub It Better* [page 9]

[A sceptical response]:



Illustration by Yaron Livay

We recently read with some amusement: "One reason foot massage may be so pleasurable and is associated with significant improvement in mood, is that the area of the brain that connects to the foot is adjacent to the area that connects to the genitals. There may be some neuronal overlapping."

Neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran writes of a person whose leg was amputated and who experienced orgasms in his phantom foot. "The genitals are right next to the foot in the body's brain maps," he notes, and speculates that this fact may account for foot fetishes.

The general rule is "if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

Kefir - the wonder food



Kefir is a fermented milk similar to yoghurt that is produced from the grains of a fungal bacillus originating in the Caucasus region of Russia. It is one of the oldest cultured milk products in existence. But for centuries it was known only to the peoples of the northern slopes of the Caucasus Mountains. Indeed there is even a legend that Mohammed gave the kefir grains to the “orthodox” and obliged them to guard the secret jealously lest its dissemination should result in a loss of its potency.

Commercial manufacture of kefir did not begin until the 1930s and, even today, its availability is limited to a few countries and mostly to health food outlets within those countries. Its major source of supply throughout the world remains, in effect, the traditional one of passing the “magic” grains on from hand to hand and spreading the word from ear to ear. Happily there is no shortage of the grains within the “kefir community” (which has expanded vastly with the increasing use of the internet), since, in the production of the kefir milk, the grains double in size every 10 to 14 days, and have then to be split. So kefir users are constantly on the lookout for people to whom the surplus supply may be given.

Kefir’s tart and refreshing flavour is similar to yoghurt, but it contains minerals and essential amino acids that help the body with healing and maintenance functions, as well as beneficial yeast and bacteria that produce lactase, an enzyme which consumes most of the lactose left after the culturing process.

Because kefir also offers an abundance of calcium and magnesium, which are important minerals for a healthy nervous system, kefir in the diet can have a profound calming effect on the nerves. It is also rich in a panoply of other vitamins, particularly of the B-complex variety.

The regular use of kefir can help relieve intestinal disorders, promote bowel movement, reduce flatulence and create a healthier digestive system. In addition, its cleansing effect on the whole body helps to establish a balanced inner ecosystem for optimum health and longevity. Kefir can also help eliminate unhealthy food

cravings by making the body more nourished and balanced. Its excellent nutritional content offers healing and health-maintenance benefits to people in every type of condition.

Joe Sinclair has been eating kefir for decades and swears by its efficacy. He also uses it in cookery wherever a recipe calls for yoghurt. A descriptive leaflet and some starter grains are yours for the asking! Just send your request to Joe by phone, email or letter at the address shown on page three.

Natural Remedies

[1] Headaches

The vast majority of headaches are not medically serious. Most can be controlled by the use of simple medications - and in the case of tension headaches, by altering habits or lifestyles. Although headaches can be very uncomfortable and temporarily disabling, most are not associated with serious illness. They can often be relieved very simply.

Here are some of the suggested Natural Health remedies for some different types of headache:

Tension headaches: Relaxation is the automatic advice; the stress may be very effectively and speedily reduced by employing two of the exercises given in the Bates Eye Therapy - rotating the neck and palming. (See page 7)

Migraine headaches: Recommended as a palliative is niacin, a B vitamin. It should be taken at the very first appearance of the symptoms, even when roused from a deep sleep. It may produce uncomfortable side effects such as an intense flush, reddening of the body, a burning or itching sensation, but provided the dosage recommended by a doctor is taken, it is harmless, and if no flush occurs within ten minutes of taking, then a second dose is to be taken. Once the flush is produced, the migraine will vanish.

Cluster headaches will usually respond to similar treatment to migraine headaches.

Sinus headaches may be treated by “sensible” doses of Vitamin A and/or large quantities of Vitamin C.

See Article: *Doing What Comes Naturally* (Page 12)

A Word of Warning:

In some cases a headache may be associated with a more serious condition..

For example (and rarely) headache is a symptom of a dangerous condition such as cerebral aneurysm, brain tumour, stroke, meningitis, or encephalitis. Very high blood pressure can cause headaches and this situation is a medical emergency. ***If you have any doubt about your headache, contact your physician.***

[2] Insomnia

It has been estimated that one in three adults suffer from insomnia and women are more likely than men to experience it. A lack of sleep will adversely effect your physical and emotional health and will leave you feeling tired, irritable, with a decrease in your ability to concentrate and make rational decisions. You will become more accident-prone and your immune system will be less effective in fighting off infections. The most common cause of insomnia is stress, anxiety, linked with physical and/or psychiatric disorders such as pain, illness, asthma, and depression. Environmental and lifestyle factors may also cause insomnia such as too much light or noise, an uncomfortable bed, drinking too much coffee or alcohol or eating late. Some post-menopausal women are prone to sleep problems.

Of course, you could always ask your GP to prescribe drugs to help you sleep but a proper diet and changes in your lifestyle may not only be more effective, but certainly longer-lasting. Changes in your lifestyle, diet and eating habits can work miracles on your sleeping problems, especially if stress is the main cause. When under stress the hydrocortisone and adrenaline produced in the body increases and stimulates the fight or flight syndrome, thus keeping you alert and unable to fall asleep. A number of relaxation techniques such as meditation, visualisation, and gentle exercises such as yoga can be tried to help decrease stress and thus decrease the build up of these stress hormones.

Physical exercise raises your core body temperature and increases your adrenaline levels. Exercise should take place in the afternoon or early evening since hormone level lowers after five or six hours, thus promoting a deep sleep. Exercising immediately before going to bed will inhibit sound sleep. The food we eat may also effect how well we sleep. Protein-rich foods, large meals, caffeine and nicotine should be avoided at least four hours prior to going to bed. Drinking alcohol before bed may also lead to problems since once the alcohol metabolises it disrupts the restorative levels of sleep.

The actual set-up of your room may also effect your sleeping habits. Avoid bright colors and different patterns in the room. Radios and alarm clocks should be kept at least three feet away. Soft calming pastel colours are restful and there should not be a drastic clash in the patterns of your bedspread, curtains and carpets. Place your bed near a wall, and it is best if you can see your bedroom door (directly or through a mirror). Your room should also be tidy before going to sleep. Use dim lighting (or candles), have adequate ventilation and keep the room at a comfortable temperature. The most important item in your room, if you want a good nights sleep, is your bed. A good-quality mattress and pillow are essential. It is recommended to replace your bed every ten years. (The recommendation was perhaps made by the Association of Furniture Manufacturers!)

[3] Arthritis

The two main forms of arthritis are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, and of these the former is the more prevalent. One practitioner has listed the following as constituting the primary causes of osteoarthritis: Malnutrition; Prolonged physical stress; Obesity; Alkalosis; Glandular insufficiency; Calcium deficiency; Shortage of hydrochloric acid. Rheumatoid arthritis may be allergic in origin, caused by a lack of raw foods, or due to a hormonal imbalance (adrenal, liver, pituitary, and sex glands).

The most widely recommended product for sufferers (or for prevention) is calcium. When the calcium in the blood becomes too low, the system will steal it from bones in other parts of the body; the resultant weakening of the bones can lead to osteoporosis as well as osteoarthritis.

For rheumatoid arthritis B and C complex vitamins are recommended.

Some herbs have also been found efficacious by sufferers, including ash, lucerne and comfrey. In East Asia ginseng has also been prescribed. And in at least one reported case, Chaparral was found to have produced a profound cure in a chronic sufferer who had been taking "calcium, Vitamin D, kelp, magnesium, and various herb teas" with only slight benefits.

See article: *Doing What Comes Naturally* (Page 12)

The fact that I have no remedy for the sorrows of the world is no reason for my accepting yours. It simply supports the strong possibility that yours is a fake. - H. L. Mencken



The Swing

Swinging is another way in which to relax the body and thereby soothe the eyes and the entire nervous system. Standing erect, the entire body relaxed, arms hanging loose, feet slightly apart, the body should sway from side to side with the arms swinging. Apart from any improvement to eyesight, this is a great exercise for simply relaxing the body and the mind, and can be done anywhere.

* It had earlier been published in the United States (Henry Holt & Co) under the title *The Bates Method of Better Eyesight Without Glasses*.

See article: *The Eyes Have It*

Flower Therapy

This was the discovery of Dr Edward Bach (1886-1936), a physician and bacteriologist. In observing the behaviour of factory workers under threat of dismissal, he theorised that their fears, tensions and uncertainties unbalanced the harmony between mind and body. His favourite dictum was "There are no diseases, only sick people." For him the patient was more important than the disease.*

He therefore set about trying to find some cure for the patient's mental state rather than the physical complaint that had been diagnosed. In due course he discovered - claiming that he had arrived at this discovery intuitively - that a variety of wildflowers had the ability to heal these negative mental conditions. He claimed that by physical contact with a plant or flower he could intuitively discover its healing powers. Flowers contain the plant's life force, or vibrations. Bach flower therapy enables the transfer of these vibrations from the flowers into water, with the help of sunlight, by non-destructive means. Sunlight has the power to transfer a plant's life force into water. Hence morning dew is said to be full of vitality and an early morning walk in the midst of this dew can cure a number of diseases.

In this system as prescribed by Bach Flower therapy, flowers are kept in spring water and exposed to the sunlight for many hours. Alcohol is then added to the water to stabilize the vibrations. Edward Bach believed that he could intuitively divine what plants or flowers could be used to produce essences for specific disturbances.

38 such essences were developed, each one used to balance a specific emotional pain or, where the lack of balance is particularly advanced, to remit the physical symptoms.

*He was anticipated, of course, 23 or so centuries earlier, by Hippocrates.



Illustration by Yaron Livay - reproduced from *Peace of Mind is a Piece of Cake* (Crown House 1998)

Joe Sinclair's tongue-in-cheek definitions of health food supplements.

Garlic. It keeps the vampires away. I haven't been kissed by one since I started taking it. The bad news is that I haven't been kissed by anyone else either



Illustration by ALB from *An ABC of NLP*

Glucosamine is a natural substance found in joints. I've just been to several joints trying to find some without success. But I persevered. After the sixth joint, I stopped caring.

Vitamin C plus bioflavonoids. It's supposed to be good for smokers, drinkers of alcohol and the elderly. And it works! I used to be a one pack a day man and a sociable drinker. I'm now up to 50 a day, and a quart of scotch. And I'm looking much older.

Continued at foot of page 10

and the ankle area where many reflexes are located. As tender areas are noted, return to them and work on them specifically, stimulating them and working out the soreness. If effective, this will help the internal organs, glands and tissues, better to function.

As a rule the pressure is applied by the thumbs. Vary this with the use of bunched or extended fingers, knuckles, the heel of the hand, or a gripping motion with the whole hand, while the four fingers are pressed inwards. Pressure should start off light and gradually increase. A visual aid has been suggested as the pressure required to impress a new tennis ball, or the strength needed to pick up a brick between thumb and index finger. Never continue if the pressure begins to hurt. Note how the soreness changes over a period of days.



THE HANDS

The basic technique is the same as for the feet. It is obviously easier, however, to work with the hands than with the feet. You can do this anywhere at any time.

Massage the hands all over with firm pressure, noting areas of tenderness. Return to the tender areas and administer firm pressure for a few minutes. As with the feet, these areas are reflex to organs and functions that are not operating at their most healthy levels.



Tongue-in-cheek definitions continued

Niacin increases sex hormones. It also has a physical effect. Or as Mae West once said: "Is that a gun in your pocket, or are you just pleased to see me?"

Royal Jelly is said to make the Queen Bee live up to 30 times longer than the normal bee. It's so expensive that I've decided it doesn't make me live 30 times longer, it just feels like 30 times longer.

I started taking **Bamboo Gum** in the form of **Silica** for my arteries, skin and eyes. Now my mouth is stuck tight! I need to open it in order to take my daily supplement of **Alpha-galactosidase** (in the form of **Beanex**), which I enjoy taking. It's a real gas!

I began taking **Ginseng** to increase my potency. I have now become completely impotent, but have achieved a nice growth of hair on my chest.

Ginkgo Biloba has had some success as a cure for my tinnitus. I used to get the sound of rushing wind in my ears. Since taking the G.B. I now hear the Beatles. I'm working on a way of getting Beethoven's Choral Symphony, preferably with a stereophonic effect.

I believe that **Evening Primrose Oil** will make me come up smelling like roses. The **Garlic**, by the way, not only wards off vampires, it hides the smell of the roses.

Treacle is supposed to be good for the hair. I stopped taking it when my barber couldn't remove my hat.

Vitamin E is supposed to increase my energy. I think it's beginning to work. I can actually now manage to raise my arm and swallow all the other pills.

And a megadose of **Multivitamins** is useful in case I forget to take enough of the others, including the one that is supposed to be good for the memory. Wish I could remember which one it is.

The Eyes Have It

by Joe Sinclair



It was 1946. Not long after the end of World War II. We had removed, as Regent Polytechnic Secondary School (later renamed the Quintin School) from the main Polytechnic building in Regent Street, to a small primary school premises in the wilds of Soho.

There was a general inspection of everyone's eyes at the school. I was dismayed to discover that my eyesight was far from perfect and, after a series of tests, I was diagnosed myopic and prescribed spectacles. I wore them reluctantly, refusing to admit (despite all evidence to the contrary) that my vision was improved by their use.

Some months later, by a process that I now know to be synchronicity - but in those days mistakenly assumed it to be coincidence! - I was taking a post-prandial stroll before afternoon classes in the somewhat seamy atmosphere of Berwick Street market and stopped to browse the books on a bookstall. The title *Better Eyes Without Glasses* caught my un-bespectacled gaze. (See! Knew I didn't need specs!) It was, however, white on black in about size 28 point. Also it only cost sixpence. So I bought it.

Written by an American dietician named Gayelord Hauser and published in 1941, it was concerned initially with nutritional benefits to eyesight and I thought that I would, maybe, try some of the author's suggestions. But reading further into the book it described the work in the area of sight therapy by Dr. William Bates and gave examples of some very simple exercises that Hauser claimed to have highly beneficial effects. It seemed easier to try the exercises than to change my diet - which would have involved selling my mother on the advantages of such a change!

There were five major exercises and some additional suggestions. The most important of all Hauser's suggestions, it seemed to me, was to blink rapidly and frequently. Recalling that advice and my determination to follow it makes me wonder what observers must have thought of me, with my eyelids continuously popping up and down. Ultimately, of course, I learned discretion and used the device only when alone and relaxed. I found that it was very helpful while studying, to stop from time to time and have a mini-blinking session. It also seemed to "clear the cobwebs".

The most praised of the exercises was palming. I discovered that this too had a remarkably relaxing effect, especially when I had been reading for a prolonged

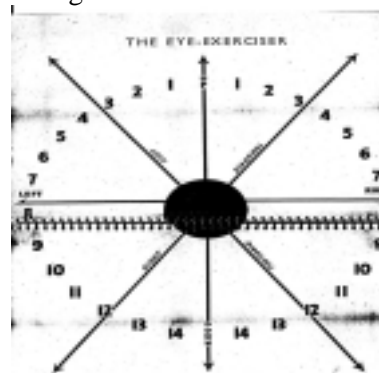
period. In addition to the palming and the blinking, I also (usually in the mornings before school and the evenings before bed) practised swinging, neck-circling, and the use of the eye-exerciser (see diagram below) which, after a while, I no longer needed as a visual aid, but could practise from memory.

[Details and illustrations will be found in our article on The Bates Method on page 7]

I stopped using my spectacles when I started the exercise routine. Three months later I threw them into a drawer and haven't used them since. Correction: I used them once more. Eighteen months later I was conscripted to National Service. As Army recruits we had to have our eyes tested for spectacles that would fit inside a gas mask. I was asked to bring my spectacles to the test. It was discovered that the myopia for which they had been prescribed had all but vanished. My eyesight was not perfect, but did not require any prosthetic assistance.

I have not worn spectacles since, but I'm pretty sure that, without the aid of Bates and his disciple Hauser, my prescription spectacles would have been increased in power from year to year until I had become totally dependent upon them.

The eye-exerciser (in its original form it is about the size of a quarto sheet of paper) should be held about four inches from the nose, with the nose in line with the centre spot. Holding the head perfectly still, the eyes should follow the up and down arrows 10 to 15 times, then follow the left and right arrows similarly, and finally repeating the process with the right diagonal and the left diagonal arrows. Finally a complete circle clockwise, blinking at each number, and a repetition anti-clockwise. When practising eye exercising myself, without the use of the chart, I developed my own system of trying to envisage myself looking at the top of my head, at my feet, and at the back of my head - without moving my head. I discovered that this "impossible" act nevertheless had the effect of making me stretch the eye muscles more than I might otherwise have done.



Doing What Comes Naturally

by Joe Sinclair

I'm not a great believer in natural remedies. I'm not a sceptic either. I suppose pragmatist would be the best word to describe my attitude to "notions, potions and nostrums". If it works, don't knock it.

Actually, despite what I said above, I reckon I must be something of a sceptic, because it usually takes forever to convince me of the efficacy of a new approach to a problem. So, while I recognise that a successful treatment is no guarantee that it would be universally or permanently successful (even my belief in the Bates Eye Therapy that has served me well for sixty years) I'm prepared to give the benefit of any doubt others may have to any remedy that has worked for me.

I can think of two - both treating symptoms described in our leading article: headaches and arthritis.

Headaches

A slew of years ago, while studying transactional analysis under the tutorship of the late Vivienne Gill, she was concerned about the discomfort of one of the class who announced that she was suffering from a headache. Vivienne then described her method of dealing with this situation.

She had us close our eyes and visualise a spot in the head where the pain was located. Of course, apart from the sufferer, the rest of us were simply using our imaginations. Having located a spot, we then had to visualise it in some shape or form. I believe her own device was a walnut. I chose to visualise a sugar lump. We then had to imagine ourselves compressing the shape, squeezing it mentally, until it became really small, then moving it across our heads until we could squeeze it out of an ear.

The member of the class for whom this exercise was adopted then announced gleefully that her headache had vanished.

The next time I had a headache, I tried this device, again using a cube of sugar to represent the pain and, in the space of about five minutes, I had cured the headache. I have never since suffered from a severe headache. Immediately I feel the onset of a pain in my head, I think of a lump of sugar and the pain disappears.

This is a pretty standard type of tactic in NLP and it is no surprise that Vivienne subsequently went on to become a Master Practitioner and to teach NLP in place of TA. Her loss to cancer at what was still an early age was deeply felt by me, but her formula for dealing



Illustration by
Yaron Livay

with headaches has ensured that she is unlikely ever to depart from my memory.

Arthritis

It came from a book on Natural Remedies that I acquired at a charity shop. It had some enthralling accounts of remedies from the past; remedies that have fallen into disuse; remedies that have been forgotten or overtaken by modern methods of treatment.

I had started suffering badly from arthritic nodules; first one thumb, then the other; and, at the time I bought the book, they were spreading to the index fingers. I was doing a lot of walking with the Cleveland Ramblers and every time one of my hands swung against my leg, the pain was excruciating. I had tried all the remedies recommended by well-wishing friends, to no effect. I had tried pills prescribed by the doctor. Zilch.

What could I lose in following the advice given in the book? It suggested heavy doses of calcium. This was not new. It had been suggested by friends and the doctor. But the author added another ingredient: she said that, in order to frustrate the possible build-up of calcium in the bones or the joints, it was necessary to take acid, and she recommended cider vinegar. So, three times a day I took a heavy dose of calcium in tablet form and a dessert-spoonful of cider vinegar. And within a fortnight the arthritic nodules had halved in size.

The only disadvantage was that I hated taking the cider vinegar. It occurred to me that any acid might serve the same purpose, and since Vitamin C is effectively ascorbic acid, I started taking a megadose of Vitamin C with each Calcium tablet. The improvement in my hands continued apace. And I enjoyed the added advantage of whatever benefits were provided by the vitamin C tablets. I have since reduced the quantities and the nodules are still there, but quite small and no longer painful.

Okay, so what if it is simply a placebo effect? *It has worked, hasn't it?*

New Age Treatment for Age Old Conditions

Brief Therapy is a type of psychotherapy that utilises the client's own strengths and resources to resolve problems. Brief therapists help clients to set and work on measurable goals. Brief therapists are task oriented. They are more interested in the present and the future than in the past origins of a condition. Hence its full name of solution-oriented (or solution-focused) brief therapy.

Clients are first encouraged to set goals and are then monitored as to progress. Unlike earlier psychoanalytical approaches, which were concerned with how problems originated and developed, solution-oriented brief therapy concentrates on where the client wishes to go and what steps are required to get there.

It dates from the 1960s when therapists started questioning the conventional wisdom that required years on an analyst's couch seeking historical reasons for current conditions, and suggested that cure was more desirable than explanation. It defined New Age pragmatism: **if it works, don't waste time worrying about why it works**. Construct solutions rather than dwell on problems. Move on and enjoy life rather than stay locked into a destructive pattern.

The client defines the goal; the therapist suggests behavioural changes that will break ingrained patterns,

such as helping the client to reframe the problem, to explore alternative solutions, and to set the new goals needed to resolve them. Changing a pattern of behaviour even when (perhaps, particularly when) there is a psychological resistance to that change is the path towards a practical solution. So long as clients cling to old pains, they will continue to be resistant to change. Changing a pattern of behaviour is the most effective and immediate way to changing one's perception of a problem. Understanding the cause is not necessarily a route to finding a solution.

Therapy is goal-directed. The therapist will get clients to focus on their strengths and resources, and utilise their own resources to effect changes. Brief therapy has been effective in treating a wide variety of problems, including depression, eating disorders, drug and alcohol addictions, relationships, anxiety disorders and sexual dysfunction.

One of the arguments against brief therapy is that ignoring a root cause does not provide a long-term solution, and that this might re-emerge at some future date, perhaps in another form. But brief therapists believe that their clients will be able to solve future problems in the same way that they have solved an existing one; and present happiness and well-being is preferable to years of therapy.



BOOK AND TAPE OFFERS

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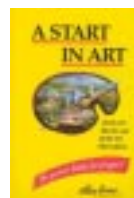
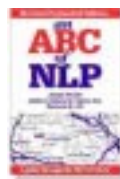
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Solution Focus

by Rob Cumming



Solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) is at first sight a rather minimal set of skills and assumptions about helping people change. It seems to defy many of the conventions of psychotherapy from the last hundred years – about the need for long-term work for example - yet it seems to be giving good results in many fields, from mental health through to organisational development.

SFBT was developed through the research programmes of the Brief Family Therapy Centre, Milwaukee, USA. It was named in 1986¹ in a paper whose title gave homage to an earlier paper² by John Weakland and his team from the Mental Research Institute at Palo Alto. That earlier paper had outlined a practice of strategic brief psychotherapy; both papers refer to the work of pioneers such as Milton Erickson and Jay Haley³. These are the “usual suspects” who show up in the history of many major threads of the strategic and brief psychotherapies and they are very much present in the genealogy of SFBT.

If a more profound understanding of SFBT’s origins is what you desire, then the literature of family therapy, particularly Milton Erickson and the Strategic branch of the subject, will reward your study. SFBT also bears a family resemblance to other contemporary collaborative and narrative therapies, such as the work of Bill O’Hanlon⁴; Michael White and David Epston⁵; John Walter and Jane Peller⁶; Harlene Anderson and Harry Goolishian⁷.

The upsurge in interest in all these variants of brief therapy has coincided with moves towards cost-effective, accountable psychological interventions in healthcare in the USA and elsewhere. But that is not where these therapies are from, or necessarily what they are for. Yvonne Dolan has written⁸ that brief therapy means doing only what is necessary for healing;

a standard which can be applied in any context. It can be very tough to achieve this in work-contexts where time is strictly rationed out.

Fundamentals

SFBT runs on questions. Approaching it as a set of skills, there are specific questions which practitioners must learn to ask. The questions the therapist has to *answer* may give a simpler idea of what happens in SFBT.

What does my client want to get as a result of coming along to see me? This involves questioning (such as the Miracle Question) and as far as possible, literal acceptance of the client’s answers. Plenty of detail is always sought; and the outcome desired for the therapy should be richly described, and include differences which therapist and client will notice, and which will make a difference!

The Miracle Question goes something like this: Suppose... we finish up our meeting today, and you go home and eventually you go to bed and go to sleep... and while you are sleeping a miracle happens, and this miracle has the effect of solving the problem which brought you along to see me today. But you’re asleep, so you don’t know this miracle has happened. What will you notice when you wake up, that shows you that the miracle has happened? This can lead to a very detailed description of the preferred future which your client want to move towards. More generically, it’s that

The therapist has to be able to invite the client in to an imagined place where their problems don’t hold sway.

word ‘suppose’ which I think is significant. The therapist has to be able to invite the client in to an imagined place where

their problems don’t hold sway. Suppose your problem is gone, what specifically would happen then? This can work as a self-help exercise – remembering always to tarry a while in the imagined future and to fully explore what it looks, sounds and feels like, and what other people make of it.

The next question the therapist has to answer is, what is my client already doing and what have they done recently which might help them to attain their preferred future? This means looking for exceptions to the rule of their problems. Here the principle is that there are exceptions to every rule. And another principle which guides these conversations is: that if the therapist chooses to talk about, and seek detail of every exceptional thing which the client tells her about, the

salience and relevance of these ‘anomalies’ in the client’s story will be greatly increased. Clients can rapidly, visibly change as this becomes real to them, and marginalised successes become central threads of their stories.

Notice that so far we have two activities in therapy - finding out what the client wants, and finding out about times when they have attained at least a little of what they want. That’s two thirds of the approach. The last bit is to find out what bridges the client can build between where they are now and their desired future. You may seek descriptions of the next small steps towards their goals which the client feels able to take. These can be very small indeed. Maybe some clients will first want to know how they can avoid getting worse! Scaling questions can come in to this bridge-building process – for example, On a scale of zero to ten where zero is where you first called me, and ten is after the miracle, where are you now? With questions like this you and your client can mark progress, talk about small steps as well as end-points or goals, and talk about what part of the process they want you to help them with.

What else is involved in solution-focused work? The emphasis on recognising and building on strengths which underpins it, works best when you are also able to truly acknowledge your client’s humanity and their suffering or difficulties. This is surely an ingredient of all effective therapy – and it is essential in SFBT also. Jingoistic positive thinking does not come in to it.

So, in SFBT we are cultivating a way of thinking which is constructive. Empathy is also essential. ‘Constructive’ means that you seek out competence and capability – however small – and build on that. Nowadays this way of thinking is being incorporated in everything from social work to dog training, so SFBT is in a sense participating in the spirit of the age. Empathy means that you are doing your very best to understand the world from your client’s point of view. When you are doing this, being curious from this perspective, your questions are far more likely to come out well and your client will be ready to work towards solutions.

Let’s end with a bit of homework. This utilises a scale in a slightly unorthodox way: Imagine a scale from 0 to

10. And immediately place yourself on that scale. Now – what does the 10 mean on your scale? What is your scale called? Give yourself a little time to notice these things.

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Biodata:

Rob Cumming is a therapist, supervisor and trainer working from, and continuing to work on, an integration of brief therapy and other therapeutic models. He loves working in process models of therapy and consultation; although his clients and students frequently frustrate and delight him by sorting things out with novelty beyond his comprehension. His website is at www.gethelp.co.uk. Links to many resources in Solution Focus and related approaches, as well as Rob’s training work, can be made there.

“Doctors put drugs of which they know little, into bodies of which they know less, for diseases of which they know nothing at all.” Voltaire

Strategic Therapy Mr. Bond?

By Stephen Bray



Bray as Bond

Every age constructs a unique model of life based within a specific social context.^[1-2] In a recent James Bond film the villain asks Bond, “Is not dying chasing a dream the best way to go?” Bond replies unconcernedly, “I’d rather not go at all.”^[3]

Ian Fleming created Bond in the early 1950s, just when the cold war between East and West was emerging. Fleming’s Bond is a ruthless assassin and under no illusions about matters of life and death. When Fleming created Bond the world had just experienced a bloody war. His Bond could never have made such a retort. Indeed the early Bond sometimes speculated that he would die an anonymous death.^[4] Today’s Bond really expresses the concern of a coming age, which is not how to live or pursue immediate dreams, but how to live forever. This important distinction is changing the nature of Brief Therapy.

Let it be understood that therapy is a process in which two parties, a therapist and client, or a team and family unite in order to resolve difficulties. Although this process was known to the ancients only during the last 100, or so years has psychotherapy and counselling become established as a profession.^[5] The man most commonly held responsible for this development is Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. Incredibly it seems that the average length of an analysis in Freud’s day was around 18 months, today analytical treatment may last for years.^[6]

Psychoanalysis was ‘invented’ for a clientele composed of the relatively wealthy middle classes of Vienna. Although it enjoyed some popularity in Europe, it was

really its adoption by America’s medical profession that swelled the numbers of its practitioners helping to make it, and psychotherapy in general, a worldwide phenomenon.^[7] Freud held that:

“We resolve to think of the consciousness or unconsciousness of a mental process as merely one of its qualities and not necessarily definitive . . . Each single process belongs in the first place to the unconscious psychological system, from the system it can in certain conditions proceed further into the conscious system . . . Every time we meet with a symptom we may conclude that definite unconscious activities which contain the meaning of the symptom are present in the patient’s mind.”^[8]

In some ways Freud’s influence eclipsed some of America’s own talent in the field of medical psychology. This it may be argued has resulted in tragic consequences for humankind, since one of those so obscured is William James, who is generally acknowledged as America’s first modern psychologist. James’ writing style is dated but his concepts could be interpreted as those of today’s quantum psychology: “Let him begin with a perceptual experience, the ‘presentation,’ so called, of a physical object, his actual field of vision, the room he sits in, with the book he is reading as its centre; and let him for the present treat this complex object in the commonsense way as being ‘really’ what it seems to be, namely, a collection of physical things cut out from an enviroing world of other physical things with which these physical things have actual or potential relations. Now at the same time it is just *those self-same things* which his mind, as we say, perceives; and the whole philosophy of perception from

Therapy is a process in which two parties, a therapist and client, or a team and family, unite in order to resolve difficulties

Democritus’s time downwards has been just one long wrangle over the paradox that what is evidently one reality should

be in two places at once, both in outer space and in a person’s mind. ‘Representative’ theories of perception avoid the logical paradox, but on the other hand they violate the reader’s sense of life, which knows no intervening mental image but seems to see the room and the book immediately just as they physically exist.

The puzzle of how the one identical room can be in two places is at bottom just the puzzle of how one identical point can be on two lines. It can, if it be situated at their

intersection; and similarly, if the ‘pure experience’ of the room were a place of intersection of two processes, which connected it with different groups of associates respectively, it could be counted twice over, as belonging to either group, and spoken of loosely as existing in two places, although it would remain all the time a numerically single thing.”^[9]

So James realizes that subject and object are representative of a greater *Self*, whilst Freud holds that behaviours are predicated upon a meaning and processes locked within an individual’s mind. Clearly James operates from a philosophy of monastic idealism^[10], whereas Freud speculates in terms of psychic determinism.^[11]

A major influence upon the development of Brief Therapy is Dr. Milton H. Erickson. Almost alone between 1935 and 1956 he pioneered the concept of the families being treated as a system of relationships operating within specific social contexts. Erickson studied both medicine and psychology at the University of Wisconsin and the great American functionalist Clark F. Hull influenced some of his ideas.^[12]

By the mid 1950s when the ‘Cold War’ between East and West was emerging Erickson’s work started to become highly regarded. The meeting of Erickson’s ideas with ‘Cold War’ interpretation resulted in one of the earliest forms of formalized Brief Therapy to be developed outside of a psychoanalytic paradigm. One interpretation was developed by a communications analyst Jay Haley and initially called ‘Directive Therapy’, but after the publication of his book *Strategies of Psychotherapy*^[13] the approach came to be known as Strategic Therapy.

According to Haley: “Therapy may be called strategic if the clinician initiates what happens during therapy and designs a particular approach for each problem.”^[14] The implication of the approach then is that the process may not only be directive, but may also be open to abuse. This coupled with its unfortunate title has drawn criticism from all corners of the globe, and particularly from Family Therapists^[15] and Philosophers of Social Work Ethics^[16] in the United Kingdom. The problem with strategic thinking is that one finds oneself concerned with power relationships, as was the preoccupation between East and West during the cold war years.

The result of this stance may be that some therapists cease to communicate as people with people, but rather seek to manipulate their communication with others,

from what they perceive as a ‘superior or enlightened’ position. Take for example Haley’s evaluation of psychoanalysis:

“The patient enters analysis in the one –down posture by asking for help and promptly ties to put the therapist one down by building him up . . . the patient compliments the therapist by how wonderful he is . . . the skilled analyst is not taken in by these manoeuvres. When the patient finds himself continually put one-down he changes tactics. He becomes mean, insulting, threatens to quit analysis, and casts doubt upon the sanity of the analyst . . . They meet an impassive, impersonal wall as the analyst remains silent or handles the insults with a simple statement like, “Have you noticed this is the second Tuesday afternoon you’ve made such a comment? . . . You seem to be reacting to me as if I’m someone else.” Frustrated in his aggressive behaviour, the patient capitulates and ostensibly hands control of the situation back to the analyst. Again building the analyst up, he leans on him, hangs on his every word, insists how helpless he is, and how strong the analyst, and waits for the moment that he will lead the analyst along far enough to devastate him with a clever ploy.

The skilled analyst handles this nicely with a series of “condescending” ploys, pointing out that the patient must help himself and not expect anyone to solve anything for him . . .”^[17]

This kind of selective interpretation led to a generation of ‘helpers’, many not as well educated or skilled as Haley, ‘intervening’ with ‘patients’ in ways that were not suspected.

But according to these excerpts from the standard British textbook *Family and Marital Psychotherapy*, printed in 1979, some people’s condition improved as a result of Strategic Therapy:

“A man sought help, having found himself increasingly unable to maintain an erection. This was causing him considerable distress and creating some tension in his relationship with his girlfriend. They were seen conjointly and the man told he needed to learn to control the behaviour of his penis more effectively. As the first stage towards his learning this control, the girl was asked that night, to try all she could to make him excited. He was instructed to try and prevent his penis becoming or staying erect. He failed.”^[18]

“A woman sought help for what she described as “shop phobia”. For some time she had been unable to remain in the smallest of shops for more than a few moments before being sick or fainting . . . I told her that I must see exactly what happened when she went into a shop.

As we drew nearer to the door I told her that she should be experiencing the humming noises in her ears by now and that her skin would start to feel clammy. She was not to try to avoid these feelings. Once inside the shop I directed her to the less crowded part so that she would be able to faint without being stepped on. Although anxious, the woman reported that she had not experienced any of her usual symptoms . . . The woman was seen two years after. She was Christmas shopping alone in the crowded toy department of a large department store.”^[19]

One root of Strategic Therapy comes from the Mental Health Institute of Palo Alto, California. A group of specialists from there worked closely with Erickson and Haley in developing the early Brief Therapy models. One of the team, Paul Watzlawick frequently contributed examples of miscommunication drawn from intelligence work into Communication Theory,^[20] and Family Therapy.^[21] In one anecdote in a Family Therapy textbook Watzlawick even gives an account of John and Robert Kennedy’s negotiations with, and the strategies used by them to mislead, Nikita Khrushchev during the Cuban missile crisis.^[22]

Today we may imagine that therapies owe little to the pioneers of Brief Strategic Therapy. But Watzlawick was one of the first to recognise and illustrate today’s post-modern idea that reality is a construction.^[23] In rural Scandinavia a team of therapists have developed a unique form of narrative therapy in which cultures are understood as sets of interpenetrating actions and ideas shaped by as well as shaping their practitioners.^[24] One of their concepts is that of the ‘saga-space’, which is a reintroduction of the Nordic verbal storytelling tradition. Within saga-space each of us lives our dream, and may die a hero’s death.

But does not the modern Bond have something in preferring not to die at all? MRI’s Strategic Therapy first introduced us to the idea of first and second order change.^[25]

“When we have a nightmare we may do many things in our dream. We may run, hide, fight, scream, jump off a cliff, (indeed we may create our very own James Bond scenario.) But no change from any one of these behaviours will terminate the nightmare. This kind of variation we all know, it’s called first order change. Second order change occurs when we awaken from our dream. Waking is not a part of the dream, but a change to a completely different state!”^[26]

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Biodata

Stephen Bray was born in Dorset and educated at Blandford Grammar School, and Universities in Plymouth, Manchester, Santa Cruz and London. He currently lives in Istanbul. Trained in the arts of dynamic therapy, family therapy, gestalt, process oriented psychology and NLP, he now spends his time supporting those who wish to help others. Details of his work and his contact information may be found at his website www.quietquality.com



I want to make myself redundant as quickly as possible when I am working therapeutically with families and individuals. That redundancy is determined not by me but by my clients. My job is to help them realise that they do not need me as much as they imagine or believe.

I focus on their limiting beliefs, their negative hallucinations, the patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that give them a sense of who they are and that tell them where they fit into the scheme of things.

I also help them to see their own personality and potential from a different perspective, to talk to themselves, and to me, with a different story, and to connect with feelings that may have been long buried or denied. May, indeed, have become destructive.

I explore each person's motivations, permissions and capabilities, their fear and courage, their habits and hopes. My approach is affirmative, assertive, directive, manipulative, validating, forthright, caringly confronting, uncomfortable, loving and, more often than not, effective.

Friend: "Michael, don't you get depressed meeting so many depressed people?"

MM: "No, because they are not with me because of their depression."

Friend: "But don't they all have a sad story to tell?"

MM: "Most do, but that is only what drives them through the door. It's just a story they tell themselves, and me, and often lots of other professionals. In the telling, they are often reliving all the locked in pain, they are burdened with the weight of their past."

Friend: "So how come you don't get depressed?"

MM: "Because, the reason they are there is not their pain but the spark of hope. I find it amazing that, despite the life they've lived and the story they repeat so often and rehearse so well, despite their limiting beliefs and self doubts and depression, despite all that, they still

have hope! That spark is the point of contact. What I want to do is fan that spark into a flame of self-belief, self appreciation, self knowledge. Once they remember who they really are, how resourceful and remarkable they truly are, they can face the future with a new hope instead of endlessly repeating the past."

Friend: "Would you like a cup of coffee?"

From pain to possibility

My clients' distress, depression or despair does not cause me pain, their strength encourages me. Their hope motivates me. Their courage inspires me. No matter what they say, no matter what they've done, no matter whether they are willing to work during the session (and I ask a lot of them) or not, whether or not they achieve what they commit to in terms of 'homework', and whether they decide to give their all or to give in, I never doubt their capacity to change, to develop, to evolve or, as I prefer to think of it, return to a full awareness of and commitment to their amazing potential and their full humanity.

The above underpins my persistent belief in our incredible potential. In truth, I can only imagine what it would be like, aspire to it for myself and work towards it. The point, for me, is not the arrival, not even the destination, but the journey.

So, that's my basic philosophy and, when I'm in flow, the energy flows through everything I do. It nourishes me and it feels great – I feel great!

When I feel great in that way, it's OK for me to feel sad, mad, scared or glad about what's happening or has happened.

My clients know - because I tell them - when I am moved by their story and feel sad, angry or scared.

I also make clear to them my belief that all - ALL - dysfunctional behaviours are evidence and symptoms of something amiss. Something has to go wrong for human beings to want to hurt themselves or each other. No matter how horrible, obnoxious or objectionable the utterance or the action, I see and hear it as someone's pain speaking.

The more blocked or belligerent, timid or intimidating a person is. The more defended, the greater their fear. The way they protect or defend themselves may, of course, be totally unacceptable. Not simply because it is illegal or immoral, nor even because it hurts other people (though, as I tell them, that would be reason

enough) but because it violates their essential self and impairs their capacity to become the best they can be.

Separate the person from the problem

Thus they learn that I separate the person from the problem or the pattern. They need not doubt – though they need not believe – that I will be honest with them because I echo things they already know. It is not OK to do certain things to self or to others. They know it, and they do not really want to do those things, which is partly why they come to see me.

At this point, I should mention that many of the teenagers I work with, and one half of many couples, do not really choose to meet me for the first time. They are compelled, coerced, persuaded, nagged, bribed or threatened (given a MacDonald or an ultimatum, or some other offer they can't refuse), attending on sufferance and behaving insufferably.

The more insufferable the behaviour, the more they are suffering. It is their fear and pain speaking. I tell them and show them that I will use all my skills to reach through their fear and pain to speak to 'the part of you that knows'.

That is a phrase I have used countless times over the years. Every person, aged from seven to 57 (what a variety!) has known exactly what I mean.

Our first contact, letter, telephone, email or in person, will provide a lot of useful information. I make quick assumptions and assessments and will then check out my hypotheses as the communication unfolds. I may check these out directly with my clients, by asking them, or look and listen to what they say and don't say, their non-verbal cues, and the way they breathe, gesticulate, grimace or smile. What they smile at will be as significant as what they wince at, along with what they celebrate or what they shy away from.

Usually, within the first half hour of a two hour session, I will have a pretty good grasp of the underlying, fundamental problem. That means a lot of time need not be spent on The Story.

More often than not, when people rehearse the story, they put themselves into the state that goes with it – sad, mad, scared or glad. They know all too well how to do The Problem, and I can always recommend them to people who are willing to listen to them, for years if they want.

They need to learn how to do solutions, to turn their

head toward the future and their heart toward love, starting with self. More specifically, starting with certain models that enable me simultaneously to elicit and impart high value information that will be of mutual benefit. I gain by being affirming or discarding my hypotheses, my clients gain by learning some models and theories that help them to make sense of the 'senseless', to find meaning in the meaningless, and to feel the warmth of connection where that have felt cold and lonely.

The models include the Self-change Model [SCM], Neuro Linguistic Programming [NLP], Emotional Freedom Techniques [EFT], and, if only to prove I'm not totally addicted to TLA's^[1], Transactional Analysis [TA] and Co-Counselling.

Logical Levels

Logical Levels provides an incredibly useful framework at any stage of the therapeutic, counselling (managing, coaching, mentoring, teaching or parenting) relationship.

It is useful for formulating questions, for deciding what kind or level of intervention is appropriate, for understanding some of the reasons for so much

communication going awry and for knowing whether the change needed or happening is remedial, generative or evolutionary.

Usually, within the first half hour of a two hour session, I will have a pretty good grasp of the underlying, fundamental problem.

Although the logical levels are most often

presented as a hierarchy, I like to imagine them as a sort of Möbius strip {twisting a long strip of material once and then joining its two ends so that it has only one surface} because each level is connected with and can impact on the others. The hierarchy of logical levels starts at the bottom with Environment, working through Behaviour. Capabilities. Beliefs. Values. Identity. Relationship. And ending with Attitude or Spirit.

We need to go to the level above the one which we hope to have an impact; to change or maintain the environment, we need to do something (behaviour). To develop a new skill, we may need to consider any limiting beliefs, and so on.

The SCM and the Logical Levels combined can make the first encounter illuminating and empowering for both client and counsellor. Making these models explicit invites the client into a collaborative partnership, a team if you will, negotiating their way towards a mutually agreed goal, which is the client's best interest and higher self. I want to know, at the outset, where they want to go. If *they* do not know, how could I possibly imagine that I could help them get there?

Actually many people have no idea what they want; they are very clear indeed about what they don't want. They don't want the pain, the pattern, the people who dump on them. They don't want the fear, the loneliness, the distance, and the memories. They don't want to be who they are, but they don't know who else to be. Even if they do, they often have no idea how to be that kind of person.

My initial task in that case is to help them determine and for me to decide whether we want to work together, toward what end and for what purpose. That is, if the therapy, or coaching, is effective, how will that manifest in the eyes, ears and hearts of other people in their lives? This ecology check is essential because the place that change really matters is not the rarefied atmosphere of the counselling room but the real world in which they live with the real people who really matter in their lives. There is a cost to pay for changing and a cost to pay for staying the same. One is all too familiar, the other is impossible to know until we change!

What do they imagine they will they say to themselves differently, and in what tone of voice? How will their breathing be different? Their posture, their beliefs, hopes and aspirations? This rehearsal moves us forward; without it, many people endlessly relapse and relive their past.

“One centimetre ahead is darkness”

Along with the above, I use many of the techniques of solution focused thinking and brief therapy. The magic question, “If this felt-tip pen was a magic wand and I could change one thing in your life right now, what would be different when you wake up tomorrow?”

Scaling, “On a scale of one to ten, where are you now on this issue?” “What would need to happen for you to move from that state?”

I also use the NLP Well Formed Outcome [WFO!] because it is an elegant framework for future focused, solution oriented thinking.

Using those three models alone in the first session would be helpful. Combined with many other subtle and not quite so subtle responses, it is possible to give people the most incredible boost to their confidence and understanding. This helps them to nurture themselves and or to ask for support and help without being devastated if they are refused.

It might also be worth mentioning that I seldom work for more than four sessions on any issue. There is homework from the first session (sometimes before), which will provide as much useful information whether

or not it is completed (or even started).

MM: (to client on the phone) “So, how's the home work going?”

Client: “Well, we haven't really done much of it; we've been so busy...”

MM: “Stop! Don't tell me you didn't have time.”

Client: “No, you're right. But it was so difficult that we...”

MM: “Stop! It was supposed to be difficult because it's what you do least and most need to do.”

Client: “Yes, I know that's what we said. But we are talking more.”

MM: “That's excellent, really great. It's what you really wanted and I want you to do the homework.”

Client: “Yes, we'll try.”

MM: “No, don't try, just do it. You've dealt with worse”

Client: “Yes, I have haven't I!”

This couple's home work was to spend a few minutes each day, sitting face to face, holding each others hands i.e. all four hands are holding, and tell each other something they felt sad, mad, scared and glad about each other as partners and as co-parents.

They love each other, but he was programmed not to admit to vulnerability and she was scripted not to ask for what she wanted or needed. So he fumed while she sulked. They had imported these games into their 18 year old marriage.

When we met for the second session, two weeks after the phone call (above), they had diligently done the homework. They had shared tears and yells, disclosed resentments that had festered for years, and discovered depths of passion and playfulness they had not realised they were capable of (I had certainly not suggested they do the homework naked, but hey!).

Two more sessions are booked, and I doubt they'll need any more, except maybe for the odd top-up.

In a future article I will go into more detail and provide some case studies.

[1] Three Letter Acronyms.

Biodata:

Michael Mallows is a Management Consultant, Group Worker, Therapist, Supervisor, Adoption Consultant, Coach and Mentor; also an Author, Lyricist, Public Speaker, Team Builder and Workshop Presenter. His website is www.mallows.co.uk; Email: michaelmallows@btinternet.com

Elizabeth Winder interviews Jini Lavelle

‘I can feel guilty about the past, apprehensive about the future, but only in the present can I act. The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness.’

Mindfulness, being present in the moment and being aware of one’s physical and mental experience in the moment, is a core concept in much eastern philosophy. Meditation techniques have become part of some western psychotherapy approaches, and their impact is now the subject of some western medical research, particularly with relation to their impact on mental health conditions. Nurturing Potential sub-editor Elizabeth Winder interviews Jini Lavelle, a therapist trained in Mindfulness who runs regular courses in Mindfulness for Oxfordshire Mind.

EW: First of all, can you describe what Mindfulness is, and how the meditation techniques have become part of western medical practice?

JL: Mindfulness training develops conscious awareness and focused attention. This enables us to become more aware of our behaviour and interaction, and to respond skillfully to events in our lives and to past patterns of behaviour. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn’s definition of Mindfulness is ‘Paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally’. He founded the stress reduction clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center about 25 years ago. He himself practiced meditation, and he set up the clinic to treat chronic medical cases which had exhausted known treatments using the Eastern practice of meditation. Since then it has been used for all forms of chronic problems including stress, anxiety, chronic illness, pain, cancer, heart disease and depression.

Research followed on the programme that had been developed, and the results were very effective. This is self-help, self-therapy, and people felt they were in control. The programme expanded to the general public, into education, business, ethnic minority communities, with specialised programmes for different groups. In the States judges have their own programme once a year. People were really empowered by being able to treat themselves, rather than passively accepting treatment.

EW: I believe there are two main types of technique,

Mindfulness based stress reduction, and Mindfulness based cognitive therapy. How do these differ?

JL: Stress is the cause of a great deal of physical and mental illness. While John Kabat-Zinn was working on physical illness, a team of clinical psychologists, John Teasdale at Cambridge University, Mark Williams then at Bangor University, and Zindel Segal at the University of Toronto investigated the use of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) to prevent relapse in depression. They adapted and incorporated the programme developed at the University of Massachusetts into Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), in which there is an emphasis on specific techniques for depression relapse. While cognitive therapy works with the automatic thoughts present in depression, MBCT enables a person to stand back from those thoughts and separate them out from the person, rather than allowing them to define the person.

EW: How available is Mindfulness training in the UK and elsewhere, for practitioners and for clients?

JL: Provision of training is very patchy. When John Kabat-Zinn began his programme, he was an experienced meditator. He could not find meditating psychologists to help with the training; he had to use yoga/meditation teachers who had a sufficient grounding in meditation and bodywork. In the groups that I run, there are people using it for their own symptoms, and for personal and professional development. The course I run would enable a professional to add this to their professional repertoire, but they would need a much deeper grounding in yoga and bodywork to teach Mindfulness. The three professors I mentioned are themselves meditators. It is something that has to be taught from one’s own experience, rather than an academic perspective. One of the tenets of the programme is that the teacher has to practice the programme along side the participants.

EW: You’ve been teaching Mindfulness with Oxfordshire Mind for three years now. How did this come about?

JL: It came about through my own experience of clinical depression. Despite years of psychotherapy, and being trained as a therapist myself, I still experienced chronic depression. Then someone gave me Kabat-Zinn’s book and I began to practise the programme on myself and worked with colleagues on

it. As result of becoming mindful I began to handle my depression. I wanted to set up a programme for the public, because in this country at that time there were only research programmes being conducted in clinical settings. I approached Oxfordshire Mind to get this going, and they financed the publicity. I organised research with the Oxford University Department of Psychiatry, which is now complete and about to be published.

EW: How do you arrange your courses?

JL: It is an eight week programme of weekly two and a half hour sessions, one full day session, and approximately an hour's practical homework per day by the participants.

EW: What sort of people come on your courses, and what are they expecting to achieve?

JL: The groups include members of the public who self-refer or are referred by their GPs or psychiatrists, and mental health professionals who want to use Mindfulness in their work. Often people are looking to professionals for a cure, and then discover they can participate in their own health and wellbeing. They won't get a cure, but they may change their way of life to reduce their stress. One common problem is rumination, that people are running the same thoughts over and over again in their heads, and believing them. However the thoughts run automatically like a computer programme. Mindfulness is about seeing thoughts as thoughts not as who you are.

EW: Do their expectations alter during the course?

JL: I don't know what to say! Out of all recognition! They stop looking for a cure, and become aware they do have choices. They stop being the victims of their symptoms and start taking responsibility for their lives. Sometimes this programme is called the art of conscious living. Thick Nat Hanh, the Vietnamese Zen Master and poet describes mindfulness as "keeping one's conscious alive to the present reality".

EW: How do you adjust your teaching for people with mental health conditions or short concentration spans?

JL: I did some pioneering work with people with long-

term schizophrenia who had lived in institutions. They loved it! It can be used, and it can be adapted. We did it for two hours a week, and now at the same project they offer mindfulness daily for 45 minutes, and continue to send project workers to me to be trained.

Learning to concentrate in a particular way is central to the training. One of the first exercises with a new group is to concentrate on the five toes of the left foot for half a minute. Most people are unable to do that without falling asleep or their thoughts drifting off, which means they can't be present in the moment. Being able to feel sensation in the body is essential to being able to be in the present moment; to be able to feel and "follow" the breath with focus enables the meditator to stop rumination and anticipation [fear and anxiety of the future].

EW: Are you able to assess the impact these techniques have on people with longstanding mental health problems?

JL: Yes . We have excellent results from our research and constant positive feedback from our participants. I know that people will not go away unchanged. Participants become aware of their thoughts and feelings and what stresses them, and are able to bring themselves out of automatic pilot into the moment and respond to a situation rather than react out of old patterns. They discover a deeper appreciation of life.

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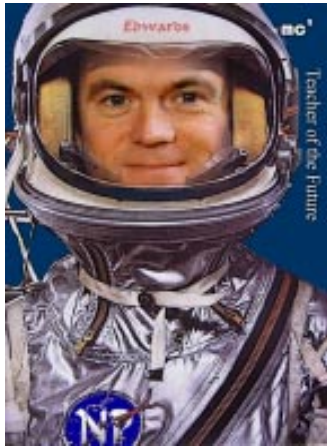
Biodata:

Jini Lavelle is a Transpersonal psychologist and psychotherapist. She also works for Allies Advocacy, a service providing advocacy to patients on the psychiatric wards in Oxfordshire. She runs programmes of mindfulness for personal and professional development throughout the year and can be contacted at Oxfordshire Mindfulness on 01865 370132 or jinilavelle @ waitrose.com.

**"The pendulum of the mind oscillates
between sense and nonsense, not
between right and wrong" Carl Jung**

Curriculum Development

by Mark Edwards



Edwards as Space Teacher

I think it was someone from the Cambridge Institute of Education who first introduced me to the three part mantra of curriculum development. It goes like this:

- Think big.
- Start small.
- Do not call in an expert.

Over the past decade, the Government has done the reverse. By using a restrictive 'target and test' approach to measure educational progress they have 'thought small.' But they have 'started big' by introducing the numeracy and literacy hours into every primary school in the country. How have they achieved this? By appointing banks of 'expert' consultants who have told teachers what to do and how to do it, bombarding schools with a plethora of policy documents in the process.

So it is not surprising that teachers are over-stressed, and feel over-burdened. And that there is increasing evidence that suggests that standards have not actually risen in the way the Government would have us believe. However, I could put up with this if it was not for the fact that what I consider to be truly innovative approaches to education are now being subjected to the same process. I am referring to 'accelerated learning' and 'emotional literacy.'

A teacher on the Times Educational Supplement website forum says that she 'has to do emotional literacy' with her class for 15 minutes every morning. This involves going round the class and asking each child how they are feeling. She says that most children just reply 'happy' or 'sad' and that the rest of the class don't listen. Further investigation has revealed that the school had a visit from an 'expert' in emotional literacy and as a result the Head has decreed that this is what they will do. With no additional training, no additional resources and no additional support.

I'm still a part-time teacher and I've witnessed the same thing first hand. The other week we had an afternoon's INSET on accelerated learning. (I am well-qualified in Neuro-Linguistic Programming so I do know quite a lot about it, but I kept quiet.) The LEA consultant was competent but uninspiring and so the majority of the staff were uninspired. We thought that would be the end of it, but a few days later an edict came round, telling us that the course leaders would be returning in a few weeks to observe how we were putting accelerated learning into practice in our classrooms. You can imagine what that has done to our stress levels; if Ofsted doesn't get you the consultant will.

I used to work as an advisory teacher in the heady days before the Education Reform Act. We were told back then to 'beware the role of the expert' and that it was important to teach 'demonstration lessons' with real children to show how problem-solving and investigation activities could be organised in a busy classroom. It did actually work, and one of the reasons it worked was that it inspired the teacher (usually) and gave them necessary practical support while they introduced the new practices.

It is very sad to witness what is happening now. On the one hand it is encouraging that despite the Government's attempts to restrict and prescribe, innovative ideas are still surfacing. I maintain that emotional literacy in particular is essential for the reclamation of education as a vehicle for personal and cognitive development. But there is a very real danger that the Government's current approach is going to snuff this particular candle out. So I implore ministers - would you please listen to the mantra:

Think big : at least one teacher trained in emotional literacy in every school together with a physical space where emotional support and development is a priority.

Think big : at least one teacher trained in emotional literacy in every school together with a physical space where emotional support and development is a priority.

Do not call in an expert : well, all right, if you must. It probably is necessary, but don't expect them to tell people what to do. Emotional literacy consultants should show teachers, and involve them.

Oh, and whatever you do, don't ask the DofE to produce a policy document on the subject.

[Mark Edwards' Biodata is at foot of next page]

Self-help is not an inevitable alternative to professional help, but it is certainly an option to be considered, if not exercised, before professional help is sought. It was always available and, indeed, adopted in many cases and for a multiplicity of reasons. But never was it as accessible and effective as it is today.

The internet is undoubtedly the greatest source of self-help information there has ever been. And organisations and groups exist everywhere that offer help and encouragement to those who are anxious to help themselves. The help ranges from simple emotional support (just being there!), through advice, direction, information, friendship, individual advocacy, and tools for diagnosis, exploration and recovery.

Despite the amount of help available for people to help themselves nowadays, it is sometimes necessary – or preferable – to seek help from a professional, someone who can view the situation impartially. So, even when it's more rewarding to treat one's own complaint by virtue of increased self-esteem, greater independence, or simply less expense, to avoid a professional out of stubbornness is a poor strategy.

Having provided that caveat, let us now consider the development, growth and increasingly utilised groups for people who have either been diagnosed with illness, physical or mental, or have been through a traumatic period of suffering and treatment and now regard themselves as survivors (or, as Abigail Freeman prefers to call herself in *The Chrysalid Years: veterans*), and are working together both for support and in order to produce change in the health system and in society.

It must be recognised that veterans are capable of being the most powerful advocates for reform, both on their own behalf and in defence of others. The self-help group movement, after all, grew out of the idea that individuals who have experienced similar crises can provide effective support to each other.

Support groups offer an opportunity to be productive, to work together with others to find solutions to a variety of obstacles. People who have experienced problems based on medication (or over-medication), social security benefits (or the absence thereof), housing, employment, neglect, families and friends, and others, are in a unique position to help others in a similar situation.

The first mental health self-help groups, for example, were started by people who had experienced what they regarded as an oppressive and abusive mental health

system. It was inevitable that they would want to join with others to fight the type of social discrimination faced by those with histories of psychiatric disorders. To summarise the benefits of self-help groups:

Joining with others who have had similar experiences provides the invaluable resource of knowing that one is not alone; that others have walked the same path and have the same feelings.

Individuals, particularly in the mental health system, often do not have the support of family and friends. Self-help groups can provide the support that may be missing.

Self-help groups offer a haven for self-disclosure and sharing experiences. It also provides access to relevant information and literature.

Self-help groups encourage personal responsibility and control over the individual's treatment. By actively helping others, the individuals gain a sense of their own competence, increasing self-confidence and self-esteem

A self-help group is a peer group; members are equal, in contrast to the profession/client relationship; and they are made to feel empowered to take an active role their own health and wellbeing.

There is a wealth of information about self-help groups and self-help strategies available on the Internet, but here are just four that we consider to be particularly useful. Three of them are in the UK and one in America. In the UK, the website operated by Self-Help Nottingham is not merely a useful guide to that geographical area, but contains information of general interest as well as a link to other UK groups. It may be accessed via <http://www.selfhelp.org.uk/groups.htm>. The UK Helplines Association is located at <http://www.helplines.org.uk/>. The office of the Surgeon General in the USA has a section on self-help consumer groups that is part of a large and interesting general report. You can access the self-help section directly at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/chapter4/sec6.html>.

Biodata from preceding page:

Mark Edwards was a headteacher, who still teaches part-time but combines this with writing articles, educational consultancy and entertaining people who like to hear badly performed rock, pop and music hall classics. He still carries a torch for child-centred education and is encouraged by the current interest in emotional literacy and thinking skills in schools. He is a Master Practitioner in NLP (Psychotherapy). Email: Mark4Ed@aol.com.

Faulty Assumptions

by Paul W. Schenk, Psy.D.

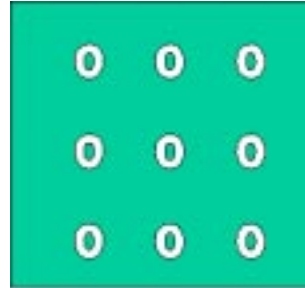


One Friday night when I was in the waiting area of our local hospital's emergency room, an ambulance arrived. The crew wheeled in a stretcher carrying a young teenage driver who was looking quite pale. As the ER physician came out to meet them, the crew explained the teen had been in a bad car accident and had lost considerable blood. The ER physician gave the boy a quick once over and said, "He needs to get into surgery. Immediately. But I can't operate on him, he's my son!" Here's a brain teaser. The physician was telling the truth. Who was the physician?

I like to use this story to teach my clients about the power of the assumptions we make. Why? I frequently find that people unwittingly block themselves from succeeding at their goals and dreams because of logical, but *faulty*, assumptions. If you're like most people, you're probably unwittingly thwarting yourself from succeeding at some of your goals too. Later I'll be dealing with four major types of faulty assumptions and a simple exercise you can use to identify them – and then get rid of them. With these illusory obstacles out of the way, you'll find it easier to achieve the goals you set for yourself.

Wouldn't it be obvious if you're falling into the "assumption trap"? No. Not when they're your own faulty assumptions. It's much easier to spot other people's. Ever watch someone get frustrated trying to push a door open that you know needs to be pulled? All it takes is one inaccurate belief to stop the person from getting through the doorway. Once the error is realized, the person can open the door easily. Assumptions are always based on our best logic. In turn, that logic is a combination of personal experience and the information available. Faulty logic inherently produces incorrect assumptions. At times, incorrect assumptions can have serious consequences. Even a single faulty assumption can turn an opportunity into an unsolvable dilemma.

Here's one more brain teaser for you to help you understand how easy it is to make an assumption that is logical but wrong. Connect the 9 circles in the box below with four straight, continuous lines. Do not lift your pencil off the page once you begin drawing. (The answers to both puzzles will be found at the foot of page 30)



Time, talent, money, and energy

There are four kinds of faulty assumptions that I find regularly block people from succeeding at their goals. These include assumptions about time, talent, money and energy. Let's take a look at some of the ways that faulty assumptions about these four issues may show up in your life. Then I'll deal with what you can do to identify and get rid of them.

There are some common core qualities that characterize such assumptions. They tend to be vague or generalized in some way. They may be based on an implicit belief that "other people can, but I can't." They typically involve a belief that something else must change first, something that is beyond the person's control. [Add more of these core characteristics after I write the examples.]

Assumptions about time:

"I don't have enough time." As a senior in college I looked forward to the illusion of having an abundance of free time once I graduated. Without the demands of nighttime and weekend studying, I would have lots of time on my hands. I don't remember exactly when that belief crashed in flames, but it happened long before the next New Year's Eve. I replaced it with the belief that when I retired I would finally have more free time. My 90-year-old father, who retired at 87, has long since helped me dispel that myth. When we talk, he sometimes still muses about how he had too little time that week to work on his hobby. With concerted practice, I'm continuing to get better at finding short but satisfying windows of opportunity for my own hobby of model railroading. Success became much easier when I stopped looking for big blocks of time and noticed what I could do with even fifteen minutes.

The “80 – 20” rule refers to the phenomenon that 80 percent of the work gets done in 20 percent of the time; the remaining 20 percent takes 80 percent of the time. That means that in a 40 hour work week, most of the work is done in 8 hours! You can see how transforming just one hour of time pays big benefits.

Let me offer two examples. When I replaced some of my office furniture a few years ago, I bought a desk with file drawers. Previously, my clients’ charts were stored six feet away in a file cabinet. Now I keep the charts within reach. As a result, paper gets filed immediately instead of going into the ubiquitous “to be filed” stack. That one change has eliminated countless hours of thumbing through *the stack* looking for a particular piece of information. Though I took a typing course in 8th grade, my speed has never been terrific. With the advent of dictation software, I now dictate at something approaching 90 wpm. Just these two changes went a long way towards creating the time that I now use for writing.

Assumptions about talent:

“I’m not smart enough to learn how to do that.” “I’m not a creative person like she is.” The most common form of faulty assumptions about talent centres on personal insufficiency. Notice some of your friends’ talents that you admire. Have you been assuming that their talent was genetic, and somehow emerged fully developed like Zeus from his mother’s womb? Most people rarely see the hundreds (or thousands) of hours their friend has spent nurturing the development of that talent over a period of years. Much of what is labeled as talent is primarily the application of persistence. A lot more seems to be accomplished when the focus is on the enjoyment of being engaged in the activity rather than on the gap between the current level of ability and the desired final goal. When I run into assumptions about insufficient talent, I find it helpful to play with the question, “What would I do *next* if I did have the talent?” This came in handy when I began to contemplate whether I had the talent to write, *and publish*, a book. A colleague suggested I would have more credibility with publishers if I had already published several articles. Further, she noted, an article involves a much shorter time commitment than an entire book. It proved to be good advice. Since I began setting aside time for writing in 1998, I’ve had 18 articles published. A number of those became the basis for one book that I published last year, *Great Ways to Sabotage a Good Conversation*. A second book is now in search of a publisher.

Assumptions about money:

“I can’t afford it.” “It would cost too much.” The common core of these assumptions involves a belief that there is only one solution that must take a particular form. A variation of this occurs in the movie *A Beautiful*

Mind. One day while teaching mathematics at Princeton, Professor Nash closes the windows because of nearby construction noise. With no air conditioning, the students begin to complain, to no avail. Then an attractive co-ed opens the window, leans out, and politely asks the men working below if they could work somewhere else for the next hour. When they willingly oblige, Professor Nash pauses for a moment before commenting, “Multivariate problems have multiple solutions.” Using a mathematician’s logic, he realizes that he had assumed the problem had only one solution. His student’s action had quietly demonstrated the flaw in his thinking.

It is easy to make a faulty assumption about a goal if the solution requires a specific amount of cash. Several years ago, the 13 year old daughter of a friend of mine told her mother she wanted to attend a private boarding school. As a single mother, the woman’s income could not stretch to cover the school’s expenses. Knowing how resourceful her daughter was, she invited her to find an alternate solution. The girl drafted a detailed letter to the school’s headmaster in which she explained her circumstances, her credentials, and her reasons for wanting to attend the school. She was awarded a full scholarship.

Assumptions about energy:

In our society, a sense of fatigue is typically at the core of assumptions about insufficient energy. “I’m just too tired by the time I get the children into bed.” One contributing factor often involves an implicit belief that there is no way to reduce the energy required for other tasks. I find that the fatigue is often iatrogenic, that is induced by the treatment being received: Because there is too little time set aside for leisure pursuits, the person begins to burn out and lose energy for the required tasks. Setting aside even small amounts of time for personal pursuits serves to re-energize. It is not unlike turning off a cell phone for awhile and plugging it into the recharger.

The Threshold of Believability:

Here is a simple exercise to help you identify whether you are holding faulty assumptions about one of your own dreams or goals. If you are, the exercise can quickly help you identify and release them. To demonstrate how it works, I’ll apply it to a problem my son, Matt, faced when he was nine. He was jealous that his older brother made money mowing lawns for some of the neighbours. He also wanted a way to earn money, but knew that he was too young to use the lawnmower himself. Identify something you want which you believe cannot happen now. Ask yourself if you believe that what you want could happen 30 years from now. Matt had no doubt that 30 years hence he would have a job with a good income. It is critical that you

begin with a time frame far enough in the future that your answer is an unhesitating, “Yes.” If there is any doubt or hesitation, select a time period even farther out in the future. Once you get a convincing, “Yes,” then begin working backwards in five year intervals. Matt continued to have no doubt at five year declining intervals until we reached a time five years hence. At that point he stopped being sure of the answer. Your own doubt may emerge in any of several ways. “I hope so.” “Probably.” “I would like to think so.” The only acceptable answer before moving to the next time period is a convincing, “Yes.” Anything else defines doubt or uncertainty.

Once you cross that threshold yourself, examine the interval between the last point where you answered “Yes” and the point in the future where you begin to have doubts. For Matt, it happened between six and seven years in the future. Looking seven years ahead, his answer was a clear, “Yes.” Looking six years ahead, he wasn’t sure. Notice what assumption emerges for you when you identify this first “threshold of believability.” Matt had assumed that he could not get a real job until he was 16. I asked him to notice if that assumption was, in fact, true. He quickly identified a few things some teenagers do to earn money before they reach 16, such as babysitting, pet sitting, and mowing lawns like his older brother. Carefully question any assumptions you identify to be sure they are valid in your particular case. If you have trouble recognizing the assumption, remember that it can be very helpful to do this exercise with your partner or a good friend whose perspective may shed important light on your assumptions. With that faulty assumption identified and eliminated, return to the process of slowly working back one or two years at a time towards the present until you again encounter some doubt about succeeding at your goal within that time frame. Then repeat the step of noticing the assumption that triggered the doubt. For Matt, the next threshold occurred between four and five years away. This was based on the fact that his older brother began mowing lawns when he was 14, and Matt doubted whether he would be allowed to do that when he was only 13. Eliminating this doubt meant expanding his range of possibilities to include other things that children 13 and younger can do to earn money. To test the waters, I told him about how I used to bake cookies and sell them to neighbours when I was about his age. I paid my mother for the ingredients and cleared 50 cents for my efforts. (Good money for a half hour’s work in 1957!) He wasn’t interested in baking cookies, but his eyes lit up when he thought about our bread maker. He had his answer. By dinner that night he and I had put together a one page flyer offering nearly a dozen different varieties of home made bread. The next day we calculated the cost of the ingredients at our local supermarket and then revised some of the prices.

By the weekend he had his first order. While his interest lasted, he and I had found another way to spend fun time together (since I supervised all the mixing), and he enjoyed being a successful entrepreneur (even too successful some weeks!)

If you get stuck on a particular assumption, experiment with these questions:

- * What if that assumption happens to be wrong? What would I do next about my goal?
- * Who might I talk with to learn if there is something faulty about that assumption?
- * Do any other obstacles emerge at this particular time interval?
- * Has there ever been an exception to this obstacle (such as a dollar amount or an age requirement?)

There will certainly be times when you are unable to find a flaw in your logic or assumptions. In such cases, I invite you to experiment with pursuing a variation of the original goal. One of my long-standing dreams has been to travel to outer space. Aside from my age and the ease with which I can develop motion sickness, there are a number of very good reasons why this dream would seem impossible to achieve. Then, for my 41st birthday, my wife sent me to NASA’s Adult Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama where I spent a long weekend sampling the daily routine of an astronaut. I haven’t made it all the way to outer space, yet, but I have some wonderful memories of getting part way there!

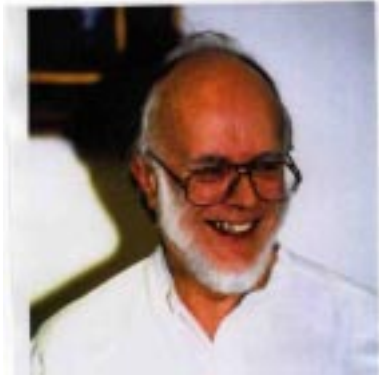
Biodata:

Dr Paul Schenk, Psy.D is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Atlanta, Georgia, USA since 1979, where he maintains a diverse practice providing evaluation and therapy for families, couples, and individuals. Dr. Schenk’s special interests include the evaluation and treatment of sexual abuse in children and adults, the evaluation of ADD and learning problems in children, adolescents and adults, and the clinical uses of hypnosis for the diagnosis and treatment of a variety of problems. He is the author of *Great Ways to Sabotage a Good Conversation* [available at www.drpaulschenk.com]
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**Logicians have but ill defined
As rational the human kind.
Logic, they say, belongs to man,
But let them prove it if they can.
- Oliver Goldsmith**

All Personality Tests Are Wrong

by John Rowan



On reading Vol.2 No.1 of Nurturing Potential it seems that people are still attached to the idea of personality tests being useful for one thing or another. The most dangerous use of them is that they can be employed in selection and development. Yet the only possible basis for using a personality test is that the person being tested has just one personality. Research shows, however, that people actually have a number of subpersonalities; which one comes to the fore depends upon the situation. The person who takes the test may not be the same person who operates at the place of work.

Let us just remind ourselves of the relevant work on this subject. One of the most interesting developments in recent personality theory (Lester 1995) is the idea that people are basically multiple. There is a continuum of dissociation:

ASC'S >>> MOODS >>> SUBPERSONALITIES
>>> POSSESSION >>> MULTIPLE
PERSONALITY

At one end of this continuum we have altered states of consciousness (ASCs) such as dreams, drunken states, drugged states, hypnagogic states, hypnotic states and so forth, which are quite transient and wear off quite predictably. Then quite close to this we find moods, defined as states of mind which we cannot shake off at will, but which go away quite unpredictably after a while. Then come subpersonalities, defined as semi-permanent and semi-autonomous regions of the personality capable of acting as a person; some of which seem to be universal, and which again are quite normal. Then comes possession, defined as states of mind where we seem to be taken over by another person or other being, voluntarily or involuntarily. And then comes multiple personality, where one person inside us does not know anything about at least one person, who is leading quite a different life, and who takes over quite unpredictably, causing a real psychiatric problem. There

is a good recent discussion of all this in the book by Stanley Krippner and Susan Marie Powers (1997).

The left-hand end of this continuum is quite normal and everyday, and the right-hand end is more of a psychiatric problem, which may be quite hard to treat, and which has been recounted in books like *The Three Faces of Eve*, *Sybil*, *The Minds of Billy Milligan*, *When Rabbit Howls*, etc.

Subpersonalities, which are mostly quite normal, can at times become a problem, and this is most likely when we hotly deny that we have any such thing (Watkins 1978). Repression, splitting and denial are likely to cause trouble (Watkins 1986). Subpersonalities have to be taken at times as solid characters, but they are really in process, and may split into two, merge into one, appear or disappear (Ornstein 1986, Sliker 1992).

There are twenty-five (at least) synonyms for subpersonalities, such as ego states, subselves, subidentities, identity states, alter-personalities, deeper potentials and so on. They are common in everyday life and are often mentioned in literature and the media (Redfearn 1985).

There seem to be at least six different origins for subpersonalities: they can come from the roles that we play; from our internal conflicts about what to do and how to be; from our images of how we would like to be or become; from the personal unconscious, like the superego or the complexes; from the cultural unconscious, like the patripsych; or from the collective unconscious, like the archetypes.

So far as psychotherapy is concerned, there are at least sixteen different schools of psychotherapy which use the concept of subpersonalities in one form or another. Freud's superego and Jung's complexes are examples of regions of the personality which answer very well to our definition of subpersonalities (Rowan 1990).

So far as psychology is concerned, there are now many researchers working in the field of cognitive and social psychology who are using the concept of a self-schema, and finding it very useful (Cantor & Kihlstrom (1987, Martindale 1980). McAdams (1985) has introduced the notion of an imago and done a good deal of research on it. Hazel Markus has found that the idea of "possible selves" is useful in studying long-term motivation for study (Markus & Nurius 1987). Brain researchers such as Gazzaniga (1985) have also found that the brain is

divided into modules which are quite compatible with the idea of subpersonalities. People studying artificial intelligence, like Minsky (1988), have found that it is quite possible to set up computer models to show how this can happen. In the field of hypnosis, the important researcher Hilgard (1977) has uncovered a wealth of data. Woolger (1990) has even opened up the possibility that some subpersonalities may come from previous lives, but this is of course less orthodox. So far as philosophy is concerned, there are several young philosophers who are saying that it makes perfect sense to talk about the person being more than one (Glover 1988, Parfit 1984). These are important steps, because they make the whole idea more respectable.

We can now say that (a) we are single persons, who can act as a unity; (b) we are multiple centres linked together in a variety of ways; and (c) we are part of something larger. All these are true, simultaneously and at all times. Which way we regard the person is a matter of choice, depending on which is more useful for the purpose in a given situation (Beahrs 1982). Much of the recent work has been gathered together in the book edited by John Rowan and Mick Cooper (1999).

This is an interesting concept, which offers a real challenge to personality theory and to personality testing. How can we have a valid personality test if there is more than one personality in the same person?

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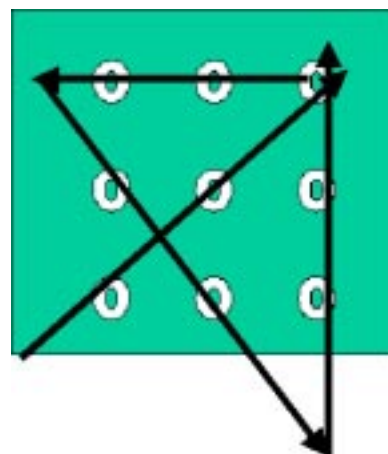
John Rowan is the author of a number of books, including *The Reality Game: A guide to humanistic counselling and therapy* (2nd edition) (Routledge 1998), *Ordinary Ecstasy: The dialectics of humanistic psychology* (3rd edition) (Routledge 2001), *Subpersonalities* (Routledge 1990), *The Transpersonal in psychotherapy and counselling* (Routledge 1993), *Discover your subpersonalities* (Routledge 1993) and *Healing the Male Psyche: Therapy as Initiation* (Routledge 1997). His most recent book, co-written with Michael Jacobs, is *The Therapist's Use of Self* (Buckingham: Open University Press) 2002

He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society (member of the Psychotherapy Section, the Counselling Psychology Division, the Transpersonal Psychology Section and the Consciousness and Experience Section), a qualified individual and group psychotherapist (AHPP and UKCP), a chartered counselling psychologist (BPS) and an accredited counsellor (BACP and UKRC). He is a Fellow of the BACP. He has been leading groups since 1969, and now practises Primal Integration, which is a holistic approach to therapy.

Solutions to *Faulty Assumptions* puzzles

ER solution: The physician is the boy's mother. People who have trouble finding the solution don't realize that they have made a faulty assumption that all physicians are men. Once this assumption is made, there is no solution to the puzzle. Once the faulty assumption is identified, most people instantly recognize the solution.

9 dot solution: Most people think that the solution has to lie inside the boundary defined by the four corner dots. Let go of this faulty assumption and let yourself think outside the "box."



LANGUAGE - THE TWO-EDGED SWORD

Part 1 of a Nurturing Potential series

“Language is apparently a sword which cuts both ways. With its help man can conquer the unknown; with it he can grievously wound himself.”⁽¹⁾



[Illustration by Albert Saunders from *An ABC of NLP*]

Language is the name we give to the vehicle we use for communicating ideas. We encode perceptual phenomena into awareness which is manipulated by the mind in order to make sense out of experience. Features of this awareness are objectified and associated with sounds. When these sounds are uttered and become the recognised sounds for the objectified phenomena they are referred to as words.

There are, however, two major problems. One is a tendency to identify the words with the object they represent. The other is the failure correctly to identify abstractions. In the first case it is useful to employ a word coined the best part of a century ago to distinguish labels for objects (i.e. words) from the objects themselves. For example, we may call a certain animal a “dog”. This is the label we give to a four-legged creature, usually with a tail, that enables that creature to be identified. The word, though, is not the animal. If, however, we term the dog itself a “referent”, this distinguishes the animal as a physical entity, as distinct from the label used to describe it.

Language is, capable of both enhancing and limiting our perception of the world; for example, “*Eskimos have some seventy different words for snow*”⁽²⁾; and much language, particularly of the more primitive kind, is not primarily concerned with ideas at all.

But while it is a simple matter to identify the referent when the label “dog” is used, even though we may not all imagine the same breed of dog, it is somewhat more complicated to apply a similar simplification to an abstract idea.

“No matter what names you humans give to things

[said Josie the chimpanzee], we chimpanzees go right on enjoying life. It isn't so with humans . . . The names you uncaged primates give things affect your attitude towards them forever after. You lose your insight because you are always holding up a screen of language between you and the real world.”⁽³⁾

Stuart Chase⁽⁴⁾ has divided labels into three classes, in ascending order of difficulty:

1. Labels for common objects such as dogs (or chairs, or books).
2. Labels for collections of things such as “mankind”, “consumer goods”, Germany, “the white race”, “the courts”.
3. Labels for abstract ideas and qualities, such as “freedom”, “individualism”, “truth”, “the sublime”.

Noam Chomsky, in his first book⁽⁴⁾, outlined his system of transformational grammar. This grammar consists of surface structures - the sounds and words in a sentence - and deep structures that contain the meaning of the sentence. The meaning is converted by a transformation - any of an ordered set of rules - to a surface structure. In other words, everyday language is the surface structure of a communication, whereas it is the deep structure that is filtered via biological constraints and social rules into the simplest form capable of containing meaning.

Chomsky says that children are born with a knowledge of the principles of the grammatical structure of all languages, and this inborn knowledge explains the success and speed with which they learn language. Anyone who has observed a child develop from 18 months to 8 years will appreciate this view.

For language adequately to communicate concepts, it must be able to transmit the deep structure of a message. Since the word is not the experience, a language must be able (a) to interpret an idea properly; (b) to form a legitimate internal representation of that idea; and (c) to convey an adequately accurate internal representation of that idea to the other person.

The problem in communicating by language arises from the fact that we each have our own, unique representation of reality, i.e. we do not all share the same model of reality. It is easy for us to accept a failure to communicate when speaking to (or listening to) someone in another language with which we/they are unfamiliar. It is less easy to appreciate, when we are both using the same language, that we may be suffering a similar failure to communicate, because we are interpreting words in a different way, or because we are using different representational systems.

“There’s an illusion that people understand each other when they repeat the same words. But since

those words internally access different experience - which they must - then there’s always going to be a difference in meaning.

“There’s a slippage between the word and the experience, and there’s also a slippage between my corresponding experience for a word and your corresponding experience for the same word. I think it’s extremely useful for you to behave so that your clients . . . have the illusion that you understand what they are saying verbally. I caution you against accepting the illusion for yourself.”⁽²⁾

References:

- (1) The Tyranny of Words. Stuart Chase.
- (2) Frogs Into Princes. Bandler and Grinder.
- (3) Adam’s Rib. Ruth Herschberger. (Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1948) [Josie, a female chimpanzee is the subject of a study arguing that males are naturally dominant over females and that females naturally engage in prostitution. In the interview, Josie tells her side of the story. She points out flaws in the experiment and offers a more woman-centered interpretation of her actions. Herschberger has written a very funny, satirical piece, which calls into question assumptions about gender issues.] Some of Herschberger’s poetry may be seen on our [Verse page](#).
- (4) Syntactic Structures. Noam Chomsky. (1957)

LANGUAGE - THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY

Part II of a Nurturing Potential series

“There are two ways of getting false maps of the world into our heads: first, by having them given to us; second, by creating them ourselves when we misread the true maps given to us.”⁽¹⁾



[Illustration by Albert Saunders from *An ABC of NLP*]

Count Alfred Korzybski, a Polish mathematician living in the United States, wrote *Science and Sanity* (1933) and must thereby accept responsibility for introducing us to the cliché⁽²⁾ “The map is not the territory” and the study of “semantics”.

The essence of Korzybski’s statement is that we need to avoid confusing the label given to an object with the non-verbal object itself. Unless we do so we are giving a counterfeit validity to the word as possessing

significance in its own right. This is bad enough when applied to simple objects such as dogs or desks. For example, I might speak of a dog with the mental image of a friendly and adoring Pekingese; on hearing the word dog, you might produce a mental image of a rabid pit bull terrier. Both are “dogs”. Yet I am speaking of peace and harmony, while you are being fed a message of terror and conflict. Or in using the word “desk”, I may be referring to a flat surface for writing or reading; you, as a chorister, may be thinking of a choir-stall.

And these are examples of confusion over simple nouns. How much more confusing might it be - indeed, how much more confusing it is - when we expand comprehension and understanding from dogs and desks to abstractions such as freedom, justice, beliefs, god . . . Small wonder that bodies such as the United Nations Security Council find it so difficult to reach agreement. Stuart Chase has written^[2]: “. . . when we hear words on the level of ideas and generalizations, we cheer loudly, we grow angry, and we storm the barricades - and often we do not know what the other man is saying. When a Russian speaks to an Englishman unacquainted with Slavic, nothing comes through. The Britisher [*sic*] shrugs his shoulders and both comprehend that communication is nil. When an Englishman speaks to an Englishman about ideas - political, economic, social - the communication is often equally blank, but the hearer thinks he understands, and sometimes proceeds to riotous action.”

Korzybski wrote (op cit): “The only possible link between the objective world and the verbal world is structural. If the two structures are similar, then the empirical world becomes intelligible to us - we understand, can adjust ourselves . . . If the two structures are not similar . . . we do not ‘know’, we do not ‘understand’, the given problems are ‘unintelligible’ to us . . . we do not know how to adjust ourselves”. Five “warning signals” to be used in our communication were proposed by Korzybski:

1. The addition of a mental “Etc.” to remind us of characteristics left out. This keeps us alert and enquiring in decision-making. We do not need much reminding to identify missing characteristics, for example, in a salesman’s pitch, or a sales leaflet, when considering a purchase. We regularly need such reminders, however, when considering the statements of a political party, or statements the Chancellor of the Exchequer might make in presenting his budget forecasts. In NLP terms, this helps us to avoid deletions.
2. Index number to break up false identifications. Thus, while we readily acknowledge and understand that Charles I was not Charles II, we may have more difficulty in recognizing that Dog I is not Dog II. In terms of transformational grammar, or NLP, this helps to avoid generalizations.
3. Adding dates helps to remind us that objects are in a

constant state of change; that today’s object is not necessarily identical with that of yesterday. That’s the way it was does not necessarily mean it’s the way it is.

4. To remind us that events are connected and Nature is all of a piece, we could use hyphens, and at the same time help to avoid “distortions”, mistaking verbal categories for the real thing. Korzybski gave the example of body-mind in place of body and mind.

5. Using quotation marks, either in writing or mentally, serves to remind us that a term we are using is high up the abstractions ladder. They also help to identify differences in meaning between different users or readers of the words or phrases.

Here are some Korzybski quotes with reference to his five warning signals:

The map is not the territory. [Quotes]

A fact is not an inference; an inference is not a value judgement. [Quotes]

There are no abstract qualities outside our heads. [Quotes]

No two events in nature are identical. [Index numbers]

Nature works in dynamic processes. [Dates and Hyphens]

Events have unlimited characteristics. [Etc.]

A word is not a thing, but an artificial symbol. [Quotes]

References:

(1) *Language in Thought and Action* - S.I. Hayakawa (1949)

[2] The word cliché is nowadays interpreted as a hackneyed phrase and - by extension - anything that is hackneyed. But what is hackneyed, is what has stood the test of time. It would be unfortunate if we were to ignore the truth behind the statement simply because of over-familiarity with the words themselves. Sam Goldwyn is purported to have said “Let’s have some new clichés”. To Russell Davies is credited: “Any story that begins with a cancerous giraffe stamping on the genitals of its keeper must surely be marked high for cliché-avoidance.” And Winston Churchill denied having said of Anthony Eden (reported in the Daily Mirror): “As far as I can see, you have used every cliché except ‘God is Love’ and ‘Please adjust your dress before leaving.’”

[3] *Power of Words* - Stuart Chase (1955)

Recommended reading:

Language in Thought and Action - S.I. Hayakawa

Language and Mind. Noam Chomsky

The Meaning of Meaning. C.K. Ogden and L.A. Richards.

Usage and Abusage. Eric Partridge.

Science and Sanity. Alfred Korzybski.

The Tyranny of Words - Stuart Chase

**“A piece dear, a piece; a bit is what goes into a horse’s mouth”
Sir Hugh Casson and Joyce Grenfell
[Nanny Says, 1972]**

Putting in a star performance

by Amanda Knight



Ownership. A word that is used a lot in business; something that is expected of employees by their leaders and managers (they get frustrated if it doesn't happen). Equally, employees so often avoid taking ownership, for a variety of reasons; most commonly because they are scared to do so, again for all sorts of reasons. But what exactly is it? How do you know when to take it, and when not to take it? And if you have taken it, how do you know if you've taken enough, or indeed, too much?

Let's take a look at the root of the word itself ~ "own". A typical dictionary definition would read, "...belonging or peculiar to; individual; not belonging to another...". So when I own something, it belongs to me; it does not belong to another.

Transferring this to ownership in the workplace then, what belongs to you personally at work, or is peculiar to you, and no one else?

Your job, your ideas, your salary package? Well, your job and your salary package can be taken away from you through redundancy or dismissal, so your job and its benefits package belong to your employer. And if you are employed (rather than self-employed), legally your employer owns the intellectual property that you create through your employed work.

So what do you bring to the table? Agreement to perform a particular role to an agreed set of standards. Your performance is your contribution, what you give; this is your part of the exchange. This is demonstrated through what you do, through your behaviour.

So when your boss asks you to take ownership of a project, he or she is actually asking you to own your own performance; to have 'star billing', rather than be a second-rate act.



How can I be a star?

Actually, you are already a star, although perhaps you don't yet realise it!

If you own your own performance, and put 100% effort into being all that you can be during that performance, then you are experiencing being a star! So how can you 'own' your performance 100%?

First, you have to identify your potential, your human potential. How can you 'be all that you can be'? Of course, that's not as easy as it sounds to identify. After all, what is 'potential'?; how do you define the ideal human experience?

Just recognising that perhaps the aim of life is to create the ideal human experience, is half the battle. This takes us out of the mindset of seeing life as a struggle, as something to survive. It puts us in the driving seat; we decide where we want to go. We become the creator of our life, rather than a victim to it.

Try the thought-provoking exercise at Figure 1. Think about where you are now. How well do the statements describe your life currently?

Try marking your performance at each level from 1 to 100 simply as a means of identifying where you are, and are not, achieving your potential. There may be one or two areas that you feel you really need to work on, there may be several needing a little, or maybe a lot, more focus and energy. But any area that feels incomplete shows where you may be inhibiting your own life performance. Reflect on your findings and maybe ask a friend or partner to do the exercise too, and share your insights. Once you have explored your potential you need to consider what is getting in your way of achieving this.

Understanding your conditioning

What you do, how you perform, is driven by what you think and feel, and what you value and believe. Much of this is shaped by people who have influenced us, our experiences, and our need to survive.

Take a look at this structure of the human identity. Imagine this is like an onion, layer upon layer, with Personal Awareness at the very inner core, and our Behaviour, underpinned by values and beliefs, as the outer skin, the part that everyone sees. [Figure 2]

Figure 1: YOUR LIFE PERFORMANCE ~ Being all that you can be!

Sense of Self	I have the simple awareness that by the pure fact of my existence I am an entity taking up space
Self Belief	I know the point of my existence, why I am here. I want to do and experience things, I have gifts I want to use and share with others, I want to make a contribution to the world
Purpose	I have identified specifically what I want to do, my gifts and/or the contribution I want to make
Self Worth	I accept I have a purpose, gifts and/or a contribution. I know how much my purpose is worth to me and that it is as important as that of anyone else
Vision	I know what my life will look like when I am achieving my purpose
Focus	I know how I will keep focused on my vision
Drive	I know how I will maintain the enthusiasm and commitment to achieving my goals
Opportunity	I am excited by opportunities that are presented to me. I am open to the unknown, the unfamiliar, and the unexpected, and I can release control of how things will happen
Connecting	I, and the people around me, are able to support each other in achieving our respective goals. I know when I need to welcome new people into my life
Leadership	I know how I can guide others towards achieving their purpose. I am aware of my unique qualities that I can use to inspire others
Wellness	I feel strong enough, emotionally and physically, to pursue my purpose. I continually strive to improve my wellbeing so that I can move forward with vitality and enthusiasm
Environment	My living and working conditions are conducive to achieving my goals. I don't need to make any changes
Self recognition	I know and accept that I am moving towards and achieving my goals. My life is full of abundance

Figure 2:

Personal Awareness
the inner or higher self

Essence
the intrinsic nature of the inner or higher self

Qualities
distinctive attributes or characteristics of the inner or higher self

Conditioning permeates (interferes) impacting:

Principles
fundamental truths of the qualities serving as foundations for beliefs

Beliefs
firmly held opinions based upon principles

Values
standards set for behaviours, forged by beliefs

Attitudes
ways of thinking and/or feeling (paradigm) that drive behaviours, developed from beliefs

Behaviours
specific ways of acting based on values and attitudes

resulting in
the propensity to operate from 'I' or 'it'*

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There are two outcomes to this human structure depending on the level of conditioning that we remain susceptible to – we either operate from the domain of ‘I’ or from the realm of ‘i’*. ‘I’ represents a personality driven by the need to survive; ‘i’ depicts a spiritual existence, where there is a strong sense of self, but no ‘i’ is greater than any other.

Operating from ‘I’ means that we are delivering a conditioned performance; our personality (from the Greek word ‘persona’ meaning ‘mask’) gives the appearance of being the true person, but is not actually a true reflection of our Essence. This is because our underlying values, beliefs and attitudes have been affected by conditioning from external sources, ie. the values, beliefs and attitudes of others (eg. parents, teachers, society as a whole, peer groups, and friends). We then struggle to maintain our own identity, creating ‘I’.

However, if we are able to operate from ‘i’, we are free of our conditioning, and are living as our unconditioned higher self. We have been able to differentiate between our own values and beliefs, and those of others, and are able to project this to the outside world through our behaviour. Our personality then reflects our higher self. We have become integrated. What we express on the outside is a true reflection of how we think, feel and believe in our deepest core. We know Who We Are. We do not need to justify our existence to anyone, nor demand the same of others.

It’s a question of integrity The words ‘integrate’ and ‘integrity’ have their roots in the same meaning, ‘oneness, wholeness’. Therefore, when we are able to integrate our Behaviour with our own core, our Essence – when these two become one – we become whole, we act with pure integrity; we operate from ‘i’. There is no gap between our deepest self and the persona we present to the world. We have removed the mask.

Think of someone you know who you feel has and demonstrates integrity. What does that mean to you? Usually it means that you can trust that person. He or she will have no sides, and will not be two-faced. People who have integrity, walk their talk, and stand by their

convictions. This is because those who act with integrity are in touch with their deeper feelings and motivations. They are more able to stand up for what they value and believe in, rather than ‘blow with the wind’ of popular beliefs, with the misguided view of remaining popular themselves.

So your performance, your behaviour, reflects your integrity; how much you are integrating your Behaviour with your Essence. Taking this back to the workplace then, your performance in the workplace also reflects your integrity, the ability to honour your own values and beliefs.

As we identified before, owning your performance is to ‘be all that you can be’ in your role; this includes taking ownership of those things that are your responsibility, ie. your own behaviours. This does not mean that you have to take ownership of responsibilities (behaviours) that belong to others. In fact you cannot do this. We cannot change other people. But we can

act as a role model.

To act or perform with pure integrity takes strength and courage: the courage to identify and stand by your own true principles; to realise and believe in your own unique qualities

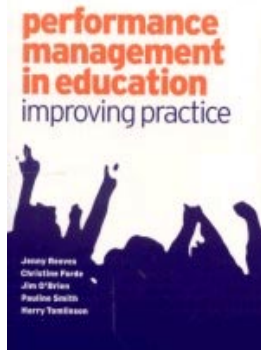
To act or perform with pure integrity takes strength and courage:

the courage to identify and stand by your own true principles; to realise and believe in your own unique qualities; to be able to expect the world to be happy with this, or at the very least, to accept that this is Who You Really Are.

Achieving this in the workplace is not easy; there are many influencers that will question your values, beliefs and behaviours. You may find that as you reaffirm your own true values and beliefs they do not appear to sit well with the values of the organisation that employs you.

But if your employer wants you to take ownership, they must understand what this means, what they are asking of you: to ‘be all that you can be’ in your role, which requires the integration of your higher self and your personality. Performing in this way, you will search for the same in others; as a result, you will seek to understand many things – particularly the decisions and behaviours of others at all levels of the organisation. Taking ownership means doing it your way ...

... I wonder if that’s what your employer really wants?



***Performance Management in Education: Improving Practice*, by Jenny Reeves, Christine Forde, Jim O'Brien, Pauline Smith, Harry Tomlinson. Paul Chapman Publishing. 208 pp, Paper (0-7619- 7172-6) £16.99, Cloth (0-7619-7171-8) £49.50**

It was a rather difficult task undertaken by the authors, to describe in a mere 200 pages what truly requires at least 1000.

Topics include performance management, continuing professional development, rewards, work-based learning, assessment, schools policy and practice. Qualifications for headship and mentoring are also discussed. The authors are mainly academics who are attempting not only to deal with behaviours in the classroom but also social-educational policy and research.

That said there is much to commend this book. The diagrams are very clear and 'lift' the text so that creative thought, rather than mere comprehension, becomes possible. The differences between the systems of England, Wales and Scotland are explored, and emerging and encouraging findings from the Americans, especially in relation to school based achievement awards, are contrasted. The Scottish system also places a greater emphasis on school self-evaluation.

Effective teachers are solution focused, able to interpret often widely contrasting data, and resolve dichotomies such as the needs of individuals vs. those of society. Importantly they take time to do so, rather than simply reacting. It is thought that this is because they have

a highly developed system of goals, principles and values.

It's clear from the book that teachers and their managers work within a complex system of constraints, which would benefit from simplification. Who was responsible for launching performance management in English schools a year prior to introducing a national continuing professional development strategy? Could they really anticipate that performance would improve, when treating people thus? I would dearly like to appraise them!

Stephen Bray



***Transactional Analysis Approaches to Brief Therapy* by Keith Tudor. Sage Publications 2001. 238 pages. £17.99 (paper) ISBN 0-7619-5681-6, £60 (cloth) ISBN 0-7619-5680-8.**

This book, edited by Keith Tudor (who is also one of the ten contributors) is excellent reading for a number of reasons: for those who know nothing about TA, it is a highly informative and readily accessible introduction. For those who read or studied it some time ago, it is an excellent refresher.

And for those who would like to add to the skills they already have, whether or not they are TA based or biased, the overlaps and integration with other therapeutic myths and models is illuminating and, I find, somewhat inspiring. The chapter headings in Part One give an indication of various theories and schools that inform and enrich TA, including: Brief Psychotherapy using Psychoanalytic TA; TA as Short-term Cognitive Therapy and Redecision Therapy as Brief Therapy.

Knowing that some people, professionals and clients, can be dubious, even sceptical about the

merits of both Brief Therapy and Transactional Analysis (which, since you ask, has not 'gone out of fashions'), the status and qualifications of the contributors should give pause for thought: Psychiatrists, Family, Drama, Integrative, Gestalt, and thought Field Therapists. They number among their ranks, social workers, professors and welfare officers, and their clients include violent sexual offenders, people with post-traumatic stress disorder, students, teachers, and survivors of abuse, adolescents and many others.

I am impressed by the diversity of people and applications of TA, and the developments outlined in this book are, certainly for me, cause for hope because, as well as offering frameworks for making 'simple' sense of humans in action – and human inaction – TA is a complex and profound system that offers people a way of solving the problems of the present, re-evaluating the struggles of the past, and reshaping the future with permission and power based on a greater sense of self.

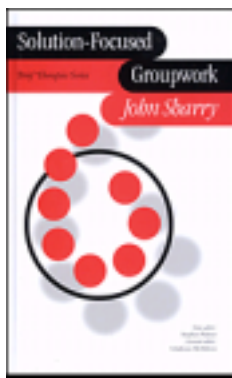
Although most of the examples, transcripts and case studies in the book refer to work with individuals, one of the great virtues of TA is that it can be used by small to medium sized groups for counselling, therapy or decision making, by large groups, e.g. in organisations, by couples and families, and also by individuals who want to understand themselves or other people better. It can also be taught to and used by children as young as seven.

TA, in essence, involves analysing the personal, interpersonal and intrapersonal transactions that go on between people.

Michael Mallows

***Solution-Focused Groupwork*, by John Sharry. Sage Publications 2001, 162 pp, £17.99 (paper) ISBN 0-7619-6780-X; £60.00 (cloth) ISBN 0-7619-6779-6.**

The dynamics of groups is one of those eternal and wondrous mysteries. There is no predicting them, even from one meeting of a group to another. They



can be a source of light and of darkness, these two elements often rotating and interchanging. One might even say “you haven’t got any problems in your group, then something must be wrong”.

The focus on what has happened, rather than what could happen, has possibly contributed to the fear that many people have about joining a group for any kind of self-improvement.

So, it is refreshing to read a book which takes a more optimistic view of human nature. While it accepts that problems as such cannot be ignored, and that groups need skilled and careful handling, it persuasively makes the point that a positive focus on what can be achieved through the hidden talents and resources of the group can be extremely productive and rewarding. Both individually and collectively group members can, by focusing on positive outcomes and using present aptitudes and strengths, rather than problems and pathologies, achieve significant goals and solutions to what might have seemed impenetrable problems. “There’s nothing wrong with you that what is right with you couldn’t fix”, as Baruch Shalem says in one of many telling quotes in the book.

Problems can often be taken so seriously that the very existence of the problem becomes a problem in itself. Humour and creativity can release both members and the group as a whole from becoming bogged down in problems and generate a lot of self acceptance and energy in the pursuit of goals that are both meaningful to and usable by the client.

You will see from this that problems are not ignored or by-passed; rather they are used as a stepping stone to the future. Indeed Sharry’s rule of thumb for the group is a balance of 20:80 between problem talk and solution talk.

Each of these is illustrated in examples, case studies and quotations and the many references give further richness and opportunity to the reader.

Sharry rightly points out that an interaction which may feel didactic and hierarchical when conducted on a one-to-one basis, can be more dispersed in a group where ideas can be shared and debated and where members can learn from each other. The book is replete with dialogues and with charts drawing contrasts not only between both individual and group approaches but also between problem-focused and solution-focused approaches. It is thus a practical “How-to-do-it book” as well as one that puts the specific method in perspective. In one sense this is both its strength and its weakness. In order to be accessible and in itself solution focused, it has not looked at the range of approaches to group therapy such as Group Analysis, Gestalt, Tavistock and some of the assumptions that underpin these: the unconscious processes, transference, counter-transference and so on. But then, why should it?

All in all, I found this to be an enlightening book, clearly written, helpfully presented and, dare I say it, educational. It makes many proper and relevant references to the literature, is very easy to dip into and provides a logical and purposeful progression in its organisation.

David Jaques



***Life in the Fat Lane* by Donna Valerie Brandes. Laughing Gravy, Australia. 172 pages; Paperback, price not known. ISBN 0-95792-2-1**

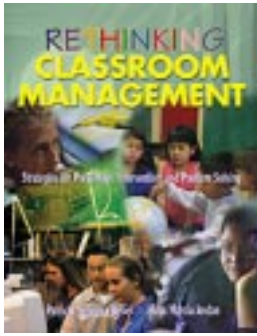
This very readable autobiography consists of significant episodes in Ms Brandes’ life. These are described with utter frankness and uncomfortable

honesty, enlivened by what purports to be total recall of her conversations with significant others in her life decades ago. The recurrent theme is her search for acceptance and love, stemming from an unhappy childhood with diligent parents who conscientiously followed the barbaric precepts of the then child expert Truby King: rigid feeding timetables, no cuddling or solace for a crying baby, etc. We find out how this early regime made her particularly vulnerable later to men who frequently seemed merely to offer the desired solace. She also learnt early to eat food to excess as an alternative source of satisfaction; with the vicious cycle of ‘too much food – becoming fat – feeling unattractive – more food’.

Before an early divorce, she had two sons of whom she is inordinately proud, though sad that she sees less of one of them who became a Sannyasin. She followed him to Poona, was presented to the Bhagwan – who commented on the apron strings still binding her son to her, and gave her good advice “You need to have a fight “ (with him). By then she was a teacher and a therapist, her success in these roles being due to her championing of and writing books about ‘student-centred learning’. Possibly this reflected her own early experiences.

Following her divorce, she constantly hankered, like so many of us these days, for another partner – and wittily describes happy and unhappy experiences on that odyssey. She even reprints a list she made (pp139-140) of 19 different ways to achieve this, again familiar to many of us. Now in her late sixties, living in Perth, Australia, she has produced this vigorous and bawdy book – which reminds those of us fortunate enough to have been members of groups she led 25 years ago (at GRTA conferences and elsewhere), of her perceptive and loving character.

Mike Baynes



Rethinking Classroom Management (subtitled: *Strategies for Prevention, Intervention, and Problem Solving*) by **Patricia Sequeira Belvel and Maya Marcia Jordan**. Corwin Press (Sage Publications) 244 pages. £23.00 (paper) ISBN 0-7619-4523-7. £51.00 (cloth) ISBN 0-7619-4522-9.

This is the sort of book that should be given free to every teacher as they walk through the door of their first classroom. It is both inspirational and practical and will be lapped up by teachers who have still not forgotten that their pupils are people first and SATS levels second. The book is well-presented and incorporates children's work into the text (I love the idea of using a 'two-inch voice' when working in a group) very effectively.

The fact that it is American doesn't bother me at all. What bothers me more is that the fact that it is American will be used as an excuse by some 'educators' in the UK to at best ignore the book and at worst attempt to ridicule it. Back in the 1960s, someone called Lady Plowden chaired a committee that reported on primary education. The Plowden report, as it became known, championed 'child-centred' education and encouraged the idea that the teacher should always start from where the learner was. Unfortunately, some sloppy applications of the recommendations meant that some children stayed there with both teacher and child happy to just stand still and admire the view. Hence the Education Reform Act - throwing out of baby with bathwater, and a pendulum swing of humungous proportions. As a result we are now going through bad times educationally in England, and it worries me that many young teachers may become enthused by this book, and then find that implementing its ideas is a struggle. I am not being unduly cynical here; I speak from experience as one who has tried for sometime to

develop the holistic approaches described here in today's educational climate - it feels a bit like whitewater rafting - upstream!

Never mind. This does not detract from the fact that the book has some excellent practical advice geared toward producing a learning environment that is humane, focused, structured and stimulating. Basically, a place where a child would want to be! There is much attention given to creating this kind of classroom and it is refreshing to see so much emphasis given to encouraging the children to actively participate in the process, through the contribution of ideas and the practical production of materials. It's nice to see a list of 'group rules' produced by children rather than by a word-processor. The general layout is clear and makes the book easily accessible - using bullet points for summarising, for example. There is a good, lengthy section on behaviour management which makes a clear distinction between punishment and discipline. The authors use the phrase 'interventions' and draw heavily on what Neuro-Linguistic Programming has discovered about communication through body language and use of voice. The principle of acting from values and beliefs rather than feelings is crucial and I can testify to the effectiveness of this. Teachers will need to practice, though - in front of the mirror if necessary.

The book helps this learning process (for the teacher) by providing 'exercises' in the form of questions to reflect on and respond to. The section on discipline borrows heavily on assertive and humanistic approaches which is a refreshing change from the strongly behaviouristic reward/consequence techniques so prevalent in UK schools at the moment, although these are referred to. (They can be effective with some, though not all, students.) The final section of the book outlines strategies for joint problem-solving that could be used in a variety of ways - by teacher and class, schools councils and peer-mediation groups.

So - all good stuff, in a nutshell; a book which is basically about empowering children to have a say in their own learning. Lady Plowden must be cheering in her grave.

Mark Edwards



Northern Ireland: A very short introduction by **Marc Mulholland**. 172pp incl. bibliography and index. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-280156-2. £6.99, US\$9.95.

The 1960 film *The Siege of Sydney Street* depicted an incident from fifty years earlier, in which two London anarchists held off the police in a gun battle that eventually involved the Horse Guards and Winston Churchill. The film hardly bothered to provide a political backdrop for the encounter: the word "anarchist" was sufficient, without the whys and wherefores. And yet it was successful; simply because, in placid postwar England, gun-battles were virtually unheard-of¹¹.

Just fifteen years on, though, such incidents were the everyday stuff of the TV news, and few would have thought the mere fact of a bombing worthy of a full-length feature film.

What happened?

This is a question to which very few people in England or Ireland could provide a coherent answer. And sadly, one has the distinct impression that very few of them really want to know.

For those who do, Marc Mulholland's book is a good place to start. It traces the current conflicts to the religious divisions of the 16th century, and shows how prejudice, interest and mismanagement combined to perpetuate strife through four and a half centuries. Most of this period is covered with speed and clarity, providing a sturdy skeleton that may be fleshed out by further reading or diligent Googling (but be wary - most websites dealing with the "troubles" have a hefty bias one way or the other). On reaching the late 1960s and early 70s, when violence began to flare and the memories of the "peaceful" 1950s (there was only the one abortive IRA campaign, in 1956) atrophied to pipe-dreams, the painful detail begins. The title of Chapter 3, *Life Cheapens*, speaks for much of what follows.

An account as brief as this is necessarily dispassionate, yet for much of its length the choice of incidents portrayed lend it great life and colour. Once a sort of peace returns, however, the endless committees and councils, from the early cease-fire attempts up to the current struggles to achieve shared power in a Stormont parliament, occasionally make weary reading. This is none of Mulholland's fault: they are indispensably part of the scene he has set out to describe. Possibly, some of the despair that dwelt in the minds he depicts communicates itself to the reader. Many initiatives were tried, well-meaning for the most part, and almost all were perverted by one side or the other, when not both.

Incidentally, I would recommend the book to anyone interested in the general mechanisms of provocation and conflict. It shows how an initially impartial peacekeeper may wake up one morning to realise that he has become one of the interested parties; and in its accounts of subtle and unsubtle provocation, echoes of Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount, and even the drum-beats preceding the current Iraqi war, may be heard.

So, what happened to shatter the complacent peace of the mid-sixties? Simply that a long-running balancing act, based on gerrymandering and discrimination, finally became so unstable that it fell off the knife-edge into war. That one of the earliest battle-cries was "one man, one vote" speaks volumes

.And the conclusion? There is none. "To jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war," said Churchill. For now, the jaws have it, but there is no real telling what the next generation will do.
^[1] *The film was an Irish production. No further comment.*

John Ewing

***Modern Ireland: A very short introduction* by Senia Pašeta. 164pp incl. bibliography and index. Oxford University Press ISBN 0-19-280167-8 £6.99, US\$9.95**



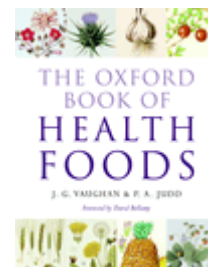
Senia Pašeta's approach differs from Marc Mulholland's in having the whole of Ireland as its subject and in taking a longer period under consideration. Beginning with the 1801 Act of Union and the events that led up to it, it examines the emergence of modern Ireland, its people, its attitudes and its institutions, from the welter of movements and counter-movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Paramount in this emergence is the Catholic Church. Whereas in Mulholland's work Catholic and Protestant are principally identifiers for opposing communities, here the extent to which Catholicism shaped the Irish character is examined: its intervention not just in politics emerges, but also in education, in literary and artistic censorship, marital law, and in private and public morality. A modern European might be astounded to read, for example, that it was not until 1993 that Irish law permitted the unrestricted sale of contraceptives. Having grown up in N. Ireland myself, I can tell you that these attitudes added considerably to northern Protestant determination not to become part of an Ireland united under the southern constitution.

The bulk of the work, though, remains with the political travails of England and Ireland, and their varying desires to be a part of each other. Although this remains a tangled web - looking through the index, I can count over 100 different organisations, all of whom had a say at one time or another - we are led through it with ease and clarity.

Although I read it as a companion to Mulholland's book, this book stands on its own, and I can well recommend it to anyone wishing to obtain a broad view of the evolution of the modern Irish nation, with less of the grim detail of what has transpired in the North for the last thirty years.

John Ewing



***The Oxford Book of Health Foods* by J.G. Vaughan and P.A. Judd. Oxford University Press. 2003. Hardback £19.99. 188 pages. ISBN 0-1-9-850459-4**

Even had I not been interested in the subject matter and presentation of this book, I would have wanted to review it simply for the pleasure of holding it in my hands, browsing the contents, and eventually placing it on my bookshelf as a valuable reference resource. It is beautifully produced and very attractively illustrated. Simply to turn the pages and gaze at the pictures is therapeutically relaxing.

But the book is much more than simply one of coffee-table character. Not only does it provide a comprehensive guide to good health available via common fruits and plants, including all the more recent "fads" such as St. John's wort, jojoba, and the New Zealand green-lipped mussel, and illustrate them all beautifully, it also provides a scientific critique of the evidence and health claims made for each product.

Given the credentials of the two authors (Vaughan is Emeritus Professor of Food Sciences at King's College, London, while Judd is Professor of Nutrition and Dietetics at the University of Central Lancashire), both are eminently qualified to provide this evidence; and to substantiate it.

A book, therefore, suitable for both the health food faddist and the health food sceptic, and as one who falls neatly between those two stools, I am doubly compensated.

And how appropriate, too, that the review of a book devoted to health foods from vitamin supplements to herbal remedies should appear in an issue of Nurturing Potential whose main theme is devoted to Notions, Potions and Nostrums.

Sep Meyer

A Start in Art

by Joe Sinclair



His letter is before me as I type this. It is dated September 1, 2001 and starts:

Dear Joseph, My wife Winifred and I were delighted to meet you yesterday and to have the preliminary chat regarding the possibility of producing a book.

It concludes:

I will send you a brief summary of the book I have in mind and then await your reaction before I proceed further.

It was signed:

Alan Crowe.

At that time Alan was already well into his eighties.

Last week I attended the book launch in New Milton, Hampshire, of the book that had progressed from Alan's mind through the various stages of discussion, anguish, disappointment, and much hard work (particularly on Alan's part), before ending up as the attractively printed and artistically designed work that is reviewed in our book pages. [You can read the review [here](#)] The picture above shows an ecstatic Alan Crowe. He may not look ecstatic to you. As he wrote in another one of his handwritten letters, this one dated February 13, 2003 "You say I must be getting very excited. Well I suppose so, but it is a *restrained* excitement." So he doesn't reveal his feelings very much, but I know that inside he is ecstatic.

And why not? At any age it is a considerable accomplishment to go from the germ of an idea for a book to the completion of the project. When that achievement involves not merely the writing of the text, but the producing of the graphics in a work that is graphically top-heavy, finding a suitable printing company that can also offer help on the production and marketing side, and then taking total responsibility for the financing, publishing and distribution, this is an achievement of which anyone, at any age, can be

justifiably proud. Let alone someone in their mid-eighties.

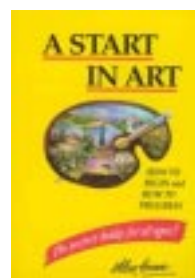
But Alan has kept himself active and involved for more than seventy years. His background was in advertising, mainly copywriting, but his interest in art also started then and was indulged at every opportunity. He had, many years earlier, and long before retiring to the south coast, produced a book of drawings and narrative of old taverns and public houses in Surrey. He had also started drawing illustrated regional maps and selling them through local outlets. He has continued this activity, and his maps of New Milton and Barton-on-Sea are on sale in several local newsagents shops.

Alan's letter to me in September 2001 was the result of his having seen an article about me and my ASPEN self-publishing service in the Prime Time supplement to Dorset's Daily Echo of August 2001. The article described how I was targeting "senior citizens", primarily via the University of the Third Age; encouraging them to consider writing "the book that is within every one of us" and learning how to publish it themselves. I had produced a booklet called *Publishing Your Book*, and Alan had written asking for a copy.

The service offered by ASPEN is non profit-making. It aims to recover costs out of book sale proceeds if the book is eventually published and sold. It is as much a retirement hobby as anything for me; a lot cheaper than philately; and a lot more fun than examining watermarks. My satisfaction, my personal sense of achievement, comes from the success of my clients.

When Alan's book was printed I wrote to tell him that I regarded him as one of my greatest success stories. He wrote back: "I take [that statement] with a pinch of salt. You must reserve judgement until we see if I sell any copies of the book!"

A typically self-effacing comment. I think the book will sell very well. But whether it does or not, it is a success, and Alan is a success, and I am proud to be associated with it and with him.



BOOK REVIEW

A Start in Art, by Alan Crowe. Seacroft Books, 126 pp (including copious black and white graphics throughout and a 12-page colour centrefold, £10.50. ISBN 0-954446-70-4



Alan Crowe with Joe Sinclair at the book launch

I have to declare my partiality . . . and my pride . . . as well as my small contribution to the publication of this book. I hope that the review itself, and my delight in its appearance and excellent content, will nevertheless be sufficiently impartial. My partiality derives from my involvement with the author from the book's beginnings as a potential project, through several meetings when (wearing my ASPEN hat) we thrashed out ways and means of bringing the project to fruition, to the moment when I left Alan to his own devices and the exploration of ways and means of having the book published and printed. I like to feel that his success in carrying the project through to completion was in at least some small measure the result of "empowerment" by ASPEN, as promised in our publicity. I'm also delighted that he chose to adopt my suggested title for the book.

Having declared the partiality, let me now describe the book.

Alan Crowe has a singular advantage. Commonly,

"how-to" books are written by experts in their chosen field for the use of novices. It is not, therefore, altogether uncommon for a slippage to appear between the ability of the writer to convey knowledge comprehensibly, and the ability of the reader to follow the instructions intelligently. Alan Crowe is not merely an expert in the field of graphic design, draftsmanship, and the practice of every type and medium of art over a period of more than 70 years, but he is a writer who is able to express what he has done (and what others should do) in a lucid, simple and easily understandable way.

And the book is not merely comprehensible, it is also remarkably comprehensive for a work of a mere 126 pages. Furthermore Alan's lavish illustration with so many of his own wonderfully evocative works - many of them revealing his delight in and love of his local New Forest flora and fauna - alone would be "worth the price of admission".

It is always a pleasure to see a craftsman at work and, in the way the book has been laid out and so lovingly crafted, the intention of the writer to convey his feelings of pleasure at the hobby of painting and drawing, particularly for those who have retired and are looking for a satisfying way of spending their new-found leisure time, has been wonderfully fulfilled.

From "Those first bold strokes", through the use of "Tools, time and Space", with a few meanders in the direction of "How to Copy", where to find your subjects, how to frame and hang, he ends up with a flourish on how to file, sell and otherwise dispose of your completed works. And having seen the "miles" of corridor wall covered with his paintings in his retirement home, this is no small concern.

So exciting a read was it, that I would be sorely tempted to take up Art myself, were I not already so heavily engaged in producing this magazine!



New Forest Ponies, reproduced in the book, adorns Joe Sinclair's office wall

Don't forget to renew your subscription or become a new subscriber!

The Last Word



Never lose your sense of curiosity

With this issue, we have expanded the size of Nurturing Potential by 12 pages, but have increased the cover price by a mere 70 pence.

The annual subscription to the magazine is now £10.00 and this includes packing and postage. Current subscribers will receive this latest issue at no increase in cost.

The electronic version is mostly free to site visitors, but original material (the articles that are reproduced in the paper magazine) may be password-protected and available to subscribers only.

Cheques for £10.00 should be made payable to ASPEN and sent to 106 Holders Hill Road., London NW4 1LL. accompanied by your name and postal address.

In our next issue



The main theme will be devoted to *Groups and Group-work*. A group, in the sense in which we use it, has been likened to a society in miniature and, as with any society, it will have a structure. We will deal with the evolution and development of groups, types of group, and the characteristics of effective groups.

The section on Education will include an important article by Maite Galan and Tom Maguire on caring discipline, an article on nurturing the gifted child, and the regular topical and controversial piece by Mark Edwards..



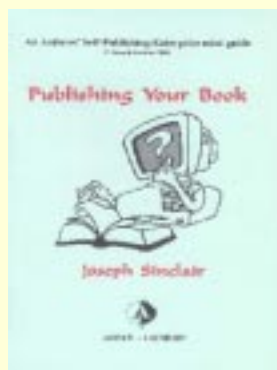
In the Business section we will be happy to present one of Terry Goodwin's simple and sensible offerings, this time on Decisions and Decision-makers.

The additional models for personality assessment, promised for this issue, were omitted for lack of space. They include Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*, Assagioli's *Psychosynthesis*, *Neuro-Linguistic Programming*, and *Reversal Theory*, and will follow in a later issue..



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Where is there potential in your life for nurturing your health and wellbeing?

The Nurturing Potential Self-Help Health Indicator

I drink at least six glasses of water every day

Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

I eat regular, balanced meals

Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

I keep myself informed about health-related issues

Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

I exercise regularly

Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

I keep my weight within limits for my height and build

Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

I support myself emotionally and spiritually

Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

I engage in stress-reducing activities

Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

I have regular medical check-ups

Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

I eat fresh fruit, vegetables and salads daily

Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

I try to maintain a balanced life

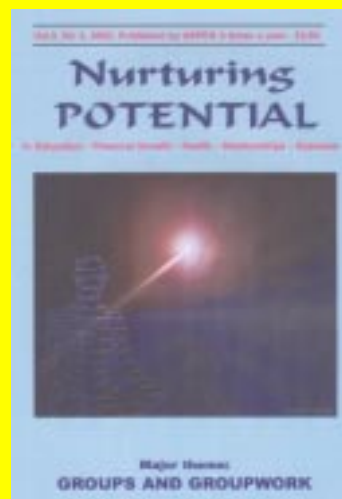
Never ☹️ ☹️ 😐 😊 😊 Always

There are no correct answers and no prizes.

The chart is a simple signpost to your awareness of your ability to control your own health.

Too much or too little, always or never, may indicate a need to change attitudes. and lead you in the direction of improved wellbeing.

Our next paper issue will feature the main theme of
Groups and Groupwork



Amongst the articles you may look forward to



John Rowan takes you right through the Tarot pack as a handbook for the group facilitator

- and -

Our language theme continues with
The Gender Agenda

Don't forget!
You can read all these articles
- and more! -
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