



## Summer Greetings and Happy Chinese New Year (the Rat)!

**A reminder that our next Monday Meditation will be on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> February at 7.00pm.**

We hope you can join us for a special hour of peace and tranquillity. There will be time for quiet mindfulness, followed by a guided meditation. We finish the meditation with a short chant.

The venue is All Souls Anglican Church next to the Chapman shops on Perry Drive. Stay later if you can. Supper is provided after the meditation and the cost for the evening is \$8. No you don't have to book, just come along...

Future monthly meditation dates: Monday **March 3<sup>rd</sup>** and Monday **April 7<sup>th</sup>**

### **Meditation Made Easy**

**Our next course starts Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

There are probably few skills that are more valuable for individual health and wellbeing than the ability to meditate. Meditation helps bring profound levels of relaxation - a much-needed antidote to increasing stress and tension that are a feature of our time.

Meditation is also the way to gain control over your thought patterns, instead of being at the mercy of mental loops, catastrophising thoughts and hours of recriminations, regrets and resentments.

Without these skills it can be hard to avoid becoming caught up in the epidemic of fear, frustration, anxiety and depression.



These conditions are crippling in themselves as well as affecting family and friends, and often lead to other physical diseases, alcohol addiction, comfort eating, obesity and a lifetime dependence on prescription drugs.

Meditation Made Easy teaches you these skills in a friendly, down to earth atmosphere that befits our western mindset /culture. There is no religion and, we hope, no 'new age' speak.

The cost is unchanged at \$165.00, which includes 2 CDs of guided meditations.

If you can't make all six sessions, you can catch up missed sessions on a subsequent course with no extra charge. And if you are thinking of retaking the whole course, there is a special price of \$95.00.

### **Meditation by the Sea – Weekend retreat – Friday 25<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2008.**

We are only planning one retreat this year and judging by past years, it is likely to be fully booked. The bookings are coming in, so if you are thinking of coming, now is a good time to start planning.

Set the weekend aside – maybe take an extra day or two either side and make it extra special. Talk a friend into coming with you, or come by yourself and make friends while you are there.

Phone or email us to book your place as soon as possible - an \$85.00 deposit is all you need!



## PSH Therapy and Depression

*Stories from the clinic room...(names are not real but the stories are...)*

Depression is not a nice place to be. It can leave the victim in a pit of despair, hopeless, lacking the energy to do much at all and not caring if they live or die. Most people who have suffered deep depression have contemplated suicide. The very condition often prevents the sufferer from seeking help. Men are notorious for their reluctance to seek help and depressed men even more so.

It can also be very difficult to stay compassionate around someone who is depressed and hard not to be judgemental. This only adds to the sense of isolation.

The causes of depression are various. Some say it is a chemical imbalance in the brain, but is this the cause or a corresponding effect of the disease?

From my experience depression follows when emotional disturbance becomes intolerable and the system collapses or 'blows a fuse'.

Most frequently the emotional overload is a form of anxiety. Depression is also common following deep unrelenting grief.

Another common pattern is where there is an overbearing sense of responsibility, often coupled with an underlying feeling of never being good enough. This can drive a person to do more and more, constantly raising the bar, trying harder, but never feeling satisfied.

I have also known cases of depression that appear the result of undigested anger, rage and feelings of injustice.

Every case is different and many will have combinations of the above. However, the symptoms may appear similar.

For some people prescription medication works well and becomes an indispensable part of their lives. But it is widely recommended that some therapy be practiced along with this.

I have found a combination of PSH, together with guided visualisations and mindfulness practice to be very effective. A big reason for this is that both PSH and meditation encourage a natural letting go at the subconscious level. So whatever the emotions underlying the depression we can find a better way of dealing them.

And however hard we've been trying to control those old feelings the need to control loosens and we can feel more comfortable in our own skin.

The following example is of a client, Peter, whose long-standing depression had not responded to years of cognitive therapy and medication. It was a depression fuelled by strong feelings of responsibility, along with feeling he was never good enough. Now after doing PSH and meditation he was noticing some positive changes; increased self-assurance and freedom; not so concerned with what others think...

*"It feels like a hocus led recovery!" (Hocus was his word for the meditation work we were doing). "I don't think this could have been achieved cognitively; that would have linked the brain back into all those 'shoulds'. It seems it's been achieved through an edit by-pass."*

Peter had had a very controlling internal critic that would edit everything to the point where his speech was very slow and deliberate with long pauses and his writing was censored out of existence.

*"The 'shoulds' and the 'controls' are on the highway with edit checks every 5 kilometres. But this by-pass is a meandering country road without the edit checks. You're there before you realise it, without trying. I'm on a different road and the edit function isn't happening."*

*“Looking back, what does this experience tell me? I’m busier, more relaxed, a better person whilst I haven’t been trying cognitively – just seeing what evolves. One difference is that the motivation comes from within rather than... (driven by) compliance with expectation and pleasing others.”*

What had come through, by way of changes in his responses and behaviour, had really surprised him. *“Things this person would normally stifle with derision before they were spoken. But the fact that they were not the result of thought and planning made them real and legitimate. Even though they were challenging it meant they were less vulnerable to failure, because I knew the motivation was real; a product of my soul, not my brain.”*

*“My soul has the wisdom to know when to let the next challenge loose. I have an unbridled faith in that.*

*I could not have scripted this, it the farthest away from logic and analysis...”*

Peter’s words came without any withholding or editing. He seemed to be functioning in a spontaneous and appropriate way and his manner was totally congruent with the changes he was describing. This would have been unimaginable for him before.

Is it the Soul that directs this transformation in us? For whatever it is that lies beyond logic and analysis has to do with our true nature. It is not limited, as our logical minds are limited, by learnt experiences of the past. Nor is it motivated by outward appearances.

Could it be that in its purest form it is the creative force that drives all life? What the ancient Greeks called Eros?

Certainly it is always surprising...  
...and never what you think.



## **Book Review:**

### **“Still Here” by Ram Dass (Embracing aging, changing and dying).**

Published by Hodder ISBN 0 7336 1317 9

Ram Dass has written a number of books, including the best selling book ‘Be Here Now’ first published in 1971.

Now in his 60’s and after suffering a serious stroke, he bravely discusses some of the more difficult aspects of life, which few of us want to face but which comes to us all. It is a tribute to his wisdom and writing skill that in reading this book one is led to the possibility that rather than things to avoid, aging, changing and dying might actually be things to embrace positively...

In a world that worships youth and beauty, how do we cope with an aging process that sees a progressive deterioration of our physical looks, health and mental clarity? The answer is not well.

In a materialistic culture the ego is of paramount importance and the body and its longevity form a major part of our ego.

Ram Dass addresses some of the more common fears and demons that arise as we start to notice the signs of our aging, what he calls ‘the usual suspects’-. Senility, Loneliness, Embarrassment, Powerlessness, Loss of Role/Meaning, and Depression.

In his compassionate, wise and eloquent way Ram Dass argues that aging, far from being a curse, is the means by which many of us arrive at a new identity, a Soul awareness.



The knowledge that we are more than our bodies and minds and that the ego is merely a fragment of who we are can enable us to see the aging process as a healing path. Experiencing Soul Consciousness in daily life offers great relief from the pain, fear, loss, anger and other difficult mind-states that arise with aging.

Ram Dass gives instructions on mindfulness meditation, describing it as one of the simplest ways to work with the mind, to transcend ego and begin to live from the soul perspective.

When living from the soul perspective, even suffering and grief can be seen as opportunities for learning and growth. Ram Dass describes his experiences of being with people who are severely disabled. One example was Kelly, a quadriplegic since 10 years old:

“At first I had difficulty being with Kelly. In fact, it took me 6 months of twice a week visits before I was able to quiet down enough inside to sit next to his grotesquely deformed body without an intense emotional reaction. Then I finally met Kelly the soul who existed in this body, but was not trapped in identification with that form.

Once this shift had occurred for me it was smooth sailing between us. Our souls were able to meet in the midst of this physical suffering and find appreciation together.”...“Learning to dis-identify myself with Kelly’s difficulties with his body, to be

mindful of his suffering without having to take it on, is similar to the challenges we face with our own bodies, learning to be mindful of our physical state and to be compassionate toward it.”

The chapter on shifting roles illustrates how our ego becomes trapped in identification with our various roles at work and at home. With aging comes the changing of these roles and for many a period of grief, confusion and depression. Coming to terms with these changes helps us to see that we are not these roles – we are so much more. With the shift in roles comes a shift in identification. We still have an ego but now more able to witness the ego acting out its roles from a new perspective - the Soul perspective.

There are chapters on Living in the Present and Learning to Die and the book finishes with his reflections on his own life following his stroke. The things that had meant so much to his ego like his sports car and his golf clubs now sat in his garage, suddenly no longer of any use.

Still Here is well illustrated with quotations and poetry and I found it a valuable read as a therapist having recently attained the age of 60 myself...(MM)



#### **Trailing Clouds of Glory...**

“What happens after death is so unspeakably glorious that our imaginations and our feelings do not suffice to form even an approximate conception of it.”

- Carl Jung, after suffering a heart attack in 1944.

**Please feel free to forward this newsletter onto others who may be interested.**  
**With love and kindness**  
**Deb and Michael Masani**