

Syandra Health Centre

a centre for meditation and emotional healing

May 2008

Greetings!

A reminder that our next Monday Meditation will be on Monday 5th May 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 need to book, just come along...

Future Dates

Monday 2nd June and Monday 7th July...

Meditation Made Easy

Our May course is now full, but we have two new courses starting:

**Monday 9th June and
Wednesday 2nd July 2008.**

The Monday evening course will skip a week to allow for the 'drop in' meditation night on Monday July 7th. It will therefore extend an extra week with the final session on 21st July. 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.

Meditation Made Easy teaches you the skills to calm the mind, relax the body and find inner peace, in a friendly, down to earth, atmosphere that is totally in keeping with our western mindset /culture. There is no religion and no 'new age' speak.

These are the skills that are invaluable to manage in an environment of ever increasing fear, frustration, anxiety and depression. If you are experiencing any of these problems and/or having sleep difficulties, not thinking clearly, or cannot stop the thinking, then these are the skills that will help you get your life back.

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 25th
to Sunday 27th July 2008.**

We have had a wonderful response and the July Retreat is now full. If you still want to register, we have begun a waiting list in the event that there may be late withdrawals.

Michael's Clinic

I run a busy full time clinic offering the following services:

- **PSH (Private Subconscious-mind Healing)** individual therapy for anxiety, depression, grief, stress, sleep difficulties;
- **Hypnotherapy** for quitting smoking and other addictions.
- **Meditation** individual tuition.

For more details give me a call, send me an email, or see our website

www.syandra.com.au



In Two Minds

One of the biggest mysteries that we are confronted with is our own mind.

Is consciousness simply the outpourings of a mechanical brain producing thoughts like the gall bladder produces bile?

If so, where do our values, ethics, compassion, and sense of meaning come from? Surely there is depth to human consciousness that cannot simply be reduced to the functioning of the brain.

And then there is the strange world of the subconscious...

Researchers in recent years have made surprising discoveries about the nature of human consciousness and the subconscious.

We have come a long way since Freud first saw the subconscious as little more than an emotional and impulsive force in a constant tug of war with the more logical and detached conscious mind. Scientists now know this view is too simplistic. Our subconscious is NOT an unthinking autopilot that needs to be subjugated by rationality, but a purposeful, active, and independent guide to behaviour.

The subconscious has thought processes too; the difference is that we are unable to articulate them.

Interestingly, non-conscious thinking may actually work better in cases where you might imagine rational, conscious thought was the best tool for the job.

Ap Dijksterhuis, at the University of Amsterdam, has found people forced to make difficult choices based on large amounts of information were happier with their decision when acting on gut instinct than when forced to think the choice through rationally. Dijksterhuis is convinced that *subconscious thought processes are superior in many situations* - including most social interactions – because they allow us to integrate complex information in a more wholistic way than can be managed by rational thought processes.

Stanislas Dehaene, director of the Cognitive Neuro-imaging Unit at INSERM in France, has devised research he calls Masking, where volunteers are shown a word for a few milliseconds followed by another image, (the mask). By gradually increasing the time interval that volunteers see the word, he found that it took about 50 milliseconds of exposure before the word would 'pop' into consciousness. Interestingly, it took less time if the word had emotional significance.

He also found that even when people were unaware of having seen the word there were clear indications that their unconscious had registered it.



This suggests there is constant monitoring of our internal and external environment such that when the input becomes important enough, the subconscious decides to engage the conscious and we become aware of what is there.

Michael Shadlen from the University of Washington, Seattle, believes that *consciousness is orchestrated by the unconscious*, "We suspect the normal unconscious monitors the environment for cues that prompt it to decide whether to awaken and engage...The decision to engage at all is, in effect, an unconscious decision to be conscious."

Something very similar happens during PSH therapy, hypnotherapy and meditation. As people get progressively relaxed, so increasingly the subconscious process takes over from our thinking, analytical mind.

The subconscious thought processes, provided with the cues and clues of the therapist, is capable of sorting through complex problems, often involving long held emotionally charged beliefs, to find a more life enhancing way to proceed.

Repeatedly, clients make these profound changes while in a deep state of rest where there is no conscious mind involvement, and then return to conscious awareness either when gently told to, or moments before. Thus confirming not only is the subconscious better able to sort out the problems of underlying emotional conflict but is then able to decide when to engage the conscious mind.

My experience is that our subconscious mind is extremely intelligent and responsive.

It appears to be in the service of the overall organism, its primary purpose is to keep us well and alive. It is at the same time, a part of our mind that we do not know very well, (for many people it is positively disowned). How weird is that!

Precisely because of this unawareness, our conscious mind has difficulty initially when it comes to trusting the unconscious to do anything.

I am reminded of Indiana Jones needing to step out to cross over an abyss, trusting that an invisible bridge will support him. Not an easy thing to do!

(Information for the above article was sourced from New Scientist 1/12/07)

Stories from the clinic room...

Many clients who present with anxiety will get their first experience of learning to trust their subconscious on the first session. Trusting the subconscious requires letting go.

Most tell me beforehand that they can't relax. They have forgotten how to let go. Why would we forget something so basic to our nature?

Our reaction to emotions such as fear, anger, grief and injustice is contraction, in many cases different versions of the fight/flight response.

Over the years and depending on the severity of our experiences, these contractions become increasingly habitual and eventually permanent.

At this point we instinctively hold onto the tension, because to let go now feels unsafe.

As one client put it, "If I let go something awful will happen. If I let go I will be out of control."



And so we hold on a bit tighter if we can and the anxiety levels are ratcheted up another notch. Anxiety may even continue to feed on itself until it reaches a level so unbearable we collapse into depression.

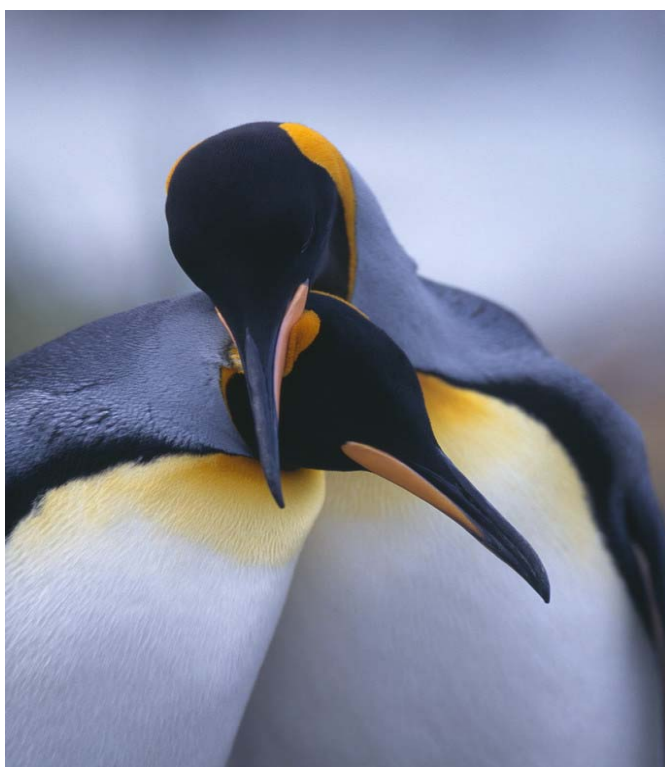
PSH and Meditation provide the circuit breaker where we can re-learn to let go. Naturally, it is harder for some; but because the response is innate in all of us, I firmly believe we can all do it.

Learning to let go is the major issue with stress and anxiety.

That's half the problem solved. The rest follows as the subconscious mind becomes more available and that is where the resources lie to deal with the backlog of undigested emotions.

As Victor Hugo puts it:

*"Be like the bird,
Who pausing in her flight awhile on boughs
too slight,
Feels them give way beneath her,
And yet sings,
Knowing that she hath wings..."*



Please feel free to forward this newsletter onto others who may be interested.

**With love and kindness
Deb & Michael Masani**



A Buddhist view on emotions

Awakening to the emotions means to feel them – nothing less, nothing more. It does not require changing our feelings – feelings change all the time on their own. Nor does it mean changing out temperament. If we are intuitive or philosophical, sanguine or melancholic, that will likely remain the same.

Our range may expand, but our temperament and personality will likely continue. One Buddhist teacher said that he had expected awakening to bring a “personal transformation,” only to be surprised that it was actually an “impersonal transformation.” The transformation is an opening of the heart, not a personality change.

This teacher went on... In many ways the spiritual transformation of the past decades is different than I had imagined. I'm still the same quirky person, with much of the same style and ways of being. So that on the outside I'm not that amazingly transformed, enlightened person I first hoped to become.

But there's a big transformation inside. Years of working with my feelings and family patterns and temper have softened the way I hold them all. In the struggle to know and deeply accept my life, it has been transformed, and my love has grown larger. If my life was like a crowded garage where I kept bumping into the furniture and judging myself, now it's like I've moved into an airplane hangar with the doors left open.

I've got the old stuff there, yet it doesn't limit me like before.

I'm the same, yet now I'm free to move about, even to fly.