



Meaningful Living Newsletter

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Cats don't go woof woof... By Karina Stell

A great difficulty in life is accepting things that are uncontrollable, unchangeable, challenging and confronting. It's one of the most difficult and at times extremely painful lessons. Things are as they are, people feel how they feel and we find ourselves often in places that hurt like hell but have no way of being changed.

The urge to blame is enormous, the watching of how it goes untenable, and equally as often, our impotence is palpable.

Russ Harris, ACT therapist, talks of the observing self. That part of us, which with work, we can separate from our acting self. The observing self is such a gift and allows us to watch ourselves in how we act, able to say, "ahh that old chestnut, I see what I do here". Being able to watch ourselves in pain, in relationships that make us feel that we are a rider at a rodeo internally, and a blank detached human being on the outside, is useful.

It allows us to see how things are and not to knee jerk from our pain. If we are searching for something that just isn't there

for us, needing something that can't be provided, looking for love where there is none, we can watch ourselves....and see how our attempts are often

counterproductive to our own happiness and we notice ourselves persisting in a valueless path.

So what then? What when we see this cycle in which we play an integral part – doing our bit just as others do theirs? Here we turn to acceptance. Accepting is so far from agreement that they shouldn't even begin with the same letter! Acceptance is a surrender to what is. Maybe its accepting that we have to give up on a relationship, maybe it's that we need to accept the reality that is so painful, maybe its accepting that we can't do any better than what we manage in where we sit.

In my learning about acceptance, I fought it as I couldn't differentiate it from agreement for a very long time. I often would say "but that's not acceptable, I don't want to be this person, or I don't want to accept this behaviour. Until one day it was lovingly pointed out to me the very distinct difference between the two by asking me "Why do you look at a cat and wait for it to go woof woof!" A simple enough statement, even kind of silly, but I understood now. Just as my hair is brown

and I'm a mother of three, so too are other things just as they are and waiting for them to be different is what brings me pain.

Recently at a seminar, Rachel Collis a well-known ACT trainer, reminded us of B.F. Skinner's well known quote, "the rat is always right". When we observe a rat in a maze not doing what we expect it to do, it isn't that the rat has it wrong, it's that we are not understanding the rat's motivations.

We all do what we do for our own reasons, things that serve our complex inner world. Some are useful, some are not. People get to this work when they get to it, and waiting for them or circumstances to be different, is folly and a very wasted amount of energy spent on pain. It's hard to take a step back and accept, but maybe compassion found in understanding we all do as we do to serve a need, can help us see the other's world.

Sometimes we have to accept some pretty rough stuff. But going on in life pretending it's there or isn't there as the case may be, only causes us to have repeated pain which we buy into.

Some things I can never agree are right, some things I've had to accept are downright haemorrhaging, but my work is to observe, make changes within my value limits and then accept what's left if necessary.

Whom is the 'ouch' for?

Part 3

BY Michael Cohn



Last month I looked at where the authentic, actual place of connection might be.

In searching for the means to get to it, somehow, the answer seems to lie in a process of dis-identification with the various identities I think I am, or identities, which describe me. And not only do I need to find a process to let go of these identities, some of which fill me with some pride and sense of achievement, but I also need to let go of my identification with those shameful aspects of myself. These are the identities of my weaknesses, my failings, my taints, my awful awful dark secrets which I try so hard to push away but which impinge on me at the slightest provocation. A name, an aunt, an old school-friend, a strange group of people – all have the potential to dislodge my sense of equanimity. The list is potentially endless.

And yet, and yet, I have sufficient life experience behind me to know that I can mostly always find a place of connection. I just have to hold gently to the notion that we are all, all just human beings with needs and wants and desires. If I can tap into that notion within myself, and know that this very pantomime exists in every other person, why, it becomes so simple.

I just drop my obsession with examining which 'me' is showing up and just know that whatever 'me' shows up is exactly like the 'me' that shows up for every other

wretchedly searching person in the world. And the amazing thing is that it is the perfect and only me for that moment. It is exactly what should show up.

The whole idea is so exquisitely encompassed in the Buddhist notion of *Anata*, - no self – the idea that we are all part of one connected whole, and the grasping at a separate self which I think is the 'real' me, is bound to lead to disappointment.

I know of no-one who is free of this essential 'manufactured' separateness, a separateness made up by fear and clinging.

I am often able to find my own connectedness in the deep understanding of just how OK it is to be me, wonderful me, flawed me, happy me, sad me, frightened me, successful me. All the "me's" are equal really, to be welcomed and loved and nurtured.

How about you?

Do you ever feel strange and disconnected and on the outer – frightened of rejection and desperately fearful of being different and unacceptable.

Do you struggle with the worms of doubt, the maggots of self-loathing, the midges of self-doubt, the deep feelings of not being good enough?

Strangely, those very places are the places from which all healing starts. It requires gentle courage and some warm hand-holding, acorns from which the oak of 'OK-ness' grows.

I know.

I struggled from these places once.

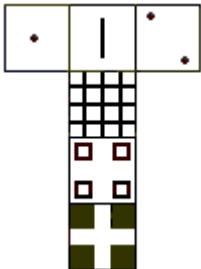
And when I get a chance to revisit them on the rare occasions I do, I am deeply grateful.

Last month's puzzle solution:

Norwegian	yellow	Dunhill	water	cat
Dane	blue	Blend	tea	horse
Briton	red	Pall Mall	milk	bird
German	green	Prince	coffee	fish
Swedish	white	Blue Master	beer	dog

Welcome to this month's puzzle!

1. A man shaves several times a day, yet he still has a beard. Who is this man?
2. The day after the day after tomorrow is four days before Monday. What day is it today?
3. If all tugs are fugs, and all fugs are yoms, then all tugs are yoms?
A. True
B. False
4. Which of the cubes is the same as the unfolded cube below?



A



B



C



D

5. What number should take the place of the question mark?

0, 4, 2, 6, 3, 7, 3.5, ?

Good Luck!