



**MEANINGFUL LIVING**  
PSYCHOLOGY, LIFE COACHING & TRAINING

# Meaningful Living Newsletter

Issue October, 2015

## *Alas, the neglected heart and mind!* By Karina Stell

I often sit and think about what it is I do. Stare into space thinking about the clients I have, the amazing things they say and know, the way my heart feels when I sit with them, 'shooting the breeze'. Oh, how irreverent! There comes up the judgment on what I just wrote. Fancy talking about how sitting with deeply disturbed individuals, couples and families can be called 'shooting the breeze'? Now I laugh. What's so funny? Nothing could be further from the truth about what I do. My work is a privilege and is about sitting with fully functioning, interesting, intelligent people – who just want to be their best selves - Who maybe have hit a struggle or two? - Who want to live a full and meaningful life!

I want that too! So how am I the therapist and they are the client? That's a tough one. Maybe I have a piece of paper that says so; maybe I read a book or two. But their experience of being human is no different to mine. It can be hard at times, joyful at others and exhilarating at yet others.

When I get to do this very special work, I hear and see how much it means to my clients to be treated as just another human being who needs to talk and share what is going on for them. No labels, no finger pointing or judgement, no high chair for the therapist and low chair or couch for the 'broken'. No, not in my room. In my room I want to connect with that human being and understand what goes on for them, what they are struggling with and try and understand.

As this blog title says, I am often saddened by the neglected heart and mind. What do I mean when I say that? It occurred to me in my weekly staring into space, that we have aroma therapy, massage therapy, hair, nail and foot therapy, all bringing a feeling of nurture and delight. Yet our hearts and minds that sometimes tire from the gifts they offer us also need some nurture. When was the last time a friend said over a cup of coffee, "You know, I'm really struggling with all I have going on. I think

I'll go and sit with my therapist and share". I've not heard it. Maybe some of you have, but I certainly haven't. I've heard "I'm so excited I'm going for a massage, my back really needs it" or "I'm having a treatment on my hair today, it's been so dry". Yes! This I've heard. Why not the former?

It's a sad thing to acknowledge, but this very wonderful part of us – our heart/mind connection – is a place we feel shame about nurturing. Somewhere people have understood that therapy is for the insane/broken/ill. Yes, there are therapists who do amazing work with these extreme cases. But for the most part, our work involves the 'everyperson'. The people just like any other people who need a place to lay their struggles and share how it is right now.

If I was to be given one professional wish, it would be that I could get that message out there.

## What I noticed.... By Michael Cohn



This last month has seen me struggle to answer the very question I asked - "Where is the actual place of connection?" How do I find it or know it? Which part of me allows me the space to just be?

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.

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, and 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.



## Questions I've been asked ....

By Jonathan Back

### Q: What should I do? Please advise me!

Psychologists and therapists are in a unique position where they are paid to listen and help improve aspects of people's lives. However, years of training and university degrees do not afford us the liberty to dole out advice to clients seeking it.

In life, and especially in therapy, there is no way that anyone can ever know what is good for someone else. Dishing out advice might make us feel important and knowledgeable, but it is usually ineffective. It implies, "I know what's best for you", and when given without being asked for, advice can sometimes feel infuriating. When I'm on the receiving end of unwanted advice (even from well-intentioned colleagues and friends), I begin to lose contact with my own process of discovering what I need.

In therapy, giving advice may even foster dependence where clients do not learn to listen to themselves (i.e. the real experts). Instead of learning how to work through dilemmas, it can become routine to ask for more advice. Given the therapist-client relationship (and the often

perceived 'expertise' that therapists supposedly have), there is a danger that the client places more importance on their therapist's values than on their own.

In both therapy and our private lives, listening to someone without judgements or solutions stands in direct contrast to advice giving. Listening without giving advice allows the one being listened to enough space to hear themselves think and come to their own conclusions.

This facilitates a process where the real experts can act more decisively after connecting to their own feelings and values.

You can submit questions to Jonathan via [Jonathan@meaningful-living.com.au](mailto:Jonathan@meaningful-living.com.au)

## Welcome to this month's Brain Teasers. Good luck!

1. Three kids from Bristol went for a walk. About a mile into the walk, they came to a deep, wide river. There was no bridge. They didn't have a boat or raft, or any materials to make one. None of them could swim. How did they get across?
2. A man marries twenty women in his village but isn't charged with polygamy
3. What is unusual about the following words: revive, banana, grammar, voodoo, assess, potato, dresser, uneven?

4. 

5. 

6. 

Last month's solution:

Across

4. Empathy; 6. Sacred; 8. Compassion; 11. Feelings; 13. Joy

Down

1. Mindfulness; 2. Weekly; 3. Values; 5. Meaning; 7. Disgust; 8. Connection; 9. Michael; 10. Anxiety; 12. Sympathy;