

JOURNAL OF

holistic healthcare

Re-imagining healthcare



Healing journeys



In search of grace
Encountering John O God
Lost tribes as teachers
Everest England
Dying is a journey
Seeking healing
Ecotherapy wanderings
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David Peters
Editor-in-Chief

Editorial

Healing journeys: the search for wholeness

A pilgrimage is a journey or search that has moral or spiritual significance

I write these words soon after the summer solstice sunrise on Firlie Beacon in Sussex. It's a dawn walk I've been making for many years, a quarterly habit that chimes the seasons in the tick-tocking of the passing year. When my senses have been blunted to Earth's benevolence, I can still walk my thanks for the web of life.

I am not alone in feeling this moral, migratory urge. With the world's great pilgrimage routes resounding to the feet of a new generation, we might (forgive the pun) wonder just what is afoot here, this entangling of walking and worship. But the connection is clear, because when we speak about the course of life, the language we use is packed full of journey metaphors. Life has its ups and downs, sometimes we feel high, then again low. Life can be an uphill struggle: we may think life is on track but then again we feel lost, that life has no direction. Perhaps we don't know where we are heading or the way is blocked, but we think we will cross that bridge when we come to it; unless life takes an unexpected turn. Even so, eventually we have to move on.

Adversity isn't optional on life's road: inevitably we run into obstacles not shown on the map drawn by life-so-far: loss, illness, heartbreak, trauma, breakdown, they all come with the territory. But no matter how much we long to move back to how things were before, the only option is to move forward, even when we see no way to go. In such dire straits, can we imagine a destination where life might be whole once more?

Our life is a faint tracing on the surface of mystery, like the idle curved tunnels of leaf miners on the face of a leaf. We must somehow take a wider view, look at the whole landscape, really see it, and describe what's going on here. Then we can at least wail the right question into the swaddling band of darkness, or, if it comes to that, choir the proper praise.

Annie Dillard, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

A crisis of body or soul (don't they always intermingle?) summons up a healing journey, but the elusive reconnection hides beyond the words available to us,

in a language we will only learn by pushing into the unknown. We are being forced to emerge from this place changed, by finding the strength to bear the unbearable, to tear up the old map of life, accept the world as it is, embracing pain and transforming it. So when the urge to overcome paralysis and uncertainty drives a person to take to the road, they become pilgrims. Inwardly but often literally they seek higher ground and a trodden path to a place where they may outgrow suffering, or at least make some sense of it.

In a life that's become empty, pilgrimage of whatever kind is a way of filling emptiness with new meaning. Why else would modern secular pilgrims set out for Elvis's Graceland or Jim Morrison's grave in Paris; or more painfully to Auschwitz or, like one of our authors in this issue, hike the ancient Basque country Camino path to Compostela? There are those who like Peter Reason may sail away in search of grace, or in the footsteps of Bruce Parry throw off the coils of class by losing themselves in remote tribes. In this issue of JHH there are experiences of others who like him have felt compelled to travel outside everyday realities; from those too whose illness has hurled them into unexpected journeys of recovery. We hear as well from seekers whose pilgrimages have sought a new communion with the natural world, and from therapists who take people into the wilds so that healing shifts may happen. From Peter Fenwick we get news of transpersonal experiences witnessed in end-of-life care: evidence perhaps of a final journey far stranger even than the earthly travels our other authors have presented.

In this issue of JHH we hear from people whose mind-body-spirit journeys have embodied their search for a lost sense of wholeness. In our rapidly changing world there's a fast emerging awareness of life as both miraculous and precarious. As part of this awakening our culture has begun to mimic something reminiscent of a religious quest: as if the same impulse that drives individuals awoken by crisis to embark on healing journeys, is present more widely in our wounded world. Whether or not we know it, we are part of our species' healing journey, whose shape though not yet clear, already implies a blurring of what's secular and what's sacred. If medicine can comprehend this transpersonal dimension, the notion of healing journeys may yet come to be respected as a vital part of whole person – and whole planet – healthcare.

Refugees and war trauma

At this one-day event at Amnesty International Peter Levine, founder of somatic experiencing and pioneering trauma expert, will present a naturalistic and psycho-physiological model for stress and trauma that he has pioneered for the past 45 years. He will explain how animals in the wild respond to stress and threat, how trauma is stored in the body and nervous system, and how both animals and human beings are capable of discharging past stress and trauma.

Amnesty International 28 August 2018, London.
www.sosinternationale.org/event/a-day-with-peter-levine/?instance_id=119255

Integrative Health Convention

This two-day convention on complementary health and integrative medicine aims to create 'a community of like-minded individuals who are open and willing to learn from each other and develop themselves so that they possess the most effective skills from the most successful health practices available at this time'. It sets out to provide a platform where practitioners involved in health and healing can meet, share, teach, and learn from one another.

13/14 October 2018, London.
<http://integrativehealthconvention.co.uk>

Social prescribing coming of age

Following a sell-out event last year, this year will be moving from examining the case for social prescribing and the benefits it offers to exploring the ways in which it can be embedded and implemented. In collaboration with the College of Medicine and the Social Prescribing Network, it will look at how it can be measured and the impact it is already having on outcomes for patients. Come along to this event to hear from those who have implemented social prescribing models and can report on their learning and outcomes and provide practical resources for commissioners, clinicians and voluntary and community organisations looking to adopt and implement social prescribing.

6 November 2018, London.
www.kingsfund.org.uk/events/social-prescribing

Positive homeopathy report suppressed?

According to campaign site www.wddty.com a homeopathic group in Australia is pressing for the release of a 'suppressed' review that is said to have found solid scientific evidence that homeopathy works for a range of health conditions. The unpublished report was replaced by a second review released in 2015 whose conclusion was that homeopathy was ineffective. The group claims that

the second review set research criteria more stringent than those of many drug trials: only studies involving at least 150 people were considered for inclusion, thus disregarding 171 studies that had shown homeopathy to be effective.

www.wddty.com/news

One day student conference

This annual College of Medicine event usually sells out as it is the only multi-disciplinary one of its kind in the UK, bringing together as it does 75 undergraduate students from up to 22 health and social care disciplines and from universities across the country. This year's focus will be on sustainable health and wellbeing. The conference is subsidised by generous sponsors and therefore costs just £39 (actual value of £150) for all talks and workshops, plus lunch and refreshments.

13 October 2018, London.
<https://collegeofmedicine.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Student-Conference-Programme-2018-v2.pdf>

New ways forward in cancer care open clinical day

Delivered by the Portland Centre for Integrative Medicine (PCIM) in collaboration with Penny Brohn UK and the College of Medicine, this event is for all healthcare professionals, CAM practitioners, students and researchers wanting clinical and evidence-based updates within a broad vision of healthcare and offers up to seven hours of CPD and information on how to best support patients with cancer.

5 October 2018, Penny Brohn, Bristol.
education@portlandcentrehealthcare.co.uk

You may have missed...

The second plant medicine conference The next steps: putting nature to work was held on June 21 at Barber Surgeons Hall, London. The emphasis was on practice and evidence for the most likely benefits. The meeting also launched a suite of online and other resources from the College of Medicine and partners: desk references on the most effective prospects for plants in healthcare, a range of formally registered herbal medicines with assured pharmaceutical quality, a comprehensive review of potential interactions with conventional medications, and a range of guides for supporting natural self-care.

Correction

The references at the end of the Paul Dieppe article in the spring 2018 issue (page 17) were unfortunately omitted. Apologies to the author and readers. The full version with references is available at <https://bbma.org/product/transformational-innovation>.

Ecological pilgrimage

Peter Reason

Writer

In my writing I aim to link the tradition of nature writing with the ecological crisis of our times, drawing on scientific, ecological, philosophical and spiritual sources. My two books *Spindrift: A wilderness pilgrimage at sea* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014) and *In Search of Grace: An ecological pilgrimage* (Earth Books, 2017) weave explorations of the human place in the ecology of the planet into the stories of sailing voyages. I also write a regular column in *Resurgence & Ecologist*. Before my retirement from academia, I contributed to the theory and practice of action research in writing, teaching and research. I am Professor Emeritus at the University of Bath.

www.peterreason.eu @peterreason

To recover from ecological disaster, we humans must transform the sense of who we are in relation to the Earth. In Search of Grace is Peter Reason's story of his ecological pilgrimage in his small yacht Coral, from Plymouth round the west coast of Ireland, to the far north of Scotland. His book explores the central themes of pilgrimage: separation from the everyday, venturing forth, and returning home. It tells of meeting wildlife, visiting sacred places, confronting danger, expanding and deepening the experience of time, of silence and of fragility.

For two days and two nights Coral lay at a visitors' buoy at Craighouse on Jura in the Western Isles of Scotland while the northwesterly gale blew. Fierce squalls came gusting down through the mountains, bringing heavy rain rattling on the deck and sprayhood. This was the final stage of my ecological pilgrimage round the west coast of Ireland to Scotland, sailing mostly on my own. For the past month I had been sailing from Clifden on the west coast of Ireland, mostly on my own. The weather had been particularly difficult. I was weary, and keen to get to Coral's winter berth near Oban.

Eventually the gale blew through. Overnight the wind dropped away to nothing. In the grey dimness just before dawn I dropped the lines on the mooring buoy and steered Coral out of the bay. The green and red navigation lights that mark the channel between Goat Island and the underwater reefs flashed reassuringly. Once clear of the island I turned Coral north up the Sound of Jura, intent on catching the last quarter or so of the flooding tide north toward Oban. I had it all worked out: the tide times, the landmarks, the alternative anchorages along the coast.

When the tide turned against me, I took Coral into Lussa Bay, tiny, south-facing, 12 miles or so north from Craighouse, and tucked her in behind a rocky peninsula out of the stream.

A lone cormorant stood sentinel on the tip of the rocks. Low cloud enveloped the hilltops and mist descended to sea level, full of dampness that now and again turned into light rain. The ensign hung soggily from the backstay. Through the mist the tones of the land were subdued: a sharp green scrub, russet brown bracken, punctuated by the black silhouettes of windblown trees; rocks dark and wet at the waterline, lighter above. In contrast to this wildness, at the head of the bay I could just see a little pocket of cultivation: a house showing white amid a cluster of mature trees; a bridge over a stream; a meadow where a brown horse was grazing.

Once I was sure the anchor was secure, I cut the engine. Its mechanical grumble and the churn of the propeller had filled my ears for two hours. Once it stopped, I felt the silence as a tangible presence inviting me to open to my surroundings. Gradually my ears cleared of engine noise and I could hear the subtle watery sounds around me: the background burbling of the tidal stream out in the sound; the deeper, hollow percussion of wavelets slopping against the rocks; the occasional creaks from the engine as it cooled down; above all these the faint patter of fine rain on the deck and sprayhood that came and went as showers blew through the bay, punctuated by the thud of larger drops falling from the boom.

As I stood in the companionway out of the rain, looking across the bay, I heard a guttural call. I looked around and saw a raven flapping its wings to land among the rocks, the inky black of its feathers penetrating the rain mist and standing out strongly against the grey of the rocky shore. I watched as it searched the foreshore. Then another movement caught my eye, across the water this time: an otter, maybe, but more likely a seal. I searched the surface hopefully, but saw no further sign.

I came into this bay for the purely practical purpose of waiting out the adverse tide. But I was enchanted. I spent hours watching, listening, scribbling incoherent notes as I searched for the right words. The quiet of this bay silenced my mind. I was absorbed with just being there.

By mid-afternoon the ebb had weakened. It was time get going again to reach the tidal race at the Sound of Luing at slack tide. I started the engine, hauled up and stowed the anchor, edged Coral round the low rocky headland that had sheltered us and continued northwards.

There is a longstanding tradition in most human societies of making a more or less arduous journey away from the comforts and familiarities of home in search of new insights and deeper understandings. This practice may be as old as the human species: mesolithic peoples in Europe certainly made long journeys to the sacred sites marked by stone circles; the Aboriginal people of Australia still take extended walks along 'songlines', re-enacting the journeys of 'creator-beings' during the Dream Time.

The idea and practice of pilgrimage was systematically forged in a religious context. There is the requirement of good Muslims to undertake the Hajj at least once in their

lives; of the Christian pilgrimages of the Middle Ages and the continuing contemporary practice; the vast numbers of Hindu devotees who travel to sacred sites on the River Ganges; and of Buddhists who walk the difficult path to circumambulate Mount Kailash. In modern times the word has perhaps become devalued, it has become customary to speak of pilgrimage in a secular sense: a Wagner devotee may describe a trip to the Bayreuth *Festspielhaus* as a pilgrimage, as might a cricket lover a visit to Lords (see Clift and Clift, 1996; Coleman *et al*, 1995; Westwood, 1997; University of York, 2014).

The English term 'pilgrim' originally comes from the Latin word *peregrinus* (per, through plus ager, field, country, land), which means a foreigner, a stranger, someone on a journey, or a temporary resident. It can describe a traveller making a brief journey to a particular place or someone settling for a short or long period in a foreign land. *Peregrinatio* was the state of being or living abroad; and of course all Christians were seen as temporary residents in this world, 'strangers and pilgrims in the Earth', travelling toward 'a heavenly country'. Here on earth, wrote St Augustine, Christians wander 'as on pilgrimage through time looking for the Kingdom of eternity' (Bunyan, 1678; St Augustine, 1958; Leopold, 1949). This contrasts with an ecological view that we are indigenous Earthlings first: we are not just passing through; we evolved with and profoundly belong to this planet. Our place is not in heaven, but here. As Aldo Leopold, one of the originators of the modern ecological movement, put it, we are plain members of the biotic community (Leopold, 1949).



In modern times, the idea of pilgrimage falls within so many cultural and spiritual traditions that it holds no single meaning. However, it usually entails a long journey in search of qualities of moral or spiritual significance, a journey across both outer physical and inner spiritual landscapes. A pilgrim separates herself from home and familiars, may join with a group of like-minded seekers, sometimes wearing special clothes or other marks that indicate their pilgrim status. In an important sense the pilgrim leaves the everyday and familiar, and journeys through an in-between space toward some transcendent purpose. The Hindu concept of the *tirtha*, a Sanskrit term for a ford or intersection between two realms, expresses this well. Places where two ecosystems meet, such as the brackish water of lagoons, are rich with lifeforms and

ecological adaptation. As the Catholic writer Douglas Christie puts it, 'The liminal space of the pilgrimage journey offers a fluid and imaginative space between the human and the more-than-human worlds, between matter and spirit, body and soul, heaven and Earth, humanity and divinity' (Christie, 2013).

I studied many accounts of religious pilgrimages, learning how the faithful travel to sacred sites in order to encounter a holy realm for worship and the affirmation of faith, in search of illumination and for healing. I began to draw parallels with my idea of ecological pilgrimage as seeking a primal, heartfelt connection with the Earth itself and the community of life that has evolved on Earth. It is also an ongoing celebration of that connection and an act of homage, honouring the Earth as the more-than-human

world of which we are a part, existing for itself rather than for human use. By taking the pilgrim away from the habits of civilisation and by disrupting the patterns of everyday life, pilgrimage offers an opening to a different view of the Earth of which we are a part.

Is it necessary to go on a long and arduous journey to open such experiences? Satish Kumar, who as a young Jain monk made an 8,000-mile pilgrimage for peace, walking from India over the Himalayas to Paris, suggests that pilgrimage is not necessarily about travel, but that its essence lies in its deep commitment to life, here and now on the Earth. He writes that 'A pilgrim is someone who keeps their mind and heart open for whatever is emerging – it is that openness that puts you on a pilgrimage, not how many miles you physically travel'. While I accept this important point, the significance of travel is that it takes you out of the taken-for-granted structures and habits of everyday life: work, family, relation-



ships, play, news, entertainment, all of which shape consciousness into a conformity that is conducive to modern life. It is not easy to move across the boundaries between worlds when locked in everyday familiarity: the practical challenges of pilgrimage spin the human heart and mind into new realisations (Kumar, 2014).

Most of us live our lives half asleep ... Pilgrimage is one attempt to wake up

I thought of the ecological pilgrim as journeying into the wild, whether the distant wild of the seas or mountains or the more immediate wild of a meadow flower. The wild in this sense can release us from the constraints of everyday consciousness. The ecological pilgrim starts from a sense of the importance and legitimacy of unmediated, direct experience of the more-than-human, independent of any benefits that might arise out of that experience. Poet and wilderness writer Gary Snyder describes the wilderness pilgrim's 'step-by-step, breath-by-breath' progress into the wild, whether the wild of mountains or ocean or meditation as 'an ancient set of gestures', that bring a sense of joy. It's a joy that arises through 'intimate contact with the real world' and so also with oneself (Snyder, 1990). While the modern eye may see pilgrimage in its traditional sense as full of superstition, self-delusion and even mass hysteria, if we look beyond these prejudices to the 'ancient set of gestures,' to the underlying archetype, we may discover how practices of pilgrimage can inform the development of ecological sensitivity and responsiveness.

So pilgrims are travellers in life, rather than tourists. I mean this in the sense that the veteran travel writer Paul Theroux used it: tourists don't know where they've been; travellers don't know where they're going (Theroux, 2013). Theroux was, of course, being mischievous, but he touches on an important truth: most of us live our lives half asleep (as the spiritual teacher Gurdjieff, among many others, has pointed out). Pilgrimage is one attempt to wake up. In particular, we modern humans think we know where we are going, but actually we don't: an important dimension of the crisis of ecology is that, with our interconnected, global and increasingly virtual society, we do not know how to live well on the Earth. It may be that small groups of humans still do, or once did (although the evidence is that humans started what is now known as 'the sixth extinction' as soon as we got effective hunting tools; and impoverishing the land as soon as we started agriculture) (Kolbert, 2014). So the ecological pilgrim is on a journey of inquiry that is potentially relevant to all humanity, not just the privileged west.

This is why pilgrimages into the wild world are one response to the ecological crisis of our times. They are

not, of course, a sufficient response, for we also urgently need a whole range of political, financial, technological and cultural initiatives that would change society as we know it. I think they are nevertheless a necessary response that may inform these practical and political concerns. Opening oneself to the wild world and describing what one finds with love and passion is a political and spiritual act.

Christian writer Martin Palmer tells us that to undertake a pilgrimage is to place yourself at risk: not just the physical risks, but the risk that you may not return the same person as you set out. He also warns that the pilgrim may even be risk being surprised by joy (Palmer, 2012). Alone at sea I was often disoriented from the taken-for-granted realities of the social world and open to a more naked sense of what it was to be a human being. At such moments it was as if a crack in the cosmic egg opened and for a tiny moment I experienced a different world that is nevertheless the same world. This was a world not fixed in form, but forever changing: no longer divided into separate things, but one dancing whole. I realise that these tiny moments also occur in everyday life, but they are easy to overlook, to see as insignificant. I have come to call these experiences 'moments of grace', a recovery of the sacred dimension of being. In this book I explore more deeply these moments of grace, how they may arise in the terror of tumultuous seas as much as in the wonder of the night sky. I also explore those times I fall from grace – moments of 'disgrace', maybe – when I lose my centre, my sense of purpose and everything looks like a failure.

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This article is adapted from Chapter 2 of *In Search of Grace*, Earth Books, 2017.

A journey through cancer

Chris Drury

Land artist

I am an internationally known land artist, or an eco-artist, or an art and nature artist. I also collaborate with scientists, doctors, technician, ecologists, farmers and small local indigenous communities. My work has taken me to every continent including Antarctica. I work mostly to commission and the context gives rise to the form, materials and process, which I deem most appropriate to the situation. This could be a large land work or sculpture outside, or it could be a film or video, a digital work or a small work on paper for exhibition inside. The mushroom's ability to break down dead matter back into soil on which new life grows has been an ongoing preoccupation.

This is the story of one man's journey into the maelstrom of prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment: hormones and radiotherapy, then progress and hope dashed by recurrence and despair. But this setback served to empower him 'to hit it from all angles': healers, vegan diet, mindfulness, the removal of mercury fillings, plus supplements, herbs, vitamins, Essiac tea, turmeric, mistletoe, yoga. Ultimately his path led to a famous healer in Brazil, John of God, and to Mother Meera, believed by her devotees to be an embodiment of the Divine Mother.

In the summer of 2014 I was getting prostate problems – mainly running to the loo and feeling tired. I went to my doctor who said he thought it was nothing but sent me for a blood test. A week later I phoned the surgery to find out what the results were and was told by the receptionist who was reading from my notes 'that no further action was required.' Relieved I went to Norway where I was mounting an exhibition.

A few days before my return I received a text saying not to forget my hospital appointment in the urology department at The Royal Sussex Hospital – a complete surprise. Luckily it was for the day after I returned, some six weeks after my blood test. Here I learned that the doctor had referred my blood test results straight to the hospital and not told me. I had a PSA (prostate specific antigen) of 45 and it was likely I had prostate cancer. That was a shock; a big shock.

I was given an appointment in two weeks for a biopsy, then I would wait six weeks for the results, but I knew they would also need to give me an MRI scan and they would have to wait a further six weeks for that, and several weeks for the result. I realised that with the cockup with my GP, this was all taking too long. So I paid for a diagnosis at The Prostate Centre in London. This took 10 days. I was seen by a doctor from Guy's who gave me

an MRI scan, a biopsy, urine flow test, and a bone scan. The cancer covered most of my prostate and they thought surgery was out as it may have been in the seminal glands and surgery would simply spread it. There was nothing visible in the bones, so they thought that with radiotherapy, they would get it. I asked the consultant if I could come under him on the NHS at Guy's and he agreed. He said to me, 'You are young and fit and you will come through this'. My GP was not in a position to refuse me, but complained that it would cost his practice 20% more for me to be treated outside the area.

I was immediately put on hormone pills and then three monthly injections and we went on a somewhat wobbly holiday to France. I had the radiotherapy at St Thomas' Hospital travelling to London every week for seven-and-a-half weeks over Christmas and into January 2015. At this point I was just dealing with radiologists.

By the summer my PSA had come down to 0.5 and I thought I was done. I was still having hormone injections. I had read a lot about cancer and had put myself on a vegetarian diet with no dairy, eggs or sugar. 2015 and 2016 were busy years for work; I was travelling all round the world – Sri Lanka, Australia, South Korea and Montana with a heavy workload. In the summer of 2016 my PSA started

to climb, and the doctors kept an eye on it. By November it had climbed to 3.7 and I was called into Guy's and finally met my new consultant who sent me for a PET (positron emission tomography) scan at the end of the month.

On 1 December 2015 I went to see a healer in Lewes, who said he thought he could see half a split pea in my prostate, my seminal glands were shot (by the radiotherapy) and I had increased white blood cell action, my immune system was depleted and working overtime and something was going on.

On the 6th, I had another appointment with the consultant at Guy's. Kay, my wife, came in with me. My consultant was abrupt and weird. He kept hovering in and out of the room. Eventually he said that the cancer had gone into my bones, extensively in the ribs, pelvis and spine and they could no longer cure it, only contain it and there was nothing I or my wife could do about it. With that he backed out of the room leaving us with a rather shocked registrar. Kay burst into tears and I was shaking with fear. I just thought 'this is it I am going to die and this may be my last Christmas.' On the web it said people in my situation had between one and three years left. I felt very isolated and alone. But many friends rallied round, especially those who had survived cancer. And a good friend offered to be a support whenever I needed it.

Somehow I got through Christmas and New Year, and I started to do a lot more reading about cancer and diet. I was now on a strict vegan diet: no dairy, eggs, meat, fish, or sugar. I found Sophie Sabbage's book called *The Cancer Whisperer*, which has a huge amount of information and links to films. One of the films showed how researchers had found that there was a direct link from the mouth to the prostate in men, and to the breasts in women. When I was diagnosed the first time, I also had a strange gum disease, which another department in the Royal Sussex Hospital said I would probably have to live with for the rest of my life. I had blisters on my gums and it was very unpleasant. Seeing the films, however, allowed me to make the link between prostate cancer and amalgam fillings and root canals. In the film you could see in the scan of one patient a line from the left jaw to the left breast.

This was a revelation. I rang up a dentist in Germany who said there was no proof of this, but I was taking no chances, so over about six weeks my own dentist changed six fillings and took out the root canal (under which she found infection – who knows how long that had been there?). The dentist (a trained homeopath) was brilliant and plied me with homeopathic remedies to heal. In three months the mouth ulcers had more or less gone. I had a feeling that this could have been the cause of the prostate cancer, and now that I had got rid of the cause I had to chase the consequences.

Through *The Cancer Whisperer* I contacted a researcher, Dr Dana Flavin, in Germany, who had been studying cancer all her life, and her reaction was: 'Yes, I can reverse this. Don't worry – we can get rid of it'. This was the first positive reaction I'd had and potentially a

life-saver. It is incredible what a few positive words can do to the spirit.

So it took two long Skype calls followed by a strict regime of supplements, herbs, vitamins and drugs – about 60 pills a day in all, some of which she prescribed through chemists in Germany and Glasgow. I had to follow the strict diet I was on anyway, take daily carrot juice plus three enemas a week, plus hot baths with Quercetin tablets. I also had to mix up a number of essential oils including CBD (Cannabidiol) oil to rub on my bones every day.

The idea of her protocol was to build the immune system, block all pathways for the cancer to spread, and finally reverse it by allowing my body to do the work. I could email her at any time if I wanted more information or to change some things. In Montana I had been told about Essiac tea, a Canadian Native American three-herb remedy which was known to reverse cancer. Dr Flavin recommended this too. I had also heard about the efficacy of turmeric to stop cancer. I found out how to make a paste with olive oil and pepper and I take two small teaspoons of this a day.

By this time I was very angry with the attitude of the consultant at Guy's and asked my doctor in February if I could be referred back to Brighton Cancer Centre, of which I was hearing good things.

I came under a Dr Savage, who immediately said that the bicolutamide I was given by Guy's was more or less useless, so he put me on a fairly new chemo drug called enzolutamide, which I had to take daily. It smashes any remaining testosterone I might have after the hormone injections – not much fun.

In the beginning it made me feel very dizzy and ill and I refused to take any more. But when Philip Savage heard I had stopped taking the drug, he rang me up from a car park in Brighton and insisted I take it immediately, or else I might be in real trouble. He was also giving me a drug which Dana had asked me to get and was only available on the NHS. I had also heard that mistletoe, as a homeopathic remedy, was very good at reversing cancer. I think it was the cricketer John Edridge who maintained he was cured by iscadore (homeopathic mistletoe remedy). A friend had got this treatment free from the Royal London Hospital for Integrated Medicine. My GP refused to refer me, saying that it was not proven. However Dr Savage referred me, and for a year I was seen by the wonderful Dr Kassab in London. Sadly, Westminster City Council has recently stopped funding homeopathic remedies and I will now have to pay for it, which I may well do.

So I was beginning to look at as many ways as possible to work on the disease – hit it from all angles. I found a brilliant psychotherapist who works with a lot with cancer patients and used to be an NHS nurse. She works out of a shed in a wood. She made me weep and gave me the psychological and psychic tools to deal with my fears and to visualise ways to attack the cancer by digging up powerful imagery from my past – visions I'd had as a child and archaic dreams. All these I started to use in daily

meditations as tools to work on imagining the destruction of this thing within me. Later when I went to a healer in Brazil, this imagery became very useful. Meanwhile, I took plenty of exercise, did yoga in the mornings and briefly tried Qi Gong. I joined Sophie Sabbage's Cancer Whisperers' online forum. My PSA was slowly coming down.

“I was beginning to look at as many ways as possible to work on the disease – hit it from all angles”

In February 2017, a friend sent me the link to a friend of hers who had been cured of colorectal cancer by a healer in Brazil. I was fascinated by this account even though it went against some of my instincts. Basically, he went to this world-renowned healer in Brazil who thousands of people visit on a daily basis. He went six times in all because the 'entities' working through the medium called Joao de Deus (John of God), a 75-year-old illiterate Brazilian peasant, said that he would be healed but did not tell him when or how. At home he was refusing surgery from his consultant, while doing roughly what I have been doing – a bit of everything. I think he was taking more pills than me. His tumour became so large and he was in such pain that the oncologist told him he would die without the surgery. So he agreed, but by that time the tumour was too large to operate on and his doctor said that they needed to reduce its size first with radiotherapy. He agreed but said he was going to Brazil first. On his return he had a course of radiotherapy and returned to Brazil, where he was pronounced cured. On his return there was nothing to operate on and the cancer had completely gone.

This was 20 years ago and he set up a website for those visiting the Casa in Aberdiania, Brasilia, and returns on a regular basis out of gratefulness. Also a mutual friend of both of us had his two-year-old daughter cured in one go of the female version of haemophilia. Doctors thought she would not live long. After their visit to Aberdiania with the child, she needed no more blood transfusions. I spoke to him on Skype, and if anything, he is a very pragmatic and no-nonsense guy, but his experience in Brazil and what he saw there changed him and his daughter is now a healthy 18-year-old. I looked at all that the web had to say about John of God, some of which is very negative, and decided I needed to go there and see this for myself. At the time I was just following what was coming towards me and this was one of those things. I went in May 2017 with my daughter.

I found it an extraordinarily profound experience, for which nothing in my life had prepared me. I was just one of the thousand or so people that line up for their 10 seconds in front of the medium three days a week.

Everything is in Portuguese and you have to find a translator to tell you what is said, and you follow to the letter what you are asked to do. Everything is free including a daily soup for those joining the various lines. John of God is no easy option and you do more than 50% of the work of healing yourself. As I mentioned, I was able to use the imagery, which I had rediscovered with my psychotherapist, to explore some very extraordinary imagery which was coming into my mind during five-hour meditations.

After two weeks, I had not had an answer on whether I could be cured, just that they were working on me and I should return. A year later I am going back to Brasilia for three weeks and I guess I will have to keep doing this until, and if, they give me the all-clear. This is not a cheap option, even though the medium is free, there are still flights and accommodation.

While I was there last year, a German woman staying in the same pousada (small hotel) told us that she believed that she had been cured by Mother Meera of breast cancer 20 years previously. On our return my daughter discovered that Mother Meera was coming to London for three days and maybe we should go. She is a very extraordinary powerful woman who is regarded as an Avatar (manifestation of the Divine) who allows the universe to work through her. You join silent, kneeling, shuffling queues to reach her, much as in Brazil (which is much noisier!). When you arrive, she says nothing, just puts her hands on your head and you stare into her liquid brown eyes. The whole thing lasts 15 seconds and you shuffle away again. People say that she performs small miracles. A day after our first visit and after Dr Flavin had been urging me to get back to work I received a very unexpected book offer. The second time I went more recently, I received an award worth three years' finance. Synchronicity – yes of course – I don't really care though: for the next three years I don't have to worry about money and I will keep going back to Mother Meera! You can even join her online in real time silent meditation.

In 2017 I decided I had to take a year out to get well and strangely during that year I had no offers of work and it was a fantastic thing that I could just concentrate on staying well; with all the various protocols and regimes I was following, there was little time for anything else. Luckily with 2016 being a very good financial year I could do this. During 2017 I could just enjoy each moment. It was a year when my life came full circle. People who I hadn't seen in decades made contact and I was able to spend much more time with close friends and family. Kay has been an incredible support throughout.

During that year The Centre for Resilience at the University of Westminster asked me if I would take part in their Resilience Lab 360. Part of this meant that I wore a miniature heart rate variability monitor attached to my chest for three days. Those three days were in fact very stressful: Dr Savage was worried the cancer might have gone into my brain so he ordered an immediate brain scan – very scary. However, on the graph, which showed red

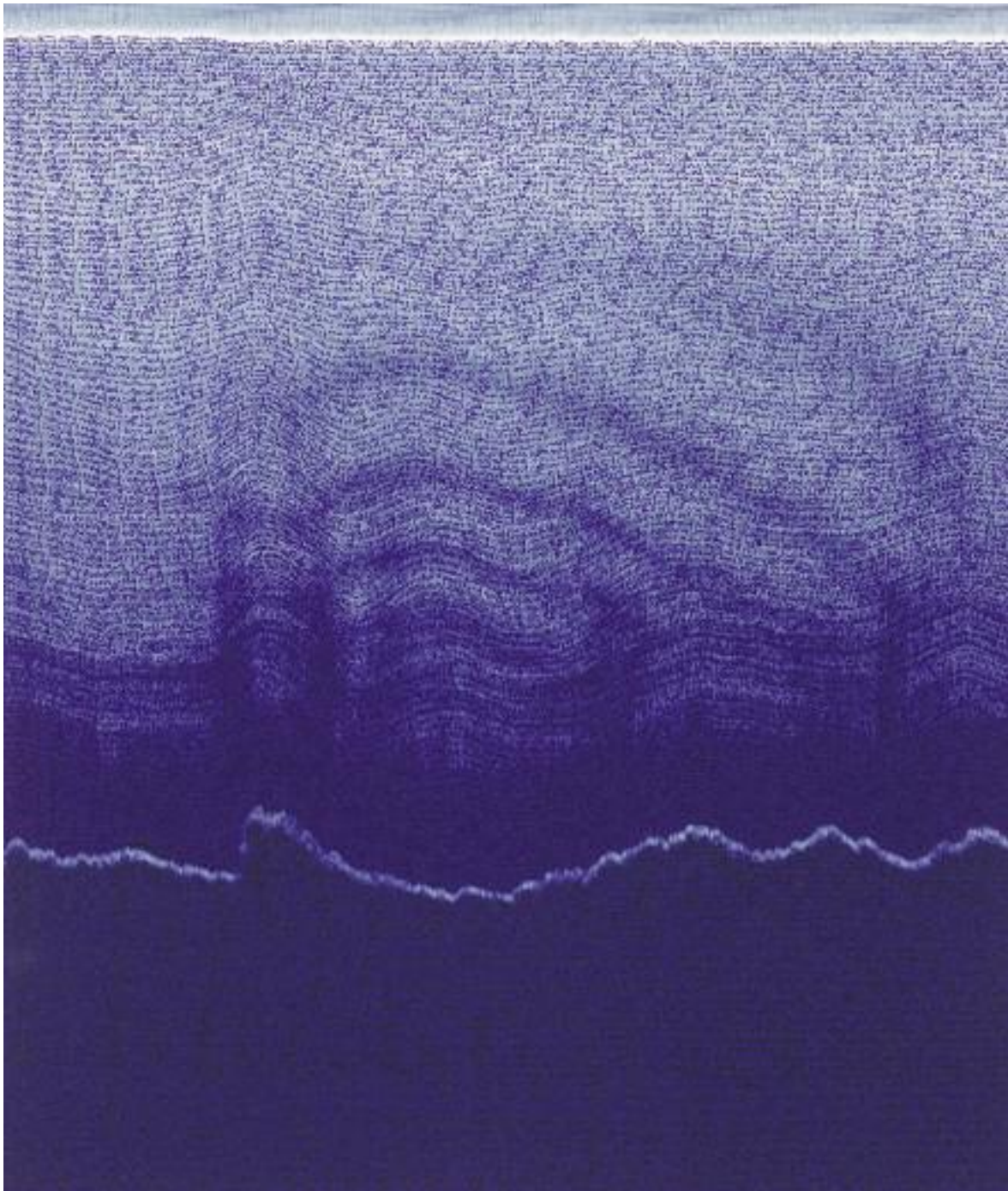
when the body was stressed and green when it was recovering, I managed to get straight back into the green after those stressful events. The researchers wondered why and sent my findings off to experts in Finland. I have spent a lifetime making art through slow meditative processes and I think that this habit simply kicked in.

This year as I prepare to return to Brazil I am again very busy with work. I see Dr Savage every three months, and I was reminded recently by the nurse who looks at my blood tests every month and speaks to me on the phone that I must stay on this drug indefinitely while it is still working. My PSA at the moment is 0.05 – virtually undetectable. The prediction is that the drug will become

ineffective eventually and the cancer will find ways around it and will take over my body. The prognosis is one to three years and I have had a year-and-a-half since the cancer went metastatic. Dr Flavin says that it is a combination of all the things I have been doing that is reversing the disease. I remain optimistic, while being aware of reality. Optimism and a passion for life can in itself cure, whatever happens. Whether I live, or die soon, it has been a fascinating journey.

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Everything Nothing by Chris Drury. From an echogram of East Antarctica.

The pilgrimage to Santiago – the talking walking cure

Paul Donovan

CEO, CH Foundation

The remains of disciple St James are said to be buried in the cathedral in Santiago. Historically pilgrims would have made the long walk to Santiago de Compostela for religious reasons, but nowadays most people say they do it to get away from the everydayness of their lives, perhaps at a time when they need something to change. More than 100,000 people walk one of the Camino routes in Spain every year: 800km with all you need for a month in a rucksack on your back. This is one man's reflection on what the Camino gave him.

After a 35-year career in business, building and leading major businesses, I am now actively engaged in the world of philanthropy. I first became interested in the how increased awareness around 'total health' can improve performance and the ability to bounce back from adversity when I became a member of the advisory board at the University of Westminster Centre for Resilience. Only then did I realise the profound effect that an experience such as the pilgrimage to Santiago can have, feeding the body and the spirit in equal measure.

The Camino of St James is the world famous pilgrimage route that begins at St Jean Pied de Port in France. It crosses the Pyrenees and passes through northern Spain before ending after 780 kilometers at the shrine of the apostle St James the Great in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. Centuries old, and part of a wider network of religious routes, it is undertaken today by around 200,000 'pilgrims' of all ages and nationalities, who travel on foot, bicycle or even by horse.

I became a pilgrim in 2012. I had just completed a stressful overseas posting as a CEO, and at the age of 54 I felt that I needed to take personal stock, and to work out what I really wanted from life. Since completing the

800km to Santiago I have tackled another part of the network from le Puy en Valay to Conques in France, and have repeated the two-week stretch from St Jean Pied de Port to Bourgos. Clearly for me it meets a need! But only now have I begun to truly understand the unique contribution that the Camino can make to personal wellbeing.

Many undertake the pilgrimage for religious or spiritual reasons, but the majority are simply seeking clarity or meaning in their lives. A minority are simply walkers whose motivations are health related or simply cultural.

It's been said that every experience changes who we are, and the more intense the experience the greater the change. For me, the prospect of setting off alone, walking 25km every day for around five weeks, carrying all my belongings in a rucksack and staying in basic shared accommodation, was daunting. But the reality was an unforgettable and transformative experience.

The walking cure

I'd describe the Camino recipe as a holistic one. Its value comes from the combination of extended physical



exercise and immersion in an experience rich in rituals. This somehow creates a strong sense of purpose, of connection and belonging. I now feel that its uniqueness may even provide a formula for greater personal resilience in the face of the pressures of modern day life.

There are clear health benefits from a long-term bout of high-volume, low-intensity exercise. After the initial trial of a 27km walk/climb over the Pyrenees on day one, it was amazing how quickly my body habituated to the demands of walking this distance every day. And if I ever needed proof, it came in the form of an 80-year-old Italian man I met, who was slowly walking his fifth Camino from Rome to Santiago!

As for scientific reassurance, there is clear evidence that pilgrims' body weight, blood pressure and fitness all improve. Given that walking with a pack burns off around 4,500 kcal a day it's not surprising that anyone a few pounds overweight can shed the equivalent of their backpack in weight over a month or so. Other research has shown that pilgrims' HDL (good) cholesterol goes up and their LDL (bad) cholesterol down. So as long as you can keep blister-free (try rubbing Vicks Vaporub on your feet each morning) and don't fall over going downhill, you'll be OK. Group exercise and social support are also predictors of exercise adherence, making it more likely you'll keep going if you stick with your fellow pilgrims. Then there's a rush of endorphins released each day by the satisfaction of reaching physical goals previously felt to be impossible. No wonder that walking is good for you! Like all rites of passage the Camino is packed with symbols and rituals at literally every turn, and it was as I found myself embracing the history and the meaning of the Camino that unexpected mental benefits surfaced.

Preparation

The first aspect of the Camino experience is personal separation from everyday life. The process of preparation and planning for a considerable time away from home, and reducing my belongings to no more than will fit into a backpack challenged my perceptions as to what is 'necessary'.

Then there was the question of whether I would walk alone or take a friend. It's estimated that two out of three people on the Camino begin the journey alone, the other third as couples, and just a few – maybe 5% – go in groups of two or more. I have walked alone twice and once in a group of three. But for me, walking alone has been a richer, more challenging experience, one that made me more open to new experiences, to meeting new people and to the personal risk of

disclosure, which for me has been an essential ingredient in self-discovery.

Finally there is the question of cutting the digital cord with everyday life. My own dependence decreased significantly: I had agreed with my wife that I would call home just once a week. Those who wear earphones to shut out the world on their daily commute soon come to understand that experiencing the sounds of nature and conversing with their fellow humans is infinitely more enriching than listening to music. That said, going to sleep with an audio book in a dormitory filled with snoring pilgrims was sometimes a blessing!

Letting go

The second, transitional phase is about shedding social and professional roles. As a typical pilgrim you are recognisable by your boots, backpack and scallop shell. No one knows or is much interested in your background or social status. So people quickly begin to be accepted for who they are and for why they are making the journey. In this way intense feelings of social togetherness emerge. Pilgrims quickly open up to each other, often to provide



The pilgrimage to Santiago – the talking walking cure

consolation and support. For my part I formed some friendships which lasted the five weeks, and others which still endure today. Solo walkers quickly join their 'Camino family', a loose group who will often stay together for parts or sometimes the whole journey. If you become disenchanted with someone there is always the simple expedient of getting up an hour earlier and walking a few kilometers more than them that day!

When physical hardship is supported by the group even the frailest of individuals can display remarkable feats of endurance. Encouragement from others to 'keep going' on the Camino in the face of blisters, injury or fatigue is something every pilgrim will



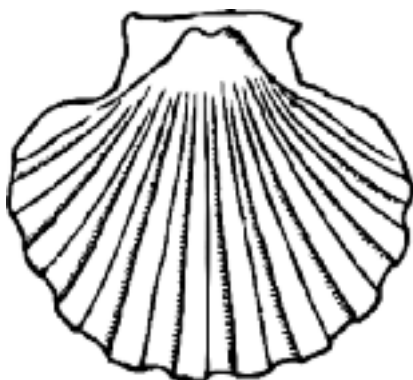
recognise. This enhanced sense of kinship affects the way complete strangers are treated: coming from a world where we often don't know our neighbours, such closeness became a real source of pleasure. And because feeling supported helps us cope with adversity, small random acts of kindness can be a boon. On return from the Camino many pilgrims feel they can cope better and feel a renewed commitment to building a stronger sense of community.

Even avowedly non-religious pilgrims adopt religious rituals. Milestones and other special places are often littered with piles of stones, representing the loss of sorrow. The Camino is also punctuated by large numbers of wayside crosses and chapels offering moments of quiet respite from the rigours of the journey. The Cruz Ferro – iron cross – at the highest point in the journey is a favoured location for leaving a personal memento or a tribute to a loved one.

But the most common ritual is to greet pilgrims with the cheery phrase 'buen Camino!' which I would hear dozens of times each day from fellow walkers and the locals.

The 'letting go' of everyday life can also mean that personal conflicts which may have been neglected or repressed come to the fore. The intensity of time spent with others – on the one hand sleeping in crowded communal dormitories but also walking alone in silence – somehow forces an inward focus. The rhythm of walking also gives rise to self-insights. Many commentators have observed that the positive effects of the Camino on wellbeing and self-esteem appear to be long-lasting. My own experience resulted in both a significant

The pilgrimage to Santiago – the talking walking cure



As a typical pilgrim you are recognisable by your boots, backpack and scallop shell

change in my long-term personal ambitions and a sense of confidence in the future.

In the final few days of the walk I felt overcome not so much by the prospect of an exuberant arrival at Santiago de Compostela but more by my contemplation of the future beyond. Entering the cathedral I was aware of taking part in history as I placed my hand on the stone doorframe which has been worn away by the touch of the millions who have preceded me. As I sat in silence I began to cry uncontrollably. To this day I honestly can't say exactly why, but I did so without embarrassment and somehow felt cleansed and renewed as a result.

The final act for many is the pilgrim mass which takes place each day. This amazing piece of theatre is the ritual burning of incense. Powered by a team of clerics manning long ropes, an enormous bronze thurible known as the Botafumeira swings like a giant pendulum



emitting a haze of smoke that fills the enormous space; a truly fitting ending to a long journey.

The physical proof of having completed the pilgrimage is the Compostela. This certificate in Latin is issued on the spot by the Cathedral of Santiago after due scrutiny of the pilgrims' actual journey. Mine sits in pride of place in my study at home.

For some the urge to walk on was unstoppable, and a good number make the final 80km onward to Finisterre – literally the end of the world. There, I'm told, many take a final run naked into the sea and burn their pilgrimage clothing on the beach – weather dependent I assume!

The return

The process of return and re-integration into everyday life and to circumstances that are still the same, isn't an easy one. I know that I struggled to share with others and relate the depth of my experiences on the Camino. I found it very difficult to cope with crowded and noisy places for several months, and would often seek comfort in long country walks.

Freud described psychotherapy as the 'talking cure'. The holistic benefits of the Camino for me were undoubted. I returned fitter, more focused, more mindful and determined to connect more deeply with others. For me it provided the 'walking, talking cure'.

Thoughts while on an Everest England pilgrimage

Peter Owen Jones

Anglican Priest, author and television presenter

Peter Owen Jones recently returned from a pilgrimage beginning on Brae Hill in Cornwall and ending in Cumbria on Scafell Pike. The total ascent of his ten-day walk took him up the height of Mount Everest.

Our journey

There is a growing interest in something loosely termed 'pilgrimage'. This is unexpected: the Christian community has not promoted it, yet it seems to be happening organically. This is not to say that it is happening accidentally, though the natural world is full of 'accidents' that eventually have huge consequences. Consider the accident 20 years ago when two African cattle egrets were blown into southern England, where now many thousands of them breed. It is said that evolution proceeds through random mutation, whose outcomes occasionally happen to be better adapted to a changing environment; and so this new line thrives. Another

Really I began life as a hunter – birds' eggs, antlers, dragonflies. I gave that up when I realised I could not possess any of it. I must have been 14 at the time. I left school at 16 and worked on the land in England and Australia. It has been the land, and over the last 20 years or so the planet, that has deepened an understanding of what is given and how it is received. And I have come to accept that this point now is a critical fulcrum in terms of how we define progress, and that I see as moving from an isolated national identity to planetary consciousness. I was ordained as an Anglican priest 22 years ago.

way of telling this story is that change happens over time in response to a deep connectedness between individuals and their world; a process articulated in this process of becoming, one based in relationship, and therefore far from 'accidental'. It is no accident that the question of separation is rising up everywhere, demanding an answer from all of us.

Separation

At a car boot sale recently a young man selling small statuettes of angels, Hindu deities and some weather-worn fairies, asked me whether I identified as 'a separate being'. No one had ever asked me such a question, nor had I thought of putting it to others. Yet it is a great question, implying as it does 'separate from what?'. It made me ask myself 'where do I feel my boundary to be; where does my sense of self end and "everything else" begin?', if the gap between the two tells of the degree of felt-separateness. These metaphors embody our sense of identity as somehow related to space and to borders, but the real separation arises in our mind and our imagination, for we have inherited in the West a template of profound separation: of divine from human, of atheists from

humanists and Christians, of consecrated land from the unconsecrated – which in turn has licensed the vandalism that is intensive farming. We have separated mind from matter, thinking from feeling, brain from heart, and friend from foe in ways that underpin our culture's basic assumptions and belief systems: materialism, objectivity, rationalism, national identity.

Inter-dependence

Every generation likes to believe its time is pivotal; that its decisions will lay the ground for all the centuries to come. But humankind is experiencing a new kind of tension. People experience themselves more acutely than ever before as isolated individuals. It is a time when scientists concur with mystics that my wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of all life forms, of all that lives and breathes. Indeed our culture is awakening to the fact that everything is connected to everything else, that everything goes somewhere, that 'there is no such thing as a free lunch'. We live in an age when there is no escaping that our individual actions have far-reaching consequences for planetary health, that my health influences your health and global

health. We know too that Gaia's vast interconnecting cycles of earth, water, air and warmth stabilise the oceans and the atmosphere. Human health and planetary health are inseparable, joined physically, emotionally, spiritually. Now it's personal: each breath affects the balance of carbon and oxygen across the entire planetary system.

Collapse

In the past, many cultures have so denuded the land and the bounty within it that they became unsustainable. In his fine book *Collapse*, Jared Diamond names the Maya, the Anasazi, the Easter Islanders and other examples. But our generation is facing (or failing to face) circumstances no other generation has encountered. The same human generated problems that collapsed ancient societies are still very much alive – deforestation and habitat destruction, soil fertility and water management problems, over-population. But add to the list human-made climate change, toxins building up in the environment and energy shortages, all of them threatening to disrupt the planetary ecosystem as they rampage through a globalising culture. We hear that this human-created apocalypse – the Anthropocene Age – might affect us but not until tomorrow, always tomorrow; it sits just over the horizon. But really it is here right now. It is happening, unfolding now. This is indeed a pivotal time.

Nature-fix?

An abundance of research tells us that time spent 'in nature' lowers blood pressure, increases our sense of well-being, and boosts our immune system; that city dwellers who live near green space have better health. All well and good: we humans walk out into woods and hills and come back feeling better about being humans. But this one-way view of our relationship with the other-than human world misses the point. For there is no science to suggest that rather than merely 'take the waters' like Victorians at a spa, we should give something in return. Instead we



wander home declaring how much better we feel, then turn up for work next morning so the whole process of depletion can begin again, in a society where for many of us, living is exhausting.

It seems to me an error to be using green-time as if it were like taking a pill: a lost opportunity to do this without letting it change the way we relate to the natural world. It is surely time for health professionals to create a revolution in the way we think about what has been called 'the nature fix', for it will be in making this shift that the great healing has to begin. By acting as though trees were the new benzodiazepine, we only mire ourselves further in our illusion of being separated from what it is that sustains us. Trees are not benzodiazepines, neither are the mountains corticosteroids, nor the rivers SSRIs. To use the natural world prescriptively means we continue to grab what we need while remaining oblivious to what is being offered to us. It is strange that we should look to something to fix us, which we are in the process of breaking and destroying. Because we, who in increasing numbers are taking to the remaining wild places, are responding to a crisis of our own creation.

The next step

We are responding to a planet that is in crisis because we are in crisis; a crisis that will only deepen if our relationship with the planet remains broken as we are broken.

Pilgrimages are times when knots can be untied and new bonds formed, times when perhaps we walk towards a state of being forgiven, or of being able to forgive. And at best I find I eventually walk into a state of gratitude, of grace. Then, in pilgrimage I am taking part in something I am not set apart from. I do not understand the bio-rhythmic force of these states of being nor how they might be healing me on a personal and physical level. But since the healing I feel isn't due to having taken something in as though it were a pill, I have to ask, 'why this is happening in this place and how this is happening to me?'

Can only some of us hear this voice? It would appear more and more of us feel compelled to listen out for it, for we are being drawn towards an inner place of deep disquiet, of sacred unease, a place where we are lost, and the way ahead is truly uncertain. Yet here and only here may we re-find our bearings. The temptation is to hang on to the old map, but the map that furnished us with the directions that brought us here won't show us where we need to go.

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The return

Peter Owen Jones

Now she speaks
in tongues of leaves
sending flies and owls
out onto the road
nothing is imagined

Did you kneel
when the grasses
raised from mud
began to speak with rain
in the houses
walled with dust and light
holding glimpses
of rocks and fields

Did you kneel
heavy with wine
at the gate of the night
as she raised her flames
and let
your horses run

Did you welcome
the autumn
as she routs the trees
and sets
the tomb of winter
deceiving you
with hope

You have made
music out of emptiness
spoken with fish
and demanded
bread and breath.

Your rafts and sails
they never owned
a destination

from ANAMNESIS – the remembering of soul

Jay Rayner

I.

Traveller: stop a moment.

It is time to stop time, to step inside.

Come into this house of quiet

and let it take your mind. Can you?

The hardest thing. To stop thinking.

So you can start really seeing

and enter the silent mind

that waits in the stillness, and your breathing.

Can you sit still? Can you let

everything be around you?

Then you will find new eyes

and the rose in your heart will open.

Then you will know what is true

infinitely made for you, in each moment;

this dew drop, this day's pearl

this grit irritating deep in your being

where everything is reflected to you.

Traveller, who are you? Under your name

your occupation and your clothes

you are formless consciousness living in time

with a strange disposition to love.

Dear naked soul, come home.

Dying – the final journey

Peter Fenwick

Hon Senior Lecturer Kings College Institute of Psychiatry, and Department of Neuroscience, Southampton University

The author became interested in end-of-life experiences after one of his own patients described a 'classic' near-death experience (NDE). Since then he has collected and analysed more than 300 examples of NDEs and is now documenting what hospice workers and others have witnessed at the end of patients' lives.

Birth and death are perhaps the two most significant landmarks in a human life. And yet while we may make extensive preparations for a birth, we do very little to prepare for death. Or perhaps I'd better phrase that another way. We do little to prepare for the process of dying. Death is another matter. Death has its own rituals – the wake, the condolences, the funeral service and burial. But these are all rituals to mark the end of a life, to help the bereaved acknowledge and come to terms with a death. They do nothing to help the dying person through the dying process. And yet if you ask 10 people how they feel about death and whether are afraid, the chances are that most will say it's not death itself that they fear; it's the *process* of dying and the anticipation

of annihilation. It is this that we should be focused on. Because it is a process. And it should be, and can be, a peaceful process, though it is one that most of us know very little about.

As a neuro-psychiatrist I worked at the Maudsley, John Radcliffe, and Broadmoor hospitals. But I would say my most compelling (and challenging) research has been into end-of-life phenomena. I have a longstanding interest in consciousness, and in what near-death experiences can tell us about its relationship to the brain, and perhaps to a wider field of non-located consciousness. My wife Elizabeth and I have written a book about the experiences of dying people, their relatives, hospice and palliative care workers. We hope *The Art of Dying* will help prepare those who are caring for dying people to understand some of the extra-ordinary, but far from uncommon, experiences that come about in the final days or hours of life.

of annihilation. It is this that we should be focused on. Because it is a process. And it should be, and can be, a peaceful process, though it is one that most of us know very little about.

Understanding how we die

A peaceful death needs preparation, and most of us are not prepared. We know that death is the shutting down of the body and brain, but we know much less about the dying process and the mental states of the dying. This is largely because we are attached to life, and in our culture death is something to be feared, and therefore ignored. Our attention and our efforts are directed much more towards prolonging life than preparing for the inevitability of death. And so we know very little about it.

It is only recently that we have begun to study the subjective process of dying and the many phenomena which have been found to occur around the time of death. There is very little argument now about whether such phenomena actually occur. The argument is usually more about whether their origin is spiritual or organic. But does this matter? The point surely is that experiencing them can transform a process that has always been thought of as fearful into something positive, indeed, joyful. Wholihan (2016) points out that these

experiences are both under-recognised, and cannot easily be explained within a traditional medical model. Yet those who consistently act as caregivers to the dying say they validate such experiences. And Melvin Morse, a paediatrician and researcher found 'deathbed phenomena to be an integral aspect of the dying process' which, he says, '...should be interpreted as being part of the spectrum of spiritual events that happens to the dying, their families and their caretakers'.

Learning about dying

The data in our own study, from 2004 to 2010, came from interviews with 110 carers in one palliative care team, one nursing home and two hospices in England, and three hospices in Holland, plus data collected in an Irish hospice study by Dr Una McColville. Following our TV and radio discussions we also received more than 1,500 emails, data very rich indeed. We found that although almost all the carers we interviewed were aware of and interested in the phenomena they had observed, very few understood their significance. Only the Dutch carers had received proper training in this area, whereas the British were poorly trained and the Irish training was worse. Clearly then, the training of carers – doctors, nurses, palliative care and auxiliary staff – should be a priority.

Ideally every adult should know of these possibilities. Perhaps education about the journey of dying ought to begin in schools.

The phenomena most often experienced by the dying include visions – usually of dead relatives, sometimes of unknown spiritual beings. We are told that these deathbed visitors draw nearer as death approaches and even sit on the bed of the dying person, in the most human and comforting way.

'I joined my daughter, after an hour, at the hospital and we both sat chatting to my mother. She spoke to me about my life... and my future – all interspersed with references to "these people" who were now at the end of her bed. She told us that she wouldn't be there the next day as "these people" would "pick her up when she fell and take her on a journey". We were slightly spooked at her comments, but she was totally at ease....She insisted that we shouldn't cry when she died. We then left her and said we would return later on Christmas Eve.'

The deathbed visions may begin a week or so before death; and then in the final days or hours, the dying person may describe the feeling that they are transiting in and out of a new reality. This 'new reality' is very similar to the world described by people who have near death experiences, full of light, love and compassion, feelings of unity, and often with presences who are usually described either as dead relatives, or as spiritual beings, and who are there to help them through the dying process.

'Suddenly she stared intently up at the window. This lasted only minutes but it seemed ages. She suddenly turned to me and said, "Please Pauline, don't ever be afraid of dying. I have seen a beautiful light and I was going towards it, I wanted to go into that light, it was so peaceful I really had to fight to come back...". Sadly she died the next morning...but I knew she had seen something that day which gave her comfort and peace when she knew she had only hours to live.'

'I was nursing my friend who had definite views that there was no afterlife. In her last couple of hours she became very peaceful and arose from her unconsciousness periodically saying clearly and happily such phrases as "I will know soon", "come on, get on with it then, I am ready to go now", and "it is so beautiful". She would immediately lapse back into unconsciousness after uttering these phrases. She was very obviously content, happy and at peace. It was a wonderful experience for her partner and me.'

Spiritual care of the dying

A Swiss palliative care theologian, Monica Renz, has a new approach to spiritual care of the dying. It requires, she

says, more than just giving a response to a patient's spiritual beliefs and attitudes. It has to do with understanding how connectedness and consciousness and communication are changing during the dying process. Even when individuals are ill or suffering or dying they often have spiritual experiences of grace, and encounters with the transcendent or the divine. When this happens the person is in a state quite different from everyday consciousness. Most importantly, Monica Renz insists that spiritual experiences are powerfully independent of religious attitudes. This is something we have found time and again in our own research.

In her book *Dying: a transition* (Columbia University Press, 2015) Monica Renz describes three phases in the dying process.

- **Pre transition**

The dying person is still in everyday consciousness and may feel needs (eg thirst, need for bonding), pain, and emotions (fear, joy). Many fear losing control and their dignity as they come to realise that their death is inevitable. In this everyday, ego-centred, pre-transition consciousness people can become locked due to denial, reactivated traumas, anxiety, strong attachments or unresolved family issues, and awareness of past negative behaviour. This is commonly called terminal anxiety. Loving support, and being given permission to be released and help in finding meaning may help them move on.

- **Transition**

Transition itself entails the loosening of ego consciousness. People typically show physical signs of anxiety and struggle. They may be restless, convulse, pour with sweat, or simply stare. Traumas may be reactivated. Some may experience transition in symbolic scenarios such as apocalyptic fights (although we have never seen this).

- **Post transition/awakening**

In this state the everyday ego is no longer dominating, for the person has moved into a state of non-symbolic, or non-dual consciousness. In this state they seem serene, beyond anxiety, pain or powerlessness, usually unable to speak but still able to hear and to communicate by gestures, or single words. In this state of consciousness joy is the predominant emotion: intimations sometimes of reconciliation, of having visions and a sense of achieving peace are observed.

Monica Renz estimates that as many as 90% of people reach this transcendent state before death. She also provides several mental attitudes and practices that may help us face death with equanimity and reduce suffering. She suggests – as you might expect – that the surest way is to have had a previous near death experience. People who pray or meditate regularly, or have had any kind of mystical experience, may be much less likely to suffer, or be afraid. If you hope to experience 'joy at thine end' curiosity may be the most effective attitude: simply to look forward to death and be interested in the journey.



Reaching for the Moon by Adrienne Thomas

Pilgrimage at the end of life

Deborah Kelly

Integrative arts psychotherapist

This article draws on Deborah Kelly's study of her palliative care group work, which was inspired by the Asklepian temple healing traditions of Ancient Greece. This work viewed pilgrimage as a journey towards a place of healing, a journey inwards towards self, or soul, and the pilgrimage of life towards death. The author's study explored the therapeutic space of palliative care groups working in and with nature, using imagery, ritual, and bodywork. Five interconnected lenses, integral to creating a healing space and environment, emerged from archival material and interviews: pilgrimage, place, nature, imagination, and presence.

I originally trained and worked as a nurse and clinical teacher, and subsequently as a Shiatsu practitioner. I have worked in palliative care for 18 years exploring both Western and Eastern medicine. As an Integrative arts psychotherapist, group facilitator and teacher, my professional interests include working with nature, ritual, imagination and embodied exploration. Studying with Marie Angelo at Chichester University led me to explore transpersonal research methodology that could incorporate the sort of creative, imaginal and embodied explorations that were aligned to my therapeutic practice. Currently I work as a programme director, tutor, and examiner at the Institute of Arts in Therapy and Education in London. I also run a private practice and facilitate groups about death and dying, groups for elder women, and ecotherapy.

Introduction

The group projects at the heart of this study were inspired by Dr Michael Kearney's search for a new paradigm of palliative care, that would address suffering as well as pain (Kearney, 2009). Concerned that its growing medical specialisation might overshadow the original holistic focus of palliative care, he saw the potential of integrating Hippocratic medicine (from which our modern medical model developed) with the intuitive healing cultivated in temples dedicated to the god Asklepius.

Asklepian temples were built in places of natural beauty, where the air was clear and where water and springs were abundant. These sanctuaries are described as places set apart from normal collective life, and as such invited a journey towards healing. Activities there, which we might recognise as contemporary holistic therapies, included bathing, rest, exercise, engagement in music and drama, the 'practice of beauty' and attending to the psyche through ritual, meditation and prayer.

The preparation and waiting within the temples was intended to put the patients into the right frame of mind to undergo the final stage of healing,

the incubation of a dream. This marked an initiation into another realm, where they would experience a 'visitation by the gods' (Patton, 2009:5). This inclusive, holistic approach involved a belief that the source of healing was within oneself *and* that healing can come through a dream, through a unity with the divine.

Inspired by Kearney's vision, I set up two projects in palliative care, incorporating Asklepian principles, which are ongoing. Participants in the palliative stage of their illness travel to a venue in a beautiful natural setting where there is time for reflection, reverie and being in nature. There they receive body therapies and can take part in meditation, simple ritual (creating a wheel of the year) and experience embodied imagination through creative visualisation, art, story and myth. Reflecting on these group experiences, there emerged the concept of a pilgrimage within the therapeutic space: a sense of 'leaving behind' everyday life, and of 'going towards' a place of rest or healing, and the potential this created for transformation before the return. The discussion that follows is adapted from my main doctoral dissertation (Kelly, 2017).

Pilgrimage was not seen in any religious sense, but rather as naming a transformational journey of intention, that could incorporate literal and imaginal expression.

Pilgrimage

A pilgrim is a traveller – literally, one who has come from afar. Pilgrimages are often associated with a sacred destination whose significance can be religious, moral or spiritual. Schmidt, writing on pilgrimage and loss, identifies six types of pilgrimage: devotional, healing, ritual/life-cycle, obligatory, wandering and transformative. From the perspective of depth psychology, the encounter with the gods can signify the inner journey towards soul. Clift and Clift (1996:9) draw on Jungian concepts in describing pilgrimage as an archetype with the capacity to ‘rearrange psychic elements, thereby producing psychological, spiritual and social effects’, in Jung’s terms ‘a heroic journey into the depths of the psyche in the quest for individuation.

To be a pilgrim is to experience life as an endless and eternal process of being.

Satish Kumar (2009:16)

According to Joseph Campbell the journey of the pilgrim/hero/heroine includes the *departure*, the *initiation/awakening* and the *return*. The pilgrim’s return involves change: he or she cannot go back to what they were before. For people facing death, transformation is inevitable, not least by the physical disease and its treatment. The medical model aims to remove the impediment to health where possible, so that the patient can return to normal. But this is not an option for people facing death, whose journey may entail immense suffering and separation, alongside the potential for transformation. In Hall’s description of the pilgrim’s descent, before there can be revelation and rebirth/return, the separation must be followed by dismemberment. For Dante, the journey toward paradise takes him through hell. For those accompanying the pilgrim, the journey may be no less arduous for, rather than intervening as the Hippocratic doctor might, the palliative care (Asklepian) practitioner can do no more (and no less) than travel alongside. The task is to remain open to what unfolds, facilitating a personal experience of illness in an intuitive way, and so enabling a patient to ‘dive down into the experience of illness in a quest for healing’ (Kearney, 1992:46). Kearney challenges the palliative care practitioners to be committed to making a journey themselves, from the surface to the depths, ‘to know what it means to cross these inner boundaries’.

Pilgrimage at the end of life

At a conference on the Sacred Art of Pilgrimage in 2013 the poet Jay Ramsay, in distilling the process of pilgrimage, presented seven progressive perspectives. I have used this

structure loosely to map out the stages of pilgrimage in relation to palliative care, and specifically in relation to our group-work projects.

“A pilgrim is a traveller – literally, one who has come from afar”

The first stage: pilgrim not tourist

Satish Kumar, who describes himself as an Earth pilgrim, distinguishes the tourist from the pilgrim, who is seeking a deep inner purpose rather than a superficial experience of travel. As a consequence of being faced with a life-threatening illness, superficiality may drop away. Indeed, whether they welcomed it or not, our group participants were already moving into deeper waters, already beginning to leave behind what they had known and had expected from life. With this separation, everything had changed. In a sense they were already pilgrims. Yet unlike their illness, their journey towards our group meetings was one they had chosen.

They embarked on these journeys in the hope of finding rest, nourishment, and some level of healing experience. The facilitators also had to prepare for and hold an openness to depth and awakening. This trust and belief in a ‘journey towards healing’, a journey of intention, may contribute to the possibility of transformation, not in a passive way, but through an active openness to depth. As psychotherapist Jauregui (2007:174) writes: ‘Moments of surprise come, compelling us with their grace, even when the problems of life seem too daunting to bear, making room for our stories of epiphanies, we rivet our attention onto these moments, watch for the objections that conspire against them, and explore their power of healing. Look at this! we say, ‘Look with me’. And in the saying, we are changed, and so is the world.’

The second stage: reading the signs

Dawkins writes of pilgrimage: ‘Sensing or seeing the patterns in the landscape, and comparing them to the energies of your own body and psyche, can help you realise the subtle and intimate relationship between yourself and nature’ (Dawkins, 1998:142). For our group participants, the journey to the venue enhanced their awareness of the seasons and weather: people noticed how the landscape and natural world could reflect, or contradict or influence their inner world and their physical body. For example, ‘I heard the wind in the trees and my breath softened’, and ‘as the fields opened up, I could feel tension releasing’. The opening landscape brought a sense of peace and tranquility, a sense of something ‘dropping away’ as the journey proceeded, that seemed to encourage an awareness of other ‘signs’ on the way. I recall, for example, a woman who was astonished and inspired by seeing a fallen tree with new shoots; another who noticed a bird’s nest and saw new life; a young man who saw beauty inside a stone. The developing connection

to nature also revealed death, and the cycle of the seasons, and the invitation to see life and death from a perspective beyond the individual.

The third stage: companions on the road: a shared journey

Along with intention and commitment to the journey, something shared had begun: a sense of fellowship and companionship, a sharing with others who understood about the cancer journey: the chemotherapy, the loss of hair, the loss of vitality and vigour, the fear in the dark nights, the deepening into life. The journey towards death, while immanent for some, was being shared by all.

According to Peter Dawkins the recurring path trodden by pilgrims, can heal not only ourselves but the land itself

The fourth stage: pilgrimage as story and remembering

As our journeys to the venue were repeated this prompted a remembering: a sense of others having travelled this way before. According to Peter Dawkins the recurring path trodden by pilgrims, can heal not only ourselves but the land itself. He writes:

'[The land is] constantly energised by the flow of pilgrims and this stimulates healing and transformation in the land, the cosmos and the person... No-one can take part in this without being personally affected: the pilgrim's own consciousness is raised, and he or she gains more understanding of life'

(Dawkins, 1998:142)

This view comes from a belief in Earth energy, and of transformative healing in a wider sense – ecological as well as personal. This connection between Earth, body, mind and spirit, though familiar in eastern and esoteric traditions, is less appreciated in western medicine, yet an intuitive sense of this connection soon emerged as we journeyed through the landscape. And the sense of stimulating healing through a flow of energy was present in other ways in our work, for example through bodywork, meditation, and tai chi.

As the seasons passed and the lanes renewed their spring flowers, or winter brought its stillness, people were remembered. And so a 'flow of pilgrims', a remembering of others 'having gone before' became an important aspect of our experience. This brings us to the second perspective, of a communal sense of remembrance, and of stories told of past group members, and the community of people coming together time and again. The repeated shared rituals and the stories told of others, and the ashes scattered in these places, or the images and poetry of past

group members, all represented a similar record of those who had 'gone before'. Perhaps like the offerings left at the Asklepiian temples, that were adorned with inscribed accounts of healings, these elements offered new participants a sense of encouragement, and belief in our work. Somehow this past community affirmed the potential of the healing place we were creating, and legitimised it for others who might be wary of the group; for a significant aspect of any pilgrimage way to a healing shrine is the cultural legitimacy of the path. The knowledge that it has been powerful and affirming for others who have travelled it, is poignant when we think of the path we must all travel, and of those who have died before us, and who have left their marks along the wayside, or at the temples. They can be our teachers, guides, inspiration and hope.

The fifth stage: becoming part of the landscape

Jay Ramsay writes of a developing sense of inter-relatedness as the 'pilgrimage' proceeds; of a connection with the land and a growing sense of unity and belonging. Such a sense of interconnectedness – perhaps heightened for someone close to death – of being at one with the natural world, may enable a search for meaning, or prompt experiences of meaningfulness. The poet, mystic and philosopher John Moriaty speaks of experiencing such an interconnectedness – a sympathy deep down in all things, with all things, which places our life and dying in a different paradigm. From this perspective, unity with nature can offer a feeling for cyclical time, rather than the linear trajectory of time's arrow. There is a rhythm, slower than we might be used to in everyday life: seasons come and go, death engenders new life, and nothing is lost. When there is a sense of time running out, as there can be for those living close to death, an experience of natural beauty can expand one moment into an eternity. At the other extreme, a glimpse of the incalculable distance of the stars, or of the vast age of the universe, may help put our lives into a far larger perspective.

Unity with nature can offer a feeling for cyclical time, rather than the linear trajectory of time's arrow

The sixth stage leads into a visionary appreciation of the land as a place where 'heaven and earth touch' (Ramsay, 2013). Here, Jay Ramsay proposes we are seeing with the eyes of spirit. Henri Corbin coined the term 'visionary geography' in his writings on the world of imagination. He proposes that this imaginal world is real, with its own laws and purposes, 'a world of visions, which guides, anticipates and molds sense perceptions', through the imagination (Cheetham, 2003:71) enabling us to behold beings who can be interacted with, listened to,

learnt from, and who may guide us (or terrify us), should we be willing or able to engage with this world. For our group participants this inner pilgrimage into other levels of awareness came through meditation, reverie, ritual, story and embodied imagination, engendering a movement into another world of potential wisdom and new landscapes. Crossing such thresholds has been seen by writers such as Stanislav Grof, as a preparation for the final crossing, of death.

Seventh stage. The Asklepien temple dream delivered a 'visitation by the gods', the final transformative, healing moment of the pilgrimage. In our work, it could come in the guise of an insight, a felt experience of meaning, a moment of deep connection or presence. The metaphor of pilgrimage can relate both to the physical journey and the inner journey, leading to transformation and the return. Yet when we consider the pilgrimage towards death, the idea of a linear trajectory, so central in western thought, can run us into trouble, implying as it does that we have run out of road; that there is no return. Continuing the linear metaphor, death might be the moment of transition from the earthly journey into something else, whether imagined as another shore, or a returning home or, through burial or fire – a physical return into the earth or the air. Eastern traditions instead embrace a circular movement towards the centre, or outward into waves of rarification – towards further incarnations or the final release of Nirvana. Whatever way we see death, it marks a transition of some sort, for as Hermann Hesse writes:

*Maybe the moment of our death too
Is just another gate to new dimensions
The call of life to us will never end
Well then, my heart, take leave and heal.*
Hesse (2011:113)

Kreinheder reflects on this final stage of the healing journey in his moving and soul-full account of his own dying. He writes:

As death approaches and the ego weakens, the unconscious leaks through and before long we are almost immersed in the divine. God, as Master Eckhart envisioned him, is a great underground river, and as we are gently gradually borne upon the waters, we are supremely content and fully healed. Death is the final healing.
Kreinheder (1991:108–110)

For him, pilgrimage at the end of life was indeed a healing journey, returning him to wholeness. As companions on the way, we, who may not be so certain, can simply walk with compassion.

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Pilgrimage as a pathway to healing for humans

Mandy Pullen

Eco shamanic practitioner

The split between mind and nature may be at the heart of our ecological crisis. Eco-psychotherapy brings together eco-psychology and psychotherapy in various ways to reconnect outer nature with our inner nature. It implies a mutuality between personal healing and healing for the Earth.

The art of pilgrimage in the 21st century is having a bit of a renaissance – the word has come back into our vocabulary and has certainly been popularised by the recent upsurge of pilgrims who seek to walk the Camino de Santiago, an age-old route that passes from the Pyrenees across the north of Spain to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. As I write there has even been a three-part documentary following a group of minor celebrities as they walked the length of it.

I am an eco shamanic practitioner based on the edge of the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire. I run workshops, courses and trainings in the subject of eco shamanism and have been practicing shamanism since 2007, completing a shamanic practitioner training in 2009. I have an eclectic background – in the 1990s I set up and ran one of the first vegetable box schemes and introduced the first salad ‘bags’ onto the market. I have also taught classical, jazz and contemporary piano and singing. In the last few years I have developed a new way forward in shamanism called eco shamanism which takes into account our changing consciousness of our Earth. I work with others in the fields of pilgrimage, plant spirit, eco linguistics and poetry. I run a private practice from my home where my eco mapping therapy, the subject of this article, is based.

Generally speaking a pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred site or a journey which encompasses a religious or moral belief. Yet it is so much more. Modern pilgrimage has a much wider brief these days and it is often used to describe an individual’s or a group’s journey from one place to the next to honour the path itself or to give meaning to an activity, whether that has religious or spiritual connotations or something else entirely. My interpretation would be to seek out the energies of a place or path and to walk it with intent to heal it, to work with it, to become one with that which is other than human. Some of the work I’m involved with goes beyond the need to heal humans in that it may deal with land that is itself in need of healing. Added to this is also the opportunity of course, in following these intentions, to heal ourselves. The word spirit can be attached yet it can put some people off. In terms of a healing journey using the word ‘pilgrimage’ rather than ‘spiritual journey’ may be the decider in terms of someone’s belief that they are taking a journey in order to heal.

In my practice, pilgrimage doesn’t have to be about distance achieved, nor does it insist on having a well-known destination, sacred or otherwise. It does, however, need an intention; and this I believe is the key to the healing power of pilgrimage. It also distinguishes it from merely ‘going for a walk’. For healing to happen during pilgrimage I have found that we have to put ourselves *into* the landscape and somehow bring the landscape in to ourselves, and so create a reconnection to our environment that I believe is dangerously lacking in human awareness at this time. Could it be that many physical and mental illnesses stem from this disconnection, from seeing ourselves as separate from the very world we inhabit? It seems to me that in our culture and society we see ourselves as entities that exist *on* Earth rather than *in* it or *of* it.

Pilgrimage as a healing tool in psychotherapy practice

Individual clients arrive with different needs. They may be seeking a physical, emotional, psychological and/or

spiritual healing. They may already be getting help from other professionals, but sometimes they come to me first; all this depends very much on their beliefs.

In my toolkit I have a practice that I call 'eco mapping'. This simply means allowing the environment to provide a map for the healing process. In eco mapping the client does the work while the practitioner holds space, perhaps posing questions and inviting the 'outside' to come forward to help the individual. Eco mapping implies a spirit of pilgrimage in that I take people out into natural environments where the 'walking' element is arranged into four phases. We begin by walking and seeking the intention needed for the healing. Once this is established the second step involves passing through, or across, a 'threshold' – a stile, a river or stream, perhaps the entrance to a wood. As we walk on we stay open to signs, signals, portents, synchronicities that might attract us or have some meaning. This second phase is done in silence using all five senses to gather information, so that my client begins to sense the 'out there' arriving 'inside'. Generally the client will walk ahead while I aim to avoid overt interference. When the client's attention has been 'caught' by something in particular we enter the third phase. We explore it through our five senses and with a curiosity as to why it caught the client's attention, and how this might relate to the original intention. Quite often, an extraordinary sense of healing, or understanding, unfolds. When this happens it is as if the 'outside' provides the answers that are 'inside' as an almost direct and healing revelation from nature. In the fourth phase we return, retracing our steps, noticing other signs. Often they seem confirmatory, and will lead us into discussing how to go forward on further journeys.

For healing to happen during pilgrimage I have found that we have to put ourselves into the landscape and somehow bring the landscape in to ourselves

I see pilgrimage – an ancient but sometimes loaded word – becoming ever more accessible and relevant to holistic healing. And I firmly believe that most healing, professionals are there primarily to guide those who seek it: that the practitioner doesn't actually do the healing. In eco mapping the client does the work while the practitioner holds space, poses questions and allows the 'outside' to come forward and help the individual.

Here is an example – to protect the client's identity I'll call him Jim.

Jim recently came to see me wanting to find out how to deal with his partner's request for an 'open relationship'. Essentially this had knocked the stuffing out of him

and left him with entangled questions that were causing him a lot of anxiety. He felt trapped and confused, aware that his normal healthy eating habits were slipping, that his sleep patterns were disturbed and that he felt disempowered.

I see pilgrimage becoming ever more accessible and relevant to holistic healing

At my home we began the first phase of conversation to sort out our intention. This continued as we drove a short distance to a path in landscape I know well. We walked a little then paused at a particular stile to make sure, before crossing this threshold, that Jim understood the process and his intention, which was to seek clarity about his partner's decision. In the second phase Jim walked slowly ahead stopping when a couple of horses in a neighbouring field suddenly kicked up a rumpus. He continued into the mist which was in itself, he commented, symbolic of his confusion. A seagull squawked some distance away and Jim caught sight of it as it flew through the mist, circling him and then moving on. Jim commented on this during our later discussion. We continued into an unmanaged wood where Jim stopped at an old tree stump covered in mosses and lichens. As he seemed to have arrived where he needed to be, I joined him. We got down on our hands and knees and explored the stump in detail, until at one point we were looking at it as though it were a sheer green rockface rising out of tropical jungle. I asked him which route he would take if he were to climb the rockface. (At this point he told me that he was a rock climber!) He chose the easiest route that was a long and sloping buttress. I asked him to look at all the other routes he could climb. Exploring the possibilities, he traced other ways with his fingers. As I brought his attention back to his intention he immediately saw that there were many routes through his dilemma. So we turned to another rockface on the other side of the stump and as we explored it Jim realised that he had felt he had no say or control in his partner's decision. Yet he was seeing, through the green mossy tree trunk, that he too had options: that if his partner wanted to bring someone else into her life then he could continue his relationship with his partner and have other relationships too. Yet his vision extended way beyond sexual partners; that his need for human contact, love and support – something he had narrowed down to his partner – might come from many people. After some further exploration of the tree stump I asked Jim if he noticed anything different now that he had come to this awakening. He replied that the birds seemed to be singing much more than when he had approached the stump and that a gentle rain had begun to fall. He could see further in the

woods now he was out of the mist and as we made our return his walk was faster and he was enthusiastic about how his life was more than his relationship with his partner.

Jim left in good spirits with a plan. His pilgrimage was not defined by how far he had walked nor really by where he had walked. It was defined by setting an intention, letting his feet take him to where he needed to be and in the process allowing the 'outside' in.

In another example a client needed to talk more before the pilgrimage. I will call her Alice.

Alice, a health professional, contacted me with a problem she had sought to address with several psychotherapists. She spoke of her physical illnesses which had caused unfounded cancer scares, and even led to surgery. She had seen a variety of alternative therapists too, all to no avail. She believed there was something much deeper that lay at the heart of her troubles. We discussed her problem at length and it wove its way, eventually, to her mother who, Alice suggested, was a forceful and scary woman who had left her husband when Alice was very young. Her mother had essentially made Alice, and her sister feel responsible for everything that happened and as a result Alice had always put everyone else first and, if there was a problem, felt she was responsible for it, or was at fault in some way. Alice was visibly upset leading up to this revelation and was very vulnerable and open. Once she had gathered herself together I took her out on a walk into the fields and woods.

We practiced the same format as the previous example but Alice walked quite quickly into the wood without much more ado. Once there she soon stopped at a fallen tree lying horizontally at about waist height. The tree was definitely dead but the ivy growing along it was very much alive. Alice mentioned a sign she had read on the way which said 'Private – keep out' and said she felt thankful that the sign was so clear and she didn't have to make a decision about it. She also spoke of two lambs in a field on their own which hadn't run away like previous lambs had done. She said they seemed to represent her sister and herself – facing the world without help from their mother. Then she held the tree and said she 'felt for it' and found it sad. We talked about the dead tree and the living ivy and



in that moment Alice suddenly blurted out 'I'm not responsible for the dead tree and I can go on living despite its demise, it's not my fault'. This felt like a huge outburst for Alice, one that she had never dared utter. We carried our dialogue on and, after some discussion as Alice seemed to become happier and bolder, we returned home.

“The experience of entering into a conversation between natural beings is in itself healing”

A few days later Alice sent me an email saying, 'All is really well. There was a moment when old patterns might have surfaced and I found myself saying out loud, to no-one in particular, "But that's not my responsibility". I was standing near a mirror at the time and having those words emerge from my mouth brought a smile to my face, which I caught sight of in the mirror. How empowering!'

What strikes me is that despite all my interactions with Alice, it was the egoless and non-judgemental dead tree that gave her the key. After our initial discussion I allowed her to lead the walk, and to make her subsequent choice of a dead tree with its cover of living ivy. In such simple acts of pilgrimage the embodied permission to find meaningful objects can allow space for an individual to find their own answers and to catalyse their own healing. As Alice said to herself, 'How empowering!'

“Our current disconnection from the land is a blip in human history”

Although this work is often called 'ecotherapy' I believe there are aspects of landscape that can help us to heal; not because nature has some mysterious benign power, but because the experience of entering into a conversation between natural beings is in itself healing. Techniques such as intentional pilgrimage help us reconnect to a larger sense of ourselves. Yet modern pilgrimage feels like a returning to an ancient way of noticing the synchronicities in the land when walking through it with intent. This is something I am sure our ancestors were well practiced in. Our current disconnection from the land is a blip in human history. I hope that in the future we will re-establish a deep awareness of being one with the land and that the return of the pilgrim's mindset will be one of the ways we rediscover our timeless connectedness.

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8 steps on a journey to healing

Frances Goodall

EFT trainer; Wellbeing coach

I am a therapist, coach, trainer, speaker, mother and the author of *You can heal chronic illness: the lotus process, 8 steps to health and happiness*. Over five years, aged 19 to 24, I went from housebound with chronic fatigue to running half marathons, and later having a son who is now five. I've since spent a decade dedicating my life to supporting hundreds of women recover their health. I am a master emotional freedom technique trainer and advanced practitioner (AAMET Accredited), a Gupta amygdala retraining coach, and a health recovery coach specialising in supporting women to heal from chronic illness.

For five years the author was disabled by chronic fatigue syndrome. This much misunderstood and in many ways mysterious condition has no known 'cure'. The question then – and it is a hard one – is how, in order to bounce forward from such debilitating physical and mental exhaustion, can a person garner the energy and gather the support that will build resilience. Here is one woman's roadmap for this journey, as travelled by one who now uses her experiences to help and guide others on the road to recovery.

Introduction

This article is a summary of my book *You can heal chronic illness the lotus process: 8 steps to health and happiness*. May it provide a roadmap for you or your clients, friends or family members for taking the journey from illness to health. It is based on the experience of my own journey from five years of disabling Chronic Fatigue Syndrome to vibrant health, and on those of clients and women in our Women's Wellness Circle community. I believe we all have vast potential for healing ourselves physically if we follow all these steps, many of which I have no doubt will be familiar to you already.

Step 1: Acceptance and surrender

The first stage of healing was to accept what is, for now. The more I could let go into surrender and acceptance, and practice gratitude, the more I was able to build a strong foundation to support a health recovery path.

Many times over the last decade in my work with clients, and in my own journey to health before that, I have witnessed the power of accepting what is, just for now. Once there is acceptance and peace about what is, the body and nervous system relax and our health can start to improve.

It is said that 'what we resist persists, what we accept can change'. To truly reach acceptance there may be a need to work through grief, anger or frustration first, and that's okay too, in fact it is often a part of the process of moving to a deeper acceptance and surrender.

Step 2: Belief and commitment

This step draws on the power of belief and commitment to support recovery, and offers some tools to help in those moments of fear and doubt to return to a more resourceful place. Taken in the right way, this step is a foundation to a steadfast and gentle commitment to your healing.

Belief in one's ability to heal is a powerful support for physical healing, and for commitment to a path towards wellbeing: a belief that it is possible to heal chronic illness: the belief in keeping going, and getting back on track when doubts come up, and to believe they can be worked through.

In order to heal, I had to believe it could happen and believe in the process or techniques that support the process. I have done this and, having supported hundreds of people in one-to-one and group settings, I believe others can too.

'It was almost nine years ago that I became completely disabled with MCS and CFS. I have been fully well for three years and enjoy a full work, family and social life.'

Susan, US

'It's absolutely possible to recover and put it behind you and start afresh. I know this, because I did it myself.'

Zara, UK

Step 3: Self-care and resources

I had to learn to look after myself with compassion on a daily basis and follow my joy. I now recommend that before breakfast people use the five-minute energy medicine routine of Donna Eden (available on YouTube) followed by a morning meditation.

I found I had to take regular breaks throughout the day to relax my nervous system, regularly pausing to mindfully embrace 'the now' and integrate into my life. There are many meditation exercises to choose from that can bring us back to ourselves when we need some fresh resources to support our healing. First we have to feel worthy of being well resourced.

Other self-care practices became daily routines for me – eating well, good sleep habits and movement such as yoga, chi kung, or walking in nature. This was all part of learning the art of self-love and exploring the creativity that supports healing.

For me and many of my clients this part of the journey to health has been foundational. By setting up life routines and practices we begin to calm the nervous system and bring about an optimal state for healing.

Step 4: Community and support

We are social animals and external support systems help us to thrive. We need community, relationships and loving support to enhance our healing path.

I have learned that for many of us, being able to ask for help is a crucial step on the recovery journey. To expand our social network and make contact with people calls for the confidence to let love in, as well as give it out. I remember a friend of mine telling me quite assertively that I needed to learn to ask for help and be open to receiving it. She told me it was actually a gift to her, because she really longed to help me. Having this kind of support, even when it meant being authentically challenged, helped me confront some core patterns that I had needed to change.

With this in mind I encourage clients who don't have support in their lives, to go out and find it. Depending on the severity of the illness, this won't be an easy step, but

isolation and loneliness will only make it even harder to heal. I get people to find whatever support and connection they can, even if initially it has to be primarily online.

Belief in one's ability to heal is a powerful support for physical healing

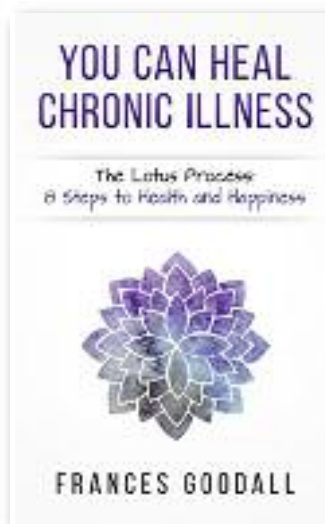
This step also touches on the value of different kinds of relationship, exploring sexuality, women's and men's circles and the support of therapists, in the course of the healing journey. It's also about feeling worthy of getting support and validation from a community that can help you navigate all the steps of the journey.

Step 5: Overcoming blocks to healing

In this step, we cover the kind of personality types that might have been a part of what led to you becoming unwell in the first place, and can hinder your recovery journey. In addition, we will be working on overcoming the roots of certain traits that are out of balance or unsustainable, while honouring and harnessing the positive qualities and gifts of your personality. This will support you to be in balance, even if you still have these tendencies as part of who you are. We will also be delving into other unconscious blocks to healing and how to overcome them.

Towards the end of my recovery journey from ME/CFS in my early 20s, I realised that I had a tendency to want to keep the peace at all costs; even if my own health had to be sacrificed. In starting to change it, I noticed a big shift in my energy levels and my health. At this time, I was living in a house that belonged to my mum where we were renting out a room to someone who we needed to move out, but I always found a reason not to mention it and kept delaying telling him, because I was scared of upsetting him and losing our pretence that all was well. I realised I needed to fundamentally change my behaviour and be more honest and authentic with people, even if that might lead to conflict or be difficult for them to hear. For me this was a real key for getting well and staying well.

We need community, relationships and loving support to enhance our healing path



This step is about getting clearer on our personal inner blocks to recovery, and how to self-compassionately approach important obstacles on our healing path. It's a step that calls us to explore personality traits, unconscious blocks and the possible secondary gains of illness, and how to overcome them.

There is power in finding a purpose for being well that can help maintain focus

Step 6: Purpose and authenticity

There is power in finding a purpose for being well that can help maintain focus and commitment to our healing path. Most of us have a longing to contribute something to the world. Finding an authentic purpose bigger than our small self, and learning how to show up as our authentic self is a key to human flourishing.

A purpose can provide the inspiration to keep working to make the inner shifts so often required for a full and lasting physical healing. So I ask these questions to help reveal a sense of purpose:

- what do you love?
- what inspires you?
- what are the wider causes you feel passionate about?
- imagine being towards the end of your life; what do you want to have accomplished? Who do you want to have been?

There was a time during my recovery journey where I felt really selfish because I was spending a lot of time doing inner work and meditation to recover. Eventually I realised that I wouldn't be able to help others unless I healed myself first. With this in mind, my personal mantra, 'be selfish so I can be selfless' enabled me to devote enough time to my healing.

In my work with people, I see that when they find a sense of purpose it helps them stay committed to their journey back to health. It helps pull them along the healing path to where they need to be. For instance, I have worked with younger clients who wanted to start a business that would express their personal passion. This focus helped them persist with all the steps to becoming well. In addition, I've worked with grandparents who longed to be with their grandchildren more, and this has been a wonderful source of inspiration for keeping going, and for following all the steps to get there.

Living your unique purpose in life, and following it with authenticity, is a key to moving towards the health we all deserve. Purpose can be big, or small and simple. What matters is that it is in some way a personally meaningful contribution to others or the world. Authenticity is the discovering of your purpose and how you express it in all areas of your life.

Step 7: Healing your past

Is our past our past? Have we truly left it there, or do we bring it with us as painful memories, thoughts, conditioned responses and body armouring? If we honestly ask that question the answer is that we do indeed bring the past into our present life. This step may require working with emotions, having an understanding of trauma, and knowing how work with inherited trauma.

Fortunately, we do not need to resolve all of our past baggage to heal physically! However, I believe that a full and lasting recovery often requires at least a gentle exploration of where our patterns and conditioning come from, so that new resources to our younger unhealed part. Trauma and suppressed emotions can later manifest as a chronic health condition. For example, when I was healing from CFS and in the final year of the illness, I was doing pretty well until I went to see my father. Within a day of being there, I began feeling really unwell and was barely able to get out of bed for days. Lying there in despair I suddenly felt that through these horrible symptoms my body was calling to me to be really authentic with my dad for the first time: to talk about how painful it was when I was a child and he split up with my mum, and what had led up to it. Thankfully, he had recently been in therapy himself and so he was open to talking about it.

Once I realised this was what I needed to do I found the energy to go out for a walk with him and from the start I brought up the topic. Sitting together on the cliffs looking out over the sea, as he told me more about his story, we both ended up crying and connecting. This was a beautiful, healing experience and a moment of reinforcing the link between mind and body – I felt so much better physically once I'd spoken my truth and been heard. I left feeling so much healthier and happier, and as though a layer of what was needed for me to recover had been resolved.

Of course it's not always possible for us to have these conversations with the people who have had a big impact on us. But a therapist's support can really help us do the necessary work.

Step 8: Sustaining health and wholeness

Even once you're fully well it is vitally important to sustain the health that has been regained, by keeping up a self-care practice, and to be aware that unhealthy old patterns may return as you rediscover the energy to start over-achieving or over-giving again. Ongoing personal growth and development is the key to retaining this sense of embodied, connected, courageous and present wholeness of self.

If you want to find out more about the author's work go to www.womenswellnesscircle.com or www.francesgoodall.com. You can find her book on Amazon.

Voyaging into the aboriginal world

Bruce Parry in conversation with David Peters

Bruce Parry is an award-winning documentary maker, indigenous rights advocate, author, explorer and trek leader. In his films and TV programmes he participates fully in the life and rituals of remote communities, reflecting as he does so on the diversity and beauty of being human.

DP Bruce, thanks for talking to us. We've seen your work and your travels on the television. I am interested to hear what draws you into the back-country, into the physical and symbolic parts that our civilisation normally doesn't get to and doesn't easily comprehend.

BP You're talking about the deeper, philosophical kind of back-country. Is that what you mean?

DP Yeah, that's what Gary Snyder calls the back-country: the wilder reaches of the human soul.

BP The inner wilderness. Yeah, that's the real adventure. I call myself an explorer though the term has negative connotations, but I don't know another one that depicts what I do. Obviously I'm known for exploring the outer geographical realms. But I've also gained so much from the opportunity to look inside. And, of course in some ways, that's the much harder journey and often it's a scarier one. I was drawn there because I was invited by some of the tribal groups I've lived with. Although

it wasn't a place I would naturally have looked for. I remember as a child my upbringing was 'don't go inside, because that's dangerous...just keep moving'. But when you spend time with tribal people you may be invited to do something like an initiation whose whole point is to go inside and look at who you are. Most memorably and clearly have been the times when I've imbibed their plant medicines. This could get especially frightening in the build up, because I was stepping into the unknown to take a deep, long look in the mirror. Thankfully these guided experiences, though scary, have always been profoundly positive.

DP I imagine you just had to do what a man has to do in those circumstances! But what first drew you into going adventuring? Were you looking to heal something in yourself by journeying into the outer wilds and finding lost tribes?

BP Probably quite the opposite! I was very much a product of a society where that reflective element has gone missing. I went to a very Christian boarding school, joined the Royal Marines.... I was a pretty embedded member of society. The whole idea of personal journeys and looking at self and spirit wasn't on my agenda at all. In fact I was on an ego drive to show myself to the world, and to be seen as being someone. So

my initial journeys were just to go out and prove myself to the world. I guess like so many people today, I was desperately trying to find my identity within the wider group. I joined the Marines because I thought, if I can become a commando in the Marines then I'll have become something. I think that most of us have the same drive, that's why we join clubs or become goths or punks or whatever and fit in. Mine happened to be the Marines. I also wanted to prove myself physically. And in fact, my early expeditions were less about looking inside and probably more about avoiding it. As long as I was being stimulated by a new horizon I didn't have to sit with myself and feel what was going on inside. I was very friendly but I definitely wasn't comfortable sitting still. So my journeys were a symptom of that restlessness and wanting to prove myself. I had a lot of internal angst churning away.

DP A lot of the great mountaineers and explorers who survived the traumatic experience of the First World War found they couldn't sit still. They had to keep moving. They thought they were hunting, but actually, they were being hunted by their past. And, of course, if you spend all your life with the accelerator pedal down, eventually you freeze and collapse. You burn out unless you can find a way to recover in your cave.

Voyaging into the aboriginal world

BP Yeah, well, what a blessing for me that it happened. I have the indigenous people to thank for that. And luckily I managed to fall in love with people who had very different world views and different values from the ones I was holding onto. One girlfriend persuaded me to take magic mushrooms. It was a horrendous experience, but it basically broke me out of my old way of seeing the world. This was a big moment in my life though I've not talked about it much, because these things are illegal in our society and these substances are banned, because we don't know what we are doing with them. Of course, that said, I've been seen on TV with tribal groups who use similar substances in a safe environment, where generations and generations of people do know what they are doing. Whereas, when we burned our shamans and witches at the stake we lost our traditional healers and the old knowledge of substances used for helping to heal the psyche. Small wonder that young, curious people may get it very wrong and have all sorts of problems when their exploring is not done respectfully in safe ritual settings.

DP How can we develop rights of passage for our young people, and to help elders walk well into the next world, without the need to be psychedelically boosted on their journey? We need ceremony that reconnects us with the other-than human world to help our troubled species take this necessary evolutionary step. Bruce, I sense you now approach the natural world with a new respect and openness. What could you say about nature reconnection and the re-enchantment our culture needs?

BP Re-enchantment is a beautiful idea. My connecting to nature has been slow. I started out seeing myself as a separate being and only gradually began to realise I am part of a wider eco-system and part of a wider society. And also part of a wider non-material consciousness that connects us. If I'd been told that about myself 20 years ago, I wouldn't have had a clue what I was talking about. So how have those changes come about? The beginning of the journey was to go inside and to have experiences of empathy and connection to other people. It started with close people and then expanded out to include the natural living world (some of this other-than human world is quite human-like too) and then beyond into a more ethereal sense of the oneness realm.

Though many different moments have moved me on, especially when living with tribal groups, at first I was quick to dismiss them as tripped out tribal ceremonies that didn't mean anything. In our part of the planet we have grown up with worldview mark one: separateness. But even having realised over time that it wasn't working for me, it still felt naïve just to dive into another worldview without fully

exploring the evidence. I didn't have a language that could make sense of them until I could also see these experiences through the prism of science. Psychiatrist and neuroscientist Ian McGilchrist, who features in the film I've just made, describes these things incredibly clearly and he has a clinically grounded explanation for some of the experiences I've had. I really needed to be held by something I understood before I could accept these experiences more fully.

On the other hand it doesn't feel enough to assume that the mind is just a manifestation of the material brain and that the impact of the ceremonies I did with the tribes was only dreaming and exploring my subconscious. I also needed an alternate world-view in which consciousness was something more universal; something we tune into like TV sets. I think having this sense of tapping into something beyond myself, and of everything being conscious, gives me a sense of aliveness.

I've had the experiences of non-separateness and I've had the explanations. So here are two competing world-views and I can choose which of them to use because they both make sense. For me, choosing where I put my meaning and my belief has been a big part of the journey. In the more recent world-view everything is conscious and awake and alert and alive and responsive. The value system that arises from this way of looking at the world means I have to check myself and see myself as part of a wider, living organism in which my actions have many repercussions. This other world-view has so much more depth and richness and puts a greater responsibility on us to be truly human.

DP We need to find a radically different way of understanding what we are and what the world is. This illusion of separateness is something the western mind created in the last few hundred years. But the alternative view isn't at odds with Christianity. Think about the early Celtic Christians and their beautiful Book of Kells whose swirling interlacing knots speak of a flow between the human and the non-human worlds. I think you are right about an emerging world-view that is 'spiritual' but not metaphorical, based as it is in the complex beauty of matter and the awe that science can inspire. It will push us towards a different way of life and we need it to.

BP I am really interested in story and the stories we tell each other. I've learned a subtly different story from indigenous peoples. The film I've just made tries to show that our real ancestral past was peaceful and egalitarian. It's a different way of seeing ourselves and why we are carrying so much trauma. Bringing back the story of this other way has been a big part of my journey. A lot of the way I used to behave was due to my carrying around stored up somatic

pockets of trauma. Ayahuasca helped me notice ways of re-channelling those pathways to allow for others that aren't activated by those same old triggers. This feels like a very powerful release.

- DP The indigenous view might be that our separation from the world and our separation from the ancestors, and our separation from our own life story, are all false separations; and that all these separations stop something that needs to flow, from flowing.
- BP That's a poetic and beautiful way of putting it. I've noticed in myself that a harmonious way of flowing through the world often gets interrupted by something blocked inside of me. Strangely I only notice the pain this blockage caused once I have let it go. Once released, I feel completely different as a human being. I realise just how much these blocks are affecting my behaviour in a negative, reactive or defensive way. In one experience of being born I felt this huge bundle of electricity behind my belly button and this constriction around my neck. Then I remembered a nightmare I had when I was very young, of regurgitating eggs, and not being able to swallow or breathe. I described it to my mother at the time but she couldn't explain it. When I saw her after this extraordinary experience of being born again, she told me for the first time that the umbilical cord had been caught round my neck and to deal with this life-threatening emergency they had to cut it. After I let go of the bundle of energy behind my belly button I realised how defensive I had been and how my fear of coming into the world had stifled my empathy. I felt like a completely different human being. After having many moments like this it has become very clear to me that stored and locked memories affect my behaviour. I can't help but want to share this story. I really understand why some people become evangelists for these medicines because they are tools we don't have in our medical chest in the same way that tribal people do. I am much more in harmony with myself and with what is around me now than when I joined the Marines. I put this down to the extraordinary healing experiences given to me through indigenous wisdom traditions and medicines outside of our western medical chest. I share this story with people because we are missing some mind-tools that our culture desperately needs.

One of the reasons we don't feel connected to nature is because to feel connected we have to be embodied; we have to be in our senses and able to

be still enough to feel an empathy with what's inside and around. But before I could do that, I had to process some of my on-board trauma. To stop and be with the pressure cooker inside of me was difficult even when I was held well in a ritual setting. So if it was that hard for me, imagine how much harder it would be for someone who'd been abused as a child. It's very hard to go on that journey and lift that lid, but in a controlled loving environment with practitioners who understand what they are doing it is possible. The story I'm bringing back is that we can be healed; that beneath these layers of pain and conditioning and difficulty we all carry there is something incredibly beautiful. My feeling is that for most of its time on the planet humans have lived in harmony with each another and with the environment. If we look at what's happening in the world (and a lot of it is very good) and inside ourselves and all we see is anger and pain and warfare then it would be easy to think that this is just the way humans are. But it's not. I have lived with tribes who see violence as a form of mental illness. Some of the most peaceful people are still living out there in huge numbers across the world. And that's our past.

So what I would like to bring home from the back-country is the story of what's possible: that beneath those layers of trauma and conditioning that keep us from being all that we could be, there is something beautiful. And that's what makes it worthwhile to go on our own unique healing journey. But if we don't believe that, if we carry on with the narrative that there's only bad stuff inside, and there's no point in going there, then no-one is going to take the vitally important healing journey that will shape the future of humankind. My film about the Panan tells of these peaceful people, who I think may be a reflection of our earliest time on Earth, as well as an image of our potential. These extraordinary beings live without leaders in a society where everyone gets on. But unless we tell the story of this possibility, how are we to discover that humans aren't inherently bad and aggressive?

- DP I think it's a good place to conclude Bruce. We need a new story about original blessing rather than original sin. Well my friend, I look forward to working with you. Thank you so much for your time.

In Spring 2019 Bruce will be leading a one-day journey for up to 15 medical students and doctors. Details on bbma.org

On granite ankles, in the lungs of gods

Dave King

Director of Breaking Convention; director of the Scientific and Medical Network

Psychedelic therapy may have prehistoric roots that perhaps persist in some indigenous cultures where hallucinogenic plants remain central to shamanic rituals. But in the 1960s the use of LSD provoked such sensational headlines and political unease that psychedelics went off the scientific agenda. Now, a more nuanced view is possible, so research banned since the 1970s can explore the impact of the extraordinary altered states of mind that these materials produce. Some studies have shown them to be capable of relieving mental distress in otherwise intractable illnesses including post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism and severe depression.

I have always been fascinated by experiences that push our boundaries of self-understanding. As a child growing up in a family with a suicidally depressed parent, I caught a glimpse of the depth and range of human experience. Later, as a medical anthropology student, I began to understand how our inner worlds reflect our cultural worlds, and how beliefs affect our realities. Now, as a final year graduate medical student, with almost 10 years' experience organising conferences on psychedelic science, I am delighted to see psychedelic-assisted psychotherapies begin to take their place in contemporary psychiatry.

It was half past nine in the evening and the sun had tumbled down the far side of the mountain; magenta and cinnamon still streaked across the sky in remembrance, blushing the cotton undercarriages that hung high above the cabin. All that could be seen in any direction were the vast, bushy hills, the tallest of which were growing a little bald in their old age. As the light faded, the half-moon to the south became brighter, and the stars slowly recovered their courage.

The room was circular and perhaps 20 meters in diameter. Its Celtic stone walls were two feet thick and the shallow conical roof lay upon 12 radial fingers. There were 15 of us inside, in sleeping bags and on mats and rugs, watching Manuel, our maestro, invert viscous bottles of ayahuasca. He sang softly as he unpacked: a pearl-white singing bowl the size of a cauldron; a small apothecary of leaves and powders and liquids; a Peruvian mat; candles; blue plastic bags; and a book of Rumi parables.

A tarot card arrived in my lap, followed by a small jar of mapacho – strong tobacco leaves infused in water. I was shown how to take it: a teaspoon is poured into the palm of your hand, and then snorted, the left nostril and then the right. It was sharp and spicy and brought tears to my eyes, along

with a bout of sneezing, but it soon took effect and I felt grounded and clear-headed.

In turn, each of us introduced ourselves and explained why we had come, and what we hoped to work on. This was the part of the ceremony known as 'intention-sharing'; it would help guide our experiences and put them into context. We also held up the tarot card that we had received and discussed any meaning it had for us. I had not planned to go into much detail concerning my intentions for the experience, but I was caught off guard by the pertinence of my card, and I ended up sharing the whole story.

My card showed a woman in a dark and cloudy world, devoid of colour and hope. In the centre of the card there was a window to a different world, one of light and healing. The description explained that this woman had been trapped in the colourless world for too long, and that she was finally overcoming procrastination by crossing the veil. This was very reminiscent of my mother, who had recently taken her life after a long battle with bi-polar.

Once the whole group had shared what they wanted to share, I watched our maestro open the cap of one of the bottles. He blew rhythmically

across it and chanted gently. Then, one by one, we sat down in front of him and swallowed a thick, salty glass of ayahuasca.

The potion drunk, the silence matured, the dance of the candles sent to spirals, we sat and waited. I was nervous and lay back. In no time at all, I saw the eaves stretching above me, and I knew that the ayahuasca was waking. In some of the traditions from which ayahuasca arises, the concoction is considered to be a sentient, female entity: *la abuela*. I found it helpful to adopt this model during the experience. Indeed, taking a psychoactive medicine is a little like inviting a guest into your home. No experience is made easier by rejecting or fighting your guest. If you choose to invite them, you must be a good host: courteous, grateful, humble.

You must make them welcome, you must give them the space to be what they are, and you must accept that. Yet, as the ayahuasca began to move through the sacred spaces of my mind, I became intensely uncomfortable.

'Why do you do this?' I asked myself. 'Why do you keep doing psychedelics? You know it makes you uncomfortable. Much as you try not to, you always fight it, you never relax into it. Why do you forget this?'. It was then that I realised why I was uncomfortable. Despite my occasional fits of extroversion, I am a very private person. Dali once described himself as an inverted introvert. I have always identified with that. Yet here I was, sharing my innermost self with the strange sentience that is ayahuasca. It felt as if I was the caretaker of an ancient mansion, one that I had barely explored, and suddenly the building was overrun with wild teenagers, throwing a party in the splendid halls. But far from the recklessness of youth, the agency that violated my privacy was wise and ageless and loving. 'Look', she said, 'if you don't let me see, how can I show you anything?'

It is fearful to realise that you do not know your own mind. To understand that you have been living your entire life in a valley, and that a whole world exists beyond the hills. The wisest aboriginal could not have imagined the invasion of the white man. The most thoughtful of earthworms will never see the stars. A universe of unimaginable breadth and complexity lurks just beyond the perimeter of the flashlight, and when the sun comes up and the world is lit, your tiny ego shivers in the wind of your true vastness. It is frightening, and in my fright I clung to what I knew to be myself, even as it was tugged from my grasp.

Years of sadness and weakness and smallness, guilt and shame and self-pity, began to well in my chest. These are emotions that we all feel, and I have rarely felt overwhelmed by any of them, but now all of their tiny memorials pulled themselves up out of the earth, and all the sediment abandoned my blood, and the heaviness left



my sternum, and the tar left my thoughts, and all the whispers of hurtful words and the echoes of self-doubt and the regrets of unfinished moments came together to inflate a sack of negativity, which I cradled in my arms like a stillborn child. It represented every sentence in my life that I had lacked the courage to complete. It contained the stains of every bad decision, every broken love, every unmet desire. I let it slowly balloon for hours, knowing that I had to let it all collect before I did something about it. I saw myself on a sofa, with the sack in my hands, and I knew that I could just drop it and let it go, but instead I saw myself close my eyes and block out the knowledge of my own empowerment, and curl up on the sofa with the sack held lovingly to my chest, because although it was melancholy, it was my melancholy. As I saw this, I saw my own tendency to repress negativity, and I knew that I had to face it. I felt that the time had come to let it go.

Suddenly, powerfully, I was sick. The waves of nausea slammed through my body again and again, lifting my guts and throwing them against the back of my mouth until everything was out. Tears ran down my cheeks and my whole body was shaking. The ancient, congealed darkness had been thrown out. For the rest of the evening I lay on the mat, searching for sleep and peace, wrapped in the comforting arms of *la abuela*, and wondering how I was going to do all of this again the next night. Although there was some sort of communication with some sort of presence, it had been less like being interviewed by another person and more like looking out of the window to see a mile-long serpent blotting out the sky. There was a consciousness there, but it was not one I could just casually speak to. It had asked me nothing because it did not need to, it saw me wholly and truthfully and did not need to hear the muddy truth of my own perspective.

The next day, during the integration session, I thought carefully about what I had learned. The experience had not been remotely visual, and that surprised me. I shared

how I had seen Mum's decision to die, and my ex-girlfriend's decision to leave, as strings that had run beside my own for a little while, and then been compelled away on their own paths. I realised how much I missed both of them, and how the images of them that I could summon in my thoughts would always lack that magical, irreducible quality that makes another person so special. I reflected on how I had been filled with gratitude for my life, and how liberating it had been to let go of all that negativity. The experience had shown me that the changes I wanted in my life had to be made by me. I had to lead, I had to empower myself, and I was afraid of doing this. I was afraid of taking control and leading my own life, because you need to know what you want, and you need to really believe in yourself to put yourself there, on the horizon, on the front line, at the blade of the flock, mastering time and marching forward into the unknown. I shared how I saw that love was the deepest current of the ocean, and that the storms and turmoils of the surf would never succeed in defying the tide.

I was struck by the poetry of one of the older men, as he described his own experience. 'I was shown that there is no darkness, there is only light... but if there is no darkness, why is it that we are blind? ... and I saw that we are blind because of the light, when it burns too bright for us to accept.'

“The experience had shown me that the changes I wanted in my life had to be made by me”

In response to my talk of control and empowerment and decision-making, Manuel reminded me of the importance of accepting that which we couldn't control, and allowing life to take you where it willed. 'I have a Zen story for you', he said. 'There once was a king, and he was an avid archer. He had great longbows made from willow, and tough shortbows of pine, and crossbows of polished hardwood. One day he was riding in the forest and he saw hundreds of targets, painted on the trees. In the perfect centre of each target was an arrow. "My goodness!", he exclaimed, "Who can this marksman be? I must meet him!" So, off they rode into town, where they were directed to the archer's house, and as they arrived the king jumped off his horse in excitement. He pounded on the door, and a little boy answered. "Young man, I am the king", said the king. "Please take me to your father, for I much admire his skill in archery." The boy shook his head. "My Dad don't shoot", he explained, "he got no sight in his eyes". "But I have seen the targets!" cried the king. "I have seen his mastery!". "Ooh, aye, that be me, that be", said the boy, "I just shoot at dem trees and then paint targets round the arrows".'

I slept for most of the day and woke shortly before the next ceremony started. I had no fear of the night, and no excitement. I was calm, and empty, and ready. It would prove to be the single most beautiful, meaningful, powerful experience that I have ever had.

* * *

After the inward-focus of the previous night, I was keen to keep my attention on the music, the room and the other people present. There would be no more lying down with the blanket over my head, no more getting lost in the catacombs. I threw the marmite ayahuasca syrup back and sat on my rug, waiting. A little dribble of mapacho tickled its way out of my left nostril. Wisps of smoke floated upwards from the extinguished candles and threw themselves into chaos. Manuel moved forwards on his mat and wrapped his legs around the huge singing bowl. I placed my pillow by my feet and lay on my belly with my chin on my hands, watching him as he prepared to play. As he moved his hands around its mouth, the bowl began its wailing siren song, and the noise reverberated around the dome of the room like whale song hitting the harbour.

In concert with the bowl drone, the ayahuasca began to play with me. As I watched Manuel, the room broke into bidirectional spirals, as are seen in the heads of sunflowers, and he became infused with a soft white light that shone from the cracks in the pattern. It was stunning. I closed my eyes and found that my mind was blank – there was no dialogue, no verbal chatter. Instead, I saw dazzling vistas of colour and tessellation: pillared temples that stretched effortlessly through Escher-like dimensions; teaming swarms of giant preying mantises, emerald green and wickedly intelligent. The great bulk of these visions are now hidden from my recollection as if my memory were bound by some ancient law, the password to this chamber of sacred sights withheld, and even in the moment of their experience I knew that it would be so, that they were too incomprehensible to be held by the clumsy manacles of remembrance, too beautiful to be captured or repainted, too sacred to ever approach the vulgarity of my ordinary consciousness. So, I cannot say much about them except that they were the most beautiful sights I had ever seen, and that tears of beauty and gratitude ran down my cheeks, and that I was struck by the knowledge that up until that moment I had never known what the universe inside my mind was capable of, and by extension that I had no idea what a human was, or where it could roam. And as the visions swallowed me, I was aware that the air in those hallowed theatres was corrosive to my sense of self, and the imaginary head around my imaginary eyes fell apart, and my eyes fell into the air like the smoke from the sleeping candles, and there was nothing left of me to be observing anything at all, because all of the indescribable beauty that was unfolding was me, and how could it be anything else? I learned that I had been completely wrong in my assumptions of where the human begins and ends.

Manuel had left the singing bowl and he was playing flamenco on his guitar, his voice filling the room. I slipped back into the visionary worlds and found myself in the jungle. My skin was brown and I was standing in a small clearing with my back to the trees. Silently, but with a musty fanfare of smell, an enormous tiger paced into the glade, his eyes like sapphires. A little voice in my head spoke to me: 'you must be afraid! he wants to eat you!' It was true, I could see it in those gleaming jewels, he did want to eat me. But I could not run, for he was much faster, and I could not fight, for he was far stronger, and so I sat and watched him, and smiled. 'Panic!' said the voice. 'Panic! He will eat you!' 'Yes', I replied, 'he will'. 'Oh', said the voice, 'that will be horrible!' 'Well', I said, 'I think that that's actually up to me.' And then the tiger moved behind me, like a locomotive in carpet, like a God, and put my head between his jaws. I smiled, and the tiger bit down.

“To open yourself to knowledge
you must accept your lack of it”

Soon thereafter, the ayahuasca and I played a game. She would show me visions of horror and death, and I would look at them and say 'Yes, that is what they are', while the little voice of fear would stare at me like the secretary of the official who has casually set fire to the office. Here is a demon, ready to shred my spirit in flaming vices. Here is a black hole, luring me with inescapable charm so that it may crush me to nothingness. Okay. It's all okay. I accepted my fate, and there was nothing left to be afraid of. I saw my own death, and I had nothing but gratitude for having a life at all, moved to tears with thankfulness for ever being in the position to die, to have something to give up. It did not, after all, have to be so. And the universe did not need to be so beautiful, and yet it was.

With these realisations that fear was useful only for showing me the difference between what I must accept, and what I must take control over, I stood up and felt

limitless confidence surge through me. It was not the reckless confidence of drunkenness, but the true confidence of the man who knows for the first time what he is. With perfect balance and composure, I walked out of the room into the night.

The unbounded elegance of the night sky tempted fresh tears. The stars were out in greater number than I had ever seen, as if I were watching the fierce glare of headlights beam through the pinpricks in a sheet of aubergine satin eaten through by a million tiny worms. Not a single cloud dared to get in the way. The world was as bright as morning. I wandered down to the outhouse in a state of unmatched marvel. It was occupied, I could see that from a distance away. No matter. Although I was sure that I had diarrhoea, I knew that I could hold it at bay for as long as was necessary, without discomfort. I have never experienced such effortless communication with my body before. It was not that I was in control of it, but we were in concert and we understood each other.

Later, when I returned to the cabin, the room was full of screams and guitar chords. One of the Spanish women was on her hands and knees, screaming in operatic despair. A man by the door was being violently sick in a bucket. I felt completely saturated with love, and I grinned at them both as they had these traumatic experiences. This may seem like a strange reaction, but I knew that they were going through something tremendously powerful, perhaps the most powerful moments of their lives, and that a vast reservoir of darkness was being cast into the light, and it was the darkness that was screaming. I wanted to comfort and touch them, but something deep told me it was forbidden – they needed to have these experiences and it would be wrong of me to take away even the smallest bit of their attention. These were significant moments, and they were not mine to interfere with.

I sat on the mat with my legs crossed and my back straight, and felt phenomenal energy and joy filling me, vast torrents of joy to fill the vastness of my inner worlds. I was in love, not with anyone or anything, but in love nonetheless. Around the room, people purged and

relaxed. The lady who had been screaming when I had returned was now singing at the top of her voice, and dancing wildly. A man to my right started playing his flute, and it was angelic. Another man began pounding the drums. Manuel was singing and strumming at the guitar and the girls to his right were on their feet, clapping. Others around the room were hidden beneath sheets, or inside sleeping bags. Yet more were crouched over the bins in sickly paralysis. I let myself drift through the magic of the room, and then off into the brilliant cosmos of impossible creativity, and then into thoughts, among which I found myself fondly



thinking of all the people in my life whom I loved and admired, and felt compelled to start better expressing my love and thankfulness and appreciation.

Eventually the room was swallowed by exhaustion and morning, but I was the last to fall asleep. It had been the most important night of my life. I had been shown how to throw away bad habits, how to reclaim my mind from unconscious reactivity, how to pay attention to other

people and how to overcome fear. I felt overwhelmed by a desire to learn, for I realised how little I knew about anything, and how my pride prevented me from learning (because to open yourself to knowledge you must accept your lack of it). I was more comfortable in my own body and mind than I ever thought possible.

As the subsequent months rolled by, I slipped back into old patterns, but at least I now knew what I had to work on, and what might one day be.

Be The Change: Choose #1CHANGE

Dr Punam Krishan, director/trustee, BSLM

In the 21st century we are excited by the advances in science and technology and its increasing prevalence in digitalising health-care. Being switched on from dawn to dusk seems to be an acceptable trend, aided by eating on the go and having instant access to ... well, pretty much everything. Our lives couldn't be easier right? Or has modern society become a barrier to longevity?

Recently we celebrated the 70th birthday of our NHS. All the usual gripes and moans were parked as we reminisced over the exceptional health services that are available for all, free at the point of care. Statistics show that in its 70th year, up to 70% of chronic diseases are directly linked to lifestyle habits. These are lifestyle-related behaviours which, if changed, could prevent or reverse long-term illnesses which, in turn, would impact longevity.

If we want to enjoy a good quality of life for longer, we must address the root causes of chronic disease formation. This must start before disease sets in. If we want the NHS to survive another 70 years, we must look at reducing the burden of such conditions on

the NHS, so that it can continue to fulfil its original remit.

It is with this in mind that the rise and rise of lifestyle medicine has started a causal shift.

The British Society of Lifestyle Medicine has launched a campaign – **#1change** – to help raise awareness in society that all of us can make a difference to our health and environment through making conscious lifestyle choices, one small step at a time.

One symptom of modern living is setting unrealistic expectations for ourselves. These resolutions tend to fail and old habits reform. The campaign aims to relay this simple yet powerful message to the public: our health is in our hands. It is crucial to educate and empower people with the knowledge that their own intervention, bespoke to them, if implemented and actioned, would drastically improve their health outcomes. It is realistic and possible and it begins with **#1change**.

A simple intervention is using the **TBC** model where identifying one **Trigger**, eg making a cup of tea, setting a conscious **Behaviour** change in response, eg 10 squats, could be **Celebrated** by enjoying the cup of tea on completion.



To master the art of living requires finding a simple formula for longevity. **#1change** is this formula.

A shaman's journey

Evelyn M Brodie

Shamanic practitioner; integrated healer;
Temenos Touch™ therapy teacher

In traditional cultures shamanic practitioners take healing journeys into a spirit world (possibly the realm Jung called the collective unconscious) and in this altered state of consciousness interact with beings (archetypes?) whose communications and energies they can express in the material world. Neo-shamanism draws on a range of beliefs and practices, some newly invented, but many inspired by indigenous cultures. The modern shaman's altered states do not necessarily need mind-altering drugs, depending instead on the use of breathing, fasting, dance, drumming and imagery; or simply deep engagement with nature.

For 30 years I enjoyed a lucrative career as an economist, financial TV journalist and communications executive. In 2004 I had an unexpected experience when exposed to an altered state of consciousness that deeply challenged my belief system. This led me to embark on a dual track quest for knowledge, first to experience a variety of altered states of consciousness and find out how best to use the information available from these states, second trying to find and understand the physics and biology of an expanded consciousness, including theories from quantum physics and neurobiology. I feel my calling is to be a bridge between the worlds of non-local healing and the scientific, medical world. I have published three books to this end: *Corporate bitch to shaman*, *Temenos Touch*, and *A better pill*.

Journeys

This year I will be 60, and until my mid-40s if you had suggested to me that I would be a shamanic practitioner and integrated healthcare therapist I would have said you were crazy! But between 2004 and 2010 I did a U-turn, from working in a succession of demanding, stressful jobs, where I had adopted the role of 'corporate bitch', to embracing the roles of therapist and teacher that I have today.

On my journey I have attended many amazing courses and have worked with a wide variety of teachers from many different cultures and belief systems. Right from the start I would like to make it clear that I did not bring any pre-existing religious or spiritual beliefs to my journey. I was brought up in a strict Scottish Protestant family where morality seemed to consist of doing things because they were 'right' and if you didn't do them you would suffer in hell for eternity. There was no sense of joy or compassion and certainly no expression of emotions. Just hard work, obligation, repression. The prevailing belief seemed to be that God had decreed that everything joyful was sinful, so by the age of seven or eight, instinctively I had ditched organised religion, and indeed developed a deep antipathy to it, much to the dismay of my parents.

I went on to spend 25 years after my graduation from university competing largely against men in the driven, rational, intellectual worlds of government, the City, TV journalism and strategic communications. I had suppressed my femininity, sexuality, intuition and empathy, without even being aware of the harsh image I was projecting to the world. I was definitely left-brain dominated, logical, uncompromising, judgemental and selfish. Despite my outward success, I felt very judged. And like so many I was obsessed by what people thought about me. I appeared confident and controlling, but that was my mask. I had very little self-esteem and depended on the approval of others both in my personal life and the workplace.

However, after stumbling on a few pages in a book that piqued my attention in 2002, I got hooked into a path of enquiry that has opened doors I didn't even know existed. We don't know what we don't know!

The initial catalyst was a reference to the American 'Remote Viewing' (RV) programme that started at an affiliate of my old university, the Stanford Research Institute in California in 1973. This was conceived within and funded by the US Department of Defense and staffed largely by highly decorated military officers from 1975 until 1995. Over



time it was known in the intelligence community as Scangate, Grillflame, Centerlane, Starburst and Stargate.¹

The pages that caught my attention were the ones that reported how outside the official RV programme, some of those who had been taught the skill decided to 'visit' other planets in our solar system. At that time images of these worlds were pretty crude and lacking in detail. Yet these remote viewers gave detailed descriptions that later proved to be highly accurate once space telescopes and exploratory probes transmitted high-resolution pictures back to earth. Conducted as they were within the military establishment under the control of a group of well-established scientists using a repeatable, verifiable protocol, these impossible feats attracted my deep curiosity. Intrigued, I read the published works of the remote viewing team², and the more I read the more convincing they became. So I had to try it for myself, and that was how I came to be sitting in David Morehouse's co-ordinate remote viewing (CRV) class. In a beautiful countryside manor in Wales in November 2004, over the space of six days we were taught the technique and given a variety of targets to visit and report back on. I had critical sensations relating to several of the targets I was asked to

view, experiences that forced me to acknowledge that somehow, I am more than my physical body. I am well aware that words like energy, soul, spirit, consciousness – even the term information – are used in many different ways by people with diverse world-views and agendas. When communicating about these frontiers of science, biology, philosophy and healing those who work in this arena are going to need some clear definitions of what they mean.

Track I – the experiential journey into altered states of consciousness from the right brain

After this experience had ripped apart my former belief system, I began an intense period of investigation and learning. On a practical level this included re-birthing work, out-of-body courses at the Monroe Institute in Virginia, USA³, training in transpersonal psychotherapy, Reiki, craniosacral therapy, past life regression, family constellations and Tántric yoga. But for the first six years of this journey I was still working in the corporate sector:

apart from anything else I needed the money for courses and trips. They were proving expensive of my spare time too: as well as looking after two teenage children, I was pounding through books on quantum physics, psycho-neuroimmunology and epigenetics. It was an intense and exhausting period and my two children often had to fend for themselves. So it was a conflicted time, as different aspects of myself pulled in very different directions, and as I expanded into my new way of being some old acquaintances and colleagues, unable to accept the new direction I was taking, dropped away. The remaining friends and new ones I made on the journey have supported me throughout. Like love, true friendship is non-judgemental, unconditional and non-local.

The next major step came with my first venture into shamanic training. Alberto Villoldo's Medicine Wheel⁴ is based on the lineage of the Q'ero people of the Peruvian Andes. When I embarked on this path in November 2007 I stepped onto the Medicine Wheel as a way of healing myself, and with the hope of finding 'tools' to use with my clients. But I soon realised that being a shamanic practitioner was not something to be taken on so lightly as really it's a complete way of life.

Shamanism may be the most ancient form of healing. In various ways it is practised among most of the indigenous peoples of the world. Shamans deal with physical ailments, but they are also capable of seeing energetic disturbance and of altering their state of consciousness to work non-locally, outside linear space and time, to retrieve information of value to their patients and their community.

Finally, in June 2010, with my children reaching adulthood and independence, I quit the strategic communications consultancy I was working for and left for a seven-month-long trip, starting in the Amazonian region of Peru, working with the hallucinogenic Ayahuasca plant medicine and the indigenous Shipibo shamans. I then moved to the Andes to work directly with the Q'ero lineage of shamans and the Wachuma plant medicine. Then I travelled to India and Thailand to meet teachers from different healing lineages and traditions. Some of the experiences I had on my journey were initially frightening, for they involved my rational mind losing control, or a descent into difficult areas of repressed emotion. In time I came to understand that the greater the fear and the deeper the shadows, the greater the learning and the gifts I could emerge with; that



A shaman's journey

my access to light was directly correlated to my willingness to journey into the darkness. Yet when I first went deep into the Amazon jungle, I had no idea what I would have to engage with, nor what to expect. Perhaps that was a good thing: had I realised the power and the possibilities, I might never have drunk the healing potion of Mother Ayahuasca!

I have drunk the medicine about 25 times, in ceremonies spanning six years. The multitude of experiences possible with di-methyl-tryptamine (DMT) are well documented in books like *DMT: The spirit molecule* (Strassman, 2001). Ahead of any plant medicine ceremony, it is essential to set an intention, for early on in an ayahuasca ceremony vomiting of physical and energetic toxins is common. Many people experience swirling, multi-coloured lights in intensely complex geometric patterns. Further on in the journey as the feeling grows of being totally immersed in other dimensions, animal and plant spirits and extra-terrestrial beings may appear. Sometimes one may sense these beings downloading information into you or as if they were operating on you. Most overwhelmingly there may come the certainty of

oneness – of being connected to the source of all that is.

I have had all these experiences at different times in a variety of Ayahuasca ceremonies. In these and other altered states of consciousness the 'presences' and the information conveyed have seemed totally real: being visited by etheric essences of plants, animals and by wise beings who have tried to communicate their knowledge; being given insights into past lives and soul contracts and their sources; communicating with deceased people I knew absolutely nothing about and receiving information that appeared to be remarkably accurate.

These strange, unanticipated and unsought encounters have given me new choices about how I live. Though initially way outside my belief system they have allowed me a knowing that goes beyond belief in the existence of a soul and reincarnation, and that entities living in other dimensions are as real as we are. But I don't expect my experiences to convince you. Only your own personal journeys into altered states of consciousness could achieve that.

From very early on in my journey of self-discovery I felt a deep sense of gratitude and honour to have gained



access to some of the teachers and information I was receiving. When I got back to the UK in January 2011 I felt an overwhelming obligation to use the intellectual tools of the 'corporate bitch' to share what I was being given. I was ready to step fully into my new life as a shamanic practitioner and body-mind therapist.

Track 2 – the academic investigation of consciousness and non-locality from the left brain

Although I was experiencing more and more altered states of consciousness, my rational, logical, investigative left brain wanted to make sense of these experiences. On the scientific track I ran into ideas about non-locality, epigenetics, psychoneuroimmunology and neuroplasticity. These relatively new fields of knowledge have expanded tremendously in the last 20 to 30 years. I believe that in time, as the scientific understanding of non-locality increases and the medical significance of neuroplasticity grows, shamanic healing and other 'placebo' or non-local cures will no longer be seen as New Age, hippy woo-woo. On the contrary they are increasingly being recognised as the foundations for 21st century integrated medicine.

Non-locality is one of the fundamental implications of quantum physics. Albert Einstein originally rejected quantum mechanics because it implied that one particle could instantaneously affect distant others in the system. What he described as 'spooky action at a distance' seemed to involve information being transmitted faster than light. Since then – and whether we understand it or not – non-local quantum entanglement effects have been shown to happen not only at the subatomic level but even with quite large molecules (Nairz *et al*, 2003).

Therefore in so far as anyone can understand these things it seems we are embedded in a non-material, non-local, holographic, entangled field in which all information past, present and future co-exists. A great deal of theoretical writing aims to explain how we might access this field. (For example the works of Bohm (1980), Van Lommel (2011), Laszlo (2009), Hameroff and Penrose (2014)). My own works try to summarise the academic evidence. Experimental research into altered states of consciousness, remote viewing, telepathy, and distant healing tests the existence of this non-local field as a carrier of information that is accessible and useful to the human mind.

Although there is not space to go into these ideas in this short article, my passion today is to act as a bridge between ancient ways of healings, and modern science and medicine. I use the term *Temenos Touch* for my own healing practice, because as described by Simon Buxton (2004), *a temenos has come to mean a protected physical and emotional space in which the transforming work of healing takes place through learning and teaching*. In my client sessions and my teaching, I try to create such a safe space, so that a connection between the body and the mind and then the body-mind and the non-

local 'inforealm' may open up, presenting the potential for transformation and healing.

Throughout the ages people have attained access to this realm of non-local information, sometimes intentionally through meditation, breath-work, trance dance, mediumship, listening to bi-neural sound and by taking hallucinogens. Others have achieved it unintentionally in spontaneous out-of-body experiences, near death experiences and perhaps even in what they have experienced as 'alien' abduction. The people who have consistently been able to journey there intentionally, whether or not aided by hallucinogens, have been the shamans. Though for centuries westerners did not believe their stories, the recent resurgence of psychedelic research has awoken scientific interest in their claims. The leading centres for a renaissance in clinical psychedelic research include the Beckley Foundation in the UK⁵ and the Heffter Research Institute in the USA⁶.

Rituals are a principal tool of the shaman, who uses them to cross between the worlds, outside conventional four-dimensional space and time. For me, rituals are important in two ways. Firstly, by boosting the right-brain's wide-ranging intuitive, empathic, emotional, non-verbal functions, they help us resonate with and connect to the realm of non-local information, by somehow loosening the hold of the default mode network – the brain's censoring and judging function. I like to think that a meaningful ritual is an honouring of something sacred and ancient; and that the field of intention and imagination it creates beams out and makes a non-local connection with all those who have performed similar rituals in the past. And so it becomes a calling in of ancestors to ask for their help in entering the eternal ever-present wider field of consciousness. Secondly, perhaps by embodying the broad and mythical archetypal information we receive from our journeying, and by re-enacting what our right-brain may have gleaned from non-local consciousness, rituals can translate this information into the language of the focused, verbal, compartmentalised organising left-brain, and the reality of everyday waking life. In doing so, rituals may create new neural attractor pathways within the brain and shape new forms of perception that transcend the many limiting stories we weave about ourselves.

Conclusion

Through the plant medicines and other alternative therapies we can learn of our interconnectedness with all life-forms, and that humans need to live in harmony with the other than human world: in symbiosis, not conflict. My great hope is that these therapies will be allowed to bring healing and hope to the millions suffering trauma or fearing death, and to convince humanity to stop inflicting catastrophic damage on each other and our planet. Already in a number of clinical trials over the last decade, the clinical use of psychedelics has shown promising results in the treatment of depression and addictions and other conditions previously labelled as incurable.⁷ They



have helped people gain experiences of interconnectedness and oneness. When we truly connect with oneness we want love, not war; to live in peace not fear.

I feel it's time for all who have had non-local experiences to share them without fear or embarrassment. If we do this, others will be more able to experiment and to question the system that keeps us isolated and small. Then perhaps the pace of change within medicine and education will accelerate.

My biggest lessons have been in discovering that I am a drop in the ocean of consciousness and, though I truly know or control very little, that I must honour the miraculous, spectacular magnificently entangled universal energy field in which I am a tiny, interconnected spark. On a personal level I feel I have a purpose, and old friends say I seem happier than ever before. While many of them

are reaching retirement, I have a new profession that will endure as long as I am in this physical body. To be of service most effectively, I have to live the way of the shaman with gratitude for being allowed to sing the song of life in this body for another day, on this beautiful planet, at this amazing time of transformation.

Notes

- 1 Details of the CIA assessment of Stargate are provided in McMoneagle, Joseph (1993) *Mind trek, exploring consciousness, time and space through remote viewing*. Chapter 7. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.
- 2 www.amazon.co.uk/Mind-Trek-Exploring-Consciousness-McMoneagle/dp/B00GXFE6WY/ref=sr_1_19?ie=UTF8&qid=1525245409&sr=8-19&keywords=joseph+mcmoneagle (This is the original, a newer revised version was released more recently) www.amazon.co.uk/Psychic-Warrior-Paranormal-Espionage-Programme/dp/1905570384/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1525245450&sr=1-3&keywords=dauid+morehouse&dpID=51dnlSdCoCL&preST=_SY344_BO1,204,203,200_QL70_&dpSrc=src_h
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Creating Pukka herbs

Sebastian Pole

Co-founder Pukka Herbs; herbalist

International governments made no binding environmental commitments at the Rio+20 Summit. In their place leading-edge companies are stepping up to the sustainability challenge. The commitments Tesco, Unilever, Dupont and Toyota have made to environmental goals might be altruistic but it's clear too that preventing waste and increasing energy efficiency boosts profitability and competitiveness. Sustainability goals are good for the financial bottom line and brand loyalty, and they hit social and environmental targets at the same time: the legendary triple bottom line. Businesses dedicated to wellbeing and pure plant-based products – such as Pukka and Weleda – are leading the way.

I came across the remarkable world of traditional herbal medicine in 1991 on meeting an Ayurvedic doctor (more officially, *vaidya*) in India. That insight into the world of Ayurvedic anatomy, physiology, pathology, pharmacology and treatment opened my eyes to a whole new world. I soon connected with its potential to help transform human and environmental health and spent the next decade training in an eclectic mix of Ayurvedic, Chinese and western herbalism. After experiencing a few too many disappointing cups of herbal tea, being inspired to bring the best organic and pharmacopoeial herbs to as many people as possible and meeting Pukka's co-founder Tim Westwell, Pukka Herbs started life in 2001 as a simple idea: connect people with the incredible wonders of herbs and do as much good as we possibly can.

This story is about the journey of creating Pukka Herbs – a quest to help bring healing herbs to the many – a vision of how business can regenerate people, plants and planet. It's about how, from humble beginnings, we grew in 15 giant years to become the fastest growing organic herbal tea and supplement company in the world; an adventure that has been healing on many levels – ecologically, socially and personally.

With a degree in Hindi, followed by a decade of studying the traditional medicine systems of Ayurveda, Chinese and Western herbalism – as well as the organic farming experience I gained to fund my studies – my path ahead was clear: to do my best to promote the benefits of herbs and natural medicine. As well as practicing in clinic, I knew that one of the best ways to achieve this would be to set up a business that would champion herbal medicine and the healing power of plants.

I met Pukka's other founder, Tim Westwell, through an advert he had placed in Bristol's monthly *Venue* magazine. It was business-dating at its best. Tim, with a background in sales and marketing, had completely different skillsets from mine, but we shared a common thread of values and mutual trust.

We had never created a business before, but we knew we wanted Ayurveda and herbal health at its heart and for everyone who came into

contact with it to profit: ecologically, socially and financially. We knew the idea had integrity, passion and essence. We just needed a name.

A name carries such importance! They are the words that symbolise who you are. After some hilarious non-starters (such as Holy Cow!) we came up with Pukka Herbs. We loved it on so many levels. In Hindi *pukka* means 'real, authentic or genuine'. It also means more colloquially 'ripe, juicy, tasty and delicious'. So Pukka symbolised all we stood for in life. Being *pukka* was our aspiration!

On 22 August 2001 we registered at Companies House, went to the cashpoint and withdrew the maximum our credit cards would allow...and set about creating our first range of three organic herbal teas.

As our teas and supplement ranges grew we began to articulate what is at the heart of Pukka and what has made our journey quite so healing.

The Pukka mission

Conservation through commerce

'In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.'

Baba Dioum, environmentalist

Realising that we could contribute to conservation through commerce was a

Creating Pukka herbs

lightbulb moment for us. And rather idealistically, from my kitchen in Bath and Tim's 'head office' spare bedroom in Bristol, this is what we wanted to do with Pukka.

Through making organic Ayurvedic creations we could bring some value to threatened forests. By paying farmers and collectors above market prices for the herbs we use at Pukka we could help protect dwindling ecosystems. By making organic farming practices worth more than soil-destroying conventional methods we could incentivise conservation of the Earth. Commerce could lead to conservation.

In order to really drive conservation through business we joined the 1% For the Planet movement in 2015. This pioneering scheme commits business to donating 1% of sales turnover (not just profit) to environmental and social causes. Last year we gave £500,000 to worthy NGOs and charities.

Values at our heart

At Pukka our values are much more than good ideas that inspire us. They are ways of working that help us be *pukka* in everything we do. We apply values to our work at Pukka to create energy, inspiration, better results and satisfaction for ourselves and others.

We have identified these values as four 'wisdom seeds' drawn from ancient Asian systems of religion, philosophy and medicine that are still alive and flourishing today. In fact, these values are so important they are the foundation of the longest thriving social and medical institutions in the world; the Buddhist Sangha and Ayurvedic medicine.

Engaging with the wisdom seeds helps us keep Pukka's culture connected with our origins as well as empower the present. They guide employment, meetings and behaviour to bring out the best in everyone's potential.

Truth is the essence of who we are, the root from which we emanate; respect is how we relate to each other, the vine that weaves throughout everything; purity is about knowing the heart of the matter, it's the flowering of our heart; and *effort* is the fruit that we reap from our inspiring and purposeful activities.

Connecting people and plants

'Through the incredible power of herbs we will inspire people to lead a more conscious life. We will strive every day to protect people, plants and planet.'

This simple statement is our daily mantra – and our mission. We want something as simple as a cup of herbal tea or supplement to be the catalyst that connects you with nature. And one vital ingredient for a more 'connected' life is ensuring that we look after the world around us – the hand that feeds us – so everything we make is certified organic. So much so that we even went to the edges of the textile industry to ensure that the string on our staple-free teabag is organic (shockingly, the cotton industry uses 10% of the volume of all pesticides used today – and in some developing countries it's up to 50%). As a Bristol-based business (the city is home to the Soil Association) we were inspired to connect with their pioneering vision for a healthy planet.

The evidence for the many ecosystem-wide benefits of organic farming continues to grow.

Recent scientific reviews and meta-studies find that organic farms deliver more wildlife, healthier soils, climate mitigation, protection against flooding, clean water, lower pesticide use, lower antibiotic use, more jobs and better food security (Pole, 2018).





Tulsi – an Indian aromatic plant – is collected by women in India where a percentage of profits is returned to the community

These advantages add up to large health benefits for individuals and society. Conversely, just as the true cost of the disruptive health impacts of our modern agricultural system becomes evident, we are piling more pressure on an already overburdened NHS. It is now well documented that, because of modern agriculture's impact, as a society we are rapidly becoming both fatter and more malnourished, just as our blood pressures are rising and our cognition descending. These huge historical errors are costing us billions of pounds and lamentable suffering (see Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2017).

Inspired by the traditional wisdom of Ayurveda

'Plants are the basis of all life, good health and prosperity.'

David Crow, herbalist

In founding Pukka, along with agricultural integrity we also wanted medical integrity too. And where better to learn than from humanity's longest practised medical system, Ayurveda? Ayurveda is India's ancient system of health, and yet so much more. It's a way to live and a way to understand and transform your life. It is often translated as 'knowledge of life' and encompasses the idea of how to live wisely. In particular it is the knowledge of how to live according to your unique and individual constitutional make-up that puts the choice of how you exist firmly in your court. A description given in the *Charaka Sambhita*, an early Ayurvedic text, written about 100BCE, says:

'It is called ayurveda because it tells us what foods, herbs and activities enhance the quality of life, and which ones don't.'

We wanted to share the wisdom and empowering vision of health that springs from the fountain of Ayurveda. It is expressed as a way of life that flows with the changes of the seasons, weather, time and place. Like a true doctor it teaches dietary and behavioural adjustments that can be adopted as you mature from childhood through to adulthood and into old age. It gives advice on how to prevent illness as one season becomes another, and specific recommendations on how to adjust your daily habits as well as detailed diagnostic and pathological interpretation. This way of wholesome living prescribes a routine for all the different climates and geographical regions of the world. At the root of Ayurveda is its focus on the uniqueness of each individual. As such it is a universal system applicable to every individual living in any part of the world – and we wanted to share its wisdom.

Pharmacopoeial-grade herbs

Another foundational principle was that the therapeutic quality of everything Pukka offered would meet the qualitative and quantitative parameters of the European as well as the Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia. Our commitment to quality, in ensuring that we sell only what a professional herbalist would be willing to dispense, would be at the centre of everything we would do. With that end in mind, 20% of our 120-strong team are qualified as herbalists,



Pukka meeting space in the new offices at the Chocolate Factory, Keynsham

nutritionists or plant scientists. We are very fortunate to have expert herbalists, academic researchers, nutritionists, pharmacognosists, clinicians, analytical chemists, botanists, sustainable horticulturalists and organic agronomists leading the quality, sourcing and herbal teams; and we have reaped the rewards by the bushel.

We have developed growing methods to increase active compounds in some species by 300%. For example, in *andrographis paniculata* – the renowned herbal immune activator for upper respiratory tract infections – increasing the andrographolide content from 1% to 5%; or the remarkable carminative and anti-spasmodic ‘anethole’ in sweet fennel seed essential oil from 0.9% to 85% of the total oil. Wanting to avoid falling into the category described by the 2002 World Health Organization (WHO) strategy declaration, ‘*finished products to which chemically defined active substances have been added, including isolated constituents from herbal materials, are not considered to be herbal*’, we have also developed special extracts that concentrate the active phytochemicals while retaining the fingerprint profile of the whole plant.

For example, turmeric root (*curcuma longa*) has around 230 compounds. Much of the research has focused on one of the yellow pigment polyphenols, curcumin, that naturally occurs at 3–5% in turmeric root. The pharmaceuticalisation of herbalism has resulted in a health industry obsession with concentrated 95% curcumin products that are essentially isolated drug compounds – and, according to the WHO, not herbal. This isolation of one compound misses out on the well-documented synergistic and protective health benefits of the essential oils and other colourful pigments present in turmeric. For example, research on turmerone (one of the

components of the essential oil) which has multiple uses as an immune modulator and anti-fungal (see Jankasem *et al*, 2013; Aggarwal *et al*, 2013).

With this ‘holistic’ approach in mind, we developed an extraction method for our wholistic turmeric supplement using carbon dioxide (‘super critical extraction’), alcoholic tinctures and whole herb powder that captured the curcuminoids at around 30% as well as the volatile compounds and full-spectrum of other phytonutrients – combining the best of tradition and science.

Research and the evidence base

It is important to us that we contribute to the growing evidence base for the efficacy of herbs and herbal medicine. In the last few years we have started to work with universities, hospitals and research laboratories to explore the mechanisms of action and efficacy of some of our herbs and blends. Today, for example, Pukka supports an innovative placebo-controlled human clinical study in a Tel Aviv hospital on the use of our wholistic turmeric (*curcuma longa*) for treating patients with familial adenomatous polyposis of the bowel; we continue our funding of a PhD with the University of Southampton in the fight against antibiotic resistance using the herbal alternative andrographis (*andrographis paniculata*). And, finally, we have opened up an exciting research collaboration with the University of Northumbria to look at how ashwagandha (*withania somnifera*) and other herbs may benefit cognitive function to help address the ever-growing epidemic of mental and emotional disorders.

Of course, our contribution is tiny compared with the huge increase in clinical research validating the benefits of herbs – more than 600 papers a year are now published

on PubMed (up from 100 a year 20 years ago). There is now solid evidence for herbs being a valid choice alongside conventional medicines in treating mild to moderate depression, anxiety, osteoarthritis, lower back pain, self-limiting upper respiratory tract infections and chronic venous insufficiency. For instance, St John's wort, valerian, ashwagandha, willow bark, turmeric, andrographis, echinacea and horse chestnut now demonstrate robust traditional and clinical backing.

Protecting our heritage in the legal quagmire

There is a litany of regulations with which any company selling foods, food supplements and/or herbal medicines must comply (eg Food Supplements Directive (2002/46/EC), Novel Foods Regulation (258.97), Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation (No. 2006/1924), Human Medicinal Products Directive (2004/27/EC) and the Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive (THMPD) (2004/24/EC). While being instinctively cautious of over-regulation, we have always respected the need for regulation to make sure that companies sell the correct species, appropriately quality controlled, labelled with safe dosage and without unsubstantiated claims.

Pukka's legal team has been active against restrictive legislation that limits our basic human right to health freedom; the freedom to access natural plant remedies and be informed about how they have been traditionally used.

Since we started Pukka, we've encountered a quagmire of contradictory and, oftentimes, illogical rulings. From the

get-go we stumbled into a land of illogical inconsistency. The first teas we nearly made back in 2001 used a herb called stevia – a zero calorie sweetener. Unbeknown to us novices, stevia was not allowed in foods in the EU (but was in the US and Japan). Interestingly, in 2012, it became authorised for use. Over the last few years, other species have not fared so well; we have had to stop selling amla and tulsi in Denmark, a type of cinnamon and seaweed in Italy, and ashwagandha in lots of places including Ireland – although, following regulatory challenges and representations by our legal team, it has been reallocated.

Then came the infamous Traditional Herbal Medicines Product Directive which is technically complex and expensive. It offers no solution to the supposed *raison d'être* of the directive: public safety. We already enjoy this protection under food legislation. At best, the most positive result of this legislation is that it may give the biomedical community more 'faith' in the consistency of herbal medicine. And, in our pursuit of supporting sustainable healthcare, Pukka was the major sponsor and lead coordinator of the College of Medicine Plant Medicine conference in June 2017, with support from the BHMA and 120 delegates (including many medics) viewing the exciting prospects for the use of herbs to meet new national health demands.

But are herbs safe?

The herbs that are available on the UK market are not dangerous in the same sense as tobacco, alcohol, or even drinking too much water. In fact, herbal medicine and natural products have an excellent safety record. Following



The quiet retreat in the new Pukka offices

an extensive review of adverse events, the chief coroner in New Zealand declared in 2005: 'In so far as natural products are concerned the linkages to public safety and risk can be described legally as *de minimis no curat lex*. That is – "of minimal risk importance"'. This means that in relation to the number of users, which according to recent government polls is thought to be more than 25% of the UK population, herbs are incredibly safe. In contrast, pharmaceutical adverse events occur in 10% of users and are a leading causes of death in developed countries. Indeed, according to recent research, '*our prescription drugs are the third leading cause of death after heart disease and cancer in the United States and Europe*' (Göttsche, 2014).

Protecting the supply

'Uncontrolled wild harvesting is threatening the medicinal plants on which the herbal medicines industry depends.'

Alan Hamilton, World Wildlife Fund

It is remarkable to think that most herb species are harvested from the wild – between 75%–95%. By weight, it's around 25% of global annual herbal harvests. Have you ever thought where your last cup of elderflower, licorice or limeflowers came from? These herbs are rarely cultivated, as they are so readily available for 'free' in the local environment. Wild herb collectors, among the poorest of the poor, are marginalised geographically, socially and economically. They often do not own land and are dependent financially on annual wild herb harvests. However, such unregulated harvesting, coupled with the modern pressure on ecosystems, is putting the sustainability of herbal medicines at risk.

A 2017 report by Kew Gardens, *State of the World's Plants* (Willis, 2017), showed that, of the 400,000 or so flowering plants, 28,187 have some documented medicinal use. Very worryingly, one in five plants face some threat to their future survival, some of them vital contributors to the pharmacopoeia. Licorice, echinacea, goldenseal, devil's claw, guggul-myrrh, sandalwood and slippery elm are all threatened in their natural habitats.

In order to address this crisis WWF, with Traffic and the IUCN, came together to create a third-party certified standard for ensuring that wild harvested species have a sustainable supply and are fairly traded. This is known as the FairWild standard. Protecting nature protects us individually as well as promoting global health. Pukka has been a pioneer in adopting this standard with the herbs we harvest from the wild – around 18% of our volume – ensuring that above a certain volume they are certified FairWild.

People: expect wonderful things

'The essence of all beings is Earth. The essence of the Earth is water. The essence of water is plants. The essence of plants is people...'

Chandogya Upanishad

When we started Pukka Herbs, we knew – well we hoped – that we were going to create something special; Tim and I were both utterly passionate about bringing plants and people together and we set off with the inspiring tailwind of Ayurveda behind us. We really wanted to be a part of the positive change that was at the heart of the organic health community and so we dived in, head first. And, wow, what a welcome we have received!

Today we are serving millions of teas and supplements every day, growing herbs on tens of thousands of acres of organic land, supporting thousands of farmers with Fair for Life wages, and introducing millions of people to the wonders of traditional herbal wisdom. There are now 120 of us working together at Pukka. We are a pretty eclectic, often hectic, but always energetic and inspired bunch of people. We're making the best of British and do 99% of our finished manufacturing in the UK from organic ingredients sourced from many friends around the world. In our own small way, we hope we're helping people to live healthier, happier lives and to fulfil their potential on this beautiful planet that we all share.

So, what next? We recently joined with Unilever to help us expand and grow. Their commitment to finding a sustainable way for business to bring positive impact throughout their network is sorely needed in leading the way for big business to take the responsibility for their actions and impacts. With 300 to 500 businesses controlling 70% of global trade – feeding and clothing the 7 billion of us – influencing the behaviour of these giants offers us the greatest opportunity for the positive change we urgently need to promote more regenerative business practices. As most of the world gets behind the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, it's a once in history chance to coordinate social change through responsible government and business.

We are even more excited about Pukka Herbs now than when we started 16 years ago. It feels like our healing journey has only just begun.

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We are not alone

The healing shadow of the other

David Zigmond

Physician in psychological medicine;
retired GP

My initial medical training was in the 1960s. My subsequent decades of work have been as a frontline practitioner: as a small practice GP and a large hospital psychiatrist and psychotherapist. From the beginning of my work I have been intrigued by how we may best understand, balance and weave together art and science; humanism and technology; imagination and data. I believe that much of our current malaise in healthcare services is due to losing sight of these questions, and then our better sense and sensibility.

Apart from what we may do in healthcare, why and how else are we important for one another? Accounts from a recent illness and a collegial exchange explore.

'Man's loneliness is but his fear of life'

Eugene O'Neill (1927), Lazarus laughed

Recently I was meeting and talking with a friend when I became suddenly and unprecedentedly disabled: abdominal pains, intense nausea and retching, and a frightening general weakness and hyperaesthesia – I felt dangerously vulnerable and without a protective skin. Yet I had, somehow, to get home; to thread my way through jostling and heedless crowds and the convergent push of the London underground. I craved my defensible space, to collapse.

Home and exhausted, I managed, with plummeting life-force, to leadenly climb the stairs to the support of my bed and soft containment of the duvet. I needed oblivion and primitive containment. My senses and primevally imagining hind-brain told

me I may be dying. Yet my now-flickering forebrain was able to feebly interject: 'No! You've probably got something like a Norovirus, that's all. You'll be fine, later'. But I wasn't interested in later. I felt so vulnerable and ill that death now would be a liberation...

The mattress and duvet were essential, but not sufficient: I needed also human connection – a resonance of consciousness in this empty house. With great difficulty I managed to send a minimally phrased, but urgent, request to my partner. She arrives quickly in a flurry of calm but kind helpfulness. She looks at my grey face, unsighted gaze and huddled, trembling body. She is not a medic and is now unusually worried.

'Shall I get a doctor?', she says. 'No ... no point', I grunt feebly, with closed eyes. She waivers with uncharacteristic inaction. 'Isn't there *something* I can do, something I can get you...?', she sounds almost plaintive in her need to be helpful. 'No. Just water, in that baby's cup.'

Her fingers touch me gently on my upper chest, probably to comfort us both. I am aware of instinctively jerking away, backwards: my skinless state renders touch painful.

'What then?' She feels saddened and emptied by this unexpected redundancy.

'Nothing else. Just be here, in the house somewhere ... I need to lie here in the dark and quiet...' I know this request is important, deep and

complex, but my depleted strength denies me explanation or expression.

In several hours of semi-delirium I am aware of her careful household noises: the benign sounds of kindred consciousness. There may be nothing else she can do, but my knowing that she knows my distress, knowing that she is thinking about me with good heart, is powerfully comforting.

Late the next day – the calm after the storm – I am recovered enough for conversation. Q is relieved by the return of life in me. 'Thank goodness! You look so much better: you looked awful ... I wish I'd been able to do more, though', she pouts, and I think I hear both blame and contrition in her voice.

'No', I want to reassure her. 'Your just being here – having me in mind – made a crucial difference. More than you realise. It's a strange but powerful truth...'

'What is?'

'Well, I wanted your presence, your witness, your compassionate thoughts – even though I knew you couldn't do anything else. I think that is almost universal in our most painful or pivotal life events ... even, or especially, our departures – our death...' I fade into reflective melancholy.

'Thankfully you now seem far from your deathbed, but not your complicated and morbid thoughts. Anyway, what do you mean?' Q's curiosity is hued with teasing, laughter and relief.

We are not alone

I cleave to my seriousness. 'Well the deathbed scenario is an excellent example of much of this. We cannot there change the course of events, but by our personal accompaniment, and by bearing witness, we certainly change the nature of the experience: we imbue the ineluctable with human value and meaning ... but we can only do this by creating human connection.'

'Do you think most people think that?' asks Q.

'In a way, yes, but they probably express it differently. How else do we account for this recurring and central theme – of the fraternally embraced and witnessed death – in so much art, literature, drama and opera ... and (probably) in our private dreams and reveries?'

*

A week later I am talking with some trainees. We are discussing the nature of pastoral healthcare – what healthcarers 'do' when they cannot decisively eliminate, or even contain, a problem? I discuss with them how, despite our many impressive advances in scientific medicine, we are still left with a vast residuum of the incurable and the largely unmodifiable: eventually our lives all end in this territory, either quickly or – more commonly now – very slowly.

So, I am saying, personal witness and accompaniment is certainly important in death and at times of earlier adversity. Yet even throughout life's more resilient times we are sustained, still, by more remote forms of these: even when we are well it is important for us to know that others are thinking of us, that they have us in mind. How else do we explain the ritualistic significance of birthday or Christmas cards or, increasingly, our compulsive appetites for 'personal' electronic signalling?

This is an eternal and almost universal human need. Much of our lives are spent searching out buttresses against, or consolation for, our four basic existential anxieties: the knowledge of our mortality, our aloneness, our ultimate insignificance, all which must be endured in a world which may have no sense or purpose. So no wonder that we need such stroking and containment – more or less directly throughout our lives. This is even more so during our times of vulnerability when personal familiarity, too, becomes especially important. And here fate is particularly unkind, because both ageing and illness are both likely to remove us from our 'communities', the most reliable source of the familiar and our stroking...

An attentive trainee jumps ahead, adding his own metaphor: 'so the malnourished can't get to the food...'

Another has more severe pragmatism: 'But a modern GP can't pay attention to all this. There's too many, more real, problems that need fixing and managing. GPs now don't have time ... Surely, these kind of problems should be dealt with by someone else.'

'Who?' I ask.

'Well, nurses, counsellors, social workers ... that sort of thing. There are charities, too...' she says, as if she could thus quickly despatch all such problems.

'Yes, I partially agree' I say, extending myself toward her more neatly viewed and bounded world 'but they will all be strangers – unfamiliar – to the patient. Often the patient will want contact with the doctor they know already, at least to begin with. That doctor can remain as their safe haven, their reliable anchor-point – even their primary attachment – in a care system that's ever more fragmented and kaleidoscopic. Of course, some patients will necessarily see all sorts of other people, but the GP can still offer that growing familiarity and accessible stability. *Personal continuity* of care makes our best *pastoral healthcare* possible: those are the terms I like to use. These things used to comprise the heart and spine – I would say the spirit – of the better general practice, and psychiatry too...'

'But we can't do much of that now. It's not just the time. It's also the fact that most of us are working very part-time in large practices with complex rotas: more and more noone really knows anyone. So we rarely get to know our patients.' She flips away her right hand. She seems, to me, wearily impatient though not discourteous.

'Hm. I fear that's the future: I'm so pleased I lived my life in the past' I muse with reminiscence and irony.

'Well that's one thing that can't trouble us with requirements for further planning or choice!' she rejoins quickly. She is playful now.

Our shared laughter is genuine: sometimes humour provides the most refreshing respite.

*

'The secret source of humour is not joy but sorrow. There is no humour in heaven.'

Mark Twain (1897) *Following the Equator*



Interested? Many articles exploring similar themes are available on David Zigmund's website www.marco-learningssystem.com

David Zigmund would be pleased to receive your feedback.

A healing journey

Here Dr William House is in conversation with Joan (not her real name). She is in her late 60s and was feeling completely well when she was found through routine breast screening to have follicular lymphoma.



William House

Retired GP; Chair of the BHMA

J If I go back to the very beginning, when I just got the lymphoma diagnosis, I didn't know if I was going to die. Before I'd seen a consultant and knew more, I was already trying to do something to combat the horror of the diagnosis, to start the healing.

W What does healing mean to you?

J That's a bit tricky. Well, it does mean taking control. My whole focus has been to feel empowered through this journey (that I didn't chose). Feeling a victim is the worst possible thing. My whole focus is to feel empowered. So it's not turning up at the hospital and having things done to me. It's not saying 'you make me better!'. So I started thinking about diet, alcohol consumption, and doing my visualisation. I could do those quickly. I believe the mind-body is really powerful and when it's focused towards healing it has huge potential if you are able to harness it.

W So how was it when you went to the hospital?

J Well ... it was terrible! As soon as I walked through the door I felt disempowered and overawed by the technology, and scared. I also have to say that I could see I needed the hospital so I didn't have any choice. My husband came with me – it would have been awful on my own. I had a lot of support and love from family and friends; that was a big factor right from the beginning. I feel really lucky not to be on my own.

W You had to make some decisions on this journey – investigations and treatments – how was that?

J They told me that my condition is not often fatal, though not curable either. So I felt I had time. I resolved that I wouldn't make decisions in the consulting room because I felt overawed by the consultant and technology. I was ill and the consultant had all the knowledge and consequently all the power as well.

W So did you refuse to have some investigations or treatments?

J I chose to delay them. I would try other routes, first to get rid of the symptoms – homeopathy and acupuncture were hugely helpful – and second, to get a wider vision of the illness. At first I just had the diagnosis, but after a while I began to think the diagnosis was also a story. I didn't like their story. It was gloomy. So having perceived it as a story, I thought I would change it into something more hopeful. The Reiki practitioner gave me the initial clue. Consultants at the hospital still keep telling me their same story, but I try not to listen to them. It takes time after every visit to recover my equilibrium! My story is much better because it has hope. I think they go too far with honesty.

W Do you really mean that about honesty?

J Yes! They don't have to keep saying 'it's not curable'. I don't expect them to lead me up the garden path, but they don't have to say it every time. Also, it takes no account of the patient and the patient's input. It's just treating symptoms and not the person.

W How is it that you eventually had chemotherapy treatment?

J I didn't want to. I was scared. But I could see there were huge risks and it was not sensible to deny them any longer. Also, I had a lovely consultant at that time who I believe had my best interests at heart. He spoke to us very carefully and slowly, because it's complicated. He was always very calm and he's obviously very knowledgeable but without being arrogant, and he answered all our questions very clearly. That's why I knew when he became a little rattled that I had to take notice.

W So you had some chemotherapy. How did things go after that?

J I incorporated the chemotherapy into my visualisation and it worked like magic.

W So you were feeling better. Then what?

J I picked up a Deepak Chopra book we've had for years and never read. That started me off on another huge journey of reading and finding out how to stay well [see Hamilton, 2010 and Dispenza, 2007]. The latest instalment in my self-help is Qi Gong, which is totally about healing. In my position this is the best thing since sliced bread! It's now 18 months since the chemo and I feel really well, but I know there's no room for complacency. It's learning and continuing.

W How has the journey so far changed you and your life?

J It's a rollercoaster and I've had to let go of some things and be less determined about my work. I've had to make time to do my healing practices and I'm still trying to find a new equilibrium. The reading is really inspiring and exciting. So certainly it's not all bad. I'm learning all the time, I've met lovely people and I'm sticking to my story!

References

- Chopra D (2016) *Quantum healing*. New York, NY: Random House.
Dispenza J (2007) *Evolve your brain*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications Inc.
Hamilton DR (2010) *How your mind can heal your body*. Carlsbad: Hay House.

Research summaries



Thanks to James Hawkins <http://goodmedicine.org.uk/goodknowledge>

Is loneliness a major cause of heart disease?

Loneliness is a mounting social problem, and a medical one too because feeling lonely doubles the chances of fatal heart disease. This makes it a bigger risk factor than smoking, drinking or being overweight. Living alone but with an active social circle seems not to run the same risk. Copenhagen University Hospital researchers asked more than 13,000 heart patients whether they lived alone or felt isolated. Dying from heart disease was a major factor for both sexes but slightly more likely among the women regardless of whether they were smokers, heavy drinkers or obese.

www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Press-Office/Press-releases/loneliness-is-bad-for-the-heart

What makes life good?

Studying happiness is one way of learning about the good life. In ordinary discourse, the 'good' can mean either pleasure or virtue or 'good' in the sense of competence, or it can denote cultural respect. So meaning and happiness overlap but they are not the same. Happiness may be relatively natural: presumably to do with an organism feeling pleasure at having its needs met. In contrast, meaning is cultural and tied up both with having social interactions and participating in a cultural system with shared values and understandings.

Baumeister RF (2017) Happiness and meaningfulness as two different and not entirely compatible versions of the good life. 19th Sydney Social Psychology Conference, Sydney.

Twenty-five years of materialism

Researchers used data from the World Values Survey and the European Values Study to compare the trends of materialism over the last quarter of a century among the US and six major European countries: France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Great Britain and Sweden. They found that the trends in Europe and in the US diverged. In the US materialism increased, while in Europe it decreased. However, some mixed patterns arise. In particular, Great Britain, Spain and Sweden showed some symptoms of an increase of materialistic values, although they were far less pronounced compared with the American ones. According to most of the measures, Americans were relatively less materialistic 25 years ago, yet more recently scored very high in the ranking of materialism in the sample countries.

Bartolini S, Sarracino F (2017) Twenty-five years of materialism: Do the US and Europe diverge? *Social Indicators Research* 133(2): 787–817.

Using positive psychology in depression

A new small study may begin to broaden treatment choice for patients and professionals. Lately, treatments for depression using the ubiquitous CBT mostly focus on reducing patients' symptoms or deficits. Instead, researchers looked at the possibility of

building positive resources using a manualised programme of validated positive psychology interventions (PPI). Their controlled clinical trial included 96 adult women diagnosed with major depression. 47 were blindly allocated to a 10-session PPI and 49 to CBT. In both groups clinical symptoms reduced and wellbeing increased. Even within the most severely depressed participants, no differences between PPI and CBT emerged.

Chaves C *et al* (2017) A comparative study on the efficacy of a positive psychology intervention and a cognitive behavioral therapy for clinical depression. *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 41(3): 417–433.

Wisdom and how to measure it

Philosophers and behavioral scientists think of wisdom as unbiased reasoning that guides one toward a balance of interests and promotes a good life. Associated characteristics include intellectual humility, recognition of uncertainty and change, consideration of the broader context at hand and perspectives of others, and the ability to integrate these perspectives. However, current ways of testing for wisdom appear biased, and may fail to capture the all-important balance-related tendencies. This large-scale psychometric investigation (N = 4,463) developed the Situated Wise Reasoning Scale (SWIS) which appears to be reliable and independent of psychological biases. SWIS scores were positively related to indices of living well, eg adaptive emotion regulation, mindfulness, balancing of cooperative with self-protective interests, goals and causal inferences about conflict. In contrast, global wisdom reports were unrelated or negatively related to balance-related measures.

Brienza, JP *et al* (2017) Wisdom, bias, and balance: Toward a process-sensitive measurement of wisdom-related cognition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 21 September.

Wisdom and how to cultivate it

Characteristics of wise thinking include intellectual humility, recognition of uncertainty and change, consideration of different perspectives, and integration of these perspectives. All these desirable characteristics are highly variable across situations, contexts and cultures. However, if you thought such wisdom depended on immutable personal qualities that develop as a consequence of extraordinary innate potential and life experiences, you could be wrong. More than ever we need a good theory of wisdom and practices to develop it, because our species needs wisdom by the shedload right now! Thankfully scholarship is developing in this crucial area where research involving experiments and cross-cultural studies already suggests for instance that greater wisdom is demonstrated in ecological and experimentally-induced contexts that promote an ego-decentered (versus egocentric) viewpoint. It seems that authenticity and real-life stories matter when teaching to generate wisdom through an appreciation of context-dependency, where intentions and actions are depicted in narratives from wisdom exemplars' lives.

Grossmann I (2017) Wisdom and how to cultivate it. *European Psychologist* 22(4): 233–246.

Reviews

In search of grace – an ecological pilgrimage

Peter Reason

Earth Books (John Hunt), 2017

ISBN 978 1 78279 4 868

Poacher's pilgrimage – an island journey

Alastair McIntosh

Birlinn, 2016

ISBN 978 1 78027 3 617



Some years ago at Falkland in Fife, Ian Bradley came to talk about his new book on pilgrimage. I was struck at the time by his finding that pilgrimage had become enormously popular over the previous 30 years, and that all kinds of people could resonate with the metaphor of life as a journey. Oddly enough, Alastair McIntosh came to speak at the same venue in 2009 just before embarking on his pilgrimage, so the event is mentioned in his book. As Peter explains, the word originally comes from the Latin *peregrinus*, etymologically derived from *per* (through) and *ager* (field, country, land) and it meant a foreigner, stranger, someone on a journey, or a temporary resident. We are certainly all temporary residents on the journey of life. Peter defines pilgrimage as a 'journey of moral or spiritual significance, undertaken in response to deep questions and a yearning for answers from a realm beyond the everyday'. So an ecological pilgrimage is a 'search for an experience of deep participation with the Earth and her creatures'. This is true for both these books featuring the west coast of Ireland and the west coast of Scotland – in Peter's case mostly on the water, while Alastair walks across his home territory of Harris and Lewis, where his father had been a GP.

The three phases of the pilgrimage are preparation, the journey itself and the return home, plus, in these cases, writing up the experience for one's own benefit and that of others. The habits of everyday life are disrupted and we subject ourselves to considerable physical discomfort and hardship. This intensifies the ups and downs of life, but such experiences are required in order to gain resilience, however challenging they are at the time. Both writers record their changing moods, sometimes corresponding to the weather, a source of constant concern to pilgrims, especially on the sea. They also write about being up against their physical limits, about tiredness and exhaustion compensated by exquisite landscapes and a deeper sense of belonging.

Both writers seek and experience the sacred, what Peter calls moments of grace. Harris and Lewis are full of ancient sacred sites and wells. Overlaid on the prevalence of second sight and the thinness of the veil between realities on the island is a bleak Calvinism, of which more below. Thomas Berry wrote about the need for a new story in which we experience ourselves as a communion of subjects rather than a collection of separate objects. Peter asks what it would take to experience ourselves fully as part of the whole, shifting our way of thinking from a world of separate objects to an interconnected whole, which is also a moral shift towards 'seeing humans as part of the community of life on Earth [the moral gaze]'. Alastair's previous

work in human ecology and on soil and soul resonates with this concern. This new vision is vital to generate the necessary energy for real transformation, as Thomas Berry insisted.

Part of our sense of alienation is the uprooting from more traditional cosmologies where we were contained within something larger and consequently knew our place and purpose. Peter and Alastair both refer to the work of Gregory Bateson, Alastair quoting his sentence: 'Mind is immanent in the larger system – man plus environment' – he could have added culture. Peter quotes Bateson to the effect that the human mind is driven by conscious purpose, which means the pursuit of short-term goals rather than long-term stability. Similarly, Bateson said that our major problems arise from the differences between the way Nature operates and the workings of the human mind – contrasting cyclical with linear: As pilgrims, the authors become aware of the rhythms and gestures of Nature – light and dark, hot and cold, sunrise and sunset, calm and storm corresponding to inner peace and turmoil. Beyond these polarities are the moments of grace and oneness where we can experience being part of a greater or wider whole. Here the boundaries of our everyday distinction between inner and outer blend, and we glimpse a greater depth as a more conscious traveller.

I reviewed Peter's earlier sea pilgrimage recounted in his book *Spindrift*. In the new book, he describes his pilgrimage in two parts over two years, spanning his 70th birthday at sea and completing the phase of his identity as a sailor by selling his boat and coming back to the fruit trees in his garden. He has a companion or companions for parts of his journey, but much of it is solo, bringing him into an encounter with himself, the boat, the sea, the weather and the landscape. Although the narrative is sequential, the chapters raise larger themes as reading and reflection intersect with episodes on the journey. Pilgrimage as homage or honouring, the relationship between tourist and pilgrim, finding the way – a lot of mapping and consulting charts is essential – dangers and difficulties, meandering and storytelling, silence and solitude, transience, fragility, Earth time, eternal now, deep time and pilgrimage at home. All this is beautifully written as the reader shares a range and intensity of experience. Just as the writer listens, so too does the reader.

Peter draws three lessons from his challenging experiences: that the world beyond and beneath human constructions is irrefutably real and its indisputable presence will be revealed; secondly, the pilgrim is alert for signs, trying to remain awake. When we translate this into our ecological situation, we realise that many of us are 'sleepwalking into calamity'. The third lesson is about response – do we have the skill, resources and presence of mind to respond appropriately, both individually and collectively? Meandering and storytelling allows us to enter into the flow of life without imposing our own goals, it corresponds to silence, stillness and deep listening, an emptiness that is also fullness and healing.

In some ways, Alastair's pilgrimage across the land of his childhood is 'knowing place for the first time', seeing with new eyes. The bus ride at the start telescopes the island into a few hours, which extends to 12 days in reverse, a pilgrimage shorter than that of Peter, but no less intense. The land has its own history, including the 18th and 19th century croft clearances intersecting with Alastair's own work on land reform and confrontation with international business interests. Many of the colourful characters of the island are brought to life over the

course of a few days, sometimes over a glass of cask-conditioned whisky. The landscape is both sacred and imaginal, the 'other-world' ever present. The ancient Celtic spiritual heritage, as I referred to above, was overlaid by the strict and severe theological system of John Calvin, with his insistence on human depravity and double predestination – to heaven or hell. As Alastair remarks, this constitutes a theology of fear and control. However, an underlying sense of veneration still breaks through. Beside the gate of an ancient 'temple' site, he came across a plaque commemorating the burial of 400 tattered old family bibles in 2006. Calvin might have fretted. Was this some idolatrous treatment of the paper, as distinct from its word? The islanders had the last word in the inscription: 'the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever.'

The dualism of heaven and hell, light and dark, good and evil also informs Alastair's work over many years with the Defence Academy and other military think tanks. American defence thinking is based on a naïve dichotomy of good and evil and the demonising of the enemy without awareness of projecting one's own shadow. Alastair explains his brief as exploring 'the moral implications of conflict that exceeds military capacity to deter or contain it; and the application of non-violence, including its religious basis, to achieve security in a complex world where the net results of conflict are not easy to predict.' He describes various encounters with high-ranking military and the typical arguments they might deploy as Alastair insists on the courage of nonviolence and deconstructs just war theory. He confronts a number of people with the question – have you killed, lamenting the brutalisation inherent in many conflict situations. He admits his own complicity in being part of the system that destroys life more generally. Thoughtful military comment that he reminds them of their limits, encouraging them to move along the spectrum from violence to nonviolence, towards a spirituality of transformation. Here his thinking intersects with earlier reflections on Calvinism, since he sees the cross as nonviolence personified, while updating the literalistic insistence on ransom and atonement – freeing ourselves from ourselves, and reconnecting with our divine source.

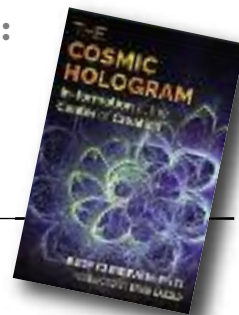
These reflections intersperse with the other side of the pilgrimage – the moor, the rocks, the sea, the wind, encounters with sacred wells and sites and with the blue mountain hare and deer, as well as the practicalities of food and shelter, with his trusty rucksack Osprey. People give him eggs and sandwiches for his journey and one can viscerally appreciate the warmth of hot drinks – also a prominent feature for Peter. The pilgrimage is an immersion not only in the landscape, but also in the otherworld of faeries and his concerns for God and war. The metaphor of the poacher comes up in a number of contexts, including the thought that we are all poachers in the flow of life: 'None of us', Alastair remarks, 'or very few at any rate, complete the cycles of gratitude and right relationships that open up to greater depths of being.' This includes a transformative encounter with the shadow, of which many people are still unaware, both generally and in themselves. In that sense, we are all work in progress, and pilgrimage helps us to become more conscious of this journey.

Both of these inspiring books can also turn into vicarious pilgrimages for the reader. The writers wrestle with central human challenges and the need for transformation, as well as personal and collective resistance to this process. If you are not planning a pilgrimage yourself, then I suggest you set aside time to read both of these books in the pilgrim state of mind as a way of opening up a deeper sense of connectedness with life and nature and enhancing your own contribution to the current evolutionary transformation.

David Lorimer, Programme Director, Scientific and Medical Network
This review is reprinted from *Network Review 123 (2017/1)*

The cosmic hologram: information at the centre of creation

Jude Currivan
Inner Traditions, 2017
ISBN: 978 1 62055 6 603



Many people believe that science is about to undergo what Kuhn famously called a 'paradigm shift': a total change in the way in which we think about our world. Over the last 200 years or so there has been a steady increase in the power of, and general belief in, materialistic science. This has led to the gradual loss of ancient wisdom and belief systems, and an erosion of human spirituality. But within science there are now signs of a 'backlash' against rigid materialism and the primacy of reductionist, positivist thinking. For example, modern neuroscience has led us to assume that our brains produce consciousness, a relatively new concept within the history of ideas, and one for which there is no evidence; but several neuroscientists are now questioning this, and going back to older ideas of a universal consciousness that our brains can tap us into. And in the USA, there is a new Academy for the Advancement of Post-materialist Sciences (AAPS.global.com).

Jude Currivan's important book *The Cosmic Hologram* brings modern science and age-old wisdom together into a new, exciting vision of the universe which accords with much of the post-materialist thinking outlined above. Dr Currivan started out as an astrophysicist, studying with the same mentor as the late Stephen Hawking. But, while Hawking stuck with astrophysics, Currivan went on to do many other things, including being a successful businesswoman, studying archaeology, and being recognised as an author, a healer and a futurist. Hawking's book *A brief history of time* captured the public's imagination – we all read it and tried to understand it. I suggest that Currivan's book *The Cosmic Hologram* is a much more important one, as well as being an easier read, and I urge you to read it and join the 'wholeworld-view' movement that is developing from it (www.wholeworld-view.org).

Max Planck, the Nobel Laureate who developed quantum theory, famously said 'I regard Matter as derivative from consciousness' – an idea that I have often quoted, in spite of the fact that I just could not get my head around it until I read this book. Quantum physics is tricky for a retired doctor like me to understand, and it has been made more problematic for us because physicists have been saying that it is incompatible with the other key theory of fundamental physics: relativity theory. Currivan's book sorts all this out! Yes, she has found a way of reconciling quantum and relativity theories by considering energy-matter and space-time as complementary expressions of information, which she says is the basic stuff of the Universe. Consciousness connects us to universal 'in-formation' from which the hologram of the physical world is derived – therefore we are all interconnected and co-creators of the innate intelligence that is the in-formation, that is the Universe. Currivan explains the physics behind this in an accessible way, using a number of fascinating examples of order in the Universe, and metaphors, such as baking the perfect cake.

Another important author, interested in a theory of everything, was Douglas Adams, who tells us in *The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy* that Trin Tragula developed the total perspective vortex on the basis that all atoms in the Universe were able to interact with each other, and that everything is interconnected and affecting the whole, allowing him to extract the machine from a piece of fairy cake. Currivan also uses cake as a

metaphor, but this is a serious book that provides us with the scientific basis for which everything really is connected, and that we are all co-creators of the 'in-formation vortex' that is reality. Trin Tragula invented his machine to get his wife back, as she was always telling him to get 'a sense of proportion'; Jude Currivan has provided us with a wonderful new perspective on the senses of proportion that underlies the whole universe.

The implications of this work are immense. Surely we would behave differently if we really understood that everything is inter-connected, that we are all one, that our actions and deeds are part of reality, and that matter is a hologram derived from universal in-formation? Such thinking not only undermines simple views of the universe, it is a way of escaping from selfish materialism, and a pathway towards the realisation of the potential of the universe and of our species within it. This is part of the remit of the worldwide-view which is based on Currivan's wonderful book.

Paul Dieppe, Emeritus Professor of Health and Wellbeing, University of Exeter Medical School

Switch: How to change things when change is hard

Dan and Chip Heath
Random House, 2011
ISBN 978 1 84794 0 322



Dan Heath is a Senior Fellow at Duke University's CASE center, which supports social entrepreneurs. At CASE he founded the Change Academy, a program designed to boost the impact of social sector leaders. His brother, Chip Heath, is a professor at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, where he teaches business strategy and organizations. Together they've written three *New York Times* bestsellers: *Decisive*, *Switch*, and *Made to Stick*.

The goal of *Switch*, Dan and Chip Heath's second book, is to teach you a framework of change, based on decades of scientific research. The results are simple enough to remember and still flexible enough to use in many different situations (family, work, community, and otherwise).

One of the greatest things about *Switch* is that Dan and Chip Heath created a framework that can be useful to people who don't have scads of authority or resources.

Switch is arranged around a correlation (immediately visual and sticky) – the example of an elephant and a rider. This is an analogy used by University of Virginia psychologist Jonathan Haidt in his amazing book, *The Happiness Hypothesis*. Haidt believes that our emotional side is an Elephant and our rational side is its Rider.

The Rider holds the reins and seems to be the leader; but his control is precarious because the Rider is so small relative to the Elephant. Anytime the Elephant and Rider disagree about which direction to go in, the Rider is going to lose. He's completely overmatched.

Following that metaphor, the Heath brothers outline nine actions that shape how groups (and individuals) respond to changes. The book describes them in detail with stories, examples, and structure. For things to change somebody, somewhere, has to start acting differently. Maybe it's you, maybe it's your team. Picture that person (or people). Each has an emotional Elephant side and a rational Rider side. You've got to reach both. And you've also got to clear the way for them to succeed.

That being said, if you are in the role of a 'change agent', *Switch* is your step-by-step manual. For individuals' behavior to

change, you've got to influence not only their environment but their hearts and minds too. The problem is this: often the heart and mind disagree. A part of us – our rational side – wants to get up at 5.45am, to allow plenty of time for a quick jog before we leave for the office. The other part – the emotional side – wakes up in the darkness of the early morning, warm inside a cocoon of blankets, and wants nothing else except to press the snooze button.

Switch is based on a basic three-part framework, one that can guide you in any situation where you need to change your behavior. Whether the switch you seek is in your family, your charity, your organization, or in society at large, you'll get there by making three things happen. You'll have to direct the Rider; motivate the Elephant, and shape the Path. If you can do all three at once dramatic change can happen, even if you don't have lots of power or resources.

Direct the rider: *'What looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity'*

You have to provide crystal-clear direction to the Rider. This can be done by following the bright spots, scripting critical moves, and pointing to the destination. To follow the bright spots you basically have to figure out what's working and clone it. When it comes to scripting the moves, you have to start thinking in terms of specific behaviors. If you want people to change, you don't ask them to "act healthier." You say, "Next time you're in the dairy aisle of the grocery store, reach for a jug of 1% milk instead of whole milk." Make sure you don't forget about the destination; change is easier when you know where you're going and why it's worth it.

Motivate the elephant: *'What looks like laziness is often exhaustion.'*

When it comes to change, it's critical that you engage people's emotional side. To achieve that you have to find something that motivates them, shrinks the change, and helps them grow. Knowledge isn't enough to cause change; you have to make people feel something. Break down the change until it no longer frightens the Elephant. Make sure to cultivate a sense of identity in your people and instill their growth mindset.

Shape the path: *'What looks like a people problem is often a situation problem.'*

The Heath brothers refer to the situation and surrounding environment as the Path. When you manage to shape the Path, change becomes much more likely to happen, no matter what's happening with the Rider and Elephant. To shape that Path you have to tweak the environment, build habits, and rally the herd.

The environment can act as a powerful brake or accelerant on our behavior; and that is why you must tweak to facilitate change. Look for ways to encourage building new habits and ingraining them in your Path. Much of our daily behavior is, in fact, more automatic than supervised; that's a good thing because the supervised behavior is the hard stuff.

When it comes to rallying the herd, keep in mind that behavior is contagious. You have to help it spread around the organization you want to change.

When change happens, it tends to follow a pattern. The people who change have a clear direction, ample motivation, and a supportive environment. In other words, when change works it's because the Rider, the Elephant, and the Path are all aligned.

Overall I found *Switch: How To Change Things When Change Is Hard* to be an excellent starting point to discuss a change in an organization, and in personal life as well. Change isn't always easy, but Dan and Chip Heath's book certainly makes the process easier.

Reprinted courtesy of GetNugget.co Team.

About the BHMA

In the heady days of 1983 while the Greenham Common Women's Camp was being born, a group of doctors formed the British Holistic Medical Association (BHMA). They too were full of idealism. They wanted to halt the relentless slide of mainstream healthcare towards industrialised monoculture. They wanted medicine to understand the world in all its fuzzy complexity, and to embrace health and healing; healing that involves body, mind and spirit. They wanted to free medicine from the grip of old institutions, from over-reliance on drugs and to explore the potential of other therapies. They wanted practitioners to care for themselves, understanding that practitioners who cannot care for their own bodies and feelings will be so much less able to care for others.

The motto, 'Physician heal thyself' is a rallying call for the healing of individuals and communities; a reminder to all humankind that we cannot rely on those in power to solve all our problems. And this motto is even more relevant now than it was in 1983. Since then, the BHMA has worked to promote holism in medicine, evolving to embrace new challenges, particularly the over-arching issue of sustainability of vital NHS human and social capital, as well as ecological and economic systems, and to understand how they are intertwined.

The BHMA now stands for five linked and overlapping dimensions of holistic healthcare:

Whole person medicine

Whole person healthcare seeks to understand the complex influences – from the genome to the ozone layer – that build up or break down the body-mind: what promotes vitality adaptation and repair, what undermines them? Practitioners are interested not just in the biochemistry and pathology of disease but in the lived body, emotions and beliefs, experiences and relationships, the impact of the family, community and the physical environment. As well as treating illness and disease, whole person medicine aims to create resilience and wellbeing. Its practitioners strive to work compassionately while recognising that they too have limitations and vulnerabilities of their own.

Self-care

All practitioners need to be aware that the medical and nursing professions are at higher risk of poor mental health and burnout. Difficult and demanding work, sometimes in toxic organisations, can foster defensive cynicism, 'presenteeism' or burnout. Healthcare workers have to understand the origins of health, and must learn to attend to their wellbeing. Certain core skills can help us, yet our resilience will often depend greatly on support from family and colleagues, and on the culture of the organisations in which we work.

Humane care

Compassion must become a core value for healthcare and be affirmed and fully supported as an essential

marker of good practice through policy, training and good management. We have a historical duty to pay special attention to deprived and excluded groups, especially those who are poor, mentally ill, disabled and elderly. Planning compassionate healthcare organisations calls for social and economic creativity. More literally, the wider use of the arts and artistic therapies can help create more humane healing spaces and may elevate the clinical encounter so that the art of healthcare can take its place alongside appropriately applied medical science.

Integrating complementary therapies

Because holistic healthcare is patient-centred and concerned about patient choice, it must be open to the possibility that forms of treatment other than conventional medicine might benefit a patient. It is not unscientific to consider that certain complementary therapies might be integrated into mainstream practice. There is already some evidence to support its use in the care and management of relapsing long-term illness and chronic disease where pharmaceuticals have relatively little to offer. A collaborative approach based on mutual respect informed by critical openness and honest evaluation of outcomes should encourage more widespread co-operation between 'orthodox' and complementary clinicians.

Sustainability

Climate change is the biggest threat to the health of human and the other-than-human species on planet Earth. The science is clear enough: what builds health and wellbeing is better diet, more exercise, less loneliness, more access to green spaces, breathing clean air and drinking uncontaminated water. If the seeds of mental ill-health are often planted in an over-stressed childhood, this is less likely in supportive communities where life feels meaningful. Wars are bad for people, and disastrous for the biosphere. In so many ways what is good for the planet is good for people too.

Medical science now has very effective ways of rescuing people from end-stage disease. But if healthcare is to become sustainable it must begin to do more than just repair bodies and minds damaged by an unsustainable culture. Holistic healthcare practitioners can help people lead healthier lives, and take the lead in developing more sustainable communities, creating more appropriate models of healthcare, and living more sustainable ways of life. If the earth is to sustain us, inaction is not a choice.

**"The Journal of Holistic Healthcare...
a great resource for the integration-minded,
and what a bargain!"**

Dr Michael Dixon

Three issues each year – £48 for full BHMA members.
On-line members £25/year including access to all past issues.

Guidelines for Contributors

About the journal

The Journal of Holistic Healthcare is a UK-based journal focusing on evidence-based holistic practice and the practical implications of holistic health and social care. Our target audience is everyone concerned with developing integrated, humane healthcare services. Our aim is to be useful to anyone who is interested in creative change in the way we think about health, and the way healthcare is practised and organised.

Our basic assumption is that holism can improve healthcare outcomes and will often point to cost-effective ways of improving health. Holistic healthcare can be understood as a response to our turbulent times, and medicine's crisis of vision and values; an evolutionary impulse driving individuals and organisation to innovate. But when complex and creative adaptations do occur, these ideas, experiences and social inventions don't always take root. Though they might be the butterfly wingbeats that could fan the winds of change, even crucial seeds of change may fail to germinate when isolated, unnoticed and lacking the oxygen of publicity or vital political support. Some of these ideas and social inventions have to be rediscovered or reinvented, and thrive once the culture becomes more receptive – or more desperate for solutions.

The JHH sees holism as one such idea, a nest of notions whose time has come. So we want the journal to be a channel for publishing ideas and experiences that don't fit easily into more conventional mainstream journals, because by making them visible, their energy for change becomes available to the system.

The journal's themes include the theory and practice of mind-body medicine; every aspect of whole person care – but especially examples of it in the NHS; patients' participation in their own healing; inter-professional care and education; integration of CAM and other promising new approaches into mainstream medicine; health worker wellbeing; creating and sustaining good health – at every level from the genome to the ozone layer; environment health and the health politics of the environment; diversity and creativity in healthcare delivery, as well as holistic development in organisations and their management: a necessarily broad remit!

Writing for the journal

We intend the journal to be intensely practical; displaying not only research, but also stories about holism in action. Personal viewpoint and theoretical articles are welcome too, providing they can be illuminated by examples of their application. The Journal of Holistic Healthcare is a vehicle for injecting

inspiration into the system: ideas and research that might enable positive change. We realise that there is nothing as practical as a good theory, and we encourage authors to foreground what they have done and their experiences, as well as what they know. Though we don't always need or want extensive references, we ask authors to refer to research and writing that supports, debates or contextualises the work they are describing, wherever appropriate. We like further reading and website URLs wherever possible. And we like authors to suggest images, photos, quotes, poems, illustrations or cartoons that enrich what they have written about.

Because the JHH aims to include both authors' ideas and their experience we invite authors to submit case studies and examples of successful holistic practice and services, research findings providing evidence for effective holistic practice, debate about new methodologies and commentaries on holistic policy and service developments. Our aim is to be a source of high-quality information about all aspects of holistic practice for anyone interested in holistic health, including policy-makers, practitioners and 'the public'. We aim to link theory to practice and to be a forum for sharing experiences and the insights of reflective practice.

Articles should be accessible and readable, but also challenging. Key articles will link theory and research to practice and policy development. Contributions from the whole spectrum of healthcare disciplines are welcome.

The journal is particularly concerned to highlight ways of embedding holistic thinking and practice into health care structures, including primary care organisations, networks and collaborative initiatives.

Original research

JHH is a platform for holistic ideas, authentic experiences, and original research. We estimate our regular (and growing) circulation of 700 copies is read by as many as 2000. And, though we don't yet attract researchers seeking RAE points, we are free to be a voice for the kind of ideas, reports, experiences and social inventions that wouldn't fit easily into more conventional mainstream journals: small studies, pilots, local reports, surveys and audits, accounts of action research, narratives, dissertation findings (otherwise hidden in the grey literature), pragmatic and qualitative studies and practice evaluations. By publishing them in the JHH, important seeds for change become available to people who need to grow them on. Another advantage of submitting to JHH is the peer feedback to authors, some of which we may include as commentaries on a published paper.

Editorial Board

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