

Destination: Rainbow

PART 1



CaroleClaude T.

Destination: Rainbow

Part 1

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Foreword

Hi there, dear Reader,

I am very happy to imagine you here on this page.

As interconnected as I believe we all are to each other, I like knowing I always have someone, even a stranger, with whom to share my thoughts.



For me, writing has always been about you (as reader) and me silently communicating with each other.



Heads up: unlike the preceding volumes of the **Stepping Stones to the Rooftop of the World** series, **Destination: Rainbow** has not been written linearly.



Streaming flurries of inspiration do not always fall neatly between full stops so, dear Reader, feel free to jump and skip equally randomly through the chapters and to cartwheel between bullet points intended to slow down the reading.

Wherever your eyes land is where you need to land and read :-))



I intended these bullet points to slow down the reading process because, according to neuroscience, our brain prefers short chunks of text followed by a few seconds of active processing of what it has ingested before we shift its focus to the next point.



About my writing

I believe the thing that makes **Destination: Rainbow** (Part 1 & 2) different from many other books written on the fathomless topic of holistic spirituality is my different approach to it.

From experience, I know that many authors who write about spirituality take things very seriously. And the message typed deliberately according to their intention and purpose is often presented in a dogmatic style.

Instead, I prefer to allow breeze-blown thoughts to shape themselves through the keyboard and into little paragraphs that somehow blend with each other semi-haphazardly.

I like exploring the possibilities embedded in what I feel prompted to type.

And, written between 2020 and 2023, yes, perhaps, **Destination: Rainbow** [Part 1] is an account, a whimsical introspection, of my findings on the Path.



Whether the genre is fiction or holistic spiritual transformation, I always write about aspects contained in the moments that make up the seemingly long strands of daily life.

I love to get as analytically close to my fictional characters as I do to my own character.

Close, too, to our separate, global and not significantly different mindsets.



So, dear Reader, whether it's about relating to some controversial plot beats in my fiction, or whether it's about deconstructing culturally-induced hacks of our hearts and souls, I like to think that my writing offers relatable thoughts to a broad range of unknown and invisible yet authentic persons 'out there'.



I like to imagine that the paragraphs aligned on each page are like waves of varying density and 'elasticity' caught in the flow of an intuitive, secular interpretation of matters of the heart and soul – the matters that shape our day-to-day, today and every day.

Always.



And in truth, it takes that proverbial village, brimming with ideas both ancient and modern, spiritual, literary and scientific, to sustain the seed-carrying stream of consciousness that has provided me with a hobby from which I have never tired.



Almost daily for the past 17 years, these soul-inspired, constant flurries of mind-meandering thoughts have kept me very busy and very happy at the keyboard throughout these many years.



As a writer, I've tried to do justice to my muse's whisperings by shaping them into coherent sentences and paragraphs that resonate with you, dear Reader, whether you are known or unknown, near or far.



I tried to capture your attention and stimulate your imagination.

I tried to slow down your reading by inserting many line breaks into bite-sized paragraphs.

I also tried to influence your reflections, as I have done mine towards a higher degree of consciousness - if only for a moment.

One moment at a time.

Always followed by another.

And again throughout the long chain of deceptively innocuous, disconnected moments.

And through the string of sometimes confronting moments that unexpectedly spring underfoot, as well.



Timely disclosure: Here and now, in the moment underfoot, I truly sense that this manuscript will heralds the end point of my writing on all matters of the heart and soul of our culture - a personal journey on which I embarked some time in 2006 with *Awakening*, a spiritual tale.

'See the breeze,' said the voice. 'Be like the sea.'



Reality check: as souls incarnated in human bodies, reflecting and responding coherently to What-Is is the best we, Earth dwellers, can do to show up as the version of ourselves we were intended to add to our generation.

Hopefully, for you, dear Reader, whether you come across this text in 2023 or in 2043, it will read as a colourful proliferation of mind-based challenges grown within, nearby and far away too.



Thank you for being here.

I appreciate you.

I am grateful for your presence on these pages.



Back story

I can say that, overall, these reflections stem from an attitude to life that, to the best of my ability, I embraced through a daily, ten-year practice under my spiritual mentor, Yudit CS, an ascetic, secular woman who lived in Jerusalem.

And, years beyond her passing, that practice is ongoing.



Basically, it is through the lens of the belief system Yudit had passed on to me that I have cultivated reflections on the slowly adaptive mindsets that, through flurries of reactive impulses, have propelled humanity onwards since the dawn of time.



The rigorous pace of Yudit's daily teachings came to an abrupt end when, unexpectedly, she passed away, early one morning in 2016.

The entire body of my writing is her legacy.



Anyway ... dear Reader, as always when it comes to mind-meanders, it's whatever comes to mind that will determine the content.

For the moment, as always, I'll just do my best to bring to life the inspired whispers that flutter through my mind. As always, priority goes to the ones that are prompting me to keyboard them, here and now.

After all, as Adelaide Anne Procter wrote in 1859, "We always may be what we might have been."

At least as long our soul keeps breathing us.



About Destination: Rainbow [Part 1]

Beyond more and more daily practices at being, just being, just trusting that ALL is as it should be, and to just be the best person I can be, dear Reader, as I type these words, I have no idea what 'rainbow living' might manifest as I eventually hit the final full stop on the last page of the last of the two books intentionally titled **Destination: Rainbow**.



For now, as long as I allow myself the freedom and confidence to write what I feel and to feel what I write, I'm happy.

For now, I am also very happy to know you are 'here', sharing more moments with me on this final mind-meandering guide to our unique, solo journey inside and out of our selves.



By 'final mind-meandering', I'm saying that you and I, dear Reader, are ready to 'end the beginning' of this, our journey of a lifetime, to finally step out more grandly, more sustainably, more coherently than ever before into a purpose-filled reality and consciously co-create with the universe.

By replacing fear with courage, we are ready to bring 'imperfect' closer to perfect.



Instead of chasing quick fixes in the form of instant gratification and instead of accepting false promises as if they were carved in gold, we ready ourselves to push off the jetty for what may well be the most challenging journey of all – the awareness of our selves aiming for the common good.

Ready to edge closer and closer to our Rainbow-desire – the life we truly want to live by being the person we truly want to see emerge from beyond our ego-persona.

Like the sun emerges from behind a cloudy sky.



And by 'final mind-meander', I'm also alluding to the fact that, although the market that seeks personal growth and development has become a billion-dollar industry, how many ways can possibly be needed to explain the self-explanatory commandment written in Leviticus 19:18, the third book of the Jewish Torah?

'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'.



How long before we finally shift from reading, nodding, viewing and listening and then reading some more to actually 'enacting' the very simple but very challenging meaning of this simple thought expressed more than 3 000 years ago, circa 1400 BC?



How much time and effort - how many words - should be needed to dissect the maxim created by Hillel the Elder, born circa 110 BCE?

'What is hateful unto you, do not do unto your neighbour,' he admonished. 'That is the whole Torah, all the rest is commentary.'



G-d said to Abram, "Go to yourself, from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land which I will show you."—Genesis 12:1

Dear Reader, the time is upon us to set off, more determined than ever, towards what we are aiming for.

Not wealth, prestige and control over all and any others, but ... Contentment.

So, together and separately, with 100% energy and courage, we are preparing to eventually push off the jetty on our metaphorical little schooner.

I imagine my little schooner as very ancient, such as the one I drew above, but let me encourage you to visualise and energise your own.

We are getting ready to travel solo towards our Rainbow, i.e., the holistically most rewarding version of our lives.



Generally speaking, the journeys we are most familiar with tend to lead away from Soul, away from our intended authenticity.

'The end of the beginning' suggests the end of journeys that lead outward beyond ourselves in the hope of moments that will be remembered transformative or, better yet, to a moment-to-moment destiny we would enjoy more than our current one.

'The end of the beginning' takes us to the beginning of an inward journey within which we should be better able to control the rips, tides and sunny moments, too, for they all are inherent to life on planet Earth.



Ever since it sprang to mind, I have been happy with the analogy that posits our life as a journey on board a little boat, course set towards a far-away rainbow, our coherent inner destination.

Over and through great rips, swells, and challenges, the frequent, unanticipated complications will all be ours to battle with.

'See the breeze,' said the voice. 'Be like the sea.'



Reality check: optimism is too often hindered by negative self-talk whispered by our Ego-persona.



And now, I've just been reminded of a real person who set sail towards her own Rainbow.

Dear Reader, you might have forgotten the name Jessica Watson, but you might remember one of her extraordinary accomplishments.



Let's wind back to 2009: Jessica, a 16-year-old sailor, sets sail from Sydney Harbour, Australia. She aims to complete a solo voyage - non-stop and unassisted - around the globe on board a small, 10.23-metre pink boat named Pink Lady.



As one can imagine, there was a lot of bad weather to contend with and giant waves to manage. Pink Lady's mast hit the water on three separate occasions. And, of course, during the 40,000km journey, serious repairs had to be done to various areas of the boat. And there were also many moments of profound loneliness.

But 210 days later, Jessica manoeuvred Pink lady back into Sydney Harbour. Mission accomplished.

One of Jessica's main takeaways: You can't change conditions - just the way you deal with them.



Though on the surface, Jessica's sailing journey was 'external' and ours is intended to take us through incremental inner evolution, she was right.

We can neither shield ourselves, our loved ones, nor Nature from unexpected, complicated, sometimes debilitating occurrences.



The best way to manage such occurrences is to do our best to maintain hard-earned coherence.

Again and again.

No matter what.

With an earnest smile ... in our eyes.



Back to Basics 101

Brisbane, August 2021

Oddly for one with no siblings, I feel like a protective 'big sister' standing dockside to farewell a sibling as s/he jumps on-board the little schooner that will take them through the long, very long journey that might eventually lead to the land of rainbow-desires come true.

So, dear Reader, we both know the journey will be challenging.

We both know there will be moments of glorious sunshine.

We both know there will be stars at night.

And that there will be clouds, winds and rain, too.

And thunder and big swells.

And also rips and tides.



We also both know that, whether good or bad, they must be navigated calmly, one micro move after another.

No real comfort.

No real rest.

No safe haven for months on end.



And so, dear Reader, at the risk of overdoing it, I wish to give YOU a whole bunch of last-minute 'provisions'.

That's in case you didn't quite 'pack enough' throughout the 1000s of pages that comprise my writing so far: several eBooks focusing on secular spirituality and numerous articles/blogs focusing on holistic wellness.

Or ... in case you're new to my writing, and this is your first landing point. In which case ... welcome to this final mind-meandering series :-)



If I remember correctly, some of the first ones off the printer were *Would The Real Soul, Please, Stand! A Drop In The Ocean*, and *Spirituality in Real Time*. Back then, I often inserted snippets of my daily conversations with Yudit CS, my Jewish-Israeli mentor over a 10 year span.



Now that you know why I'm still lingering at the keyboard, let's get back to basics: Together and separately, though they do it in their own way and style, the five major world religions overlap in promoting a sense of community that can only be fostered by applied compassion, forgiveness, trust, patience and tolerance.

These virtues are often sorely absent from our thoughts – and, therefore, from our responses to What-Is.



Hinduism, for example, has its own set of commandments.

Satya is about remaining truthful.

Ahimsa is about non-violence.

Brahmacharya is about celibacy or non-adultery.

Asteya is about the lack of desire to possess what we don't have or steal what is not ours.

The last two commandments, Aparighara and Shaucha, insist on freedom from corruption in all its forms and a healthy body and mind.



As an aside, at its purest, Hinduism recognises the validity of all other faiths.

It accepts that a healthy belief relies on a transparent attitude.

Not on rituals.

Not on posturing in a bid for power in the physical world.

Not on words blasted through a microphone.



The Sikh religion prioritises lifting the veil that obscures the ego. In modern parlance, it amounts to acknowledging that our ego is our default program. Hence the need to update it by aligning it with our heart-based priorities – our chosen program.



Ego, it is said, is like a thorn in our foot. The fears and beliefs that limit our ego-persona are the root cause of all our suffering.

Like a thorn in a toe, it hurts us more and more the longer we leave it unattended. Sikhism also urges those of the faith to treat everyone equally. It stresses the interconnectedness of humanity.



Our Ego-persona is the one who craves confidence. She is the one who needs to feel safe and seen and heard, and validated.

Regardless of our age, gender and status, whenever we feel stuck in self-doubt, reactive, divisive or vulnerable in the gaze of others, we know ego is in the saddle.

Controlling our ego means controlling our pride and anger, our greedy or lustful nature. It means controlling our insecurities and the limiting beliefs we hold, mostly about ourselves.

So, we teach ourselves to think along the lines of 'neither I nor you are wrong.'

We do that because, in the absolute, that is true.



Of course, someone like Wayne Muller, a leadership mentor, therapist, minister, and community advocate, would say, "The heart of most spiritual practices is simply this: Remember who you are.

Remember what you love.

Remember what is sacred.

Remember what is true.

Remember that you will die and that this day is a gift.

Remember how you wish to live."



Islam, too, in its pure form, attaches great importance to values such as mercy and compassion.

It urges its followers to avert any conflict, be it personal or national, in favour of a peaceful settlement.

Though it focuses on its Five Pillars, the substance of the biblical commandments that originated in the Jewish Torah appears in various places in the Koran.

Of course, it does.



The Torah, which became known as the Old Testament of Christianity, is the bedrock of the Bible and the Koran.

Moreover, reverence for Nature is engrained in all ancient spiritual traditions.



So, the Golden Rule that hails back to Leviticus, the third book of the Torah, a.k.a. the Pentateuch, has also been interpreted as the call to 'love thy neighbour as thyself' (19:18).



At this point, it's interesting to put a date on this universal thought, the kernel of existential wisdom and holistic well-being.

However modern it might seem, scholars estimate that the current version of the Torah/Old Testament goes as far back as 539 BCE.



Equally 'anciently wise' for it belongs to the mind of Aurelius, the Roman Emperor and philosopher who died in 180 CE, is this thought: Your three components: body, breath, mind. Two are yours in trust; to the third alone you have clear title.



As an aside, it's amazing how deeply enlightened, astute and free of verbosity was the wisdom of this man who lived 2000 years ago.

It is easy to read through the multitude of ageless topics that make up the 12 books of compiled 'notes' scripted with brevity and clever or cryptic wordplay in what might have been his journal.

Or perhaps notes for a more formal exposé.



Thanks to Gregory Hays' translation from ancient Greek, Aurelius' Meditations confirm how ancient our understanding of 'the meaning of life and self' really is.

In Book 1 [of 12], Aurelius jotted down a few resolutions he thought he needed to cultivate: "To read attentively—not to be satisfied with 'just getting the gist of it.' And not to fall for every smooth talker."



Here is another one: "Not to support this side or that in chariot-racing, this fighter or that in the games. To put up with discomfort and not make demands. To do my own work, mind my own business, and have no time for slanderers."

Bottom line: regardless of the exact wording of any ancient or modern text, a golden understanding needs to infuse us: we cannot change others – and neither should we want to.

We cannot change 'the world', let alone 'save it'.

We can only effect a change within.

We can only 'change' *our* selves.

Throughout that process, we spare ourselves depleting thoughts that lead to reactive complications either in the moment underfoot or further downstream.



Reality check: something will shift once we find ways to 'like' *our* selves better, from the inside/out.

So, if bolstered by that intention, we would 'do' better at every opportunity – and, in the fullness of time, we would become better.

It's true.

We would.



Though I was always blessed with good health, a middle-class upbringing and a physically safe environment, emotionally challenging times experienced since early childhood have, some fifty years later, led me to mind-fullness.

These tough times also pushed me to exercise a necessary 'care-full' handling of many moments.

They shifted me away from a tendency to default into a 'Poor me' mindset, the sense of being largely 'dispensable' and the common Me vs You/her/him/them mode.



These days, I remember the physical commonality between all of us, humans alive today.

I remember the emotional commonality that transcends age, gender and race. And intellectual and physical ability, too.

In all invisible aspects, we are probably 90% identical to each other.

And so, I do my best to be my best.

Should I mess up today, I will do my best to repair or amend what came to pass.

Or I will simply do my best to 'do' better tomorrow.



Serious questions: how to 'be' our best and 'do' our best once awake and aware?

Once we become as thought-full and caring as possible whenever we can – however we can?

Once we understand that when we're not up to it today, we will try again tomorrow?

Once we understand that tomorrow is a new day and that the next moment is new?

Once we actively understand that the perpetually new moment underfoot is as transient as the body of water that passes in front of our eyes on the back of a little brook?



Serious answer: indeed, we can NEVER change the energy or the content of moments underfoot. Or what has come to pass in another of our souls' previous lives, in our childhood, last year or a few seconds ago.

It is also true that we can ALWAYS, if not in a coma, choose how we respond to - or repair - in the following, always new, moment.



For example, instead of imagining the one who, we feel, has betrayed our trust as the nastiest of all villains and reacting in our own villainous way, we could choose to imagine why, prompted by an insecure ego, that persona lacked clarity and impulsively did what they did.

Later, once in a coherent mood, we could bravely engage with them in what might be a complicated conversation, but one that would help restore mutual trust.



So, we need more active practice in responding differently to feel less vulnerable.

We find ways to reframe negativity positively.

We know that when we shape reactions to others into responses rather than into reactions, we reduce our emotional strain.

It's a fact.

It's true.



Reality check: if not now, then later. Yes, later.

In any one of the moments to come, we can choose to feel different.

We can choose to act and respond differently.

In the meantime, we can choose to make ourselves breathe consciously.



We can choose to silence our ego-persona to better 'feel' what our gut and heart are telling us.

Yes, we can choose to do that.



We can also choose to repeat each of these necessary steps once we realise that the only thing missing from our lives is an essential trust in our self.

It is a trusting understanding that if What-Was has come to pass, it is for our personal edification.

'Gam zu letova,' as my Jewish/Israeli mentor would say. That, too, is for the best.

Par-for-the-course of our emotional growth.

Par-for-the-course for an authentic coming of age.



Bottom line: yes, we are perfectly human, i.e., our system is entirely compatible with any necessary updates and critical upgrades.



One reason for the life-long, DIY obligatory upgrades is that the 3-D reality we claim is 'life' contains all the ever-morphing bugs intended to make us stronger. Stronger than our circumstances.

Stronger than the strongest waves that carry our metaphoric little schooner forward.

Our moment-to-moment 3-D reality also includes all the fixes to enhance our performance and an unfathomable number of synchronistic possibilities ready to optimise this 'life' of ours.



For now, dear Reader, keep reading.

Keep pondering. Keep hoping. Keep sharing.

Trusting that you practice being better in more of your moment-to-moment reality means the world to me.

Of course, it does.



Neutral Observers, We Can Be

Brisbane - July 2021

Dear reader, I'm so glad you're here, ready to read and reflect, ready, too, to share your thoughts on this new 'mind-meander'.



As I sit, fingertips on the keyboard in this, the moment underfoot, I have no idea why the current 'breeze blown infiltration of thoughts seems to be about the need to observe ourselves ... neutrally.

Naturally.

'Au naturel', as the French might say.

Neither as a critical Judge nor as an Examiner.

There are no penalties to receive.

And there are no immediate reward points either.

None, beyond seeing more clearly what to keep and what to shift.



Regarding these mind-meandering articles, I like to imagine the paragraphs on each page as separate as little waves below the hull of our metaphorical little schooner.



I imagine these little waves are activated by the flow of intuitive thoughts on matters that are the heart and soul of our culture.

So, let's jump in.

Let's observe our own thoughts before we settle into an observation of What-Is and how it is in the world beyond.



Regardless of their nature, unsolicited thoughts never occur in isolation.

Like clumps of soil rubbed between fingers, they don't flutter down one at a time.

They don't sit in our minds in tidy rows.

They don't intend to become a focal point in our garden bed.

Nor do thoughts know how to form clear patterns like flowering plants in a well-tended garden bed.



Instead, thoughts flash in and out of our awareness.

They infiltrate our minds as seeds dropped by passing birds penetrate the soil and form their own haphazard designs.

Like any down-to-earth gardener would know, the process has to get messy before it takes shape and makes sense.



Reality check: as fluttering seeds landing here and there, our thoughts are not 'us', and they generally remain 'unedited'.



So, neutral observation of what we see, hear, feel, and do as a result – and why we feel, think and do as we do – is crucial to any objective assessment of what shapes the everyday emotional landscape of our day-to-day.

Yes, of course, we objectively check ourselves before we attempt to check anyone else.



At the moment, the conduit thoughts fluttering on my screen via the keyboard seem to be about the need to exert greater control over our thoughts and over our actions. Maybe that's about the need to better activate two of our most relevant birthrights: free will when it comes to choosing actions vs inactions, reaction vs responses and the freedom to choose freely every-thing, any-thing or no-thing ... within the limits of the law, of course.



Technically, choosing freely means that our choices are free of self, peer, media or authoritarian coercion.

So, maybe this little mind-meander is about digging up a more thought-full, unbiased answer to the question, 'How have my free will and the associated freedom to choose my actions, reactions and responses made me who am I today?'



Indeed, who are we beyond our name, (adopted) gender, status, work and qualifications, material possessions, the content of our closets and of our 'beauty stash'?



Who are we beyond our skin that periodically flakes off or peels, beyond our cells that regenerate themselves occasionally without affecting 'who we are' in any way?



Who are we, really, beyond our skeleton formed aeons ago and beyond our past, which has moved from present to past without altering our essence?



Who are we, really, beyond or through the labels we do our best to project, those that separate us from others?



Who are we, really, beyond the labels we've accepted from others, those that make us feel less than enjoyable to be with, less than worthy of trust, love, affection or respect?



Our answers are simply a surface summary of who we think we are or who we believe we are, but, in reality, there is so much more depth to tap within our total being.

Similarly, there always is a big gap between our untapped potential and how we fail to maximise it.



Reality check: in the absence of a genuinely neutral observation of our modus operandi, we tend to remain fixed under a pile of labels, many of which are detrimental to our well-being.

So, as we go about this impromptu investigative foray into ourselves, let's avoid handing out labels.



Our self-preserving frame of mind restricts integrating many of our most positive character traits.

So, unconscious as we tend to be, we leave them untapped and, therefore undeveloped.

We don't trust ourselves enough to allow them to truly flourish.

We seldom allow them to become integrated aspects of who we are – of our reality.

What we tend to do is confirm the perception others have of us.

As it appears to be the line of least resistance, that's the line we follow.



Knowing as we do that most of our current needs and fears are a throwback from our early childhood, we can ask our adult self, 'What stirs me up the most these days?'

'Why does it?'

'What makes me feel good? Like, really deep down?'

'If it's true that my current circumstances, such as they are, are exactly how they need to be, what thoughts should I choose to cultivate to enjoy a lot more my 'here and now'?

'What, really, what do I need, here and now, to feel content with the content of my days?'

'If I peel back layers of worries and insecurities, what is at my core?'



Heads up: we have a better chance of getting an accurate answer when we balance what we want with what we need... genuinely need.

Of course, we understand what Maya Angelou meant when she said, "My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive."



Reality check: choosing freely means deciding what, as multi-dimensional beings cast in the roles of young or older adults, parents, relatives, friends, partners and colleagues, we want to think, say and do – or not – on the issues of our own authentic personal and social agency.



And on the issues of family togetherness, gender equity and racism, too, particularly and if only because so many more of us are finally willing to lean into these issues.

And within the framework of what we have so far karmically co-engineered with the Universe, what about our personal ... purpose for what remains of this lifetime?

So, before we dive in to grapple with the significant issues that involve more than ourselves, let's agree to attempt finding the little trap door that will lead us to our higher purpose and ... let it rip! 😊

From Illusion to Inner Reality

Brisbane, July 2022

Just when I thought I could speed up the mind-meander on our illusion of self and 'reality', the ageless wisdom of Marcus Aurelius came to mind.

Book 12.1 - *Everything you're trying to reach—by taking the long way round—you could have right now, this moment. If you'd only stop thwarting your own attempts. If you'd only let go of the past, entrust the future to*

Providence, and guide the present toward reverence and justice.

Reverence: so you'll accept what you're allotted. Nature intended it for you, and you for it.

Justice: so that you'll speak the truth, frankly and without evasions, and act as you should—and as other people deserve.

Don't let anything deter you: other people's misbehavior, your own misperceptions, What People Will Say, or the feelings of the body that covers you (let the affected part take care of those). And if, when it's time to depart, you shunt everything aside except your mind and the divinity within ... if it isn't ceasing to live that you're afraid of but never beginning to live properly ... then you'll be worthy of the world that made you.

No longer an alien in your own land.

No longer shocked by everyday events—as if they were unheard-of aberrations.

No longer at the mercy of this, or that.

Book 12 of Marcus Aurelius' **Meditations**, translated by Gregory Hays



So tempting to add: No longer alien in our own skin.

Seriously, dear Reader: though these words, translated from Ancient Greek, were written circa 160 AD by the Roman Emperor, what words could be more relevant this year, 2022?

Surely, it is another year that will be remembered for its turbulence and ongoing conflagration of discordant and opinionated, often violent reactions, individually, communally and globally.



Despite all evidence, we see ourselves as free-thinking humans instead of accepting that we are, in fact, the sole creators of the illusion we live through in the 3-D reality of life on planet Earth.

Our thoughts do transport us to an imaginary world – a world of our complicit creation.

They transport us away from a love-induced curiosity that would allow us to let our perceived opponent have 'our' front-row seat. Instead, our Me-First thoughts transport us to a landscape of perpetual reactivity to this, that or the other.



The illusory reality we accept as real also transports us to a world of uncertainty and inner fragmentation that does not exist in the moment underfoot.



We forget that no matter how familiar the 'actors', the setting, the storyline and our emotions might feel, that moment, as each micro-moment, is unique in all aspects. And we also don't take seriously enough the fact that anger, fear and resentment create thoughts that trigger reactions from our gut to our brain.

As do the emotions attached to regret, doubt and self-judgement.



Bottom line: from under our roofs, in our workplace and community, our self-made reality lures us deep into an array of dysfunctional relationships, which fosters a big gap between our potential and what we do with it.



"When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves."

Viktor E. Frankl – Man's Search For Meaning



Interesting questions: are we really cognizant of what we truly want and why we want it?

Do we truly know why we do and say what we do and say?

How could we affect real change at the personal and collective levels?

How do we actively accept that even complications that spin our lives out of control ultimately benefit our greater good? That is ... should we be so 'blessed' as to survive them holistically?

How to actively understand that what we think is the best moment of our day - of the year - of our life - might occasionally yield our worst blunder? A hindsight scan of past euphoric moments may confirm that.

While scanning the past, we might also conclude that, at times, what felt like a big blunder has yielded an unanticipated, unlikely, but positive outcome.



A conversation with any survivor of trauma who has self-engineered the 'hope-fuelled' resilience essential to transforming their lives and the lives of those around them will confirm 'the Phoenix' principle can work.



Think of the heart-breaking images and empowering personal accounts that ripple out of Ukraine. And think of those who, having lost 'their lives' in devastating floods, mudslides, earthquakes and wildfires, are building new ones.

Though tired and still hurting, they are not broken.

They put one foot before the other.

They are getting things done.

They are once again hopeful for a future they are building moment by moment for themselves.

For their loved ones.

For their community.

With their community.



Think of Bibi Aisha, too. She was the young woman featured on Time magazine cover in 2010 - with her nose cut off.

Her Afghan father had forced her into an arranged marriage with a Taliban fighter when she was only 12 years old. After years of daily abuse, these men also cut off her ears. They left her in the hills to die, but Bibi was not ready to die. Undeniably assisted by a power greater than her own, she took charge of her destiny and somehow found help.

Thirteen years and many operations later, Bibi is settled in the States. Despite the trauma permanently carved deep into her psyche, she is whole.

She is thriving. She eventually became a nurse to help others as she had been helped.



More challenging questions: how do we actively accept that 'all' we need to do is positively internalise each of life's teaching moments?

How do we actively understand that each of these moments and all the good and indifferent ones are the flow-on effects of all we have co-created with the universe over the past decades? Over the past year.

Throughout the long string of moments that have preceded this one – the one that is underfoot right now.



Serious answers: all karmic choreography aside, it depends mainly on how well we accept the part we've played in whichever breakdown keeps us awake at night.

It depends on whether we are brave enough to make amends, to mend and calmly repair aspects of what, over time, has become dysfunctional.

It depends on how motivated we are to do better - to be better - to reap better moments in the time we have left as energy beings incarnated on planet Earth.



More, more challenging questions: how do we come back to balance, composure and dignity – to connectedness after a metaphoric 'blow to the head' or 'kick in the gut'?

How do we engineer the space and time needed to feel what our heart and gut are whispering to us?

How do we use the space between our deep inhales and slow exhales to connect our thoughts to the energy of our heart and of our root chakra -our lower dantian, as that space below the navel is called in the tradition of qigong?

How do we give *our* selves permission and time to feel what our heart and our gut are whispering to us?

How do we find the emotional space and strength to heal ourselves and heal hurtful connections to others?



Serious answers: there are no magic wands to wave about. No quick fixes worth Googling.

No angel is likely to rush to our rescue and make it all flutter away with one robust flapping of their mighty wings. We can only improve our responses by doing what we can, the best way we can – again and again.

When our response today is more coherent than yesterday... good job!



Cultivating our heart-based intelligence a complicated endeavour. Yet, it's as simple as trusting the healing power of such a practice.

It's as complicated and as simple as having faith in the energy of the universe, that which has created and maintains All That Is.

It's as complicated and as simple as developing an athlete's brave determination to leap over all hurdles, big and small – one hurdle at a time.



Reality check: yes, it IS complicated, but the good news is that we don't need to negotiate who we are to get the scales back into balance to achieve 'net zero-muddled emissions' in the foreseeable future – way sooner than 2050 :-))



Studies on change confirm that 'only' a critical mass of about 25% is needed for collective social transformation.

So, let's choose to agree that altering our personal M.O. by 25% is enough.

Enough for today.

Tomorrow is another day.



Good news: by next week, next month, or by next year, it will become incrementally
We are always better prepared for tomorrow when we use what we've realised about ourselves today.

So, we slow down and do our best to become and remain actively tuned to the moment underfoot – moment after moment. A loss of focus is the call to focus on our breath and to exhale slowly and softly. And again.



Heart-Check. Do You Want In?

Brisbane, March 2020

What choice did I have?

Bad luck?

Wrong place-wrong time?

Bad karma?

It's your fault. You made me do it!

Or, as some of us used to say jokingly in the 70s, 'The devil made me do it.'



'The things you think about determine the quality of your mind,' wrote Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor and philosopher born in the year 0180. 'Your soul takes on the color of your thoughts', he added.



Thanks to Gregory Hay, translator/author, Aurelius' Meditations give us a delightful and insightful confirmation that humanity has pursued an ongoing search for inner wellness since the dawn of time.



Having said that, I'll beg to most respectfully differ with Aurelius' take on Soul.

In the absence of any absolute knowledge, I prefer to think of Soul as an entity of the highest, purest frequency - the energy of the universe.



As such Soul cannot be 'coloured' by our thoughts – not any more than a crystal at the bottom of a pond can be tainted by the mud in which it lies.

Therefore, there are no such things as 'lazy' or 'lost' or 'dark' or 'cursed' souls.

There are only lazy, lost, dark or sociopathic ego-personas.



Reality Check #1: reins loose in our hands; most of us are slouched, asleep in the saddle while our ego-persona galumphs and roams through our moments of life.

Either appealed by 'that', repelled by that' or left indifferent by 'that' – by whatever has sprung in the moment underfoot – its impulses and thoughts are ours.



Unhappily, then, all the while fearing we might fall off, we bump along, clinging to what we can.

Often, we do just that.

And our ego-persona' colours' the moment any way it pleases.

Usually, it colours it in shades of dark.



Heads up: how about we stop blaming our soul - or anyone else's soul - for whatever our ego-persona and that of others are doing or have done?

When all we must do is 'show up' as our authentic selves, blaming our ego-personas is equally unhelpful.



Evidence pointing to misdeeds perpetrated by our ego-persona would not be admissible as Law. Imagine defending your action in a Court of Law by saying, 'It's my ego-persona that did it. I wasn't even there!'



When it comes to our heart, that's another matter entirely.

Whether we are 'heartless' or 'heart-broken', whether we 'wear our heart on our sleeve' or show up 'heart in mouth', our heart is the one that absorbs the toxicity of our misguided impulses and their flow-on thoughts.



Our heart suffers.

Our poor little heart is the one who struggles on our behalf to maintain a degree of equanimity.

It does that every time we react incoherently.



The magnetic and electric fields in our hearts do not vibrate and reverberate in a private, secret domain.

Invisibly, even beyond our actions, they ripple into the world beyond our senses.

That toxicity constricts our heart's energy as much as it depletes our whole system.

And that of others, too.



Reality check #2: from aeons ago, our culture has been based on the power of the mind, a.k.a. the power of the intellect, but modern science tells us that not only the brain but also the heart itself is an intelligent system.



Bottom line: our real power is in our hearts. Love is much more than 'sentimental' love and attachment.

Up to each one of us to actively accept this as 100% relevant to our day-to-day.

Up to each of us to do our best to 'feel' our heart.



Head up: assuming that Friedrich Nietzsche was right when he wrote that 'Invisible threads are the strongest ties', should 30% of humanity, one day become permanently 'heart-minded', that essential a critical mass of influence would assist the personal connection to merge and become infinite connections.

And THAT would be a cultural - global - game changer.



Reality check #3: the moment underfoot can be accepted as a karmically choreographed experience we have (consciously or unconsciously) co-created with Soul.

With the universe.

And all is, for now, for our personal growth, exactly how it needs to be.

Just like the mass of water constantly in motion under our metaphoric little schooner is precisely how it needs to be to push us forward.

That's until we choose to stand firmly in the cockpit and regain control of the wheel and sails.



We remember the words of Alice Morse Earle, the American historian born in 1851. 'The clock is running,' she said. 'Make the most of today. Time waits for no man. Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it is called the present.'

The present = the gift of sustained awareness that leads to our personal growth.



I can help add that if a woman of today's generation, Earle would undoubtedly have inserted, 'Time waits for no woman' inside that nugget of wisdom.



Heads up: the moment can also be accepted as a variable – one of the many millions of unexpected happenings of varying magnitude that define the plot beats of the lives of us mere mortals.



Another Heads up: we can choose to accept all moments as testers of the integrity of our thoughts, reactions and responses.

The neutral observers that we want to become observe what is around us from the inside.



We begin to do that by feeling our feelings.

We 'feel' the sensations that have surged in our bellies or hearts.

We allow them 'presence'.



These feelings guide us to the source, the real source of our discomfort.

We separate them from the thoughts that have just now impulsively formed in our minds.

We understand their true origin, which goes far, far back in time.

We make peace with them.

We place a hand over our hearts in a subtle acknowledgement of our younger selves.

Why?

Because our younger selves are the ones who experienced the difficulties, the lacks, and the complications of adulthood, where we stand today.



Some of these challenging moments are those stored 'in memory' because one of our brain's missions is to protect us from more of the same.

That's why we remember the emotionally challenging moments more than those that gave us joy.

And, with few attempts at deletion and update, we have allowed them to stay 'in memory' seemingly forever.

These memories have created feelings still actively running our programme from behind the screen.



Diversity of experience begets resilience, and yes, our younger selves have been highly resilient.

Each of them must have been very determined to get through their age-related painful moments the best way, the only way, they could at the time – with the means they had.



Bottom line: karmic destiny notwithstanding, we owe our life to our younger selves.

And we owe it to our resilient body, too, of course.

Still, to this day, our body does all it can to resist all the toxicity we ingest through the air we breathe, all that we ingest and the thoughts we ruminate.



Reality check #4: even more than that, our body does all it can to rejuvenate itself on our behalf.

It does that nanosecond by nanosecond, cell by cell - neuron by neuron.

It does that via its energy pathways that communicate with one another.

It does that by sending signals and instructions from one part of the body to another.

As does the intelligence of our biome, said to be our body's protector.



These days, we know how to nurture our gut bacteria.

So, now, we do our best to do just that.

We understand that our sleep pattern, eating, drinking and thinking habits, and level of stress - all of our life's choices impact our microbiome, our gut - the intended seat of our intuition.



Reality check #5: haven't we all used the expressions, 'I feel it in my gut'... 'Gut-instinct' and 'I feel kicked in the gut'?

We know, too, that our microbiome feeds back to the brain, the intended seat of clarity.

So, it's easy to imagine the assault it's been through decade after decade, again and again, without receiving any support from us!



Heads up: regardless of its level of current performance, sure, we owe our body big time.

And we owe it a heartfelt apology, too.



So, we actively accept that our gut has invisibly regulated all aspects of our metabolism up to this moment underfoot.

As well as our brain functionality.

And our immune system.



It did that before we were born into our body, and till our last breath, it will keep doing it to the very best of its constantly challenged ability.

So, from breathing freely to walking freely, thinking freely, writing freely, and caring freely, we learn to truly appreciate the many freedoms our body allows us.



And, yes, we acknowledge it all.

We move through it all.

We return to the moment underfoot.

But not before remembering to feel gratitude for all that makes us smile - or should do.

And we understand the meaning of that saying from the early 1900s: "It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it."



Regardless of its age, size, appearance and current state of being, we know our body has always done all it could to repair itself from the impact of some of our thoughts, of what we forced it to ingest and the strains that have impacted it over decades and more decades.

It did it because that is what it's been karmically engineered to do, even if it was formed in utero with some limiting weaknesses.

It's still doing its best on our behalf, and it will keep doing it until Soul gives it its last breath.



As we awake in the morning and lie in bed at night, we say, 'Thank YOU, my dear body, for having endured as well as you have all you've been through.'

So, no longer judgemental about our physical appearance, we smile at our body.

And, we also smile in confirmation that we CAN breathe freely - which is definitely something one should never ever take for granted - we inhale slowly right down into the belly.

We briefly hold that breath.

We exhale slowly.

Our only next step is to show up.

Again and again.



It's All On Us

Brisbane - November 2022

Now is as good a moment as any to remind ourselves of the first verse of the Serenity prayer attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr in 1930:

Father, give us courage to change what must be altered, serenity to accept what cannot be helped, and the insight to know the one from the other.

It's also a good moment to remind ourselves that the names God and Father in any prayer or scripture are interchangeable with the words Soul, Universal Energy or the name of any saint, archangel and divine entity in which we have placed our trust.



Serious question asked in the preceding chapter: why are so many mega-millions of inspired 'words' on paper, on-screens or in audios needed to guide us, seekers of holistic wellness, when all we need to energise our heart-mind coherence is to implement the Golden Rule to do unto others as we would have them do unto us and, in doing so, 'pay it forward', so to speak?



Personal answer: the purpose I found in writing more and more words - and in finding overlapping ways to dissect the Golden Rule – is that I, for one, despite all I have come to understand and consciously accept 100%, despite years of mindful practice throughout the long procession of moments since 2007, still fell into the traps generated by ego, as flagged in the many preceding chapters.



I have realised that knowledge is one thing.

Understanding the theory is one thing, too.

Accepting AND practising is something else.



Once we begin to transcend the limitations imposed by our likes, dislikes and 'comfort zones', our dualistic notions get tuned down.



I have noticed that when understanding and acceptance lead to a brave and determined, active practice, welcome shifts happen over time.

But it's like watching the grass grow.

Of course, even if we camp on its back and stare at it day and night, we will never 'see' it grow.

But, over time, even if we forget to watch it, we notice that it has definitely grown all on its own.



For us humans, it is different.

To grow and – notice our growth - we need to remain constantly awake.

Constantly aware of how we manage the ripple effect of our emotions.

Our thoughts.



Complication: we, humans, experience feel-good moments but, too quickly, too often, such feel-good lulls are interrupted by recurring 'underground' tremors of varying intensity that threaten our emotional 'fault line'.



Reality check: when, in the absence of any real threat, our energy is constricted by a blend of resentment and the insecure 'I don't matter enough to her/him/them' impulse that causes tremors.

Emotional vulnerability is the cause of most tremors.

Therefore, we need to be aware of our 'fault line'.



We don't want to tumble into it when complicated feelings from past circumstances have been reawakened by someone's words, actions, omissions or facial expressions.

Or by their presence.

Or by their absence.

Or when our breath has become shallow because the embodied awareness of the moment has faded.

When the flow of happy endorphins is blocked because our mind anticipates 'familiar' murky outcomes!

It's true we need to be very aware of our fault line.



Heads up: even when we are clear about what we want to achieve and how we want to respond during 'trigger' moments, we often sabotage our best intentions.

We do that even when our plan for change is so vivid and valuable to us that it resonates in our hearts.

I know that from personal experience: from a challenging 19 year-long experiential practice aimed at regaining a heart connection to my mother lost many-many years earlier.



Here's the thing: at 69 years of age, I still get 'sucked into' little sinkholes of hurt, vulnerability and resentment - particularly when in the presence of my mother.

In all honesty, I can say that I consider her as my 'fault line' and my Achilles' Heel, too.



Warning: there's a full disclosure of my 'mother issue' and how it has ultimately pushed me to shape my life for the better in **Rafting Towards Our rainbow** – beginning on page 51.



Quick back story: my mother, very preoccupied with her own needs, has modelled for me since I was two years old, everything that one should 'never' do, say or think.

Her unconscious priorities have led me to the pain, insecurity, and sense of separation and isolation that a complete focus one's self can bring to others, especially, perhaps, to a young/dependent child.



Reality check: leading by example, my mother did, in her own isolating way.

Unconsciously forcing me on the path of self-improvement to honour my karmic destiny as my mother's daughter, she did that as well.



Serious question #1: while inside this incarnated body of ours, how do we know what we are meant to deal with in this lifetime?

Serious answer: whatever situation karmically choreographed to become dysfunctional impacts our senses – our heart and mind.

Serious question #2: what if we can't totally fix a 'broken' situation?

Serious answer: we do our best moment by moment to repair whichever piece we can repair. Then, we glue it to the next repaired piece.

In the fullness of time, we might be able to repair most, if not all, of that broken situation.



Here's the thing: even after years of 'concentrated efforts' to step up and be the best I can be, there are still times when I 'forget' my mentor's simple advice.

'Remember, CC,' Yudit CS would say. 'It's not so much what you do but how you do it and how you feel when you do it that matters. So, whatever it is you do, do it from your heart. And remember that, mostly, you are doing it for yourself.'



Reality check: aged 87, my mother is a recent widow. Her brain is challenged by a moderate + form of Alzheimer's, and my desire to help her feel safe and loved is always present.

However, I know my heart is partly closed to my mother.

Even if my love for her is not gushing, my affection for her is real.



Actually, sometimes I do feel the energy of love for my mother.

Often, I don't, though I continue my 'duty' of care with great diligence.

Usually gripped in her presence by an impulse-driven state of alarm, I don't feel emotionally safe.

Not safe within myself even in the absence of any looming threat.



I know that's because old emotions die hard.

I know it's because, despite all that I know and consciously accept about the moment underfoot being the only moment that exists, I somehow allow my thoughts to be swept into an out-of-the moment previous reality.

That's until I remember to 'catch' my breath.

That's until I remember to breathe consciously.

That's until I reconnect with the calm and safe reality of the moment underfoot.

Which is the newest real moment of the many I feel I have co-created with the universe over the past 15 years.



And so, yes, writing and writing, revisiting the same 4 or 5 principles essential to holistic wellness - and observing them, reframing them, and energising them - again and again over a couple of thousands of pages has been the process I have needed to remain active in the repairing of the love for my mother.

But it's not yet bursting out from my heart space.

It's there; yes, it is.

But it still feels bruised.

Wounded.

Mistrusting.



Having just typed that, I'm now asking myself, *'What is love'?*

Maybe it's simply choosing to sacrifice a degree of personal freedom to ensure the comfort and relative happiness of the other.

Maybe it's about our willingness to accept a degree of emotional or physical discomfort, too.

Maybe love is about 'delivering' all that with gentle care and a lightness of being.

Maybe love is about never giving up on the other.

So, yes, as I'm doing all of the above to the best of my moment-to-moment ability, there definitely is 'love' in what I feel for my mother.



Anyway, tomorrow is another day.

Tomorrow, I will again spend the afternoon with my mother.

I will again apply myself to the heart-task at hand.



I hope AND trust that when tomorrow comes, in the new string of moments underfoot, I will make myself ... happier and prouder of *my* self. 😊



In the meantime, here and now, in the space between inhale and exhale, I know I want to cultivate gratitude for the difficult path on which my mother has unconsciously set me since the age of 2.

By way of its many tumultuous circumstances, I know that path has led me to a fair degree of holistic awareness which, of course, I could never have attained without the synchronistic appearance of my mentor, Yudit CS.

And her dedicated daily input over 10 years once I actively accepted her guidance.



Here is how and why it all began for me: In Fertile Ground - [CC Saint-Clair In Fertile Ground](#)

As it is, I appreciate that some 17 years later, together and separately, the many challenging moments I struggled with in my youth and later, too, have been instrumental in forging me into the much calmer, much more emotionally reliable, more 'mind-full', or should I say more 'care-full', person I am today.



Heads up: it's true that, once observed and understood, our struggles can become our greatest teachers.

Until they're observed and understood, as Hamlet said to Ophelia, "God has given you one face, and you make yourself another."



And, woohoo! Albeit in a somewhat circuitous way, I have found the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this, the last of my mind-meandering series.



Separately and collectively, we need avalanches of words, words and more words on/off screen.

We need repetitions.

We need them from many voices.

We need them presented in many ways.

And we need them again and again.

Once we believe we can make it ... we will.



Perhaps – a long-long time ago, humanity's collective brain fell prey to what neurologists call an 'emotional hijack.'

The term suggests that, still in the current era, our global consciousness remains shadowed by the knee jerks of our ego-personas - the human selves who answer to our names; the ones who wear our clothes, manage our work and private lives the best they can.



In **Meditations**, a collection of reflections translated from ancient Greek by Gregory Hays, Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor born some 1900 years ago, wrote, 'It never ceases to amaze me: we all love ourselves more than other people, but care more about their opinion than our own. If a god appeared to us—or a wise human being, even—and prohibited us from concealing our thoughts or imagining anything without immediately shouting it out, we wouldn't make it through a single day. That's how much we value other people's opinions—instead of our own.'



Heads up: we need to absolutely love our ego-personas.

At the same time, like good parents would do for their toddlers, it is our duty to train them to respond correctly to life circumstances to maximise satisfaction on the way to mastering contentment.



Reality check: that training - our recalibration of priorities and reactions - begins in the home before moving to the schoolyard and to the multiple types of relationships we have co-created with the universe since we were children.



Our ego-personas are historically known to default to fight-mode and to shift blame; they find it quasi-impossible to utter a heartfelt apology.

In truth, these selves have the same tendency to run away from responsibilities as that of our Homo Sapiens ancestors who ran away from any predator they feared.



Ah, the existential evolutionary mismatch!

The neural traits that aeons ago enabled our earliest ancestors to thrive through their decades (and the chronicled millennia that followed) became maladaptive many-many centuries ago.



Bottom line: and here we are, still loaded down with an impulsive Me-First reaction to 'life'.

Just as if our survival as humans still depended on how we react when our environment feels unstable, and our insecurities are triggered.

We divide, but we seldom conquer.



Heads up: 'conquering' often comes at a cost – at an emotional cost.

Most often, what we think we have conquered only amounts to tactical obedience.

We seldom conquer more than the tip of the iceberg, so to speak.



Our ego-personas fear the world beyond the body because, like the children we once were, we still believe there are potentially 'scary things' lurking - not in the dark recesses of our closets - but in all that is beyond the boundary of our skin.

Sometimes, we even sense them crouched inside the whorls of our minds.

'How might I respond differently so that I am less vulnerable?' we ask ourselves.

'What could I do to regain control? How can I handle negativity in positive ways?'



Recap: each of the societal ills flagged throughout the collection of my mind-meandering series exists TODAY only because we – driven by our ego-personas – separately and collectively, have so far failed to address what needed to be addressed ... aeons ago.



We failed because, in the absence of a determined commitment to change, we have remained driven by a sense of feeling unworthy of positive attention and inclusion.

We failed because we allowed limiting beliefs about ego-personas and others to taint our responses to life's positive synchronicity.

And, of course, the same can be said of most of our politicians and influencers, worldwide.



To right these sorts of entrenched 'ills' and inequities, we need more than social activists aiming to guide politicians' choices.

As we know from experience, confrontational tactics tend to backfire or, at best, prompt 'the other' to pay lip service to our demands by delivering weak compromises and Band-Aid solutions that have short expiry dates.



Bottom line: city by city, country by country, we need to globally energise ourselves into a critical mass of heart-coherent humanity.



I now realise that it's taken me years of reframing in so many different ways the 'stuff' that makes the Golden Rule 'the' golden commandment.

It's taken me years to incrementally allow 'the stuff' to take root deeper and deeper in the garden bed that is my mind.

That many words!

Over so many years!

Just to enable me to consolidate my own understanding.

Just to further energise my own practice by moving beyond good intentions and best efforts ... as often as possible.

Just to enable me to live less and less in moments already past.

Yes!

To feeling more vibrant.

More level headed.

Unconstricted in my solar plexus.

More patient.

Better able to respond to everything in a better manner

And to no longer just act on impulse.

Yes!

So, here and now, bouncing forward from shared experiences, dear Reader, we make ourselves 'intentional'.

We enliven/energise our heart-felt intentions.



Here we are, dear Reader, remembering once more together that what matters most to a life well-lived is not how we posture throughout our daily activities.

It's not the content of our pantries, closets and garages.

It's not the square meters we inhabit.

It's not our address.

It's not our physique, either.

Whatever might be the total sum of these 'things', that sum is not us.

Not any more than our name alone is us.



Bottom line: they are not us because even as these descriptors shift or disappear, we already remain who we are – on the inside.



It's not our best intentions that matter most either, but, of course, we know that in the absence of 'best intentions' to align with a heart-based coherence, we have nothing to work with.

Rich or homeless.

In the limelight or in anonymity ... we are what we think.



Bottom line: we are what we feel.

Our mindset is everything.

We are 'that' because what we think and what we feel leads to what we do.

We are our foundation – we are our core.

So, yes, it's all on us.



Rafting Towards Our Rainbow

How 'mother issues' are intended to make us stronger - Part 1/3

Brisbane - June 2021

Here's one of the truisms we don't want to hear too often - *As long as we rely on external circumstances to provide us with happiness or joy, even when at their peak, we will never know sustained contentment.*

-

Tuned discordantly, as we are, to one trigger-reason or another to feel aggrieved, many of us are constantly struggling with the context of the moment underfoot.

We compete, clash and push back today – as we do every day.

'Yes', we admit. 'I'm stressed. But,' we are quick to add defensively, 'isn't everyone?'

We might even feel pricked enough to add, 'I'm angry, too! Isn't everyone?'

-

That said, yes, most of us understand that in the absence of real satisfaction and happiness, we can fake it till we make it.

When we don't feel happy, we can always choose to act happy.

If we practice that act of positive deceit, we will actually begin to feel happier.

It's true.

It works ... but only in the fullness of time.

But it doesn't happen naturally.

It doesn't happen quickly.

It doesn't happen on a wing or a prayer.

But, happen, it can.

-

Modern research has confirmed what we all suspected from way back: regularly doses of joy are essential to our well-being.

Happiness in a brain thing.

Happiness happens once we've prompted our brain to release a balanced cocktail of Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin and Endorphins.

It happens through a long-haul practice of committed, healthy, targeted efforts.

When it happens, we say, 'Thank you, Brain. Thank You, Body.'

And we smile.

And we breathe consciously – slowly and deeply.

In time, we are better able to experience more ease, more satisfaction, more joy daily.

Jumping on to that pursuit is an act of self-love – the only one that counts.

-

A belief is a thought about a subjective perception that we believe to be absolutely true. But that doesn't mean that it is.

We know that.

It's highly likely that several of our beliefs are holding us back from reaching the outcomes we desire.

We know that, as well.

What we tend to forget is that when beliefs remain static, they become the control panel of our ego-persona - in sore need of an upgrade.

-

Reality check: anytime we process moment after moment through knee jerk reactions, we confirm that we're still driven by early childhood patterns we forgot to update, patterns designed to protect our younger selves.

We forgot to optimise our 3-D system, a.k.a. our brain, which controls all our body's systems.

-

The flow-on effect is that, in various ways, the set views we have about how to make things happen, how to treat others, how to show up, avoid, deflect and divert keep us from connecting in earnest with the true essence of who we are and, certainly, even with our loved ones.

-

Bottom line: several limiting and self-sabotaging beliefs rooted in our mind keep us from feeling genuine satisfaction, emotional security and, ultimately, Contentment with What-Is - no matter how cool, how good, how amazing What-Is happens to be in that string of moments.

That said, these beliefs are quick to trigger resentment and a 'poor me' view of life should the ebb and flow of karma place us at the receiving end of something we don't want.

-

Sometimes, we feel we've lived our life for the benefit of someone else.

We didn't want to disappoint.

We wanted to be of service.

We thought we were doing what we had to do, but we did it under duress.

Sometimes, we accepted a relationship in which we had to pretend to be different from our self. Our likes and dislikes, our aptitude for this or for that were shelved.

Our intentions were honourable when we signed up for the role, but, in time, we resented the demands made.

We resented the commitment we had co-created with the universe.

•

If we are 'happy' because we got something we wanted, we are still stuck on the treadmill.

If we are 'happy' because today is a day off, we are still on the treadmill.

If we are 'happy' because we felt valued today, we are still on the treadmill.

And if we are 'happy' because we got a lucky break, we are still on the treadmill.

Q: why are we always on the treadmill?

A: because our essential 'we' is missing.

Q: where is it?

•

There is little doubt that our mind seizes ample opportunities to churn over and over many of the feelings, thoughts and compensatory actions we had already co-engineered in the character of our ego-persona, by the time we walked through the gates of our first high school.

Each time we followed our negative impulses, or our weed-thoughts, as I like to call them - each time we fertilised and strengthened them.

•

So, dear Reader, what, within your predominant cluster of weed-thoughts is the one, big, emotionally 'yuck' emotion you know is the root cause of a fair chunk of your rooted discontent?

•

Two decades ago already, my 'rainbow desire' was to wake up in the mornings, free of the murky fight-flight symptoms of chronic anxiety that were already active in the pit of my stomach by 5 AM and remained constant throughout each day.

My system was on high alert 24/7 despite leading a safe and comfortable life in a quiet suburb.

•

Random sounds from the street below, the chirping of birds in the garden, my partner's movements under the sheet, each activated successive nail-sharp spikes of chemicals which would lead to repeated flurries of heart palpitations.

Impossible to explain how being safe in bed could possibly feel like what, I imagine, a refugee might realistically feel close to dawn, surrounded by invisible but possible dangers.

•

I longed for that 'space' in my solar plexus to be filled with the invigorating vibrations of contentment that my healthy and balanced lifestyle should procure me.

After all, I had always been in good health.

I had always worked in the area of my choosing, and it always afforded me a good income.

•

I was blessed with, Myahr, my wonderfully supportive partner.

We lived in a house in which we were safe and comfortable.

Later, we adopted Oscar, our adorable and very soul-ful, 8-year-old 'puppy' 😊

What was there to not feel calm, contented and thankful for?

•

In this little mind-meander, I will refer to my ego-persona, the person who's out there for all to see, as 'my little raft'.

Even before I began aiming my little raft towards that elusive rainbow of contentment that shimmered at the far end of the sea, I first had to identify the root cause of the anxiety that had gripped my solar plexus for as long as I could remember.

•

My Achilles Heel, I decided, had to be the ongoing toxic relationship I had with my mother.

I was repeatedly flabbergasted by her sense of self-importance and entitlement.

Her intolerance and suspicion of others seemed boundless.

I could not understand her penchant for belittling just about everyone. Neither could I accept her unwillingness to ever utter the words, 'I'm sorry'.

•

I didn't know then that a narcissistic persona keeps the one in which it dwells wired to unhappiness and to the chronic disappointment that 'life' is not given them the special consideration they believe they deserved.

And in my ignorance, time and time again, my mother and I would go down into reactive rabbit-hole arguments which, of course, led to dead-ends in which both my mother and I remained trapped.

I have since learnt that there is never any point in arguing about whose reality is correct. All parties involved always end up diminished by it.

•

Also, I have realised how emotionally and mentally depleting it must be to be afflicted with such a personality imbalance as narcissism.

So, instead of defaulting impulsively into argument-mode, I now know that I should have found my authentic voice and said things like, 'I'm not comfortable with this or that. I don't want to have to worry about us. I'm worried. That really makes me feel sad.'

•

From family accounts, my mother and her siblings had had a 'happy' childhood.

At 18, my petite mother was a head-turner. A vast collection of photos confirms it.

That year, she married the strapping young man of her choosing, my father.

At 19, she was a mother.

At 21, disappointed with her life as a soldier's wife whose husband was often away on parachuting missions behind enemy lines, she obtained a divorce.

My grandparents took me in for the next 5 years.

My mother remarried and, eventually, reclaimed me from my grandparents when I was 7 years old.

•

Considered handsome in his own way, my stepfather was a calm man who, unfortunately for us, turned out to be an emotionally distant husband and stepfather.

Beyond that, as far back as I can remember, his salary alone afforded us a safe, upper-middle-class lifestyle.

Cartier jewellery and Chanel suits for her.

Rolex watches for both of them.

Sports cars, MGs and Jaguars, for him and for her.

•

Back to life as it was between my mother and me some 20 years ago.

Though I had spent several years working in Paris, one of those karmic choreographies that 'makes' us do things we had not previously considered prompted me to return to Australia.

I settled in Brisbane, one hour's drive from where my mother and stepfather lived on the coast.

That year, my mother turned 63, and I celebrated my 44th birthday.

-

Back in those days, as when I was a child, I found my mother to be uncaring of my feelings and highly critical of any of my decisions, priorities and aspirations. Extremely critical, too, she was of the healthy, independent and balanced adult reality I had created for myself.

At the same time, she was divisive and dismissive of just about everything I thought, of everything I did and of everything I valued.

-

The only exception to my mother's dislike was my ongoing work as a high school teacher of English, mainly at the senior level, in which I had steadfastly involved myself after graduating from the University of Texas at 21.

I also taught French and Spanish.

That, my mother respected.

-

Of course, as my thoughts and reactions were consumed by the emotions created by my perception of my mother's thoughts, actions and reactions, I, myself, had no healthy emotions, no loving thoughts, for her.

Yet I knew I loved my mother. Yes, definitely, but that love was as dim as a candle's flame seen behind a thick veil.

•

The thing is, the longer a wound has been left untreated, the longer it festers.

The more drawn-out and complicated is the healing process.

Then, as always, the only way to move away from a predictable future based on the blueprint of our past is to actively choose to respond differently to the familiar, ongoing stimuli.

•

In reality, I had simply been a child raised in a physically safe and comfortable middle-class environment by two people who thought that good parenting was about making sure the child remained healthy and was physically well-looked after.

Recurring challenges and needs I faced partly due to ever-shifting social and schooling situations were just 'life', my mother insisted, as they moved from city to city, continent to continent, following my stepfather's work.

They had to be endured.

•

Every French person is familiar with the proverb, *Qui aime bien châtie bien*.

It's believed to have its origin in the Latin phrase, *Qui bene amat, bene castigat* which, in turn, is believed to hail even further back to King Solomon's ancient wisdom.

Taken literally, as do most people who use that proverb, the emphasis is on the necessity of punishment to make strong those whom we love.

Some spouses use it with each other and, numerous, of course, are the parents who have made that construct their go-to strategy in the belief throughout the eras when 'good parenting' was deemed that easy.

My parents were among them.

-

I remember my mother's other succinct lesson on 'Life'.

'Be strong!' she would say whenever I hoped she would show some empathy for my reality, one that she, herself, had not experienced as a child. But, 'Pick yourself up. Never show your weakness,' is what I remember getting from her.

Nothing very unusual in that in an era when children were told, 'Chin up!' and were expected to be seen but not heard.

I became so good at keeping my emotional, and sometimes even my physical pain to myself that, most of the time, my mother didn't realise I was feeling 'cast-off' and entirely dispensable.

-

Serious question: what if it is true that silence gives shame the oxygen it needs to overtake our feelings and our thoughts?

-

Apart from the normal childhood and teenage concerns, the added complication for me was that, between the ages of 5 and 17, my schooling took place in several state-run schools scattered around the world.

First in France. Then, in Africa.

Then, in Tunisia.

Then, once again in France for a year or two.

Then, in America for a year and finally in Guatemala, Central America where I graduated from high school.

-

Navigating through so many dislocating relocations might have been daunting enough for anyone. But, having to go with the flow and learn from curricula delivered in languages unknown to me had added a considerable challenge to my parents' expectations that, of course, I would easily progress from one year to the next - without any support.

They were right. I progressed.

They were wrong. It wasn't easy. It was terribly difficult.

•

Always the 'new girl', I was far too shy to reach out and say, 'Hi, I'm new here. Can I play with you?'

Always the outsider, always on high alert, I felt vulnerable.

I didn't know then what I know now; that within our vulnerability lies our strength - our courage, should we be brave enough to accept What-Is and push through.

I never felt I belonged anywhere – not with anyone either, but, as I knew there was no point in crying and sulking, I usually kept quiet about my apprehension and my insecurity.

Odd as it might sound, it was after all the path of least resistance.

Then again, perhaps, not so odd as we, humans are primarily feeling beings.

We think after we feel. And, at such times, what I felt brought up depleting thoughts.

Perhaps the presence by my side of siblings or supportive relatives or childhood friends might have bolstered me up but, in the absence of any, I was on constant solitary overwhelm.

•

In hindsight, of course, I can only sigh, very much aware that what I went through as a child was in no way comparable to what children who live in uncaring foster families or in war zones go through daily.

Be that as it may, as long as going back in time is not an option, the only way forward is ... through.

-

Bottom line: the life experiences we ingest with most difficulty are the ones that shape us into the people we have become.

-

Already back then, I sensed that we become what we think about.

And I did not want to cement in the personality that seemed about to become mine because of the thoughts, fears, hopes I had.

So, it is the campaign to ditch my unwanted neural baggage and free myself from the symptoms of chronic anxiety led me to my rainbow-desire.

During that journey, which I hoped would be a short one, I knew I would have to heal my feelings by healing my heart by learning to 'love' my mother.

After all, as Yudit CS, my Jewish-Israeli mentor of ten years, reminded me, my mother, like everyone's mother, father, siblings and relatives, had been appointed to me for a reason - long before my birth in this lifetime.

And she, along with everyone else, had her own story wired deep within her psyche.

-

When fragmentation occurs between those in our pre-designated clan, Yudit would remind me time and time again, learning how to change frazzled reactions to purposeful responses is the essential first step towards meeting our karmic purpose and, of course, growing through the process.

•

Serious question: how to manage 'that' when, in response to a word or to a subtle shift in my mother's face, the spike of anxiety ripped through my solar plexus, even before my next intake of breath?

•

Serious answer: now that I know about 'gathas', short verses to recite in one's mind to recalibrate intentions the moment underfoot, I am much better able to allow 'purposeful responses' in the conversation.

When I sense tension building up in my stomach, I immediately find a way to inconspicuously breathe deeply and slowly. In doing so, I side-step a frazzle I know I would later regret.

•

As my mother is very fond of Oscar, my ever-so gentle and loving dog, I usually take him with me when I visit her.

So, here's a 'cute' homemade *gatha* I will share with you, dear Reader:

Finding My Self

I breathe in and I see my gentle, all-accepting Oscar.

I breathe out and I see my heart space deep inside my chest.

I breathe in - I am safe.

I breathe out - love infuses the room.

•

Action: go ahead and create your own *gatha*, dear Reader.

Tick that box! 😊

•

One day, I told myself, I would reach the point where I could accept that, beyond the trappings of her *persona*-lity, my mother loved me; that she, in her own way, always had had my best interest at heart.

And that, then as now, like the rest of us, she did the best she could with the mindset that had developed over time as her *persona*-lity.

•

Yudit, however had a different take on that. 'In this karmic play, CC, you are the 'aware' one. You are the grown-up, so act like one. Your purpose in this lifetime is to tame your mother with your heart - not by words and toxic energy'.

'My energy? Toxic? Me?' I replied, eyes wide open in disbelief.

'Of course, your energy is toxic,' Yudit was quick to reply. 'As toxic for you as it is for your mother. Why would it be less toxic than hers while you react the way you do? Your energy will remain toxic until you free *your* self from the emotions of your childhood. You survived it all, CC! You were resilient already then. It's all in the past now. So, for you, now that you are 'aware' and on the path, it's time to move on. Time for you to cultivate your heart.'

'Easily said. How?'

'Love your mother now as you wanted to be loved by her when you were young. Unconditionally. In time, she'll love you back in equal doses. That's her karmic destiny as your mother, and it's your duty to create with her how to get her there.'

•

Of course, under Yudit's guidance, I eventually realised that, no matter how I felt about it, my mother's M.O. was not any 'weirder' than mine. And mine was not any weirder than the next-door neighbour's.

•

Bottom line: I had to actively accept that forgiveness was not a process intended to benefit 'the one who has hurt us'.

Forgiveness is a process on which we embark for our own well-being.

The ability to truly forgive, which does not mean agreeing or consenting with what came to pass, resonates in the little happiness gauge that's a part of the limbic system in our brain.

When we forgive, we release ourselves from the past which, truly has ... passed.
Done!

Now we can move forward.

More whole than before.

More stable than before.

•

These days, I highly recommend swapping the old 'F' word for a new one:
Forgiveness.

Not only is forgiveness beneficial for our brain, perhaps more immediately relevant, it allows us to get our power back.

It frees us from the toxic grip of resentment that would otherwise pollute so many moments – even in the dead of night.

When we embark on the path of Forgiveness, we embark on an act of bravery.

We commit to choosing our own way, to changing a future that's aligned with our best intentions and our holistic well-being.

If we are bound to chase after a future that is dictated by our responses to the present moment, we'd better make sure we are actively and coherently engaged in the moment underfoot.

Luckily for us, in all of our existence, there is only ONE moment presenting underfoot at a time. 😊

•

Reality check: we are all weird in our own way.

We are all reactive when our buttons are pushed.

•

Of course, my energy combined with that of my mother would have, indeed, contributed to toxic encounters whenever we met. Therefore, my challenge was to push out all the noise from inside my head.

•

I had to lead - not by being 'loud', but by example.

I needed to raise a fist, a loving fist, inside my chest.

I needed to be strong.

I needed to be wise.

I needed to count my blessings.

I needed to allow my blessings to get me to the other side.

I needed to pretend I saw the glint of a rainbow ... until I saw one.

•

Of course, under Yudit's guidance, I also understood that, like all of us, my mother had emotional wiring that she hadn't window shopped for herself.

She, too, was led by an ego-persona that had become hers even before she attended primary school.

She, too, must have some unrecognised grief for something or other that had lacked in her life or that she had mishandled a long time ago.

Perhaps she, too, had failed to fully air out her feelings.

The thing to remember is that screaming and raging, blaming and belittling never brings us a desired outcome.

Not fully. Not permanently.

It does, however, create static on the surface and resentment below.

-

On the other hand, finding our voice, talking from the heart to explain how whichever situation affects us and responding calmly is the safest, most effective way to make our yearning heard.

It's true, but it's a messy process.

It's complicated.

It's emotionally challenging.

It demands discipline.

-

Sadly though, once our ego-persona is allowed to become our default personality, it's like we're a character in a sci-fi script in which we make our own Halloween mask.

Then, somehow, that mask comes to life and overtakes our 3-D human body.

Once in, it co-creates our outer reality through its own emotions, thoughts, actions, reactions and inactions.

Though, all the time, we are there, in those bodies of flesh and fluids, we do not control them.

In truth, they are not us.

-

Heads up: a vaccine in a fridge is useless until it's injected into an arm. Proven strategies, too, remain useless to us until we use them and test them on ourselves.

For ourselves.

So, dear Reader, *lezz do it!*

Let's allow our emotions and thoughts just be - and to just fade away.



‘Every mikkle mek a mukkule’

Brisbane - August 2023

‘Every little makes something’ – Jamaican proverb

Many tiny amounts of 'anything' end up making something consequential.

Good or bad.

Sometimes neutral – seldom indifferent.

•

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages." William Shakespeare – As You Like It

•

Seven ages = seven stages = seven decades

Seventy years of life tallied up as a very 'lucky' old age in Shakespeare's 1600s.

•

Having said that, the years that move us from infancy, early learning and adolescence to maturity, middle age, old age/dotage and death span roughly seven decades before old age/dotage pick up their pace towards death – the moment Soul suspends our breath.

•

These days, if we're fortunate enough to be in reasonable good health and able to regularly enjoy moments of genuine contentment beyond seven decades, it suggests we've navigated well enough the peaks and troughs that our karmic co-creations have carved into each of our decades :-))

•

We, beings of energy compressed in our human bodies, ONLY need to actively accept that, beyond the hurtful memories of the past and anxieties about the future, What-Is ... really IS all that is real in the moment underfoot – on stage.

All that is real in our day – in our lives.

Real under the hull of our metaphorical little schooner.

•

Muttering to myself: 'Argh ... more thoughts keep fluttering down. Closing the door on this series of mind-meanders won't be as quick as I thought it would be.'

Ah, well, dear Reader ... I'll just have to flow with what 'the moment' seems to ask of me – hoping I interpret its clues correctly because, as the saying goes, 'Every little difference amounts to a lot.' 😊

•

Heads up: what-Is in this, and every moment underfoot is the only '*real-ity*' in our human lives.

•

Bottom line: our karmic responsibility is to handle 'that moment' - every moment - in a manner that is as neutrally objective and as 'mind-fully' effective as possible.

•

Some people believe that the afterlife – heaven and hell, as ultimate metaphoric destinations – is about the consequences of our actions.

Our persona's legacy.

They say that heaven and hell, however imagined, are really about our soul's perspective on the moral fibre of the person we once were while incarnated on Earth.

•

For now, as Earth dwellers trapped by a limited understanding of our 3-D reality, we do not have the gift of Perspective.

When we are dissatisfied with our lives is the time we interpret every challenging moment as 'unfair'.

We thrash about asking the heavens why, oh why this happening to us, the good persons, the law-abiding persons, the hard-working persons that we are.

•

Those of us who believe in karma accept that it is here, in the moments underfoot, that we co-create our legacy with the universe, which is never still.

Here, now, on planet Earth, is where our thoughts, actions, inactions and responses create a flow-on effect of energy.

The consequences of our actions ripple out in one way or another, as does the energy that invisibly moves the rips and tides of the ocean that is never still.

These consequences ripple out through our days ... all the way to our very last one ... all the way to our last breath.

•

In the absence of absolute knowledge, we believe that whatever ripples of cause and effect have seeped into – or flooded - our moments underfoot, they have travelled as energy travels through time.

The energy of potential consequences travelled all the way to where X marks the spot and left it to us to navigate through ... as we chose.

•

Again and again, regardless of the label we apply to any moment (fun – bad – good – scary – blissful – boring – traumatic), it helps to believe that our moments are not only our just deserts.

Some are our just oases, too.

Our rewards.

•

My mentor, Yudit CS, was equally adamant about our purpose in this lifetime. *"Simply accept that, in one way or another and far beyond the reach of human understanding, each moment you like and each moment you don't like pushes you to jump out of your rigid mindset.*

They're intended to shift you out of the continuous playback of past moments, which, you already know, cease to exist the moment you choose to blow out the memory of them like a flame.

Up to you whether you blow or don't."

•

Yudit explained it this way. "Don't *fall back on good karma or bad karma,*" she would say, *"because it's not about that. It's not about good luck and back luck, either.*

These things don't exist. They're like urban myths.

We get from life exactly what we need to grow, to become genuine persons who are resilient and coherent.

What does exist is a cosmic cycle that expects each one of us alive today to produce better outcomes in our lifetime than were produced by those who were our souls' previous vehicles in bygone eras."

•

Reality check: we tend to attribute our dissatisfaction with life - as we perceive it - to the unconsidered or irreverent behaviour of others.

Namely, those we know and those we don't.

Those we see and those we don't.

Those who are near and others who are far.

But, in truth, our greatest challenge is the management of our selves.

•

Whether our perceived 'storm' can be contained in a teacup or whether it is a full-on drama or devastating trauma, we are now alert and full of misgivings.

We gnash our teeth.

Anxiety clouds over and tightens our solar plexus.

Perceived through a mere keyhole understanding of the world immediately before us, difficult moments often produce hurtful personal experiences.

•

To rise above rather than sink below, Yudit offered a daunting four-pronged approach:

1 - 'Make a whole-hearted peace with the situation and with those who may have enabled it,' she urged.

2 - Shift your focus to shift your pattern of reaction.

3 - Breathe with awareness.

4 - Present yourself shining from the inside.'

•

So, here and now, dear Reader, we quieten the Sceptic and the Judge and the Jury and the Poor Me persona.

Better yet, we remove them from the front-row seats they have held within us for far too long already.

•

We energise the newly freed-up space with a deep inhale.

We allow ourselves to drop in, and we exhale slowly.

We rescue our thoughts away from paralysis by analysis.

This means we step away from the fear of making things worse and becoming trapped as vulnerable in the eye of those who, we think, might judge us.

We actively remember that, under their many guises, challenging moments can help us cultivate our heart-based coherence and our resilience.

•

So, we shift our 'ambition' from the sort of achievement that we think will bring us money and appreciation to fulfilment.

•

Reality check: our 'ambition' becomes our ability to remain awake and aware, particularly in moments of carefree happiness and in moments of doubt and fear.

Our upgraded ambition is to 'perform with purpose'.

•

Aware of the inner-outer uniqueness of the moment underfoot, we standstill.

Stand still, urge the words of a Native American elder as translated by David Wagoner.

A life lived through wakefulness and awareness.

Stand still.

The trees ahead and the bushes beside you

Are not lost.

Wherever you are is called Here,

And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,

Must ask permission to know it and be known.

The forest breathes.

Listen. It answers,

I have made this place around you,

If you leave it you may come back again, saying Here.

No two trees are the same to Raven.

No two branches are the same to Wren.

If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,

You are surely lost. Stand still.

The forest knows Where you are.

You must let it find you.

Why Oh Why so Many Words?!?

Brisbane – November 2022

Together and separately, we tend to unconsciously perpetuate against ourselves the divisive myth that 'Justice, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Some see an

innocent victim. Others will see evil incarnate getting exactly what's deserved,' said Zora Neale Hurston, born in 1891.



Justice, like Beauty, like Fairness. Like love.



We might 'see' a callous, self-centred familiar person whose actions hurt our feelings.

A third party might simply see in that person someone who is only making a point.

Where we taste rat poison, they taste nothing.



Equally, we are too often willing participants in the game of Judge – Jury and thoughts, actions and inactions.

Through that lens, our judgement is often harsher than one given by a more objective third party.

Self-criticism is embedded in our neural pathways.



Time after time, we punish ourselves with dark thoughts and limiting beliefs.

We do unto others as we do unto ourselves.

Self-compassion was seldom taught at home.

It's still not taught in classrooms.



Reality check: our reactive judgement negatively colours the present moment and many that follow

They go on doing that long after we have left the scene of the difficult conversation.

Long after the gripping sensation it triggered.



Sometimes, instead of checking in - instead of forcing ourselves to take that discreet, deep in-breath and allow time for that slow exhale - we impulsively slam the door shut.

And sometimes, we don't find the built-in key that would open that door again.



Anxiety prevents us from returning to coherence.

It keeps us locked in combat-mode.



But, as Dr Joan Rosenberg tells us in her book *90 Seconds to A Life You Love*, our anxiety is not so much caused by anticipating the other person's toxic reactions to our peace-making endeavours.

It is often caused by the unconscious apprehension of the surge of uncomfortable feelings that would flood our system should that rejection become real.

'When you worry about or refuse to take risks, no matter what they are, afraid of the risk itself than of the unpleasant feelings that might result if things don't turn out the way you want.'



Heads up: our mind's protective instinct keeps us in combat mode.

Or maybe it's the fear of fear itself.



Until we gain control of our nervous system, anxiety persists as the shield against vulnerability.

We apprehend the vulnerability that our mind anticipates when faced with the likely eventuality that our effort to mitigate the complication is rejected.

Avoidance is our make-believe shield.



"How many times have your younger selves been misunderstood, misheard, mishandled!" shouts our mind. "You need to stay away! You need to spare *your* self

the pain and the humiliation! That person will NEVER see **you**. S/he will NEVER hear **you**! S/he will NEVER love and protect **you**!



Meanwhile, gut-tightening worry about what 'that other' person might think about us compounds the muck.

We get lost in that muck.

We want to find our way out of it, but the muck impacts our nervous system, impacting our reactions to the flow of moments underfoot.

That's because 'reaction' trigger aggravations.



Bottom line: divide, we do but, conquer, we don't.

And until we say to ourselves, 'Wait a minute! This is not who I am! This is not working for me.' we remain stuck in the muck.



We stay lost until we remember that we can stop searching for 'a golden heart', for we already have one within.



Once awake and aware, we accept that it is our responsibility to manage not just our irritation, resentment, and anger but also our insecurities.

It is our responsibility as one who has come of age to usher in openness.

And to grapple with the invisible forces at play within and around us.



Heads up: it is our duty to ourselves to develop trust in the karmic reason for What-Is. And trust, too, in the realm of positive possibilities, a.k.a. unexpected synchronicity.



"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." Man's Search for Meaning is a 1946 book by Viktor Frankl prisoner in Nazi concentration camps during World War II.

It describes his psychotherapeutic method, which involved identifying a purpose in life to feel optimistic about and then, immersively, imagining that positive outcome.



When awake and aware, we tap into our innate courage.

We tap into our innate wisdom.

We take action.



We remember and actively accept that we are not our minds and that we are not our bodies.

That we are living, breathing, conscious energy beings.

When we don't, it's all on us, as the expression goes.



So, having just typed all of that about 'generalities', I am now going to hazard an 'educated' guess as to why my soul 'prompted' me some 20 years ago to begin writing and to keep writing about the incessant interplay of Mind, Body and Soul when, really, it is all summarised in one sentence: treat others as you would like them to treat you.

In a sense, it comes down to a form of 'paying it forward'.



Though I find the process enjoyable, writing is not an activity I have intentionally embarked on. Not one I ever wished to develop.

Not one that I ever prioritised.

So, of course, I regularly ask myself why Soul has kept me 'inspired', daily, spontaneously, randomly, till this, the current moment underfoot in my study, a sunny/cloudy morning in May 17, 2023.



Followers of several religions and ancient practices like Hindus, Jains and Sikhs, Buddhists, too, have their version of a festival of light intended to symbolise our 'inner' lights.

Christmas, with all its displays of lights and candles, is the Christian illustration of that inner light.

And let's not forget the heart-warming candles atop our birthday cakes!

Of course, it's best if those candles are real... but plastic. Ouch!



Either way, dear Reader, may the cycle of months till the next festival of lights in your life bring you many-many moments of contentment.

Even if you read this mind-meander well after the festival is over.



Reality check: over it might be on the calendar, but the light always shines within 😊



Back to topic: I'm guessing that if Soul, my muse, has pushed me to write for so long about the same stuff, i.e., us, humans struggling within the heart and soul of our culture, there must be a reason.



Instead of prompting me to be succinct and shorten what appears to be far too long, she sends down more flurries of thoughts to clarify the obvious differently.



Reality check: my unerring Soul must be well-aware that my authentic self is not yet realised... enough.

That I have yet to come of age.

That I have yet to match more of what I know and accept with what I feel.



Every time I write 'we', I could easily write 'I'.

For example, when, a few lines above, I typed, '*We* are too often willing participants in the game of Judge ...,' I could have written that I am too often a willing participant in the game of Judge

And instead of '*our* reactive judgement colours negatively the next moment...' I could have written 'my reactive judgement colours'

Soul has plenty of opportunities to sense that, too often, the past was pulling me away from the present - from the potentially neutral moment underfoot.



I agree.

I STILL need to remind myself again and again of the mindset essential to Holistic Wisdom 101.



That, and to stay true to the obligation I chose many years ago to systematically apply that mindset to my daily life.

As humans incarnated on Planet Earth, we are meant to be vulnerable.

We are meant to embrace our feelings, particularly the ones that wound us the most.



I think Rumi, the 13th century Sufi mystic got it right when he said, "Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it."

And make peace with that reality. Tough, painful, but true.



When Handling the Tiller

Brisbane – September 2023

Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do.

So throw off the bowlines.

Sail away from the safe harbor.

Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore. Dream. Discover – Mark Twain



Yes, indeed, we feel a sea change is coming, and yes, another analogy is on its way. That's OK because the content of this book is evolving around the metaphor of a raft (our ego-persona), the only physical and mental support we have as we, separately and collectively, chart a course towards our desire-rainbow, the place of contentment/*bien-etre et joie de vivre*, we want to reach—the place of inner calm we want to make our own.

The place we want for ourselves and the care - most.



Our emotional landscape provides plenty of storms and 'high seas'. Additionally, for many of us, our family members are also our 'rough seas'.

They are the ones who know more about us without truly knowing much about us at all.



However, as our parents went about raising us, they did their best to shape us into fine children who would grow up as fine teenagers who would one day become fine adults and have fine families of their own - if only according to their own checklist.

The emotional mindset instilled in their toddlers is reinforced throughout the many moments contained in the many years they live at home.



It could be argued that parents indoctrinate their children - for their greater good, of course.

The problem is that the presumed 'greater good', when interpreted according to one's biased filters, often results in emotional manipulation that does not always benefit the adults that the former children have become.



And, of course, that dissonance between upbringing and optimal responses to stimuli comes at a cost.

First, to the 'doee'.

Later, to the doer.

Both become exposed to conflagrating divergent views and aspirations.

In any case, our siblings, early childhood friends, relatives and teachers are so many parts of the team that have set us on our life path.

As young ego-personas already laden with many beliefs of mixed value, we set out into the outer reality of adulthood.

And here we are today.



Fully formed, we are, but not entirely in charge of the tiller that moves the rudder under our metaphoric little raft.

Regardless of our potential, we are ill-prepared to turn our raft away from rips, dipping and crashing waves, and rocks hidden beneath the surface.



The wind is not always going the same way as us, so we must compromise.

We understand that, but we don't always know how to make healthy ones.

In the absence of a reliable wind indicator on our little raft, untrained in reading the movements of the clouds, we often find ourselves sailing into a contrary wind.

Turning across the wind to switch from one tack to another is often problematic.



Reality check: we don't always know how to deviate from our chartered course to avoid unsafe conditions and collisions.

We don't always know when to approach wild conditions with enough healthy and steadfast confidence.

We don't know how to source the best inner shelter.

We seldom give ourselves the time and space to ponder the best response for the here and now.

We don't know how to be still.



First response: as simple as it is difficult and essential, when we feel pricked by someone's comment or reaction, we cancel the autopilot that whirs in our head and grips our stomach.

We make ourselves breathe in and out, gently and deeply.

Consciously.



As we do, we remember our favourite calming *gatha* (as discussed in Chasing Our Rainbow).

Here is one I have just now made up to show you, dear Reader, how easy it is to create our own *gatha*.

Slow inhale: *I sense impending*

nastiness in the words of the other.

Slow exhale: *Breath constricted;*

I am not in the moment.

Slow inhale: *I see that person as a frightened toddler.*

Slow exhale: *I breathe. I am in the moment.*

I smile to myself.

I have released the moment.



Reality check: of course! Any process that demands we really dig in and take a deep soul-searching dive into the past 10, 20 30 decades cannot be easy as disinfecting a virtual wound and applying stitches.

It cannot be quick.

It cannot be painless.

It cannot ... NOT be messy and complicated.



Of course, there are many daily wellness providers devoted to supporting us as we commit to improving our mental, spiritual, and physical health.

However, beyond being encouraged to surrender to the wisdom of uncertainty, it is unlikely that a new persona, a new us, will emerge as promised like a larva out of its chrysalis upon completion of any online course.



That said, of course, we might get our money's worth of 'aha' moments and, yes, of course, a well-delivered course is likely to prompt us to dig deeper in the hope of, one day, tapping into the personality that is authentic and unique to us.



Yes, quick fixes offer short-term relief, but we know quick fixes do not create sustainable shifts.

And when it comes to us, as individual, or planet Earth, our individual and global wellbeing relies on the sustainability of improved habits and patterns.

We also know that the longer the stem, the longer the root, the more tenacious the plant, and the more difficult it is to uproot.

And so, it is with the patterns we have allowed to consolidate in our brain.



Bottom line: unless the targeted conundrum stems from a reasonably new complication, one should best prepare for a long-haul expedition into the unknown world of tangible possibilities.



Knowing that time is the indefinite, continued progress of existence, how to define *quick* when it comes to progress made?

How to define *slow*?



Either *quick* or *slow* is the time it takes for our metaphorically little schooner, our ego-persona in this context, to find its way safely to the most brilliant part of our desire-rainbow.



At first, the little wave that would otherwise have toppled us overboard quietly slips under the hull of our raft.

Never to be felt again.

This is the beginning of the celebration of our personal control over the 'elements'.

There is no such thing as a 'little' victory.



Reality check: every moment conquered from the heart brings us closer to our desired destination.



True mastery of rafting begins with the management of the currents.

Of submerged rocks.

Of the winds.

Of greater, stronger, faster waves.

Of their peaks.

Of their troughs.

All the time, we remember that a well-manage trough will place our little schooner on the next crest to form.

Exactly where it needs to be to glide forward push by the wind.



As we trim down our little sails, we trim our objective to bite-sized, new habits.

We anchor new habits like refraining from judging anyone - anyone.

From belittling and excluding anyone.

We remember the golden rule to treat others as we would like them to treat us.

We refrain from gossiping about anyone.

About anyone at all.

Online and offline.

No exception.



We refrain from complaining.

We don't look for scapegoats to whom we might want to shout, 'See what YOU made me do?'

Instead, we cultivate the understanding that after all - and no matter what - our glass is more than half-full.

It's true.

It is.



We develop the courage to tell those whose behaviour hurts us that we feel the hurt.

We forgive even the ones who have wronged us.

Like us, at one time or another, they managed themselves in the only way that came to their mind at the time.



We develop a new form of courage, too.

Like that of saying sorry - a heartfelt sorry - even when we're not totally at fault.

Sorry about the messiness of the current emotions felt.

Though we don't have the luxury of dropping anchor anywhere, we do anchor our intentions.

We acknowledge each of the moments handled as best as we could ... in the moment underfoot.

We celebrate ourselves so whole-heartedly that our mind gets the message that doing 'it' in that new way is what makes us happiest.



Bottom line: the combination of What-Is and our moment-by-moment response to it creates a new reality. It, then, creates the (positive, neutral or negative) consequence of how we handled a number of earlier moments.



The new moment underfoot is the upshot of how we turned the raft to the wind or against the wind.

It's the result of how we managed the tiller and the rudder.

It's the results of our choices, there and then, in the moment underfoot – moment after moment.



When it comes to unsatisfactory outcomes, our ego-persona prefers to blame the wind, the current or the nastiness of submerged rocks. And so, for our judgment errors and our Me-first attitude to life, we blame all aspects of the outer world.

We blame those we love or should love.

We blame those we could trust and rely on.

We blame strangers near and far.

And we excuse ourselves for feeling how we feel, think and act by blaming all our addictions on social culture.



Reality check: blaming is a response to events that prick us for unconscious reasons buried deep in our psyche.

Blaming is childish reaction to adult concerns.

Therefore, as we aspire to come of age, one of our tasks is to identify the source of our discomfort.

Not to blame the past but to become aware of what we are feeling, thinking and doing.

And why.

The flow-on task is to find a coherent way to talk ourselves into consciousness.



Serious questions #1: do we 'want' to evolve our ego-persona, or do we feel we have to 'do' something?

Or do we feel we 'have to' evolve because we 'want' to innovate and open up to possibilities previously not considered?



Heads up: ideally, we are seeking to engineer a shift that will allow, out of the left field, unknown possibilities into our current reality.



Serious questions #2: what are we ready to commit to achieving in the next 6 months?

To achieve this specific, time-bound, short-term goal, what is that foremost disempowering habit that we aim to remove, delete, cancel or call out firmly and loudly?



We break down the task into manageable bits, as we would for a much-loved child.

We anchor our intentions before we show up.

We anchor our new habits as we activate them.

As we repeat them again and again.



We breathe consciously and slowly for as long as we have the patience to do 'just' that.

When we do, our lungs signal to our brain that we are OK.



We chart our progress on the long-very long continuum of personal evolution.

We honour every slight positive shift.

We celebrate every success, however small, with the same beaming smile we had as toddlers managing our first steps successfully.

With the same smile we have any time 'we' feel proud of what we have done - however inconsequential it might seem to others.



While on the long-haul expedition towards Life - karmically empowered to live it fully - we envision the impact of our inner-outer conscious mindset.

We energise our vision.

It's worth repeating that there are no such things as small or unimportant shifts.



Heads up: as we would encourage a much-loved child needing reassurance and comfort, we talk to ourselves.

Holistic self-maintenance begins with supporting ourselves as we would like to be supported by others.

Should we not quite succeed in our micro-shifts today, we make peace with whatever came to pass.

We breathe.

We breathe because we are blessed with the ability to do 'just' that.

We remember that tomorrow is another day.

Tomorrow will provide us with the training we need to generate some 'good' stress.



Reality check: we need to get out of our heads that we are grown-up and adults being the age we've reached.

Yes, we've learnt a few essential things along the way, skills, mostly.

But our human brain always remains wired in the same manner, no matter our age.

No matter the era in which our souls happened to have been reincarnated over the aeons.



Left to its own devices, its wiring deepens but does not change.

Our default mind is our 'toddler mind'.

As when we were very young, our brains, and therefore our minds, only thrive when they assess the landscape as safe.

When they feel heard.

Seen.

Appreciated.

Loved.



And so, we support and encourage ourselves through any situation in the way we would like to be loved today.

In the way we would have loved to be heard, seen, protected and encouraged - loved - by our own parents.

In this pursuit of inner/outer holistic wellness lies our purpose in this lifetime.

Nothing more.

Nothing else.

'Just' that.



Keep thinking, dear Reader.

Keep sharing.

Keep caring.

Keep reading.



Rafting Towards Our Rainbow - Rips and Tides

Like 'sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.'

How 'mother issues' are intended to make us stronger - Part 2/3

Brisbane - June 2022

We cannot see 'reality' as it is, for the wiring of our brain compels us to see things as we are.

If this rings true, let's take out our compass and check our position again.

We look for checkpoints.

Even if, at the moment, we feel we are rafting like champs, unless we know where we are, though we might reach land, we won't reach our destination.



My mentor, Yudit CS, lived in Jerusalem, and I, in Australia, but the physical distance between us never hindered her guidance and my learning.

So, intellectually, of course, I understood her teachings. And her holistic approach enabled me to begin a practice of active acceptance of What-Was, as it came down in the moments underfoot.



That moment-by-moment practice was challenging. It was long.

It was emotionally messy. Very slowly, I noticed a shift in me.

In my thoughts.

Not yet in my emotions.



Emotions, I've learnt, are activated by a familiar 'signal' that, in a nanosecond flutter that our eyes or ears relay to our brain.

Even before we are aware of it, the signal is already identified as 'immediately dangerous' to our wellbeing.



Signals are sounds, words, visuals or non-verbals. In the case of an impending confrontation, they are as subtle as the other clearing his/her throat, a word, a change in tone, a tightening of their eyes, pursing of their lips, a noticeable in-breath, the biting of their bottom lip or the scratching of their head.



Once the alert is released throughout our neural pathways, a 'feeling' is then activated within us.

A sudden tightening in the stomach, a quickened heartbeat, a freeze-frame instant.

Either way, they all unleash the same flurry of un-thought thoughts.

They prompt un-thoughts that push out words and gestures we might immediately regret, but ... too late. They can never be unheard or unsaid.



Once released, the energy these words and gestures carry remains trapped in our heart and solar plexus. It remains almost palpable in the space between ourselves and that other.



Reality check: we have no control over the instinctive emotional response of our nervous system.

We do, however, have total control, should we wish to exert it, over our response to the thought and gesture activation that immediately follows.

We can if we slow it right down.

We can if we remember to breathe consciously and slowly exhale.



Strengthened by my newly acquired understanding of life, there came a moment when I began rigging my ego-persona, a.k.a. my little schooner, in preparation for setting sail towards my Rainbow.

A genuine reconciliation with my mother via the process of me finding my love for her was the course I intended to navigate.



In fact, I was curious about what such a shift of mindset might feel like.

I wondered where the willingness to open up to these possibilities would lead me.

Now, many years later, I can confirm that the process has slowly led me to a healthier, balanced life than I could have anticipated.



It was via email, the only mode of communication I had with my mentor, Yudit, whom I had not yet met in person that, some 18 years ago, had come the first piece of advice.

Intent on helping me address the chaotic tightness that constantly churned in my solar plexus, which I attributed to my ongoing dysfunctional relationship with my mother, Yudit reminded me that I was not actually a child anymore.



She said that I probably didn't really want my mother to hug me all day and do baby talk with me.

She added that I probably didn't wish to entrust her with all my little secrets; that I was quite able to tap into my own self-worth while accepting What-Is and What-Was. She suggested that the process was, in fact, a tailor-made karmic rite of passage into genuine maturity.

With a big sigh, I nodded.

Wise as Yudit was, she was probably right.



In truth, I never had any problem accepting the wisdom of Yudit's teachings and reasoning, but continually rowing against the tide proved to be very testing of my best intentions.

Energising them was difficult.



Trying to break the habit of feeling and reacting as I had done all my life was nerve-racking.

Peeling off the mask of my ego-persona, forgetting the past, all of it, even that of the previous moment - and side-stepping them altogether - is a messy process.

It's a long-haul adventure into our psyche.

Definitely not for the faint-hearted.



Well aware that back then, my mother thought my visits were too infrequent, I nevertheless visited her and my stepfather once a month for the afternoon.

As I drove down to the coast where they lived, my brain totally gripped by the survival instinct that activates 'fight/flight' symptoms and a plague of What-Ifs topped by resentment, I'd brace myself in readiness for the assault on my insecurity hotspots.

Of course, I expected the worst.

Is it surprising now that I almost always got what I expected?



Sure, I felt vulnerable.

Exposed – helpless.

Again.

Still.



Obviously, I had not yet internalised what it meant to be aware and awake, present in the moment underfoot.

I had not internalised either that vulnerability is not a weakness.



As we battle against emotional exposure, uncertainty, and risk, our sense of vulnerability becomes the gauge of our courage.

Reaching beyond our fears, we choose where we step with our words.

When aware and awake in the moment underfoot, we choose the best steps we can take in that moment.

When our options are limited, we choose one that is coherent with our best intentions.



Reality check: one step at a time - or one well-managed wave at a time - we move forward in our expedition of a lifetime.

The much-respected self-help and spiritual author Wayne Dyer said, 'Our intention creates our reality.' It's true, of course, but it only works that way when we're ready to commit to the long-haul journey of self-discovery.



During those visits, my mother and I would sometimes go to the beach.

Sometimes, we walked on the esplanade, went shopping, stopped at a café along the way or simply enjoyed the sea view from her balcony.

Pricked by what I was hearing her say, time after time, my resolve to remain calm, open and present for my mother too abruptly clouded over with the same-old mix of vulnerability, shame and acute resentful non-acceptance of her as I perceived her.



My perception of my mother's self-centeredness repeatedly tested my resolve to not let any reactive thoughts drift me further away from the course I had set to reach my rainbow desire.

Her instinct for divisiveness seemed compounded by what I sensed as an utter inability to take responsibility for any failed consequence, whether with her friends or neighbours or with me or with Myahr, my partner of many years already.



I resented, too, her unwillingness to consider the appropriateness of a meaningful 'I'm sorry' to anyone.

In hindsight, I now understand that more than unwilling, my mother could not process any thought any differently.

Her persona did not allow her to do that.

And, of course, my mother's unreasoned suspicion of everyone else's motives, including mine, pricked me hard and often.



And, I, still driven at the time by my own ego-persona, again felt that in my mother's eyes, I was 'not enough' as a daughter, not enough as an adult – that I, not my lifestyle choices, were a disappointment to my mother. That her 'love' was entirely conditional upon performance.

She was the 'uber' Judge.

And that I was powerless to change her views.

Powerless to make her see 'me'.



Under such circumstances, sharing any of my work-a-day apprehensions - among others - with my mother was never an option.

She acutely feared the shame of what others would think of her for having a gay daughter, should they ever find out.

That phobia compounded the level of complication in our relationship. After all, I was already 50 and thought I had done enough to demonstrate my 'reasonable' character and value.



No matter what, my ego-persona kept battling the possibility that I was not only unworthy as a daughter but also an unworthy human being.

So, of course, on edge, I pushed back every time.

Very tempted to slam the door shut on us - forever.



Though that never helped me feel better, my ego-persona felt that pushing me into fight mode had done what it could to ensure my self-preservation.

The thing is, wherever our attention goes, our thoughts go, too.

And our thoughts dictate the next step. Unless we take charge of the moment underfoot to create a different next moment than otherwise.



The one thing my mother respected about me was my profession. But, it, too, set me up for many anxious moments.

Of course, my apprehension that, perhaps, one day, I might be shamed in the workplace was not open for conversation between my mother and me.



As an aside, regardless of one's level of expertise, integrity and professionalism, it's impossible for a high school teacher, such as I was, to please every student and every parent all the time.

Thus, on and off, for the best part of my 40 years career, I apprehended the day when students' whispers and jokes, either thoughtlessly intended as funny or deliberately spiteful and vengeful, would yank open the doors of the private-life closet in which I lived since I was 19.



Insecure for sure: whenever I sensed tension in a student or in a class, I dreaded the possibility that one day, I might be exposed as 'that teacher. You know ...the lesbian'.



At least up to early 2016, when I retired, the cultural expectation was that homosexual teachers, particularly women and particularly those not involved in physical education, would remain 'in the closet', as the expression went.

The likelihood of being ridiculed, harassed and vilified – of being 'labelled' and potentially losing my credibility was very real.

Obviously, that recurring fear of potential exposure did not do much to fortify my sense of self. It did, however, contribute significantly to the level of chronic anxiety developed in my childhood.



Good news: that worst-case scenario never happened. Nowhere near.

That said, I hope that so many years on, pushed along by social change, the deeply-rooted anti-gay sentiment has begun to wane across all strata of our culture.



In truth, regardless of our responsibilities, activities and lifestyles, overthinking what others might be thinking is draining.

It's emotionally exhausting.

Imagining their thoughts as potential threats to our wellbeing creates what we randomly call stress.

We feel the contraction of the anticipated lack of safety and rejection.



Stress and anxiety, I've also learnt, are activated by the fear of the gaze of others, the fear of being judged. They are our body's reaction to the fear of being found

lacking and shamed. They come from the fear of suffering emotional consequences we are unwilling to suffer.



Saying, 'Don't run away from fear. Harness its power instead' is a great thing to say. Now that I think of it, that fear of the judgement of being deemed 'deficient' because of one's sexual orientation - and the inevitable, ensuing feeling of shame - might be comparable to the apprehension one feels when contemplating the possibility of cognitive decline due to Alzheimer's.



It's not so much about the fear of 'losing it'.

It's more about the fear of the stigma attached to 'losing it'.

That, too, is about fearing the gaze, the judgement of others.

That, too, is about apprehending the burden of responsibility befalling loved ones or, worse – the apprehension of being left floundering on one's own.

All that 'freaks us out' has to do with our perception of being or becoming 'less than'.



Back to the main issue of attaining my rainbow desire.

I was my mother's only child.

Surely, I would tell myself, I should be important to her. She should appreciate me, if only for being a financially independent, healthy, decent human being.

How dare she not!

What if she never budes from her position?

Is she even able to change her mind?



Interestingly, contrary to frequent advice given to those who feel trapped in a toxic relationship, Yudit encouraged me to not cut ties with my mother.

Tirelessly, she urged me to hang in there but hang in there differently.

'Karmic destinies, CC! We don't see them. We don't know anything about them. We don't think about them, but their blueprint is the blueprint of our purpose in this lifetime.' Mmm... and?



I read on. 'This time around,' Yudit had typed in her daily email, 'the karmic choreography of growing up with a distant mother is one key feature of the hand you were dealt from the start.'

Long before you were born, CC, your intended purpose was and still is to go beyond *your* self to find love for your mother because she has been picked and co-designed to be YOUR mother in this lifetime.

You've been too focused on your own needs. You've forgotten to search for your real mother. You know, the one authentic one that lives inside the heart of the one you don't like.

You've made your real mother as invisible to you as you were to her as a child. So, for you, now is the time to remove all this negativity about your mother's temperament from your heart.'



Then, Yudit added, 'Heal your thoughts now, CC. Later, they will heal your emotions. They will reduce the fire of your anxiety to ashes. Be a brave warrior.'



Pierre Cardin, the French fashion designer, passed away in 2020. He was 98.

'I design for tomorrow. I never go backwards,' he once said.

Gold mindset that one, and up to us to make it work for us as well as it did for that man of enduring international fame.



So, dear Reader, what actions are you ready to take here, now, to facilitate your personal upgrade and that of those who are near and far. No pressure! 😊

Repetition Strengthens Our 'Inner Muscle'

It is true that the insights that fill the pages of this book are often repetitive.

They ebb and flow like waves under the hull of our metaphorical little schooner.

Like waves, these thoughts like most thoughts are 'unique' but similar.



As I was thinking of an appropriate heading for this section, I remembered that repetition is a necessary action for growth be it mental or physical.

World-class athletes repeat the same moves again and again throughout their careers.

And the best classical musicians practice the same notes and the same compositions again and again.

And, as toddlers, we learned to walk and talk through repetition, too.



I also remember that when we allow the same thoughts, usually negative ones, to repeat on a loop, we allow our minds to ruminate.

Yes, to ruminate like cows do.

As I do.



Instead of 'mind-lessly' ruminating, I could rearrange my dream from within.

I know what I know but knowing is not always enough.

I know my mind – my ego-persona - is not my enemy, of course not.

My mind simply offers me the amalgam of emotions absorbed mostly throughout my childhood.

And those absorbed later by my younger selves - the ones who have brought me to the age and the day-to-day 3D reality/destiny that is currently mine.

So, my mind, like any other mind, needs constant in-the-moment updates.

I need to show it who's the boss, as the expression goes, but I need to do this with great care and empathy in memory of the wounded selves within.

Basically, I am the one who needs to come of age – and stay 'of age'.



An updated mindset is essential in enlivening what I know.

What I feel.

How I want to show up, even when my heart is numb and my gut is constricted.

Even when I have my usual 'out-of-body' sensory experiences of vulnerability that hail from an unforgotten distant past.

Even when I disregard these signals that my body is giving me to deal in sensible ways here and now in the moment underfoot.

When I say 'No' to the moment.

When I feel unseen.

Under-valued.



The Journey by Mary Oliver is a poem that reminds us of the necessity to effect change in our lives.

*'One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began', wrote Oliver,
'though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice -
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers*

*at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.*

*It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.*

*But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognised as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do—
determined to save
the only life you could save.*



It's true that in many relationships, one of the hardest things to do is to say, "No-No more!" but in my case, I need to say it to my ego-persona.

She is my representative.

She speaks for me... as often as I let her.

She is quite dogged and the energy/awareness needed to order her, however gently or firmly, to go on 'mute' are not easily summoned.



Though Oliver's poem could be about one's brave determination to turn one's back on a toxic relationship, I interpret it more as the call to step away from a dark mindset, and finding one's inner-outer positivity.

Indeed, at the level of emotions, the only life we can save is our own.

Once we save our emotional life, we can look after that of others.



Perhaps that's what I read in the poem because that's the step I chose to take some 20 years ago on the long road I knew it would be to reconcile my heart with the reality of my mother's *persona*-lity.



Yes, I actively accept that all we need to do is stay true to our understanding of What-Is real and to a heart-based coherence that works for the greater good of all.



Reality check: I forced myself to do that against the judgemental voice of my ego-persona, the negative voice urging me towards the least resistance line, the enduring darkness.



The day-to-day energy of this most karmic of relationships has been my ongoing testing ground for many years already.

Even while in my forties, my self-control extended to resisting the impulse to slam the door shut forever – and to never look back.

Perhaps strangely, the more difficult it was to remain calm around my mother, the more, deep down, I yearned to, one day, 'feel' a measure of my love for her.



Reality check: even when, like a chrysalis, we emerge, we emerge from within our minds. We emerge within an awareness rooted in Soul.



Each of my younger selves - and the body and mind they had had at the time - did their best to minimise the effects of the falsely protective behaviours I had put in place as barricades.



Barricades against the chronic fear of missing out.

Of not being found 'relevant'.

Of never being found worthy of care and protection, let alone of Love.



Serious question: how to not be grateful towards each of my younger selves for having kept me whole, healthy and able?



For the best part of forty years of adult life, though I had always enjoyed a physically comfortable and safe life, my mind and my gut had whirred doing their best to counteract the toxic effects of my deep sense of vulnerability and emotional isolation.

And throughout it all, my ego-persona, having chosen to remain free of emotional attachment to others as a self-protective measure, I forgot what I should have cultivated within myself.

I didn't know who or what to trust.

I didn't sense what was true for me.

I only apprehended the moment when, again, I would feel as I did as a child – the feeling of being a somewhat deficient being instead of feeling somewhat optimised by my life's journey thus far.



Heads up: sure, our survival relies on the mysterious mechanism of our body.

It knows what to do.



All our body needs from us is relative inner quietude and supportive nutrients. Which, of course, it doesn't get when it is constantly under attack by toxic thoughts and depleting self-beliefs.

Despite my better judgement, I still occasionally, too often, try to get one specific 'familiar other' to respond to me with appreciation which, in turn, boosts my pride in the satisfying life I have, after all, engineered for myself.

Of course, I was helped along by a karmic nod from Soul.



My reality check: I accept that ALL the millions of words typed in the past 15 years have been my necessary homework – even now, the moment underfoot.

The only moment there is.



Every line, every short paragraph acts as a repeating mantra.

A recurring call to practice moment by moment what I feel is true.

A recurring call to repeat again and again what I feel works for the greater good.

However slowly my mind adjusts, adjust, it does.



Hopeful illusion

Brisbane, Mars 2023

So, again, yes, why keep looking for more and more ways to explain what is self-explanatory?



The stress, distress and anxiety that so many of us inject in the moment underfoot and, therefore, into our organs taint more than our perception of 'the future'. They

affect our health, here and now. They sabotage our dogged pursuit of happiness, satisfaction and self-respect.



Allowing these emotions into our day-to-day indicates a mistrust of the Greater Order of Things – i.e., the coming together of the karma we co-create moment by moment with the universe and the field of synchronistic opportunities programmed to manifest at the most optimal stage of our life.



Reality check: we have all had opportunities to notice that the rainbow we 'chase' hard and fast often keeps eluding us.

Should we be so lucky as to have secured bits of that elusive rainbow, too soon, circumstances that ripple out of that wished-for 3-D reality can become toxic.



Serious question: how many happy wedding days and informal unions have led to unhappiness and, in many cases, to trauma - and even to murder?



Of course, we also hear of the many celebrities who have led - or are leading - a depleting private life despite the fame, fortune and public adoration so many of us would 'die' for.



Ah, yes! Of course, let's spare a thought for all those who have taken their own lives while at the peak of their careers - while seemingly living 'the dream'.

Let's also spare a thought for all our 'loved ones' who, too, chose to shorten their stay on planet Earth, though on the surface, they had plenty to live for and were loved and respected by many.



Another serious question: we tend to believe that our personality has evolved through cumulative past experiences dispensed by parents, relatives, friends, teachers, and 'false enemies', but, as we know, the past never exists in real-time. So, how does our belief enable us to respond coherently to the reality of What-Is in the present moment?

Simple answer: this belief doesn't serve us. It has created the illusion of our reality that only limits us.



Reality check: to reach a higher degree of contentment, we 'only' need to ease the emotional pressure we inflict on ourselves. And also the pressure of discord which, too often, we inflict onto others, be they near or far.

Known to us or not.

Visible to us or not.

Reality check: if we don't 'give' respect to others near and far, it's highly likely that we will 'feel' insulted or belittled fairly regularly.

If we don't 'give' fairness freely, it's highly likely that we will 'feel' nastiness in its myriad forms.

If we don't know how to 'give' heartfelt love and acceptance, it's highly likely that we won't know how to accept either easily either.

It's highly likely that we will 'feel' rejection.

Again and again, we will, until we change our M.O.

There is great emotional integrity to be gained by adopting the 'Pay it forward' motto.



As an aside, modern research has concluded that a high percentage of disease symptoms are triggered by problems in our mouths.

The same mouths that too often speak as carelessly as they enjoy unhealthy food?

Too 'funny', don't you think, dear Reader?



We 'only' need to accept that we have a minimal understanding of our true nature. And, we, energy beings karmically compressed in the bodysuits that respond to our name, have even less of an understanding of the purpose of our presence on planet Earth.



Doing our best to update, upgrade or reset the thoughts triggered - not by factual reality but by our emotions - is essential to instill coherence in all that lurks within the whorls of our minds.

And in all that lurks within the whorls of our heart – and of our gut, as well.



Heads up: depending on how we 'do' life, our gut, a.k.a. our sacral chakra/lower dantian, wavers from being the seat of our intuition and the seat of our Being to being the seat of our emotions – of our unease.



Across eras, many philosophers, scientists, authors, religious leaders, artists and even athletes have shared their thoughts on day-to-day 'life' being an illusion created by our perception, which is created by our emotions.



For example, Socrates, born in the 5th century BCE, is quoted saying, perhaps by Plato, his student, that 'A system of morality which is based on relative emotional values is a mere illusion, a thoroughly vulgar conception which has nothing sound in it and nothing true.'



Albert Einstein wrote that 'People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.'

The American self-help author and motivational speaker, Wayne Dyer, explained, 'The ego is only an illusion, but a very influential one. Letting the ego-illusion become your identity can prevent you from knowing your true self. Ego, the false idea of believing that you are what you have or what you do, is a backwards way of assessing and living life.'



And in a 2009 speech, Michael Jordan, the first billionaire in the history of the American National Basketball Association [NBA] urged his audience to 'Never say never, because limits, like fears, are often just an illusion.'



And, here, now, we can say that, more often than not, truth, too, is an illusion, a perception often based on subjective thoughts and conclusions.

In the 16th century, Galileo, the astronomer, pushed out his truth about planet Earth rotating and revolving around the Sun. Unfortunately for him, his truth collided with that of other astronomers and, principally as it contradicted Holy Scripture, with the Catholic Church. The Pope along with every person of Faith who has ever lived, have their own understanding of what is 'true' to them.

So, tried by the Inquisition for suspected heresy, Galileo was forced to recant and spent roughly the last 10 years of his life under house arrest.



At the time of writing in 2022-2023, those who are keeping the 45th President of the United States afloat and buying 'merch' that clamors **God - Guns - Trump** are also propelled by a truth - one that is vastly different from what the rest of the world accepts as helpful and valid.

Many on both sides of this divide are willing to fight, perhaps kill – possibly die – in defense of *their* truth.

In this respect, human nature has remained largely unchanged over the millennia.



Here's a thought: maybe it can be said that Truth, like the goddess Medusa coiffed by swirls of venomous snakes, is an illusion that, itself, has many 'heads'.



Reality check: head-to-head collisions with others, be they loved or not, be they near or far, are inevitable.



Though our sense of self often lacks the awe of magic, our day-to-day 'reality' is an illusion, too – an illusion we quasi-desperately want to 'spice up'.



For those of us who enjoy interactive, high-octane PC games, the theatre, ballet performances or Broadway shows, every performance is perceived as magic. They are immersive.

They drop us off in a sort of parallel universe - if only for a couple of hours.



Having said that and according to many, there is no greater illusion of freedom, power and awe than which would be provided onboard a Blue Origin Space Flight. Imagine treating ourselves to a seat that cost a minimum of \$250,000 for a suborbital experience that lasts about 11 minutes!

Surely, if there ever was an occasion to attempt slowing down time, that would be it :-)

So, when in pursuit of an ephemeral sensory illusion, a seat costing approximately \$120 per ticket in the Orchestra section is a very tempting and reasonable option. :-)



The thing is, as in the fantastical world of video games, on Broadway, as on a space flight, over decades [if not millennia], invisibly to us, our day-to-day has been a 'creation-in-constant progress'.

It still is.

And, complicitly, we are likely to go on allowing our truths and illusions – our beliefs - to go on being created on our behalf until the moment Soul gives us our last breath.

Be that as it may, for now, at this point in time, the total sum of such 'creations' equates to our *personalised* illusion of "**I am**".



Bottom line: our illusion of what is real has been shaped - not so much by the interactions we've had with a vast web of people - but mainly by the flurries of emotions we have felt in reaction to what these people, known and unknown to us, have said, done, and suggested to us – about us - through us and others, too.



Yes, on the one hand, the creation of *illusory persona*-lities relies on our passivity. On the other it demands a fair degree of reactivity.

This self-defeating illusion penetrates further inside our neural system with each of our reactions to what others 'do' to us, to our loved ones, to those we know and to those, far and wide, we don't know and never will know.

And by our reaction to what we 'think' they are saying and doing.

And by our reaction to all that we feel we are unfairly missing out on.



Yes, it's true. Living life authentically demands an active acceptance of the plusses and minuses that add up to who we have become thus far.

Living authentically demands that we be aware and awake within each minute of every day and year through every decade.

Living authentically is our reward for heart-based coherence in response to What-Is.

It is a reward confirmed by what we do for our genuine well-being and for that of others – near and far.

Living life authentically demands a sense of connection between who we are on paper and who, deeply, we are.

Deep below the waves of life.
Far beyond mere hopeful illusions.



Rafting Towards Our rainbow

How 'mother issues' are intended to make us stronger - Part 3/3

Brisbane – November 2022

'The opposite of love is not hate. It is indifference,' said Nobel laureate, Elie Weisel, a much-celebrated Holocaust survivor and author.



Perhaps strangely, the more difficult it was to remain calm around my mother, the more, deep down, I yearned to one day sense a measure of her love for me.

It had not dawned on me that she, too, needed proof of my love for her – backed up by the sort of evidence she could sense as genuine.



Tapping into my 'Buddha nature', my authentic self, a.k.a. my soulful self, as Yudit, my mentor, would say, was my constant intention, of course!

But it certainly was not what shone through the recurring frazzle that gripped my gut.



At the time, my attempts at calm resilience could not loosen the tightness in my solar plexus, in my stomach - where the energy of courage, determination and empathy should have been vibrating.

The notion of tapping into my cosmic essence was as much an impossibility as it was touching a rainbow of light.

Actually, my mother's unintentional impact on me drained my emotional energy. For obvious reasons, such persons are often called energy vampires.



Back then, though my intentions were heart-based, fear-based reactions were stronger.

None of my intentions fell into place automatically.

None of them was sustainable.

In my own self-appointed role of Judge of my mother's performance and my own, I felt the same powerlessness as when I was a child, and I was berated via one parental 'truth' or another.



Maintaining a positive inner posture in the face of what, to me, was a quasi-incessant meanness of spirit was harrowing.

Depleting, at times.

Clearly, the adult that I had become several decades ago had long accepted playing the role of the Victim.



Reality check: no matter how familiar the sounds, visuals and activities happening in any one moment, technically, every moment underfoot is as unique as lemons of similar size and weight.

Not any two will ever have the exact shape, skin and texture.

No two will yield precisely the same amount of zest and juice as the other.

No two have the same number of pips.

Yet, not one of my afternoon visits unfolded without the knot in my stomach tightening over itself like a sailor's stopper knot, a knot known to not come loose quickly.

And, tight in my stomach, that knot travelled back home to Brisbane where I lived.



At the time, I hoped my mother might experience a spontaneous aha moment or an epiphany.

That such a new awareness might prompt her to change her mindset.

That she would be moved to become caring, thoughtful and forgiving.

Not just with me.

With everyone.



I wanted her to appreciate her many blessings instead of taking everything for granted and focussing on perceived lacks. I knew that the only person who could provide us with a different game plan was me, myself and I – not my ego-persona. I needed to double down on the practice of sustained active acceptance of What-Was.



Back then, I was unable to hear Soul's whispered reassurance that all would be well if only I could make myself step back from the Judge's seat to become a detached observer. If I could desist from being the generator of my own fears, of my own sense of vulnerability and of my own resentment, I would unlock my power.



Bottom line: too much inner static.

If I were to show up only as an observer, Yudit would remind me repeatedly that I would no longer be the receiver of my mother's toxic energy.

I would no longer spread my own toxic energy through her system, either.

I knew my words would not improve the electrified silence that had momentarily settled between my mother and me.

The best I could do at the time was to desist from insisting on what I saw as 'my truth'.

In doing so, I avoided saying anything I knew I would have immediately regretted.

My self-control extended to resisting the impulse to slam the door shut forever – and never look back.

As if never looking back was truly an option we, humans, have!



Gradually, the changes in my behaviour patterns towards my mother began to bear fruit.

The emergence of healing.

Imperceptible progress.

A frail seedling at first.

Then, tender shoots begin to sprout.

Some convulse and die.

Others thrive.

A bud not yet a bloom, but the potential is feeling tangible.

Love-drought.

Intolerance.

Active acceptance attempted.

Somewhat satisfying.

Somewhat rewarding.

Definitely better.



Fast-forwarding to the present, my rainbow in the hues of 'mother-daughter love' is finally almost palpable.

Sadly, my stepfather passed away 4 years ago.

Even in absentia, he has provided my mother with the ongoing comfort and security to which she was accustomed, albeit on a smaller-scale apartment.



She moved nearby to a safe, well-run, beautiful retirement village.

My mother is now 89.

A few years ago, she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

She is now on stage 5 of 7 - Moderately Severe Decline.

She is no longer able to problem-solve ... anything, however simple.

With much love and respect, I often refer to her as my 5-year-old toddler who needs me to speak for her, look out for her, and play with her.

Colouring to the rescue :-)

Though over the years, my mother's decline means that the colouring subjects had to become larger and larger, I am so thankful she has accepted to engage in that activity with me drawing alongside her on her lovely balcony.

In all other aspects, beyond an encroaching loss of mobility, my mother is lucid, and her ego-persona remains intact.



Rain or shine, in the absence of any emergency at my mother's end and in addition to the usual family celebrations, I spend three afternoons a week with her.

They are calendarised.

So is my daily meditation practice.

No excuses for me to not show up.

No shortcuts.



I have also found a vibrant, energetic social carer who weekly spends the other four afternoons with my mother.

These days, my mother comments on how lost she would be if I wasn't the daughter that I've become.

She often tells me how proud of me she is.

And how Myrah is a perfect caring, intelligent, fun match for me.

And that, when her time comes, I should not have any regrets.

I should be happy, then, knowing that I have done all I could have done for her.

And when that moment comes, she will be relieved knowing that Myarh is my trustworthy offside forever.



In regards to this 'becoming', it's true that I've spent years following Yudit's advice: *'Treat your mother as you would have liked her to treat you when you were a child.*

When you were a teenager. When you were forty.

When you wanted her to be there for you.

Be present for her now.

But, also remember, CC, it's not so much what you do but how you do it that matters.

So, whatever it is you do, do it from your heart and before you know it, your little mother will be forever grateful.'



Reality check: years ago, I was fighting with myself to not slam the door shut on my mother and on myself, by association.

I was ready to finally stride away for good.

Instead, I ended up willingly tagging myself to be 'it', to be the go-to person for my elderly mother.



Myahr volunteered alongside me. I never doubted she would. 😊

So many years later, together and separately, Myahr and I still perform our duty of care with affection from one and with love from the other.

Did I just type 'love'?



Serious questions: Love – what characteristics define love?

What feelings are in the pit of the stomach or in the heart area?

How are they different from those that stem from affection and care?



My love for my mother is not yet flowing out from my heart.

It's there.

But it still feels bruised.

So maybe the sacrifices Myahr and I have made over the past few years to make myself available to my mother only amount to the 'duty of affection' done with care.



There's always a cost to letting our ego-persona roam where it likes to hide best, like an unaware toddler.

The cost of a life-long disconnection from sharing and caring means, for my little mother, that even now, she has unconsciously chosen disconnection from all the village residents and activities.

Her unwillingness to reach out when she first arrived at the retirement village seven years ago, to allow herself the vulnerability of possible rejection and the possibility of making meaningful connections, means she doesn't have any.



For reasons best attributed to the ebb and flow of karma, my little mother now finds herself as vulnerable and isolated as I felt when she left me in a nun-run boarding school in Tunisia - with one notable difference.

The Management staff and all the workers in that retirement community are much more inclusive and ready to be of support than any of 'my' nuns ever were.



My mother is and always was, depressed and stuck in the poor-me frame of mind. What was, still is.

It still ripples out into the long string of moments underfoot.

As it does for everyone alive today.



Bottom line: a narcissistic temperament doesn't allow one the freedom to admit being a part of the problem. It doesn't spare a thought for causality – not when things don't turn out as we would like them to.



Such an ego-*persona*-lity cannot factor in the possible ripples that flow on from a divisive, unapologetic mindset.

In fact, research shows that cognitive decline due to Alzheimer's only exacerbates narcissistic personalities.



Karma has forced my hand a little, as only karma could.

Details in my karmic blueprint have cast me as an only child.

It also cast my mother as one whose remaining family lives in France while she's been residing in Australia for the past 41 years.

And so, karma has cast me, too.



My karmic blueprint also allowed me to tap into moral courage and be encouraged and supported first by Yudit and, throughout it all, by Myahr.

I do my best to honour each of these gifts.

So, yes, 8 years ago, at the time of writing, I became my ageing parents' go-to-person for all their needs, big and small.



From their administrative paperwork to making phone calls and appointments and driving them wherever to buy whatever, I'm the one.

All - except 'youthful joie de vivre and vitality' - is provided as needed, when needed.



In the five years that preceded the Covid pandemic, although my partner Myarh and I were newly retired, we had agreed to postpone the month-long holidays overseas and frequent local escapades to which we were accustomed.



My parents' dependence on me, on us, would take precedence.

So many years later, it still does.

For us, as for many caring for emotionally dependent ones who rely entirely on them, such pleasures are put on hold indefinitely.



But, in the fullness of time, at the most optimal and beneficial time for all of us, moments of exciting yet relaxing adventures - contentment - will be there for us.

Better than ever before.

Better than would otherwise have been.

No doubt.



Today as always, my mother is disconnected from all that could have brought her enjoyment and pleasure.

She cannot fathom that her palette of emotions, thoughts, actions, and reactions, as well as her inactions, have led her to the point she's at today – isolated in her lovely apartment with a view of trees, birds and usually blue sky – but lonely as a rock, though surrounded 700 other residents in the retirement village.

Still living comfortably.

Still safe.

Still healthy.

Still cared for.

Still fractious and suspicious of others.

Still miserable except during the hours that I spend with her.



Reality check #1: no one can side-step the outer reality we've co-created ourselves.

From metabolic disorders to infections and psychiatric disorders, research has not yet identified the systematic causes of dementia. It does, however, confirm that fading cognitive ability is not necessarily a part of the natural result of ageing.



Reality check #2: it's a lot more nebulous than that.



On that topic, some 12 years ago, and apropos of nothing in particular, Yudit told me that, as far as she was concerned, losing one's power to remember the past - no matter how far or how near - worked as a karmic blessing.

She saw it as a shield against one's pain of remembering the scope of the emotional struggle endured up to that point - against themselves – for not daring to come out from under that rock.



These days, my little mother is free of any regrets and any sense of culpability she might otherwise feel for having been an emotionally distant mother and a generally fractious being.

She is also free of the memory of her decades of loneliness as the wife of a nice but passive, well-meaning husband – a good provider - who seemed as emotionally distant towards her as she was towards me.

From that angle, my mother's 'version' of Alzheimer's is a blessing.



Earlier on, of course, my mother would have had such thoughts in the dead of night – on many a night!

I know she did.

Now, that painful past has evaporated into the ether.

Like dark clouds pushed away by the wind to reveal a clear blue sky.

No memory.

No past.



I like to think that our human brain has not been specifically to *store memories*, but to experience living life.

What keeps my mother in a state of painful loneliness is her perception of others – her suspicion – her disconnection from the present moment – moment after moment. Patterns repeated.



Moreover, the ageing process is disgusting, she says.

She looks at her 89-year-old face and swollen, bruised legs and shakes her head, disbelieving 'this' has become her.



Reality check #3: no matter how we play it, no one can escape the present.

Not while we're alive.

No one can thrive while rejecting What-Is

No one can thrive without the will or the ability to amend the past.

My mother has taught me that in real-time.



These days, although she is in good health, my mother is openly contemplating her own mortality.

She prays for it to come sooner than later, preferably in her sleep.

It's not a ploy for sympathy.

She urges me to not be sad but happy for her when her final moment comes.

She means it.

The real world, she knows, is quickly fading from her senses.



The thing is, we, dwellers on planet Earth, have no more a handle on our last moments on Earth than we do on our first.

From pre-birth to death, life is only shaped by the quality of our responses to each plot beat contained in each moment underfoot.



Like many people, my mother doubts the concept of universal energy.

So many people think it doubtful that there is any interplay between ourselves and a greater intelligence.



They think it doubtful that our souls are our unerring, dedicated guides in this lifetime.

They think it doubtful, too, that our souls, not ourselves, have been incarnated in numerous previous bodies across the aeons.



Me, I can't wrap my head around the man-made interpretations of the Highest Divine Intelligence people called 'God' or an equivalent name in their language.

At least not as explained in the Scriptures and other sacred texts.

Not in those texts that men created more than a millennium ago.

Not in those still today imposed – and accepted by the masses - as ritualised religion.

Not in those re-interpreted by faith leaders into something as divisive and dangerous as political dogma for removed from the Golden Rule: Matthew (7:12): *"In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you."*



So – as I can't say to my mother, 'Don't worry, *Maman*, God will keep you safe', my reply-wish to my mother goes along those lines: I tell her that every day, I ask the 'divine powers' to keep her well. To keep her as well as possible for as long as they want her to remain on Earth.

I do that.

It's true.

It's true too that my mother is happy with that.

And she is happy with me.



Good news: for a couple of years already, my mother has been telling me that I'm the best daughter any mother could wish for.

'So attentive', says my mother.

'So responsible.'

'So trustworthy.'



Lately, she's been putting more sentiment into her words.

I take that as a good return on the heartfelt investment with which I energised my personal Rainbow.

The thing is, I am not yet able to reply in kind.

I can't tell my mother that she is the best mother anyone could have. Even if I did, I bet she wouldn't believe me.

But, in fact, if I am as I am today, in the good space I'm in, it is because of what my mother directly and indirectly has forced me into.



My mother tells me she loves me.

I tell her I love her, too.

It's true, I do.

Even if my love is not gushing, my affection is genuine.

The desire to help my mother feel safe and loved is always present.

Every time I kiss her goodbye, she urges me to stay well and live the long, happy life I deserve.

Twenty-five years after she first met Myrah and rejecting her on principle, my mother now often adds '... with Myrah'.



Other than that, why don't I now feel any relief, any joy, finally knowing my little mother loves me?

Finally knowing that she 'sees' me?

That's because, as Yudit had told me many years ago, I'm not a child anymore. I don't need my mother to hug and soothe me.

I no longer need her support and advice on managing the plot beats of my day-to-day. I'm an independent grown-up.

Reality check: I've come of age, not one day too soon.



Anyway, as Yudit used to remind me, I can choose to think that, partly through karmically-induced, partly through unconscious self-sacrifices of sorts, my mother has modelled for me everything that one should 'never' do, say or think.

She showed me the pain and the sense of separation and isolation that a complete focus on the self can bring.

Leading by example, she did, in her own unique way.



In doing so, she has forced me to become a resilient, autonomous and independent-thinking being who has learnt to connect not only to her heart space but to her soul,

the one whose guidance, should we care to hear it, keeps us on the most beneficial track possible throughout any lifetime.



Quick insert in real time: so, on this day in June 2023, at the age of 69 & 3/4, I should be able to gently look into my mother's eyes.

I should find it in my heart to reply, 'Maman, you are the best mother I could have had. Thank you. You trained me to be brave like a warrior.'

Or, at the very least, I could say, 'Thank you for being the mother I needed ... in this lifetime adventure.'

And, at some point later today, while I am with my mother, I will say just that.

I will say it as the realised, empowered daughter I have incrementally become.

Deep breath.

Slow breath out.

What's there to lose, huh?



Bad news: every morning, come 5 AM, even small sounds from the street below, the chirping of birds in the garden, the rustling of the curtains, Myahr's sleepy tugs on the sheet, they all still fire up the familiar and dreaded tightness in the stomach - and heart palpitations, too.

Still stuck in Code Red mode from dawn to well past dusk.



Rafting Out of the Darkness

Warning: this chapter contains graphic details of a rape case presented to a Jury in 1974 [Edited extract from my novel, Benchmarks, published in 2007]

Brisbane, August 2021



This is where I might disclose that at the age of 20, while attending the University of Texas, in Austin, I found myself trapped in a date rape nightmare.

Actually, it was not a 'date' as such.

It was just me saying, 'Yes, OK. Why not!' to the offer of a ride to the evening Homecoming football game from Josh, a Law school student, whom I had met earlier on campus through a mutual acquaintance.



As a Senior a few months away from Graduation, it would be my last opportunity to attend this yearly event ... for the first time.

'You drive me back home after the game. Yeah?' I had asked, assuming a positive reply.

'Sure thing!' he shrugged. 'Of course, I will. Yeah.'



The traumatic event of rape and being held captive lasted several hours.

Throughout those hours, pinned under the weight of my aggressor, I feared I would not escape alive.

But I did.



I remember having felt as helpless as a rag doll wedged under a bolster.

I remember wondering, but very briefly, why my eyesight had still not gotten accustomed to the darkness in the room.

His forearm slammed against my windpipe again, like a bar of concrete. My eyes watered, my vision blurred.

I can't swallow!

Again, he levered himself against my neck. I thrashed around as best I could.

Move, Carole! Move!

Sharp orders barked at myself came from within.

Don't stand still.

Move your legs! Hips! Just don't stand still!

Tire him out.

Buy yourself some time!



I kicked up. My legs were once again brutally spread apart, his lower body, pillar-like, was bolting me down. I remember having screamed in pain as something tore inside my right shoulder.

I remember not being able to move. An image of me had flitted through my mind. Me, as a blue butterfly pinned to a corkboard by a long upholstery tack that speared its middle.

I need to swallow.

I need to breathe.

•

“He snarled an animal snarl. Small jerky movements. I knew he was fumbling with ... with his crotch ... penis. It’s then that ... I became aware that I still had my slacks on.” I took in a deep breath and released it slowly around each of my words. “Which is why ... he hadn’t yet ... been able to ... rape me.”

“Carole, do you mean to tell us that that man, so intent on raping you, hadn’t realised that he first had to ... make it possible for himself?” The low hum of whispers buzzed around the room and settled as quickly as it had erupted.

“I guess, well ... all this happened pretty fast, really. It takes a long time to explain but ... Well, I think that with the amount of alcohol he had drunk and the marijuana he had smoked ... and the crazed violent way in which he ... carried on ... I think he had lost track of ... of that. Of my trousers.”

“To the best of your recollection, how much time had, indeed, elapsed from the time your aggressor began till the moment you realised you were still protected by your clothing?”

“Oh, I ... I don’t know. It ... felt like a long, a very long time spent crushed, being hit and strangled and afraid to die ... that way.” I stopped suddenly, unable to say clearly how long my ordeal had lasted. I took a sip of water from the glass Mr Smith had left for me on the wooden rail on the witness stand, by the microphone. And then logic suggested that my struggle, the violence, couldn’t have lasted more than a few minutes.



How long does it take, in real time, for a strong man to pin a girl down, in a room in which she is totally disoriented, totally blind?

How long does it take him to grab her again, once she's managed a temporary escape for herself?

How long could it possibly take him to come crashing down on her, his forearm at her throat as he braces himself into position, as his knee grinds away the resistance of her thighs?

"Not very long. Only a few minutes." He had heaved once, and slammed hard against my sex, heavy on my stomach, his forearm still crushing my throat.

I need to breathe. Dislodge the bastard!

Block out the grunts! I need to buy me some time.

"Hey! Hey ... Josh," I had rasped, painfully trying to work a tiny space for my saliva to move down. "Ease ... up, man."

Can't swallow.

Can't breathe.

I needed to move my neck.

Sideways. A fraction.



He grunted again, shifting between my legs. 'Shut it, bitch!' His face was right above mine. I felt him. I smelt his thick, rancid breath. His hips pushed hard against mine, his trunk-like legs keeping mine apart.

Then, the pressure of his forearm eased against my throat. I filled my lungs. But only for a moment. I knew he was re-adjusting his position.

His final aim for the penetration.

The killing thrust of the Matador.

Talk to him.

Promise anything. Let him have what he wants.

Beat the bastard at his game!

“Hey ... ease ... up, Josh!” I had begged, trying to calm my voice into a semblance of sensuality. “I’ll help. Relax. Hey ... Come on ... Josh.”

I tried to cajole, I tried to con him. I had switched into a survival mode.

‘You ... you don’t have to do it this way. Let me move. Hey ... let me help you.’ I pleaded out loud, silently pleading for air. And silently, too, pleading for my life.

“Shut the fuck up, bitch!”



The vision of the hunting knife and bullet case noticed earlier on the kitchen counter was silently urging me to make a move – to make very quiet, very slow moves - to free myself from under the dead weight of that heavy body.

‘The bastard’s asleep’, I hissed silently into the heavy darkness of the room!

Sigh of relief ... Thank you!

A slow-motion escape from under his arm, away from his hot, clammy body.

Only a few millimetres at a time.

Please, God, I silently begged, don’t let him wake up now.



Movements hampered by the tinkle of tiny Moroccan coins threaded as a bracelet around my ankle.

Can’t remove it without slicing through the leather thong.

Movements hampered by the groans of the mattress as I slid my weight across its width, one slow centimetre at a time.

Movements timed with the rattles of the air conditioner.

He must not wake.

Minutes into hours.

If he wakes up, I won’t survive the next assault.

The recurring image of the Bowie hunting knife that I had seen glinting on the Formica counter kept me inching away.



The fear of waking him in the process gripped my brain, but I had to survive.



The lock! Can't undo the fucking lock. Numb fingertips.

Seconds into minutes.

He's heard. All that noise!

He's looking for me!

He'll grab me!

He'll grab me again!

I hurt.

I ache.

I can't think.



Survival instinct overtook the onset of hysteria. It made its priority over pain, over fear, over panic.

Grab clothes off the floor.

The window! Closed. Open it.

How? Jammed.

Slide it. Slide it hard!



The fracas released from the aluminium frame was thunderous to my ears.

I cringed but I looked down, too.

One floor up.

Jump!

No. I can't! Too high!

He's heard me!

He's coming!

Stay alive!

Survive this!

Jump! Gotta Jump!

And jump, I did, landing heavily, clumsily, naked in some kind of garden bed.



Torn pants and a ripped shirt bundled under an arm, I ran for my life, hiding behind parked cars, fearful that he was already coming for me, suddenly awakened by the shrill squeal of the window slide.

Eventually, I stopped running.

I caught my breath and quickly slipped on the clothes.



Broken and drained, I collapsed at the entrance of a 7-Eleven store.

A kind worker came to offer assistance.

I mumbled my phone number.

He called Cher, my girlfriend, who drove me home.



Months later, when the case was presented to the Courts, the perpetrator was declared Not Guilty.

Strong and quiet, handsome even, in a nice Texan rugged sort of a way, and on his way to becoming a lawyer.



Give us a break, they might have thought. This girl is trying to come out whiter than Snow White. What did she say? She didn't drink? What?! This guy had smuggled rum into the stadium but she threw the drinks he gave her beneath the bleacher where they sat? As if no one would notice! Didn't smoke dope, not even cigarettes. You gotta be kidding!



The Jury had decided that the bruises on my neck, across my Adam's apple and stomach could have been sustained during heated but consensual sex.

After all, they said, I had 'agreed' to detour to this man's place after the game.

In that, they echoed my mother's words to me.

The women in the Jury probably agreed with the defence that the accused did look like any mother's wish for a son-in-law.



I shifted uncomfortably against the car seat, as we drove out of the stadium carpark.

For the first time of the night, I noticed the taut thickness of Josh's neck. The muscles wrapped snake-like under the skin of his steering arm.

A pang of alarm rose inside me.

I was, no longer, merely annoyed, tired, aggravated or simply fed up. I had just become scared, scared of the man driving through the night the vehicle in which I was as much a prisoner as anything else.

I had become afraid of what he might do, of what he could do, simply because ... he could.

He could because he was high and probably drunk, too.



A thought crossed my mind: maybe I should open the car door and roll out. I glanced at the speedometer. I glanced at Josh. I saw the lampposts racing past with only the briefest blur of houses and sky between them. I opted against any rash decisions.

Shit woman, that's one crazy thought, that ... jumping out of that damn car.

Hulk here's not worth all this hassle! Re-lax Carole! Okay, you're definitely not in control here, so just hang loose and re-lax.

"Hey, girl! Chill a little. I'll just be quick. You'll be back at your place in no time at all!"



Unpredictably, I found myself thinking that maybe, just maybe, the guy might be a little bit right. Maybe because, from the moment he had knocked on our door to give me a ride to the stadium, I had looked upon him as if he belonged to an alien race, I had become a little too uptight.

He was an alien all right, totally foreign to me.



The Jury's take on that night's events was even more hurtful, considering they had heard testimonials from friends I had bumped into as we all moved with the crowd exiting through the gates. "It was very reluctantly," they said in their own ways, that I had accepted 'a quick detour' to this guy's place.



“Little change of plans,” Josh had said. “Before I drive you back, I’ll stop by my pad to pick up something for the party I’ll be going to ... after I drop you off. My place is not far from here so ... won’t take long.”

Already then, his coercive behaviour had left me no escape.

And that was in the '70s, long before Bondage sex and BDSM became a fad in the '90s!



“Objection, Your Honour!” Mr Bartley interjected.

“Sustained.”

Startled, I looked at my lawyer, startled by the defence lawyer’s objection.

“Carole, without *naming* anyone,” enjoined my lawyer, “please, tell us why you wanted passers-by to call the police on your behalf.”

“Without *naming* ... anyone?”

“Carole, remember? Let’s refer to him as ‘the accused.’”



How can I not name him? He was not an abstract concept.

He was right here, right in front of me.

Boring right through me, smirking when he thought no one was watching.

Why can’t I refer to him by his name, Josh Bell, the man who raped me?

“This man raped me... violently! “

“Objection, Your Honour!”

“Sustained!”

I willed myself to be mesmerised by the hem of the navy-blue skirt I was wearing and how it lay pressed slightly above my knees, demurely close together.

“Carole?”

“Yes, sir.” I answered, fighting the pull of Josh’s presence, as he leaned comfortably back into his chair, slightly out of focus but very real all the same, as he sat permanently to the left of my field of vision each time I leaned forward to speak into the microphone. “Well ... Josh – the accused ... Well, I knew ... I just knew he was

going to ... to rape me.” One hand clasped tight inside the other I fought to contain my emotions. “And I was afraid to ... to die, too.”



Mr Smith let my words ripple across the silent courtroom before pretending an innocent question, “You mean that you thought the act of rape might kill you?”

“No. No, sir. I don’t mean that. I was ... I was a virgin but, more to the point, sir ... “

I wanted to add, ‘No woman ever wants to be penetrated in a climate of fear.

Not even if they have made love a zillion times before.’

But no, I didn’t think *his dick* was going to kill me.

“... I was ... terribly frightened of being raped. But on top of that, I thought he ... my ... aggressor might ... he might kill me ... instead of ... or ... afterwards.”

“Instead of what?”

“Instead of raping me. Because he couldn’t ... penetrate.”



“This sounds somewhat confusing, Carole. You need to tell us, you need to tell the jury here why such horrible thoughts had crossed your mind and why your aggressor could not penetrate.”

“Well, he ... he had finally managed to ... get on top of me. But he hadn’t ... yet.

I mean I knew he was not yet able ... to rape me. I had thrown him off. I sensed he was furious. Mad! I mean ... crazy.”

“So, he was crazed because he had not yet been able to penetrate you and - ”

“And I remembered the big hunting knife, a Bowie, I had seen in the kitchen near the sink. And the cartridges. I knew there would be a rifle ... somewhere in his apartment.”

“And why were you worried about a rifle being in the apartment or by the hunting knife in the kitchen?”

“I felt he ... he was becoming enraged or so frustrated with me, with ... the fact that he couldn't, that he might ... get a weapon. The violence in him ... I just knew ... Then I just felt my pants had ripped ... you know ... the seam between the legs and -”

“Carole, I am going to ask you a very important question. Listen carefully. You had two fears going on simultaneously at the moment at which you screamed for someone to help you.

One was that you were about to be raped.

The other was the intuitive feeling that you might be stabbed or shot dead by a deranged-”

“Your Honour! Objection! Cheap trickery to- ”

“Sustained!” declared Judge Grimes. “Mr Smith, the Court is asking you to refrain from using any sort of derogatory epithet that might lead the jury to a premature character judgement of the defendant during this particular line of questioning.”

“Yes, Your Honour. Carole, rape or death? Which did you fear the most at the time?”



Be that as it may, the intangible result of that particular [karmic] complication might have been that the sense of feeling unimportant and vulnerable whirring within since my youth had been compounded by that long and brutal assault followed by the dismissive verdict of the Jury.

It probably revved up and cemented the helplessness I had felt as a child.

It can now be labelled PTSD.



Back to the present: if, years ago, my Rainbow-desire was to, one day, feel that my little mother loved me, I've reached that destination.

I can tie up my metaphoric little schooner to the nearest bollard and stretch my body out on the soft sand.

However, if my Rainbow-desire is to wave that chronic, gripping anxiety bye-bye forever ... I need to chart an even longer course.

‘See the breeze,’ said the voice. ‘Be like the sea.’



To use a computer maintenance analogy, I need to disable more programs no longer necessary for my survival.

I need to clean up all 'system junk'.

I must delete all 'cookies' and potentially unwanted programs that may clog up my system.

I need to deactivate all of that from my 'inner' drive.



In the meantime, I breathe consciously when I feel a frazzle coming on.

So, dear Reader, how about, right now, in this moment underfoot, we settle into a 3 minutes breath practice?



Eyes closed, body relaxed, let's inhale quietly and deeply through the nose and exhale slowly, silently, through the mouth.

Let's imagine a gentle stream of fresh air coming in as we inhale slowly - mindfully.

Let's hold that inhale at the top of our heads for a few seconds before releasing it slowly through the mouth.

Each slow exhale clears away flakes of darkness, encrusted stress, negativity, and anxiety.

We see it.

We energise that vision.



We can easily practice breathing consciously during our usual commute or any time we have 5 minutes to spare.

Of course, we already know there are no lasting quick fixes for anything – not even for our shallow breathing, so, yup, dear Reader, practice makes perfect.



A couple of years ago, I downloaded a free mindfulness app from Plum Village, one of several monastic communities founded by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh.

I've programmed a bell of mindfulness to ring every 30 minutes.

It's the prompt I need to sit up or stand, to move my shoulders and neck.

It's the prompt I need to breathe consciously.

It's the prompt I need to remember to be consciously present in the moment underfoot.



I have been meditating daily for the past five years and, as surely as good rain is essential to plant growth, that daily practice has gone a very long way in enabling me

to respond 'to life as I know it' with doses of patience and equanimity that I would not have been able to generate twenty years ago - not even five years ago.

'Hameichin mitzadei gaver', used to say Yudit. We thank Soul [or God or whichever entity in which we have placed our faith] for guiding our footsteps in the right direction.



Reality check: understanding 'the way' is one thing.

It's the first thing.

The next step is to develop the ability to energise and activate our best intentions in the presence of dangerous rips, giant waves and strong gusts of wind.

Actualising our best-heartfelt intentions in the face of all perceived adversity is another.



These days, when I see actions or hear words that stir up what I don't want to be stirred up, I fall back on *Eudaimonia*.

Aristotle coined the word to refer to the concept of the good embedded in all that is good.

Good, doing '*good*', performing 'good', and feeling 'good' can only be delivered as a package deal.



I now refuse to let mistrust pull me in one direction, resentment in another, while fear pulls in a third direction.

I choose to not enable either of them.

I do not let them feed *me* thoughts I don't want to have.

I will not let them in and make me fail in my practice.

I will not allow them to rip me from the course I have chartered for myself.



So, I make myself slip on the cloak of the detached Observer.

I concentrate as best I can on the physical aspects of the moment, not on my mind's interpretation of the words I hear.

Not on emotions that may lurk in keen anticipation of gripping my gut again.

I just don't let them.



When I sense my stomach tighten during a difficult 'exchange of ideas', I find a simple excuse to absent myself for a few minutes.

Then, I use the 4-7-8 breathing technique, but any exhale that is twice as long as the inhale (through the nose) will work just as well.

10 sets.

Hands on chest – hands on heart.

I might even hum silently, allowing the sound to resonate in my belly.

Either practice is enough to reset my emotions and settle my mind.

I can, then, return to the conversation and better stick to my intention of participating as a detached Observer.



Modern science has confirmed that humming is one of the simplest yet most profound sounds humans can create.

It increases oxygen in the cells and, among several other benefits, it lowers our blood pressure and heart rate.

If my presence is required, but there is no urgent demand for my replies, I prep myself with a few minutes of Box breathing.

And that moment, too, does pass.



In any case, silence can be a most rewarding sound.

How is our silence quotient at any given moment?

My take on silence is that it is the sound of the wise.

And another storm has been avoided.

In those moments, I do the best I can.

I might be able to do better in the upcoming string of moments.

Maybe not.

If not now, then tomorrow.

I might be able to do better then.

Maybe not.

One's 'Best' is always variable.

But 'Best' is always a good place to start again.

'Better' is an excellent place to end ... until next time.

Until tomorrow.



'At the centre of your being you have the answer,' said Lao Tzu. 'You know who you are and you know what you want.'



In response to that thought, I wrote, *'I'm 15 meters tall.*

I am a tree, a tall, sturdy tree.

A Eucalyptus.

I am one of the many Gum Trees that abound here, in Brisbane, Australia.

My bark is white.

It is smooth except for a few gashes - nature's way of releasing sap.

My shallow, spreading roots are adapted to harsh growing conditions.

When the wind is up, when a storm is emptying itself from Above Below, I feel the movements of my limbs and leaves.

I know my thick branches are not buffeted by the wind.

I feel them move to allow the wind to pass through them.

Deliberately, they offer no resistance.

They sway for as long as the wind blows.

Then they settle into calmness.

Then, with my leaves rustling gently in the breeze,

They settle again into being bird sanctuaries.'



As an aside, Australia's indigenous people sometimes used 'gum' tree sap as candy, similar to the sap of Maple trees.

Sometimes as medicine.

Sometimes as adhesive, too, depending on how the sap was treated.



Reality check: each of us, beings incarnated on planet Earth since the dawn of time and till the end of time, will have been 'here' for a reason, to fulfil a purpose within the mundane but often challenging plot beats of 'life'.



That purpose is embedded in all we might label 'complications' or setbacks.

That purpose is embedded in our breakthroughs and failures.

In our lucky breaks, too.

And in our sadness.



It's embedded in the deep-seated fear of being found lacking in some way.

And it's embedded in our happiness.

It's also embedded in the freedom we give ourselves to be ourselves.

It's true.



The duty-bound expression of our personal purpose can only be realised through each of the emotions, thoughts, actions, reactions and inactions with which we address each perceived complication – and each of our 'Yes!' moments.

That's it.

There is no other reason for human presence on Earth.

We are the only ones endowed with a conscience.

We are the only ones able to choose and decide for ourselves, should we want to.

We are the only ones able to make a pronouncement on ... everything, however unwise it might sometimes be.



And, so, we take it from there ... one moment at a time.

As we tighten the sails on our little raft, we detach from the memories of the past.

And we smile at ourselves.

We hug our beautiful inner selves.

After all, she is the one who, under Soul's guidance, has kept us resilient and caring through the myriad complications we have already faced - and survived in this lifetime.

We thank our physical selves, too, for, as we know, they do all the complicated emotional and physical work on our behalves.

And they are the ones who withstand all the emotional jolts that befall us.



Already back then, when we were tiny beings, our persona did the best she could to keep us safe and able to move forward under Soul's wing.

Restoring harmony to our body, heart, and mind is by its very nature an essential aspect of our purpose, and it's always to remain a work in progress.

It's deemed to be a component of self-love.



Research also confirms that it is important to challenge ourselves, not just in the workplace and sports.

Challenging times provide the ideal garden bed for growth.

Up to us, then, to fertilise this purpose-made soil for a real coming of age.

How soon we get there depends on each of the decisions we make today.

It depends as much on the small ones as it does on the big ones.

'*Gam zu letova*', as Yudit Cs would say about my 'difficult' moments.

Yes, *'that, too, is good.'*



And ... for those who are robust enough to accept this optic, there always is a rare moment in our life that will positively separate 'before and after' for ourselves and our loved ones.



Bottom line: the only way to lead a worthwhile life as a shaper of a healthy global legacy is by being sustainably coherent beings now.

When we look back, we want to have reasons to smile – a big smile.

We do, but getting there is 'work in progress.'

Work in constant progress.



And, now, dear Reader, back@you and your Rainbow-desire. 😊

Once your thoughts are remapped, you're ready to jump on your little schooner, heart-strong and prepared to handle ... come what may – from the inside-out.

So, then, towards which desire rainbow are you setting sail?

What will be your ultimate destination for that authentic 'journey of a lifetime'?



A Warrior's Wounds, We All Have

Brisbane - August 2023

As the character of Virginia Woolf states in the film, *the Hours*, "You cannot find peace by avoiding life."

It's true – but as we know, 'doing Life' can often be hard.



As T. S. Eliot wrote in Four Quartets, "Humankind cannot bear very much reality."

So, dear Reader, let's choose to prove these words wrong by choosing to reframe 'life' underfoot as 'purposefully challenging'.

And 'challenging' doesn't have to be either 'bad' or painful.

When handled coherently, problem-solving of challenging circumstances creates 'good stress', and good stress helps us be awake in the moments underfoot.

It gets us energised.



On the one hand, good stress helps build inner resilience, the cornerstone of our holistic well-being.

On the other, entrenched resentment and mistrust are known to generate great doses of counter-productive/bad stress. The longer we let that stress grip our heart and gut, the more it blocks our entire system – the more it depletes us.



Some say that deep forgiveness is a virtue.

Others say it's a gritty challenge.

A conscious act.



Even when understood from a 'mere' secular perspective, some scriptures do offer great advice and encouragement.

"Let love and kindness be the motivation behind all that you do.

Keep your eyes open, hold tight to your convictions, give it all you've got, be resolute, and love without stopping.

Let all that you do be done in love.

And do everything with love" - I Corinthian 16:14



It doesn't matter how we choose to label the committed effort required to forgive those who have hurt us the most.

Robust 'mind' strength and great empathy are the best tools with which to knit back together the pieces of our fractured trust and bruised emotions.



Destiny is life as we know it, here and now.

So, here and now, we practice the art of forgiveness.

Destiny is the temporary end result of the controlled or uncontrolled prevalent energies of our thoughts, actions, reactions, and inactions that have come together to create the synergy of constantly evolving, always shifting 3-D circumstances.

And because our destiny is constantly evolving, we don't fear asking ourselves a set of crucial questions.



'Who Am I, really?' we dare ask ourselves.

What matters most to me, here, now, in this lifetime? Why?

What do I want to give to my loved ones?

And to others near ... and far?

What do my 'loved ones' expect from me?

And those who are near and far?



There is so much that is outside my control, what challenges are my individual problems to fix?'

Is what I try hard to deliver aligned with what, deep down, is true to me? True to the integrity that lives inside of me?

Or am I doing my best to live up to the expectations of others, hoping their judgement will make me feel better about myself?



We spend so much time dreaming, fearing and networking away from the present moment!

So, when we do our best to dive deep into these essential questions, the answers give us a clearer understanding of who we are deep inside and way beyond our 3-D, here and now circumstances.



Heads up: some of us have an aha moment, and we clearly sense that our current destiny is the result of a chain reaction to those thoughts, actions, reactions and inactions which we have, most often, repeated over and over again.

Over the years, perhaps even over decades, we accept that we have fired the same arrows and hit targets that may have appeared different but turned out to be strangely similar.

Familiar, even.



Reality check: We sometimes understand that destiny A.K.A. consequences, is the immediate ripple effect of something we recently thought, said - did or failed to do.

Destiny often bites us on the tail. ;-(



Either way, when we feel unhappy about our current destiny, it pays to admit, if only to ourselves, that we are suffering from self-inflicted wounds and that the only effective 'disinfectant' is to make peace with those wounds – our warrior wounds.



So, we honour our warrior wounds by applying the balm of forgiveness to *our* selves.

And we set about righting the 'wrong' we have identified as being 'on us.'



Heads up: it's our call to grow into a genuine 'coming of age'.

Regardless of our IQ and emotional levels, we, humans endowed with fantastic potential, can only tap into a fraction of the 'power' of thought that, technically, is available to us.



Primarily due to the various laws that deter the more 'detractable' among us, we are, on the whole, observably less 'barbaric' than some of our ancestors.

Still, the global and local mindsets have not evolved much.

Our brain is still wired like that of our earliest ancestors, the Neanderthals.

And no matter how evolved our lifestyle might be, one and all, we are still unable to 'clear our minds' as the expression goes.

We still struggle to look within or look up at our soul star for whispered guidance.



We find it difficult, excruciatingly so at times, to actively own the fact that we were wrong when, deep down, we know we were.

We are often overcome by an unwillingness to make direct amends. That would make us vulnerable, we think.

So, we walk away from the very test we needed to pass to build on our resilience.

As equally important as 'owning our truths' is owning our errors of judgment.



Heads up: when we own our errors, they fade away like footsteps in the sand at low tide. When we don't, these errors become lead boots. They drag us down to places that make us uncomfortable – even in our sleep.

Sick, even.



It's possible that the pandemic has reminded us – or has taught us - that minutes can be extremely precious. Globally, we have faced more grief, loss, and overwhelming circumstances than ever, in our lifetime.

Now, leading by their collective and individual example, the Ukrainian people are showing us the need to respond calmly as individual who choose to cut loose from the herd mentality and balance the individual risk they take against a coherent degree of caution.



It's as if subliminally, they were hearing Thich Nhat Hanh, one of today's most influential Zen masters, whisper his advice to all of us, "I have arrived, I am home is your practice to survive. It's not a luxury. If you cannot be yourself, if you do not know how to handle the fear, the anger, the despair in you, you are lost. You cannot help any other people. You cannot help your country."



Heads up: we cannot even help ourselves.



Bottom line: though we already have everything we need to create and enjoy a life that would make us smile – even in our sleep - we are still as unable to erase the thoughts and memories that deplete, prompt or challenge us as were our Homo sapiens ancestors.



That's because the function of the mind is to think.

To think on its own.

To think by itself.

To think however and whatever it wants to think in any given moment.



Reality check: though the system in the brain that controls our breaths operates under both conscious and unconscious control, our brains have been engineered to

filter information through our retinas and pass all information throughout our body's organs all on its own.

We cannot hijack the process.

Our minds think on their own, too.

No differently than our stomachs know to begin the major work of digestion as soon as they sense the download of anything ingested from our mouths.

We cannot readily interfere with that process.



Our bodies have been programmed to function autonomously – and they do, unless we hinder their work.

Or, in the case of our minds, unless we grab the reins back from our ego-persona.

Which is one of the healthiest things we can do for ourselves.



Our wonderful bodies made up of photons and neutrons can do it all by themselves, provided we play our part in keeping our selves healthy.

That begins with asking our ego-persona to, please, slow down and rethink 'whatever' carefully.



Heads up #1: left to its own devices, our amazing mind is often a bit of a trickster.

It knows precisely how to make it seem that the thoughts it generates are ours.



Heads up #2: 'Knowledge is power,' we are told.

So, as we know our mind to be, we could learn to respond to it knowingly.

When we don't, we often say, OMG! If only I had known!



Culture changes somewhat every 10 years or so. Still, one of the particularly limiting aspects of social 'culture' that has endured through the millennia (besides girls and women being judged, even by themselves, according to their youthful appearance and sexualised vitality) is one that most parents inculcate in their children: we are not enough just as we are.

We are groomed to believe that we are not enough until 'enough' others respect us and envy us for whatever traits or achievements.



And here's the catch: 'One of the greatest blocks to loving kindness is our own sense of unworthiness. If we leave ourselves out of the circle of love and compassion, we have misunderstood' - Jack Kornfield



Edmund Lee, a prolific writer advises: 'Surround yourself with the dreamers and the doers, the believers and thinkers, but most of all, surround yourself with those who see the greatness within you, even when you don't see it yourself.'



Yes, definitely. In a perfect world, that would be an obvious go-to strategy.

But we are karmically 'surrounded' by our clan, the ones we chose and the ones who chose us and the ones we depend on etc.

Very few of them - and us - 'see' ... greatness anywhere.



That said, we cannot and should not, unless faced with physical or emotional danger, cut any of them loose in our search for 'unicorn' beings with whom to replace them in a bid to find contentment within.

Contentment is not likely to blow into our day-to-day in the absence of sustained emotionally coherent others-centeredness.

Not likely until we energise our best intentions.

Not likely until our best intentions flow into heartfelt actions.

Not likely until, by the time we get to bed, tonight and every night, we assess the energy behind our daytime actions and responses.



Once we whole-heartedly agree to switch on our inner light, we practice switching it on more frequently than ever.

We practice keeping it on longer.

When we do, the potentially dark and scary energy of complicated 'moments' relaxes, and it begins to wane in the fullness of time.

The warmer the light we enable, the warmer our heart feels.

The better we feel.

We all share in that light.

We relax our stomach muscles, and we relax our facial muscles.

We smile.

We pat ourselves on the back.

We got this, dear Reader! :-))



Reality check: when we allow our ego-persona, insecure for reasons best known to her to prompts us to sidestep or misrepresent someone, we allow her to sabotage the moment and alter the quality of ripple effect.



Ditto when we respond defensively to something that would be harmless or to someone who meant no harm, we sabotage the cosmically intended ripple effect.

Same result whenever we 'thoughtlessly' rush to persons, things and situations that seemed fun, cheap and appealing, but which we should have ignored.

Skewed outcomes all along.



Bottom line: when we let go of 'the tiller', we forget all about free will and our ability to focus our thoughts where we want to focus our minds.

Where we want to focus our hearts.



When a much anticipated 'holiday of a lifetime', or the purchase of the 'dream car' or 'dream home', or the pursuit of what was initially identified as 'the answer to our dreams' have led so many people of all ages to unanticipated disappointments, tragedies, and even deaths, we one can only shout at ourselves, 'If only I had known!'



Reality check: regardless of age, gender and status, together and separately, we will always be confronted by 'wounding' moments of varying consequences.

But we don't have to let our wounds fester any more than we have to let ourselves metaphorically bleed to death.



Since we are all gifted with the power of hindsight, we can clearly see that, had we known what we now know about the consequences brought about by the succession of decisions made freely ... Oh! The million 'things' we would have chosen to handle differently.

By not handling them at all.



'Don't touch', my mentor, Yudit C.S. would say. 'Don't dip your hand in the pond to swirl the muddy water because you never know what might float up to the surface.'

That was Yudit's way to warn me against getting involved where/when my involvement/thoughts were not necessary.

No meddling. No gossip. No posturing. No tribal bonding – Don't take sides.

But we need wisdom to know when and how to respond and when not to get involved.



Oops, another mind-meander coming up 😊

When 'certified' mystics talk about their conversations with archangels, prophets, or the god or goddesses of their faith, regardless of their 'good faith', their experience remains unverifiable.



Even with the assistance of gifted clairvoyants and card readers, we are unable to accurately 'see' or 'know' - beyond doubt - how any one of the millions of conscious and unconscious choices we allow in, moment after moment, opens, taints, twists, deletes, depletes or optimises our near and long-term future.

We do not have the ability to anticipate how our handling of any moment not yet underfoot, will potentially shape our near - or long-term destiny.



Even if those who master the lucid dreaming technique might get a sense of control from shaping the story and the ending of their dreams, even such dreams fail to deliver guaranteed certainty once our eyes are open to the 3-D world of senses.



Yes, lucid dreams might go some way in reducing anxiety.

Still, neither Tarot cards nor analysis of dream scenarios will open for us a 'sliding portal' such as in the well-known 1998 film, Sliding Doors.



Just as the film's main character was about to board a subway compartment, she got transported through two parallel versions of her future.

Each reality yields a series of plot beats which become her 'What-Is' destiny'.



Each vastly different scenario and its consequences hinge on her unconsciously responding in an inconsequential and random nano-moment. Will she or won't she step into the train compartment before its doors close.



Bottom line: hindered by our perception of our 3-D reality, we cannot access alternative scenarios of 'life as it could be' if, on impulse or mood alone, we accepted or declined this or that invitation or opportunity.

Or if, with a shrug, we decided to stand still or move forward.

If we chose to say 'Yes' instead of 'No'.

Instead of Why Not?

If we chose to move on instead of forgiving.

If we chose to get involved with one particular situation or with a different situation.

Or opted to 'mind our own business'.



Bottom line: the only thing that is certain: blind little mice, we all are.

Just as blind as our earliest ancestors were.

Just as wounded as they were.



Dear Reader, thank you for being here – still reading.

I am grateful for that. 😊



What Intelligence Are We Using?

Brisbane, December 2023



The name Machiavelli brings to mind notions of political deception and treachery, particularly when the intention and the result are deemed beneficial by the instigators and their supporters.

Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli was an Italian diplomat and philosopher who lived during the renaissance and died in 1527.

Put simply, Machiavelli's view was that one in power should behave 'correctly' if he could. But all the while, he should be prepared to manipulate, even act maliciously if there was no other way to achieve desired outcomes.



Reality check: we don't have to think too hard to bring up instances, local and foreign, where violence and manipulation were/are deemed necessary to maintain power. And for the introduction/consolidation of its political framework, too.



Serious question: doesn't a scaled-down version of that Machiavellian mindset guide some of the 'coercive' strategies we may have activated under our roofs, in our workplace, in our teams and in our streets?



That said, regardless of Machiavelli's intentions, at some point, he wrote, 'There are three kinds of intelligence: one kind understands things for itself, the other appreciates what others can understand, the third understands neither for itself nor through others.

This first kind is excellent, the second good, and the third kind useless.'



Heads up: according to the iconic Buddhist, writer and anarchist, Alexandra David-Neel, born in 1868, in ancient Tibetan Buddhist texts predating Machiavelli's era, these degrees of aware intelligence are called: thama, hbring and rab.



In that assessment of the human potential, Machiavelli was probably right.

And, so many centuries later, as 2022 is about to fade into one last sunset, it is up to us to decide in which category we would place ourselves, here and now.

And how 'Machiavellian' - or not - we plan on being throughout the coming year and beyond.



Ah! To tap into the noble and brave determination that would enable us to become and remain true to our soul-full self!

Ah ... the dream to access the resilience of our soul-powered inner warrior!

Ah ... to know how to structure support for the changes we want to make.

Such changes would promote making the right choices of thoughts, actions, responses, and habits!

Such choices would enable us to become incrementally more resilient during what often feels like endless periods of odds unfairly stacked against us.



Ah ... trusting and feeling that our efforts are as much for our holistic, greater good!

That they, ultimately, also benefit those who live under our roofs.

And those we think about, glance at, work and play with.

And they are for the greater good, too, of those we don't know exist beyond our line of vision.

Ah, the wisdom to actively embrace a healing process as a catalyst for profound awakening!

And ... ah! To celebrate the strength of character that demands this, the journey of our lifetime as incarnated human beings. 😊



Bottom line: once we become aware of our default pattern, we have the power to create change.

The intelligence worth cultivating is the one that pushes us to translate our best intentions into words and actions.

It's the one that incrementally reveals our core identity.



“The past has no power to stop you from being present now. Only your grievance about the past can do that. What is grievance? The baggage of old thought and emotion.” Quote attributed to Lao Tzu circa 500 BCE



As we go about our busy-ness, we understand that the change we initiate within our mind and heart ripples on to infuse others near and far in ways we will never know about. After all, the knowledge we have acquired as mere humans is forever dependent on our limited vision and hearing.

Luckily for us, modern humans, the scope of our vision has been incredibly expanded by microscopes, scans, drones and the amazingly far-reaching eye of the James Webb space telescope.



Serious questions: when we find ourselves thinking or talking about ourselves negatively, about our appearance, our potential, our actions and our thoughts, do we do so to motivate ourselves to improving what is ours to improve?

Or do we do it in a semi-unconscious, auto-defamation mode?

If we do, do we even know why we devalue ourselves in our own eyes?

Which of Machiavelli's three kinds of intelligence is driving us?



Do we know how to step away from the combative culture we have inherited, the one that has taught us to prioritise worldly achievement through gritted teeth?

That culture also values and favours physical attractiveness, height and strength above integrity and cooperation. Above, joy in feeling and in sharing emotional balance, and resilience.



So, when we talk about or think about 'others', any other, known or unknown to us, visible or not, near or far, how acute is our perception of their whole person? Do we talk about them - or to them in an informative, open-hearted manner?

Or do we unconsciously fan flames and cast aspersions on their character and purpose?



While keeping in mind that the politics of division seldom bring about positive outcomes, maybe we can agree with the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, who posited that 'Freedom is what you do with what's been done to you.'

The freedom to choose whether to implode/explode or stay centred is ours.

The freedom to choose whether to react angrily or to respond coherently according to tangible evidence and the wish to problem-solve in our hearts is also ours.

The freedom to loosen some of the ties we have with the illusory Band-Aid fixes that don't last the distance.



So, yes, we know: our emotions drive the thoughts we reject and the ones we allow to thrive. They push us to swallow all we ingest via our mouths and via our senses. When we breathe consciously, we regain control of our selves.



As long as the freedom to breathe remains ours, we breathe gently through the nose and exhale slowly into the belly.

The process of conscious breathing allows us to incrementally develop a greater level of emotional clarity. A greater level of self-determination.

It impedes knee-jerk reactions while allowing us time to frame a thoughtful response instead of yet another divisive reaction.



Heads up: returning for a moment to the metaphor of our solo journey on board a little schooner towards our rainbow-desires, one of the most significant moments is simply pushing off the jetty.

We must be on board to move forward and eventually reach our desired destination.



Once we actively accept that uncertainty will be - as it always has been - our invisible off-sider, we are better balanced to deal with rips and swells, particularly those we

anticipate calmly. The tiller is firmly in hand, we handle the complications that are ours to handle, not anyone else's.



Bottom line: since the purpose of our journey is to find contentment in an inherently insecure and discordant world, we don't meddle.



For us, beginners on the Path of heart-based coherence, finding our way is as complicated as simple.

It's as complicated and as simple as coordinating the slow-motion movements of our head, torso, hands and legs with our breath during a qigong practice. It's as simple and complicated as sustaining the visual image of the healing light of the universe infusing all our organs – all our cells. It's as simple and as complicated as accepting that Soul is the one who illuminates us from within.



What? Too Basic?

Brisbane, February 2021

Heads up, dear Reader: of course, as always in my mind-meandering writing, in this and the final pieces, there will be repetitions of concepts and thoughts already visited throughout the previous series.

As I often joke, 'How many ways are there to peel a banana?' Ah, the process could be explained convolutedly using scientific words related to a banana's structure, such as inner skin, mesocarp, exocarp, phloem bundles, and bananus.

Alternatively, the explanation for how to peel a banana could be simplified by saying, 'Use a sharp knife. Cut the top off. Peel back the skin with two fingers.

Enjoy.

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By that analogy, I mean how many ways can be needed to explain the self-explanatory commandment written in Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself".

•

How many words should be needed to dissect the maxim popularised by Hillel the Elder born circa 110 BCE: "What is hateful unto you, do not do unto your neighbor. That is the whole Torah, all the rest is commentary."

•

Circa 70 CE, these two principles became blended into what is commonly known as the Golden Rule principle attributed to Jesus by way of Matthew's gospel:(7:12): "*In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.*"

•

As discussed in several preceding articles, such as *Hollow or Whole*, *We Were Them*, *It's All On Us*, and *The Golden Rule*, the core of this simple principle is also at the centre of all main religions and spiritual traditions. It has been amplified throughout the millennia, compiled, modernised and spread worldwide, seldom by kindness and heart-based intentions.

That said, from Krishna to Christ, the GREAT mystery of the Universe, the power beyond any human control and genuine understanding, has been reduced to mere personification.

•

So, no matter how persons of faith might interpret or spin or over-intellectualise and ritualise the scriptures, as Hillel suggested, it can all be boiled down to the original principle.

Down to the original principle and its no-need-to-say-it-because-it's-obvious extension: *"Don't do what is hateful to your loved ones and don't do it to your self either."*

Because none of that empowers our emotional intelligence.

Because none of that assists us in feeling better about ourselves and others.

None of that assists us in securing a life that is well worth living.

•

The minds from which such wisdom has emanated are genuinely ancient. Their insight suggests that a couple of thousand years ago, empathy and compassion were prerequisites to holistic wellness and a life well-lived.

•

Reality check: the virtues that were missing many centuries ago are still in great demand but in short supply in this, the era at the apex of often toxic modernity.

The only 'things' over which we have any control are our thoughts and ourselves in terms of who we control or reframe our thoughts. And that includes our actions, reactions and inactions too.

That's when the growth happens. That's when we begin to learn about ourselves.

•

Bottom line: what is hateful to you, do not do to *your* self.

Do not do to any of your loved ones.

Do not do to those who have shunned you – or to those who don't 'get' you.

Or to those who, on the surface, are different - or think differently - from you.

Or to those you don't know

Or to those, far and wide, you will never get to know.

•

Obvious it all is, but, as might be the case coming from a big sister to a sibling she wishes well, I believe that repeated recommendations cement the heartfelt, last-minute farewell intended in these final instalments of my meandering writing.

These repeated recommendations also help cement the inspired content of these mind-meanders inside my mind. 😊

So ... dear Reader, pull on your life vest in readiness to pull up anchor and sail off towards a continuously expanding horizon!

•

Reality check: be it a pleasant one, a difficult one, a traumatic one, one filled with childlike awe or joy - or one that makes us feel small, unworthy and vulnerable - or one that is simply routinely familiar, each moment has been invisibly, karmically co-created over time between *our* selves and the Universe.

•

We, Homo sapiens sapiens, have become programmed to seek out more and more pleasurable feelings and activities while simplifying as much as possible process and effort.

The list of thoughts, possibilities, and people, even 'loved ones' we have become programmed to avoid or separate from is often long.

We are prone to become quickly overwhelmed and despairing over our projection of the 'inevitable' outcomes.

We are prone to letting complications and disappointments trigger us in ways that make us uncomfortable and unreliable, adding more negative energy to the situation.

•

More centuries have passed than waves we can see rolling towards the beach.

Yet, today, only a few of us excel at observing what-Is neutrally.

Not many of us know how to make 'life' function how we'd like it to function.

Smoothly and sprinkled with many moments of joy.

Free of setbacks.

Free of sadness.

Free of any sort of pain.

•

So, dear Reader, we must remember that it is not – not really – the content of the moment that either excites or repels us.

Instead, our reactions to emotions and impulsive thoughts immediately ignite within our neural circuitry.

•

Heads up: that doesn't mean we have to passively give in.

It doesn't mean we have to passively accept whatever.

Of course not.

•

It doesn't mean we should pretend to ourselves and others that nothing hurtful, painful or unfair has occurred.

It doesn't mean we should deny being wounded, gutted or torn apart.

Of course not.

•

But it does mean we should become - and remain - awake and aware of where our responsibility to 'life' begins and ends.

To that effect, the first step is to call our inner self back from exile from our ego-persona.

We do that by mindfully infiltrating that ego-persona of ours.

We actively accept that it is our karmic duty to respond calmly to 'life' with an understanding that there is a grander scheme of things than meets the eye.

•

Heads up: we desist from looking at What-Is through the narrow slits of our fortress' rock walls.

We give up the practice of reacting impulsively and firing inflamed arrows at 'the messengers' we allow in, and at those we don't want to allow in.



Unconscious, We Awaken

Brisbane, April 2023

"If you don't have any shadows you're not in the light"- Lady Gaga

•

Modern science has found that most, if not all, of our decisions and our so-called forward planning emerge from memories of the past. None of us grew out of our youth unscathed. Many of us have experienced subsequent testing or traumatic incidents.

If these memories had a 3-D form, archaeologists might label them 'fossilised vestiges from a distant past'.

●

Reality check: much has stayed the same over the aeons regarding how our ego-persona does what it thinks it's supposed to do to keep us safe.

●

We, Earth dwellers, go on bumping along to the pitch, pace and rhythm of emotions past, unaware that, like the Dodder vine, a parasitic plant which relies on its host for survival, our emotions strangle future outcomes by infusing them with the essence of what has already passed.

By infusing them with the built-in fear of mostly imagined imminent dangers.

●

Be that as it may, whether our memorised moments were positive or negative, it is from these little fragments of tainted possibilities that we set in motion 'the rest of our lives', one blind step at a time.

●

The wiring of our brain, we know, also infuses our bodies with all that we ingest by way of our mouths and by way of our thoughts.

Therefore, that wiring is also the driver of our current state of health.

And we also know that, really, the only way to bypass being pulled from the past into the present is to let go of the past.

The only way is to let it fade away.

But, of course, that's much easier said than done.

●

Good news: we become an altered version of our authentic selves 'only' when we surrender control over thought and action to the flight-or-fight response embedded in our primal brain.

'Only' when we allow that wiring to repeat the 'system' ingrained in us by our parents and the culture of their day just as they repeated the patterns their parents had inherited from their parents' ancestors and the culture of bygone eras.



And since science-based findings has validated ancestral philosophical tenets such as those pronounced by Socrates and Plato (also embedded in ancient spiritual practices), we understand that once we choose to change our consciousness, we also change our reality.

That's because our moment-to-moment destiny, a.k.a. karma, notwithstanding, every choice we make spins out an energetic consequence.



The surge of anxiety or unwanted, unhealthy feelings is the prompt to tap our pause button, and conscious breathing is our pause button.

So, we breathe deeply and slowly.



Heads up: as newborns, our very first breath was a reflex - a gasp for air.

Our last breath will be taken unconsciously, too.

It will happen a nanosecond before Soul suspends it forever.



But while we are between our first and last breaths, it is our responsibility to breathe consciously, slowly and deeply, as often as we remember to do so.



Heads up: expansion and contraction from our diaphragms, hearts and lungs like the oceans that warms up and expand during the summer months and cools down and contract in winter.



So, here and now, we inhale as we straighten our spine and move our shoulders back.

We expand our stomach and ribcage.

As we exhale, we lengthen our spine.

While at it, we might as well inhale the light of love and compassion for ourselves.



While at it, we might as well also exhale love and compassion for others – all others, particularly those who still have our permission to push our buttons.

We feel love and compassion for those who prick us the most.

We forgive them because we remember that we have unconsciously allowed them to do what they do mostly unconsciously, too.

We also feel love and compassion for those who are more vulnerable than us.



Reality check: we do all that because, mercifully, we can.

Because doing that serves us well.

And we do it because, in this process, we trust.

Not doing that would mean that our inner values remain muted.



When we open our eyes in the morning, our To-Do list is often quick to position itself at the front row of our attention.

On the one hand, even when we have reached a blessed stage where enjoyable stability and good health are the linchpins of our 3-D reality, we seldom contemplate our To-Do list with a sense of bliss.

On the other, our emotional landscape is quick to settle in as a backdrop the moment we open our eyes.

Already it has reassembled itself in the same way, with the same occupier's rights as it has done morning after morning throughout the several decades of mornings.



For those of us who are chronically anxious, it means that the gripping sensation at the level of our solar plexus or in our stomach has already relaunched itself with the opening of our eyes.



With those unconscious inner processes 'in mind' as our default GPS, we ready ourselves the best we can for the new day ahead.

We do.

It's true.

And this is how we get our children ready for the day, too.



Even if we have reached a stage in our lives where the essential determinants of 'happiness', physical, emotional and financial stability, are well anchored, this is how we, the anxious ones, do it.



Reality check: our voice, the one that belongs to our true self gets muted by the whirring of thoughts linked to our repetitive behavioural patterns.

As they did, we allow our minds to convince us that

1. we can't calm our mind long enough
2. we just don't have time to try harder or better
3. it's just too hard. Too complicated.
4. committing to a new, upgraded or challenging behaviour is boring.

Or that it doesn't really work for us



Bottom line: we must work with our ego-persona to help her understand her story.

Our duty of care to ourselves is to understand that our persona is operating from an unconscious program based on a lack of self-love.

Therefore, we must gently guide her towards the mature understanding that no one has ever been able to bypass any difficult circumstance that presented itself with or without warning.

And so, neither can she.



Yes, we must work as one with her.

We must encourage our ego-persona to respond from a heart-based coherence to each situation as it presents itself throughout the series of moments underfoot.



The intensity of anxiety is spiking around the world so, through uncomfortable conversations with ourselves, we retrain our ego-persona to release the damaging waves of fear and anxiety that would otherwise go on capsizing our little schooner on its way to our Rainbow-Desires.



As the author of the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood, said in an interview for Time Magazine, *'The moment when you give up hope that is when you cease to take any actions that might be positive to get out of the doom.'*

As in the past, as in the present moment, as in the future.



Perhaps that sentiment might help cancel the Imposter's syndrome which affects those of us who have defaulted to the belief of others that we are unworthy of this, that and the other.

We have unconsciously allowed them to do that to us, and, mostly unconsciously, they did it.

And, almost in locked step, too many of us allow depleting patterns to repeat day after day - even before we get out of bed.



Heads up: now that we better understand the cause of What-Is, we can forgive everyone.

One by one.

Now, yes, we can.

And we do.



We Are Our Breath

Heads up: by the time we become conscious of daylight and of the day ahead, a lot has already whirred throughout our body's systems.

Our mind-drive is already pre-programmed.

Some might say, 'It's revving.'

So, we help our mind relax because, if we don't, it will drive us through our day like a glitchy GPS.

It will prompt us to follow its uninformed trajectory.



So, we show up for ourselves. Discretionary power to choose among various possibilities according to our specific [best] interest is our birthright.

We must exert it.

We do that with a mindful yawn and climate emergency, and we choose to tap fully into the source of energy that makes us human.

That of our Soul. That of our heart.

That of our heart-felt intentions.



In doing so, we choose to move away from partisan actions that, supposedly taken to protect cherished values, too often lead us away from the simple precepts of the Golden Rule and into more divisiveness – not less.



Leviticus 19:18. "You shall neither take revenge from nor bear a grudge against the members of your people; you shall love your fellow as yourself."

Rabbi Hillel, born circa 110 BCE, suggested the flipside of the Golden Rule by teaching, "That which is hateful to you, *do not do* to your fellow. That is the entire Torah, and the rest is commentary. Now go and study."

Perhaps Hillel knew that 'not' doing' was simpler for us mere humans that to mindfully 'do'.

Be that as it may, in the most modern era of all, how about we choose to make the words 'your people' and 'fellow' synonymous with 'all that is' - and 'all that lives' - on planet Earth?

Our life.

Our choice.



So, ideally, we choose to follow the Sage's advice here and now because we remember that we're made of the same magnificent energy that sets this beautiful universe in motion.

The same energy that puts the stars in the sky, the planets around the sun and manages all of the functions within your body without you even thinking about it!



Now, finally, we breathe consciously because we can.

Because conscious breaths pause the old to allow in the new.

We breathe gently but deeply. We exhale softly because the breath is the bridge between our hearts and our minds.

We breathe mindfully because we appreciate that we can do just that – unassisted by anything and by any other than by Soul.

Till our last breath, we appreciate the fact that we are alive.

The fact that our loved ones are alive.

And our current much-loved pets, too.

We know they are all here, on planet Earth, even if they are not within our line of vision.

We know.



Ah, but wait, there's more :-))

We appreciate having a new day in front of us.

A day full of invisible but non-the-less real positive possibilities and synchronistic opportunities we are intended to sense and perceive.

So, we breathe consciously because we appreciate our ability to get out of bed.

We do this, because we appreciate our unique ability to get on with our very own To-Do list, also unassisted.

Finally, we know how to click to allow the Freedom download :-))



Here's a thought that will hopefully make you smile, dear Reader:

We can even appreciate not being as an animal always at the mercy of others, be they predators or humans.



Yikes!

Think about it.

Most animals have a tough life.

I'm thinking of those living in the receding wilderness, those needing to elude poachers and the domesticated ones harmed through neglect, cruelty, greed.

Or because of those of us who are driven by mind-less, old culture-based food choices.



Reality check #1: developing the sustained awareness of being 'in our body', not just that of being 'in the world', is often considered 'epic' and life-changing.



Heads up: because it would be 'epic' and life-changing, we have no quick fixes.

Not today – not ever.

But today, right now, we can practice being 'in' body.

We can practice feeling and acting as if our life is already the blissful life we dream of.



Reality check #2: we remember that the result of any coherent revolution – as opposed to a coup d'état - is mainly achieved by a succession of small inner-outer and in-community actions, not just through large and loud events.

And so, tonight, as we get into bed, we bring one hand to our heart and, in gratitude, we say thank you to whichever power in which we have placed – or should place – our trust.

And, tomorrow morning, even before we get out of bed, we bring one hand to our heart and, in gratitude, we say thank you to whichever power in which we have placed our trust.



We do that because the time is upon us to fire up our spiritual awareness.

We do that because we know the benefits of living a life that inspires us.

We understand the benefits of living a life that inspires others like our 'loved ones', neighbours and friends.

Near and far.



Bottom line: we know how to take one step after the other, not to fix up all our relationships at once but tiny steps that are enough to begin cultivating the grander expression of *who* and *what* we are.



So, now, we are ready to do all of that for real.

Here and now.

Separately and together.



In parting, dear Reader, here is a prayer from the Lakota Native American tribe who understand our conscious breath to be our cradle for change.

This prayer is addressed to the sacred or the divine; the Great Spirit also aptly referred to as Great Mystery for reasons we can easily surmise.

Wakan Tanka, Great Mystery,

teach me how to trust my heart,

my mind, my intuition, my inner knowing,

the senses of my body, the blessings of my spirit.

Teach me to trust these things so that I may enter my sacred space and love beyond my fear,

and thus, walk in balance with the passing of each glorious sun.



Pause and Imagine

Brisbane, December 2022

“Love works in ways that are wondrous and strange. There’s nothing in life that love cannot change,” said, Helen Steiner Rice, an American writer of inspirational poetry



More than any other factor, the thoughts we allow to settle in our minds daily will determine our destiny regarding our emotional health and state of being.



As humans, particularly as 'modern' humans, we are prone to developing an array of 'pushable' sensitivities, a.k.a. 'buttons'.

Though invisible, these 'buttons' are very reactive.



Heads up: almost anyone and anything from near or far can push these 'buttons' at any time, any place.

That's because the trigger points are often related to feeling misunderstood, hurt or dispensable when what we want most is perceived as inherently valuable and worth getting or protecting against all odds.



Reality check: access to our trigger 'buttons' motherboard is restricted to whoever has our fingerprints.

Restricted to us and to us alone.

Once in, there are neither firewalls nor weird algorithms to protect them from de-activation.

So, here, now, we must learn to practice anchoring ourselves in the present moment.



As we understand the principle of treating others as we would like them to treat us, the moment we sense we don't 'like' someone, how about we do ourselves a favour? How about we help them out?



Serious question: are we willing to dim down the chatter of our ego-persona to accept others as, within our own circumstances, we would very much want to be accepted – just as they are – just as we are?



Once we accept that our thoughts do not serve us well, it becomes easier to explore healthier ways to dial down the chatter of our reactive, self-centred, self-protective 'toddler mind'.



By practising a mind-on awareness often enough, just because we can, we reassure ourselves that many of those who wouldn't like us for one reason or another will take it much easier on us the next time we cross paths. 😊

Paying it forward does have great merit.



Heads up #1: in real life, no one ever gets to control everything that happens to them, to others or the planet.

However, everyone gets to choose when and how they will respond, and Science tells us that the most potent response to whatever life 'throws at us' is how we care, as in Care with an uppercase C - how we Care for others, for ourselves and, of course, how we Care about serious global issues.



Heads up #2: Nothing in our world can get fixed while pressure points remain unidentified.

Once we become aware that 'things' we say, think and do are counter-productive to our desire for emotional wellness, a healthy sense of self and the inherent need to be good and fair, we become aware that we always have a choice.

Yes, we do.

We always do.



Good news: it all begins with accepting that the negative energy we may have accumulated by ruminating about that, this or the other is fairly toxic.



Heads up #3: negative energy is as toxic for our emotions as it is for our brain and all our bodies' systems. It is as harmful to our well-being as the water of a polluted river is toxic for all that would otherwise thrive in, on and next to it.

So, we explore healthy ways to clear unwanted energy. But ... there are no quick fixes.

And it's not a one size fits all process.



Reality check: removing two cookies from our daily diet or lifting a dumbbell five times a week will not make a noticeable difference to our physical reality.

But little heartfelt intentions carried out through a succession of tiny steps over an extended period of time ... is what makes the proverbial journey of 1000 steps a most worthwhile journey.

Only time and the sort of focused, sustained effort that creates good stress in our brain will begin to make an incremental difference for the greater good – ours and that of others near and far.

Seen and invisible.

Known or not.



Bottom line: either we courageously surrender to who we are, deep down, far below the surface, here and now, or we keep going on our predictable track.

Business as usual



Heads up #4: our pause/reset 'button' is the only button of any use to us.

Our conscious breath is our pause button.



Heads up #5: if we happen to be tagged with however many buttons that 'life' pushes for us, it's because, as humans incarnated in the bodies that answer to our name, we are karmically intended to respond holistically to the sensations, emotions and thoughts that they trigger.

That's so that we can reframe our perception of What-Is and Why-It-Is.



Heads up #6: whether or not we allow ourselves to reframe and 'boot up' from the inside-out to respond to 'It' with Care and curiosity - it's all on us.

Only on us.

Always.



Reality check: when we are emotionally frozen, paralysed, or overwhelmed, we have very little to offer ourselves and others.

We are neither able to mitigate nor adapt.



Cliché but true: what doesn't break us makes us stronger.

That line of reasoning is derived from Nietzsche's 1888 autobiography, *Ecce Homo*. "He divines remedies for injuries," he wrote. "He knows how to turn serious accidents to his own advantage; that which does not kill him makes him stronger."

'Stronger' as in emotionally resilient, no doubt.

Nietzsche was right.

Post-trauma growth is not a myth. It's the well-deserved reward for augmented resilience.

And, of course, if Nietzsche had been a man of this century, he would probably have made 's/he' the subject of this edifying statement.



And, here, I'll let my mind meander briefly about Yoko Ono, the Japanese multimedia artist and peace activist who came into international fame in the 70s.



In 2013, she featured herself in *Bad Dancer*, one of her song videos.

Her hordes of detractors were unable to keep quiet at the sight of an 80-year-old woman in a top hat and black 'shorts' suit moving deftly enough and enjoying herself. The visuals were probably intended as positive an age-defying move.



Yoko acknowledged calmly to the trolls' comments.

According to the New Zealand Herald [found on the Double J site], she said, "I was amazed. I thought I had conquered racism, I conquered sexism, and there was ageism. I couldn't believe it. I ignore it, stepping on all those prejudices and working as if there's no problem."

And, bolstered by the resilience that had been severely tested over the decades, with her aspirations and life choices 'in mind', forward Yoko went.

As we all should.

As we will.

As we do, dear Reader :-))



As an aside, any suffering, whether self-generated or not, is an aspect of our moment-to-moment destiny.

Suffering is a karmically orchestrated opportunity to build inner strength through a heart-based, patient 'embrace' of What-Is as it is.

Let's not forget that, dear Reader.

And let's not forget either that both the words 'patience' and 'passion' are derived from the Latin word 'suffering'.

Perhaps knowing that helps make more sense of the wording 'The Passion of Jesus'.



And looping back to Ecce Homo which, translated from Latin, means Behold the Man, these words were first attributed to Pontius Pilate as he disdainfully shoved Jesus, bleeding and weakened, towards an angry crowd clamouring to see him crucified.



After the Cyclone – A Faint Rainbow

Part 1

Brisbane - November 7, 2020

You can't stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you.
You have to go to them sometimes – **Winnie The Pooh**



Back at the keyboard after watching in real-time, Kamala Harris, the US Vice President-elect, deliver her victory speech.

Actually, it feels appropriate to, now, borrow the thoughtful words Ms Harris delivered today as she referred to Joe Biden, the President-elect.

'A healer. A uniter. A tested and steady hand', she said.

Deep down, that, too, is who we can all be.

All of that is what is at our core.

All of that is who we are deep below the surface of our ego-persona.



Ms Harris added that our own *'experience of loss gives [us] a sense of purpose'* – and, yes, so it should.

Then, she said that we, too, have *'a big heart who loves with abandon'*. True, but only when we let it.

Only when we breathe deep and breathe wide.



And I might as well go further and paraphrase Ms Harris' encouragement to Americans.

'Dream with ambition,' she urged.

'Lead with conviction, and see [ourselves] in a way that others might not see [us], simply because they've never seen it before.'

And, yes, of course, *'we will applaud [ourselves] every step of the way,'* as our commitment to ourselves turns division into unity, into opportunities for growth, here, there and everywhere.



Beyond being listed as 'good people' in the books of many, now that the votes have been counted, Kamala Harris and Joe Biden seem to have come into their uber purpose.

The faint glow of an emerging rainbow is peaking through dissipating dark clouds.



On and off, many of us scratch our heads, wondering what our 'purpose' for being alive today on planet Earth could possibly be.

What skills and pathways are authentically ours?

What voice is authentically ours?

What behaviours are the 'real' us?

What's with the self that has been absorbed into our ego-persona?

Whatever inspires us, whatever fires up our creative and purposeful caring, whatever comes naturally to us, are so many hints.



As children, we thought that people pleasers were rewarded with love. Even if we were unable to confirm that by simple observations of interactions in our homes, schools and neighbourhood, we intuited that the best version of ourselves would be 'us' as people pleasers.

That's because culture, that of our parents and grandparents - and now the one that drives us - has had an ongoing obsession: love of the romantic sort.

Mostly the 'love' that leads to exalted sex.

Bookstores, newspapers reviews, songs and films give us enough 'love' to make us feel that LOVE is real and tangible... for some people.

For those who deserve it for their physical appeal or for their *persona*-lity.



In truth, the romanticized versions of love lost and gained and regained do not align with the reality on the ground.

Love driven by sexual urges does not often last.

Heartfelt love is not often regained.

It does not often prevail.



Even when so many events remain unreported, the ever-spiking statistics for domestic violence, sex abuse, fragmented families, lonely persons who feel discarded and those who, as a consequence of love scarcity, rely on depleting habits just to get by, all attest to a deep disconnect between the romanticised notion of us, humans, thriving for an resilient in-love reality, and the constricted bursts of love that we exhale day-in/day out on planet Earth.



As every acting coach reminds students, to act credibly, they have to feel it. So, now that we are fully grown up, we can shed the perception we have of ourselves in our 3-D reality.

We can find our true selves through tenacious resilience.

Where we used to be like the caterpillar in a cocoon-shaped to its contour, we can shaped ourselves to fit in.

Now, we can choose to emerge from that outer cocoon.

We can choose to embark on an emotion reset, our long-haul expedition into our authenticity.

Yes, we can!



Now, we develop a new set of skills.

Making money is not a skill, but the ability to convince others to buy our product or step in alongside us might be one.

Making others fall in 'love' with us is not a skill.

It's a trick.

Making them stay in love with us through thick and thin is a skill, but only in as much it is reciprocated.

If it's not, it's manipulation.



In 1883, the writer and orator Robert Ingersoll said, 'If you want to find out what a man is to the bottom, give him power.'

Obviously, that line of thought applies to 'woman' as well.

It even applies to children of all ages.

Only people who are 'great' inside and out know how to manage power, love and prosperity.

They do it with integrity.

They do it respectfully.

Sometimes we allow their responses to life to inspire us.



What, indeed, is a bully, if not one who feels enabled to exert power over one perceived as ... power-less.

Based on this understanding, we can question the nature of the 'power' we have – or think we have – over others near and far.

It also leads us to question how and why we use that power.

It brings us back to the endemic issue of sexual abuse in its many guises.

It brings us back to the issue of domestic violence in its many guises.

It brings us back to the issue of racism in its many guises.

It brings us back to the issue of conscious or unconscious belittling of those we place in the subcategory of 'minority'.

But it doesn't bring enough of us into the complicated conversations we need to have in our homes, our clans, our social groups, our teams and our workplace.



Back to the business of understanding ourselves better and where we might find our innate power, we go on with our line of self-observation.

What gives us genuine, naturally-induced pleasure?

Why does it?

What keeps us afloat when all feels weird, gloomy and scary?

Why does it?

In what circumstances do we resist participating fully in the flow of our life?

Why do we?

What happens when we participate under duress and resent doing so?



Change is inevitable.

It's true. We know.

Change is a process. It is an essential aspect of 'life' on Earth.

For rocks and trees, flora, fauna and insects, too, change is ongoing.

But they are passive in the flow of change.

Change happens to them.



For us, humans, it's different.

It should be different.

We know better than to wait for a positive change to occur on its own – and last.

We know it's unwise to wait for others to execute any change on our behalf, let alone to expect them to change – in them – what we want them to change.



After the Cyclone – a Faint Rainbow

Part 2

“Whatever you do, always give 100%. Unless you’ve donated blood.” - Bill Murray



We, humans, have been endowed with different neural pathways from the rest of the creations on planet Earth.

We sense when changes within are needed but, often, we resist them.

We endure them.

We suffer.

When we don't willingly change our paradigm, it's true we suffer.

Indeed, 'what we resist persists' is a truism.

It's like head lice.

Without proper attention, emotions remain in our system for months or years.

Or throughout our entire lifetime.



We resist some engagements mostly because we feel like there is something more worthwhile, more pleasant or more distracting we should be doing.

At times, too, we sense the vacuousness of it all.



As Yudit CS, my mentor, used to remind me, 'Be aware of what you allow in by being reactive but passive. Instead, you could actively set in motion thoughts, actions and responses that are likely to bring about a welcome change into your human reality.'



Either way, our resistance to engage fully might be a symptom of our insecurity.

We fear the possible revelation of our perceived incompetence.

Of our unworthiness.

And so, we face that fear and do our best to surpass it.

We release the contraction in our stomach.

We actively accept What-Is.

We don't let go of anything because there is nothing to release.

No particular action is required to release our fear of being rejected.

We just accept it as an aspect of our 3-D persona.

Then we let it be.

As we do, we also breathe gently and slowly to clear our heart space.

To clear our thoughts.

We do that until we understand that our resistance to engage fully activates the sensation of emotional frazzle we call stress.



It's not just us.

Resistance is a brain-thing.

Resistance prevents us from performing at the top of our game.

Our well-intended brain is trying to get us out of 'that place' and on to a place it thinks is better suited to our wellbeing.

What our brain thinks might be the line of least resistance often turns out to be the path of inner constriction and interrupted flow.

Stagnation. Confusion. Depression. Reaction.

No rainbow in sight.

It's time to observe the storm.



Reality check: like us, our brain is overly busy – in use, most of the time – even when we perform simple actions.

But, as awesome as it is, it doesn't know everything about us.



What our brain doesn't know complicates our lives.

It doesn't know that most of us who live in relatively safe democracies and belong to a majority group don't live surrounded by real threats.

It doesn't differentiate between the frazzle induced by our emotion-driven reaction to an unexpected visitor who plans to stay a few days and that which is created by a more serious circumstance such as news of a serious illness.

It doesn't know either that each complication surpassed enables us to go further – beyond what our mind might prefer to think. And so, it tries its best – and often succeeds – to shift our attention to the line of least resistance – our usual tendencies.

To a sort of default mode.



Left to its own devices, our brain does not do gratitude very well.

It doesn't feel it easily.

Awe and wonderment are emotions only little children can feel.

Too quickly, even the things and experiences we've yearned for – and got, sometimes against all odds – become ordinary again, underappreciated.

And, once again, we find ourselves doing life under a cloud that blanks out our rainbow.



In its self-protective attempts to quickly move us elsewhere, our mind pulls us in several directions simultaneously.

Even when not at work, we multitask.

We multitask in our head.

We half-do. We rush.

We're unfocused.

In the moment underfoot, we mix it up incoherently. Often, we get away with it, but not always.

At times, incoherent behaviour adds another challenge for us.

'I'm only human', we say. 'Don't blame me.'



Bottom line: we sense we're swimming against the flow, against the tide – and we are.

It's exhausting, that.

It's true.



So, if we step out of the control room and leave our brain in charge, it becomes our mind – the entity that positions us on the path of dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction with ourselves and with others and with the world as we perceive it through our senses.



Serious question: trust is a brain-thing, too, yet, our mind is attached to the mission to protect us from ourselves and from others. It does what it can to push us into something akin a parallel reality.

Away from what is unfamiliar and away from all that it feels could potentially pose a threat to our wellbeing.

So, how trustworthy are we, really, when push comes to shove?



Flurry of serious questions: how trustworthy can we be as long as we resist asking ourselves serious, messy questions like, how willing are we to engage in a mindful exploration with our dearest friends and partners of all that is most meaningful to us?

Like, our feelings about love, our fears, our memories and our desires?

Like, our yearning for frequent childlike playfulness and excitement?

Are we willing to assess under what conditions are we trustworthy?

With whom are we trustworthy?

How reliable are we, here and now?

What are the limits of our love, of our trust, of our transparency and of our reliability?



Once something or someone irks us, are the grown-ups that we are any more likely to stay balanced than our children?

Any more transparent than our partner or spouse?

More than another parent, sibling, friend, relative, colleague or teammate when push comes to shove?



Heads up: doggedly rafting towards the faint rainbow of hope – or the herald of a breakthrough that's just now appeared over the horizon – those of us who are awake and aware at the tiller insist and persist with the process of intimate scrutiny.

Towards whom does our mindset aim us to trust – or distrust?

On what basis?

What are our mind's criteria for trust and for distrust?

How do we feel about the pre-selected groupings it has placed on our Trust and Distrust lists?



One thing seems obvious: we cannot often be trusted to be 'in the moment' as supportive and caringly efficient as we could be – as our true self would like to be ... deep, deep down.

However, every moment we will ourselves to be attentive, any moment we offer active, heartfelt, and purposeful support where and when it's needed, we tick the right boxes.

Once we do it often enough, our mind gets the message that we're happy doing what we're doing and, if we're happy, then we're safe. Then, our mind is happy, too.



That's what happens when we 'just do it', as per the trademark slogan Nike coined back in 1988.

Once the moment has passed, we know we did well.



Bottom line: it's a good feeling to know we're in the flow of life.

It's our reward to feel we've done the best we could in 'that' moment and that 'best' was the best we could do, right there and then.

We are positively self-aware.

We just are.



It has become a cliché, these days, to say that whatever we connect with today or any day is precisely what we need to connect with.

But it's true.

Perhaps, it leads us to do a good deed without expecting anything in return.

Perhaps it forces us to overcome a perceived limitation, a challenge.

Perhaps it offers us an unanticipated opportunity to go against 'the grain' and respond rather than react.

Rather than ignore.

Rather than cancel the other.



Any moment can lead us to many outcomes, including tapping into our inner wisdom and appreciating ourselves.

Sure, we can choose how we want to co-create our present and our future which, really, begins in the next moment underfoot.

We can opt-in. We can opt out.

Either way, it's at our own risk – or at our own reward.

Only the ripples of time will tell.

Time, and the emotions we feel, as we opt-in or as we opt-out, will tell.



Neuroscience has already confirmed what we've known deep down to be true:

Happiness, joy and contentment are cultivated within.

And it's true

No need to overthink it.

We only have to lean in.

And we already know how to do this.

Really, we do.



Howard Thurman, The Black American and civil rights activist, mentor to Martin Luther King Jr., once said, 'Don't ask what the world needs, ask what makes you come alive, and go do it because what the world needs are people who have come alive.'



Once we understand that 'being awake' precedes being 'aware', a healthy inquiry into the matters that make us who we are is a necessary par-for-the-course in any goal-setting process leading towards the evolution of our self.



Reality check: put succinctly, our sole purpose or, better said, our Soul's purpose, for our incarnation in the body our consciousness currently inhabits, is simply to turn up willingly and to stay present.



Equally, we need to remember that Soul (or God, the Unified Field, the Source, the Universe or our Higher Self, as we choose to recognise a higher power) intends to set us for success in our world, not failure.

Soul, our unerring GPS, is also dedicated to tracing the best course to follow in each moment, but her wiring and intentions vary greatly from those of our mind.



Not involved with our fear and shame and self-perception, Soul guides us to the next best outcome within the maze of the karmic blueprint we've already co-created, up to today.

Up to 'this' moment.



In her bid to focus on the inner, not the outer 'poor me', here's what Soul might whisper to us in our sleep:

'I know what being overlooked feels like better than anyone,' might say our inner self. Our soul.

'I've spent my entire life unthanked and unnoticed. And you tell me I'm too distant for you to get me? Seriously, dear Ego-Persona whose body I inhabit, I know you doubt my purpose, even my existence.'



Here's the sting: the deeper a root, the longer it's been left to do its own thing in the deep soil of our mind, the harder-harder-harder it is to pull out.

We are counter-intuitive, emotion-tenders.

Choosing, planting, watering and fertilising only the sprigs we should grow till they become an integral part of our heart-space is hard labour.

It's a labour of love.

It's an exercise of trust that all our effort won't be in vain.



Heads up: getting there is extremely intense.

It requires an unwavering commitment to ourselves.

That said, once a meaningful shift is detected, the expedition into uncharted waters we've embarked on becomes a lot more satisfying.



And now, dear Reader, Warrior for the greater good, we begin 'the hard' but essential work of choosing unity within ourselves and unity with those who step into our line of vision.

Here, now, today and every day, we chose unity over division.

We are our own – and our loved ones' – essential workers within our circle.



Freedom-Ready?

Brisbane, August 2023

Heads up: 95-year-old Dr Edith Egers is an Auschwitz survivor who became a highly sought-after specialist in treating post-traumatic stress disorder.



In 2017, she published *The Choice*, a New York Times and Sunday Times bestseller. 'Only I can do what I can do the way I can do it,' Dr Egers wrote. [...] 'We can choose to be our own jailors, or we can choose to be free.'



Heads up: whip-quick to position itself in our 'unaware awareness' is the assumption that we know how the day will unfold.

And, usually, the day is, indeed, free of surprises and unanticipated glitches.

It only presents us with the usual bad, the typical ugly, the ordinary mediocre and the familiar, occasional, good feelings.



We are not often aware that the effort it takes to remove ourselves from the past is the gift of true transcendence – of connecting with the life we are meant to live.



Beyond our inability to understand, let alone create our moment-to-moment destiny as we would sincerely want to shape it, we are so immersed in our ego-persona's perception of What-Is that we have no clue as to the 'real' purpose of anything – not even that of our focused aims and ambitions.



Unconsciously, we assume that everyone is awake and aware of their surroundings, in control of their children, pets, and thoughts.

No toddler will play behind our car unnoticed as we reverse out of a parking space.

No dog off-leash in a park will attack our own dog, our child, us - or anyone.

Neither will it run in front of our car, provoking a rear-end collision as we hit the brakes hard to avoid it ... Or, fatalistically, run over that poor dog.



Of course, we assume the world around us has a balanced grip because, if we didn't, many of us would not dare leave the house.

Similarly, we assume that those dear to us will get on with their day and return home safely.

Usually, they do, but as confirmed by every local news stream... not always.



We passively assume that everyone in stores, in malls, at work, in our adult playgroups and everywhere will also control their emotions and duty of care and be aware of their civic responsibilities to others.

We unconsciously assume that everyone we encounter on the road will control their emotions and, therefore, their vehicles.

We assume we will, too.

Usually, they are.

Usually, we are - but not always.



Heads up: the day doesn't always turn out according to the anticipated script we had in our thoughts.



Here is a sad illustration that occurred at the time of writing, in Australia where I live. April 14, 2023 – Sydney - A 29-year-old ambulance paramedic was fatally stabbed outside a McDonald's while he and a workmate were taking a much-needed break towards the end of their night shift. Due to soon be the father of a second child, the man died moments after the incident.



Reality check: we have no understanding of the purpose of unexpected moments. And even less of those to which we can only react on impulse.



In the absence of any specific, challenging complication to push through, though we passively blank out the possibility of glitchy, challenging moments, we still live with the unconscious fear of 'things' going wrong.

That apprehension tends to flatten us into reactive pessimism and dread.



And, with emotion-driven odds stacked against us, we try as hard as we can to make things work out the way we want them to.

The only way we can bear them to be.



Minimal lateral thinking is involved because, too often, our unconscious focus is about maintaining relative control over someone else, often a friend or a 'loved' one.

Reality check: we tend to forget that secure relationships are based on a healthy sharing of genuine love, mutual authenticity and heart-based connection.



Bottom line: when we feel our life is on a plummeting roller-coaster or that the world has gone nastier than ever **when we neither feel heard nor understood**, we forget that bouncing down is the prelude to bouncing up.

Yes, Lady Gaga was on the right track when she said, 'If you don't have any shadows you're not in the light.'



So, our struggle is often driven by the unconscious need to control more firmly 'the other' – in misguided attempts to increase our sense of self and our emotional security.



Sometimes an unanticipated reaction from others catches us flatfooted.

It leaves us angry and resentful.

And sometimes, but not always, that's how the content of new moments pan out to be.

Angry and resentful.



And, we don't do ourselves any favours by pretending, through fake optimism, that somehow everything will eventually work out.

Or by pretending that we don't know that as long as we keep hateful thoughts whirring through our mind, neither 'our' world nor 'the' world will seem any better.



There's a call in the media that urges us to become planet-conscious by becoming climate positive.

As Earth dwellers, our responsibility to the planet has a direct parallel with the call to be mindful, to behave the best we can within our 3-D reality, not as if we lived in a pretend land of infinite plenitude, free of cause and effect consequences.



Our responsibility also has a direct parallel with the call to be radically honest with our 3-D reality, which means sitting either with joy or discomfort and being honest with ourselves about the emotions we feel in the moment that is present.



Within our heart and mind, together and separately, we need to be awake and aware. Full stop.



As the French philosopher, Rene Descartes said, 'Cogito, ergo sum'/I think, therefore I am.

So, 'think', is what, as humans, we must do together and separately.

We think about how to 'be' and to 'belong' ... better.

Inside and out.



“Do not wait: the time will never be 'just right,' urged Napoleon Hill, author of Think and Grow Rich (1937). 'Start where you stand, and work whatever tools you may have at your command and better tools will be found as you go along.'”



Call for action: unconsciously, we allow thoughts pre-conditioned by the past to meet the reality of the present.

So, from now on, we remember that the moment underfoot is always new in every way, no matter how familiar it looks, sounds, tastes and feels.

From now on, we remember that only the moment 'live' in front of our eyes is real and current.



We remember to do that because forgetting that the living experience of 'now' is always fresh by virtue of its nature, we are prone to dealing with the present - and to some extent the future - from memories of old.

And we also remember that our beliefs are the rippling effect of our long-held memories, nothing more.



So, from now on, dear Reader, because we remember that our minds' amalgams of inaccurate' memories' create the past on which we rely to move forward, we choose to bypass them.



So, now, let's begin believing that we can! That, yes, we can choose to break away from our long-gone past. 😊

Let's step into the patterns that have shaped most of our lives.

Let's scrutinise them with our hearts and minds.

Then, let's begin handling ourselves as, all along, we had meant to.



Reality check: incrementally, the *persona*-lity we choose to grow out of the old one is the one we can create, here and now, in the space between our in and out breaths. It's the *persona*-lity we sustain.

It's who we become.

And in the fullness of time, we can tell, we really can, that our M.O. has shifted for the better and forever.



So, when Tuli Kupferberg, the counter-culture American poet said, "When patterns are broken, new worlds emerge," he was probably right.



Meanwhile, and perhaps ironically, seeing that so many millions of us live with a form of fear curled up somewhere in our being, we assume that no fun day out, no dream holiday will ever end in a tragedy.

Usually, they don't, but as already discussed, sometimes, they do.



So, for as long as we are spared personal tragedies, we remember to be grateful.

We remember to breathe consciously.

And if we have not been spared our karmic share of traumatic circumstances, as we feel again the pain of what came to pass, we also remember to breathe.



We train ourselves to breathe in slowly, purposefully, the fresh energy of the only moment there ever is, for us, as for all Earth dwellers – the moment that is right here – right now in front of our eyes.

Right now, under our feet.



Serious question: dear Reader, are you readying yourself for the Freedom download?

Yes, of course, you are :-))



By now, we're almost done now, dear Reader.

But, until the release of **Destination: Rainbow [part 2]** that I am currently editing ...
keep pondering.
Keep practicing.
Keep sharing.

And, also, do keep in mind that, as Dr. Dwayne Dyer wrote, 'You are not a human being having a spiritual experience. You are a spiritual being having a human experience.'

A human experience on-board your metaphorical little schooner.

Woohoo!

Very kind thoughts from me :-))



P.S. Like you, Yudit *yekara* [may your memory be a blessing], I lay a hand on my heart.



To you, I say, "*Toda raba*, thank you, for having taught me so much about how to begin living life 'under Soul's wing', as you used to say.

Without the ten years of daily, selfless training you blessed me with all the way from Israel, Yudit, I would never have become the person you have helped me become - and I certainly, too, would not have had any thoughts worth mind-meandering about. Now, thanks to you, *kol b'seder*. All is well."

