



# Holistic Heart

Australian Holistic Healers & Counsellors Association  
**February 2010**

| Contents  | Page      |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Office Bearers .....</b>                                     | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>How to Cope with Effects of Critical Incident Stress ...</b> | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>The trials of adversity .....</b>                            | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Decide to live your ideal life.....</b>                      | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Self energy clearing and protection .....</b>                | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Healing with harmony .....</b>                               | <b>12</b> |

## AHHA OFFICE BEARERS 2010

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Hi All

After the recent world events of earthquakes and volcanos as the earth adjusts to new stresses, many can be suffering and affected by the effects from the events.

This newsletter focuses on how lifestyles can be affected and perhaps offers some solutions.

Take care of yourselves and others at this time of change. I hope you find ways of coping and adapting.

Helen



## How to Cope with the Effects of Critical Incident Stress

A critical incident is a relatively sudden, untimely and unanticipated event or situation which is outside the range of usual human experience and which evokes unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with one's ability to function at the time the situation arises or later.

Many people experience a critical incident at some stage of their life. Examples of traumatic events in the wider world include disasters, floods, bushfires, foundering of a vessel, plane crash, war; violent public incidents- shootouts, hostage-taking; other traumatic events could include suicides, murder of a friend or colleague, unexpected death, being assaulted, mugged or raped. Sometimes a trauma may be experienced indirectly, eg as a bystander, or where friends or family are victims.

This article is designed to help you to understand the typical reactions of others who have been in traumatic situations. It will give you some guidance in taking care of yourself so that recovery can be facilitated.

At the time of the incident you may have felt stunned or frozen, or felt that your sense of time was distorted or your perceptions very focused. You might have been angry, anxious or frustrated. Physical responses could have included nausea, rapid heartbeat or muscular tension. Afterwards it is common to feel numb, in shock, unable to believe what occurred. Gradually the impact of the incident is felt, and the numbness wears off. At this time, you may experience intrusive thoughts of the incident, sleep is often disturbed, perhaps with nightmares, or you may experience flashbacks where aspects of the event recur in imagination so vividly, you feel as if you are reliving the trauma.

Self-doubts and “what if's?” are common. All reactions are part of your body's efforts to come to terms with what you have experienced, part of the natural process to recovery. Talking to people that understand, whether friends, family, partner, counsellors, chaplains, colleagues or fellow survivors helps process the incident and provides emotional relief.

Remember:

- People react differently to traumatic events. They also progress through the effects of critical incident stress at different rates. Symptoms experienced may vary.
- Accept your own feelings and reactions to the incident as well as those of others. There is no wrong or right way to feel or think. Your reactions are valid.
- Most people do the best that they can at the time of a critical incident. It's natural for you to feel that you could have done something to lessen the impact or prevent the incident. This is probably unrealistic. Don't take too much responsibility for the incident or the way it went. Don't be too harsh on yourself.
- You have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event which no doubt will affect you in some way. Be aware that symptoms may develop. Be alert to the signs of critical incident stress in



your general functioning.

### Effects of critical incident stress

Symptoms usually begin immediately or soon after the trauma. Sometimes symptoms are delayed for a period of months or in some cases even years after the incident although avoidance symptoms might have been present during this period.

Common effects:

- Nightmares
- Insomnia
- Flashbacks
- Intrusive thoughts about the incident; what ifs?
- Difficulties in concentration and memory
- Regression to earlier behaviours
- Apathy, no energy
- Inability to feel
- Decreased sexual interest, impotency
- Outbursts of aggression
- Irritability
- Violent impulses
- Hostility, rage
- Anxiety
- Startle reactions; hyperalertness
- Restlessness
- Shock or denial
- Numbness
- Fear
- Guilt
- Grief
- Feelings of detachment from others
- Sadness, depression
- Mistrust
- Phobias
- Avoidance of reminders of the incident;
- Avoidance of people or places connected to the incident

Effects on Attitudes:

- A heightened sense of concern for the well-being of loved ones
- Feelings of hopelessness and a sense of loss of control of one's life
- A sense of a foreshortened future. Loss of trust in others, or in a God



- Loss of a sense of self as a worthwhile person; as invulnerable and immortal.
- A sense that the world has changed; that it is not just or fair.
- Common concerns seem trivial

#### Physical Responses:

- Nausea, vomiting
- Dizziness
- Heart palpitations
- Shaking, trembling
- Diarrhoea
- Muscular tension, headaches, aching
- Neck and back pain
- Chest pain (check with your GP)
- Menstrual dysfunction
- Difficulty of breathing, shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Rapid heart beat
- Sweating
- Loss of appetite
- Frequent low grade infections

#### People may be more vulnerable to the effects of traumatic experiences when:

- Exhausted, tired or sick or when the incident triggers memories of a traumatic event in the past;
- The event involved violent deaths
- Involved the death or injury of a child
- The circumstances were horrifying; or involved characteristics that particularly affected you
- The event involved many casualties
- The event involved others you are close to
- The event involved severe injuries to victims, eg mutilations, burns
- The event involved a personal threat to life or when other critical incidents have been experienced recently; or other major stressors are active in one's life or when there is no effective support unit, eg family or friends.

#### Coping with the effects of critical incident stress:

- Remember that these reactions will lessen in time; they are normal reactions to extreme stress.
- Keep, or return to, your usual routine as much as possible. Structure your time.
- Talk to family and friends; share your feelings and your concerns. This helps the healing process.
- Don't have rules about your progress, just go with how you feel.
- Avoid over-use of alcohol and drugs.
- Get some exercise or relaxation daily.



- Do something pleasant for yourself from time-to-time.
- Take some time and space to work through the event.
- Sometimes jotting down thoughts helps to process your experience cognitively as well as emotionally.
- Delay making major decisions or life changes at this time; however making smaller day-to-day decisions increases your feeling of control over life.
- Keep up some social contact.
- Eat regular, balanced meals even if you don't feel hungry.
- Memories of what you have experienced will fade with time. Don't have unrealistic expectations that they will disappear early.
- Check on friends or colleagues who shared the experience with you. You may be having a good day and can be supportive. They can do the same for you at another time.
- Remember, you are not going crazy.
- Remember, help is available if you find that you are feeling too much pain.
- Remember that there is always hope, and that the world is waiting for you to get back into it.

#### How loved ones and friends can help:

It can be extremely distressing to watch a loved one experience reactions to a traumatic event. Feelings of helplessness may result, and you, yourself, may become stressed. There are a few things you can do to alleviate the response of your loved one, and your own feelings of concern:

- Try to understand what your loved one has experienced and how it has affected him/her.
- Remember, with time, care and support, these reactions should subside and usual patterns of behaviour resume.
- Realise that your loved one will feel dreadful at times.
- Be there to listen when your loved one wants to talk; expression of emotion helps the healing process.
- Have patience, reassure them you are there whatever they may need.
- Encourage them to maintain normal work and social routines.
- Encourage them to participate in a sporting or relaxation activity.
- Understand that your loved one may want to be alone sometimes, to reflect on what he/she has experienced.
- Encourage your loved one to seek help if symptoms do not subside within a few weeks, or if certain symptoms seem to get worse, or significantly inhibit their usual functioning.
- Seek help yourself if you feel the need to talk, or are uncertain or over-whelmed by the situation.

#### When to seek help:

- If numbness persists and you continue to feel detached from life.
- If you feel overwhelmed by intense emotions or physical symptoms.



- If your relationships are deteriorating as a result of your experience.
- If you are abusing alcohol or drugs.
- If nightmares or flashbacks persist.
- If intrusive thoughts persist and are discomfoting.
- If you cannot get on with the job after a reasonable period.
- If you are unable to discuss, express or share your experiences, perhaps because you have no social supports.

by Wendy McCartney from Counselling Services Sydney University [www.usyd.edu.au](http://www.usyd.edu.au)

## **The Trials of Adversity**

*Written by Denise Coote MAHHCA*

**If you feel you have reached your darkest hour and you've fallen as far as you can fall, don't despair, turn to the light and swim for calmer waters.**

A wise man once said, "It is through adversity that you learn the lesson." If this is true why then does it take adversity to learn what we need to know?

Consider what happens if you touch a hot BBQ plate...you get burnt, feel excruciating pain and quickly learn not to touch the hot plate again. If however your experience of touching the hot plate were anything but painful you'd be tempted to do it time and again without ever thinking of the consequences. And so it is with the biggest and hardest lessons we have to learn in life.

Adversity is often the consequence of a long process or cycle of learning in which all prior challenges concerning the need to learn or change were met with inaction, warning and wake-up calls were ignored or a test of strength and character is failed.

Often the warning signs of the inevitable hardship ahead failed to be observed and acted upon because there was some form of payoff for remaining oblivious to our weak, self-sacrificing or destructive ways. Resistance to change due to fear of creating more pain, fear of the unknown and refusal to accept responsibility for our actions keeps the denial in motion. It is not until the pain begins to outweigh the payoff that one is then propelled to change.

For example, someone with a drug addiction receives the payoff of the 'high.' An alcoholic gets a buzz out of being drunk and an abused spouse receives a payoff by staying in the comfort zone of being with the devil she/he knows rather than facing the fear of being with the one she/he doesn't.

Sometimes people will receive these 'temporary' payoffs for years before they become aware of the fact that they are severely depriving themselves of something so much better. And for as long as they continue to deny themselves of this truth their situation will deteriorate.

Likewise, for as long as we fail to rise to the challenge of a lesson that lesson will continue to be delivered forth upon us until we accept and take up the challenge of learning whatever it is that needs to be learned. The circumstances or manner in which the lesson is delivered may alter each time the lesson is presented, (e.g. the lesson is delivered through a different relationship), but each time it is delivered the intensity of the challenge increases - ten fold.

Therefore if you fail to rise to the challenge and accept the lesson the first time around, the lesson will be repeated within six months, the price you'll inevitably pay will be higher and the circumstances in which the lesson appears will be magnified until you learn what you need to know.



The Universal law of attraction being money attracts money, like attracts like, love attracts love, hatred attracts hatred and pain attracts pain, keeps the momentum building to a climax. So if you resist owning or acknowledging a destructive behavior, weakness or addiction it continues to persist and wreak havoc in your life. In accepting the temporary payoff's you in effect create the greater losses that follow because you chose to have less than the best for yourself in the first place.

For instance, you chose to take drugs or alcohol in an attempt to avoid or suppress the pain of say, a broken heart. Drugs cost money, but still you choose to buy and take drugs for the 'high' (payoff) rather than save your money and seek a natural healthier high. Before you know it you are addicted to drugs, broke and now have a need to resort to crime to get more money to get the drugs that are now controlling your whole life. You spend all of your time and energy searching for the next 'high' and are so focused on getting your next high that you don't notice that you have been neglecting your other needs for love, friendship, security etc, or that in the eyes of others your behavior has become impossible to tolerate. In effect you have driven your loved ones and everything else in your life away.

The mind-altering effects of alcohol create a similar outcome and as for the example of the abused spouse, well her/his situation deteriorates through experiencing more severe and less tolerable abuse that may result in a stay in hospital or worse, death.

The do-gooders of the world operate at the opposite extreme of those who inflict pain and suffering upon others, but often create pain and suffering for themselves through their self-sacrificing and just as destructive tendencies of giving away more than they can afford and end up broke, homeless, ill or are taken advantage of by the greedy.

Regardless of which end of the spectrum we are operating at, there is an imbalance in both extremes and if this imbalance is not corrected it will inevitably result in loss and adversity. The more destructive or self-sacrificing a person is the greater the losses will be.

### **Plunged into darkness**

It is in our deepest darkest hour that we are given the opportunity to enter into a search of the soul for the answers to our woes. Whether you are aware of it or not there exists within you a higher intelligence, wisdom and strength that can only be accessed through stillness. So it is at this point that all of your outside distractions will have evaporated, forcing you into a state of inaction perhaps through illness, loss of job or relationship. Honour then this space in time for it is exactly what you need in order to go within yourself and tap into the source from which all other things exist.

This is not a time for trying to mentally figure it out, or for trying to explain your situation away. Doing so will only lead to frustration and prolong the time you spend in this state. Surrender therefore to the process. This is a time for resting, healing, contemplation and rectification.

### **Rectification comes before progress**

When in darkness, look for the light. Consider the uses of adversity. You received the wake-up calls but failed to heed them. It has taken the experience of suffering through loss to wake you up and make you face up to yourself, your weaknesses and the truth. Be patient with yourself and the situation at hand. Avoid judging yourself, blaming others and trying to push open the doors that are closed to you right now. Also ignore the judgments and demands of others and just allow yourself to be exactly where you need to be.



### **What does not kill you makes you stronger**

Be grateful for this experience. Mistakes are only mistakes if you fail to learn from them. There is always light at the end of the tunnel and you will come out of adversity and the darkness a much stronger, wiser and more humbled person for the experience. If this is no consolation consider and be thankful for what you haven't lost, whether that's a child, home, health or sanity.

### **Starting over**

Once you have learnt the lesson fully and completely (you know it at a heart and gut level) there will be no need to go back and repeat the lesson. You will then be free to start building your life again from a healthier more enlightened perspective. And just watch the rewards flood in! Through working on yourself you will have undertaken the hardest work you will ever have to do in life and for that the rewards are great and many. It is then that you will look back in retrospect, appreciate the experience of adversity and say, "Thank God that happened." Even though it may have been the worst experience of your life it will also have been exactly what needed to happen to make you wake up to yourself. Remember; your new life will always be greater than the one you are leaving behind.

*Trials are but lessons that you failed to learn presented once again, so where you made a faulty choice before, you can now make a better one and thus escape all pain that what you chose before has brought to you.*

*A Course in Miracles*

## **Decide to live Your Ideal Life**

By Jeff Menguin

What is your most ideal day? Do you know exactly how you want to live your life for the next five days, five weeks, five months, and five years? When was the last best day of your life? When is the next?

The best day of our lives is today. The past is no longer here. To dwell on the past to waste the opportunity to enjoy the present. The future is a promise; a time that will not come because what we have is only today. When tomorrow comes, it will not be tomorrow anymore; it becomes your today. I am not trying to sound philosophical. You cannot enjoy tomorrow unless you know how to enjoy your today.

If you were live to thirty more years, you are going to experience 10,957 todays. Given that you have that many more days to live, it is easy to waste time. But every day that passed without your notice is day cut off from your life.

How many of these days will be given to building relationship with your family, friends, co-workers, and the people around you? How many of these days will be invested to learning new things, to increasing your value in the society, to making a difference in the world of one or one million? How many of these days will be spent for knowing yourself and your God? And how many



of these 10,957 days do you intend to spend with worry, anger, fear, and frustration?

Each day is a decision.

Whatever we do today is our decision. Some people plan for the future as if the future is something that you can reach by following a straight line. No; every moment is a moment of decision. There are moments that we make bigger decisions, but we only reach these bigger decisions because of the small decisions we made before.

Some people cry when they stumble. Others laugh. And there are those who pretend that nothing happened. Each action is a decision.

Do you know of people who are always late? Have you realized that these are also the same people who blame the traffic, the drivers, and the weather? Have you realized that these are the same people who complain a lot? And yes, the same people who find their days very toxic? Being late in the workplace is a decision.

Avoid the complainers. They are making their lives stressful and miserable. And they want you to feel the same. You need to accept that the way you spend your days and live your life is your responsibility. Each day is a decision. And you are the decision maker.

Each day is a decision to live.

Today is a gift. How you use this day is up to you. At each new day, you decided whether to unwrap that gift, or let it stay in the corner and spoil. There are people who exist but do not live. They wake up each morning not knowing what to do. Ask them why they go to school, and they will be surprised by you asking that question. They say that's what you are supposed to do to have a good job. Ask them why they go to work, and they say because everyone goes to work. So, they go to work, spending a portion of their valuable days for work they don't want to do, with people whom they don't want to see, for a place they don't want to stay. And then they complain about being stressed. So, they attend stress management seminars and learn stress management techniques for a day. They go back to work expecting to be able to handle the stressors in the workplace. And being stressed further because they will find out that techniques do not work.

Stress for those who do not know why they live is suicide in slow motion. Stress for those who live with purpose serves a good purpose.

Each day is a decision to live your ideal life.

One great tragedy of our generation is that most people do not even pause to think about life. Deep within you is the desire to live an ideal life. Again, how do you intend to live each day of your life? What are the things, which are important to you?

A favourite bible verse says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of



these things will be given unto you." This is my guide. Every day is opportunity to seek my real purpose. To live my purpose is my ideal life. Every day is a chance to live an ideal life.

I believe that worry and frustrations have no place in my ideal life. To truly live my purpose, I must do everything that will realize my purpose each new day. It does not take ten seconds to decide. How about you, how do you like to spend your next hour? Will it help you realize your purpose?

You may still worry about your boss getting angry with you. But then again, you will realize that worrying won't help solve a problem. And who says that you have to be affected by your boss' anger. You may not be able to make the day of your boss any better on that day (of course, you can always try), but you don't need to ruin your day either.

You may still worry about angry and difficult clients. There are those who call you names. But wait, you are in control! This client is just one of the many souls you will meet on this day, or in your lifetime. Your role for today is to help this customer solve his problem. You cannot allow him to ruin your day (and that is not really his purpose).

You sleep late. You love watching that TV show until the wee hours. I don't have to counsel you. But as for me, I know that sleeping very late will not really help me. First, there is really no TV show or night party which is more important than doing the things that I love doing. Second, I spend a lot of energy when I sleep late. I wake up late and start late and oftentimes am not productive. So, why waste the opportunity to be at my best for something that will not really add a minute to my life, to my self-esteem, or even my value to this world.

I challenge you to be clear about your purposes in life. Decide to live your ideal life.



## **Self-Energy Clearing & Protection**

**By Gayle Powell MAHCA**

During the course of our day we pick up energies from others, as well as store our own emotional experiences and thought process within our being. Some of these energies can become bound in our Aura &/or Etheric energy fields, making us feel heavy, lethargic, anxious &/or exhausted. Cleansing your being on a daily basis is an excellent way of aiding self-balance and feeling energized.

Daily energy clearing/cleansing can be done either in the evening or first thing in the morning. One method is, when showering, visualize or feel that as you wash your body you are scrubbing all unbalanced energies, blocks and unwanted thought patterns from your body and being on all levels: physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual. See or sense the water as pure liquid brilliance and as it flows over your body, it also flows through your body. Imagine, as clearly as you can, the pure liquid brilliance is picking up all of the tired and inharmonious energies that you have unconsciously stored and is washing them out of your body and being through your feet; with your mind and full intent, state that these energies are neutralized as it leaves your body & being. When you feel, sense or see that your body and being has been cleansed, allow the pure liquid brilliance to fill you recharging and energizing your body and being. Then imagine that you are being coated with this pure liquid brilliance, forming a protective shield from all inharmonious external energies. If you can sense, feel or see this powerfully it will protect you from picking up and absorbing other people's moods and energies that are inharmonious to you.

It is generally a good idea to use pure liquid brilliance light, as it is a harmonious unity of all the coloured rays of light. If you feel that you need to focus on a particular light ray, such as rich emerald green to connect with nature and healing, or rich blue light for relaxation and detoxification of stress then the same process can be used with transparent coloured light.

If you have never done this type of energy work before this process may take awhile and there will be layers of stored heavy energy that has built up over the years. All of this can be gradually cleansed from your body and being with a daily energy cleansing routine. The more often that you practice this, the easier and quicker this technique becomes.



## Healing with Harmony

Helen Bramley-Jackson MAHCA

Breath deeply, and imagine that there is a circle of nature all around see, feel and hear the sounds of nature .....

Flowing in harmony, and keeping our thoughts warm and safe inside....

Feel your feet on the floor.....

Be the strong oak... sturdy and solid, roots reaching deeply into the earth...

Draw up the earth's energy... feel the warm softness of the bare ground....

Smell the warm earthy moisture.....

Now reach upward with your thoughts... into your energy centre.

You are balanced and centred in this spot, and you feel comfortable and at peace with yourself and others.

As you breath inward... breath in the positive mist swirling around.

As you breath outward... release the pent up emotions that prevent you from being whole and complete.

Relax... and feel your breath.

Now.....let that Breath wash over you.....

Feel your Breath, not just as a simple rush of air, but as the Spirit of Life filling you.

Feel the Power that the Air provides.

Feel the Harmony that the energy within the Air contains.

Your body becomes light.....

Your mind grows clearer.

Accept the energy you receive

Feel the Love given without conditions – it is a compelling act of Grace.

Feel the Harmony Within Yourself...This Peace.... This Glow.... Is Yours By Divine Right from the very centre of the Universe, this Power flows...

We commune with it by Choice. And in the Choosing, we are blessed.

This harmonious flow is the Way Of Nature. We join with Nature....

Feel the Ground of the earth sprouting the ground of your being as your whole self comes together to go forward with life.

Accept Joy and happiness in your life...