

DR PETA STAPLETON

THINK WELL GROW WELL

Dr. Peta Stapleton brings you what she believes to be the best combination of techniques and skills to change your own problems, and patterns in your life, and also change other people's! Imagine: skills that allow you to change other people without them knowing, and foster better relationships! Finally, methods to help you get what you really want in life!

Think Well, Grow Well
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This is a work of non-fiction.

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Introduction

The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people. ~ Theodore Roosevelt

Who Am I?

My name is Peta Stapleton. I am also a trained psychologist and have gained a PhD in Psychology, specialising in eating disorders and addictions. I have counselled many clients with these problems over the last ten years, and run free support groups in the area too. I have lectured at a university and several colleges and am currently still employed at one.

My interest in Psychology stemmed from my own concerns about body image and weight as a teenager. Over the years my interest has grown to the point where I have researched and studied many methods to heal and change my own and other people's problems, behaviours and emotions. I have for some time explored my own purpose and passion in life. For me, it is about helping others. This book is my offer to you; some will find it useful, and some may use it as a reference later.

This book is about what I believe to be the best combination of techniques and skills to change your own problems, and patterns in your life, and also change other people's! Imagine: skills that allow you to change other people without them knowing, and foster better relationships! Finally, methods to help you get what you really want in life! But more on that later...

There are many books in the marketplace, which talk about healing and self-growth and have a range of wonderful techniques in them to help you change. The most diligent people out there may dedicate time to learning them and in fact change their behaviour and feelings and so on. However, have you ever noticed that, like many things, after a while those old patterns and thoughts and feelings creep back? You vow to be different in your relationship, and then after a while, everything is the same as before anyway? You are adamant you will be better this year with your budget, and somehow at the end of the year you are financially the same, if not worse.

Do you ever wonder why it is that you attract the same person in a relationship, a marriage? Have you ever left a job, secured a new one, only to find that it may be a new job, but the people are essentially the same as in your old one? Do you ever wonder why you have never won anything, and other people seem to win things all the time? Why other people never worry about money and you have bills all the time and can't seem to get ahead? You might just get on top of everything and then something happens, even something unusual, which drains the account again.

What if you could learn a technique or two which would break those habits and patterns forever so that you no longer attracted the same type of partner; so that you always ended up in a great position; would you be interested?

What This Book Is About

If you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always gotten.

~ Anonymous

If the preceding questions have interested you and you have found yourself saying, “That sounds like me! That has happened to me!” then perhaps the skills in this book might be useful for you. Years of research have explored all of the ideas presented here, but maybe you have never read them all put together like this. I freely acknowledge and reference this work to those who have prepared it before me. My aim here is to present it in a universal guidebook, which may decrease the time needed to find the skills when you most need them.

You can do this on your own. You could also have someone assist you. This book is not designed to be difficult or time consuming or require professional expertise. It is deliberately written for everyone in the community. Every now and then you will see reference to research or scientific evidence, and if this interests you, you can follow that up in your own time. If not, cut to the chase and let go of those patterns now!

Where Did This Come From?

Much of this book is based upon years of experience with clients with a variety of problems and behaviours. I have studied many different types of counselling, therapeutic techniques and ways of living over the years, and as happens sometimes, the information that you learn can sometimes become one giant mass. It can appear as though my ideas are new and refreshing, however it all stems from existing knowledge and ways of healing. What has happened here is that this book might be a new way of presenting it, all in one source. In parts, I have made reference to the source of information and where it may have originated. However, if in part I think it is my interpretation and I am wrong, I apologise to the original owners.

Chapter 1

Why Nothing Changes

In the Beginning

When we think about it, all of us had the same start. Somewhere, our mother and our father (irrespective of whether we think of them like that now), came together and started the life that is now you.

This is where it all goes back to.

There is research to suggest that from as early as six weeks gestation (meaning from when a mother is six weeks pregnant with her baby), the foetus begins to absorb every feeling and thought from the mother. If you think about it, a woman carries this child around within her for a fair amount of time, so it makes sense that at some level the child becomes aware of body states and emotions. Results from studies carried out suggest that at the prenatal level there is the beginning of cognitive schemes and regulations in mental operations.

There has always been a lot of research which suggests we do not develop memories until the age of two to three years. This may be true for some memories, like picture images you can remember. Researchers like to think of the memories we develop from six weeks in the womb as emotional memories. You might not be able to remember what your mum was doing when she was four or seven months pregnant, but any significant feeling she had was absorbed by you at the same time.

So, parents pass on more than genes to their children. Parents provide non-genetic contributions that dramatically influence the development of the baby. Maternal contributions can enhance a baby's chances for survival and assist the baby to adapt to the immediate environment.

Sarah attended counselling and one of the concerns she wanted to address was her intense fear of driving on a highway. She felt okay driving on local roads, but started to suffer from panicky feelings when she drove on a major highway. Through some of the techniques discussed later, Sarah identified that she had had the same feelings inside since she was very young. She could almost say she had always had them. But she couldn't recall ever being in a car accident or anything similar. She went home and asked her mother whether she had been in any car accidents and, to her surprise, her mother said she had had a serious accident when she was five months pregnant with Sarah, while she was having driving lessons. Her mother immediately stopped learning to drive and had never acquired her licence, because her fear was too great.

So it makes sense to suggest that whatever your parents were going through during the pregnancy, that you might have some similar concerns now.

For example, have you ever been told that you sound like your mother or gesture exactly like your father? If you can take on these types of traits it must be possible that you can take on emotional traits or problems as well. You might even now be thinking of some feelings that you have and which you can also say one of your parents has experienced. What we mean is: you

might always have bad luck with finances and always seem to be struggling to get ahead, and your parents have had the same issues their whole lives too.

It can work the opposite too. It is not always about the problems in life. You may be the type of person who always lands on your feet. No matter what happens in life, things work out somehow. And you might find the same is true of your dad.

This brings us to the next part; which is the notion that everything we are, every pattern we have in life, every reaction that we feel, and every behaviour we exhibit, essentially stems from the patterns, behaviours and emotions our parents have given us. By this I mean your biological parents. You may not be in a position where you know your biological parents (for example: adoption, one or both are deceased, you were only raised by one parent and never knew the other). This essentially does not matter. You will see why in the chapter about the process.

Take a deep breath!

While it might be easy to say, “Excellent! It is all their fault!” it is not quite like that. This is by no means a blame situation. It still stands through years of research into behaviour and emotions, that only *we* are responsible for our feelings and reactions. But what this new research suggests is that, by using certain techniques, you can unhook your connection to your parents and, in doing so, be released from their patterns and behaviours and be given the chance to truly change!

How Does This Work? The Preconscious

Much work has been conducted on the power of the preconscious. This is the part of the brain which absorbs everything going on around us from a very early age. We may not pay daily attention to the enormous amount of information stored in our preconscious, but it is there. It creeps out whenever it wants, and whenever something in it is triggered.

There are a couple of things you should know about your preconscious:

1. It does not know the difference between right and wrong information. It just knows that if it hears something often enough, it thinks it is important, so it stores it.

Do you ever find yourself humming or singing, or just thinking of a jingle from an advertisement on television? Some repetitive tune which you cannot get rid of? Something triggers you off thinking about it, and then you spend the day with it in your head? Did you ever sit down and study the advertisement to learn and memorise the jingle?

You may have walked past the television enough while it was being played, or sat in front of it, but not really paid attention. This was enough for your preconscious to say, "Right, heard that one many times, must be important, better store that jingle." And bam, there it is.

The same thing happens with comments you hear growing up. Perhaps your mother always told you, "You can do anything you want. You can do anything you want." As a five-year-old you

did not know whether you could or not, but you heard it enough so that as an adult, this was your belief system. The same goes with “You will never amount to anything. You will never amount to anything.”

This is how affirmations work too. You may have heard of these statements which are designed to re-program your preconscious, by feeding it positive sentences on a regular basis so that you believe it. For example, “I am a confident, assertive adult.”

Here is an exercise you can try at home (you may have heard of variations of this):

Next time you are out, pick a model and colour of car to focus upon. For example, a yellow Beetle. Drive around, thinking to yourself, “Yellow Beetle, yellow Beetle.” You will be amazed at how many yellow Beetles you will spot – as far away as the eighth aisle of the parking lot, in the seventeenth row.

What happens is your preconscious mind is doing the work for you – you have just placed the thing you want to focus on in the foremost of your mind.

This book takes it one step further. If you could identify a message you were given growing up which still bothers you today, like the one above, an affirmation might be successful in changing that belief because of the nature of the preconscious. However, this would take some time for you to continually repeat a positive statement until you felt it was second nature. But if you could get to the root of the problem fairly quickly and unhook where that message came from, it might take years off having to learn and recite affirmations. Would this interest you?

2. Your preconscious is very active. It stores and absorbs anywhere up to hundreds of things going on at once, but you only pay attention to between five and seven per minute. You might find yourself having strange dreams, or even recurring ones, and wonder what they were about. Some people suggest that this is just your preconscious spilling over when you are asleep. It gets a blank movie screen and starts churning out all the stuff it has been absorbing, and it often comes out in a big mess. There will be clues in your preconscious to issues and concerns you have in your life, but we will get to that later.

So Why Do I Keep Picking the Same Person? The Power of the Magnet.

So, you have patterns and behaviours which have been handed on to you by your parents; as a combination of their patterns and behaviours that have been stored away within you for many, many years from six weeks gestation. What happens now is that you have one big jigsaw of patterns, all acting as magnets, fitting together. You go out there into the world and your magnets start looking for other magnets to match. The jigsaw pieces need a perfect fit otherwise you move on and perhaps never really have a friendship or relationship with that person.

You know how you can meet some people and think, “Not sure what it is about that person, but I don’t like him.” You may not have any logical reason at all to say this, but you do not need one. Your preconscious does not fit with that person, so you move on.

The reverse happens. Have you ever met anyone and thought, “It’s like we’ve been friends for years?” Your jigsaw and theirs

fit together.

The jigsaw pieces are all part of your preconscious. Every pattern and behaviour you have is stored as a piece. And they can only be activated by the right person and situation.

Julie had dated several men in her twenties and always struck men who emotionally and verbally put her down. They were never physically abusive, but seemed to all have the common trait of speaking to her rudely and ignoring her emotional needs in the relationship. She read a few books on being assertive and decided at the end of her last relationship that the next one would be different! She had always met men through social venues like clubs, so was not surprised that, to her, the men were all similar. This time though, she was going to venture out into other hobbies, in the hope of finding a different person.

When she met Dan at a local pottery class, she was smitten. He was polite and respectful to her during the classes and they shared many common interests. After a while they started to go on a few dates and she thought, “Dan is so different from the others. This is the one!” The relationship progressed well and they eventually married. After a while things started to change subtly. Julie did not feel as fulfilled as she had in the beginning, and started to notice that Dan was oblivious to her moods. One night, in a distressed state, Julie realised that there were many similar traits between her other boyfriends and Dan, and that he too was now emotionally abusive towards her.

Even though Julie *consciously* decided she wanted to choose a different type of partner, her preconscious was only capable of attracting what she already knew. The packaging might have

looked different in the beginning, and some people suggest that we need rose-coloured glasses for a while to fall in love and make a commitment, but ultimately the preconscious always wins and the old patterns emerge. Unfortunately for Julie, she will always attract the same type of partner - for eternity! Unless she finds a way to unhook her preconscious from the patterns handed to her from her parents.

This common example can be presented as any issue. Always had money problems? You will continue to have them forever, unless you unhook them preconsciously. Always feel like you are wandering through life with no real purpose? You will always feel like this. No amount of classes, books or lectures will change you preconsciously. Always had struggles with your weight? This issue will always be there, even if you lose weight, you may find it is always at the back of your mind - where the preconscious lives!

It works in reverse too. And this is the good stuff. Have you always had the ability to get any job you want, no matter what qualifications or skills are required? You will always have this ability. Have you never worried about money or where it was coming from, and always seemed to have plenty? You will always be like this. Everyone will have a bunch of patterns that do not work very well for them, and everyone will have patterns which work wonderfully – ones they do not want to mess with!

The Harsh Reality

You are probably at the stage now where you are thinking, “Good one if I have things I want to change, but it seems they are here to stay for eternity. What do I do now? I don’t want to

be poor (sad, single, lonely, depressed, overweight, addicted) for the rest of my life!” The reality is that these things will probably stay, unless you learn some techniques that get to the preconscious.

Back to the patterns your parents hand on to you. There is scientific evidence to support these patterns and how they are transferred and we have a whole section here devoted to this. You may choose to read it, or you may choose to skip it. It does not make a whole lot of difference, but some people are more interested in the details.

Chapter 2

The Scientific Basis

(assisted by Alan J. Spencer)

The aim of this chapter is to give you further evidence and research which has explored the notion of these patterns handed on from your parents. Some of it might be quite tedious, but of interest to others. You truly do not need to know all of this in order to release those old patterns, but for some, this information is important.

Chronic and Repeated Patterns are Learned

You may have already heard of toxins that a mother passes to her foetus while she is pregnant: things like cigarettes, alcohol and other drugs. Very few people are aware that the mother also passes on information to the foetus. The information relayed by the mother to the foetus concerns the status of the environment. This status is conveyed in the mother's perceived attitudes about life. The mother's emotions, such as fear, anger, or love, can biochemically alter the genetic expression of the baby.

It is important to note that one-off events of emotions such as anger and fear do not necessarily distort the physiology of the developing child. Rather it is specifically 'chronic' or continuously held emotions that prove to be detrimental during pregnancy. For example, parents who do not wish to have a child; parents who are continuously concerned about their own, and consequently, their baby's, survival; women who sustain physical and/or emotional abuse during their pregnancy; all

represent situations where adverse environmental cues surrounding the birth of the child can be passed on to the child. Specifically, these are all cases of repeated or patterned abuses, which is entirely different from parents who express an occasional spat or emotional peak.

Our perceptions of the environment, and consequent emotions, result in physiological responses in the body by releasing 'signal' molecules into the bloodstream. Blood-borne, emotion-related signals activate specific receptor proteins on the surface of cells in tissues and organs in the foetus. *Activated receptors serve as molecular switches that adjust the metabolic system and behaviour of the organism, so as to accommodate environmental challenges.*

During pregnancy, the parent's perception of the environment is chemically communicated to the foetus through the placenta. The mother's blood-borne emotional chemicals cross the placenta (which is the cellular barrier between the mother's blood and the blood of the foetus) and affect the same target cells in the foetus as those in the parent. Though the developing child is unaware of the details evoking the mother's emotional response, he/she is aware of the emotion's physiological consequences and sensations.

While developing in the safety and confinement of the uterus, the child is provided a preview of the environment as it is defined by the parent's perception and behaviour. Parental behaviours are generally cyclic, and when repeated, they serve to habituate the developing behavioural chemistry in the foetus. Consequently, perceptions and responses to the environmental stress are imparted to the offspring and serve in programming its

behavioural expression.

Senses Forming in the Womb

From the moment the foetus begins to form in the womb, its senses are also forming. Life in the womb bears little resemblance to the lazy world previously assumed in which a baby was virtually deaf, dumb and blind. In fact, much of what was thought about the life of the pre-nate is false. We have misunderstood and underestimated their abilities.

*By eight weeks, it is apparent that the ability to **feel** is present. When the face (cheek) is stroked in utero, the baby will respond.*

The motor control centres have developed sufficiently to give the **ability to move spontaneously** from about eight to ten weeks. That demonstrates aspects of self expression and of self-control, expression of needs and interests, and protest against uncomfortable experiences. For example, a baby demonstrates the ability to feel by recoiling from the needle when an **amniocentesis** is performed.

This may indicate a self-protection and self-assertion mechanism is already present. The **expression of fear and anger** is present much earlier than previously thought possible. By **ten weeks**, ultrasound reveals a world of smooth (not reflexive) **voluntary activity**, including hand and face contacts, stretches, yawns and jaw opening, including tongue movements.

Amniocentesis is a (minor) surgical test that allows your doctor to obtain a sample of the amniotic fluid. The fluid is analysed to

look for genetic characteristics of the baby or to check on the maturity of the unborn baby's lungs. Amniocentesis helps the doctor estimate the baby's lung maturity because babies often 'breathe' amniotic fluid in and out of their lungs inside the womb. Amniotic fluid is chemically similar to the fluid within their lungs. As the lungs mature, the chemical composition changes, and these changes can be measured. It is a common way to obtain material for genetic and other testing of the baby. The doctor inserts a long, thin, hollow needle through the mother's abdomen into the uterus and amniotic fluid. The doctor usually uses ultrasound imaging to guide the needle. The amount of fluid taken should not affect the baby.

Preparation for Life in the Family

Memories will be covered in more detail later. However, for now, realise that behavioural memories are in part related to the appearance of specialised cell and tissue protein receptors, which serve as filters in remembering the past signals. *Behavioural filters acquired during pre- and perinatal programming are nature's way of preparing the neonate to function in the parents' environment.* In theory, these learned filters would enable the child to adapt outside the womb more quickly and successfully to the home environment. In this way, the parents' experiences help 'pre-programme' the behaviour of the child so that it may more effectively deal with environmental circumstances. From this perspective, parent nurturing is more than just providing a materially safe environment. Nurturing is more inclusive, in that the parents' attitudes and perceptions help prepare the baby in learning to deal with its new environment. In 'conscious parenting' the concept of a 'family' becomes a reality from the moment of conception. Parents must be

consciously aware that, from the idea of conceiving a baby and all the way through its pre- and postnatal development, their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours will influence their child's development and health.

For example, it has been demonstrated that prenatals of mothers who listened to 'soap opera' theme music during pregnancy showed a preference for the same music during the postnatal period.

The Brain is Not Fixed At Birth

It is a system that self-assembles, and when we are born, it works. For every growing child, the biology of learning shapes the brain's anatomy and functional character.

It all starts with a series of bulges on a four-week-old embryo's neural tube. From there, foetal brain cells multiply at a rate of about 250,000 a minute. Billions of brain cells, called neurons, develop throughout the pregnancy. By the time labour begins, the infant will have generated about 100 billion cells (neurons). No more neurons will develop after birth.

Starting at about age five, the brain hits a peak of activity it may never reach again. Research shows that between the ages of three and eight years, a child's brain has twice as many neurons, twice as many connections between them, and is twice as energetic as an adult brain. Infants can generate up to 15,000 connections to each neuron during the first few years of life. As those pathways enlarge, they develop 1,000 trillion connections, and the brain quadruples in size! This is the architecture for the physical maps that allow learning to occur.

The brain remains a work in progress throughout childhood. At eight months, an infant may have 1,000 trillion synapses. However, by the age of ten, the number of synapses decreases to about 500 trillion.

The developing brain is so robust that it can overcome severe physical trauma, yet again, so fragile that a mother's prolonged depression can imprint her infant's brain for a lifetime with the neurochemistry of sadness.

The Brain is a Sensory Organ

Everything we **experience is filtered** by our senses, and new or novel experience is stored. The brain senses and processes incoming signals. It then stores elements of that information, and acts on it when required. Even as you read/listen to this piece, you are monitoring/filtering information, which is out of your conscious awareness, until something happens that requires your conscious attention.

All sensory signals that are picked up by the **infant child** initiate a cascade of processes in the brain that **alter brain structure** and function. The direction these processes take depends upon the pattern, intensity, and frequency of brain activity produced by sensing, processing, and storing those signals.

Experiences **create a processing template** through which all **new input** is filtered. *Throughout the rest of our lives, our brain is making memories that correspond to various sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and movements stored in infancy, in an attempt to make meaning of new information.*

Imagine, for a moment, walking on the grass on a cold and frosty morning. You may have noticed the footprints that you leave behind. When the sun comes up, the footprints are gone, but you know that you have walked there. Some blades of grass will be pushed down because of your weight. The infant brain in its most primitive form is like that grass. You leave footprints wherever you walk. You may not be able to see them later, but they are there.

For many people the word memory has come to mean only some aspect of cognitive memory. Yet this is not the case, as the following examples will demonstrate.

a). Cognitive memories arise from ‘use-dependent’ changes in neuronal patterns of activity present during cognition (e.g. learning names, phone numbers, language).

b). Emotional or affect memories also result from ‘use-dependent’ changes in patterns of activity present during specific emotional experiences (e.g. grief, fear, and mirth). Emotional memories may manifest as first impression or transference (see LeDoux et al, 1990).

c). Motor vestibular memories again arise from ‘use-dependent’ activation of motor vestibular parts of the brain (e.g. riding a bicycle, typing, dancing, playing the piano).

d). State memories develop when a pattern of activation in state-regulating parts of the brain occurs that is sensitising, chronic or prolonged (e.g. chronic domestic violence, traumatic stress).

Derek is a nine-year-old boy. He was the victim of chronic and pervasive physical threat and abuse from his biological father. From the age of two until six, his father physically and sexually abused him. His mother acknowledged the abuse, and at age six

he was removed from the family. At age eight, he was injured in a fall. He suffered from serious brain injury and was in a coma for eight months as a result. He continues to be difficult to arouse, is non-verbal, and no form of meaningful communication is ever noted.

However, in the presence of his biological father, he began to scream, moan, and his heart rate increased dramatically. Audiotapes of his biological father elicit a similar response.

^{*}
(See extra research.)

So What is the Impact or the Implications?

Brain research has recently challenged many assumptions about heredity and environment beginning before birth. Once it was thought that our genes determined how our brain developed and how we interacted with the world.

^{*}
(Shore, Rima. Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development. Families & Work Institute: New York, 1997. Simmons, Tim and Sheen, Ruth. A Brain Research Manifests Importance of First Years. The News and Observer. Sunday, February 16, 1997. Time Magazine, February 3, 1997 Vol. 149 No. 5, Special Report. A Fertile Mind by Amy Markezich, Stanford University .)

It appears now that genes are relevant in predisposing an individual toward certain traits. However, environmental factors such as care, nutrition, surroundings and stimulation, also have an effect on the dynamics of brain development. The roles of nature and nurture determine intelligence and the emotional resilience interplay.

New knowledge in brain research shows that nurturing is the key to learning and the regulation of emotional responses. When

parents and caregivers show responsive early care, babies thrive. Responsive care-giving means meeting the baby's need for nourishment and warm touches, as well as infant's basic physical needs. In fact, it has been shown that the way parents and caregivers plan children's contact with the environment affects the formation of neural pathways. Fostering and reinforcing positive interactions with babies will greatly influence the developing patterns of neuronal connectivity. Play exchanges and positive interactions between the caregiver and the infant are beneficial to the formation and biochemistry of the brain's development. Secure attachments during the first year of life seem to predict social competency as the child gets older. Infants who experience warm and responsive care-giving are evidenced to be more empathetic with peers later in life. Also, infants with these nurturing experiences learn to be connected with other people.

Again, research reveals that the quality of care and security of attachment will affect a child's later capacity for empathy, emotional regulation and behaviour. The quality of care and secure attachments are the building blocks of healthy brain development.

Emotional Development and the Brain

Emotions seem to have critical periods of development. Personalities, feelings and emotions known as family traits seem to be passed from parent to child. Much research has indicated that there are genetic links for emotional disorders.

Research indicates that there is a critical window for emotional development. PET scans have shown increased activity in the

brain's frontal cortex between six months and two years. However, between ten and eighteen months, a baby's emotional intelligence begins to be wired, and this emotional arousal is closely linked with long-term memory.

Particular situations are tied with emotional reactions and make some memories long lasting. The more vivid the memory, the stronger the imprint is in the brain. It appears that the limbic system regulates emotional impulse. Emotional responses can interfere with decision making. Children learn to trust. If trust is nurtured, then it will become a part of the child's nature. On the other hand, neglect during childhood could cause behavioural and learning problems later on in life. It has also been reported that prolonged exposure to severe stress can actually change the physiological development of a child's brain.

Remember that nature provides an organ that craves experience and association. Whatever experiences are nurtured will be what becomes more permanent. The nurturing that young children learn will depend on exposure and we want positive and wonderful experiences for the children in our care. In other words, it is very important that we enhance the emotional bonds we develop with children from birth so the neurological connections will remain intact.

Language Development and the Brain

Neuroscientists often ask what wires a child's brain or rewires it after a physical trauma. They have determined the answer to be: repeated experiences. A baby tries to touch an interesting moving object or listens to a lullaby that results in tiny bursts of electricity shooting through the brain. Neurons are knitting into

circuits. The results are those behavioural milestones that never cease to intrigue us. Around two months of age, the motor-control centres of the brain develop to the degree that infants can suddenly reach out and grab a nearby object. At approximately four months of age, the cortex begins to refine the connections for depth perception and binocular vision. Moreover, around twelve months of age, the speech centres of the brain are balanced and the child begins to use language.

The Concept of Trauma

For the purpose of this book, the term trauma is used in the context of an event or series of events which are out of the normal range of the child's ability to comprehend. These are the sorts of things that can happen in everyday living. The world can be a very frightening place, even from an adult perspective. We live in a world prone to floods, cyclones, and terrorism, not to mention other sorts of natural disasters, and without warning, people die or are injured. Children may be hospitalised, or require some difficult and/or painful medical procedures. It is even suggested that a difficult birth can be traumatic for the newborn child.

Realise that trauma is not to be confused with stress, or fears. Although a trauma's toll on a child's brain begins with fear, the most important job of any living being is that they remain alive; and homeostasis (*the tendency of a physiological system to remain more or less stable*) is the job of the brain, the most delicate job of all. Homeostasis requires appropriate responses to the environment; responses whose goal is to keep the state stable. When faced with a threat, the body embarks on a surge of

physiological reactions. Adrenaline surges, setting the heart pounding and blood pressure soaring, and readying the muscles for action; a response called 'fight or flight'. At the same time, a more subtle set of changes, called the stress response, releases the hormone cortisol, which also helps the body respond to danger.

What is important is: there is not much agreement about what stress means. However, children who are exposed to and nurtured through stress, learn to deal with it. Children do not fear the same things adults fear; but children's fears are very real for them.

Stress during development is not necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, the development of stress-response neural systems depends upon exposure to moderate, controllable levels of stress. The opportunity for a toddler to control his or her exploration, to discover and to experience moderated novelty is essential for healthy development. Moderate, predictable levels of arousal and 'stress' related to the novelty of healthy exploration and development helps create a resilient, healthy child.

Children, when given the opportunity for moderate, controlled exposures to stress during childhood – with a consistent, available and safe caregiver to serve as 'home-base', can become inoculated against future, more severe stressors. Fears are also a part of everyday life, so it is normal for children to have fears. We tend to have different fears as we mature, and so children's fears tend to be underestimated by adults.

Nevertheless, children's fears are very real for them. Children fear things like the bogeyman that lives under their bed, and

other sorts of monsters. The thoughts of children tend to be focused on the present: the here and now. That is because children do not have the cognitive ability to be able to make sense of abstract situations, such as death and divorce. This cognitive lacking interferes with their ability to reason through a fear, so something that frightens them may persist long after the event has ended.

Consider the evening news. What message would you think children receive about the world where they live if they saw the same news item that you are viewing? Adults listening to news reports are often horrified, but imagine what a child might think after hearing such a frightening news report, and seeing the response of their carers. The child might ask: what does it mean to be abandoned by loved ones; or bashed; raped; set on fire; shot to death; drowned; taken by a shark; or seriously injured in a car, plane, or train accident?

Perhaps everyday events might be fearful things such as going to the dentist, to the child care centre or school for the first day. Other things may be traumatising, such as a relative dying, or divorce. Children of divorced parents report that it was the most stressful time of their lives, second only to the death of a loved one. Your child could be forgiven for asking the question, "Could this happen to me?" Your child's sense of autonomy may also influence how he interprets potentially fear-inducing events. The toddler begins to learn through life experiences how much *control* he/she has over themselves and their world.

In order to understand the origins and impact of interpersonal violence, it is essential to appreciate how violence alters, and moulds, the developing child. Remember the child and the adult

reflect the world they are raised in. Traumas, which are inescapable because of helplessness, can severely damage the hippocampus, killing off neurons, causing injury. This damage is caused by the release of a flow of cortisol, adrenaline and other stress hormones during traumatising that not only damage brain cells and impair memory, but also set in motion a long-lasting deregulation of the brain's biochemistry.

An excess of repeated surges of these chemicals and hormones to the brain is believed to cause the amygdala to become desensitised to the fear response and normal levels of serotonin to be reduced.

The regulation of emotion in the brain first occurs during mother-infant mutual gaze dialogues. The regulation and organisation of an infant's emotional perceptions continue to develop through ongoing interaction with its mother or primary caregiver. Research has shown that a mother who is pleasantly responsive to the infant through early eye contact is stimulating positive social learning.

In contrast, a mother who is not responsive to that early eye contact is not providing a positive social learning experience and is hindering the human attachment process, which is critical to healthy emotional growth. Similar social learning opportunities occur when an infant attempts to communicate through its cries.

Crying may be spurred because the infant is hungry, in pain, uncomfortable or frightened. Often, upon waking, an infant will begin to signal to its caregiver with soft whimpering, which eventually accelerates into frantic crying if it receives no response. Sometimes crying is misconstrued as an idealised

expression of anger or manipulation. Yet, such distressed crying in a young infant might better be described as a fear response.

In an infant, a fear might be invoked by the uncomfortable feeling of being soiled, the rumbling of stomach pains, or the vulnerability of being alone in the dark. Crying infants left unattended have been known to cry desperately for an hour or more until the amygdala eventually shuts down. The infant, in turn, learns after repeated episodes that it cannot expect comfort and response to its cries, and it may decide its needs are unworthy of attention and nurturing - a decision which may ultimately affect the infant's development of self-worth and connectedness to the world.

Fear of predators and death is an emotion deeply seated within our evolutionary biological make-up. In our earliest days, families and tribes huddled closely together in the dark to help soothe this fear. The idea of 'safety in numbers' held true, because a larger group of humans would fare better warding off predators than a small group or individual would.

Today, as parents, we may know that an infant is safe alone in its crib. However, the biology of an infant's brain is initially encoded with innate fear responses, which are easily prompted often in early life. Even though the brain may eventually determine it is not in any danger on its own, vital opportunities to develop and reinforce social lessons in trust, security and empathy may be missed if no attempt is made by a nurturing caregiver to calm that state of emotional turmoil.

When the infant is in a state of helpless fear and panic, the amygdala kicks in and sends messages to the brain to prepare the body for 'fight or flight'. An infant can neither fight nor flee. If

the panic is not subdued by intervention from a nurturing adult, the flood of chemicals and hormones may rage through the brain, specifically targeting the amygdala and hippocampus, for an unhealthy length of time.

We live in a violent world and sadly, in today's world, millions of children are raised in unstable and violent settings. There has been a misconception up until recently that children are resilient. That is to say, they were thought to be able to recover easily from misfortune, and capable of returning to their original state or way of being after the trauma is over.

We now know that children are, in fact, malleable. That is: they are capable of being shaped or formed, as by hammering or pressing. They are easily controlled or influenced by authority. Developing children are tractable.

People who have experienced traumatic events in childhood are at increased risk for a host of other problems, affecting all domains of functioning. Traumatic stress can have profound impact on the emotional, behavioural, cognitive, social and physical development of children; in some cases resulting in lifelong loss of potential, and chronic mental and physical health problems. Researchers are finding that trauma, neglect, physical and sexual abuse can have severe effects on a child's developing brain.

The Brain, Stress and Adaptation

We have learned that our brain is designed to sense, process, store, perceive, and act on information from the external and internal world to keep us alive. In order to do this, our brain has

hundreds of neural systems, all working in a continuous, dynamic process of modulating, regulating, compensating - increasing or decreasing activity to control the body's physiology.

Each of our many complex physiological systems has a rhythm of activity that regulates key functions. When blood sugar falls below a certain level, a set of compensatory physiological actions is activated. When tissue oxygen is low from exertion, or when an individual is dehydrated, sleepy, or threatened by a predator, still other sets of regulating activity will be turned on to respond to the specific need. For each of these systems, there are 'basal' or homeostatic patterns of activity within which the majority of environmental challenges can be sustained. Whether an internal condition, such as dehydration, or an external challenge, such as the constant physical or emotional abuse of a child, persists, this is a stress on the system.

It is the unpredictability factor that creates the most difficulty for the child's brain to assimilate.

The brain is a pattern-seeking organ; it demands consistency. Dramatic, rapid, unpredictable, or threatening changes in the environment will activate the 'stress' response systems. If this stress is severe or prolonged, the compensatory mechanisms can become over-activated or fatigued and incapable of restoring the previous state of equilibrium or homeostasis.

In a very real sense, trauma throws the organism 'off balance', and creates a persisting set of compensatory responses which create a new, but less functionally flexible, state of equilibrium. The unbalancing nature of trauma tangles both the chemistry and

archaeology of the child's brain. This new, trauma-induced homeostasis is more energy consuming and maladaptive than the previous state. The child has survived the traumatic experience: but at a cost.

The most well characterised reaction to threat is the fight or flight response. A second and quite common reaction pattern to threat is dissociation. It is increasingly clear that responses to threat can vary tremendously from individual to individual. This second major adaptive response to threat involves an entirely different set of physiological and mental changes, yet does not fall under the heading of either 'fight' or 'flight'.

Dissociation is not always a response to threat or trauma, though. *It is a common mental mechanism used in many situations during a routine day.* For example: meditation, Lamaze childbirth exercises, daydreaming and highway hypnosis are all mild forms of dissociation.

Many common and 'normal' mental states, such as anxiety, dissociation, or anger, are experienced by most of us to some degree. When any one of these becomes pervasive and ever-present, however, they begin to interfere with the rest of one's life. When this occurs, we often classify this problem as a neuropsychiatric disorder, such as a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Between ten and twenty percent of survivors of abuse are believed to suffer from dissociative disorders or from PTSD. Dissociation and PTSD are not sharply separated and often alternate in the same individual. People with PTSD tend to relive violent memories. They are easily startled, avoid cues that remind them of the original experience, and become intensely

agitated when confronted with such stimuli.

Children tend to use dissociation as an adaptation to threat more often than adults.

Because of their small size and limited life experiences, 'fight or flight' is usually not an option for children in a threatening situation. When fighting or physically fleeing is not possible, the child may use avoidant and psychological fleeing mechanisms that are categorised as dissociative. Dissociation due to threat and/or trauma may involve a distorted sense of time, a detached feeling that you are 'observing' something happen to you as if it is unreal, the sense that you may be watching a movie of your life. In extreme cases, children may withdraw into an elaborate fantasy world where they may assume special powers or strengths.

Like the alarm response, this 'defeat' or dissociative response is graded along a continuum. The intensity of the dissociation varies with the intensity and duration of the traumatic event. Again, remember that even when we are not threatened, we use dissociative mental mechanisms, such as daydreaming, all of the time. The period between wakefulness and sleep is another example of dissociating from the present to your inner thoughts, ideas, fears, fantasies, and then, ultimately, moving into the state of sleep.

During a traumatic event, all children and most adults use some degree of dissociation. However, some individuals will use, and some kinds of trauma induce, dissociation as a primary adaptive response.

For most children, the adaptive response to an acute trauma involves a *combination* of hyperarousal and dissociation. During the actual trauma, a child will feel threatened and the arousal systems will activate. With increased threat, the child moves along the arousal continuum. At some point along this continuum, if the child cannot escape or fight off the danger, the dissociative response is activated. This results in a host of protective mental (e.g. decreases in the perception of anxiety and pain) and physiological responses (decreased heart rate: see Perry et al., 1995) that characterize the dissociative response.

Where to from here?

The aim of this chapter was to consider some of the interplay between emotions, genes and the environment and how this impacts upon a developing foetus and a growing child. Patterns are established early in life and responses to situations seem difficult to change unless we interrupt the actual connections happening at a preconscious level.

The aim of the rest of this book is to provide you with some techniques to do this. This chapter may have sparked off some thought in you about your own patterns and what you might remember from your own childhood. The next chapter asks you to consider something you would like to change and the steps to take to remove that pattern.

Chapter 3

Identifying An Issue

*And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb,
Physician, **heal thyself**
(Luke 4:22-24)*

Time to Pick an Issue

The first part in this process is choosing something you want to change. If you have ever visited a counsellor or therapist or bought a self-help book, you probably had a behaviour you wanted to change.

Here is the interesting part. We only choose to change a behaviour when it has become a burden for us. When it no longer serves a purpose, or no longer gives us some level of enjoyment or reward. You might say, "But I want to lose weight and I have never ENJOYED being overweight!" You may not have enjoyed it, but it served a purpose for a while. That purpose has come to an end. Time to go.

If other people try to tell you what you should change and you are not ready to let go of that behaviour or emotion, because it still has some investment for you, you will have a reaction. "What do you mean, I have control issues? I don't have control issues!"

So, you choose. What do you really want to change?

Step 1. There will always be a double message or discrepancy in the behaviour or pattern

Meredith wanted to become more assertive. She felt she had always taken a back seat in family discussions growing up, and even today did not participate in staff meetings or social functions as much as she wanted. She felt awkward and nervous when she needed to speak, found herself tongue-tied and always walked away thinking, “I wish I had said this ... ” She thought about a double message she might have had with this issue.

“I know I don’t speak up in groups and seem timid and shy most of the time, but when I am in a relationship, I know I lay down the law in a very quiet way. It’s my way or the highway. It’s the only way I seem to be able to get control. I don’t rant or rage, I just have unstated rules and conditions in the relationship like, ‘Don’t mess with me. I don’t tolerate rubbish from people’.”

There will always be a discrepancy. In the pattern you want to change, first identify where you do not give a congruent message. Here are some questions to prompt this exploration:

Are there any times where you do the opposite of what you are trying to change, even if you feel it is justified? I am trying to lose weight but I know, if it is a special occasion, I will get back on the diet tomorrow.

Do other people find you inconsistent on this issue?

Mary is always complaining about money and having a huge credit card bill she can’t pay off, but if she needs those shoes to match the outfit for that wedding, she gets them, even if it doesn’t make sense. I am sick of hearing about it!

*This part of the process requires you to be honest. Find the double message you give the world and yourself, and write it down. In secret if you want, but acknowledge it. Some people think acknowledging the issue and being aware of it is enough to change it. Wrong. It just brings it from your preconscious to your conscious mind and will just hang around there annoying you. This brings new meaning to the phrase 'ignorance is bliss'. If you do not know about it, essentially you do not need to change it. It has not caused enough inconvenience or heartache or agony in your life for you to **want** to change it.*

Step 2. Acknowledge the role this behaviour has been playing for you.

Meredith realised that when she was quiet in a group or didn't participate in a social situation, she came across as a cold person. She was by far the warmest person she knew and just wanted to be friends with everyone and have everyone like her, but her shyness was often misinterpreted as snobbish behaviour. She acknowledged that this also kept her safe. If people did not get too close to her, did not learn too much about her, they could not get to know her faults. While she desperately wanted to be assertive, she knew that by being quiet, she didn't have to put herself on the line. She was stuck in a bind.

Doing steps 1 and 2 might be new for you. This is why the following two techniques are included to help this process:

Technique 1: try spending some time quietly to think and ponder on the double message/s you might be showing. Lie quietly with your eyes closed, preferably not when you are tired or you will fall asleep, and silently talk through the thoughts in your head.

Quiet time and the dark seem to help people clarify things and reach conclusions they could not get to when they are up and staring at the television.

Technique 2: grab a pen and paper and jot down the behaviour you want to change at the top. Write the 2 questions of “what double messages do I show here?” and “what role does this behaviour play for me?” And then put the pen in your other hand (your non-dominant hand) and let yourself answer the questions like that. You may be thinking your handwriting is terrible and you can hardly read it and feel like a prize donkey doing it, but here is how it works.

Very simply, research tells us that each of our brain’s hemispheres controls the opposite side of our bodies. The left hemisphere controls the right side of our bodies and vice versa. People affected by stroke are testament to this. Our dominant hand draws heavily on the logical part of our opposite hemisphere because we usually use this hand to do many things in life. The suggestion is that the emotions in our brain are stored in the opposite hemisphere and so will not be readily accessed with our dominant hand. If you swap hands to write, you will be accessing the emotional component in your brain, ‘the inner child’, as some people call it, and find out a range of things in your preconscious that perhaps you were not consciously aware of.

You can only try it. Basically the logical ones amongst us may think this is garbage and it probably will not work. Perhaps this could be the first issue to work on: accepting other realms of experience out there! The bottom line is that you need to know the double message and the role the pattern plays before moving

on to the unhooking part.

Sally knew her pattern of procrastinating was causing her problems in her personal life as well as at work. She never quite got around to doing things, even though she had the very best of intentions. Other things just always seemed to come up. Sally held a managerial role with a graphic design company and was in charge of many young recruits. However, her procrastinating eventually got to the point where she was about to lose her job because she was way behind on her jobs and never met her budgets, so she knew she needed to address it. She identified a double message. Sally could easily order other people around at work and lecture them on completing jobs and how to overcome inertia, but she hid her own procrastination very well. Although she procrastinated herself, she refused to accept it in others.

However, when it came to identifying the role procrastination played in her life, Sally felt stuck. Nothing really came to mind. She tried the opposite hand writing and was shocked to discover an outflow of thoughts and feelings stemming back to when she was six years old. Her father used to always say to her, "If you can't do anything right the first time, don't do it at all." What may have been a throwaway comment by her dad, impacted upon her preconscious after hearing it time after time, and was stored for life. Her perfectionist qualities may have got her the job in the beginning, but because she worried incessantly about completing a job perfectly, she found herself avoiding starting it for fear of it not being good enough.

Chapter 4

Unhooking the Pattern

I think self-awareness is probably the most important thing towards being a champion.

~ Billie Jean King

It is best to choose a time when you know you will be relaxed and free from noise and interruption. Remember earlier we were talking about the power of the preconscious and how it acts as a magnet? There are a few other things you need to know about this wonderful part of ourselves:

1. Your preconscious does not know right from wrong. This was covered earlier. All it knows is that it has served you a purpose for many years. Therefore, when you make a decision to actively change part of it, in order to heal, your preconscious may react. How does it do this?

Sometimes, what happens is that you will make the decision to complete an unhooking process, and when you go to do it, you may experience a whole range of physical sensations, such as butterflies in your stomach. You may feel nauseated, nervous or panicky. This is believed to be your preconscious trying to make itself heard! It is important in this instance to reassure yourself that the process you are about to do is to heal, not damage.

2. Strange things may happen to prevent you from doing your unhooking. For example: the telephone may ring, a visitor may pop in unexpectedly. Again, it is just a matter of being aware

that your preconscious may be trying to avoid the process, because as far as it knows, you are going in there to destroy it! Take a deep breath, plan to try again later, and reassure yourself you are going to heal and become better.

The Process

It is best to read through this whole section first, and then go back and try the process. The aim is to begin by relaxing. Here are two examples of visualisation exercises to help you achieve a calm state.

1. Close your eyes. Begin by taking several deep, slow breaths. Imagine, in your mind, you are standing at the top of a set of stairs which are heading down. There are ten steps. As you slowly imagine stepping down onto each step, your relaxation level will become deeper

Or

2. Close your eyes. Imagine you are about to walk into a lift. You are the only person in this lift and it is descending three levels. As you imagine pressing the button to start going down, your relaxation levels will become deeper. As the lift slowly moves and gently reaches each level, your relaxation level becomes deeper.

When you reach the bottom of either exercise, imagine walking into a room. This is your room of knowledge and wisdom. Imagine there is a chair in the centre of the room. You walk over and sit in it, noticing the room around you. Is there a colour,

sounds, certain messages? As you imagine looking up towards the ceiling, you will notice there is no roof. This room opens directly to the sky. Imagine you can feel yourself floating up out of your chair and towards the blue sky, the clouds surround you and you feel weightless.

Imagine now an image of your mother and father appearing before you. Also imagine yourself there, at your present age. It is not important to visualise their exact features. You can just imagine a blob or shadow which represents them. This also means that if you have never met one of your parents, it is not important. Again, just imagine a shape which you can call them.

Choose which parent you would like to have your conversation with first. Turn your attention to them and begin to talk to them in your mind about whatever issue you have become aware of. Let this parent know that you are grateful for all they have taught you, but that now it is time for you to move on, as this behaviour/feeling is no longer useful to you. Imagine a cord on some part of your body that connects you to this parent, and using whatever means you like, disconnect that cord. Remember to connect your end back to you and their end back to them. You may also like to forgive your parents if you think this is necessary.

Repeat this process for the other parent. It is important to have the conversation with both parents, even if you think it is only one parent who has taught you this pattern. Sometimes there is a minor part that belongs to this other parent and the pattern will not be completely healed until you release this too.

When you are ready, you can imagine your parents fading away.

You might like to prepare to return. Start to breathe a little deeper and become aware of outside sounds. Take a moment to ground yourself, before getting up and moving around. Remind yourself that your healing has taken place and enjoy the days which follow, when you will become aware of how things have changed.

A Quick Overview

- Relax
- Imagine an image of your mother and father in your mind, and yourself there as well.
- Have the conversation you need to have *with each parent*.
- Imagine the cord that connects you to each parent.
- Disconnect yourself from each parent, putting their end back into their body and your end back into your body.
- Thank each parent, forgive if need be, and return from your relaxation.

How and Why Does it Work?

The first act of relaxing and floating up in the visualisation exercise helps you access your preconscious. Once you have practised this technique a few times, you only need to imagine your mum and dad before you and this is enough to disassociate you from your body. You need to be disassociated in order to access your preconscious. Keep in mind some people can do this exercise with their eyes open, but it is useful in the beginning to close your eyes.

The concept of disassociating was discussed in the chapter on

the science behind these patterns. In this case, we are using disassociation to our advantage.

You may have heard phrases about people still being connected to a parent by an imaginary umbilical cord. As funny as it sounds, this is actually the case. The act of disconnecting the cord acts as a powerful release from that parent, on whatever issue you are focusing. Sometimes people ask, “In that case, can you just disconnect everything from your parents, in one big swoop?” Experience has shown that this is not very effective. Some patterns are stronger than others, and individual issues need to be dealt with like that. What you will find, though, is that when you deal with one issue, other things in your life change because they were linked to that issue, unbeknownst to you!

When One Parent or Both are Unknown to You

Sometimes a person will comment that they have never known their mother or father, so therefore cannot unhook patterns to this person. Experience in only unhooking patterns to one parent results in some of the pattern remaining. This is because biologically you came from two people. Colleagues and I have also discovered that you do not need to consciously have ‘known’ a parent for this technique to work.

As discussed, everything you need to know or unhook is already stored within you, in your preconscious. You just need to access it. You do not need to imagine an exact photograph of the parent you do not know – imagining a blur or shape is enough. As you engage in the process, you might find you think of things that make sense or remember something someone told you a long

time ago. This is your preconscious freeing up information for you to access.

If you are adopted and have never known your biological parents, the same thing stands. You need to imagine your biological parents as blurs and they are the ones to unhook from. Your adoptive parents did not preconsciously hand you their patterns or beliefs, although they would have picked you for adoption based on those jigsaw pieces fitting together!

Joe was born with problems with his hips. He was adopted at ten months by an older couple who could not have children of their own. It was at a time where there was an abundance of children to adopt, all of whom were physically healthy, except Joe. However, for 'some' reason, the couple picked Joe.

From an early age, Joe's adoptive parents were abusive to him. They punished him, using cruel methods and behaved in such a malicious way towards him that he wondered why they had adopted him. He was a quiet child and so never disclosed what was happening to anyone.

Eventually Joe left home and sought information and a relationship with his biological parents, who had since divorced. Upon seeking counselling for his own relationship concerns, Joe learnt about unhooking patterns and changing behaviour. He realised that while he did not have a close relationship with his biological mother and father, he knew enough about them to realise that they had been abusive to each other and subsequent children.

His own adoptive parents were similar to this, and all of a

sudden, Joe realised that when they came to adopt him, his biological jigsaw pieces fitted with their – over all the other children.

How Can You Tell it has Worked?

The most obvious way of telling if your unhooking has worked is to see if the issue or pattern still occurs in your life. Because this is such a subtle technique, sometimes people have to look hard to notice changes. This is because it does not feel any different than before – you just no longer attract certain magnets!

Jennifer had isolated a behaviour she wanted to change. She had always felt left out by her oldest sister and no matter how often she tried to talk to her, the same old pattern happened. Susan would organise a family picnic and forget to ask Jennifer to attend. Susan would go to get drinks for everyone at the movies and forget to get Jennifer one. It seemed like she was doing it on purpose, but when questioned, she seemed to have genuinely forgotten.

Jennifer decided to unhook this pattern and traced it back to her parents. She knew she had a discrepancy in her own behaviour. While she always tried to be the one to look after the family, and include everyone so people's feelings were not hurt, she knew there were some people in her family she didn't like and preconsciously avoided them.

Jennifer went through the process and found herself not dwelling on her sister's forgetfulness where she was concerned. It just didn't seem like an issue to her anymore. She didn't really know

things had changed until the next family barbecue when her sister went to get everyone a plate and handed Jennifer one without first being prompted. Jennifer realised she had removed the trigger, the jigsaw piece, and her sister was none the wiser. Things have been different ever since.

This example is a very common outcome. After you unhook the behaviour or pattern, it no longer seems to be an issue for you. The key is to notice yourself in daily routines to pick up the changes.

It is also important here to point out some alarm bells which might signify the issue is not over and might need some more work:

- If you find yourself still dwelling on an issue and it is still going around in your mind, you may need to approach it from a different angle. While your unhooking would have worked on some part of the pattern, there may be another part to it.
- If you notice a pattern still happens to you, you might need to approach it again. For example, if Jennifer had found that her sister still forgot about her at the next family function, she would have known that she needed to go in there again and do some more unhooking.
- You still experience physical sensations in a situation. This might be a clue that there is something else to work on.

The Physical Sensations

Sometimes people are aware of a physical sensation in their

bodies before they become aware of the pattern they want to change. For example, many people are afraid of public speaking. They might find themselves nervous in the stomach, have tightness in the throat, and panicky all over. There has been much research done on physical states like this and the process outlined above can also be used to heal these types of feelings.

Jacob knew that every time he wanted to confront someone about something they had done, he felt nervous in his stomach and his heart pounded uncontrollably. He was sure the other person would know! He found it difficult to say the right words when confronting, even though he might have gone over and over it in his mind. The words got stuck in his throat and he had to control his nerves. The overall effect was that Jacob never really expressed what he wanted to, and this pattern kept repeating itself, over and over.

Jacob reviewed the information on Chakras and gained some insight into what caused the sensations in his stomach and throat. He was then able to explore this further and unhook the pattern when he became aware of where it came from.

Research into the Chakras in the body has spanned many years. The word Chakra comes from the Sanskrit word for 'wheel'. They are seen as energy centres in the body. Not so much part of the physical body, but of the energy system, or aura, of the body. Charkas have been part of daily life in many cultures for years.

Traditionally there are seven Chakras of the body. Each is associated with an endocrine gland and organs in the body, and you will often see them associated with a different colour. Depending on how balanced we are in life, our Chakras can

either be opened or closed. The ideal is to find balance. There are many books and papers on Chakras and I encourage you to seek more detailed information as this is a simplified version.

The aim of this next section is to give you an overview of each Chakra and some insight into the physical and emotional issues attached to each. This, in turn, may assist you when exploring a physical sensation in your body and start you off to find the pattern you want to unhook. Keep in mind it is only a guide.

<i>1st Chakra – colour red</i>	
Location	Base of the spine
Gland	Adrenals
Body parts	Legs, bones, spine, colon
Physical symptoms	Lower back pain, depression, varicose veins
Emotional symptoms	Feeling ungrounded, feelings of having no basis in existence
What it controls	Instincts, survival, physical needs
Spiritual lesson	Stability, grounding, physical health, trust, prosperity
Opposing force / thing to release	Material world lessons, fear

<i>2nd Chakra – colour orange</i>	
Location	Sacrum, lower abdomen (2 inches below navel)
Gland	Ovaries, testicles
Body parts	Womb, genitals, kidney, bladder, muscles
Physical symptoms	Female hormone problems, sexual dysfunction
Emotional symptoms	Mood swings, loss of sex drive, feeling unattractive
What it controls	Sexual and emotional energies
Spiritual lesson	Creativity, manifestation, learning to let go
Opposing force / thing to release	Guilt

<i>3rd Chakra – colour yellow</i>	
Location	Solar plexus (mid torso)
Gland	Pancreas

Body parts	Digestive organs, stomach, liver, gall bladder, spleen
Physical symptoms	Ulcers, upset stomach, indigestion
Emotional symptoms	Feelings of helplessness, passivity, fear
What it controls	Emotion, self will, personal power
Spiritual lesson	Acceptance of your place in life stream (self-love)
Opposing force / thing to release	Shame

<i>4th Chakra – colour green</i>	
Location	Heart area, centre of chest
Gland	Thymus
Body parts	Heart, lungs, arms, hands
Physical symptoms	Heart problems
Emotional symptoms	Loneliness, heartbreak
What it controls	Love

Spiritual lesson	Forgiveness, unconditional love, letting go, trust, compassion
Opposing force / thing to release	Sadness

<i>5th Chakra – colour blue</i>	
Location	Throat area
Gland	Thyroid
Body parts	Throat, ears, mouth
Physical symptoms	Sore throat, speech problems
Emotional symptoms	Inability to communicate effectively, choices
What it controls	Communication
Spiritual lesson	Confession, faith, truthfulness over deceit
Opposing force / thing to release	Lies

<i>6th Chakra – colour indigo</i>	
Location	Brow, centre of forehead (above and between eyebrows)
Gland	Pineal
Body parts	Mind function, left and right cerebral hemispheres
Physical symptoms	Headaches
Emotional symptoms	Forgetful, too intellectual, fear of future
What it controls	Creative thought, psychic powers, wisdom
Spiritual lesson	Understanding, detachment, open mind, reality checkpoint
Opposing force / thing to release	Illusion

<i>7th Chakra – colour violet</i>	
Location	Crown, top of head
Gland	Pituitary
Body parts	Transcends the physical body and controls esoteric anatomy

Physical symptoms	All
Emotional symptoms	Unconnected, out of control, lack of purpose, value, ethics
What it controls	Hope, connection with higher powers, spirituality
Spiritual lesson	Living in the now, spirituality
Opposing force / thing to release	Attachment

Dreams as a Clue

There is a lot of information in the marketplace about dreams and what they mean. The purpose of this comment is just to act as a guide, not to explain what dreams mean. If you find yourself remembering a whole dream or sections of it, and they play over and over in your mind, this might be a clue about something you need to heal and put to rest. There is some truth in the saying, "Put it behind you". This literally means: out of your conscious mind. Here's an example which may help.

Penelope used to have a recurring dream as a child and she could still remember parts of it as an adult. While she no longer had the dream, she wondered why she had it for so long as a child, over and over.

The dream was about the family having a picnic with some close friends and their children. These were actual people in Penelope's life at the time. They were all picnicking atop a cliff,

in a set area. The children had all been told not to play in the cars. Penelope was about seven years in the dream, which was her actual age at the time. Somehow in the dream, she and two other children were in one of the cars, playing, despite being told not to. One of the other children played with the handbrake and the car started rolling towards the edge of the cliff. At this stage, Penelope always awoke from the dream.

The most significant thing Penelope remembered about the dream was her feelings of guilt that she was doing the wrong thing.

Now, as an adult, Penelope no longer had the dream, but could easily identify the similar feelings of guilt which always arose when she knowingly did something wrong. She had been taught strong morals as a child, closely associated with a strict religious upbringing, and guilt was always present when being reprimanded for doing something wrong.

When Penelope released the irrational feelings of guilt from her parents, she found that she was no longer plagued by situations in life which made her choose between right and wrong. So, therefore, the guilt cycle did not happen. She just always found herself living true to her heart. Her morals or values did not change, just her irrational guilt.

Chapter 5

Healing Physical Complaints

Physical Complaints

There has been some wonderful work done by American author, Brandon Bays, on healing and process work¹. In particular, Brandon has explored the notion of healing physical complaints within our bodies. While the skills and techniques he discusses are effective, the following version is just as successful in releasing old pain which manifests into physical complaints.

The Notion Of Physical Problems And Emotional Memories

Have you ever developed a rash or started to lose hair, only to notice a few weeks later that you were under incredible stress or something similar during that time? Again, there has been much thought given to, and research conducted into, how emotional memories might result in a physical problem. Deepak Chopra, endocrinologist, has released many books exploring this notion and I encourage you to read some of his work².

While it might be easy to say, “Yes, I can see how stress might make my hair fall out,” it might be a bit of a stretch for you to consider something like arthritis being emotionally linked to a

¹ See *The Journey*, Brandon Bays, 1999, Thorsons: London

² See *Perfect Health: The Complete Mind/Body Guide*, Deepak Chopra, 2001, Harmony: USA and *Ageless Body: Timeless Mind*, Deepak Chopra, 1994, Harmony: USA

past memory or a few memories. It might be easier to say that arthritis is genetic in your family and you are bound to get it, regardless.

Pause for a moment and allow yourself to consider this: sometimes emotional memories are stored in our bodies because we do not learn the lesson in the moment they happen. Rather than have that same lesson pop up at a later time in life, it manifests as a physical complaint instead. If you could locate the memory in your body and release it, and the pain left, would this interest you? It may be one of those things you need to have a go at to see what happens.

The concept here is similar to the past chapter on techniques. However, the memory you will be accessing will be in your body. So part of the process is going *within* to find it. Sometimes people say, “But I don’t know what I look like inside my body!” You might be interested to know that even children as young as five have been known to describe body organs and functions, without any obvious understanding of anatomy! This suggests that we have an innate understanding of how our bodies operate and if we allow ourselves to relax and trust our instincts, we will find what we need to know.

Again, it may be easier for you to have someone read this technique to you, in order for you to learn it for next time.

Steps to Healing Physical Pain

Allow yourself to choose a time when you can have a quiet and relaxing space. You may like to repeat the method of relaxing as described in previous chapters.

Close your eyes. Imagine you are about to walk into a lift. You are the only person in this lift and it is descending three levels. As you imagine pressing the button to start going down, your relaxation levels will become deeper. As the lift slowly moves and gently reaches each level, your relaxation level becomes deeper.

As you reach the ground floor, imagine you are about to step out and into a vehicle in your mind. This vehicle is to transport you to the place in your body you will be healing. It can look like anything you want it to.

Continue to relax and allow yourself to explore your vehicle in your mind. When you are ready, instruct your vehicle to take you to the site of your emotional memory, which is causing the pain. One thing to keep in mind here: you might have the pain in your wrist, but your vehicle may take you to your lungs for the memory. Flow with this. Your body knows best.

If you are still struggling to relax and nothing immediately springs to mind, perhaps take the time to start with each leg: imagine you are exploring down the right leg and then the left. Continue to your pelvic area and so on.

You may now get instant images of what your 'insides' look like and that is fine. You may get a feeling instead. Trust your instinct to stop where you think something is different.

When you have located the place in your body which seems to have the memory, pause and concentrate. You may be able to imagine parts of the body or organ where you are being different to whatever else is around you. Sometimes people describe in

great detail the dissimilar veins, surface areas and so on.

You are now waiting for a memory to 'pop up' before you: like you are watching it on a movie screen. Again, if nothing pops up immediately, allow yourself some time to continue relaxing and remind yourself: this process is about healing. Sometimes our preconscious needs to be reassured, because again, it has served a purpose for some time and it can become anxious that you want it to change!

When the memory has surfaced, imagine the key players or people in your memory are before you: you are there at your present age and all the other people involved are there too. If it was just you as a child in the memory, have the two versions and ages of you there.

You will know whatever it was you needed to say to each of these people during the time the event happened – but perhaps did not. Now is your chance. Moving from person to person, share with them what you needed to say and question whether you need to forgive them or reassure them that you are older now and understand. If there is a younger version of yourself, you may like to remind yourself (the younger you) that again, you are older now and have more skills to deal with life.

As you feel ready to let each person go, imagine they fade off into the distance until you are left by yourself. As you pause, ready to move on, have a glance around you at the body part or organ and notice any changes. These changes can be instant after a healing. When you are ready to leave, return to your vehicle and move away from the area, returning to the place where you started. As you leave your vehicle, remind yourself that you are

able to return whenever you need and your healing can take place at any time.

This technique is as powerful as the previous ones described in healing physical complaints. Again, because it is unknown how many memories may be stored within a body part or organ, you may need to revisit your vehicle if you find that only part of the physical pain has left.

Wayne had suffered from sciatic pain in his lower back and legs for some years. He did not quite know what had started it, but he had not responded to therapies such as acupuncture, heat or cold packs, or massage, and did not want to continue taking pain relief medication. Through some reading on the Chakras and associated physical complaints, he realised that he had always had concerns about his safety and financial wellbeing in life.

The vehicle technique was described to Wayne and he happily gave it a go. The first time he explored his body, he located a memory within his pelvic region. Wayne remembers being two or three years of age at the time and recalled a period when his parents fought all the time about money and finances and his father's drinking. He had always known that his mother had struggled paying the bills because most of his father's wage ended up at the pub. However, he had underestimated the amount of fear he felt as a child, watching this scenario, and how much guilt he carried around as he heard his father say, "That child costs too much money. We should never have had kids!" Wayne spent some time talking to this younger version of himself and each parent, and although it was difficult, finally forgave his father.

Wayne revisited the technique some time later and located

another memory in his heart region. Again he had discussions with all people involved and continued his healing. He has since found the sciatic pain has gone from a seven on a scale of one to ten (ten being the greatest) to a two. He is continuing to explore this pain and knows he will be pain free within the year!

Ironically, Wayne has also found other positive side effects: he has sometimes 'forgotten' to triple lock his doors and windows at night (part of his safety concerns) and has still slept peacefully at night. He has recently acquired a new job which gives him excess money each week after paying his bills. This is quite different to years of always owing money and being on payment plans.

Chapter 6

Troubleshooting

This section has a variety of frequently asked questions which sometimes arise during the timeline processes.

What if I fall asleep during the process?

If a therapist is helping you out with these techniques and they are talking to you while you fall asleep, it does not seem to make a difference. Therapists can use signals (like you raising one finger when you are ready to move on during the process) and people appear to continue doing this even when they fall asleep.

However, if you are doing the techniques by yourself and fall asleep, the process seems to stop and the disconnecting does not take place. You must try again at another time when you are not tired. Keep in mind that the preconscious is strong and you may start to feel sleepy during a technique, even if you did not beforehand! The preconscious may be trying to divert you from changing a pattern that has been useful for you until this point.

How do I know if the technique has worked?

The best way to check this is to get back out there in life and see if the pattern occurs again. Because these techniques are subtle, yet powerful, you may have to pay particular attention to the area in life you want to change. What seems to happen is that the behaviour changes and things just start to work out and it is a while before you realise it used to be different! This is because

the new behaviour seems so normal!

Do I have to believe in these techniques for them to work?

Sometimes people think they need to believe in techniques like these for them to work. However, this is not the case when working with the preconscious. As long as you follow the process (or have someone do it for you), your behaviour and patterns will change. Of course, if you do not believe in it and do not give it a go, nothing will change!

I have done the timeline but the pattern still seems to happen!

There is a chance that you have not got to the bottom of the pattern if this happens. Sometimes our patterns are very intricate and while you will definitely change some aspect of it during a process, the part you might really want to change is buried a bit deeper. I liken it to an onion with layers. If you peel back one layer of the onion, it then allows you to peel back the next layer, and so on. It can be the same with patterns. Unless you do the first timeline, you might not be able to then become aware of the next thing you need to change. Patterns will change along the way, until finally the core or foundation of the pattern will change. There is no set number of techniques you need to do before this happens. It is all individual. The good news is: you will hit some of the patterns on the head first time around!

Do I have to speak to both parents every time I do a technique?

The answer is: yes. Parts of your patterns and behaviours have come from both parents, and regardless of whether you consciously think they have contributed to a theme or not, you need to address both of them.

What if I cannot imagine my parents in my mind?

You do not need to imagine each parent as a photo. Some people are not visual by nature, so imagining may be difficult. Imagining a blob or just a shadow is sufficient (the technique will still work) – as long as you call it your mother or father.

What if I do not know my mother / father?

This is the case for many people. This question was addressed in Chapter 4, but to recap: you only need to imagine a blob (especially if you have never seen a photo of them) and speak to the blob as though it is your father/mother. When you access your preconscious, you will become aware of information that is stored there. You basically have all the information inside; it is just not in your conscious mind right now.

So, if I do not believe in timeline techniques and do not do them, is there any other way (or techniques) that will change my patterns?

I am not aware of any other techniques, which so easily change your patterns on a preconscious level. Many therapies teach clients techniques which target the conscious mind (like learning

appropriate thoughts) but they take a lot of conscious effort. There may be other preconscious techniques out there; this is just one that has worked very easily.

What if I cannot unhook the cord from a parent? (the parent hangs onto it tightly or it rejoins after you attempt to disconnect it)

This has been known to happen! The preconscious is a powerful part of us! In this case, it is best to relax and not rush things. Speak gently and quietly to the parent and reassure them that this technique will not ruin your relationship with them, but rather make it stronger and healthier. Remember, you need to take particular care as this pattern has served a purpose until now and may not understand why you are changing it!

What if I cannot work out what I want to change?

This one is over to you. Spend some time thinking about different areas in your life and decide what you are unhappy about. You may find it is a physical sensation that you do not like. For example, a pounding heart or wavering voice when you speak in public. If you are still stuck, ask someone in your life what they do not like about your behaviour! This will give you food for thought.

What if I cannot work out the double message in my behaviour?

If you have spent some time considering this and still cannot work it out, ask someone you trust if they can recognise a double message. Often people removed from our situation can easily spot our discrepancies. Just be prepared for the answer!

How do I change the patterns in my child?

While there is a section on changing others in this book, it is really about changing your reactions to them to affect the invisible ‘pull’ that might be there. The same thing happens with a child. If your child always ignores you when you reprimand him, you need to consider if your behaviour is inconsistent towards him. For example, you might reprimand sometimes, and other times laugh at them because their naughtiness is ‘cute’. This message confuses a child so, of course, they will not listen to you when you are in proper ‘parent mode’ – as sometimes you are not! If you change your own pattern and the reasons why you are sometimes inconsistent, then your child will respond consistently too. It really works!

What if I cannot relax enough to do a technique?

You really do not need to be completely relaxed in order for these techniques to work. If you close your eyes sitting at a desk and imagine your mother and father before you and have a conversation, it will still work. For first-timers, it is often useful to relax and lie down in order to fully access the preconscious and learn. Once you are used to the techniques, you can do them quickly and anywhere! I have worked with some clients who do not need to close their eyes!

When can I stop doing the techniques?

You can stop at any time. However, you will usually become aware of something else you want to change down the track. It is the ‘onion’ analogy again. Peeling back layers will just make you aware of other patterns buried deeper. The time in between

techniques will vary – you may do several a day, and then nothing for months. It is up to you.

What if I find it difficult to focus during the technique (and I start daydreaming about other stuff)?

This can happen to us all. You can either try again at another time or persevere until you stay focussed. If you find this is a general pattern in your life anyway (i.e. you always have difficulty focussing and everyone tells you so) – you could always work on that theme first! If you change that behaviour, other things will change in your life.

With the physical sensations techniques, what if I cannot imagine inside my body or the body parts?

Some people are not visual and this is fine. You may just pick a sensation that you are inside your leg or stomach and you may just get an intuition feeling to ‘stop’ at the place where the memory is. This is okay too.

Tips for Therapists

Following below is a script which is useful to read to clients when you are guiding them through the timeline technique. Asking a client to raise one finger when they are ready to move on, allows them to stay fully immersed in the process and not have to speak. Speak slowly and pause whenever you want, to allow the client to relax into the process. Often clients find it useful to lie down if they can, perhaps with an eye pillow over their eyes.

Script

Begin by focusing on your breathing; concentrate on each breath as you breathe in, and breathe out. You may be aware of outside sounds, or your own thoughts, just allow them to drift in and drift out. You do not need to pay attention to them right now. Breathing in, breathing out.

When you are ready, imagine you are about to walk down a staircase. You are standing at the top of the staircase. It may be one you have walked down before. As you take the first step down the staircase, imagine your relaxation levels become slightly deeper. You may be able to feel what it is like, you may be aware of what is around you right now. Taking the next step. Step 3. Continuing to breath, feeling slightly more relaxed. Step 5. Step 6. Feeing more relaxed than before. Step 7. Step 8. Step 9. Breathing slowly, feeling relaxed. As you get ready to step down to the final step you may imagine a door in front of you. Taking that last step – step 10. When you reach the door, imagine you can push it open and walk into a room.

This is your room of knowledge and wisdom. Your room of answers. Imagine what is in this room today – some things may pop into mind. Imagine there is a chair in the centre of the room. Walk over to the chair and rest for a while, absorbing the feelings here today. As you glance up towards the ceiling, you notice there is no roof – this room opens directly to the sky. You can see the blue of the sky above you. You begin to float out of the chair now and up through the roof and into the sky. You might feel the warmth of the sun; feel the fluffy white clouds around you. As you glance down, you can see the room way beneath you, and the chair in the middle of the room, beneath you now. You are floating in the sky.

As you glance behind you, you imagine an image of your mum and your dad appearing before you now. You are there as the person you are today. The three of you sitting together. Focus on what you know represents your mother and your father. There is no need for a clear picture – you will instinctively know who is who.

Remind yourself that this process today is about healing. You are improving your relationships and moving forward. You choose which parent you would like to start with and when you are ready in your mind, turn your attention to that parent.

Today you will have a conversation with this parent about the patterns and behaviours you have recently become aware of and how they might have taught you: (*insert actual behaviour, if known*). Talk for as long as you need now and while you do so, imagine a cord on your body that connects this parent to you. When you are finished, disconnect that cord, anyway you like, and connect your end back to your body and their end back to theirs. Let me know when you are finished and ready to move on

by raising one finger.

Pause until client raises one finger to move on.

Good. Just notice how this feels now compared to when you started. You may want to thank this parent for allowing you to move on today, and even forgive them if you need to. When you are ready, turn to the next parent and again have a conversation about the behaviours and patterns you want to change. Talk about how they might have taught you this pattern and how you want to change it now. Always imagine the cord that connects you and always disconnect this cord before you finish. Connect your end back to your body and their end back to theirs. Let me know when you are finished by raising one finger.

Pause.

Good. Again, thank this parent for helping you today and let the images of Mum and Dad drift off into the distance. Turn around and face your own future now and imagine you can see a movie screen in front of you. It is like you are watching a movie. You may see images floating of you in the future, things you might be doing; you might be able to see yourself and feel what it is like with your new behaviour. Watch for a moment and enjoy. *Pause 20 seconds.* Now step into the movie so you are part of it. You are no longer watching the movie. You are in it. Feel how this is different now. *Pause 20 seconds.* And now step out of the movie again and watch it on the screen. Remind yourself that you can do this process at any time.

You might begin to notice your breathing starts to become a little deeper now. Breathing in and breathing out. You might be

able to hear some sounds around you (*point some out that are in the background*). Notice how your hands are resting, how your feet are positioned. Continuing to breathe deeply. As I count backwards from 5, when I reach 1, you will feel refreshed and relaxed. 5...4...3...2...and 1.

A Final Note

Everyone has different modes of perceiving the world. The most common include:

- Visual – people who imagine easily and often use words like ‘see, imagine, look’ in their speech
- Auditory – people who need to hear things to process them, rather than reading, for example. They use words like ‘I hear..., sounds like...’
- Kinaesthetic – people who feel things in their body and relate to the touch of things when learning. They use words like ‘feels like. The experience of it...’

You may not always know what mode a client prefers, but if you have noticed in their speech the types of phrases they use, try and use those words in your script. For example: a visual client will respond well to you saying ‘imagine this, imagine that’. A kinaesthetic client will respond to you saying ‘how does it feel, notice how it feels’. However, you can use all three types (*as you might have noticed in the script example*) and you will cover all bases.

Your Feedback

Your feedback and experiences are very welcome. We look forward to how the exercises have assisted you, and even the difficulties you may have encountered.

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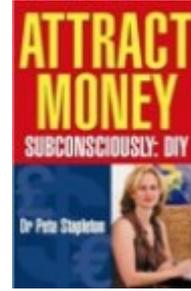
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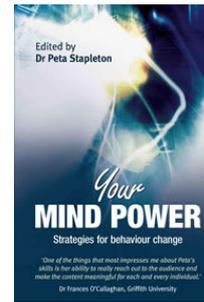
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Brad, Personal Trainer, Tweed Heads

I was a chocolate-a- day addict before SlimMinds.
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Health Professional, Brisbane

I have not touched any of the food or soft drinks since doing the techniques. Overnight I have gone from having 2 litres of cola soft drink to not a drop!

Student and Mother, Gold Coast

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