



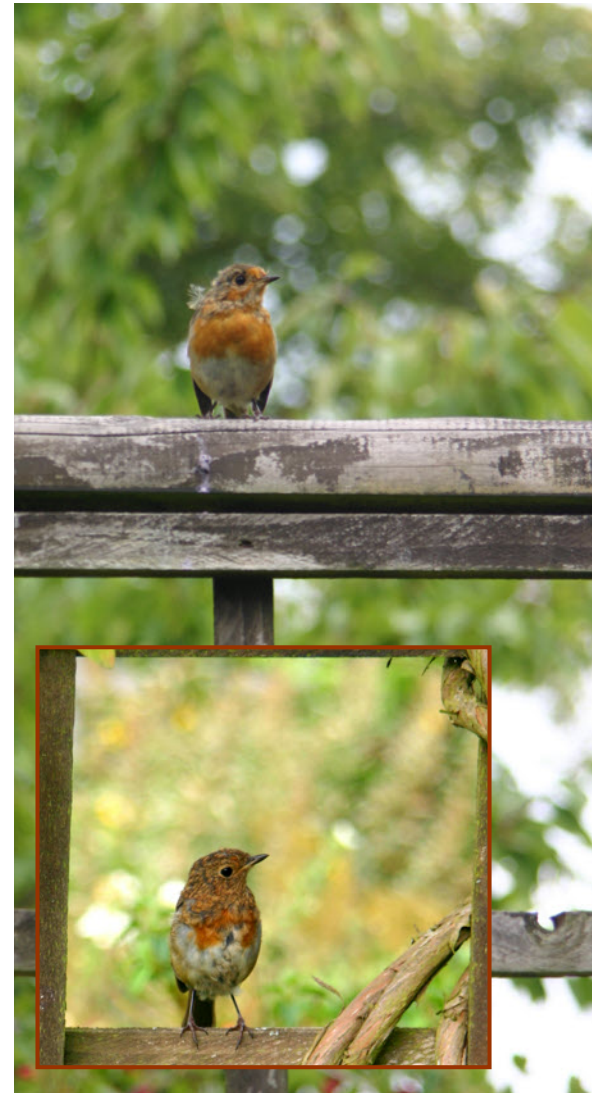
Nicknamed *Cyclops* due to having lost an eye, the resident cat of Quarr Abbey goes for the cream intended for a visitor's coffee!



Being Alongside

The Bi-Monthly magazine of *Being Alongside* / APCMH

January - February 2010



Several readers said they enjoyed last issue's photo of a Squirrel feeding in a tree at Sissinghurst Castle Gardens in Kent. So, for this issue's cover...

It's a Family Affair!

A Robin Redbreast at Quarr Abbey near Ryde on the Isle of Wight looking for a chance to feed from visitors' plates.

Inset may well be Dad, judging by the degraded plumage.

But see back cover where a rival gets far bolder!

The Barnabas Drop - In Sessions

'Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement)' Acts 4:36

St. Paul's Community Project in partnership with BA / APCMH

Mondays 2pm - 5pm

Plus various activities: Table tennis, dominoes, scrabble, art / craft, poetry reading, tea / sandwiches / cakes and chat.

Wednesday 10am - 12pm

A more reflective discussion time with tea and biscuits, an opportunity to all share concerns or to receive one-to-one support (by appointment).

Free. All Welcome.

Venue: St Paul's Church Centre, 3 Rossmore Rd, NW1
(5 mins walk from Marylebone Station; buses 139 & 189 stop outside)

call: Captain Mark Dadds, or Sister Theresa: 020 7724 8517

'When he arrived and saw the wonderful things God was doing, he was filled with excitement & joy, and encouraged the believers to stay close to The Lord whatever the cost. Barnabas was a kindly person, full of the Holy Spirit & strong in faith. As a result large numbers of people were added to the Lord. (Acts 11:19-24)

Mental Health Support Group (The Dymphna Group)

St Andrew's, Frognal, United Reformed Church NW3

2nd and 4th Friday of each month

10.00am-12noon

Aiming to provide friendship and mutual support for those living with mental health concerns, both sufferers and carers, where matters may be explored and discussion encouraged.

contact: The Rev'd Jonathan Dean: 020 7435 7920
or Jean Marsham: 020 8455 1240

Junction of Frognal Lane / West End Lane / Finchley Road.

near Finchley Rd Met / Jub;
113, 82, 13, 46, 268, 328, 139, C11 (West End Green);
Finchley Rd / Frognal (NL Metro),
Hampstead (Northern);
West Hampstead (First Capital Direct)



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'Being Alongside' is the operational name for the 'Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health', (APCMH), a Christian based, voluntary association of individual members and affiliated groups who recognise the importance of spiritual values and support in mental health.

It has a network of supporters throughout the United Kingdom and it welcomes and encourages people whatever their own faith or belief system.

Governed by its National Committee, APCMH is primarily concerned to promote and encourage "being alongside" people experiencing mental or emotional distress.

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The views expressed in *Being Alongside* are not necessarily those of the organisation.

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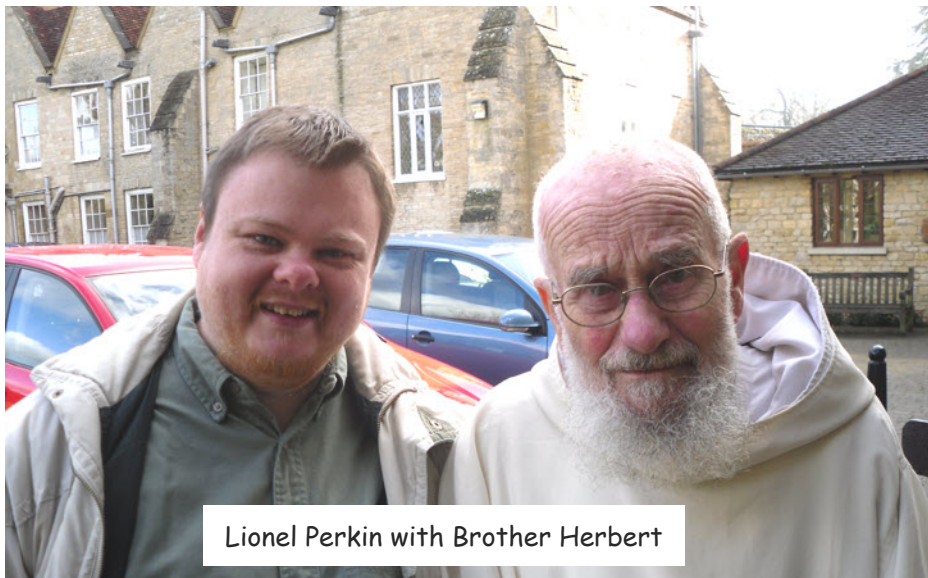
Being Alongside Jan - Feb 2010

to accept them self as a person and a believer, who has had mental illness but is now better and ready to be involved in normal life once again. It is always a hard journey but different people cope in diverse ways and some have had the courage to tell us about it.

Please carry on writing for *Being Alongside* and in particular keep on working, with me, at trying to explain the difficult interface between religious belief and psychiatric symptoms. Be assured that far from damaging your mental health, the vast majority of extensive research carried out supports the finding that Christian belief and practice is beneficial to health and recovery from mental illness.

How about the question asked in the title of the book: is faith delusion? If delusion, when used precisely, is a psychiatric word, which it is, then the answer is quite clearly, No. Faith is not delusion. Someone may have religious faith **and** be a victim of holding a delusion because of co-existing mental illness but *faith*, of itself, is not delusional and is not *caused* by mental illness. One can be emphatic on that point. To answer Richard Dawkins' book, *The God Delusion*, God is not a delusion, neither is believing in Him delusional.

Dr Andrew Sims



Lionel Perkin with Brother Herbert

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Many thanks to all our contributors! Your offerings are so vital. Submissions are welcome from all areas of the community, especially insights from the varying faith communities. Whilst we all appreciate a well balanced magazine, I can only put in what I receive - so I hope you're working on your next piece...!

Copy for next issue - due March 1st - to the editor by February 1st please, but sooner is always more helpful!

Front Page: *Who Rules the World?*

National Committee Member Diana Klewin infers this is God's world, therefore we need to combat climate change...

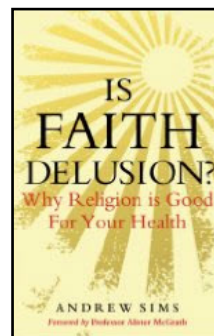
It is becoming increasingly evident that our planet is changing and human beings are feeling the consequences of their own negative impact. To whom does the Earth 'belong'? The Earth is the Lord's - or is it? According to the Judeo - Christian tradition God did make the Earth and it was pronounced as 'good'. My conversations with Hindus, Muslims and Quakers suggest there are shared underlying principles: we worship the same creator God.

I feel the Earth's pain as we dominate it more and more instead of being its custodians; we exploit it and do not put enough back. In my opinion the Earth is 'sick'. Our immodest use of resources violates the entire biosphere threatening millions of lives and the habitats of thousands of species. In the West we consume more than we need in direct contradiction to Gandhi who said 'Live simply that others may simply live', or put another way, 'there is enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed.' If we changed our thinking about how we perceive the earth - if we respected it more - the balance of nature could eventually be restored. This is my belief. All we are doing, it seems, is putting an enormous plaster on the earth instead of dealing with the root cause. We must tackle this problem urgently because human activity does seem to have a knock on negative effect.

For example, we are losing many bees. As with all intensely farmed animals, commercial bee colonies are prone to the likes of the varroa mite and evidence suggests the threat is extending to wild colonies. (see www.vegansociety.com). We do not need commercially produced honey and wax for cosmetics, food, toiletries, candles and polishes, there are animal free alternatives.

There has been a shift in our global weather patterns which has caused more than the usual floods, droughts, and particularly devastating tsunamis. The 'greenhouse effect' behind them is the result of the sun's heat being trapped by layers of carbon dioxide, much produced by human

Book from our Patron



Book:	<i>Is Faith Delusion?</i>
Author:	Professor Andrew Sims
Publisher:	Orca Books, March 2009
Guide Price:	£14.99
isbn:	9781847063403
pp:	252 pb

Available direct from:

tel:	01202 665432.
email:	orders@orcabookservices.co.uk
net:	www.continuumbooks.com

The eagle eyed among you will remember previous reference to this book in B.A. Sep - Oct 09; Professor Andrew Sims has responded in gratitude. There are not many 'believing' psychiatrists 'out there', so read and give thanks.

Thank you, *Being Alongside*, for your review of my book with this title. I also wanted to thank readers of the magazine, and many others who are both believers and suffering from some form of mental distress for having inspired me to write. As you well know, both Christian practice and mental illness carry stigma in our survival-of-the-fittest, secular society. Both you and I, as a Christian and a mental health professional experience that stigma. Throughout my career of more than 40 years in psychiatry I have been inspired and sustained in my faith by Christian patients, some of whom have made an invaluable contribution to their churches and communities afterwards.

Being Alongside is quoted several times in *Is Faith Delusion?* I am indebted to the magazine, and to individual writers, for writing about their experiences of faith through mental illness. The magazine gives unique insight into the twin, and sometimes conflicting, worlds of Christian belief and psychiatry, the Church and the medical / psychiatric establishment. How individuals deal with the onset and course of their illness and its treatment, supported by their faith and by other Christians, continues to be an inspiration to me and, I am sure, other readers. It is also of great interest to read how each person, as he or she gets better, discovers how

Poem: He Knows

*When living on the raw edge of life
God is the only place to run and hide.
Seeking to nestle in the shelter of His love,
Seeking someone who knows the piercing pain
That seems to pervade every fibre of life,
Only He knows,
For only He ever was so alone.*

*Who can I trust to find me when I don't know who I am?
But He who created me,
His fingers paint my life,
Those hands which bear my name are etched with pain.
My wounds – chasms of darkness,
His fingers of love touching the icy coldness.*

*The candle of my life, flickering,
Ever towards His love, longingly,
For I have no answers.
The cold shafts of pain tug at my bones,
But there is one,
Who walks close,
And who knows the splintered fragments that
make up the web of my life.*

Paula Johnson

from *Christian Horizons*, edited by Carl Golder,
as discovered and read at Turvey by Suzanne Heneghan

activity, in the higher levels of the atmosphere. This raises global temperatures and unbalances climate systems.

Industrial activity in the West has given rise to diseases like cancer and asthma to levels which are not known in so called 'less developed' countries. Half of a previously uncontacted tribe in the Andean foothills of Peru died after exposure to Western researchers.

So we neglect the earth at our peril. If we can respect it rather than 'dominate' it, we may be able to repair some of the damage; it might have a chance to heal. I regard the Earth as a living planet with a delicate eco-system. Like a good 'mother', Earth gives us all we need. If we take it for granted we will slowly kill it and thereby indirectly kill ourselves; our negative impact will mean it will no longer be able to sustain life.

Bibliography:

The Old Testament

www.bibleontheweb.com

www.vegansociety.com

Some Consequences of Climate Change: Quaker Article

The Causes of Climate Change: Quaker Article

www.amazon-indians.org/Uncontacted-Amazon-Indians-Peru.html

Diana Klewin

Cartoon coming close to Diana's theme by emerging talent David Shaw.



A word from the Chair...

Two recent reports made me think about our recent reflections and decisions about our way forward. The Department of Health's *New Horizons: a Shared Vision for Mental Health* report looks at ways of improving mental well being and improving the quality of mental health care, recognising the importance of prevention, especially in children and young people, and building resilience. Being alongside, befriending and spirituality all play their part for the individual and in rebuilding community. The Young Foundation's (Bethnal Green) report *Sinking and Swimming: Understanding Britain's Unmet Needs* recognises progress has been made on meeting material needs, (jobs, homes & health care), and now we need to take more account of psychological needs with more risk of loneliness and isolation and mental illness. This is again an opportunity to develop our values of being alongside and our concern for befriending.

This led me to think about the many new ways of communicating: email, texting, FaceBook, mobile phone etc. They meet many people's needs, but I feel people still need face to face human contact, to know we matter to someone and they care about us.

Given our limited energy, resources and time, yet mindful of recent generous legacies and donations, the national committee have agreed that our focus would be befriending and being alongside people, which many people and groups already do. We want to open up dialogue, discussion, reflection and action that we hope will lead to more understanding and response to the needs in this area. We would like to invite you individually, or as a group, to share your thoughts, ideas, experiences, opportunities and pitfalls around befriending. What does befriending mean? Is it something you would like more of? How best to spread the word? Be as creative as you like – shared experience, a poem, visual work! You can send it to me via St Paul's Church or email; to our newsletter editor; or Pam Freeman as convenor of a small group looking further into this.

Our Spring workshop will be centred around this theme - so look out for more details! The workshop, with our AGM, will be on Sat 15 May at Battersea Park church. Put the date in your diary now! We hope to take this further – watch this space! In the meantime I wish you all a blessed and content year ahead.

Stephan Ball
December 2009

nice 'racy' sound to it, fast and lively! I do wonder whether I could hand it over to Ian Young, in the hope that he and his band might be able to make something of it?

Five Good Reasons Why

*Perhaps after this after this
I'll be able to follow more closely
how the Son of Man came to be slain;
to see a little more clearly why He had to die.*

*Only when the place you're in caves in
can Truth like a ray splinter the dark,
a flint of new fire ignite a spirited hope.
Only then, out of its chrysalis
Life, however uncertainly, life re-emerges.*

*Without it I know I would have felt steel enter the soul
and sharp edges of stones, whose shouts
could have shattered an ear—drum or severed a nerve.
And under a blood—red sky the mind half blinded
the heart deadened by grief (His grief and ours) and I
deaf to His dying 'Yes' to five good reasons why
yes five good reasons why -*

*perhaps after all after all this
I'll find myself able to follow a little more closely
the Man who came to be slain--
to see in His scars the darkness of our pain
- and the darkness of our pain lift
as the Son in us rises again, as the Son in us rises again.*

Felicia Houssein



Captain Mark Dadds, Membership & Company Secretary with Miriam Reyes

Poem & a Challenge?

Felicia Houssein writes:

Written after a Chaplaincy Course on the Drugs Dependency Unit of the Bethlem Royal Hospital many years ago, this poem sums up the student's experience in relation to faith. The rhythmic folk-song style reflects the youthful age of the five patients on the Unit. I can't remember when exactly I was at the Bethlem Royal. I think it must have followed a brief stint as Chaplain's Assistant to the Warlingham Park Hospital the mid-Seventies, where I was put in charge of nine geriatric wards!

I was fascinated to read Sheila MacPherson's account (ed: Nov - Dec issue p12) of her nephew writing lyrics for songs his band plays. I had anyway already been considering sending in the enclosed, and wondering how I could get a small group of young people to sing it to guitars and the like. More importantly, where I could find someone to set it? It needs a



Talkabout Turvey

L-r Back row: Bro John, Lionel, Jean, Mark, Stephan, Diana, Bro Herbert, Pam.

Middle row : Felicia, Miriam; Front row: Suzanne, Sr Theresa.

In November, the National Committee of B.A. / apcmh, above, gathered at Turvey Abbey on the Beds / Northants border to consider 'how things were going'. Chair Stephan Ball has already written of 'befriending' as becoming a feature of BA / apmch's work. Another of the aired issues was our logo. Having been around for about a year, it was felt by some to be too much identified as 'hands at prayer' and thereby being possibly exclusive, so a new logo was affirmed and now graces the front cover, and will form part of new stationary for B.A. / apcmh. Also the tree on the leaflet received attention. Coming soon!

Now a poetic response to the gathering by Felicia and Suzanne. Felicia is retiring from National Council after many years enthusiastic, creative input and robust support. We wish her well in taking things easier, but fully and fondly expect her contributions to *B.A.* to continue! Meanwhile, Turvey photos appear throughout the newsletter.

Alongside on Pilgrimage



*Wholeness, in essence,
is gifted in spiritual growth,
which largely evolves
from journeying together and in
listening and being heard;
above all, acceptance the key
to the heart of faith.*

*And here, through the space we're now in -
yes, through this very place -
flows the God-given grace of compassion,
out of which springs
the exquisitely tender flowering of hope.*

Felicia Houssein

Much time was taken up with the distinct contribution B.A. / apcmh can make to the world of mh. A source of rejoicing and encouragement was news of the Befriending initiatives, which it was realised, was one of the jewels in the B.A. Crown. Thus the Committee resolved to commit to and support 'Befriending; more later after consultations have yielded fruit.

*Handle every stressful situation like a dog.
If you can't eat it or play with it, just pee on it and walk away.*

Day, a Brains Trust Panel took questions and comments from the floor. It was hosted by Rev'd Chris MacKenna, Director of the nationally famous St Marylebone Healing and Counselling Centre, and Chaplain to The Guild of Health. (cmackenna@stmarylebone.org 020 7953 5066). He pointed out that the church was an appropriate place for healing; especially because the crucifix was a sign that the worst can be redeemed.



Above, l to r: Chris MacKenna, Isabel Clarke, Jean Marsham, Suzanne Heneghan, Roz Hewitt and Deidre King.

The host of the Day was Rev'd Jonathan Dean, Minister of St Andrew's URC. We thank him for his hospitality and benefited from his breadth of involvement with inter-faith committees particularly Christians, Jews and Muslims, and sometime Free Church Chaplain at the Charing Cross and West London Hospitals.

Everyone had a fulfilling day, and if more interest can be shown, it might develop into an annual event.



Left:
someone
enjoyed it!
Deidre King
chats with
Redwood.

*Steve
Press*

're-education' rather than a 'therapy'. It builds upon a sense of integration of emotion, mind and body in that the mind will receive stimuli and process perceptions which will be stored in the emotions and be expressed in the body. Because of 'feedback loops', adjustments made in the body can affect our minds and emotions as can be seen in exchanges between adolescents and parents as they try to get them out of bed! Much AT, seen as a 'recovering' not a 'cure', is about unlearning body movements and postures learned in periods of uneasy childhood, as well as stealing the thunder of any tension created by 'anticipation of the worst'. Its keywords are relaxing, attention, mindfulness and releasing.

After the pleasantries of getting out of the chair and 'rolling around the floor' came the hard facts of family life challenged by mh issues. Jean Marsham and Suzanne Heneghan both spoke of the pains de-stabilising their mental health. Jean shared her experiences of a difficult marriage that resulted in her psychotic breakdown leading to a bi-polar disorder. This involved hospital stays whilst trying to bring up two daughters including Jessica, who at 10 years of age suddenly needed to be the 'adult'. Jessica was on hand to share her side of the the story.

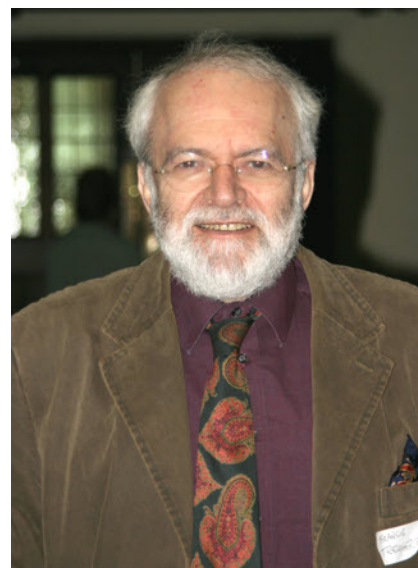
Suzanne, whose Mum was diagnosed with bi-polar and schizophrenia spent her youngest years in 'care', followed by fostering. When, aged 21, she did find her 'birth mother', the relationship was cordial but not close. Her clinical experience included CBT and psychotherapy. In the final plenary, Chris MacKenna, spoke of the extreme suffering of mental health patients and reminded us all that the Therapeutic Relationship is crucial for recovery. (below, *left to right*: Jessica, Jean and Suzanne.)



To the

See What You Missed!

It was such a shame that more *B.A.* Readers were not able to come along to Jean Marsham's Day Conference on *Alternative Methods of Dealing with Mental Stress* at St Andrew's URC, Frognal Lane Hampstead, on 21 October. It was informative and fun with lots of insights as to how 'alternative' approaches can help practically with the burden of mental illness. The line up of speakers was impressive and they all engaged with warmth and humour to provide lots of 'tips' for coping strategies.



Left: Francis Treuherz, naturopath, who opened the day.

He is a fellow of the Society of Homeopaths and seeks to *co-operate with doctors to help the patients they cannot cure, and to avoid the use of drugs and surgery*'. (Quote from his literature.) He has been in practice since 1984 and has travelled the world as lecturer. His pride and joy is a computer database, which he helps to edit, of over 1000 articles, books and features on homeopathy.

He came armed with an attractive PowerPoint projection to help his address, but the most attractive feature was his genial, easy personality giving the impression that just chatting to him would lift one's spirits. Francis spoke enthusiastically and knowledgeably which would give patients confidence in his therapy. It was easy to get the impression that most of the consultation period (initially one hour then subsequently half hours), would feel like a counselling session.

Would I go to see him? Yes, because despite the fee - up to £80 an hour - I certainly feel he would help me change my view of things - including myself - and bequeath me a message I would keep for life.

His contact number is 0208 450 6564.



Next up was Deidre King, an Autogenic Therapist. Those familiar with Geoffrey Harding's *Lying Down in Church* will quickly appreciate Deidre's approach and techniques. Autogenic Training (AT) is a set of highly structured exercises and skills taught individually or in small groups in 1.5 hourly sessions spanning about 8 weeks. It is a training course not crisis therapy featuring AT's emphasis on self help. Sessions comprise relaxation and perception managing techniques to bring the mind to a calm state in order to free it up from distracting everyday processes so

the subconscious can stimulate the immune system to focus on healing. Deidre led us through an exercise so we could sample the feel of being very relaxed; it was very much appreciated by all. She can be contacted on 07801931684. AT is available on the NHS.

Consultant Clinical Psychologist Isabel Clarke works in an Acute Mental health Hospital in the Southampton area. As a volunteer she is active in the Spiritual Crisis Network. (visit www.isabelclarke.org and www.spiritualcrisisnetwork.org.uk). She is especially interested in the psychology of spirituality and the overlap of psychosis and spirituality. Having originally studied Medieval History, she turned to Psychology when a friend had a 'breakdown'.

We have, she said, two governing principles or 'meaning making systems' that we have to keep in balance: the hind brain that manages the body and emotions while the frontal lobes manages verbal and reasoned thought. That they communicate with fluency is vital for mental health. We also inhabit two worlds, one shared and the other unshared. Both are equally valid and real, although the mentally 'healthy' person knows when and how to inhabit each. Some mystical and religious experiences do not always spring forth from illness, but can be a highly creative and insightful part of the 'unshared world we each individually have. Such experiences, often labelled as examples of 'insanity', need affirming and honouring and putting in their rightful place.

Slightly different are traumas caused by stressors. These can 'de-synchronise', upset the balance and lay down 'cross wires' of weird associations of ideas and meanings which come out in our thoughts and

behaviours. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, often the current generic therapy of choice, was often recommended by Isabel as a treatment for psychosis, indicating Isabel's pioneering temperament: she says she is uncomfortable with many mainstream 'solutions'. She advocates meditation, art, Autogenic Training, gardening, fasting, being solitary and drugs as potential ways of finding the 'way back to equilibrium'.

Clients' important experiences must be validated until such times as the client abandons them. She exemplified Vincent Van Gogh, William Blake and in our day, Stephen Fry as having 'trans-liminal' experiences that are of vital importance to the individual, yet remain often unshared by the community. Helping clients is not about helping them to see 'common sense', which can be very patronising, but helping them discern which of their ideas are part of the 'shared' world and which are not. Telling Clients they are mistaken and asking for 'evidence' for odd thoughts are counter-productive. Unconditional Positive Regard gives 'room' for Clients to make their own assessments and to 'choose' which world to inhabit; this is empowering if only because we all need 'context' to make sense of things. Mindfulness and focusing on the here and now, the present is very powerful. To those that 'hear voices' Isabel does not advocate dismissing them but focusing on, for instance, their sound, ie this is engagement, not rejection of the 'unshared' reality. It's not about running away but accepting 'at a distance'. We all need the skill of stepping back and choosing the reality we wish to inhabit, provided we do not live exclusively in one world.

If Isabel's was the 'brain strain' of the day - nothing wrong in that for we all need to be encouraged to stretch towards a deeper understanding - Roz Hewitt's presentation was literally about lying down, getting up, sitting down and standing up again. Left, she is helping Susan eliminate stress by paying attention to her body and making minor physical adjustments, resulting in eased discomfort.



The Alexander Technique, developed by an actor who discovered the throat pains undermining his performances emanated from poor posture, is a