network news
a guide to inspiring events in north wales

islands of sanity ~ the three principles ~ incredible edibles ~ conspirituality
rebirth in the wilderness ~ your money or your life ~ how to be an antiracist
towards one humanity ~ one friendship at a time
July 2020

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Front Cover Illustration by Femke van Gent
www.femkevangent.art

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Welcome to the July Network News. The Italian word “Quarantine” references that spiritual teacher of long ago who endured 40 days of heart-searching in the Wilderness. Well, for the first time in history, several billion of us have just done that simultaneously - through Lent and Ramadan and Wesak and beyond! Some of us found a new resolve in the Wilderness; others are desperate to get back to all the addictions of the world before lockdown. We are all vulnerable to those fake “fixes” that haunt the internet: tales of dark cabals that run the world; youtubers who promise to open the “stargates” for an elite few. Easy, instant answers, to stifle the pain and help us feel special. This is called: “conspirituality”. See Page 8.

But there is no “quick fix” for humanity, or the ravaged Earth. There is only a slow, daily, rhythmic strengthening of our Core - whether we call it our Soul, our Heart or our Integrity, and whether we strengthen it through meditation or parenting or planting carrots!

A spiritual teacher of recent times suggested that strengthening our Soul life is the only way to tackle humanity’s divisions at the root: When a Soul is undeveloped, either because it is young or is not being nurtured, it is drawn to be born, time and time again, into the apparent security of the same nation or bloodline. This repetition and reinforcement is how nationalism and aristocracy and racism get such a powerful grip. But as the Soul strengthens, it dares to be born among former strangers or enemies. As it strengthens further, the Soul is just drawn to wherever it can best serve the Whole, regardless of race. In this way, as Soul takes precedence over blood, One Humanity is born.

And we needn’t wait to be born into a race to become infused with its qualities, and begin to heal our divisions. We may enter through art and music and writing and, most powerfully, through friendship.

Blessings to all beings
**Lizzie:** Incredible Edible Porthmadog began in 2016 as Edible Madog, when Charissa Buhler and I saw some raised vegetable beds at Byw’n Iach Glaslyn, that needed some attention.

We were inspired by the Incredible Edible concept of growing community food for all in public places, which aligned with our urge to create edible urban spaces and increase food security. At first, we worked alone, showing up at the same time each week, slowly expanding the planting. People began to join us, equally enamoured by the concept.

Last year was a big one. We were awarded £50k by the Welsh Government/ WCVA Landfill Tax Disposal grant scheme, who understood our vision and the importance of community composting to creating closed loop food cycles and building with waste materials. We were fortunate to be joined by more volunteers, including our trustees Alison Duncan, Teresa Shirres and Fiona Ruddle, who have helped to develop the plans with us.

We are now a registered charity and our focus this year is to complete the ecobrick and cob hub/shed, to make progress on the ‘grow food all year’ walipini greenhouse (which earth-bermed/buried on one side to keep the heat in over winter). Also to gently expand the Edible Corridor. This links the train station with the High Street, with the main part evolving around Ysgol Eifion Wyn primary school, where we love working with the children, who have been an important part of the design. Alison is doing a fantastic job of keeping the vegetable beds brimming with plants and the compost bins filled, Charissa grows and nurtures young plants, while Teresa and I focus on creating the structures. All this is assisted by our keen volunteers, it’s certainly a team effort.

Our unique hub/shed attracts quite a lot of attention, due to its unusual appearance. It has evolved from my MSc dissertation on building with PET plastic bottles and is a pilot building demonstrating the techniques researched; now part of my PhD research at the Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University.

The oval walls sit on cement free foundations, made of rubble filled tyres, rising upwards as a cob structure decorated with spots of colour; looking a little like a round chocolate cake with smarties as decoration. The reciprocal, roundwood, ash roof is under construction at the moment. The cob is made using subsoil, straw and water, most of which has been thoroughly stomped together by...
Teresa, while recovering from a leg operation. The labour intensive process activates the magical clay in the soil to blend with all the ingredients, to create a strong mortar. The walls weigh about 8 tons so far and are still being plastered and thickened. The PET bottle bricks are filled with single waste plastic, which turns them into a solid, insulative building block, an ‘ecobrick’. The bottles are mostly 1 litre, each weighing around 300g, which, in 1250 bricks, amounts to almost half a ton of sequestered plastic. This demonstrates that with a little ingenuity, our waste can be part of a circular economy, instead of heading to landfill. This does not give manufactures any reason to produce more plastic, but it is a good way to usefully clean up what we have already. The building is not the first of its kind in the world, but it may be the first without cement.

We were hoping to officially open the building this summer, but the pandemic means no gatherings, so we will have to wait. Perhaps we can celebrate this at our harvest festival, but in the meantime, there is much to do. We will continue, with safe distances between us all, to develop the structures, the Edible Corridor and nurture the plants.

Teresa: From an early age I was taught that food should be shared - the more you share, the more will come your way. So, the idea that food can be grown for the community to share was what spurred me to volunteer with Incredible Edible Porthmadog.

I’m not sure I have ‘green-fingers’ but I do enjoy having a go at growing, seeing seeds grow into seedlings and eventually into flowers, fruit, trees and vegetables. I have made some fantastic friends at IE and am learning more about plants and also about building using waste materials.

During the lockdown we have still been very busy – albeit physically distancing - digging, weeding, planting, watering and building our Hub, and even taking it in turns going to work at the site. We all felt it was even more important to keep growing food for the community during these uncertain times. Over the past months I have been helping Lizzie, the IE project manager, finish building the wall height for the Hub, by making cob mixes. It was very physical work but I looked forward to the days we were building as it was a great excuse to be outside doing something useful.

With May being so hot and dry, the seedlings and salads needed watering on days we weren’t building. Gardening gives a sense of pride in helping and seeing the plants grow and survive, whether you or someone else planted them.

Thanks Alison and Teresa for keeping our notice board updated. It’s just inside the door, on the right, at the leisure centre Glaslyn Byw’n Iach

cont...
When people come by to have a chat with us while we work and tell us how much they like the garden, it is a chance to explain about the importance of local food and the future issue of food security.

**Alison:** Through the winter we worked with children of Ysgol Eifion Wyn designing and planning the creation of a productive garden around the school as an important part of our edible corridor. The children started in February by planting 60 Welsh heritage fruit trees and were keenly learning to manage the recycling of the school’s kitchen food waste along with woodchip in the new Ridan composter. An old sailing boat that had been donated was in position ready for filling and planting. Then lockdown!

Now in June the boat is overflowing with a variety of vegetables and strawberries and nearby potatoes and squash are growing on the heaps of soil the children had already dug out for new pathways. A tyre stack has been filled with flowers to attract pollinating insects using the first of the schools homemade compost. It will be great to see the children working and learning again in their garden.

Meanwhile by the silent leisure centre plenty is happening in our various growing areas. The tyre garden abounds with herbs and flowers for pollinating insects, the plum tree heavy with fruit while the cob/bottle bed (built last year) is overflowing with green; peas and lettuce and much more for harvesting. In the line of old recycling blue boxes, there is kale and beetroot, spinach and strawberries, showing what can be grown in a limited space.

We save our own seeds where we can, as seeds are the very heart of food security for our future. The miracle of seeds and growth never ceases to amaze me.

**Facebook: Bwyd Bendigedig Port**

In September there will be an Open Day to which everyone will be welcome. There will be drinks and cakes and a chance to pick and sample our food crops. Details will follow later.
The Woodland Skills Centre had to go into lockdown to slow the spread of Covid19 and, at the time, we all thought, “Oh well. 3 weeks. It’s not too bad and then we will be back to normal.” Now that 3 weeks has become 3 months we are faced with the issues we didn’t think of at the start: what is the impact on children of not being in school and will this be making the gap wider between the most and least fortunate; what is the impact of suspension of cancer treatment, cancer testing and organ transplant programmes? At a personal level I had been grateful for the expertise of my optician, dentist, osteopath and chiropodist to help keep me functioning!

Now that there are glimpses that we might be over the worst, what have we learned? We clapped for our carers, we tried to give space to people in supermarkets, we became more aware of the health risks faced by shopworkers and others whose jobs mean they have to be in contact with the public, we missed the friends and relatives we could no longer meet with, we missed the occasional visit to the pub, restaurant, theatre, most of us tried to find ways to spend time positively at home with the family, we worked in our gardens and thought about growing more vegetables and fruit, we appreciated the natural world. Above all we explored ways to live a life that was more centred on people and less on material things. We were confronted by interesting questions about what is “essential.” Garden Centres were closed but supermarkets sold tobacco, alcohol, biscuits, crisps, cakes.

Central Government is obsessed with “getting the economy moving.” What does this mean? Buying more things we don’t really need? Importing food and goods from all over the world? More cars? More roads?

Have we really learned from the last 3 months? Should we not be concentrating on what has been highlighted – that a civilised and caring society looks after the young, the old and the ill, makes sure that all can afford food and housing and that all are treated with respect and can fulfil their potential?

It is interesting that Black Lives Matter has come at this time of a global pandemic that disproportionately affects those who are already unfairly treated.

“Getting the economy moving” is based on the assumption that we have a right to a standard of living higher than most of the other people on our planet. We don’t. Britain had a navy and guns that allowed the country to plunder the wealth of other nations under the guise of bringing them civilisation. We then enslaved thousands of people and used their forced labour to enrich a small section of our population. These riches funded much of the industrial revolution. This perpetuated the disparity between what the UK “earned” and what other peoples had, and perpetuated the disparity in our own country between what different people have.

We wait, we watch and we do what we can. Maybe this will be a turning point.

Rod Waterfield is the founder of the Woodland Skills Centre, near Denbigh.

woodlandsskillscentre.co.uk
I want to compare two forms of mystical experience:

The first is a sort of extroverted euphoric mystical experience: ‘Everything is connected. I am synchronicitously drawn to helpers and allies, the universe is carrying us forward to a wonderful climactic transformation (the Rapture, the Omega Point, the Paradigm Shift), and we are the divine warriors of light appointed by God / the Universe to manifest this glorious new phase shift in human history.’

The second is a paranoid ‘bad’ trip version of the euphoric ‘good’ trip. ‘Everything is connected, there is a secret order being revealed to me, but I am not part of it. It is an evil demonic order, and it is trying to control me and everyone else. They have a Grand Plan and it is taking shape now. But perhaps I, and one or two others, can wake up to this Grand Plan, and expose it, and at least hide from it.’

The first trip is a euphoric ego-expansion (I am God! I am the Cosmic Universe evolving!) and the second is paranoid ego-persecution (The Universe is controlled by Evil Demons who are against me!)

In both, the individual awakens to this hidden reality. But in the first, they are a superpowered initiate in the hidden order and a catalyst for a Millennials transformation, in the second they are a vulnerable and disempowered exposor of the powerful hidden order. These are two sides of the same coin, two sides in the same game.

William James, father of American psychology, made this point in The Varieties of Religious Experience, where he writes that paranoia is a form of diabolical mysticism, a sort of religious mysticism turned upside down. The same sense of the ineffable importance of the smallest events, the same text and words coming with new meanings, the same voices and visions and leadings and missions, the same controlling by extraneous powers; only this time the emotion is pessimistic: instead of consolations we have desolations; the meanings are dreadful; and the powers are enemies to life.

Their thinking styles are in some ways quite similar - schizotypal,
magical, prone to seeing secret influences, hidden connections, and Grand Plans. Above all, both over-estimate the competence of elites to control the world. They under-estimate the dumbness of elites and the chaotic cluster-f*ck of actual politics. Both think the elite are superhuman - either divinely-inspired or demonically-controlled.

I think it is possible to be prone to both these forms of magical thinking, to switch between ecstatic, optimistic Millennarianism and paranoid persecutory conspiracy thinking. From ‘everything is connected and I’m a central part of this wonderful cosmic transformation!’ to ‘everything is connected and I’m at risk from this awful global plot!’.

Now we can dismiss this sort of thinking as simply bullshit religious enthusiasm. However, this is probably not a very helpful attitude. There is, in fact, a value to both these forms of mystical thinking.

The value in mystical globalism is that it can lead to positive things - HG Wells’ ecstatic globalism helped to inspire forms of global governance like the UN Declaration of Human Rights, for example. You need a bit of cosmic optimism to try and get anything changed!

The value of conspiracy thinking, meanwhile, can be that it holds power to account. Power can be over-concentrated - the World Health Organisation is excessively reliant on funding by Bill Gates, and the Gates Foundation should be more transparent and accountable, considering the massive influence it has over global public health.

In general (and in conclusion), there is a value in non-rational forms of knowing, such as dreams, intuitions, inspiration and mystical experiences. These can be important sources of wisdom and healing. Many great scientific discoveries and cultural creations have come from ecstatic or schizotypal inspiration, from Newton’s discovery of gravity to Paradise Lost.

We should be free to believe whatever we want, but in this instance - a global pandemic in the internet age - our beliefs and behaviours profoundly impact others. We need to try and be extra careful in what we believe and what we share, so as to practice mental hygiene.

We can do a basic test, equivalent to washing our hands.

1. What’s the source? Is it a reliable media organisation? Is it backed up by other reliable sources?
2. How likely is the fact? The less likely, the greater the burden of evidence.
3. Is there anything out there suggesting it’s fake? Rather than looking for evidence to support our beliefs, can we search for evidence against our beliefs?
4. Can we emotionally accept our belief might be wrong?

We can try to practice that sort of mental hygiene on ourselves, but how does one practice effective public communication to counteract conspiracy thinking? Perhaps it takes a trusted friend from inside your network to challenge the beliefs in a sympathetic and non-threatening way. That is slow work when one in five Brits say they might not take a COVID-19 vaccine, and even superpowers are trading rival theories as to how the virus emerged.

Our herd immunity to bullshit may be breaking down.

Jules Evans is a research fellow at the Centre for the History of the Emotions at Queen Mary, University of London. His latest book is Breaking Open: Finding a Way Through Spiritual Emergency

Full article at: medium.com
See also: conspirituality.net
I used to work for a local equality charity North Wales Regional Equality Network (NWREN) and we provided some basic antiracism lessons to primary school children on Ynys Mon.

The kids received the workshops really well, but after some of the sessions, some teachers remarked how unnecessary antiracism workshops are in schools with all white kids living in an all white village.

As the only brown kid in my village primary school near Pwllheli, and experiencing the bullying that went along with that, I could see how flawed this perspective is. Teachers do not seem to be sufficiently trained in seeing racism and its subtle manifestations. So there is a lack of sufficient training for teachers in this area. This would traditionally be seen as a "race neutral" policy but actually the lack of consideration for how BAME children will be impacted by the lack of awareness of many white teachers results in adverse consequences - so this is an example, as I see it, of racist policy making.

Is there systemic racism in the UK? Is it as tangible as in the US? When we slip it into a conversation about racism and people ask you to provide examples, would you be able to? Can we describe what systemic racism actually is? How can a structure be racist?

Is a structure not simply made up of individuals, some of whom may be racist, therefore, it is the person, not the structure? These are questions I have struggled to answer clearly. Ibram X Kendi, in his book, *How to be an Antiracist* simplifies this concept by doing away with terms like systemic, structural and institutional racism and instead uses the term, "racist policy" vs "antiracist policy". He says the following: “A racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups. An antiracist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups.

“There is no such thing as a non-racist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in every institution, in every community, in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups.

“Racist policy' says exactly what the problem is and where the problem is. The terms ‘Institutional racism’, ‘structural racism’ and ‘systemic racism’ are redundant. Racism itself is institutional, structural and systemic. ‘Racist policy’ also cuts to the core of racism better than ‘racial discrimination’, another common phrase.

“Racial discrimination is an immediate and visible manifestation of an underlying racial policy. When someone discriminates against a person in a racial group, they are carrying out a policy or taking advantage of the lack of a protective policy. We all have the power to discriminate, only an exclusive few have the power to make policy.”

You can join the Facebook group below. Can we use this as a resource, and over time, build up examples of racist policy within the UK? This could be by sharing anecdotal experiences, linking to news articles, or research and statistics. This will help us be clearer on this subject when we talk about racism and help us not get caught out.

Mae bywydau du o bwys // Black Lives Matter Gwynedd
Omid Behr

Omid lives in Pwllheli
Choose to Refuse single-use plastic

Communities around the globe are concerned about plastic ending up in landfill and polluting the oceans - choose to be part of Plastic Free July
JOIN THE CHALLENGE!
plasticfreejuly.org

More of our neighbourhood friends helping to produce NN.

You can freely download back issues of Network News at network-news.org

Martha Musonza Holman
Martha, taught politics & has worked for the last 16 years to create links between Wales and Zimbabwe.

Mutale Merrill OBE
A former Welsh Woman of the Year, Mutale is the founding chief executive of Bawso, a leading third sector provider for black minority ethnic women and children facing domestic and other forms of abuse and violence.

#BLACKLIVESMATTER
July Virtual Events

Practising Gratitude
Thurs 2nd July, 1 - 2pm, free. Gratitude takes kindness to the next level. In this session we’ll explore why it’s so good and introduce a few straightforward practices for inviting a little more into your day.
Register: eventbrite.co.uk

The Seven points of Mind Training (online)
3rd - 5th July. An overview to the practice of mind training, continuing from previous talks on love and compassion. All welcome.
Bookings: ahs.org.uk

The Story of Plastic
A film exploring the global waste disaster of plastic and the plastics industry. 1st July, 7pm, 95 mins, followed by panel discussion; free.
More: eventbrite.co.uk

Leading Through Storms: From Emergency Response to Deep Adaptation
1st & 22nd July, 1.30 - 3pm. What are we learning from the current climate, ecological and social crises? Looking at the 4Rs of Deep Adaptation: Resilience, Relinquishment, Restoration and Reconciliation. What is our leadership part to play? Free, 90 mins per session.
Register: eventbrite.co.uk

Zero Carbon Britain: online
21st - 22nd July Offering an in-depth look at CAT’s flagship research project, Zero Carbon Britain. Connect with a network of others working and studying in the field and explore the radical changes needed to rise to the climate challenge.
9.30am - 5pm both days, (incl offline task 1 - 4pm). £50, 16+ years
Bookings: cat.org.uk

The Menopause Expert Club Monthly
Thursday 16th July 6 - 8pm. Welcoming all women (and men) who are interested in having a healthy and happy menopause - the full holistic approach! via Zoom. eventbrite.co.uk

An Introduction to Working with Couples - Workshop with Ian Wallace. 4th July. For qualified counsellors who are thinking of training to work with couples in their practice. 10am-4pm. Donations/what you can afford.
Book: eventbrite.co.uk

Easy Tips to Boost Your Mood
Every day in July 12 - 12.30pm, free. Register: eventbrite.co.uk

Me and White Supremacy
by Layla F Saad.
Monthly Book Club considers the relationship between white supremacy and the wellbeing economy. 15th July, 6.30 - 7.45pm, free, register: eventbrite.co.uk

Educate Yourself: Online Racial Equity Workshops:
From 2nd: Black British History from 1948. 8 week course, £30 per class/ £200 full course. 7 - 10pm, via Zoom. Tickets: eventbrite.co.uk or avrilswalksandtalks.co.uk

&
28th: A Black & British History: the Jamaican slaves who abolished slavery. Genealogist Paul Crooks presents an alternative perspective of slavery and abolition in the Caribbean. Free 7 - 7.30pm. Links will be provided via an email a day before the event.
Register: eventbrite.co.uk

Mindful Online Mandala Drawing Workshop
July 13th,
10am - 11.30am, £20.
Book: eventbrite.co.uk

Your Wild Food & Foraging Year - Live Workshop
15th July. 7 - 8pm, £7. Foragers & Outdoor Leaders, James & Lea will be showcasing a host of wild edible foods that are available in the hedgerows during July and throughout summer.
Woodland Classroom via eventbrite.co.uk

Virtual Pride info
24/25 July
See page 22
Climate Declares Emergency
1st & 8th July 11am - 12pm, free
Exploring intersections of artistic practice and ecology and sharing research.
Visit: eventbrte.co.uk

At Home With Alan Rusbridger: In Conversation
with Matthew Stadlen Friday 3rd July. 6.30 - 7.30pm, £15 tickets.
The ex-Guardian Newspaper Editor reflects on the events of 2020 and the future of a free world. Via eventbrite.co.uk

Sustainable Narratives - Virtual Conference
2nd - 5th July
A week of dialogue, understanding and re-imagining the stories that shape humanity.
Through panel discussions, conversations and art; topics include: materialism, individualism, cultural nationalism, spiritual growth, sustainable wealth. Supported by Earth Foundation and the Centre for Sustainability. Free, but limited numbers. Register with: eventbrite.co.uk or more info from vichaarmanthan.org

Digital Self Defence: How to Keep Politically Active Women Safe
Several dates in July.
Free and vital online training on digital self care, safety and security for women currently in or aspiring to be in politics.
Bookings: eventbrite.co.uk or fixtheglitch.org/summer2020

Rockpool School
Until 17th July. Aimed at 7+; beachacademywales.com/rockpoolschool

Introduction to The Work That Reconnects
3rd & 17th July, 11am - 12.30pm, donations.
Sessions offer nourishing, strengthening practices that support us in being able to face, cope with and find our best responses to the extraordinary times we’re living in. 12 places.
Register: eventbrite.co.uk
FB: Being in Nature

Online ‘Muzlamic’ Series:
Securitisation, Fundamental British Values and the Neutralisation of Dissent within Muslim Discourses in the UK
Book review with author Dr Khadijah Elshayal 4th July, 5pm BST.
Free; eventbrite.co.uk

Averting the Insect Apocalypse
7th July, 7 - 8pm, free, via Zoom
Come and join celebrated writer and environmentalist Dave Goulson who will talk about how we should tackle this crisis, first by turning our gardens into oases for life, and second by fundamentally changing the way we grow food.
Register: eventbrite.co.uk

Libraries in Gwynedd will operate a “click & collect” system from early July.
Or home delivery for those that are unable to visit their library. More: gwynedd.llwy.cymru

Terrarium Thursdays!
Receive your kit in the post! Join online class Thursdays, 6.30 - 8pm, July 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th. £8 - £55. Book through: eventbrite.co.uk

Online Follow Up Sessions
for those who have completed a Mindfulness Course.
5th & 19th July Free drop-in, Sundays 7 - 8pm.
gwyneddmindfulness.co.uk

Sustainability in Textiles
Explore the Future of Sustainability in the Textiles Industry. 10th July, 10 - 11.30am, free, via Webex, see eventbrite.co.uk

Black Abolitionist Tour of London
90min virtual walking tour of London, highlighting 6 sites where African American activists made an important impact on the UK landscape. 8th & 15th July, 5 - 6.30pm, free, via Zoom.
Register: eventbrite.co.uk

Climate & Colour
Reflecting on white privilege, a history of institutionalised racism in the church and the racial lens through which we view climate change.
7th July, 8 - 9.30pm, free
With Christian Climate Action
Register: eventbrite.co.uk

Climate Declares Emergency
1st & 8th July 11am - 12pm, free
Exploring intersections of artistic practice and ecology and sharing research.
Visit: eventbrte.co.uk

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New Funding for Community Environment Projects in Wales.

Applications now open for The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Welsh Government’s new grant programmes helping communities to get involved with restoring and enhancing nature including woodlands. Applications are open now until 14 October 2020 and the scheme will run until March 2021. Grants will range between £10,000 and £100,000.

Activities could include:
* increasing community orchards, community growing and allotments;
* planting street trees
* minimising the use of pesticides, fertilisers and peat-based compost;
* changing land use to promote nature and reduce flooding;
* increasing access to safe drinking water.

Visit the Application Portal on website: heritagefund.org.uk

Wales stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter. Over 20 participants talking about how to address racism:
2hrs 30
FB: Black History Month Wales

Friday 3rd July Hosted by Patrick Gale, presents a new tale by Christy Lefteri and a jazz premiere by Liran Donin

Saturday 4th July Hosted by Raymond Antrobus, presents readings and Behrouz Boochani & Omid Tofigiani in conversation. Music by Greg Russell and Ciaran Algar.

Sunday 5th July Hosted by Aida Edemariam, presenting a new tale by Robert Macfarlane and music by viola da gamba player Ibrahim Aziz.

*During the three days of Refugee Tales 2020 some people will choose to walk with us in solidarity according to country guidance at the time. It may be that where you are in the world you can only walk indoors at home, in your locality alone or in a small socially distanced group. Please see our website www.refugeetales.org for details of all events over the three days. More from: eventbrite.co.uk

Friday 3rd July

“Visit our Woodland Skills Centre Facebook page where we feature a different nature theme each week: we do a post in the photo and invite the plant or be. Then we go page in the the answer and and information particular "object". and make it fun but educational".

FB: Woodland Skills Centre, Bodfari

Learn new skills, see performances and create your own Festival in your Garden or Festive Tent in your living room!

31ST JULY - 2ND AUGUST

bellydance :: yoga :: flower crowns :: recipes
dancing :: music
donations welcome - to go to artists eventbrite.co.uk

Eric Ngalle
Charles Poet, playwright, actor and human rights campaigner, FB: Black Entertainment Wales

31st July – 2nd August

bellydance :: yoga :: flower crowns :: recipes
dancing :: music
donations welcome - to go to artists eventbrite.co.uk

More from: eventbrite.co.uk
Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Soul

Kundalini Yoga and Gong Bath Online
Free, from Guru Ram Dass Project-UK, Brixton.
Contact: Hayley Shoesmith: hayley@couturefitness.co.uk

Inspire - Rewire
Mini Chakra Series, 30 mins each, followed by 15 mins chat & meditation. 8.15pm, available on replay too.
FB: Inspire - Rewire

On Being
*Resmaa Menaken - “Notice the Rage; Notice the Silence” onbeing.org

Teresa’s Yoga Class Online
Join me for weekly Dru Yoga classes in the peace of your own home, either live or via the recording any time, anywhere as often as you like. You gain access to a library of recorded classes. Includes full health and safety screening and guidelines
Contact Teresa teresa@teresa4yoga.co.uk teresa4yoga.co.uk/yoga-online

Liberation From Sorrow
Meditation every 8th day of the month, all welcome to join.
thurpa.com

Global Daily Prayers
for healing Covid-19
1.30pm BST - All welcome
FB: Yoga North Wales

Body & Breath
Reduce anxiety and feel more relaxed. 10 mins
YT: Love Yoga Live Yoga

Powa Prayers with Kalpa Bhadra Buddhist Centre
Compassionate prayers for the deceased 7 - 8pm, free, please register.
meditatenorthwales.com

Also:
2020 International Festival
The Joy of Kadampa Life
24th July - 8th Aug. A festival of Buddhist Teachings and Meditations. Join for 1, 2 or 3 weeks. Bookings:
kadampafestivals.org

Closest Friend & Helper
4th July 10am - 3pm, online, via Zoom, £20
with Buddhist nun Gen Kelsang Leksang, includes Q & A, and guided meditation.

Reasons To Be Happy
11th July 11am - 12.30pm, £7. This course is suitable for everyone, including beginners. The course will include guided meditations and practical advice for a happy life.
Register for both with link meditatenorthwales.com

Kalpa Bhadra Buddhist Centre

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Soul

Steph Healy ~ Pure Sound
I’ve made a YouTube channel, with free relaxation and sound meditations! Feel free to pop over and subscribe or share, thank you, Steph x
YT: Pure Sound

WOMEN’S GROUPS
Red Tent Gwynedd
Pabell Goch
Mondays & Thursdays ~ 8.30 - 9.10pm,
Also Tent meetings as organised; both via Zoom.
More from:
FB: Red Tent Gwynedd Pabell Goch

Online Sister Circles
sistercircletemple.com
FB: Sister Circle

Free Weekly Meditations
and a community for all women
FB: Sisters Circles Under the Dancing Tree

LGBT+ Gwynedd, Conwy & Mon
FB Group for those in the North Wales LGBT+ community

Hon Judge Ray Singh
First ethnic minority judge on the Welsh bench. Currently Chairman of Race Council Cymru

Celebrate 30 Years of Vegan Trademark to help consumers easily spot vegan products.
vegansociety.com

FB = Facebook; YT = YouTube
YOGA

Emily Kyle Yoga
Contact: 07775 798536
FB: Emily Kyle Yoga

Rosslyn Falconer Yoga
Friends FB: Yoga Friends

Tru Dru Yoga
Cat Stuijt 07816 103064
Book: trudruyoga.co.uk

Claire Mace
FB: Claire Mace & YT: inspiratrix.as.me

Easy and Gentle
YT: Yoga with Dhananjay

OM Yoga North Wales
YT: OM Yoga at Home
FB: OM Yoga North Wales

Dru Yoga North Wales
druyogaonline.com
FB: Dru Yoga Online
Studio

Yoga Shala
FB: Yoga Shala North Wales

Source Yoga Nutrition & Health
YT: 40 minutes Yin Sequence - Backbends and Hips

Derwen Hatha Yoga
FB: Derwen Yoga (North Wales)

Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga
FB: Yoga North Wales

Nonviolent Communication (NVC)
Learning to communicate with empathy and observation. Connect through Skype with Lisa Mundle, email: busybees@phonecoop.coop

Elizabeth Campbell MBE
Wales first black headteacher. Voted Wales top ‘Hidden Heroines’. 1934 - 2017

MOVEMENT / DANCE

Liz Lane Dance/Movement Sessions
with Groove Dancefloor Sundays 5 - 6pm, Tuesdays 7.30 - 8.30pm. All welcome, you can switch off your camera if you like, just enjoy the sounds and movement.
FB: Liz Lane

Continuum Practice Group
Monthly 9.30 - 11am,
FB: Lucy Parry / North Wales Continuum Movement

Farrah’s Dance Workout - Bollywood Fit at Home!
Several dates; 6pm, Mondays. £5/session. More from FB: farrahsdanceworkout/live

Chakradance with Roz
Connect with Roz Daws for some freeform, spontaneous dance in response to music designed to balance the chakra system
FB: Chakradance with Roz

Polynesian Dancing
Every Thursday 8 - 8.50pm. Led by Rachel
FB: Under The Dancing Tree

“Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet”
Thich Nhat Hanh

TAI CHI & QI GONG

45 mins with Dr Paul Lam
YT: Tai Chi for Beginners *

Tai Chi North Wales
taiji-online.co.uk *

Qigong for Beginners
30 minutes
YT: Yoqi Yoga and Qigong *

Qi Gong Classes via Zoom
taichiphil@outlook.com

Healing Ragas - Star Tabla Classical Instrumental Fusion
YT: Classical Music Raga Behag

Weekly Wellbeing Lunch
Sharing some of our expertise in wellbeing and positive psychology, focusing on some simple, practical tools and approaches. Thursdays, 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd & 30th July.
1pm for 60 mins, free, via Zoom, details from eventbrite.co.uk

Pilates with Carys
First part of a video that introduces key elements of Carysmatic Pilates
YT: Introduction to Carysmatic Pilates 1
40 mins
Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race
The experience of being a person of colour in today’s society.
12 mins
YT: Reni Eddo-Lodge

Vivienne A.A.A White MBE
Cardiff’s first black dentist and first black bus driver faced discrimination because of his race. He went on to become the first black youth worker in Wales.

5 x 15
5 speakers, 15 mins each; sharing inspirations, script-free and against the clock. Topics: mental health, wisdom, human rights, politics, health, unconventional lives.
YT: 5 x 15

“You Matter More Than You Think” don’t underestimate how much our actions change the world

The largest film library for social change
filmsforaction.org

Ubiquity University
Humanity Rising
“If you want to go far go together”
If you missed the live stream you can watch all the sessions from the video library. The Summit will continue for as long as the pandemic lasts.
humanityrising.solutions

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Books & Films to read/watch on issues of Black Lives Matter
Some novels ~ some discourses

Books

“Me and White Supremacy - How to recognise your priviledge, combat racism and change the world” by Layla F Saad

“When they Call You A Terrorist” A Black Lives Matter memoir by Patrisse Khan-Cullors & Asha Bandele

“Underground Railroad” by Colson Whitehead, novel

“Natives: Race & Class in the Ruins of Empire” by Akala

“Coal” by Audre Lorde, poetry

“The Colour Purple” by Alice Walker, novel

“Dust Tracks On A Road” by Zora Neale Hurston, novel

“Beloved” Toni Morrison, novel

“The Souls of Black Folk” William E. Bughardt Du Bois

“The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban America” Khalil Gibran Mohammad

“The Life and Rhymes of Benjamin Zephaniah” activist, poet and writer

“Small Island” Andrea Levy, novel

Films / YT

“White Fragility” by Robin DiAngelo. YT: Family Action Network


Salvador Dali for 10 - 13 year olds Online Art Webinar ~ Thurs 16th July
During this workshop we will learn the story of the artist during a short Power Point Lecture and then will draw and paint together!
1hr 40, 4 - 5.30pm, via Zoom
eventbrite.co.uk

What we need is resilience and a deep search for our endurance to get through the coming months.
“Endurance is patience concentrated”
- Thomas Carlyle

Dictionary Divination
Find a book/dictionary & without looking find a page, put your finger on to a word and make a story using the word

The Criterion Collection
A continuing series of important classic and contemporary films.
criterion.com

“A riot is the language of the unheard”
Martin Luther King, JR

It has now been recognised that ‘forest bathing’ (spending time soaking up the atmosphere of a woodland) has a measurable positive impact on our physical and mental health. If our nature reserves are part of your local patch, please enjoy them responsibly and in line with government guidelines.
There are lots of ideas and updates about how to connect with nature on our website and Facebook.
northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk ~ FB: North Wales Wildlife Trust

Groups who have taken action on climate change:
Included are Incredible Edible in Porthmadog and Corwen Reservoir Hydro Power
Scheme in North Wales plus other inspiring groups based in Mid & South Wales
renewwales.com
See page 4 for article on IE, Porthmadog
RainbowBiz Hippy Shop has re-opened!
8 Daniel Owen Precinct, Mold, Flintshire
FB: RainbowBiz CIC

Y Lon Goed - Grid Ref : SH 45873 43428
8km oak-lined path which dates from the early 19th century. Immortalised by renowned poet R Williams Parry (1884-1956) in his famous poem ‘Eifionydd’.
The path doubles as a wildlife corridor, so look out for polecats, bats, barn owls, hares and weasels as you walk the linear route.
landoflegends.wales

Dancing Queer
Egyptian refugee belly dancer and engineer Shrouk El-Attar, who now lives in Wales, talks about how she uses dance to protect the rights of LGBT people.
The Slate / 2 mins bbc.co.uk

Eid Ali Ahmed helped found the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) after arriving here as a refugee in 1987. He was the deputy chief executive when he left the WRC in 2011.

Jane Elliott - One Race
The Blue Eyes & Brown Eyes Exercise. The film "The Eye of the Storm," introduces, discusses and explores, with the audience, the problems of racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, and ethnocentrism and the responsibility shared by all of us for illuminating them in and eliminating them from ourselves and our environment.
janeelliott.com

Abdulrahim Abby Farah Wales-born Somali diplomat helped to release Mandela behind the scenes in the UN

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Notes and requests from participants of the video:
“Stop posting violent videos on line - it’s harmful to see and doesn’t address the problem”.
“What good does posting a black square do? In posting this, how is it helpful? Make it authentic.
Ask yourself:
* Am I willing to back this (these words) up with action?
* How have I been shaped by the forces of racism?
* How do I facilitate discussions in this? How might this post be damaging to me? Am I going to challenge my behaviour?
* Why are you asking black people what to do? Find out for yourself!
* It’s not our job to teach you about systemic racism and white priviledge.
Find out in your work place these important issues: HR Solutions for micro aggressions in the work place; the hiring of black people/Diversity Policies; do you make contributions to wider society - charities, donations, political donations.”
Find out more from: racecouncilcymru.co.uk

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Coronavirus: Considering Our Responses And Responsibilities
Supporting practitioners in these extraordinary times so that they can support their clients. 6.30 - 7.30pm, 1st, 8th & 29th July, free online event.
Register: eventbrite.co.uk

GIG / NHS Health Visiting Service
To speak to a Health Visitor please contact the number for your area:
Arfon (Bethesda, Bangor, Caernarfon) 03000 851609 / 851610
Meirionydd - Blaenau Ffestiniog 03000 853489
Dwyfor (Cilan) 01758 701152
Anglesey - Tŷ Derwyydd 03000 853174
Holyhead Area, Jesse Hughes 01407 762507

North Wales PPE Support
Can you help?
Groups on FB: North Wales PPE Support
Laundry Bags & Button Bands - NHS Wales Key Workers
Love: North Wales Coronavirus Help & Support
The Scrub Team
Covid-19 Mutual Aid UK
Local groups: covidmutualaid.org

Networking for World Awareness of Multicultural Integration (NWAMI) FB page. To promote a cohesive community and integrated society in North Wales in the 21st century through peaceful, respectful and healthy ways ~ nwami.org

Yellow Hearts to Remember
A place to meet for those who have lost loved ones
FB: Yellow Hearts to Remember - Covid 19

Sustainability in Textiles
Explore the Future of Sustainability in the Textiles Industry. 10th July, 10 - 11.30am, free, via Webex, see eventbrite.co.uk

Cliff DePass
One of the lead founding members of Black History Month in Wales, Cliff is regarded as an elder statesman amongst the community members.

FB = Facebook
YT = YouTube

Mercy Ngulube
Born with HIV this 20-year-old from Cardiff has used her experiences of stigma to pursue equality for young people living with the virus.

Young Artist Club Online Art Webinar
for 5 - 6 year olds, with Art Enthusiasts ondon “How to Paint a Landscape” Fri 17th July, 10 - 11.15am, £4.36 eventbrite.co.uk
plus other Young Artist Club events

Resurgence Talks
Covering a range of ideas on the environment, the arts, culture and ethical living.
14th July Satish Kumar - The Power of Humility. A talk on how humility can enhance all our relationships.
29th July Richard Dunne - How can Nature’s principles of Harmony guide and inform a new way of learning to live?
£5, resurgence.org/talks for updates and bookings
1. What word becomes smaller if you add letters to it?

2. What common non-hyphenated word contains the above letter sequence with no letters inbetween?

3. All of the words in the list below share a very unique property except one. Which is the odd one out?
   - bass
   - mark
   - live
   - sewer
   - content
   - project
   - contest
   - record
   - read
   - wind

4. Mary's father has 5 daughters - Nana, Nene, Nini, Novo, and _____. What is the fifth daughter's name?

What Am I?
1. I sit in a corner and travel all around the world. What am I?
2. I'm flat as a leaf and round as a ring I have two eyes, but can't see a thing. What am I?
3. When I am alive I stay put where I am. It is only when I am dead that I move about here and there. What am I?

How to make a toad abode:
There are several How To's on the resource pages for connecting to nature and creatures in our environment to do at home
chesterzoo.org

You can also help raise funds:
See justgiving.com: Walk for Chester Zoo and Mental Health (with Tina Royles)

Gwen Ferch Ellis (1542-1591) was the first person convicted and executed for witchcraft in Wales. She was a healer, herbalist and wise woman accused of leaving a curse at the home of Thomas Mostyn of Gloddaeth. In local legend, inebriated men from the village barged into her home and took fright at a large fly, thinking it was Ellis’ demon. New charges were brought of causing death and insanity, and she was tried for witchcraft in Llansanffraid Church, and later hanged in the town square – now the location of Denbigh Library - legendsofwales.wales

Culture Declares Emergency
Urging you to work locally within cohorts of interest amidst the climate crisis
Toolkit online; visit culturedeclares.org

Gardening Tips for July:
Dead head flowers; water plants well with grey water if you can; hoe off weeds; clear algae & blanket weeds from ponds rhs.org.uk

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This report sets out my assessment of progress made in implementing the Act within the first reporting period, i.e. the last three years.

It reflects on the progress of all public bodies in terms of whether they have embraced the cultural change required by the Act and also considers the progress being made on each of the seven national well-being goals. As this is a once in five year report and has to cover all policy areas covered by the well-being goals, the report is lengthy and has a significant number of findings and over 100 recommendations covering both policy and process directed at Government and other bodies covered by the Act.

In preparing this report I have involved over 5000 people from conversations in supermarkets, on line surveys using Sensemaker, roundtable meetings across Wales and with specific sectors and detailed work with innovators public private and third sector partners and academics.

The report highlights many innovative approaches and excellent practice across Wales where public bodies, individuals within them, community groups and even organisations not covered by the statutory duties under the Act are embracing its requirements and using it to frame their work.

Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

EXPLORE or DOWNLOAD the FULL REPORT at: futuregenerations.wales

**Pride Rhithwir Cymru ~ Wales-Wide Virtual Pride**

24 & 25 July

Live video with LGBTQymru created to unite all the voices, stories, groups and LGBTQ+ organisations of Wales, all in one place, and all at the same time.

Mae Pride Rhithwir Cymru wedi'i greu i uno'r holl leisiau, straeon, grwpiau a sefydliadau LGBTQ+ yng Nghymru, y cyfan mewn un lle, a'r cyfan ar yr un pryd.

FB: LGBTQymruWales-Wide Virtual Pride // Pride Rhithwir Cymru

**QUIZ ANSWERS**

1. (Small + er)
2. W I T C H C R A F T
3. Mark: all the others can be pronounced 2 ways
4. Mary

**What Am I?**

1. stamp
2. button
3. leaf/flower
**LOCAL FRESH FOOD - Deliveries** (as of 21st June)

**Village Veg, Waunfawr/Caernarfon** Delivery Fri or Sat. Free delivery over £8.50 order. Phone Kevin 07962 214347. For updates: Facebook: Village Veg

**Moelyci, Tregarth** Orders/payment over the phone and will let you know when it is ready to collect from outside the shop. 01248 602793, Facebook: Moelyci

**DJ's Fruit and Vegetables, Penrhyndeudraeth.** Email: info@djfruit.cymru for a form or call 01766 514330, djfruit.cymru

**The Eating Gorilla in Penrhyndeudraeth** Takeaway and home delivery with B&M Taxis. Can include Porthmadog. Call 01766 770292

**Siop a Caffi y Garreg in Llanfrothen** are doing grocery deliveries to vulnerable people. They can also deliver simple hot meals. Box collections available, call 01766 770094.

**Grapes in Maentwrog** are now offering takeaway. 01766 590365, grapeshotelsnowdonia.co.uk

**Henbant, Clynnog Fawr, Caernarfon** Now taking orders for their veg boxes £15/ week standard or £10/week small. Sign up : henbant.org. matt@henbant.org / 07786 316413

**Kyffin Cafe Deli, Bangor** Kyffin are making food for takeaway and delivery, including packs of various loose leaf tea. You can find them on Facebook or call 01248 355161.

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**Soulvegan Bakery** Online orders welcome. Emma 07583 947472, emma@soulvegan.co.uk, soulvegan.co.uk FB: Soulvegan bakery

**Treddafydd Organic Farm** You can order online seasonal veg bags, fruit bags, chutneys and jam. Local delivery or pick up in person. Based in Llithfaen; deliveries around Pen Llyn. Orders: treddafyddorganic.co.uk

**Eat Your Greens** Grown using environmentally friendly methods. Delivery service available, based in Denbigh. Order from 01745 289160, hello@eatyourgreens.wales ~ eatyourgreens.wales

**Central Bakery** Delivering in Anglesey. Contact 01248 810386 to place your orders, payment can be made over the phone. See Facebook: Central Bakery for more info.

**Phoenix Bistro, Llangollen** Operating a take away service. Order via phone or email, pay over the phone, beep/call when outside, pick up your food from collection point. Service available 12pm & 8pm. Contact 01978 469829, thephoenixbistro2018@gmail.com Facebook: The Phoenix Bistro.

**Zero Food Waste and Food Share Llangollen** See their page on Facebook: offering food to those in need

**Felin Uchaf, Rhoshirwaun** Market Garden full of veg, fruit and flowers. FB: felin Uchaf; 01758 780280, felinuchaf.org

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**eatweeds.co.uk** ~ a foraging guide to the edible and medicinal wild plants of Britain

*See also our inside back cover as most of the health food shops are open for collection or deliveries.*
Sydney Banks once said that, if the only thing people learned was not to be afraid of their experience, that alone would change the world.

Syd was a Glaswegian welder with only basic formal education. After he moved to Canada, he had a revelation one day that changed his life and led to the understanding that we call The Three Principles of Mind, Thought, and Consciousness. Syd himself said that these are not new – we have just forgotten them – so forgive me if aspects of this seem familiar. But now, more than ever, we are at a tipping point and it is abundantly clear that the old ways of society, culture, and economics are not working. Is it time for a new paradigm?

I am a mental health practitioner - I started my nursing training just as the Mental Health Act 1983 came into force. The medical model prevailed – diagnose, label, and treat. If treatment is not with drugs, working on presumed chemical imbalances (has anybody ever had their serotonin levels checked?), then it is through talking therapies. These explore the person’s personal history, looking for trauma or external circumstances that could pinpoint exactly where this mental health issue originates. Some patients churn out their tale so frequently that it becomes a Jackanory – but without an ending. The labels and the medication can become a life sentence. What if it could be different?

A few years ago, I discovered the Three Principles, and developed my understanding of this philosophy. It felt like a natural fit. They underpin every part of my work, from a conversation with a colleague, through supporting my patients, to letting go at the end of the day. I had already studied mindfulness, and undoubtedly there are parallels. However, the key difference is that mindfulness is a practice, whereas the Three Principles just are. They are like gravity – you don’t have to comprehend it to see its effects. Indeed, many trainee coaches try too hard to rationalise and search for the tricks and techniques. There aren’t any, really. Everyone knows it but has forgotten along the way in all the busy-ness and coping strategies of modern adult life. We just need reMinding.

Our minds are so frantic with thoughts - thousands of them every day - and we attach feelings to these thoughts so that they grow and take on significance. Thoughts are neutral and should be transient like the clouds. Recognising and letting go of this noisy thinking is the first step towards improving mental wellbeing. Slow down the thoughts, choosing which to pursue - using any technique that helps to refocus, such as meditation, yoga, mindful walking or other gentle activities – and allowing a quiet mind to access inner wisdom.

Thoughts are formless, but giving them substance by ruminating and over-analysing creates Consciousness. We have all experienced how two people can be part of a situation and see it in a totally different way - neither is wrong, but it is seen through their personal reality. Our reality colours how we see interactions and circumstances. While experience is useful, you cannot step in the same river twice. So, if experience has taught us that
‘nothing ever goes right’ it will adversely affect our reality unless we have let go of that expectation and enter each new moment anew.

Mind is probably best understood as the prevalent state of mind. We all react in the moment to sadness, provocation, shock, and so on, but beyond this we develop and rely on a hopeful but quiet and accepting state of mind as our default setting. An understanding of the Three Principles grows, but we can always work from our grounding. We begin to notice if our thoughts become noisy or unhelpful. My mentor calls this rumble strips, like the warning at the edge of a road that one is drifting out of the lane. Quietness allows us to hear our own and collective wisdom; radical acceptance means we know that many things are not within our control – and that includes other people. Hope is fostered without attachment to a particular outcome.

Sydney Banks talked about personal and divine Thought, Consciousness, and Mind. We can equally use the terms Universal or collective. This perhaps accounts for trends, movements and sociocultural shifts in attitudes - often ahead of legislation. It also supports the need to counter negativity with unconditional love and be open to possibilities.

Were I to offer a ‘101’ for mental wellbeing, it would be this:

- We have innate mental health. Nobody is broken or needs to be fixed.
- Thoughts are neutral until we attach emotions to them. Acknowledge your thoughts but let them go.
- We cannot control other people’s thoughts, actions and behaviours. Only our own, and our reactions to others.
- Much emotional difficulty relates to unresolved memories, and the strategies we innocently adopt to cope. Memories are feelings attached to thoughts travelling through time.
- We cannot change the past or predict the future. We have only now to become the best version of ourselves.

Shari Auldyth is an NHS nurse, and a certified transformational coach and manager of Serenda events, currently offering online coaching. She is a published academic author (welfare history) and also writes poetry, memoir and mystery stories. She lives in Caernarfon with her three sons.

www.liveinthenow.co.uk

serenda
The residential “Warriors for the Human Spirit” training course, led by Margaret (Meg) Wheatley, and organised by Collective Leadership Scotland, seems a lifetime ago. The world in which I got up on a sunny morning in early March, walked out with my backpack and my fold-up bike, and got on a train to Perth, is not the world we live in now. My backpack has collapsed in on itself, slumped over as the despair of millions. My fold-up bike is on offer to any frontline worker that might need it. I’m more likely to travel on a spaceship than I am on a train.

We’re all less mobile now.

I started writing this six weeks ago. But I’ve had to rewrite it. My mood has shifted. For so many of us there is discombobulation. Anger. Fear. Helplessness. There is a constant, tattering edge. Emotional detritus washes in and out on a fractious tide.

The new temporary rings out the daily bells of the dead. But church bells don’t peal any more. The bells are, instead, line graphs that rise, octave upon octave. Funeral services are live-streamed. Mourners, limited in attendance by risk assessments, stand two metres apart. No words can replace a hug.

We’re all bereaved now.

I’ve been listening to Tunnel 29. It tells the story of a group of students who tunneled from West Berlin into East Berlin to help their friends and relatives escape. What bravery, what leadership. The group was infiltrated by a Stasi informer. We are not living in that world. But the state has, on the back of the COVID-19 crisis, taken extraordinary powers that impinge upon our liberties, particularly those of the poor. Citizens are encouraged to inform on their neighbours. And, according to the police, they have been doing so in droves.

We’re all being watched now.

Life-affirming leaders, or Warriors for the Human Spirit, are leaders, activists, and citizens who want to make a meaningful contribution in this time of increasing assaults on the human spirit and all life. The COVID–19 pandemic has demonstrated a clear need for this type of leadership. And indeed, these warriors are emerging. They are not common yet, but they are here. We catch a glimpse of them on television. On social media. On our streets. In our shops. In our new on-line world. In our places of work or worship. We speak to them when they call us to check that we’re still okay.

Could I be a warrior? At the beginning of March I was on a career break. I wondered whether I should offer to go back to help out with the crisis. Surely more hands would be needed? But words from Meg’s training gave me pause. ‘Don’t rush in to fix things. Ask yourself: what is your work and what can you do to serve?’ So in those early days after that intensive residential week in Perth, I carried on writing, and I carried on my voluntary work, supporting local efforts to improve conditions for walking, cycling and wheeling.
I spoke with my new friends from the warrior training. What were they doing? How were they coping? Many talked about taking their seat – the daily mindfulness practice at the core of warrior work. Taking our seats, being present, dignified and grounded, is essential if we are to make meaningful contributions to both our own lives and those of others.

No, I haven’t meditated every day since the course. Nor do I practice with my eyes open as Meg had instructed. But the regular practice has helped me identify what I think about the most, where my anxieties lie, and how to deal with some of the thought processes I find most difficult. I know what my work is right now. What it will be in two or three months, I’m not sure. I haven’t yet offered to go back to my paid employment. But the request for volunteers has come in. And I have three days left to decide.

We can all take our seat.

There was so much to think about at the warrior training. For me, the essence of it seems to be that we behave with decency and dignity in the service of others. So in lockdown, I have taken the opportunity to observe myself.

I notice first that my writing has taken on a darker more fantastical edge. My stories have become dystopian. I have embraced magical realism, played with shape-shifters, and ordinary household objects take on human qualities. I break creative writing rules, make up words, leave sentences undone. Has lockdown set me free? On quality perhaps. But not on quantity. The first draft of my novel, completed in November, remains untouched. Short pieces are easy. Longer pieces are still fragments to be knitted together when my edges stop tattering. Warriors, we were told, don’t expect applause. Expecting applause and not getting it can result in anger, disappointment and pain. It is not easy, though. I yearn for affirmation with my writing. I want people to tell me that my experimental work prompted them to think differently. Or that they liked the rhythm of my words. Or that they caught up with a character that I’d invented. It seems I’ve still got a long way to go on this warrior trait.

Can I prevent the hurt that comes from lack of acknowledgement in the future? Perhaps. Focussing on the work, or the service that needs to be done, without needing praise, is a selfless act. And I have found that I am generally able to do it with my voluntary work. Staying in the background, and getting pleasure from something I’ve worked on with other people, turns out to be enough for my self-esteem.

We can all do without applause (but it’s hard).

Warriors create islands of sanity. We can all imagine these. Swinging in a hammock under a coconut palm or a Caledonian Pine. Everybody respects everybody else. Compassion and trust are the cocktails of
the day. Warriors put the qualities of relationships at the heart of their leadership on these islands. And learning and reflection are the conditions required for our survival.

I had struggled to see the relevance for my own situation at first. In my previous paid work, yes. But my voluntary effort would surely be too small for island creation? And, on top of that, I know I’m not a particularly calming person. Island building would be too hard for me.

In my work, four (or sometimes five or six) of us pull together to get things done in and around our local neighbourhood. The who does what depends on who has the time, or the skills, or the contacts. I am the leader only in as much that I saw that the work needed done, starting doing it, and people came along to help.

In the COVID-19 crisis my local fellow activists are juggling home schooling, working from home, and enduring the mental fatigue of lockdown. The people that we are working with (the Council, stakeholders, other communities) have the same challenges. So I have attempted to create an island of sanity. So far, its boundaries are not clear. It’s not apparent who’s on the island and who isn’t, although all are welcome. Sometimes I get side tracked. I forget about the coconut oil and pick up a jack hammer (for this I apologise). But then I take my seat and get back to the serious business of focusing on the quality of the relationships, rather than the transactional elements. Not just between ourselves in our small clan, but between all the people that we are working with on the projects we’d like delivered.

**We can all create islands of sanity.**

Of course, focusing on the quality of relationships means doing so with those that you don’t get on with, as well as those that you do. In our training week we spent a bit of time identifying what triggers us, why we are triggered, and what the impacts of those triggers are. Triggers for me are someone or something that stokes my rage. Tightens my chest. Drops a rock in my belly. Triggers hurl a response out of my mouth before I’ve taken time to reflect.

Most of us are probably triggered by something that links back to a lack of respect. For us. For others. For the planet. So on our island, we understand what triggers us. And we aren’t triggered. The red flag goes up. We pause. We create space. And most importantly, we treat trigger individuals as if we’ve never met them before. We erase our common history and start again.

**We can all learn not to be triggered.**

As with all of aspects of warriorship, the theory is easier than the practice. Meg encouraged us to be grateful to everyone. Yes, even the ones pulling the triggers. The person that made my life hell. The person that threw me under a bus. What can I learn about myself from that person and their actions? About my reactions? I learn to focus on my own behaviours. To be respectful and decent. To be less transactional. To waste less energy being
angry over someone that I can’t control.

We can all be grateful to everyone.

There’s one more thing I want to say about this island of sanity. It is an island without hope. Hope, according to Meg, is an addiction we cling to. As I understand it, she asks us to replace hope with being present. Being present prevents us from toppling into despair when our hopes are not realised. I was resistant at first. But I was also relieved. We all know it’s the hope that kills you.

Working in climate change involved so much hope for me. Hope that it would be prioritised across the globe. Hope that every organisation would do the right thing. Hope that if I could just be better at my job I’d get better results. All those hopes dashed, despite the efforts and successes of so many, by the interminable height climbed by those lines on the graphs. Letting that hope go feels lighter. On our island we might use the word hope. Hope your folks are okay. Hope it works out for you. But we won’t be hopeful, we’ll be present instead.

*We can all live without hope.*

Our warrior training continues. The group from Perth meets every month online. In between those sessions we exchange messages. A photograph of a sunrise. A virtual hug. A reading about futures. A poem about grief. There is shared love and dark humour. All of us in wonder about how it came to be that we entered that hotel outside Perth to start our training in one world, and came out, wide-eyed and bewildered, in another. We were together. I forget the rest.

Now I watch and listen to other leaders with my warrior hat by my side. Senior politicians leading their countries with humanity and integrity. Chief executives working with their staff on the collective transformation of their businesses as they adapt to pandemic life. Team leaders providing a space each morning for colleagues to express their fears and concerns. Women keeping calm order in panicky supermarket queues. Bus drivers reassuring anxious passengers; and cleaners, everywhere, keeping the show on the road.

*We can all be leaders now.*

This blog was written for Collective Leadership Scotland.

*Kirsty Lewin reads, writes and makes short films, takes photographs, and campaigns on local environmental and transport issues.*

sanderlings.home.blog

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Children of the Earth by Yasus Afari

The earth is the garden of creation purposefully clothed, with lush, green vegetation. Roots! Firm enough to prevent critical soil erosion, all elements working in union, for natural joy and satisfaction.

The earth is our friend, we are the children of the earth.

The cyclic function of the earth’s ecology is no mystery, like the organs of the human body, each working in perfect harmony, in this our environmental community, of which the guardians and keepers are the children of humanity.

The earth is our friend, we are the children of the earth.

The rivers, like blood streams flowing into the oceans, returning secretly to the fleshy bowels of earth’s creation, evaporating to the atmospheric breath of life, sun, moon and stars, solid, liquid and gas, land, sea and air, flesh, blood and spirit.

The earth is our friend, we are the children of the earth.

Like the lungs of man, the trees breathe to keep the earth alive. Yeah! The Sun, like a devoted Father working from sunrise until sunset and the Moon, like a loving Mother, working from dusk until dawn, shining with the sweet embrace of her children, the stars.

The earth is our friend, we are the children of the earth.

If we protect the earth, then, the earth will protect us, clothe, feed and shelter us. The earth is the garden of creation. if we keep the earth alive, then we will stay alive, the earth will keep us alive.

The earth is our mother and our friend! We are the children and the friends of the earth, of the earth, of Mother Earth.

yasusafari.net

Yasus is a Dub Poet, Author & Ambassador