

Life Force Foundation is a non-profit organisation providing emotional/psychosocial support for people dealing with the experience of cancer, through group therapy and meditation, counselling, special workshops and retreats.

Life Force Foundation

CFN 15707

ABN 61 068 056 682

DGR. 428809

EASTERN SUBURBS

NORTHERN SUBURBS

INNER WEST

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Bondi Junction NSW 1355

Tel: (02) 9389 3834

Gabi Hollows

Patrons:

Prof. Michael Friedlander

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Poetry & Prose on again - May 12

Our Annual Fundraiser has become so popular that there will be 2 performances... a matinee at 2pm and an evening performance at 7.00pm. As it is Mother's Day, it will be a marvellous opportunity to give your mother a treat!! As usual we have a fabulous line-up of guest presenters, so don't miss out. (See flyer enclosed and book early).

Beautiful Experiences on Retreat

In this edition, we hear from one of our retreat participants about her experiences on our summer retreat in the Kandos valley. Also included is a poem written by another participant after our Autumn retreat in May 2001.

The retreats are a place where we learn that another way of living is possible. Wonderful transformative experiences occur, and people can work on integrating these experiences into their daily lives. (See back page for details of our next retreat)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people in the community who provide retreat sponsorship which allows everybody to have the chance to participate in these life-affirming experiences. It is such a lovely gift to people when they need it most.

Support Groups and Life Skills Course

See back page for details of our Term 2 group meetings and note our next Life Skills For Cancer Survivors Course to be held once again at Ryde College of TAFE.

In this issue there is an interesting article by Psychiatrist Mark Ryan, which helps us to see the importance of looking at life

from a different perspective and using the groups and courses to help us make adjustments in our lives, using different approaches and skills. Mark and clinical psychologist Michael Parle are advisors to LFF, and both are guest speakers at our Life Skills Course.

Life Skills for Cancer Survivors

Next course runs each Wednesday 6.00-8.30pm from May 1st to June 26th 2002 at Ryde College of TAFE, Parkes Street, West Ryde.

Feedback from previous participants...

"Go do it - the people you meet there are caring and supportive and you will receive a lot of help to survive the rest of your life."

"A good way of getting more tools in the kitbag for ordinary people to cope with extraordinary circumstances."

"Fabulous!"

The course is conducted by LFF counsellor and group leader, Denise Lavell and clinical psychologist, Jessica Medd.

One of the added strengths of the course is the presence of Clinical Psychologist Michael Parle and Psychiatrist Mark Ryan of the Sydney Psychological Medicine Group as guest speakers on Communication and Relationship issues and aspects of coping with stress and worry. Participants find their sessions extremely helpful.



NEWSLETTER

MAR
2002

Please do not throw this newsletter in the bin. Pass it on to someone who may benefit from it, or give it to your doctor, dentist or other health professionals. You may wish to put the support group information up on a noticeboard. In this way you may be able to help someone in need. Thankyou.

Life Force Survivors of Cancer Course

Prepared by **Mark Ryan**, May 2001

Thoughts, beliefs and being in the world - both permitting and constraining

The concepts that are available to us will determine the way we think about things. These concepts will express our interest, direct our attention and shape our perceptions, understanding, explanations and behaviours. They will guide our interaction with, interpretative reasoning about and behaviour in the world. Generally speaking, one cannot do what one cannot conceive.

But the concepts we have will narrow our attention, limiting our perception, creating blind spots because we will fit (reduce) what we see to these concepts.

The medical model refers to a set of concepts that shape a distorted view of a person because it ignores the human and subjective dimensions - the psychological, the social and the cultural.

Thus the human experience of illness and disease are usually left out of the doctor's considerations and interactions with a patient. Thus there may be no attention to or appreciation of how a person thinks and feel about their medical condition.

Yet a person's beliefs and feelings about their illness are major factors in the course and outcome of the illness. Medical treatment may be less effective because these factors are not acknowledged and responded to.

Additionally, significant psychological distress and disturbance may be responded to morally, the person being seen as responsible for their condition, as opposed to more obviously physical diseases which are seen as tragedies visited upon the person who is thus not blamed for them.

However the psychological can affect the body - grief, panic, phobia, worry etc. will be both experienced physically as well as manifested in the body. But this interaction is rarely acknowledged because of the bias in medical perception that only "sees" the body affecting the mind.

A more holistic conceptual model of mind and body would allow the whole person to be considered; it is the entire organism not the body or brain alone that interacts with the environment or responds to disease. Such a model would enable a more comprehensive and adequate interaction with a person who is ill.

Revising and developing new beliefs, meanings and ways of being in the world

As patients, an illness provides an opportunity to become mindful of the concepts that guide our own

perceptions, thinking and behaviour in the world. In illness, and also in adapting to life, we need to be able to develop new ways of thinking about, seeing and doing things. This process of mindfulness can be facilitated by conversations that allow a person to loosen their grip on their own opinions and create new meanings, evolving their sense of "I".

Sensations and experiences arising from changes in the body will generate an awareness of distress and discomfort or pleasure. The available concepts enable interpretation and will allow us to give meaning and names to these experiences. Our culture, our individual history and interaction with others will specifically shape the meanings, the evaluations and thus responses to these experiences. Thus there will be variations in the threshold at which the experience is noted and is felt and the intensity with which it is experienced. It is our beliefs and meanings that will both influence the intensity of the suffering experienced and provide a means for lessening it.

Mindfulness is a key skill

Mindfulness is a skill we all have to strive to develop. It is a process that requires developing our attentional capacity and control, awareness of both what we are doing as well as how we are doing. It enables an appreciation that we are not our thoughts and sensations, although we are embodied. It fosters our capacity for thinking about our thinking, for developing multiple perspectives and considering other ways of thinking about and doing things. There are a number of strategies to facilitate this skill and it is important to keep in mind that the outcome is a process, that is, we need to keep practising the skills.

Mark Ryan MB BS FRANZCP

Some helpful Books

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.
"Living Well. The Psychology of Everyday Life".
Phoenix Books, London. 1997.

Jon Kabat-Zinn.
"Full Catastrophe Living. Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness".
Delta Books, New York, 1990.

Timothy J. Sharp.
"The Good Sleep Guide. 10 steps to better sleep and how to break the worry cycle".
Penguin Books, Australia, 2001.

The Retreat

On 1st March the Life Force Retreat was held in the Kandos Valley. I was pale and quite exhausted when we arrived on Friday evening in time for dinner. The place was beautiful, a lovely old stone farmhouse with verandahs and a fantastic view of the surrounding countryside, dam and hills.

I slept so well, despite a strange bed and awoke refreshed. Saturday morning was spent in Yoga but because of my tiredness I only participated in the meditation at the end. Afterwards I had a massage with Karen - wonderful.

In the afternoon we had sand tray therapy. This was a new experience for me. We were presented with a tray of sand and many objects to choose from.

For 20 minutes I worked at my picture, which just came to me. I used some objects to represent difficult people and times in my life and others that I felt could help in my healing journey. These represented spirituality, endurance, nuclear medicine, nutrition,

friends and nature. It was very powerful and I made a decision to incorporate these in my life after the weekend.

On Sunday we had a Vision Quest, which was the highlight of the weekend. We used traditions from several indigenous people's rituals and received powerful messages.

During my Vision Quest I saw a tree - my tree, straight but with branches only on the left side. I took the tree into my heart and wondered what it meant.

Someone once told me that the creative triumph is the present, the left side the past and the right side the future. Perhaps I am meant to fill in the right side of the tree to make it whole again. I now have visions of both trees as one merges into the other and I see my future more clearly.

On meeting back at the campfire afterwards we all placed leaves in the fire and watched the smoke take our aspirations up to the Great Spirit. I felt glowing at the end of my Journey.

Anne Thorpe

Faith in the Universe

by Katie Barton 10/6/01

If you have faith in the universe
You will be led
By a greater power
Than what's in your head.

If you have faith in the universe
The universe will look after you
Being aware of synchronicity
And the power of nature too.

If you have faith in the universe
You will realise the power of living in the moment
Not tomorrow, not yesterday, just now
And realise that conformity, is meant to be bent.

If you have faith in the universe
A positive energy will filter through your blood
Aided by conscious living
Creativity will flow through your veins like a flood.

If you have faith in the universe
You will develop your own spiritual being
Where life will be pitted with life's treasures
And your intuition will be a new way of seeing.

If you have faith in the universe
You will let your worries go
And realise ideas need time to come to fruition
And with the practice of universal living you'll know.

If you have faith in the universe
You will have faith in being led
You will know there's a greater power
And to keep your mind open, to what lies ahead.

(Katie wrote: I'm enclosing a poem which reflects what I learnt at the retreat last year)



Acknowledgements...

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Tom Bassett, Jan Bray, Budget Rent-a-Car, Nancy Cash, Pamela Chalmers, Agnes Chan, Eliana Chavez, Ann Christie, Maree D'Arcy, Joan de Carvalho, M. Dureau, Heather Edwards, Anouch Esden, Ian Hunter, Gregory Keane, Turn of Phrase, Laing Real Estate, Janice Lam, Jon & Jacky Marcuson, McGrath Estate Agents, Paula O'Sullivan, Collette Parr, Merle Phillipps, Dorothy Prentice, Gabrielle Prentice, Giulia Priante, Jill Ralston, Kerry Robertson, Bertram & Pauline Rosenberg, Mark Ryan, Anne Schofield, Terri Sissian Public Relations Pty Ltd, Jody Somogy, Anne Thorpe, Maggy Todd, M.C & D.E Traynor, Gavin Wilson & Associates. Hellie Yound. Helen Yoxall



Next LFF Retreat for 2002

To be held on the weekend of May 24-26 - book early on 9389 3834.

Other items of interest for the Cancer Care Community...

Telegroup Counselling (TGC)

For adults isolated by their cancer. The Cancer Council has received a significant number of submissions from others in the community of NSW who find themselves isolated due to their experience of cancer, who would benefit from the use of the **telephone support group**. We are currently developing the TGC model to be available for adults isolated due to their cancer.

- **Geographically isolated** from participating in a face-to-face support group.
- **Restricted to the home** due to treatment or severity of illness.
- **Preferring anonymity** (because of family or social reasons)
- **Requiring an alternative choice for cancer support** i.e. don't fit into the average criteria for support groups
- **With rare cancers**
- **With disfiguring cancers**

Telegroup Counselling comprises of groups of 6-8 adults who participate in an eight-week series of counselling and peer support via teleconferencing. The teleconference is paid for and set up by the Cancer Council and run by two

trained facilitators. The participants just need to have access to a phone, preferably in their home in a private room.

They will need to make themselves available for one hour, once per week (time to be arranged, but is flexible.)

For further information and to register your interest in participating contact: **The Cancer Help Line 131120**

or direct to: Kim Pearce (02) 9334 1755

email: kimp@nswcc.org.au

Articles, poems etc.

We welcome any articles of interest or poetry for publication in our quarterly newsletter. Please submit any material to Jilly, preferably by email, or by fax, or by post to the above address.

djwarra gunyah hair

Elaine & Drina from djwarra gunyah (meaning the hair place) are continuing their special offer to all Life Force members. You will need to register with LFF so we can put you on the list. djwarra gunyah, Shop 10, 8 Waters Rd. Neutral Bay. Tel: 9904 0325. Please ask for Elaine or Drina.

The Offer: **First haircut/consultation free** (up to one hour) + **15% discount** on all services for one year. Tuesday to Friday, 10am to 6pm.

Life Force Foundation Support Groups

2002 Term Dates

Note: It is important to register for all support groups, before turning up, in order to check on numbers and confirm that details are correct. Phone the LFF no.: **(02) 9389 3834**.

Eastern Suburbs

meets weekly at:

**St. Joseph's Parish Centre
10 Albert St, Edgecliff**

Monday evenings: 5:45pm - 7:45pm

Term 2 May 6 to Jun 24 (8 weeks)
Term 3 July 29 to Sep 16 (8 weeks)
Term 4 Oct 21 to Dec 9 (8 weeks)

Northern Suburbs

meets weekly at:

**Mosman Community Centre
Cnr Short & Myahgah Sts, Mosman**

Wednesday evenings: 6.30pm - 8.30pm

Term 2 May 1 to Jun 19 (8 weeks)
Term 3 TBA (8 weeks)
Term 4 TBA (8 weeks)

Phone Jane Gillespie: 9960 3213

Inner West

meets weekly at:

**Annandale Neighbourhood Centre
79 Johnston St, Annandale**

Thursday evenings: 5:45pm - 7:45pm

Term 2 May 2 to Jun 20 (8 weeks)
Term 3 July 25 to Sep 12 (8 weeks)
Term 4 Oct 17 to Dec 5 (8 weeks)

Family & Carers Group

meets weekly at:

**The Forest House, Suite 2,
47-49 Forestville S/Ctr, Darley St, Forestville
or Annandale N/hood Ctr (Tel: 9453 4100)**

Monday evenings: 5.45pm - 7.45 pm

Term 2 May 6 to Jun 24 (8 weeks)
Term 3 July 29 to Sep 16 (8 weeks)
Term 4 Oct 21 to Dec 9 (8 weeks)