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**Work in Progress**

Published monthly by Michele Crawford

Work in Progress is an electronic newsletter intended to assist individuals seeking optimum well-being.

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Work in Progress February 2008 Volume III Issue II

Feature Article: Two models of transcending adversity: Mindfulness and Assertiveness Part Two

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1) Note from Michele

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Dear Reader

Beyond providing the capacity to deal with adversity, learning to be grounded and mindful can take us to a deeper level of experiencing life with more joy.

Joy is a state of mind... it lies within us. It cannot be found in acquisition, possessions, medication or other people. If joy exists in each of us, then it is within our reach when we turn inward. Turning inward is only possible when your mind is still.

It would appear that the more you have on your mind, the less room there is for joy. The first step is to eliminate the white noise that interferes with your capacity to experience joy.

This intrusion is both a result of trying to wrestle joy from external sources... a definite dead-end... and it's related to your biology.

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2) Feature Article: Two models of transcending adversity:  
Mindfulness and Assertiveness Part Two  
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When a deer is walking in the woods, he is attentive to all of his senses... that would be crucial to his survival. His senses of smell and hearing, keen eye-sight, his awareness of changes in energy, are all acute.

Then he is startled by a strange noise and immediately freezes; all his concentration is on the source of the noise to determine if it's a danger to him or not. Now he has the appearance of the proverbial deer in headlights. This biological response is called orienting.

If other noises are added, he is completely unaware of them because he remains oriented on the potentially hazardous sound. Until he knows it is benign, he will remain frozen and ready to bolt if necessary.

All animals share the biological reaction of orienting, including human beings. This is the reason people report a loss of short-term memory and concentration when they are feeling stressed. Just like a deer in headlights, individuals cannot assimilate new information when they feel overwhelmed!

When a deer is brought down by a wolf pack, the chemicals of freeze are released to the extent that the deer appears to be instantly dead. Although aware of what is happening, this deer is very detached and feels absolutely no pain.

Inside, all his senses race like a tornado. This is part of mother-nature's last bid for the deer's survival. If the deer sees his chance to escape, he will have the amplified power, ready on demand, to take off in a flash.

People share these chemical reactions to protect them from physical and emotional danger. When your mind is racing, that is the equivalent to the deer's internal tornado. It is evidence of your being caught-in-headlights state of mind.

A racing mind will not permit restful sleep, peace or relaxation, physical health or joyfulness. Living in a deer-in-the-headlights condition, you are neither grounded or mindful... your energy is spinning too fast.

A racing mind is often accompanied by negative thoughts, especially self-denigrating chatter. Your brain releases chemicals associated with these words which make you feel worse. Sleep deprivation also makes you feel worse. An expectation that external sources will alleviate negative sensation leaves you feeling empty.

The solution lies in first quieting your mind and re-establishing your energy into your body. Besides the steps outlined in Part One of this series, meditation is another way to reclaiming mindfulness and being grounded.

It isn't as difficult as you may think. Find a comfortable place: your favourite chair, your garden, by a river, in a warm bath, in the woods. The idea is to be still; to be with yourself for a few moments each day.

With eyes closed, or if open, glancing downwards without focus, gently center on your breath. Breathe in and out normally. You might begin with the words "Breathing in, breathing out." After you have a rhythm, let the words go.

Whenever your mind wanders, simply notice and then let those thoughts go. Do this by coming back to your breath again: "Breathing in, breathing out." Some people like the vibration of humming, and holding, a word with an 'mmmmm' sound. I'm told it mimics the vibration of both a drum and the earth.

This simple practice, over time, calms the hyper-vigilance associated with our fight or flight or freeze response. It opens the door to self-nurturing and getting to know yourself. Just like the deer that resumes gently grazing in the woods once the danger is over, you can settle down, calm down, and be still once more.

As simple as that... meditation calms your mind and better prepares you to be open to the resonating pulsation of joy that lies within us all.

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3) About Michele  
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Michele Crawford is a therapist who assists individuals who are struggling with trauma, anxiety or depression. Her passion for her work remains embedded in being able to connect with you in your suffering, helping you find real solutions no matter how complex the issue may be.

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4) Counselling Services  
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Are you prepared to live with more happiness, optimism, confidence, self-worth and hope? If your answer is "yes," then your next step is to contact me for a free 20-minute phone consultation. We can then discuss how I might best help you resolve your problems of Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.

The benefits of counselling with Michele include: significantly reduced stress levels, an optimistic outlook in life, increased confidence and hope.

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