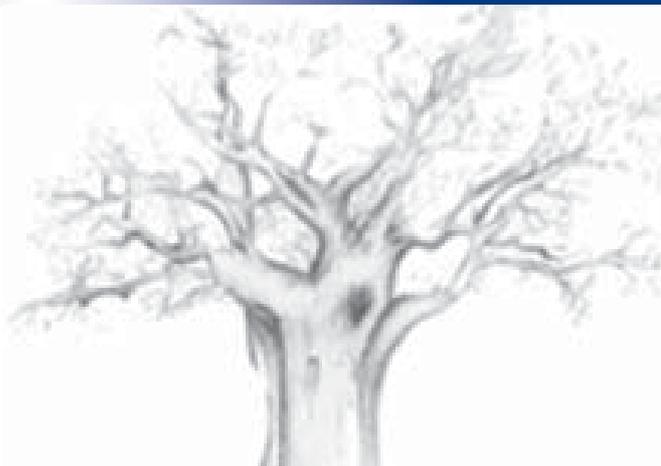


January Newsletter 2009



The Baobab Centre Inspiring potential and growth

First of all, on behalf of our team here at The Baobab Centre I would like to wish you and your organisation a healthy and prosperous New Year.

In a year when we are promised much doom and gloom with the continuing recession, we wonder if it might be poignant not only to review your financial arrangements, but also to review the way in which you live your life and carry out your work. We hope this issue of our newsletter will help you to stop a while and consider what changes, if any, you may need to make in the way you approach 2009, so that it may become a successful year for you despite the trying times.

The thoughts and offerings in this issue invite you, in a few different ways, to reappraise what you do and how you do it, to re-evaluate your efficacy. Albert Bandura, an American psychologist, writer, academic and pioneer of social cognitive theory, suggests that efficacy is about the ability to produce the desired outcome or effect. Bandura (1994) cites John White in saying,

“In his delightful book, titled, Rejection, John White provides vivid testimony, that the striking characteristics of people who have achieved eminence in their fields is an inextinguishable sense of personal efficacy and a firm belief in the worth of what they are doing.”

We hope this newsletter encourages you to affirm or re-ignite your firm belief in what you are doing and how you do it.

Gayle-Anne

Multitasking: is it all it's cracked up to be or could I be doing something else?

I'm answering calls whilst filling the dishwasher. I'm returning emails whilst waiting for an appointment. I'm filling in spreadsheets whilst the photocopier prints off 300 copies for the next training day and making side notes of jobs to do tomorrow. Does this sound familiar? And yet on the other hand 'not enough time', seems to be my mantra these days. Not enough time to tend to the garden, to read the books I've set aside, to finish that boring paperwork or to make those calls to friends or family members on the *to do* list! Days turn into weeks, weeks into months - you get the picture.

Or maybe you don't. How about eating your lunch at your desk whilst surfing the net? At the end of your sandwich, can you remember what it tasted like? Leaving aside the consequences to your digestive system and the germs on your keyboard!

What about listening to your music in the car and missing the emergency lights driving up behind you?

Shopping and talking to your husband, wife, mother, daughter, friend on the phone and missing the smile from the sales assistant who has just scanned your entire trolley load with sad, lonely eyes?

Have you ever left the bath running to put the washing away and come back and found too much cold water in it?

Reading your report whilst your little boy plays at your feet and not noticing what he has just done...what has he done??

Eating out at the restaurant and getting distracted by News 24 running on the TV in the corner and not noticing that your partner is really worried, and because you don't ever do any jobs together like wash-up, you are not likely to talk to each other again until that next phone call in the supermarket, which will in fact be an exchange of information: I am in xxx, where are you? What do you want for dinner? Who's around at the weekend, blah blah...

But, have you ever noticed that when you go somewhere new for the weekend or on a longer holiday, that the pace there seems much slower? Have you ever wondered why that might seem so? I wonder if it is actually because you are taking and using the time to look and it is your pace that is the slower element. So you can absorb more of the environment, experience and have an increased awareness because you

are actually looking, stopping, breathing it in. Of course you might be on a Greek island, somewhere with a small population and nothing much really happening, or in a log cabin, holed up in the snow and the pace slows, you breathe deeply, feel OK and, and maybe even start to relax (roaring children, family, friends permitting?) Lovely, compared to the rush of the other scenarios.

Now, hey, I'm not saying that some of our wonderful tools (mobile phones, headsets, earpieces, mp3 players, dishwashers, washing machines, computers etc. etc.) aren't fabulous in their way. I have a thing for spreadsheets, but actually when I take the ability to do more than one thing, two things, three, four or more things at a time, as a life style change, I run the risk of losing sight of 'life'. Then I have let those labour saving tools (and a racing society) convince me that I must use my new spare time productively, and in turn dictate who I am, how I am and how accessible I am to those others living around me! I then miss some opportunities to make connections with, or experience, whoever or whatever may be around me.

It seems to me that we have shot ourselves in the foot somehow. We have devised so many tools that can do a job automatically that it has come with the assumption that we must be doing something else at the same time. And of course that may be true sometimes, but not necessarily always.

And in emotional terms, why do we think that we can work efficiently whilst grieving a loss? Why do we go to the meeting when we've just had some fantastic news, and feel the celebration deflate through the day? Why do we think we should pay less attention to the person on the phone,

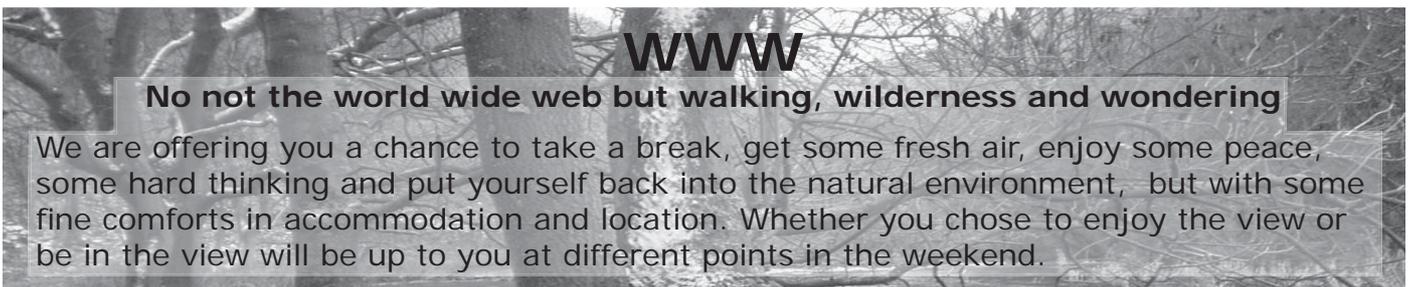
sitting next to us, who just walked past right now, because we have another job to do - why do we cram so much into a moment of time? Or are we just making different choices? Where has this hurry actually got us?

So I wonder, the next time you take a call sitting in front of your computer, turn the screen off and pay attention to the caller – see if anything is different. If you can do two things at once consider your choices; for instance, the next time you are about to load the dishwasher, maybe risk inviting someone else in the house to wash-up with you while talking about your day. The

next time you are tempted to make a call whilst you are shopping, walking to the bus stop, the car, postpone the call and actually take a good look around you, notice what you might hear, smell, even feel inside of yourself and maybe just give yourself a chance to claw back a few moments of experiencing your aliveness?

Enjoy the dashing around as much as you like but maybe just add a splash of stop for the hell of it. What have you got to lose? And if your head is telling you that you can't waste the time, maybe just ask yourself what living is actually about?

Nic Neath



This weekend aims to give you a chance to bring yourself back into focus with yourself and your environment, through workshops, discussions, art, poetry and walking. We hope to offer everyone a chance to reconnect with nature inside and out.

We aim to make it engaging and relaxing and to include facilities for drawing and painting, sculpting, writing, walking, sitting and reflecting; and you don't need to come equipped with any previous experience of any of these.

The weekend will be facilitated by The Baobab Team who have experience in self-reflection, walking, the arts, and on how to run a fabulous weekend experience.

The weekend is likely to cost something in the region of £350 (please ask about concessions) for two nights, all meals on the one full day, half board on the part days; and materials and facilities. You will need to bring your own walking boots and clothes!

The weekend date is Friday 26th - Sunday 28th June. The venue is still to

be confirmed but it is guaranteed to be beautiful although all we can say about the weather is that it will be British!

Please register your interest now by contacting Nic at The Baobab Centre on 01904 422733 or by email to nicneath@baobabcentre.com. Please also feel free to get in touch if you have any questions about the weekend, without obligation.

We are expecting this to be a popular event and numbers will be limited, so we encourage you to get in touch as soon as you can. A 20% deposit will not be expected until March 31st 2009 with final payment by 30th May 2009, giving us all time to save from the VAT changes we hope!

Go on, you know you want to, especially if you saw yourself in any part of the previous article!



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People not only gain understanding through reflection, they evaluate and alter their own thinking.

Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory. 1986

"Am I 'bovvered'?" And why I should be!

Katherine Tate has made 'Am I 'bovvered'?' a popular phrase and, sadly, its popularity is indicative of this widespread sentiment in this day and age. The rhetorical question is asked with barely masked aggression and brings with it the complacency, lethargy and mediocrity which sometimes seem to rule the day.

Anyway, why should any of us be bothered? Being bothered takes a lot of hard work and effort. Being bothered isn't glamorous. It isn't a skill that will get you on television. It isn't a quality that the media recognises. Sometimes, being 'bothered' can get you into a lot of 'bother' with those who would prefer it if you kept quiet, if you didn't highlight their inadequacies or inappropriate behaviour, if you stuck to the status quo. Being bothered means that people might start relying on you and who wants that sort of responsibility – right?

So, what would happen if no-one, not even you, ever bothered about anything? I'll leave you to answer that question for yourself – the answer will be quite different for each one of us. Some of you will think of the ones you love and how it would affect them if you just didn't bother and no-one cared for them. Others of you will think of close friends or colleagues at work and the support that they need. There will also be some of you who will think of people they don't know at all who are suffering in some way and can only be released from their suffering if someone can be bothered to help them. Some of you will think of world crises and the results if no-one at all cared.

Thankfully, there are people who care and who can be bothered to make life the better

for living. There are people who dare to stand up and be counted. There are people who challenge the status quo. There are people who work hard at bettering themselves for the sake of others. There are people who will bother to question themselves before they question others. There are people who understand that they cannot expect others to be bothered if they cannot be bothered themselves. There are people who will bother, not because they will be in the papers, not because they will make a lot of money, not because they will make a lot of friends, but just because every tiny act of being bothered helps to make the world a better place for someone, if not for several.

Some American people stood in line for four and a half hours on the fourth of November 2008 to show that they have had enough of complacency and abdication of responsibility. They were bothered enough to bring about a historic moment in the history of the United States.

Are you bothered?

Manar Matusiak

If this or any of the other articles in this newsletter have inspired you to make a comment please do let us know.

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The golden moments in the stream of life rush past us and we see nothing but sand; the angels come to visit us, and we only know them when they are gone.

Quote attributed to George Eliot (1819 - 1880).