

# FREE

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## Fall Issue 2010

### Look Inside!

Psychology . . . . . Page 1  
 Relating . . . . . Page 2  
 Environmental . . . . . Page 3  
 Education . . . . . Page 4  
 Politics . . . . . Page 5  
 Metaphysical . . . . . Page 5  
 Health & Healing . . Page 6

### IS IT OKAY TO LIE TO THE PUBLIC?

By Michael Strelcheck

With the current 'climate of change' that is in our country today it seems as if our national moral fiber has been stretched to a critical point. The national debates and news presented by the modern media seems filled with conflicting facts and individuals who are claiming that others are lying about the state of our country. Politicians, both Republican and Democrat, routinely claim that their opponents are not telling the truth and that they cannot be trusted – yet many of them are also being accused themselves of lying. Many have claimed that British Petroleum's (BP) management is lying about what happened in the Gulf of Mexico and what they are doing in cleaning it up. Sports figures like baseball pitcher Roger Clemens and biker Lance Armstrong claim they didn't take performance enhancing drugs even though there's physical evidence that they did. Even our President, as he was giving a speech in congress no less, was openly called a liar by a sitting Congressman. Unfortunately, all these situations have one thing in common; the individuals concerned are all considered respectable leaders and role models in our free society.

One has to wonder why there are so many questions today about what is true. Aren't there facts that clearly define what's happened and aren't people naturally interested in truth? I mean after all, we're a God fearing society (I know this to be true because it says "In God We Trust" on the dollar bill). I'm not a Pollyanna by any means and I know that lying (or spinning the truth) can be a useful skill at times and God knows I've told my share of 'white' lies, but isn't a part of being a good citizen being *honest and trust worthy* - particularly at those times when it counts most (or maybe that's only for those who were Girl and Boy Scouts).

Strange as it may seem to many is that our Constitution actually supports an individual's *right to lie* for it protects a citizen's right of free speech. This, at first, may seem as an oversight by our country's founding fathers! I imagine that the founders debated including some type of ethical standard in the Constitution which

would have formed a moral and ethical foundation for the new Republic they were proposing but decided not to try to overreach in their design. After all, they were attempting to create a free society so the last thing they wanted to do was put in place a bunch of restricting rules that would limit an individual's free expression. And back then a person's word could be counted on for it reflected a person's sincerity and character, and the thought that someone would brazenly lie probably didn't seem that probable. So they most likely came to the conclusion that moral questions could be better addressed through an open society's right to religious freedom and left it at that.

Fortunately, to insure fair play in the new country the Framers of the Constitution made provisions for the establishment of a national judicial system, which was to be formed by the first Congress after independence was won. This decree provided for a public forum where arguments and injustices could be settled by an impersonal arbiter and it would be there, where truth would be served.

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The court system, up to recently, has done a fair job in policing fairness in our society, but recently the courts have become overloaded with 'cases' and many of the individual's in our government, modern corporations and public institutions are going unjudged and unpunished for their dishonesty. Perhaps that's why many of our society's leaders today feel free to 'cloud the facts' or downright mislead the public feeling there is little to risk.

The question is – has the American culture become corrupted by the individualistic pursuit for self-gratification? Perhaps there needs to be a national discussion about public ethics and morals. Maybe an amendment to the Constitution, which would require a higher standard of integrity in public dealings, would help. What do you think?

Relating

## Legacy

By Mary Summerbell

Where do we go when we die? A question most every child asks, and most every person ponders. As a child I certainly wondered. As an adult, I wonder still. Along with "Where did I come from?" "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" It's one of the quintessential questions conscious people ask - if not out loud to a parent, teacher or friend when we're kids, then certainly silently, inside, when processing the deaths of pets and people in our lives. It's one of life's greatest mysteries.

I can hear some of you, already, saying, " But I know we go to a better place, to be with God, to the astral plane," etc., etc.....There are all kinds of beliefs, each one as valid as the next, in the context of our cultures and religions and personal experiences. And I'm not trying to take anything away from anybody, or convince you of anything. This is just my perspective. But if I'm going to be offensive, best I get to it right away, and save you reading the rest of this if you disagree. Give you time to eat some ice-cream, or take a bath, something pleasant like that, instead of getting your knickers all twisted in mental rebuttal.

The way I see it, with due respect to all, there is no objective fact, no irrefutable evidence or undeniable proof of where we go, or what happens to us when we die. Not that I need scientific support for my beliefs; there is much truth that science can't explain, and intuition is valid, in my opinion. But I do need direct evidence to uphold what I view as true. I was going to say I don't need empirical evidence of after death events, but was surprised to find the dictionary define empirical as "relying on observation or experience; guided by experience rather than theory." The root of the word empirical is experience. Empirical evidence is exactly what I need!

Coming from experience, I'll turn first to the Catholic view. One foundational concept of Catholicism is resurrection; Christ rose from the dead, and all the faithful will one day rise up, also. Amazing, if it's true. But taken literally, it creates all manner of scientific mayhem. And no way for me to have direct experience of it, with Christ preceding me in time by a few centuries. Faith and the Bible would be the basis for belief in resurrection, and I'm a little challenged in both of those. So I'll say it's possible, but I'm not buying stock in it.

Another aspect of Catholicism is the classic heaven/hell, salvation/damnation idea. Not to forget purgatory, where folks do on

temporary hold until they're ready for heaven, and limbo, which is permanent nowhere, with no chance of a change of eternal location. Lots of logistical issues in all this. Rather confusing, if you ask me. And it always left me a little cold that a perfectly innocent newborn baby's soul would go to limbo forever for lack of being baptized. Come on, now. What kind of benevolent father-God would eternally distance or deny his child for lack of a little splash of water? Especially as the child has absolutely no control over a particular ritual being performed, or any knowledge of it's existence? I can't believe it.

Back to heaven and hell, which are not exclusively Catholic concepts. There are many examples of posthumous judgment, punishment-reward systems in human history, including ancient Egyptian culture, with such heavy emphasis on the afterlife. I find it striking that Catholics and ancient Egyptians both place so much focus on hoping for something better after death, as opposed to striving to make a better life. It seems to me to be trading the definite potential, (now that's an oxymoron for you), of a good, happy life for some hazy hereafter. So much invested in such uncertainty. Not for me.

And I've always been uneasy about embracing any ideology where an educated elite dangle the motivational carrot of salvation in the faces of a vastly uneducated population. I don't want my current life or my afterlife decided on or defined by some ruling human hierarchy. If salvation and eternal life are real, I want to earn or be denied mine on the basis of my own merit, not on an externally imposed value system. I'd rather be damned for my own thinking than saved by mindlessly following someone else's ideas.

I feel this way because, growing up, the prospect of eternal damnation tainted much of my thinking, causing me much unnecessary suffering. I was steeped in a mentality of sin - constantly defining, weighing, measuring all aspects and degrees of it. I was taught in Catechism class about mortal and venial sin, and saw the picture of the totally black, black soul of someone in mortal sin, compared to the polka-dotly soul of a venial sinner, and my tummy got in knots, a lot, trying to figure out how all this applied to me and my sinful little seven year old life. What needless strife. I was a little kid, an impressionable, innocent child, all twisted up and tormented by ideas planted in my mind by imposing grownups. That was hell. Not in a hereafter, but in this minute. And this remains my definition of hell - a place without peace within, not a place of burning, eternal flames of damnation.

So, again - where do we go when we die? Considering the flip side of eternal life would be to entertain existential/ atheist/agnostic possibility that when we die, we're done. I had a friend, once, who believed that human beings are basically batteries that breathe, that the body is a sack of chemical interactions with an expiration date. He was as intelligent, ethical and likable a person as you'd want to meet, living his life according to what he thought best, doing no more harm than most, with no concern whatsoever for everlasting ramifications of his actions. I admired his clean, simple clarity, being unencumbered by the burden of eternity. But, honestly, my ego doesn't want to believe I'm just dust to dust. Something in me wants to live on, beyond this limited physical existence.

When I hear or read stories of what people call near death experiences, I want to believe what they say about tunnels of light, and deceased family and friends eagerly welcoming them to the "other side." It seems to soothe something in them, and I'd say it's harmless, even beneficial, if it only serves to ease their fear of death. I haven't had such an experience. And I know that scientists have duplicated this phenomenon, in subjects who are fully awake, by directing electrical impulses to specific areas of the brain.

Hospitals have done experiments where words or phrases are written on walls in places that could only be seen by an unconscious patient coming out of body to read them. No one has ever come back with those words. So maybe "going to the light" is nature's merciful, brain chemical way of easing our exit from the planet. I don't know.

I saw on a television program, once, that Hopi Indians believe that, at the moment of death, our bodies fall away, to return to Mother Earth, and our souls, in our last breath, become part of Father Sky. We join our ancestors, there, in becoming part of the sun, the wind, the clouds, the rain - all the forces of the weather. That sounds great to me. None of that heaven and hell stuff. Just go back home to mom and dad.

As for reincarnation, the jury is still out on that case in my brain. If we have souls, and if they're immortal, it makes sense to me that with eternity and all the universe to play in, we'd be curious enough to want to visit more than one little planet, one short time. Also, I vote for immortality to be inclusive, not exclusive - an equal opportunity phenomenon, not just for pharaohs, and popes, and kings, but for all us earnest peons, too.

But, again, I've never experienced or learned anything that totally convinces me reincarnation is real. I've had my share of deja vu moments, and instantaneous connections, and feelings that I've been somewhere, or known someone, before, when it's not possible I could have. There are things I know about or can do that I don't remember anyone ever teaching me. I have inexplicable attractions and aversions to certain people, places, things, activities and historical time periods. But all of these can be explained by some combination of genetics, personality, brain chemistry, and environmental influences. Surely we're all unique individuals, with many personal traits and preferences, whether or not we have multiple lives. So, even though I've felt those tugs from time to time, and there are many compelling and convincing reasons to believe in reincarnation, I still see it as a very intriguing, logical and plausible theory, but not fact.

So - where do we go when we die? In the process of facing two significant deaths this past year, and several the year before, I keep asking that question, keep revisiting the possibilities, looking for new ways to see through my grief. Especially since a very close friend of mine died in July, I keep looking for answers. Seeking comfort, sure, but also reaching for truth, without sentimentality. All sorrow aside, where do we go when we die? I'm not just curious; it's personal. Where is my friend now? Where will I go when I die? Does it depend on what I believe? Do we create our afterlife, or lack of it, based on our expectations of it? Can we choose to live on, or not? Opt out of immortality? Cancel eternal chances? Get off the train of reincarnation?

So many questions. So little certainty.

What I know, for sure, is this. Wherever we go when we die, I have felt the presence of departed people in my life many times, from the touch of an invisible hand on my shoulder when my brother died, to finding pennies in odd and obvious places, which I take as signs from my mother. There have been enough of these specific messages to convince me there is some connection beyond death. I don't know if I believe in ghosts. I've never seen one, except in my mind's eye. But I have heard with inner ears the voices of those gone ahead of me, and feel them around me sometimes.

It's also obvious to me that we live on in what we've done, in the knowledge and skills we pass on to others while we're alive. We live on in traditions. We live on in stories, poems, paintings, ideas - all the things we build or create while we're here. We leave behind little tangible, and intangible, treasures that have meaning to those who know and love us.

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But the best evidence I have of where we go when we die is inside me. In my thoughts and feelings and memories. I can be with anyone I want to, living or dead, whenever I want, just by imagining them, remembering them. My mom lives on in me, not just literally, genetically, but energetically, in essence. My friend lives on in me, in my mind and heart and soul, as I recall the things she taught me and the times we had together. Those who go before us live on in us, as we live on in those we leave behind. How far that extends in time, into eternity, I don't know. When there is no longer a picture of me in someone's mind, no longer a feeling for me inside them, do I cease to exist? I don't know.

There's much for me to wonder about until I die, and find out firsthand what happens. But whether we are ultimately headed for obscurity, or immortality, in whatever afterlife we have, I know for a fact there is life after death in the connections of one person to another beyond physical presence. And if that is all I have, if that is all there is, my life here and the connections to others from it, then that recollection is not so much of hell, and heaven enough for me.

## Environmental

### Mama Earth

By Doris Deits

It's recently occurred to me that we (humans) seem to have disconnected or distanced ourselves from the concept that we actually come from the planet. Historically speaking, our physical body or form has gone through a process of evolution, and we can definitely say



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that we humans have evolved from a physical, mental and emotional perspective. So wouldn't it be logical to believe that the Planet also has a mental and emotional body or aspect to it, and they too are evolving?

Many people laugh at this idea as if it were the silliest thing they've ever heard. But when I ask if they personally have emotions, they say 'why yes, of course!' Confused, I reply 'then where did you get them from?' I've realized most of us don't truly understand how intimately connected and similar we are to 'Mother Earth.' After all, the planet couldn't create something it didn't already have, right? Anyone who has owned a cat or a dog will attest to the fact that animals have at least a limited range of emotions. Where do all these emotions come from? My money's on Mama Earth.

So how exactly does the planet express its emotions? Well, if we cry when we're happy or sad, does the planet also cry when it's happy or sad...like when it rains? Is rain really tears of the Earth? Think about all the different types of rain we experience. There are gentle spring rains, drizzling rain, hard rain, soft rain, frozen rain, cleansing rain, driving rain, sheets of rain, and the list goes on. Isn't it possible that there is some type of planetary emotion behind rain and water? Are floods a way for the earth to cleanse or heal itself? And isn't the same true of people? Women say they feel better after a good cry. People take baths and soak in hot tubs to melt away stress. And where do most people like to vacation? That's right, near the water.

While we may not be able to understand, predict or definitively define the planets emotional expressions with our puny minds at this stage in our evolution, it's not hard to see there is some connection between human emotions, water and the planet. Human emotions represent an aspect of the planet we live on. How cool is that?

## Education

### A Biased Perspective on NCLB

#### Part I: The Beginning

by K. Vetch

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) became law under President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. To quote from the bill, its purpose is "to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind." Taken at face value, who could argue with that? We want

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our children to be well educated, to learn to the best of their ability, to be globally competitive... How do we know they're not? In 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk* let us know that our children were in dire straits academically. What had been feared was now being written about and talked about on a grand scale. Students in the United States had not only fallen behind those in other countries, but about 13% of 17 year olds were functionally illiterate. That's not "the American Way!" There must be a problem with our educational system and President Bush figured out how to solve it. To be clear, I'm not making light of illiteracy. It's not acceptable for students who have attended school to not be able to read. My concern and frustration are with what is popularly referred to as No Child Left Behind and the wholesale testing it has propagated.

Before delving into NCLB, let's take a brief look at *A Nation at Risk*, the impetus for NCLB. From where did they glean their data? They read papers written by experts; spoke with teachers, students, public groups...; analyzed problems in education, read letters from concerned citizens; and read descriptions of exemplary programs. They did not conduct any studies of their own. Are their observations and conclusions valid and representative of the state of education or were they skewed to reflect public opinion or a political agenda? Doing research in the pre-computer era was much different than having a wealth of information at your fingertips. People of my era (or better) remember what an arduous process it was to gather data for a research paper. It was a different world back then, which is another issue.

*A Nation at Risk* did not put the blame of our educational shortcomings solely on the teachers, or even public education. They saw it as a systemic problem. Of their 38 recommendations, almost half were things that were outside the scope of classroom teachers, principals, and school boards. They included things such as funding, effective textbooks, and rigorous entrance requirements for colleges. They also said teachers should be paid more and given more time to prepare for their classes and have fewer administrative duties which would translate into more time teaching. (I can't disagree with everything in the report!) Only one recommendation was for standardized testing, yet that is the cornerstone of NCLB.

The rate of functional illiteracy quoted in the report is alarming. However, calculating literacy rates in the US (or any country) isn't as clear cut as it may seem. What is "literacy?" How are you measuring it? *A Nation at Risk* reports that 13% of 17 year olds in the US were "functionally" illiterate. However, according to National Center for Educational Statistics of the US Department of Education, in a 1993 article on literacy rates in the US, in 1979, 0.6% of people 14 years and older were illiterate. This sounds somewhat contradictory. How is it possible that in four years (1979 - 1983) so many young-people became illiterate? In reviewing many articles and web sites regarding worldwide literacy rates, I'm amazed at how many countries are listed as having very high rates of literacy, over 90%, over 95%, even 100% literacy. How can this be? Do they have no people with disabilities that preclude their ability to read? Were 13% of 17 year olds truly functionally illiterate in the US in 1983?

*A Nation at Risk* found many areas of concern, not just with our public schools. They said we have ceased to be a society that strives for excellence, instead accepting mediocrity and stressing minimum requirements rather than promoting learning for its intrinsic values (another valid point). They expressed concern for the "intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths of our people which knit together the very fabric of our society." However, I'm not aware of any national movement or laws to address our moral and spiritual decline. If, as the report suggested, our children are at risk

(Cont. on pg 8)

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Conscious Community Newsletters

# Politics

## Are Politicians Your Friends?

By Dale Lucht

Are you now, or have you ever been a member of the Republican Party? I'll let you in on a dirty little secret. I voted for Richard Nixon, twice. I was raised Republican, my folks thought FDR was an ass. I was drafted and sent overseas by LBJ. I turned 21 in Viet Nam, my first vote was for Nixon. In 1972, I was working at GM and attending classes at U-Rock. Mama Cass accompanied George McGovern on a visit to U-Rock. There was something about him that I didn't trust. Maybe it was his false teeth, anyway I voted for Nixon again.

It was a different time and a different party. I can proudly say I never voted for another Republican for President. There is one tenet of the GOP that I still agree with and that is Fiscal Responsibility. You cannot borrow your way out of debt.

Ronald Reagan started that in 1980, when he said you can cut taxes and increase spending.

George Bush who was running against him called it Voodoo Economics. Bush Sr. was right, even Reagan recognized it later when he raised taxes. Bush Jr. never got that memo. He never met a tax he liked.

We have had thirty years of redistribution of wealth, from the poor and middle class to the rich and super-rich. I would venture a guess that no reader is in this group. When I hired in at Chevrolet in 1966, I had a choice of employment. In Janesville we had Parker Pen, Borg-Warner, Gilman Engineering, Fisher Body, and a couple of other firms that all offered comparable union wages. I applied at Chevrolet on a Wednesday, was interviewed and hired. I started work on Thursday. This was not an uncommon experience in 1966. Now we're fighting for low paying jobs at McDonalds, or low paying, non-union jobs at Wal-Mart. We'll get back to Wal-Mart shortly.

What does all of this personal history have to do with this year's election? It is simple, while your politicians are in thrall to Corporate America your decision comes down to the lesser of two evils. Democrats are ineffectual apologists each of whom need a pair of balls.

Republicans are liars and cheats who have one goal, to please their handlers. International Corporations and Corporate America can now pour millions into our elections. One of their goals is to destroy the unions and in effect create serfs of all working people. Is it any wonder that these people are in control of the South?

Republicans always attack welfare. They want to do away with unemployment, food stamps, government funded health care, and of course Social Security. Unknown to Republican politicians is that Social Security is funded by us. To Republicans it is welfare if you live long enough to collect it.

Of course they are all for welfare to corporations. Exxon-Mobil, Halliburton, Wal-Mart and of course BP all receive millions of dollars in welfare.

Let us look at Wal-Mart just in the State of Wisconsin. Wal-Mart made \$852,000,000.00 in net profits in Wisconsin between 2000 and 2003. They paid \$3 million in income tax. This is a tax rate of 0.35 percent. The Corporate tax rate is 7.9%.

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What can we do? First of all become educated. Don't let one news source be your only source.

Find out who is funding your candidate. I propose a law that candidates can only spend money raised by Oct. 1, and every donor and amount has to be listed and advertised that last month. That way the electorate will see who pulls his chain.

One more thing, always, and I mean always vote for what is in your own best interest.

# Metaphysical

## Conditional Truth

By Frank Conerton

In studying ancient wisdom or New Age we often hear truths which seem impossible. For instance, one fundamental principal underlying many manifestation models is that everything is connected by consciousness. Because of this connection, we are able to align with everything in order to manifest our conscious creations. Whether you believe Science of the Mind, Jerry and Ester Hicks, The Secret, The Four T's, or another model of manifestation, this basic principle of connection allows manifestation to happen.

I think many of us have a common sense objection to this idea of conscious connection of all matter. We seem to be separate from other people and things. For example, after meditation class, I do not feel diminished when I drive away. I do not feel as if part of me has stayed behind or went elsewhere. I feel like myself. I easily believe that people are separate beings. Besides that, there are a few people I sure do not want to be connected with at all!

I have moved and downsized several times and disposed of a lot of stuff without feeling any loss of my personal substance. I have sold cars which I had driven for years. The only feeling of loss was for the trigger that brought back some very, very fond memories. The car itself did not seem connected to me at all. It seems obvious that we are separate from our stuff.

We could easily assume that physical reality is dangerous. I know one woman who simply tripped in her room and suffered neck trauma which affected her leg and hand movement for months. Another person I know cracked the back of their head under a table. Their personality and vitality were affected for over a year. How can we say that everything is connected when it seems things would just as soon hurt us? To handle this apparent contradiction we need to accept the concept of conditional truth.

As an example, is oxygen good for you? Breathing oxygen in normal concentrations is absolutely essential to life. However,

if we breathe pure oxygen for long enough it will kill us by oxidizing the body. The conditions create the truth. In this case the percentage of oxygen that we breathe determines if it is healthy or deadly; conditional truth.

It is considered truth that  $1+1=2$ . But what if I have one drop of water and I added a second drop of water? I end up with one bigger drop:  $1+1=1$ . It is assumed that one item will not simply merge with the second item for  $1+1=2$ . All truths have some conditions which underlie their validity.

Going back to the apparent contradiction between separate or connected matter, the two descriptions both make sense when we consider conditions. If we look at only surface physical reality, things do seem unconnected and separate. Slamming soft flesh against hard matter often causes injury.

If we consider the atomic level of matter, then connectivity and interaction become apparent. Atoms both share and exchange electrons constantly. Soft and hard no longer exist when you are looking at the atomic level of matter where strong and weak atomic forces prevail. Matter is mainly empty space at the atomic level.

So next time you find yourself pulled between two apparently contradictory truths, consider the conditions that support those truths. Both truths may be right within their own set of conditions; or not.

## Health & Healing

### Perception Is Everything

by Janet Zimborski

What better time than now for all of us to take a look at our belief systems and ideology. Write everything down and check out the validity of these old outworn beliefs and ideas. The Earth is changing and it is not due to global warming. Global warming is a symptom. We habitually look at symptoms and not the causes, because that has been the mindset we have grown accustomed to. Most of us are fortunate to have access to the internet now. Seek and ye shall find any answer you ask in earnest. Change, as you know is the only thing you can count on. The Earth, the inhabitants and the cosmos are all in transition. The Industrial age is nearing an end. Take a good healthy look. The institutions and corporations that have served us in this last era are coming to an end. The changes taking place with the Earth and the cosmos are having an affect on our consciousness. We as a collective are slowly taking back our lives as we SEE the deterioration and destruction that has run rampant within our societies, our ecologies,

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government, religious, economical, medical, and educational institutions.

Accept responsibility for EVERY choice you make, and let your voice be heard. The only way to correct the imbalances you see are to Understand the power behind your thoughts, words and deeds. They have an effect on all of humanity. Open your heart and mind to the daily opportunities you have to impact someone's life in a positive manner. In Unity, you will find REAL freedom. The possibility exists you cannot see the necessity to these actions, and then I say, start by being kind to yourself and grateful for all that you are and all that you have. In your search for truth, in the various institutions, there are threads of truth. Let the change begin with the thread of truth. Let all other fall away.

Remember how you perceive the world to be is what it will be. There are no second class citizens folks, just those who have not recognized their potentials.

## The Power of What If

By Wild Bill Collett

The hardest things that life can throw at you only make you better. Relying on excuses to justify your inability to take charge & determine your own fate is the path most choose. Without a goal, it's easy to fail. Set a goal & take charge of your life, cast away those influences around you that tell you that you can't do it. No, it's not your friends. Your worst enemy resides inside your mind...

\* Internal fear is something that you link to a negative emotion, for example, fear developed out of low self esteem.

Fear can be described with different terms in relation to the degree of fear that is experienced. It varies from mild caution to extreme phobia

The most common physical reactions of fear include:

- \* Rapid heart rate
- \* Increased blood pressure
- \* Tightening of muscles
- \* Sharpened or redirected senses
- \* Dilation of the pupils (to let in more light)
- \* Increased sweating

In a 2005 Gallup poll (U.S.A.), a national sample of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15 were asked what they feared the most. The question was open ended and participants were able to say whatever they wanted. The most frequently cited fear (mentioned by 8% of the teens) was terrorism. The top ten fears were, in order: terrorist attacks, spiders, death, being a failure, war, heights, criminal or gang violence, being alone, the future, and nuclear war.

I am sick and tired of people complaining. Let's put a label on what the are whining about :

- Amathophobia- Fear of dust.
- Anuptaphobia- Fear of staying single.
- Arachnophobia- Fear of spiders.
- Atychiphobia- Fear of failure.
- Bibliophobia- Fear of books.
- Brontophobia- Fear of thunder and lightning.
- Cyclophobia- Fear of bicycles.

Dementophobia- Fear of insanity.  
 Demophobia- Fear of crowds. (Agoraphobia)  
 Dendrophobia- Fear of trees.  
 Dentophobia- Fear of dentists.  
 Ecclesiophobia- Fear of church.  
 Ergophobia- Fear of work.  
 Hedonophobia- Fear of feeling pleasure.  
 Microphobia- Fear of small things.  
 Neophobia- Fear of anything new.  
 Numerophobia- Fear of numbers.  
 Nyctophobia- Fear of the dark or of night.  
 Pantophobia- Fear of everything.  
 Philophobia- Fear of falling in love or being in love.  
 Samhainophobia: Fear of Halloween.  
 Satanophobia- Fear of Satan.  
 Somniphobia- Fear of sleep.  
 Theophobia- Fear of gods or religion.  
 Venustraphobia- Fear of beautiful women.  
 Verbophobia- Fear of words.  
 Wiccaphobia: Fear of witches and witchcraft.  
 Xenophobia- Fear of strangers or foreigners.  
 Zoophobia- Fear of animals

Yes, I know I'm silly to list so many phobias - but I have heard so many excuses as to why people cannot help. I can truly say now that I really feel I have now heard them all.

I have spent the last couple of years stretching.....stretching to do more than I've ever done before. To see how far I can go!

In the last twelve months:

I became the program director of a non-profit for the state of Illinois (St. BaldRicks)

I'm a mentor and coach of a young woman who is sponsored by Donald Trump for the Miss Illinois Beauty Pageant.

Created a non-profit to help people in need - over 200,000 members that are contributing. Along with this a calling center that employs five people.

So the question is - how far can I go? What's next?



ST. BaldRicks - after

### Join Us!

If you want to contribute to **Conscious Community** By way of an article, ad or assisting with distribution please contact us at

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### Foot

## DETOX

### Special

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For an appt.

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(exp. 12-31-10)

People tell me that they could NEVER DO this! Funny, as this is what I thought just a year ago.

Now I'm in demand and being sent out to California for St. BaldRicks!!! To do training for a program, as they respect what I have done and want to learn from me.....and get this, The State of Wisconsin does not list me as unemployed but non-working. Just think what I could do if I had an employer who appreciates my talents.



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### Tuesday Nights Meditation & Study Groups

Every Tues Michael Strelcheck alternates his groups with different topics and/or Wisdom of the Body topics. 7:00pm. Cost: \$5 or \$7.

### Peaceful Heart

123 South Main St., Oregon, WI 53575

608-835-5288 [www.peacefulheart.net](http://www.peacefulheart.net)

### New Class Series, Practical Spirituality

There is a new class being offered at Peaceful Heart on the last Wednesday of each month (usually) from 6:30-8:00 pm. It's called Practical Spirituality and each class offers a discussion on what we are as "energy." Our physical bodies, our thoughts and emotions all have an energetic quality. The intention is to offer a basic understanding of these subtle energetic qualities so that we can begin to feel 'whole' again. So please join facilitators Doris Deits and Brian Sieger (our in-house meditation expert) as we all learn how to tune into our body's wisdom and work with (not against) our human and spiritual nature. Feel free to attend one class or all classes, as each class will target a different discussion topic. No experience necessary. Cost is \$10.

### Conscious Community Mission Statement:

*Provide a platform for opinions, innovation and inspiration for community*

If you like this newsletter share it with a friend.

due to deficits, not only in our educational system, but in our moral and spiritual framework, how can we concentrate on one and expect it all to improve?

I want to touch on one more aspect that I feel was overlooked before moving on to NCLB. The 1960s and '70s were a time of great change in our country. We saw changes in civil rights, women's rights, rights for the disabled... We began to focus on the individual rather than the group. Our views on war changed. Our views on propriety, the environment, civil disobedience, religion, and so much more changed. Our educational practices in some ways tried to keep up with these changes, but often fell short. It takes a long time for massive change to filter down through the layers that make up an institution. I agree that our schools can and should do a better job. Complacency is detrimental, at best. However, I disagree on how our schools and our children are being assessed.

That said, let's continue by taking a deeper look at the premise on which NCLB is based. (For ease of explanation, and because I am a high school teacher and therefore most familiar with the high school milieu, I will address high school students in this article.)

Are US high school students underperforming when compared to their counterparts in other countries? The answer is yes and no. That is, the test data says students in several other countries are performing better than ours. Once again, that appears clear cut. Who can argue with statistics? Would it surprise you to learn that this data has several HUGE flaws? For example, our students are tested with fifty different tests. Each state develops its own test. We have no national test. The students in other countries typically take the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) which tests 15 year-olds in math, science, and reading literacy. This alone prohibits any sound comparison of the data. We're testing different things using different instruments. But it gets worse. Our tests tend to ask factual recall or formula-type questions with multiple-choice answers. An actual WKCE (Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam) test question:

How is the Trumpeter Swan's bill specially adapted for feeding in water?

- The toothlike edges help to filter food.
- The flat shape helps to scoop up small fish.
- The sharp point helps to dig up aquatic plants.
- The small teeth inside help to grind vegetation.

The PISA tests for the application of knowledge. An actual PISA test question:

In the story the judge gives fifty strokes of the lash for all the crimes. Apart from the kind of punishment, what is one way in which law and justice in your country are DIFFERENT to the kind of law and justice shown in this story?

After NCLB became law, we (the US) began testing some of our students with the PISA. We gave the PISA to 5,611 students from 166 schools in 2006.<sup>1</sup> This small sampling was compared to the performance of students in 57 other countries. The US students overall performed a bit below the

average of the students tested (average score was 522 - US students averaged 489); however, the US had about the same percentage of students scoring at the highest level of the test as Korea, which was one of the highest performing countries. But we're still not comparing apples to apples. In other countries, students are assessed using the PISA in three-year cycles. Each year a different subject is stressed. In 2006, science was the targeted subject. Questions on math and reading were spread out across the test booklets (i.e. one test booklet had some of the math and reading questions, the next booklet had a few others, and so on) so once again, the US students are not taking the same test as their global counterparts. Another difference: The PISA tests students who are 15 years old. In the 2006 test sampling cited above, "There [were] substantial national differences in the reported grade levels of 15 year-olds, e.g., 100 percent of the tested Japanese students were in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, while 70.9 % of U.S. and 1.4% of Danish students were in that grade."<sup>2</sup> To further complicate the situation, languages are not equal. Any time a document is translated into another language, something is changed. The PISA has been translated into many languages.

The article "International Testing Comparisons and Large Scale Assessments"<sup>2</sup> concludes by stating, "the use of international assessments to compare and rank the educational systems of different countries is invalid. In fact, we are not aware of any of the validation studies that would support such a use." There is nothing wrong with wanting our students to do well academically. There is something wrong with ranking students without a valid means to do so.

In conclusion, I believe our educational practices need to change to reflect the needs, values, and attitudes of society. I believe adults need to raise children to appreciate an education for its intrinsic value. I believe our society needs to be more concerned with the content of a person's character than the balance of their bank account, which would help children value an education and job satisfaction over a big paycheck.

Remember:

Statistics are like bikinis. What they reveal is suggestive, but what they conceal is vital. ~ Aaron Levenstein

Statistics can be made to prove anything - even the truth.

~ Author Unknown

The average human has one breast and one testicle. ~ Des McHale

Facts are stubborn, but statistics are more pliable. ~ Mark Twain

<sup>1</sup>Baldie, S., Y. Jin, M. Skemer, P. Green, D. Hergel, and H. Xie. (2007). "Highlights from PISA 2006: Performance of U.S. 15-year-old students in Science and Mathematics Literacy in an International Context (NCES 2008-016)." (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics: Washington, DC).

<sup>2</sup>([www.psea.org/uploadedFiles/Resources/Research/InternationalTesting.pdf](http://www.psea.org/uploadedFiles/Resources/Research/InternationalTesting.pdf) Pennsylvania State Education Association International Testing Comparisons and Large Scale Assessments)



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