

Get well & stay well!

My hope for this little booklet is that it helps those people I've worked with in the past to stay well, and for the clients I am currently working with I hope it encourages you to keep working at Reverse Therapy (RT) and applying it in all aspects of your lives enabling you to return to full health.

To all my clients, old and new, I extend warmth and gratitude to you all, without exception. I feel truly privileged to have been given the opportunity to work as a reverse therapist. To meet and support people who have become ill - and at times extremely debilitated - by a variety of symptoms and to then be able to teach them how to apply RT to their own lives and watch them return to full health: it's hard to imagine a more rewarding occupation. Thank you ☺

My own experiences, and how to apply RT

The single most life changing event as I was growing up was losing my brother David in 1981. That changed my life, and that of my whole family's.

He was killed in an explosion in his farm cottage. It had been a particularly cold period and the back boiler of his fire had not been drained. He lit the fire and it exploded, killing David and injuring his nineteen year old friend Derek.

I was thirteen years old at the time and I thought that my life was over. I really couldn't see there was much point in living. Life felt meaningless.

At his funeral I was told not to cry as it would upset my Grandma.

I thought my head was going to explode with the pain, and my heart felt as if it was being grated and shredded into small pieces as I walked behind his coffin just desperate to see him one last time. Just writing this is making me cry.

It was a long time ago so this hardly fits with the books about grief, which state after x amount of weeks you may feel angry, then you may feel a huge sense of loss, and so on and so forth...we cannot be told how grief will affect us, we cannot read about it and try to slot our feelings into the required time frame according to what Dr so and so wrote!

We are unique and beautiful individuals, we need to respect ourselves first and foremost, honour what we feel and express it accordingly. Our feelings cannot and should not be prescribed to us by our family or society we are brought up in. Once we master the art of honouring what we really FEEL the rest becomes easy.

After my brother's funeral my big sister Ellie and I were given some time off school. We built jigsaws together in the living-room while friends of my parents came and went for tea and sympathy.

I remember one evening my Mum saying to me, "I'm glad for your sake that this has happened to you now as you'll have

no memory of it when you're older!" Oh dear!! How wrong she was. I guess, and it is a guess, that she was hoping it wouldn't scar me too much and that my pain would not be like hers. I cannot imagine how my parents felt at losing their first and only son. All I do know is that losing my brother was and is the worst thing that ever happened to me.

Ellie and I went back to school. It was just before Christmas and suddenly I had hundreds of new "friends." This made me feel really angry, exasperated at their lack of understanding. Some of the festive greetings were given to me from kids who didn't even know me, clearly something had been said in assembly and all the kids had been instructed to be really nice to us. If those kids had been allowed to deal with the situation in their own way it would've been far better for them and us. I would've much rather have received a few uncomfortable stares and glances, while my few good friends gave me a Christmas card with a thoughtful word in it rather than have a forced friendship prescribed to the children by the school staff!

One card from an unknown signatory had a festive message in it that read, “I hope the festive season brings you all that you wish for” Well that really would be a miracle!

I was an angry teenager – I wanted to scream at them all and tell them to stop trying to be nice to me, it really was doing my head in!!

This seems a good time to explain what we understand in RT as the two intelligences, the headmind and the bodymind.

We see the headmind as being the tape that plays in our heads telling us what we ought to say and do according to our situation. This is developed as we grow up and listen to our parents or the significant adults in our lives saying things like,

“Stop moaning, life’s hard for everyone!” Or “Don’t be a baby! Stop crying this minute!” Or “You should be grateful you’ve got a job at all, just get on with it.” Or “If you don’t

do what they want you to do you'll end up being a very lonely person with no friends!"

Oh the joys of parenthood! We really could do some serious damage if we were to let our headminds take the lead!

We all have our own tapes playing at certain times throughout our daily interactions with others. If however we are in a situation which clearly has the potential to have us leaping into headminds and responding according to what our "tapes" say, then we are in trouble!

Leading from a bodymind place is what we want to be doing as often as is feasible – which in my belief is always!

Although I really do appreciate the thought of always being emotionally honest can be more than a bit daunting!

Don't go thinking about that yet – no thinking allowed! I'll explain the beauty of bodymind now, and I really want you to feel what it's like to get connected to that again – because we all were once, before our families and society started filling us up with their expectations of who we ought to be.

So, to bodymind – this is the REAL, AUTHENTIC YOU! I write that in block letters because I really want you to get that bit!

The real you without the tape.

The real you that existed in pure form way back at the beginning, before whatever got you relying on a domineering headmind in order to survive happened – whatever that was. Pushy parents with great expectations of what you should become? Being bullied at school? Losing someone you loved? Moving home and schools leaving all your friends to re-locate with your Dad's new job? Your parents splitting up? Marrying the man you thought you loved only to discover you weren't actually that compatible after all? Whatever it was, no matter how big or small an event or sequence of events, it wasn't your fault that you shot into your headmind in order to survive that awfulness.

When your bodymind sees you ignoring your gut reaction and listening to your headmind justifying why you ought

not to rock the boat by speaking up with reasons like, “Oh well, he’s good sometimes, and he is always sorry – and he is the father to my children”, it does the only thing the bodymind can do: it starts using symptoms to try to get your attention hoping you will do or say something differently in order to really get your needs met in that situation.

Initially they can be quite mild, a sore head, lower back pain a bit of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), dizziness, psoriasis for example. However, when the bodymind sees that nothing is changing it turns up the volume of the symptoms. For more detailed information on the physiology aspect have a read of Dr John Eaton’s book, “The Reverse Therapy Approach”. His book is good at explaining that part, I’ll not attempt to do that here.

Let me explain going back to my brother’s death.

Going to school involved a five mile bus trip which took me past the road end to the cottage where the explosion happened. I would get on the bus. Initially I would be okay with just a bit of a nervous tummy.

As the journey progressed, I would start to feel my heart pounding in my chest, the palms of my hand would be sweaty, my breathing shallow, I'd start to see stars round the corners of my eyes, a sickening feeling would rise up from the pit of my stomach and I would feel tears welling up in my eyes, I would keep swallowing and open my mouth to try and breathe more easily. I never shed a tear, I was good at holding it in.

The bus would arrive at school, I'd get off, relieved, but still shaking I would go to the girls toilets, wash my hands and face and cool myself down. I'd be okay again, until the bus journey home and the whole thing would happen again.

I left home at fifteen years old, and my sister Ellie was at Edinburgh University, so I would get a bus from Dundee to Edinburgh – and the whole thing would happen on that bus route too, and so the pattern continued for years. I told myself I had panic attacks when I got on buses. I was okay on trains or planes, but buses, no.

One more big event was about to happen before I'd finally get to the bottom of the panic on the buses situation.

When I was twenty five years old my Mum died, she was just fifty four years old.

I did what I and many others do and listened to my tape to get through the pain of losing her. My headmind said, "Everyone loses those they love – get on with it. You've got two little girls to look after, you're a single parent and your Mum's died. Other folk come through worse, stop moaning, and for goodness sake don't cry. The girls need to see you being strong and coping!"

So, as a result of all of this the bus issue was going to be sorted! What am I talking about? Well, I realised I needed to get help, professional help. My headmind chatter was becoming too much to bear. I was getting awful symptoms of fatigue, constant, unrelenting headaches, and good old IBS!

I was working part-time as a nurse at the time, and I had been signed off with, “stress” and referred to the Clinical Psychologist for two sessions a week initially.

He wasn't as I'd imagined a psychologist would be. That headmind of mine had done a great job of stereotyping! He was a long haired Canadian, with a country singers moustache (I'm not making this up!) that started by coming out of his nose then crept all the way down the sides of his mouth and ended in an unflattering style looking like it was hanging on for its life at the end of his face. I secretly expected him to stand up half way through our session, click his cowboy boots together, throw on his ten-gallon hat, put both hands on his hips and slide smoothly into a line dance just to see if he could get me to crack a smile!

Life was too serious for all that of course. I had completely lost my sense of humour. This life I'd found myself in was just hard work, emotionally, physically and on every level I felt empty, completely void of that light at the end of the tunnel I'd heard about.

The country & western psychologist did get me out of the loop I'd found myself in on the buses. He explained to me that it was nothing to do with the bus. The bus was a red herring.

Without using the terms headmind and bodymind he explained to me that over a long period of time I'd been holding in my grief over the loss of David, and more recently that of my mother.

Getting on the bus after he had died and driving past the cottage he'd lost his life in was simply too much to bear, and what had I done with that pain? Nothing, absolutely nothing. I kept it there, and over the weeks and months following the event just kept holding it in there (bodymind) and getting on with going to school and not speaking about it.

Now, putting an RT angle on it I totally understand this set of circumstances. You lose someone close to you and what your bodymind wants for you is to be able to speak about how you are feeling, be it anger at the circumstances that led to his death, deep sadness at the loss you feel, or

whatever it is that is true to you, it simply wants you to have the freedom and ability to express what you are feeling. Instead, in this set of circumstances, it was clear that I was expected to “just get on with it” so that is what I did. This was very annoying for my bodymind to witness and the only thing it could do was send me symptoms in order to get my attention to speak up and be heard! So, the symptoms I was experiencing on the bus were linked to my pot (the body) being full to bursting with all those held-in emotions. The bodymind was literally crying out to be heard by me and acted upon. My headmind however was away off at a tangent listening to a relentless tape, thinking that was the best, and in fact the only way to survive the pain. In reality the complete opposite was true.

When we truly honour what we really feel and express it in any situation, no matter how embarrassing it may seem to be, we will reap the rewards of the bodymind being so hugely relieved that we will be symptom-free.

For those of you who were children in the 70's (I'm a 1968 baby) you may remember that little hard plastic doll who had a head that could be pulled apart with a bit of string from her body. Once cranked to her full separation from her body the head would slowly wind its way back to its position on top of her neck and body. On the journey back her voice would say, "Uh oh...my feet are moving closer!" "Here comes my body!" and the best one, "I'm falling apart uh oh!"

She was only ever quiet and happy when her head was nestled safely back on top of her neck in its rightful position: if only we could realise the importance of that too! Our headminds being separated from our bodyminds results in us living incongruently. By following the headmind's instruction we remain stuck in a place of suffering. To return to your authentic place, you need to be able to listen and be aware of what it is you really FEEL from a bodymind position and by responding accordingly to that you will return to full health! So why is it so difficult?

It's difficult for a number of reasons. Firstly we have headminds that have been in charge of the show for a very long time!

Take the example of being in a job which means you have to sit at the computer for hours at a time. You start to feel restless, fidgety and maybe start to develop a headache.

Listen up! This is your bodymind saying, "Enough of this! Take a break! I'm bored! I need to change position, go and get a drink, go for a comfort break, or chat to my colleagues for a minute, but for goodness sake get up off that chair and do something else for a few minutes...if you don't I'll just get louder, and start really screaming at you through symptoms...that niggling headache you've got right now is nothing compared to what I'll send you in a minute if you don't get up and do something else – HURRY UP!"

We shouldn't be annoyed that this happens, we need to really understand that it's brilliant that our bodies CAN communicate with us when we're getting it wrong! Our bodymind has our best interests at heart. It loves us very much and wants us to live a life that is balanced, varied and fulfilling – and when it sees that isn't happening it does that

thing I mentioned before, the only thing it can do, and sends us symptoms to try and get our attention in order that we change what we're saying or doing in THAT MOMENT!

To me the bodymind is similar to a young child that has a short attention span.

It doesn't like being told to do stuff, and it certainly doesn't like doing anything for too long – bored, bored, bored!

So, the headmind is like the dictator demanding that it pulls itself together and sits working at that computer for as long as is EXPECTED by the employer! You can imagine the conflict!

When I think about what my bodymind truly wants for me it really feels so comforting and reassuring. It's about living our lives as authentically as we can, grabbing opportunities as they come up, without the headmind interference which questions whether this is a good idea, or is it sensible?

What will others think about you leaving here and going to work over there? Will you lose respect? What will your

family think? The torturous, questioning, catastrophising headmind can be really wearing at times!

Due to the way we've been brought up, and as a result of the expectations of the society we live in, we do put too much importance on what our headmind (which really means society, parents and the significant adults in our life) has to say about a particular subject which is actually only really relevant to us!

When we absolutely get the fact that we alone are responsible for this journey through life, and we are the only ones who can make the necessary changes to evolve and shape our lives into what we genuinely want for ourselves, we are well on the path to a symptom-free and fulfilling life! I found this quote recently which puts so beautifully what I'm trying to say!

"Afoot and light hearted I
take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before
me leading wherever I choose."

From Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road"

We can only really start on our journey back to full health when we stop blaming others for the predicament we find ourselves in. Stop blaming others, and stop blaming our symptoms – now there's a challenge!

What needs to change is the way we understand symptoms and what they are about.

The symptoms are not there to prevent you from living your life fully and getting the most from this journey – the symptoms are there because you're not living your life fully or getting the most from this journey!

Read that bit again.

Then read it again. Not comprehending that point is undoubtedly going to hold you back from full recovery.

So how do we do that?

In my opinion the singularly most important thing is to start practising bodymind awareness. Putting it simply this means being grounded in THIS moment, as THIS moment is the only thing we can be sure of. All you know is that you are reading these words right now, what might happen next,

or what happened earlier on is not real to your bodymind. It's the headmind that goes over what might happen, or trawls us through what happened in the past. The only thing we know is now, and the only place your bodymind wants you is HERE, RIGHT NOW!

Here is what I want you to practise in order to enable your head and body to return to their healthy aligned state. When you notice yourself thinking about something completely unrelated to the activity you are actually doing I want you to think the word STOP! Then shift your awareness to your feet on the ground. Think about the shape of your feet in your shoes, the temperature of your feet, how the ground feels meeting the sole of your feet, everything related to your feet on the ground. This is the best way to get you out of the thinking headmind. Then engage all your senses in what you are actually doing in that moment.

So, let me talk you through an example from real life.

I'm peeling the vegetables for my family's supper. As I'm working my way through the carrots I put my hand in the bag to get the next one out only to discover I've done them all, though I don't really recall doing them! This happens to us all the time, at different times of the day we drift up and away in to our heads and we're thinking about numerous other things we have to do while doing a task we've done a thousand times before.

So I think STOP! I shift my awareness to my feet on the ground. I then notice the temperature of the cold water running on to my hands. I can hear the water hitting the metal sink, I can smell the earth coming off the carrots. I am also still keeping my awareness on my feet on the ground, and I notice how my hand feels as it holds the vegetable I'm peeling. I am fully aware of the activity I am involved in, and this means my head and body are in alignment at that moment.

When we practise this exercise we become far more able to notice what we are feeling at any given point. Then we can acknowledge that and use our headminds constructively to put that feeling into action!

This brings me on to another reason the body sends symptoms, when we are doing too much of one type of thing! For many of us we work, and work, make meals for our family and work. We forget altogether about our needs being met. We forget altogether about the need for balance, variety and FUN!

I know first hand that it can think (notice I'm not saying feel) like there's no time for me to meet up with my friend for lunch...WRONG! If I don't make time in my day to do things I genuinely want to do then I will get symptoms as my body expresses it's frustration at my needs (the things that make me happy) being ignored. Remember the bodymind is the loving, caring parent that wants you to be symptom-free. To enable us to get to that point we need to live a life that is balanced, ensuring we do our best to create time in our day to combine the things we have to do, with the things we want to do. So often our headmind says something like, " Yes, when I feel better I'll definitely go out more and do more of those fun things" Well here's the news...your body won't stop sending symptoms until it sees you doing those things!!

I know symptoms can be horrendously debilitating, and with the right support and guidance on how to apply RT you too can be like hundreds of my clients and be living your life fully well once more.

My commitment to my clients is to help them get well as quickly as possible. So to enable that to happen I offer email support in between the hourly sessions. RT is an educational process and I will help you learn it as effectively as possible. RT is not about doing affirmation work!

It is about being taught how to understand what your bodymind wants you to be doing differently, apply it and experiencing the bodymind reducing then turning off symptoms as it trusts you no longer need to be communicated with through symptoms.

Below is a lovely testimonial I received in a Christmas card from a client I worked with back in 2004. It was lovely to receive this five years after we had worked together, and thank you Ann for giving me permission to re-print part of your letter. If you too want to get your life back, no matter

your age or stage in life, do get in touch, set up an appointment and take the first step towards returning to full health and getting your life back.

I look forward to assisting you on that journey.

Kathleen Haden ☺

“...my 70th birthday present last month was a trip to the Maldives for 10 days (with 3 kids under 4 years old!) It was great and I did my first proper snorkel out on a reef and it was magical. So many, many times I think of you and the life you gave back to me. Also the laughs we had in the process! We cycled (tricycled) around the island. It was quite physical, and non stop but it felt so relaxed and I was so happy to be part of it all – oh what joy to be M.E free! I can never thank you enough!” Ann L. Edinburgh, December 2009.

