



## *Special thanks....*

In this issue I am pleased & honoured to receive contributions from people who help people and wished to share something with all of us. Thank you!

I wish to also extend a special word of love to my life-partner, who contributes freely and generously, sometimes at his own peril as I have been known to be a reluctant student, and this is not always apparent but I *am* very grateful.

## *Want to share your story?*

Do you have a story that you would like to share? A life experience you want to talk about? I want to hear! I'm looking for stories about life situations, changes, losses, gains or things that have happened that didn't turn out to be what you expected.

Contact Cindy Trevitt: [ctrevitt@telus.net](mailto:ctrevitt@telus.net) or call 604.518.1394

## *Want to receive more of these via email?*

Simply send an email to Cindy Trevitt at [ctrevitt@telus.net](mailto:ctrevitt@telus.net) and write "subscribe" in the subject line.

## *Want to hear about a certain topic?*

Send in your suggestions or questions – I'd love to hear from you.

Contact Cindy Trevitt: [ctrevitt@telus.net](mailto:ctrevitt@telus.net) or call 604.518.1394

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## Dark nights of the soul...

By Cindy Trevitt, Counsellor

June 2006

Between living and dreaming  
There is something else.  
Guess what it is.

*Antonio Machado*

*(transl. Mary Berg and Dennis Maloney)*

I fell into a very dark night of my soul and I did what I have done before – I questioned it. Then I tried to understand it. Then I went with it. I struggled some more. I cried. I accepted. I railed. I feared. I dreaded. I found peace. Then I wrote and wrote and wrote. Understanding started to come.

No man knows till he has suffered from the night how sweet and dear to his heart and eye the morning can be.

– Bram Stoker

In the black of night. In that lonely, feverish, stark place of uncertainty creeping in the twilight between wakefulness and slumber. In my twisted, restless and relentless dreams it came in symbols, people, allusions and shadows of my past. It was reminiscent of a time long ago where I felt the same lost feeling. I weep for that lost girl. She was innocent. We all are. But then, I felt that I was no good *because* I was lost. I was a salmon stuck in the rocks while millions of my brothers and sisters poured past in a torrent of purpose and direction. Maybe it sounds bent when I say this, but I'm very grateful for these times – at least after the fact. Each one of these times is a thorny labyrinth at the end of which I get a deeper understanding of myself, my life or my situation. It may not look different from the outside but inside a whole other galaxy has been born and I'm wiser. I'm deeper. I'm lighter.

Life takes a whip to the back of my knees and commands me to fall down. To rest. To wrestle with my demons. To become agitated and anxious and angry. To despair and sweat and wring my soul. Until I learn the lesson I am destined to experience it again and again and again. And here's something more I've learned – sometimes the lesson is to learn to change my behaviour. Sometimes the lesson is to do the emotional work I left behind in that mess. To grieve. To wrench my

guts into a knot and bleed out all that pain I felt yesterday. Last year. Decades ago. Sometimes it's just time to peel away another layer. To take that carving knife and scrape and carve and hack away at that dead skin and grasp a fresh, honest and humble revival.

And it keeps happening. I don't know when. I don't know where. I don't know how long. It just does. It doesn't ask. It doesn't announce. It just shows up and commands my attention. And the more I fight the deeper I sink into its oppressive quicksand. (And fighting for me looks like a smile that says, Hey, I'm chewing on tinfoil and I like it!) Like the seedling buried deep, damp and cold. Peeling its fleshy husk and thrusting its naked body up through the dark, heavy soil to burst into the raw air and fill its aching lungs and to recover – then grow.

In the middle of our life journey I found myself in a dark wood. I had wandered from the straight path. It isn't easy to talk about it: it was such a thick, wild, and rough forest that when I think of it my fear returns... I can't offer any good explanation for how I entered it. I was so sleepy at that point that I strayed from the right path.

- Dante, *Inferno*, Canto I

It's like the winter. We sleep and feel heavy, broody, sullen and dark. We want to shed a light on ourselves. Take a pill. Eat more greens to cheer up. To force ourselves to be okay. The truth is maybe we need a little hibernation. Maybe we, in our natural, pure energy embodied need to have our cycles of nature. Our seasons of rest. Our seasons of losing our dead leaves. Our seasons of growing again or growing new limbs. Our seasons of full and fleshy bloom. Perhaps this makeshift world of false lighting and room temperature does us a disservice. Perhaps we need to howl at the moon.

In the epicenter of all this magma and darkness is the truth. My simple truth. Your simple truth. Truths are difficult and complicated to find sometimes but in, and of themselves, they're often quite simple. And waiting for you.

The thing is – I know I'm not alone. I know that everyone I have ever known has experienced this – usually often and frequently. And we have learned not only to feel the burn of tears, the painful knot in our throat choking our voices, but to judge ourselves mercilessly for even having such a feeling. As if there is something wrong with us. We're bad, weak, stupid, failures, and whatever other judgmental adjective we can throw at ourselves. Those feelings you're having are

*natural*. You are beautiful in them. I invite you to sleep. Cry. Rage. Run. Rest. Rail. Hurt. Grieve. Laugh. Smirk. Explore. Express. Write and write and write. Paint a portrait of your battered and scaly self. And accept this. Accept yourself. Marvel at the miraculous, enigmatic, powerful, cyclical, spectacle of nature that you have become.

Make a point of celebrating your dark nights. Without pain, it is difficult to savour pleasure.

And I promise you: you are not alone. You are in magnificent and lush company. You are immersed.

I tell you: share your stories. We all have stories. We have all suffered. Share. You gain healing from sharing and we all gain wisdom.

### *Furthermore:*

I recommend educating yourself in the art of living consciously and in keeping with your authentic self. Find self-help books that truly speak to your unique sensibilities. Here are a couple of my personal favourites:

- ☺ *Dark Nights of the Soul*, by Thomas Moore
- ☺ *In the Meantime*, Iyanla Vanzant



**Cindy Trevitt is a Registered Professional Counsellor living and working in Vancouver. She can be reached at 604.518.1394 and welcomes all calls.**

It is not unusual to have difficulty sleeping from time to time. However, if you feel that you do not get enough sleep or satisfying sleep, you may have insomnia. Insomnia is a sleeping disorder that affects one in seven Canadians and roughly 50% of seniors. People with insomnia have one or more of the following:

- \* Difficulty falling asleep
- \* Waking up often during the night and having trouble going back to sleep
- \* Waking up too early in the morning
- \* Unrefreshing sleep

The two basic types of insomnia are acute (short-term) and chronic (long-term).

Acute insomnia can last anywhere from one night to a few weeks. Causes for acute insomnia can

include: illness, stress, jet lag, or environmental factors such as noise or light, which interfere with sleep.

Chronic insomnia lasts for a month or more and is often caused by depression, pain or chronic stress. Treatment for chronic insomnia must address the underlying condition or health problems that are causing the insomnia.

It is not recommended to use over the counter sleeping pills for insomnia. Most medicines that are used for sleep have side effects and must be used with caution. Often these medications cause daytime drowsiness, dependency and can cause rebound insomnia unless even higher doses are taken.

### **Tips for a Good Night's Sleep**

- \* Avoid strenuous exercise before bedtime. Do not exercise at least three hours before bedtime.
- \* Turn off the TV at least thirty minutes before bedtime.
- \* Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day (or on most days).
- \* Create a relaxing bedtime ritual, like taking a hot bath with aromatherapy oils.
- \* Sleep primarily at night. Daytime naps steal hours from nighttime slumber. Limit daytime sleep to less than one hour, no later than 3pm.
- \* Eat lightly in the evening. A heavy meal too close to bedtime interferes with sleep. If you need a snack, try eating things that raise your melatonin production. Suggestions include: soy nuts, chicken, cottage cheese, pumpkin seeds, turkey, oats, rice, ginger, barley, and tomatoes.
- \* Avoid bright light around the house before bed. Using dimmer switches in living rooms and bathrooms before bed can be helpful.
- \* Avoid caffeine at least six hours (and preferably eight hours) before bedtime. This stimulant found in coffee, pop, tea and chocolate can make it difficult to fall asleep and stay asleep.
- \* Use the bed just for sleeping and sex. Avoid watching TV, using laptop computers, or reading in bed. Bright light from these activities may inhibit sleep. If it helps to read before sleep, make sure you use a very low wattage light bulb.
- \* Avoid looking at the clock if you wake up in the middle of the night. It can cause anxiety.
- \* If you can't get to sleep for over thirty minutes, get out of bed and do something boring in dim light till you are sleepy.
- \* If you have trouble lying awake worrying about things, try making a to-do list before you go to bed. This may help you to "let go" of those worries.
- \* Avoid alcohol. Although alcohol is a depressant and may help you fall asleep, the subsequent metabolism that clears it from your body when you are sleeping causes a withdrawal syndrome. This withdrawal causes awakenings and is often associated with nightmares and sweats.
- \* Deficiencies in certain vitamins and minerals may disrupt sleep. Ensure that you are taking adequate doses of calcium, magnesium and B vitamins. Additionally, many people find a tea of chamomile or valerian especially beneficial.
- \* Seek the help of an Acupuncturist. Acupuncture is particularly effective in treating insomnia. Many people report immediate improvements in their sleeping habits. With acupuncture, the sensation of sleep comes easily, lasts without interruption, and is deeper and more refreshing. Chinese Medicine recognizes many forms of insomnia, and each is treated with a different combination of points, as well as different herbal formulas. In fact, treatments are tailored to meet the unique needs of each individual.

Insomnia is a condition affecting nearly everyone at some point in his or her life. It is important to remember however that insomnia is not defined by the number of hours you sleep every night. The amount of sleep a person needs varies. While most people need between seven and eight hours of sleep a night, other people do well with less, and some need more. If you do think that you have insomnia, by making a few simple lifestyle changes, healthful sleep doesn't have to be just a dream.



**Andrea Lamont R. TCMP. is a Registered Acupuncturist practicing in Vancouver, BC. She can be reached at Glow Acupuncture and Wellness Center at (778) 786-2517 or please visit her website at [www.glowwellness.com](http://www.glowwellness.com)**

Andrea Lamont R. TCMP. earned her Masters of Science in Traditional Oriental Medicine from Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, in San Diego, California, where she graduated with honours.

Her prior clinical experience includes positions at San Diego Hospice, where she worked closely with biomedical staff and provided treatments for terminally ill patients; UCSD Free Clinic, a medical facility providing no cost treatment to geriatric and homeless patients; Acupuncture at Sea, a wellness center aboard Celebrity Cruise ships; and private practice in New York City, focusing on pain management.

Andrea's credentials include: BC Registered Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioner, New York State Licensed Acupuncturist, Florida State Acupuncture Physician, and NCCAOM (National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine) Diplomat.

Andrea feels that the purpose of Acupuncture is to balance the subtle energies of the body, mind and spirit, so that the body may heal itself.

Andrea is a caring, nurturing professional who brings sensitivity and compassion to her sessions.

Please feel free to contact Andrea at [778-786-2517](tel:778-786-2517) or visit her website [www.glowwellness.com](http://www.glowwellness.com) for more information

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