

If You're a Dog...



You Gotta **BARK!**

by Martin Gray

If You're a Dog, You Gotta Bark!



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Dedication

This is for all the people who've looked at their life's circumstances and said: "I can't go on like this anymore: how do I get out of this and live a life I really **would** enjoy?"

Also to all the experts and authors for creating and employing their wealth of resources, which I've benefitted from myself and have the privilege of referring readers to in this book.

And for those dear friends, too many to single-out, who've supported me through the years, with encouragement, input, a bed, food and sometimes money, so I may pursue the publication of this book and various other creative accomplishments.

Thank You.

Why we do What we Do



“People are inspired not by what you do, but why you do it”
([Simon Sinek](#)¹ in his popular ‘TED’ talk)

So this book is not only about Freedom of Expression and speaking up for the right of everyone to be able to express and be creative in life to their un-restricted potential, it’s also about giving.

And not so much ‘giving back’, but rather ‘Giving’ as the driving principle of why we do what we do, without having to wait for ourselves or anyone else to ‘do something’ first, upon which our subsequent giving is based.

When you buy this book, a child in India gets 1 week of art-life skills such as clay-modelling, puppetry or theatre, to develop creativity, self-confidence, team-work and communication. Skills that will go a long way in helping this child have more opportunities and a say in his life

This is all possible through Buy-1Give-1. Check [their website](#) or specifically my ‘[Giving Profile](#)’.

Also by buying this book, and by whatever you personally get from it, you’re helping me do what I love to do most, which is freely create and express, as well as continue to interact with other very special people around the planet, for which I am immensely grateful, beyond anything you might imagine!

Thank you.

A Bit About the Author

Raised and educated in England during the 1960s and 70s, I succeeded in gross underachievement of my academic and artistic potential, and plodded compliantly into early career choices, mostly as a draughtsman, but rebelliously once as a car cleaner. I had a mortgage and 'steady' relationship by age 22 and pretty-well lived like everyone else I knew.

Something first began to change though, when I moved out of backwater Somerset and entered corporate IT Yuppie-Britain in 1989. However, my imagined land of milk and honey never materialised; only intense frustration and a further stifling of raw expressive talent, until a relationship break-up in Canada 'wiped my metaphorical hard-drive'. I returned to Britain a lost and broken man and started a path pursuing Buddhist philosophy, art, music, plus alternative and rather new-age ways of living outside the only world order I'd ever known.

Not surprisingly, but unknowingly at the time, many life challenges came along with such choices, and long term self-doubt, semi-depression, intense unfulfilment and dissatisfaction became dark and daily companions.

But I also began to get insights into my psychology and over time developed a growing fascination with human behaviour: why **do** we do what we do?

Now at age 50, through much personal self-discovery and a lot of wrong paths to back out of, life is suddenly looking so much more simple, clear, exciting and peaceful than I ever imagined: the result of all it has taken to now know, without a shadow of doubt, that my life is about Freedom of Expression.

Whilst not an autobiography, this book tells some of those stories and what I eventually learned was going on inside me when I (as I'm sure do millions of others) lived suppressing and subjugating my true, natural talent and creative expression, in favour of the acceptance by others and fitting in with the established world way of living.

Interestingly, even after a number of years as a backpacker-traveller and becoming very comfortable crossing into and communicating with other cultures (notably in

S.E.Asia and Latin America) and making some in-roads into exploring my creative potential, I still found myself living mostly to gain the approval of others and society in general.

I recall that as I squeezed myself into roles and identities which I felt uncomfortable about, as well as unmotivated or enthusiastic, I kept getting this picture of a dog pretending to be a cat: doing all the actions, the moves, the voice, the whole works: yet knowing the whole time that there was something bubbling underneath, like a suppressed volcano building pressure, that one day, I would 'Bark' in the wrong place, or cock my leg and someone who knew me as a cat would see, and, heaven forbid, the 'Game' would be up!

Martin now lives in NZ (since 1999) and enjoys creating art, photography and living as multi-culturally as he can, including frequent visits to S.E.Asia and Central America, where he also sponsors 1-to-1 aid-trade projects with people he meets and befriends there.

Among other things.



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All text you find in [blue](#) activates weblinks (which were active at time of writing), and which should take you directly to a website for the relevant reference. Otherwise use the noted number¹ to refer to more information or book ISBN in the Appendices.

If You're a Dog, You Gotta Bark!

"...There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure about you.....and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated (from our own fear) our presence automatically liberates others..."

([Marianne Williamson¹](#))

Introduction

You're not crazy; you're just trying to be someone else.

And you're not stupid, un-talented, un-committed, unclear, inactive or any of that other stuff either (which people may have said to you).

You're just not doing what you're **meant to** be doing; what you're **good at**; what you **love doing**.....

You're just not **being** who....you....innately... **'are'**.



In the Beginning

So, imagine a mummy dog and a daddy dog who love each other very much....etc: well OK, several months later, mum gives birth to a litter of the cutest puppies. Notice I said puppies, not kittens, rabbits, ducklings.....**puppies**.

True to their innate psychology and type, puppies are pre-programmed and genetically already set up to do 'puppy-like things', develop puppy-dog fur, teeth, paws, internal organs and especially instincts.

As they grow, they play, explore and experience their world (with regular coaching from mum) and hone their instincts and doggie identity. Boy dogs learn to cock their legs while peeing; girl dogs to squat. Dogs are known to chase sticks, balls and cats, and especially they're known to growl and bark (among other things).

Now, let's just freeze-frame here a moment. Notice nowhere in this brief picture did the growing dog either get **taught** to "Meow" or "Quack", nor did he suddenly develop that trait against his genetic animal propensity. He didn't start questioning his identity, born of feeling sort of 'different' or because of the opinions and feedback of other animals (dogs, humans or otherwise).

Sure, he might have found playmates in the family kitten or rabbit, but he always 'knew' (if dogs can consciously 'know' as we perceive it) that he was a dog, and when the leg-cocking and barking needed to be done, he was there, first on the scene, front of the queue, ticking all the leg-cocking and barking boxes!

Nowhere did we see or hear of Fido saving up to buy a mail order **cat suit** (delivered in a plain wrapper, complete with instructions and CD audio 'meowing lessons'!).

I think you get the picture. There was no inclination shown, nor coercion nor encouragement given for our doggie to be and do anything other than his god-given doggie duty, thereby fulfilling the role which had perfectly awaited him and his uniqueness.

Now this book could turn into an enormous tome of psycho-analytical, Darwinian, Quantum, Jungian discussion, pulling-in evidence from every study of species determinism

and merged with the projection of unlimited possibilities of human (or canine) potential, drawing on every metaphor from the animal kingdom....

But we're not going there.

All of that is available and at regular times through this book, reference and referral will be made to further reading and additional information where it serves to develop a topic or concept more fully, as well as clarify for you my own particular illustrations in life.

OK, so let's start putting this more into the Human Experience

Have you ever felt that no matter **what** you 'do' or study, or whatever your actions and even accomplishments and successes, it still feels 'uphill', against the flow; that if you stopped or backed-off for even just one day it would all slide back down and you'd have to start all over again?

All that time, effort, sweat, even money?

Maybe you even trot along, pretty happily (it seems) accepting this constant 'energy' needed to keep up; keep it going, keep 'uphilling', striving....whatever...

And maybe lurking so much quieter or silenced now beneath the surface of your daily conscious thoughts and self appraisal, was still the feeling that for all your effort or success or whatever, it **still** didn't **really** engage you or 'feel like you', but you've become so used to being/doing it now, why meddle with it or start digging and changing?

In this book then, through sharing parts of my own story, views, experiences, loves, losses, struggles and finally understandings, and especially from my prolonged states of semi-depression and chronic anxiety, fatigue and the facades I created to cover that up (and look like I was coping with life), I hope to give you a glimpse of not only what could still be lying below the seemingly calm (but possible muted) surface of our potential, but also an exploration of some of the bigger questions like "What's the point of it all?", "Why am I here?" and "What should I or **could** I be doing/being if I weren't doing/being what I'm currently doing/being?" (and some other questions too!).

Let's be clear though, this is not yet another 'self help' book nor a fix, cure, magic silver-bullet or miracle, for I believe everything is 'perfectly so' moment to moment for whatever opportunities it gives us and that nothing is 'wrong' per se. It's not therapy, teachings, techniques nor coaching.

There are no exercises (to do or to avoid!), no right or wrong ways, no solutions...

Ultimately not even any motivations or "OK, let's **go for it!**" kind of rallying calls. Nope; none of this stuff.

However, where this book **might** be of value (at whatever phase or time of your life you've picked it up, been given it and/or are reading it) is simply that by reading another's story (mine in this case), their ups and downs and learnings, you might also give yourself permission to discover or delve deeper into your own life experiences, comprehensions, challenges etc. or somehow feel the support and reassurance that comes from hearing something that makes you say: "Oh my God; I'm like that too: yes! I'm not alone (stupid, dull, weird, wrong, crazy, etc) after all!"

Intention/About this Book

OK, so if this is not a 'How' book nor a 'What' book: you know "How do I do (this or that)?" or "What do I do so that....?" Then what is it?

I offer it more as a 'Where' book: "Where can I get information and examples I can relate to, where I'm at right now?" (not someone in a remote 'Ivory-Tower-already-fixed-it' and "If-I-Can-Do-It-So-Can-You" kind of place).

And thus too a 'Who' book: "Who has pieces of the/this picture I'm dealing with right now?"

And finally that age-old question 'Why': "Why are things like they are?": "Why can't I cope or understand what's **really** going on?" "Why do I keep doing things that don't get me where I want to go, even though I thought I'd already done so much work on **that** issue?"

In frequently referring to situations from my own life, to illustrate things which started to become clearer as I was gathering vast amounts of information from courses & books (the authors of which are the real 'stars' here), it's not my

intention to simply 'talk about me' nor make excuses or reasons why 'I can't/couldn't do this or that'. It's not to play victim or poor-me and wallow in the drama of such stories, nor focus us on 'what's not working' etc.

Rather, I seek to use my experiences to illustrate ways of living and past-thinking that give us contrast to what we (as humans) **do** want in life – what brings pleasure & fulfilment, full use of our potential – which others might relate to. I'll also intersperse topics that may throw some 'less emotional light' on what is **really** going on, in our minds, our worlds and our projections on it and the other people we share it with.

I'm not here to harm others, nor myself. Nor to judge them or make damning indictments of the actions of others, their personalities or to blame them for anything which actually I truly have responsibility for and for feeling in my own life.

Fact though: as humans, on whatever 'level' you consider it, we judge. We judge ourselves, other people, events, the weather; everything. Dogs bark, humans judge. But it depends how one perceives 'judgement'. Maybe like me you prefer the word 'observe' or to have 'opinions'?

This book and all I write in it are, after all, simply **my** opinions and thoughts. They're not unquestionable truths or immutable laws or great platitudes. And they morph and change along with my own changes, acceptance of new information and discarding of the old.

Interesting isn't it: 'Judgement' to some, has a kind of bad or negative connotation only. "Look at that fat guy: he looks **such** a loser! I bet he's a real jerk!" etc. But isn't it equally a judgement (and many are **pre**-judgements) or a projection to say "Wow: look at **her**! She looks so snappy, sexy....bet she's got it all together and the world at her feet"?

How can we truly know how another person is living in their private world, let alone how they 'should' be living, based on our assumptions, demands or views (which are only ever based on our own experiences and filters of the world, after all)?

Some readers may be a bit shocked at the frankness of my experiences, evaluations or ways I talk about things I've felt or done. Maybe confronted by my humanness, occasional

arrogance and more occasional humble self-observations or errors.

It's all part of the story – not just mine, I'd suggest too – and only included in context for where it gives us a more open, honest, down-to-earth sense of understanding of the issues at hand.

Some may also find my style of writing a little unusual in its flow or the kinds of words or vocabulary I use a bit challenging. I'm not a writer, and I've also moved between worlds of 'bloke' to 'new age' to 'corporate' to 'world traveller' and beyond, and each has its own kind of language that you may or may not more readily relate to.

I **did** want to make sure, however, it **is** written in a way that is as accessible as possible to all and yet also remain loyal and true to the very heart and theme of such a book, being the bark of a self-aware dog (ie. free expression), not a neatly rehearsed "Meow".

I have also of course, changed the names of those I've had more close connection with, especially in the illustrations of my personal relationship partners. The events and memories I have are real, but the names of the other people are not, to respect their privacy and also their integrity - for these very dear people are also walking their own very unique and valid paths.

Everything we experienced together or as a result of our connection, to me is undoubtedly a great gift: very new age to say that, but truly I could not have experienced and learned what I did without them, and I'm much stronger and I hope wiser now for them.

John of Huia however, is/was called John and his living and passing-on were also both treasures and precious contributions to my own life.

Some of the names of companies I've worked for or with, remain intact, for again, it's not so much about my 'judgements' of who or what they are or do, but more about the great amount of fertile soil which I was immersed in /exposed to, and providing many situations and challenges which again, I could not have learned and grown without.

So I have a lot of gratitude. In no way am I wishing to be seen as disloyal nor undermining in anyway their business ethics and good reputation.

One in particular gives me still a good foundation upon which I speak of building a new vision for the future and all that I see possible in their current arena and communities (relevant to the theme of personal self expression of this book). I'm hoping in the near future they'll also join me in helping to contribute to that aim, for all our mutual benefits.

Written in Four Parts

Without intending it, as I got deeper into writing it, I noticed this book was taking on a faintly familiar structure, one which anyone who's studied Buddhism at all may recognise. That's not to say however this is a book about Buddhism or conversion or needing to understand Buddhism etc. to be able to read and enjoy it.

Whilst not 'exactly' divided up into clear parts - certainly not equal-length, to be honest - there is nevertheless to me a similar flow that I hope you/the reader will find helpful to know of at the outset. If you're anything like me, I really prefer to know where we're going first up. I like the long distance view, destinations, and journeys: then to see landmarks reached and ticked off, bringing the purpose of the journey nearer and nearer. I just find that kind of thing more satisfying to my own psychology. And we're going to learn a few more things like that before we're done!

Anyway, just to briefly summarise: the main teachings of the Buddha, once he had attained his 'enlightenment', were founded upon the notion that all life was suffering. Not necessarily the blood-pain-death-trauma kind of suffering you might instantly picture, but more like the quieter suffering of enduring something, or of not knowing: not knowing "why we're here, why things happen as they do, why we don't see the whole picture or point of it all" etc. and that "things we want elude us, or that we love or posses will all leave us eventually". You might also call it 'struggle'.

That was translated as [The Four Noble Truths¹](#), which, in my own words are essentially:

1. There is Suffering
2. There is a cause of, or reason for Suffering
3. There is an end to Suffering
4. There is a path that leads to the end of Suffering

Further and more clear explanations and all the information one could possibly want about the life or teachings of the Buddha are available in a myriad of ways, a couple of which I will mention however in the Appendices at the end of this book.

For now though, if we just take those 4 points in the crude way I've named them, then I hope you'll keep them in mind as you read on through this book now, and begin to relate/identify back to them along the way, for the shape/structure here is not dissimilar, I believe.

I speak often of my own experiences and struggles of how things were at certain times: not understanding why they were like that or how they could change.

I also began to read and study works of authors like [Dr John Gray²](#), [Bruce Lipton³](#), [Joe Dispenza⁴](#) etc. where the first lights of understanding the **causes** of my situations became a little clearer, and the ways our human minds, bodies and even societies function (or not!).

This part of the book then could be seen to correspond with the first 2 Noble Truths perhaps: those being that no matter what you know, who you are, where you are, there is struggle and suffering: fact. There are also reasons and causes that underlie the struggle and suffering and I believe general ignorance of what it **is** to be human is one of the greatest; for if we knew more of this and our huge potential, we might likely **first** treat ourselves in very different ways, let alone the way we treat other people, animals, the environment, planet etc.

Notice I say 'ignorance' by which I simply mean 'unknowing of information', not as the word has more become known to mean in this age as somehow stupid or deliberately in denial of the certain ways things are.

As I came to move through the darkest, lowest points of my struggles, and through more study and attempts at imagining how to apply it, I started to conceive that it wouldn't **always** be like this; the moods, isolation, pressures, self-punishment etc. That there could indeed be better or happier times, just as there had been before, and that my predicament was more about 'where' I was than 'who' I was (though one's own inner fortitude and attitude **do** also ultimately play a huge part).

So in that third section of the book, you'll pick up less rhetoric about what wasn't working, or why, and sense instead more hope starting to creep in, as the material I was absorbing began to open doors and windows – albeit fleetingly sometimes. That there was indeed an 'end to suffering' possible.

And finally that there is a 'path or way that leads to the end of suffering' is the subject of the quite deliberately-entitled last section: about a Vision, a new way forward and where I speak not as some 'preacher' or 'futurist' or 'expert', of what I see possible for us within our lifetimes – as individuals and communities – but from my own opinions; my own imaginings and ideas, especially too those based on the undercurrent of where, as individuals and collectively, our past and present is likely to lead us, in the most empowering of ways if we each choose to discover and enact them.

Along the way, (for this is a journey which for me is also far from over) I refer quite regularly to the theories, works and vast body of material of others already published or online, who are already having their own impact(s) on humanity.

I'm not an 'expert' nor am I seeking to set myself up as one. Rather than attempting to be yet another author with their own theories, personalities or entourages, I've been inspired over the past couple of years now to more-like 'collate' what I have read, studied and resonated with.

And where this comes up (as we continue) I'll add my brief interpretation of that information, in the context of how I came to understand, apply or benefit from it. I'll also point you directly to **their** resources and material so you can read and understand more specifically for yourself (just like I did) and can get your own 'aha's' in that way.

The difference of this book then, one might say, is that it offers access to a wide and comprehensive range of authors and material all in a '**One Stop Shop**' way, distilling out the key points and weaving them into my own illustrated experiences for continuity.

And so my job here therefore, is ultimately to start things off: initiate and create the first steps of access for you. I've come to learn this is one of my innate 'dog' qualities, through the works of people like [Roger Hamilton and XL Foundation⁵](#) (more on this to follow). After briefly speaking up in such a way, my role then is to 'pass the ball'; to refer, connect and play 'team' sort of: to network for you so that more gets done by those better placed or qualified.

So to say anymore here would be to try to squeeze the whole book and its contents into the 'About' chapter; to make the map try to be the actual journey. And that wouldn't be appropriate: I wouldn't want to deny you what I hope you'll agree will be the pleasure.

For it is also **my** pleasure: not necessarily to 'please' you, but somehow to be of service and value by what follows, to your **own** unique journey.

We'd not want to be squeezed into anything too small for its true and full expression, would we!

Like a Cat Suit, for example, you might say?



1. There is Suffering
2. There is a cause of, or reason for Suffering
3. There is an end to Suffering
4. There is a path that leads to the end of Suffering

CHAPTER 1

A Good Place to Start

A bit like a dog trying to be a cat and 'meow', what if you were best suited, enjoyed, had success and passion for a certain way of life (or occupation) let's say, but in ending up doing or squeezing yourself into some other quite different role you found your vigour and fun (and productivity and enjoyment etc.) vastly dulled? Or that you felt what you wanted to contribute or express was really not applicable (or worse, not appropriate) in how and where you were working?

There may be many reasons and influences why you'd put yourself there, much of which we could call 'conditioning' or societal/familial or peer-group training. Without getting too deep in there just now though, let's say that very often we seem to do things 'to get approval', even attention and there are separate psychological reasons for that too. Also to 'belong', to fit in, not stand out: all kinds of things which in my own experience and research seem to be foundational among almost all people, regardless of race, religion, epoch, location etc.

Let me share some of my own such experiences, in this case relating to the 'work/job/career' type category, and one which many of you may have some version of or relation to, given that especially in the west, our main notion of who we are and what will occupy us in this life-time has become our 'job': the way we earn income: our title, our very **identity** almost.

Sun Alliance

Up until 1989 I'd spent pretty well all of my childhood, youth and adulthood in small town areas of Wiltshire and Somerset, South-West England. In those 10 years of working I guess I'd just plodded along, doing what everyone else did. And whilst I sort of harboured somewhere inside me, aspirations of a better, richer quality and expressive life, I knew no-one else who lived like that, nor had any real clear vision or means of what it looked like or how I would get there.

So I did various jobs, starting in local government at 18 as a trainee architectural technician, and in this I'd already 'opted out' of a truer expression of myself. In school in my puberty I'd discovered girls, smoking, athletics and rugby (I know: an unlikely combination!), as well as a growing belligerence to old-school teaching methods and systems which seemed to punish (yes including many physical instances too) my creative, playful, cheeky expressions. And so letting my grades and interest in academic intelligence and knowledge easily slip, by the time my higher subjects and direction choices were up for review, I had no interest in university or 'career' and dragging things out any longer. And I only really paid token compliance with parental wishes that would have had me study for 5 years at university and become a fully fledged architect instead.

2 years earlier, in the summer of 1977 at 16 years old, I'd got my first part time job as a car cleaner, which actually was strangely fulfilling and where I could be rough-tongued, work in oil and mess all day, smoke, earn cash-in-hand and start driving (so long as no-one caught me). I'd soon got thoroughly bored I my government job, as it seemed to encourage my lethargy in those pre-Thatcher socialist, unionised days it. So when I quit, it was firstly back to the cars I went.

Working full-time through a few harsh winters, working outside, in sub-zero temperatures with chemicals on my skin wasn't fun. And after a while, it also really dawned on me that others (especially bosses) were treating me like shit, and that actually I was doing that too and encouraging it in a way by refusing to elevate myself in terms of occupation.

And whilst a return to design-drafting was what engaged me through the 1980s and afforded me that simple, un-achieving lifestyle (a small mortgage on a small house at 22, playing rugby, getting drunk a lot, washing the car and mowing the lawns at weekends), a change was brewing which would kick me in to a 'career'. Which is where (by the long route) I'm aiming us, for this first real-life example of wrong 'application of self' (this is a term by the way which I recently came across in an illuminating book by [Moshe Feldenkreis: Your Potent Self](#))¹.

The year was 1989 (I was by now 28) and I can now look back with some astrological understanding which firmly points to 'celestial activities' and influences concerning my [Saturn Return](#)². Here it seems, in short, one's life, routines, circumstances etc. all get thrown up in the air for review, and large scale change usually ensues!

So it was for me too, that a number of things occurred at around the same time.

My old dog and 14-year companion (and last link with the innocence and irresponsibility of childhood) died, or rather I had to authorise his euthanasia after a debilitating stroke.

The boredom and incompatibilities of my personal relationship (termed by then a 'Common Law Marriage' in England, in that after 8 years together and an engagement I was unwilling to take all the way to the altar, we jointly therefore owned the home, car and possessions) came to a predictably turbulent end and where I bought out her share and took on the whole mortgage myself.

My parents, who'd until that year continued to live and run their successful pharmacy business, church, political and social lives in the next town (where they'd done so for 25 years) finally semi-retired, sold up and moved 350 miles north, back to our family homeland of north Lancashire/Cumbria, leaving me in the south-west with no other immediate family ties or support; my only sister having long-since flown the nest and been several years by then in Edinburgh.

And the fourth and capping component of this 28th 'year of change' was the chronic groin/sporting injury which not only kept me from physical activity, rugby matches and training, even walking without discomfort, but also resulted in much inner (and often externally expressed too) frustration and irrational outbursts.

However it was that, via a chance visit and subsequent day long session of psychometric evaluation, I became aware for the first time I had skills, abilities **and** high intellectual capacity to be engaged and successful in much more than my current struggling little life, and where also 'a career in computing' was suggested as a kind of ideal match/job/situation where I might apply all this and excel!

I have to say that my design and construction work of that time had become a disaster area where I'd essentially been moved from the drawing board component and was more involved in managing a very large farm construction project, (which was going steadily from bad to worse), as well as other project sales and tendering, **and** having to manage gangs of builders and engineers to get the jobs done in the face of extremely difficult client demands and overt intimidations. Never during all of this did I feel I had any real support where it mattered, from employer or colleagues. And all of it operating in arenas which really I had or have no skill or interest in, let alone 'passion'.

So the mood I was in, around that time, I was on edge and fairly gobbled up the inspiring results of my [Myers and Briggs](#)³ testing, ran straight across town to a computer recruitment fair, grabbed the HR person of the first large company I found (Sun Alliance insurance) and, waving my impressive score sheets in her face, basically bullied her into setting up an interview with me!

The process of course became quite protracted and all the high scores, good interviews etc. failed to bring me the role at their local (Bristol) offices. Maybe my attitude?

However after several months, where I was about to quit my striving to better myself and change career, and resign myself to a life of the drawing boards of this or some other office, out of the blue they offered me an interview in their Sussex HQ complex: Horsham; 120 miles away, commuter-belt of London and, in those heady days of late 1980s **the** 'Mecca' of affluence, prosperity and '**yuppies**' (Young Upwardly-mobile Professional People in Employment).

All I recall is that I arrived late and that I talked sport and rugby with my prospective team manager for an hour and got the job!

Over the next few months I rented out and then eventually sold my Somerset house, moved my life to Horsham, quit smoking and on a very impressive salary (even as an entry-level trainee programmer) I thought I'd arrived in the land of milk and honey, and had it made!

My plan upon entering the 'IT' world (of which both technologically and commercially I knew close to zero) was

that my 'flair and superior skills' (as per psychometric tests) would quickly lead me to excel and command a ludicrously high salary, after which I imagined I would be able to somehow 'switch-codes' and get into the fledgling computer graphic/games line of work, thus completing the package of at last marrying my creative flair with my intellect and make my fortune!

That was, however, until I waded my way through the first two alarming and challenging weeks of my trainee-ship!

I landed with a bump. I was now not only a little fish in a **very** big pond, I was also on the bottom rung of the ladder at 28, where most of my immediate supervisors and managers were **younger** than me and about 75% of them female! I'd only ever worked with women who were receptionists or typists and this was a big culture shock and gender shock to my sense of raw 'masculism' (finding many of them attractive too didn't help my challenge and perspective either!)

As I tried to get to grips with the concepts and theories of basic computer-coding (CoBOL) language, as well as a myriad of new protocols and procedures in this high-tech, fast-paced professional environment, virtually **all** my regular (and now old) reference points seemed to have vanished.

Clunky and slow on a keyboard, I was also hit hard by the reality that **none** of all this new info (as thoroughly as it was all being presented and taught) was making any sense **nor** sinking in! To cope, I found myself having to do every step so slowly and meticulously in real fear of making mistakes (and looking stupid!) and this really ground down my natural rough-edged, happy-go-lucky, gung-ho way of doing things. My self frustration and feelings of inadequacy were starting to also be felt by my mentor and team, and the more I struggled the more I made myself 'wrong' for being so slow and pathetic. Asking for frequent help even at this early stage soon became a humiliating and increasingly-hard thing for me to do.

I took assignments and work home each night and poured over them, trying, hoping it would start to 'click' and flow. It didn't.

I came in on weekends: my colleagues thought I was crazy and encouraged me not to get so wound up about it and take it easy. I couldn't. All I knew (and expected, from my

years of previous work and culture) was a hard-flogging, unforgiving angry boss or system that could ridicule me and make life hell, or could fire me at any moment for underperforming.

To try to compensate, I pushed myself in sports and rugby for the team I'd joined, and through that winter I also got drunk a lot, angry a lot, and started to isolate myself a lot (to cope and try to stay calm, or keep my unpredictable self from spilling out onto other people!). One saving point was that, as a way of fitting in, I was able to quit smoking, having already found myself feeling furtive and sly, hiding my 'dirty habit', and the smell that my colleagues must surely have picked up.

I got way behind in my assignments. My team assured me that my accuracy was highly valued and 'speed' would come, down the track: It didn't, and though I eventually graduated and slowly took my place in the team and high-demand projects, I never lost that self-stigma (which I came to also believe/perceive was how other people thought of me) of struggle and only ever just keeping up.

In my socialising and relationships, I became over-the-top, especially again as much of the socialising included alcohol, bars and parties. I became known for my over-competitive, even arrogant & aggressive nature. I threw myself into sport and had a company-wide reputation as driven, superbly fit... and **very** hard to work with!

Even though I kept getting good reports and grade reviews and advancements, and salary increases, I still never shook off my sense of self-incompetence and even sheer impotency, especially when newer computing and PC technology and business projects came along.

I started losing sleep, having weird dreams and along with further self introversion, for the first time referred myself to a psychotherapist, hoping that no-one would find out because (again) my perception and experience was that surely others must see there was something 'wrong' with me, as all but me seemed to enjoy, succeed and advance in their work.

Pretty lonely place to be. I never truly felt I fully belonged or was accepted for my work ability (even if I was!). And **that** after all, in this book and reason for relating this

episode, was 'who I was' (accepted for work ability I mean) and how one surely was supposed to live and be measured: by their work performance at it, salary and sense of passion for it. Wasn't it?

Sure enough though, the wind (or in this case, hurricane) of change came.

I can see now that even though I certainly had the raw flair, creative talent, intelligence (top 1% score in [MENSA](#)⁴ testing) and spatial awareness-reasoning-problem-solving capacity etc, what was missing was something I could actually **see and touch** as a result of my work/activity. I was used to cleaning cars, or drawing buildings then seeing them erected and used (even being a part of their construction on site).

Here in computing (especially in those 'mainframe' days) it was concepts, theories, like chasing phantoms of bits and bytes down the wire to the main computer banks in the basement. The only tangible evidence of my work was a screen-view on which business staff could see their customer data and information, or at best (where at least I did feel a sense of pride and fulfilment on such projects) where I worked on programs which produced actual certificates, paper/documents of customers' insurance.

Only in the last couple of years have I begun to start to understand the huge, fundamental importance and significance of this. That my creative nature and intellectual capacity needs '**form**'. That I'm highly visual and kinaesthetic.

We'll see in the second (and other) example(s) following, how that issue came up again and again though, before I finally got the understanding which I feel I'm empowered with now.

We'll also look at how working for prolonged periods to deadlines and pressure is also not conducive to my best performance, on mental and accuracy-related tasks especially. For many other people, I'm sure this may also be true.

I mentioned the winds of change. Perhaps like me you believe that 'things are sent' to us, kind of, to teach or instruct or give us the opportunity to experience something, or which force us to change, let go, move on etc?

Recently, via the works of people like [Jerry & Esther Hicks \(the Abraham books and Law of Attraction\)](#)⁵ and a posse

of newly-emerged experts, coaches and speakers, I see it more as having 'attracted' from within myself: called forth (rather than being 'dealt a hand' as in a card game of luck or chance).

Whichever outlook you align with however, suffice it to say that at the end of 1992 I hit a brick wall around everything I thought I was and what life was about. An incident being the end of a short but profound love affair with a woman. A very educated, professional, beautiful, aloof, unattainable woman 14 years my senior; an ex-colleague who'd returned to live in Toronto where, and to whom, I'd travelled (invited myself actually!) imagining in my blind arrogance that this was all going to provide me – **me** – with the stage for my next belligerent conquest!

What **actually** happened (whilst sparing you the actual personal detail of my 'dismissal') was that instead I limped back to England an entirely empty, broken and disoriented man, no longer wanting to go back to work or engage the world. I gave up all my sport, socialising, drinking and anything remotely competitive or of the type of life I'd lived up until a few weeks before.

And whilst I did continue to work at that company/career for another 2 years before being able to leave it and that whole chapter behind, who I became, how I lived and occupied my none-work time was a 180 degree change.

Though my experiences and feelings of impotency at work and utter uselessness at 'computing' continued, and even increased, I didn't know (then) any other way but to force myself each day to go to a work I hated, 8-to-5, earn a salary and try to keep up appearances.

There's a line from the [Pink Floyd track 'Breathe' from Dark Side of the Moon](#)⁶: "Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way.." and that was never more true than for me in those times.

Appearances of course changed too, as I started to grow my hair very long, took to wearing different and more 'new age' kinds of clothes & bangles – a softer, more feminine and creative look. To try to quieten my mind of 24/7 whirling, loud chaos and thoughts, I began going to meditation, the [Thai Theravada Buddhist tradition](#)⁷ which exposed me to very

different and differently-oriented people: to a monastic community, to Thai people and culture, and to Brighton, 30 miles south on the English Sussex coast, to where I soon moved (renting out my own Horsham home and sharing a grand-old sea-front flat).

I locked myself away each night and found myself composing prolific amounts of poetry, songs, drawings and paintings, all firmly and deliberately it seems rooting me in the melancholy of my lost love.

Eventually, my inner turmoil turned to bouts of self argument, sometimes aloud with myself in a mirror or window, and often on the drive to work via the rolling landscapes of the Sussex South Downs hills, I would scream myself hoarse and cry violently, all the while still conditioned to arrive at work and somehow keep this all under polite control.

I would sit for an hour at a time motionless in front of my computer screen, yet in my mind crazily composing more poetry or prose as a way of describing my predicament and coping with this split existence. I'd doodle and scribble ideas which, having then raced back to my flat each evening, I would develop in pencil or pastel at my drawing table; favourite 70s rock music helping the night hours speed-by unseen, until I found myself driving to work again – and screaming again!

It all came to a head: it had to, I guess. No one specific thing. I decided to leave and to 'become an artist' but with no idea where or how or what that actually really looked like, or how I would 'earn money'. All I knew was that deep inside I'd always **been** an artist and that to live in any other way right now would continue to live as if without food, water and air. No matter what else I did or had done, the things I craved more than anything were like imagining being 'plucked' out of the dull crowd by some illuminated being and placed 'where I finally belonged' in my 'real' life!

And all I'd ever known outside that fantasy was 16 years straight of work and career, and that I had to leave and allow all the creative flow to, er, flow....

In the absence of any other guidance, I decided I would need a cross-over period, say 1 year. And to live on the £5,000 I'd saved, I'd be best to live in a country that would

allow that money to go a long way! By now I had already experienced Thailand and found my feet as a budding backpacker/independent traveller (during a 4 week sortie the previous winter) so that would be my skeleton plan to return and start off there and see how I would go (I actually thought I might just also disappear into the sunset and never be seen or heard of again!).

Before I began my 'exit' I followed a friend's suggestion to study to teach English as a foreign language. It was a popular way he said, of finding work and income to keep me going wherever in Asia I went, and it was one night, suddenly struck by a panic attack and distressing myself over which of the top 2 language school place offers (in Brighton) I should take, that the door to my old world closed and the one to my as yet unformed new life opened.

I excelled at and thoroughly enjoyed my 4-week full-time course and teaching experience, right from the challenging day one, up in front of real adult-students from a variety of nations. It was the birth of seeds I even now still tend and grow about human interaction, confidence in public speaking, the 'unknown' and my sense of deep respectful connecting and 'belonging' to the vast cultural diversity yet unity of human kind on the planet.

My glowing report and qualification in hand, I could now leave Sun Alliance and the known, prescribed path I could no longer make the pretence of following, including having to break this all with my parents, for whom this wasn't probably the first 'disappointment' as such about their son's chosen path of non-conformism. Nor the last either! ☺

Two weeks before finally walking away from all that a secure career could offer (and some amount of exclamation both of questioning my sanity by my colleagues and celebrating my audacious courage and independence) I had time and occasion to fall in love with a mesmerising German girl, Anja, whom I met in Brittany.

Like you do, eh!

Whilst it doesn't really add to what I wanted to share here about being in the completely wrong life/work role and environment, and damaging mental & emotional impacts these things had been having, I mention her because integral with

my journey of 'who am I, what should I best be doing/being on the planet?' etc, some of my greatest pains, challenges and triggers for times of absolute darkness and depression, as well as immense bliss and gifts and opportunities to love and learn and come out of it all with handfuls of gold and life experience, spiritual understanding etc, have come from the succession of intimate relationships, their breakdowns and resulting traumas. A succession with compounding effects to my psyche in how I took them (at the time when they occurred). Simone in Canada was the first and most life-changingly profound. Eventually, a year or so after first meeting her, Anja became the second.