

A True Story of the Power of the Mind

Tuesday 13th June 2006 started the same as usual, soft gentle music woke me at 6.20 and I chanted my normal affirmations, rose slowly and showered. 'Today is the day', I said to myself in the mirror as I shaved.

The taxi arrived and Peter the driver enquired about my destination. "The Alexandra Hospital in Cheadle" I said. As we drove we passed the normal comments about the weather, the world cup football and then the conversation got more personal. "Not keen on hospitals." said Peter.

"Why is that?" I enquired.

"Don't get me wrong I think they are a good thing like, it's just that I don't feel comfortable in them. I had a hernia operation last year at Wythenshawe and I felt worse after the operation than I did before. They didn't do anything wrong it's just that it took me weeks to get over the anaesthetic and the pain. I couldn't drive for nearly 3 weeks and the discomfort lasted a lot longer than that."

"That's what I am having, a hernia operation."

"Oh! Sorry mate didn't mean to err ..." his embarrassment showed in his nervous cough.

"Don't worry Peter I am not having any anaesthetic so I don't expect to have the same problems as you."

I could see the words drift into his head, tumble through his mind and then formulate a question. "Sorry mate did you say that you were not going to have any anaesthetic?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Well there are 3 reasons. The first reason is I do not want any unnecessary drugs in my body. The second reason is that when you are subject to a general anaesthetic your body is flooded with drugs

to relax every muscle in your body to the point where you are just at a level above death. The anaesthesiologist monitors your vital signs to ensure that you stay comatose by allowing more or less of the cocktail of drugs to flood into your body. When you awake from the operation your body's immune system has to spend days healing the damage that the drugs have subject your body to during the general anaesthetic. Many people often feel nausea, sleepy, tired, and listless and often patients report a lack of appetite after being subject to a general anaesthetic. Your body should be concentrating 100% on healing your operation wound, not the affects of drugs.

There was silence as Peter negotiated the traffic and the road signs.

"You said 3 reasons, what's the third?"

"Well I am a psychotherapist and I teach many people to meditate and relax, I teach them how to make different choices in their lives; and because I 'walk the walk' every day myself, I need to know if what I am teaching can be used in the most extreme circumstances. I know in my own mind what I am able to do, and have no doubt that with the right surgeon this is possible."

The noise of the engine masked the noise in Peter's thoughts. "But it must be painful. I mean they cut me from here to here." He signed with his finger across his tummy. "The cut is about 7" long and I couldn't move for over a week; every time I farted it hurt."

"I had not considered that." I said. We both laughed out loud.

"How will you do it exactly? I mean ..." he struggled with the words to explain what he was trying to say.

"I have talked it through with the surgeon and we have agreed that I will take a couple of minutes, before he is ready to start the operation, to relax down and get into a meditative state. He will ask me closed questions, questions I can respond to with a yes or no answer, and I will respond using my finger. Throughout the operation he will talk to me and tell me what he is doing. I hope that I will be able to control my state well enough that I will be able to talk with him once I get my body relaxed."

“You are going to do it by relaxing?”

“And using meditation to control pain and discomfort.” I responded.

Peter concentrated on his driving as he struggled to word-craft his response. It was clear that it was not every day that he carried a fruitcake in his car. Relief came as we pulled into the hospital grounds.

I booked in with reception and was taken to my room to await Mr Ian Welch the consultant surgeon, who had agreed to perform the operation. When he came we chatted and confirmed how the operation would go. “So Gordon you are still happy to proceed without any general anaesthetic and we only use a local anaesthetic if you, for whatever reason, feel you need some pain relief?”

I confirmed and he wrote out the consent form, talked me through it and asked me to sign it. Handing me my copy he shook my hand and said, “Get ready and we will have you in first.”

As Ian left another male entered the room “Hi I’m Roger Smith the anaesthetist. I know you have asked for no anaesthetic but I will be in theatre with you as a backup and I just wanted to talk to you about what you would like me to do in case anything went wrong.”

“Nothing will go wrong.” I said.

“No of course not; I meant if you need some help with pain reduction.”

“I won’t.” I smiled, “But if I do then I have agreed with Ian to have a local. There is something you can do for me though.”

Roger smiled and tilted his head slightly in recognition that he was listening.

“I intend to try and give you and Ian some feedback with regard to any pain or discomfort I may feel during the operation. I was

thinking of ranking pain and discomfort out of 10. So zero would be no pain and 10 would be I'm on the ceiling so please stop."

We each gave an audible laugh as we smiled at each other.

"Could you record this information for me, and I assume you will link me to a heart monitor, so could I have my heart rate recorded as well, at specific points in the operation?"

"Sure, I will be monitoring your blood pressure as well so we can record it all."

"Thanks that would be great."

I was wheeled into the theatre and lifted onto the operating table. Ian, Roger and two nurses were busying themselves with whatever it was that they needed to do. The nurses smiled and made me comfortable. Soon Ian approached with his razor. "Time for a shave" he smiled. "Ok Gordon I will be ready to start in a couple of minutes so you asked me to let you know two minutes before count down, so if you would like to prepare yourself?"

I closed my eyes and began my preparation. I meditate daily and have followed the same process many times. I was very soon relaxed and I could hear the feedback from the heart monitor bleeping to the rhythm of my heart as it slowed down as I relaxed.

"Heart rate 55" said Roger.

"Are you ready Gordon?" said Ian. I acknowledged with a slight movement of my first finger on my left hand. "The time is 14.40 so I will make an incision just above the area. Here goes."

As the knife went to the skin I heard my heart rate increase, and as the knife cut into my skin I felt a burning sensation as if someone was using a small acetylene torch on my tummy.

"Pain 5." I murmured softly. I heard the heart monitor increase and I felt my heart rate rise. I focused on my body and I concentrated on relaxing. My heart beat slowed and I remember thinking 'wow what an amazing feeling.'

“I’m going to separate the muscle now from the area Gordon.” And I felt Ian’s fingers tearing tissue and I felt pain to level 5 again as Ian cauterised the blood vessels. It felt like he was using a red-hot pin head to touch parts of my body. The pain went to level 5 every time he performed this action. “I’m now going to do deep tissue separation Gordon.” Ian’s words drifted into my hearing as I focused and isolated my body from my mind. That was the easy bit, isolating the pain from the area Ian was working on was another thing entirely. The pain level reduced to 3 and my heart rate remained consistent.

“Heart rate 58” said Roger. I murmured my discomfort levels. “Discomfort 3, discomfort 4.” The levels would rise and drop as Ian poked and prodded tearing my skin from the muscle tissues with his fingers. “I’m going to insert a retractor now Gordon.” There was no pain only discomfort at level 3. More deep tissue separation then muscle layer separation and what Ian termed the hernia pull. Pain and discomfort levels rose to 5. Then the dissection around the hernia lifted the pain level to 6 as my body responded with a heartbeat of 65. The worst was over. The hernia was now separated; I had no pain only level 3 discomfort. The stitching of the muscle structures lifted my heart rate to 66 and for a few moments the pain and discomfort levels rated 6. I asked Ian for a few moments to balance my mind and body. He stopped and I focused and rebalanced my body without interference from external fingers and retractors.

As Ian pushed my hernia into its rightful place my pain level went to 5 then reduced. “I’m going to insert a piece of mesh now Gordon.”

“Can I have a look?” I responded.

Ian held up a piece of thin mesh material and I opened my eyes, smiled and quipped. “It’s got stripes.”

“I’m going to stitch it into place now over your muscles so it does not move.” Ian’s commentary was allowing me to create an image in my mind. This part of the operation went from pain level 2 to level 5 and discomfort up to 6. “Heart rate steady at 61” voiced Roger.

“Ready for skin closure now Gordon.” I opened my eyes and looked into the smiling face of Ian. “Could I suggest that if you were to have a local it should be now as this part can be uncomfortable?”

I looked at him and smiled. “Listen wimp you have come this far without me being relaxed by drugs you can finish the job without drugs. Get on with it.”

He laughed, “Ok.”

“Before you start Ian could you just give me a moment to rebalance my mind and body?”

The stitching finished at 16.12 hours; (1 hour 32 minutes.) I had lost all sense of time. It seemed to me to be amazing that it was so late.

I was picked up by a friend and taken home. Isn't it strange that I do not normally have a cough but because my tummy really hurt with the slightest movement, I suddenly developed the urge to cough? I could not get comfortable and did not dare lie down on my bed as I feared I would not be able to get up, and living by myself, this could have disastrous results for moments when I needed the toilet, so I slept downstairs on my reclining chair.

I have developed specific healing techniques, and each day I indulged in my meditation and focused healing programme. By day 6 (Monday 19th June 2006) I was feeling great and I woke at my normal time to my gentle music, completed my affirmations and by 7.00 am I was in my local gym. I drove my car and practiced emergency stops without any ill effects; I had no pain or discomfort. I ran 5k and did some gentle upper body exercises. On Tuesday I was feeling so good I had a full round of golf. I had no pain or discomfort. On Wednesday I was again at my local gym for 7.00 am and this time I ran 10.5k and completed a good upper body workout. My rehabilitation was complete. I felt wonderful.

From the day of my operation to the day I played a full round of golf was 7 days. My recovery time was remarkable but nevertheless a fact. I put this down to several factors.

1. I was fit and healthy before I had my operation.

2. I have practiced meditation and relaxation daily for the last 2½ years and consider my health and well-being as paramount in my life.
3. The dedication and skill of Ian Welch and his team.
4. The ability to have an operation without anaesthetic.
5. The knowing that it is too easy to live in the illusion of your mind.

I felt it had been a privilege for me to have had the opportunity for such a powerful experience. I had given permission for action to take place, and therefore my body responded with signals, which although painful at times, were loving feedback. I felt the signals from my body were part of the healing; because I accepted with love the feedback and did not attach emotions to the feelings. My thoughts were focused on love and peace, and each breath I took I breathed in love and peace. My body responded the only way it knows by following the instructions from my thoughts. What other explanation can you give for my unprecedented recovery?

There is nothing special or magic about me, we all have this amazing ability to heal ourselves, particularly of the past or future fears. Many people live in an illusion, trapped in their thoughts. Learn to free yourself and find peace, love and forgiveness.

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