

catalyst
online

Newsletter Archives

~~~~~

Catalyst News and Views from AnnA

Your Personal Development & Creativity Newsletter

23 January, 2009

~~~~~

I hope there is something that inspires you this week to get writing, or to make a contribution to the world at large. The qualities of a good boss can actually be used as a guide for any relationship, and talking of that there is some food for thought about who could be your new best friend. Best wishes for your continuing love of life, creativity, and all the gifts your life brings you - AnnA

IN THIS ISSUE:

- HOW YOUR BOSS CAN LITERALLY KILL YOU
- FRIENDSHIP ACROSS THE GENDER DIVIDE
- HOLIDAYS WITH A NATURAL HEART
- TOO OLD TO WRITE/ TOO HARD TO GET PUBLISHED?

CREATIVITY CLIPS:

- EXPRESS YOURSELF
- ARVON CALLING
- WHO WRITES LIKE?..

HOW YOUR BOSS CAN LITERALLY KILL YOU

~~~~~

My mother often used to say - somewhat exasperatedly - that I would be 'the death of her'. I took this to mean that I was being more than ordinarily annoying, but now many years later it seems that science is on her side - particularly in the workplace.

Swedish research published in the online journal Occupational and Environmental Medicine, makes grim reading. They studied

over 3000 men aged between 19-70 and discovered that an employees' risk of getting angina, heart attack and even death were higher when they felt that their bosses were incompetent.

Looking at the men's lives after the study, the researchers found that those men who had serious, or fatal, incidences of heart disease, heart attacks and angina were more likely to suffer these conditions if they felt their bosses were incompetent and the longer they had worked for that boss, then the higher was the risk.

Men who felt their bosses knew what they were doing had far lower risks of heart disease which puts the onus squarely on employers to monitor their managers performance - and on employees to take action to handle the stress of their job before it becomes fatal. Stress related illnesses are on the increase, and so any action you can take that will help alleviate that has got to benefit overall health.

If you suffer from such a boss, there are certain great qualities you would probably like them to develop - you could print out this list and leave it on their desk - anonymously might be best! If you are a boss, how many of these boxes do you tick?

A GOOD EMPLOYER IS:

- \* consistent and clear in communicating with employees
  
- \* ensures feedback is fair, private and useful ?
- \* one who treats all staff with courtesy and consideration
  
- \* able to set clear and realistic goals
  
- \* one who does not have unrealistic expectations of performance
  
- \* making sure employees are involved in the decision-making process
  
- \* able to delegate authority where appropriate
  
- \* aware of how to manage change in the workplace

In other words, you regard it as your prime responsibility to provide your employees with information, support, power

in relation to responsibilities, clarity in expectations,  
and feedback.

Do all that and you get a gold star - and an effective,  
fulfilled and loyal workforce.

#### FRIENDSHIP ACROSS THE GENDER DIVIDE

~~~~~

In any conversation in a single sex group, the one word 'men',
or 'women' can express a whole range of emotions ranging from
fond affection to outright exasperation and confusion. How
well do the two sexes really understand each other, and can
they ever be 'just friends'?

Many years ago I interviewed author John Gray who wrote 'Men
are from Mars and Women are from Venus' who certainly made it
clear that he didn't think friendship was ever on the cards.

Back then, I might have agreed with him but times have changed
and with attitudes. Traditionally sexual jealousy has been at
the root of maintaining platonic relationships but apparently
all that has changed.

There has a major cultural shift where the sexes are no longer

separated but go to school, work and socialise together which means there does not have to be a romantic element to sharing time. I have seen this shift among my own friends and particularly my god children who go out together in groups, not pairs, and think of each other as mates in the friendship not relationship sense.

It is not always easy, some of the challenges include actually defining what it is in the first place, seeing each other as separate and equal individuals and dealing with sexual attraction in an open and honest way. So, it can be done, and there are definite benefits to doing so. With a platonic opposite sex friend you can ask the questions you can't always get answered by your true love; such as why do women have so many pairs of shoes, and how come men always want to solve a problem when I all I want is a sympathetic ear?

It can be a real education, and if you don't have any in your life and give you a different perspective from the other side.

HOLIDAYS WITH A NATURAL HEART

~~~~~

It's the time of year when you can't carry the Radio Times home without a forklift truck because of all the travel supplements

and ads for holidays it contains. If you would like to redress the balance to make up for the sacrifice of the several trees that died to produce it, then you might think of a holiday with a conservation and eco theme. These new, short breaks, are aimed at people who want to get involved in worthwhile conservation, teaching or community development projects but are unable to commit to a long term project.

Frontier is a conservation and development agency established in 1989 to conserve the world's most endangered wildlife and threatened habitats. They build sustainable livelihoods for impoverished communities in the world's poorest countries and offer a unique opportunity to volunteer for a holiday with a heart.

So, what about two weeks in Madagascar on a Lemur Conservation Eco-Break? The Sifaka lemur is the focus of this research and conservation project and volunteers will spend time in a tropical forest environment and could find themselves involved in the reforestation programme, or teaching the Malagasy guides English, or any number of other conservation-related activities. Or what about going to Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Namibia, Nepal, Peru, South Africa, Sri Lanka or Thailand? All projects include accommodation, food, local

orientation, comprehensive project training, project equipment and materials, 24-hour emergency support and communication with local frontier project staff and representatives.

Excluding flights, they can cost as little as £295 per person, and for every person that books an Eco-Break, Frontier guarantees to plant enough trees to offset two tonnes of carbon, which represents almost 20% of the yearly carbon footprint of the average Briton and considerably more than the carbon produced by the volunteers' air travel. The trees will be planted as part of an ongoing reforestation project in Sumatra just outside the Gunung Leuser National Park.

Interested? Then visit [www.frontier.ac.uk](http://www.frontier.ac.uk) or contact 0844 5763 677 for more details.

#### TOO OLD TO WRITE/TOO HARD TO GET PUBLISHED?

~~~~~

Sometimes people ask me whether they are too old to write, and my answer is always the same 'you won't get any younger, so start now'. Mary Wesley is probably the best-known writer who had her first novel published at the grand age of 71, and

writers seem to keep going as long as they have ideas and someone to read them. Another first time author is Bill Lucas who at 75 has published his first book looking back on a 50 year career as a journalist with stories from the Isle of Lewis. Not a new writer perhaps but still an inspiration?

I freely admit that getting a new novel published in the current market - or indeed in any market - can be an uphill struggle. So it is very heartening for all you novelists out there to hear that a new UK author, Kirsten Hawkins, is to have her first book published by Cornerstone. Dona Nicanora's Hat shop is set in a small south American town and full of memorable characters and a strong romantic story that had the editor reaching for the phone to commission the rest almost before she had finished her coffee. So don't give up, it can be done.

CREATIVITY CLIPS

~~~~~

1 Express Yourself and try this creative exercise that was inspired by a sentence I came across in one of those email round robins of the send to 30 people or you will die variety. I didn't and I haven't, but I liked the quote.

"Of all the things you wear, your expression is the most important."

What does your everyday expression say about you? Do you ironed in frown lines, or crinkles when you smile? What expression is most characteristic, and least, for you? What does your expression convey about you - and what expression would you describe best if it applied to a character in a novel or play - and what would you have most difficulty with? Try it and see.

2 Arvon calling is not a misprint pointing you to catalogue beauty buys, but the time of year when the Arvon foundation issues its new prospectus for the year. It's something all writers ought to have handy so when inspiration dries up you can see if you could take yourself off to one of their centres for a weekend or week of inspiration. Courses on offer this year include: food writing, poetry, novels, plays, children's books, journalism, theatre, writing for radio and tv and so much more. If cash is a bit short they also have a bursary scheme so go to their website and download a guide, or get a real printed copy sent to you to pore over in the comfort of an armchair with a cup of coffee and your diary to hand. Visit [www.arvonfoundation.org](http://www.arvonfoundation.org) for more information.

3 Who writes like..? If you read a lot, and run out of your favourite author's books, then there is an indispensable guide that will save you a lot of trouble. It's usually under the counter in most libraries - a bit like contraband - but do ask if they have a copy of 'Who Writes Like ..' and your troubles could be over. There is a new edition featuring over 2000 writers and they cover all the usual genres of romance, crime, thriller etc but have added a couple of new ones of historical romance, and mature chick lit. The last is a new one on me, and whether it refers to the author, the readers or the characters I leave it to you to find out.

How it works is that you just look up your favourite author and underneath the entry is a suggested list of similar or compatible authors you might like to try. If your local library doesn't have a copy, badger them to get one - you won't regret it!

~~~~~

Any questions, comments or criticisms? I love to hear your views and your experience, or feedback on any items in the newsletter, so do please do contact me at <http://www.catalystonline.co.uk> or

email anna@creativecatalyst.co.uk

~~~~~

Catalyst News and Views from AnnA

Your Personal Development & Creativity Newsletter

9 January, 2009

~~~~~

How was it for you? Does 2009 look like being your personal best year yet? No, I am not crazy - I know the world is full of doom and gloom, and I also know that our attitude creates our reality so may I encourage you to look at your life and be incredibly grateful for as much as you can in it. Not always easy, but to truly develop as creative human beings we need to look below the surface of our problems and see where we can find a blessing. We are all wonderfully creative, and adaptive beings so turn those talents into improving your life and raise that half full glass in a toast to all that life has given you, and don't complain that the glass is half empty - if you do, it will stay that way.

So, here's a way to write your thoughts for publication, and a new way to look for a job if that's what's needed this year, and some creative promptings to set you on your way.

Best wishes for your continuing love of life, creativity, and all the gifts your life brings you - AnnA

IN THIS ISSUE:

- EXISTENTIAL DEPRESSION - HAVE YOUR SAY
- RENEW AND RETREAT IN ITALY
- FREE ONLINE SELF DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE
- WHAT I HAVE LEARNED SO FAR

CREATIVITY CLIPS:

- Why I have Not Written Any Of My Books
- Online job hunting

EXISTENTIAL DEPRESSION - HAVE YOUR SAY

~~~~~

My regular readers will recall Eric Maisel, the psychotherapist and writer who developed the idea of creativity coaching. In his book 'The Van Gogh Blues' he explored the link between creativity and depression, and is now looking to go further with this. He is writing a new book exploring what he calls the problem of existential depression and is looking for

contributions for the book.

I have already submitted my views, and if you would like to contribute he would love to hear from you. This is what he wrote to me: "From my point of view, I would like to get the problem named and understood as a first step to finding answers". If you are willing, I would love to have you describe what your meaning challenges look and feel like, describing those meaning challenges any way you like (at about 500 - 1500 words). My intention would be to use your story, including or not including your name (your choice), in one or more of three ways: in my newsletter, as part of an ongoing series on existential depression; on my blog, as part of a similar series; and in the book I am working on about meaning.

I have the sense that existential depression is a giant and completely ignored issue among contemporary smart, sensitive people and I want, as a first step, to have people see what this terrible and insidious ailment looks like. Will you tell your story?

If you would like me to provide you with questions or prompts to help you get started, I can do that. But I think it would be even better if you just told your story your way. Let me know if you are willing."

So if you would like to share your thoughts just head your email 'existential depression' and send to [eric@ericmaisel.com](mailto:eric@ericmaisel.com)

RENEW AND RETREAT IN ITALY

~~~~~

I am a great believer in the restorative power of retreats and have done a fair few in my time from the total silence of a weekend in contemplation aided only by a handful of dates and a bottle of water, to the more fleshly delights of a writing holiday in Lanzarote which combined lots of solitude and writing with wonderful seafood and an amazing cactus liquer. On balance, I like a bit of comfort and have just come across a lovely holistic centre in Italy with the romantic name of The Hill That Breathes - which tells you it's not on the coast.

If you want to indulge yourself this year and take a deeper look at what's going on in your life then this could be the answer as they promise contemplation, and good food, plus a fascinating series of programmes that you can dip into. Near to the renaissance hill-town of Urbino, you can wander the 100 acre wooded hill or swim in the pool while gazing at the lovely Italian farmhouse. Could be a perfect spot for a bit of deeper writing - ask me if you need some prompting

questions to pack in your bag - or just have a look at their website. Oh, and apparently they also do a a great pizza.

<http://www.thehillthatbreathes.com/>

FREE ONLINE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE

~~~~~

When times get tough we often want to think about changing some aspect of our lives. We may decide to spread our wings and start a new business, or want to learn more about what some of the 'big thinkers' of are time are turning their attention to.

Think Big magazine can offer you all that, and you can read it for free online. It looks at achievement, leadership, and personal as well as inspirational stories and everyday wisdom and the current issue has certainly got plenty of those 'big names'. Some of the highlights include Bob Proctor on how to live the Laws of Attraction, Dr John Demartini on why patience is the key to surviving tough times, Brian Tracy on how to be creative to gain strength and success and one I am hoping to fulfil myself is Kim Kiyosaki's prediction on why more wealthy women will make the world a better place. Click the link, or copy and paste into your browser

<http://www.thinkbigmagazine.com/free-magazine?af=CLO2053341>

## WHAT I HAVE LEARNED SO FAR

~~~~~

Poetry has a way of going straight to the heart of the matter, no matter how much you may wish it didn't sometimes. I am a big fan of the distinguished American poet Mary Oliver whose ability to hold your heart and open it to visceral experiences is something I value. The turning of the year is a time when we reflect on what we have achieved, or learned, in the past year so let's hear her reflection, and her recurring theme of calling us to 'be' actively in our lives, not just spectators.

What I Have Learned So Far - Mary Oliver

"Meditation is old and honorable, so why should I not sit, every morning of my life, on the hillside, looking into the shining world? Because, properly attended to, delight, as well as havoc, is suggestion. Can one be passionate about the just, the ideal, the sublime, and the holy, and yet commit to no labor in its cause? I don't think so.

All summations have a beginning, all effect has a story, all kindness begins with the sown seed. Thought buds toward radiance. The gospel of light is the crossroads of - indolence, or action.

Be ignited, or be gone."

(New and Selected Poems Volume Two)

What are you holding the match ready to ignite in your life? Create the flame of passion and light and let yourself go, and grow.

CREATIVITY CLIPS

~~~~~

1 'Why I have not written any of my books' is the rather wonderful title of a French book by Marcel Benabou which Catalyst reader Martine kindly mentioned to me. I couldn't resist it, and I would like you to use it as the basis of a creative exercise and 'explain' in a letter to your

intended publisher just 'why' you haven't got round to it.

I would love to hear what you say!

2 Online job hunting has reared its head since I mentioned Mike's online guide in the last issue. I have had a couple of enquiries about it from readers, so for those who are looking for a new start in 2009, his site offers you all the information you need to find new jobs on the internet and speeds up the whole process by giving you accurate information and sites to check out for your specific employment area. It's also useful for those looking at a change of career. You can download the guide immediately at <http://tinyurl.com/annarushton> and the webpage gives you all the information you need to decide whether it's for you.

~~~~~

Any questions, comments or criticisms? I love to hear your views and your experience, or feedback on any items in the newsletter, so do please do contact me either via my website: <http://www.catalystonline.co.uk/> or email to anna@creativecatalyst.co.uk

TITLE HERE

Paste body text here