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Newsletter of the Lower Hutt Women's Centre

Hui Tangaru 2012 Vol.20 No 1



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Women's Centre Opening Hours

Monday to Thursday 10am – 5pm

Friday 9am – 5pm

Ph: 04 569 2711 Fax: 04 570 2820

Email: info@lhwc.org.nz

186 Knights Road, Waterloo

Lower Hutt 5011



Thanks to all the women that helped put the newsletter together, and to the women that donate the graphics to Isis International Manilla.

Website: www.lhwc.org.nz email: info@lhwc.org.nz

WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

The Women's Support Group is for support or if you are having a hard time coping with stress, day to day hassles, depression or oppression. Do you want to unload, are you getting stressed out? If you are feeling out of touch with yourself and other people around, or feeling isolated .. then the group is a time to get support in a caring environment while you work on looking at yourself, your feelings and how you are in life.

The group is open to all women and you can join the group by turning up to the Women's Centre on Wednesdays at 1pm. The group goes from 1pm to 2.30pm. **Facilitator:** Julie Smart



Friendship Group

We are a facilitated group who meet weekly for discussions and occasionally an outing.

Our focus is on learning about friendship, maintaining, developing and exploring the ideas.

Friendships are a vital source of emotional sustenance. As well as providing the pleasure of companionship, your friendship network offers you a sense of support and belonging.

This group is open to all women and you can join the group by turning up to the Women's Centre on Thursdays from 10am to 12noon.

Our ability to make and sustain friendships is influenced by our ability to develop and maintain a nurturing relationship with ourselves.

Facilitator: Yvonne Broadley

If you are interested please phone or come along.

All welcome.
For more information 5692711

FREE ACCESS COMPUTER

The Women's Centre has a free public access computer available for all women to use during our opening hours. We have programmes such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, Mavis Beacon Typing Tutor, Publisher and Power Point; Internet and Email access.

There are no computer lessons available at the moment.

Sleep Well for Women

In a world where "time is money", just about everything in life can seem more important than sleep.

Yet, our sleep and health are very closely linked. Parenting demands, caring for an elderly parent, or a restless partner can interrupt our sleep. Pain, worries, fears or our fluctuating hormones may keep us awake. Whilst sleeping problems are as widespread as they are diverse, this course aims to help participants to understand basic facts and to discover practical and workable solutions toward improved sleep and well-being. and your self in everyday situations.

We will begin with exploring important aspects of sleep, including;

- sleep stages and body rhythms
- the relationship between daytime busyness and quality of sleep
- the effects of sleep loss.

Participants will be invited to reflect on their own sleeping patterns and needs.

We will look at what helps, and what may get in the way of sleep. This includes;

- stress, worry and anxiety
- food and other habits
- parenting and other caring roles
- hormonal changes, illness and changing patterns as we age.

Handouts and information about other resources will be provided.

Dates: 6 Weeks beginning Thursday 1st March 2012.

Venue: Women's Centre, 186 Knights Road, Waterloo. Lower Hutt

Enrol: Only by payment or deposit

Cost: Waged \$30/\$15

Time: 7-9pm

Facilitator: Veronika Gabel

Enrol for this course through deposit or payment
Phone 5692711

Assertiveness for Women

Assertiveness is the ability to express yourself and your rights without violating the rights of others. It is appropriately direct, open, and honest communication which is self-enhancing and expressive. Acting assertively will give you the opportunity to feel self-confident and will generally gain you the respect of yourself and your peers and friends. It can increase your chances for honest relationships, and help you to feel better about yourself and your self in everyday situations.

Dates: 6 Weeks beginning Wednesday 28th March 2012

Venue: Women's Centre, 186 Knights Road, Waterloo. Lower Hutt

Enrol: Only by payment or deposit

Cost: Waged \$40/\$20 Waged/Unwaged

Time: 7-9pm

Facilitator: Stephanie Brockman

Enrol for this course through

Self Esteem for Teens

A workshop for girls to learn about themselves, to have fun, to learn self respect and to be more confident and to accept yourself and others.

We are all different, who we are, what we like and don't like. Our cultures, and our backgrounds.

There is no one else quite like you.

This course is based around discussion and the sharing of ideas and experiences .

Dates: 10 Weeks beginning Tuesday 6th March 2012 (2 weeks off for school holidays)

Venue: Women's Centre, 186 Knights Road, Waterloo. Lower Hutt

Enrol: Only by payment or deposit

Cost: Waged \$40

Time: 7-9pm

Facilitators: Johanna Pibal and Ally Andersun
Enrol for this course through deposit or payment
5692711 Phone for a pamphlet to be posted to you.

Women Who Love Too Much Part One

(Codependency/Addiction/Losing yourself in Relationships)

Part one is an educational weekend. This weekend will give participants an opportunity to explore their own issues around co-dependency and process addiction, the origins of your behaviour and ways of changing and developing in yourself. Women Who Love Too Much , co-dependency, relationship addiction; all names which reflect different aspects of this issue that some women have in relationships. If you have difficulty with relationships; partners, children, parents, then this workshop may help you in understanding how to look at your behaviour in the relationship and where that behaviour comes from. This workshop will help women that want to

look at the damaging or dysfunctional relationships they have been/or are in. Using the group work process and action methods we will begin the process of personal recovery

Weekend Course

Dates: Frid 9th Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th March 2012

Time: Frid: 7-9.30pm 10-5pm Saturday and 10-4.30pm Sunday

Venue: Women's Centre

Enrol: Only by payment or deposit

Cost: Waged \$40 /Low or Unwaged \$20

Facilitator: Ally Andersun

6 Minimum and 10 Maximum for course to commence
Participants are expected to attend the full course.

Participants are expected to attend the full course

Self Development Using the Psychodramatic Method

This weekend will give participants opportunity to explore personal issues using the psychodramatic method. This workshop will be useful for women wanting to expand and develop their experience of life and the issues that hold them back. Women new to the psychodramatic method are welcome.

Participants are expected to attend the full course

Weekend Course

Dates: Frid 27th, Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th April 2012

Time: Frid: 7-9.30pm 10-5pm Saturday and 10-4.30pm Sunday

Venue: Women's Centre

Enrol: Only by payment or deposit

Cost: Waged \$40 /Low or Unwaged \$20

Facilitator: Ally Andersun

6 Minimum and 7 Maximum for course to commence
Participants are expected to attend the full course.

Menopause for Women

If you are starting menopause, experiencing full on symptoms, post menopausal or just curious about what lies ahead this course is for you. We will look at different aspects of menopause, physical, emotional, spiritual, social and psychological. We will have guest speakers and discussion.

What is Menopause?

Menopause literally means cessation of menstruation or last period. It marks the end of a woman's fertile years when the ovaries produce lower levels of the reproductive hormones oestrogen and progesterone.

The average age for menopause in New Zealand is 51.5 years. 'Perimenopause' is the official term used

to describe the average of five or so years up to the last period.

When periods have stopped for a year it can be assumed that a woman is post-menopause. After menopause the body achieves a new hormonal balance by producing hormones from the adrenal glands, the brain, muscles, and hair follicles as well as continuing to produce lesser amounts of hormones from the ovaries.

Dates: 6 Weeks beginning 9th May 2012

Time: Wednesday evenings 7-9pm.

Venue: Women's Centre

Cost: Waged \$40 /\$20 Waged/Unwaged/low waged

Facilitator: Ally Andersun

Enrol for this course through payment or deposit
5692711

My Mother My Self

The workshop will look at the issues of guilt including; mother guilt, our mother's guilt – how much did we inherit from her, and how we are controlled through guilt.

Other issues include; looking at concepts of what stops us from living our own authentic lives, our relationship with our mother, how our relationship with our mother influences how we are today.

- "Understanding what we have with out Mothers is the beginning of understanding ourselves."
- "Our mothers had not raised us to feel comfortable with autonomy, sexuality, a life different from theirs"

Both quotes from **Nancy Friday** in **My Mother My Self**.

This is an experiential workshop and participants need to have a commitment to their own development and to attend all parts of the weekend including Friday evening

Participants are expected to attend the full course

Weekend Course

Dates: Frid 18th , Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th May 2012

Time: Frid: 7-9.30pm 10-5pm Saturday and 10-4.30pm Sunday

Venue: Women's Centre

Enrol: Only by payment or deposit

Cost: Waged \$40 /Low or Unwaged \$20

Facilitator: Ally Andersun

6 Minimum and 10 Maximum for course to commence
Participants are expected to attend the full course.

Inner Child Workshop

Through the use of action and art learning the techniques to develop a deeper understanding of yourself and your processes.

It is said that the child holds the key to our own healing and recovery, and this is an individual journey for each person. This workshop is for women that have done previous self development workshops or groups.

Participants are expected to attend the full course

All participants need to phone interviewed by Ally Andersun before registration.

Phone 5692711 and put your name down to register and be contacted for an interview.

Weekend Course

Dates: Frid 22nd, Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th June 2012

Time: Frid: 7-9.30pm 10-5pm Saturday and 10-4.30pm Sunday

Venue: Women's Centre

Enrol: Only by payment or deposit

Cost: Waged \$40 /Low or Unwaged \$20

Facilitator: Ally Andersun

6 Minimum and 10 Maximum for course to commence

Participants are expected to attend the full course.



Self Esteem Workshops For Women

Lower Hutt Women's Centre
186 Knights Road
Lower Hutt
5692 711

Friday Morning
2012

- Jan 27 Striving for pure motives
- Feb 3 Putting Yourself in Neutral
- Feb 10 Having the Courage to be Imperfect
- Feb 17 Developing Courage
- Feb 24 Willpower
- March 2 Anger as a Strength
- March 9 Developing Self Knowledge
- March 16 Self Love
- March 23 Acknowledging Self
- March 30 Enhancing self in terms of awareness
- April 13 Acceptance and use of strengths
- April 20 Positive thought and talk
- April 27 Messages about self
- May 4 Accepting responsibility about self
- May 11 Coming to grips with feelings
- May 18 Talking About Ourselves
- May 25 Beliefs About Self
- June 1 Expressing Pride in Self
- June 8 Letting Go of the Past
- June 15 Respecting Self and Others

Tuesday Evening

2012

- Jan 24 Positive thought and talk
- Jan 31 Messages about Self
- Feb 7 Accepting responsibility for self
- Feb 14 Coming to grips with feelings
- Feb 21 Talking About Ourselves
- Feb 28 Beliefs About Self
- March 6 Expressing Pride in Self
- March 13 Letting Go of the Past
- March 20 Respecting Self and Others
- March 27 Striving for Pure Motives
- April 3 Putting Yourself in Neutral
- April 10 Having the Courage to be Imperfect
- April 17 Developing Courage
- April 24 Willpower
- May 1 Anger as a Strength
- May 8 Developing Self Knowledge
- May 15 Self Love
- May 22 Acknowledging Self
- May 29 Enhancing self in terms of awareness
- June 5 Acceptance and use of strengths

Now is the time for all good women to stand up and say who we will be

Self Esteem Workshops on a Friday morning and a Tuesday Evening.

Each workshop is separate. You may attend one or as many as you like. Creche is provided for pre-school children only without extra charge only on Friday morning. Please make enquiries about babies because they need a lot of attention and we have one creche worker. The workshop is for women only so try to avoid planning on taking your children into the workshop.

Time: Friday morning 9.45 - 12noon and Tuesday evening 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

The workshop starts right on time at 10am and 6.30pm and late comers can't go into the morning workshop.

If you have children you need to arrive about 20 minutes early to settle them in.

Cost: Friday \$2.00 and Tuesday \$5.00

All women welcome.

You don't need to enrol, just turn up.

Facilitators:

Friday Morning Stephanie Brockman

Tuesday Evening Julie Smart



Opportunity for Healing from Sexual Abuse or Rape

These weekend workshops are designed for women that have in their life experienced sexual abuse or rape and are ready to use group work process to assist with this healing.

There are three weekend workshops. You may attend one, two or three. You need to register for each separately.

Interviews with the facilitator will be necessary before enrolment.

Workshop One

Dates: Friday evening, Sat and Sun. 30th, 31st March 2012 and 1st April 2012

Time: Frid 7-9.30pm, Saturday 10-5pm and Sunday 10-4.30pm

Cost: \$40/\$20 Waged/Unwaged/Low Waged

Workshop Two

Dates: Friday evening, Sat and Sun. 8th, 9th and 10th June 2012

Time: Frid 7-9.30pm, Saturday 10-5pm and Sunday 10-4.30pm

Cost: \$40/\$20 Waged/Unwaged/Low Waged

Workshop Three

Dates: Friday evening, Sat and Sun. 24th, 25th and 26th August 2012.

Time: Frid 7-9.30pm, Saturday 10-5pm and Sunday 10-4.30pm

Cost: \$40/\$20 Waged/Unwaged/Low Waged

Facilitator: Ally Andersun Phone to register your interest, leave a message for Ally Andersun and she will phone you back. 5692711

Mosaics

If you want to learn how to mosaics and meet other women doing the same come along anytime from 10am to 2.00pm every Tuesday and Clare and/or Stephanie can show you what to do. We normally start with a paver, after you have made a paving stone you can progress on to a variety of projects. We do charge for materials - it does cost \$5 for a completed paver. If you want to work on your own projects you need to pay for materials.

This is an open workshop and costs are for materials used only.

All Women Welcome

Stone and Stream

A 6 week Meditation Course with Ruth Pink



Meditation is an ancient art with many possibilities for modern application. Using simple techniques of watching and being with the breath, it is designed to help people to calm the mind and to live well. In this respect it is one of the cheapest, most portable kinds of healthcare and self help around. Meditation can be used to manage stress, pain, anxiety and depression. It is also a way to connect more deeply with the richness and beauty that we are.

Taking inspiration from the qualities of stone and stream and the natural world, Ruth will tailor the course to the needs and aspirations of the women who attend. During the six weeks we will also:

- learn some basic meditation techniques,**
- explore ways to manage our thoughts and feelings (instead of letting them manage us!)**
- discuss ways of living more easefully and more mindfully.**
- explore some basic Buddhist principles that support meditation.**

The course will include meditation practice, art work, gentle body movements, discussion and sharing. It is suitable for people who are new to meditation and those who are looking to revitalise their practice.

Date: Thursday evenings beginning 12th April 2011

Time: 7-9pm

Cost: \$30 Waged/\$15 Unwaged Please wear warm loose clothing.

Ruth Pink is a writer, poet, counsellor and celebrant. She has been meditating and studying meditation for more than 17 years. A stressful job brought her to meditation and a serious illness helped her really practice it. Ruth is connected to the Wangapeka Study and Retreat Centre in Nelson, and has studied with the Venerable Tarchin Hearn, the Venerable Namgyal Rinpoche, Leander Kane and many other teachers whose wisdom has enriched her life. Ruth weaves together teachings from the Buddha and other spiritual traditions with art, science, ecology and poetry. While seeking to inspire others to change their lives and change their minds, she is also open-hearted, and down to earth.

Therapeutic Massage & Relaxation Massage

Massage has many wide-ranging benefits that affect both our bodies and our minds.

When muscles are overworked, waste products such as lactic acid can accumulate in the muscle, causing soreness, stiffness, and even muscle spasm.

Massage improves circulation, which increases blood flow, bringing fresh oxygen and nutrients to body tissues. This can assist the lymphatic system in the elimination of waste products, speed healing after injury, and enhance recovery from disease. It eases tense and knotted muscles and stiff joints, improving mobility and flexibility.

Therapeutic massage can be used to promote general well-being and enhance self-esteem, while boosting the circulatory and immune systems to benefit blood pressure, circulation, muscle tone, digestion, and skin tone.

And it feels great!

Book a session at The Women's Centre with Rachel on: 04-5653119 or 0226988090 or email: therapeuticmassage@gmx.com

I am working at the Women's Centre on a Monday from 2012.

Price: 1 hour session for only \$30

I also treat clients at Aurora Medical Centre in 39 Pretoria Street, Lower Hutt which I charge professional rates. As a Women's Centre member you will get a 15% Discount and 5% of the total cost will be donated back to the Women's Centre.

REFLEXOLOGY AT THE WOMEN'S CENTRE

WHAT IS REFLEXOLOGY AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Reflexology is a natural, gentle, relaxing method of activating the healing powers of the body. A totally safe, non-invasive therapy administered to the feet, hands or ears. There is no manipulating of the body or undue application of pressure applied. **BENEFITS** Reflexology can reduce stress (responsible, some say, for 75% of all illnesses) and induces deep relaxation. **Other benefits are reported to include:**

- Revitalises energy • Improved sleep patterns • Cleanses the body of toxins and impurities
- Stimulation of creativity and productivity • Improved circulation • Improved breathing
- Relief from digestive disorders • Hormonal balance • Migraine and headache relief

Reflexology is not an alternative to conventional medicine and reflexologists do not diagnose or claim to cure illness. **APPOINTMENTS** There will be a charge for each appointment of which the majority will be donated to the Women's Centre:

Half an Hour \$15.00 One Hour \$30.00

If the above prices are out of your reach but would still like to experience reflexology do not let this stop you from calling to negotiate a suitable price.

To book an appointment please contact Dawn on: 04 566 5585 or email dawn@renewingharmony.com.
Appointments will be on the 1st Wednesday of the month (afternoon).

I also treat clients at my home-based practice in Lower Hutt for which I charge professional rates. For any appointment made as a result of a referral from the Women's Centre 10% of the total cost will be donated back to the Women's Centre. Looking forward to meeting you all soon.

International Women's Day – 8th March

Lower Hutt Women's Centre: Shared Breakfast 7am All Women and Girls Welcome

International Women's Day was first proposed by Clara Zetkin at the 1910 International Socialist Women's Conference in Copenhagen. Back on 8th March 1857 a group of New York women garment workers held a demonstration protesting over their 12 hour day, low wages and poor working conditions. Police charged the demonstration, arresting many and trampling others under their horses.

Again in 1908 New York garment workers held a demonstration on 8th March to commemorate the 1857 demonstration, and to protest against child labour, poor working conditions and for the right to vote. After 13 weeks of striking the women succeeded in introducing the International Ladies Garment Workers Union into more than 300 shops, and began working shorter hours with greater pay. Born in 1857 Clara Zetkin was a German communist who spent many early years fighting to organise women into trade unions. Germany, Austria, Denmark, Switzerland and the USA publicly celebrated International Women's Day in 1911. In 1914 in Germany and in 1943 in Italy 8th March was marked by massive anti-war demonstrations.

In 1977 the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution (32/142) inviting countries to proclaim a day for Women's Rights and International Peace. In many countries this day is observed on March 8th as International Women's Day.

(This outline of the significance of IWD was compiled by Danna Glendining from information provided by the United Nations, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Wellington Women's subcommittee of the Combined Trade Unions.)

2000 and beyond

IWD is now an official holiday in Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China (for women only), Cuba, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Madagascar (for women only), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal (for women only), Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Zambia. The tradition sees men honouring their mothers, wives, girlfriends, colleagues, etc with flowers and small gifts. In some countries IWD has the equivalent status of Mother's Day where children give small presents to their mothers and grandmothers.

The new millennium has witnessed a significant change and attitudinal shift in both women's and society's thoughts about women's equality and emancipation. Many from a younger generation feel that 'all the battles have been won for women' while many feminists from the 1970's know only too well the longevity and ingrained complexity of patriarchy. With more women in the boardroom, greater equality in legislative rights, and an increased critical mass of women's visibility as impressive role models in every aspect of life, one could think that women have gained true equality. The unfortunate fact is that women are still not paid equally to that of their male counterparts, women still are not present in equal numbers in business or politics, and globally women's education, health and the violence against them is worse than that of men.

However, great improvements have been made. We do have female astronauts and prime ministers, school girls are welcomed into university, women can work and have a family, women have real choices. And so the tone and nature of IWD has, for the past few years, moved from being a reminder about the negatives to a celebration of the positives.

Annually on 8 March, thousands of events are held throughout the world to inspire women and celebrate achievements. A global web of rich and diverse local activity connects women from all around the world ranging from political rallies, business conferences, government activities and networking events through to local women's craft markets, theatrical performances, fashion parades and more.

So make a difference, think globally and act locally !! Make everyday International Women's Day. Do your bit to ensure that the future for girls is bright, equal, safe and rewarding

**International Women's Day:
Women say NO to War
Thursday, 8 March 2012**

Below are the details of two more events in Wellington marking International Women's Day

International Women's Day: Women Say NO to War, at 5.30pm, Thursday, 8 March 2012: Come along to add your voice to the call of women around the world who are saying NO to war and YES to peace - our theme this year is alternatives to military spending, eg ~ welfare not warfare ~ education not militarisation ~ Join us at 5.30pm at the NZ Defence Force Headquarters, corner Aitken and Mulgrave Streets, Wellington.

Please wear black if you can, and bring black streamers / ribbons / wool, photos, messages, cardboard or paper peace doves to decorate the Defence Force HQ, something to make a noise with - pot and spoon, drum, your voice - during the time of anger, flowers or candles to leave there during the time of mourning, and a poem or reading to share during the time of reflection and your own banner or placard if you wish. All women and children welcome. Organised by Peace Movement Aotearoa and Wellington Women in Black,

Wellington Women Walk For Peace, from 12.30pm to 1.30pm, Thursday, 8 March 2012: Women Say NO to War will be part of the Wellington Women Walk For Peace "to raise awareness of our interconnectedness and interdependence in our hope and work towards the attainment of peace. We invite all women from all walks of life, from different religions and diverse beliefs, from different ethnicities and cultures to join the Walk ~ walk to support the protest against violence on women and children ~ walk to support protest against wars ~ walk to support empowerment of women".

Gather at parliament at 12.30pm, then walk to Civic Square

Painful Sex

(WOMENSENEWS)--Women who suffer from sexual pain feel isolated and confused in a way that's like no other we've ever seen.

You might confess to your coworkers that you frequently get migraines or struggle with back pain, but it's a lot harder to excuse an absence from work by saying "My clitoris was giving me a lot of trouble" or to explain the need for a special pillow on your office chair by saying "I have this awful skin condition on my vulva."

Even if you have a steady partner and a great sex life, you--or your partner--may be uncomfortable talking about all the things that have gone wrong "down there," or you may feel overwhelmed by all the emotions that come up for each of you--shame, guilt, frustration, sadness, anger, isolation, confusion. If you are seeing someone new, trying to date or living a single life, sexual pain can make you feel so alone.

But if you have ever felt pain during or because of sex, you are not alone. It's estimated that 16 to 20 percent of all women have had sexual pain at some point in their lives--that's one in every five or six women.

Compare that with the percentage of adults (men and women combined) who have asthma (7.7 percent), cancer (8.2 per-



cent) or heart disease (12 percent), and you'll see how shockingly common sexual pain is.

If sexual pain is more common than asthma, cancer and heart disease, why do we often feel so alone with it? Probably because, unlike asthma, cancer and heart disease, sexual pain is hard to talk about, even with a doctor. Most women reveal their condition only to a trusted few, and many women feel they can't tell anybody, not even their partners.

Inexperienced Doctors
Most doctors--even the most enlightened gynecologists--are not experienced in treating sexual pain, and they too are often very uncomfortable discussing the subject.

Talking about sexual pain with your doctor can sometimes make you feel even worse than keeping silent. If you've tried to speak with a physician about your condition, you may already have been told--perhaps several times--that your problem is "all in your head," that it stems from your bad attitude toward sex, or that there's nothing that can be done to help you.

We're here to tell you that none of that is true. Sexual pain is almost always caused by an identifiable, verifiable medical condition; it can be treated and it is not in your head. Very few doctors understand what needs to be done, so help may be hard to find. You may already have been to several doctors and, in your search for effective **treatment, you may still have to visit up to a dozen more.**

Yes, it is just that difficult to find a physician who is either educated about sexual pain or willing to become so. But help is out there, treatments do exist and once you find the right person to work with, you have enormous reason for hope. Please don't give up on yourself and your sex life, because we promise you, something can be done.

A full and complete recovery is often possible. In many cases, although you may face some recurring flare-ups of your condition, you can look forward to long periods with no pain or only minimal discomfort. Even in the most difficult situations, you can experience a significant reduction in your pain and can find help for reintroducing sex as a joyous and nourishing part of your life.

We promise: Things can get better.

Excerpted from "Healing Painful Sex: A Woman's Guide to Confronting, Diagnosing, and Treating Sexual Pain" Deborah Coady, M.D., and Nancy Fish, M.S.W., M.P.H.. Available from Seal Press, a member of the Perseus Books Group. Copyright 2011.

Dr. Deborah Coady is a clinical assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at New York University's Langone Medical Center. Her medical practice, Soho Obstetrics and Gynecology, is located in New York City. Nancy Fish is a licensed social worker with a master's degree in public health. She works part-time in her office counseling patients and leads a monthly support group at Soho Obgyn. She has a private practice in Bergen County, N.J.

For more information: Buy the Book, "Healing Painful Sex: A Woman's Guide to Confronting, Diagnosing, and Treating Sexual Pain":

http://www.powells.com/partner/34289/biblio/9781580053631?p_ti

<http://www.womensenews.org/story/books/111209/painful-sex-not-in-our-heads-right-docs-scarce>

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Indians Rewrite Role of Women in Sacred Scripts

By Kavitha Rao
WeNews correspondent
Friday, December 30, 2011

Religious epics in India are chock-a-block with patiently self-sacrificing women. In the past year, however, a trend has been accelerating for writers and artists to revise those characters in blockbuster novels, essays, films and theatrical scripts.

For generations, Indian women have been reared on religious epics, filled with patiently suffering, self-sacrificing women. But a new breed of writers—many of them women—are rewriting sacred scriptures.

But not without setting off intense protests from Hindu groups objecting to the new characterizations of women featured in ancient epics.

One of these modern versions, a retelling of the Ramayana by 27-year-old writer Samhita Arni with graphic artist Moyna Chitrakar, has just spent two weeks on the New York Times bestseller list for graphic novels.

The Ramayana is a sacred epic first written by the sage Valmiki in 500 B.C. that spawned hundreds of variations across India, Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia.

Arni's acclaimed "Sita's Ramayana" retells the epic from the point of view of Sita, wife of the earthbound deity Prince Rama. Kidnapped by the demon Ravana, Sita is eventually rescued by Rama, but not until she has gone through a trial by fire to prove her purity. Arni's novel portrays Sita as a strong, powerful woman who takes fate into her own hands.

Meanwhile writer Arshia Sattar, a self-described feminist, has also released a new book called "Lost Loves," which looks at Rama and Sita as humans rather than gods and dissects Rama's actions dispassionately.

This September, Indian-American filmmaker Virali Gokuldas premiered a play called "Janaki: Daughter of Dirt" in San Francisco, which features a modern Indian woman using Sita's tale to make sense of her own life.

American filmmaker Nina Paley used the Ramayana as a parallel to the story of her own failed marriage in her 2008 animated film "Sita Sings the Blues."

Controversial Epics
The new versions of these epics are controversial.

In October, Delhi University decided to drop an essay by the late linguist and scholar A.K. Ramanujan from its syllabus, following violent protests by the student wing of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

The essay, "Three Hundred Ramayanas," talks about the many versions of the Ramayana, including some in which Sita is portrayed as Ravana's daughter and another in which Ravana is actually a hero.

The university has been strongly criticized by academics and students for caving in to pressure from Hindutva groups, who say they will not allow any "blasphemous" versions of the Ramayana to be circulated.

Meanwhile, Oxford University Press, Ramanujan's publisher, stopped printing his collected essays, citing "minimal demand." This month, following protests and accusations of censorship by over 450 scholars, authors and students, Oxford University Press did a complete turnaround and announced that it would reprint the essays.

In July and September this year, screenings of "Sita Sings the Blues" were cancelled in New York and Goa, India, following protests by Hindu groups who called the film "shameful" and "denigrating."

Despite protests, Arni believes that women need to "reclaim" the many versions of the Ramayana.

"Right-wing Hindu groups want to impose their own version of the Ramayana on us because it suits their political purposes," she says. "India has such a rich and diverse storytelling tradition, both oral and written. It would be a tragedy to lose it."

Kavitha Rao is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist who writes on culture, people and places. Her website is at www.kavitharao.net.

For more information:
Sita Sings the Blues: <http://sitasingstheblues.com/>

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Sexual Revolution Blog by Luddite Journo

Broadly speaking, feminists who see pornography as a problem tend to come from sexual and domestic violence activist backgrounds. They point to research like Michael Flood's 2009 review of children and young people viewing pornography:

Especially among boys and young men who are frequent consumers of pornography, including of more violent materials, consumption intensifies attitudes supportive of sexual coercion and increases their likelihood of perpetrating assault.

I've supported women whose rapes were filmed, and later made available as porn. Who found naked pictures taken by pimps online years later, advertising commercial sex. Who were taught how to work in the sex industry, after being trafficked from another country and held captive, by being forced to watch pornography. Who have been raped, often repeatedly, by men who used porn to prepare themselves to cause pain.

And the largest category, women who have been pressured into particular sexual activities because their male partner has seen porn featuring that activity. Often these experiences were painful and/or unpleasant. Sometimes they were sexual violation.

Broadly speaking, feminists who see censoring pornography as a problem tend to come from sexuality rights backgrounds or anti-state censorship backgrounds. They point to research which suggests the causal relationship between rape and viewing pornography is not established.

Feminists in this camp are concerned about what happens when sexuality is repressed. When we teach young people to wait until they are married, and rates of sexually transmitted infections increase, or when the first books about sex taken out of schools are those featuring queer identities.

They point to sexually explicit material in which participants were explicitly consenting, narratives did not demean women (or anyone else), and exploring the erotic was sexy. They also ask us to pay attention to how demeaning narratives about women are found in Hollywood movies, or music videos, or advertising, and they argue that pornography can be re-fashioned, made feminist, if we make it ourselves, talk about what turns us on, don't harm or exploit in making it, and produce a range of images.

Many feminists today tend to believe feminist porn is possible, desirable, sexy and fun. I think this is positive and hopeful – if sometimes naïve to the realities of sexist objectification for women with less structural power.

Positive because unless women believe we can live in a world in which we are free sexual beings – people able to decide what turns us on, explore that with lovers, take part in not just consent but enthusiastic mutual agreement – then I don't think those changes will happen.

We don't live in that world now – but in all the examples of my own work I gave above, pornography is not the problem.

Sexually explicit material with degrading narratives about women is part of a package of women hating behaviours, supporting, encouraging and providing a site for violence against women. It is also, critically – but far from uniquely – a part of our culture that reduces women to "just sex."

Paying attention to the stories porn tells, just as we might pay attention to the stories music videos, or advertisements, or Hollywood movies tell, is, I think, the critical issue.

We live in an era in which sexualised imagery of women and girls seems all pervasive. Exploitative, heteronormative, damaging to our senses of what we should look like, how we should behave.

Damaging to men, especially young men, who learn how to be sexual from watching images in which women are often active beings only in their desires to please men.

This isn't porn – it's MTV. Or how about this Guinness ad from 2008?

*Utube clip
Best Guinness Commercial Ever
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=km-rN1T_zfl&feature=player_embedded*

Trigger warning for women-hating.

The issue is the narrative, the story, not the medium.

What we need are narratives, in every medium, that explore enthusiastic consent.

That treat our bodies as beautiful parts of whole people, in which the choices we make to explore different activities at different times are freely given and joyful.

We need to know about sex – not from stories which are only interested in

male pleasure – but because sex can be fun, may be about as meaningful a connection as we have to others, and is, for many of us, an area of our lives we enjoy.

We also need narratives, in every medium, in which sex is not the only reason women are there.

At the moment, we see sexualised images of women in all kinds of contexts.

What we don't see enough are women living our lives with all the humdrum realities that come with working, par-

enting, having friendships, playing sport, singing, making art, shopping for groceries or climbing mountains.

Women, like men, have a wide range of interests, con-

cerns, areas of expertise, not all of which are reducible to our breast size, how short our skirt might be or whether we perform particular sexual acts.

Sex is important – but it's not, ever, all we are – and increasing acceptance of sexualised, and only sexualised, images of women is no kind of sexual revolution.

Sexual freedom – the freedom to be sexual in the ways which turn us on – has to include the capacity to not only, not always, be sexual.



The needs and rights of children in a compassionate economy

by Sue Bradford

If we are to begin to imagine an economy in which the needs and rights of children are taken seriously, rather than relegated and dismissed as of little importance, I believe the first step is to realise that things do not need to stay the way they are.

Here in Aotearoa our economic system has been based on the needs of capital, of big business, since European settlement in the 19th century.

In 2011 we live in an economic system that has come to seem immutable, as unchanging and unchangeable as breathing.

To change our economy to one in which every child has a chance to lead a fruitful and fulfilling life, the first step is to understand that our current system can - and must - be changed, and to look beyond its underpinning assumptions. If we were to put children at the centre of our economic vision, some of the main things that would need to happen include
Ending poverty

Children who grow up in our poorest families have the worst health, educational and employment outcomes. Maori and Pasifika children are disproportionately affected.

A compassionate economy would encompass policies and structures that delivered a much smaller gap between the highest and lowest wages, lifted minimum wages and increased benefit levels.

Government support for children would be universal, without, for example, the discrimination against the children of beneficiaries which occurs at present through the Working for Families In Work payment.

It is no good talking about child poverty alone. Unless the adults responsible for raising children have enough income to live on, the impacts of sub-standard housing, family violence, transience, food insecurity, poor health and the rest will continue.

Jobs are also key to ending family poverty. An economy that was fair to children would have a commitment to full employment, alongside maximising access to quality training and education for people at all stages of their learning and working lives. Such a society would not accept high rates of unemployment as the necessary cost of keeping wages and conditions low, as is the case at present.

Valuing the work of bringing up children

At the moment, employment in the paid workforce is valued; the work of raising children is not. The greatest evidence of this lies in changes to our welfare system, in which successive Governments increasingly harass mothers of young children to get off the benefit and back into the paid workforce as soon as they are possibly able.

A compassionate economy would recognise the true value of parenting through measures such as extending paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers, and through allowing beneficiaries with primary responsibility for raising children to remain on a benefit until they can reasonably achieve paid employment or training without detriment to themselves and their children.

Valuing the work of parenting would also mean much greater support for those who need particular assistance, for example, with bringing up children with impairments or illness (mental and physical), and those struggling to cope with parenting itself.
Education

Equitable access to educational opportunities from birth through to young adulthood is clearly critical if children are to reach their full potential in life.

The more a country invests in its children and young people, the more reward it is likely to reap as they enter the workforce and become parents themselves.

We have a particular problem in this country, in that we have both the highest rate of youth unemployment in the OECD and we also lose many of our young people overseas because of lack of opportunities here.

In an economy that was compassionate to children, current holes in our provision of education and training would be plugged at every stage, including through

Universal access to quality, affordable early childhood education, available with culturally appropriate options.

A commitment to quality public education at primary and secondary levels.

Wider access to out-of-school care and to special support programmes for children and families with particular needs.

Health and wellbeing
New Zealand continues to embarrass itself with some of the worst statistics of child abuse and neglect - and ill health due to diseases of poverty - in the Western world.

Reducing levels of poverty is the key, alongside other critical measures including:

The state taking responsibility for ensuring those families who are homeless or living in substandard, overcrowded and unsafe housing are housed, adequately and well.

Serious investment in child health, including child and adolescent mental health services fully funded to meet actual need; and providing children in low decile schools with at least one decent meal a day - ideally, a universal healthy meal programme should become part of the school system.

Restricting adult access to social hazards such as pokies and liquor, which can have such a devastating impact on children's lives.

Improving support for programmes which tackle both the causes and effects of family violence.

Conclusion

There will always be questions asked about how any government can pay for measures which ensure greater fairness and equity for all in society, at the same time as dealing with the costs of the environmental crises which confront our nation with ever increasing urgency.



The answers to this lie in far more detailed consideration of tax, welfare, fiscal and economic policies than is remotely possible in a short paper like this.

And such costs should also always be weighed up against the price our society pays now in mopping up the consequences of our current inadequate system - in outward migration, prisons, police, and health care.

At the heart, however, of any move to an economy which is compassionate towards children, is the need for a change in political will - a determination to work in every way possible for a much fairer country - in which the well being of all its citizens, not just some of them, is paramount.

<http://www.greens.org.nz/compassionateconomy/children>

Born This Way

Blog by Luddite Journo

A week or so ago, actor Cynthia Nixon said, in relation to an earlier speech she'd given saying she'd been straight and gay, and being gay was better:

"They tried to get me to change it, because they said it implies that homosexuality can be a choice. And for me, it is a choice. I understand that for many people it's not, but for me it's a choice, and you don't get to define my gayness for me."

Cue big fuss: if it's a choice, some people might choose not to be queer. If it's a choice, won't the homophobes try and hurt us, or not accept us, or take away our rights?

So Cynthia came back, and said she's bisexual, not through choice, but that she's choosing to be in a relationship with a woman at the moment.

While I'm pleased to see someone claiming the B word, it saddens me she's allowed herself to be pushed into claiming a genetic essentialism for her sexuality, regardless of identity.

As Cynthia notes, there are people who believe they were born same, both or opposite attracted, who live their lives acting on attractions which feel enduring and intrinsic to their sense of self, which are consistent over time.

And there are people who explore attraction differently at different points of their lives. Because their social environment changes or because they meet someone who they find themselves drawn to in ways they did not expect.

I feel like every aspect of my sexual life has been a choice, as soon as I knew that heterosexuality is not compulsory. And I think that's true for lots of people, and one of the main drivers of right wing

fundamentalist terrors around queer visibility. After all, if heterosexuality wasn't so damn fragile, would it really be so threatening when queer people "flaunt" who and how we love?

When I was sixteen, a woman I'd played cricket with at school came out as lesbian. I thought she was wonderful, athletic, funny and smart. Her coming out made me wonder if I was lesbian too, because she was the player to whom I was closest in the team. I spent an agonised night, going over and over how much I liked her, deciding in the wee hours that since I knew I was attracted to boys, I couldn't be lesbian.

[Queer reading: if I'd known being bi was possible, that night would have been less agonising. And if I'd recognised the huge raving crush I'd had on Ruth could have been sexual, cricket might have been even more fun.]

I've written before about coming out as bi. It was in my head first - the possibility of attraction to women - and then I realised one day I was fantasising about a beautiful feminist friend, about running my fingers through her hair while I looked into her eyes. Not all that platonic, then.

Since being sexual with women, I've chosen to continue identifying as bisexual. Even though I've never fallen in love with a man. I've loved men, and I've really enjoyed sex with men, but I've not yet felt spiritually connected to a male lover in the way I have to several women lovers.

People make choices around being sexual all the time, and some of those choices are to act on or deny same and both sex attractions. Insisting on an essentialist view of this is limiting and, I believe, heterosexist, since the safer it is to explore same sex attraction, in my experience, the more people do it. No disrespect for people who know they were born this way, but let's not remove our agency through fear - let's celebrate it, hell, let's insist on it.

Newsletter Collective Statement

We would like this newsletter to be:

- ✘ a creative outlook for writers and artists and that means you
- ✘ a publication that provides information relative to women
- ✘ a publication that informs women on Women's Centre activities and other activities for women in the region.

We know we will make mistakes but hope we can learn from these and be open to criticism and change, and to sharing skills and resources with other groups.

The newsletter collective reserves the right not to publish letters which conflict with Women's Centre philosophy. We may not agree with the views expressed in letters. Some letters are edited in consultation with the writer. We do not publish personal attacks. Letter addressed to the newsletter collective are assumed to be intended for publication. Please indicate clearly if they are not.

Women's Centre philosophy

The Women's centre:

- i) recognise and work in the spirit of the Tiriti O Waitangi;
- ii) confront women's oppression and empower women to take control of their own lives
- iii) oppose discrimination by those who have power against those who do not. This includes discrimination against women, especially Maori women, Pacific Island women, women of colour, lesbians, those who are differently abled, young, old, working class and those with different spiritual beliefs.
- iv) promote a safe supportive environment for all women and children;
- v) promote the sharing of power and resources;
- vi) act as a resource and information centre for the community.

The news letter is free to Women's Centre members and women's organisations. To join the Lower Hutt Women's Centre, send \$27 waged, \$15 unwaged, \$10 teenage, \$5 children to 186 Knights Road Lower Hutt. Membership also entitles you to borrow books, magazines, tapes, videos etc from the library for up to one month.

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