Trudi Bareham 20.2.13

I wanted to share with you my story of how Bowen has helped me as both a therapist and a patient. I have worked as therapist since 2001, and practiced Reflexology, Massage, Indian Head Massage and Reiki before studying Bowen. Now I practice Bowen, Reflexology and Reiki, all completely independently of the other. Each treatment has it's own merits and each client has their own preferences. These treatments had enormous impact on my own healing in different ways and is why I love to continue working with them.

I was in a car accident aged 16 (now 46) and suffered debilitating headaches all my life after the accident. I searched for many ways to eliminate the daily suffering and is the reason I became a therapist. I also had a severe back issue which almost resulted in disc removal; with 2 young children, I chose to manage it with exercise and physio and gradually things improved. I have spent my life with little confidence, self esteem or self belief created by experiences I had from a young age and allowed my subconscious to form about myself.

I began studying Bowen in 2007 and completed CERT IV in 2008. I remember at the time feeling very sad, because after having regular Bowen treatments, I became aware of not having any happy memories from being a child. I was not angry, just sad.

I always felt I knew a great deal about health and healing - in fact I really did know, but just never had the belief in myself to follow through. I always believed we had the innate healing ability within us to heal ourselves when we have access to what we need. I also believed that diet and nutrition is crucial to healing. And I very deeply believed that our emotions hold the answers to accessing the innate healing within.

I was diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis in early 2009. RA is a chronic disease with no cure, nothing positive to read about it or the outcome. Chronic pain, inflammation, joint degeneration, ending up in a wheelchair, unable to take care of myself or work - not a cheery read at all. The only option is to take drugs to slow down progression of the disease, and this may or may not work either. Having met so many people with RA who followed the medical protocol and still felt awful, along with additional conditions created from the drugs, I chose not to follow the medical route. I jumped head long into a battle of wits with this RA and learnt after 2 years of been locked into this fight, that I was getting nowhere.

I became fully obsessed with RA and how it was affecting my life. When you are diagnosed with a serious disease, it can affect us in many ways. It began defining who I was and everything in my life and I hated it. I was a good person, would do anything for other people and was always trying to help in any way I could. Yet here I was trying desperately to help myself and failing miserably.

Bowen became a very regular part of my treatment protocol. It mostly helped with the pain, but if a flare was imminent it was not advisable to have any treatment I discovered, as the pain became a lot worse. With regular treatments, I began to notice an awareness of other things, events that had occurred long ago in the past which for some reason, were indicating relevance to what I was going through. Nothing really made sense, but I knew that Bowen worked to allow the layers to peel back and reveal the true self.

I tried many different approaches to healing the RA. I believe everything I tried added another piece to a very big puzzle. I found a spiritual organisation nearby which really helped me understand about illness and disease and how we create it in our bodies. Through this, I learnt that fighting anything just makes it fight harder, so I made RA my friend and daily asked for help in understanding what it had come to teach me about myself. I was very much evolving spiritually, but physically and emotionally I was deteriorating at speed, or that's how it felt. June 2011 was probably the most intense part of this journey to date, with several flares in one week, copious amounts of tears and the month that Mind Bowen Bowen came in to my life. At the introduction, I briefly said I had RA for 2 and 1/2 years, was having the worst time right now, would probably spend the weekend crying - I was ready for anything!

I love Bowen for it's simplicity. I love it because we do not determine what the client needs, the body knows this based on the information we facilitate through the moves. However, like many Bowen therapists, I struggled with the "less is more", based on people expecting value for money. This came from my lack of belief in me rather than Bowen. I have met Bowen therapists who believe Mind Body Bowen is just 'mumbo jumbo airy fairy' stuff and doesn't work. I have learnt so much about Bowen from brilliant teachers but this workshop taught me exactly what I needed to know about Bowen. LESS IS MORE.

At the workshop we were introduced to a different approach in working with Bowen, and one that made complete sense to me, as my core beliefs are that pain, illness and disease come from stress and the emotions. One idea I struggled with was the concept around birth and trauma setting up patterns for life for many people. I am very open to everything, but like to hold on to some scepticism, until I have seen proof. Fortunately for me, I had absolutely no idea of what happened around my birth, or I would have felt the whole experience had been preconceived by my knowledge of it. I will share my Mind Body Bowen experience with you.

Prior to the workshop, I had been struggling with breathing for a few months. I felt as if I couldn't get enough air into my lungs, however deeply I was breathing. I felt agitated lying on my front during Bowen treatments because of this, and had also been having 5 elements acupuncture which works on the emotions. This also made me feel agitated and like I was struggling for breath. I would yawn continuously, trying to fill my lungs with air.

Day 1, at MBB, I had moves 1 & 2 from BRM1. I was completely overwhelmed by the feeling of not being able to breathe in air. I was not afraid, (because I was already on the journey of a lifetime!) but the experience was unnerving. The sensation continued for almost 30 minutes, but gradually subsided. I had memories surrounding incidents as a child flash up - one holiday, I had fallen in a swimming pool and couldn't get myself back up for air. Another holiday, a man died at the next table from a heart attack and I heard the death rattle - air being expired from his lungs. Traumatic to experience at any age but I was about 11 at the time. Both memories have breathing connections.

Using MBB includes working with the meridians. Events and traumas stored in our subconscious are also stored within the cells. By tuning in to the body sensations, we are listening in to discover what it needs in order to release these events from the body. I was so excited when I got off the table, I felt as if I had been given a new life. I still didn't really know why or how, but something had really changed in that 30 minutes. And all I had was moves 1 and 2. Out of the 15 people on the workshop, only 2 people had more than moves 1 and 2 performed, because we were still feeling sensations for 30 minutes. What an amazing concept and treatment.

Day 2. I bounced in feeling more alive than I had in months. On the table, moves 1 & 2 were performed and again, I had the sensation of not being able to breathe, only this time it was more intense. I also felt like I could not swallow, which was incredibly unnerving and although scary, I felt I needed the experience. We proceeded on with other moves as the sensations subsided and I had BRMS 1,2 and respiratory procedures, which my body indicated I needed. I had no subconscious memories come up other than a sensation of being inside an internal body vessel, and feeling like I had spent my whole life on my own, not being able to trust anyone to help me. (Long story attached to this and one I completely understand now!)

When I got off the table, I felt as if I had been set free. I still didn't really understand the sensations or believe the whole birth concept. That was, until I spoke to mum. I told her about the workshop and asked about my birth. I was stunned at what I found out. I was forceps delivery, born blue and the doctors could not get me to breathe. Mum does not know if I had the cord around my neck, as she was put to sleep and not told anything else. Suddenly everything I had experienced made sense, and I cannot tell you how excited I was by what I had discovered. As if this wasn't enough, I also realised that my 26 year nasal spray addiction may also be connected with this traumatic start in life. I became addicted to them because I was terrified of not being able to breathe. And having suffered headaches for most of my life (which got increasingly worse after the car accident), is an effect of forceps birth.

This all sounds quite bizarre and unbelievable I am sure, and as a semi sceptic, I would have to agree. Without living this whole experience for myself, I would probably doubt the validity of it. But I have lived it. And by doing so, it allowed to me continue on my journey to health. The year from June 2011 to April 2012 was the most challenging part of my life, in every single way, but without it, I would not be who I am today.

I mentioned earlier I believed I knew a lot about health. I know an awful lot more since being diagnosed with RA. And I understand a lot more. About why we get sick, and how we get well.

For any Bowen therapists out there who think Mind Body Bowen is airy fairy, think again. It is an astounding discovery of how profound a treatment Bowen is, and Anne Schubert and Margaret Spicer have done us proud bringing this work to us. I recently did a talk for the local Reflexology Association of Australia group about RA and the whole process around illness and disease because I want to encourage everyone to think differently about chronic illness and disease. I wrote the following for them to consider -

*"We are all guilty at times of determining we know what is best for clients and what the problem is. Clients only tell us the things they want us to know. I can fully validate that the subconscious hides much from the conscious mind. It is therefore impossible for us to know the best course of action when treating a client, despite what we think.*

*The body and it's subconscious knows how it got sick and therefore knows how to get well. It knows in what order things happened in the body/mind and in what order these things need to be healed. Whatever you determine maybe the client's issue or what you think needs addressing from the consultation, the things they say or their presenting symptoms, please immediately remove yourself from this. In my experience from my personal journey with healing from RA and from treating many people, the symptoms and conditions they present with are FAR removed from what they need to heal from. The body is highly intelligent - I ALWAYS treat the whole person, and never treat specific symptoms or systems because I do not believe it is within my judgement to determine what this person needs to heal. Trauma can block their subconscious from allowing the story to be told and many, many people are in complete denial of their illness/pain and why they have it. Remember we are only facilitators for healing - the client is actually the "healer" and the subconscious will heal the emotional and physical body when it is ready, willing and able.*

*I believe illness and disease occur because something needs to change. For many people, change is very difficult and as I discovered, even when we are willing and able to change, it is not easy to let go of things which are so deeply buried within us. Fear can be a crippling emotion when combined with illness and the mind is so powerful in the way it controls us."*

Being diagnosed with RA was one of the best things to happen in my life and I am so grateful for the experience - It has given me my life back. Through being open to learning and healing in different ways, removing my ego (eventually) from the party, I am now a new and improved version of me. I am happy, confident in everything I say and do and can fully validate and endorse what I believe because I have experienced it. I have a passion in life that I never had before, because fear and my subconscious held me captive. Bowen and Mind Body Bowen in particular, helped set me free from that.

In April 2012 I began a support group for people with RA looking to manage their condition alongside the medical route with more natural methods. We are achieving brilliant results and overall, people have less pain, inflammation, reduced medication and are feeling much happier. Empowering people to change their health through knowledge and education, is my absolute passion. By encouraging them to be open to everything and anything however much it challenges their belief system, allows them to remove limitations about what they can achieve in their lives and they are getting results.

In December 2012, despite all I had read and been advised by rheumatologists to the contrary, my rheumatologist told me I am in remission in as many ways as is possible. I believed I could heal, I believed I would find the answers and I did. We all know how brilliant Bowen is as a therapy, but by embracing things in a different way, such as through Mind Body Bowen, we are opening ourselves up to it's brilliance at a much deeper level. I hope through sharing what I have you will understand this and look at Bowen through new eyes.

If you have clients with RA and they are interested in our support group, we can be contacted by email - naturalwaysforra@hotmail.com or by joining facebook group at www.facebook.com/groups/naturalwaysforra