

From Well-Looking to Well-Being:
18 Testimonials on Emotions That Will Keep
You Inspired

From Well-Looking to Well-Being:
18 Testimonials on Emotions That Will Keep
You Inspired

Compiled by PISTA Programs

Nova Palm, Ltd.
2019

Copyright © 2019 by Nova Palm, Ltd.

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review or scholarly journal.

First Printing: 2019

ISBN 978-0-359-88107-9

Nova Palm, Ltd.

141 Prince Edward Road, West Mongkok, Kowloon, Hong Kong

www.pistaprograms.com

Contents

Foreword.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
This Is Me.....	9
Finding Calmness and My Own Space.....	11
How PISTA Helped Me Find Myself.....	15
Being a Prefect and Perfect.....	19
Controlling My Emotions.....	24
Project: I Want to Be Amazing.....	27
I Belong.....	37
To Love Myself and Hang On.....	39
Reconciling with Rules and Pursuing My Dreams.....	43
Growing Stronger.....	46
Campus Market: Team Dauntless.....	52
I Am Brave.....	55
The Numbness Cure.....	57
The Challenges of Coaching.....	67
The Corporate Environment: Stressful and Overwhelming	73
Stress Is Not the Enemy: A New Approach to Stress	
Management.....	79
I Will Go On.....	85
A Life of Victories, Losses, and Change.....	87
To Embrace and Let Go.....	93
Keeping Up with A Childhood Experience.....	97
414. One Day at A Time.....	101
Bonded by Love Forever.....	105
References.....	109

Foreword

There is no perfect life on earth. Each individual embarks on his or her own journey. Along the way, some feel triumphant, some feel a sense of loss, but in any case, most people follow their own paths as they pan out before them. As a psychologist for over 30 years, my vocation has allowed me to witness, provide support, and assist clients in seeking or even carving out new paths for their life journeys. My clients' experiences have taught me that the most important element, which ultimately allows people to walk their journey in peace, is acceptance.

When I was asked to write the foreword for the second PISTA book, I recognised that what echoes loudly in each chapter is the same theme of acceptance. Acceptance allows people to open new doors to breathe, live, be free, and embrace new experiences which can make the journey ahead more meaningful. Without acceptance, one can become stuck in pain, anguish, or feelings of hopelessness. This not only dampens one's spirit and takes away any sense of joy, but it can also damage one's physical and mental health.

The journey of transforming from fear, pain, or disappointment to acceptance is not a simple matter. PISTA plays a crucial element in this transformation. Each author in this book reveals his or her own individual experience of confronting unexpected life events, dark secrets, and traumatic experiences. No one could have prepared them for these life events, yet with the help of PISTA and their own determination, each of them rose to embrace their own life and history with acceptance.

As a clinical psychologist, I have been trained in many psychological treatment modalities and methodologies including psychodynamic therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy, family therapy, hypnosis, and EMDR, to name a few. Yet, I find PISTA to be the most direct, comprehensive modality, with a wide variety of applications. Not only can it access deep-seated psychological issues at a faster pace than most of the traditional "talk" therapies, but it can also help people to be more aware of their own behaviour and gain deeper insight for changes, ultimately enabling peace, acceptance, and growth.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

These heartfelt, personal tales are a testimony to this. My wish is that these stories will inspire you to live life and live it fully, regardless of pain, fear, or distressing experiences in your past, and to continue life's journey with a new sense of enthusiasm.

Dr. Cathy Tsang-Feign
Clinical Psychologist and author of *Living Abroad*

Introduction

Digital Stress and Emotional Exhaustion: The By-products of Today's Digitisation

In the last 30 years, we have already witnessed two digital revolutions called the “digital wave,” and the third one is close to happening, or may already be happening. This significantly affects our everyday life—in the way we live and work. Steve Case, known as the co-founder of America Online (AOL) and CEO of Revolution LLC, describes the first phase of digital revolution as building the Internet. During that time, around 1985-1999, it was about creating the Internet and getting people to use the medium and integrate it into their lives. Now, the mobile revolution and the development of smartphones and apps are crucial. The availability of mobile networks provided a significant added value in this day and age. In particular, social networks and messengers have permanently changed the way we communicate. Where once letters, faxes or phone calls were needed, we can now coordinate and organise our concerns around the world within just seconds. For many people, smartphones and the ability to access the contents of the Internet from almost anywhere have become indispensable.

Because many people today find work essential for their own identity, and, thus, is considered a crucial part of their lives, flexibility in this area is particularly important to be able to adapt to constant changes. The work has changed dramatically in the last 30 years and it requires everyone to follow new paths again and again. The prerequisites for being sufficiently flexible are provided by the technical means of the 21st century. Portable communication devices and the Internet allow virtual exchange around the globe without wasting any time.

The need for permanent updating of knowledge, reorientation and adaptation to new projects and employment are a problematic aspect of the changing and modernising world of work. Every individual must be flexible, active in many areas, proactive, autonomous and willing to take risks, and, nowadays, should also be good in organising himself. These many new skills mean that greater autonomy and self-responsibility are inflicting with man's design of work processes. Everyone has to manage his tasks and projects

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

himself. However, the “danger of self-exploitation” (Grimmer, 2015: 16) goes hand in hand with this “freedom.”

The increasing inequality in companies further favours competitive pressure (Grimmer, 2015: 15). Every employee feels compelled or develops an ambition to do more, work faster and ascend to a more prosperous social class.

While these processes give individuals new freedom, they also place them under an imperative autonomy. Where self-responsibility and initiative are regarded as codes of conduct in companies, this set of norms changes. As a result, many individuals experience feelings of “not being enough” (Kury, 2012: 275), which they ultimately compensate for by self-optimisation. Also, these feelings are associated with loss of stability because the task of devising one’s identity destroys the structural, social cohesion.

The process of lifelong learning describes the inherent endowment. The job no longer represents a list of skills, which then teaches you the skills you need. On the contrary, one determines the demand on the labour market much more and then selects employment according to one’s specific abilities. Therefore, a biologist, an economic consultant or a mechanical engineer becomes an artist.

Diminished capacity, lack of motivation, depression, fatigue, feeling of emptiness, frustration, total emotional exhaustion—many people today have to deal with these restrictions and overcome them. They are symptoms of mass suffering and public epidemic—the disease of people working in the capitalist system. These are symptoms of burnout, a new affliction among social workers, first diagnosed in the 1970s by the American psychoanalyst Herbert Freudenberger (Grimmer, 2015: 10). Since then, burnout has spread among workers in the modern working class world, and more and more people are confronted with the many symptoms of this phenomenon.

However, not only the burnout syndrome manifests itself through all the changes happening in the working class world. Mental illness, physical suffering and anxiety up to the loss of one’s ego are also already known. There is stress in the workplace. The pressure of competition is high. The demands are manifold and force employees to work faster and more efficiently. To be able to withstand the stress,

employees get less sleep, drink a lot of coffee and smoke cigarettes. Despite the good compensation packages, these offers do not help cope with the general overload. So what exactly has changed in the modern work environment? Is it that people now suffer psychological damage because of their work, which makes them temporarily or even wholly incapacitated?

Other than the ever-increasing requirement of flexibility, there is at least one other factor that adds to the pressure, which leads an individual to lose himself and develop illnesses. In the course of modernisation, the character of the individual, which is now becoming increasingly formative, emerges from historically prescribed social forms (Beck/Beck-Gernsheim, 1994: 11). This process has resulted in a changed relationship between an individual and the other members of society, often due to lack of time and self-isolation in favour of work.

Due to self-administration, results and benefits have become subject to self-regulation. Individual services are now controlled with the help of increased transparency and improved digital control mechanisms. Therefore, the delivery of consistent performance at the highest level becomes the only goal. Rewards no longer apply to the whole group, which raises the question of how well an individual can deal with the risk of failure.

According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1994), the individual blames himself for his inability to perform better or cope with the challenges at work. The reaction with self-optimisation now generates opportunities for illnesses. Besides, the regular work routine has already overcome the time constraints—a certain number of hours does not finish a working day, but the completion of a task or a project. The consequence is the delimitation (Grimmer, 2015: 15) of the working world, which dissolves the boundaries between work and leisure.

Increased job instability adds to this process as companies are less likely to offer permanent jobs and focus on temporary, project-based employment. The question of whether one workforce will still be needed in the future, whether the maintenance for the next month is still secured, makes people spend themselves beyond their capacities. To meet all the requirements—self-organisation on one hand, and adaptation to the demands of the institutions on the other hand—a great deal of flexibility is demanded from an individual. As

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

work today occupies a prominent position in the lives of many people, decisions are too often in favour of the job. Spending quality time with family and friends is frequently no longer possible (Kury, 2012: 283).

In today's society, characterised by globalisation and capitalist thinking, the competition is enormous. Only the one who is the most adapted and flexible will prevail. The prerequisite for success is yet again flexibility. The required permanent applicability means to generate as many projects as possible or to participate in them. Life, therefore, consists of successive and finished projects. It is no longer experienced as a continuous whole but as individual episodes. The CV, these days, is characterised by short-term engagements. The consequence of this is that the adaptation services are required at a high-speed sequence, making the necessary degree of flexibility difficult to achieve.

In addition to the already widely-demanded flexibility, self-organisation and thirst for knowledge, there is another reason why illnesses today seem to affect full social classes. Hartmut Rosa's reflections on a social theory of acceleration analyse the paradoxical situation of increasing technical and social efficiency with "time and time constraints" felt by modern man, despite the historically unprecedented level of non-working life (Rosa, 1999: 387).

Acceleration of the pace of life is found as a culturally and causally efficacious historical origin in the basic principle of capitalist economics. The time gains created by "the spectacular shortening of transport, production and communication time" create the preconditions of temporal open spaces and spaces of freedom. However, under the premise of the scarcity of all goods, the potential and real leisure time are also subject to the law of exploitation of capital. According to this logic, it is not enough to shorten the production of a product X by person A as a working process to a certain extent. On the contrary, capitalist production, which generally demands competition and growth compulsion, must be constantly optimised. For product X, fewer and fewer resources are used, and person A is to spend the free time for the production of more products per unit of time. Rosa refers to this in connection to Karl Marx's "Critique of Political Economy."

In the logic of the bourgeoisie, which is based on an increase in productivity and production, it soon recognised its time-economic character (Rosa, 1999: 392). Time itself, bound to the mechanical clockwork in the actual process of capital accumulation, has become the determining unit for measuring efficiency. From the term “Work 4.0,” which describes the states of the working processes in the digital age, one can speak of a sensitive escalation of this development. Modern people can be contacted from anywhere and around the clock via smartphones, tablets and portable laptops, and the transfer of information via the Internet can be done within seconds, which can inevitably lead to stress and also digital stress.

A study carried out in this context by the University of Augsburg and the Fraunhofer Project Group Business Informatics showed that digital stress really could be found everywhere—in every industry, every job profile, and every age and gender group. “The emergence of digital stress always depends on the individual employee’s skills and on the requirements he faces,” explains Julia Lanzl from the Fraunhofer Project Group Business Informatics.

Digital stress is when you feel overwhelmed with the technology in the workplace. More than a third of all employees feel insecure when dealing with digital technologies. In fact, according to study, digital stress is associated with significant health problems.

One in two employees suffering from high levels of digital stress has to deal with back pain, headaches and general fatigue at the same time. Another finding is that although women often judge themselves to be more competent, they often suffer more from digital stress than men. This may be caused by the fact that women work with more digital technologies. A survey showed that men, on the average, use 12 digital technologies in the workplace while women use 14.

Different studies, including those of Google’s, show that the requirements for each mentioned here, such as flexibility, acceleration and self-organisation, in today’s accelerating society, can have severe implications for the human ego as well as for the organism. This can go so far that the individual is no longer efficient and could already be suffering from anxiety or depression. Diseases such as burnout, depression or even anxiety are not uncommon among today’s managers and employees; they are rather the norm. The decoupling of the human ego quickly leads to the most severe mental disorders. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in addition to legal stimulants or

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

drugs, senior executives are also looking for alternative methods, such as hypnosis, to gain the necessary performance and efficiency to keep up with the acceleration of the world.

The digital revolution has likewise changed the way adolescents learn, play, and interact. The Internet, mobile devices, and social media unleashed an avalanche of information that gushes into the teens' brain.

The length of adolescents' screen time is continuously increasing as technology improves and becomes more widely available. In 2010, adolescents in the U.S. used digital devices for an average of 8.5 hours per day compared to just 6.5 hours in 2006 (Giedd, 2012: 101-105). This number can be expanded because 30% of their time interacting with devices were spent simultaneously on multiple devices. This brings the screen time to 11.5 hours daily and may vary depending on their socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geography (ibid.).

The speed by which life processes adjust to the digital revolution raises several questions on adolescent health, including that of children, teens, parents, teachers, and society. Moreover, the ease and immediacy of information, and the growing tendency of teens to perform multitasking may lead to circumscribed thinking and a lack of resistance and patience required for higher learning. The data from a Kaiser Foundation survey in 2010 indicated that two-thirds of the time teens spend doing homework on the computer are actually spent on instant-messaging, listening to music, texting, surfing the Internet, and viewing Facebook pages (Rideout et al., 2010).

There is a consensus from several studies that dividing the brain's attention systems has consequences both in time and performance. When a person multitasks, his brain is rapidly shifting from one task to another and he pays a metabolic and time toll for each switch. An example of the dangers of multitasking is using mobile phones when driving.

The digital revolution has also exposed children to a host of information. New technologies enable them to connect with a much wider portion of the world and broaden their exposure to ideas, customs, and ways of life. It is important for these children to receive guidance and have the ability to gauge the moods and intentions of others and to distinguish useful from destructive information.

The myriad of information available to teens also opens a window for them to consciously or unconsciously compare themselves to others. People on the Internet, social media in particular, have the tendency to showcase their perfect hair, perfect friends, and perfect selfies (Ehmke, 2019). Everyone enjoys these posts and teens who are just building their own identities see these as their examples.

Teens may hurt their self-esteem when their lives do not feel as perfect as those of the others. They may start over analyzing themselves and their image in social media. More Facebook likes become a confirmation of good image, so teens push themselves to look effortlessly perfect regardless of how they really feel. Because of their fear of missing out, teens work hard to keep up with social media and the newest technology on their hands.

The survey likewise shows that teens experience higher levels of stress than adults. Teens feel overwhelmed by stress which makes them sad, depressed, or experience fatigue. Forty-two percent (42%) of the teens surveyed responded that they are unsure if they are doing enough to manage stress (Hurley, 2016).

We all want to look good and be accepted. We work hard to keep up with today's fast-paced work processes and lifestyles and need affirmation that we are keeping up just fine. The approval we seek are confirmations that we are significant at home, among our circle of friends, in the society and in the workplace. This is the reason why young adults struggle to reinvent themselves in order to belong to circles and to get peer and parental approval. As such, men and women put in a great deal of work to sustain families and to be outstanding providers and success icons. In addition, they spread themselves too thinly to simultaneously fulfill socially assigned roles in the family and at work.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being: 18 Testimonials on Emotions That Keep You Inspired shows that our need to be accepted by others is the biggest contributor to the stress we experience today. It is a follow up on PISTA's first book, *To Mind and Mend: How PISTA Method Heals and Improves Living*, and presents true-to-life stories of individuals who have learned the importance of self-acceptance and appreciation of personal emotions, strengths, and limitations in every life situation they find themselves in. The authors of the chapters have embraced their true selves and have accepted that having a completely

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

healthy well-being is far more important than looking well physically and measuring up against others' expectations.

All 18 stories are testimonials of how the authors leveraged the power of their minds to meet the acceleration of the world and its changing demands. Read how each chapter unfolds the stories of people who stood up to the challenges that the new digital world has affected into their careers, health, search for identity, and social relationships.

Dr. André Stang

Toxicologist and co-author of *To Mind and Mend*

This Is Me

I accept myself.

*“Because one believes in oneself, one doesn't try to convince others.
Because one is content with oneself, one doesn't need others' approval.
Because one accepts oneself, the whole world accepts him or her.”*

- Lao Tzu

Finding Calmness and My Own Space

By Elsa Tossé

Mum started teaching me the importance of life when I was a kid. “Don’t waste time,” she said. “Life is precious, so you better choose the people you are spending time with well.”

As a kid, I thought my mum was too tough and too selective of people. I understand her now.

This Is My Circle

Looking back, I realise that I have wasted a lot of time with the wrong company—the kind who you have compassion for and want to help but later find out that it was, in fact, pity that you feel for them. They are very lonely and tell stories that make you feel drained just by listening to them.

Everything is always complicated for them. Trivial concerns are enormous problems that form an endless cycle of even bigger problems. To me, it seemed like they will always find issues because they are looking for attention. It felt like I was slowly losing my space and energy to accommodate the people at home, at work, and inside my circle of friends.

I used to be successful at filtering their remarks and keeping my distance from them. I used to listen to them and help them maintain a positive disposition. Now, they won’t step back anymore. Filtering out their words is no longer enough. Like a vampire, they started to suck all my positive energy. I didn’t want to compromise my personal space. I needed to breathe badly.

Because I was young, I didn’t know myself and my limits. I didn’t listen to myself. I always pushed my patience and repressed my anger. I didn’t realise this behaviour was harmful until I got older and more independent. I learned to protect myself and to listen to my own needs.

This Is Me

I ask myself, why do I always gravitate toward this kind of people? The only answer I can think of is it is because of me.

First, I’m an introvert and not used to speaking about my problems. I think that someone who can talk about one’s personal issues to a stranger, or at least someone with whom one is not very close to, is experiencing maximum distress levels. I can’t stand to see

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

someone in this state of distress and not do anything to help. Service and compassion for others are vital for me. How can I be more serviceable than to help someone in this situation? Later, I would learn, that offering an effective solution doesn't always stop people from complaining and discussing their difficulties to willing listeners.

Second is the sense of duty that I feel for others. I've always thought that nobody is perfect and that a good relationship means accepting and overcoming a person's faults, especially when you've known that person for a long time. That time, I didn't ask myself if I appreciate a person or not. I felt guilty at the thought of abandoning someone. I thought that guilt is a person's weapon against me—to make me stay with him. It was hard to keep myself away from this kind of company because they usually find every excuse to make me feel guilty.

I almost always stayed in situations like this, and that is the last reason why I ended up dealing with these people. I stayed because I thought it was more comfortable and convenient to put up with them.

This Is My Childhood

I had an intense feeling of insecurity as a child. I remember being anxious to meet and play with friends again after two weeks of holiday break. I was seven years old in primary school and afraid that my friends would reject me because they didn't like me anymore.

I'd like to think that I was curious and very mature at that age because I spent a lot of time with adults, doing cultural stuff. I was also keen on children documentaries and scientific books. In fact, I was teasingly branded by friends as someone who knows everything.

One day, they came up with a word to tease me and make me fight back and say "I am not!" At that age, I understand that knowledge is not always positive. I also started to wonder if the words I used to defend myself sounded too arrogant. This was the first time I questioned my behaviour, and this situation happened again. Because I was scared of rejection, I restrained myself from fighting back, and I slowly lost my self-confidence.

I also felt insecure at home. I thought that if I did something terrible and didn't respect rules, my mum would abandon me. I went to summer camps on holidays and was always quite excited about it, but I couldn't stop myself from wondering if I was sent there because I was unwanted at home.

As a teenager, I was convinced that my mum preferred a son than a daughter because I felt that I was different from her. I thought I would never be good enough for her to be proud of me. School was one of the things I was good at, but it seemed that she wasn't paying attention to my marks. I had no other alternatives to make her proud.

Today, I know that my thoughts are all wrong. Mum just didn't want to put too much pressure on me, so she didn't comment on my marks. I wasn't sent to summer camp because I was unwanted. Mum wanted me to have fun and to socialise with kids my age instead of always being with adults.

Finding My Balance

My fear of getting excluded made me hold back and increased my self-doubt. It pushed me to the wrong people who only reinforced my fears. When I was introduced to PISTA, I took a step back to re-evaluate myself.

Striking a balance between my need for independence and my desire for social connection has always been tricky for me. I kept my distance so that I won't get overwhelmed by others and not have to listen to them anymore. At the same time, I also didn't want to isolate myself because the more I get away from people, the more I am afraid to go with them.

With PISTA, I managed to find a balance and silence the voice in my head saying "What will others think of me?" I'm no longer worried that others might reject me. Every time these thoughts come up, I'm strong enough to say, "I don't care." I also feel better knowing myself. I can now analyse my reactions and face my fears.

I used to be influenced by other people's moods easily. Now, PISTA is helping me to be unaffected by the feelings of others. I know that they have their own problems which have nothing to do with me. I should not be affected by these. I no longer ask if I am good enough. I can be myself freely.

My situation is like driving. I'm the driver, and there are four people with me in the car. Everyone gives comments on my driving, like which way to take and how fast I should drive. I try to focus on the road but, with such hubbub, it's hard to concentrate and think that yes, I might be wrong. Then I'd get a red light.

Comments are like negative thoughts that pollute my mind and confuse me every day. With PISTA, driving is being alone in my car and enjoying good GPS and nice music. I am calm in my own

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

personal space. I can focus and reach my destination without interruptions.

Elsa Tossé started using PISTA when she was three years old. Since then, PISTA has helped her with her engineering studies, social relationships, and entrepreneurial endeavors including Campus Market, an organization which she co-founded with Paul Célérier.

How PISTA Helped Me Find Myself

By Dr. André Stang

Everyone believes that he knows who he is and what he can do, but the truth is, our perception of ourselves is drastically different from how others see us. Even the way we perceive others does not always correspond to reality. Some people may look stress-free and relaxed, but inside, they can be very much pressured with a lot of responsibilities, and are being eaten up by the burden they are feeling. This can happen to anyone and can often lead to health problems.

I happened to think that I had been a subject of wrong perception of others and thought that the pressure would not affect me, until it affected my health. I always thought that I knew myself well and can manage my issues, but I was wrong. I am a middle-aged man with a career in the academe, but I have always been insecure about my height, being too short. I am almost always the smallest guy wherever I go. Over time, I thought that I have overcome my height issues, but I realised that I have not.

As a child, I was good in sports and in school, but there were situations when people only saw my appearance and not what I can actually do. Whenever I get into a fight or wanted to help a friend who was in trouble, I always got humiliated because everyone thought of me as inferior due to my height. This happened to me all the time during my childhood.

When I Was Feeling Small

When I was already working, I would walk into my appointments and would feel that the person opposite me was only thinking about how I look like a little boy, without considering the fact that I actually knew what I was talking about. I would sometimes feel that my boss did not want to listen to my ideas because I felt that he thought I am just a little man, and that has always gnawed my self-confidence. I have established a negative feeling even if the person I was talking to or was having a discussion with was completely neutral and even thankful for my excellent work.

Those negative feelings and thoughts have eaten up my consciousness for so long, I could not even recognise them. For years, I was doubting my abilities and I never felt that I was doing anything

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

right. My perception and the reality kept getting farther apart. They went so far apart that I started questioning why the world was punishing me for being short, while I felt that others were more successful just by being tall.

After some time, I went into every conversation with a negative feeling that I no longer reached my goals and it affected my work. Aside from that dull perception, I also started having health issues, like stomach problems, insomnia and constant headache, which led me deeper into an emotional quagmire.

Starting with PISTA

I started PISTA because I wanted to improve my efficiency in my job. I wanted to be more purposefully so that I could quickly reach my goals and overcome the situation I was in. During my first experience with PISTA, I was already able to look deep into my consciousness. The first encounter was all about what I see without any direction. At that time, I saw different ways with many forks in the road, and I saw mountains at a distance.

However, when I started my first session on improving efficiency, it was different as the PISTA coach gave me a question that I should ask myself—do I work efficiently? There were many different pictures and feelings that, sometimes, I could already feel a sense of pressure in my heart area. The PISTA coach then gave me more questions, which made me go further into the past and it made me realise that there were blockages in me. At the same time, I felt that I was no longer looking at my professional self, but on my childhood where there was a lot of emotions that need to be confronted.

I found it challenging to get involved with my emotions because a number of moments from my childhood came to light. They were not always easy for me to see or experience again nor do I want to share them with anyone. I thought it was the past and I can already forget about it. However, I also realised that those memories seem to influence me in the present because I always feel terrible whenever I remember them. Had the PISTA coach not been at my side during those times of confronting my emotions, I would have stopped. With the help of PISTA and my PISTA coach, it became possible for me to shed light on my situation. Even though it took an effort to stay at the beginning, PISTA helped me look back on my life without intense emotional conflicts and delusion.

The succeeding sessions dwelt deeper into my subconscious mind. With each session of pushing further, I recognised that my past experiences made me develop knots and cramps that affect my mind and health. After the first eight sessions, I felt that it was precisely these memories and the way I dealt with them that had positive effect in my professional life and my attitude. I realised more clearly my surroundings, and I no longer drown in lost feelings and thoughts.

My Journey to Self-Awareness and Acceptance

At work, I found myself more relaxed during meetings. There are times when I still feel skeptical and negative, but the difference is that I can now identify them and shift my mind away from them and toward a more positive outlook.

I remember a specific meeting wherein I dealt with a particularly tall person. The meeting went well and I found the person kind and very professional. It was an important experience for me because I felt that the person I was having a meeting with did not make any negative comment during the whole conversation nor showed any signs of body language that can cause any feeling of disparagement. However, at some point during the meeting, I still felt that the person was probably making fun of my height, and I realised that negative emotions were rising which caused my stomach to cramp. The good thing about it was that I was aware of my feelings and I was able to identify my emotions. I recognise, however, that I still need to improve because my health issues have not yet disappeared.

In the next PISTA sessions, I was able to tackle my emotions and open up further. I became more emotionally stable with continuous sessions until I realized that I no longer have this negative mindset at work. I felt calm and at peace, and it had a positive effect on my well-being. I started listening to PISTA at work, and over the following weeks and months, the health problems, such as skin irritation and stomach problems, got better until they were completely gone. I felt comfortable with myself and it made me more productive and creative in my everyday life, particularly at work. While it took some time for me to veer away from the negative emotions during meetings, the negativity became less and less as I move forward.

Looking back, I am glad to have taken the PISTA method. I feel like I am a totally different person now. I have a sense of fulfilment in what I do and I can now manage the challenges that come my way—be it an argument in the office or dealing with much taller persons.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

My entire working mantra has changed for the better and I am positive that I will soon achieve my goals. Although I still have a long way to go in terms of my development, I am looking forward to the next challenges that life may throw at me knowing that I am at peace with my inner self, thanks to PISTA.

Dr. André Stang is a German toxicologist. He studies the adverse effect of modern chemicals and lifestyle to the human body's natural balance and discovers new approaches to promote healthy work-life practices. Dr. Stang is also a Table Tennis champion who has won more than 70 tournaments over the last 20 years.

Being a Prefect and Perfect

By Samantha Lam

This is my first year in secondary school, and I can say that secondary school is very different from primary school. My attitude has changed a lot in the last year. By writing this article I was able to reflect on the changes that I went through. I found it interesting how my attitude toward rules has changed. In primary school, I believed rules had to be obeyed at all times. As a prefect, I had to enforce those rules. When I was in primary school, I thought that being told that I was a good student was the highest form of praise I could get.

In primary school, teachers want the students to develop discipline—both in school and at home. Being a good student was important to me and I was proud that the teachers thought of me as one. I didn't want to break the rules because I wanted to hear praises from the teachers. During my primary school years, I was chosen to do various duties. I was a class monitor in primary 1, primary 2 and primary 4. I didn't see it as something restrictive because I wanted to be praised by my teachers. I always listened.

I was very happy and honored when I was chosen as a prefect. I saw it as recognition for my obedience and hard work. As a prefect, my role was to make sure everyone followed the school rules. A prefect is like a police officer—I had to enforce the rules, decide who was right and who was disobedient. I had a responsibility to do as a prefect, but at the same time, I didn't like getting my classmates into trouble. It became a difficult task.

Being a prefect would have been easier if we had received some kind of support from the teachers. They said we could come to them if we have problems, but even when I did go to them, they didn't really help me. The teachers seemed to care more about my conduct than about my relationship with others. Even when students started spreading horrible rumors about me, the teachers still didn't step in and help.

Prefects face many challenges. The most difficult students to enforce rules on were my year group. Enforcing rules on my own class was the hardest. They wouldn't listen to me and they didn't recognise me as someone who could tell them what to do. I don't

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

think my classmates liked me very much—they said I was too bossy. They felt that I was too strict. Some of the other students wouldn't play with me because they didn't trust me. As a prefect, I had to list down the names of the “naughty” kids and then give them to the teacher. The other students knew this and decided I would ruin their fun if they included me in their groups.

These experiences were difficult to cope with. They created behavioural patterns in me that made me become inflexible. As a prefect, I felt I had to win every argument or I would have no authority. Being left out made me feel insecure and unsure of myself. As I became aware of my behaviour, I realised I felt disappointed and sad about my experience in primary school. I wanted to be recognised as a good student, so I obeyed the teachers and the rules. I wanted to be praised, make my teachers proud and be noticed. But what I realised is that I became invisible in class. I wasn't noticed, and in many ways I was ignored. My teachers didn't notice my struggles. They didn't notice that I put on a mask to fit their expectations, and in the process lost myself.

I didn't find the experience of being a prefect to be as good as I expected. Truth is, being a prefect was nothing like I imagined it to be. It was only when I was chosen as a prefect that I realised that prefects are chosen because of their academic records or their obedience record and not because of any leadership skills. Even though we were in leadership positions, the teachers didn't give us training on how to manage other students or how to manage conflict.

My Role and the Rules

I found it difficult to perform my role within my own class. I was supposed to keep them from misbehaving, but when I had to talk to them about their behaviour, they would not listen to me. They even blamed me for not being able to have fun in the class. When I tried to tell them to stop talking, they just ignored me. They complained that I was interrupting their conversation and they thought that I was rude. They didn't want to follow the rules and only wanted to do whatever they felt like doing. It was very hard. I asked them to stop using their phones, but they didn't listen. There are times when they eventually listen to me but only after they back-chatted me.

As a prefect, it wasn't just my classmates' attitude toward me and the rules that I struggled with. When you are a prefect, both your

classmates and teachers watch you. Everyone looks at you. Prefects are there to help the teachers discipline the students. Our role was to help relieve the teachers of some of their duties, but this extra responsibility became a burden to me. As soon as we were made prefects, we were expected to act more mature than the rest of our classmates. We were expected to be leaders, but we never got a say in how things were done.

I felt trapped. I was assigned to watch for and report anyone in my own class who broke the rules. They were my own classmates, the peers that I had to learn with in class. I saw them every day. I had to do assignments in groups with them. And if I took them to the office or gave them detention, they would hate me. What kind of a student life will I have if every day that I had to go to school my classmates would hate me? Yet, I needed to do what the teachers expected me to do, and they expected me to discipline my class. I didn't feel like I could go to a teacher for help, and that made me very sad and angry.

I also didn't feel safe in class. I was bullied and ignored by my classmates because I was a prefect, but I didn't have any support from my teachers. I felt that I cannot trust any of the teachers in school. They seem to be putting on these masks and not expressing their real feelings. Teachers can be nice, but they really didn't share their experiences nor give us ideas on how to cope with our roles as prefects.

Changing Lanes

Just over a year ago, in my second semester of being a prefect, I joined the PISTA English course. My coach encouraged me to use PISTA every day to not only help with my focus and concentration when studying, but also to help improve my self-confidence and my ability to handle my emotions in different social situations.

Unlike my teachers in school, my coach at the PISTA workshops allowed me to open up and express my feelings and opinions. I was able to work through the anxiety I felt whenever I was in a difficult situation. The safer I felt, the easier it was to accept that others could be better than me without making me feel insecure. I was able to work through the memories of being bullied and having ugly rumours spread about me.

As part of my development, my attitude toward rules has changed. Being a good student who follows the rules is not important to me anymore. Studying and passing my subjects became more important

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

to me because I want to go to a good university. Rules were very important to me last year, but this year, they don't hold the same meaning to me anymore. I no longer get as uptight as I used to about obeying rules. I still try to be very good in class though.

I have realised that no matter how good I am, I will still get to break a rule because there are just so many of them. As a result, I no longer worry too much about the rules in school. I realised that the rules can be changed; they are not set in concrete. I don't have to follow all the rules completely. As a prefect in primary school, I thought rules had to be obeyed completely and that there was no room to negotiate. Now, I understand that rules are there to ensure that we have an environment in school where we can learn both our lessons and good manners in dealing with our classmates, and that the rules can be flexible in some situations.

However, I know that there is a difference between adjusting rules to different situations, and not caring about the rules at all. In secondary school, the teachers don't scold or punish students because they believe we should all have self-discipline. I like not having the rules hanging over me like a weapon that the teachers can use to constantly scold or punish us. At the same time, I think the teachers feel it is a waste of time disciplining the students.

Because the students in my class are going through puberty, they think they don't have to listen to adults, especially those who have authority over them. It is nice not being scolded all the time and not being forced to obey a long list of rules, but it also means that sometimes, the students in class can be disruptive. Sometimes, I want to study, but the other students would be so noisy playing on their phones. I don't have the authority to tell them to stop, and I find it frustrating. I want to work, I want to do well but if my group doesn't want to do anything, then I have to do it all or get a bad score.

The changes with PISTA have been subtle. Looking back, I notice the difference in my thinking patterns and the way I process information. My mind is much stronger, and I have a much healthier relationship with rules. As a result, I can manage myself within relationships better, and I am not seen as bossy and strict anymore. I am more flexible, and I can improvise. There are still students who don't like me, and though I would prefer to be liked, I am okay with that.

I am not a prefect anymore. Do I miss being one? No, I don't. Do I miss being a leader? Yes, I do. I enjoy being a leader. At one of the PISTA English events, I was given the role of MC. Not only did I lead the entire three-hour event, I was involved in planning and organising the event. My coach said I was really good at it having thought of the things that she missed out. During the meeting, I stepped in when I needed to, I kept the event on track and made sure everyone had a good time. As the MC, I didn't have to be a policeman. I didn't have to discipline or report anyone. I was able to participate in the decision making and develop real leadership skills. Being a prefect would have been so different if our teachers had used it as an opportunity for us to grow and learn.

Samantha Lam is starting her second year in school. She is a keen artist and a very good storyteller and presenter.

Controlling My Emotions

By Colin

Situational awareness. Control. Power. These are the things that human beings want in life. I want to be the best. I dream of becoming a leader. I wish for great things that probably will never happen. All because I am not great now. When I think of control, I think about ways to be the smartest, to be the best. I always think I have a grasp of everything that is going on in my life, that everything is under my watchful eye.

I was wrong.

When I was ten, I was nowhere near controlling my emotions. Hell, I haven't gotten the grasp of controlling them now. I was very aggressive—shouting at people and demanding everything from everyone because I thought I was the best. I believed violence solved everything.

I was totally out of control.

Managing emotions was never an easy task. Even to this day, the problematic bits still come out every now and then to provoke me. It is always up and down, like the rough seas during a typhoon. There really seems to be no hope for me. The people around me slowly started to disappear. I am losing friends and even the trust of my family by the day. I thought it is because people are bored of me and want something fresh, but it turns out that most of them are outright scared of being near me.

One of the strongest emotions I have in me is fear. I could say fear is the root of all my other emotions. I get angry when I am scared of being embarrassed in front of others. One of the ways that I do to cover this fear is to act like the class clown because I am afraid others would see I am a failure. If I acted dumb, then my classmates wouldn't make fun of me if I did badly in a test as it is accepted that I am no good.

I have always been a nomad. I gave myself that title because of my ability to move around friendship circles. As a nomad, I can join friendship groups for less than five minutes to months on end. I never say I have a best friend because I hate the concept of one. I feel that moving around and meeting new people is a better option, but others

don't want to do that with me. Most of the people I meet are manipulative and fake, they couldn't care less about my feelings. This is why I never stick around with people for too long.

I get frustrated very easily; I have a short fuse. People are not always honest toward me and that is what makes me feel trapped. I get frustrated because I feel unlistened to, so I keep trying to find ways to retaliate. When I have the guts to retaliate, I get emotional and I embarrass other people.

One thing I am very jealous of is other people's ability to get into friendships. Over the years, I have become very awkward. I have become less social and laid back in gatherings. I feel uncomfortable when teachers ask something I don't know how to answer. This problem mainly occurs in German class as I know I am not the best at it. Either I stutter or I go completely silent.

I have a coach who has been helping me address my problems. I found out that even she had wanted to stop working with me because of my behaviour. However, she is not willing to give up on me yet and has gone searching for other ways to help me. She discovered the PISTA method and introduced it to me. The changes in my behaviour were so quick and noticeable. Later, we both became part of the PISTA Team. She became a licensed PISTA coach and my biggest supporter.

If it wasn't for PISTA, my coach told me that I could've become a very violent person. While working through a specific PISTA exercise, I realised I had trigger points that I tend to react to, and my usual reactions would either be to get really angry at someone (ie. shout at them, fight back), or lock up completely. I get aggressive when I fear my reputation is at stake, or when people make fun of me for no reason. This was seen quite a lot especially in school when other students tend to make fun of me. I did not understand why they want to do that.

PISTA has really brought me a step forward as I go through my teenage years. I have seen significant improvement in the way I handle my emotions. I guess confidence plays a big role in every aspect of life. When I compare myself to others around my age, I feel that I am growing, internally, much faster than them. I feel that I am starting to mature as a person. I can now tell how different I am from my classmates and that they are also different in their own ways.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

I have learned that there are things that are out of my control, but I have control over my emotions and my dreams. Now, with confidence that I know myself better, I can continue to dream and strive to always be the best that I can possibly be.

Colin is on his 11th grade and is completing his IGCSE certificate. He is a keen table tennis player and a self-published author. His first published masterpiece is a fiction book based on his own teenage struggles.

Project: I Want to Be Amazing

By Kerry-Ann Edge

I was introduced to PISTA while searching for a way to help a 10-year-old student. He was struggling with fear, which he displayed through tantrums. It had gotten to a point, where I no longer wanted to teach him, but at the same time, I wasn't ready to give up on him. I had already tried various techniques but none of them made any difference. What I didn't expect is how my search to help him would lead me to my own journey of change.

Before my first training session on how to apply PISTA, I had been nervous and apprehensive. I have been to counsellors, coaches and psychologists before. I have heard all types of promises from self-help gurus and books. I worked hard to apply the methods but I never fully experienced the promised changes. In fact, the harder I tried to do what they told me, the more of a failure I felt. I never understood what was wrong with me. Why did these methods work for others, but not for me?

During my first session, my assigned coach asked me the three areas I wanted to work on. After a brief discussion, I decided to focus on fear of connection, becoming financially independent, and dealing with depressive feelings that sucked the joy out of my and my husband's life. I had expected my first session to be like all my other experiences with other counsellors. They asked lots of questions and then homed in on a topic, asking difficult questions that I didn't have the answer to. Sometimes, I didn't want to answer the question, but other times, I really didn't have any answer. Often, I was made to feel bad that I couldn't answer, that I was hiding something and therefore didn't want to change.

However, in PISTA, I was introduced to a system that allowed me, under the guidance of a professional, to work through things at my own pace. If an exercise I had completed showed my mind wasn't ready to deal with the topic, my coach wouldn't try and force the issue. She would direct me to work through other issues until my mind was ready. In the safety of my own home, I was able to work through many tough areas with permanent changes.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

Another principle I liked was at no time did I have to share any results from any exercise that was too personal. I liked the idea that my coach could work with me without me sharing everything. It was, however, my own decision to share with my coach my thoughts and experiences no matter how personal or how embarrassing they may be. If the research and science behind PISTA was right, then I wasn't going to give myself the option to hide anything. I was desperate enough for change.

I wasn't just introduced to the PISTA system, but I was also given access to my coach and the global PISTA team 24 hours a day through my chosen online messaging platform. I now have a team of medical experts, psychologists and business leaders supporting me in my growth and development. Right from the start, this program focused on helping me become a whole person—as a business woman, as an equal contributor toward financial stability within my marriage, in my personal feelings, and in dealing with the effects of trauma.

Step 1: Jumpstart my way toward my goals.

The topic my coach chose to start working on surprised me. I had expected her to want to dive into the deep personal emotions of shame and embarrassment like the other counsellors and psychologists I had been to before. Instead, my coach directed me to do exercises related to the obstacles stopping my financial success.

My goal was to be financially self-sufficient. Part of my low esteem and feelings of worthlessness stemmed from not achieving anything to be proud of and not contributing financially. When I moved to Asia, I stopped working within the design field. The business had moved on and I no longer had the right skills to find a job. While living in Asia, I worked as an ESL teacher. That meant that outside of Asia, I have no marketable skills and that realization put me in a dangerous place. I could not provide for myself. I was getting a small income from teaching, but it wasn't enough to live on. It wasn't enough to have an investment plan for my future. This led to a deep fear of what would happen to me if anything happened to my husband. Strangely enough, this fear didn't motivate me to get myself into a better position instead it paralysed me.

My unhappiness trapped me within a very small world where I kept sabotaging all my attempts to achieve my goals. I wanted to achieve something. I wanted to be amazing. I just didn't know how to

do it. I worked hard and studied so that I could become good at something. I studied different courses—music, computing, design—but each time I got to the point of being successful, I would change direction. The change in direction required me to study again, to start all over, to be back to square one. Being a beginner meant I couldn't fail, I couldn't be criticized. However, it also meant feeling like I had nothing to offer. What can a beginner offer compared to someone who has already been in a career for so long? I was never good enough, always doing the lower end projects to gain experience and I felt like an underachiever.

Step 2: Come to terms with my fears.

During the PISTA exercises I became aware of how entangled my emotions were. A large part of my PISTA journey has been about untangling what is real, what I can deal with, what I have perceived and what I believe in. As I dealt with the obstacles that I myself created to sabotage any success, I became aware of the small life I had lived. Fear had prevented me from developing my skills and talents. I recognised I had let so many opportunities pass. I also learned that fear comes in many forms. I had allowed fear to paralyse me, divide me, hold me back and judge me. By moving toward financial independence, my coach knew I would be able to untangle all the mess inside and then have something solid to be proud of.

Networking is an important part of business building. Shortly after I started using PISTA regularly, I went to a personal branding business lunch. Over lunch the speaker discussed brand management, personal branding and how to build a brand. While she was speaking, I noticed how uncomfortable the idea of branding myself made me feel. The more the lady spoke, the more nauseous I became. I was terrified at the idea of exposing myself. Afterwards, I needed an hour to sit and regain my emotional balance.

The strength of my physical reaction caused by the idea of building up a social media reputation took me by surprise. After updating my coach on what had happened, she gave me some exercises to complete. I discovered two main reasons for wanting to stay invisible—the fear of criticism which stemmed from an experience of being bullied, and the fear of failure. These two reasons were deeply entangled with each other.

Through the exercises, I realised what a deep trauma being bullied had caused me. It had created a thick defensive shield. I had

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

shut off everyone, including my husband. I had disconnected with friends. I got rid of social media accounts. I didn't want the bully to have any more ammunition to use against me. The very idea of allowing myself to connect and engage with people made me nauseous. I didn't want to open myself up to people for fear of criticism and bullying. As I delved into this area, I became aware of a strong division within myself. I had locked a part of myself up because I was embarrassed. I was afraid to show this part of me because I believed it wasn't good enough. I was afraid that people would think of me as a fraud. What really shocked me was how agreeable, bland and passionless I had become. I was too afraid to voice my own opinion because I didn't want to cause conflict or upset other people.

As I worked through the sense of failure in social settings, I noticed just how uncomfortable I felt. I realised that quite often I dug my nails into the palms of my hand to deal with the distress I was feeling. I explored these feelings under the guidance of the PISTA team and became aware that this intense discomfort happened even with friends. It is hard to engage with anyone—my husband, friends, acquaintances—when I am picking up on various stimuli and interpreting them in an unhealthy manner. I realised my sensitivity to a person's attitude, body language and hand movement resulted in me comparing myself, and developing inferior feelings of being low and good for nothing.

Because of these fears, I became very defensive and took everything seriously. I didn't know how to laugh at jokes; I didn't know how to laugh at myself. I didn't know how to handle myself in emotional situations. Locking parts of myself away impacted my ability to connect with myself and those around me. The fear of being vulnerable allowed shame to shut me off from real communication with my husband and friends. When my husband tried to talk to me, I ran away emotionally; and hid my real feelings. I never discussed my feelings or the situation because I thought it was all my fault, and if I could just fix myself, our relationship would be better.

With these new realisations came the awareness of my behaviour. I have created unhealthy behavioural patterns to protect myself. One of those behaviours was being passive-aggressive. It wasn't a revelation though. People had told me I was passive-aggressive.

However, I began to see that my feeling toward something was always masked by my behaviour. I deliberately masked my feelings, especially anger, because I didn't want to upset anyone. I craved approval and acknowledgement. I didn't want to do anything that would cause conflict or disapproval. As a result, I learned to express my dislike or disagreement through subtle behaviour like sulking or emotional withdrawal.

As I worked through the different PISTA modalities, the constant dread in my stomach disappeared. It wasn't until it was gone that I realised just how much dread, fear and anxiety I had carried with me like a lead weight.

The changes in my attitude were very noticeable to the people who know me. There are two experiences that stand out for me. First is the day a mother called to let me know she no longer wanted me to teach her children. My reaction was one of curiosity. Instead of the negative and defensive attitude I usually displayed, I was able to understand her reasons. Her reasons had nothing to do with my inability to teach. She was just concerned that her children were tired and she wanted them to have a proper holiday break. The second was at a meal with friends. I always felt inferior when I am with this set of friends, but in that particular time, as they spoke, I realised I had stopped interpreting their words and gestures as looking down on me. When I told them about these thoughts, they were shocked that I interpreted their gestures as such. My insecurity has built around me a wall that prevented me from interacting with my friends.

As I learned to become a whole person, I realised that I could have a voice and express it. I became stronger with each PISTA exercise I completed. I started seeing myself as equal to others, and not inferior. I stopped giving my power and inner strength away.

Step 3: Work on the relationships that I have and want to have.

As my business started to take shape, I faced an unexpected obstacle. To put my business plan in action, I had to let go of my ESL teaching job in which I am already attached to. I was so involved with my two students that I had moved past from being just a teacher to being like a mother to them, an au pair, a mentor and a friend. I went to their school plays, Parents' Day and birthdays. I clung to the idea of being an ESL teacher because I had no confidence in myself. My coach and husband were concerned about the amount of time and effort I put into my private students without compensation.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

My resistance to changing the relationship with my students became a roadblock. As I worked through the exercises my coach gave me, I realised that I had used this relationship to mask the emptiness I felt because of not having my own child. My husband and I had tried to conceive, but years passed and I didn't get pregnant. I knew something was wrong. Eventually, after a never-ending stream of uncomfortable appointments with no satisfactory answer, my doctor sent me to a fertility expert. He sent me for a batch of test.

The results of the tests weren't delivered in the privacy of a room where I could ask questions. Instead, they were put on the counter by a receptionist. It was there in the waiting room, surrounded by pregnant ladies and new born babies, when I found out I could not get pregnant. The news was devastating, and I died inside. I felt ashamed and embarrassed. I didn't know how to tell my husband. I was so caught up in my own pain, I didn't ask him how he felt.

My grief and shame were so overwhelming that all I saw was my failure. I was a disappointment. The sense of failure that grew inside of me drew me deeper into depression. I believed I wasn't good enough, but now there was this evidence that I had failed at being a woman. The shame was so intense that I cut myself off from my friends. I couldn't face anyone. I was negative and I didn't know how to talk to my husband. Every time he tried to talk to me, I felt like he was just rubbing salt in the wound of how bad I was, how unlovable I was and what a disappointment I was. I couldn't hear what he was really saying. I could only hear how bad I was.

It took me a couple of weeks to work through the entanglement of emotions. By the end of the two weeks, I felt like I had been knitted back together. Not only had I worked through the disappointment and anger of the loss, but also through the sense of failure. Something inside me changed and I felt hopeful. I was ready to work through the negative thoughts and habits that living in depression had established within me. I noticed a new determination in me—I wanted my marriage, my business, my health and my fitness to thrive. I still had a lot of obstacles to work through, but I felt supported enough to work through them.

Step 4: Change how I behave, feel, and think.

As I went deeper, I discovered I was struggling with undiagnosed depression. I also discovered that depression was not just a way of

thinking or a chemical imbalance in the brain, but also an established way of life. Because I was depressed, I lived with fear, insecurity, lack of self-confidence, and a sense of failure. During the worst of these phases, which could last from a day to a month, I felt blank. I didn't know how to participate in conversation because my mind was empty, like there was no thought. If there was any thought, which was really more of a sensation than actual feeling, it was criticism—for being lazy, for not being able to pull myself together, for messing up, for being fake.

What I didn't realise is I had established patterns that led to my downward spiral into a deep black pit. The long hours of being alone resulted in negative thoughts, a negative attitude and a mouth that only spoke complaints. Through the PISTA program, I worked on my mental processing as well as on creating structures to support me in my journey to wholeness. One of the first things I agreed to do was to change my daily routine. This was challenging. I could no longer spend as many hours as I had in isolation. I had withdrawn and cut myself off from any support structure.

Partly, I disconnected myself because of embarrassment—I didn't want anyone to know how I really felt—and partly because I was used to being alone. I got sick when I was a teenager. Over a five-year period, I spent many hours alone dealing with my fear, pain, social exclusion and isolation. I developed my own strategies to deal with my emotional experiences. These experiences ranged from what my doctors said, from being constantly misdiagnosed and sometimes mistreated and to the frustration of missing school, school trips or family gatherings. I didn't want to be a burden. I didn't want to add to the discomfort of people around me, so I stopped sharing. I didn't want people to worry about me so I would brush my issues under the carpet.

Unfortunately, after I regained my health, the coping mechanism didn't just disappear. How I handled issues had become a way of life. I got trapped in the quagmire of negative emotions of fear, anxiety and failure. I lived in my own world, making up stories about how people saw me, how I had disappointed them and how I would amount to nothing. I lost the ability to share my feelings or deal with issues that needed to be dealt with. I didn't know how to face my problems. It was easier to run away, to shut down and to deal with

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

disappointments alone than to be vulnerable and open to hurt and criticism from others.

During one particular PISTA session about feeling ill, I remembered a doctor told me that my illness would reoccur when I reached adulthood. I lived in constant fear that the illness would return. As I worked through the intense anxiety and fear, I learned to change my response to what I was feeling. Instead of sleeping when I was tired, I started experimenting with different PISTA techniques. When I got anxious about something, I used the PISTA modalities to explore my feelings. I discovered that the anxiety I felt was because there was something I needed to do but felt overwhelmed by or scared of it.

Step 5: Set my personal coping strategies and practice them.

Through the PISTA exercises, I learned new and healthy coping strategies to manage my emotional experiences that I could use in my daily life. I apply these techniques as I take on more business challenges. I like how practical PISTA has been for me. It has taught me how to be whole, but at a pace I am comfortable in. As part of the exercises I was doing, I needed to track my energy, my feelings, my successes and what I ate. By recording them every day, I could see how much progress I was making on a weekly basis. My coach encouraged me to focus on the successes. These successes weren't just mental breakthroughs; there were also financial, health, eating and friendship successes.

The result of working through the obstacles to financial independence had taken me on a road I had not expected. I had worked through shame, bullying, feelings of failure, harmful behaviour, dependency, depressive tendencies and grief. The changes in me were very noticeable to those around me. One change that I still enjoy is having energy. As I practiced pushing aside attention to every anxious thought, I stopped needing to sleep every afternoon. I stopped going to bed at 9PM because I was too tired to even watch a movie. The brain fog lifted and I felt engaged with life.

At first, the idea of building a business and setting financial and commercial targets unnerved me. However, my confidence grew as I worked through the mental obstacles. The confidence I have didn't make me feel brave, but it allowed me to verbalise what I really wanted to do. I learned that when I channeled fear correctly, it could

give me strength to take the next step. I had always viewed fear as bad and something to be avoided. As I step away from my perception of being inferior and not good enough, I discovered that I didn't need to hide behind any more excuses. If I needed a skill, then I could learn it. If it was a skill that would take too long to learn, I could hire someone to do it for me.

The more energy I have, the more eager I become with business plan. With the input of my coach and PISTA team, I went from seeing myself as a hopeless, lost cause to building a centre for students to learn. Although my first set of PISTA exercises had been about obstacles to financial success, I have worked through all three areas I mentioned in my first meeting. I have broken patterns and habits and have healed and strengthened my relationship with my husband. I have developed new strategies to manage myself and my emotions with confidence.

Through PISTA, I moved from fear and paralysis to taking the right action. I started making decisions and not just passively accepting other people's decisions. As I grow stronger, I have become an equal partner within my marriage, and I am on my way to financial independence. I have continued doing my daily PISTA exercises to overcome the mental and emotional obstacles trying to sabotage me.

I am not quite there yet, but, yes, I can feel it coming. I am amazing.

Kerry-Ann Edge is a certified PISTA coach and instructor. When not in her toes organising workshops and training individuals and teams, Kerry-Ann is busy creating things and painting.

I Belong

I am part of a bigger group. I will be all right just being me.

“Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.”

- Brené Brown

To Love Myself and Hang On

By Evelyn

Awkward. That's how I feel right now.

I feel like I am at the bottom of a staircase while everyone else is at the top. I have always felt different and low because of my physical flaws. Nevertheless, my classmates in primary school liked me for the awkward kid that I was. I was not ashamed of my physical appearance back then. However, secondary school was totally different. My classmates did not only notice my flaws, they also pointed them out and made me feel ashamed of myself.

In primary school, I felt that I found a place where I belonged. I worked through my intense shyness and started participating in class and group discussions with the help of my PISTA team. My PISTA coach helped me work through my anxiety and fear, and gave me a safe environment where I can cultivate my skills to be a leader. These changes resulted in me running workshops, taking part as one of the main characters in the end of year production in school and being part of my class. People in my school knew who I was—they spoke to me, they admired me.

I also considered it easy to find things that people praised me for back in primary school, but things changed in secondary school. It is strange to think that before middle school, life was not this hard.

When I entered secondary school, I felt like I had entered a war zone, but, instead of fighting for something that actually matters, the fight is always about who is cooler than who. The coolest person gets to be voted in or chosen for the important roles, such as house captain, not because he or she is the best fit for the role, but because everyone likes him or her. Secondary school is not about what you can achieve academically anymore nor is it about the good times you can have regardless of how you look like; it is all about the looks.

For some reason, the people who work the hardest do not seem to get the recognition they deserve, while those who seem to be able to talk and engage with others get the attention. Those people seem to get things without trying. How is that fair? For me and others like me, we can only work hard and try our best. We can empty our brain cells

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

and pour every ounce of our souls into being recognised, but we are not even noticed.

The social hierarchy in secondary school is established during the first few months of classes. People in school will only make friends with you when you have better social connections. It is like a ladder—each person only establishes friendship with someone more popular than one's self, so that one goes up another rung. The goal? I have no idea. I just know that I have been deemed as a person who cannot take anybody to the next rung. The friends I have are connected with other people higher up the social hierarchy, and they would not hesitate to ditch me if I embarrass them. I am more like an extra person that others pass by on their climb to the top. It feels like I am merely a person passing out water in a marathon, not seen and quickly forgotten.

I struggled with how those people from my primary school who were nice to me before have become quite nasty. If you do not fit in their image of perfection, then they can be very mean to you. According to my peers, perfection refers to the models on the front covers of magazines and in the advertisements. Perfect are those people who are photoshopped, touched up, and then plastered around as a fake ideal for us to be like. And then, of course, there are the celebrities who are trying to model their looks, clothes and attitudes to their huge fan bases. It is the same in school. Those cute boys and girls who can pull off the look of the hero are loved by the majority of the school's population. Unfortunately, I do not fit into any of these images.

My peers call me an outcast. Once you are deemed an outcast, it is very difficult to make friends. Being "rejected" in school has long term consequences. It hurts when your "friends" choose to hang out with someone else over you. I have to be with people who do not have anyone to work with. I do not have a friend who I know will be my partner in any class activity or someone who is actually excited to be my partner. It is weird when I am alone, standing like an idiot that no one wants to work with. I do not have a friend.

It took a lot of self-exploration to understand the effect of my response to this maltreatment I was receiving from my schoolmates. I realized that I stopped expressing my feelings. I did not want to be hated even more, so I allowed people to mistreat me. My strategy is to

survive without making many enemies. Within the few relationships I made, I made it clear by my actions that I would not lash out at them and that they could not hurt me, but they did hurt me. It hurt when they continuously threw my favourite water bottle, messed cold drinks in my locker, and made me feel left out. I made friends by making them know they can hurt me and I will not lash back at them.

My PISTA coach taught me about respecting myself. At first, I struggled to understand why I should continue working on myself. After all, I spent the last two years of primary school working on improving my self-esteem. Yes, I had achieved a lot but when I stepped into secondary school, I felt like I went right back to square one. I thought, "What is the point of continuing with the PISTA exercises?" Sometimes, it is hard to see the point of working on loving myself when after all that work, the only person that will truly be able to stand me would be me.

I remember feeling embarrassed during my first PISTA exercise related to my body. It was difficult to admit and talk about how others see me, about my own image, about my changing body. I do not like talking about it because it often comes out as self-deprecating or humorous. I did not realise what my thoughts sounded like when I speak them out loudly. I hated myself. Sometimes, I wish there was a reason for other people to like me and for them not to focus on whether my stomach is flat or my face is round.

I was embarrassed with my physical appearance because I do not meet other people's expectations of what a girl should look like. I thought people do not expect eleven year-old girls to be so tall, flat-chested and doll-like. People might think that I did not notice their silent remarks, their silent judgments or their silent jokes, but I did.

I was convinced that I am worthless, and I could not see that my thoughts had become a roadblock. It was very difficult for me, being in the middle of an emotional turmoil, to remember that all I was feeling was just another milestone in my development. However, I have come to discern that it is my choice. I can stay stuck in the roadblock while everyone else goes past me, or I can move the roadblock and continue with my adventure.

It is hard to leave all the negativity I felt about myself. I have gotten so used to hating myself that I sometimes ask if I have enough will to stop myself from the sad, embarrassed person I have convinced myself to be. Before, I did not see the point in working on

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

my self-image, but if I were to keep hating myself, then the hatred will always be there to stop me from achieving my true potential. My PISTA coach made it clear that this is something that we have to deal with. She told me that it is better to fight this roadblock off before I can do any more damage to myself. I realised that self-love is not empty and fake; it is the ability to love the person that you are—one who has been through so much, yet is still hanging on.

Evelyn is 12 years old and in her second year of secondary school. She enjoys challenging herself physically and mentally through bouldering. She has written and self-published two books.

Reconciling with Rules and Pursuing My Dreams

By Paul Célérier

I asked a lot of questions when I was a child. I remember asking about events that happened in my life and how society was organised.

When I was eighteen, I was unsatisfied with the inequalities in the world and blamed the authorities for their inaction in changing these injustices. I thought teachers taught useless lessons, parents had to conform to society, and so on.

Because of this mentality, I started not putting a lot of effort into my studies. I worked even before exams and only prepared the night before exam day. I didn't want to fail, but, at the same time, I didn't want to strictly follow good study habits. I only gave the minimum effort, just enough to keep me from failing. This worked, but it put me in very stressful situations numerous times in my studies.

My actions and the difficult situations I got myself in made me very unhappy with my life. I was convinced that I would not be happy studying things that I thought were useless. My unwillingness to work and succeed started to cause trouble. Instead of working, I stayed at home in the evenings, but I could not bring myself to use my computer or phone as distractions because of my fear of becoming a failure at work. Soon, I found myself dealing with stress from highly toxic emotions.

I thought refusing to follow the rules is an excellent way to assert myself because it was my vision of freedom. Then it became clear to me that this thinking was not leading me to live a happy life. I read good books to manage my emotions and search for answers, but I realised that it was not what I needed at that stage of my life. Besides, most of the time, I was not really into my reading because my head is in another space, running after my dreams.

I got to know myself better when I started using PISTA. I understood that part of me dreams and longs for a different world. This part of me would not accept the reality, which is the world we have now. I also realised that I was not focusing on what I like to do because the truth is that I was pretty much unaware of what I really liked.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

It was in high school when I worked on a humanitarian project and discovered that this kind of work gave me great satisfaction. I still did not like studying that time, but I was already succeeding in my studies. I was able to convince myself that most of what I studied was useless because it did not have a significant impact on me. However, this project gave me energy and got me to focus on my dreams. I also had the energy to work on my courses, and I was okay.

The realisation that I was working on new projects made me happy and pushed me to take the initiative to organise an exhibit of company prototypes at my engineering school. I was very thrilled by this project, and my grades started to improve. After the exhibit, I organised a conference where entrepreneurs inspired students with their speeches. The success of this conference gave me fulfillment and happiness.

The following year, I launched a new project that collected old furniture from students leaving the universities and sold them to new students. The project received a lot of help and publicity because it addressed the pressing need to remove furniture from the streets of Lille, France. I conceptualised this project with my girlfriend, and its success made us busy and, sometimes, kept us working until late in the evening.

The amount of time our project demanded from us could have adversely affected my academic performance. Instead, the project improved my grades because of the energy and satisfaction it gave me. I had no time to waste in delaying my work. I used to be one of the worst students in my batch, but I was so inspired that I moved up to become one of the best.

Now that I am already working in a building company, I still invest a lot of my time on side projects. I learned that no matter how good my job is, pursuing my own dream project makes me happier and more fulfilled. I am different from who I was five years ago. Now, I know that I can design my projects and, with these, I can create and follow my own rules and live my personal dreams. I find this truly fulfilling.

Paul is an engineer who studied urban development of cities and social entrepreneurship at Hautes Etudes d'Ingénieur and HEC Paris, respectively. A PISTA user of three years, Paul is the co-founder of

Campus Market, a non-profit organization in France that facilitates student relocations while reducing environmental footprints.

Growing Stronger

By Kelly Lam

Being sick makes me feel like a lot of factors in my body are controlling me. I was two years old when my parents found out that I have kidney disease, and that was when my medications started. It was also the beginning of the battle that will unexpectedly help me become a stronger person.

In School

I was excited to start school like all the other children in my class, but I didn't find school that easy. I realised that when the other children ran around, I couldn't keep up with them. I sometimes tried to do sports, but my face would turn red, I could not carry on. I would get tired too quickly.

When the other children walked up the stairs to class, I couldn't walk with them at the same pace. I struggled to breathe. If I climbed the stairs, or walked up a hill, my face would go red and I would experience difficulty in breathing. Sadly, the other children teased me for this.

I also couldn't go to school every day. Sometimes, my body wasn't healthy enough to get up in the morning. I wanted to go, but the doctor would look at me and tell my parents that I needed to rest at home quietly. Some other times the doctor said I had to stay in hospital so that the nurses could monitor me. There were also instances when I was back in school but I would feel so sick, my parents had to take me back to hospital.

It was difficult for me to make friends in school because the other children didn't want to be near me. I didn't have any friend when I was in Primary 1. It may be because the symptoms of kidney problem were not nice, like the hard lump on my finger. My classmates thought that the lump was very ugly and I was so embarrassed by it. My classmates would make faces at me and if I touched something, they would never touch it again. It was a sad time for me.

The teachers never asked me how I felt. If I was in school, I had to do what everybody else did and learn the lessons the same pace as my classmates. That was difficult because there were times when I missed a lot of school work and when I get back, I didn't know what

the teacher was talking about. I did have a couple of really good teachers who cared for me and made school a bit easier. I don't know if the teachers realise how important they are to children who are sick. School was hard for me, but knowing there was at least one person in school who would speak to me and not treat me like I am dirty or ugly was very important. It was the nice teachers who told the other children they were behaving badly and taught them to be kind.

At Home

My fever controlled what and how much I can do at home. When you are sick you have to stay home the whole day and you can't do anything—no dancing, no playing on the mobile phone and not even watching TV. I had to take medicine that tasted horrible. I also always had to wear a mask because my immune system was low and I might get sick from people around me who had cough and colds. I had to be very mindful of the people around me.

Unfortunately, the medicines I was taking did not stop the kidney disease from getting worse. Just after my family and I came back from a very special trip to Japan, we found out that I had renal failure. This meant I had to go under the kidney “washing machine” which the hospital people call the kidney dialysis machine. I also had to be admitted to the hospital so that they could do a surgery to put a tube in my kidney.

After the surgery I was in the hospital for seven weeks. Then, after I left hospital, I had to use the kidney washing machine every night. It was hard because once I was connected to the machine, I could not move. It meant that I had to do all my homework, eat, shower and prepare for school before I was connected to the machine. My doctor told me I needed a new kidney and I was put on waiting list.

In the Hospital

Even if I was having a hard time in school, I still found it much more fun than in the hospital. It wasn't fun staying in the hospital whenever I was feeling sick. If I had to stay in the hospital, then I couldn't go to school and I missed out on school work and making friends, even if I only had a few. However, after some time of getting used to being in the hospital, I started to appreciate it. I was always looked after when I was in the hospital. I also learned that there were a number of activities that I could do. I still did not like staying in bed and taking the medicines, but I appreciate the nice people who

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

brought toys for me to play with. I enjoyed playing with the different toys because they helped me forget that I was in the hospital.

I found out that one can also meet some friends in the hospital. In fact, it was easier to make friends with kids in the hospital than in school. I would sometimes make friends in school, but then I will get sick and had to be admitted to the hospital. By the time I got back to school, my friend would have already met new friends and then I would be left out. But, in the hospital, we were all sick and we understood what it was like to be away from home. Also, in the hospital, I made friends with children not only of my age; there were also older children, some were as old as 16 or 18 years old. I preferred making friends with the older children because I felt that I could share with them. I could talk to them and they would listen to me. They would also share with me their stories.

During the 7 weeks that I stayed in the hospital after the catheter surgery, I met two friends who were older than me. One of them never ate meat and didn't have enough iron. She was very weak and pale. Another girl I met was just like me. She had to use a catheter for her kidney. The friends I met in the hospital didn't mind how I looked like. I was pale and thin, but they didn't tease me or laugh at me. They didn't think I would make them sick. The people in the hospital would touch me, share their toys with me and treat me nicely.

My hospital friends would play with me and try to make me feel better even though I was feeling very uncomfortable. They would talk to me normally and they did not treat me like I was dirty or dumb. We talked a lot.

I Love You, Mommy

If I had to say something to someone else's mommy, I would like to say this, "Please remember that your child is sick. She might not be able to control her temper, but she is not really mad at you. She is very sick and it is too difficult to talk to anyone. She can hear you, but may not respond because she finds it hard to do so. Be patient with her and take good care of her."

Even when I was in the ICU, my Mommy still took care of me. I had to use a normal urine catheter and had to wear a diaper. The nurse didn't want the pee to go through my clothes and give me rashes. It was embarrassing and uncomfortable having to wear diapers that I would sometimes get mad at my Mommy. It wasn't Mommy's fault

but because I felt so uncomfortable with the diaper, the catheter and all the other tubes in my nose and arms, I would feel very annoyed.

I am very lucky because even if I sometimes made Mommy angry, she was still very patient with me. She took many days off from work to look after me. My Mommy took care of me. I love my Mommy, Daddy and Che Che.

When you are sick, you get upset very quickly. I was in pain most of the time, so I would always cry. It was hard to explain myself to people because it was difficult for me to talk. I was always in pain that it was uncomfortable even if someone would just touch me. I felt that I did not have to explain myself to anyone.

I know that people only wanted to care for me, but I can't help that I sometimes felt annoyed about everything. I was lucky though, because my Mommy never got angry with me. I apologised for my bad behavior and she loved me still. It was important for me to know that I am loved even when I am feeling bad.

It was very lonely lying in bed with no one coming in to visit. When I was very sick and couldn't get out of bed, or when I was in the hospital, Mommy and Daddy visited me as much as they could. My cousins also visited me and they made me smile. My school classmates never came to see me and later, when I did make some school friends, they also never came to visit me. We would WhatsApp and talk to each other, however, it was not the same as talking face to face, but at least I felt like they hadn't forgotten me.

I was scared a lot during the worst of the renal failure. I was especially scared before the surgeries. The surgery that I was most scared of was when they "changed" my kidney. Sixteen months after I was put on the kidney washing machine, the nurse phoned my Mom to say that I had to come to the hospital the next day because they had found a new kidney for me. The surgery started at 5PM, so I had the whole day to be scared. My Mommy stayed with me the whole time. She was holding my hand because I was so scared I was crying the whole day. I realised that I was making Mommy feel bad and I didn't want her to worry a lot so I stopped crying and put on my happy face.

When I was very sick, I needed people who would be nice to me and give me courage. I needed my parents, teachers, friends and doctors to encourage me and to tell me I would get better. The people around me gave me the courage not to give up. Because of my parents, cousins and doctors, I believed I would get better.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

Thank You, PISTA

My long-time sickness and the treatment that I got from my schoolmates before took away my self-esteem. Because I was sick for a long time, I doubted myself. When I joined the PISTA English course, I was shy and scared that nobody would like me. However, the PISTA team helped me to speak more, make more friends, take part in public speaking, and become stronger.

I am now in Primary 6 and I am better. I still see the doctors regularly and I still have to “eat” medicines, but a lot has changed since I joined the PISTA English team. The more I followed the PISTA team’s instructions, the more relaxed and less scared I have become. One of the problems from the illness was my memory. I use PISTA to study and learn. I find that I am more relaxed, I work faster and I am able to remember better. PISTA has also helped me overcome my issues with speaking in front of the class and in public. I remember in the workshop that I was too scared to speak because I might say something wrong. One of the other girls said, “You can’t fail here, you can only learn.” Knowing that I can try and keep trying until I am doing it the best I can makes me very happy. I am growing in confidence and I feel good about myself.

My schoolmates’ attitude toward me has changed. It may be because when we were little, the children didn’t know what was happening and neither did I. But now that we are older, the children treat me better. The students don’t care about the lumps on my hand anymore. If I touch something, they will also touch it. Now, if I pass my ruler to the person sitting next to me, she will take the ruler and use it. They are not scared of getting the “disease” that I have. They have learned that I am not going to make them sick or ugly. It makes me happy my classmates treat me normally now. They now ask me for a pen or my handbook if they forgot theirs.

Another thing I am very happy about is the activities at the PISTA workshops. Even if I cannot do the activity, the other children still want me on their team. These children make me feel welcome and make me feel that I belong to their team, and that is a very nice feeling. I enjoy taking part of activities and not feeling tired anymore. My coach lets me be a leader, which I love. I am allowed to lead in the workshops and in the PISTA events. I especially like the events

where I can practice talking in front of a lot of people. Everyone tells me that I am a good speaker.

A year ago, I never imagined that I could learn to be strong, or that I could be a confident speaker. I never imagined I could be happy and not be scared talking to adults. Now, I not only talk to adults, but when I lead my group at events, I give ideas that the adults think are good. I am very happy that I am in control of how I feel. I might be sick, but I am growing stronger and in control.

Kelly Lam has just become a teenager and has started her first year of secondary school. Since her kidney operation, she has enjoyed taking part in activities and playdates with her friends. She still does hospital check-ups, but she is happy with her progress.

Campus Market: Team Dauntless

By Elsa Tossé

We are dreamers. Paul and I graduated from the School of Advanced Engineering Studies of Lille with a desire to contribute to a circular economy and sustainable development. It was a big ambition, which we achieved through determination and with strong support from people who share our dreams.

Starting the project that will bring us to our goal was not easy. I am a thinker. I think things out a lot before I go into action. I am also a perfectionist who can get extra careful when embarking on new challenges that are important to me. Paul, on the other hand, is a doer. He discovered early in high school that conceptualising and launching projects give him energy and fulfillment. He likes to dream, and turning his dreams into reality drives him to full action.

Together, we found out that there are a lot of opportunities to make our dreams come true. We wanted to take advantage of what we learned in Smart Cities, a course that works on urban development that meets the needs of the environment, by launching a project that will help limit waste and overconsumption. This desire was further inspired after we attended a Zero Waste conference in 2017.

To start, we identified important events that take place regularly in campus and observed that a lot of furniture are left on the streets every year after graduation. Students leave the campus without an idea of what to do with their furniture. They have little or no time to properly dispose their old belongings so they end up leaving their furniture on the streets. This leads to pollution, overproduction and overconsumption of resources.

This yearly occurrence poses serious concerns for the city of Lille. Some locals complain about the resulting congestion on the sidewalks, and the collection of this waste brings real extra cost. In March 2017, there were 170 furniture that were abandoned in the Vauban district of Lille in a week.

Meanwhile, thousands of new students also move to the city every year and they buy furniture for their new homes. This activity also generates pollution, overproduction and the overconsumption of

resources. In addition, these students have small resources to buy expensive new furniture.

This concern led us to put up Campus Market, a service organization that collects the discarded furniture of students, who leave to search for new schools or to pursue internship in other cities, and resells these items at very low prices to new students at the start of the academic year. By providing this service, we intend to clean up the streets, allow students to fill up their apartments at a lower cost and promote reuse of commodities. We also wanted all the activities of Campus Market to be green and environment-friendly so we came up with the idea of collecting all furniture with bicycle trolleys.

Other groups and volunteers that share the same cause as ours soon joined our activities. Campus Market was awarded with the Deloitte, Veolia and Famae Foundation Awards and was the French representative in the World Cup Enactus 2018 in California's Silicon Valley.

When we started, we stored all the collected furniture in the storage room of the federation of students in the university. In 2019, we teamed up with Vitamin T Group to help us collect and store the furniture. This year, we doubled our collection and had a total of 125 cubic meters of furniture up for sale in the upcoming school year. This corresponds to an environmental impact of preventing more than nine tons of carbon dioxide from being released into the environment.

I did not imagine Campus Market would be this successful. We have expanded the reach of our services to Roubaix and other neighboring cities. All the work that our team has been putting in from the start sometimes overwhelms me. Thanks to PISTA, I am able to manage all the stress that comes with our work.

It was difficult to tell where we were going during the start of this project. It was at times scary for me. We were faced with a lot of opportunities that we did not know which opportunity to choose and which track to take. But, using PISTA eased all my fears and it helped us identify answers to the many questions that crossed our minds.

As for Paul, who admits to being a prudent person, PISTA helped him accept and enjoy the uncertainties of difficult projects, like Campus Market. He learned to take risks, accept uncertainties, and be confident in his decisions, no matter how venturesome they are. We are happy and grateful that we have the PISTA team to guide and coach us in conceptualising and executing our action plans.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

Two and a half years after the launch, we, at Campus Market, are now using our experience in providing support to students who want to start their own projects in the university. Every year, with Nova Palm Foundation, one of the organizations that work with PISTA, we identify from university graduates young entrepreneurs who are venturing into their own business startups. The foundation helps the startups in scaling plans and formulating strategies so they are guided toward proper growth, progress, and a well-managed business.

Life is full of unknown things. PISTA taught us that this is okay and that we don't need to anticipate and know everything before we jump to the unknown and take action. We just need to be brave and dive in because what is important is to just go ahead—to have no fear and live our dreams.

Elsa Tossé is the founder and fellow dauntless of the Campus Market. She and co-founder Paul are often seen gracing TV interviews and various news and feature articles because of Campus Market's success.

I Am Brave

Because I have accepted my strengths and limitations, I know that I can move things and bring forth positive change in me and the society.

“Nothing brings down walls as surely as acceptance.”

- Deepak Chopra

The Numbness Cure

By Larry Feign

One morning, as I was waking up from an anxious dream, I discovered that my hands were numb. Figuring I'd slept in the wrong position and that feeling would soon return, I calmly rose from my bed to go about my morning business.

How strange; my feet couldn't sense the tile floor. Devoid of feeling, they seemed swollen, even if they visibly weren't. Hobbling to the bathroom was like walking on balloons.

Figuring it was a pinched nerve, I consulted my doctor for a referral to a chiropractor. My normally gregarious GP scratched his chin and scribbled something onto a piece of paper.

"A pinched nerve won't normally affect both hands and feet. But if your chiropractor can fix it, we'll save a lot of trouble. Please ask her about this."

I tucked his paper into my shirt pocket.

The chiropractor was booked solid. Her first opening was a week from Monday, the day my wife and I were flying to Thailand to celebrate our thirty-fifth wedding anniversary with a 200-kilometre cycling trek around the Golden Triangle. I pleaded with the receptionist, who squeezed me in on Thursday.

By then, my condition worsened. My fingertips felt "burning cold", like when you stick your hands in the snow a little too long. My lips and tongue tingled.

The chiropractor was all twinkles and cheer while she put me through a number of manipulations, had me do specific stretches, then massaged the points where pinched nerves typically occur. By the end of the session, her smile had left the building.

"Larry, if it were a blocked nerve, you'd be responding to the treatment, but you're not. I think you have some systemic issue going on here."

I remembered the paper the doctor gave me, which I'd shoved in my wallet without giving it a glance. I fished it out for the chiropractor.

Her face pinched. "Yeah, unfortunately, that's what I was thinking. Do you know any neurologists?"

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

She handed back the paper, which I looked at for the very first time: *Peripheral Neuropathy*.

“We can postpone the trip,” Cathy said. “We don’t have to go right away.”

“We have to go.”

It had been our tradition every year to travel somewhere for our anniversary and incorporate cycling into the trip. Anyway, the holiday might distract me from freaking out. I was reading everything I could find about peripheral neuropathy, and Doctor Google was scaring the pants off me. Neuropathy is most commonly a side effect of diabetes. But I’d recently had my annual health check and was miles away from being diabetic. That left other possible causes, like a stroke, aneurysm, brain tumour, chemical poisoning, or most chilling of all, multiple sclerosis. Wheelchairs twirled before my eyes.

Neuropathy is an autoimmune disorder. It occurs when the immune system goes haywire, attacking the myelin sheath which coats our nerve fibres. The bare nerves then shrivel and die. Conventional medical wisdom says that damaged nerves won’t heal and dead nerves never regrow. Every reputable medical source says that neuropathy is irreversible, untreatable, and will eventually worsen. The only so-called “remedies” are potent pharmaceuticals for pain relief. Fortunately, mine had not progressed to the point of pain, except the paralytic fear that all this research was causing.

We made the trip. Cycling, even with numb fingers and feet, was no problem. With a private guide, we spent three full days cycling the back roads of Northern Thailand. The landscape was beautiful, food excellent, the exertion sent blood pumping into my extremities. Riding beside the love of my life, I forgot about my problem for a while. We enjoyed our anniversary dinner at a makeshift cooked food stall overlooking Laos across the Mekong River. I was happy.

Walking was the problem. One morning, crossing a busy street in Chang Rai, a car careened around a corner straight at us. My instinct, of course, was to run. I raised my leg, but it wouldn’t respond. Running involves pressing upward on the balls of your feet and shifting balance, sensed through the toes. I’d never understood what toes are for. Now I knew: they’re like cat’s whiskers and dynamos

combined, and mine weren't working. Fortunately, the car stopped in time, but my panic went on.

Back home in Hong Kong, I checked myself into the hospital. I was put through X-rays, brain scans, countless blood and urine tests, and vast periods of boredom, waiting and waiting and waiting some more for an audience with the neurologist. On the third day, I was summoned to the neurological examination laboratory. The neurologist covered me with electrodes, twisted my limbs, jabbed needles into my muscles, and jolted me with electric shocks for over an hour.

The diagnosis? Surprise! *Peripheral neuropathy*.

The tests all confirmed that my neuropathy was not a result of diabetes, vitamin deficiency, stroke, brain tumours, spinal injury, or multiple sclerosis. The doctor could tell me what hadn't caused it, but not what had. Which was why he wanted to do a nerve biopsy: slice off a small section of nerve for examination, which would leave a spot on my leg permanently numb.

"What difference will the biopsy make?" I asked.

"It will allow us to make a definitive diagnosis," he responded.

"Will that make a difference to the treatment?"

He sensed my scepticism. "Since you're not presently experiencing any pain, we won't recommend a particular treatment."

"Uh-huh. And there's no cure, right?"

"We can manage the pain if it comes to that, but as yet, there is no cure."

"I don't get it. No treatment, no cure. Can you please convince me what's the purpose of sacrificing another nerve?"

"Mr Feign, I see that you voluntarily admitted yourself to a hospital, presumably to diagnose your condition. Without a biopsy, I'm afraid I'll be unable to offer you a definitive answer."

"I'll think about it," I said. Without another word, the doctor walked out.

So did I. The lab tests and the neurologist told me all I needed to know: no MS or other serious health issues. Beyond that, they offered me no hope of getting my fingers and feet back.

Neuropathy affected not just my hands and feet, but my mind, career, and marriage. How could I meet my book deadline when I couldn't

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

manage a keyboard or a pen? There was so little conductivity in my fingers that I had trouble getting a touch screen phone to respond. I couldn't sleep. I lost all appetite. My wife was lovingly supportive, but as neuropathy flooded every pore of my existence, it threatened to drown our marriage in despair.

Neuropathy support forums offered little more than doom and gloom, trading tips not about cures but painkillers, every day the same topics: "Gabapentin or Lyrica?" "What can I take to end the torment?" People scoffed at questions about natural cures, assuring me that my condition would only get worse and worse until I was reduced to an immobile throbbing lump of flesh mainlining painkillers just like them. Woe-is-us!

"Cure Neuropathy" books told me nothing I hadn't learned from a day of web browsing. Specialist neuropathy clinics posted convincing YouTube infomercials boasting impressive results with their high-tech immersion baths, electrode-studded beds, and other devices operated by people in reassuring white coats. But the nearest clinic was 13,000 kilometres away. No one in my hemisphere seemed to know a thing about this terrifying disease.

I was on my own, my future a bleak shadow show of handicaps and suffering.

I couldn't imagine living the rest of my life like this. I couldn't imagine giving up and waiting for the pain to set in.

Well, then... *to hell with it!* To hell with whatever was devouring my nerves. To hell with doctors and clinics and "poor me" online forums.

I will cure myself!

I gave myself three months. I couldn't concentrate on my work anyway, much less type a coherent sentence. Setting aside all other projects, I spent all day every day working on my cure. One nutrient at a time, I followed the information trail and read every study, report, and personal testimony until my eyes crossed from the strain. My sources were scientists, rogue neurologists, naturopaths, traditional medicine practitioners from India, China, and Jamaica. Sadly, there is a lot of humbugs to be found on Doctor Google. Someone heard something somewhere, then someone else quotes it, and it becomes received as established fact. Weeding out the nonsense took up ninety per cent of my day. I cross-checked, verified, and compared notes.

Did you know that onion skins contain a powerful natural antihistamine? I learned all there is to know about Alpha Lipoic Acid and various herbs and remedies. The only reports I passed over were anything having to do with pharmaceuticals. My cure would be drug-free.

That went for my diet as well. Something inside me had been knocked out of balance. The first step was to cleanse and purify the system. Only real food would be allowed inside. Anything processed, from a can, with even a single preservative, colouring, or flavour enhancer was banned from my gut. From there I waded into the competing dogmas of anti-inflammatory diets. Vegan vs Paleo vs Keto—each made sense and none of them did. I essentially had to give up eating everything. Not a grain of sugar, no wheat (not just gluten-free, but wheat-free); in fact, make that no other grains. No dairy, eliminate nightshades (tomato, potato, eggplant, pepper), sweet fruits, and, well, almost everything else. And of course, no alcohol. It meant giving up everything I loved: Mars bars, soy lattes, ravioli drowning in tomato sauce, spicy eggplant casserole, spicy *anything*. I haven't eaten meat in decades and wasn't about to start, so my diet was reduced to sweet potatoes, cabbage, and a shrunken menu of bland things.

Cautiously, one substance at a time, I became my own lab rat, feeling my body's reactions—good and bad. Based on my own observations, I tweaked, added to, and deleted from my list, settling on a course of fifty—yes, 50—supplements each day, and a smaller variety of actual foods. I was a terrible dinner guest. But if it led to a cure, better to live without flavour on my tongue than without sensation in my fingers and toes.

Was it working? All my body's antennae stood at full attention, feeling for the slightest signs. Had the dead zones on my feet shrunk a little? Was one finger a teeny bit less numb when I got out of bed or was I just getting used to it? Somehow, I was sure I was on the right track.

Until I nearly fell down three flights of stairs.

Our house has four stories. Every day, I made at least fifteen effortless round-trips up and down sixty steps between my home office on the top floor and the kitchen at ground level. That was before the neuropathy struck. Now, I stopped to catch my breath and rub strength into my legs every five or six steps.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

One morning I walked upstairs carrying a large mug of coffee up to my office. Midway to the third floor, my legs quit. My one free hand held the rail but lacked the strength to support my body, and I felt myself teetering backwards, unable to bend over to set down the heavy glass mug. Hot coffee spewed over my feet. A few seconds more and I'd tumble downstairs. I yelled for help.

Fortunately, our cleaner was home and reached me in time, taking the coffee and helping me up to the landing.

I couldn't even carry a drink upstairs without crying for help. Whatever progress I'd imagined for my cure was wishful thinking. I had to turn up the treatment. I needed to nourish those weakened muscles, retrain the neural pathways. Maybe exercise would help.

By some cosmic stroke of synchronicity, a new gym opened that same week, which is a five-minute bike ride from my home.

Me? Set foot in a gym? Never in my life! I wasn't the testosterone-inflamed macho type who got a charge out of flexing his pecs. Wasn't lifting weights boring? But everything else in my life had turned upside down, so why not give it a chance? I signed up for six months and a stack of personal training sessions.

Tony, the gym owner and trainer, looked on helplessly when I couldn't complete a squat without falling on my face. A two-kilogram kettlebell was too much to lift. The humiliation was unbearable. This was the neuropathy's doing, of course. Until then, I hadn't been such a basket case.

Then the greatest thing in the world happened.

Tony put me through a set of warm-up stretches. One, called a Wall Angel, involves standing back against a wall then spreading your arms like wings until they touch the wall. It isn't easy at first, and you feel the stretch all the way up to your arms. After repeating it five times, I felt something else.

My fingers.

Sensation returned to all ten digits—just a little, maybe fifteen or twenty per cent. It didn't last long, perhaps a minute before full numbness returned. But it was real. Something in that particular manoeuvre stretched the nerves and opened the circulation. The implication was enormous. My nerves weren't dead! There was hope of recovery.

It got better. After forty-five minutes of the most strenuous exercise I could manage, I felt the blood pumping into the tiniest capillaries at my outermost extremities, carrying healing nourishment to my crippled but still living nerves. It was like the Wall Angel, only better. The feeling of recovery lasted a full half hour after the workout.

Exercise was the best medicine yet.

Whatever short-lived boost the workouts offered was tempered by the fact that life was a mess. Stuck at home in my little world of pills and bland food, there was no pleasure in my days. Cathy felt the pressure of being the sole breadwinner, and I think she got tired of our one-note conversations over dinner. With no other news to share, I lectured her about whatever supplement or exotic superfood I'd found in that day's research. I gave her much to worry about and little joy. Many nights I crept into the bathroom and turned on the tap so she wouldn't hear my crying.

I was scared. Despite my bravado and outward heroics, a lot of fear was stuffed way down deep where nobody could see it. Keeping the anxiety hidden, especially from myself, was the only way I thought I could persevere, but inside, the unreleased stress must have been burning up my nerves.

This insight led me to PISTA, a method based on sound vibrations which alter the brainwaves and entrain the brain. I was familiar with PISTA through my wife's psychology practise and had used it with good effect to help me sleep. I had also tried it several times with guided imagery, which dug up a lot of repressed feelings. My wife had been pushing me to try it for the neuropathy, yet I started out sceptical. PISTA is undeniably powerful for deep relaxation and psychological effect, but to physically repair nerves? On further thought, it began to make sense. First, I needed something to clear out the suppressed fear and all those stress hormones. Looking further, if PISTA can have such an acute effect on the brain, both physiologically and psychologically, it stands to reason that its effects will transfer throughout the entire nervous system, releasing blockages in the circuitry and rejuvenating the nerves down to a cellular level.

The way I began to see it, human health has four pillars: mechanics, chemistry, physics, and spirit. Modern Western medicine is based on mechanics and biochemistry. If something is broken or

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

diseased, patch it or cut it out; otherwise, apply drugs. But the nervous system is a vast network of circuits, synapses, and electric pulses which control everything from breathing and heartbeats to pain to memory, thought, and language. That sounds more like physics. What I had been doing until now with supplements took care of my biochemistry, and exercise was pure mechanics. PISTA appeared to be the biophysical pillar I was looking for.

At first, I wore the earphones all night. I was advised that it wasn't enough. I should use it during the day for at least eight hours. I resisted. Already two of my five senses were suppressed: I had no feeling in my hands and feet, and my taste buds had nothing to do during meals. Now I was supposed to confine my hearing to alternating sound pulses? I continued the all-night treatment and kept it going for two hours after I got up. During those morning PISTA sessions, I began to notice sensations that were new to me. I didn't feel the effects directly in my fingers or toes, but rather what I can only describe as a radiance, an electric hum which centred inside my skull and spread outward, like the sun emitting light. Yes, I imagined, biophysics at work. But two hours each day was all I gave it.

Meanwhile, I tried homoeopathy, energy healing, a TENS machine (a device which blasts electric pulses through the skin), and exotic food like lion's mane fungus, none of which seemed to do anything. One at a time, I dropped them but kept the supplements, diet, exercise, and PISTA going.

The final pillar of my self-treatment was the spirit. That didn't need much work. It never occurred to me that I wouldn't heal. Really. No matter how frightened or depressed I was, never once did I doubt that my body would return to its normal state.

All right, maybe just once.

I was on my way to an appointment in town. Walking from the ferry terminal into the heart of the city centre, my feet felt worse than usual, as though my socks were filled with coarse gravel. Sharp pains stabbed the bottom of my feet. The hand gripping my briefcase throbbed with that "burning cold" sensation, and I had to stop every fifty steps or so to catch my breath. Soon both feet hurt so badly that I couldn't walk another step. My briefcase dropped from my hand, and I leaned on a ledge for support, squeezing my face as hard as I could

so as not to be seen breaking down in the middle of a crowded walkway.

This was it, the pain they kept warning about on the neuropathy forums. It almost always begins in the feet. And once it starts, it never stops. Soon you can't walk, you can't sleep without massive doses of multi-syllable painkillers. It had been three months since I'd begun my self-healing journey, and the only progress was downward. My treatment was failing. I was an arrogant idiot to think I could cure myself with magic potions and sound waves.

Should I admit failure, check into a hospital, and ask for drugs? It was a brief ten-minute drive from where I stood.

Someone picked up my briefcase and placed it on the ledge beside me. He asked, "Do you need help?"

Good question. He could help me reach a taxi. The hospital could help alleviate my pain. The drugs would help me to endure. And give me god-knows-what physical side effects and put me into a brain fog that would end forever any chance of my continuing to write or draw, while my body slowly withered away.

Or I could help myself.

I thanked him and said I just needed a moment's rest. I turned around, gritted my teeth, and made it in time for the next return ferry.

Back home, I re-evaluated all four pillars of my therapy.

Chemistry: increased some supplements, cut back even more foods that may be remotely inflammatory.

Mechanics: Tony at the gym called me insane; I took the workout routine he'd composed for me and tripled it.

Physics: I turned up the PISTA to six to eight hours every day like I'd been told in the first place. I became accustomed to wearing earphones throughout the day, removing them in the evening so I could have normal conversations with my wife.

Spirit: I'd had a setback only, darkest before the dawn and all that. I was going to beat this.

Two or three weeks later, I was sitting in the living room reading a book. Something was different, something so small and insignificant that most people would never notice: I could feel the page edges brushing the little finger of my right hand. Running that finger across the sofa cushion, I sensed the texture of the fabric for the first time in months. With eyes closed, I tried the tile floor; yes, I could make out little bumps and indents in the stone-patterned ceramic.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

My hands shook so hard it took several tries to dial my wife's office number. She wasn't taking calls, so I left a message. When she called back later, I gave her the news.

"My little finger is back. I'm winning! *I'm winning!*"

It has been a little over a year since neuropathy disrupted my life. My hands are 100 per cent healed. Spots of residual numbness persist behind my toes, but these are hardly noticeable most of the time and don't affect my life. As a bonus, the pure diet, daily workouts, and other treatments, including PISTA, have made me stronger and healthier. I lost all my belly fat, gained muscles in my arms and chest that I never knew existed, and I'm more energetic and focused than I've been in decades. I'm acutely in touch with my body and can sense immediately when it is out of balance. Most of all, I've developed a newer, healthier, more thankful way of seeing the world.

The doctors were wrong. Conventional literature was wrong. The naysayers on Facebook were wrong, wrong, and wrong again. Instead of pleading for someone to fix me, I took ownership of my own illness. I took ownership of my cure. I took ownership of my own narrative. I didn't let anyone tell me the end of my story. Every time a treatment failed, instead of dropping into despair, I failed forward into the next cure.

The question I sometimes get is: Was I too extreme in my self-treatment? Could I have acquired the same effect with fewer supplements, a less austere diet, an hour a day of PISTA? Or might I have achieved a cure with supplements alone or PISTA only? My response to both questions is no, and no. A desperate illness requires extreme measures. Without my handfuls of pills, my kettlebell swings, or PISTA, I doubt very much that I would be able to write these words you've just read.

Larry Feign is an award-winning artist, animation director, and writer who has worked in Honolulu, Los Angeles, London, and Hong Kong. He is the author of numerous humor books for adults and children, and his work has appeared in Time, The Economist, the New York Times, and other publications. He currently lives on Lantau Island in Hong Kong.

The Challenges of Coaching

By Kerry-Ann Edge

There is a certain amount of frustration involved in self-development. We know that if we change some aspects of our lives, such as eating healthier or watching less TV, then our quality of living would improve. The problem is the gap between knowing what our desired goals are and the effort required by us to achieve those goals.

I know these conflicting emotions well. I have been stuck in this cycle many times. There is this gnawing feeling to change my imperfections. I want to be fitter. I want to be a better artist. I want to contribute to society more. However, the urge to relax and watch YouTube after a hard day's work can be so overpowering. I find it challenging to resist my desires of instant gratification. Yet, I know that if I don't resist, I would be in the same mental, physical, and emotional place year after year.

Being stuck in a rut that goes nowhere is not what I want nor what I want for others. As a certified PISTA coach, my job often puts me in very emotional situations that require different types of skill sets and attitudes. One of the things I find hard is watching someone else's struggle. My natural tendency is to jump right into the mess, protect my clients from suffering, and sort out everything for them. Unfortunately, doing this only makes the situation worse, and I find this difficult to accept because I genuinely want the best for all my clients.

The reality is, when I try to make a situation better, I take away my client's opportunity to face patterns and behaviours that got him in that situation. I take away his ability to learn. I make him dependent on me and give him the sense that he can't cope alone. As hard as it is to stay professionally detached from the situation, I have realised that driving change for him only reinforces harmful behaviours. I permit him to label himself as a victim and someone who is powerless.

This struggle between wanting to ease my client's difficulty and giving him an opportunity to grow is tough. Coaching isn't just about guiding the client on his journey; it also challenges my responses, reactions, and attitude as a coach. Often, my response to a situation reveals behaviour in myself that I need to deal with.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

When I need to speak about an emotion that I, myself, haven't dealt with, I try and steer my client to the direction that I think is best for me instead of for him. As a PISTA coach, this is an area that I have to manage correctly. I am not there to give advice, interpret situations, or analyse exercise results. I am only there to facilitate my client's learning and development. By sharing my opinions, I interfere with the processing of my client's mind as he finds his own solutions to the situation.

A young client finds his voice

A young client's situation in school reminded me of how real this struggle of maintaining a professional distance is. My client's school questioned his capability to continue his studies and graduate with a diploma. His grades were lower than what he is capable of getting because of the difficulty he has in written exams. If he would read the exam questions and answer out loud, he would pass. Whereas, if he would take the test in the exam room and write down his answers, he would score poorly. My role as his coach is to work with the school and his parents to ensure he gets the help he needed.

There is no student who wants his parents know that he can no longer continue his studies in school. When my client heard the news, he was distressed because he knew he had to tell his parents. He became anxious about an impending confrontation with them so the PISTA team helped him to prepare for it. Everyday for a week, he did exercises to help him manage his emotions and his fear of speaking to his parents. I helped him work on possible solutions that he could offer his parents.

There was no confrontation when he announced the unfortunate news to his parents. During their meeting, my client was able to keep his emotions under control and communicate his situation clearly. His parents were disappointed of how he handled his studies, but they were willing to listen. They agreed to find a way for him to finish his studies at his school. At the same time, they also understood that alternative options are just as valuable.

I wanted to tell my client how I thought he should deal with his situation, but I had to give him the space to explore his thoughts, behaviour, and attitude. The opportunity to independently assess himself allowed him to accept his role in the situation. As a result, he dedicated himself to completing all the PISTA exercises that were

designed to help him in this stage of his life. He worked through his emotions and identified possibly harmful communication patterns. When he finally spoke to his father, he kept his composure and directed the conversation. He was able to give his father a better understanding of his situation and received his support.

If I had jumped in and tried to ease the whole process for my client, he would have missed this beautiful moment of closeness with his father. He would have missed the opportunity to believe in his own strength and to discover his ability to handle the situation. It was through this situation that the complexity of being a PISTA coach became very clear to me. I had an increased appreciation of the importance of being a part of the PISTA team of experts who guides me in working with the school and ensuring that all possible solutions are explored.

Having the PISTA team's support in situations like this means a lot to me. The guidance that I got from this team of scientists and medical experts helped me gain the confidence I need in order to give my client the support that he needs. The team did not only help me get over my disappointments, sadness, and worries of being a coach. They also gave me full guidance in making sure that I am following the PISTA approach.

A husband makes his own discovery

I came to a fresh realisation of how my words influence the discovery of solutions during a marriage coaching session. As I guided the husband through the steps for his exercise, I had to consciously bite down on my tongue and stop myself from speaking every time a smart thought popped in my head. I kept quiet and secretly took pride in my ability to analyse his situation with depth and clarity.

Five sets later, the husband had a realisation that took him by surprise. It was a revelation and a turning point for him. Even I didn't see it coming and didn't think of probing toward the subject of his discovery. If I had not followed the PISTA approach of letting the client discover independently without my interference or unsolicited opinion, I would have directed him away from the insight that resulted in the pivotal change in his life.

The advantages of being in a team

One of the areas that I have personally struggled with is working within a team. I tend to work alone because, for many years, I have done things on my own. This changed when I became part of the

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

PISTA team. Being part of the team gives me access to medical professionals who willingly share their knowledge and experiences. My continuous growth and development is supervised by a psychologist who is part of the PISTA core team. As a PISTA coach, I am required to work on my clients' personal development everyday and to report the results to the team in order to maintain honesty and authenticity in my coaching.

Accountability and team participation are essential when dealing with success and loss. When my client finishes a course successfully, I feel an invigorating emotion that quickly turns into a sense of pride because I was a facilitator of my client's triumph. However, a client's success comes from their willingness to commit to the PISTA exercises and readiness to follow the approach.

The most frustrating aspect of being a coach, for me, is when my clients suddenly give up and stop the program. For different reasons, some clients quit even when they are making good progress and are near the goal they want to achieve. Sometimes, it is easy to take this as a personal failure and I start making a list of why I failed. Having the support of the PISTA team reminds me to regain perspective and understand that everybody has the invaluable freedom of choice.

The same kind of support is also what my clients receive when they enlist in a course or a coaching program with me. It is the same support that my young student client received when he made his decision on his next school. He wasn't alone anymore. He told me that the pain in his heart was no longer there because he knew that there are people who would help him. He felt safe. He felt like he belonged.

Facing my own challenges

Every coaching session challenges me. During one marriage coaching session, I worked with a wife who felt betrayed by her husband's actions. My natural reaction was deep sympathy for her and judgement toward the husband. She cried and talked a lot; however, the more she spoke, the sorrier she felt for herself and the angrier she got. The situation became more intense, too. I allowed her to talk about her emotions freely even if she only repeated the loop of negative thoughts in her mind. In fact, I thought that she gave me the rehearsed speech that she would always tell anyone who would listen to her.

None of what she said helped her or the situation. Her talk was only reinforcing her sense of being wronged and her right to feel sorry for herself. My sympathy or judgement wasn't helping as well; instead, it strengthened her behaviour pattern. If I would support and defend her, I would let her be a victim and not take responsibility for herself. If I would judge her husband, I would take away his opportunity to explore his behaviour and to discover factors that could have probably caused his behaviour.

As I struggled with my natural response to the situation, I realised that I needed to take myself out of the situation. By doing this, I allowed her and her husband to discover their strengths, weaknesses, forgiveness, and the path they wanted to take.

Again, this is where being part of a professional team is so important for my clients and me. I struggled with thoughts that I was hard and unemotional in the situation. I knew in my mind that I needed to provide a judgement-free environment but my heart felt like doing such would make me unsympathetic to the wife's emotions. I worked through this conflict with my own coach and understood why I identified with the wife. It turned out that she had triggered a deep secret fear inside of me which is being betrayed. This fear was not helpful in my life. Harboring a fear of being betrayed undermined my marriage and resulted in me wanting to protect myself from something I was secretly afraid might happen.

Being part of the PISTA team and using its methodology to coach my clients shaped me more than I anticipated. I expected to grow through the experience, but I didn't expect the depth of growth I needed to support my clients in their journey. After my experience of coaching and training with and without PISTA, I knew that I can't go back to my old ways of coaching. Now, my clients and I no longer have the gap between what we desire to achieve and our immediate actions. We can tell when our behaviour is not leading us toward our goals. We have the tools to bridge that gap and to keep moving to the direction we want to go to.

Kerry-Ann Edge is a certified PISTA coach and instructor. When not on her toes organising workshops and training individuals and teams, Kerry-Ann is busy creating things and painting.

The Corporate Environment: Stressful and Overwhelming

By Michael Edge

The Information Technology (IT) industry is facing a crisis. About ten years ago, IT was stagnant, with innovation controlled by large organisations innovating purely for financial gain as a way of staying ahead of the competition. These large enterprises would simultaneously run expensive marketing campaigns aimed at convincing organisations that they could not survive without the new technology. Today, we are facing a huge resurgence in true IT innovation spurred by an exploding open source software movement, web-scale global business models and technology, such as Internet of Things, Blockchain and Machine Learning. The combination of these technologies running on highly scalable Clouds enables new peer-to-peer business models that are disrupting the income streams of established businesses.

In this case, established does not necessarily mean traditional or long-standing. While it's clear that banks are seeing much of their business payments taken over by modern payment providers, even these modern payment providers are facing challenges from payment channels supported by cryptocurrency networks using decentralized peer-to-peer payments involving no third party intermediary. Airbnb, which has significantly changed the way we book accommodation, started with one listing in 2008, but in 2019, it has more than six million listings in over 190 countries. However, within only 10 years of operation, Airbnb is already experiencing a challenge to their model from companies such as beenest.com, which offers people a low-fee, peer-to-peer booking solution without a central party, such as Airbnb and its exorbitant fees. Uber, also only 10 years in operation, caused worldwide riots and protests in many cities by offering a superior taxi service compared to that offered by the local taxi mafia. They are now being undercut by peer-to-peer taxi systems operated on the Blockchain, such as Arcade City in Austin, TX, that do not involve a central company who knows (and sells) the details of every trip you take.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

Personally, I am all for it. Bring it on, I say. I want to see new, customer-focused business models succeed at the expense of those that have relegated their customers to third and fourth in the priority queue. For too long, the directors of these companies have used our money to fund their mansions and they have sold our data to fund their Maseratis.

However, as the world falls in love with IT again, the increasing demand for IT skills has resulted in a shortage of IT staff. This trend is worldwide and it is growing, affecting almost every developed and developing nation. According to the 2017 Manpower Survey, IT skills are one of the most difficult skills to find globally. This situation is more dire in Asia, where IT skills are at the top of the most wanted skills list. The skills shortage is especially noticeable in the areas of programming, Cloud and mobile, which are the foundational skills for any organization moving toward a digital future. Cloud skills consistently rank top of the most in-demand skills on LinkedIn.

You might think that a worldwide shortage of IT people would be a panacea for someone like me with over 25 years of experience in the industry, but a skills shortage typically manifests in two ways. A shortage of staff does not equate to a shortage of work. In fact, the growing shortage of staff comes at a time when there is a growing dependence on IT. Many large companies today are totally dependent on their IT systems for running their business, and many companies look to technology in order to gain a short-term competitive advantage in a highly disruptive marketplace. All of these mean that we, as IT staff, are overworked. The workload continues to increase unabated without a corresponding increase in the number of people to absorb and digest the workload, reducing the eight-hour workday to a distant dream from a utopian past.

A shortage of staff leads to an increase in demand with a corresponding increase in choice. Increased choice has a negative side, too. Employers pay more for less and end up with some staff who are distinctly unqualified for their roles. This lowers the bar inside an IT department and is stressful for other employees who take pride in their roles, as they have to step in and help their less-qualified colleagues. To rub salt into the wound, the less-qualified colleagues who joined during a period of high demand are probably earning more than the established veterans. Abundant choice itself is stressful. As

human beings, we do not cope too well with abundant choice; we are much better suited to choosing between a couple of alternatives.

Too much work

Overworking can be overwhelming. My work is not operational. It is not predictable nor is it repetitive. I work on the cutting edge of technology, which means I need to spend a lot of time thinking about how to achieve a particular technical outcome. Doing this for eight hours a day would be fine. In fact, it would be great. But I work in a corporate environment. Corporate environments do not have an intelligent designer who ensures a harmonious, balanced ecosystem that functions like a smoothly-oiled machine. No. They are a mishmash of personalities, each having his own agenda. Some people want to rule others, some want to earn as much as possible, some are trading water as they wait for the next bonus cycle, some want to attain the highest ranks, while others keep a low profile and stay out of the limelight. Some collaborate freely with everyone while others scheme, tear down, and manipulate.

The point is that, while workloads are increasing, corporate crap is also increasing to the point that some companies are achieving a mere 50% productivity among their IT staff. The rest of the time is spent in pointless meetings, reading useless emails, working on expense claims, timesheets, performance reviews, reports or other pointless administrative work. Add to this mix the need for corporations to demonstrate growing revenue numbers year on year, a need that forces every employee to become a salesperson to some extent, and you end up with an increasingly unproductive environment that somehow needs to conjure more revenue than it did the previous year. This type of corporation naturally worships the sales person who exceeds his or her quota while simultaneously passing more and more work to the IT staff who are pressured to deliver what the sales superstar is selling.

This is highly stressful. I need to achieve more but I have less available time. I need to be more productive and come up with more output from the same 24-hour day. Each hour spent in a meeting reduces the time I have to do meaningful work. To make it worse, technical work requires a mental context switch. After an interruption, I need time to get back in the zone before I can move forward and progress my design or my code, and this context switch sometimes takes 30 to 60 minutes. Because I work on three to four engagements

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

at the same time, I have to context switch two to three times per day. I am very good at focus, very good at single-tasking, but completely ineffective when multi-tasking.

With too much tasks at hand, a lot of questions started popping in my head. Why can't they improve their hiring process and get more people on board? Why do the sales people commit to something we can't possibly deliver? Why do people keep interrupting my thought process? Why do clueless managers keep asking me to do things I don't have time for? Can't they see I'm super busy?

Too much choice

Demand is currently outstripping supply in the IT market worldwide, which means I have too many job options. I can see your bemused expression. What is he complaining about when surely having options is a good thing? I would much rather have an abundance of choice than too little, but psychologically speaking, too much choice results in confusion, inaction and paralysis.

I recently changed jobs. I had four offers to consider, and they were all good offers. To add to the equation, I had the choice of five different cities I could live in, all of them in Asia and all of them cities I would happily live in. During the three-month period I had to consider these options, I would sway from one option to another, depending on my mood, depending on who I had spoken to that day, or depending on the weather. Negotiating the options was also not smooth sailing. We would reach agreement on one aspect and be unable to reach agreement on another, so instead of one offer standing head and shoulders above the others, the whole exercise became a complex analysis of pros and cons. I experienced three months of uncertainty and frustration.

The voices in my head were also on a roller coaster during this process. The contract for this offer should have arrived last week, what is the hold up? Is it that bastard, paper-pushing middle manager being obstructive again? What if that offer doesn't get approved? What if my visa application is unsuccessful? What if, what if, what if? PISTA

How does PISTA help me when I am overworked, or when I am overwhelmed by choices? More importantly, how does it help when my expectations are not being met and I am intensely frustrated with the seemingly illogical processes and irrational people?

In my experience, PISTA helped me cut through the confusion and gain a clear perspective of my situation. During stressful situations, I tend to see only the issues that are right in front of me, but PISTA helped me expand my mind and see the bigger picture. I came to the following realisations with the help of PISTA:

- In the span of my life on earth, what is happening right now is not that important; a year from now I'll probably have forgotten this situation.
- If I make the wrong decision now, I can correct it by making another decision later.
- It's okay to live with uncertainty. It's okay not knowing what tomorrow will bring.

While choosing among multiple job options during the first quarter of 2019, PISTA helped me clearly define and prioritise the important factors that I considered in weighing each option. Those important factors would naturally be different for everyone, but in my case, they included the following:

- The role allows me to focus exclusively on the areas and the technologies I want to focus on. I gain much more satisfaction being a deep specialist in two to three areas as opposed to being a generalist.
- The people I work and interact with are very important. I want to work with people with a can-do attitude who want to get stuff done, and who love getting around a whiteboard and discussing technology. I don't want to work in an isolated bubble. It would be even better if my colleagues are smarter than me.
- I want to be intellectually challenged. I want to ponder a problem in the shower and then wonder whether I actually washed myself. I want to grapple with a technical problem and have the satisfaction of eventually solving it, and I want to do this with others who are equally engaged in discussing and solving problems.
- Since bureaucracy forces me to report to a manager somewhere, I'd prefer one that leads rather than one who manages, one who works hard, who tries to set a good example, and who stays out of the way and lets me do my job.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

- I identified that working with someone who inspires me, while achieving something I consider meaningful, is the ultimate goal. Inspired people produce 2.25 times more than satisfied people (Mankins 2017) and they stretch and push you every day.

PISTA also helped me care less about certain situations. I cannot explain how it did this, but I managed to feel serene in spite of having no certainty of where I would be or what I would be doing in the near future. I gained an attitude of believing it would all work out one way or the other, and I started to focus less on my expectations. This resulted in me being more peaceful and less frustrated. At the same time, I felt more open to the possibility that if it works out differently from what I expected, I would handle it anyway.

Based on the factors above, I chose a job that gives me four out of five. One of these days I'll find that elusive five out of five opportunities; I know it is just out there somewhere.

Michael Edge works in the IT field as a BlockChain expert. He spends his time away from the buzzing corporate world by exploring various trails in nature reserves and mountains.

Stress Is Not the Enemy: A New Approach to Stress Management

By Dr. Cathy Tsang-Feign

As a clinical psychologist, people often ask me, “Don’t you experience stress working with so many people?” or “How do you deal with listening to so many types of problems?”

I do sometimes feel the burden of my clients’ issues, but that does not necessarily mount to real stress, as I have practiced managing my stress over the years.

The next thing people ask is, “What should I do to deal with my stress? What method should I use—meditation, yoga, exercise?”

The answer is, before you do anything, you must understand what stress is. However, it may surprise you because stress is not the enemy; you, yourself, may be your own worst enemy. It is crucial to understand how stress manifests in your life, and what purpose it serves, before searching for a cure.

Stress is like filling a bottle. A one-liter bottle can hold a maximum of one liter of water. Add even a drop more and the bottle overflows. Generally, people can handle a certain level of stressful input without adverse effects. Scientifically we refer to this capacity for stress as the “allostatic load” (McEwen and Stellar, 1993). If an individual is repeatedly exposed to stressful situations beyond what he or she can handle, then the allostatic load will be strained. This ultimately leads to elevated endocrine or neural responses which manifest themselves physically. The individual will experience high levels of physical sensation which we call stress. This can come in various forms, such as anxiety, agitation, shortness of breath, tension within the body, acid reflux, and so on.

In our day-to-day life, we are bound to experience certain levels of stress, but how do we know when the stress level is approaching our built-in capacity to manage it before it turns into an allostatic overload? We have a built-in alarm system that helps us detect stress. It gives out warning signals when it exceeds the limit. This alarm system is our body’s natural response, which we rely on, to keep us emotionally balanced and healthy. Too often people ignore, mask, or even undermine those signals. In doing so, we lose important signs

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

which help us pinpoint the root of our own psychological or medical problems.

I play detective as my way of dealing with my own stress. Let me use my occasional bingeing as an example. When I write a difficult report, I sometimes drag and resist. I distract myself by searching for snacks instead of buckling down to do it. As the process prolongs itself, I become more anxious and therefore unable to start the writing, even when I know that the deadline is nearing. My anxiety can show up in the form of shortness of breath, tightness in my shoulders, and upset stomach. All these physical responses cause me uneasiness, so I find ways to distract myself or procrastinate, which, for me, means searching for snacks. I learned through my own observations that when my stomach feels uncomfortable and empty between meals, it does not necessarily mean I am hungry, but that I am experiencing a stressful episode which should be dealt with.

Without such awareness, I might fill my stomach through bingeing. The bingeing and procrastination, in turn, only exacerbate the level of stress. Eating neither makes the stress disappear nor resolves it. Other people in similar circumstances may have a drink, lie down, or go for a short run to answer that physical urge which comes from the anxiety. The physical need may be satisfied, but the stress behind it is made worse. For me it is craving for snacks. For others, the early warning signs of excess stress can include shortness of breath, grinding teeth, stiffening of the body, knots in the stomach, frequent urination, etc.

With over 30 years of clinical experience, I have witnessed a variety of stress manifestations in individuals, including panic attacks, insomnia, migraine headaches, stomach problems, such as acid reflux or ulcers, hair loss, bingeing with food, alcohol or other intoxicants, frequent vaginal infection, irritable bowel syndrome, jaw tension, back and spine problems, and hypertension. Furthermore, when many of these physical symptoms persist or go unnoticed, they may sometimes lead to serious illnesses, such as heart disease and breast cancer. All of these can be part of our built-in alarm system, which is meant to alert us for some deeper problems. If we start paying attention to the alarm signals and addressing the causes which trigger the alarm, then stress and its symptoms can be reduced or removed. What can we do when the alarm system is disconnected?

Unfortunately, the most common way of addressing stress is to “beat” the symptoms as if they are the problem—using medication, alcohol, recreational drugs, games, submerging themselves in work, or other forms of distraction. People are terrified of the physical responses, especially when they occur frequently. They become hypervigilant toward the next worse “attack.” For example, when they experience heart palpitations or tightness in the chest area, they rush to a hospital for fear of having a heart attack.

This is where the problem lies. Most people block the alarm by various means or let the alarm trigger frequently, making the stress alarm go into automatic mode and leaving it on all the time. Essentially, we need to reinstate the built-in alarm system and use it properly to ensure that our stress level does not overflow or become ignored.

Stress Management and Psychotherapy

When seeking therapy for stress, people often choose either a pharmaceutical approach of using medication to lessen the symptoms, or natural remedies such as teas, oils, massage, or yoga to relax themselves. Again, both approaches are geared toward symptoms removal rather than toward solving the underlying cause of the stress. While symptoms alleviation can be beneficial to some people, neither method treats the causes of stress whether it is short- or long-term. The person only becomes reliant on drugs or herbs to continue to blanket the symptoms.

In traditional stress management programs, trainers usually list down what people should or should not do in order to manage stress, in addition to teaching different exercises or methods to alleviate the stress as it occurs. We psychologists usually take a further step to determine and analyse the cause of stress and what needs to be done by utilising various psychotherapeutic methods, depending on the psychologist. Psychologists believe that there is a root cause of stress, and that stress manifestation in the body is, in fact, emotionally driven.

There is an emotional element that triggers our body to respond to stress. Take anxiety for example. People who experience anxiousness usually know what they are experiencing because of the strong sensation in their bodies, such as shortness of breath or jittery feelings. Whether or not these people try to figure out what is behind the physical manifestation, the sensation still persists. In reality, the

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

physical alarm gets triggered for a reason and simply ignoring or pacifying the symptoms does not make the stress go away.

Attitude toward Stress

In order to assist individuals to reduce stress by figuring out the emotional tie, it is crucial for the psychologist to figure out the type of attitude a person has toward stress. My own attitude toward stress also helps me manage stress easier. First of all, I know that stress symptoms are meant for me to notice; therefore, I should neither casually dismiss nor fight them. Furthermore, I do not get frightened because I know my body well. If there is any sign of misalignment, I should learn to work with it and figure out what is going on. This is the time I will listen to my “body alarm” and connect my mind and body in order to get to the root of my stress.

I do not imply that we can always treat our own illnesses without seeking help from health professionals. However, stress is a psychological and emotionally-related issue, which requires a different approach compared to a general medical condition. While medications may offer temporary relief, only the mind can heal itself.

Examine Your Own Attitude toward Stress

The common rationale why people rely on medications, like anti-anxiety drugs, beta blockers, or psychotropic drugs, to subdue the symptoms is because they do not believe anything else can be done or they are so afraid of the symptoms, they just want to numb themselves. Their attitudes include:

“I don’t know what happened to me, so I turned to my doctor for a solution.”

“I am scared of what my body is doing, so I took medication to control it from getting out of hand.”

“I know my over-thinking and worrying cause me stress, but I can’t change it.”

“I have a demanding job and stress comes with it, so I just have to press on.”

These attitudes make people not only feel trapped but also helpless. The path they often choose to “manage” their stress is not sustainable unless they can get to the core of the issue.

I have taught stress management and used many different modalities to assist clients regain their balance and reduce stress. The most important step is to reconnect their body and mind so that they

can shift toward approaching life issues differently. This approach will naturally lessen the stress levels or at least keep the stress to a manageable level.

PISTA

In recent years, I have adopted a new method for stress management that provides clients with good results—this is the PISTA approach.

PISTA has many different applications. Beyond treating stress issues, I find it particularly useful in treating clients with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PISTA utilises brainwave feedback and brain entrainment to reconnect blockages caused by various mental and emotional states.

Clients who are receptive of the PISTA treatment and are able to absorb the sound frequency generally find themselves calmer. They tend to recognise some faulty mental activities in their brains, which the frequencies help correct. At the same time, they become more aware of their body responses. As the treatment proceeds, and often within the same session, the clients gain a better perspective of what is blocking them in terms of emotional changes. Once they gain these insights, they naturally become more open to change with support from the therapist.

Another important step that can be easily achieved by using the PISTA approach is connecting the body response with the clients' feelings and emotions. At the same time, the changes in thinking or mental states open the individuals to view their stress differently. They will adopt a new approach in handling stress and related issues.

It is important to note that with PISTA, the changes people undergo are not so much guided or instructed by the therapist, but genuinely come from within. This is the direct result of the effects on the mental activities inside the brain. This is a crucial part of any individual's development; further changes and improvement will continue as part of the person's life journey.

Over the years I have deployed many types of methodologies and modalities in working through psychological and emotional issues with clients. Often, it will take quite some time for people to get to the point of awareness and openness to change. However, I found that by using PISTA, I can achieve the same or much better results within a shorter time frame, and sometimes even within one or two sessions. This is a truly remarkable tool for me as a psychologist.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

Not too many individuals lead a completely stress-free life. While I am assisting clients to handle their issues and stress, I am also mindful to manage my own. Not only have I adopted a healthy lifestyle of exercise, diet, and maintaining a positive attitude and sense of optimism, but I also practice using PISTA daily on myself. PISTA sound frequency keeps me balanced and cleanses me of negative emotional activities. This is becoming a lifestyle rather than a way of dealing with problems.

Dr. Cathy Tsang-Feign is a clinical psychologist known for her expertise in expatriate psychology and adjustment. She has worked with businessmen, diplomats, and their families living in Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America for over 25 years. She loves gardening and is the author of the book Living Abroad.

I Will Go On

No matter what happens, I will thrive. Life goes on with hope.

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”

- Winston Churchill

A Life of Victories, Losses, and Change

By Françoise Béguin

In life, you undergo a series of ups and downs. Even when you think you are the most balanced person in the world, you go through storms and turmoil, too.

Growing up is managing to live through these difficulties without getting broken. You become stronger after absorbing each shock that comes and hope that you become sturdier for the next one. These life incidents accumulate, and some are more important than others. When you look back, you realise that you have lived to survive all of these. But the question stands: did these events really make you stronger to carry on?

Your life journey is like being in a pinball machine. In this scenario, you are the ball being kicked from one side of the machine to the other just to score points. You are the victim of a player addicted to scoring points. Every time you shook around, you are veered off your track inside the machine. The only time you can feel peace is when you roll down to the starting box where you have to wait for the player to have another go at you—to be kicked and shaken repetitively—until the game ends.

This is My Journey

The day my older brother left home, after a fight with my parents, was the day I started to wake up to reality. His departure felt like a strong wave that hit me. He was only seventeen when he moved out, and we did not see him for a year. I was the only one whom he wrote to and acted as the messenger between the family and him. I was twelve back then and thought my older brother was exploring the world, away from our little primitive town. He was not around but was very present in my life. I remember how happy I was to receive letters from him. It took a long negotiation between his friend and my parents before he came home. He was not ready, and even delayed his return for a few times.

It was winter when I heard there was a car from the south of France in the other village. In my mind, no one around here could have that car so it must be my older brother because he was living in the south of France. Then I heard his name. Finally, he was back!

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

There was deep snow around the village, but I did not mind. I ran as fast as I could to see whether it was really him. I was the first one to see him after such a long time.

We were so happy to be together again. We chatted about a lot of things—his trip, his ideas of life, his drawings at Les Beaux-Arts class, the music he was listening to, and so on. For a little girl like me, all of those things were a lot to process, but the happiness of having my brother back was more important. Our closeness was still there, and I felt complete. From then on, I was sure he would never go.

That was what a little girl of twelve years thought at that time. But now, everything has changed and will stay that way for life.

Moving Forward, Growing

I was always inspired by my brother—whether it be on a philosophical, artistic, or musical level. I followed his every move. He remarked that I did not have much personality, that I was just copying and repeating what he was saying and doing, but that did not trouble me at all. I was under his influence, and I'm comfortable learning from him. I felt I had a master despite us having different directions in life. That time, I was joining skiing competitions during the winter and travelling around Europe in the summer while he was building a family and trying to settle down.

One day, after his 27th birthday, I got a call telling me that my brother was dead. The feeling of abandonment, that I have long since buried, crept in. I felt abandoned again. I knew from that moment that I was on my own. I had to go away, to go somewhere else and start a different life because the life that I was living then was not the real me. It was a wake-up call. My brother showed me that life was short and I should not lose time. I had to find who I am. And for that to happen, I had to grow and be on the road again, but on a bigger scale, not just short trips to England that I managed to do for a while.

I decided to go to the United States alone. At that time, I wanted to be far away and also to fulfill a childhood dream. Of course, looking back now, it seemed silly. But in the year 1980, when there was no Internet nor mobile phones yet, travel to another continent all by yourself was a big feat.

I returned to France after six months of travelling around the US. I felt better, different, and more mature. I had the satisfaction of achieving something, and now, I was ready to build my life. In fact, I

felt so powerful and believed that I could do anything I wanted to do. I came back to my world of professional skating and underwent training sessions in slalom and speed skiing. No matter what other people thought, I continued to put a lot of energy in teaching skiing in winter because my goal was to score the best numbers of teaching hours and compete at the international world championship. I was receiving records, victories, and respect from people in my field. I was at the top of my game.

Everything went smoothly for years, but I realised that my life of world records and my so-called personal achievements did not satisfy me. I needed to develop intellectually, connect with a different world, and grow with friends that have nothing to do with my world of sports.

I continued my search for intellectual development. I tried to meet a lot of people at work. I built strong and deep emotional relationships with notable personalities in the world of psychology, art, fashion, and cinema.

After many years, I finally struck the right balance between personal achievement and ambition. I was proud of who I became. Of course, throughout this long journey, I encountered waves that I needed to face, shocks that I had to absorb, storms and turmoil that I needed to survive. I felt silly to discuss these things with other people, even close friends, because I thought what I was experiencing were minor and manageable emotions. This changed when I heard someone mention the word toxic emotion.

A Series of Unfortunate Events

Toxic emotion. It was the right word that described what I have felt all those years. Putting a name to the emotion gave me a certain feeling of peace.

I was diagnosed with Hodgkin disease in my early thirties. This disease is a type of lymphoma, which is a cancer of a part of the immune system called the lymph system. I underwent heavy treatments and long chemotherapy sessions, which made me sick for at least six months. I remember being so ill during the treatment that I lost a kilogram off my body weight every day. Luckily, after six months, everything was back to normal, and I was back to competing and winning my first world cup in the next winter.

I was quite naive back then to believe that one gets cancer because it runs in the family. I thought it is only the fruit of hazard or sheer bad luck. However, looking back to this period in my life with

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

the strength and knowledge I have today, I can see clearly that, even though sports helped me to grow, I have accumulated a lot of stress from my long career in competition.

There was also a lot of stress in my family life—violent incidents, aggressive discussions, and turbulent relationships that pushed me to disconnect from myself. I felt disconnection whenever I was in a group of people; I never felt that I was part of it. Even though I was easy to be with—due to my experience in holiday camps, training camps, and my adaptive nature—I always felt different and not in tune with others especially when I was younger.

I also observed that I could not manage to be in a group. I needed my own privacy. I wanted strong and deep relationships with individuals rather than the whole team. Therefore, I became more selective in choosing the kinds of relationships I wanted to be in.

My father's accident years ago was another challenge that I had to face. I got a ring from the hospital at 3AM and was told that my whole family got into a car accident on the highway. I drove nine hours all the way from my home on the French west coast just to see them.

My father was in a coma. According to the doctor, his spine was damaged from the accident and, even if he could survive his operation, he would live his life in a wheelchair. I remember these words clearly. I knew I had to take charge of everything. It was going to be a long fight to keep my father alive.

I moved to the city where the hospital was, rented a flat, and spent hours taking care of my father. He took a number of medications that it seemed that he was in a different world. His lungs were severely damaged from the accident and could not sufficiently supply oxygen to his body. Sometimes, he needed oxygen support so that his lung cavities would open up.

This experience was a torture to me. The memory of myself holding down the mask transformed into an image of myself murdering him with a pillow pressed down on his face.

I held my father's hands and asked him to accept life and to live for us. The thought of having to go through another day and another session of getting oxygen in his blood to just make him come back to us drained me. I was immeasurably happy and thankful when the

sessions stopped and my father came back to life with his smile and a nice tan.

Looking back on my life, at this pinball machine that has played me harshly non-stop, I realised Looking back on my life, at this pinball machine that has played me harshly non-stop, I realised that I never had so much time in the starting box where I felt at peace—my game went on non-stop.

Learning My Game

Strange things troubled me as the game called my life continued. I realised that I could not stand the wind around my house. The unsteadiness of the breeze that went through the house bothered me. I checked my windows regularly to close them. Having wind outside, in a big, open space like the sea, was okay. However, having wind inside my house is a whole different thing. It made me panic and gave me a feeling of not being safe. The truth was that I was inwardly feeling insecure.

I was introduced to PISTA about 20 years ago, in my forties. In the beginning, I was not so convinced by this method because, first, it was hard to admit that I had problems. I always managed to cope with my daily troubles and pretended that everything was normal. Second, I believed in more traditional ways of treatment through words, in-depth explanation, and going back to one's childhood. However, I kept an open mind because I had a lot of respect for the researcher who invented PISTA. I started to follow the progress of different cases and traumas of PISTA users with interest and was impressed to see that PISTA helped them a lot.

I continued my internal learning as I was lucky to be associated with the PISTA team. I even learned to give assistance to many sessions. In my mind, PISTA will be the next approach that could save a lot of people from taking drugs and being dependent on long therapies. I thought that it is only a matter of developing the system and making it accessible to everybody worldwide.

After many years, I learned more about others and myself with PISTA. I could now identify and acknowledge the kind of phobia and discomfort I had. I learned that being strong was not enough. I have to accept my emotions and discomfort if I really wanted to get rid of anxiety, stress, and physical pain, and to live a better life.

I used to wake up at night feeling suffocated. I didn't want to go back to sleep for fear of losing control of my breathing during sleep. I

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

also used to panic inside enclosed places like the airplane and has the desire to vomit after eating vegetables like aubergines. Now that I am using PISTA intensively, all the anxiety, fears, stress, and physical pain that I felt before are now gone and will never come back. PISTA helped understand that these feelings and behaviours are connected to the emotional events in my life.

A Change Worth Sharing

I always share my experience of PISTA with other individuals and encourage them to try it. I can never be grateful enough to PISTA for helping me and other people who are in the same state of misery as I was in. PISTA made my life more energised, precise, and focused, especially now that I am growing old. PISTA is like my protector, putting things in the right order and perspective, giving me a clear path and future.

Now, I can regulate my emotions and the unnecessary excitement that drives me in a deep state of deception. PISTA gave me so much energy in everything that, sometimes, I feel I am living in reverse by getting younger every day. Actually, I am not the only one who noticed this. Thank you, PISTA support team!

Françoise Béguin is a world ski champion. Her life-changing experience of PISTA moved her to incorporate psychological elements in ski training. She invented the PISTA Ski Program and has been a trainer and advocate of advancing sports performance through PISTA for 25 years now.

To Embrace and Let Go

By Dr. Gary Yang

Having control is the goal of all of mankind's endeavours. Whether it be control of the smallest atoms, the vast expanse of space, the future, our choices, and ultimately, our lives. Arguably, the most challenging thing to control is, in fact, ourselves; our thinking, our mind. I learned that all of my problems happened because I wasn't able to control myself. The consequences are painful and regrettable.

Why is it so difficult to have control? How do I control myself? Can I turn back time and make the right decisions? I want to share with you my story of how I lost control.

I was a young, immature boy. There was a time when I did not know what was right and wrong or what was good or bad. I was ignorant; no one taught me. Life has not taught me yet. As I grew during my university years and when I started my career, I thought I worked out a sense of what was right and wrong. I thought I found the answers and knew how to define things in black and white. I thought I knew what I wanted, what I should fight for, what my goals and dreams are.

Then, I faced the realities of life. I met the love of my life and had the most precious family. I was excelling in my career as a young doctor. My life looked perfect, and it was perfect. However, everything turned upside down in an instant. Now, my family, career, mind, body, and spirit are shattered. Everything I valued disappeared. Everything I thought I knew was questioned and challenged. Did I really know what was right and wrong? I was confused. Nothing was black and white anymore; everything was grey. I did not know what I wanted. I lost direction. I thought I was standing on solid ground, but in reality, it was quicksand. As I sank, I spiralled and lost control until I became a wreck. I was ashamed of what I had become.

A special mention goes to control of words. The power of the tongue is immense. Words can be simple and few, but what we speak can be a destructive force that may cause tremendous pain. These effects can last not only days or weeks but for years and even a lifetime. There are many times when I have been quick to speak, and I immediately regret it. It takes enormous effort and healing to reverse

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

the effect of even a single offensive remark. In the opposite direction, I have been triggered and stirred by particular criticisms and provocations to the point that I lost self-control. Ultimately, I was controlled by external views and words against me, which drove me to my deepest and darkest depression.

Where, when, and how did everything go so wrong? I am the only one who can answer that question. For a long time, I tried to figure out how I lost control, but I cannot find an answer. How can I get my life back on track? Now, it's slowly dawning on me. I missed a lot of the warning signs until it was too late.

I had no idea that I was losing control. I lost control when I thought I had it. I believed that I was confident, but it was actually fake confidence. I was proud and arrogant and wanted life to go my way. I thought I was always right. This made my pride a burden for me and those around me, especially my family and the ones I love most. The most horrifying aspect is that I believed I was doing good, that I was on the right track, when, in fact, I was actually causing harm and pain in ways I did not realise and could not imagine. I was wrong, but I was in denial. I had to admit I was not in control. I did not make the right decisions; instead, I made a lot of mistakes. Realising all of these drove me to the dust; I lost my mind and hit rock bottom.

Using PISTA, as well as other factors, slowly led me to the light. I knew I had to change and give up my desire for control. Once I did, it was unexpectedly liberating. I did not have the pressure to force everything I thought was right. New doors and opportunities opened up in places where I used to consider as out of my comfort zone. I can allow the world to flow and let life take its course. The effects of giving up control were actually opposite to what I feared.

When I accepted that I was not in control, through the help of PISTA, I realised what I really wanted. I discovered what I truly enjoy and value rather than create empty desires that cannot be filled. My path and direction became more apparent. The actions I needed to take became more straightforward, more precise, and more logical. In the past, I created many outer layers to give an image of control. In giving up myself, I actually found myself. I peeled off the layers to discover who I really am.

Despite my transformation, the process of giving up control is no doubt painful. It is a dramatic change in my life. Let no one tell you this is easy because this is, by far, the biggest challenge I have faced. It is an unnatural and counterintuitive thing to do especially when you are vulnerable, threatened, weak, and in fear. How can you have faith and trust that giving up control will actually be the key to gaining control of your life? The most challenging part is the first step of realising the need to do so. Then it takes tremendous strength to have the humility to admit that you cannot determine what is right and wrong. It is incredibly difficult to truly listen and accept another point of view as equally or more valid than yours. Finally, you cannot imagine the risks and fears of finally letting go. This is why the use of PISTA, along with other support that you can rely on, is absolutely necessary during this period of transition.

I do not want to give the impression that we should float in a world of chaos, and that we are swept about by randomness and chance. We do not apathetically give up when hardships and challenges come. Of course, we need to shoulder our responsibilities and grasp every opportunity. We need to work hard to build the future that we desire. Instead, this is what I have concluded: we should accept that we cannot control nearly as much as we think we can. It is a delusion to do so. There is order and control in our world and in our lives, but it is not up to us. An omnipotent, omnipresent power is required to control the universe and all that exists. Our mind and level of understanding are simply inadequate to manage the complexity that is life.

Trying to force our own control will actually cause more harm and failure. If we embrace letting go of control to achieve control, we gain a sense of freedom and empowerment that will allow us to reach our fullest potential. So much pain, conflict, frustration, and burden can be avoided. I thought I had lost what I have built over the years, but I gained maturity, understanding, and self-discovery.

I draw on my experiences and failures and plead to others not to make the same mistakes. The problems with my family, career, and mind are still ongoing, and there is no guarantee that they will be resolved. However, through my darkest days, I was given the most incredible love, support, and understanding from people close and far. These dear friends and family, in addition to the use of PISTA, helped me identify where I went wrong. Even though I realised my

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

mistakes too late, I am grateful that I have taken the first steps to redemption and reconciliation. After all the past pain, regrets, and mistakes, I now have a clearer path to follow and move forward.

Dr. Gary Yang is a medical doctor who specialises in Emergency and Intensive Care. He is currently the instructor for Basic ICU Course for undergraduate medical students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Keeping Up with A Childhood Experience

By Selina Chan

A working paper by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child states that there are studies showing that experiencing abuse and exposure to violence during childhood can cause fear and chronic anxiety in children and that these states are dangerous and trigger extreme, prolonged activation of the body's stress response system. (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010).

Adverse childhood experiences are important determinants of psychiatric disorders. Exposure to these fearful circumstances affects the areas for emotions and learning in the young and developing brain. Maltreatment, environmental deprivation, family violence, and mental instability of parents create persistent and even lasting detrimental effects on a person's well-being. (Nelson et al., 2009).

I have been practicing clinical psychology for 30 years, and have seen how childhood adversities negatively impact the quality of life during adulthood. The cases I have worked on reflected how unfavorable childhood experiences affected the development of the juvenile brain during its most critical period. I have observed that toxic stress that adults go through originate from a childhood experience.

I have also learned the importance of raising children in supportive families with good parenting. Nurturing children in a safe and secure environment is good for mental and physical growth.

However, the reality is that not all children are blessed with the chance to grow in an ideal environment. Many children are exposed to harmful circumstances. Some experience trauma once in their lives, while others are repeatedly subjected to these circumstances. Both situations have the potential to damage how children learn, solve problems, and relate to others. (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010).

Coping with My Childhood

I, myself, had a traumatic childhood experience that I would like to share.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

I developed emotional numbness during my childhood. I distanced myself from others and thought that maybe, if I avoided them, it would be easier to deal with the jungle of emotions inside me. I hid and denied my pain which rooted from the complexities of my situation—I have a missing right index finger.

I was barely four years old when I lost my finger. It was a normal day that has gone very wrong for both me and my mother. She was having a hard time dealing with her temper so she channeled her anger on me and shoved me out of the house. I did not understand what was happening so I resisted being pushed out and held on to the door frame. What happened next went by really fast like a bullet train. Mother slammed the door shut while my fragile, little girl's finger was stuck between the door and the frame. Cut.

My naive mind thought that Mother treated me violently and Father was a hypocrite. I grew up going through more traumatic experiences that were too toxic for my young brain. Some say that being neglected, as compared to being abused, brings more adverse effects to one's well-being. Whichever is worse does not matter to me because I experienced both.

Every day, I was a walking zombie. I was completely disconnected from my emotions. As a child, I was always verbally abused. I became the laughing stock of people who derived pleasure from making fun of other people.

Numbness made me go through all these experiences in limbo. I was oblivious that I have already walked into an abusive relationship and have allowed others to maltreat me. Indifference helped me shut down my anger, fear, and sadness. I started to need less energy to cope with unwanted emotions. I felt less drained.

I also shut down my ability to feel joy and love. I lost my innocence and ability to trust others, and then I developed fears—I feared unpredictable events that overwhelm me and relationships that I could not manage. The emotional neglect that I suffered during my childhood made me withdraw from life silently and nurture very strong and dangerous emotions.

The Road to Self-Discovery

When I was transitioning from childhood to adulthood, I suffered from a negative image of being physically incomplete. I longed to belong to a supportive group of friends, but also felt pressure from the

need to be normal like other people my age and to conform to their different expectations. I needed someone to be my hero. I needed help.

I began to experience health problems in my adult years. My brain became dissociated from most things in life and I started to say things that I did not really mean. A roller coaster of ups and downs paralysed me. There were moments when I felt I was on a high, but everything always became a muddled mess after.

I sought different kinds of help. I joined group therapy work, solicited advice from a priest in church, and underwent the typical counselling work. All these did not work for me. By the time I discovered PISTA, I was already facing an adversity that seemed a lot bigger than me.

PISTA is very different from the classic methods of therapy. I was given my own space to process my emotions and to work on my mess at my own pace. I achieved self-rediscovery with very minimal intervention from my coach. With her stable and loving support, my coach guided me as I processed my trauma and learned to face the consequences of my early childhood adversity.

This process of self-discovery made me understand that there is no perfect condition at home nor an absolute set of guide for parents and children. Internal struggles, like maternal emotional problems, household conflicts and some degree of childhood domestic adversities, are common experiences of children. Parents have their personal difficulties and extend anger to their children. They rage because of stress from their work or marital relationship. Punishments sometimes become harsh and violent and my childhood home was not an exception to this.

Gaining Emotional Strength

Because of PISTA, I learned that dealing with my traumatic experience is an important skill that makes a healthy mind. PISTA showed me that having sympathy and compassion for myself reduce my pain. I do not need to hide nor deny having personal issues or that I have lost a finger. I stopped avoiding people and realised that focusing on my childhood experience will not help me heal and recover. I learned to accept what happened and to let go of my anger.

I stopped blaming my mother because I started to experience a fresh wave of learning that helped me regulate my daily emotions. I came to know that childhood experiences play an important role in shaping my life, but blaming my parents will not help heal myself.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

PISTA took me away from the blame game and pushed me to overcome the burden from my past. I was no longer trapped in my rough childhood experiences. PISTA released the painful memories stored in my body. Now, I can focus on the present which is more important.

I am still the scared little girl who dealt with a lot of fears during my childhood. I do not stop myself from occasionally allowing sadness to wash through me. But now, I can start days without the heavy baggage and with the confidence that I can now manage my emotions. Now, I find appreciation and gladness in having achieved this level of emotional strength.

Selina Chan is a psychologist who works with leaders and managers in addressing the common emotional and psychological needs of people in the corporate world. She supports various Chinese and English communities and volunteers in Hong Kong and China to help people cope with daily life challenges.

414. One Day at A Time.

By Mingmin Huang

Day 1. I was mending a broken heart when I started using PISTA. I was in a long-standing relationship with my boyfriend. He was so sweet, and we were already planning to get married.

I was out of town travelling when he sent me a text message saying that he was breaking up with me and leaving me for a younger girl. I had no clue that he had been cheating on me for a year.

It was totally unexpected, and I could not handle the news. I was desperate and felt unwanted, abandoned and unloved. I remembered my mother who passed away and thought that everybody who I cared for always leaves me.

I could hardly sleep or eat; my brain was not functioning at all. I kept thinking about my ex-boyfriend. Oh, how sweet it was when we were together, but how he cheated on me! My body weight dropped dramatically from 55 kilograms to 45 kilograms in just two weeks.

I met Dr. Cathy through a friend's referral. I started seeing her regularly and, after a few sessions, she introduced me to PISTA. According to Dr. Cathy, PISTA will help me balance my thinking and rid my mind of negative thoughts.

It was my first time to hear about the PISTA method, and I was not sure if it will work. I practised PISTA at Dr. Cathy's office and, after a few sessions, amazing things started to happen. I felt refreshed, and I got the strength to look ahead and move on. It was unbelievable. I started to feel a lot of energy and emotions flowing through my body. Every time I walked out of Dr. Cathy's office, my heart got lighter. I started to sleep at night again and learned to live a life without my ex.

I continued using PISTA for a few months more until Christmas came, but I stopped because I had to travel. My mind got out of control, and I started calling my ex and asked him to meet me. He turned down my requests. I went into hysterics again. One time, I even screamed at him over the phone in the street.

I realised that something went wrong and I needed help. After Christmas, I went back to Dr. Cathy's office and started using PISTA again. This time, I became more familiar with it as Dr. Cathy let me take the PISTA machine home so I could spend more time using it.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

This calmed me down and made me stop contacting my ex. I was back on track.

February. The left side of my chest started to feel some pain which got more prominent when I practised PISTA. I decided to go for a checkup. The doctor told me that the report would be ready in two weeks. I left Hong Kong that evening for a business meeting in Shanghai.

In the morning of the second day of my trip, the hospital rang me while I was in the middle of a meeting. They asked me to come back to Hong Kong as soon as possible. There was a shadow in my chest X-ray, and I needed to see a specialist.

March. One week later, I was diagnosed with lung cancer.

The diagnosis overwhelmed my entire family. I realised that my expected lifespan will be slashed by decades. I was horrified, and I was facing an incredible amount of stress. My mom passed away last year, seven months after she was diagnosed with lung cancer, too. The last few months of her life were miserable. Now, it is my turn, and I am well aware that it will be a painful and challenging journey.

I cried every night. Dr. Cathy asked me to use PISTA for a few more hours so I could find strength and peace in my heart. She also introduced me to Dr. Lana and the team of experts at Mind and Mend. They monitored my health condition and gave me support. Mind and Mend is a program that uses the PISTA method to help harness the power of one's mind for strength in dealing with emotional and physical conditions. I was doubtful at first. I was not sure how Dr. Lana and her team could help me as they barely knew me.

I started to open my heart and share my life and feelings with the team after a few calls with Dr. Lana. With their guidance and support as well as with many hours of practice with PISTA, my situation improved significantly. Dr. Cathy and Dr. Lana became my most trusted advisors. I talked to them and sought their advice before I made significant decisions in my life.

The Mind and Mend support team assisted me every time I needed them 24 hours a day. Their experts helped me manage my pain, emotions, and nutrition. They talked to me daily and became a reliable support network that helped me overcome my fear of cancer. They became my close friends, although we have never met in person.

December. My best friend for over twenty years lost her battle to lymphoma after ten months of brave fighting. We were together a few weeks before her condition deteriorated. We talked about both of us finally getting healed, and spending holidays and growing old together. Suddenly, nothing made sense anymore.

I didn't understand why things could change so much in such a short time. My friend was always there for me when I went through my ups and downs all these years. Never in my wildest dreams did I dream of loving her like this. I realised again how cruel cancer could be. There was a vast emptiness in my heart.

Until now, I still continue to reach out to Dr. Cathy and Dr. Lana for their guidance and support. They spend a lot of time mentoring, guiding, and helping me stay strong. I use PISTA for as many hours a day as I can and continue using entry points[An entry point is a thought or an image which the client focuses on throughout the PISTA session. It can be a scenario or a past experience which the patient feels strongly about. The coach helps the client in identifying this image.]. With their help, I was able to recover gradually from the immense sorrow. It must be unimaginable for anyone to understand how I can cope daily, but with full guidance, love, and support from the PISTA team, I am keen to take every day and make it the best. I will continue my fight with cancer.

It has been a year since I started being under the care of Dr. Lana and the Mind and Mend team. My complicated journey through cancer has been a rollercoaster ride. I am blessed to have Dr. Cathy, Dr. Lana, and the PISTA team who gave me comfort during my time of pain, anxiety, and depression. I count up the days of life since my diagnosis.

Today, I mark day 414. PISTA and the team changed my perception of life. Each day comes to me as a gift—whether it is the last day of a short life or the first day of a long life. I have learned to be grateful for each breath and every moment—another opportunity to hug my family and to cherish my friends.

Mingmin Huang is a distinguished private banker. She led the closing of successful million-dollar deals with various companies in China, Hong Kong, and Singapore during her career. As of this chapter's writing, Mingmin stays strong in her battle with lung cancer and continues to find love and peace with the support of the PISTA Team.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

Bonded by Love Forever

By Dr. Lana Chan

*Death has a way of changing us; it brings beauty,
hope, and peace.*

We do not understand grief until we walk through it ourselves. The models and theories related to grief and mourning tell how bereaved individuals go through a linear succession of tasks and processes, even possibly jumping between stages, and later come to an acceptance and closure. However, when people who lost their loved ones try to fit into these models in search for answers, they feel as if nothing fits right.

A new model of continuing bonds was introduced in the book *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief* (1996). The new paradigm suggests that healthy grief is resolved by creating a new relationship with the deceased, not by detaching one's self from the one that passed on.

I lost four of my loved ones within three years. This loss brought me deep sadness. At the same time, my melancholia filled me with a newfound energy that transformed my attachment to loss into an internal presence that sustains me, empowering my internal world daily. It seems that my attachment continued and kept on renewing its meaning.

Death has a way of changing us; it brings beauty, hope, and peace. I realised that there was no decisive end in grief as my loved ones continued to play important roles in my life. I learned that my initial concept of mourning was wrong. I found myself in a new state of equilibrium; there was no need for adjustment.

PISTA helped me reach this state by reshaping my sentimental landscape and conditioning myself for a high level of emotional fitness. I am resilient now. I learned to accept the vulnerable feeling that comes with my grief and to voluntarily regulate the emotions that arise from what I go through every day.

PISTA also taught me how to re-conceptualise my response to loss. I developed the capacity to broaden my understanding of loss, which shifts constantly as I live through grief. In the absence of

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

physical presence, I fostered and mastered new ways to cultivate this new bonding with my loved ones. Now, the uncertainty of life makes me strong rather than vulnerable. My emotions are no longer lonely but filled with love from a new social connection that has new meaning.

Humans are so adaptive. We can find ways to construe events with meaning and redefine love and relationships with the deceased. To deal with the real pain of loss, I shifted my vision from perceiving things from troubled human perspectives to seeing them from a broader view of the world. Now, comfortable with my own existence and place in the path of loss, I live through grief learning to live in silence. I have developed the courage to experience this immense sadness and to fully engage with the emotions moving me.

Death has changed me. I see things that I haven't seen before. I understand now that we are given opportunities to do well—to perform well, to spend time on things that matter to us, and to give love. If we are not trained to identify these opportunities, we lose the chance to create beautiful memories with our loved ones. We have to seize and give meaning to moments like these. This new appreciation of life lets me put importance to living every day with fun, love, and quality; doing everything with my heart and soul.

I grew up in a family that taught us love in the art of giving and receiving. Because my parents had financial strength, treating others like family members and giving more attention to those in need of financial help became a family tradition. I grew up with this practice and the mindset that anyone, rich or poor, can help with love and honesty.

My experience of loss also intensified my admiration and experience of beauty. This feeling inspires me to do better; to do things I have never done before. I should not let opportunities to create meaning and beauty pass. With PISTA, I have learned how to identify these moments every day. Change is permanent; nothing stays the same. I see beauty in every new face of change.

It is hard to describe how it is to be struck by the awakening of a strong bond of the deceased and the bereaved. This bond grows stronger as I understand the depth and breadth of both the pain and the love that we carry. It is amazing how grief brings a profound realisation of how a loss can bring a deeper understanding of true

love. The heartache, pain, and tears reassure me of my connection to my deceased loved ones.

There is no cure to my broken heart. Grief lasts forever as love lasts forever. The bleeding won't stop as I continue missing my loved ones. Nothing can fill this empty space, no matter how much time has passed. The pain and joy of holding the memories of shared time are unspeakable. The power of pain in missing drives me deeper into my experience of true, meaningful love. I embrace life with more pain and turn my suffering into a catalyst for improving the person that I am.

Every day, my soul and my spirit are in a deeper space. I know how precious life is because I have a greater understanding of my capacity to love. As I balance my pain, sorrow, joy, and peace every day, I finally feel that grief is making sense. Grief makes me live in profound love. I've never been stronger than before.

Dr. Lana Chan has dedicated herself as a lifetime researcher on emotional health. She is the founder of Nova Palm Foundation and works with a team of scientists in discovering scientific and research-based solutions that provide support to people faced by emotional challenges and affected by poverty and deprivation. She enjoys sharing and learning from all the people she meets.

References

- Beck, Ulrich/Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth (1994): Individualisierung in modernen Gesellschaften - Perspektiven und Kontroversen einer subjektorientierten Soziologie. In: Beck, Ulrich/Beck-Gernsheim,
- Boltanski, Luc/Chiapello, Ève (2001): Die Rolle der Kritik in der Dynamik des Kapitalismus und der normative Wandel. In: Berliner Journal für Soziologie 11, S. 459- 478.
- Ehmke, Rachel. Managing Social Media Stress With Mindfulness. Child Mind Institute. <https://childmind.org/article/social-media-stress-mindfulness/>. Accessed 24 May 2019.
- Elisabeth (Hg) Riskante Freiheiten. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp. S. 10-39.
- Giedd, Jay N., (2012) The Digital Revolution and Adolescent Brain Evolution. J Adolesc Health. 2012 Aug; 51(2): 101–105. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.06.002
- Grimmer, Bernhard. (2015): Burnout - psychodynamische und soziodynamische Überlegungen zu einem neuen Leiden. In: Figurationen, 16(1), S. 9-25.
- Hurley, Katie. (2016). You can't protect your kids from stress. But here are ways to teach them to cope. On Parenting, The Washinton Post.
- Klass, D., Silvermann, P., & Nickman, S. (1996). Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief. Rout
- Kury, Patrick (2012): Der überforderte Mensch - Eine Wissensgeschichte vom Stress zum Burnout. Frankfurt a. M. [u.a.]: Campus-Verlag. S. 267-290.
- Mankins, M. 2017. Bain.com. Great Companies Obsess Over Productivity, Not Efficiency.
- Manpower Group Talent Shortage Survey, 2016-2017. Manpowergroup.com.
- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010). Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.
- Nelson, C.A., Furtado, E.A., Fox, N.A., & Zeanah, C.H. (2009). The deprived human brain. American Scientist, 97, 222-229.
- Petrone. (2018). LinkedIn The Learning Blog. The Skills Companies Need Most in 2018 – And the Courses to Get Them. <https://learning.linkedin.com/blog/top-skills/the-skills-companies-need-most-in-2018--and-the-courses-to-get-t>
- Rideout V, Foehr U, Roberts D. GENERATION M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds. The Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation; 2010. [Google Scholar]
- Rosa, Hartmut. (1999): Bewegung und Beharrung. Überlegungen zu einer sozialen Theorie der Beschleunigung. In: Leviathan 27: S. 386-414.

From Well-Looking to Well-Being

