

Message from the Chair



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Chair of BACP Coaching

As I began to write today I expected my fingers to move easily across the keyboard, creating a graceful flow of inspiring words.

However, I found myself staring at a blank screen. The odd, passionless word appeared, only to be deleted, found wanting. I began to panic. Where had my words gone?

I closed the laptop, changed into my trainers and set off for a run at the local track. The sky was blue. I skipped through the alleyways, passed the new building sites and called out 'Hi' to numerous cheery children. I held my breath as I passed the *hashaa*¹ dogs, hoping they would continue their afternoon nap for just a little longer.

As I ran in the warmth of the early evening, I realised the most likely place to find my flow would be in accepting and fully connecting with where I am - here, today; to trust that it is from this place of acceptance and connection that inspiration and new realisations can emerge.

It is amazing that I can run today, and it marks an important shift - and a significant moment for me as a human being going through a process of change. I'm not a good runner... not even in the UK, not at all. However, I love running and I haven't been able to run since arriving here in Mongolia in February. I have simply been too exhausted. The literature explains that I will have been making some extra red blood corpuscles to cope with living at 5,000 feet - just the first edge of 'at altitude'.

Alongside this physiological change I believe there is more. I have been fatigued. I have longed for sleep. I have also been super-vigilant, watchful, alert: absorbing the sounds, smells, tastes, sights and experiencing the emotions of being immersed in 'newness' - surprise, shock, laughter, sadness, frustration, fear, anger, delight.

Everyday tasks engaged a substantial part of my 'thinking' and concentration. Everything around me was different: the words in Cyrillic I could not read; the spoken language I could not understand; the eight-lane highway I could not cross.

The world became a mystery to me. Life was exciting... *and* it was such an effort.

Suddenly, this week, after three months, I noticed that life had become quite 'ordinary'. I can cross the road, get the bus, exchange greetings. I can distinguish the different notes in my purse with just a simple glance and - most joyously - I can read the signs. This learning has been so tiring! My whole being has been engaged in creating familiarity, understanding, and new behaviours. Suddenly, I feel reconnected with my natural buoyancy, an easy energy - and a compelling desire to run... and skip!

In telling this story I find a renewed acceptance of where I am; this place of glorious quiet - and in that, strangely, finding the easy words that were so hard to come by at the beginning. I have been in a process of change, growth, adjustment and adaption, and the 'new' has now become commonplace. I feel a sense of simplicity and lightness - replenishing before the next stretch lifts me out into a new adventure.

I leave this for you to decide whether any part of my story resonates with you: in your own journey at times of change; in work with others; in work in organisations, so often full of people navigating a changing environment; or in our profession as it grows in maturity, carving our path through new ground. ■

Footnote

- 1 The *hashaa* can be considered similar to the 'homestead'. Literal translation is the perimeter fence. Most people in Mongolia live in gers (round tents similar to yurts). The *hashaa* is usually protected by a dog, which very often patrols both inside and outside the perimeter fence.

For more about life in Mongolia read my blog <http://www.tumblr.com/blog/jobirch>

