



OCTOBER 2020

Q MAGAZINE

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following US surrogacy

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ABN 21 631 209 230

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q feature: GROWING FAMILIES

Gay Singles & Couples Creating Families In the Covid Era

Last year, over 86 infants were born via surrogacy here in Australia, over a third of them to gay couples and singles – that’s an enormous increase on just two years prior. At least double that number were born to Australians using offshore surrogacy. For those engaging in domestic surrogacy, many have been working with surrogates in other states. This has meant hundreds have had to navigate compassionate travel arrangements to be present at the birth of their child since Australia’s domestic and international travel lockdowns came into play.

I’ve counted 34 gay couples and singles using offshore programs who I have assisted in the last six months alone – most of them welcoming newborns in the US or Canada, though there have also been births to gay Aussies in Colombia, Mexico and Cyprus. Some countries closed their borders to foreigners for months – baby or no baby. Others closed their passports offices. Then Australia introduced tiny quotas on arriving passengers. Such challenges have seen the non-profit Growing Families dealing daily with airlines, government departments and anxious parents to be.

On my wall at work I have a collage of at least twenty newborns united with their parents. For while Covid-19 put a halt to much of the service and travel we once took for granted, babies in utero kept coming.

Joe Mauri was unable to travel to the US for the birth of his son. Instead he looked after all the paperwork from Melbourne while his partner Adam travelled and spent months caring for their newborn Jean-Pierre.

Phil & Jeff are a Melbourne couple who engaged with one of California’s most popular IVF clinics, San Diego Fertility Center. Dr Said Daneshmand helped them create embryos and they worked with a Californian surrogate.

Their successful transfer was in November last year, well before Covid hit, meaning they were expecting to be parents by mid August this year.

Travelling to the US at this time was nerve-wracking to say the least. They made sure to arrive over two weeks before the due date. However timelines to obtain a US passport for a newborn had blown out from two weeks to two months. Further, visitor visas were not being granted in US passports.

When their son Brandon was born on 20 August, just one of them was allowed in the hospital for the birth - the other had to settle for being there via FaceTime.

Phil & Jeff were able to collect baby Brandon’s birth certificate within three days. (One benefit of the birth being in California - a court had declared them legally Brandon’s parents months prior to birth).

Instead of a US passport, they started applying for Australian citizenship as soon as they had the birth certificate. Reams of documents needed to be prepared and uploaded online for Australia’s Department of Home Affairs to assess.

Once they had uploaded the correct paperwork, Citizenship approval was quick. It was a relief to find this process ‘fairly seamless’ Phil admits.

The next hurdle was an emergency passport – and here the Australian Consulate in San Francisco assisted. Two days after an in-person appointment, a passport had been approved.

Thirty four days post birth, this new family was in Sydney quarantine – assigned an apartment with a kitchen and laundry. They brought plenty of baby essentials from the US and friends delivered care packages.



Despite having to deal with a myriad of officials in their US hospital, and government departments across two countries, Phil admits that there were few hiccups.

Phil admits that an extra month or two overseas was a small price to pay. 'We love being dads and are completely in love with our newborn son. We've wanted to be parents for a long time and being able to fulfil this dream has been a wonderful experience'.



Growing Families Australian conference, originally scheduled for Brisbane last June, will now involve online webinars spread across three days 14 – 22 November. It will share the perspectives of parents, surrogates, donors, counsellors, as well as global experts in IVF and surrogate recruitment and support. Saturday 14 November will be devoted to domestic donor and surrogacy options and 21/22 November will focus on international programs from a medical, legal and psychological standpoint. If you are considering building family, don't miss the chance to learn from others who have gone before you.

Full details at <https://www.growingfamilies.org/2020-conference-and-event-schedule>

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q cuisine: with YOUR COOK HYLTON

When I was young, my mother always encouraged me to learn the basics of cooking, and was keen for me to start building my own book of easy recipes, upon which to build in the future. I have fond memories of my late mother teaching me how to make certain dishes, a lot of her guidance consisting of measurements such as “a pinch” of this and “a goodly pour” of that. When Fannie Farmer introduced the standardised cup measure in the late 19th century, she clearly didn’t have my mother in mind, either that or my grandmother never really took notice. Over the years I’ve learnt to combine cooking by recipe with cooking by taste and sight. While a recipe can be a wonderful guide, creativity, daring, and overall experience is what’s going to broaden your horizons.

As George Bernard Shaw wrote, “There is no love sincerer than the love of food,” and expanding upon that, there is nothing more loving than sharing food with family or friends. Relationships amongst families in many cultures are tempered by breaking bread together, an activity that has more and more fallen to the wayside in recent times. I have often cooked not for myself, but just for others, to see a smile cross their face when they bite into something into which I’ve put my love and good energy.



During this very difficult time, wherever you are around the globe, it is likely that certain events may be taking their toll on your sanity. For those of you not able to work, or even those who are, free time is a perfect opportunity to expand your culinary repertoire or try something new.

Take out those cookbooks your family gave you for Christmas umpteen years ago and give something a whirl. Perhaps, for a meal you enjoy regularly, but thought was lacking in one regard or another, add a little something extra, experiment. The worst that can happen is that you don’t add that next time.

I tend to double the following recipe, because I do like leftovers, and also, if I’m not quite in the mood to make a half-batch of rumballs, I hate to waste half a can of condensed milk. I will also begrudgingly admit, that with the amount of cocktails made in my household, I do have bottled lime juice on hand most of the time. Also, depending on availability, I’m known to use canned passionfruit pulp, otherwise, depending on where you live, and what season it is, this recipe can be somewhat costly.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup (250mL) pouring cream
- 1/2 cup (approx. 1/2 can) condensed milk
- 1/2 cup of passionfruit juice, strained through a small sieve (approx 1 can). Reserve pulp for serving.
- 1 tbsp (20mL) lime juice

Method:

- In a medium bowl, combine condensed milk, passionfruit and lime juice.
- In a smaller bowl, whip cream with an electric mixer until soft peaks form.
- Pour and scrape cream into the bowl with other ingredients. Stir to combine.
- Pour into serving glasses (latte or martini glasses work well). Cover with cling wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.
- Garnish with passionfruit pulp and serve.





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q art: THE HAPPY PRINCE

Kim Carpenter. The Happy Prince

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Acclaimed theatre devisor/director/designer Kim Carpenter AM – will exhibit 26 major artworks in response to Oscar Wilde's The Happy Prince – the classic story of The Prince and The Little Swallow.

Carpenter recently adapted The Happy Prince for The Australian Ballet in collaboration with renowned choreographer Graeme Murphy. Carpenter also designed the stage sets and costumes.

The production Premiered at The Queensland Performing Arts Centre in Brisbane on 25th February 2020. Sadly, due to the COVID19 pandemic The Australian Ballet has been forced to cancel the August season at The Arts Centre in Melbourne and the November-December season at The Sydney Opera House.

BUT...! Oscar Wilde's immortal tale of love and sacrifice, tenderness and joy – combined with the creative journey of making a new full-length ballet with collaborators – choreographer, Graeme Murphy, and composer Christopher Gordon – fuelled Carpenter's inspiration to create this suite of exquisite watercolour paintings.

Kim Carpenter Founder & Artistic Director of Theatre of Image for 30 years. In 2019 TOI celebrated three successful decades of extraordinary theatre productions and Kim then closed the company so to pursue more personal projects and collaborations. This exhibition and his collaboration with the Australian Ballet Company are two of them.

It has been a joy to harness all my visual references from Wilde's book and the process of creating and designing the ballet in order to reinvent them so as to tell the story in a purely visual form to be experienced in an art gallery. So, the lockdown has allowed me an absorbing, driven, creative period. Kim Carpenter 2020

Carpenter's images are imaginative and whimsical, playful and atmospheric. They reflect Wilde's wit, poetry and social commentary. The Happy Prince's observations of struggle and survival, the disparity between the rich and the poor, are equally relevant today. The COVID19 pandemic has highlighted the divisions in society that Wilde wrote about in his story in 1888.



q music: JOHN CHANDLER MISSING

John Chandler, formerly of Maurice Starr's boyband 6PIECE, is back with "Missing", his gritty and soulful new track that was inspired from a conversation John had with his father on the front porch. "I was visiting from New York City, where I was living at the time, and not sure if I was in the right relationship, working the right job or living in the right city," John recalls. "Dad said to me, 'It's not always what's wrong with a situation, sometimes it's what's missing. Find out what that thing is, and that will guide you'". John says his Dad's simple message resonated with him and started him on a journey of making some major life changes, including breaking up with his boyfriend, leaving New York, and ultimately writing the song.

"We've all woken up wondering if we are doing enough to fulfill our purpose in life," John continues from his Nashville home. "For me, the message in 'Missing' is that often what we're chasing and searching for is inside ourselves and the key to happiness is remaining centered."

It's been a long road to enlightenment for John. Much of his recent struggles, he realizes today, stem from finding success as a teen. "Being discovered by Maurice Starr, the man behind New Kids on the Block and New Edition, was a blessing and a curse. On one hand it was amazing, opening for NSYNC on the Pop Odyssey Tour and sharing the stage with acts like Alicia Keys, Jagged Edge, and Trisha Yearwood. On the other, it gave me a false sense of how the world works. I thought dreams were just handed to you at 16, and then you lived happily ever after."

He is taking a different direction with "Missing," the first song off his next EP that chronicles John's road to self-discovery. The working title is "Running, Missing, Changing, Growing"; literally, the EP's track list. Each single has sad but hopeful lyrics, set to real piano and guitars, mixed with 808 drums and some vocoder, that each tell a story all their own.

"2020 has changed my life forever, and this EP reflects that," John says. "I've been wrestling with the end of a relationship, being fired from my job, living in a new city, raising money for my Mom's stage 4 Cancer treatment, and all during a global pandemic."

Because of the pandemic, John couldn't shoot the music video in New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta, as he had intended. He shot it locally, in Nashville. In order to capture the energy of the single, John and director Cooper Smith filmed in several locations throughout the city including the metal scrapyards next to the Nissan Stadium, by the Cumberland River, in Printers Alley, downtown and in the city's tallest luxury skyscraper, the 505.

"This year the universe told us all to take a seat," John Chandler jokes today. "It didn't matter who you were or where you lived, we were all forced to put things on pause."

"When COVID passes, and we start reintroducing things back into our lives, my hope is that we don't just go back to life as normal," he continues. "I hope we let go of the things that never really mattered and allow room in our lives for what has truly been missing. We have the opportunity to find a new type of happiness and way of life. That's what my song and upcoming EP are all about."

John Chandler's "Missing" is being released independently and is available now on Apple Music, Amazon and all other major retailers, as well as for streaming through Spotify. Its video is on YouTube.



For more information, follow John Chandler at www.instagram.com/johnchandlerofficial and www.facebook.com/johnchandler or <http://Johnchandlerofficial.com>

q book: E'THING IN ITS RIGHT PLACE

'Equal parts harrowing coming of age story, and paean to the joys of a misspent youth, *Everything in its Right Place* is a heartbreaking, lyrical love letter to overcoming trauma, and finding oneself in the bohemian heart of Melbourne.'

LIAM PIEPER, AUTHOR OF THE FEEL-GOOD HIT OF THE YEAR AND SWEETNESS AND LIGHT

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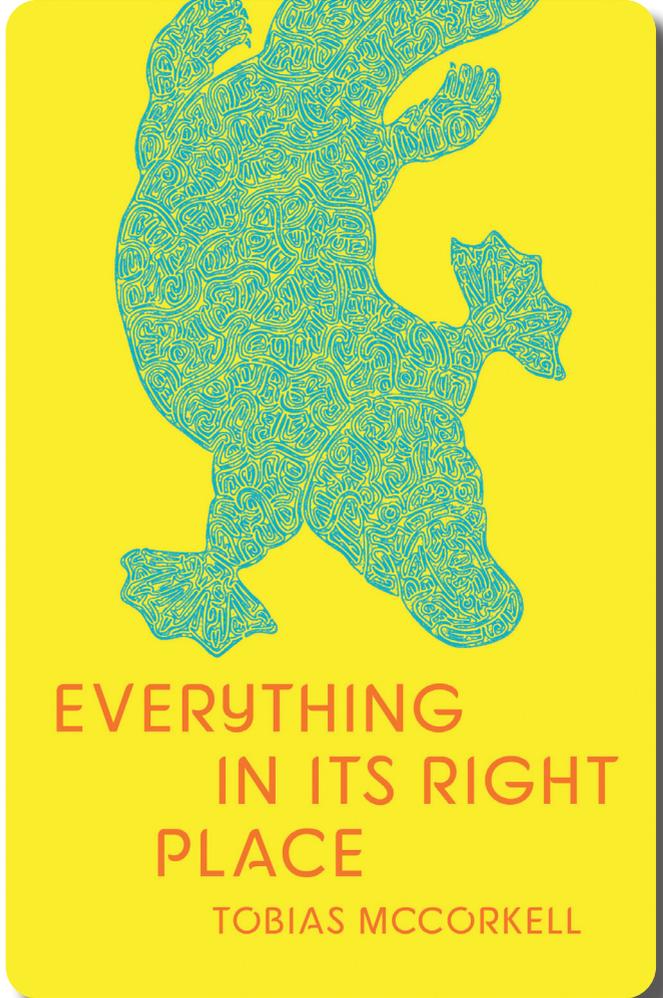
Coburg, Melbourne. Ford McCullen is growing up with his mother Deidre and his Pop and Noonie in 'The Compound', a pair of units in the shadow of Pentridge prison. His father, Robert, has left them to live in the bush with his new male partner. Nobody is coping.

When Ford's paternal grandmother Queenie's good fortune allows him to attend a prestigious Catholic private school on the other side of the river and to learn the violin, Ford finds himself balancing separate identities. At school he sees himself being moulded into an image that is not his own, something at odds with the rough and tumble of his beloved north.

Crumbling under the weight of his family's expectations and realising that he just might be the only adult amongst them, Ford embarks on a quest for meaning while navigating the uncomfortable realities of his father's life, his mother's ongoing crisis, and the pillars of football and religion, delving ever deeper into a fraught search for the source of the 'McCullen curse'.

Everything in its Right Place tackles themes of class, love and sexuality with humour, truth and grit. It is a story of the legacies and dilemmas that families bring, of how we all must find our own way, astonishingly told.

Tobias McCorkell spent the first 25 years of his life in Coburg. He has taught creative writing at the University of Melbourne and has authored works of non-fiction. In 2018 he appeared at the Melbourne Emerging Writer's Festival. He is the recipient of a 2019 Varuna Residency Fellowship.



Everything in its Right Place - OUT NOW in all good bookstores.

Tobias McCorkell

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q advice: NAVIGATE JEALOUSY

How to navigate jealousy in friendships

The green-eyed monster can have a toxic impact on any friendship. Have you ever achieved big success, like landing an amazing new job, and instead of being supportive your friend starts ghosting you? Or perhaps when you go out on the town, your friend gets furious if you're given any attention from the opposite sex? This could be jealousy or envy at play, and if unaddressed, it can rot your friendship faster than a dateless man Tinder swiping on NYE.

When is Jealousy a problem?

First of all, let's be clear, it's not a sin to feel admiration of what others have achieved. The Dutch call this type of envy *Benijden* or benign envy – which is a normal part of life that motivates us to strive for good things ourselves! Where this goes wrong is when one's awe tips over into resentment and the person engages in toxic behaviour – the Dutch call this little sucker *Afgunst* – or malicious envy. This means there is malicious intent, including wanting to see another person fail, and/or taking actions to harm their chances of success.*

How do we know if someone is being jealous/envious? Jenvious...

A friend who is toxic can be hard to spot— sometimes the toxic behaviour is as obvious as a slap in the face with a wet fish (bullying, name calling, teasing). Other times the behaviour is covert and subtle, like passive aggression, saying back-handed compliments, subtly belittling you in front of others, undermining you, and generally causing you to walk away from the interaction feeling worse than before you entered it.

Why does toxic jealousy matter?

The problem with the covert behaviour is that it confuses biological systems that send us into chronic states of stress. Like fight and flight. Your brain has this wonderful nerve called the polyvagal nerve (that's pronounced 'vague-al' not 'vag-al' . . .) – it's the thing that makes you faint around blood and gives you the "heebie-geebs" gut instinct when you're around someone dodgy.

The problem with being around a toxic 'jenvious' friend is they confuse your poly-vagal response. Instead of only triggering around an obvious threat – like a robber or a fan of pineapple on pizza. It gets triggered by someone who is supposed to be your friend (non-threat) behaving like a threat – all unconsciously to you! The vagal nerve loses its precision at spotting threats and starts firing chronically!** This wildly messes with our fight-flight response and sends us into chronic-stress-ville (i.e., ever laid in bed at night reliving that conversation with your jealous friend. Ending up anxious and wide awake – that's chronic adrenaline and it's not good for you).

What do we do about jealousy?

This can be a hard one. If your friend hasn't communicated to you that they are jealous, you are making an assumption. It can be difficult to say to someone, 'I think you speak to me rudely because you are jealous of how clever I am.' That is not likely to go down well . . . You need to trust your friend will open up about their insecurities on their own.

If they aren't big enough to be honest about this then the next best thing is to just stick to the facts and don't make assumptions about motives! This means recognising what a 'real friend' is and setting boundaries that you can stick to if and when they behave in an unfriendly way.

Instead of saying 'you're being rude because you're jealous' (i.e., assuming motives), say 'please don't tell me to shut up' (i.e., calling out the bad behaviour with no reference to the motive)! By just sticking to the facts of calling out the behaviour, you don't risk getting yourself in hot water about making assuming's about why they did that behaviour.

Remember - You are not responsible for the behaviour of others

Ultimately, the take home message is this: If you happen to be fit, successful, smart or good-looking, there is nothing you can do about people being jealous of you. There is no reason why you should bring yourself down for that person. Being arrogant is a different concept, and rubbing good fortune in someone's face is never a good look. But genuinely just being successful in life is not a sin. You should not have to tear yourself down, or play down your own successes because of other people's insecurities. Certainly, you can be sensitive to them, care about them and be supportive. But if a friend is bringing you down because they are jealous of you, for your looks, money, success, smarts, career, then this constitutes a toxic friend who lacks trust, support, affection and respect – and it may be time to break up!

Neuropsychologist Hannah Korrel is the author of *How to Break Up With Friends* (Impact Press \$24.99) and has spent over a decade becoming an expert in why the brain makes us do the things we do. A fierce mental health advocate, Hannah brings neurology and psychology together to explain common life dilemmas, minus the BS. Hear more from Hannah at www.hannahkorrel.com

* Lange, J. & Crusius, J., 'Dispositional envy revisited: Unraveling the motivational dynamics of benign and malicious envy', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 41(2), February 2014, pp. 284–94.

** Amy Banks, *Wired to Connect: The surprising link between brain science and strong, healthy relationship* (2016)

DR HANNAH KORREL

HOW TO BREAK UP WITH FRIENDS

FROM FRIENDSH*T TO FRIENDSPLIT
a guide to ditching crappy companions

q serial: PORN STAR - EP 7

In my quest to become a pornstar I had moved to LA, found a new place to live, got some photos from two photographers and had reached out to two pornstars, who I vaguely knew and quite frankly were not a source of support or information. I was looking for an agent, looking out for any porn scouts (if that was a real thing and not an urban legend) and at the same time was looking to begin auditions to get into the industry. I still wanted to learn more about the experiences of pornstars, both gay and straight, to know what to expect. With the information from the pornstars I spoke to being useless, I decided to conduct my research online.

There were some sites which warned that porn was a dangerous world, full of people who aimed to take advantage of others and how it was filled with drugs. It made sense that such people existed. And they existed everywhere. Then there were other pornstars who said that the people they met in the industry were supportive and encouraging. Like any industry there were professional elements and unprofessional ones. But who was who? How to know that unless you worked with them? It concerned me.

Some porn auditions were clearly set up; where a reluctant newbie ends up being banged by the director. But there were also authentic ones I came across. One audition tape showed a lean, well-built, American sitting man on a casting couch ready for a solo jerk off show.

'You know what would make this a great porn film?' asked the man behind the camera.

'No, what?' said the cheerful, beautiful man on the couch.

'If you got hard. It would really be helpful if you got hard for this film,' said the director in a smirky way.

The actor smiled shyly and he pulled his cock back and forth in a way to make it erect. Obviously the comments from the director did not encourage him to pop a boner.

Then there were the porn films, shot in front of a live audience that went out control and almost spiralled into violence. In one particular film, an ex-Marine was having a threesome with two female pornstars on the pool table at a frat house as a performance for all frats to watch. Porn companies can pay frat houses up to USD 1000 to rent out their spaces to shoot a porn film, on the basis that the frats can watch, cheer on and in that case insult and assault the pornstars.

'I see dingleberries,' shouted one frat, in reference to the actor's small balls.

'Are we serious?' said another frat, unimpressed by the pornstars.

'Fuck her like you mean it,' shouted out another frat as he began humping away at her in doggy style.

'Are you gay?' 'Why can't you get it hard?' and 'what are you going to do if you lose your boner?' were other insults hurled at the performers as they did their job for the cameras and the audience on the green surface of frats' the pool table.

In the end the male pornstar got up; his muscles ready to beat them, the veins in his neck throbbing but his penis deflated; and confronted the frats.

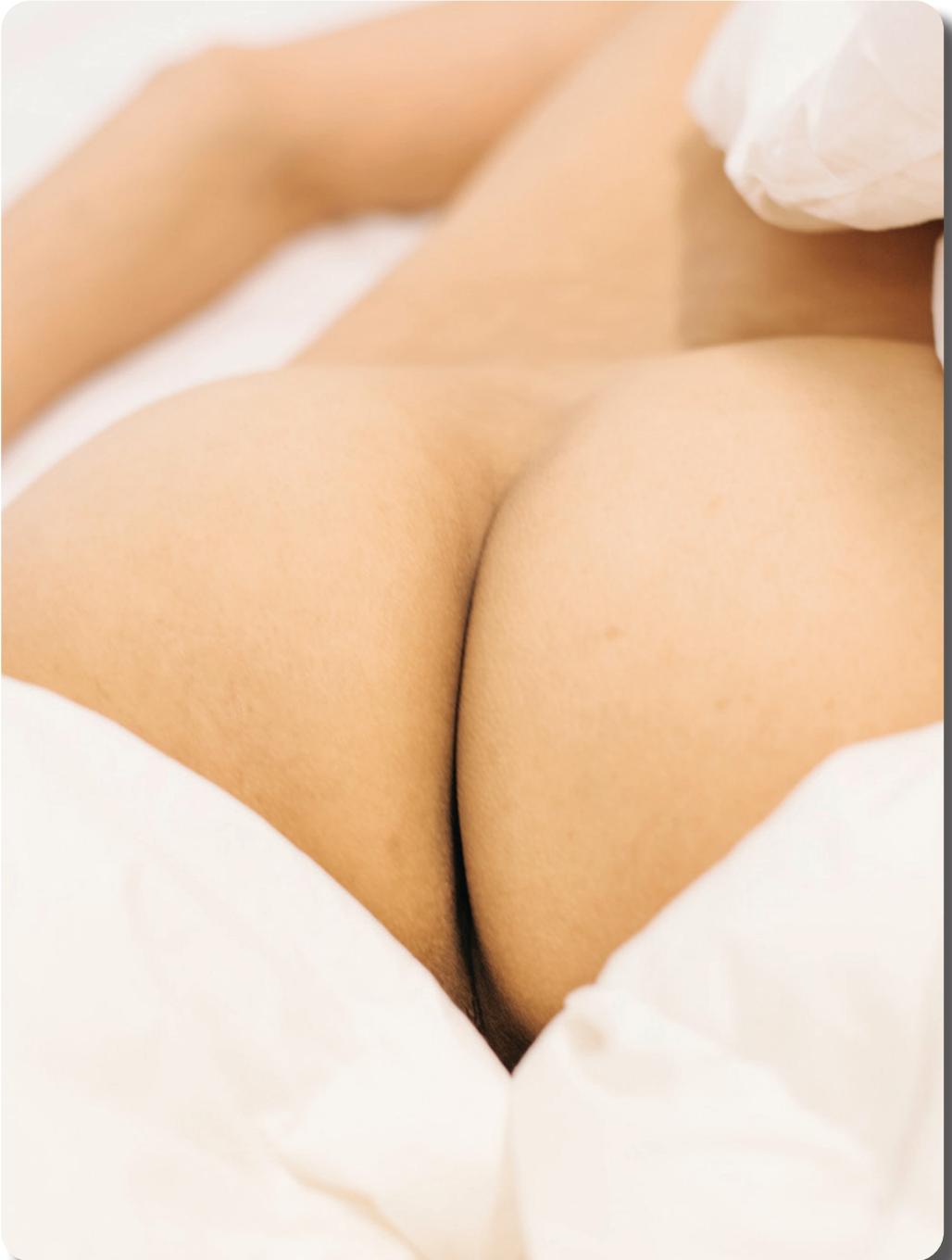
'There are many of us,' said one frat to the naked pornstar who was outnumbered.

In the end the cameraman put down the camera and intervened stopping the incident from getting out of hand.

Was that really the industry? Was it really that unpleasant? If that was what was filmed on camera, what was it like off camera, behind the scenes with sneaky directors and mean cast members?

On Twitter all I saw were the accounts of pornstars, professional or amateur, who seemed to be having a good time and supporting each other as they participated in porn films. They posted photos of themselves, in groups, posing naked for the promotional material seemingly having a good time. I didn't assume they could fake it, they didn't seem to be such good actors, and clearly enjoyed the sex they were having. They were either very professional and good at hiding their dislike of the industry, which I doubted, or as I guessed, they were genuinely enjoying what they did within a fun, supportive and kind remit.

From searching auditions gone wrong, to porn filming gone wrong I then came across porn bloopers. In one porn film, set in the Amazon a Brazilian top was having sex with his bottom on the side of an inflatable boat that drifted on the river. One hard thrust too many from the top, and the bottom fell off the inflated tarp of the boat and into the river with a big splash. His butt and hole was all that could be seen as he fell overboard, much to the laughter of the top and the crew. It was funny. It was also a little uncomfortable to watch. However not as uncomfortable as being told to get an erection or insulted by frats as you perform naked on a pool table.



q renovate: RELATIONSHIPS

The 80/20 Rule of Relationships – why 20% of issues cause 80% of the problems

Out of all the rooms in the house, where do you spend most of your time? From your wardrobe, which items get the most wear? Of all the apps on your phone how many do you use the most? How many of your customers account for most of the profit? 80% of results will come from 20% of the action! From where I sit, the 80/20 rule reigns even in the Counselling room! 20% of relationship issues account for 80% of the angst.

As a relationship specialist, I have the honour of journeying with individuals and couples at their most major and toughest junctures in their life. I have noticed it is the same few difficulties that have them ill-equipped to enjoy the dynamic and flourishing relationship they deserve. Many clients consistently report their relationship is 80% amazing except for the hefty weight of 20% of the bad times that have them often defeatedly slumped in my office.

What is the root cause of the 20%?

- Some of us can blame our parents or grandparents for ill-equipping us! Whilst we can't directly 'sock it to them', our ancestors were less likely to require wisdom on how to collaborate with their spouse in areas such as finances and how to raise the children. They didn't need to check in with each other as their relationships featured more clearly defined, traditional roles that didn't overlap so much. This is in comparison to today's common tag team situation—symptomatic of both parents working outside the home where we collide on work, home duties and parenting decisions.

- We can also unconsciously repeat the same approach to relationships as our parents or caregivers. We become stuck in patterns of disconnection over the same bad habits such as passive silence or angry aggression that can grow in momentum.

- We forget that we can default to being selfish, inward focussed with fallible memory recall and easily compare ourselves and our partner to others!

What comprises the 20%? The 3 Corrosive C's:

1. Crushed Confidence: It never fails to amaze me how much damage we do to our intimate connections because we are too busy slamming ourselves on the head with a metaphorical hammer. Poor self-worth is a silent killer of relationships. An uncontrolled thought life can have us succumb to fear of what "I can't" and "I'm not". We ruminate on key moments in life that have us caught in toxic self-deprecating. It is frustrating to watch the countless incredulous and gifted clients who initially cannot see how beautiful and talented they are. How can you contribute to your relationship when exhausting your partner with your reliance on them to boost you up and inhibiting that united force you were destined to enjoy?

2. Communication: I like to think that as a therapist, an author and frequent media commentator, I'm quite the communicator. Pop me in a situation where I'm emotionally invested and the harsh reality is, I am not as clever as I think I am. I easily compare to others, can be stubborn and threatened when things don't go my way. I have learnt to turn the finger back on myself and consciously realise when I'm emotionally triggered. This includes realising fatigue can have me a lot less rational. We are also not the best versions of ourselves when unfit, fallen into poor eating and drinking habits, stressed and assume we are easily understood.

3. Conflict: Have you ever considered that we are frequently misunderstanding each other a lot of the time? Our memories are incredibly unreliable particularly when our raw emotions are triggered, and reality is skewed. How also can we naturally navigate our way through our differences when the person you're disagreeing with was initially likely incredibly attractive because they were different and complemented you with features and approaches you don't have? It has syntax error flashing all over it!

Have hope that the "3 Corrosive C's" can be overcome and do not need to dominate a large percentage of your relationship. Why not take a step back and look at your thoughts about yourself to yourself, how you communicate with your partner and if you approach your differences in a healthy manner?

I have all the tools you'll ever need in Renovate Your Relationship which focusses on these three major inhibitors to avoid fast-tracking to expensive 'Splitsville'. Through being consciously aware where your relationship habits came from, know you can renovate your relationship to happily ever after!

Joanne Wilson is the Relationship Rejuvenator and author of Renovate Your Relationship – All The DIY Tools For Your Most Important Project (\$29.99). She is a neuropsychologist inspiring the community for thriving and dynamic relationships that impact generations for mental well-being. Find out more at www.relationshiprejuvenator.com

RENOVATE

your

RELATIONSHIP



JOANNE WILSON

THE RELATIONSHIP REJUVENATOR

q work: SEVEN BAD HABITS

The 7 bad habits that drive your boss crazy & how to turn them around

We've all worked for one, or perhaps you are working for one now - the boss who makes your working life day hell. Perhaps you judged them to be ineffective, unethical, power-hungry, a perfectionist, a micro-managing control freak, or some other not so lovely adjective. They may be all that and more, or perhaps there's more to it. When situations at work aren't working, it could be that you are in the wrong role or that your boss or organisation isn't bringing out the best in you. It could also be that your work habits are less than ideal, and are impacting your productivity and working relationships. It's almost impossible to assess a situation accurately if you don't first understand the part you are playing in what's happening. Ask yourself: Are you really bringing your best self to work every day?

Let's find out.

1. Are you always late?

When you keep people waiting you are effectively saying, 'My time is more important than yours', unconsciously implying that you regard yourself as more important. When you miss deadlines, you show yourself to be unreliable and difficult to work with. Be clear on deadlines and prioritise your workday to get the most important things done first.

2. Are you a meeting junkie?

When you rush from meeting to meeting or event to event, you can get to the end of the day exhausted yet having achieved little on your to-do list. Structuring your day and including time for breaks will help elevate your productivity and keep you focused and alert.

3. Are you setting the bar too high?

We are often told we need to set goals, but not just any goals - BIG GOALS. Yet research shows that setting goals that are too high and too hard often inhibits progress. You are far more likely to make sustained progress when you break your work down into bite-size, manageable chunks.

4. Do you avoid saying 'no'?

There's nothing worse than feeling like you are drowning in work and yet are unappreciated as more and more comes your way. It's easy to say 'yes' when a request comes in, yet there will be times when you need to say 'no'. Jointly set priorities with your boss, agree on the boundaries around workload, and how you will respond to work requests outside standard working hours.

5. Are you the office energy thief?

An energy thief saps you of energy, drains your focus, wastes your time and can throw you off track as they continuously focus on the negative, seeking to drag others down with them. They expect people to do things for them, demanding attention and support, yet are not prepared to offer the same support to others. Being seen as political, a gossip or an energy thief will do nothing to endear you to your boss or work colleagues.

6. Are you firing on all cylinders?

Downtime and holidays are essential for your mental health and wellbeing. As well, if you frequently burn the candle at both ends - working late, taking work home and always working weekends - you will eventually burn out. When you aren't in good shape, your work suffers, as does your ability to handle stressful and demanding situations. It's essential to find time for you.

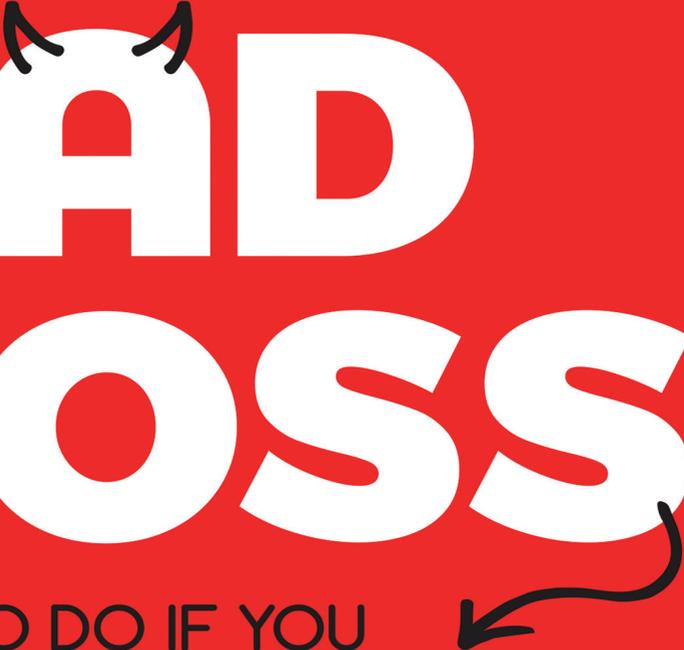
7. Are you getting enough sleep?

Many people are chronically sleep-deprived. It's easy to sacrifice sleep when you're busy and juggling priorities. However, it is a crucial ingredient for successful working relationships. Dealing with work pressure is easier when you are well-rested. You'll also be better equipped to step into courageous conversations with your boss, manage a heavy workload and make well-reasoned decisions.

How many of these habits are you sometimes, or often, guilty of? Poor habits can strain working relationships and ultimately stretch them to breaking point. To be your best at work, you have to be prepared to dig deep into how you think you are and how you actually are. That's hard, and it can hurt. However, it is the only way to improve. After doing this, you may find that the shift you need to make is only small, or it may be large. But now you know where you stand, and with that self-awareness you can start making the changes necessary to progress.

Michelle Gibbings is a workplace expert, working with global leaders to build workplaces where leaders and employees thrive and great things happen. She is the author of 'Step Up: How to Build Your Influence at Work', 'Career Leap: How to Reinvent and Liberate your Career' and the new book 'Bad Boss: What to do if you work for one, manage one or are one'. www.michellegibbings.com

BAD BOSS



WHAT TO DO IF YOU
WORK FOR ONE,
MANAGE ONE OR
ARE ONE

**MICHELLE
GIBBINGS**

WILEY

q life: with GABRIEL TABASCO

The Perks of Being a Poolboy - Part II

In Q Magazine's August 2020's article I wrote about getting a job as a poolboy a few summers ago in a nudist colony in Crete. My work was going well, until I received odd feedback from Jörn, the colony's General Manager.

'We've had some complaints,' said Jörn, with a stern look.

'What happened?' I asked. 'I'm sorry if I used too much chlorine in the pool.'

'It's not that,' he snapped. 'Some guests feel uncomfortable with you being fully clothed,' he explained.

'But I'm not fully clothed. I mean, all I'm wearing is a speedo,' I said pointing down to my tight, blue speedos.

'That's the problem. This is a nudist colony and the guests would like you to take the speedos off.'

I did not know what to say. It sounded like a bizarre request and something that was not really a problem.

'I see you are having issues grasping the concept of this,' said Jörn in his usual, sour way. He walked towards me as if coming closer would make me see sense. 'This is a nudist colony, and people do not feel comfortable with the staff being clothed.'

'Well you're clothed,' I said.

'I am the General Manager; I run the errands. I see the guests. Manage the taxi drivers. I cannot do that naked. Don't you agree?' he said.

'I do.'

'Well then. Please disrobe.'

'Right now?'

'There is no better time than the present,' he said and motioned with his hand to my speedos, indicating to take them off.

I put down my mop and bucket, that I did not realise I was holding throughout our conversation, and went to remove my speedos.

'Come on, we don't have all day,' said Jörn.

With a swipe I removed them and set the blue speedos on the table of his office.

'You can collect them later from here,' said Jörn, and then looked down at my penis. 'A semi-erection already. Typical of non-nudists. You can stay in here a moment and calm down before going out again. Not everyone needs to see your willy,' and then as an afterthought added, 'though it might help with the tips depending on its length,' he said laughing.

I blushed as he gave me instructions to the day's work.

'... and finally I need you to mow the lawn, then de-weed the area by the trees.'

'But naked?'

'But of course,' he said.

'But the stinging nettles might...'

'Might stick your white buttocks? I'm sure it has been stung by things other than nettles. Wear gloves and you'll be fine.' Then he looked down. 'It seems you now have a full erection. I take it you agree with me,' and he chuckled as he left the room, with a hurried air, clutching a file of papers.

If I didn't know Jörn better his comments would have bothered me. But knowing his sour sense of humour I knew he was joking. His comments had fully aroused me and my boner would not subside. There was nothing to do but jerk off. I took a look around and noticed there was no one coming so I sat down on his old leather chair, that faced his desk and those old school PC Monitors, ones like big boxes that are no longer used, and began to jerk myself off. I figured the best way to get back to work, and not risk



getting a public erection was for a quick wank. I felt bad, doing that on the job, but it would not have been more than 10 minutes and I could dock the time from my break.

I was close to coming when I heard some footsteps. I turned around and two of the guests, older gentlemen in their 50s from Denmark, had spotted me. They chuckled and waved right at the point that I was coming. Unable to stop, they witnessed my cum shoot all over my chest. Once I was done, gasping for breath, they smiled and walked away as I heaved with a sigh of relief. I did not have time to clean up my mess, and ask them not to say anything to any of the other guests and especially not to Jörn. I did not want to think what he would make of my white ass on his pleather office chair.

But from the titters of light laughter that I heard as I went about my pool duties I could tell they told the other guests what happened. A couple even raised their beers at me as I walked by. One man asked for a cocktail, emphasising the cock. I did not want to think of Jörn's reaction. Surely he would fire me so I might as well get through the day with dignity and by doing a good job and then accept my marching orders.

I did as instructed and cleaned the poo, careful not to spill the chlorine on any sensitive areas. I mowed the lawn and pushed the heavy lawn mower hard as my dick flopped in the air. Then on all fours I had to crouch under the cypress trees and de-weed the plants and clear the weeds and leaves up. My dick and balls were dangling freely as I crouched on all fours, wearing gloves, a baseball bat and sandals. I was conscious of the guest lingering who could surely see my hole through my ass cheeks. I hope it did not flex as they watched but could feel my sweat from the summer sun beat down on me.



'A dip in the pool would be nice,' I thought to myself and then thought maybe Jörn would not allow me to stay on.

When I had finished I put all the tools away in the shed, tidied up the pool area, waved goodbye to the naked barman (a man as hunky as he was beautiful) and went to tell Jörn I was done for the day. I hoped I'd still have my job.

'I'm off from the day.'

'Ok. See you tomorrow,' he said.

'That's it?'

'Yes. What else do you want?'

'I still have my job?'

'Why wouldn't you have your job? Ah... because you were having fun at my desk.' So he knew. 'Yes it is all the guests could talk about today. I heard it. Well at least you did it in here. And they spent more at the bar as they looked at you and drank. So yes, I suppose you can stay,' he said jokingly.

I exhaled a sigh of relief.

'Ok, now leave please before you get another erection.'

I did as was told, grabbed my blue speedo that was still on his desk, put my clothes on and made my way out of the hotel. I was stopped just as I was leaving. I hated it when that happened. A guest motioned over to me and was sitting with two of his friends. He was a hunky American man in his late forties.

'I wanted to ask if there is any fresh milk around here?' he said.

'I can check with the bar staff. Do you prefer full fat, skimmed, almond or soya?'

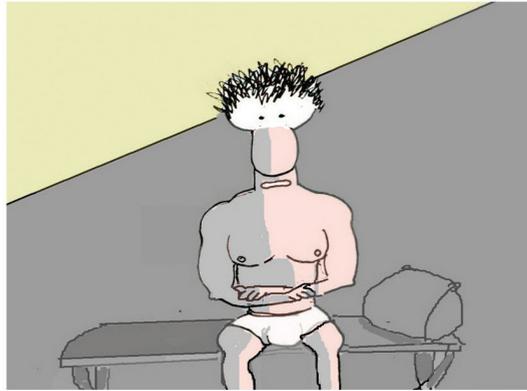
'Actually, I'd like your milk. I'd like to milk you.'

To be continued...

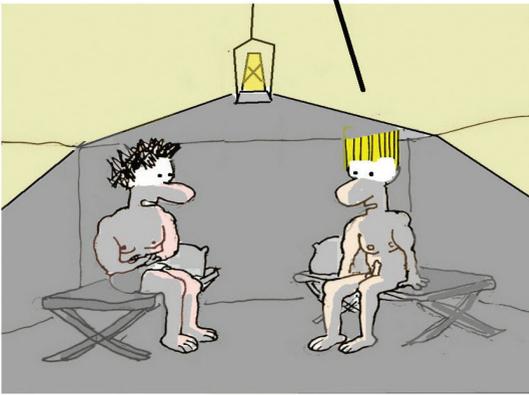
You're attractive Gaylord,
but I can't have anal sex



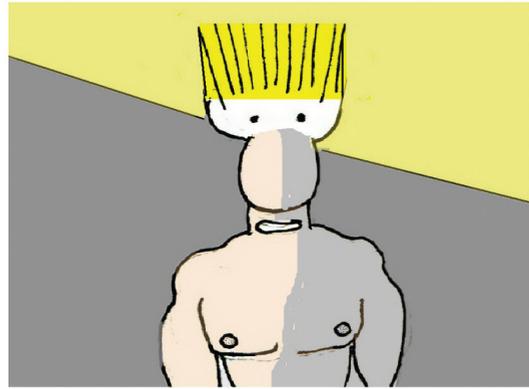
my religion says only a urologist
can shove something up my ass



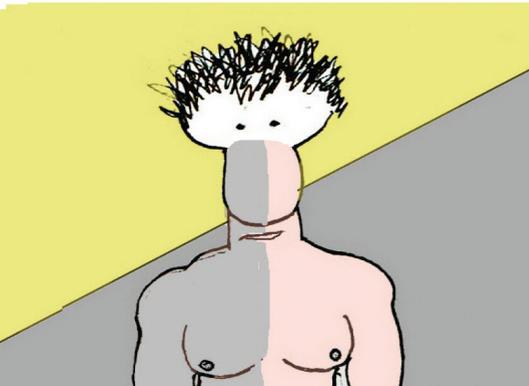
So, ... a prostate exam is HOLY?



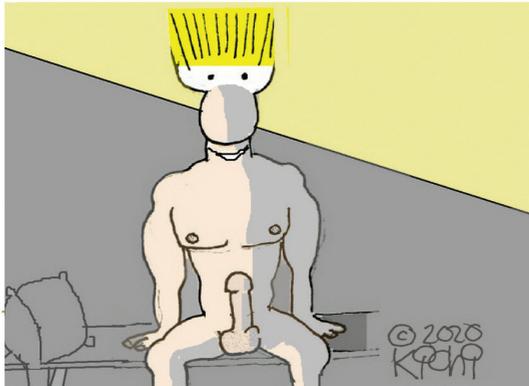
tell me how that is, exactly!



The purpose of a prostate exam
is to discover disease



What if I shag your brains out to
look for a diseased mind?





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