

---

# ATTENTION!!!

## Top Tips

March 2014

---

I'm loving the way Spring is arriving this year; there's a sort of dramatic wildness to it. As I write the sun is shining, the sky is blue, and a north-westerly wind is belting round the house!

This month's Top Tip is inspired by the drama of the weather, and how we can respond when our internal world is similarly turbulent.

So...our internal worlds and dramatic landscapes!

When we experience internal drama we can sense it physiologically, emotionally, psychologically, or, indeed, spiritually. Usually we begin to notice what we describe as 'symptoms'. These might be a noticing of discomfort, pain, thoughts, sweaty palms, digestive disturbances, headaches and so on.

These symptoms might be an invitation for us to attend to something. For example, an anxious thought or sensation might be because you are about to fall down the stairs, and quick action is needed to grab hold of the hand rail! A pain might be a message to slow down or take a break from the computer.

But for some of us, we end up OVER-LISTENING to our symptoms, and we can find ourselves in a cycle of listening to symptoms, finding them, looking for more, FINDING THEM...etc etc and we can feel as if we are in the middle of a storm of symptoms. I remember when I was doing ME, I could be brilliant at tuning in to my body and mind regularly, maybe several times a minute. And our brains obediently find and produce what we are looking for.

If you are someone who over-listens, who 'hears' their symptoms with great regularity, then this month's TOP TIP is for you.

---

# ATTENTION!!!

Last night, as a member of a choir, I sang in Faure's Requiem in Truro Cathedral. It was a spellbinding experience. When we were singing, we were completely focused on the music, the sound, the conductor, the rests, the entries. And there was no room for any other thought - and discomfort is always a thought.

If we want to change our internal experiences, one lovely way of doing it is simply to **ACCEPT** it, lovingly (yes - I know this can be a challenge - and it can be done, by softening ourselves towards it gently and compassionately), then to take our **ATTENTION** elsewhere.

What does it mean to take our **attention** elsewhere? Well it doesn't mean to 'pretend' the symptom isn't there, and it doesn't mean to 'try' to make it go away. What it does mean is to shift our **attention** to what else is going on, or what else needs to be done right now. And there is always something that needs to be done. Here's a clue: you won't find it in the past or the future! What needs our attention right now is always in the present. As I type I'm taking my attention to fingers and noticing how they connect with the keys; I'm watching the screen; I'm feeling the warmth of my jumper on my arms; I'm hearing the washing splashing in the machine. Notice how what I'm attending to is not *internal* but *external*.

Will switching my **attention** elsewhere make my symptoms go away? Not necessarily. But it will give your body-mind time to settle down on its own, which is what it would love to do without our constant checking and lifting of the plaster to see what is happening. You will be amazed how quickly symptoms can shift when we shift our **attention**. I remember once coming in from a long teaching day at school, flopping on the sofa, feeling exhausted, when my husband came in and asked me how my lesson with my fifth years went. It had been a really fun lesson, so without thinking I sat up and told him all about it! The fatigue vanished in a second!

So my TOP TIP for March is to **SHIFT YOUR ATTENTION!** A by-product of this is that symptoms can settle down, and we can lead a more productive and fulfilling life. Have fun shifting your attention to useful things, fun things, humorous things, practical things, educational things. When I've finished this letter I'm going to shift my attention to gardening things...and see how much difference I can make to my herb garden.

---

With love,

*Julia*

