

## Natural invitation

I would like to respond to Derek Wilson's letter *Bark at the moon* (DDN, 9 March, page 9) which was in response to my work on natural awareness.

I would like to start by thanking Derek for having the courage to give his view. While I feel he missed some of the points I was making, I believe his main issue was with the lack of empirical evidence.

To that end I would like to invite Derek to attend my workshop on natural awareness free of charge, so that he can see for himself first hand what is actually involved. I would invite him to come as a complete sceptic but also with an open mind to other possibilities.

Regarding the lack of empirical evidence of alternative and spiritual aspects of recovery and nature based therapy, I do believe that perhaps with future research natural awareness could in a small way close the gap on the so called 'grey literature'.

I believe that Derek as a professional might agree with WR Miller when he says that to 'simply to ignore a... potential source of healing violates both scientific curiosity and professional responsibility.' Miller challenges the academic and spiritual community by stating 'It is time to question and reverse the assumption that spiritual variables are taboo for scientists and therapists, or that scientific methods cannot possibly shed light on spirituality'.

To that end I would welcome Derek's professional constructive feedback on his experiences of natural awareness. I would also like to extend this invitation to Molly Cochrane (DDN, 23 March, page7) and to a member of your team in the interests of balance.

I trust that you will accept my heartfelt invitation. You can contact me through <http://wild-tracking.blogspot.com/>. Details of the course can also be found at [www.geoffmcmullan.com/Natural-Awareness-Part-1.html](http://www.geoffmcmullan.com/Natural-Awareness-Part-1.html)

I look forward to hearing from you all very soon.

**Geoffrey McMullan, natural awareness therapist**

## Cranstoun's fortieth

In 1969 Cranstoun Drug Services opened the doors of its first service for those affected by drugs and alcohol, when a community GP and his wife responded to a locally identified need in Esher, Surrey. Forty years ago a family gave their house, time and effort to help others. Forty years on Cranstoun is a leading national charity that continues to respond to locally identified needs and embrace the principles and philosophy of its founders.

Have you worked for Cranstoun in the past or accessed our services? If you would like to share your story with us please contact Lisa Head – email [40years@cranstoun.org.uk](mailto:40years@cranstoun.org.uk), tel 020 8335 1830 or write to Cranstoun Drug Services, 1st Floor, St Andrews House, 26-27 Victoria Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 4JZ.

We look forward to hearing from you.

**Lisa Head, Cranstoun Drug Services**

## We welcome your letters...

Please email them to the editor,

[claire@cjwellings.com](mailto:claire@cjwellings.com) or post them to the address

on page 3. Letters may be edited for space or clarity.

Visit our forum at [www.drinkanddrugsnews.com](http://www.drinkanddrugsnews.com)

# Recipes for recovery

## EVERYBODY LOVES THE SUNSHINE

In her first healthy eating column for DDN, our nutritionist Helen Sandwell suggests a dose of therapeutic summer fruits and sunshine



I often wonder who decided that New Year resolutions were a good thing. How many of us make feeble attempts to diet and exercise away the excess pounds after the Yuletide binge, but fail miserably? In reality, eating and exercise behaviour change is probably more difficult in the depths of winter than at any other time of year.

This is not surprising because throughout most of our evolution winter has been a time for the conservation of energy stores. Man the hunter-gatherer had a lean time of it in winter in northerly climes, and losing valuable fat stores was not on his agenda.

Through winter in the UK the body's stores of vitamin D are low, since the sun's rays are too weak to manufacture vitamin D in our skin, and the main dietary source, oily fish, is far from the nation's favourite food. Several studies have demonstrated that low levels of vitamin D are associated with low mood, including seasonal affective disorder (SAD), and that administering vitamin D can boost mood.

Many people in the UK experience some symptoms of SAD – studies have shown the incidence of SAD amongst primary care patients is around 10 per cent. Not everyone will have full-blown depression though. Many more of us just want to eat carb-rich food, curl up in a ball and hibernate. Not a great time for resolutions to join the gym and eat salads, and the winter blues won't induce your clients to make lifestyle changes either.

However, now summer is underway it's an ideal time to encourage your clients to make small lifestyle changes to support their physical and mental health and aid their recovery.

This summer promises to be a long hot one, so encourage your clients to get out in the sunshine for at least 30 minutes a day, to build up vitamin D and boost serotonin. A game of football in the park will have mood-enhancing and bone-protecting effects from both exercise and the sun's rays, as well as the immunity-boosting effects of exercise.

As SAD symptoms fade with the increasing sunshine, luscious and appealing soft fruits from the Mediterranean and the UK also appear in the shops. Once in full glut they need not be expensive choices. It's much easier to encourage the fruit-phobic to eat their 5-a-day by presenting them with a tasty plate of ripe watermelon, peaches and apricots, or a fresh strawberry milkshake, than trying to encourage them that fruit is a good thing with the hard apples and tasteless under ripe melon of winter. All those red, orange and purple soft fruits are packed full of antioxidants, ideal for boosting immunity and preventing tissue damage from drug-related infections and the general wear and tear on the body that comes with substance misuse.

Money is often an issue, so wise fruit-shopping strategies need to be encouraged – shop at markets, at the end of the day to find the marked-down bargains, or with a friend to make best use of BOGOFs (buy one get one free). Money is not always seen as an issue though – as one woman in residential treatment recently told me, 'I've spent so much money on drugs over the years, I think I can spend a bit on eating healthily now.'

Some fun in the park in the sunshine, a glowing tan, and a delicious strawberry tea... what could be a more enjoyable route to recovery?

*Helen Sandwell is a freelance nutritionist. Her website is at [www.goodfoodandhealth.co.uk](http://www.goodfoodandhealth.co.uk) Helen's nutrition toolkit, giving healthy eating advice relating to substance use, is published by DDN on CD-rom – email [charlotte@cjwellings.com](mailto:charlotte@cjwellings.com) for details.*