



The family

This my wife
and I, plus
'Nugget',
recently
brought from
the cats and
dogs home.

THE FEARLESS ONE !





My name is Richard Barker and I am a counsellor and a life coach.

I have also been a teacher and continue to practise painting and photography. Previously I was a Buddhist monk for 7 years.

I originally trained in the UK as a counsellor and a psychotherapist using a model conceptualised by the South African, Petruska Clarkson.

This is known as an integrative model which utilises different skills from different disciplines, such as **psychodynamic and humanistic theories of the mind**.

I have added to this the skills of life coaching, as it is my belief that counselling, psychotherapy and life coaching cannot be separated easily.



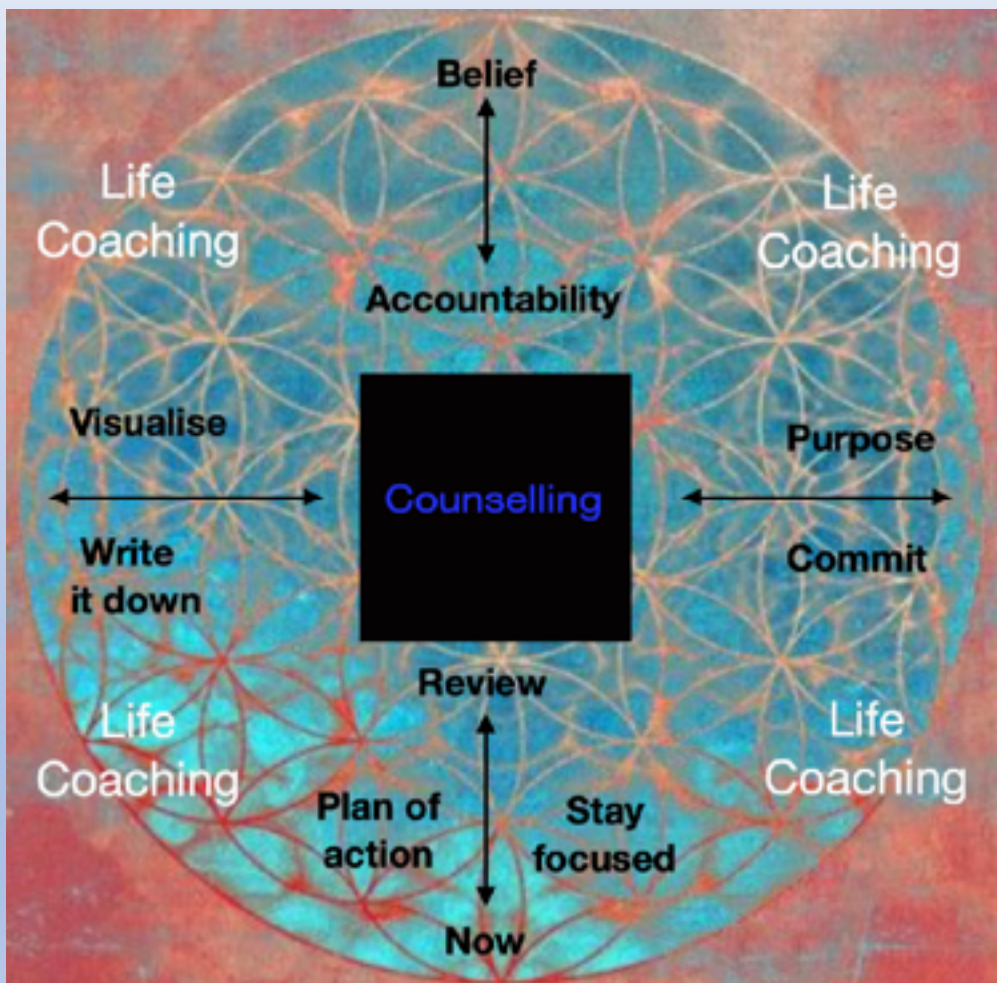
What is life coaching ? What is counselling? How can they be combined?

At the heart of life coaching is counselling.

You cannot have one without the other.

Life coaching offers a form of development (the titles of which you can see on this chart), whereby I offer support to help individuals and organisations achieve a specific personal or professional goal(s).

Counselling offers particular forms of guidance in helping individuals, partners, groups resolve personal or psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and trauma.





Life coaching and counselling inevitably cross over.



A successful business man had previously come to me with issues of **frustration, anger and burn out.**

He needed help with his business which he felt was affecting his personal relationships with his wife and children. Divorce was on the horizon.

By understanding his underlying issues we understood that his economically poor upbringing and childhood meant he had a deep fear of losing his modest wealth.

Hence **counselling work** needed to uncover the atmosphere of anxiety in childhood, which affected his personal and workplace relationships.

By understanding and opening up the cause of his fear, which showed as anger, we opened up an empathic space of re-attunement for him, which we were then able to use in **life coaching.**

We built understanding of how his growing **BELIEF** in **compassion** would be useful in his personal relationships, and also those with his employees.

It is often the case that a happy work force is more positive and productive because the employer offers a considerate and compassionate understanding of his or her work force.



So what is empathic attunement and why would we dissolve into a black hole if we didn't have it?

It's what you may have received when you were a child: essentially it's **kindness**.

Attachment theory teaches us that children find a secure attachment via **empathic attunement** with their primary carer. In this way they grow up with a strong emotional core

A SECURE ATTACHMENT IN CHILDHOOD IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL FOR ALL OF US

Without it children become fearful, anxious, ambivalent or chaotic in their lives and relationships, and replicate this in their adult lives.

As a result of insecure attachments children, young people and adults come to see me.

This of course takes **COURAGE**, as if you are fearful on some level, it's not easy to open up to someone you do not know.



The good news is there is no black hole: Separation from the True source of Compassion is in fact an **illusion**.

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Empathy is the heart and soul of life coaching and counselling.

If a client is confused they need to be seen and heard by an open heart which does not judge them.

By internalising the missing need of empathy, via the **counsellor, a client re-attunes themselves and thus finds a secure attachment: a stronger emotional core.**

From this solid ground we can work on our plans and beliefs for the future with realism and kindness, via the **life coach.**



Such empathy is mirrored in religious and humanistic notions of



ALL ACCEPTANCE

This is the third position of the TRANSPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP in counselling.

This is not something unfamiliar to all of you.

It is called love. This is the authentic heart of counselling and life coaching, and you will know when it's missing.



The most important thing a counsellor or a life coach can do is...

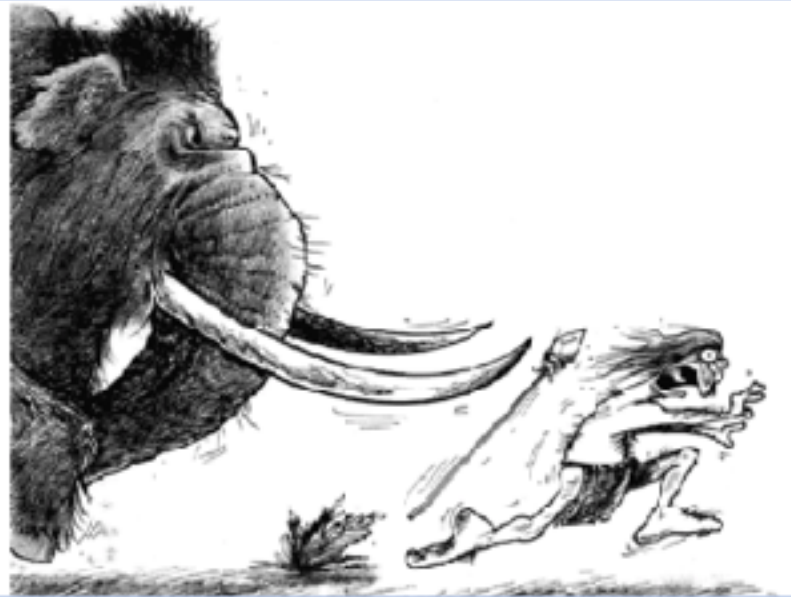
GET THEMSELVES OUT OF THE WAY

For a client to receive what is their authentic natural birthright; their true inheritance, a skilled therapist will know when to be silent, to enable the client to receive their own truth.

This is the basis of all **EMPOWERMENT.**



So, if a life coach and counsellor offers an empathic space, whereby we can work on our **SELF LIMITING SUBCONSCIOUS BELIEFS**, what's the ***science*** behind our anxieties and fears?



Genetically we have inherited a need to protect ourselves: a need to deal with dangerous predators. This is known as the **FLIGHT, FIGHT, or FREEZE response**.

So our business man was experiencing a fight response.

FIGHT: Physical responses can be a knotted stomach/nausea, burning stomach, flexed/tight jaw, grinding of the teeth.

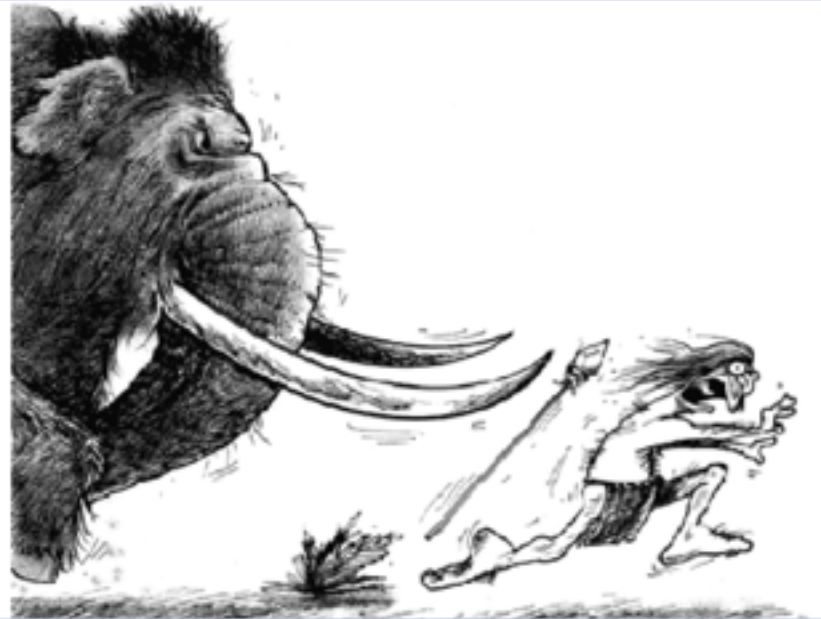
FLIGHT: Symptoms can be restlessness, feeling trapped, excessive leg/foot movement.

FREEZE: Symptoms can be holding the breath and restricted breathing, feeling cold/frozen, numb, pale skin etc.



In fight, flight and freeze the **autonomic nervous system** is activated.

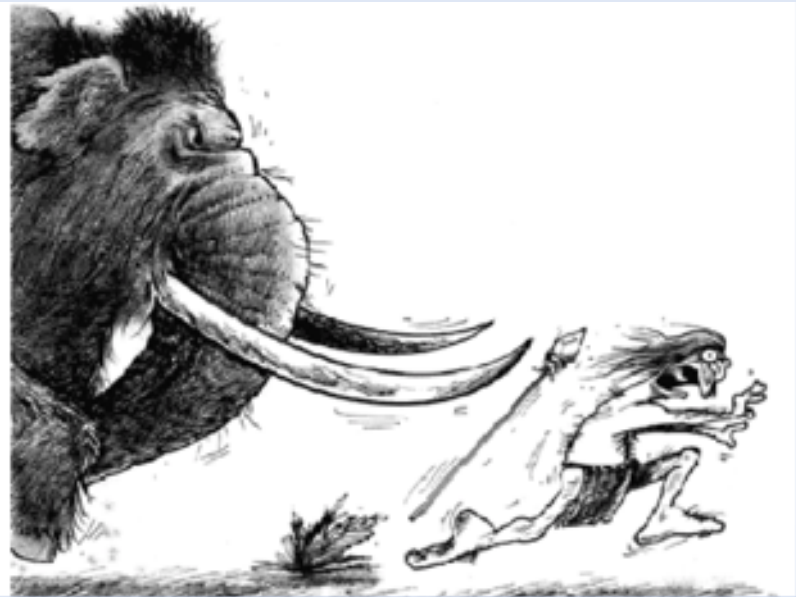
...the part of the nervous system responsible for control of the bodily functions not consciously directed, such as breathing, the heartbeat, and digestive processes.



However, in today's world the triggers are no longer animals in pursuit of us, but the modern day stresses: work, lack of work, fear of disease (Covid 19), fear of climate change: enforced by constant bad news, worry over finances, family, relationships, and trauma experienced in our earliest years as well as our youth.

The pervasiveness of these experiences can feel like we are being pushed by life threatening situations, so our minds and bodies react accordingly producing **cortisone, adrenalin** and **noradrenalin**: hormones which stimulate the body to run from what feels like an aggressor.

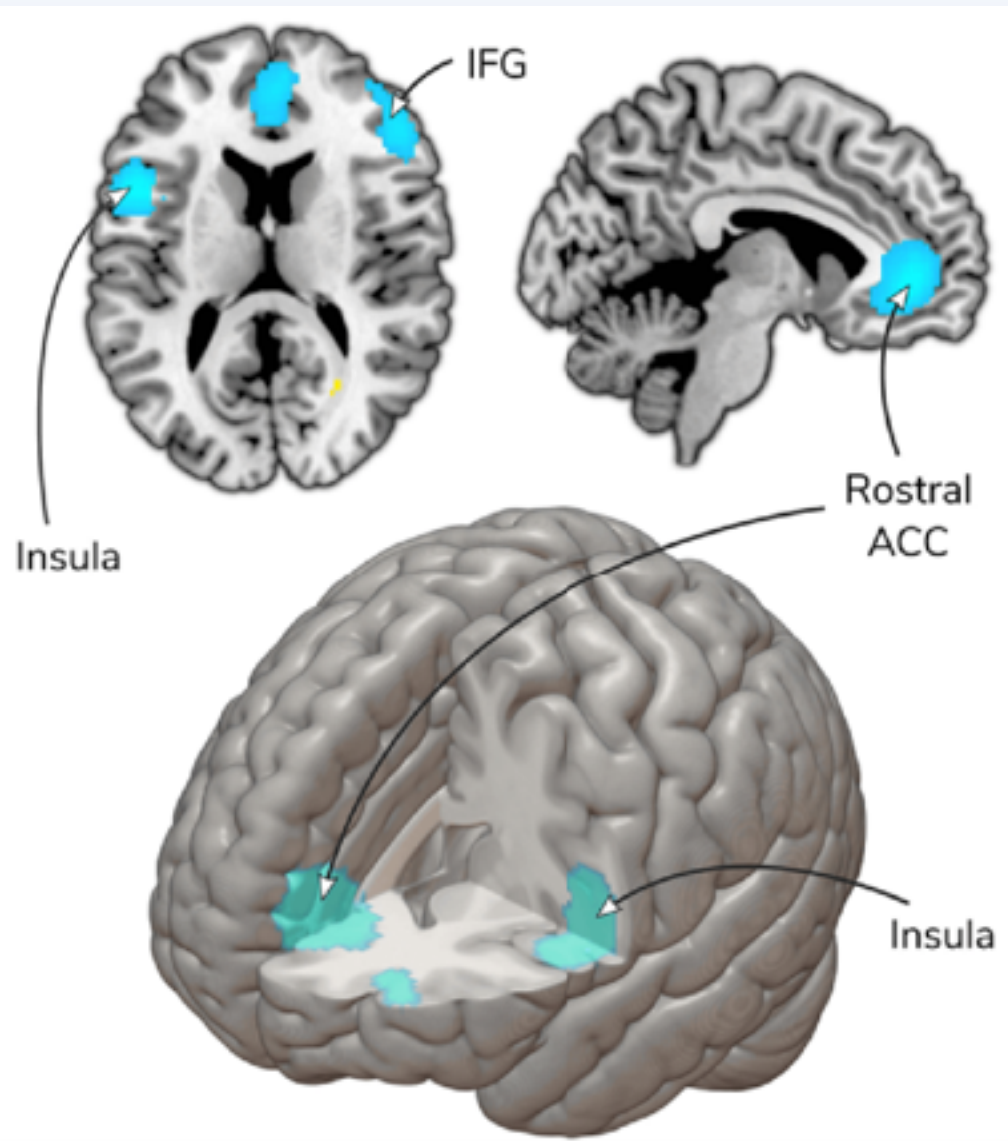
Stress is the biggest killer in modern times.



Stress means we mobilise resources from our gut, from our brain, our **immune system**, and put energy into our muscles to fight for our lives.

This means our memory is impacted; concentration is limited; we won't be able to digest our food properly; **we can't eliminate toxins properly**, and *our immune system is compromised ... chronically...all the time.*

This in turn affects the overall immune system and can eventually result in physical disease.



The chemistry of fear can take hold of our lives.

The antidote to flight and flight is rest and repair.

One of the greatest tools for helping the mind and body to return to balance and homeostasis is relaxation: **relaxation in activity and in stillness.**

This shuts down the flight and fight response of the **sympathetic nervous system**, and returns the body to the **parasympathetic system**, via the production of **dopamine, endorphins, serotonin and oxytocin.**

Neuroscience has also shown how work in therapy can in fact re-open previous parts of the brain that have literally shut down because of emotional illness and trauma.

PART OF MY WORK IS TO HELP CLIENTS LEARN TO RELAX.

Blue highlights indicate brain regions where activity decreased after therapy, including the the cingulate cortex (rostral ACC) and insula, which are involved in emotional processing and anxiety.

To relax we need to come back to the present moment.

So in therapy work, I teach clients to stay in the present through,

breathing techniques, visualisation, meditation, mindfulness and cognitive behavioural therapy.

Along side this I help them understand how their minds are taking them away from this present moment.

It is only in this present moment that clients can understand how patterns of past trauma are impacting them, and how negative self beliefs limit their ability to commit and make plans for the future.

It's our thoughts and beliefs which alter which way we see the world: whether we go into generalised anxiety and flight and flight, or more rest and repair.



COVID 19

For many their immune systems have been sadly overcome during this pandemic. But those not directly affected are also suffering- often from huge emotional stress. This also causes pressure on the immune system.

Mental Health workers are warning of a “tsunami” of mental health illness from problems stored up during lockdown.

Financial pressures for many are huge. The figures of abuse on women and children are startling. And the pressure on young people working at home is causing confusion and anxiety. The constant ‘bad news’ is only adding to this anxiety.



COVID 19

I'd like to finish by offering the following tips on how to deal with anxiety.

Please note these are *not* a replacement for in-depth life coaching and counselling.



**THE FOLLOWING MAY SEEM LIKE VERY SIMPLE TECHNIQUES
FOR DEALING WITH ANXIETY BUT THEY ARE INCREDIBLY EFFECTIVE.**

Tip 1: Name the anxiety: *Putting feeling into words reduces anxiety.* The main **part of the brain** responsible for processing emotions is thus necessarily over ridden by the prefrontal cortex: the part of the brain used for thought, complex planning.

Tip 2: Face the anxiety: *Avoidance needs to be replaced by acceptance.* By facing the fear we learn strategies to deal with it. We cannot do this if we refuse to look at it. Find yourself a relaxed setting (ideally with a counsellor) and imagine what you are afraid of. By purposely and calmly going towards the fear, the brain eventually learns not to fear it. *Become a master of your fear, by training it.*

Tip 3: When fear and anxiety are present we can **breathe out the anxiety.**

Breath in to a quick count of 7 (not 7 seconds, but a quick count), then pausing, and then breathing out to a quick count of 11.

The important thing is not the count but that the out breath is longer than the in breath.

We can further change our physiological response to triggers which cause anxiety by practising this breathing whilst imagining the fear.

Tip 4: **Grade the anxiety:**

On a scale of 0 - 10 where 0 is no anxiety at all.

By reframing from a feeling to a number we dilute the fear. The cognitive functions of the brain get hijacked when we are afraid. So take back control. By scaling the fear we reignite the prefrontal cortex; become more mindful and are able to see the fear rather than being a victim of it.

Then if we are about to do something we are afraid of, like public speaking, we will actually see that no one is screaming at us; no one is throwing rotten eggs and we are more able to engage our cognitive faculties.

TIP 5: **Discharge the anxiety.:**

Hard exercise can be a powerful antidote to depressive states. By doing this we fulfil the outcome and circuit of the flight and fight response, so that it diminishes. This is because our mind perceives we have survived the threats and hence the body returns to homeostasis/balance.

Tip 6: **Awareness:** *Sometimes carrying a small card in your pocket with the acronym ' **AWARE** '* can be helpful when feeling anxious:

Accept that you're feeling anxious and name it

Watch the anxiety and grade it

Act normal, breathe as described above and carry on regardless. Show your fear instinct that you are in control, not the fear.

Repeat the previous 3 steps if necessary

Expect the best: you are taking control; taming and training the fear.



So...

Expect the best.

Take control.

Tame and train the fear.

Richard Barker
COUNSELLOR
LIFE COACH