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Legends hide great truths. With the advent of writing the tales told around the fire century after century became garbled and disjointed. Today we are searching for the truth hiding in these legends. Our future may very well depend on seeking this knowledge.

What actually resides in these myths and legends; what great discoveries are to be made and what from the past has made it into the present world we live in?

From trance dances to mind altering substances, it appears that these are a gateway into that other world; that world of star stuff, the world of dreams and alternate reality. And yet, before we find the truth we need to find our own reality conscious.

Why do we have to be unhappy; why do we have to suffer? There is a glaring imbalance in our present world. If we do not create that balance, Mother Nature will do it herself.

It is not always necessary to imbibe mind altering drugs, there are foods, herbs and spices that if we include in our daily diet, will assist in achieving a relatively healthy and happy state of mind.

Consciousness is at once the most commonplace and the most mysterious of all life processes.

The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious.

The evidence for the Divine lies in inner personal experiences.



I do not lie,
But bleed
And melt
And melt
Into myriad
Colours,
So inimical
Eye
Becomes
Blind
To the miracle
Of me

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**HOW THE MIND WORKS WITH
ALTERED STATES**
With Lois Stahl

Our experiences of the world is a result of the functions of our mind and specific parts of the mental body relate to locations in the **astral, etheric and physical bodies**, which are all integrated through the multidimensional functions of the chakras. In the brain, learning and memory are related to **REPEATED USE of certain neurological pathways**...similarly in the mental body. This is so for all animals which from the moment of birth teach and transmit knowledge of how to live and survive in a physical body. Preferred or strong impressions and associated patterns constitute learned and perpetuated mental dispositions. These structured responses, attitudes and conceptual frameworks are relatively concrete and our sense of identity and individual constructs of reality, are built on these mental structures. In fact, when we assimilate information from our environment if this information has no resonance in our memory banks we discard/throw out what is "unknown" to what we believe and identify with. Although useful, these constructs are usually preventing us from expanding the horizons of awareness.

Altered states of consciousness, sometimes called non-ordinary states, include various mental states in which the mind can be aware but is not in its usual wakeful condition, such as during hypnosis, meditation, hallucination, trance, and the dream stage. Altered states can occur anywhere from yoga class to the birth of a child. They allow us to see our lives and ourselves with a broader lens and from different angles of perception than the ordinary mind. Sometimes people rely too heavily on the ordinary mind. They painstakingly analyze themselves and their problems with little payoff, as if the ordinary mind is the only and best tool for healing.

Many of us live our lives and meet our challenges with the intellect, neglecting the opportunities that altered states offer. Maybe we just prefer the safety and predictability of the ordinary mind and the world of thought. We know what's wrong intellectually but we feel stuck when it comes to getting relief. We feel stuck, in part, because we are relying too heavily on "figuring out" our problems. When we only use the ordinary mode of consciousness, our problems can become self-perpetuating.

We are like a person stuck in a hole who digs with a shovel rather than climbing out with a ladder. Sometimes we can't see the ladder with the ordinary mind. At times like these, dropping the effort to figure ourselves out can be the best medicine. That doesn't mean dropping the effort to get better, but giving the intellect a rest for a while.

Not only has the common conception of altered states been bound to illegal drug use in the popular imagination, but also with mental illness and its associated stereotypes. However, advances in the fields of neuroscience, anthropology, and ethnobotany have revealed that this is very far from the whole truth about altered states.

Research in these fields has yielded some astonishing insights into the nature and role of this phenomenon in the human brain and body. Most surprising of all is that ASCs share an underlying pattern of distinct brain functioning, regardless of how they are induced. Research suggests that this distinct pattern of brain functioning may be psychologically and physiologically beneficial for a range of anxiety and stress disorders that are still difficult to treat, for example, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and end-of-life anxiety.

Defining Altered States

So what exactly are altered states of consciousness? ASC can be best defined as an "integrative mode of consciousness."

Integrating the Conscious and Subconscious

The idea of integration is crucial to understanding how altered states can be beneficial. Brain functioning during ASC integrates information from the lower levels of the brain into the processing capacity of the frontal cortex, particularly integrating nonverbal emotional and behavioral information into the frontal brain. This process brings

“preconscious or unconscious functions and material into self-conscious awareness,” which, in turn, can provide individuals with new levels of insight and understanding.

We might wonder how the experience of dissociation, so common during altered states, can play a role in integration, since the two processes seem diametrically opposed to each other. However, if we consider the use of dissociation in hypnotherapy, for example, we can begin to see how dissociation can paradoxically lead to integration. By providing people with a sense of psychological distance from negative and traumatic information, dissociation can provide a sense of psychological safety and comfort that bypasses the mechanisms of repression, allowing them to engage or reconnect with repressed content and ultimately lead to integration, or acceptance of the content. Very often, troubling thoughts, feelings, and experiences just feel too close to us — we’re not comfortable dealing with them, and because of this, we can’t really get a clear view of them. This often results in an inability to learn from our experiences and successfully adapt our thinking and behavior accordingly.

We can now begin to appreciate how much more there is to the phenomenon of altered states than the typical stereotypes associated with them, especially so when considering that the capacity to experience them is based on innate human biology structures and functions. The evidence showing that altered states can be psychologically beneficial only further underscores how common social misconceptions and biases have

greatly hindered our understanding. However, there is another feature of this phenomenon that is equally if not more remarkable than what we have already learned.



Evolutionary Evidence

Research indicates significant differences between humans and chimpanzees (our closest living evolutionary relative) which provide evidence of a long-term relationship between psychotropic substances and humans, allowing for human use of environmental sources of consciousness-altering chemicals.

This is especially evident in our ability to utilize natural opioids from the opium poppy and serotonin-like substances such as psilocybin from hallucinogenic mushrooms. Exogenous neurotransmitter analogues are substances originating from outside of the body which share characteristics with endogenous neurotransmitters — those naturally produced within the body. Through successful evolutionary adaptation, endogenous mechanisms in humans have enabled the selective benefits for using exogenous serotonin-mimicking substances.

There is evidence that evolutionary changes influenced the role that serotonin plays in higher-level cognition, and that it even may have participated in the specialization of cognitive functions. For early human ancestors, the pressures for survival facilitated successful adaptation. Consistent with these demands, the desirable effects of ASC on behavior, cognition, and emotions seemingly fulfilled this need.

Comparative research on the genetics of humans and chimpanzees has found that human gene variations have enhanced the capacity to metabolize plant toxins in addition to opiates and other drugs such as the antidepressant selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). These variations are found in CYP2D6, a gene

involved in the metabolism of foreign substances that are not naturally produced or part of the normal diet. Variations in these genes indicate positive selectivity for humans specifically with CYP2D6, thus increasing the chances of survival.

There is a remarkable consistency in the shamanic practices of various cultures, noting that a shaman in one culture will often have more in common in terms of beliefs and practices with shamans in other cultures than he or she does with other healers within their own culture. There is the use of well-known induction methods such as consuming entheogens (psychoactive substances), drumming (auditory driving), and dancing (extreme motor activity), combined with such distinct experiences as soul flight, encountering non-human beings, experiencing emotional catharsis, and gaining insight as transcultural elements of ASC. The perception of spirals and dark tunnels leading to a single point of light are commonly experienced during altered states and could account not only for their use in cave art but also in leading early humans to associate caves with entrances to other worlds. This in turn may have been an influential factor in the selection of caves as a site for creating art.

However, ASC may have played an even larger role in the development of some of the foundational ideas that have influenced the metaphysical beliefs shared by most of the major religions developed throughout history. The dissociative effects of ASC, including out-of-body experiences (OBE), can easily have provided the basis for belief in humans’ possessing an independent, transcending spirit that is capable of separating from its body, flight, and entering other realms of existence where it would encounter nonhuman beings who could either be benevolent or hostile.

These experiences could have clearly helped establish the cardinal points of the spirit world and the roles of its inhabitants as conceptualized by most cultures

throughout history. The validity of cultural interpretations of ASC experiences is not so much the point. Rather, the crucial point is the role that altered states may have played in the development of human culture, potentially moving us from a rudimentary level of perception to being capable of developing richly imagined conceptualizations of the world around us and within us.

There can also be little doubt that biological and cultural power of ASC will continue to prove both controversial and irresistible as we struggle to come to terms with its role in our history and the innate human drive to alter consciousness.

INSPIRING FOODS & HERBS With Michele Slabbert

The intimate relationship between spirituality and consciousness becomes most conspicuous through mystical experiences, which are invariably accompanied by major alterations in perceptions.

It is not always necessary to ingest mind altering drugs to achieve a happy medium. While we can eat healthily, if we do not get enough balance in sleep and exercise, health challenges can arise. Sleep is essential to maintain neurotransmitter balance. Exercise keeps our bodies and minds alive.

Anything that reduces the flow of blood to the brain has a negative impact on mental function. The brain requires optimal levels of fuel and various nutrients to perform its diverse functions.

Here are a few examples of supplements, herbs and oils one can use every day to assist in keeping our consciousness alive and vital.

Vitamin B complex promotes the smooth operation of the nervous system.

Vitamin C is another nutrient the body needs to produce neurotransmitters. High levels of Vitamin C can also help to protect the brain cells from oxidation.

Zinc is used by the brain, which requires fairly high levels in order to prevent damage from free

radicals. Optimum zinc levels improve neurotransmission.

Magnesium assists in the functioning of the nervous system and the transmission of nerve signals. Deficiency can lead to confusion and learning problems.

Foods that are rich in protein boost dopamine and norepinephrine which give increased alertness and speeds up thought processes. Beans and legumes, fermented soy, and coffee (the real stuff!) assist in improving reaction time.

Black tea and green tea boost dopamine and norepinephrine.

Peppermint, nettles, red clover, fenugreek and dandelion are among the herbs that assist in raising dopamine levels.

St. John's wort, ginseng, chamomile, lavender, saffron, cannabis, black cohosh, oat straw, and wild yam all raise serotonin levels, where mild to moderate depression is a challenge.

Calming herbs include Valerian, Scelletium, Passionflower, Hops, Lemon Balm, Chamomile and Catnip. Take a pinch of each herb to make 2 teaspoons, infuse in hot water for 10 minutes with cup covered, strain, cool, sip and relax!

There are also essential oils that can be used to create internal harmony. Lavender being one of the best to use.

Several foods contain tryptophan, which is a building block to creating mood boosting serotonin. Tryptophan plays an important part in the production of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin and the hormone melatonin, both of which act as natural sedatives.

Although eggs, poultry and meat are rich in tryptophan, they also contain large amounts of other amino acids that compete with tryptophan for uptake in the brain and have a stimulating instead of calming effect on the nervous system.

Include pineapples, bananas, kiwi fruit, plums, avocados and tomatoes in your diet.

Saffron, cinnamon, turmeric, rosemary and thyme are spices and herbs that make you happy, so do include these in your day to

day meals or drinks. Add walnuts to salads, as they have a high concentration of serotonin. Dark chocolate is another serotonin boosting food.

Serotonin regulates intestinal activity, so adding the above spices are very beneficial for overall health.

Roasted pumpkin seeds, dried sunflower seeds eaten in quantity contain a fair amount of tryptophan.

AN ALL ROUND TREE

Tarchonanthus Camphoratus
The Camphor Bush

When observing a flower, shrub or tree, our ancestors took note and experimented with all parts of the particular fauna of interest.

Very often animal reaction to plants would give an idea of what could be eaten or not. While there are certain plants that can harm, it was fairly quickly learned which could be used and which not. In addition plants that could heal, create a harmonious atmosphere and provide material to make life a little more comfortable were highly attended to.

Spiritual properties were attributed to each and every plant. A highly prized tree was the Camphor bush. There are many different names associated to the camphor bush namely, kuskanferbos, isiduli selindle, igqeba-elimhlope

Growing along the Coast, this small tree is capable of withstanding the unsteady climate of the Western Cape, growing fairly tall with green leaves and small cotton like flower buds that have a fragrant scent.

The Camphor bush has a wide range of medical uses. Every aspect of the plant provided a significant medical value to its users, earning itself an important place in the medicinal practices of the indigenous populations. The leaves and twigs were some of the most important aspects of the plant. Often used internally in teas and directly chewed to treat a wide variety of ailments such as headaches, asthma, chest infections, internal bleeding, anxiety and stomach problems.

When the leaves are incorporated into a tonic it can help to relieve

WISDOM WITHIN

With Lynne van Zyl
Gogo NomVuka

the symptoms of measles and reputedly cancer. For external uses an ointment was made from the extracts of leaves to relieve and prevent muscle pains.

Hunters would often use the cream to prepare their legs for a long Journey.

Camphor Bush infused in brandy makes a good asthma tonic as well as being good for most chest ailments. Take a good handful of leaves and cover with brandy; leave for about 6 weeks, shaking every now and then. Strain, label and date. Store in a brown or green bottle. 1 to 2 teaspoons to be taken at a time.

An external use of the plant was placing the cotton balls inside of pillows. This would help one get a peaceful night sleep and treat headaches.

Apart from medical uses the Camphor bush had many other uses that were used in everyday life. The Camphor bush has an extraordinary ability to ward off unwanted insects. When burned the leaves release a powerful but subtle odour that kept dwellings insect free. Because of how effective the burning was, the leaves and twigs were taken in their original form and placed between items of clothing to keep insects away. The ability to ward off insects also reaches to those that may inhabit our bodies, such as lice. The dried leaves are used as part of the purification process. When turned into a perfume and rubbed into the scalp it aids in the treatment of lice as well as dandruff.

As a building material, the wood was often used to create indoor furniture and hunting weapons. Also used to make shelves, fence poles, spears and other items of furniture.

It is not surprising then that the Camphor bush's ability to be used in both medical and non-medical circumstances was of great use in everyday life and highly respected for its valuable contribution to the upliftment of the eternal Spirit.

With thanks to my granddaughter Melissa Slabbert for her research into the Camphor Bush. It's a valuable tree in our gardens.

Legends hide great truths, as it was up to us to find the wisdom within. Yet they sprinkled breadcrumbs, clues everywhere they went. From ancient rock art to sacred sites and so much more. For aeons people have been trying to decipher these hidden meanings and messages from the ancient ones. Such wisdom was left as pointers to humanity, which ultimately resides within each and every one of us.

Everything in our lives we have created and due to Western indoctrination and conditioning, we have been brainwashed to believe in "no pain, no gain" that we have to suffer in order to learn anything. This is absolute nonsense! We are our Lords of Karma, our own creators. Everything that shows up or happens in your life, you have asked for. Take nothing for granted and everything we say and do, has consequences. It's therefore especially important to look into your past lives. They house many clues in one's own suffering, genetic inheritance and social imbalances. We all need to take responsibility and learn to overcome these internal fears and patterns of conditioning. This is an inward self discovering journey, as opposed to a knowledge based outcome. Realisation of the *God-Self within* and the civilisations and multiplicity of the worlds within oneself. This is the greatest awakening, awakening within. There is no need for mind altering substances to obtain anything "outside oneself". In fact, we have seen many, many cases which only induces further trauma if not dealt appropriate and responsibility. This is certainly not what healing is about. Having the courage and finding an authentic support, whereby one feels "safe" to observe your current trauma. Then only can you change your contract. What is of utmost importance is to RE_MEMBER why you came to earth in the first place, so you can fulfil your destiny, as opposed to one's fate.

Today there are many "rituals and ceremonies" been held, which are seeming to be more of a "New-Age" trend and the word consciousness, is so easily and loosely expressed. Yes there are many healers who walk an authentic path, at the same time many charlatans involved in a lot of black magic. We've seen and heard many vulnerable people, seeking and searching for support landing up in precarious situations taking mind altering substances, thinking it will be life-changing shift. Certainly, not disputing in some cases there have been reported success and healing stories. However, in reaching out for the "magical cure" the physical body takes huge strain and are possibly once again put into further trauma.

However the good news is, humanity in general are finding the courage to wake up to themselves by losing the outside authority and are able to make their own decisions"; this is a significant shift for humankind.

Let's take a step back and look at the first sound on earth which was heard. It was our mother's heartbeat. Our relationship with rhythm began in the womb. As human beings, we are intrinsically rhythmic and this is a potent source of well-being.

Our Ancestors knew how to read the stars, zodiac and connection to their own organic living body, knowingly utilising their wisdom from indigenous plants and the world in which they lived.

Dancing, story-telling and beating the drum around the fire was a sacred custom. It's one of the oldest practices of humankind. The beat of the drum reminds us of our Ancestors who came before us. The comforting heartbeat, our deep connection to the body of our mother and her children itself. The use of rhythmically beating a drum (two-beat) was the connection to Mother Earth and climbing of the "God Ropes". Of course, we are all aware there are tricksters on the path, however from one's own experience and the wisdom carried within, one learns to recognise which rope to climb.

The revival of beating the drum into today's modern society brings with it physical, emotional and spiritual healing that could profoundly impact individual and collective health. As Shaman's/Igqriha's it's a daily practice to dance, awakening the flow of energy and becoming positive.

"We heal ourselves and communities, when dancing. Not only do we store energy, we strengthen our bodies and build bridges through different memories."

I= person – GQI= Life Force Energy - RHA= full of

Frontiers of Psychology, entitled The Human Nature of Music, researchers present a theory that *"our ability to create and appreciate music at the centre of what it means to be human"*.

In his book, Shamanism: The Neural Ecology of Consciousness and Healing, Michael Winkelman explains how "drumming synchronizes the frontal and lower areas of the brain, integrating non-verbal information from lower brain structures into the frontal cortex, producing feelings of insight, understanding, integration, certainty, conviction, and truth, which surpass ordinary understandings and tend to persist long after the experience".

Potential benefits of drumming, results have shown that participating in drumming circles helps to fortify and increase natural killer T-cells that fight cancer and viruses, such as AIDS. The research, published in PLOS/ONE, reveals a profound reduction of inflammation in people that took part in in 90-minute drum circles, during a 10 week study.

In cases of significant damage to the parts of the brain, such as with Parkinson's disease, drumming has the ability to generate neuronal connections between all parts of the brain. These rhythmic cues, according to Michael Thaut, director of Colorado State University's Center for Biomedical Research in Music, *"can help retrain the brain after a stroke or other neurological impairment"*.

From PTSD disorders, to adolescents discharging anger and negative emotions, to corporate executives letting go of some of their day-to-day stress". Drumming has also been shown to help Alzheimer's patients improve their short-term memory and increase their social interactions, autistic children increase their attention span, and help stroke victims regain control of their movements. There is something primal and ancient in our neuroanatomy responds.

It's no coincidence that every culture around the world has made ritual use of a drum. This all illustrates the continued relevance of shamanic paradigms in treating psychological symptoms like stress, anxiety, and pain.

With today's modern and busy lifestyle, we find little to zero time to find time to centre ourselves and go within. Particularly now in this global pandemic, it's proven even more restrictive. This is pivotal now more than ever to connect within. Simply by daily connecting to our slow moving breath, it is vital for maintaining our well-being. One need not have a circle or group to belong to, it's to find the time for self-care and quiet reflection within. Pick up an instrument you've been longing to play, even with zero "no-how". Just by connecting to it and tuning into the vibrations of sound, will help centre, calm and relax. However, as human beings, human interaction is vital for our survival and inter-connectivity and interaction with others and nature.

Currently with the reduced lockdown levels, there are smaller circles offering connectivity and holding space in these times, either live or via on-line sessions. This certainly has assisted in isolated times and still provides a welcoming support structure. If one has no means to do this, simply take the time to journey with music and dancing. Raise your vibrations. Tai-Chi, Qi-Qong or Yoga are wonderful ancient practises to assist in health immunity and vitality. Daily visits into Mother Nature, our unconditional mother and healer. At night giving thanks to, Father

Sky, by looking up gazing at the stars and grandmother moon.

RE-MEMBERING we come from the stars. By being in nature we collect what we call "angel food", snapshots from our time and daily experience in nature. While sleeping the angels can make duplicates pictures of our capturing's. Not only are we feeling wonderfully balanced, we are helping the Angelic Realm.

In Joseph Campbell's the Power of Myth – The Hero's Adventure We are only to follow the thread of the *Hero Path*. Come to the centre of our own existence.

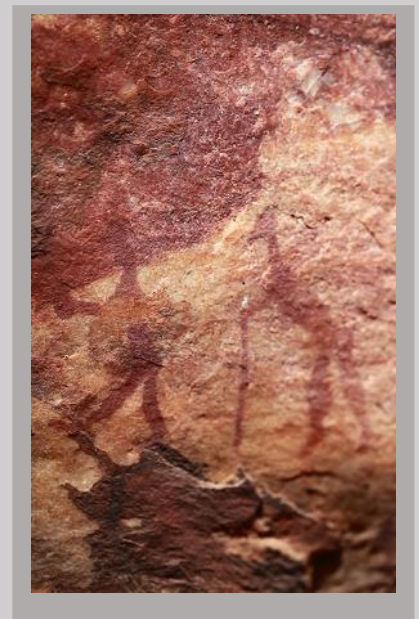
Listen to your heart-centred life. Place yourself in rest, slow moving breath to tune into the quiet within. Creative Spirit resides deep within. Our life evokes our higher nature. Bringing vitality to oneself and others and *"Follow your bliss"*.

Ultimately, in "the end" it's about *RE_MEMBERING* why you came to earth, fulfilling your destiny and relationship to Self and All beings on this planet. Developing consciousness and maturity to exit.

"We don't have theology or ideology...we dance! Mythology, the dance of the universe... This is the medicine"

Blessings & peace to all Beings
Gogo NomVuka

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EASING THE INNER WORLD with Michele Slabbert

Magic is a word that can often create either inspiration or fear. Paul Gallico sorted that one out for me a long time ago when I read *The Man who was Magic*. The picture he drew in my mind was of a cow grazing in a field turning grass into milk and that did it for me. It enabled me to see the magic in the world around me in a new light every day.

We find ourselves here, in this moment, within our own little universe. We choose whether we want to live in fear or in Truth. Whenever you find yourself at odds with yourself and at home, step back, do something else to take your mind away from what can overwhelm you and turn that feeling into something positive.

Create.

What you self prepare with the right energy is always good for you. Working with herbs and essential oils is scent for the brain, refining and calming. It makes the Truth come alive.

Making pot pourri is fun and if you have a garden or have fresh flowers available, you can experiment as the journey takes you. Lavender, wilde als, scented roses, rosemary, cloves and cinnamon are good herbs and spices to work with.

Both Lavender and Lemon essential oils are good mood stabilisers, so working with these two as a base you could create a bowl for those times when you need upliftment.

And for those who love baking, try Lavender Biscuits.

¾ cup fine sugar / 1 egg
225g Butter / 1 cup plain flour
1 ½ cups self raising flour
2 teaspoons custard powder
2 tablespoons dried English lavender

Cream butter and sugar. Add egg and mix thoroughly. Sift flour and custard powder and add slowly to the mixture. Strip lavender flowers off stems and add to mix. Roll ½ teaspoon size and slightly flatten. 200deg oven for 10 – 15 minutes on an ungreased tray. The end of 2021 is at hand, time flies by and year end celebrations become part of the thought

processes. Here is where you can have fun making simple gifts.

If you have a garden take your seedlings and plant them in a small pot, which you can decorate as you will. Friends with small children will enjoy receiving mint as this can be placed in a sickroom to scent away the often cloying atmosphere.

Make a Rose petal or Lavender vinegar to cleanse rooms. Unless you have a prolific rose bush make the lavender as the petals need to be changed quite regularly. When using rose petals gently place them in a container, cover with either organic apple cider vinegar or a good quality grape vinegar. Close and change petals every 2 days for about 8 days. Shake gently each day. Check the scent and if not as desired then continue for another week. Strain three times, decant into a spray bottle and label. To make lavender vinegar strip the lavender from stalk and fill container to one third. Pour over vinegar and leave for a week. Strain and refill container with fresh lavender and leave for another week. Check scent and if needs be continue for another week. Strain three times, decant into spray bottles and label.

If you want to splurge a little then make some burner or bath oils. Little bottles of either blue, green or brown should be used. Choose a base oil – grape seed or sweet almond – and add a few drops each of your choice of essential oils. *Relaxing and restorative* oils include Basil, Chamomile, Clary Sage, Frankincense, Jasmine, Lavender, Rose and Sandalwood. *Stimulating* oils include Rosemary, Basil, Peppermint and Pine.

Scent is an excellent source of pleasure. The scent and sight of flowers can bring a sense of peace and clarity so cut the chocolates by half and buy a bunch of the flowers that catch your eye and tug a little inside. Have fun, be creative and happy.

The Joy of the Journey

In August of this year, 3 Healers set off on a journey up the West Coast. We didn't know each other well; we only knew how well our combined healing energy flowed.

This journey was magical. Every flower opened its heart to us; every rock formation spoke; the rock art manifested itself in all its splendour and the mountains held us in awe.

Kgara Kevin Rack captured some of this magic in his photographs.



CONTACT

Lois Stahl

Reiki Master / Mayan Astrologer
masonwaspstudio@gmail.com

Lynne van Zyl

Traditional Health Practitioner
Gogo NomVuka
info@nomvukatraditionalhealing.co.za
www.nomvukatraditionalhealing.co.za

Michele Slabbert

Traditional Health Practitioner
Herbalist
Michele.herbalist@gmail.com
<https://tinyurl.com/GreenEnergyHerbals>

Gerrard Chaiken - Poet
gerrard@upwardspiral.com

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Kgara_Kevin Rack SEO&M