

January 2020

Welcome to a new decade. For each of us the promise of new, rewarding experiences and spiritual growth.

The focus for me this year is Mental Health. So often poor Mental Health begins with loneliness and social isolation, which correlate with a 29% increased risk of Coronary Heart Disease and 32% increased risk of Stroke, as well as higher rates of depression and anxiety. Loneliness had been linked to premature death, emotional distress, suicide and the development of dementia, poor health behaviours, smoking, physical inactivity, poor sleep and poor immune function. We need to acknowledge those of us who are in need of support, listen to what has to be said and offer friendship and support. Being patient, understanding and more tolerant of those with Mental Illness is not easy, but is necessary for the health and well being of our planet.

Living in country Tasmania for the past 8 years has opened my eyes to just how important being part of a Community is. I consider myself very fortunate in that I have Marion to share my life and together we have more good fortune in that we are members of a vibrant Community, parts of a whole.

Our land has no physical boundaries and our neighbour is happy for us to use his property for direct access to the beach! As well, he has given us free rein in his productive veggie patch which supplements our own. He calls us a part of his tribe and we are happy in this role. Last year another of our neighbours died. His death was anticipated and months before he threw a huge party...his living wake, where we all shared food, music, and dancing in celebration of his life. When he died he was laid to rest in a coffin made by a local carpenter, with timber from, "long held onto apple crates". The burial was in the small local graveyard within metres of his home and there were 5 shovels available for all of us to take turns and pile dirt over him. We all brought food and drink and reminisced about a life well lived

We buy our eggs from a girl down the road, our free range pork from another, and lamb from a local who runs sheep not far away. A friend took us out on his boat several times last year and we indulged in fresh tuna, scallops and abalone. All of these experiences are life enriching and so important in the maintenance of good health. We all need to look out for each other and help each other where we can. This sense of community always comes to the fore in a crisis such as the recent horrific bushfires in NSW and Victoria, this is of course wonderful to behold, but more importantly it should be cultivated and cherished in good times as well as bad.

In August my fourth grandchild was born, a boy called Willem. I felt so privileged to have been asked to stay with my son and his family in those first 2 weeks, and carrying Willem from the hospital to the car....each of my steps so carefully taken...filled me with such joy.

This year, do what you can for others and in doing so your rewards will be bountiful.

Be in love with living,

Monica