

4 Body + Soul

Rage, jealousy, anxiety: could a

Terrence Barnardt, aka Terrence the Teacher, is the fashionistas' favourite healer and hypnotist. But could he rise to the challenge of Robert Crampton's long list of problems?

Terrence Barnardt, aka Terrence the Teacher, is making a bit of a name for himself in the fashion world, with models, designers and editors seeking help for anything from anxiety and panic attacks to insomnia — although the precise name for what he does remains a little unclear. Hypnotist? Healer? Helper? Maybe he's a bit of all three. Maybe it doesn't matter. Christian Louboutin, no less, swears by the guy, saying "for me, Terrence represents the ideal teacher". Going to name a shoe after him, so I hear — a tottering high honour indeed, although I have to say that "I'll just slip on my Terrence the Teachers" is a bit of a mouthful.

Even so, good for Terrence. Good for M. Louboutin too. And good also, presumably, for fans of expensive footwear with a signature red sole. Still, I prefer to reserve judgment.

But hold on, what's this? Lord have mercy. No need to delay. The Day of Judgment, Terrence-wise, is upon us. Because here he is, guru to the stars, a-knockin' on my door. I'm honoured to have been granted an audience. In terms of personal therapy — although that is not a word he particularly relishes — this chap is the flavour of the month, charging from £200 for a session. And here he stands, all set to work his magic on his latest troubled, volatile, borderline-bonkers client.

That would be me.

A compact, enviably youthful 43 — no, 44, oh OK, he concedes graciously, 45-year-old South African — and one sporting a defiant blond-streaked quiff that ought not to work but somehow does, Terrence sits at my kitchen table and asks what I hope to get out of the session. Mate, I say, I've got the full set — where do you want to start? Weight, booze, fags, insomnia, rage, anxiety, agoraphobia, aggression, jealousy, depression, low self-esteem matched with overweening arrogance juxtaposed with a splash of paranoia, the whole ensemble accessorised by a flamboyant hatred of people I've never met. What do you fancy? Go on, take your pick.

Terrence swallows, looks down at his pad of paper, gathers his thoughts. "Have you done this sort of thing before?" he asks. I tell him I was first sent to see what was then called a child guidance counsellor in 1971, when I was 7. And again at 10, and again (by now it was an educational psychologist) at 17, and again (by now it was a full-blown shrink) at 21. She told me I wanted to sleep with my mother. I told her I was very fond of my mum but that was the most ridiculous thing I'd ever heard.

After which I backed off for a while. But then, in my late-thirties, I wrote a weekly column for this newspaper about undergoing various forms of mind, body, spirit therapy. Hypnosis, neuro-linguistic programming... Then, at 41, my wife put her foot down and I started on anti-depressants, which I still take, and which frankly aren't working as well as they used to. So, yeah, I've done this sort of thing before.

"Why were you sent to see someone when you were 7?" asks Terrence.

Anti-social, angry, aggressive, all-round generally obnoxious, what teachers would call a total pain in the arse, I tell him.

"So something happened to you when you were 7," says Terrence. "Some initial sensitising event, and it was an anger thing, and before you know it, it got compounded, became a habit, and is now a massive issue in your adult life."

I say I'm not sure it was any one event as such, but yes, for whatever reason, undeniably I lugged certain utterly useless, counter-productive modes of behaviour from childhood into adult life. These behaviours weren't much use way back then and they sure as hell aren't any use now. The weight, the fags, the booze — let's not worry about them. I know what I need to do about them — and in any case, they're symptoms, not causes. This other stuff, however — the anger, the aggression, the paranoia, the low self-esteem — that is altogether more ingrained, not least because it's been part of my life for much longer than has the over-eating, heavy drinking and smoking too much. I'm fed up with it. I want rid. So let's concentrate on that.

Terrence agrees. "It's good to simplify things," he says.

"My main tool," he explains, "is hypnosis. I've seen it change people's lives. In hypnosis, the subconscious — the core you — is more open to suggestion. Our subconscious mind wants the best for us. And if anger has worked for you, if it's served you, your subconscious has learnt that, and it will do whatever it can to sustain the core person it thinks you are. So we need to get the subconscious to make new connections, fire new neurons, realise that a new way of being serves you better." All of which, Terrence adds, may be confusing and hard to accept.

On the contrary, I tell him. None of what you have just said is even a little bit confusing. I accept it absolutely.

"My past is not the prettiest," says Terrence, suddenly changing tack. Really, I say, why so? "My mum was murdered," he says. "I was found on her body. I was two months old." He falters for a moment. So, frankly, do I. "It's cool," he says. I tell him it's anything but cool. "She had 20 stab wounds," he says, "and I survived. So I've decided I must be here for a purpose, which is to help other people."

We share a moment of reflection.

I know I shouldn't pry, but I can't help myself, so I go right ahead and ask this

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chap, who I've only just met, who killed his mum. "I'm not ready to share that, Robert." Fair enough. "I grew up in an orphanage," he volunteers.

"Oh really, so where was your dad?" I ask. "That's part of what I don't want to share." Another moment of reflection.

"I hated the surname [Barnardt] on my passport. I walked away from that history. I don't know if they are even alive." He was raised by foster parents. Not awful, I gather, but not ideal. "The people who believed in me, motivated me, encouraged me," he says, "were teachers. That's why I call myself Terrence the Teacher."

The penny drops: the mother's killer was the father. The father went to prison. Hence the orphanage and the foster care.

I start to ask another question, but Terrence intervenes. "If you could, please, for two minutes, be quiet," he implores, "I'd like to get back to you."

He tells me that, in his experience, for fairly obvious reasons, any therapy centred on reliving the pain of infancy is not only not much use, but potentially disastrous. I say, listen, compared with what you experienced, my childhood was pretty damn peachy, but in the normal run of things, it wasn't great. So the last thing I want to do is revisit it. Facing forwards, cracking on, leaving all that s*** where it lies, that's fine by me. "I'm all about taking charge," says Terrence.

Before becoming more interested in the emotional and psychological aspects of behaviour — although I would suspect he would agree with me in saying these matters are all of a piece — Terrence worked as a personal trainer. He recalls a period when, due to a pinched nerve in his shoulder, he couldn't do pull-ups. "So when I tried to do one, I'd say 'I love you' to that muscle." Before long, pull-ups became possible once more. "I set out to confuse my brain, mess up the messages it received." I nod. "That sounds weird, right?" Not at all, I say, and recount how I have had as much success in strengthening my abdominal muscles — on the rare occasions such activity has felt important to me — by focusing on them, lecturing them, talking to them — as I have had by lifting weights or doing endless sit-ups.

"It's the power of suggestion," says Terrence. "Engaging the brain gets amazing results. You have to give your subconscious permission to change."

And so, eventually, after all this preamble, Terrence and I repair to a quiet darkened room in which — having banished the cats, muted my mobile and warned off Barry the decorator who's flitting about doing a bit of painting — I lie on a couch while Terrence does his deeper and deeper you are now very relaxed stuff. It's all quite seductive. On paper, a strong Afrikaans accent such as Terrence's ought to be un-conducive to relaxation. Yet, rather like his quiff, his voice does the trick. I start to feel remarkably chilled, remarkably feely.

I don't mean to sound sceptical. If anything, I'm the opposite of a sceptic. I'm quite positive about these techniques. It's just that I've been the subject of hypnosis several times and each time, it hasn't had



Robert Crampton with Terrence Barnardt

