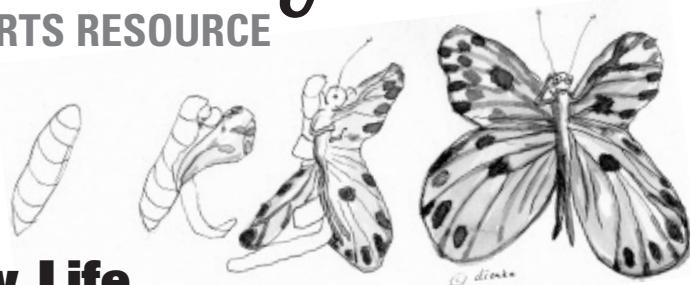


**BUTTERFLY**

# ButterFly

A HEALING ARTS RESOURCE



## Rainbow Life

By Sandy Penny

Back in 1993, I did an interview with psychologist Nancy White who has a holistic therapy center in Houston, Texas. She has a light machine that is supposed to affect your mood and ability to handle stress. Combining light therapy and psychoanaly-

sis, she has been quite successful in treating alcoholics, drug abusers, and depression—garnering a much lower recidivism rate than most programs.

Nancy allowed me to experience the light machine during our interview. I sat in a

chair with a hood over my head while a special type of light was strobed into my eyes to be absorbed by my brain. I also wore earphones, and music and miscellaneous sounds—including ocean waves, helicopters, voices in a crowd, yelling, and soothing music—were played while the light blinked.

I watched, mesmerized, as colors swirled through my vision in a psychedelic rainbow spiral. I began to wonder what kind of light source could change colors that way. Was it a more sophisticated spinning color wheel like those we used on metal Christmas trees? Was it projecting some kind of a movie? When I asked her about it, she blew my mind when she said, “There is only one color being strobed, white light. The colors you see are a response to the sounds you hear through the earphones and are generated by your own inner prism.” I could barely wrap my mind around the concept, and I have spent a great deal of time

considering the ramifications.

We say that we color our lives with our perceptions, but this dynamic is so much more real and powerful than we realize. Our feelings change the way we experience an event. Have you noticed that when you're stressed and in a hurry, it seems like every traffic light is red, every slow driver is on the road in front of you, and people demonstrate the rudest behaviors? But, when you're in a great mood, you just seem to sail along, choosing all the right streets to avoid traffic snarls and finding the perfect front door parking space. So, is that a reality or a perception influenced by your mood? Do you actually affect traffic, or do you just notice something different? And, how interactive is it if you're conscious of your reactions? Can you choose to have a better life just by refusing to let it upset you? If so, what a powerful tool.

In the late 1970s, I wrote about biofeedback experiments conducted by Baylor Col-

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lege of Medicine in the Houston Medical Center. I was allowed to observe several patients who had issues with blood pressure, fast heart rate and other measurable physical problems. The biofeedback machine was set to emit a faster, high-pitched tone when the blood pressure was high or the heart rate too fast. The patient's goal was to lower their blood pressure or heart rate, and as it lowered, the biofeedback machine emitted a slower and lower tone, so you could measure your progress by the changing pitch. And, of course, the lower pitch was less annoying.

How amazing that people could change a physical response by merely knowing that it was too high. They were instructed to simply breathe and imagine it going down. It worked. And, out of that study came another result: once a patient could easily lower their physical stats by listening to the tone change, the researchers set the tone to the lower tone to begin with, and without even thinking about it, the physical stats immediately lowered themselves—Pavlov's new dog. The interactive training of the body was complete. At the time, this was a radical and revolutionary finding. It gave us the understanding that we respond to outside influences, and that we ultimately have control over those responses.

Today, it's common knowledge that we have more control over our bodies and lives than we give ourselves credit for. So, why do we let our lives get so out of control? Why do we let things bother us so much that we stress out and make ourselves sick? Perhaps it has to do with personal responsibility. If we acknowledge that we are in control of our lives and our joy, then we have no one to blame for our unhappiness except ourselves. But, I prefer the term "response ability," the ability to respond to the circumstances of our lives in a positive and joyful way.

Yes, life is our own personal rainbow, and it's up to us to paint it beautifully. ✿

## Where Were You in 1969?

By Debra Villalobos

Mama used to tell us that she was really "just a gypsy." She liked to dance and move, not just her body, but our homes. With each move, she could set up "camp," making our next house look like a family had lived in it for years. She was only sixteen years older than me. My sister and I adored her. She seemed exotic and beautiful compared to other mothers. She liked strange and unconventional people.

On Halloween, she would dress my sister as a gypsy with a long skirt, scarf about the head, and eye makeup. I was the beatnik wearing a big dark turtleneck, tight pants like leggings, and dark glasses. I nodded my head on the trick or treat route saying words like "daddy-o" and "cool, man, cool." I wasn't really sure what a beatnik was, but Mama seemed to know. "Gypsies and beatniks are not like normal people, they're rebels." We lived in Amarillo, and people thought we were of an odd pair of trick-or-treaters, but they would smile and dole out candy.

When I was ten, we moved to Alabama, home of my step-father. We donned our usual Halloween attire to cruise the streets of Scottsboro. It was 1965. We weren't a big hit in the costume department, and I remember thinking that something truly dark lurked there. I later figured that one out. The word rebel took on a different meaning, the name of a Southern warrior defending the right to own slaves. I began to understand what racism meant. I saw how the Negro was treated.

By 1969, we were living slightly to the north in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I was fourteen. That summer, I read about the horrific deeds the 'hippie' tribe of Manson had carried out in California. I watched a man walk on the moon with millions of other T.V. viewers. Mama said the hippie had evolved

from the beatnik and gypsy cultures. Technology was under way.

We didn't have many hippies there. Artists, writers, and musicians going against the grain seemed like hippies to me. Their images and words attracted me. What I saw on television turned me on to embroider my jeans and let my short hair grow longer and do its frizzy thing. I also ironed my jeans and washed my hair everyday. Mama called me a pseudo hippie.

As I began to see the world through my own eyes, I watched the youth of the country protest war. They weren't just hippies, but also students and blacks. We were having our own local turbulence with the civil rights movement.

A personal protest for myself, my sister, and other "arty" kids was to rid casual vocabulary of the words "nigger" and "queer." We made our relatives at family reunions feel guilty. They quit using those words whenever my sister and I were present. We believed in civil rights. The movement to recognize black folks and gay people as human beings seemed most important, though not separate, juxtaposed to the hippie movement. I liked the philosophy of peace or no more wars, and I loved the Beatles, Joan Baez, James Taylor, and all Motown. My favorite uncle reveled in the death of Martin Luther King in Memphis and fell off my pedestal.

I didn't go see the movie "Easy Rider" when it came out because I didn't want to see rednecks gunning down motorcyclists. I was

on the tail end of the hippie movement. But I did resonate with Kent State survivors and the post traumatic stress (PTS) of Vietnam vets. However, I was oblivious to the movement and settling of communes here in Taos.

When I was seventeen, we moved to Germany, and I encountered the hippies of Europe. Though our language barrier prevented deep oral communication, they were my tribe. Vietnam was ending that year and leaving a trail of battered souls.

The hippies of my youth were actually other artists. Junior high and high school art teachers were often gay. Out of curiosity, I used to drive my '61 blue Chevy Biscayne downtown to see if Mr. Wilson, our art teacher, actually did frequent a bar called Cross Keys, where men seeking men gathered. I never saw him going in or leaving, but I was definitely curious about his lifestyle.

Today in Taos, I know people that seem only slightly younger than me who grew up as the children of hippies and sprouted in the communes. I didn't see any gay or black people living in the communes, or for that matter, any murderers. I still embrace many of the ideals of living a natural life, and I voted for our President of color. I still seek out the artists as friends. Some things have changed—many have not. Most of us still seek to live our lives in harmony with all mankind and nature. We have a long way to go.

I look forward to this Summer of Love ... a time to revisit the consciousness and culture in the evolution of humankind. ✿



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