

Self-help meets hocus-pocus

By Ruth Ostrow

WILLIAM Whitecloud sits and chats with me for about 10 minutes. He is affable, pleasant, but he is actually "reading" me in preparation for a self-help session. He is one of the new breed of mind-benders emerging from the hugely over-populated personal-growth industry around the world.

While traditionally self-development has fallen under the guise of pop psychology with the emphasis on behavioural modification, there is a fascinating new group blending two very different disciplines: psychology and clairvoyance.

It's psychic-ology. A strange mixture of personal motivation and sooth-saying. Common sense mixed with a dash of the supernatural. Where Freud meets Uri Geller.

"We like to call it intuition," says Whitecloud, preparing the room for the session in which he will mine my soul.

In the US "intuition" is the buzz-word in the world of corporate training, as leaders are encouraged to throw away market research and focus in on their hearts and feelings. To listen to their own instincts that have given them so much success rather than continually doubting their judgment and needing verification through statistical analysis and advisers.

All sorts of wonderful techniques are used to unlock this intuition, from astrology and tarot cards to deep meditation.

While researching a story a few years ago, I watched a group of powerful American business leaders being taught by a psychic how to locate auras and read information about each other. They were then urged to discard logic and use this technique on their clients.

Internationally renowned American symbolist James Wanless was recently in Australia holding intuition seminars for our leading corporations using the famous Voyager Deck tarot cards, which he designed. The colours and symbols on the cards are used to help clients connect with their spirit guides or "higher self".

And now intuition has spilled into the personal-growth field to help inspire ordinary folk, with men such as former financial markets analyst Whitecloud who once predicted fluctuations in money markets now predicting fluctuations in the human soul.

Like many other intuitives, Whitecloud, who was born in South Africa's Swaziland and arrived in Australia in 1983, says his diagnostic techniques are eclectic. He uses a blend of Jungian archetypes, wisdoms gleaned from ancient Hermetic texts and instinct.

Whitecloud, who has adopted a Shamanic name, is also a staunch follower of American self-development guru Robert Fritz, author of the 1980s best-seller *The Path of Least Resistance*.

"My work does include a bit of alchemy," he admits. Like others of his ilk have discovered, the alchemy bit appeals to the corporate market and Whitecloud has worked with executives from Westpac, IBM, Macquarie Bank, and the Australian Film Commission.

So I am seated and waiting to be given my reading, which is what Whitecloud does before engaging his clients in a tell-all encounter designed to help bring up their blockages and give them a more optimistic focus.

"What I'm getting about you is this," he says as I watch him staring off into the distance as if images are flashing before his eyes.

His insight is shockingly accurate. I have been sitting on a personal issue that has been blocking me for a long time, something painful, something I haven't known how to put into words. I gasp in shock. "How did you get it, where did it come from?" I query as Whitecloud shrugs. "I'm always asked that. Other people's thoughts travel in energy, so I just pick up on your energy," he says.

"Everyone is psychic. We are all capable of reading people, but we operate out of the rational mind so we ignore the thoughts that come into our heads.

"I don't want to be a quack with a crystal ball. But things do come up which I can then combine with my knowledge of psychology to derive accurate personality profiles."

Like Wanless and other intuitives, Whitecloud teaches people how to use these abilities to unlock the essence of themselves in his Living From Greatness seminars which he holds around Australia each year. But he also uses the skills himself when dealing with clients.

Whitecloud, 44, who is married with two children, says he teaches far more than intuition: "Everything we do has a profoundly mystical dimension because 'belief creates reality'. When you get this, you can see what is possible.

"There was one client I had who came to me about an emotional problem, but I kept seeing blood. Finally I asked her why I was seeing blood. She told me that her father died of a blood disorder. Then the man she married also got sick and finally died of a blood disorder. She created the thing she most feared.

"We all create what we believe will happen to us. I don't know how. But just think of how many women from violent or alcoholic backgrounds end up attracting this sort of man into their lives. Some of these men don't show the tendencies when they meet the woman but somehow the pattern is mysteriously repeated. We are very powerful beings," he says.

His theories on creating remind me of an amazing, true story. I didn't want to go to an old friend's wedding because I hadn't seen her for almost a decade and it seemed pointless. So I declined, saying I'd be overseas.

About two weeks before the wedding I began dwelling on how awful it would be if I bumped into her. A week before the big event, in a restaurant in the middle of nowhere, she walked in. I stammered my way out of the situation saying that I was going away the next day.

To my absolute horror I bumped into her twice more during that week, all in the most obscure places. Whitecloud says we all manifest. But using our intuition we

have the ability to create positive relationships and magical outcomes for ourselves.

What he and the new intuitives do is help people get in touch with their feelings, with what really is possible, what can be predicted, and changed for the better.

Seems the catch-cry in this New Age era, where self-help meets hocus-pocus, is this: "Be careful what you wish for. Or you might just get it."

www.ruthostrow.com

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