

Saved, with a little help from my electronic friend

By Ruth Ostrow

A FEW years ago, a strange thing happened. I was in the middle of finishing the final draft of a book. I hadn't done a back-up save-to-floppy for a week because I was up against such a ruthless deadline that I didn't even have time to eat properly, let alone go and buy a new packet of disks.

So I kept pushing ahead, working till dawn. Finally at 4am one morning I put the last full stop on my electronic manuscript, which was due at the publisher at 9am. I pulled out an empty disk that a friend had kindly dropped into my letterbox that day, pressed the save function, and watched as the unbelievable happened. The computer sparked, then crashed.

Panicked beyond words, I spent an hour pulling out plugs, putting things in different sockets. Nothing worked. Finally, in desperation, I did my secret thing. Something I rarely speak of. I started stroking the computer, talking to it and pleading with it.

"You've been so amazing to me," I told it, "I appreciate and love you." As I spoke I felt real feelings of love for the machine which had supported my career for years. I put my hands on its little belly and sent reiki energy to the C-Drive, all the while imagining waves of healing light washing through the machine. "Just this last time, work for me."

After 10 minutes of intense concentration, the machine mysteriously booted up. I saved the manuscript onto floppy. My darling computer then breathed its final breath and died forever.

Though my husband witnessed the whole drama, I knew better -- as a journalist -- than to ever publicly talk of what happened. Nor of my verbal relationship with other inanimate objects -- such as the time I lovingly talked my car all the way home on a totally empty fuel tank. Or the time I talked my roof through a violent Sydney storm that saw all the surrounding roofs torn off.

The roof man came the next day and exclaimed that it was a "miracle" the roof had stayed on given that all the bolts had been torn loose. "I can't understand it," he said scratching his head. "It makes no sense."

But in the book *The Heart's Code*, which I referred to last week, Paul Pearsall -- PhD, neuroimmunologist and psychologist -- talks about his own personal relationship with inanimate objects and how he -- as a scientist -- believes that human beings can influence machines by praying to them, talking to them and sending energy to their parts.

His relationship with machines started when he discovered he had stage four lymphoma, a deadly cancer of the lymph system that had spread to his bones, and was sent off to radiation therapy with very little chance of survival.

Believing the heart is a mystical not just physical organ, which has the capacity to send and receive healing energy, he communicated with the machine each time

he went for radiation. He says he knew that he "did not have to be a passive target for the X-ray machine my doctors used to bombard and kill the overgrown cells swarming within me ... I could somehow actually connect with and influence the machine".

Now miraculously cured, he writes: "One radiation technician told me: 'This is very, very strange but you seem to get a much more measurable effect with much less dosage and time than most patients. What are you doing to our machine?'"

Interestingly, 20 years of research into subtle energy conducted by the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research program at Princeton University has documented small but statistically significant differences in the way machines behaved when operators were present and trying to influence them.

The PEAR laboratory team concluded that some form of subtle "info-energetic connection" seemed to exist between person and machine, referring to the concept of quantum physics and the principle of matter and energy relating through vibrating waves.

And so I was overjoyed during my recent trip to India to discover that on a particular day called Victory Day -- when the God Rama defeats the demon king Ravana -- the country honours its machines and tools of trade. Bus and taxidriviers put flowers on their windscreens -- never mind they can't see out. Factory workers bless and thank their equipment, laying incense and candles around production lines. Even on our train, the blackened engine-room was strewn with glitter.

Given what science is now unearthing about humans and machines, I think this is a marvellous idea. Alongside Mother's Day, Father's Day and birthdays, I would love to see an Indian-style Machine Day to acknowledge our mechanical and electronic friends.

Out of the closet and glowing with pride, I could speak publicly to my machines for the first time: "I'd just like to thank my telephone Sadie, my car Sam and my beloved computer Edna. And I'd like to remember those who died in service, my old computer Frank..."

Well, it may sound kooky to you but I just felt Edna start purring beneath my fingertips.

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