

message – it doesn't require digging up painful past experiences. Initially, just recognising when they are being 'driven' can give them back some control and choice. We then suggest that further investment in their personal confidence bank is usually key, as more positive feelings usually follow from doing things positively. We use the Emotional Needs Audit, which focuses people on universal needs, such as those for a degree of security, autonomy and control, attention, emotional and community connection, status, competence, privacy and meaning and purpose, to reinforce this message further.<sup>14</sup>

All the threads are brought together at the end, enabling participants to confirm their decisions to become non-smokers. To help them prepare, I lead a relaxation session, during which they imagine themselves as non-smokers and what they will be doing and feeling differently.

#### The six-week quit phase

Most people who complete the foundation course move on to the six-week quit phase, if they have made a definite decision to quit. This part of the course, which gets down to the actual

business of quitting, is fairly standard throughout NHS 'stop smoking' services. Motivational advice and support are given throughout, alongside carbon monoxide monitoring and nicotine replacement therapies, including patches and gum, for those who want them. (In my view, although nicotine replacement therapies are part of the recommended NHS approach for smoking cessation and can be a very useful tool, it is common for people who quit smoking to transfer their addiction to the replacement, possibly leaving them more vulnerable to relapse. There is also continued emotional and physical dependence on an addictive and mood-altering substance.)

At the beginning of the six-week phase, a quit date is set and each week participants report on how they are progressing. The group members support and encourage each other and may also choose to buddy a fellow quitter in the group. Relapses are common but not inevitable at this stage and, when this happens, the reasons for the relapse need to be identified carefully and a rescue plan put in place. Relaxation sessions continue throughout the

six-week phase, with general guided imagery used to enhance wellbeing and strengthen participants' coping resources. As a recent article in this journal described, guided imagery in addiction treatment can be highly effective.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, not everyone manages to quit successfully the first time they try. We encourage those who relapse to keep trying and to see their efforts as a step in the right direction, rather than a failure. Those who do manage to quit have demonstrably improved physical and mental wellbeing as well as a real sense of achievement and self mastery – these latter being novel concepts for most of our participants. Most of all, they have learned better ways of meeting their needs than reaching for a cigarette. Stopping smoking is life enhancing as well as potentially life saving. When someone with mental health problems succeeds in becoming a non-smoker, it can be a deeply moving and inspiring experience for all concerned. ■

*My thanks are due to Qaim Zaidi, British Heart Foundation, for his expert input as the smoking cessation advisor for the course.*

## BOOKS



### The Sexual Paradox

Susan Pinker  
Atlantic Books, £12.99

**THE VERY** idea that persistent sex differences still found in the workplace are rooted in biology is a highly sensitive issue in the UK and even more so in the USA. Larry Summers, a distinguished president of Harvard, learned this to his cost when, in a keynote address, he raised the possibility that one of the reasons that women were not succeeding in some scientific areas might, just might, be partly biological. He was careful to stress that cultural expectations and prejudice were part of it too. But most in his audience did not hear his qualifications and he was hounded out of his job for this mild-mannered proposition.

Susan Pinker in *The Sexual Paradox* goes much further, arguing that the big sex divide found in the

workplace is indeed down to biology, not prejudice. Surprisingly, her strong stance has not created the storm that erupted around Summers' suggestion – perhaps because Pinker uses the female, indirect approach. She tackles this political hot potato by hanging it on an intriguing paradox: the high-achieving girls who fail to live up to their early promise versus the schoolboy failures who succeed spectacularly. "Why is this?" she asks and successfully answers the question through enlightening stories. In so doing, she outlines the fundamentals of the sex differences in biology that create the differences in the workplace.

The male success stories are drawn from problem boys who were referred to her for help. In her 20 years of clinical practice and teaching as a child psychologist, most of the problem children referred to her

were boys with learning problems. Tracking down these boys, she was surprised to find how many of these total educational failures are doing incredibly well in their jobs and careers. The female stories came from her carefully researched look at high-achieving women who had walked away from their jobs and careers, either taking jobs at much lower status and pay or quitting work altogether. Weaving their stories with the science of sex differences, she cleverly illustrates the power of biology in their lives.

A survey of just how much the workplace has changed, both in educational terms and in legislation, to ensure equality sets the scene. These changes, Pinker believes, created an expectation that all differences between men and women were created by unjust practices and therefore would be erased once these barriers were removed. With new laws and policies in place and women taking up almost half of the workforce, there was a leap of faith that it was only a matter of

time before all occupations would be split 50:50. But, despite women outnumbering men and, indeed, achieving much higher grades on the education front, the sexual divide in the workplace is still incredibly wide. A few examples suffice: schoolteachers, nurses and social workers are mostly female; engineers, mechanics and top executives are mostly male. A recent UK report shows that there are far fewer women in top jobs in 2008 than there were a decade ago.

Among many feminists the persistence of difference is taken as a failure and gender discrimination is deemed to explain the current wide discrepancy between men and women in certain jobs. A lot of time, angst and government money is spent in attempting to change this. But Susan Pinker would argue that men are simply more competitive and status driven and will reach the top in whatever profession they choose – even in female-dominated ones like teaching, most primary schoolteachers are female while most primary headteachers are male.

Throughout childhood, boys hone the skills of competition and risk taking. Pinker found that many of her boys that failed in the classroom failed because of these boyish traits. Bored and frustrated by the limits of their education, they acted up, creating havoc in their classrooms. Totally out of control, they landed up in her office; she did help them but, in the end, it was their own personalities and boyish traits that helped them more. Richard Branson's story of school failure and subsequent success echoes Pinker's American stories. Branson is on the extreme end of the risk-taking spectrum – ballooning across the Atlantic is very dangerous. But it is that very aspect of his personality that is the engine to his entrepreneurial success. It is not greed but the thrill akin to a cocaine high that motivates. Most women are not biologically primed in that way.

Then there were those boys who failed but were obsessed generally with some computer-driven, obscure technological field. Isolated and ostracised in school and totally unable to operate in the social world, they found community and acceptance in the world of work, where these very skills were the currency of success. Men like this

## SHORT REPORTS

### The 10 Best-Ever Anxiety Management Techniques

Margaret Wehrenberg  
Norton, £15.99

**THIS** book gets to the biologically based heart of the problem of anxiety and offers practical, effective tips familiar to human givens therapists for managing day-to-day anxiety: diaphragmatic breathing and muscle relaxation, self-talk, mindfulness, planning ahead, controlling too much activity, and so on. The interest for this journal's readers is in the diversity and detail.

### Mind/Body Techniques for Asberger's Syndrome

Ron Rubio  
Jessica Kingsley, £13.99

**PEOPLE** with Asperger's syndrome (AS) typically experience difficulty with balance, coordination and sensory awareness. The mind/body exercises in this book are designed to help young people with AS improve these skills, leading to greater self-confidence and independence. The techniques are claimed to have an immediate effect on how an individual stands, sits, moves, thinks of him- or herself, and relates to others. The author's approach integrates ideas and practices from martial arts

discipline, Eastern principles of mindfulness, visualisation, breathing, principles of posture and movement, and from mentoring.

### Sindbad and Other Stories from the Arabian Nights

Translated by Husain Haddawy  
Norton, £9.99

**ANOTHER** delightful volume from the translator of *The Arabian Nights*, which featured in the last issue. This one is a translation of the four most popular later stories: "Sindbad the Sailor", "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves", "Ala al-Din [Aladdin] and the Magic Lamp" and "Qamar al-Zaman". Haddawy's introduction traces the history of the *Nights'* translation, serving as a guide to the evolution of this classic body of stories into a capacious

mythology of both the written and oral traditions.



are common, Bill Gates of Microsoft being one of the most obvious. There just aren't female equivalents and it is not just down to hormones, although Pinker cites evidence enough of their role: thinking and being excited and challenged by quite different interests are also down to brain wiring.

Women's interests are broader, their needs wider. Their social connections are far more important than work achievements. They are biologically primed to care and to worry about their relationships. Men, of course, care but not usually to the same degree.

The women in the stories all gave up their high-flying posts because

they knew that, for them, happiness lay in a more balanced life. When success and promotion conflicted with family or home life, they chose to keep the emotional balance by quitting or taking a lower-grade job with more flexibility.

Take Anita, an industrial engineer by training, who, at school, excelled in all subjects but especially maths and science. As a successful engineer, her earning power was substantial but, after just a few years in the profession, she quit and became a much more lowly paid teacher. Anita's reasoning illustrates the female approach to the workplace to perfection: "I was unhappy and didn't want to continue. I made



a decision to switch as much for me as for my family. Education corresponds better to who I am; it reflects my more human side. In engineering I never felt that human relations were valued. I wouldn't have the opportunity to help people, to form relationships with kids, to guide them to success. In science it's all Cartesian. But humans are not machines. They're more complicated, and that's interesting to me. I would rather earn three to four thousand dollars less a year but feel I was open to new challenges, allowed to blossom."

Pinker concludes that, "Gifted talented women with the most choices and freedoms don't seem to be choosing the same paths, in the same numbers, as the men around them. Even with barriers stripped away, they don't behave like male clones."

This trend is backed by studies done in the UK by Catherine Hakim at the London School of Economics which show that, given the choice, 60–80 per cent of American and European women choose part-time work over full-time schedules. The arrival of kids is the key. "The vast majority of women who claim to be career-oriented discover that their priorities change after they have children," says Pinker. Women adapt their careers to cope with the demands of motherhood. Men rarely do that. They steam ahead and rarely turn down promotion.

(Interestingly, it isn't only when women leave male-dominated professions or careers that the findings of different priorities become apparent. Researchers who surveyed over 200 male and female business owners in America found that, although female owners were less successful financially, they were just as satisfied with their business success, probably because they had different values – such as a greater interest in work–life balance or customer satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>)

There are many who find this picture both disheartening and unacceptable. Pinker, however, feels that we should be celebrating rather than blaming the system and spending futile millions on attempting to change it; that the persistent differences in the workplace "are a sign of a free and educated society – one where

individuals are able to make up their own choices". She concludes with a rallying cry: "Discoveries about sex differences in human learning and development can offer insights into the best ways to help boys who need assistance. Acknowledging their preferences can help girls choose the lives and careers they want."

Bravo! I hope that those who throw the millions at the wrong problems are listening.

Anne Moir

1. Powell, G and Eddleston, K (2008). *The paradox of the contented female business owner*. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 73, 1, 24–36.

## I Think There's Something Wrong With Me

Nigel Smith

Black Swan, £7.99

**NIGEL Smith, an up-and-coming comedy writer aged 34, has "this numbness thing going on", suddenly, on the left side of his face and body. Unaccountably, the locum GP he sees fobs him off with a chuckle, so he phones his friend Phil Hammond for advice. Hammond, a doctor and sometime guest on *Have I Got News For You*, to which Nigel has contributed as a writer, is briefly and expletively frank about how serious his symptoms are and says, "Get a scan" – which Nigel ignores. But he ends up in hospital next day anyway and the radiologist, when he reads his scan, assumes it is of a man already dead.**

Thereafter, our extraordinary hero remains in intensive care for months. What he goes through is often sheer hell: the unknown and never-identified lesion which blankets his brain leaves him in most respects as helpless as a baby and often in excruciating pain. Utterly dependent on others, he gives grateful credit wherever it is due but is mercilessly intolerant of the inefficiency, stupidity and thoughtlessness, great and small, around him in abundance. For instance early on, when he can still just about speak, two Filipino nurses come round every two hours, asking the same three questions: "What is your name?"; "Where are you?"; "Who is the Prime Minister?" Like the zombie they probably think he is, each makes no attempt at even marginal human contact with

a man so obviously cut off and fighting for his life, and he finds their indifference shocking and unbelievable. This, by the way, is the least of it; there are serious mistakes and muddles aplenty. But comedy, much of it surreal, is Nigel's mode and, though the humour is often of the gallows variety, the wonder is how many laughs he manages to get out of his long series of ordeals.

As the illness gets worse he can't speak or swallow or even move, except for one hand, and, as intensive care beds don't have bells (the planners didn't think patients would need them), he has to rattle a pill box to attract attention until, later on, the staff figure out he can scribble notes. Yet all he can really do is lie there observing. And because he is unsparing of himself as much as others, his observations are often inspiring – and when they are not, they are both shocking and valuable.

That he survives, it goes almost without saying, is due to the considerable skill and care of some of his doctors, one in particular, and Nigel's gratitude to them, and to the NHS, is profuse. But, even so, it is doubtful whether he would have come through without his own formidable array of strengths and resources. These include his almost total lack of self-pity (for example, we learn only in passing, towards the end of the book, that he is typing it all with one finger), his mental clarity and determination, his rage, his sense of the ridiculous, his belief in the future (at one point we find him wondering whether his now paralysed 'equipment' will be up to it when he's back home with his wife), his fierce ... I can only call it 'life force' and his unwavering bloody-mindedness. Don't try to be a 'good' patient, I discovered years ago when in hospital myself for several weeks: the ones that recover often seem to be those who insist on making their needs known, if necessary by being 'hostile' and a nuisance.

Above all, it never once occurred to Nigel that he would not survive. He describes seeing, early on, a narrow door in front of him and a black-sleeved arm trying to slide in, as if to get at the handle from the other side. Sweating profusely, he bends all his will towards keeping the door closed, to stop the arm's owner coming closer. Much later