

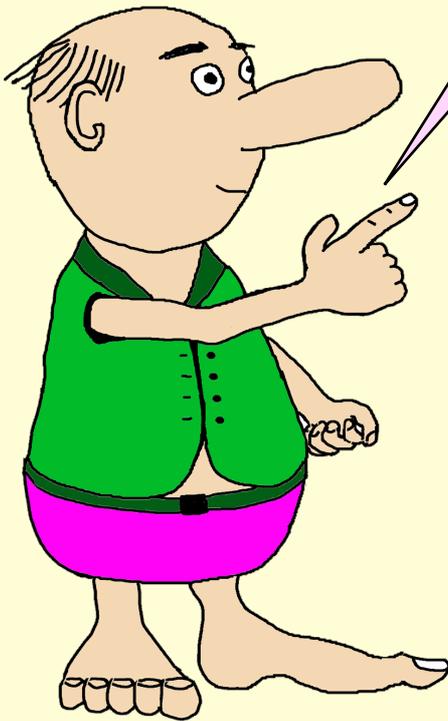
# **“DEAR DICK” - MORAL ISSUES**

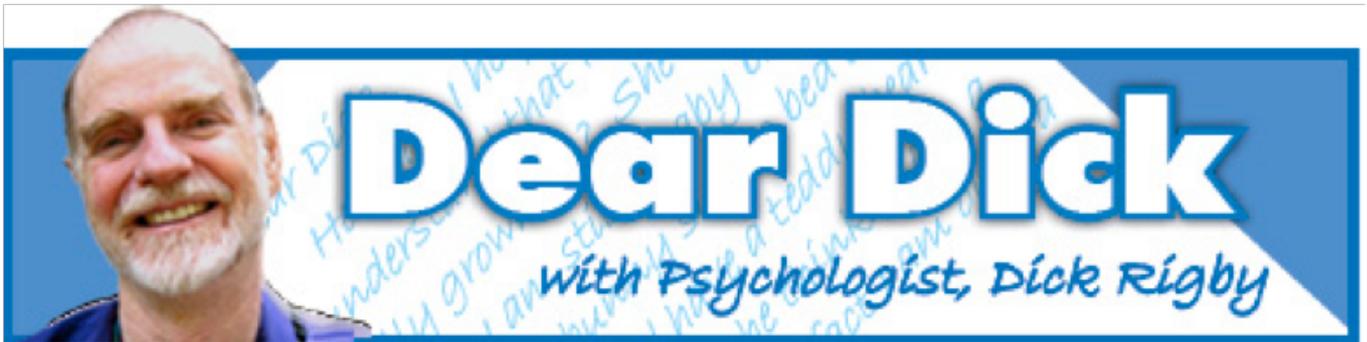
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# Chapter 1. Our environment





**“An inconvenient truth”  
November 2006**

I saw this great film on a Qantas flight between Frankfurt and Singapore. “An inconvenient truth” featuring Al Gore. I strongly recommend this film to you. This brilliant film deals with an aspect of psychology. The psychology of denial.

The film gives clear scientific evidence that global warming is happening, and it is sneaking up on us quicker than we think. Terrorism gets the headlines because it is dramatic, immediate and we can blame someone else. Global warming is slow, gradual and we have ourselves to blame.

But global warming leaves terrorism for dead in terms of the consequences.

Another reason for global warming not being issue number one, is that there are vested interests in the energy industry putting out misinformation denying that it is happening. Al Gore reminds us that the tobacco industry also tried to do a snow job on us by claiming that cigarette smoking was harmless.

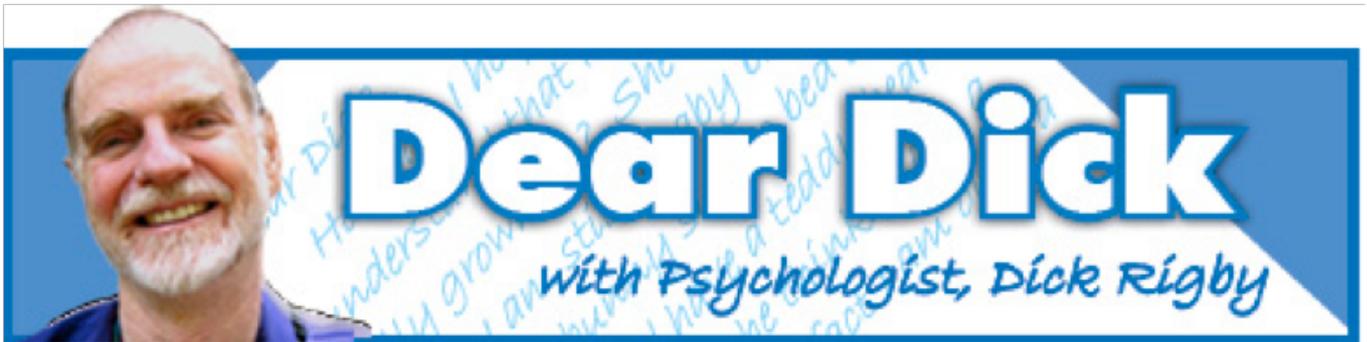
This misinformation makes it easier for us to stay in denial rather than dealing with the difficult choices of conserving energy and reducing pollution. One gentleman I met said that it wasn't his problem because he will be dead by the time global warming had an impact.

This is not just irresponsible, but it is just not true. Global warming is effecting us now. We need look no further than our garden taps in Brisbane.

We need to get out of denial and do something. That is one of the reasons I have written this article. Most of us try to help by recycling our garbage and conserving water. But there are many more things that we can do. We can stop buying gas guzzling 4X4 cars. We can build energy efficient houses. The list goes on.

The time has come to write to our politicians encouraging governments at all levels to have a more environmentally proactive approach. Australia and the USA are the only developed nations that have not signed the Kyoto protocol restricting carbon emissions.

Denial is not only unhealthy in our personal lives, but it is also unhealthy for our planet. It's time to take our heads out of the sand to save our planet.



**“Frog in a pot”  
December 2007**

You know about the frog in hot water. If you put the frog in hot water, he will jump out. Ouch! If you heat the water slowly, the frog will die. That’s us on our planet!

A year ago, I wrote an article called “An inconvenient truth”. This “Dear Dick” is a follow up. I have just finished reading Richard Branson’s latest book and I am inspired about how many influential people such as Richard, are putting their weight behind saving our planet. I think that I can offer a unique perspective on the issue of what is happening to our planet, as I hold science degrees in both Zoology and in Psychology.

Global warming is definitely a psychological issue. Our attitudes created the problem in the first place, and our collective psychology can fix it. There are three psychological hurdles to overcome:

1. The first one is that we, as individuals may feel too insignificant to make a difference. Wrong. As individuals we can make a lot of difference. “Think globally – act locally”!
2. The second is denial of the problem of global warming. Denial suits the conservative energy industry who feed our need to reassure ourselves that everything’s going to be ok. Denial of this problem will not make it go away.
3. The third one is that we have time on our side. That’s what the frog thought.

Time is running out for us to take action. Our politicians in election mode pay lip service to reducing carbon emissions. They seem reluctant to embrace tough carbon targets backed up by the full force of the law.

That’s where you come in. Politicians will not act against vested interests unless there’s a vote in it. When it came to the hole in the Ozone layer, people kicked up a stink and something was done to reverse that. We can do the same for carbon dioxide emissions.

Some people say it will damage our economy to change to clean energy. If we don’t change, we won’t have an economy. There is now compelling evidence that clean energy is even more economical when it is generated in clever ways.

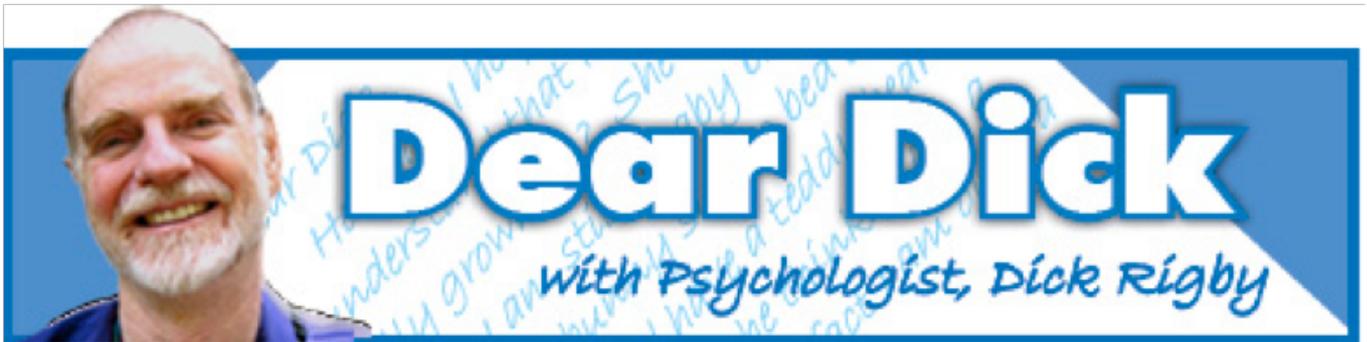
To save our planet we need to take action now. If we don’t do anything then there will certainly be an ecological Armageddon, just as Al Gore predicted.

I am in the USA as I write this article. It is so good to see so many TV ads promoting clean energy. Even BP (British Petroleum) is calling itself “Beyond Petroleum”.

Come on, let’s jump now!

## Chapter 2. Religion





**“Religious sects”  
April 2007**

Religious sects have been around for ever. I am sure that there are many sects who don't get noticed because they don't cause any trouble. The ones who seem to attract the most adverse publicity are those who require their followers to break their family ties.

I heard a radio program on the ABC the other day describing the activities of The Exclusive Brethren. The program described how members were encouraged not interact with non members.

Ralph was a client of mine who had been a member of a religious sect for about 8 years. He chose to leave the sect because he had had enough of their narrow mindedness, bigotry and economic control over his life. His wife chose to remain in the sect. They had no option but to separate. The Family Court granted custody of their two daughters to the wife. The husband had normal access orders granted.

When he went to pick his daughters up, they were gone. On each subsequent occasion he came to collect his daughters they were missing. What was going on was quite sinister. The sect believed that all people outside the sect were evil and were doomed to go to Hell. Only sect members were bound for Paradise.

His daughters were being told that their father was evil and that he would be going to Hell. When the access time came, sect members would hide his children away to prevent access. The distress that this caused Ralph and his two daughters was enormous.

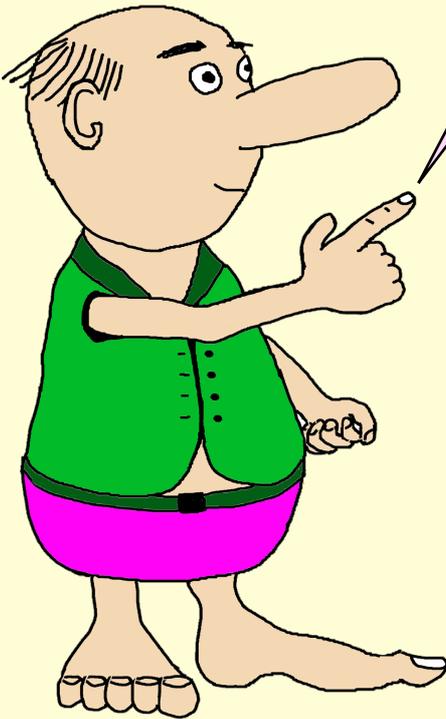
The radio program pointed out that we live in very complex times. Some people turn to fundamentalists religions to provide certainty in an uncertain world. But the price of certainty can be bigotry and isolation.

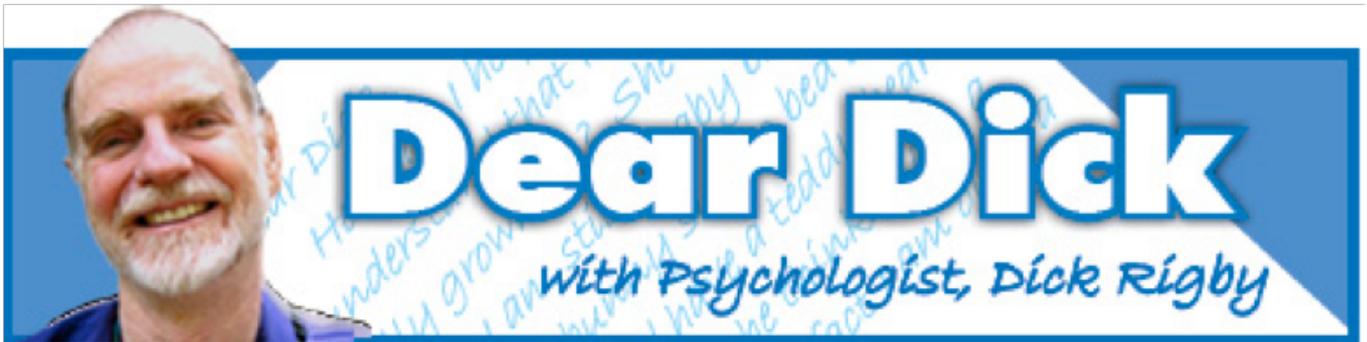
The distress that this closed door policy can have on families can be quite devastating. One very good friend of mine had a son who joined a sect. At 26 he married a sect member. My friend didn't find out about her son's wedding until two months later. She was very upset.

We here in Australia seem to be following the lead of the USA in the growth of powerful, and closed sects. I think that it is a very dangerous road to follow.

I am proud to be part of a tolerant nation and I do not want to see the growth of organized bigotry that trades on the fear of “the outsider”.

# Chapter 3. Meant to be





**“Meant to be’s”  
May 2007**

“Meant to be or not meant to be, that is the question”. Peter and Andrea lost their daughter to cancer when she was just 6 years old. They couldn’t make sense of it. Andrea was a deeply religious person so she resolved it by saying that it was God’s will. Peter was less religious and explained it by saying it was “meant to be”.

I believe that Peter and Andrea resolved their terrible grief as well as they possibly could. Some sort of “meant to be” or divine plan can help make sense of something like a child’s death and facilitate the grieving process.

The “meant to be” philosophy runs into trouble when a person uses it as an excuse to avoid taking responsibility for their life. Mal was drop dead gorgeous and he knew it. He had a never ending series of relationships. Each followed much the same pattern. He would fall in love with a woman and use his abundant charms to woo her.

They would live together in loving bliss for about 6 months or so. Then Mal would lose interest and want to move on.

Mal’s latest conquest was Jill. When Mal eventually left Jill, she couldn’t understand what went wrong. They were so much in love. Mal had an answer. It was a “meant to be”. It was just part of life’s rich plan over which he had no control.

You guessed it - there was something wrong with Mal. He was an avoidance addict. By using the “meant to be” explanation, he was able to absolve himself of responsibility for any part that he may have played in the fiasco.

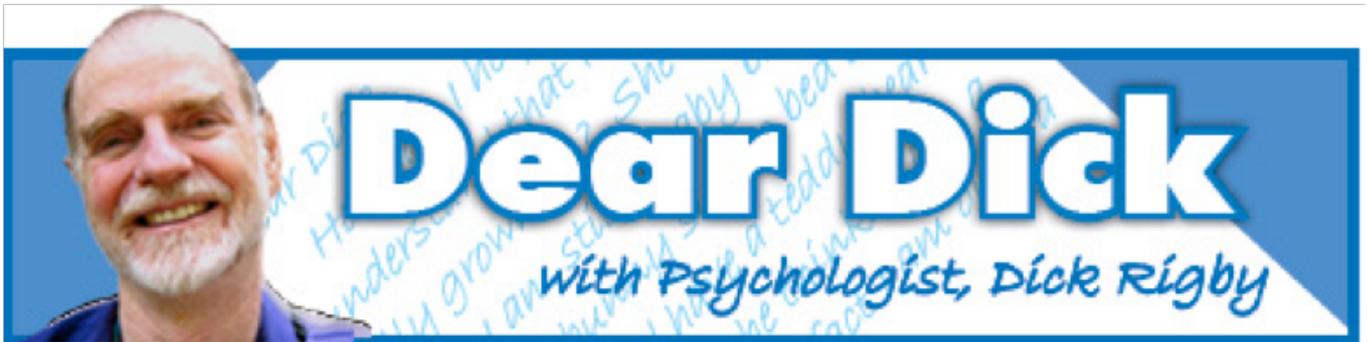
An avoidance addict is one who can become very intimately involved, but doesn’t have the ability to maintain that intimacy. When Mal fell in love with Jill, his feelings were intense and genuine. He wasn’t a cad and he wasn’t trying to use women. It’s just that after the honeymoon wore off, Mal didn’t have the skills to manage the next stage of the relationship.

What Mal should have done was look at his repeating pattern of failed relationships and ask the question, “What am I doing wrong?” If he had gone to therapy, he could have learned to overcome the deep hidden fears that powered his avoidance addiction. He could have also learned to develop the skills to manage a long term relationship.

Lets hope that one day he will do something to fix his problem.

# Chapter 4. Wars & fighting





**“War on terror”  
January 2009**

The war on terror is a war against people who passionately believe that they are the victims of injustice and are fighting for the rights of their people. They could be Muslims or Christians or from any religious group. Their religion is not important, their fanatical interpretation is.

The terrorists who carried out all that slaughter in Mumbai would have believed that they were “Freedom Fighters” and heroes. They would not have seen themselves as terrorists.

If the war on terror is to be won, it has to be a “smart war” not a “macho war”. A smart war is one that reaches into the hearts and minds of people who want to bomb and kill us.

The macho war on terrorism has not worked because it is not getting to the hearts and minds of the people who are being trained to be terrorists. I am not an expert in this area, but what I have been able to learn is that recruits are trained in specialized schools and training camps to fight for the “right cause”.

If we are going to stop terrorism we need to target our smart war at the very points of indoctrination. I know of some work being done to do this, but I imagine that it is a very small fraction of the resources that power the American military machine.

I have heard commentators say that the root cause of terrorism is poverty. This is only one of many causes. The root cause is the sense of injustice. This may be because people do not have enough to eat, or they may believe they are being persecuted, it could also be a dispute over land ownership.

I believe that we should be targeting the hearts and minds of potential recruits. The macho war creates more recruits. If the Americans bomb a wedding party in Afghanistan and kill lots of wedding guests, people will want revenge. That is understandable. They are the recruits of the future.

A smart war would put a lot of resources into making sure that civilian casualties are minimized. A smart war would put resources towards educating the people in our own countries to help them understand the problems of poverty, disadvantage and injustice that provide the breeding ground for terrorism.

If we in Australia were more informed about the issues that lead to terrorism, then we would be more supportive of channeling financial resources towards helping fix the problems facing the potential recruits.