

# Resources

When I first started this list it was confined to permaculture only. I've realised since then that variety is the spice of life and I'm including all the practices that have helped me regain positive mental and physical health. Most of the information below should be compulsory in school, and yet none of it is. So much of the path less travelled is hindered by our own acceptance or resistance to change. It took me experiencing all of the below to transform my beliefs and have the confidence to express my own ideas. Take or leave what you wish, if anything seems interesting and you want an honest opinion from lived experience, feel free to contact me.

## My Trusted Sources

These people are essentially my heroes and mentors even though they haven't a clue who I am. I read or view almost anything they release. Endless research into various topics have led me to people who don't have money as a priority. Most of their offerings are pay what you feel. I am the kind of person that if I find something that looks good, I download it for free, then if it is great, I give them a donation and donate to their products from then on. Try before you buy kind of philosophy. As an example of what these folk are like, Charles didn't write anything for about six months, so he sent an email advising that he would turn all subscriptions off for the time being until he started writing again – thus cutting off one of his income streams...

- Miki Kashtan - <https://mikikashtan.org/> (see below)
- Happen Films - <https://happenfilms.com/> - great films.
- Charles Eisenstein - <https://charleseisenstein.org/> (see below)
- Artist as Family - <https://artistasfamily.is/> - read their blog.
- Mark Boyle - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark\\_Boyle\\_%28Moneyless\\_Man%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Boyle_%28Moneyless_Man%29)

Mark Boyle wrote three books and has completely left technology behind and writes newspaper articles with a pencil and posts them to newspapers. No idea what he is up to now apart from living the truly good life.

Miki Kashtan and Charles Eisenstein are on another level. Both are just out there creating ways to try and get people to connect and embody a new way of living. They have both written



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books and are always public speaking and arranging zoom workshops. They both deliver from the heart, truly without expectation of return and embrace the gift economy. Charles is essentially a philosopher, and Miki orients herself from Non-Violent Communication. She is on a mission to find out what truly connects us as people. Every time I read something by either of them I learn another piece of the puzzle. They seem to tap into what I intuitively know but cannot express myself.

## Activities

Fitting all of these into life is the difficult part but they all help. Meditation would be my essential, must-do out of all of them. If you are open to it Breathwork is breath taking. Permaculture and Non-Violent Communication are not on the list because they are a way of life, rather than an activity you fit in when you can.

- Yoga
- Meditation
- Breathwork
- Deep Ecology/ The Work that Reconnects/ Active Hope
- Ice baths/ cold showers/ swimming in the ocean
- Bushwalking/ forest bathing

## Networking opportunities in person

**Join your local Community Garden** – or start one! This is absolutely the number one way to increase skills, community and happiness that I know of. A chance to network with like-minded people and learn how to grow, compost, when to plant, swap seeds, produce. Another place for your excess seedlings and they may have spare seedlings for you. It is good to know another garden well in your area so that you can troubleshoot your own problems at home and visa versa.

**Your local permaculture group.** Most groups offer similar activities as the below.



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- Permaculture Sydney North (PSN) is mine – join up at <https://www.permaculturenorth.org.au/>.
- Subscribe to newsletter and/or courses.
- Meetings once a month
  - Comprehensive permaculture library
  - Crops/seed/unwanted stuff for swap
- Permabees. A group of people come to your house and help you with various projects to get a lot done in a short time. You usually provide refreshments in return for their labour.
- If you haven't got the skills ask PSN to organise a workshop.
- Use the facebook group for advice.

**Crop Swap** – swap surplus seeds, produce, home made goods for the seeds, plants, goods you haven't got. Join the Facebook community to arrange in-person swaps local to you.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CropSwapSydney>

**Transition Town groups** – few and far between where I live so I am not a member of one, but you might be fortunate. Their website has full instructions for starting out if you fancy transitioning your own town or suburb. If you live near me I would be willing to get one going.

**Deep Ecology** – John Seed on the Central Coast helped Joanna Macy expand her offering to create Deep Ecology workshops and a worldwide community. Joanna calls her version 'The Work That Reconnects' based around where she is from on the west coast of the US. It was created in response to the nuclear threat back in the eighties when Joanna realised activists were burning out and needed rejuvenation to continue their work. John specialises in saving Rainforests across the globe and Deep Ecology dovetails in perfectly with permaculture. Deep Ecology was a term coined by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher to describe the realisation that humans need to reconnect and reciprocate with all other living organisms and the earth itself. The connections you make are fantastic. I've never been anywhere else that can tap into such a rich vein of group bonding. A real contrast with normal day to day life!

**Sustain** – Nick Rose heads up Sustain, an organisation based in Melbourne who are trying to change the food landscape in Australia to an organic and locally sourced model. They have a



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conference in Sydney around November time. Costa Georgiadis has MC'ed the last two and they have been a wealth of information on people doing great things around Australia and abroad.

Mike Hughes 0429 172 736

ABN: 86 640 010 279



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Permaculture is all about your local community, however at this point in time (2024) there are precious few stellar examples of permaculture in action in the Sydney area that their creators are willing to share with the public. There are two gardens in NSW which are incredible and really open the mind to the possibilities.

## **Limestone Permaculture, 846 The Bucketts Way, Stroud Rd. (towards Gloucester)**

- This is where I did my Permaculture Design Certificate. Brett and Nici Cooper are an inspiration and my go-to recommendation for anyone to visit, regardless of whether permaculture is their thing or not. Their property is just amazing. Book on a farm tour at <https://www.limestonepermaculture.com/>

## **Brogo Permaculture Gardens, 397 Hawkeshead Rd, Brogo (nr Bega).**

- John Champagne has transformed his property over 30 years, building a mud brick home and a stunning orchard/ food forest. Not exactly a day trip from Sydney, but another amazing property worth seeing. John also runs Permaculture Design Courses and garden tour days. <https://www.permaculturedesign.com.au/>

## **Books**

(there are hundreds, but some of my picks are...)

**The Earth Restorers Guide to Permaculture** – Rosemary Morrow. An easier to digest permaculture manual than Bill Mollison's original. This is an updated version of Rosemary's original book so it has very current ideas and information. If you ever get the chance to meet Rowe for any length of time she will change your life.

**Introduction to Permaculture** – Bill Mollison, exactly what it says from the co-creator.

**Permaculture: A Designers Manual** – Bill Mollison, the original manual. A bit of a dry school textbook, but very informative. Worth reading so you can understand just how in tune this guy was to what needs to happen in the world.



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**Retrosuburbia** – Permaculture co-creator David Holmgrens latest book. Get the hardcopy book or, pay what you can/feel option for online purchase. Join the Facebook community. Especially relevant if you live in the suburbs.

**Miraculous Abundance** – inspiring story of two French people who embraced all aspects of permaculture, growing large amounts of food on two acres.

**First Knowledges edited by Margo Neale** – various authors have written a series of books on Australia's original caretakers. A brilliant insight into what western culture can learn from the oldest continuous culture on the planet.

**The Way Home** – Mark Boyle. An account of how Mark transitioned into, and lived without money for one year in the UK. He ended up liking it so much he stretched it to three years. My hero.

**Dark Emu** – Bruce Pascoe. A thoroughly enlightening book about the more realistic Aboriginal way of life at the point of invasion than what has been claimed by the colonists.

**The One Straw Revolution** – Masanobu Fukuoka. The art of 'do nothing' gardening. If you want a low maintenance way to produce food, trust that the plants know what they are doing – they've been around for a lot longer than we have. A great read and full of simple wisdom.

**Silent Spring** – Rachael Carson. The book that triggered the whole environmental movement in 1962 by documenting the harm caused by DDT and the misinformation by chemical companies about it's safety. A woman in the sixties up against patriarchal industrial giants.

**Braiding Sweetgrass** – Robyn Wall Kimmerer. Beautifully written read about First Nations Americans way of life and making sense of this in the modern world. Love this book.

**Lost Connections** – Johann Hari. I found a TED talk featuring Johann by accident when I was desperately trying to get a handle on why I continually reverted back to borderline depression. Seventeen million people have also watched it....

([https://www.ted.com/talks/johann\\_hari\\_this\\_could\\_be\\_why\\_you\\_re\\_depressed\\_or\\_anxious?sub\\_title=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/johann_hari_this_could_be_why_you_re_depressed_or_anxious?sub_title=en))



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Johann's book narrowed down depression to nine leading causes (there are others...) and I had major issues with three of them. This book gave me the tools to focus on the aspects of my life that required tweaking. I started getting better from that point on.

**No Bad Parts** – Richard Schwartz. I got recommended this from a friend and it opened up a whole new world of how I see the mind and psychology. We should be taught this in school. The method is called Internal Family Systems. It takes the premise that everyone has different parts of themselves that take over at various times. If you have been traumatised by a snake for example, every time you see a snake that traumatised part kicks in. By getting in touch with these parts you can liberate yourself from mental walls you've built up around people, experiences, ideas and snakes! Really brings you in touch with yourself and is very powerful. If you have been subject to systematic abuse or trauma seek out a professional who practises Internal Family Systems psychology.

**The Master and His Emissary** – Iain McGilchrist. Reading this book is a big decision, it is huge and information dense. Iain's intelligence is kind of mind boggling and he wrote a book about how the left brain and right brain work, and how they have formed our civilisation. In modern society the left brain (the emissary) is taking over the right brain (the master), but it is the right brain's existence that keeps the left brain in check. The left brain analyses things constantly and compares them to the past and future. Compulsively doing this creates anxiety and stress. The right brain lives purely in the moment and is where we assess and accept second by second without judgement. You access far more of the right brain when you meditate and turn your inner chatter off. Check out any podcast or video where he is a guest, so interesting.

**The Power of Now** – Eckhart Tolle. I first read this as I was beginning to feel the effects of being disconnected working on the mines. I didn't have a clue what it meant, although I thought I did. Once I really started meditating, understanding the left brain and right brain, and the different parts of myself that needed my attention it made all the sense in the world.

**The Engaged Spiritual Life** – Donald Rothbury. A great book outlining practical ways to be a connected, respectful and balanced human being. Not based around any particular religion but heavily leans on Buddhist wisdom.



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**Breaking Together** – Jem Bendell. Jem is a Professor of Sustainability who attended World Economic Forum Conferences and spent 20 years thinking we could persuade corporate culture to change before he took a year off to look at the data. The paper he wrote after that, called Deep Adaptation inspired the creation of Extinction Rebellion. A very honest appraisal of where humanity is at right now without any of the corporate greenwashing. He also lays out what he believes is the way forward – connecting with others, growing food, reducing dependence on the monetary economy and spirituality. Sound familiar?

## Online Courses

I've done a fair few of these and the following are my pick – free if you want them to be:

**Making Life Work** – Miki Kastan. <https://thefearlessheart.org/making-life-work/>

Miki has a way of putting things that makes so much sense and this course distils her knowledge together with Non-Violent Communication into helping you make sense of life.

**Non-Violent Communication** - <https://nvcacademy.com/nonviolent-communication/free-30-day-introductory-nvc-course-nonviolent-communication>

NVC for short, is a really simple, effective way of looking at life which brings you more in tune with everyone around you. Essentially every living thing has needs and acts according to what needs they have at that time. By empathising with others needs you can vastly improve your interactions and relationships. You eventually move out of instantly reacting in difficult situations to considered responses that don't offend or hurt others.

**Active Hope** – Chris Johnstone. <https://www.activehope.info/free-training>

Chris Johnstone from the UK is another collaborator with Joanna Macy and calls his flavour of Deep Ecology, Active Hope. Chris made this online course which is a great introduction to how the spiral works and how to apply it in your life.

**The Michael Singer Podcast, Series 1** – Michael Singer is a yogi from Florida. His delivery can be rather irritating but the messages are spot on. This helped me bridge the gap between meditating and it's purpose helping you make sense of how you think. He gave my meditating real purpose, and not just sitting there trying not to think.





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## In-Person Courses/ Events

These events really changed my life.

- Permaculture Design Course – do an in-person one as locally as possible to you if you can. Otherwise, the people you study with will not be your community...
- 10 day Vipassana Silent Meditation Retreat – sounds challenging, and it is, but in the best possible way.
- Permaculture Teacher Training – Rosemary Morrow is very motivated to get others to help change the world. Inspirational.
- Deep Ecology Weekend – I've done two of them and both were amazing.

## Film, Music and Art

<https://happenfilms.com/> – inspiring mostly free, professional films about permaculture and sustainable living from Australia and NZ.

<https://www.localfutures.org/action-resources/films-for-change/> – Huge list of films for making a better world.

[www.formidablevegetable.com.au](http://www.formidablevegetable.com.au) – Formidable Vegetable Sound System. Permaculture via the ukulele and humour. Unique! Particularly relevant to children. Also watch on Youtube.

<https://www.brennaquinlan.com/> – Brenna Quinlan has illustrated numerous standard permaculture texts. Thought provoking.

## Websites

(in no particular order...)

<https://www.katlavers.com/about-kat/> – Kat Lavers house is called The Plummery, in Melbourne. Great example of what you can do with a small block. Kat has done some really useful videos and is also on Happen Films.



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<https://www.permaculturenorthernbeaches.org.au/#home> – great website with calendar of events/ courses for northern beaches Sydney

<https://ourpermaculturelife.com/> – Morag Gamble, permaculture guru. Loads of information. Great YouTube clips.

<https://www.permacoach.com.au/> – Courses and inspiration from Meg McGowan and others.

<https://smarterthancrows.wordpress.com/> – Meg McGowan's blog (Permacoach). Meg is great at communicating design tips and relating them to the principles. Not just for the garden, but for life.

<https://artistasfamily.is/> – Artist as Family. A family trying to live as far outside the monetary economy as possible. The blog is a great read, and their YouTube channel is fantastic.

<https://charlesdowding.co.uk/> – Charles Dowding is an English market gardener with 35 years experience. Fantastic website and YouTube channel. Huge advocate for no dig gardening.

<http://witcheskitchen.com.au/> – Linda Woodrow, permaculture guru's blog.

<https://permaculturesydneyinstitute.org/> – Penny Pyatt, St Albans, north of Sydney. Events and courses fairly close to Sydney. Very experienced permaculturist who used to teach at Ryde TAFE.

<http://www.urbanfoodgarden.org/index.htm> – loads of information. Located in Ballarat, VIC

<http://www.underthechokotree.com/> – Nevin Sweeney. Urban legend from Sydney's western suburbs. Loads of information.

<https://goodlifepermaculture.com.au/> – Hannah Moloney. ABC Gardening Australia presenter from Hobart, TAS. Force of nature.

<https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/factsheets/> – Gardening Australia snippets.

<https://deepgreenpermaculture.com/my-garden/> – Bloody amazing garden story. Fully documented creation of an urban food forest in a rented city house. Melbourne.

<https://www.milkwood.net/> – Nick Ritar and Kirsten Bradley. Join the Facebook group. Loads of practical advice and instruction on sustainable living.

<https://www.permaculturenews.org/> – Geoff Lawton. Permaculture guru based in northern NSW. More information here than you ever thought possible, but sometimes not as practical for urban living. More for agriculture based permaculture application in my opinion. Geoff Lawton's 'Greening the desert' video's from Jordan in the Middle East are nothing short of amazing.

<https://makingpermaculturestronger.net/> – once you have the basics. This is where you go for the deeper understanding. Brain food. Dan Palmers website.



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<https://www.veryediblegardens.com.au/> - Garden design and wicking bed maker out of Melbourne area. Loads of useful information.

<https://polyfacefarms.com/> - If you are planning to farm, then check out Joel Salatin's methods for starters.

<https://www.fritjofcapra.net/> - Fritjof is on loads of podcasts and runs the 'Capra Course' on systems thinking and becoming connected to everything. Really interesting thinker.

<https://sharewaste.com/> - connect with people who have scraps/ lawn clipping/ mulch to give away.

<https://nvcaustralia.com/> - The Australian arm of Non Violent Communication. Marshall Rosenberg developed a brilliant way to understand your own reasoning and how to communicate with others.

**Facebook** - Like minded groups.

Lets Grow Shopping - my own corner of the internet.

Milkwood

Retrosurbia

Earth Gardeners

Australian Backyard Vegetable Growers

Permaculture Sydney North

Permacoach

Crop Swap - great resource for swapping seeds, surplus plants, homemade goods etc.

Hornsby Buy, Sell, Swap (or see your own local council area)

My Efficient Electric Home - not so much permaculture, but interesting reads on what is efficient and what is not...

## **Free, Cheap and Ethical Stuff**

The trick here is little and often, and being patient. Every time you pass by just pop in and quickly scan everything. Sometimes you hit the jackpot. Have a list of stuff that you want, but don't desperately need right now, and scan the following suggestions for free stuff. Have a "Resource centre" somewhere on your property where you accumulate stuff you can use such as cardboard, plants pots, trellis etc etc.



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The difference between cheap/ free and expensive is often how long you are prepared to wait. In this day and age, everyone wants everything right now and have no problems paying a fortune for it. Keep scanning for a couple of months and you might pick up something better for nothing.

**Compost.** – Number one rule of backyard organic gardening. Absolutely NOTHING you can buy is anywhere close to your own compost. Treat it like gold. Hot compost if you can – google the Berkeley Method for instructions.

## **Council hard rubbish collections**

### **Garage Sales**

**Industrial estates or Bunnings** – pallets and cardboard

**Local coffee shop** – spent coffee grounds for compost and worm farms

**Arborists** – free mulch. In the suburbs, this is hugely plentiful and if you can afford the space to pile it up and let it rot, a guaranteed source of worms. In the long term it does wonders for your garden.

**Neighbours** – Canvas the neighbours for their grass clippings and food scraps – this could be hit and miss as you want quality food scraps, not bits of meat, fat and plastic because they couldn't be bothered to separate 100% of the time...

### **Metal scrap yards**

**Tip shop** – Kimbriki

**Second hand shops in general** – books, clothes, kitchen stuff, shoes.

**Gumtree and Ebay** – not half as good as they used to be, but worth a shot, particularly for building materials (colourbond, bricks, pavers etc)

**Your local Buy, Sell, Swap** group on Facebook

**Keep your eyes peeled.** I picked up fifty (yes 50) sheets of 4m long metal roofing sheets at the local primary school because they were replacing all the shade area roofing. You just have to ask. A 'No' is the worst you will get. (I gave away the sheets to a friend who lost his house in the bushfires).



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## **Give with No Expectation of Anything In Return**

Giving your time, produce, products and unwanted items are the essence of community building. Over time it will pay you back in spades. Reduce your dependence on the monetary economy!

