

A woman with dark hair is lying in bed, looking directly at the camera with a wide-eyed, awake expression. She is wearing a dark blue, long-sleeved nightgown. Her hands are holding a white sheet or pillowcase near her chest. The bed has white pillows and a white sheet. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

**WHAT'S KEEPING YOU
AWAKE AT NIGHT?**

by Paul Freedman

A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID BOGAN



Are you a worrier? Do you lie awake in the wee small hours, churning, fretting, going over and over and over it in your mind? Are unspoken fears, unsolved problems, niggling disagreements or looming wars robbing you of sleep?. Well, David Bogan's got a word for you ...

He's been settling disputes and resolving conflicts for decades – everything from marriage conflicts and child custody battles to criminal lawsuits and medical misadventures. In fact he belongs to the International Coalition of Concerned Mediators.

He talked with Grapevine a few years ago, when his first book – *'Avoid Retirement & Stay Alive'* – became a best-seller. And he's now hit the headlines again with a second book: *'What's Keeping You Awake at Night?'*

He confesses that he 'drifted' into counselling after years in a major bank's 'Legal and Recovery' division. It seems that people facing financial meltdown have the same headaches and heartaches as those facing personal or relationship problems. So we sat him down and popped the question: "Do we all have problems that keep us awake at night ... or only 99% of us?"

DAVID BOGAN: I think we probably *all* do. The word 'problem' is number 24 on the top four hundred most-used nouns in the world. But the words 'resolution' or 'solution' are nowhere in sight. So that really says it all.

Problems can vary in size and intensity, but essentially every one of us has things that make us stop and think and wonder how we're going to get through.

GRAPEVINE: Which leads us nicely to the word 'worry' – right?

DAVID: Exactly! We all have times when we worry. I think worry's a fabulous word. It sits on a fulcrum – a point-of-balance –

of belief. You see, the other side of 'worry' is 'hope'. And you can't do both.

TAKE YOUR PICK:

You're either a worrier, or you're hopeful. If you're worrying, it's because you doubt that there'll be a good outcome. But if you're hopeful, then you believe things can be better. So hope and belief take you forward – worry and doubt take you backwards.

GRAPEVINE: The people you work with – are most of them hopers or worriers?

DAVID: Most of them are worried.

Because they're faced with a range of probabilities, none of which look good.

My role is to try and inject some hopeful possibilities. I'm saying, "Yes, all of these things could happen, but you *do* have other options – and here they are!"

GRAPEVINE: Do those of us who are worriers really *know* what our problems are?

DAVID: Well, deep down we *do* know what's wrong. But, on a day-to-day level, our problems can just become a nagging feeling in the background that continually gets us down – because we've forgotten what it was that got us uptight in the first place.

We start to worry, and then a whole lot of things get added on.

I'll give you an example. I met a fellow recently. He's due for his Gold Card and should be retiring. But he lost badly in the financial meltdown, and thinks he can't afford to retire. More importantly, he doesn't know when he'll be able to recover what he's lost. He thinks, 15 years. Now, in 15 years he'll be 80!

I pointed out that he wasn't going to have to worry at all about what'd be happening to him then – because, with all the stress he was putting himself under, he'll be gone by Christmas!

Worrying is doing infinitely more damage to him than his 'poverty'. What he needs to do is reframe his options and take a realistic view of his life.

What he's concerned about (where he's going to be in 15 years) is irrelevant – yet *that's* what's keeping him awake at night.

GRAPEVINE: Okay. Another question about those of us who worry: on average, are we clever in the way we identify and tackle our problems ... or do we mostly just hope they'll go away?

DAVID: A bit of both. Your word 'clever' is interesting. To be 'clever' is, in a sense, shutting out the intuitive part of our mind, and 'clever' is the *rational* way we deal with problems. Trouble is, we often don't really get underneath to what really helps. We don't see the problem for what it really is.

This chap I met yesterday ... he's very clever. He'd worked out all the mathematical formulae for shares and property deals to regain the financial state he'd been in before the crash. And he's in a quandary about whether his cup is half-full or half-empty. But it's more important for him to realise that he doesn't need much water, really.

Whether his cup's half-full or half-empty is immaterial. There's *much more* water there than he needs.

GRAPEVINE: You make this sound like it's simple ...

DAVID: Well, it frequently is. When these 'worry' situations are stripped down, there's often something quite simple underneath.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

*The Lord's Prayer says "Give us **this day** our daily bread ..."* And it's actually not a plea to stuff the fridge and overflow the pantry, ensuring we have enough for weeks or months. We need to be realistic. "Am I going to get through **today?**"

When you think about it, the whole idea of growth for the sake of growth is the principal that underlies the cancer cell. We need to know when enough is enough ...

GRAPEVINE: That's a good point, when it



comes to the worries we have about money. But something else that keeps us awake at night is conflict – especially when we’re at daggers-drawn with someone.

DAVID: Ah! You’re talking about *confrontation*. And how-to-handle-confrontation is a skill anyone can learn.

You see, when we’re confronted (on our borders or boundaries) with an ‘intruder’, we have three options:

We can ***co-operate*** with them, so we can reach some sort of deal.

We can ***collaborate***. (I love that term – it means ‘working with the enemy’.) Even if we don’t *like* them, we can still *deal with* them.

We can ***compete***. And if we compete, we *fight* – a legal fight, a physical fight, a verbal fight, whatever.

Now, for that fighting to end, we have to go back to one of the earlier steps. We have to start *collaborating* ... learning how best to work together. And, once that’s happened, we can get down to *co-operating*.

GRAPEVINE: Me? I’d run a hundred miles to avoid confrontation. Yet you seem to suggest that conflict is not only inevitable ... but *good!*

DAVID: The quote that explains this best is from Professor Luis Diaz. He says: “*There’s no life without co-existence. And there is no co-existence without confrontation.*” In other words, none of us lives in isolation. We all have people and things around us. And we’re going to face confrontation – boundary challenges.

That, in itself, isn’t the problem. The problem is how we *deal* with these.

Now, people who *co-operate* don’t come and see me – they’re already successfully working things out. Even those who’ve chosen *collaboration* don’t need to see me – they’ve also got the situation under control.

OUT OF CONTROL

*No, the people I get to see are the ones who are **competing and fighting**. And my role is to help them back into the middle ... where, even if they hate each other, they learn the techniques and insights needed to work things out.*

GRAPEVINE: I imagine the tricky thing about confrontation is that both parties think they’re right – don’t they?

DAVID: Absolutely. And to remind me

of that truth, I have this phrase, “*The reason people fight is because they’re both right!*” printed on all my notepaper! I can’t afford to forget that, when people fight, they each believe they have a valid point to compete over.

Again, to give a current example, I’ve been working with a lender and a borrower who are fighting over a truck. He’s a contracting farmer, and he got the truck from a finance company. He’s in Australia, where they’ve been suffering from a terrible drought for three years, so he hasn’t made any payments.

It’s finally starting to rain, and his contracting business is picking up. So he’s now saying, “Look, if you leave me with the truck, I’m getting some work at last, so I can start to pay it off ...”

But the financier is saying, “Hey, you haven’t paid anything for three years – and the truck’s depreciating. We’d like to take it back and sell it to somebody else who’ll actually give us some money for it!”

Now, both those propositions have validity. In a way, they’re both ‘right’. And my role, as a mediator, is to try and find some common ground that enables them to collaborate – so they both get what they want. The farmer gets to keep the truck, and the financier gets some actual money.

GRAPEVINE: Coming closer to home, what can we do if the problem that’s keeping us awake at night is, say, a marriage problem?

DAVID: Well, very simply, we have three choices:

We can **‘act out’**.

We can **suppress** what’s happening.

We can **communicate**.

The trouble with ‘acting out’ is that, often, it’s not against the person we’ve got the problem with.

LIKE KICKING THE CAT

You’re very angry – but, instead of taking it out on the person who’s causing the anger, you take it home and argue with your wife. You dump it on somebody who’s got nothing to do with the situation – someone who’s not a threat to you.

I see this all the time. Couples in a strained relationship will act out against each other. They won’t talk usefully about what’s gone wrong and how to put it right. They’ll just ignore each other ... or argue and bicker ... or leave the tension to hang there, unspoken.

GRAPEVINE: Other couples, obviously, prefer the second option ...

DAVID: That’s right. They *suppress* it, bury it, stick it in their system somewhere. Maybe in their neck or their shoulders or their stomach.

The human body’s wonderfully compliant. It does as it’s told. So we can overload it quite a lot. But it finally reaches a point where it blows a fuse. And if you don’t respond when your shoulders and neck start getting stiff, then something bad will happen. You might become ill and get laid low. (I’m saying this from my own experience, I have to admit!) Or you might have a stroke or a heart attack, and end up in hospital.

Sooner or later, if you keep stuffing your body with suppressed problems, it’ll go into overload.

GRAPEVINE: Which leaves us with option 3 – right?



DAVID: Right. The only way to release pressure in a way that's not damaging to yourself or somebody else, is to *communicate*. Which means talking over the real problem ... preferably with the person you're fighting with. But if you can't do that immediately, then talk to somebody else, *anybody else* ... even the cat or the dog!

GRAPEVINE: You mean, *pets* make great therapists?

DAVID: Sure! They'll let you put into words what's really going on. And that's so important.

I have a psychiatrist friend who gets all his patients to write what he calls 'A.L.I.E.N.S.' letters. He tells them the word stands for *'Angry Letters Intended ... Eventually Never Sent'*.

You scribble it all out furiously – get everything off your chest – and then you tuck it away in your 'ALIENS' file. If you still feel the same two weeks later, then maybe you'll actually send it – but it's the writing of it all down that's the key thing. Nine times out of 10, he says, the letters never get sent. But his clients have got the bile out of their systems.

You see, stuff like that will keep you awake at night – the injustice you feel, and the anger that gets batted around in your brain, backwards and forwards, over and over. You've got to get it out – and that's why good communication is so important.

GRAPEVINE: Can we go back to something you said earlier – about boundaries? Saying "NO!" to people who are making demands and pushing the limits is actually very hard, don't you agree?

DAVID: Yes, because most people don't like the thought of conflict. But, generally,

if you're saying "yes" to somebody who's stepping on your boundaries, then you're saying "no" to yourself.

Of course, saying "no" is like electrifying the boundary fence ...

CHANGING THE GAME-PLAN:

You're saying, "You can't cross here – that's it – I've said no!" And that could get you an adverse reaction. But if you say "no" to somebody else, you're then actually saying "yes" to yourself. So you're okay – and they've now got the problem!

GRAPEVINE: When it comes to resolving clients' conflicts and settling disputes, does fairness come into it? I mean, are people concerned anymore about what's fair and what's not?

DAVID: Some aren't. Some just want to resort to the law in the hope of getting 'justice'. And I try to warn them: "Justice is something you'll get in the *next* life – but what you get here is the legal system. And every time two lawyers go to court, one of them is always wrong."

But fairness is genetic. It has nothing to do with justice and the law. We all know what's fair and what's unfair. And I can tell where people are at in a dispute by asking, "Now what makes this fair?" If they can answer that, then I know we're set for a reasonable discussion. But if they say, "I don't give a toss whether it's fair or not!" – then I know we've still got a lot of talking up ahead.

Fairness often goes out the door if one party has all the power. They're the ones who'll say, "I don't give a toss!" They're convinced they're 'legally right', and can do whatever they want ... so they do.



GRAPEVINE: Going back to your example of the Aussie farmer and his truck, what's the fair thing there?

DAVID: Well, the financier hasn't been paid in three years, and he's fully entitled to just go and *take* the truck. But if I can get him to discuss fairness, he might come around to the proposal: "Okay, I suppose the *farmer* might as well pay me as anyone else ... but he does need to pay. And if he's got some additional security he can give me, that would make the deal a lot sweeter."

Sadly, the people with the power-base are often *beyond* fairness. They're holding the gun. But, if a discussion based around fairness can be coaxed out of the situation, then we're headed in a good direction.

GRAPEVINE: You talk, in your book, about encouraging clients to look for the

"least-worst" option. *Least-worst?* Sounds like a German sausage!

DAVID: Hey, that's a great idea! I'd like to commission a butcher to create a "Least-Worst" sausage!

What happens is that, when people are smart, they'll deal with any issues they've got. So the good situations more or less look after themselves. In the middling ones, the disputing parties will think about things and generally find some solution.

But the bad ones are the ones that I get. And, by the time I meet the parties, the good options are gone, the middling options are gone, and the parties are down to the *worst* options. They're scraping the bottom of the barrel.

However, rather than say, "Well, it's all hopeless ..." I'll say, "Well, *all* the solutions are painful. But what is the *least* painful? What's the 'least-worst' solution?" And, then, the least-worst solution becomes the *best* option to take.

If you don't do anything, someone else is going to do it for you – and they might go to the '*worst-worst*' option. Whereas, if you stay in charge yourself, you can at least choose the best of the bad solutions available.

Going back to the farmer with the truck, his least-worst option might be to just surrender the truck. The financier could say, "We've had enough of this – just give us the truck back and we'll call it a day." That *could be* the farmer's least-worst option. But if, instead, he picks a fight with the financiers, then they might sell the truck for a lot less than what he owes them – and sue him as well! So the poor farmer's going to have a big debt (still), no truck, *and* sleepless nights ...

GRAPEVINE: You urge people who've hit rock bottom with their problems to go and "look in their haversack" ... because the answer's in there, *and always has been*. What do you mean by that?

DAVID: I stumbled on the idea of the 'haversack' when I was working with *Life-line*. It came to me, after talking to literally thousands of people over many years, that a common denominator was coming through their stories: they actually *knew* what they needed to do, but they didn't have a painless way to begin doing it.

I describe it like this ...

WELL-PREPARED:

When God put us here, he packed into our haversack everything we'd want to know, everything we'd ever need for this journey. Now, the answers that we find mightn't be right for anybody else – but if they're right for us, then we just need to get on with it.

I've found that people can easily grasp this idea. If they're stuck, I'll talk about the haversack and say, "Now, I believe you actually *know* what you want to do – you just don't want to talk about it – or perhaps you're worried that it mightn't be right or valid."

I've never met anybody, of any age, who doesn't know what they need to do, and can't access their own haversack. They *know* what's in there – they just need confidence to get started.

It's about discovering and using the resources we actually have within us. We don't have to *buy* anything, we don't have to *do* anything, we just have to value ourselves and believe that God packed the haversack and the answer's in there.

GRAPEVINE: You're actually bringing a spiritual dimension to the process of resolving conflict – do people take to that readily?

DAVID: Yes, they do. And I think it's because they know it innately. In a sense, I've come to this book backwards. I haven't come with a whole lot of theories that I hope *might* work. I've come to it with the things that *do* work and *have* worked.

When I was wondering how to sum the whole thing up, the penny dropped for me and I thought ... "*Oh yes! The Lord's Prayer!*" Because, you see, my book's all about boundaries and boundary-breaches. And it's about "forgive us our trespasses": "*Hey guys – you've come to a boundary. If you've crossed it, you've trespassed – you need to ask for forgiveness.*" And it's about fairness, too: about being treated ourselves the way we treat others.

When you strip this great prayer down, it's so revealing – and simple! In terms of resolving conflicts, it sums everything up.

If I'd realised this when I *started* writing the book, instead of at the end, I might have just written: "*Hey, read this prayer ... it'll sort everything out ... brilliantly!*"

GRAPEVINE: Imagine someone not sleeping at night because of worry ... then going through each day feeling beat-up and worn-down. What's the single most helpful thing they can do to get on top of that worry?

DAVID: I have three words that pop up on my cell-phone when I turn it on: "*Cognito*" ... "*Cogito*" ... and "*Credo*". They're the Latin words for "I know" ... "I think" ... "I believe".

"*I know*" – that's what you're born with, your haversack, your heritage.

"*I think*" – that's your brain's processing



power, to help you deal with the probabilities.

“I believe” – that’s your hope and faith in the future.

These three things, seen separately, can trigger our resources. Instead of seeing a problem in one single dimension, we can expand it out. We look at it and say, well, that’s what I *think* ... but what do I *know*? ... and, more importantly, what do I *believe*?

If you believe and have hope, you can escape from that useless worry-syndrome. But you need to be honest with yourself: The day that you have is the only one you’ve got. You mightn’t have tomorrow or the next day or the day after that. So make the most of *this* day – right now!

MIND OVER MATTER:

*You also need to take control of your thoughts: When you rise and greet the morning, you should think, “Well, I **can’t** fix the war in Iraq, and I **can’t** fix global warming, but I **can** do something nice for my wife ... or my neighbour ... or the person I work with.”*

Instead of waking up filled with doom-and-gloom, you can go out and lend a helping hand, plant an apple tree, do something positive. It gets you back into the ‘future possibilities’ part of life – instead of believing that everything’s turning to guano.

Hope and faith? Or worry and doubt?

That’s the choice you get to make each day ...



TO FIND OUT MORE GO TO WWW.DAVIDBOGAN.COM. HIS BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE AT ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS.
