

The right choice

TRAINED BY A MEDICINE MAN IN THE AMAZON JUNGLE, Dr Antonia Ruhl is today a specialist in herbal medicine, an author and a practising hypnotherapist. She is in Dubai to conduct a series of workshops on emotional well-being. By **Sangeetha Swaroop**

There is nothing extraordinary about Dr Antonia Ruhl at first glance. She is petite, wears all white and has a calm disposition. Her face, sporting minimal make-up, is framed by her curly hair. On her neck she wears an intricate necklace that is sure to catch the eye.

In a crowd of people, she may appear as a regular well-dressed woman but it is when she speaks that you notice the difference. Articulate and knowledgeable in her field, she listens intently when you speak to her and her passion for what she does becomes clear once you get to know her.

It is not just what she says but also what she does that makes her stand out from others. Dr Ruhl is, by her own admission, "living many lives at the same time". She is an author, a practising hypnotherapist, the creator and designer of a fine line of jewellery, a model, a writer and she travels the world conducting workshops on how one can achieve success.

No aspect of her versatile life is more prominent or less significant. Each role is as vital as the other and each and every role is intertwined with another.

Dr Ruhl hails from a family of healers. Her father was a doctor, her grandfather was a chemist and her great grandmother was a renowned tribal medicine woman. Dr Ruhl says: "Even as a young child I always felt connected to nature. I remember digging up plants and pulling out roots to inspect them. At the age of eight I convinced my grandfather to let me work with him in the pharmacy. Perhaps this was born out of my desire to make

people happy. I wanted to contribute in some way to their lives. I lived interacting with the people who came to get medicine."

Dr Ruhl became a star of sorts very early in life. She knew at the age of nine what she wanted to do in life – make people happy. At the age of 10, she was hosting a children's TV show. At 16 she became a model. She was married at 18 but became a widow at 19. With a newborn to care for, Dr Ruhl left her little town in Brazil on a lifelong journey of self-exploration venturing into the depths of the Amazon jungle – a two-year journey that was to change the course of her life.

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“Poverty was rife in Brazil,” she says. “The vast majority of people relied on medicinal herbs for preventive and curative properties. I had the ability to select and mix and grind the right herbs for a range of symptoms. Around the same time I also started making tea concoctions. Their effectiveness gave me a reputation and soon people caught wind that I might be able to help them with their illnesses. Before I knew it, I didn’t have a childhood anymore – my life had begun to revolve around preparing herbal teas and applying herbal poultices. It gave me great delight to see people get better.”

She was a natural when it came to understanding herbs and their properties – an ability she believes she inherited from her great grandmother. Once her grandfather realised this, he took her to the Kayapo Indians living in the Amazon so she could learn more.

Her parents protested initially, keen that their daughter continue with her studies, but eventually yielded when her grandfather agreed that she would return home and to school as soon as her vacation was over.

Her grandfather persuaded them by saying that she should be allowed the opportunity to learn more about her heritage and the amazing healing properties of many

Dr Ruhl has authored two books:

The Game of Life – a collection of her articles which takes a look at the philosophical approach to living and *You Are Only Two Millimetres Away*, which guides people to reaching their true potential.



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Amazonian plants.

That period in her life was life-changing as far as Dr Ruhl was concerned. "I felt instantly at home in the jungle and found that I had a lot in common with the tribal people. The *paje* – the tribal medicine man – took me under his wing. He told my grandfather that I belonged there and began to train me," she says.

In keeping with the promise to her parents, she soon had to return to the city, but the magic of the jungle and its ways stayed with her. A year after her husband died in a car accident, Dr Ruhl with an infant in tow, sought solace in the depths of the jungle once more.

"You have come home," were the *paje's* first words when he saw her, she recollects. "He said he would train me to become a medicine woman and put me through a series of tests to find out whether I truly belonged there. I was taken and left alone at the top of a mountain and

"Many people are controlled by their past experiences more than they realise or will choose to admit."

had to find my way back on my own. It took me three days and two nights, but eventually I managed to return safely," she says.

Under the watchful guidance of her teacher, Dr Ruhl mastered the basic principles of herbal medicine. She learnt the names and medicinal properties of each plant. Once again she remembers feeling calm and "at home"

during her stay there. She was devastated when two years later, the *paje* announced that she must leave. "He told me that I belonged to the world," she recalls. She left the jungle to embark on a new adventure.

She stayed in Brazil. But a few years later she moved to Melbourne, Australia. She opened a natural health clinic there in 1990, which allowed her to make use of her special abilities.

She went on to complete a cultural doctorate in paranormal science, followed by a PhD in philosophy. Dr Ruhl is also a certified practitioner of neuro-linguistic programming and timeline therapy – a process in which you learn to let

go of negative emotions. She is also a clinical counsellor.

A regular contributor to various newspapers in Melbourne, Dr Ruhl was inspired to write her first book *The Game of Life* – a collection of her articles which takes a look at the philosophical approach to living. The book also offers practical exercises to create a more abundant and fulfilling life.

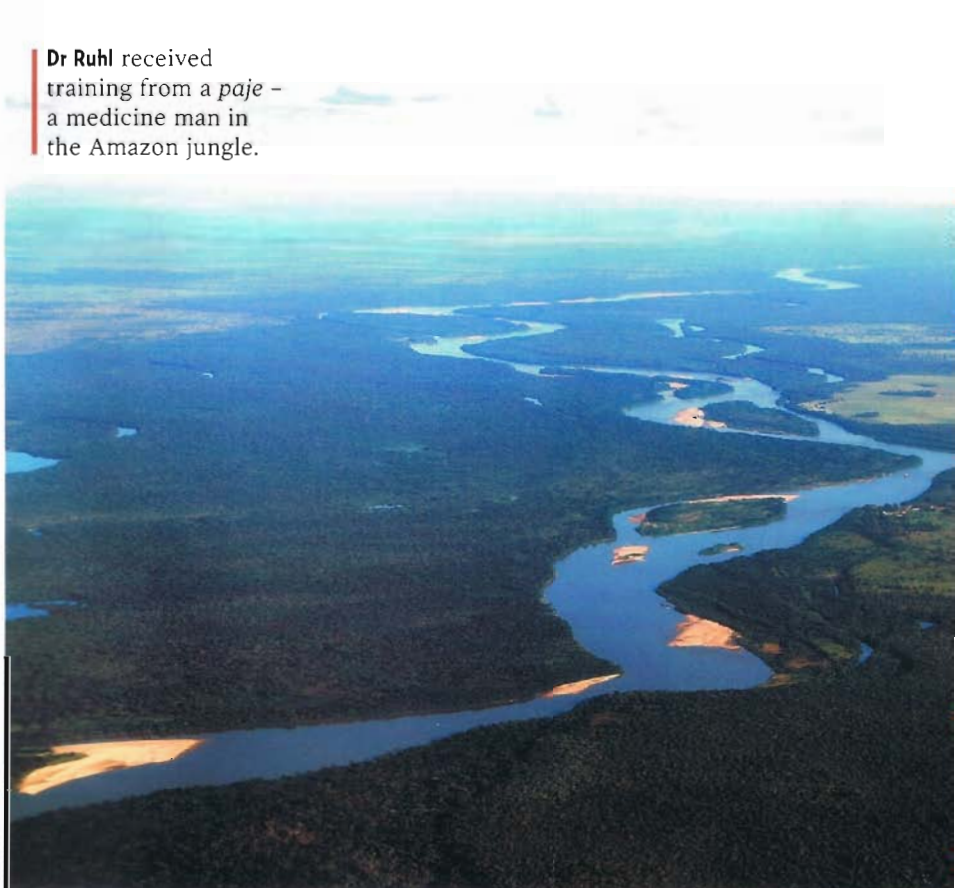
You Are Only Two Millimetres Away was published in 2008. She says that this book helps people to tap into their true potential by making minor adjustments to their perspectives.

Dr Ruhl will hold a two-day workshop in Dubai in March entitled *Heal Your Past to Create the Future You Desire*. Dr Ruhl aims to take participants on a journey through time to access their past experiences that impact their lives today. "The purpose of the seminar is to help people achieve their ultimate inner balance. It is this balance that is important to the success of relationships, careers and overall well being," she explains.

"Many people are controlled by their past experiences more than they realise or will choose to admit," she says. "Emotional scars that



Dr Ruhl received training from a *paje* – a medicine man in the Amazon jungle.



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have been left open can hinder our present, while suppressed emotions lead to a downward spiral, progressively paralysing our decision-making abilities. It is only by facing our fears, past rejections, judgments and pervasive negativity can unleash our true potential and live life to the full."

She believes that life is all about choices. "For our lives to change we must make new and different choices. It is these choices that determine our future experiences," she says.

However, change also requires modifications to existing beliefs, even though we may hold very strong attachments to these beliefs. "People want to grow but they also know that this requires change and this threatens another aspect that they cherish and cling to - security.

"In nature, anything that is not growing is dying. There is no steady state. If you are not growing, you are dying. This is true physically, mentally and emotionally," she says.

In these current trying times, change is an inevitable reality for many. "There is no doubting that 2009 will be a tough year for many people around the world. But we also need to realise that just as we have our spring, summer and autumn, we also need our winter. It can present an opportunity to rejuvenate and renew. However stormy this season of unrest is, it will not last forever. We need to understand it as just another cycle of life. When we emerge from this period, life will be booming and flourishing all over again.

"For those who have been displaced or are facing the prospect of unemployment, my advice is to look at the situation from a different perspective," she says. "Do not wallow in misery solely because of the lack of financial flow. Perhaps a change has come about because it is time for you to move on. Maybe you were stuck in a job that you did not like or continued to stay on only for the money. Perhaps there was only so much you could attain in that job and in that work environment.

"What you are facing now can lead you in the right direction if you adopt the right attitude. Difficult times also help you to grow stronger. Focus on where you need to be and keep your options open. Remember, if you are afraid of moving on, you cannot



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WORKSHOP IN DUBAI

Brazilian healer and author Dr Antonia Ruhl is in Dubai to conduct a two-day workshop titled *Heal Your Past to Create the Future You Desire*.

The workshop will be held on March 7 and 8 at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel, Dubai.

For bookings, please visit www.timeouttickets.com.

Private consultation sessions are also available with Dr Ruhl from March 9 to 11 in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. They are by appointment only.

E-mail info@eventsunlimited.net.au to book appointments.

move into the future. Yesterday is gone but there is always the promise of tomorrow. There is something out there for everyone. If you are resourceful, you will find a way to reach where you want to be."

She emphasises that embracing change is critical. "See it as a positive indicator of your growth. This is a time to assume responsibility and create a new opportunity for

yourself. This may be your 'winter' but if you see the beauty even in this situation you will find ways to grow from this experience.

"When you see the wave, you must learn to catch it before it breaks. If you hold on to your past, or cling to your regrets, you just may miss the best ride of your life." ■

- Sangeetha Swaroop is a Dubai-based freelancer