

CYC-Online

FOR THOSE WHO LIVE OR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
ISSUE 144 • FEBRUARY 2011





CONTENTS

ISSUE 144 - FEBRUARY 2011

<i>Editorial: Growing On</i>	1
The worst school violence <i>Larry K. Brendtro</i>	3
Declaring War on Children <i>Gerry Fewster</i>	15
Working With Groups in Residential Settings <i>Richard Biolsi and Paul Gitelson</i>	18
Hope and the Imagination <i>Herbert Kohl</i>	22
Types of Knowledge <i>Mark Smith</i>	26
Lizzy: Understanding attachment and loss in young people with complex needs <i>Edwina Grant, Mary McFarlane and Rita Crawford</i>	28
Poetics and the Language of Youth Work <i>Mark Krueger</i>	36
Lessons From The Tiler <i>Lesiba Molepo</i>	40
Now we are Six <i>Liz Laidlaw</i>	44
Meeting Expectations and Valuing the Importance of the Expectation <i>Jack Phelan</i>	47
What Do You Expect? <i>John Stein</i>	48
Defining to Exclude <i>Kiaras Gharabaghi</i>	53
Leon Fulcher's Postcard from the UK	55
Like Grandfather <i>Nils Ling</i>	58
EndNotes	61
Information	63

Growing On ...

Well, by now you have noticed our new format. Like all things new, it may take a little time for us to 'get it right' and for you to become familiar with it. In the end though, we hope you like it. Do let us know.

It seems appropriate that we launch this new format after 144 issues on CYC-Online. Imagine that. Eh? 12 dozen issues. And that's because you, the readers of CYC-Online and those who write for it, continue to be supportive. And we appreciate that support!

It is also time for us to consider some further changes as we move to this new look. While CYC-Net itself was originally conceived of as a place for Child and Youth Care Practitioners, however they are called, we have always welcomed others to join us. This past year, for example, we have been including many more materials relevant for Foster Carers. Starting this year, we are going to make greater efforts to be consciously more 'inclusive'; reaching out to, and providing information for, parents, teachers, youth-workers, boarding school staff, and the many others who work with children and youth, so that there can be more "commerce" between all the sectors of young people's lives. In our practice we

should already be talking with and listening to parents, teachers and others in the circles of the children and youth we work with, so this development is just giving greater effect to this level of working together.

No matter what you do, where you work or what you are called we believe that if you work with, or are concerned about children, youth and their families, especially those we often call 'troubled', then CYC-Net considers you a part of the family; the family of carers. We believe that, ultimately, the more we are all connected together, the better all of our services will be.

So, if any of you have any ideas about how we can connect with others, encouraging them to be a part of 'our family' then we would love to hear your ideas.

As we move to be more inclusive, of course, we will never forget our origins – it is after all embedded in the name *CYC-Net*. (*Remember when all CYC practice was residential care?*) We will remain a site committed to the sharing of information relevant to CYC Practitioners, and others. We believe that CYC has a lot to offer other people working with, or concerned about, youth. We also believe

that we have a lot to learn from them.

Change is never easy. We all like things, typically, 'the way they are' for one reason or another. We all know that from our work. But, properly approached, change is an opportunity for growth; for the individual, the group and, in this case, our field. So, hang in there with us, help us out, send us your ideas and let's see what happens.

Hey, this is Child and Youth Care – the outcome is bound to be good!

Thom & Brian



CRYSTAL KIRK



The worst school violence

Larry K. Brendtro

We can never know the full reasons behind the dramatic school killings at Colorado's Columbine High School in 1999 or at Minnesota's Red Lake Reservation in 2005. In both cases, the young perpetrators killed themselves. But, measured by loss of life, the most horrific school violence in history occurred nearly a half century ago at a Chicago elementary school. Ninety-two students and three teachers burned to death in a fire believed to have been set by a student. This account examines that troubled boy's pathway to violence and, in time, to reconnection and restoration. This research was sponsored by Starr Commonwealth in preparation for the book No Disposable Kids.¹

Our Lady of Angels elementary school was located in a tree-lined neighborhood five miles west of the downtown Chicago Loop. The residents of this primarily Italian Catholic community took great pride in their parochial school. On December 1, 1958, it was the site of the worst incident of school violence in U.S. history.

The Incident

A fire began in a barrel of trash in the school's basement. The stairwell soon became a chimney, shooting flames through the building. Teachers led younger children from the lower floors to safety. But many older students were trapped on the upper levels by intense heat and smoke that fouled the hallways. Many escaped by ladder, but 92 students and their teachers died together, praying for rescue.

The *Chicago American* published a memorial edition four days after the fire. The front page was covered with school photos of many of the victims. This display of happy faces looked like a grade school graduating class. To friends and relatives, these victims would remain children forever.

For months, Chicago media covered the fire story. Rumors ran rampant. Controversy swirled around all connected with the school, from the bishop to the building's janitor. Authorities gathered statements from every student and school employee but all leads grew cold. Many authorities remained convinced that the fire was purposely set, probably by a student. Meanwhile, the mother of one boy who had survived the fire harbored

her own suspicions. Her son, whom we will call Tony, was often playing with matches and had set other smaller fires in the neighborhood. Her greatest fear was that he might have started this one, too.

Turbulent Childhood

Tony's mother allegedly had been raped by her own stepfather. At the age of 15, she gave birth to her son in a home for unwed mothers. She was supposed to give up her child for adoption. But when the time came to sign the papers, she refused to let anybody take her child away. Though lacking mature parenting skills, this friendless girl set out for distant Chicago with her infant son.

Little is known of Tony's early childhood, although the young mother lived for a time with relatives in the city. But the first sign that something terribly wrong had happened to him came at age five: Tony began setting fires.

Tony's emotional problems spilled over to school and peer relationships, and he was ridiculed and bullied by peers. At the Angels school, Sister Carolan taught religion and counseled Tony. She described him as a boy starving for a male role model. He was hungry for interaction with the two priests assigned to the school. Sister Carolan saw him as a practical joker who acted up for attention but meant no harm. He was always remorseful when he had done something wrong. Other teachers were not so kind in their assessment. Tony was intelligent but needed close supervision. He restlessly roamed through the school, and teachers would send other students to locate him and escort him back to class.

Area fire investigators kept a roster of students enrolled in Our Lady of Angels School at the time of the fire. In any other case when arson was suspected, they crosschecked the names of juvenile suspects against this roster. Police were unaware that shortly after the Angels fire, a troubled fifth grade boy moved from the parish to the suburb of Cicero. His mother had married, so Tony now had a stepfather. He also gained a new name but retained his old ways, now becoming a firebug in Cicero.

Tony was enrolled in a new parochial school but only lasted two months. He was then sent to the Cicero public schools. Tony did not fit in there either. He loathed school, as shown in poor attendance and grades. Teachers saw him as a troublemaker whose deportment was "deplorable." Of course, school authorities had to deal with his disruptive behavior while being totally in the dark about what was going on inside this troubled boy.

Tony's new stepfather tried to lay down the law but did not give Tony the love he craved. When it was just Tony and his mom, home had been a sanctuary from a hostile world. With the new man in the house, home became a battleground. Tony's behavior continued to deteriorate.

The Angry Fire Setter

For three years, authorities were unable to connect Tony to the fire that killed ninety-two students and three teachers, although he repeatedly was seen in the vicinity of suspicious Cicero fires. When questioned, he denied involvement. He was never detained or locked up but

always released to his mother. She denied or minimized his behavior and sought to protect him.

According to neighbors, Tony's stepfather was abusive. He reportedly beat Tony with rabbit punches and held his hand over the gas burner. Tony was terrified of the man who told him: "The next time you set anything on fire and if you kill anybody, and if the police don't get you and give you the electric chair, I'll come after you myself and kill you." Threats were to no avail, and Tony was implicated in a string of suspicious fires. He seemed to want to be caught. On the other hand, he was terrified of his stepfather. When interrogated by police, Tony was usually accompanied by his mother and both denied any wrongdoing.

By now, Tony's mother was so concerned, that she rarely let her son out of her sight. She drove him to school so he didn't get into trouble on the way. When not working, she accompanied Tony on his paper route for fear he might be accused of some new charge. She also sought counseling at Catholic Social Services. But counselors did not connect and his problems remained concealed.

One day Tony knocked on the door of a customer on his paper route. He asked her if she smelled smoke on his clothing. He then reported that he had just "discovered" a fire in a nearby basement and told her to call the fire department. Officials questioned him about this and other fires.

Tony's past caught up to him on December 8, 1961. He admitted to

police that he had set some fires in Cicero. Tony described one fire where the motive seemed to have been retribution: "I wanted to get even with the kid who lives there. He pushes me around a lot and I don't like him." He later recanted this statement.

As investigators zeroed in, his parents hired an attorney. His mother vigorously protested that her boy was being harassed by authorities. She charged that they interrogated him at school whenever there was a fire, interfering with his education. She had kept a list of eleven such fires; maybe her boy started one or two of them, but certainly he did not start them all.

The Admission

Tony's parents agreed to a polygraph test, hoping to clear their boy of some allegations. They retained John E. Reid, a prominent polygraph expert, lawyer, and former Chicago police officer. Mr. Reid was highly skillful and, in short order, built rapport with Tony. Tony admitted to setting several lesser fires in his neighborhood and recalled details from when he burned a garage when he was only five years old. Tony seemed relieved to be able to get these secrets off his chest. "Sometimes, after I set the fires, I feel so bad, I wish I hadn't been born."

When Tony mentioned that he once was a student at Our Lady of Angels School, Mr. Reid was stunned. If this was arson, this was the most infamous school violence in history. Tony was opening up by layers. He initially said only that he knew who set the Angels fire and that he and a friend had talked about it. "On the

afternoon it happened, I was coming back to school with this other kid, and I said, 'I got some matches in my pocket and I could burn down the school and we wouldn't have to go to school no more.'"

Mr. Reid played to Tony's conscience: "You know telling a lie is a sin. There are ninety-two children and three nuns looking down at us right now from heaven who want the truth. Now tell me, did you set the school on fire?" After initially suggesting another boy had set the fire, Tony changed his story. He told of leaving class to go to the boys' bathroom in the basement and lighting a barrel of paper with three matches. He watched the flames get bigger and bigger and then ran back to his room.

"Why did you set the fire?" Mr. Reid asked. The boy's voice turned bitter: "Because of my teachers," he said. "I hated my teachers and my principal. They always were threatening me. They always wanted to expel me from school."

After speaking to Tony's mother, Mr. Reid determined she had suspected this all along. Reid felt obligated to contact authorities and related the boy's admission to Cook County Juvenile Judge Alfred Cilella.

On January 16, 1962, the *Chicago Tribune* reported:

"Information that a 13-year-old boy has confessed setting the fire at Our Lady of Angels School which took the lives of 92 children and 3 nuns was given yesterday to Judge Alfred J. Cilella of Family Court." This was the last the public would hear of the matter for a generation.

The Judge's Dilemma

Judge Cilella sealed all records and ordered that Tony be locked in isolation at Audy Juvenile Home in Chicago. Even police and investigators were not allowed to interview him. A court psychologist found that Tony scored in the bright-normal range of intelligence. A panel of psychiatrists determined Tony was not psychotic and was competent to stand trial.

Closed juvenile court hearings' began in early February. On advice of his attorneys, Tony pled not guilty to all charges. He claimed he gave a confession to Reid because he was frightened and tired. Under Illinois law at the time, a ten year old could not be held criminally liable. The boy obviously needed treatment.

Judge Cilella found Tony guilty of certain Cicero fires. He threw out the Angels charge, citing inconsistencies in the boy's story. In reality, nothing would be served by reopening this tragedy.

The judge had few options since placement anywhere in Illinois increased the risk that Tony might be murdered if his identity became known. Placement outside of the State of Illinois seemed to be in the best interests of the child. In the very city where the world's first juvenile court was founded, Judge Alfred J. Cilella pondered his responsibility.

When the court rendered its decision, Tony's parents were not present. The state was now to be legally responsible for raising this boy. Over the years, Judge Cilella had sent other difficult youth who needed a fresh start to a school operated by Floyd Starr in Michigan. So, the judge ordered Tony to be placed at Starr

Commonwealth to receive psychiatric therapy for fire setting.

No Hopeless Kids

Floyd Starr had known other fire-setters in his day. In 1915, the *Chicago Daily News* reported a speech that he gave before the local YMCA on the theme "there is no such thing as a bad boy."² He told the story of Ernest, a boy almost thirteen who was an arsonist, tortured animals, and stole continuously. "The boy who burns down barns, lies, cheats, and disturbs his neighborhood isn't any different at heart from the boy who is held up in the same block as a model." Many who spoke in court thought Ernest was a hopeless case and wanted him locked away in the state correctional school. Instead, that judge decided to send the boy to Starr Commonwealth.

The court had kept Tony locked incommunicado from January through March. While isolation was for his own protection, Tony felt bitterness at being abandoned. The detention facility became his private Alcatraz. He wanted to get out-but to be sent away from his family was to lose everything. He had never left his mother since she had refused to give him up at birth. But on a mid-April morning, Tony was loaded with his scant possessions to embark for Michigan.

A New Beginning

The trip from Chicago to Michigan follows the course of Interstate 94. After two hours of industrial sprawl, the highway opens onto the farms and

orchards of southern Michigan. Halfway across the state, Starr Commonwealth is announced by a large billboard displaying a lad and the motto “There is no such thing as a bad boy.”³

First impressions are disorienting. Could this possibly be a school for troubled students? The three-hundred-fifty-acre campus with a pristine lake is surrounded by pine forests and farms. Floyd Starr believed that beauty is a silent teacher: “I wanted to send them a clear message: this beautiful place is for you because you are of value.”

Tony arrived at Starr Commonwealth in the afternoon. After school on a typical spring day, boys were busily engaged in a variety of work and recreation activities. Some rode in trucks toting tools for maintenance or farm work. From the band room in Webster Hall came the sounds of clarinets or trumpets blaring as the band practiced for Memorial Day. Other groups of boys would be fishing on the shores of Montcalm Lake or running on the track. Three months locked in a cell, and now Tony entered a place without bars or fences.

Tony was supposed to receive therapy for fire setting. Remarkably, any reference to arson had been purged from the records sent to Starr. Initially, nobody at Starr had the slightest hint of the real reason for this referral. If Tony’s past was kept from his new caretakers, then treatment for fire setting certainly could not be arranged. Was the court trying to lower the risk that Tony’s past would become public? Were the records sanitized to make admission more likely? Perhaps. But other factors probably

weighed on the judge’s mind.

Judge Cilella realized that Tony needed more than talking to psychiatrists. Starr was never known as a psychiatric facility, but as an environment where a damaged boy could be restored to healthy maturity. As a juvenile judge, his task was to protect both this child and the public. Following the original Cook County children’s court charter, Judge Cilella would balance “the moral, emotional, mental, and physical welfare of the minor and the best interests of the community.” By cleaning the slate, Tony was given a second chance.

A Reclaiming Environment

Like all new boys, Tony was assigned to a residence with a dozen other boys. This was scary for a lad who had spent most of his life without Siblings or friends. At first, it was strange to hear the other boys call the houseparents “Mom” and “Pop.” All shared in work. Setting tables, serving, washing dishes, carrying garbage, mopping bathrooms—all followed a system that seemed strange to Tony. A small student handbook contained tips on cleanliness and good manners. The main rule was to be generous. Floyd Starr would say, “Commonwealth means we all share in common every good thing that happens.”

School was held in three buildings situated near the lake, and students switched classes like on a college campus. One building housed academics; another, the vocational, music, and art programs; and the third was a fully equipped gymnasium near the sports field. Tony would be toughened with rigorous daily physical education. After school, play alternated with hard work. Some boys

elected sports, while those less athletic like Tony signed up for the band.

The campus had a natural rhythm of events calculated to provide structure and strengthen character. In the spring, boys planted gardens and trees. Mr. Starr told the boys, "Every spring we plant new trees to replace those that will be lost to lightning, wind, or disease." He then would show them the tree planted by Helen Keller on her visit. He said it was a privilege to help plant trees because students were giving a gift to future generations of boys.

Summer brought a reduced school schedule as recreation and work became prominent. There was perpetual weed pulling and lawn mowing. Montcalm Lake bustled with its swimming beach, boats, and canoes. The Fourth of July might even bring the Governor of Michigan landing in his helicopter on the school's athletic field. The Boy Scout troop was preparing for camping trips.

In September, it was back to school and football. All eyes were now on the first Sunday in October, Founder's Day. A famous speaker such as athlete Jesse Owens or poet Carl Sandburg would draw thousands of visitors. Alumni returned and Floyd Starr introduced his "old boys" to the current youth. Here were models of youth who had overcome adversity.

As Thanksgiving approached, boys would hear the story of the first "Fast Day" in 1913. It seems a street kid from Detroit started the tradition by asking to give up a meal so the cost could help kids he knew in Detroit who were starving. The other boys joined him in the fast and

a tradition was established. For decades, Mr. Starr would retell the story and call for a show of hands if they wanted to continue the tradition. The vote was always unanimous.

At Christmas, fire took center stage. A highlight of the season was the "Little Builder of Christmas Fires" ceremony. All would gather around a huge fireplace built into the gymnasium wall just for this annual event. Floyd Starr would sit in a rocker by the fireplace and read the story of a boy who brought firewood to warm loveless homes. Then, the smallest boy in the Commonwealth would have the honor of putting a match to the stack of wood in the fireplace. According to tradition, if there were enough love in the Commonwealth, the fire would light with only one match. To insure a roaring fire, Mr. Starr would have the maintenance department pre-soak the wood with kerosene. It was the biggest legal blaze that most had ever enjoyed.

Spiritual growth was also encouraged by Starr's chaplain, a jolly giant of an Anglican priest, Father Austin Pellett. Many boys would seek him out when they were wrestling with unresolved guilt. Sunday services in the Chapel in the Woods provided a time for families to visit the campus. For boys who did not get visits, the sight of parents in chapel triggered feelings of abandonment. To compensate, Father Pellett pumped out the message that every boy belonged as a child of God.

The Courage to Trust

While Tony was starving for love, he initially kept to himself. His life path had

been littered with damaged relationships. But now he was immersed in a network of human bonds that would point his life in a new direction.

This lad who had never gotten along with other boys was learning to live and work with a diverse group of peers. In the residences, the mature women who served as surrogate mothers were particularly important to boys living away from home. They provided a stability that many had not found in their own mothers. Few had advanced training, but they brought deep commitment and they were huggable. College-age students who served as recreation staff provided positive role models and a high-octane version of youth care.

Heading the staff of counselors was Al Lilly, a former teacher who went on to earn a graduate degree in social work. Lilly explained, "Many students initially had very little self-control. But even when adults had to exercise external control, they talked to the student about self-control." Boys started out in highly structured cottages. When they learned responsibility, they earned their way to more relaxed, ranch-style residences. By making good decisions, they were preparing for return to the community. They also gained insight into how their own families had broken down and learned a new style of family living. Lilly saw the big picture: "The cycle of abuse has to be broken."

Mr. Lilly chose Jerry to be Tony's counselor. Jerry was a zestful young man who in later years became a decorated sea captain. He was a pied piper for hard-to-reach kids. Tony was very

guarded and Jerry had little to go on as the case files had been "sanitized." The expert on Tony would have to be Tony, the boy who did not trust adults.

Jerry recognized that guarded youth needed time to find the courage to trust. One did not need to probe into the past, for in their own time, students usually opened up of their own volition. Every child has a story to tell if an adult can be found who is worthy of trust. Tony found that adult in Jerry.

Because of the seriousness of his problem, Al Lilly believed that Tony might benefit from another more seasoned counselor, so he invited Max to join Jerry as a two-person treatment team. Max was a former Ohio State police officer also much admired by the students. Six foot four and middle aged, Max was a symbol of benign fatherly power. Now this fatherless boy had two strong male role models mentoring him.

In retrospect, what Tony most needed was probably not psychiatric treatment but stable adults to provide support and guidance. Fire setting was but a symptom of many unmet needs in Tony's life. Jerry and Max decided to focus on present and future challenges. Tony needed to learn to bond to adults, respect authority, get along with peers, be a friend, succeed in school, plan for a vocation, and find a purpose for his life. In today's terms, these were strength-based interventions. "Our goal," said Jerry, "was to immerse students in experiences that helped them make sense out of their lives. We tried to provide as many normal growth opportunities as possible. As they surmounted challenges, they built

confidence in themselves.”

School was not anything like Tony had known. Classes were small and most teachers took an interest in him just like Sister Carol an once had. In this bounty of role models, Principal Kent Esbaugh added even more stability and was not the least intimidated by kids who hated school. In fact, he had left a career as a principal and coach in public schools in order to work with these highly challenging students. Esbaugh was impressed that there were many like Tony who were intelligent but had had lousy experiences with school. In order to succeed, it was important to treat them with respect.

While Esbaugh had strong expectations for academic success, he believed a rich curriculum was equally important. Automotive and wood shops, as well as creative arts, were popular. Just as in the cottages, the boys helped keep their school and classrooms immaculate. Students who once vandalized schools took pride in this place. Teachers gave abundant individualized attention. Esbaugh said, “We always had students with very serious problems. Once they get their lives organized, they can turn around and be very positive.” Esbaugh saw school success as a powerful therapy. Routines of responsibility stabilized disorganized lives. Teachers would rekindle an interest in learning in students who had miserable school records. So it was with Tony.

Reclaimed and Restored

For more than three years, Tony thrived and grew. An alienated boy learned to belong. A failing student found success. An out-of-control teen learned

responsibility. A self-absorbed youth became a friend to others. Grade eleven was the upper limit of the school’s curriculum at the time. Most students returned home to finish high school. But this was the era of Vietnam, and youth turning seventeen could go directly into the armed services. Military recruiters were hunting for youth who would respect authority, work as a team, and get along with diverse groups of people. Tony qualified on all counts. He decided on his future; with the court’s approval, he enlisted.

Tony’s time in Floyd Starr’s character factory came to a close. A boy who had been a terror to the community was now a strong young man set out to risk his own life in the service of his country. After completing his tour of duty in the rice fields of Southeast Asia, Tony returned to civilian life. His goal was to build a future totally unlinked to his troubled past. In later years, investigative journalists would uncover pieces of his story. All rigorously protected his privacy. When in his mid-forties, Tony was interviewed by author John Kuenster. He was reluctant to look back. “I don’t want to open old wounds. I might say something wrong. I want to forget it.”⁴

Tony was able to quietly take his place in the community where he chose to make his home. Today, he is not a hero who is changing the world. He is a quiet citizen doing his part, wanting little more than to live his life in privacy. We honor these wishes and end his story here.

Our Lady of Angels has also left its past behind. Today the building once gutted by fire stands again as a beacon of hope for

the African American and Latino students now enrolled there. Although the Our Lady of Angels fire records have never been officially closed, those who have researched this story conclude this was the most tragic case of school violence in U.S. history.

A close friend of Judge Alfred J. Cilella recalls the incredible stress that accompanied the hearings on this case. “He took a real beating from all corners, and it had a very detrimental effect. It wasn’t long after that he got sick and died.”⁵ Had he lived to see the fruits of his decision, the judge would have had the satisfaction of knowing that he had been faithful to the code of the children’s court: “To serve the moral, emotional, mental, and physical welfare of the minor and the best interests of the community.”

Some might say that a child guilty of serious crimes does not deserve a second chance and that society would be better served by caging such kids for life. For half a century, Floyd Starr encountered such criticism. To those quick to condemn, Starr would recite a passage he knew by heart: “My brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him with a spirit of gentleness. But watch yourself, lest you also be tempted.” These were the words of a mass murderer turned theologian, St. Paul writing to the Galatians. Or, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., would say, “When we look beneath the surface, beneath the impulsive evil deed, we see within our enemy-neighbor a measure of goodness and know that the viciousness and evilness of his acts are not quite representative of all that he is. We see him in a new light.”⁶

Note: Adapted from Brendtro, L., Ness, A., & Mitchell, M. (2005). *No Disposable Kids*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Reference Notes

1. The author first became aware of the Our Lady of Angels story when serving as president of Starr Commonwealth in Albion, Michigan. In 1978, he was contacted by Tom Fitzpatrick of the *Chicago Sun Times* who was writing a twentieth-anniversary feature on the disaster. This investigative reporting uncovered previously sealed court information about the youth. This current discussion draws from his work and the extensive media file of the Our Lady of Angels school disaster provided by the Chicago Public Library. Further information comes from two prior books on the fire: Cowan & Kuenster (1996) and McBride (1979). The former provides the most thorough background of the boy whom court officials believed was responsible for this fire. The latter offers a view of the victims of the fire. This current psycho-historical analysis synthesizes information available in the public record through sources cited above. Nothing has previously been published about the educational and treatment program provided to this youth at Starr Commonwealth. Information on the programs provided during Tony’s stay was provided by the late Al Lilly, director of clinical services, and other former educational and clinical staff. Prior authors protected the youth’s identity and we honor that confidentiality by altering identifying data.

2. Starr, F. (1915, October 8). Bad Boy? No Such Animal. *The Chicago Daily News*.
3. This saying is widely attributed to Father Flanagan who founded Boys Town in 1917. However, it was originally penned by Floyd Starr in his 1913 Starr Commonwealth Creed.
4. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of John Kuenster, executive editor of Century Publishing Company, Evanston, Illinois, and co-author of *To Sleep with the Angels: The Story of a Fire*.
5. Cowan, D., & Kuenster, J. (1996). *To Sleep with the Angels: The Story of a Fire*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, p. 218.
6. King, M. L., Jr. (1963). *Strength to Love*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

This feature: Brendtro, L. (2005). The Worst School Violence. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 14 (2), pp.72-79



Declaring War on Children

Gerry Fewster

Larry Baumgart's "Warning to Parents" was a painful and familiar cry. Acknowledging that his own 13-year-old daughter had chosen the "street culture" over "family values," despite the "reasoning, coercion, bribery and intimidation" used to keep her safe at home, he declares a state of war and then sets out in search of the enemy.

He begins with the kids themselves – particularly those who prey upon the unwary and seduce new members into the transgressions and addictions of street life. Then he targets the philosophers and the law-makers who have been more committed to protecting the rights of children than with providing "deterrents" to effectively enforce their obedience.

Family, friends, teachers, and police are seen as helpless while the professionals in the "self-fulfilling bureaucracies" are more

concerned with the problems of their own "woefully inadequate services" than with the desperation of yet another parent looking for help. But, according to Baumgart, it is the "Generals" – the government ministers and elected officials – who are losing the war on the kids of the street culture. These are the people who should be taken to task and held accountable.

The pain, anger, and frustration of this parent is readily understandable to all who have found themselves screaming helplessly from the sidelines as their children turn *Dungeons and Dragons* into

real-life dramas. His “warning” is bound to strike fear into the hearts of those who continue to watch their young ones struggle to come to terms with these confusing times.

But, however much we fear for the future and however much we feel rejected by those we claim to love, we cannot allow ourselves to declare war on our own kids. We cannot call upon the school, law enforcement, social service, and mental health systems to become our champions on an intergenerational battlefield. And we cannot reasonably expect our senior bureaucrats and lawmakers to replace the glue that seems to have been running out from our cherished versions of the family for quite some time.

It doesn't take great insight to understand that the old “family values” are dead – if, in fact, they ever existed – and it doesn't take very much foresight to realize that it's futile to force stray sheep back into a fold that will never contain them again, no matter how vicious the dogs and how strong the fences. Why would kids choose to accept traditional family values in a world where men and women fight each other for power and where parent/child relationships are increasingly defined by custody agreements and access orders? Why would kids say “no” to drugs in a society where the pharmaceutical quick fix has become the foundation of the health care system? And why would thoughtful young people buy into a way of being that has brought this planet to the brink of ecological chaos?

Young people are not the enemy, not even the “hard-core” ones. We adults

have created these conditions, and it remains our responsibility to offer our kids a future that contains some reason for optimism. Personally, I don't want them to follow in our footsteps and I'm not at all surprised that so many are choosing to reject the world we have created, even to the point of their own self-destruction. Who has been there to offer any alternative? If there is another way, then let's get on with the task of defining it, living it, and teaching it, rather than alienating ourselves still further by calling upon the forces of coercion to defend our dying empire.

Much as our hearts might go out to the Baumgart family, there really is no point in blaming one another and demanding accountability from the “authorities.” Nor is there any point in sitting down and blaming ourselves. We are all in this together, and such animosity is just one more reflection of a society that deserves to be rejected. If change is to take place, it won't be through new laws, upgraded policing, and more effective professionals. It will begin where the problem is most painfully experienced *in the direct relationship between each parent and each child.*

This isn't a call for parents to feel guilty about failure or for children to see themselves as victims of abuse, neglect, or deprivation. On the contrary, the challenge is to begin to create relationships in which each person grows to assume increasing levels of responsibility not in order to simply accept a pre-designed power structure or some prescribed set of values, but in order to respect and understand each other as unique and related human beings. In other

words, we must learn to be with our kids in a different way, supporting them for all they bring into this world, rather than condemning them for not buying into our designs.

This isn't about permissive parenting. We are still the adults and the teachers, but we must learn to speak honestly and clearly, living according to the values we purport to hold while acknowledging that we are not the guardians of the "truth" or the masters of the "only way." Contrary to popular belief, the role of the parent is not weakened or diminished by such humility, it is strengthened.

And, whether we like it or not, ultimately our kids will make their own choices. All we can ever hope for is that they make those decisions that fit them, in a way that respects the ability of others to also choose for themselves. As parents, it is our responsibility to ensure that choices can be made from a wide range of alternatives; this is the essence of self-responsibility.

In the final analysis, if the values we hold, the culture we create, and the future we envision address the most basic human needs for love, respect, and connection, then most kids will choose lives and relationships in which these needs can be addressed. No victims, no villains, no enemies, no war.

This article, written in response to a lengthy letter published in the *Victoria Times Colonist*, appeared in that newspaper on May 30, 1996.



NATHAN ALFRED

Bartimaeus Inc. supports individuals who are experiencing emotional, psychological, developmental and/or behavioural difficulties, and their families.

Bartimaeus also supports organizations by offering, customized Training, Consultation and Management Services.

www.bartimaeus.com

SUPPORT SERVICES

REHABILITATION SERVICES

SPECIAL SERVICES

CONSULTATION & TRAINING

MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Knowledge
Experience
Choice

Since
1988

Working with Groups in Residential Settings

Richard Biolsi and Paul Gitelson

Individual emotionally disturbed children and adolescents have their own issues and life problems, but residential care, by its very nature, is a group process. In addition, the residential group presents unique problems for staff: members are constantly entering and leaving the group; there are a large number of staff involved in working with residents; “living rooms” become “meeting rooms”, and so on. This article will attempt to examine and identify some specific issues and intervention techniques for staff as they work in this type of setting.

The Cottage as a Social System

Human beings do not live independently of each other, but rather are involved in a series of relationship networks which are called social systems. Members of a social system are interdependent, so that a change in one will influence the others and the entire system. An example of a social system is the family. Aspects of social systems include:

- statuses and roles which identify one’s place and behavior in the system;
- formal and informal rules which guide behavior and influence the way people communicate with one another;
- boundaries which are flexible and include those individuals who

share the same norms and maintain relationships with the system;

- values, which are powerful beliefs, attitudes and prejudices upon which roles, rules and boundaries are based.

The living unit staff come together and form a social system which subscribes to the combined values which the staff bring with them. When adolescents come to the facility, there is a strong possibility of an oppositional social system developing

which is based on delinquent

values. If this happens, each young person who comes to the living unit must decide whether to join the delinquent system of his peers, or the basically middle-class system of the staff, or be in limbo between the two. The



pressure to join the peer system is often much greater than that of the adult system.

It is important for child care workers to recognize the possibility of a delinquent system developing and to develop strategies for working with it. If they focus only on the individual they disregard the peer social system as both a powerful reality in the lives of these individuals and an effective tool for treatment

Two typical responses to the peer subculture by adults are as follows:

1. **The Storm Trooper Approach:**

The adult develops an extremely rigid structure which gives youngsters few significant choices and which uses power and intimidation to control behavior. Such an approach is often characterized by a very orderly living unit which is always neat and clean, and a very strong identification by the resident with the leader. In this situation, the staff views problems as trouble and they go to great lengths to deal with them rather than having the youngster deal with them. For instance, if there is stealing taking place, the staff will lock everything up and develop a more rigid structure rather than require the residents themselves to deal with the problem. Unfortunately, the end result of the storm trooper approach is that often the youngsters will develop adaptive behavior on the surface while the deviant behavior goes underground. Sadly, we find a quick reversion to former anti-social behavior patterns once the youngster leaves the program.

2. **The Surrender Approach:** In an attempt to “buy” the cooperation of the residents, the staff provide little structure, have a few confrontations and give much freedom. As indicated in Howard Polsky’s Cottage Six, the staff actually become a part of the delinquent subculture pecking order and in many ways, are controlled and intimidated by it. This approach is characterized by a living unit which is often messy and disorganized and which sustains considerable damage. A great deal of individual counselling takes place as staff attempt to indicate that there is work going on.

The authors advocate an alternative approach, called the “Work-Care Approach,” which views problems as opportunities for work and which is characterized by:

- clearcut behavioral and responsibility expectations from a strong staff; the conscious development of a culture of concern and responsibility for one another. This is where the “work” comes in and although the description of its implementation is beyond the scope of this summary, it is reflected when there is a change in staff approach from, “It’s none of your business why he ran away,” to “What did any of you do to help him stay here?”
- the development of opportunities within the environment in which the group can take control of and responsibility for their lives.

Some of the tasks and techniques of the work-care approach include:

- deciding which behavioral expectations are necessary and which are arbitrary;
- examining and recognizing the peer culture, both in terms of its negative elements and as a catalyst for change;
- staff posturing, which is a general heading for an approach which includes modelling (behavior, concern, reliability, strength, positive values, etc.), avoiding lecturing, active listening, avoiding defensiveness, etc;
- a push for “work” by the residents, which means not smoothing over or taking responsibility for solving problems, but helping the youngster to struggle through to a reasonable solution;
- maintaining an awareness for and a willingness to intervene in situations which affect members of the social system (moodiness and depression around the holidays, acting out behavior at termination time, sexual acting out behavior on the part of one or more members of the group, new staff members, etc).
- Providing opportunities for the group members to identify themselves as a positive force.

Recognizing the powerful influence which the group has on thinking and behavior of individual members, one can use a variety of groupings in the living unit to carry out treatment tasks and to further reinforce the idea of “work” on problems as the primary reason for the individual being in placement. Three of these unit groups are as follows:

Cottage Life Groups

A good part of life consists of having to negotiate systems and cottage meetings can be used as an opportunity for members to work out mutually agreeable solutions to problems which arise in the process of living together. Cottage life groups are based on the premise that everything that happens in the group living situation replicates what has previously gone on in the youngster’s life. There are a number of issues specific to cottage life groups of which the staff must remain cognizant. For example, at the end of the meeting the members do not go their separate ways, but remain together in the living unit, a situation which might encourage the existence of a “What’s that you said about my mother?” syndrome. Thus, staff must take pains to help the group members to resolve or put aside issues raised until the next meeting. Similarly, agreement concerning confidentiality of the material discussed must be forged in order to both protect the members and to encourage them to talk about personal issues. Finally, the open-ended nature of the group, with new members constantly coming in and old members leaving, raises other issues related to security and abandonment, and these, too, must be sensitively dealt with by the leaders.

Task Groups

There are many issues which youngsters feel more comfortable about if they are dealt with in a group setting rather than individually. Task groups deal with specific issues such as orientation to the institution, termination, school

problems, or sexuality. The topics of these groups depend on the needs and interests of youngsters in the living unit at the time. Task groups may relate either to “emotional” issues or to “functional” issues (such as planning a trip), but regardless, there will always be an emotional component to the discussion. Again, as in cottage life groups, the issue of material discussed by the group outside of the meeting and the maintenance of confidentiality must be dealt with.

Serendipitous Groups

The group process is constantly occurring in the living unit. Residents are always interacting with one another, reacting to the behavior and thoughts of others and trying out relationships. The astute worker will seize on conversations during lunch, “bull” sessions, bus trips, etc. to help youngsters to work on issues which are important to their growth. These group encounters give rise to all of the systems characteristic of the groups previously discussed, including roles, values and rules of behavior. The worker who can identify this wealth of information and expression and help the group to reflect on it has taken a major step toward effective treatment of his or her clients.

Residential care is rich with group work opportunities. This article has identified only three. The worker who wants to be most effective will constantly be aware of, and looking for opportunities to utilize, the unique opportunities presented by this reality.

Recommended Readings

- Adler, J. (1981). Relationships with The Group. *Fundamentals of Child Care*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Adler, Jack. (1979, Fall). The Child Care Worker’s Leadership in Group Process. *Child Care Quarterly*. 8(3).
- Biolsi, R. & Gerard, R. (1980, Fall). Training and Evaluating Child Care Workers: The identification of Tasks and Skills. *Residential and Community Child Care Administration*. 1(4).
- Gitelson, P., Moore, J. G., & O’Reilly, W. Teaching Group Skills to Child Care Workers. Unpublished. Available from author.
- Gitelson, P. (1983, April). Modifying Group Work Techniques with Living Groups in a Residential Milieu. *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Symposium on Social Work with Groups*: Toronto.
- Gitterman, A. & Shulman, L. (Ed.). (1986). *Mutual Aid Groups and the Life Cycles*. Itasca: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.
- Jones, M. (1953). *The Therapeutic Community: A New Treatment Method in Psychiatry*. New York: Basis Books.
- Maier, H.W. (Ed.). (1965). *Group Work as Part of Residential Treatment*. New York: NASW.
- Mayer, M.F. (1972, October). The Group in Residential Treatment of Adolescents. *Child Welfare*. 51(8).
- Polsky, H.W. (1962). *Cottage Six*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Richardson, C. & Meyer, R.G. (1972, October). Techniques in Guided Group Interaction Programs. *Child Welfare*. 51(8).
- Vorrath, H. H. & Brendtro, L. K. (1974). *Positive Peer Culture*. New York: Aldini Publishing Company.

This feature: *Reaching Children and Youth* (4),3



Hope and the Imagination

Herbert Kohl

For many young people, a lack of hope stems from a sense of isolation, a sense that no one shares their values and that they are not cared for by others. Caring about people outside of one's own circle of friends and family presents a challenge in a world where such concern is not a common value. I remember a quote from a song that was a favorite of my students in 1962 (Kohl, 1967):

Goodbye cruel world, I'm off to join the circus. I'm going to be a broken-hearted clown.

For many of these children, running away to the circus represented a dream of living in a magical world where everyday strife did not exist. Being broken hearted was a common experience. Caring was what they longed for and often could not find.

Caring for youth and helping them develop the strength to face the challenges in their lives involves fostering hope and not promising the impossible. Optimism, which conveys the belief that things will turn out right, is not the same as hope, which is an abiding, psychological, sociological, and political faith that the

world can be better if only you try. Hope promises nothing material but promotes dignity, self-respect, and a spirit of struggle.

Creating hope in oneself as a teacher and nourishing or rekindling it in one's students is the central issue educators face these days. After 30 years of teaching and trying to reform public schools while continuing to work in a framework of hope, I have had to examine the sources of my own hope as well as my struggles with the temptation to despair and quit. This examination has taken me on a personal journey that has led to some ideas about how hope can be instilled and nurtured in young people. One of the most powerful of those ideas concerns the value of imagination in creating hope. The first step in gaining that value is to create an environment in which the imagination can thrive.

Creating Hope Through the Environment

The novelist George Eliot wrote in *Middlemarch* that "if youth is the season of hope, it is often so only in the sense that our elders are hopeful about us" (p. 590). This is a profound truth that caring adults must internalize and practice. We cannot teach hope unless we ourselves are hopeful, not merely in a general sense but in specific ways for individual children. Teaching hope involves focusing on strengths and cultivating a hopeful learning community.

Focus on strengths

One way to teach hope is to get to know children, not merely their

weaknesses, but also their strengths and beauty. It is easy to discover what children do not know - just give them a high-stakes test. But to know the strengths they have, their dreams and aspirations, you have to be in affectionate dialog with them. That is the challenge of creating hope-to establish a condition of mutuality where you and the young people you work with are curious about each other and share history, experience, and knowledge.

One way to identify strengths is to have children talk about what they love to do outside of school. The skills involved in these activities can become the basis for learning in other areas and the basis for dialog and mutuality in the classroom. Another way to identify strengths is to introduce games, puzzles, and complex building toys into the classroom and watch how young people relate to them. You might be astonished at the strengths that emerge in the context of play.

Cultivate a hopeful learning community

This attitude should not be mistaken for the notion that young people and the adults who work with them are the same and know the same things. Adults have knowledge and experience that young people cannot possibly have. It is vital that a hopeful learning community of adults and young people acknowledge that they have things to teach each other.

In such a community of learners, the development of a moral and social imagination would be central. The imagination is best thought of holistically, as a mode of mental functioning that supplements the conventions of ordinary

experience. The imagination does not merely represent the everyday physical and social world. It conceives of other possible worlds. And it is this opening of possibility that leads to hope. If the world can be imagined to be different and if young people have experiences imagining better, more caring possibilities, they have a resource from which to draw on their own strengths.

One strategy to help students imagine better possibilities is to have them build their dream community. The best way to do this is to discuss what they would like to see if they had the power to build a city or a neighborhood they may even build a model of the world they imagine. Another strategy is to have students invent things no one has seen before, such as computers that walk, new secret languages and codes, and new musical instruments. The act of invention teases the imagination and helps to develop an awareness of the possible.

Creating Hope Through the Imagination

Once a supportive, strengths-based environment exists, you can begin to create hope for children and youth by encouraging self-expression through their imaginations. There are many children on the verge of despair who echo, in their private moments, the sentiments expressed in a poem attributed to a Canadian high school senior who committed suicide.* In the poem, the young man describes a picture he drew that explained things he felt no one else cared about—a picture that said things about himself he could not say otherwise:

He kept it under his pillow and would
let no one see it.
And he would look at it every night
and think about it.
And when it was dark, and his eyes
were closed, he could still see it.
And it was all of him. And he loved it.

The youth took the picture to school with him, to remind him of who he was and what he knew about himself. He struggled to preserve his individuality as his teacher and his mother encouraged him to conform. When he began to behave like the other students, the picture lost its power. After he threw the picture away,

... he lay alone looking at the sky.
It was big and blue and all of
everything, But he wasn't anymore.
He was square inside, and brown,
And his hands were stiff.
And he was like everyone else.
And the thing inside him that needed
saying didn't need it anymore.

This poem illustrates the power of imagination to help one cope with the adversities of life. It also illustrates the responsibility adults have to preserve and nurture hope through imaginative thinking. The creations of youthful imagination may be just the strengths we need to try to understand in order to cultivate hopeful learning communities.

Feeling-thinking. How can we encourage and understand youthful imagination? In *The Book of Embraces*, Eduardo Galeano (1992), introduced a new word, *sentipensante*, that applies to such imaginative activity:

Why does one write, if not to put one's pieces together? From the moment we enter school or church, education chops us into pieces: it teaches us to divorce soul from body and mind from heart. The fishermen of the Colombian Coast must be learned doctors of ethics and morality, for they invented the word *sentipensante*, feeling-thinking, to define language that speaks the truth. (p. 32)

The imagination is *sentipensante* in an extended way. It does not speak the truth, but allows one to play with possible truths, to transcend everyday reality. As we begin to merge thought and feeling, we begin to define values. Thought and feeling merged in imaginative play or reverie can at times suspend the laws of logic and reason, and we begin to dream new worlds. Both thought and feeling are elements that can be played with within the realm of the imagination, and at the same time used to weigh and balance the values that emerge from these imaginative worlds.

Tutors of hope

The imagination is a major source of hope. What this implies is that the arts, music, drama, dance, literature, and poetry are not just things that have to be studied but essentials in the development of creative hopeful learning. They do not preach. Instead, they invite participation and creation, and allow for dreaming and interpretation. For me the arts are the tutors of hope. One of the major challenges teachers face today is to find ways of using the arts to reach out to young people, to foster hopeful learning,

and to express values not explicit in the results of comprehensive tests. Young people can create their own dances, develop plays about a future they might like to live in, write imaginary diaries about imaginary worlds, or create their own songs. Making something lively, expressive, and worth sharing with others is a way of affirming the self and inspiring strength and hope.

We need to take youthful creativity seriously as valuable self-expression with the hope that our learning communities are healthier, more caring environments in which individual lives are honored and can flourish. When I think about the poem by the Canadian high school student, I see a young man who was reaching out, crying for help, and demonstrating creativity, insight, and intelligence. What if a caring adult had read this poem and had become part of an imaginative rescue attempt? Maybe the young man would have become hopeful and not taken his life. Maybe not. But good teaching always involves "maybes" on the hopeful side.

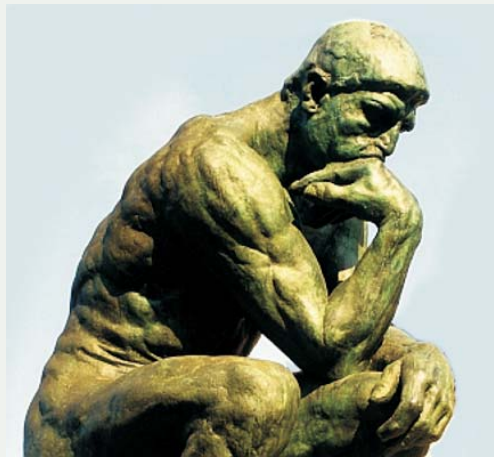
References

- Eliot, G. (1871-2. 1965). *Middlemarch*. Penguin: Harmondsworth, Middlesex. England.
- Galeano, E. H. (1992). *The book of embraces*. C. Belfrage and M. Schafer. trans. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Kohl, H. (1967). *36 children*. New York: New American Library.
- * This poem originally appeared in *Generation* magazine, which is no longer being published. It also appeared on a poster for a Canadian educational group.
- This feature: Kohl, H. 2000. Hope and the Imagination. *Reaching Today's Youth*, 4,4

Types of knowledge

Mark Smith

As a family we look after a disabled lad, David, so as his parents can get some respite. David can't speak but is, nonetheless, a very adept communicator. One of his favourite activities when he comes to us is to feed the ducks at a local pond. As soon as he arrives at our house he flaps one of his arms as we might if we were trying to mimic a chicken. He follows this up by putting his hand to his mouth and pretending to lick it, letting us know in no uncertain terms that feeding the ducks is to be followed by an



ice-cream at the van that sets up along from the pond.

We had David on one of the days between Christmas and New Year and, as it was the holiday period, decided to go further afield in search of ducks to feed. So, we packed our stale bread and went into the hills that surround Edinburgh.

We walked up to a reservoir where there is usually a plentiful supply of ducks, swans and geese. But there were none to be seen; the reservoir had mostly frozen over following the coldest snap we have had in Scotland for many a long year.

Walking back down to the car we met

one of the Water Board workers who lived by the reservoir. He kept a few animals on the grounds around his cottage and was moving sheep to a pen for the night when he and my wife got chatting. My wife, a city dweller all her days, asked if the sheep might like the bread we had brought with us to feed the ducks. Funnily enough, he didn't think they would but said that we'd be welcome to feed the bread to the birds he kept. 'That's if you can find any', he added wistfully. He went on to say that he had once kept as many as 60 fantail pigeons. But conservation groups and environmental scientists had, in their wisdom, decided to reintroduce hawks brought over from Scandinavia to rebalance what they claimed was the natural habitat of the area. 'But I've lived here for forty years' said our companion, 'and I've never seen a hawk here in all that time. His friend on a nearby farm told the same story. The result was that the newly introduced hawks had attacked and killed off most of the birds he kept. He had written to politicians and newspapers he said, but no-one wanted to know.'

This encounter got me thinking about just what it is we do know and how we know it. We live in a world where we are encouraged to bow down to scientific knowledge; we are exhorted to practise in an evidence-based way. In such a climate the tacit and proximate knowledge of a man who has lived all his days in the hills is superseded by the apparently superior knowledge of those with a few letters after their names. We see a similar dynamic in other areas too; in fisheries scientists' predictions of fish stocks being wiped out are discounted by trawlermen

who have lived through the different cycles of fish levels and who start to tell a different story based on what they are finding in their nets. We see it in residential child care where social workers and psychologists tell us how we should be looking after children, proffering advice that encourages those who work on the shop floor to question how long these 'experts' might last in actual practice.

The disjunctions in perspectives outlined in the examples above aren't just about science getting things wrong. At a deeper level they challenge the whole dominance of a scientific paradigm and ask questions of the very nature of knowledge. Some of my current thinking takes me back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who identifies different types of knowledge. Specifically he identifies *episteme*, or theoretical and abstract knowledge, *techne*, denoting technical know how and *phronesis* which emphasises practical and ethical wisdom grounded in the everyday realities of practice.

For too long in child and youth care we have existed in the thrall of scientific knowledge and its technical application. We seek theories to understand and programmes to intervene. While each of these might have some place in our canon, what we can't learn from books and manuals is the tacit and proximate knowledge that only comes from actual practice and which is built up over years of reflexion upon this. It is such phronetic understandings of our worlds that we need to aspire to and assert in child and youth care.



Lizzy: Understanding attachment and loss in young people with complex needs

Edwina Grant, Mary McFarlane and Rita Crawford

Introducing Lizzy

Lizzy is now a twenty year-old young woman with brown hair, lovely blue eyes and the most amazing smile. She has a great sense of humour and is a very sociable person. She enjoys going out and about, be it to the cinema, shopping trips, ten-pin bowling or for something to eat.

When on form, she sparkles. She is an avid Dunfermline supporter attending all their home games with Richard, her foster father. One of the highlights of the year is Lizzy's summer holiday which she really enjoys. She is absolutely passionate about desserts, especially anything chocolate flavoured. Lizzy enjoys being in company

but also enjoys her own space. She knows her own mind.

Lizzy lives in a long-term residential house located in the local community. The house offers residential care to five young people with complex physical and intellectual disabilities. The house is spacious and was designed for the young people who are currently living there. All of these young people have been living in the unit for between four and thirteen years. Lizzy has her own bedroom with en-suite toilet and bathing facilities. Her bedroom reflects her personality and is adorned with Dunfermline football team posters and flags as well as photos of her family and lots of soft toys.

Lizzy spends most of her life in a wheelchair and her only form of communication is by eye pointing. When you get to know her, she can use this quite effectively.

She requires total assistance to eat and drink, as she has problems with food and its consistency and everything has to be liquidised. Indeed Lizzy requires total assistance to stay alive.

A story of attachment, loss, inclusion and recovery

Lizzy was born by caesarean section in 1987 and had a very traumatic birth. By six months old she had been diagnosed as having cerebral palsy with dyskinesia which affects muscle tone and limits the use of trunk and limbs. It became apparent to her parents that her development across the board was delayed. By the time Lizzy was a year old, her mum was becoming depressed about her lack of progress and beginning to

wonder about their future as a family. The pain experienced by the family at this time is palpable in the following extracts taken from a diary kept by Lizzy's mum (with her permission).

Her mum writes:

In late 1988 Lizzy started to attend the Early Education Unit at Westerlea. I was full of hope that they would help her to develop physically. It never occurred to me that she would have any learning disabilities. In 1989 Lizzy and I had our first trip to the Peto Institute in Budapest and we had been told that with a lot of work we might teach Lizzy to walk and that she would almost certainly talk. By the time Lizzy was eighteen months I started to carry out gruelling exercise programmes twice daily with Lizzy. Both Lizzy and I found this very distressing. I worked hard to make this work for Lizzy. In May 1990 Lizzy's brother was born. We went to the Spastic Society in Edinburgh with Lizzy and were told she would never talk and that we should try alternative communication. They also said children like Lizzy always end up in an institution in their adult lives due to the demands they put on their carers.

With much heartache and soul-searching, the family decided to proceed with fostering for Lizzy in the summer of 1991. Whilst they made this decision, they have continued to be an important part of Lizzy's life and involved in any major decisions regarding her future and other aspects of her life.

When Lizzy was four-and-a-half years old, she was placed in short-term foster care where she lived for the following year before being placed with Linda, Richard and their two sons in a long-term placement. She appeared settled and happy for the next three and a half years keeping some contact with her birth family.

When Lizzy was nine years-old, Linda developed cancer. At this point, Lizzy began to receive shared care from the unit in which she currently resides, to support Richard and Linda during Linda's illness. When Linda died, Lizzy moved into the unit on a permanent basis. During this very sad time Richard remained and still remains a constant feature in Lizzy's life.

When she first moved in with us, she screamed constantly and there was no eye contact. She was a sad and distressed little girl. After Lizzy's initial settling-in period, however, she appeared to enjoy all the experiences and opportunities that had opened up to her. When Lizzy was 15 years old, however, staff noticed deterioration in Lizzy's general well-being. She lost her sparkle, she lost her laughter, and she did not want to connect with anyone anymore. Lizzy started self-harming, biting and gouging her hands and arms. She would also bite staff, and she was in a constant state of agitation. She was not eating or sleeping well. As time went on, staff had to protect her by putting cotton gloves on her hands, as this helped prevent her from biting and gouging her hands. She also had to wear special walking socks to prevent her feet blistering from her constant agitation and movement. Although Lizzy had always

bitten her upper arms, this increased and staff had to introduce elastic upper arm supports as she had been prescribed antibiotics for the severe bites she had given herself on several occasions.

Staff became more seriously concerned about Lizzy's physical and mental health as time went on. They were convinced that Lizzy's behaviour was not connected to her complex physical needs. Advice was sought from a number of health professionals with very little success. Looking back now and stepping into Lizzy's shoes, she had faced many major challenges in her life from a difficult birth to separation from her birth family to the loss of her foster mother. Her world must have been turned upside down – how could she understand what had happened and why she was taken away from people she loved and who loved her. Where did Linda go? Why did she not live with Richard any more? Why was she living with all these people she did not really know? Only one stable part of her life, the school, remained the same.

When the staff team discussed Lizzy's life, the amount of loss, trauma and change she had experienced became apparent to them. She would have poor understanding of what had happened, no meaningful explanation, and little opportunity to grieve. Staff realised that she must have felt abandoned and frightened. Staff wanted to help Lizzy to understand what had happened, to reassure her that she was not to blame and to help her to rebuild her trust in people and relationships. Were theoretical understandings of attachment and loss a key to understanding Lizzy's present

self-destructive behaviours?

When looking for therapeutic approaches to help Lizzy, the service manager discovered an intervention called Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy. This therapy, developed by Hughes (2006), an American clinical psychologist, is based on attachment theory. He evolved this approach specifically to assist children who have experienced trauma and loss to start on the road to recovery. Research on attachment theory for children with complex difficulties is sparse. What little there is suggests that 'professional carers need to take on board that facilitating secure attachment relationships for distressed clients may be difficult for professionals, but partial assuagement of their attachment needs is a realistic clinical goal' (Clegg and Lansdall, 1995, p. 296). It was decided to contact a therapist or psychologist who could offer this Dyadic Developmental approach to see if a way could be found to create an intervention which would halt Lizzy's downward spiral.

The therapist suggested that a training day for the team be organised to ensure all the staff received a basic understanding of attachment theory and its importance with respect to child and human development. This was an excellent day. The staff spent some of the time reflecting on Lizzy's past and ways of supporting her to move forward. Out of this training day came a therapeutic plan for Lizzy's emotional recovery.

Theoretical perspectives

Inclusion and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979) tells us that warm, close,

trusting relationships that grow with us, making choices, developing skills and abilities, and having a respected and valued role are important for our well-being.

Everyone needs to be included, everyone needs relationships, everyone can communicate, everyone can learn, everyone has their own gifts and strengths and everyone needs support – some more than others.

Attachment theory informs us that our experiences of care from our parents in our early years shape our view of relationships, potentially for the rest of our lives. Secure relationships are built on the foundations of secure parenting. Our resilience to meet life's challenges develops as we build positive relationships and have success in our skills and talents (Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999). As Dan Hughes (2006) states:

In healthy families, a baby forms a secure attachment with her parents as naturally as she breathes, eats, smiles and cries. This occurs easily because of her parents' attuned interactions with her. Her parents notice her physiological affective states and they respond to her sensitively and fully. Beyond simply meeting her unique needs, however, her parents 'dance' with her. Hundreds of times a day, day after day, they dance with her. There are other families where the baby neither dances nor even hears the sound of any music (Hughes, 2006, p. ix).

This 'dance of attunement' that forms secure attachment can be disrupted by different factors – parental, environmental or child. For example, parents who have mental health problems or difficulties in their own attachment histories may not be able to attune to the needs of their infants. Poor housing, unemployment and other forms of social exclusion can all make attunement more challenging for a parent. Some children, for example premature babies, babies with chronic illness, children with autism or learning disabilities or sensory impairments, may struggle to signal their needs and this can make it difficult for parents to attune.

Loss, change (particularly enforced change) and trauma affect us all and are often accompanied by strong feelings such as despair, depression, anger, anxiety, shame, loneliness, hopelessness and helplessness (Herman, 1992; Mallon, 1998; Wayment and Vierthaler, 2002). There is evidence that such issues are exaggerated in children who are looked after (Meltzer et al., 2003). How feelings are expressed in behaviours will depend on the individual's personality, resilience, past experience of relationships and support network.

Extreme behaviours such as self-harming, hitting out and even suicide attempts are not unusual responses to such overwhelming feelings, particularly when the person cannot make sense of what has happened and there is no-one to share their emotional pain. Children in particular often blame themselves for the loss of, or separation from, parents and carers. They need much reassurance that it was not their fault. Such evidence was used to inform the therapeutic plan for Lizzy.

Developing a therapeutic plan

The therapist met Lizzy, her foster father and her staff team and talked about her personality, her likes and dislikes, her strengths and talents, her successes, her struggles and her life story. Work was done to help the staff to understand that much of Lizzy's distressed and challenging behaviour (self-harming, biting staff, and not eating or sleeping well) was an ordinary human reaction to separation and loss. Lizzy's self-harming could be construed as deliberate as she seemed numb to hurting herself, with no discernable pain reaction, whereas if she was hurt accidentally she reacted to the pain. Lizzy seemed to be experiencing powerful feelings with poor understanding of events and limited opportunity and means to share her feelings. Overall, it was no surprise she had lost her 'sparkle'. The therapist facilitated a training day on attachment and loss for the whole staff team and then worked with all concerned to formulate a therapeutic plan aimed toward Lizzy's emotional recovery. The needs identified by the staff and her foster father were as follows:

- To be and feel safe;
- To feel special – loved and cherished;
- To be accepted;
- To belong and to feel included;
- To have fun;
- To be heard and to communicate;
- To have success.

These needs had to be met within the context of a secure attachment relationship. All but one of Lizzy's actual and potential close relationships were

with paid professionals. This situation (although often the norm for children and adults with complex support needs) did not assist her to have an ordinary life and be included in society. The one consistent, close relationship in her life was with her foster father. To meet Lizzy's needs the following elements were included in the therapeutic plan:

- Work on maintaining eye contact with Lizzy, allowing her access to a communication channel which is intense yet non-verbal;
- Maximising touch;
- Empathising with Lizzy;
- Getting warm and cosy;
- Sharing experiences;
- Just having fun.

The plan unfolded gradually, initially starting in February 2007. This was made into a reality using the following strategies:

- Enlisting the permission and support of Lizzy's birth family to undertake this work;
- Her foster father continuing his weekly visits to spend time with Lizzy, extending this from going to see Dunfermline play football to spending time with her in the residential unit;
- Four members of the staff team becoming Lizzy's anchors committing to spending individual time with her every day helping her to feel special and doing things that she used to enjoy. This included reading to her, holding hands, watching TV, cuddling her, telling her about their day and encouraging her to tell them the stories

of her day (Lizzy cannot speak but she can most definitely communicate not only with eye pointing but with sounds that clearly indicate her mood from grouching to giggling!) A vital part of the work was to engage Lizzy in eye contact, responding to Lizzy's reactions and allowing her to lead the conversation. The team thought a good time and place would be in Lizzy's bedroom between her return home from day-care and tea-time. Lizzy had the choice not to participate. She has only decided not to participate on a few occasions;

- The service manager put together a photographic Life Story Book for Lizzy starting from when she was a baby, explaining the events in her life including the separation from her family and the death of Linda, her foster mother. It also celebrated her past and present successes. One member of the team would read this with Lizzy, acknowledging the privacy of such a story;
- Using relaxing pleasurable sensory experiences to give Lizzy an opportunity to enjoy and trust touch. These included Reiki, hand massage, foot massage, and nail painting. The staff started to remove Lizzy's gloves a few minutes at a time, to give her back as much freedom as possible;
- Creating opportunities to have fun and laugh with Lizzy;
- Staff acknowledged and stayed (safely) with Lizzy's anger and emotional pain. They assisted her to open up her strong feelings by showing empathy ('This is hard for you', 'you look upset',

'I am here to help you stay safe', 'I want to stay with you just now') rather than deny these feelings or try to joke or talk her out of it ('don't be angry', 'no need to be upset', 'let's cheer you up', 'you'll be OK');

- The staff talked to Lizzy appropriately about her feelings and how staff were feeling, taking care to show emotions in their faces as well as with words;
- After reading Dan Hughes' book, the service manager realised that Lizzy's problems with sleeping could be as simple as not feeling secure in her bed. This was rectified by buying a larger duvet and tucking it tightly round Lizzy and under the mattress. Lizzy now sleeps soundly;
- Good communication and recording in the team to be clear what is working and what is difficult and/or challenging;
- Continued consultation between the team and the therapist concerning understanding Lizzy's feelings and behaviour, the pace of unfolding the plan, monitoring success and tackling challenges.

As a result of the implementation of the therapeutic plan, the change in Lizzy has been amazing and all this has been achieved without having to increase her medication. Lizzy has her 'sparkle' back and she is much more communicative and vocal, smiling and laughing. Her eye contact is much better and she is now interested in what is happening around her. People who know her have commented on how happy, healthy and well she is looking. Lizzy's anchors have mentioned they have noticed how

responsive she is, especially during her special time with them. The agitation has lessened and she has only bitten herself once in the last six months. Staff are still working on preventing Lizzy from hurting herself. The permanent removal of her gloves is a long way off but continues to be pursued at every opportunity. Lizzy loves skin-on-skin contact and is now able to enjoy the experience of both massage and Reiki massage. It is lovely to see her lying still, calm and totally relaxed.

Conclusion

A therapeutic approach based on attachment theory has been beneficial in Lizzy's case. Staff are able to see through the label of 'complex needs'. They understand that there was an isolated, frightened young person who was having extreme difficulties in dealing with feelings of separation and loss. This empowered staff to work in a pro-active way with Lizzy and to help her on her road to having an ordinary life. Every child, every human being, is quite unique. We are all a mix of genetics, early years' experiences of being looked after by our parents or carers and events in our life.

Every child needs to feel special. It is clear that the quality of the affectionate bonds a child has in their early years affects how they feel about themselves, how they feel about and relate to other people, and their world view. Secure attachments build resilience to deal with life's challenges and the child grows up knowing that if something happens with which they cannot cope, there will always be someone there to help sort it out. As practitioners, we should not forget the

truth of this for our children and young people with severe and complex needs.

References

- Bowlby, J. (1979). *The making and breaking of affectional bonds*. New York: Routledge.
- Clegg, J.A. & Lansdall, R. (1995). A theoretical review informing three clinical interventions. *Journal of Intellectual Disability*, 39, 295-305.
- Daniel, B., Wassell, S. & Gilligan, R. (1999). *Child development for child care and protection workers*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hughes, D.A. (2006). *Building the bonds of attachment: Awakening love in deeply troubled children* (2nd edition). New York: Jason Aronson.
- Mallon, B. (1998). *Helping children to manage loss*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Meltzer, H., Lader, D., Corbin, T., Goodman, R. & Ford, T. (2003). *The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in Scotland*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office.
- Wayment H. A. & Vierthaler, J. (2002). *Attachment style and bereavement reactions*. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 7(2), 129-149.

From: *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*
Volume 8 No 1 February/March 2009
pp.29-37

Poetics and the Language of Youth Work

Mark Krueger

This column is another in a series of columns in which I have written about writing and morality in child and youth care. I was moved to write it in a recent discussion about meaning making, reflective research, and a phenomenological approach to our work.

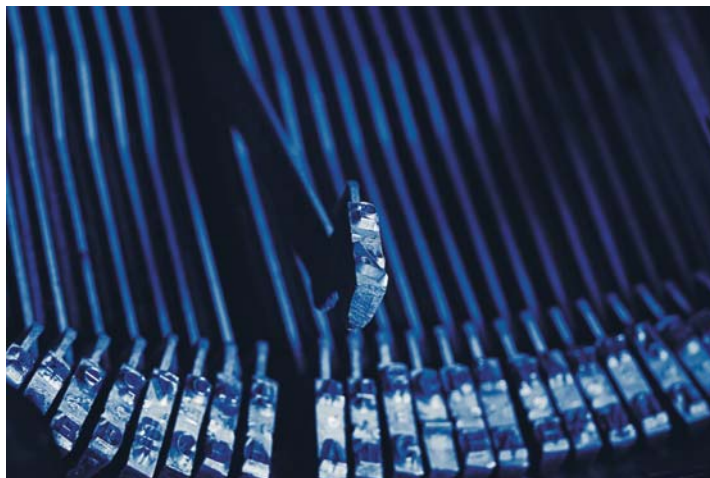
For many fiction writers, poetry is the truest way to portray an image or express a feeling. For example, prize winning novelist Roberto Bolano considered poetry the highest form of expression. He wrote poems when he is not working on his novels. Even though it was very difficult, he could say something in a few words than he could not say in the longer narrative form.

Some poems are written spontaneously like jazz. In general a poet works a poem until he or she feels it is just right or rings true. It can take days, months or years before it looks and sounds right. The author writes a first draft and returns (even to the ones written

spontaneously) to it many times to try to capture the essence (hear it deep) of what he or she wants to say, or the picture the poem is intended to portray. The reader reads the situation in the moment as part of the larger whole, or their world view as shaped by their experience.

Similar to the way I wrote in October in this column (In the Spaces Between) about a Sam Shepard, playwright and poet of dialog in his own right, in most poems the spaces between the words are as important as the words. The poet

attempts to invite the reader into the poem to contemplate and relate the images related to the readers own experience. The hope is that it will ring true for the reader as well, and this



ENRIQUE SALIENT

will make them curious enough to engage in a personal dialog or discourse with the work. Or to say, “Yes, that’s the way it is. I never thought of it that way, but that is the way I experience it. I understand. Or I want to understand more.”

The movement of words and the rhythm of a poem are crucial to its success. The tempo has to be consistent with the mood the writer wants to convey otherwise the poem does not read true. So is the ability to see a situation for what it is to the writer. When German poet Rilke lost his way, sculptor Rodin told him to go to the zoo and look at the animals until he could see them. Rilke went and looked at a panther for days then wrote this poem which I have presented in this column in the past (translated by poet Robert Bly):

The Panther

From seeing the bars, his seeing is so exhausted that it no longer holds anything anymore.

To him the world is bars, a hundred thousand bars, and behind the bars, nothing.

The lithe swinging of that rhythmical easy stride which circles down to the tiniest hub is like a dance of energy around a point in which a great will stands stunned and numb.

Only at times the curtains of the pupil out a sound ... then a shape enters, slips through the tightened silence of the shoulders, reaches the heart, and dies.

In this poem, which is about a panther not youth work, Rilke captures the experience of the caged panther in a few words. When I read it I am overwhelmed by its clarity and power. I can almost feel what the panther must have been feeling. I am unable to go to the zoo and not think of it. When I first read it, I compared it to the experience I had with troubled youth who lived caged in their community and how we had to create experiences and activities that would make the light shine from their eyes in our activities and interactions.

The line “Properly weathered places” in William Carlos Williams’s poem *Pastoral* resonated almost immediately with my calling to escape the American pastoral and work with youth in urban communities. Williams, a medical doctor, was expressing how he felt more comfortable in places with a history of aging and poverty. His work portrays both the struggle and beauty of these places and the people in them.

In creating, writing and speaking about moments in our work, perhaps we should be more like the poet and try to capture the essence of what we want to say while paying attention to the mood we care conveying with everyday words. Poet Ezra Pound referred to this as the quest for fundamental accuracy of statement, which he saw as the sole morality of poetry. Much of the language and writing in our field is foreign to the way an event or conversation occurred. It is written sometimes to impress an imaginary audience of professionals, administrators and academics. Generally people like language that is clear and conveys an

image of the situation the writer is trying to convey.

If we believe that our goal is to understand rather than prove, we should have confidence if we strive for fundamental accuracy of statement will advance our field just as poets have been instrumental advancing the social, cultural, and creative development of the world. This is not to say that we should write poems in place of our reports in articles and conversations, but rather that we could learn from poets and the power of images and words that ring true and be a little more like them by choosing with care words that convey the images, feeling state, or analysis we are trying to share,

including acknowledgment of the dualities and absurdities in our work. There is something very important about a line such as, “He got up from his chair and joined the activity” when presented in the context of a youth who had avoided involvement. Or, simply, “He smiled,” for a youth who had been “caged” in a life of despair. Properly placed in a vignette or case example, phrases like these can be very powerful in informing us and the reader or listener.



GRAPHOO



Partners in Child and Youth Care

Kibble is pleased to have been a supporter of cyc-net since its very early days. Back then we had only one internet ready PC in the admin corridor, and the cyc-net newsletter was downloaded (very slowly!) printed and displayed on the general notice board. How times have changed!

A Brighter Future for Young People



"I never wanted a career until I started here..."

KibblePLUS participant

Today the Kibble Centre in Paisley is one of Scotland's leading child and youth care organisations. Young people are referred to us from across Scotland, and we operate at the intersection of child welfare, mental health and youth justice. Our uniquely integrated array of preventative and rehabilitative services encompasses intensive residential and community services, a full educational curriculum, throughcare and aftercare, intensive fostering and a secure unit. KibbleWorks and KibblePLUS comprise a portfolio of social enterprises, offering a range of solutions to meet the training and employment needs of disadvantaged young people (16 to 24).

KibblePLUS
JOBS CHANGE LIVES

KibbleWorks
LEARNING AND EARNING

www.kibble.org

Many of our staff are regular readers and contributors to cyc-net. For our type of work, it is the most comprehensive and contemporary web resource we have come across, and we are looking at ways of increasing awareness of the site and its contents through our intranet and monthly staff newsletter. We hope that this new format will encourage more people to access the excellent cyc-net resources.

Kibble Education and Care Centre
Goudie Street - Paisley - PA3 2LG
Tel: 0141 889 0044
Fax: 0141 887 6694

Scottish Charity Number SC026917
Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in Scotland no 158220

Registered Office:
Abercorn House
79 Renfrew Road
Paisley PA3 4DA

Kibble
EDUCATION AND CARE CENTRE

Lessons From The Tiler

Lesiba Molepo

Introduction

During festive the season, many people tend to rest. Some take long holidays to various tourist destinations. Others do all sorts of things, especially those things that they cannot get to do during the course of the year. This past festive season, I decided to spend my time in Tshebela Village, GaMolepo which is situated in the rural area of Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Some rest, others work

Part of my plan was to renovate my little house. It is the type of house many would call a holiday house as I do not spend too much time there. It is not a very well built house, not so straight, and even the material used is not of good quality. To go and tile this house I decided on a tiler whom I normally use in the urban area of Johannesburg for projects such as this one. This meant that he had to travel some 350km away from his home and family to go and do this job. I



immediately thought of those child and youth care workers who work far away from their homes. In South Africa, there are a number of child and youth care workers who still work far away from their families. They do so, (1) to be able to provide for their families since job opportunities in this field are not yet evenly available in different provinces, (2) to get to work for organisations that will reasonably meet their needs in terms of working conditions as well as salaries.

Family as the source of strength

This tiler arrived on a public holiday. As is the case with many child and youth care workers, working on a public holiday was the norm for this tiler. On the first day, we worked until late at night, using the

generator, as there is no electricity – another sign that resources and services have still not reached some rural areas. Before he could go to bed, he used his cellphone to call his beloved wife. I realised that she was his source of strength. This tiler would not let the distance or the task at hand make him forget about the importance of calling his loved ones. He spent a while talking to this person, also finding out how the rest of family members were doing. After his conversation he let us know that everyone was fine back at home. He really looked reenergised after this call. Then he took a long bath before he went to bed. This is what child and youth care workers need to do, after a long shift, a long day, or along hectic week, we need to find time to relax, think of our families and then take care of ourselves. Of course, people take care of themselves in different ways, but whatever it is that refreshes us, we need to find that one thing and do it.

The wall was not straight, the floor was not level

The following day, I watched him get down to the real job of tiling the house. He spent a lot of time trying to level the ground. It must have taken him about 45 minutes to get the level of the floor right. He spent time establishing which tile will give him the best level for the rest of the house. He did not rush into laying the rest of the tiles. He knew that if he did not get it right from the start, the rest of the tiles were not going to be level. Then the importance of assessment in child and youth care jumped to my mind. I was reminded about the importance of both

formal and informal assessment before committing to any interventions which might cause irreversible harm. As child and youth care workers we cannot underestimate the importance of assessment. We need to carry out this task in such a way that when we proceed, we proceed on a solid, well laid foundation.

I was expecting the tiler to complain about the floor not being level.

Particularly, I expected him to complain about the builder who obviously did a shabby job in the first place, but he did not. In child and youth care, we tend to quickly blame those who have lived with the young persons in our care before us.

Their parents, step-parents, foster parents, previous places of care, etc., tend to be on the receiving end of our complaints. Instead of getting down to the task at hand we often spend much time complaining about the ‘mess’ others have made in these youngsters’ lives. Yet we know that complaining will not help. In my mind I might have thought to myself, ‘you’d better not complain Mr Tiler because that is the reason why I brought you all the way to come do this job’. I had belief and confidence in him as a professional tiler. I would like to believe that deep inside those that we serve, this is the kind of belief they hold about us. Whether we are volunteers, trained or qualified child and youth care workers, they expect us to help with all the challenges they may be facing, we will be able to contain and guide their ‘uncontrollable’ behaviours. Parents, too, believe that even if they may have contributed to some undesired behaviours

in their children, we will help so that things do not get worse. What is the point of reminding them of their often unintentional mistakes? Other professionals who have worked with these children also believe that they did their bit, and therefore that they can trust us to take on from where they have left off.

This tiler cut his tiles in such a way that they would fit the shape of the wall, despite it being crooked. He did the best that he could under the circumstances. And I was reminded that this is the reason why we are in this profession of working with people whose difficult life circumstances made them seek our services — even those that were referred to us, for we must remember that they did not all come voluntarily. We therefore need to respond without blaming others who have dealt with them in the past. Even that ‘abusive’ foster parent may have done something good that has positively contributed to where this child is today. Had this foster parent not been there, this child might have been in a worse situation. After all, where were we when this foster parent volunteered to take in this child? So we don’t blame, and simply take over from where they left off?

Not all tiles will be used in full, it is necessary to cut some

Tilers tend to use full tiles in the beginning. At this stage it is easier, as the main job is to ensure that the spacing between the tiles is accurate. Towards the end, especially when we get to the end of the walls and between door frames, that’s where the difficult task begins. I believe

that if you are looking for a professional tiler, look for someone who cuts and join tiles properly. Measurements need to be perfect, and poor joints can really expose those who are not professionals. But with this particular tiler I was not too concerned about his cutting and measuring skills for I had seen his work before. I knew he would do a good job. What really impressed me was to see how neatly cut were those pieces of tiles that were at the end not even used. By the way, I must mention that at the end of the job, pieces equivalent to only one tile were left. This is an indication that his estimations were also spot on. Those few little pieces were also neatly cut and also remained in beautiful shape. I then thought of those young people that, despite our efforts and professionalism, we cannot manage to assist. However hard we may have tried, their special needs are such that we could not successfully reach them. Such youngsters need to be treated in a way that even after they have left our programmes and despite our attempts, they must have dignity. Even if they are not respected by society, they should know deep in their hearts that we have treated them with the respect they deserved. The one hope I have for them is that one day they can look at themselves, the opportunities they had, and be able to say ‘I had an excellent bunch of professional people in my life. Even if the opportunities did not assist me at the time, when I look at other youngsters that have been through the programme with me, I am convinced that it was a good programme’.

In conclusion, when I look at my little

house now, I feel proud of it. It gives me motivation and courage to extend it. I now realise that it always had the potential to look better, but all it needed was a professional tiler. Next time I want to do anything on it, I will hire nobody less than a professional. The tiler was also impressed with his own work. During the conversation, he said: 'I am not only doing it for you but also for those who will be visiting your house'. He might have been thinking of possible future clients. I think this may be one difference between his profession and ours. Whereas tilers may also be concerned with future clients, in our profession our focus is 'this child' at this moment. I therefore trust that we will always aspire to hire at least those who work towards becoming professionals, if not yet professionals, so that we can all feel proud and confident about those young people who come through our programmes.

“The day that you think you could not have ended up just like the worst of the troubled youths you serve, you should leave this work because you have lost your ability for empathy.”

BILL MORSE (to Larry Brendtro)

Now we are Six

Liz Laidlaw

I recently survived my daughter's sixth birthday party. The whole thing proved very challenging, and not only because I was recovering from the flu. Watching these girls communicate, cope with feelings, get along, and alternately, not get along, was educational and highly emotional, especially for me.

It all started innocently enough. Twelve little girls arrived, most with pretty tea party dresses on. The first game we played is "Cake Walk", which is like Musical Chairs, except that everyone has a "place" so there is no need to push and shove. The person who is "out" is determined by drawing numbers. The girls loved dancing and jumping around to the music. We declared a winner and then I made my first (almost fatal) mistake.



I awarded a prize to the last one standing. The rest all literally turned on me demanding to know where "their" prize was. I was actually a little frightened by this response.

Quickly, they were diverted by the offer of another game (and another prize). They roared their approval and raced to "Pin the Flower on the Teapot", a cute version of pin the tail on the donkey. The blindfold goes on but something tells me we should have test run this one. The first one up put the flower squarely where it was required to go. Hmm. The second one up did the same. Double hmm. Then I heard someone whisper, "I'll tell you the trick". A more impenetrable blindfold was immediately located. "But I can't open my eyes!" the next one protested. "Precisely

the idea” I replied.

When everyone has had a turn, in my infinite wisdom, I award two more prizes (as there was a tie) and hope to move on. The protest is deafening. The two who have won are fighting over the (wrapped) prizes and those who have lost are howling their indignation. “Where’s my prize!” they wail. I consider raiding my daughter’s piggy bank and giving them money. At this point my husband feels it necessary to point out that he had “wondered about” my decision to award prizes at all, since there weren’t enough for everyone. Thank you ever so much but next time, could you please “wonder” out loud and prior to the event?

Apparently we are raising children who don’t win or lose, are never first or last at any cost. If you are going to have one prize, you must have a prize for all. We are to treat it like a golf tournament, where everyone wins something no matter how horrible they do at the game. Personally, I always win the crappy prize at the golf tournament and would rather go home empty handed than with the cooler bag shaped like a golf bag or the XXL golf shirt emblazoned with giant logos from motor oil companies. But that’s just me. I remember birthday parties when I was younger where I did not win a prize and I don’t recall suffering any kind of emotional breakdown that scarred me for life.

As we sit down for “tea” and cake, someone sits at the head of the table where my daughter wants to sit and won’t move. Tears are threatened. An intervention ensues and eventually, after much negotiation, peace is restored. The girls have juice in my mother’s precious

demitasse cups, which is marvellous, except all the cups are different and there is much bickering over who gets which cup. The Barbie cake (the actual edible cake is the Barbie skirt and the plastic doll emerges out the top from waist up) is brought out and we all sing. My daughter is beaming, truly thrilled in her moment. Then I hear one girl declare, “I don’t like Barbie’s hair”. “Me neither”, agrees another, “and her dress is ugly too”. I want to cover Barbie’s ears so she isn’t offended. Only two girls bring up their dishes and say thank you (one of them being my daughter, only because she can probably see how frazzled I am).

I don’t know why I’m so shocked by any of this behaviour. Both of my children have often displayed undesirable behaviour, as have I and many other adults I know, come to think of it. Maybe because I remember how nasty girls can be and maybe because my daughter is so innocent and so far fairly uncorrupted that it has yet to occur to her to be nasty to someone just for the sake of being nasty. Watching all of this makes me quiver with fear and trepidation. How will she cope with the intricate balancing act of making and maintaining relationships throughout her life, let alone throughout elementary school?

Who these little girls are and how they connect with each other depends on so much; their birth order, if they have siblings, the parenting styles of the adults in their lives, their innate nature, what they see modeled on a daily basis just to name a few factors. My daughter is a first born, so her innocence seems to be lasting longer. Those with older siblings

are taught things much earlier, and I can attest to that from personal experience. My daughter only learned the alternate lyrics to Jingle Bells last year when she was five. My son is just two and can already sing (with glee) “Batman smells, Robin laid an egg”. So some of the girls with older brothers and sisters appear to be more jaded and savvy while the ones who are the oldest are more apt to be bossy and used to having things their way. Watching them all interact and socialize is fascinating and extremely painful. I find myself horrified yet unable to look away, like driving by a bad car wreck. They learn by doing and whatever doesn’t kill them will make them stronger I guess.

My daughter had opted out of having gifts and instead had a “toonie” party. Each child brought two toonies, one for the birthday girl (to buy something special for herself) and one for a charity (in my daughter’s case Habitat for Humanity), so we were spared the gift opening ceremony. Instead she opened cards that were made or signed by her friends and she took great joy in that. The girls all crowded around and watched with anticipation until their card was opened and then beamed with pride as it was admired and passed around. She still has all the cards in a special drawer and picks them up and looks lovingly at them.

In the end I may have been exhausted and a little shell shocked, but my daughter was beyond happy. To her, the party had been a huge success, and that, essentially, is all that matters. If she can come through a social event where some of the guests behave poorly, cheat at games, steal her seat, insult her cake, and she

doesn’t win any prizes, then maybe, just maybe, she’ll be able to handle a grown up social gathering or life in general. I’ve been to many social gatherings where grown ups have behaved much worse than these amazing girls.

This experience has reminded me how wonderful and complicated being six can be. These girls are on the edge of the world, about to tumble in and experience it in all its ragged, nasty, astonishing glory. I imagine seven is just as awe inspiring, so I’d better get used to it. If my daughter takes after me at all (and I’m afraid she does), she’ll find herself to be hyper sensitive to the people she’s in relationship with in life. This will prove to be sometimes difficult, but should also make her empathetic and compassionate, not necessarily bad qualities. And if we want to bring out some killer instincts we can always play party games for piggy bank coin. “A work in progress”, as they say.

Originally published in *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*, 19/2, Summer 2006

Meeting Expectations and Valuing the Importance of the Expectation

Jack Phelan



FELIX MZIOZNIKOV

Henry Maier wrote about this issue many years ago (Maier, 1987) and I believe it may be a useful topic for this month. When we work with youth we often experience them not meeting the expectations we have prescribed for them. It could be attending school, or completing a task, or just getting out of bed. When we focus our attention on the ignored expectation, we feel a loss of status or self-esteem, because our behavioral goal was not met, and the typical reaction is to use power to create the desired behavior.

Child and Youth Care staff can take a different, more developmentally focused view, and highlight the value of the expectation rather than the violation. Focus on the violation ultimately comes to revolve around authority issues and a power struggle, while continued concern with expectations maintains the original concern with what we value to be important.

We can emphasize supporting a youth to fulfill expectations in terms of their actual appropriateness rather than dealing

with the non-compliance through punishment. Concern can center on the critical learning and creating support for mastery rather than the worker's self-esteem. Learning strategies instead of control strategies become the focus of attention and this is easiest for workers who do not doubt their authority or power position.

When workers say things like "I don't have to put up with that" or "these youth need to learn who is in charge around here", the

focus has shifted from the value of the task to the workers' hurt feelings.

Our task in a developmentally based program is to support growth, teach new competencies, and reduce external control wherever it is useful. Punishment responses based on the need of the staff members to feel like they are in charge is an indication of a less experienced and somewhat fearful staff.

Child and Youth Care supervisors can support the team to focus on the value of the specific task and how it is necessary for the youth to learn useful things, rather than the power dynamics that arise through non-compliance or poor performance .

The challenge is to use a developmental lens rather than a behavioral lens to interpret and strategize when our expectations are not met.

Maier, H. (1987). *Developmental group care of children and youth: Concepts and practice.* (pp 78-79). New York: Haworth Press.

What Do You Expect?

John Stein

One of my education professors opened class one day with a parable.

On her first day, a few days before school would start, the new teacher found a list of her students on her desk. Behind each name was a number ranging between 120 and 144. She thought to herself, “My what high IQs these children have. I will have to prepare lessons carefully to maintain their interest.” After a few months, her colleagues were remarking about how well her students were doing. Her principal asked her one day how she managed to motivate these children to come to school each day and perform so well. A bit taken aback, she replied that she thought working with such gifted children was a privilege, not a



JONATHON ROSS

challenge. The principal asked what she meant. She told him about their IQs. The principal was now taken aback – he didn’t understand. She went to her classroom and returned with the list. “Oh that,” he said. “That’s their attendance for last year.” While 120

may be a respectable IQ, it’s a terrible attendance record for a school year of 180 days. Even 144 indicates 36 days’ absence—a day a week. As a new teacher, she had been given the worst students, not the best.

OK. You saw that (or something like it) coming. I doubt it was a true story, but there is truth in it. The moral is that children, like other people, tend to live up to (or down to) expectations – provided that the expectations are not out of reach.

I had planned to write about goals. One of the things I noticed about so many of the troubled kids with whom I worked over the years was that they had no goals, either short term or long term. They had little or no concept of the future. I would sometimes ask an adolescent where he saw himself at the age of twenty-five, what he thought his life would be like. I always got a blank stare. I would ask questions such as, "Where will you be living?" "What kind of job will you have?" "Will you have a car?" "Will you be married?" It seemed to me that their not having any goals was a significant aspect of the problems they were experiencing.

Then I read the article on expectations by Kiaras Gharabaghi in January's issue of CYC-Online, *Small and Stupid*, see it at <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cyconline-jan2011-gharabaghi.html>. It made me think. The problem was not with *goals* but rather with *expectations*. Why would you have a goal if you had no expectation of achieving it?

I would have had trouble with those questions as a teenager. I had no goals. What I had were expectations. I expected to graduate high school and go on to college. I expected to get married and have a good job. I expected to have a nice apartment and a car. These were not goals, they were things I expected. More importantly, they were shared expectations – not just expectations that I had for myself, but expectations that my parents and my teachers had for me. More, even my peers had these expectations of me, as I did of them. We all expected these things.

It was not goals that governed my life

in those days, it was the shared expectations of my community. My goals were simple day-to-day things – get a good grade on the physics exam, get a date for the dance, beat my best friend at basketball. It was my expectations that were more important, not only the expectations I had of myself but also the expectations I had of others and of the world in which I lived. I expected to behave well and to do well. I expected my peers to behave well and do well. I expected adults to treat me fairly. When I made a mistake, I expected adults to "correct me," to explain what was wrong with what I did and what I could have done. If I studied for an exam, I expected to get a good grade.

So what about the expectations of troubled kids? What expectations do *others* have of them? Others like their peers, their parents, their teachers? Child and youth care workers? What expectations do they have of themselves?

Do they expect themselves to go to school every day? If they do go to school, do they expect to learn? If they study for a test, do they expect to pass? Do they expect to graduate? If they graduate, do they expect to be able to get to college or get a job? What kind of boyfriend or girlfriend do they expect to have? What do their peers expect of them? Do their parents expect them to do well in school? Their teachers? Their peers?

Perhaps even more importantly, do they expect to be safe? At home? At school? With their peers?

When I worked in the housing projects, I saw too many children who did not expect to succeed, children who did not

expect to grow up to have a good job, no matter what they did in school. They did not expect it, their friends did not expect it, their teachers did not expect it, their parents did not expect it. Indeed, everyone might have wished for their success, but no one expected it. Wishes and dreams are only fantasies when there is little expectation of success.

Years later, when my wife worked with children going through the court system, she met kids who did not even expect to live to the age of twenty-five. How about that for expectations? What goals did they set for themselves?

When troubled children come into a residential program, do we explain what the rules are and what is expected? Do we then expect them to be compliant and docile? To stop being oppositional? To stop having temper tantrums? To stop lying? To stop stealing? To stop running away? Or do we realistically expect them to continue to have many of the same problem behaviors that brought them into treatment? And if we do, how do we begin to change expectations?

I always thought of the kids with whom I worked as “normal.” Their behavior, their feelings and emotions, perhaps their beliefs, values, or attitudes may have been outside normal limits, but I always believed that they learned quite normally. I believed that they learned all of their “problems” quite normally, given the circumstances presented to them. Consequently, I didn’t expect them to behave, but I did expect them to learn, provided we could arrange the necessary circumstances.

The challenge, then, is to create an

environment where learning is expected, where everyone (not only the staff but also the kids) expects staff to teach and children to learn, to learn the how’s and why’s and skills associated with appropriate behavior.

I never saw anyone do this better than James Rogers. James was the program manager of a group home for twelve boys that relied heavily on a social skills curriculum – not making friends and such, but skills such as respecting adults, respecting peers, expressing anger appropriately, and accepting criticism. Seven skills were broken down into specific steps and staff were trained to teach the skills and coach the boys in their use. James supervised the staff and the living environment. When problems would occur (or erupt), and they sometimes did, James would stop everything. Sometimes he would take a boy who was having a problem to his office. Other times he would assemble the group in the dining room. He would talk a bit about the problem. Soon he would get to his classic routine, which all of the boys learned pretty quickly:

James: Who’s the adult here?

Adolescent: You are, James.

James: Who’s the child?

Adolescent: I am.

James: What’s the adult’s job?

Adolescent: To teach.

James: And what’s the child’s job?

Adolescent: To learn.

James: Am I doing my job?

Adolescent: Yes, James.

James: Are you doing your job?

Adolescent: (quietly) No.

(James recognized only two types of people, children and adults. These tough adolescents accepted this from James because he always treated children like adults, with the utmost respect, except for this one distinction.)

Then James would begin teaching. Although capable of delivering a powerful lecture, his strength was in the way he asked questions to make the boys think “How do you think Bobby feels when...?” “How do you feel when...?” “Do staff ever treat you like that?” “How would it look if I did that?” He made the boys think about things such as feelings and values and the results of their behavior. Then he would walk the boys through the steps of the social skill that was the problem. All the boys learned the steps of all the skills within their first few weeks. They could recite them verbatim. The problem was not in learning the skills but rather in learning to use them in the day to day challenges of daily living. James helped the boys to learn how to apply their skills, coaching them in their use of the skills. Then James would return the boys to normal activities.

James did not use his “Who’s the adult?” routine every day, just often enough to establish and maintain the shared expectations that adults would teach and children would learn. At times, James would use the “Who’s the adult?” routine in support of staff, or to process something that happened in school:

James: Who’s the adult here, you or Suzanne?

Adolescent: Suzanne.

James: Who’s the child?

Adolescent: I am.

James: What’s Suzanne’s job?

Adolescent: To teach.

James: Is Suzanne doing her Job?... And so on.

But James and his staff used the teaching part daily.

The other expectation that is necessary is the expectation of success. Many of the children who come to the attention of child and youth care workers have had little experience with success, beginning with their relationships. More likely, their success had to do with ending relationships, with leaving one placement after another and one school after another, starting with their own homes. Or success with deviant activities, sneaking cigarettes or drugs, shoplifting and theft, bullying others or manipulating adults and avoiding consequences, rather than success in school, athletics, music.

The first step is creating an environment where children feel safe, even to fail, an environment where they expect to remain, an environment that will not quit on them, no matter what. This requires developing a history of not discharging children for their behavior, where all kids expect to finish the program, whatever that may entail. The second step is making sure that children experience success by helping them set small goals for themselves that are realistically attainable, helping them to succeed, then helping them to recognize and appreciate their accomplishments. It must permeate the milieu, from helping them to do their chores well, to making sure they win once in a while in games and

contests, to helping them plan and carry out an activity for the weekend, not just giving them goals on their treatment plan.

There were rarely consequences other than the teaching routine, except for the expectation that boys would do whatever was reasonably within their power to make things right. Consequences in the form of rewards and punishments in an attempt to coerce compliance contribute little to the creation of a learning environment. These things do not teach, at least not the things that children need to learn. Behavior is not controlled so much by the consequences that people might arrange as it is by values and beliefs and feelings and attitudes. These things determine what behavior is appropriate and important. It is these things that children must learn. These are the things adults must teach. More coercion does

little to help children feel successful.

There can be little satisfaction in making good choices when the choice is based simply on whether or not to get a reward or avoid a punishment.

And so James created an environment where everyone expected adults to teach and everyone expected children to learn. The staff expected it and the boys expected it. The better the boys became at using the skills they learned, the better their lives got, in the group home, in school, and at home. People began to expect good things from the boys, and they began to expect good things of themselves. They began to experience success, especially in their relationships. Experience with success leads to increasing expectations of success and to self-confidence.



Defining to Exclude



Kiaras Gharabaghi

Lately there has been some discussion on CYC Net and elsewhere about defining the discipline of child and youth care practice. Actually, the discussion hasn't really been about defining the discipline, but this issue seems to always creep into whatever else it is we might be talking about. In current discussions, attempts are made at stating specifically what child and youth care is and what it is not, fears are expressed at the prospect of fragmenting or dividing the field based on language, topics and themes, and the usual divisions amongst academics and practitioners are variably lamented and celebrated. Our need to label what we are talking about is an interesting phenomenon. Our need to determine who gets to talk about what is also interesting but perhaps a little worrisome. Our need to have opinions about how things ought to be talked about is outright scary. And still, I am convinced that just about everyone who has participated in the discussions as of late, and perhaps most others involved in child and youth care at some level somewhere has pretty strong feelings about the whole issue of who belongs and who does not. I

can't claim to be any different, and I have thought a lot about why some contributions to the field are more satisfying than others and why other contributions I find outright offensive. I've come up with nine random self realizations:

1. I think it is possible to simply be wrong and incompetent, and some people are wrong and incompetent; I find it annoying to read things written by them.
2. I think everyone seeks to exclude others from their turf, and child and youth care as a discipline is very much a turf that we protect and claim ownership of. I know I have a fairly distinct image of our discipline that isn't always theoretically sound or practical, but it is deeply entrenched. I find opening the door to expand or shift that image surprisingly difficult, but it helps to be aware that my tendency is to try and exclude.
3. Exclusion is a skill, and some people are very good at it and able to exclude in ways that seem to suggest inclusion. The onus is on the excluders to either

acknowledge their desire to exclude or to work harder to listen to the perspective of those not present (of those feeling excluded). Very few people seem to do this work.

4. I like it when occasionally, when the moment seems right, not too often but perhaps more than once per year, we stop talking about ourselves and our grand designs for the post modern nirvana of perpetual deconstruction in the name of liberation (dogma) and make even a faint reference to youth. That would be nice.
6. I think the Canadian spelling of 'behaviour' is aesthetically superior to the American spelling of 'behavior', and until this is formally recognized, we should stop drawing any connections between child and youth care practice and behaviour/behavior.
7. I find it offensive when some linguistic approaches to the field claim ownership over the concept of anti-oppression; in fact, I find the most oppressive environments to be the ones that demand of everyone to practice anti-oppression in the same way.
8. I don't think our field is at risk of being fragmented or divided; I do think it is at risk of becoming (or perhaps remaining) largely irrelevant.
9. Amongst those who articulate their thoughts about the field frequently and publically, I am always most impressed by those who do so in lots of different ways, using lots of different languages, and focusing on lots of different levels of abstraction, from the very practical to the very abstract. I am less

impressed by those who resist any thought or approach that doesn't immediately translate into practice, but I am not all impressed by those who seem to use language to mask a lack of knowledge and in the process offend both the practitioners and the philosophers.

10. I still believe that the drive to inclusion almost always results in exclusion. Inclusion should not require a special drive but simply be reflective of our humanity.

I know what you are thinking: hey look, he said he had nine points, but clearly there are ten! To those of you who are simply wrong and incompetent, I say "learn how to count!" To those of you who claim ownership over anti-oppression, I say "who are you to say how many points there are?" To those of you who worry about the fragmentation of the field, I say "whose side are you on"? And to the children and youth I have met over the years, I say "give me five"!

leon fulcher's postcard

From the UK



A toast to all good Scotsmen and women – along with friends – as we celebrate another Burns Supper this year. This annual salute to Robbie Burns involves haggis, neeps and tatties, along with a dram or two hoisted to oor 18th Century Scottish Bard! Burns' *Ode to a Haggis* is recited world wide –since 1801 – to launch an evening spent celebrating Scottish cultural identity. Haggis made the news in senior diplomatic circles this month! The Government of Scotland seeks access to the lucrative American haggis market along with Scotch whisky. Burns' Suppers feature prominently there.



Burns' Night – Ode to a Haggis

A Burns' Supper formally begins with these salutary lines: "***Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face***, [Fair full your honest, jolly face], ***Great chieftain o' the puddin-race!*** [Great chieftain of the sausage race!] ***Aboon them a' ye tak your place***, [Above them all you take your place,] ***Painch, tripe, or thairm:*** [Stomach, tripe, or intestines:] ***Weel are ye wordy o' a grace as lang's my arm.*** [Well are you worthy of a grace {or prayer} as long as my arm.]"



Home of William Shakespeare – Bard of English Literature

Reflecting on celebrations of Scottish culture, a recent visit to Stratford-upon-Avon and a drive through the Cotswolds had me drawing comparisons with how the famous English Bard, William Shakespeare, is celebrated. Shakespeare's theatre is reproduced world-wide. It is

studied in every secondary school and is known in some way or another by almost everyone. However, a fact remains: there is no world-wide tradition of Shakespeare Suppers or the Scottish *Ode to a Haggis*.



***A Jacobean Gate House
in a Cotswolds' Village***

I've lived nearly forty years the United Kingdom and still historical moments keep hitting me in the face. I gaze in amazement at Renaissance architecture built well before Canada became a country, before the American War of Independence or the French settled in Quebec. I always wondered about the terms *Jacobean* and *Jacobite*. Wikipedia helped me learn how both names are derived from the Latin version of James – King James that is! It was King James VI and I (same guy) who authorised the King James Version of the Bible. Some may know of it. He was also the first King to hold the combined Crown of England and Scotland – hence the United Kingdom! The Jacobite Rebellions were about Kings and rivals to the English

and Scottish throne(s). Burns' Suppers and *Ode to a Haggis* satirize these ancient historical rivalries.



***Playing with Fire –
Characteristic of Child & Youth Care?***

I was brought back to immediacy while watching a young man juggle fire in the centre of Cheltenham. He had me thinking about the characteristics of a child and youth care approach. Isn't it interesting how by 'hanging out' and 'hanging in' with a young person, child and youth care workers are frequently out there playing with fire; living on the edge. As I reflected back on crisis moments which demanded being in the present ever yet poised for action, the symbolism of playing with fire resonated. One bad move and you get burnt. And sometimes, it can all go up in flames! Thank goodness for back-up!

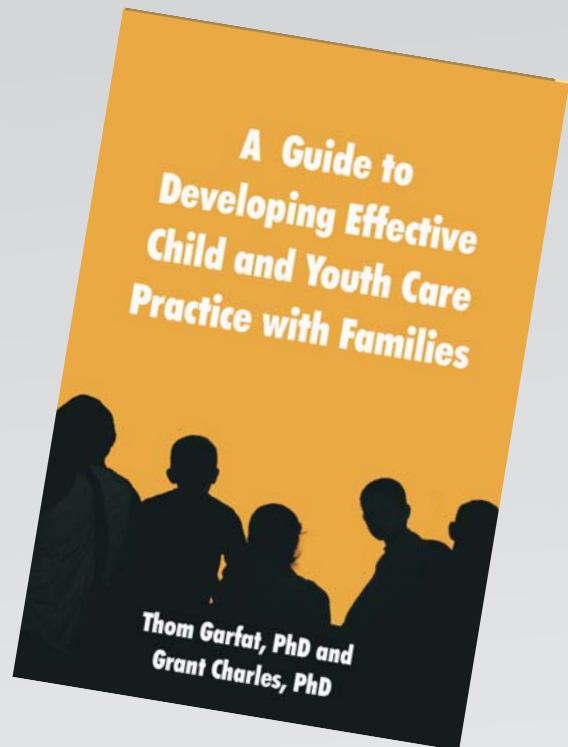


Glimpses of Seasonal Climate Change

Then I turned to more peaceful reflections about changing seasons. Thank goodness for peaceful moments that help us re-charge; take stock.

Be well!

leon@cyc-net.org



A Guide to Developing Effective Child and Youth Care Practice with Families

Can\$22 dollars + Can\$5.00 shipping & handling + applicable taxes

Orders to:

Thom Garfat (garfat@videotron.ca)
207, L'île de Belair E., Rosemere, Quebec,
J7A 1A8

Grant Charles (gcharles@interchange.ubc.ca)
2080 West Mall
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V6T 1Z2

Like Grandfather ...

My grandson came over for a sleepover last weekend. He's 16 months old, and this was his first overnight stay. I believe I can say, without exaggerating, that my wife put more thought and worry into this single night than she did when we took a three week vacation in Europe. Full-scale military incursions have gone forward with less preparation.

The thing is, this child lives two minutes away. He is over at our house several times a week. He has eaten meals here, had his diaper changed here, gone down for naps here. It's not like this was entirely unfamiliar territory we'd be exploring.

I would say all this to my wife, and she'd shake me off dismissively. "Yes. But he'll be staying here for *the whole night!* Here! In our house!"

I was a bit perplexed. "You do know that this child actually came out of a woman who somehow managed to survive several thousand overnight stays with us, right?"

"Yes. But he is

different. He's a baby!" (Like our kids came down the chute fully grown. Preposterous.) (And, umm ... ouch.)

"What if he doesn't like what we make him for supper?" By now I could see my wife was warming up to an epic attack of the frets. She had gone past "concern" without blinking; rocketed past "worried" with nary a hitch in her step and was fast closing on "freaked out". I tried to calm her.

"Well," I explained reasonably, "he's a kid. Fact is, he probably won't like what we make him for supper. Because what we make him for supper won't be made exactly how he always has it. It will be different. Kids don't like 'different'.

Sometimes, they don't even like 'same'. Sometimes you give them 'same' and they say it's 'different', even though you scooped it out of the very bowl you put back in the fridge after you fed them the last time and can scientifically prove that what you are serving them is identical, on a molecular level, with the meal they happily ate the night before. So whatever we make him, he may well just push it away."

"But ... what will we do?"



SERGIY NYKONENKO

“What we did with our kids. Clean up the mess from supper and go on with the evening.”

“But ... but ... he’ll be hungry!”

“Perhaps. We will have to steel our souls against that very real possibility.”

“Do not tease me. I hate being teased.”

Well, she was right, at least about me teasing her. I absolutely was. But I’m not so sure she hates it. My wife knows she’s as prone as anyone else to behaviour that flirts with “goofy”, and she can generally laugh at herself. Besides, if you really hate being around a tease, you might want to rethink marrying someone who actually lists that as his “Occupation” on Income Tax forms.

Despite all her planning and fretting we survived supper. I made some pasta, and while the little guy didn’t exactly clean his plate, there wasn’t much left for the starving children of India.

Bath time was uneventful, except I had never bathed a boy baby before in my life and was quite unprepared for certain things boy babies do. I actually heard myself at one point saying, “Dude. You can let go of it for just a minute. *Nobody’s going to take it.*”

Once he was bathed, diapered, and in his pyjamas, he got his story and my wife put him to bed. She tiptoed out of the room.

“What if he wakes up in the middle of the night?” she asked.

“Well, we’ll just do what we did with our kids. I’ll go get him, while you pretend to be asleep.”

As it turned out, he slept through the night with no problem and was bright and cheery the next day. We took him to the

Farmer’s Market and let him wander around the stalls.

He stopped at one with small, shiny baubles hanging down, right at his eye level. He reached for one and closed his hand over it.

“No,” said my wife, her face stern.

“No touching. That’s not for babies.”

The little guy thought this over for a second, looked at me, looked at my wife, and slowly reached his hand out for another bauble. I swear my wife had just opened her mouth to say something when he snatched his hand away and grinned at me.

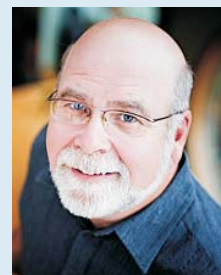
I laughed.

He reached out again ... and just before my wife said something, he snatched his hand back and this time we both laughed. And to her credit, my wife joined right in.

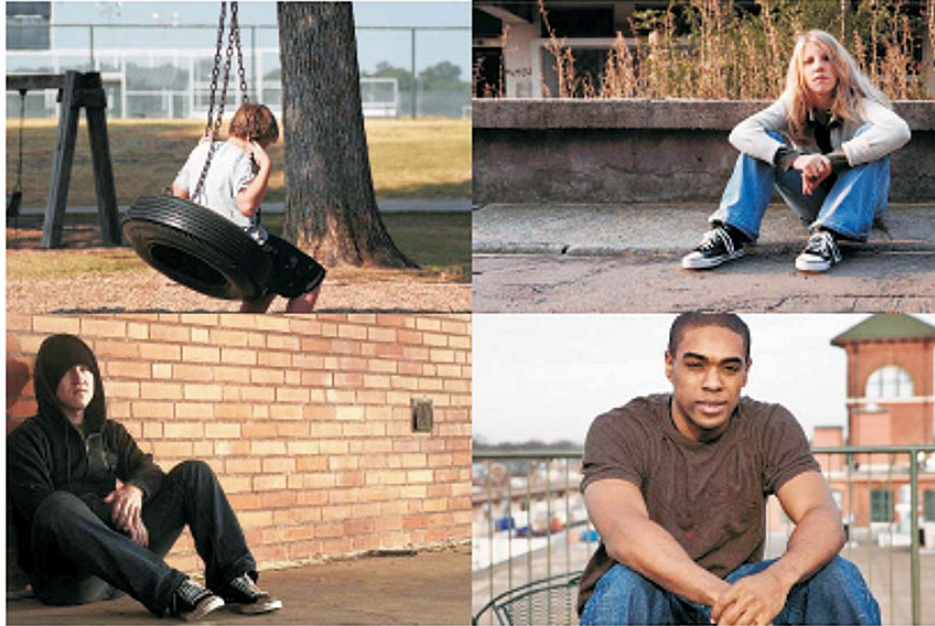
It was one of my favourite moments so far in that little guy’s life. He has learned how to tease Grandma.

Now it *really* gets to be fun.

This feature: From Nils Ling’s book *Truths and Half Truths*. A collection of some of his most memorable and hilarious columns. Write to him at RR #9, 747 Brackley Point Road, Charlottetown, PE, C1E 1Z3, Canada.



BECAUSE



every youth deserves a chance.

Since 1979, HomeBridge Youth Society has been serving youth between the ages of 12 and 18 years old who are in need of temporary or longer term places to live. HomeBridge provides residential youth care in six facilities in the HRM: Hawthorne House, Johnson House, Jubien House, Sullivan House, Reigh Allen Centre and Cogswell House.

"CYC-Net is an invaluable site for enhancing professional growth and development among youth care practitioners, youth care supervisors and administrators in services like residential care. Here at HomeBridge Youth Society we rely on the discussion threads and the vast library of resources offered within the site to ensure our practice is keeping up on trends and information from around the world."

Ernie Hilton, MSc CYCA

Director of Youth Care & Operations, HomeBridge Youth Society

270 Pleasant Street, Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 3S3 • www.homebridgeyouth.ca



EndNotes



Trusting you ...

I have put
All that I am
In your hands

When I go
I hope to safely be
All that I am

Mothers in History

THOMAS EDISON'S MOTHER: "Of course I'm proud that you invented the electric light bulb. Now, turn it off and get to bed!"

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S MOTHER: "Again with the stovepipe hat? Can't you just wear a baseball cap like the other kids?"

ALBERT EINSTEIN'S MOTHER: "But it's your senior picture. Can't you do something about your hair? OY! Styling gel, Mousse, Something...?"

COLUMBUS' MOTHER: "I don't care what you've discovered, You still could have written!"

MICHELANGELO'S MOTHER: "Can't you paint on walls like other children? Do you have any idea how hard it is to get that stuff off the ceiling?"

NAPOLEON'S MOTHER: "All right, if you aren't hiding your report card inside your jacket, take your hand out of there and show me."

MARY'S MOTHER: "I'm not upset that your lamb followed you to school. But, I would like to know how he got a better grade than you."

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOTHER: "The next time I catch you throwing money across the Potomac, you can kiss your allowance good-bye!"

PAUL REVERE'S MOTHER: "I don't care where you think you have to go, young man, midnight is past your curfew."



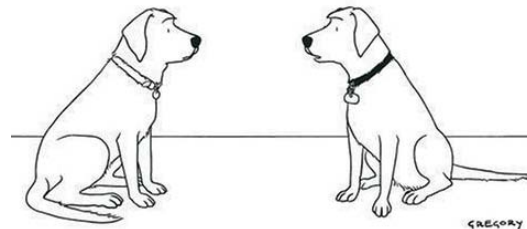
Don't be embarrassed to
ask for help, Dad.

Truth for careworkers ...

“You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she’s treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will.”

— Lisa Doolittle to Colonel Pickering in *Pygmalion* (G.B. Shaw)

—



I had my own blog for a while
but I decided to go back to pointless,
incessant barking.

—

For the first time in many years, an old man traveled from his rural town to the city to attend a movie. After buying his ticket, he stopped at the concession stand to purchase some popcorn. Handing the attendant \$1.50, he couldn’t help but comment, “The last time I came to the movies, popcorn was only 15c.” “Well, sir,” the attendant replied with a grin, “You’re really going to enjoy yourself today. We have *sound* now!”

Henry Maier 1918 - 2005

The defining quality of his teaching, which his pupils affectionately referred to as “Henry’s wisdom,” was a mix of humor and intelligence. To illustrate concepts during lectures, Maier would come with plastic frogs, rubber giraffes, beanbags and his favorite, balloons. “A balloon has unusual power to engage ... even a reluctant participant,” he wrote in his paper “Play in the University Classroom.” It was these unconventional techniques, as well as his highly praised work on children’s issues, that earned him a UW Distinguished Teaching Award in 1984.

—Avani Nadkarni

—



In return for an increase in my allowance,
I can offer you free unlimited in-home
computer tech support.

—

***“Life can be pulled by goals
just as surely as it can be
pushed by drives.”***

— Viktor E. Frankl

information

CYC-Online is a web-based e-publication and therefore not available in printed form. However, readers are always welcome to print out pages or chapters as desired.

Editors

Thom Garfat (Canada) / thom@cyc-net.org

Brian Gannon (South Africa) / brian@cyc-net.org

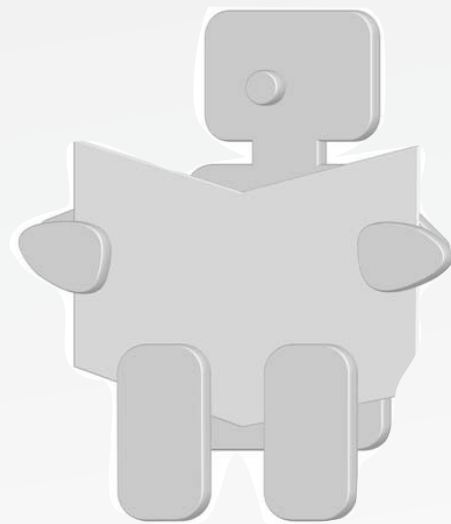
Correspondence

The Editors welcome your input, comment, requests, etc.

Write to cyconline@cyc-net.org

Advertising

Only advertising related to the profession, programs, courses, books, conferences etc. will be accepted. Rates and specifications are obtainable from advertising@cyc-net.org





ONLINE JOURNAL OF
THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK (CYC-NET)

www.cyc-net.org