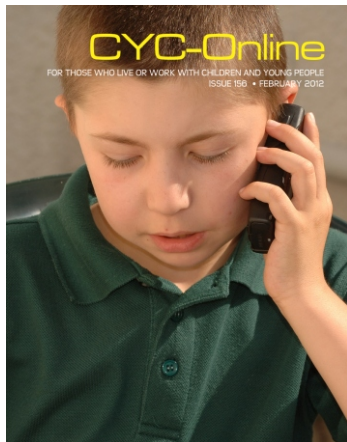




# CYC-Online

FOR THOSE WHO LIVE OR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
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# Public Recognition and Pride in History

I have a Google Alert set to search for terms like Child and Youth Care, CYC Work, Youth Work, etc. and each day I receive a few notices from Google on references it has found to these terms.

Often the reference is to some advertisement for a position available and on slow days it usually just picks up something from CYC-Net. But I think I have been seeing a different trend over the past year or so.

More and more I receive 'alerts' in which the phrase 'child and youth care' or 'youth work' is simply a part of identifying a person who was interviewed or making comments on some subject or another. As well, I have been seeing more alerts where the person being interviewed is described as having a history in our field, such as 'she was previously a Child and Youth Care Worker...' or 'he worked as a Child Care Counsellor at...' or 'as a Youth Worker, she...' (For a really clear example see [this announcement](#) re: Melanie Wright from Manitoba.

They are not all so clear and obvious, of course. But I have seen, for example:

- A reference to a facilitator at a musical fund raising who was identified as a CYC
- A reference to a person involved in a talent contest who was identified as having studied Child and Youth Care

- An interview with an Executive Director of an organisation who had a degree in CYC.
- A news report where Child and Youth Care Workers were protesting the cut-back of services in their area.
- A report on a couple receiving a recognition award for their Youth Work.

Now, on one level this is no big deal. After all, we all know people who used to be a CYC before doing whatever it is they are doing now. And we all know CYCs who 'moved on' to become managers or directors, social workers or psychologists, teachers or athletes.

But after all these years in the field, I cannot remember a time when I saw so many *public references* to people identifying themselves, or being identified, as having a connection with Child and Youth Care.

Now, of course, I don't know what this means but I like to think it means that these people are showing what I want to call *pride in history*. I like to think that it signifies that we, as a field, are demonstrating that we think CYC work is significant and so it becomes a part of our public profile.

And perhaps, one can hope, it also signifies that others – journalists, etc., are also seeing Child and Youth Care or Youth Work as being significant enough to mention.

Throughout the years as we have promoted International Child and Youth Care Day in the first week of May, we have encouraged people to put announcements in the paper – like the folks a NSCC in Nova Scotia did last year, or to take some other action which recognises Youth Workers - like the folks who started the ‘Thank a Youth Worker Day’ are doing (<http://www.thankayouthworkerday.com>) – or to take some other form of public action which promotes the field.

Well, personally, I don’t think there is a much better form of public recognition that when, in the midst of telling a story about some event of significance, the terms CYC or Youth Work get mentioned. After all, people reading the story are already open to hearing what is being said.

So, to those of you who are making public your connection to Child and Youth Care or Youth Work, or whatever you are called depending on where you live, I just want to say, thanks to you for helping to promote the profession. You are great models for all of us because we

should all be doing the same whenever we can.

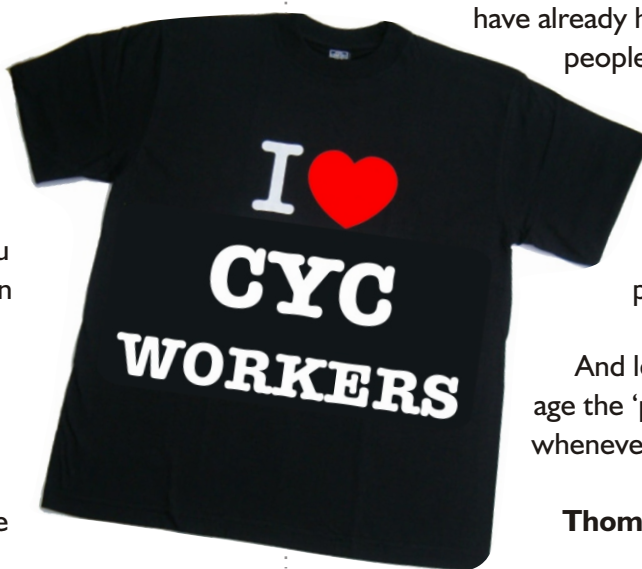
And on that note, before I leave, I want to mention two things:

1. First, Kibble Education and Care Centers (long a promoter of CYC) are hosting a one day open conference in Scotland – go here and look at how they have called it: <http://www.kibble.org/events/cycnet> Thank you Kibble for such public support and recognition for our field.
2. Second, don’t forget that in the first week of May (this year April 29 – May 5) we celebrate International CYC Day. Start thinking now about how you will encourage the recognition of CYC work and CYC Workers. We

have already heard from some people about the plans they are making and it is good to start soon. Let us know what you are planning.

And let’s all encourage the ‘pride of history’ whenever we can.

**Thom**

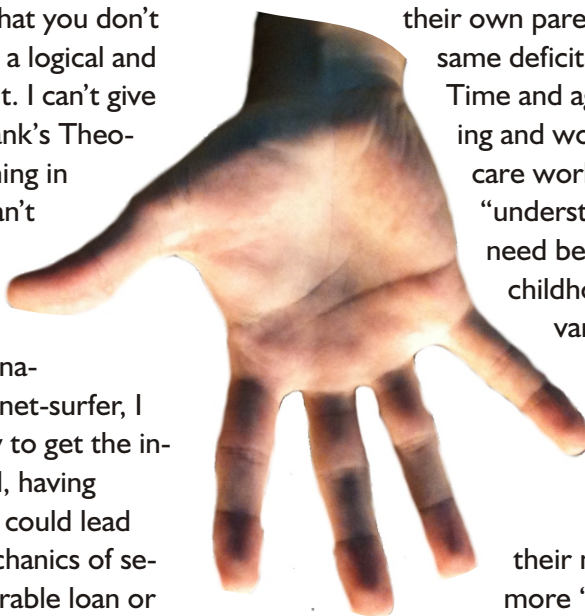


# The Lost Commandment: Don't Try to Give What You Don't Have

Gerry Fewster

“You can't give what you don't have” may seem like a logical and reasonable statement. I can't give you the details of Plank's Theorem if I have no training in mathematics and I can't give you the cash to pay your rent if I'm down to my last ten bucks. Alternatively, as a seasoned net-surfer, I could show you how to get the information online and, having worked for a bank, I could lead you through the mechanics of securing the most favorable loan or making arrangements for debt consolidation. So, while my limitations are clear and understandable, there are many things I could do to be of assistance.

But once we sink into the murky depths of human relationships, what is logical and reasonable can become deceptively blurred and distorted. Time and again, I've watched parents struggle to give their kids what they didn't get from



their own parents, only to pass the same deficits on to their offspring. Time and again I've heard practicing and would-be child and youth care workers tell me how they “understand” what the kids need because of their own childhood deprivations. Invariably, their heart-felt efforts to ‘make things right’ end up in frustration and rejection. Some decide to abandon their noble cause to become more “professional” while others soldier on to their destiny with disenchantment and burn-out.

Please don't get me wrong. I'm talking about caring, sensitive and well-meaning folks who genuinely want to enhance the well-being of young people for all the right reasons. The essential problem is not their intention but their confused belief that by trying to give something they've never had, the missing pieces will miracu-

lously appear and all will be well. So, rather than settle for the gifts they *could* bring to the party, they bring only empty packages that have no intrinsic value for either the giver or the receiver. It's a futile exchange and the more intense it becomes, the greater the let down and resentment on both sides. But, for the most part, it's the caring adult who suffers the most. However difficult it is for self-respecting professionals to admit they are looking to remedy their own deficiencies through the kids, that possibility is always somewhere in the mix. In this case, the work is being clearly driven by the needs of the practitioner who is prepared to sacrifice his or her Self to a hopeless cause. The answer is not to eradicate the sin or punish the sinner: the real professional will recognize what's happening, take responsibility, and steer a different course. He or she will know that it's simply another step along the way.

### **The Confessions of an Undercover Giver**

If this still sounds critical or judgmental, let me acknowledge my own complicity. As a young child, I felt abandoned by parents who, after my father returned from his duties in the second world war, became preoccupied for eight hours a day and seven days a week with their small retail business. With the exception of my paternal grandmother, who died when I was eight, I felt unseen and unheard by the adults around me. In school, I always made sure I had one or two 'special' friends and jealously guarded these relationships for fear that I might be betrayed and abandoned again. From the outside, I

was considered to be just another run-of-the-mill working class kid, passively resisting the expectations of my teachers and occasionally brushing up against the moral and legal authorities in my grimy and dreary neighborhood. But, on the inside, I struggled to contain deeply rooted fears about my competence, acceptability and worthiness. To my friends I was a rebel and a leader, but whenever I delved beneath this carefully constructed image, I came face-to-face with a lonely kid, full of self-doubt and ready to do whatever was necessary to secure a place in an indifferent world.

Getting into a university did nothing to assuage my doubts or bolster my esteem. On the contrary, having attributed this unlikely outcome to a series of random events, I found myself isolated among cliques of toffee-nosed achievers - constant reminders of my inferior status and unacceptability. Resorting to a well-practiced strategy, I found another couple of working-class misfits and together we dreamed up ways of rejecting the oppressors and sabotaging their pretensions whenever the opportunities arose.

By this time, I'd committed myself to working with kids - kids who, through no fault of their own, were left to roam unattended and uncared for in the barren wastelands of the city slums. I knew exactly what needed to be done. I would come to know them as special and unique human beings; I would listen to what they thought and how they felt, assuring them of their inherent worthiness and supporting them in moving beyond their personal, economic and cultural limitations. And, above all, I would be there for them

through thick and thin – no rejection, no abandonment - no sir.

So, immediately after graduation, off I went to work at a Youth Center with the most deprived and downtrodden kids in the most deprived and downtrodden part of the city. Here I felt at home. I understood these kids – they were just like my old school buddies – the way I used to be. While the other youth leaders seemed to spend their time teaching, preaching and screeching, I was there to listen to whatever the kids had to say. While it was all so familiar and predictable, I wanted them to know that that I cared and understood. I used what I'd learned in my final academic year to enhance their self-esteem, particularly the social-reinforcement stuff, but my primary focus was to 'be there' regardless of whatever else was going on. I never kept count of my hours of 'service' and my mission became my life. If anybody could help these kids, it was me. I was their hope and nobody was going to question my dedication.

It took me well over a year to admit that things were not working out. I began to feel drained at the end of each shift and less enthusiastic about meeting wayward kids in homes, schools and parks on my own time. Without listing all the signs and symptoms, I reluctantly came to the conclusion that my interventions were not having the impact I'd hope for. Certainly the kids accepted me, but more as one of them than someone who could help to bring hope and meaning into their troubled lives. I grew tired of listening to their repetitive stories, their unwillingness to think beyond the clichés of their 'sub-culture' and their tedious methods of

avoiding responsibility by presenting themselves as victims. In short, I found myself losing my empathy, patience and commitment to a cause that had been driving me from the inside. And, along with this, came the old familiar feelings of being unappreciated, unseen, incompetent and alone. When my supervisor suggested I should stop "all the fancy counseling stuff" and use my athletic abilities to put together a team in the City Football League, I told him I hadn't gone to university for four years to become a bloody soccer coach. When he went on to suggest that my frustration was more about me than the kids in the program, I told him to go to Hell.

Of course he was absolutely spot on but I wasn't ready to confront the obvious at the time. Yet somewhere behind all the determination and bravado was the sneaky unacceptable belief that if I could make the kids feel seen and heard, then they would see and hear me in return, we would come to know each other. If I could get them to change their ways and feel better about themselves, then my efforts would be rewarded and I would begin to feel better about *myself*. Surrounded by needy kids and dedicated youth care workers, I would have a place where, at last, I would feel wanted, competent and appreciated.

Coming to recognize my delusions was a long and painful process, but looking back to that time, I can now say, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that I needed the kids at the Dingle Youth Settlement far more than they needed me. But I no longer condemn myself for my early delusions. This was a critical period in my

personal and professional development and as I think about them now, and listen again to what they were telling me, it's abundantly clear that those youngsters, including the ones in my soccer team (we came second in the division championships) were actually my teachers. So I really did need them and, in a strange roundabout way, they really did deliver.

### **It's Not a Game of Give and Take**

Trying to give what we don't have is not, in itself, a selfish, destructive or pathological act. On the contrary, it's a natural ingredient in the development of all personal and caring relationships. Consider the greatest gift of all – love. Children who grow up receiving constant unconditional love may come to know that loving others is an expression of Self that seeks nothing in return. But even the briefest sense of being loved can open the heart and create a longing for more. When love from others is conditional, children will strive to meet the conditions of the provider. If the provider needs to be loved in return, then love becomes a commodity to be traded back and forth in a game of give and take. In the most primary case, a mother may look to her baby to give her the love she didn't get as a child. Obviously, no infant is able to provide this service. The child may learn to say "I love you mommy" twenty times a day, but mother's needs will remain constant and unsatisfied. This situation won't change until mother let's her baby off the hook and finds another source of loving. And herein lies the crux of the matter.

Developmentally speaking, our needs to feel loved, seen, accepted and valued can-

not be met from the outside beyond the age of three or four. From that point on, the Self becomes the internal source and manager of our thoughts and feelings. If, for example, we come to define ourselves as 'unlovable,' loving messages from the outside will not be received as intended. From this point on, we have to find these gifts in ourselves before we can accept them from, and give them to, others.

This doesn't mean we should withdraw from relationships until all our childhood longings have been satisfied. Quite the opposite. It's only through relationships that we come to identify and acknowledge our unmet needs, learn how to look after and value ourselves, and come to experience and share the fullness of our being. In other words, once we become aware of our missing pieces, we must somehow find the resources within ourselves rather than expect our friends, lovers and partners to fill the void.

Can you imagine a relationship in which both parties are looking to each other to provide the impossible? Well, strange as it may seem, through my own life and many years of working with couples, I've become convinced that this dynamic exists at some time, and to some extent, in all personal and intimate relationships. Without awareness and intervention, this charade has the power to stifle the personal growth of both parties and strangle their relationship in a web of repetitive and meaningless rituals. But if the cause is understood and each person gradually begins to let the other off the hook, both selves are released from bondages of the past to create a bond between equals ... and the relationship blossoms. This is



what I mean when I say it is part of the journey.

Having fessed-up to my own complicities, I'm also convinced that this same delusion is equally prevalent in relationships between helping professionals and their clients. And again, I believe that, through understanding and sensitivity, this awareness can transform the relational contract from "helping-you" to "growing together," regardless of the chronological and developmental differences between the parties. In other words, I think this is something that applies as much in the practice of child and youth care as it does in social work and psychotherapy. To this end, I invite you to consider the following suggestions:

### **Finding the Elusive Gift**

As always, awareness is the bottom line. As I've said many times before in this series, being aware of your own childhood experience is essential for you to understand where you end and your 'client' begins. Discovering the residual longings from your early life is part of that process. You might begin by asking yourself: "To what extent did I feel wanted, loved, cared for, appreciated, worthwhile, understood, competent" – and whatever other questions might arise from your research. But, before going any further, it's important to let your parents off the hook. Remind yourself that there are no perfect parents and whatever they did, or didn't do, is now in the past. They also had their own stuff to deal with and, chances are, they did what they thought was right at the time. So, give them a message of appreciation; it's time to move

on to take charge of your own life.

To identify the missing pieces don't just rely upon what your adult mind has to say. Take a breath as you consider each one and go to that place where the earliest memories are contained – within your body. Focus on the one that draws the most feeling and stay with it. How is that need playing out in your current life and relationships? Is there someone you've been hoping will meet that need? If so, let them off the hook too and consider ways for you take charge by giving that missing piece to yourself? There is no prescription for this – different people have different ways – but the following are a few random examples taken from my own life and from the lives of folks I've worked with over the years:

#### *Seeking love, yet feeling unlovable*

- Some people find adopting "I Love You" as a personal mantra serves as helpful declaration of self-love. But, remember, love is also a verb.
- There are endless possibilities for treating oneself in a loving way but taking the time is always the first step. It means you're worth the effort.
- Sensual acts directed toward Self, rather than Other go to the deepest levels of loving but be prepared – you might have to deal with some guilt along the way.

#### *Seeking connection, yet abandoning the Self (often in the service of others)*

- Create an ongoing dialogue with yourself. A personal journal is a very

effective tool for recording and reflecting upon your conversations.

- Find a way to explore and express your creativity – for your enjoyment only.
- Listen to your ‘inner voice’. Breathe and pay attention to your feelings and sensations. Keep in mind that all authentic feelings are equally important.

*Seeking a sense of self worth, yet judging ‘successes’ and ‘failures’ through the eyes of others*

- Make a list of your daily activities and identify those that have the most value, *for you*. Increase the amount of time you spend with these, without telling anybody.
- Engage in activities ‘for their own sake’. Yoga and meditation, for example, are likely to enhance your inner sense of well-being (the somatic core of self-worth).
- Listen carefully to your ‘critical voice’ and put it back where it belongs – in the minds and hearts of others.

*Seeking to be seen and heard, yet presenting a false self (image) to the world*

- Find ways to explore and express your authentic thoughts and feelings. Practice saying your real “yeses” and “nos” and to hell with the consequences
- Work with boundaries as a felt sense in the body and learn how to create the physical, cognitive and emotional space you need
- Carefully select someone you trust and invite him or her to be your ‘mirror’.

These are some general ideas for you to consider as a general framework, not a prescription. The real challenge is to create your own strategies for meeting your own needs in your own way. Remember, you have all the resources you need to become the author of your own life, so be gentle with yourself, be creative and use only what fits for you.

### **Using the Gifts You Already Have**

Knowing what you’re not yet ready to bring into a relationship is a significant step forward, but it’s equally important to be aware of all the valuable gifts you can bring to the party. My supervisor had the right idea when he suggested I should form a soccer team at the Youth Center. What he failed to recognize were all the other qualities and talents I had to offer and, in my own self-deprecating way, I was devastated and angry. I felt unseen and unheard, unappreciated, unwanted and unworthy. But all that was in place well before he came along why would I expect him to know of things I hadn’t even disclosed. So, with all this in mind, I offer the following suggestions for your consideration.

- When you’re in a positive mood, take a look at what you are contributing within your current personal relationships and make a list
- In similar mood, make a list of the gifts you bring to your professional relationships
- Look at the differences between these two categories and notice where you might be holding back, and why
- Taking each ‘gift’ in turn, explore ways

of enhancing its qualities and effectiveness

- Notice the 'value' you place upon your contributions (if you don't value what you offer, chances are that others won't either)
- Examine your notion of what it means to be 'professional', paying particular attention to how your qualities and abilities can be more effectively incorporated into your work with young people
- Review all your 'gifts' and ask yourself what you want in return. If you are asking for the unreasonable or the impossible, it's time to take another look at what you're not ready to offer.

### Don't be Selfish – Be Self-full

If you're like me, you'll find it easier to focus on your deficits than your contributions – a revealing piece of self-information from the get-go. Even to this day, I tend to begin my personal audit by focusing upon the assets before moving to the liabilities. Examining and fine-tuning the gifts you bring will almost certainly enhance your personal and professional satisfaction and, as you begin to take re-

sponsibility for giving yourself what you didn't get, that satisfaction can only increase along with the quality of your relationships. In the final analysis, it seems to me that dissatisfaction, frustration and burn out are more likely to arise from our futile attempts to give what we don't have, rather than embracing all the wonderful gifts that we do have to offer. I firmly believe that my best way to be in relationship is to live my own life to the full, knowing that I can share my experience with others without losing my Self along the way.

To conclude with a new version of an old adage: It's better to give and receive – as long as one doesn't demand the other.

*(This is the tenth in a series of eleven articles. If you have read this article, please contact the author at: [fewster@seaside.net](mailto:fewster@seaside.net) You don't have to make any comments but any such responses will be greatly appreciated. All emails will be acknowledged)*

## Advertising in CYC-Online

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# Lessons learned about (and from) Families

Donna Jamieson

I am passionate about families — my own and other people's, personally and professionally. For twenty years, starting in the early eighties, I supervised a small but committed band of Child and Youth Care Family Support Workers, and honestly, during that time, I could not have had a more rewarding (or more fun) career. When I finally did move on, it was to teach Child and Youth Care students about the importance of family work. My students will attest to fact that any course that I teach ends up being about families in some way. This column pays tribute to the program and the families that taught me so much.

The early eighties were a time of almost ridiculous plenty in Alberta. Since then, we have gone through several bust and boom periods. However, in 1981, an overabundance of government money led to the funding of the Yellowhead Family Support Program. It was a small unit based on, at that time, a very novel idea: that perhaps if someone worked with high risk families in their homes and communities, we could prevent children from coming into care. In retrospect, I don't think there

was too much concern about whether the program succeeded — after all, nothing ventured, nothing gained. And as I said, at that time public money seemed to be falling from the trees, or at any rate, bubbling from the ground. So the great adventure began: a group of naive, but well-intentioned, Child and Youth Care workers, none of whom had ever seriously worked with families in any setting, set out to keep children out of care.

Gradually, that little band of fearless (or perhaps foolhardy?) workers matured into a confident, much-used resource. I have in recent years begun to read other CYC practitioners' ideas about what makes CYC work with families unique. My colleague, Jack Phelan, tried many times (unsuccessfully) to get us to put the principles of our practice on paper. This never occurred, but we often discussed the fundamentals of our practice with each other, and as well, we provided numerous workshops and training opportunities to other emerging family-focused programs over the years. It has been something of a relief to me to discover that our daily practice really was distinctly Child and Youth Care,

and that most of those now writing about this work would, no doubt, give us their blessing, if only in retrospect. When the Yellowhead Family Support Program began, the notion of keeping children out of care or shortening their stay in care by working with families in their homes was revolutionary. Now, thirty years later, the approach is well-accepted but just as exciting.

In the early stages, we were willing to try almost anything. We gratefully accepted any training that appeared to be even remotely related to family work. Thankfully, the relationship-building skills developed while working with

youth and children who often didn't want to work with us seemed to work equally well with adults (who also often didn't want to work with us). Shifting focus from working directly with children and youth to working with whole families and with children through their parents was the most difficult piece of our initial adjustment. This shift in focus remained a hurdle for almost every individual that joined us from a residential or group care setting. Sadly, in residential and group care there was often a tendency to view the parents as the "bad" guys — the ones who had hurt "our" kids.

It turned out that most of the parents that we were working with had, as chil-

dren, been abused or neglected or somehow lacked suitable parental role models. It was clear that if these hurting adult children could gradually learn to better meet their own needs and to nurture themselves, they would be better able to parent their own children. The need to "go slow" was a hard lesson for

many of us — there is a tendency to want to immediately teach parenting or other skills and to give good "advice" about how their situation could be radically improved, if only they would follow these three (or four or five or twenty) "simple" steps. CYC professionals might know more about child development, behaviour



management, positive communication techniques, available community resources, or whatever; only the parents really knew what they were willing to try ... what fit for them ... what might work in their home at that particular point in time (and if they trusted us enough to listen to anything we had to say). We recognized that parents would be caregivers in their homes long after we had terminated our services. The more we focused on parents' strengths and positive intentions towards their children, the more we came to understand and appreciate their coping skills, their survival instincts, and thankfully, their willingness to share their expertise and "help" us succeed in our roles.

The beginning phases of every involvement needed to be “CYC 101”, with a focus on really listening, being non-judgmental, and having an attitude of genuine caring, especially toward the adults in the family. The first stages of involvement might include providing concrete help with basic needs identified by the family — food, clothing, shelter, medical care, outstanding warrants, and so on. “Re-parenting” was commonly an important part of relationship-building with these adults. This kind of acceptance and practical support was frequently a new experience (especially from a member of the “system”). While an attitude of genuine caring is talked about a lot in the helping professions, practising it on a day-to-day basis in the client’s life space is crucial for successful family work.

As Child and Youth Care professionals, we seemed to be especially pragmatic in our approach to family work. Recently, when discussing the success of our program with a retired long-term family support worker whom I’ll call “Dave” (because that’s his name), he said, “We just did whatever worked.” I had to agree that, within the bounds of ethical practice, we often did appear to do just that. However, early in the Program’s development, we had established ourselves as a relational model, and for any approach or technique to become a permanent part of our practice, it had to be respectful, congruent, and achievable within the life space of the families. The same Dave also said, early on, “There are really only three things you need to know to do family work — relationship, relationship, relationship.”

Within our staff group, relationship was also our guiding principle — we did not respect each other in spite of our differences, but because of them. As a program, we shared core beliefs, knowledge, and skills, but each staff was supported to be themselves — to create unique interventions that fit for them and for each family and their individual members, and to “own” and be fully accountable for their specific practice.

Family systems theory, ecological systems theory, family of origin work, strength-based practice, resiliency work, solution-focused approaches, use of the life space and of activities — all of these approaches were embraced as part of daily practice. Workers “counselled” and had helpful conversations with clients while driving to appointments; attending graduations and weddings; helping find housing; recreational activities; food and summer camps; drinking coffee; shopping; sewing; throwing balls; picnicking; baking; eating; colouring; playing cards; and generally experiencing life together. These shared experiences yielded learning that no textbook could equal — about pain, loss, grief, family loyalty, commitment, healing, joy, happiness; and much more. As we learned to do family work, the families with whom we were involved also taught us about ourselves and our own values, and about what really counts in life.

Interestingly, in this life space approach, boundaries, while fluid, become more crucial and needed to be more conscious than in traditional office therapies. Supervisory sessions and team meetings often included discussion of things like whether it was okay to accept a thank you gift or

an invitation out to supper from a family — culture, relationship, and numerous other variables were thoughtfully considered. Often, we ended up doing things that were viewed as “unprofessional” by some other disciplines, but that fit very well for a CYC life space approach. Few self-respecting psychologists, for example, would drive a client to an appointment with another professional, attend court as a support, bring a bouquet of flowers from their garden to a depressed mother, help a parent paint their kitchen cupboards, go apartment hunting, clean, grocery shop, throw a football or picnic in the park with a family, or sit through an AADAC intake interview with a frightened parent and/or teenager. Yet these were the kinds of activities that were a regular part of our relational practice with families. As Mark Krueger would say, “We learned to ‘dance’ to each family’s developmental rhythm ... in an atmosphere that support[ed] growth, change, and/or just being together” (Krueger, 2003, p. 64).

At times, our work did not result in the “success” story that was hoped for — children did end up in care, sometimes as permanent wards of Children’s Services. These “unsuccessful” cases taught us difficult lessons — sadly, sometimes a natural home isn’t the best place for a child to grow up; sometimes even when parents are doing their best, they cannot ensure the safety, security, and healthy development of their children; and sometimes, our best really wasn’t good enough. At a recent workshop, Lorraine Fox commented that when a child cannot stay with their family, there are no other really good solutions. I agree, and in these kinds of sit-

uations I think that our program worked hard to help families achieve “less bad” solutions — a permanent guardianship with regular parental contact, placement with significant relatives or within the community or culture, and as healthy a “letting go” process as possible.

After twenty years of providing in-home services to families, and shortly after winning the Premier’s Gold Award of Excellence, the Yellowhead Family Support Program was disbanded, largely due to structural shifts in the Alberta Children’s Services system that had employed us for so many years. Interestingly, the initial shift of staff from our program to a regional training and consulting role reflected a positive shift in attitude toward families and communities that none of us would have predicted in 1981. I do sometimes worry that the distinctly Child and Youth Care flavor of the in-home support work we provided may be lost in the shuffle, but I also hope that as a CYC profession, we will continue to recognize and advocate for the importance of our unique support role in the lives of children and their families.

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# Reflections on Progress

Kiaras Gharabaghi

When I first started in the field of child and youth care in the mid-1980s, I was told that the goal of my work was to make sure the kids behaved well. Other professionals would deal with any other needs of the kids, but this would only be possible if I did my job and ensured that the kids were well behaved, since the other professionals would not likely be able to do much for them if they were constantly ranting and raving about largely trivial things. In order to accomplish this *task*, I was given a behaviour management system that involved a rather complicated set of points and levels that when used effectively and *consistently*, would ensure that the kids knew who was in *control*.

Of course, I was also told that the kids were vulnerable and had experienced challenging lives, and that I was to be *nice* to them. I still remember very clearly the long instructions I was given about how to deal with the kids' families. For the most part, I needed to understand that the *par-*

*ents* were the problem, and part of my task was to *protect* the kids from these parents. I also was told to protect *myself* from any law suits and complaints by documenting any conversations I had with parents, and ideally by minimizing my exposure to them.

Once I figured out what the job actually was, I remember reflecting on why I got the job in the first place. After all, I had no prior experience working with young people, I was very young myself (I still am...), I had not been the most 'successful' kid (I knew many police officers by their first name), and I barely spoke English. I had absolutely no pre-service training of any kind (and I did not really receive any in-service training for several years). I certainly didn't look very hireable (I had really, really long hair — I now choose to be balding) and at the time, I was protesting against the concept of shaving.

When I asked my *boss* why she hired me, I was told that I seemed very nice,



and that kids might like me. I had a good sense of humour, and given that I had grown up in the midst of a (fairly violent) revolution, I might be able to relate to the issues of the kids. Initially I thought I had scored big, since this kind of job doesn't actually exist in one of my home countries (Iran), and requires a University degree in the other of my home countries (Germany – a degree in social pedagogy). Here I was, completely unqualified and yet making six bucks an hour (twice the minimum wage at the time) hanging out with some kids who struck me as fairly cool and unproblematic.

Over time, I learned that my scenario was hardly unusual. As I got to know my team mates (in a residential program) I discovered that I was working with quite an array of individuals. My favourite was a British Lady with a thick accent from the Liverpool area, who had an obsession with cleaning everything with bleach. There was Brad, a clean cut guy whose goal it was to take over his father's chemical company, Chris, a guy from way up north (Barrie, I think, about an hour north of Toronto) who, foreshadowing the coming fashion, sported a mullet, and another Brad, who at one time had been an assistant coach of the Canadian Olympic Karate team. And then there was the woman who was clearly the brain of the operation, which everyone agreed was no surprise since she was the only one who had actually completed the proper training for being a child and youth worker — she had a Social Services Certificate from the local College.

As a newcomer to Canada, this job was extremely helpful in overcoming my social

adjustment problems. Every 3-11 shift started at 2 in the afternoon and ended at 1 in the morning, followed by an alcohol filled three hour de-briefing session at somebody's house (basement apartment, more accurately). I vaguely remember there being some other goodies as well, but it is all a bit of a blur now.

And then I remember some of the things we did with the kids. There was the whole control thing — I would shout things like 'that's five', which meant the kid lost five points that shift for swearing. I removed many stereos and other belongings from kids' rooms as a consequence (punishment) for behavioural outbursts, and in extreme situations where kids were completely out of control and aggressive, I would perform my famous 'airborne half twist to the floor' restraint, which was much admired by my colleagues for its agility and artistic merit.

But I also remember some of the other things we did with the kids. We went on outings pretty much every day, exploring the region and beyond, usually with eight or nine persons in a seven seater minivan. We climbed cliffs, holding on to the 'no climbing' signs generously provided by the conservation authorities. We jumped into lakes wondering what the 'Bacteria Alert' signs meant, we did car washes so that we could afford to go camping, we played midnight games of capture the flag in a nearby forest, and we talked and talked and talked with the kids over hot chocolates and candy.

On special holidays, everybody would come to work to celebrate with the kids, we put on dances for the kids and danced with them, including to superhits such as

*Love Hurts* and some of the great ballades of Triumph, and we played and played and played. When kids went AWOL, we'd just go with them, hanging out downtown and getting to know all of their friends. When a kid got a job at a gas station, we would all get gas only at that station, and when a kid got a job at a coffee shop, all coffee had to be purchased at that particular shop.

As a team, we were both a work team and a social unit. Everybody knew everyone's else life stories. When someone had problems (which was a daily occurrence) we would plan 'interventions' (back to the alcohol and other goodies...). We didn't really have team meetings, because every day was a team meeting of sorts. When we thought it would be good to meet, we quickly learned that we had already discussed everything informally and had nothing left to say.

In fact, when I reflect on my job experiences through the course of my adult life, there is no better one than those first four years of *being* a 'child and youth worker'. I still know and am friends with some of my team members from that group home, and occasionally I hear about a kid from those days. My professional life came full circle about ten years ago, when I joined a child welfare agency as the Manager of Residential Resources. Ironically, that very first group home I had worked in years prior was one of several owned and operated by my agency. When I first re-entered the group home it felt oddly unfamiliar. Most things looked the same, but nothing felt the same. The staff were sitting in the office, the supervisor in his office, and the kids were either not pres-

ent or they were sitting by themselves. There was a huge board in the hallway with posters from the Ministry about Children's rights and responsibilities, and how to complain, and there was another bulletin board about Health and Safety rules. I noticed that there was no music and the house smelled neutral — no smell of bleach, smoke, or food! I also noticed that the phone was ringing pretty much all the time. I asked the supervisor who would be calling, and I was told that it might be a Child Protection Worker, a probation worker, a medical person, a community worker, a parent, someone from the psychologist's or psychiatrist's office, or a Ministry person chasing down a Serious Occurrence Report. Or it might be the police taking the information on a Missing Person, or maybe the HR or Finance people from the agency chasing down a document or a receipt. I started to wonder whether twenty years prior, the phone really didn't ring or whether we just didn't hear it because CCR's "Fortunate Son" was in the house, or we were on a "Stairway to Heaven", or we were doing the "Blitzkrieg Bop" with our friends, the Ramones.

So much has changed in what we have come to refer to as child and youth care practice. As I encounter residential child and youth workers today, I am painfully aware that much of their time is spent doing things that have absolutely nothing to do with taking care of children. They are busy writing reports, making appointments, answering the phone, justifying their expenses, and consulting their union about employment issues. Sure, they absolutely care about the kids in the

program as well. Many of the workers spend a great deal of time talking with the kids about their problems and offer endless solutions and approaches to making things better. Often workers bring in information about other services, or they call and make referrals on behalf of the kids. Certainly there is no shortage of engagement *per se*; child and youth work continues to be fundamentally about child and youth workers interacting with kids, notwithstanding ever-increasing administrative demands, ever higher accountability standards, and ever more complex situations arising out of the coexistence of employers, unions, and legislation such as the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

The standards related to the care provided in residential settings and elsewhere have also increased substantially. The licensing regulations for group homes contain rules about staff qualifications and certifications (none related to pre-service education), restraints are subject to a great deal of scrutiny and have to correspond to Ministry approved techniques, and policies and procedures are not only examined by licensing officers, but staff and kids are interviewed to see whether the activities correspond to such policies and procedures.

All of this is probably good. On the other hand, as I look at what actually transpires through the eyes of the kids, I am not at all convinced that this regulated, much safer, and generally better coordinated way of working with kids has improved anything through the eyes of those kids. I am quite certain that kids are experiencing a much more effective inter-

vention with respect to the provision of targeted services, treatment, counselling, and other types of skilled or evidence-based approaches. But are they experiencing childhood or adolescence?? Are child and youth workers encouraged to do things with the kids that correspond to what most high functioning, socially competent, emotionally stable individuals would have experienced during their younger years? Things like impulsive decision-making, unplanned trips and activities, learning by trial and error (as opposed to an evidence base), breaking some rules, sidestepping adult expectations, developing their own language and method of communication, and generally practicing their comfort level within a disposition of non-conformity.

What I am learning through my reflections in this context is this: progress, although necessary, is surprisingly unsatisfying.



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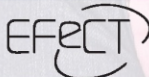
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# A Praxis-Oriented Approach to Collective Change Processes for Young Children

Laura Cocksedge

## Abstract

*Behavioural issues and diagnosed attention deficiencies appear to be on the rise in young children. This article discusses the impact that an industrial model for classroom management has on behavioural issues. Changing the paradigm of a school system to enhance outdoor experiences, in effect, creating a connection to nature, has been shown to increase cognitive functioning while decreasing resistance to classroom deficiencies. A program designed for seven-year-old children examined the relational aspects of these children in outdoor activities meant to stimulate collective intentionality in play. It was discovered that by offering relationship opportunities together with opening avenues for involvement in inherently interesting activities, cognitive functioning increased and behavioural issues were mitigated. This article demonstrates a need for continued research into the creation of a school system reliant on community, environmental and social awareness.*

## Introduction

During the past couple of years the topic of children's behavioural issues and how to deal with them has dominated discussions in my household; in particular behavioural issues stemming from my six-year-old son. I have quickly gone from the position of confident, competent adult to one of complete irrationality as the parent of a six-year-old refusing to eat a carrot: emotional responses to attempts at control seem to be coming from both of us. At the heart of my behavioural expecta-

tion is a desire to instil into my child an internal motivation to do the right thing: to eat that carrot because it is good for him. But the line between acting out of responsibility and performing for reward is often murky.

What makes me choose one way of acting over another? How has my society, my culture, influenced my choices? Is my primary role as parent or educator necessarily one of discipline towards children? I often consider how I will teach my child to be independent while I view actions like

not eating a carrot to be a punishable offence; what lesson is he truly learning if he actually does not like carrots? A simple example in the mine-field of parenting, but one which opens up explorations of how children navigate through the many complex social relationships and situations we expose them to and expect them to understand. Perhaps instead, if we engage with the 'messiness' (Newbury, 2011) that structures our motivation for choosing one thing over another in any given moment we might be relieved of the sense of obligation to solve situations; rather, it could allow us the opportunity to embrace moments of reality, take what we need from them, and move forward.

The central focus of this article is two-fold: firstly I explore the observations and experiences of six-year-olds in a two-week summer program which I both designed and delivered. Secondly, I take a look at the larger picture of children's social responsiveness in the context of this program; how they develop an understanding of self- and social awareness. Our cultural dependence on reward and punishment and competition, together with a school system forged in the image of industry, challenges the assumption that education is the creator of critical thinkers. Does the system we perpetuate diminish children's inherent capacities for individual thought and collaborative processing? Is it my intention to condition my six-year-old son to accept that which is unpalatable, eating the carrot; or can I simply teach him to choose an acceptable alternative? Is the carrot issue mine or his?

School curriculums that include outdoor based learning and teaching

strategies such as scaffolding (explained later) offer two examples of fashioning systems that encourage creative and critical thinking by optimizing cognitive processes. I will scrutinize the structure of the school system, a key determinant in regulating how children are socially influenced, in an effort to understand the motivations guiding this current system. Finally, how do I choose to move forward with this knowledge and create better avenues for my work with children while preserving that inherent sense of wonder within a child and myself?

### **Intention, Plan, and Expectation**

#### *Intention*

The intention of this project, which consists of a two week summer program together with continuing research, is to examine relational classroom dynamics in elementary school. The motivation behind creating the summer program began from behavioural concerns in the classroom with my own six-year-old child. Report cards indicated that academically he was exceeding expectations, but socially he was floundering. A socialite from the outset, my son has struggled with social expectation in the school setting. School based team meetings, developmental specialists, behaviour information workshops, and terrible three-hour-long temper tantrums became our standard fare. It was very difficult to separate what I wanted as a mother and what I felt I needed to do as a Child and Youth Care worker.

From a Child and Youth Care perspective my research specifically involves investigation of extended outdoor learning

as part of school-based curriculum to help fulfill a theorized need for better social skill acquisition and enhanced cognitive processing. I am interested in how children learn social expectations: how their behavioural responses relate to their environments. I will incorporate observations from my own involvement as the facilitator of the summer program to provide a platform for discussion and exploration.

Much of the direction for this research is rooted in a unique Eco-Immersion program in its' pilot year at a local school. As part of the school system, this program specializes in French immersion with an emphasis on outdoor-based, Montessori-like education (see The Montessori Foundation, 2011). The program came with a great deal of support from the school board and like-minded parents intent on creating a better option for education. It was with a great sense of relief that we sent Liam into grade one. However, the issues with Liam not only continued, they seemed to get worse. It is possible that the class make-up (mainly boys) contributed to Liam's number of 'accidents', as in playing pinball tag and 'accidentally' injuring another child in the rough-and-tumble physical-contact way boys tend to play. But more likely the answer lies in discovering his individual developmental needs: how he processes psychological needs, how he interprets relationships, how he keeps track of his growing body, and how all that fits in a classroom environment. Liam is just as liable to accidentally choke someone as the Superhero saving the day as he is to glue his hand to his hair while sharing quality time with Grandpa. As I was to eventually

learn through other parents, this behaviour was echoed among the boys in his class. I created a small summer program to see for myself.

### *Plan*

The plan was to offer educational opportunities through social activities, in contrast to a traditional model of learning which teaches social expectation through educational avenues; this is a subtle but important distinction when trying to understand the intent and motivation behind kids' choices. Dr Greene's (n.d.) theory that kids do well when they can is evident in children like my son who excel socially when the pressure of over-stimulating classrooms is taken away.

The program incorporated individual and group challenges. The kids built a shelter, went through a ropes course, practiced yoga, learned about a berry farm, interviewed seniors, explored tidal pool habitats, and learned the art of whitening and lighting fires. We talked about leadership, friendship, working together, good choices, and flatulence. Conversations occurred naturally, discussion was encouraged, and any questions were welcomed and answered. As much variety and as many self-directed individual and group activities as possible were offered within the time slot of ten morning sessions.

Of primary importance to me in planning this program was to allow avenues for the exertion of energy. The extraordinary energy levels of young children are not to be ignored. Dewey (in Warde, 1960) asserted that the energetic side of a child's nature should take precedence in

early education because that is what they need. Cognitive ability is stunted when physical activity is curbed.

### *Expectation*

Through the course of the summer program, I expected to gain more insight into how groups of children form together, define their relationships, accomplish different tasks, and function in a variety of environments. Specifically, I wanted to observe how these children experience their development of self-awareness and how it relates to their experiences *as a group* in order to better understand what was happening in their classroom. What is it that we need, as educators and role models, to effectively translate the expectations of classroom, and ultimately, social engagement? We do not have behavioural issues when we are alone. Someone other than us in the room decides that a certain way of behaving is acceptable or unacceptable to *them*. Again, are perceived behavioural problems my issue or the child's?

I expected that through the use of inherently interesting activities – activities that engage involuntary attention (explained later), activities that encourage movement, and activities that are student led – I could gain insight into avenues that might improve the classroom experience for students and teachers. I needed to take a big step back and examine systemic deficiencies inherent in classroom environments that can block the educational needs of young children by assuming that the deficiencies exist in the children as individuals. I expected to observe that supporting the *relational* components of

early childhood learning can be a step towards cultivating critical thought and social capacities in young children.

I anticipated little to no behavioural issues and increased positive social behaviours during my two week summer program. I expected some resistance to rainy days and predicted high physical activity levels. I planned the sessions in the morning as my assumption is that typically children function better in the morning. I expected to change direction with activities if the situation warranted; in effect, to engage a relational approach to Child and Youth Care.

### **Snapshots of Reality**

This section examines two specific events during the two week program that demonstrate the type of activities the children engaged in. These examples will serve as concrete anchors throughout the remainder of the article.

The first day of the program saw four happy faces ready to experience a plane crash (imagined) and be tasked with building a shelter. The kids gathered materials and helped each other carry objects during the twenty minute hike up to the site. The kids were handed two packages: one with food and one with supplies. The boys immediately got stuck into eating while Lily examined the clippers and twine and began to prepare a site for a shelter.

The boys, unsure of what exactly Lily was doing, left to find their own site nearby. They went off in different directions and experimented cutting branches off a fallen tree with the clippers, tied twine around branches to drag, and fired imaginary machine guns at imaginary foe.



Interventions to assist their collective thinking and offer ways to proceed with the shelter, three at about ten minute intervals, proved unhelpful. Lily completed her own shelter.

Tummolini, Castelfranchi, and Rakoczy (2006) examine Piaget's theory of the pre-operational stage (ages two to seven) and the development of collective intentionality in play. Further, they explain that it is unclear how the development of an understanding of another's pretence, a requirement for joint play, develops from solitary pretending. Piaget theorized (in Tannock, 2011) that by practising the social aspect of play, skills learned will lead to the concrete operational stage (ages seven to eleven) and the development of games with rules and structure. From this, group acceptance begins to take hold. My sense was that these children needed more group direction, not necessarily individual direction: a socially oriented answer to a social problem – achieving a shared social pretence.

In contrast to the observed lack of shared social pretence of the shelter building exercise, the following day the kids were presented with a Zunga activity: a suspended rope with a big knot on the end to swing on. On either side of the clearing were platforms, in between which was an imagined poisonous pit. The task was to swing to one platform, pick up a ball and bring it back to the original platform. Unlike the shelter building exercise, the kids decided on their own whose turn it was, how to retrieve the rope from the middle when it was dropped, and how to carry balls between the platforms. They showed empathy when one child dragged

himself, organized more space to land on the platform, assisted each other in landing, and cheered each other on: all examples of a shared social pretence or collaboration.

Of particular note was their choice not to choose a leader. No child inherently stood out and accepted total responsibility; rather, they each contributed to the accomplishment of the task in different ways. Interestingly, in the shelter exercise, a clear 'leader', by adult standards, existed: Lily knew how to build a shelter. But the boys were more fascinated with what Erikson (in Santrock, MacKenzie-Rivers, Leung, & Malcomson, 2008) describes as developmentally recognized interests such as experimenting with the tools provided. We examined the roles of leader and follower at a later time and all of the children expressed that they wanted to be leaders, and we discussed what this meant for them in a group.

Initially I felt that the shelter exercise was not as successful as the Zunga because there was a clear accomplished outcome in the Zunga by my standards. However, viewing these two exercises as either failure or success simplifies the real nature of play and the implications of what was learned by the children: that shared social intent is like any other skill acquisition. Through scaffolded learning we can also learn how to engage collectively.

### **What I Actually Ended up Learning**

*"I can't wait until I grow up". Why? "Because then I will have lots of responsibility".*

I have learned a great deal from my two weeks with the kids and my research. This section will offer an account of how

schools are structured and how we can improve on the teaching methods used by employing strategies such as scaffolding. I examine the systemic use of reward and punishment. Finally I highlight the theory of group-think. Our collective ability to ensure an educational process free from behavioural labels and standardization begins with an understanding of why we ascribe to that model in the first place.

#### *The model of industrial education*

To understand how the school system affects learning, I needed to understand the motivations behind choice of content and delivery within that system. School is an integral part of our culture and an undeniable influence on how we behave and socialize. Dewey (in Wikipedia, 2011) believed that the ideal school is not just a place to gain a predetermined set of skills, but a place to learn how to live: a realization of a student's full potential and the ability to use acquired skills for the greater good. But the school system was created at the turn of the last century by the needs of industry, not formed by social consciousness (Robinson, 2010).

Robinson (2010) describes the formation of the educational system as being focused primarily on academics; however, he further explains that critics at that time argued that education would be wasted on under-privileged kids because they were incapable of learning. Robinson's view is the educational system therein became a dual-purpose system in which it served a purpose in the workforce and made assumptions about social structure and capacity: that there existed academic people and non-academic people and the

system, not the student, decided which were which. Intellectual attainment was distanced from practical everyday occupational tasks (Warde, 1960). Evolution of that industrialized, business-minded model still sees the role of education as predominantly preparing our children for entrance into the economies of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; but how *do* we effectively educate our children, if this is our goal, given that we are unable to predict what the economy will look like next week (Robinson, 2010; Klein & Lewis, 2011)?

Economic and industrial reasoning play major roles in structuring the formula for deciding school content and delivery. Computer time has been mandated for elementary students in my district: by grade four they will be responsible for creating a Power Point presentation. Weizenbaum (in Armstrong & Casement, 1998) views computer use in the classroom as "a solution in search of problems" (p. 3); an assumption that intelligence begins with the solution and not the process to it. I was unable to locate evidenced based practice studies to indicate the validity of technology use by nine year olds in elementary school. Quite the opposite. Children are already getting, on average, approximately seven hours per day of screen time with a combination of technological devices (Harper, 2011). Technology overuse – TV, videogame, cell phones, hand held devices, computers, and the internet – is contributing to increasing levels of psychological, physical, and behavioural disorders in children which in turn is increasing prescriptions of psychotropic medication (Rowan, 2011). Further, Robinson (2010) indicates an

alarming increase in diagnosed attention deficit disorders. He links this increase to intensely over-stimulating environments, under-stimulating school experience, standardized testing, media, and technology use. There is overwhelming evidence that technology is detrimental to the development of a child and we are giving them more.

Berman (2008) explains that technology over-use is a stress on children's cognitive control processes, or directed attention: directed, or voluntary, attention resolves conflict while suppressing distracting stimuli such as crossing a busy street or solving a math problem in a noisy classroom (Berman, 2008). Directed attention also plays a role in cognitive function and a child's ability to self-regulate things like short term memory, attention span, and memory retention which can determine success at school.

Berman (2008) further explains that involuntary attention, on the other hand, is used when we interact with environments that are inherently stimulating such as nature or the Zunga pit in the snapshot described earlier. This enables directed attention mechanisms to take a break allowing for better cognitive functioning when demanding environments are re-introduced. From personal experience, as a parent and Child and Youth Care worker, I have found that nature based learning can address many concerns currently affecting classroom environments: too loud, too bright, too crowded, too noisy, too busy or too much. This finding is echoed in Well's (in Lang, 2003) study that linked better cognitive function with increased connection to nature. Directed attention

is not being given a chance to replenish, particularly when the school yards are simply extensions of the classroom with few areas free from concrete, play structures, or other kids. (It is interesting to note that while governments offer money towards technology purchases in the school, parents are responsible for raising money to improve school playgrounds, furthering the agenda of business models for education.)

Participating in activities that allow for rests in directed attention indicates that one could increase the ability to focus and concentrate on tasks later that depend on directed attention abilities. An interesting observation with the kids in the summer program was that their cognitive functioning increased in the afternoon, contrary to my assumption, once the activities were done. Reports from the parents echoed my realization that the kids were happy to self-direct in the afternoon. They socialized better, they listened well, there were few behavioural issues, and their ability to focus on tasks was improved. Perhaps a classroom system that is designed to take advantage of learning outdoors in the morning with more intense cognitive tasks in the afternoon is worthy of study.

Contrary to the industrial model of education that focuses on concrete outcomes such as standardized testing, nature based educational models focus on "giving students the necessary skills to think critically about personal choices and the relationships between society, economy, culture and the environment" (Barfoot & Westland, n.d.). And contrary to the lack of testing that would indicate more technology in education is better,

nature based learning has vast examples and evidenced based practice to support its' place in today's schools (see Barfoot & Westland, n.d.; Harper, 2011; Saskatchewan Eco Network, 2011; Willis, 2008). The simple fact that currently nature based programming exists as therapy for kids who are unable to cope in the school system, primarily with attention disorders, should be enough evidence to support incorporating it into the school system proper. We do not send children with attention deficit disorder to video game therapy, we engage them with nature. Documented effects of interacting with nature show improved cognitive functioning and an over-all sense of well-being; from a therapeutic perspective, there are no side effects, it is readily available, and there is no cost (Berman, Jonides, & Kaplan, 2008). My son lost recess privileges often because of his rambunctiousness in the classroom; instead he attended Problem Solving in the Library and was made to write out his mistakes. Is there logic in denying a six-year-old child the chance to work off accumulated energy? This is a very good example of how the current system places the deficiency on the child rather than the classroom.

#### *Scaffolding to greater heights*

The industrial model of education leaves little room for apprentice-type learning, or scaffolding. Grouping children by age alone does not address the many barriers to learning: learning styles, teaching styles, cognitive ability, physical and mental challenges, compliance patterns, and temperament (see MacDonald, 2005; Robinson, 2010). A highly effective answer

to this dilemma, one that can be applied proactively to young children, has been to teach students tasks using the technique of scaffolding.

Predominantly a child-initiated process at home (Gauvain, 2006), scaffolding is a learner focused progression of acquiring new skills. This differs from school-based learning which tends to be teacher focused. Gauvain identifies that scaffolding is a social learning process which, when taking place at home, includes many partners: parents, siblings, and grandparents. Gauvain explains that socially we set the boundaries of learning: physically we define where and how children can explore; intellectually we limit or direct requested knowledge; and emotionally we focus their enthusiasm and interests.

When used in a school setting, scaffolding resembles the teaching style of an apprentice model (Schwarz, in Weber, 2010, p118). Students are shown how to accomplish a task then the instructor provides feedback that allows the student to do the task independently. Unlike apprentice positions that focus on immediate job training, scaffolding aims to present the students with a wide variety of avenues of interest. Where scaffolding differs from traditional teaching styles in the school system is that this model is student led. Success is determined by both the abilities of the student as well as the instructional methods of the teacher. If the student is not succeeding, then the student and teacher determine why – a relational approach rather than blaming. This process requires addressing the deficiencies in the system rather than the deficiencies in the child.

During the course of the summer program there was very little social interruption. The kids were afforded the opportunity to join at their own pace and experience in their own comfort level. Resistance to situations, whether from fear, apprehension, or lack of understanding, can manifest itself in many forms such as anger, aggression, tears, or anxiety. For example, during the program, one child needed extra time before engaging in events that required physical demands. He watched the event and eventually indicated readiness to join in. Again I am reminded of Greene's (n.d.) mantra: kids do well when they can. When you allow a child to assume some control over demanding environments, such as delaying participation, they learn new skill sets to overcome anxiety with certain tasks. Scaffolding enables the child to determine readiness; an important skill in learning how to manage risk.

Another aspect of incorporating scaffolding into early childhood education is the developmental readiness to master knowledge and intellectual skills. With an intense enthusiasm for learning, children will initiate many opportunities for new experiences. Erikson (in Santrock, MacKenzie-Rivers, Leung, & Malcomson, 2008) presents this theory of development as the fourth of eight stages: industry versus inferiority. In this stage Erikson posits that a child's interest in how things work and a natural preoccupation with making, building, constructing, fixing, and solving leads to a greater sense of self. When adults interpret this industry as making a mess, or failing, it leads to a sense of inferiority within the child. An

emphasis on collaborative approaches, rather than competitive approaches, and scaffolding rather than task-oriented learning, was at the heart of this summer program. If a system is designed to emphasize building together while supporting each other, I believe that self-confidence rather than a feeling of incompetence can be fostered.

Taking the two scenarios from the summer program described earlier, one could view the first group exercise (the shelter building) as a failure and the second (the Zunga) as a success; after all, one outcome was productive while the other seemingly haphazard. But by identifying elements of progress that embrace scaffolding, the outcomes yield better results. These kids knew how to work together in the first exercise, not just the second; they did not magically learn how to work collaboratively overnight. And there was inherent interest in both, that is, both scenarios engaged them. Perhaps one difference was that the majority of children knew how to tackle the Zunga activity while only one knew how to tackle the shelter. The kids inherently relied on scaffolding amongst themselves, not adult leaders, to produce the collaborative effect of the Zunga. These are pretty cool results for a group of six-year-olds. By creating a program that was designed to emphasize building together, I inadvertently supported the development of a shared social intent. The kids learned to foster their own sense of self-confidence without competition and without reward and punishment.

### *The story of reward and punishment*

A spontaneous comment of “I can’t wait to grow up” from Liam begged the question: why? Perhaps one of the most significant learning moments for me during this process of research was Liam’s reasoning for wanting to grow up: “because then I will have lots of responsibility”. Liam has made a link between responsibility and privilege; when you are able to make good choices, when you are able to manage risk, you are able to participate in more and bigger things on your own.

The school system’s reliance on punishment and reward structures, right and wrong answers, and first and last competitive thinking negate assumptions of functionality by encouraging a child to perform for reward rather than desire. Pervasive in our traditional interchanges are the assumptions of universal logic (Gergen, McNamee, & Barrett, 2001) and the single story (Adichie, 2009). For example, a child is motivated to do the right thing for fear of consequences or anticipation of reward. Why would that child not be motivated by the desire to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do? If we teach a child to perform for reward then when does she become independent? Are we not teaching dependence?

Reward systems fly in the face of intuitive motivation that desires autonomy, mastery, and purpose (Pink, 2010). If schools maintain a bureaucratic model of hierarchy then students will learn compliance instead of independence. Self-direction engages students and encourages creative and critical thinking. I have found that autonomy from adult direction is a sought over commodity for

six-year-olds: Liam’s recognition of privilege through responsibility. Mastery of something, such as riding a bike, feels great; kids inherently master things with no need of a reward. This is supported by Erikson’s (in Santrock, MacKenzie-Rivers, Leung, & Malcomson, 2008 p.45) theory, that six to twelve year olds are preoccupied with mastering physical and intellectual problems. A great example of collective autonomy, mastery, and purpose theory at work was the Zunga activity.

The kids were not rewarded for working together, not punished for making wrong choices, and they were not motivated by candy to complete the task. And yet, they were inherently motivated to accomplish the activity together. They were self-directed, they learned from their mistakes – an element of scaffolding – and they engaged each other in creating solutions. Nature based learning and teaching strategies like scaffolding remove our outdated, single story mentality that competition is a necessary part of learning. Resisting the reliance on right answers creates opportunities for discovery of new answers.

When we change the single story as the adult we also influence our own perspective on the situation. White’s (2008) approach to understanding situational awareness provides us the opportunity to view intent as an important component of an action: not simply our own adult version of intent, but a child’s personalized interpretation of an event. Rather than punish a child for accidentally kicking a ball into the stomach of another child during a game, we gathered as a group, listened to the injured child, empathized, and dis-

cussed the need for control of our bodies and objects when we are near others. The single story of punishment which assumes malicious intent which in turn fosters isolation and shame was avoided in favour of solving the issue collectively. In effect, I took advantage of scaffolding learning by socially constructing emotional boundaries: I demonstrated compassion for each child regardless of the situation.

#### *Group Think*

An important aspect of learning to work together is the understanding of the power of “group-think”; in effect, evolution has taught us that those who cannot recognize and heed emotional cues of others cannot survive long (Perry, 2006). Those cues are vital to our ability to achieve social success despite our own intelligence, common sense, or education. Dr. Seuss (1961) presents this concept of social conformity using Sneetches: those with stars on their bellies versus those without. The struggle to gain acceptance with the perceived popular group in itself creates an unpopular group.

For the boys in the summer program, a lovely expression of friendship, a comment of “you are my best friend, John” elicited a tearful response from Liam: “you said you were *my* best friend, Gabe.” What followed was an examination with the boys of what it means to be a friend, the power of words, and how relationships can change. I believe the need in adult society to fit in is misconstrued as a need for conformity – external – rather than a need for acceptance – internal. As I saw with the Sneetches and with Liam, when they learned to accept each other

for who they were instead of what they thought they were, the need for competition evaporated. A quirk of human nature, we make choices based on our own inner feelings; however, we tend to discount what others feel and say and instead rely on their actions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

#### **Learning as Forward Motion**

Allowing kids to self-direct and master skills through strategies such as scaffolding ensures their ability to create purpose through good choices. Our assumption that as adults we know the true path and hold all the answers only limits our own growth and possibility – and theirs. How do we really know that what we are doing is helping; if there is a better way, what is it? Mahoney (1991) contends that change is not in itself the answer because we seek change ‘for the better’ and not ‘for the worse’. Human psychological development is influenced by emotionally charged relationships and the relationship with self. Mahoney seeks to explain that we must respect the influence of the individual on the system just as the system influences the individual.

I view the educational system as a component of Child and Youth Care, not a stand-alone institution. Our compulsion to separate out the very elements of social interaction that influence our responses within that system reduces our ability to affect change on a systemic level. Situational awareness within the school system allows for an understanding of the dynamics at play (Newbury, 2011) rather than discounting the influence of contexts such as home life and vice versa. We are all integral components of the system, of the

culture, of the community that sways our decisions in how we choose to participate. Child and Youth Care practice should be a necessary component of the educational process, not just the therapeutic answer when the system lets the kids down.

Dewey (in Warde, 1960) proposed almost one hundred years ago that the school system should be a place for the development of social consciousness. Schools *have* adapted, succumbing to determined, persevering parents, to embrace community needs such as the inclusion of Aboriginal classes and by allowing programs such as the Eco-Immersion class to exist in my district. But they are still an integrated part of the industrialized system which measures outcomes in a standardized way. If these programs fail to make the grade, so-to-speak, their existence is threatened. Technology, on the other hand, *has* failed socially for young children (Rowan, 2008) yet its existence seems to be guaranteed and is nurtured in our culture. Why not make the computer courses the extra-curricular activity and instead mandate five hours per week of outdoor instruction?

Warde (1960) contended that children are a marginalized group by virtue of their inability to formulate collective grievances or organize for improvements in their conditions or mode of education. Further, he advocates the assistance of adults who are sensitive to these impairments to act as spokespersons resolved to remedy the situations. I worry that the work of Child and Youth Care practitioners connected to the school system has evolved, in large part, into a reactionary stance. With so

much evidence that clearly indicates outdoor learning to be an effective accompaniment to education (for example Abrams, 2001) and evidence that clearly indicates technology to be detrimental (for example, Armstrong & Casement, 1998), we are still locked in a system that we perpetuate. A Child and Youth Care praxis-oriented approach to collective change is an ethical, self-aware, responsive, and accountable (White, in Bellefeuille & Ricks, 2008) collection of skills necessary to affect change processes for the benefit of young children.

Forward motion is in creating awareness. As Newbury (2011) explains, situational analysis will not necessarily yield new practices to deal with the issues plaguing our school system, but it can offer a platform for discussion. For example, rather than continuing the conversation surrounding attention deficit disorders from a child focused viewpoint, perhaps the conversation can include a wider understanding of proactive interventions, such as those I explored in my summer program. When we look at behaviour disorders as a result of societal dysfunction we can understand the issue from a systemic perspective and begin to look at organizational changes.

## **Conclusion**

I run a daycare, but I am not a teacher; my only experience lately in the school system is as an involved parent. My observations that outdoor learning can be a valued daily component in the educational system is based on an understanding that schools are needed to teach community, environmental, and social awareness. This



is also the same understanding that led to the emergence of the new Eco-Immersion program in which Liam is enrolled. The industrial and economic agenda that determines content and delivery of knowledge and shapes the face of many social interactions is not working. Klein and Lewis (2011) advocate taking a big step back to return to the grass roots, as it were, in education. They suggested that local solutions to local problems be sought: such as the continued support of the Eco-Immersion program. I am looking forward to increasing my knowledge of the school system as I journey through with my son. As well, I hope to examine the process and the impacts of locally organized programs such as investigation of funding sources for an environmentally based playground at Liam's school.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not take an opportunity to recognize and acknowledge the people who volunteered their time and efforts to helping make the activities for the summer program come alive. Social consciousness and a sense of community exist because we create it despite the industrialized notion that says 'money makes the world go around'.

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# The joys of being a sibling

**O**n a recent cross-Canada family vacation to Halifax, Nova Scotia, a distant relative commented that my children seemed to get along very well. I answered that yes, they did, when they weren't killing each other.

My children will potentially have a more influential and longer lasting relationship with each other than with my husband or me. Their relationship will possibly last longer than their relationship with their future spouses and even their own children. My son and daughter constantly struggle for who has ultimate control over every situation they find themselves in. It has been fascinating watching their relationship evolve over time but I'm somewhat frightened about what lies ahead. I meet so many people who tell me they have terrible relationships with their siblings, or worse, no relationship at all. How does this happen? Can I prevent this from happening with my own kids?

My daughter was three-and-a-half years old when my son was born. She has spent the most time in control just because she was here first. She jumped at the chance to help take care of her brother and reveled in being able to con-



**Liz Laidlaw**

trol his movements, his toys, his whole environment. Her position as first-born in the birth order has required her to develop a variety of pro-social skills – helping, sharing, co-operating. She has also been placed in a position that allows her to be an effective teacher of these skills to her younger brother.

But now that my son is four, he is no longer as pliable as he was when he was an infant. He can (loudly) voice his opinions and physically fight for his territory. My daughter has become a master of manipulation where her brother is concerned, using all kinds of psychological warfare to her advantage, learning from her mistakes and constantly updating her management operations arsenal. For his part, my son is learning at twice her speed to be equally as manipulative. He is paying attention to what works and what doesn't, as well as to his parents' reactions to this behaviour, intensely planning his strategies and rebuttals.

My usual reaction has been to get quite involved and facilitate the argument. But I realize that I'm not helping, only becoming a pawn in a never-ending war. So I vow to stay out of it and let them deal with it, suffer their own consequences and learn from their experiences. Except I can't

stand to do that either, because the noise of them bickering and battling drives me crazy. So I have resorted to threatening to split them up, separate them. They are horrified at the thought of being separated, especially during a summer vacation or a long Christmas break when other friends are few and far between. They quickly join forces against the evil third party and scurry off together in a temporary truce. Depending on how tired, hungry or merciless they are feeling, this truce can last anywhere from a few seconds to several hours, and then they're right back at it.

I have always had a good relationship with my (only) older brother, except for, as he reminded me recently, the five or six years we didn't speak at all. Ah yes, I had conveniently forgotten about that rift in our teen years when he was a geek and I was a loser. Although we each deemed each other less than cool, I do remember my brother helping me out of a few sticky situations when I was in high school. And I do remember watching how he handled things and how my parents reacted to his screw-ups, which helped me gauge mine. After years of living continents apart, our whole family is concentrated in one area again. Seeing my brother more often now after all these years is somehow very comforting. I still learn new things about him (and from him) all the time, but the core of who he is seems to be embedded in my soul. To speak of the past with someone who knows it almost like you do is validating and reassuring. To grow old with him in my family's life will be a privilege, and as our parents age, it will be hugely supportive to have someone else

to consult with on how to best assist them.

I am reminded of a previous long ago cross-Canada family vacation, where my brother and I were each treated to a special something at one of the pit stops along the way. We were driving from Winnipeg, Manitoba to Halifax, Nova Scotia and about half way there, my parents purchased a wooden tomahawk for my brother. I was given a soft suede drum. Hardly a fair and equitable situation. You can imagine what happened in the back of the old Volvo station wagon as we sped along the highway.

All these years later, we are in Halifax with our children and my husband takes the kids to pick out a special something. My son chooses a long plastic pirate's sword complete with scabbard. My daughter chooses a seashell. I want to scream. Luckily we are traveling by plane this trip and of course, the sword is not allowed in the carry on luggage. So my daughter is spared the same fate as her mother, at least until we get home.

Trying to teach our children how to express their anger, irritation or resentment towards their siblings without nastiness and cruelty is exhausting. But, if they can learn to use some of these tools in their own relationships, it can only help them to form effective peer relationships and hone some of these social skills that they can use throughout their lives. Hopefully, my kids will continue to negotiate the conflict between them in their lives and with any luck, they'll become normal functioning people with a somewhat normal, enduring and supportive relationship in this world. They've got their work cut out for them.

# Power is Naturally Fearful

Jack Phelan

This title comes from an article on the Spanish Inquisition and its cruelties which I recently read. One sentence stands out for me; "The values of tolerance are one of the most difficult lessons to impart, not because people are naturally cruel, but because power is naturally fearful." To have power over someone else and to have the capability to keep oneself safe enough to resist being fearful seems to be necessary in order to be tolerant (open to the value of another point of view). CYC practitioners are powerful people in the lives of the youth and families we serve, and self-awareness about our powerfulness is essential.

Relationships, especially helping relationships, are complex interactions, fraught with potential for disagreements. When you add the naturally occurring conflictual dynamics of adults and teenagers, there is a high need for tolerance and open-minded humility. Building bridges and connection are much more useful than trying to impose beliefs and controls.

How you think about what you are doing determines how it is done. Helping another person is both a simple and a very complex task. How I think about the task of helping will be a critical factor, yet sometimes I attempt to help without

thinking about what is happening.

When a person wants help and I want to help him and we agree about what needs to be done, then things are easier (you have a cut finger and I have a Band-Aid). Sometimes the person needing help does not know how to ask or what help is needed, so they look for an expert who knows more than they do. Sometimes the helper sees the need for change even though it is not understood by the other. Sometimes the person needing help knows what they need, but the helper does not concur. Sometimes the awareness of both people about the helping process is in conflict, or the commitment to the necessary transactions is unequal.

Power and control are major dynamics, with safety and trust constantly needed by both. Helpers see the need to be willingly invited to create influence, while the other person is trying to be vulnerable and powerful at the same time. The helping dance is a delicate balance for both partners. When either person believes that they must always be in control of the helping relationship, then they are thinking badly. Unfortunately, this need for control often dominates the thinking of both sides. Both people often think that they know better (think more accurately) about what

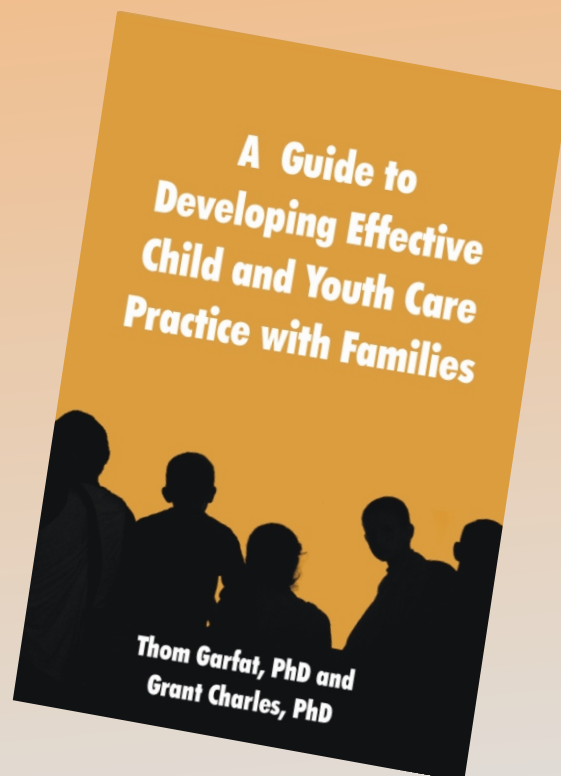
is needed, which is actually not a problem, because they are both right in their own way. In fact, the process of creating an open discussion exploring the “rightness” of each point of view will be the most helpful approach.

So it is the beliefs and thoughts about power and control which block the helping process, not who knows better about what is needed (whose truth is correct).

Power is naturally fearful, to return to our theme, and it is the ability to control our fear which is a key helping skill. Fear is focussed on self, not the other, with fight or flight being the normal response. When there is a power imbalance in a relationship, which is typical of CYC interactions, then fear and reactive responses are natural. The helper, feeling unsafe, will focus on his own needs and use the power imbalance to impose control, while the youth, feeling unsafe, will react to the power imbalance with a fight or flight response.

Mature CYC practitioners can manage the natural fear that having power (and responsibility for control) creates through personal confidence in professional competence that comes with increasing experience. Tolerance, humility and the ability to bridge differences do not exist in fearful situations, so skilled CYC helpers can manage both their own and the other persons natural fearfulness.

So, being an effective helper will require a rigorous and regular examination of the dynamics of power, fearfulness and personal safety. Being in control of yourself does not really require you to be in control of the other person or the rightness of the opinions considered.



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# Naming Our Losses

Joanne Tamming

**Abstract:** *Child and youth care practitioners are generally prepared to recognize and deal with the issues of change, loss, and grief when they occur within the lives of their clients. Yet professionals are rarely encouraged to identify, examine, and work through these same issues when they arise within their own lives. This denial of personal experience is detrimental to the creation of open and effective relationships. In this article, the writer suggests that change, loss, and grief are integral aspects of professional practice and explores ways in which child and youth care practitioners might acquire the permission, curiosity, and skills to bring their own experience into the equation.*

In becoming professionals, child and youth care practitioners are usually taught how to *acquire* things – not what to do when they lose them (James & Friedman, 1998). They are expected to *acquire* theories and techniques that will enable them to work effectively with their clients. And in the process they *acquire* a language that reflects their unique place in the scheme of things. For themselves, most seek to *acquire* the respect and recognition that will identify them within an established profession.

Above all, they must learn how to become involved in the lives of children and youth through something called a “professional relationship.” They are expected to know about “transference” and “counter-transference,” how to separate personal from professional issues, how to practice stress management, and how to identify and respond to traumatic situations (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1996). As Catherine Andrew (2000) noted, “my training as a child and

youth care practitioner and counselor had taught me about neutrality and creating a healthy professional space between myself and their [clients’] pain” (p. 70).

From the outside, the practitioner’s ability to offer effective care and support for others, particularly those who have experienced loss and grief, is seen to be a reflection of his or her worth as a professional. Whatever a practitioner has acquired along the way is considered to be the resources he or she needs to do the job. Yet in child and youth care, where the relationship is central, it might be argued that the richest professional resource is the personal experience of the practitioner. When it comes to the common difficulties associated with change, loss, and grief, this is a matter of critical importance.

This raises the question of the effectiveness of professionals engaged in loss and grief work who have not been encouraged and trained to deal with their own losses. This is not just a matter of ac-

knowledging deep-rooted injury or trauma; it is also about acknowledging and working through the everyday changes that occur within the world of professional practice. In child and youth care, these constant shifts and challenges are often known and predictable. By understanding the nature of such changes and the options for responding, the self-aware practitioner can bring valuable experience into his or her understanding of what might be happening within the life of the client.

### **Defining The Issues**

Words such as “loss” and “grief,” in addition to the phrase “a significant life change,” are key to the discussion. Webster’s Dictionary defines “loss” as “a decrease in the amount, magnitude or degree of something.” Loss is an unavoidable and natural part of life for everyone, regardless of age, gender, nationality, wealth, ethnic background, education, or intelligence (School of Population Health, 2001). Grief is “the normal and natural reaction to loss of any kind. Grief is the conflicting feeling caused by the end or change in a familiar pattern of behavior” (James & Friedman, 1998, p. 3). The grieving experience is a process of reacting emotionally, physically, psychologically, and relationally to life losses. In order for loss and grief emotions to emerge, a particular event or change needs to have occurred. A significant life change is “an event or occurrence, a loss or gain, positive or negative, but one which after it happens, a person’s life is never quite the same, and cannot go back to the way life was before the event” (Dyer, 1998, p. 1).

The interaction and degree of loss, grief, and significant life change are unique for each person, including each child and youth care practitioner. In a broader sense, however, there are qualities and characteristics of this profession that often trigger such issues and influence how each person relates to the world, both inside and outside the workplace

### **Significant Life Changes**

The concept of loss might be framed within the equation: Change = Loss = Grief (Weiss, 1998, p. 31). Loss is triggered by a change of life events and circumstances. In child and youth care, a practitioner’s personal relationships may change through the diminished time and energy available for family and friends. Structural downsizing, promotion, reorganization, and mergers within the workplace are reflections of an ever-changing context. Heavier or lighter caseloads, cutbacks, erratic work hours, wage adjustments, and client comings and goings all contribute to the day-to-day reality. At the same time, changes that affect the personal world – marriages, deaths, births, relocations – make their own contribution to the accumulation of issues that, if left unacknowledged, will never be adequately addressed. As a professional, the child and youth care practitioner may be expected to grieve quietly and separately from the workplace, skillfully detaching personal from professional issues in accordance with some external principle (as in Ontario’s *Apprenticeship Training Standards* [Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1996]).



## Losses

With each change comes a loss. In child and youth care, the practitioner may experience a sense of loss around an infinite variety of circumstantial shifts, but the following have become common, if not predictable.

*The loss of a work schedule compatible with the schedules of significant others:*

Child and youth care practitioners may be expected to work, or be available, for any period of time within any given day. In addition, they may be required to work at night, over weekends and during traditional holiday periods. As Krueger (1986) has said, “schedules can become very taxing ... if they are filled with overtime and if they interfere constantly with their personal lives” (pp. 43-44). The long-term effects of this loss of predictable contact with friends, family, and others is difficult to assess, but there is no doubt that there is a price to be paid.

*The loss of supervision due to the time constraints of the work:* Traditionally, supervision is a time for any professional to receive feedback, be affirmed, identify problems, review goals, and grow personally and professionally. But in child and youth care, as Krueger (1986a) points out, “something always seems to be ready to impinge upon supervision (a crisis with the kids, a shortage of coverage, the supervisor is called away, etc.)” (p. 47). In his book *Careless to Caring* (1986a), Krueger observes, “a significant number of caregivers never fulfill their role potential because the care-giving system is unable to provide them with the status, financial incentives, supervision and training needed” (p. 16). Later in the same text he

notes, “It is not uncommon to hear caregivers state that ‘the only time I see my supervisor is at staffings, after a crisis situation, or at my annual evaluation’ ... not many administrators can honestly state that their caregivers receive adequate supervision” (p. 34).

*The loss of a supportive team experience:* In training, many practitioners become accustomed to a learning environment that is supportive and nurturing. This is considered to be essential where the experience involves considerable personal challenge and risk. Unfortunately, in many work contexts, where the pressures are even greater, the practitioner may well find herself or himself working in relative isolation, despite the illusion of being a member of a team. To return once again to the words of Krueger (1986b), “the lack of time and resources have also been identified as the major deterrents to team work. Add to this the job stress which is inevitable when workers must confront, assert and compromise and it becomes apparent why some people struggle more than grow with teams” (p. 62).

*The loss of identity, self concept, and permission to express feelings:* While those who design professional standards might insist that practitioners learn how to detach themselves from other people’s problems, the fact remains that many issues raised by clients are similar to those experienced personally by the worker. If the practitioner is unable to acknowledge and express the thoughts and feelings associated with this connection, then he or she is effectively cutting off from the experience of self. The effects of this repression or denial can have severe con-

sequences for both parties in the relationship. Again, Krueger (1986a) has identified the problem. He states, “managers and team members often assume or pretend they are not affected. This is a terrible burden to put on the agency and the individuals. No-one can perform effectively in an environment where personal problems are repressed or denied” (pp. 77-78). Similarly, Levine and Doueck (1995) report the story of one practitioner who, having listened to a client disclose a situation of family abuse, declared, “I was angry. I was exhausted ... I had to work really hard to keep those [feelings] in check” (p. 98). In their analysis they concluded, “therapists may even reject clients in the same way that an angry client might reject a therapist” (p. 98).

*The loss of being vulnerable:* In his book *Being in Child Care: A Journey into Self*, Fewster (1990) states, “personal vulnerability is the most potent state for all learning. We fear the judgments that others might make and we run back behind our disguises. Babies offer an openness that we [professionals] lose as we ... grow up” (p. 52). The implication is that a practitioner who cannot take the risk to become vulnerable loses the capacity to experience the fullness of relationships. Since child and youth care is essentially about relationships, the loss of vulnerability has profound implications.

*The loss of personal values, beliefs, and world view:* In many situations a worker may feel coerced into compromising values and personal beliefs in order to remain with a particular agency and work within its mandate. According to Krueger (1986a), “every team member brings a

unique set of beliefs and values to the team. Some of these can be compromised and others can't. Team members can't function in an environment where most of their basic beliefs are inconsistent with the prevailing beliefs at their center” (p. 79). Even the most deeply rooted structure of values and beliefs – a world view that stems from our earliest formative experiences – can be challenged, .. if not compromised, when working with clients and colleagues who see things very differently. Beliefs and strategies concerning “discipline,” for example, can create considerable explicit or implicit tensions that affect relationships and the working environment. When a person's world view is threatened in some way, the potential for loss is pervasive and profound.

*The loss of status, decision-making power, and respect:* In many organizational designs, child and youth care professionals are considered to be on the lowest rungs of the decision-making ladder. A loss of personal efficacy, a loss of voice, is detrimental to the well-being of any individual, but for those who work with clients who themselves feel disempowered, like children, the consequences are particularly tragic. Yet as Krueger (1986b) points out, “youth care agencies often consciously and/ or unconsciously perpetuate situations which make it hard for caregivers to become more involved in the organization ... Most agencies still place an inordinate amount of decision-making power in the hands of individuals with the highest employment standards, but the least opportunity to spend time with youth” (p. 44). The hierarchy reflects the status quo, and those in the most powerful positions

(e.g., administrators, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers) are rarely willing to relinquish their powers to those of lower rank. In such contexts, child and youth care practitioners may have every reason to believe that their voices are seldom heard and their opinions count for little in the overall scheme.

*The loss of energy, self-esteem, and personal autonomy:* According to Krueger (1986b), “many [child and youth care workers] enter the field with innovative ideas and a strong desire to improve treatment conditions. Instead of receiving support, they face resistance to change. Caregivers in these situations lose their energy for the job very early” (p. 28). Along with this loss of energy, practitioners may come to doubt themselves and their competency. They find themselves facing impossible odds in bringing about change either in their work environment or within the lives of their clients, and end up feeling defeated and worthless. In describing the experiences of one worker, Fewster (1990) explains how “she continued to attribute a youngster’s lack of response to her own lack of skills” (p. 82). In the same text, Fewster reflects upon the commonly destructive image of the practitioner as a “people pleaser,” being obsessed with the expectations and judgments of others. The task is hopeless since, however much the practitioner may struggle to match such expectations, the goal of changing other people’s lives or meeting their expectations can never be accomplished. The loss of energy, esteem, and autonomy that arises from this struggle is often referred to as “bum-out.”

*The loss of equitable remuneration and*

*life-style choices:* While few child and youth care professionals begin with vast accumulations of wealth, it is not unusual for them to experience a diminishing balance between income and expenditures. Compared with other human service professions, wages and salaries in child and youth care are notoriously low. This often means that child and youth care professionals are unable to keep up with their friends and acquaintances in supporting a desired life-style – a loss of equivalency and even contact. Wages also have ramifications for the practitioner’s longevity within a particular agency and within the field as a whole. As Krueger (1986b) points out, “the average salary ... is hardly enough to support even a very moderate life-style and certainly not enough to raise a family ... salaries are not commensurate with role potential [so] caregivers often leave the field long before they are able to reach the potential that is inherent in the role” (pp. 43-34).

*The loss of opportunity for education and training:* Lack of training within an agency is often attributed to lack of financial resources and time. This lack of training might also reflect a lack of valuing of and recognition for the practitioner, who has every reason to expect ongoing professional development. Either way, the opportunities that many workers enjoyed in school and in their training are no longer available once they step into the world of professional practice.

*The loss of health and innocence:* Child and youth care professionals are constantly exposed to the distress of others. Without the necessary support, it is not unusual for practitioners to sense that the

world is no longer a safe and innocent place to be. Facing this loss, they may become desensitized to the traumas of others, displaying the signs and symptoms of having experienced and internalized these losses but lacking the tools to deal with them. Symptoms may manifest themselves in conditions of emotional or physical burn-out, secondary trauma, clinical depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or poor coping strategies such as drug or alcohol abuse, nicotine addiction, overeating, or lack of exercise.

*The loss of relationships and a sense of belonging:* Shift work, low wages, and job stress, if not managed and balanced, can become toxic to relationships. Partners or spouses may not understand the stressors associated with the work, and relationships may change drastically. The high turnover within the profession creates additional losses of relationships with co-workers, children and youth, and families. In such circumstances, the practitioner may sense a loss of belonging and security. Additionally, there may be a loss of trust within relationships with clients. There are many situations in which practitioners are obliged to make “reports” on their clients, which can cause an irreparable rift in the connection. In the words of Levine and Doueck (1995), “clients who are reported by their therapists frequently feel a sense of betrayal and loss of trust. Many will refuse to continue treatment with the therapist who made the report” (p. 92).

### **Grief**

Among child and youth care practitioners, reactions or responses to any of the

above losses may vary considerably. Practitioners might express emotional symptoms of helplessness, sadness, depression, or shame. They might experience grief at a *spiritual* level, losing faith in God or other beliefs, having witnessed the pain of their clients’ lives. The grief might be dealt with *cognitively* by dwelling in a confused state, wrestling with short attention span or suffering from short-term memory loss. Grief might manifest itself in physical symptoms like headaches, nausea, or lack of energy. Behaviourally, they might become immobilized or display severe mood swings, become tearful, withdraw socially, experience a shift in sleeping patterns, become disorganized, or become restless in the workplace (Outreach Grief Services, 1999). Any or all of these responses are normal and natural. In the final analysis, it is their own knowledge of these responses that will enable practitioners to recognize the diversity of experiences that are evident in clients and co-workers who experience grief.

### **The Journey Towards Healing**

By identifying their own personal and professional life changes, child and youth care practitioners are able to come to terms with the grief process. By opening the dialogue and mastering the language of grief and loss with clients and co-workers, they are able to find the *sameness* within the diversity – without losing the person in the process. As Wholey (1992) points out, “while the events of each individual’s life may differ, the *process* of life is the same for all of us” (p. 6). It is important for practitioners, along with their clients

and co-workers, to connect with each other, understand, and give space for each other's grief rituals and cultural expressions of loss.

Acknowledging loss is empowering, not crippling. It is a process of healing. The space of healing must be one that allows the individual to laugh and to cry, giving permission to forget about the grief when the mood fits. The space should allow the person to acknowledge feeling scared at times. The space should allow for fun amidst the grief without external judgment. The healing space should encourage the person to talk and talk, until he or she feels the emotions of grief lift (Specialist Education Services, 1998). And all of this applies as much to the practitioner as it does to her or his clients.

James and Friedman (1998) have outlined the universal healing strategies for people dealing with loss and grief. Their suggestions include keeping a journal, getting lots of rest, eating healthily, focusing on physical activity, accepting the reality of what happened, going through the pain, and recognizing that the loss is final. Above all, they suggest, it is important to remember to celebrate the small steps and the small victories in moving through the grieving process. People in general, and professional "helpers" in particular, should be encouraged to be very aware of not getting lost in intellectualizing losses and ignoring the associated feelings.

Child and youth care workers who are willing to identify and explore their own feelings of loss and grief are more able to deal with the same issues as they arise in the lives of their clients and even their co-workers. From their own understand-

ing, they are able to respect the grieving person's need for privacy. They are prepared to create opportunities for others to share feelings and to give permission for the expression of emotions, whether tears or laughter. In their own place of grief, they are able to share with others and let their own needs be known. They can acknowledge their own tears, anger, sadness, and disappointment without looking to others for the solution. They will understand that such feelings of sadness and loss will recur, even after the intense period of grief is over, and that is quite natural and acceptable (University of Michigan, 2001).

### **Insights for Child and Youth Care**

Loss and grief work is about sharing what one knows about the issue with the assurance that whoever is listening can understand from their own experience without judgment. In the words of Mark Krueger (1986b), "knowledge sharing is one of the most important facets of personal growth and in development in the care giving movement as a whole. There is nothing more inspiring or powerful ... the rewards are plentiful" (p. 104). Along similar lines, a practitioner in Fewster's *Being in Child Care: A Journey into Self* (1990) is reported as saying, "child and youth care must develop on the basis of its own experience ... at the most fundamental level, child and youth care workers must begin by valuing their individual experience and subjecting it to personal reflection and analysis. Unfortunately, most of my colleagues seem to invalidate their own direct experience" (pp. 140-143). In the same text, Fewster concludes, "among all

the helping professionals, only child and youth care workers have the courage and the privilege to immerse themselves in the everyday life world of their clients. If they can take the risk to be themselves and acquire the skills and confidence to speak directly to the youngsters in their care, they can become therapists par excellence” (p. 133).

To conclude, it is evident that all child and youth care practitioners encounter personal and professional losses while travelling the professional pathway. The professional journey is about embracing both the losses and the gains encountered along the way. The sense of loss and grief is not only about people who leave or die; it is also about things and events that are no longer available. By acknowledging and exploring these experiences a practitioner learns how to be with others – clients, family members, friends, and co-workers – who share the same life-process. In this way, ongoing personal and professional growth is assured and the potential for all future relationships is enhanced.

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# Connecting Humour and Touch to Recognise Containment

Laura Steckley and Kathleen Mulvey

*It is always a pleasure to share my monthly column with students. I get to read about their practice and, usually, about how they have applied some aspect of their learning to it. It's different from reading their assignments; there's just not the same static around – they don't feel forced to write it and I don't have to give it a mark (grade). It's also more developmental.*

*I make editorial suggestions, they accept or reject them, we sometimes work on a passage together that doesn't quite communicate what they want to say, and we both learn from and develop within that process. Since I no longer get to directly witness (and have some small part in) the development of young people in residential child care, these opportunities are all the more valuable to me.*



*So this month, I would like to introduce Kathleen Mulvey. Kathleen is a 3rd year student on the Residential Child Care Pathway of the BA in Social Work. She also is a member of the Residential Child Care Workers' Association and has put in a lot of work towards its development. What I particularly like about Kathleen's piece is that it makes visible the process of her understanding going from dormant, to tacit, to explicit, to articulated. It's a process we don't often attend to, and yet is so important to the development of practice.*

Enjoy...

A couple of weeks before the annual SIRCC conference one of the boys was telling me a story that he found so funny that tears were rolling down his face. He was giggling and at the end of every sentence he said, 'no but Kathleen' while tapping me on the arm. At the time I remember thinking this isn't funny, not even in a bizarre way and trying to unravel it, I'll call him Jim, was lying. I hate to use the word but that's what he sometimes does. Life, real life, for Jim is

often too hard to embrace and so we work with challenging him about his use of fantasy, escape, creation of another truth, a world which feels real and safe to him. Nothing really came of this time and we moved on to something else... until, as is often the case with those moments of practice, I have the epiphany sometime later. That clarity came for me when one of the plenary sessions and a workshop at the SIRCC conference connected and took me back to that moment.

John Digney gave a workshop on the use of humour. It was full of humour but also stimulated discussion and reflection: how we use it, why we use it, what is its purpose, how do we know when is it real, right, connected? I didn't immediately think of Jim and his, to me, unfunny story. Then one of the other delegates had said about humour being a catharsis, with belly laughs, real laughs, being a release. That's when I thought of Jim! I remembered the tears of laughter rolling down his face and how, as a team, we've discussed they way our young people release their emotions. Anger is the dominant way, but some of these teenage boys cry. I wondered if it wasn't about the story but that when the belly laughs came for Jim, it was about that catharsis of emotion, not just those which were present but those which were buried.

The following day Laura Steckley delivered a plenary session 'Cultures of Warmth, Cultures of Fear: Containment, Touch and Physical Restraint.' It's probably not the best advert to say I tried really hard to not go to this session. Laura teaches on the undergraduate course I'm on and we also work together through the Scottish Residential Child Care Workers Association. I've been blessed with enormous amounts of support and input not only on her specialist topics but in all areas of my own development, both in terms of academia and practice. But, it was just too tempting to miss and for many reasons I'm glad I didn't. I'm especially glad, though, because of Jim. The day before I'd been left realising that perhaps there was an opportunity that I'd missed — that because I was unsure of the story, or not

finding it funny, that I missed the other cues. Then during this session, I knew that I had.

When talking about touch, Laura, in the latter part of the presentation, talked through the dialogue from her research. I remember at the time wondering why there was so much emphasis on the actual verbatim conversations. Then I remembered the tapping of my arm. The emphasis on the voices of the young people and staff helped me make powerful connections to my own practice. I thought of how touch with Jim can be quite subtle. We try to understand this and talk about what he needs. Jim has said that, at times, he initiates a restraint to be held. Sometimes when he's stressed or you can see he's pre-occupied, proximity works and he'll play with your sleeve or watch. So then the tapping of the arm made sense, but for the first time I understood that Jim was not only orchestrating this touch, but that through his continuation of the story and the 'no but Kathleen', he was holding me there. Laura spoke about containment and how our young people give us their emotions, their pain, their experiences so that we can give it back to them in something much more manageable. Looking back I wonder what it was that Jim needed from me that I couldn't see or hear. Did he want me to be the container of his emotions, to share in it and help him make sense of what he was thinking and feeling? An opportunity missed, but one thing's for sure – thanks to John and Laura's way of weaving the academic world into practice, I'm in a better place to recognise it next time.



# Nothing left to subtract

Travis S. Sampson

Kids are funny. They *know* they don't like the taste of something before it even touches the taste buds on their under-sized tongues. I smile at the thought as I chop onions, green peppers, ham and mushrooms into tiny cubes. It's Saturday morning. Omelet day. I separate the ingredients into little piles for each child.

Sam doesn't like mushrooms.

Jacob only wants ham.

Henry will only take mushrooms and peppers and ham, refuses to even smell, nay, *look* at an onion.

I organize the piles. I'm going to put every ingredient into my own omelet. I'm not the biggest fan of mushrooms, but know that an extra vegetable isn't going to hurt me. In fact it can only help me. I know this and decide to eat them all. I also know it isn't my job to force this decision on my kids. Well, they're not really *my* kids, but after spending as much time with them as I do it's sometimes hard not to think of them this way.

I'm a Youth Worker. My job is not to preach and demand, but to educate and support. I am not there to force children into decisions that I think are best for them, but to walk beside them as they make these decisions for themselves. If a child wants only ham in his or her omelet

and doesn't want vegetables it isn't the end of the world. Not life or death. It's his or her choice and, for a child who has probably been ignored, neglected, belittled or commanded for his or her entire life something as simple as choosing only ham can go a long, long way. And so I comply. I do not demand they meet my expectations, but assist them in meeting their own.

I love my job. I love it so much, in fact, that I view the word 'job' as a pathetically lame combination of letters that could not hope to ever adequately describe the life path I have chosen for myself. I work in a secure care facility. What does that mean? Well, we have been outlined in official legislation as, ahem, "a short-term crisis intervention centre."

I know right. Sounds like a load of bullshit.

Basically what we do is try to meet the needs of kids who cannot find the help they need in group-care or other facilities that operate under the watchful eye of the Department of Community Services. My constable-of-a-cousin would refer to the children I work with as, "the most fucked up of the fucked up." I suppose that's true. But 'fucked up' to me sort of assigns blame for the kids' behaviour. As if it is

entirely their fault that they lack impulse control or basic social skills. While it is true (and the basis of all good Youth Work) that every person is, in the end, responsible for his or her actions, it is hard, for me at least, to blame a child for being born to a drug-addicted mother who, instead of love and support, provides only neglect and abuse because she likely knew nothing more than that herself. Where others see a child who refuses to be helped or cared for I, and I believe this should be the case for any worker who's hoping succeed in the field, find it impossible to ignore a child screaming out for help.

After five years in the facility, I have clearly defined my own role in these children's lives. It is my duty to *subtract* the child from his or her behaviour and realize that the two things are separate entities. This, I believe, is the key to successful Youth Work. Many people find this a near impossible feat. Even fantastic Youth Workers encounter youth whose behaviour they cannot separate from the child. I haven't. Maybe someday I will. I hope not. I doubt it. I have worked with a male youth who asked his younger cousin, also male, to masturbate in front of him. I have helped a girl who cut herself so frequently and so deeply that the nurses at the local hospital came to know her by her first name. One young man threw his own shit against his door when he was displeased with the consequences we provided for his actions. I like to think I have seen it all. Perhaps there is a behaviour I could not separate from a child, although, with all my brainpower, I cannot imagine it.

Once I have seven little piles of omelet ingredients, I move out of the kitchen. There should be another worker on the floor with me, but Rachel, one of the casuals on staff, called in sick and Mike, another casual, has to drive from twenty minutes out of town to make it. Besides the kids, for now, I am alone. I walk the sterile hallways of the facility. I have been here, like I said, for five years, but the plain, off-white walls, grey tile floors and buzzing neon lights still make me feel uncomfortable. We do what we can to make the place feel more like a home than a hospital (put the kids paintings on the walls, draw on the wire-enforced glass with washable paint to celebrate upcoming holidays), but the smell and feel of the place still makes me uneasy. We are, however, funded by the taxpayers' dollar and, as the elected officials often tell us in fancy, typewritten documents: Beggars can't be choosers. Or something like that.

I listen to the unnerving echo of my footsteps bounce around me. I will never get used to the sound of this somber march. I enter the common area, which feels a bit more homey with it's plush couches, television sets, video game consoles and area rugs, and take a hard left to the hallway that plays host to the children's bedrooms. There are ten rooms in our facility, but we are currently only housing five children.

"A socialist drain on tax payers hard-earned money!" the right wing belows somewhere from their ivory tower.

Maybe.

But I see the empty bedrooms as just the opposite, a sign that the tax dollars are being put to good use. They are proof that

programs are taking hold. When I started these rooms were full. And there was a waiting list. I feel good about myself, my colleagues, about the entire profession as I pass by the empty rooms that house hollow dresser drawers and naked mattresses. The vacancies are badges that I will wear proudly, validation that all the spit I've soaked up, all the scars I've accumulated and all the I-fucking-hate-you's I've had to endure have actually been worth it. I feel the warmth of serving a purpose greater than myself, but only allow myself a quick taste of it. I'm not walking on water here, after all.

I knock gently on the doors of the kids. I walk into two of the rooms and give Henry and Jacob the gentle shake I know they need to be roused from their slumber. After that I move to the last room.

I don't quite know how to approach the final bedroom. It is home to our newest child and I will be waking him from his first night's sleep in the facility. Should I just knock to wake him? Should I go in and give him a light shake like Henry and Jacob? I am unsure, but I decide that I'll start with a light knock. I don't want to intrude this early in the game. Perhaps a call from the threshold is all he'll need.

Alex is his name. He arrived in the facility yesterday. Some of the other workers are nervous about his arrival. The first reason is the obvious one. He's a big fucking boy. Huge. Actually. He's 13 years old, the youngest our program accepts. But he's bigger than any of the 17 year-old boys that are currently with us. The second reason for the staff's apprehension was born from a story they watched on the news. Before he made his way to us

Alex did something that made him famous. Well, 'local' famous.

Infamous.

Whatever.

I don't watch the news. I don't waste my time. Blood and gore. Assaults and shootings. And always so negative and without proper context or background information. I'd rather watch a Tarantino film. At least he is honest about the fact that what he's showing you isn't true.

The other workers also read Alex's files. I suppose I could have done that, maybe should have done that. But I didn't. I decided quite some time ago to spend a day with each child before I read every incriminating incident report and the countless descriptions of 'challenging' behaviour. It gives me a chance for a fair first impression. I figure I owe each kid at least this much.

So, there I am, approaching Alex's room with all of these noble notions of objectivity and I find that his door is already open, only an inch or two ajar. I am surprised by this, but not overly concerned. This is a secure facility. There are only so many places he can be.

I retrace my steps to the common room. I don't immediately see him, but there is a little nook at the far end of the room that is a sort of porch for the dog kennel.

The dog was my idea.

About a year ago I put forth an informal proposal that was said in jest with little or no hope that it would actually be taken seriously. I suggested we get a dog for the facility. People laughed, but Jim, the director of the facility, didn't. He was intrigued. I'm lucky he was in the room. Well, the kids are lucky, really.

Jim and I discussed it further after my shift that evening.

He asked me if I was serious.

I told him I was.

He asked me why.

I explained that I think it's a lot less work showing unconditional love and affection for a dog than for a human. I told him I thought giving the kids a chance to live with and take of our canine counterpart would develop some positive emotional reactions and foster some concrete skills. I guess I threw enough 'helper' jargon into my spiel to coax Jim into agreement.

We had the dog and a kennel built a week later.

The kids at the centre helped us decide on breed (A mutt that looked like a half-sized German Shepherd,) while we cruised Kijiji ads online. After that we all agreed on a name. Shadow. They were thrilled. So was I. Those kids have moved on from the facility. The workers remain the only constant. As a result, we have all sort of come to see Shadow as one of our own. And I myself, more than the others, grew close with the dog. Perhaps it is my innate human pettiness, but the fact that Shadow was my idea convinced me that he belonged more to me than to anyone else. Funny how us humans attach ownership to things, even other living creatures.

Anyway, I move towards the porch and, sure enough, find Alex sitting down next to the full-length window, knees in arms and face not more than a few inches from the glass. He doesn't react in the least to my entrance.

"Alex," I say. "We're about to eat breakfast. You like omelets?"

He slowly shifts his gaze to me. A huge smile breaks across his face. It seems he is forcing his face into this position, reacting in a way he knows he *should* react, even though he probably doesn't feel the natural need to do so. "What type?" he asked me. His tone is friendly, but as equally rigid as his smile.

"I don't really know," I confess. "I guess you could call them Westerns. We have mushrooms, onions, ham, and green peppers. You can have whichever of those you want, or none of them. It's up to you."

He turns his eyes back towards the glass. Shadow paces on the other side. I can't hear him, but I know he is whimpering, hoping to meet someone new. "That's fine," Alex tells me.

"You're good with all of that?" I confirm.

He nods.

I'm about to walk away, but before I can take my first step back to the kitchen I catch myself. "Do you want to meet Shadow?"

"Is that his name?" Alex asks me without taking his eyes off of the glass.

"That's it," I say. I move towards the door and pull my keycard out from my hip.

Alex stands.

The door beeps and a light on the lock shifts from red to green. So welcoming, are these security doors. Friendly.

Shadow backs up as we enter. I tell him to sit. He does. Alex immediately moves ahead of me, rubs Shadow's head with one hand and scratches under his throat with the other.

"He likes you," I say.

Alex doesn't respond.

I decide that I had better get back into

the kitchen. I think that I left the chopping knife on the counter. It's not that I think the kids are going to uncontrollably stab each other, but all the same. "OK, Al. Let's go eat. We can play with Shadow sometime this afternoon."

Alex doesn't move.

"Al?"

"Why do you call me Al?" he asks me.

"I don't know," I say. "Always looking for a shortcut I guess," I smile at my self-deprecation. "Why? Should I not?"

"No," he says. "I think it's cool. No one calls me it."

I grin at this minor success.

"Can I stay with him while you cook breakfast?" Alex demands and interrupts the mental victory lap I'm taking to commemorate my successful assignment of a nickname.

I pause. My instinct is that it will be fine. But there's something else. I ignore the 'something else,' figure it to be nothing more than the clammy palms of paranoid professional practice grasping for a firm hold on the shoulder of my otherwise confident intuition. The kennel is made of thick steel wiring, like a baseball backstop, and constructed as a full dome. Alex has nowhere to go.

"Sure," I tell him. "I'll be right back." And with that, I turn and head back to the kitchen.

The kids are already there. Some pour orange juice from the fridge I have already unlocked for them. Two huddle over the electric kettle, waiting for it to steam up so they can pour a cup of instant coffee. My eyes immediately search out my chopping knife. There it is. Right where I left it. Maybe the kids didn't notice it. Maybe. But I prefer to think they did and merely

weren't interested in raising hell with it. I move over to it, rinse it in the sink and lock it back up in its drawer.

"No fucking onions, Sean!" Henry reminds me.

"What?" I say. "I didn't catch that."

"Just onions," a pause. "Please."

I chuckle and nod to show my understanding.

"You know I only want ham. Right?" Jacob chimes in.

"I thought it was ham and dog crap," I joke, careful to use the word 'crap' instead of the 'shit' my brain is more comfortable with.

"Ha. Ha," he says sarcastically, but I notice the smile that pulls at his cheeks as he turns back to his cup of instant coffee mix.

Just then Mike, my backup, arrives. "Sorry I'm late, Sean. I came as fast as I could."

"No worries," I assure him. "Thanks for coming at all."

He throws his coat over a chair around the table. "Anything I can do to help?"

I point to the carton of eggs. "Start scrambling them two at a time and fire up the frying pan. We're making omelets. I cut up enough ingredients for you. I'm going to get Alex. He's with Shadow."

"Alex?" Mike says, screws his face.

"He arrived yesterday," I explain. "Him and Shadow are getting to know each other."

"Oh," says Mike, "perfect. I'll take care of this then. Go ahead."

I give him an appreciative slap on the back and head back to Shadow's Kennel. When I get there I find Alex kneeling next to Shadow by the doghouse. He is slowly rubbing the dog's head with one hand and scratching underneath his neck with the

other. I lean against the threshold. “He really does like you,” I tell Alex with a smile.

He doesn’t turn to look at me, keeps rubbing and scratching.

“Alright buddy, time to go inside. We’ve got ice-cold juice and milk. Or coffee if you’re into that.”

I still get no response.

“Alex?”

“I don’t want to go inside,” he says coolly, keeping his eyes fixed on Shadow’s.

I remain patient. “I bet everyone would like to officially meet you,” I say, a subtle suggestion.

“I don’t fucking care about them.”

Fair enough, I think, but I persist anyway. “Do you think you should give everyone a chance before you decide to avoid us?” I ask.

“Is that what you think?” Alex says back to me, still without making eye contact.

He’s smart, this one. “That is what I think,” I tell him honestly.

“Well I don’t fucking care what you think.”

“Fair enough,” I tell him. “Come inside then, you can eat breakfast in your room.”

“I’m staying out here,” he states flatly.

“Shadow needs to be fed soon. We’re going to leave him alone and you can have your room to yourself instead.” I need to show Alex that while he can control whether or not he eats breakfast with the group, he cannot dominate me on all fronts. I hold my hand out to encourage him to get up.

He looks at me now for the first time, his face with a smile spread across it. It is not the forced smile like before, but a genuine one. However, there is something ominous about it. He tightens his grip

around fur on the back of Shadow’s neck, where a mother would bite down on her pups to carry them around. He then squeezes his other hand around the lower mandible of Shadow’s mouth. I take a step forward, alarmed at what Alex’s next move might be. But he’s just bringing the dog’s head in closer, I realize, for a kiss.

He is just bringing the snout closer to his face?

Right?

Shadow whimpers.

I remember another sound filling the air after that. But even as I recall the memory now, I’m not sure whether it was the sickening snap of Shadow’s cervical vertebrae as Alex wrenched his snout violently to the side, leaving his neck at an angle that could be used to define ‘grotesque’ in any dictionary. Or if it was the slap of my own vomit as it crashed to the concrete tiles at my feet.

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# Showing You Care

## The Hawthorne Effect

John Stein

It was in my introductory psychology text—a section about experiments conducted in the late 1920's at the Hawthorne Western Electric Plant in Illinois. The plant assembled telephone equipment for Bell Telephone. Some industrial psychologists from a university were curious about the effects of working conditions on productivity.

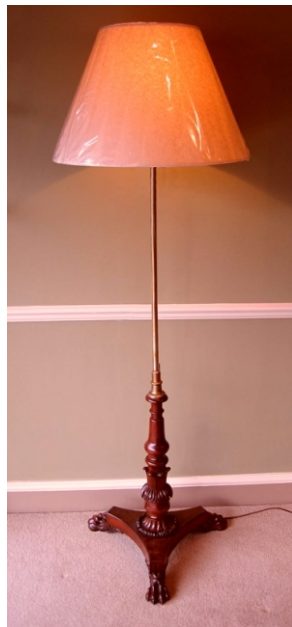
First they quantified the output of the workers on an assembly line. Then they began making changes in working conditions to measure the effects of those changes, if any, on productivity. First, they made changes to the lighting. Productivity went up. Then they made other changes—I don't remember what all they were. Each change they made resulted in an incremental increase in productivity. Finally, they returned things to the way they were and were surprised that, once again, productivity increased. They concluded that it was not improved working conditions that affected productivity, but rather the perception of the workers that someone cared about them and was paying attention to what

they did.

What I learned was that, if I as a manager found ways to improve things for staff, morale improved. Later, I learned that, if I found ways to improve things for the children, then their attitude improved. It's difficult to measure 'output' in residential treatment. Results take a long time,

during which time many things change. There is a turnover amongst the children — there are discharges and new arrivals. There is also staff turnover. (Sadly, staff sometimes change more rapidly than the residents.) It is not possible to control for those changes, so it is most difficult to determine which changes may be responsible for any improvements. Further, it does not seem ethical when changes in the facility or the program seem to be indicated to change only one thing at a time while keeping everything else constant simply to measure the effects of each

change. Our work is not about gathering data for studies; it's about caring for children. For example, when coming into a new program, I liked to change the light-



ing. But I also saw needs to make changes in point and level systems and other policies and procedures. And I didn't think any changes should wait. It wasn't about making changes and measuring outcomes; it was about helping people. Consequently I was never able to measure the effects of any given change.

## Things to improve for the kids

### *Lighting*

There are those who believe that standard fluorescent lighting is problematic and may contribute to or cause symptoms associated with ADHD. I'm one of those people. I like to replace regular cool white fluorescent tubes with daylight or full spectrum tubes. They cost considerably more than standard tubes, but when you change part of the building, such as client activity areas, and leave other areas unchanged, such as staff offices, the difference is dramatic. Within only one or two days, office staff start lobbying administration to have the new lighting in their offices. It was not long before the administration would ask me to upgrade all the lighting. Colors change. Moods brighten. Standard cool white fluorescent tubes produce light that is high in the blue and yellow-green spectrum, low in the red spectrum. Full spectrum or daylight tubes, like natural light, produce all the colors of the rainbow. It is my belief that full spectrum light stimulates a part of the brain in a way that cool white fluorescent lighting does not, so that artificial stimulants such as Ritalin may not be so necessary. We are diurnal animals. We need full daylight, not just a part of it. I

can't prove it. Whenever I changed lighting, I was also making other changes that were clearly necessary, so it was not possible to attribute any improvements to the lighting or anything else. Given the Hawthorne effect, that any change may be perceived as someone caring and paying attention, it is quite possible that changing from daylight to cool white fluorescent tubes might also produce some improvements. I doubt it and never tried. I wasn't conducting experiments, I was running treatment programs.

### *Recreation equipment*

How many programs have I seen where the recreation equipment was not in top condition? How many where it was in deplorable condition? Billiard/pool tables with worn out covers and broken bumpers. Cues with no tips. Ping pong paddles with torn or missing covers. Basketball goals with no nets. Stuff worn out from use rather than misuse or abuse.

When they can't play a proper game of billiards or pool, they find other things to do—dodge ball with the balls, sword fighting with the cues. Ok, they may sword fight with the cues anyway. And it's basketball, not hoop ball. There's quite a difference between shooting at a goal with a net on it and shooting at a hoop with no net. And playing ping pong with proper paddles and playing with paddles of bare wood.

It really doesn't cost much to put some of this stuff back in shape—but it does require effort. And when things are not in good condition, neither are the kids, so the kids require a lot of effort. The extra effort to get things in shape pays off. It



shows the kids that you care. And gradually, things change. Some of these things cost so little that staff can make the changes at their own expense if they cannot get funds from the agency.

#### *Menus*

Got to have dieticians. Got to have menus approved. Some dieticians believe in healthy foods and create healthy menus chocked full of healthy foods. That few kids eat. Other dieticians are creative in developing menus chocked full of healthy foods that kids will eat and enjoy. Is there any reason they cannot have a great steak once in awhile? Or even lobster? Too extravagant? They don't deserve it?

Feed them well. Very well. Throw in a special meal once in awhile. Take them out to eat at a restaurant once in awhile.

#### *Activities*

Kids need excitement. Don't we all. If they don't get it in legitimate or constructive ways, they are likely to create or seek their own. Either by creating some in the program or by running away to find it. Provide some exciting activities. An outing to a go cart track or amusement park. A stimulating hike in the woods. And don't ever make such supervised activities contingent on points or behaviour.

More, having kids visit educational, business, and cultural sites provides them with exposure to many diverse things, improving their knowledge and providing them with a background that facilitates their education. I think part of the problem with kids who are somewhat deprived is that they don't have exposure to things that their classmates take for

granted. Consequently, they have fewer things to which to relate the things they are learning in school. Makes it difficult for them to integrate it. It's as if their minds do not have a place in which to place some of the things they should be learning. More, when knowledgeable and caring staff prepare them for such visits in advance, they know what to expect and what will be expected from them. They behave appropriately. They earn respect and even compliments from people at the place they are visiting. Then get invited to return. A boost to their self esteem. These children are often not used to being well-received and complimented by adults.

Look around. There are many things that can be improved, many of them fairly simple. Adjust the schedule. Change some rules. Minimize some "consequences." (In my experience, consequences usually mean punishment, and punishments are often more severe than necessary.)

### **Things to improve for the staff**

#### *Forms and reports and reporting*

There are always forms and reports and requirements to report. They develop over the years with changing needs and regulations and such. Often there is duplication and old forms still in use in spite of new forms. Often, things can be simplified, forms combined or eliminated, giving staff more time to do other things that are more meaningful, such as spending time enjoying the children.

### *Locks*

I worked in several programs where each door had its own lock and key. Meanwhile, other areas were secured by padlocks, each different. Staff had a huge key ring with all the keys that they passed from one to the other. They had to get the key ring, then fumble through the keys until finding the right key for whatever lock. A real mess in an emergency. Having the locks keyed to a master key system and buying padlocks that are all keyed alike to one key reduces the number of keys to two and allows individual staff members to each have their own keys. It saves them time and trouble and improves their efficiency.

### *Leave policy and time off*

Many agencies I have known, before approving a request for time off, require staff to find someone to work their shift. Good staff often make personal sacrifices for the needs of the children or the agency. They will not leave at the end of their shift if a child is distraught. They will not leave if their replacement is late, or if things are a bit rowdy. I expect these things. I also believe that the agency leadership should be willing to make some sacrifices for staff, granting reasonable requests for time off without question or hesitation, and taking the responsibility for scheduling a replacement, even if it means working the shift themselves.

These same agencies, in order to be sure that staff had taken care of every foreseeable circumstance before leaving for vacation, required so much of staff in the week before they left that they were exhausted by the time they went on vaca-

tion. In such cases, it takes people a few days to 'get into their vacation' as it were. Doesn't leave much time to relax and enjoy when it is only a one week vacation. Then, when they got back, they found such a pile of work that they had to work long hours to catch up and get things in order. They were often more worn out than they were before their vacation.

The only reasonable request for time off is when staff need it. (Good staff will not make an unreasonable request.) Grant time off when they need it. Then keep their work caught up while they're away so they don't come back to a mess and find themselves exhausted immediately upon their return.

### **In Conclusion**

It really doesn't matter what you do, so long as children or staff perceive that you are doing it because you care about them. When they realize that you care, they will often offer suggestions. Listen. When they realize that you listened and see you act on their suggestions, it makes them feel a part of the team. Even when you can't implement a suggestion, taking the time to think about it and getting back with them to explain fully and clearly why you cannot do it lets them know that you listened and considered it carefully. They still feel a part of the team. This applies to both staff and children.

In my experience, most changes are top-down changes, imposed by administration and management, often for their needs or the needs of the agency. Often mandated by funding or regulatory agencies. Decided by management unilaterally, with little or no input from staff or chil-

dren. Staff and children simply have to comply and live with the changes. It appears to them that no one cares. Simply telling staff and children what has become necessary and why and asking them for ideas on how to comply helps to make them feel a part of the team.

Perhaps the most classic example occurred in a large residential program for boys. It had with multiple units on a large campus. Each unit had its own kitchen and cooks. Boys awoke in the morning to the aroma of breakfast cooking. They returned in the evening to the aroma of dinner being prepared. There was interaction between the boys and the cooks. The cooks knew when the boys appreciated their efforts. They got feedback. Consequently, they worked diligently to prepare meals the boys appreciated. They liked doing it.

A new financial director determined that the agency could save money by using a centralized kitchen to prepare the meals, then transporting the food to two cafeterias on different sides of the campus. Staff then had to escort their boys to the cafeteria. The meals were not quite fresh. The cooks who prepared the food were not the people who served it. There was no aroma on the units. More, two vans had to be reserved and equipped for transporting the food, reducing the number of vehicles available for activities. There was no payoff for the children or the staff. The savings did not result in increases in allowances or activity funds for the children, nor increased salaries for the staff. The only benefit was an improved bottom line for administration. The message to kids and staff? You are not all that important.

People who feel a part of the team, including staff and children, work together to help the team succeed. People who do not feel a part of the team...Well, that's where the us vs. them dynamic comes from—staff vs. management, kids vs. staff, 'professional' treatment people vs. child care staff. It's ugly. It's dangerous. And it doesn't have to be that way.

Many things require only minimal money from typically limited agency budgets to improve things for staff and children. Rather, most things require significant effort. But the effort pays off. The initial investment of time and energy results in lower turnover and less effort down the road to recruit, hire, and train new staff. Staff who feel a part of the team do not leave quite so readily. I have found it is worth the effort. It's an investment that pays off in much less effort being required down the road.

More, it can lead to increased revenues. Getting donations is challenging, but people or groups or businesses are much more likely to contribute for specific things for the children, or perhaps even to recognize the staff, then they are to just contribute funds for the 'mission' of the agency. They will raise money for new recreation equipment or activities more readily than for the budget that includes things like salaries and food and office supplies—things either for the children or as a bonus for staff members who need to be commended, such as a gift certificate at a restaurant for dinner for two for valued staff members.

It is fun to improve things. And it pays off.

# International Cooperation between Social Pedagogues

**Benny Andersen**

**S**ocial pedagogues and social educators are a group of professionals that are rarely acknowledged for their actual work and expertise. In many countries, they are often juxtaposed with social workers, or other types of educators, with no regards to the specific field of knowledge and underlying theories that social pedagogues have attained through their education and training. Knowledge and theories distinguish social pedagogy, in theory and in practice, from that of social work and other professions.

I was recently in Moscow where I attended the congress of the Russian Union of Social Workers and Social Pedagogues. The president of the union, Antonina Dashkina, received well-deserved applause when she told the audience that the following day she would meet the Russian president, Mr. Medvedev, with 20 social workers, in order to receive a medal of honor for the work they did during the extreme heat wave and severe forest fires that Russia experienced last summer. The point was that other professions, such as firemen and paramedics, had already received their medal of honor a while ago, and that Ms. Dashkina had

fought to get one for the social workers too. However, I am sure that most of the social pedagogues in Russia were also affected and worked hard too during the heat and the fires-but their work is less visible.

In Denmark, we have a saying, “Only a fool doesn’t fear the sea.” Witty heads have turned this into, “Only a foolish regional politician doesn’t fear the uproar of parents,” referring to the fact that parents are a powerful group, especially parents with children in regular day care. Most people know somebody with their child in either day care or in school; few people know somebody with a child with developmental disabilities or a criminal record. Surely, this is a good thing, but this also means that the social pedagogues working with marginalized groups get less attention, although their work is just as important as any school teacher’s or social worker’s.

So, we must tell our politicians about the work we do and the expertise we have in regards to persons with developmental disabilities, troubled children and youth, and other marginalized groups. We must tell them how we make a difference in terms of assisting them to be a part of society and live their lives in self-determination, citizenship, participation, and inclusion. We must tell people that, although our work may seem invisible, because it is carried out in corners of society that few people ever see or even are aware of, the effects of it are great; and without it, without the professional expertise and assistance that is put into the lives of those persons who for one reason or another are in a life situation where they



can easily fall overboard, our societies would be poor.

As the president of the International Association of Social Educators, AIEJI, my main objective is to make us stronger as a profession, and make us heard. AIEJI ([www.aieji.net](http://www.aieji.net)) was founded in the aftermath of the second world war when the high commissioners of France, Germany, and the Netherlands held a meeting to discuss what to do with the many children and youth left orphaned after the war-how to ensure their education. Soon, many other European countries joined and so, AIEJI was initially created as a joint European project focused on children and youth. AIEJI is French and means "Association internationale des éducateurs de jeunes inadaptes."

Today, AIEJI has grown and also represents people working with persons with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities, and the organization has spread beyond the borders of Europe. One of the means to make us stronger as an organization and to give us a voice is to obtain

NGO-status within both the UN and EU systems. Another important activity is to produce policy papers and discussion papers that define our common professional standards and point out the challenges we face. With this kind of work we can manifest ourselves as a profession with common international standards and a common framework. In concrete, in 2006 AIEJI published the paper "The professional competencies of social educators-a conceptual framework," which sets a common ground for the competencies a social pedagogue must have, and recently published the discussion paper "Working with persons with developmental disabilities-the role of the social educator," which talks about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the challenges it represents to social pedagogues in practice. Through 2011 AIEJI will work on a similar paper regarding the role of the social educator when working with troubled children and youth. Eventually, AIEJI will also collect and produce knowledge in order to point to differences

in policy making, methods, and results.

However, in order to establish AIEJI as an international platform for social educators and social pedagogues we need to gain more support from professional organizations and individual members who are interested in this joint, international collaboration. A great source of enthusiasm and new memberships is the AIEJI World Congress held every 4th year. The congresses are great international events where social pedagogues and social educators from all over the world get a chance to meet. For many of them, it is a unique opportunity to meet fellow colleagues from other countries with whom they can exchange knowledge and professional experiences in their specific field of work. The last congress was in Copenhagen in May 2009. I know that several professional and personal friendships were founded back then and many participants shared their new contacts with colleagues back home who later arranged study trips to go and learn from one another. When this sort of thing happens, it makes me a very happy person because this is the core

of international relations-this is what it is all about: to get to know each other, exchange knowledge, and learn from each other. It is through this we strengthen ourselves as a profession; it is through this we develop as a profession; and it is through this we establish how and why we make a difference.

Therefore, international collaboration is very important. It can take many forms: writing a paper or article together, conducting a survey, going on study trips, taking part in online discussion forums, performing volunteer work in other countries, and so forth. At the very base of it is the inspiration it spurs, the new knowledge it produces, and the feeling of knowing that all over the world there are people working with the same challenges as you, but using other methods to handle them. And from this we can learn, from this we can grow, as practitioners and as persons.

From: *Child & Youth Services*, Vol.32, No. 1, pp.6-8.



# “Something to open on Christmas morning”

**B**efore Christmas a student in my Social Welfare & Community Resources class approached me with this wonderful idea. She felt that everyone should have something to open on Christmas morning including people living in shelters. She proposed that our class gather various items to place in shoe boxes, wrap the boxes in Christmas paper and donate all shoe boxes to the YWCA. The students in this program loved the idea. We all started collecting items such as; hygiene products for women and children, socks, undergarments, mitts, hats, beanie babies, colouring books/pencils, etc. The response from the students was absolutely amazing. We devoted one class to putting these shoe boxes together. Ev-

eryone brought their “goodies” and to avoid chaos everyone had their jobs to do. We put on some Christmas music, wrapped and enjoyed some home made Christmas cookies. This was certainly a memorable experience for all involved. The representatives from the YWCA were very thankful to receive the gifts. We hope to do this again next year and perhaps encourage others around the world to do the same.

**Helen Ramier, S.S.W., B.A., M.S.T., CYC**  
(cert). *Project Lead, Partial Load Faculty, CYC Program Social Welfare & Community Resources, Fleming College*



We're delighted to welcome back to these pages **Nils Ling**, who offers us, month by month, a time of light relief from the horrors of our working lives ...

**nils ling**

# Rage Against The Machines

In an effort to protect my family from the latest workplace syndrome, I went out this week and bought myself a new computer.

This syndrome is called “computer rage syndrome”, and it’s sweeping the world – well, at least those parts of the world where people measure their lives in nanoseconds. “Computer rage syndrome” is what you feel when your computer doesn’t do things the way you want. Maybe it takes a few extra seconds to load a program, or maybe a power bump wipes the memory clean and you lose an hour’s work, or maybe the stupid machine just insists on beating you in Solitaire. But it just won’t behave.

Now, the traditional response to this intransigence is to talk to your computer. Let’s say you have a big report due in an hour, and all of a sudden your computer begins to hack and cough and clutch its hard drive. Generally, you’d start out with gentle persuasion: “Come on, baby. Come on. Just get through this one job ...” Then an urgency creeps in, as the

computer begins slurring its words and staggering: “Oh, don’t do this to me now ...” And when it finally turns over and flops on its back, wiggling its little computer feet in the air, there’s really nothing to be done but yell at it. I have heard computers called a lot of different names, many of which – okay, all of which – are utterly obscene.

Now, yelling at your machine in a crowded office is sometimes very therapeutic - but most people who have worked on a computer for any length of time have at one time or another harboured a secret desire to throw the damn thing out a seventh floor window just to see if it will bounce. And now, according to recent reports, more and more people are doing just that. Or sweeping it off their desks in a burst of anger. Or hitting it with an office chair. And a new syndrome was born. What used to be called “going postal” is now called “Going geek”.

Because this is the New Millennium, and God forbid anyone should actually take responsibility for their actions, somebody



somewhere came up with a name for this kind of behaviour: "Computer Rage Syndrome". So now, what do you want to bet support groups will start popping up, offering twelve step programs: "Okay, step number one - put the baseball bat down". And somewhere, someone will apply for a government grant. (But they won't get it because halfway through the application, their computer will come sailing out the window onto the street below).

See ... none of this ever happened with pencils and paper. I'm not saying computers are a bad thing. But they do spoil us. I've seen people red in the face, yelling at their computer for taking an extra twelve seconds to do a job that a decade ago would have taken six weeks to complete. And those same people go out at coffee break and spend ten minutes waiting in line at Starbucks for a double mocca cappucino with cinnamon sprinkles.

I'll tell you, once artificial intelligence becomes a reality, the computers are going to start yelling right back: "Give me a break, idiot carbon based life form. I'm doing things in here at the speed of light that would make your puny brain explode."

Well, before it comes to that, I decided to alleviate my computer rage and buy a new machine. It's got a million bells and whistles I'll never use and a screen the size of a drive-in movie. I use it mostly to play Battleships.

But you know what? I think there's something wrong with the damn thing. I mean, I'm pretty good at Battleships, but do you think I ever win one single lousy rotten game against this thing? Nooooo.

Pass me that baseball bat. I feel a syndrome coming on.



Ms. Johnson, would you mind ordering me another computer? And you can cancel that call to tech-support.

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# Post Card from Leon Fulcher



## Lake Waikaremoana, New Zealand

January is mid-Summer in New Zealand, a time of school holidays and family camping trips, like Summertime activities everywhere – at the beach or a lake with boating, fishing and water sports thrown in as routine. Our Summer holiday was spent living in a tent for 19 days beside Lake Waikaremoana in the Urewera National Park.



Who said that camping cannot offer comforts?

This National Park is haven for native birds such as Kiwi and Wood Pigeons, along with other flora and fauna. It was created through a 50 year lease agreement with the Maori tribe of Nga Iwi Ngai Tuhoie who hold legal claim to lands used to create the Urewera National Park as it is found today.

Whilst living at the Lake, good fortune let us experience the Lake Waikaremoana Boating and Fishing Association’s Annual Family Fishing Competition. Family groups of fishing people set off before



Lake Waikaremoana Boating & Fishing Association Annual Family Fishing Competition

dawn and returned by 3pm to have their fish first identified as being either a Brown Trout or a Rainbow Trout, the weight and length of each fish and details recorded in the results sheet, alongside family name, age of the person catching the fish and explanation of how they caught it, whether by trolling, spinning or flies.

The Urewera National Park was formally established in 1954 and then extended through the next twenty years



Multiple sponsorships for a family event which started back in 1930!

and is mostly native bush with epic trees and bird life. As we watched the Family Fishing Competition Prize Giving, I was struck by how this event dates from nearly a quarter century before the National Park was created. We spoke with a grandmother who has been participating in the Family Fishing Competition for the past 20 years.



Two young fishermen watch as their trout are weighed and measured.

As we watched the 2012 Annual Prize Giving, it was like watching something from a very rare history book. It was like stepping back in time. They call it Kiwiana here. It got me to thinking about how many children learn to fish – whether in the sea, in a river or stream, or in a lake? How many children do you know who have learned how to fish through family and extended family knowledge and traditions? Did you ever learn to fish?

I was keenly interested in the competition weigh in and measurement process. It became immediately clear that children and young people had been learning the art of trout fishing from master craftsmen and women. Knowledge of this particular lake and the nature of the trout which inhabit it is knowledge held by very few.



An inter-generational family membership waiting for the prize giving

Does it matter I asked myself? Then I remembered that saying which said something like: *“Don’t give me a fish when I am hungry. Rather, teach me to fish and I will be self-sufficient.”*



A young fisherman excited about his prize!

I was struck by the excitement and enthusiasm generated amongst children of all ages. While I fished all day, they brought back fish while I ate sausages. Fishing people are fairly tight lipped about where they caught fish and how. Is it possible to take children or young people fishing where you work? Why not?

Fishing isn’t for everyone but most never know because they’ve never tried it!

## EndNotes



**You may wonder what ecstasies  
and thanksgivings  
have given rise to this  
doubtless wondrous dream;  
It's only that in the store today  
he saw his Mom buy for supper  
that ravishing new ice cream.**

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### Adolescence

“You have a wonderful child. Then, when he's 13, gremlins carry him away and leave in his place a stranger who gives you not a moment's peace. You have to hang in there, because two or three years later, the gremlins will return your child, and he will be wonderful again.”

— Jill Eikenberry

## *On Children*

Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life's  
longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you yet they be-  
long not to you.

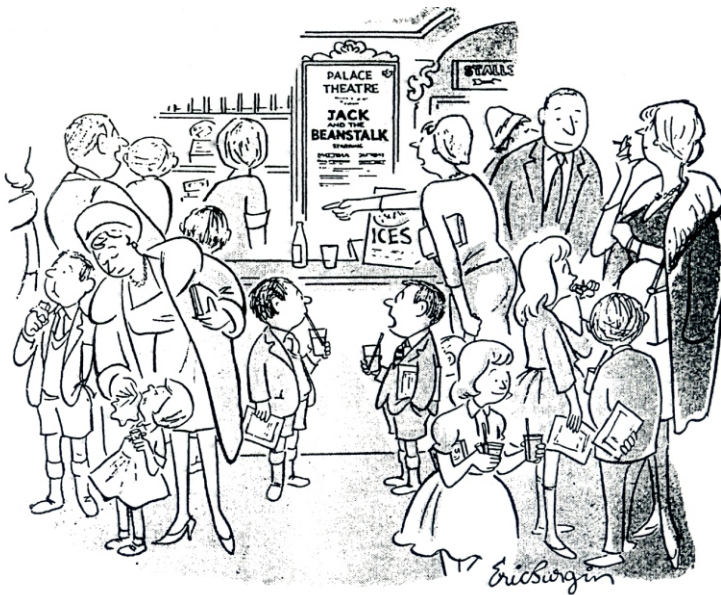
You may give them your love but not your  
thoughts,  
For they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their  
souls,  
For their souls dwell in the house of to-  
morrow,  
which you cannot visit, not even in your  
dreams.  
You may strive to be like them,  
but seek not to make them like you.  
For life goes not backward nor carries  
with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your chil-  
dren as living arrows are sent forth.  
The archer sees the mark upon the path  
of the infinite,  
and He bends you with His might  
that His arrows may go swift and far.  
Let your bending in the archer's hand be  
for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,  
so He loves also the bow that is stable.

— Kahlil Gibran

We can learn something new  
anytime we believe we can.

— Virginia Satir



“Well if it *has* got a message, it’s not getting through to me!

“We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.”

— Plato

“If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.”

— Carl Jung

“Children are entitled to their otherness, as anyone is; and when we reach them, as we sometimes do, it is generally on a point of sheer delight, to us so astonishing, but to them so natural.”

— Alastair Reid



“In every real man a child is hidden that wants to play.”

— Friedrich Nietzsche

“Don’t worry, the wife won’t be back from her macramé, or origami, or whatever the hell she’s studying these days.”



“Children will not remember you for the material things you provided but for the feeling that you cherished them.”

— Richard L. Evans

“Frankly, I think he over-disciplines those animals of his.”

## information

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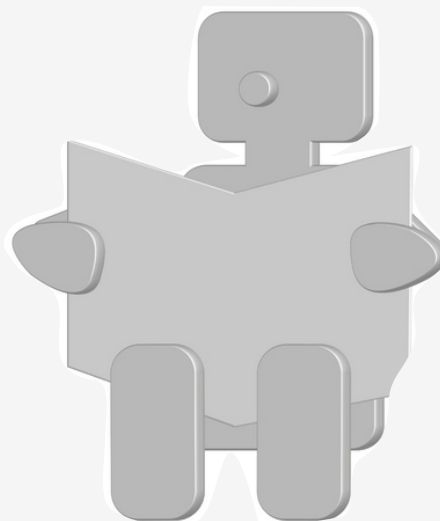
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