CYC-Online

FOR THOSE WHO LIVE OR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ISSUE 155 • JANUARY 2012

ISSUE 155: JANUARY 2012

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2012 — A New Year Year

Well, here we go again. Another new year for many – and not so for many others. So, for those for whom it is a new year starting – it really is arbitrary, isn't it? – it seems appropriate to take a moment to reflect on past and future from, of course, the perspective of present.

The past year was a 'tougher than usual' year for many people as the economic turmoil has impacted on programmes, services, staff, families and young people. Some programmes and services we used to know have disappeared – some say that is because the easiest place to cut is in areas where people have no voice – and who has less voice than those in need? So what happens? Well families and young people suffer more of course. Whether it be in the area of basic support or sophisticated treatment, the reduction or elimination of services hits directly at the most needy.

As programmes and services reduce, staff and their families are also impacted (another group with little voice), with breadwinners becoming unemployed, or working less hours, and so their families also suffer the outcome, some say, of the greed and selfishness of those who already have more than they need. As the old song goes, 'the rich get richer and the poor get poorer'.

But everything wasn't bad last year, of course. CYCs around the world continued to build connections and other CYCs continued to promote an appreciation of the field (for example, the folks in the USA who are behind the "Thank a Youth Worker Day" which they have celebrated in the first week of November have been in touch with us and we have talked about uniting that day with the International Child & Youth Care Workers' Week which we have always celebrated in the first week of May and we hope that soon — before May — we can pass on to you all the information about that). Still others continued to work hard to do more with less – and did so effectively. Such is the remarkable resilience of the people in our field. Caring people, caring.

Here at CYC-Net we have been supported by a Board of Governors, gradually becoming more active, who help us think about how to move forward, how to evolve CYC-Net as we, the olding editors, slowly move to the back rooms – wait! Not yet! But in time – and so we need to prepare for the future and we have a Board which is helping us to do so. It gives us some reassurance to know there are others caring about this 'child of ours'.

And it seems more and more people are expressing that they care about CYC-Net through subscribing to CYC-Net financially. Look here and you will see the many people and organisations which have helped keep CYC-Net viable this past year — seriously, please do go there and see the list of wonderful folks who have kept CYC-Net available

for all of us this past year. Some people chose to make monthly subscription payments, some annual, some large, some small – people doing what they can afford, the way they can afford to do it. We are grateful to all of you!

Next year holds promise as well – well, it is the new year, so one is entitled to indulge in a little hopefulness. As we see signs of positive things – and as you all share with us the positive, hopeful things that you encounter – we will share them with everyone else. We can, after all, become a 'good story' site, couldn't we?

On that note, there is an interesting event shaping up in Paisley Scotland, sponsored by Kibble Education and Care Centre (www.kibble.org). On March 21st, 2011, they are hosting a one day International CYC Conference entitled *Innovations and Inspirations*. It looks like many CYCs from many different countries will be there for that day – and here is a really exciting thing – all the conference presentations will be recorded for sharing via CYC-Net – now there's a gift. Stay tuned – as we get more information we will share it here.

So, thanks for all the support over the past year. We hope we will continue to be worthy of that as the new year unfolds. And if you can think of ways we might be more useful, please let us know.

Thom & Brian

Commandment Nine: Don't Rely on the School System

Gerry Fewster

Learning and the Self

Throughout the preceding articles in this series I've argued that the creation and expression of the Self is the central organizational and motivational force in our lives. From conception onwards, this inner sense of who we are draws our physiological, emotional and cognitive resources into its service, urging us to explore our qualities on the inside and carve out a place for ourselves in the world we share with Others. Given the support of our early caretakers and teachers, the Self becomes a place where information from the outside world mingles and integrates with what we know on the inside, creating a foundation for learning that keeps us solidly at the center of our own lives. In this way, our thoughts, feelings and actions become expressions of this integration – our own integrity if you like. Whatever might be happening on the outside, we come to know that we have the resources to create our own life in our own way – to act on our own behalf, take responsibility for our actions and create relationships in which we can become known, accepted and loved, for who we *really* are.

Well, this is the theory. It's also a very idealistic statement. In reality, very few of us were unconditionally welcomed into this world by parents and teachers who

recognized us as unique and separate beings with the inherent wisdom and ability to choose our own way of being in the world. To some extent, most of us found ourselves unseen and struggling to become what others wanted us to be. This doesn't mean these significant adults didn't care for us, love us, or have our best interests in heart and mind. It simply means that very few of them were supported in discovering and expressing the development of their own sense of Self – so how could they pass this wisdom on to their children, students and clients?

The good news is that, while our childhood may have fallen short of the above ideal, most of us received enough love and support to give ourselves what we didn't get during those early years. If we stop to listen, we can still hear that stifled voice on the inside urging us on to be who we really are and, deep down, we know we have what it takes to become the creative authors of our own lives. The not-so-good news is that the same can't be said for kids who come to the attention of helping professionals. In many cases, their inner voice has long-since been silenced and they find themselves struggling to cope with the incessant demands and expectations of an inhospitable world. Understanding how things came to be this way is our professional responsibility. Finding ways to bring the lost Selves back into the action is our professional challenge.

THE TWO ARENAS

1. Home is where the heart Is

In order to remain on course, the fledgling Self must somehow navigate through two critical and hazardous arenas – otherwise know as "home" and "school."

In the first instance, we now have compelling evidence to suggest that this journey begins well before birth and the initial direction is set through the relationship with mother. Over the first year of life, infants learn about what the world has to offer and what must be done to ensure their survival at the most basic level. If they are offered unconditional caring and love, the emerging Self moves forward with confidence and without fear. If caring and love are strained or absent, the Self is abandoned as the infant attempts to provide whatever the world seems to want. If caring and love are replaced by neglect or abuse, the Self creates its own defensive armor as a protection against a hostile world. In both cases, the agenda of the Self is replaced by the infant's overriding need to simply survive.

The more this pattern becomes entrenched, the retrieval and revival of the Self becomes increasingly difficult. In our profession we are often amazed by how kids can learn to survive in even the most diabolical settings, thereby contributing to the illusion that the family is somehow

working in the best interests of its members. Practitioners often refer to this quality as "resilience" and seek to strengthen the youngsters' defenses. But the most primary need of the Self is to be seen and heard — not to be hidden away behind yet another protective layer. This is one of the many reasons why we in child & youth care have come to view relationships as the heart and soul of our work. Only through a close and trusting relationship will a fragile Self take the risk to become known to another Self. Only then is it possible to build strength from the inside-out.

Just for the record, I'm not only talking about kids in trouble. In fact, I'm convinced that there's an element of this dynamic in most of our lives. Just ask yourself the question, "What did I have to do to 'survive' in my family?" and make a list. Now ask yourself, "In what ways did these strategies serve to take me away from who I *really* am and what I *really* wanted to do? If you find nothing to report, you are one of a rare breed. If you can identify self-defeating patterns that continue to influence your adult life and relationships, there's work to be done. So get on with it – it will not only serve you but also the kids with whom you work.

In the pre-school years, the Self is seeking answers to the essential questions: "Am I wanted?" – "Am I loved" – "Do I have a place here?" During infancy, the answers are not received in words and translated into thoughts; they are sensed and experienced in the body. We are talking here about the deepest level of the Self, the foundation upon which subsequent self images and thoughts will be constructed. If this foundation is solid and accessible, it will evolve into an integrated understanding of Self that can move purposefully and confidently in the world. If the foundation is flimsy or inaccessible the unsupported core self will withdraw from the action, leaving the child to create an image of self from the appraisals of significant others. What they present to the world is not who they are but who they believe they should be. 'False Selves' constructed in this way may look solid but their dependency upon the outside world for sustenance and affirmation leaves the individual constantly seeking affirmation from others in order to feel recognized, accepted and worthy. Because there is no internal core to internalize the external messages, however, such feedback is never enough. No matter how powerful and successful the person may become, his or her achievements are for other others and the inside will remain empty.

Working relationally with children at the core self level requires considerable understanding and patience. What needs to be understood is that the missing element is deeply rooted. Positive feedback may appear to reinforce acceptable behaviors, increase self-esteem and enhance relationships, but unless the hidden and protected Self is brought into the equation this approach will only serve to increase the youngster's dependency on external rewards and contingencies. By the same token negative feedback will simply confirm what the kid already believes – he or she is empty and worthless. The challenge for professional practitioners is to find ways to encourage these youngsters to turn their attention inward – to slowly

open up the channel to the silenced voice. And this is where the patience comes in. The journey inward is not generally seen to be a very attractive proposition and the pathway is certainly beset with hazards. The secret is to move slowly and sensitively, accepting and reflecting whatever lies in store. If you're interested in how do this, I refer to my earlier piece – *Commandment 6*.

2. Self-less Schooling

Beginning school usually coincides with a critical phase of cognitive development – a time when objects become separate entities, constructs replace fantasies and ideas are created from complex associations — perhaps it was planned this way. Kids who have established a solid core sense of Self are ready to receive and process complex information about the world without losing themselves along the way. What they know and experience on the inside is important to them and remains a constant point of reference. They are motivated from the inside-out, pursuing their own inherent curiosity, taking in information, assimilating what fits, and questioning, or rejecting, what doesn't. In short they are highly participatory self-motivated learners ready to explore the world around them. They should be outstanding students participating in a stimulating and respectful learning environment.

Unfortunately, public school systems don't usually see things this way. For whatever reason, most operate on the principle that learning is essentially an 'outside-in' proposition that must be imposed on a reluctant and potentially unruly congregation. Beginning with the 'basics,' information is presented in the form of rigid curricula that is blatantly unresponsive to the particular interests and sensitivities of individual learners – so much for curiosity. It is generally delivered in packages, as facts to be learned and regurgitated, rather than possibilities to be considered and questioned – so much for internal integration. In the interests of efficiency and consistency, every effort is made to ensure that the recipient's internal experiences don't interfere with the objectivity of the enterprise – so much for Self involvement.

In effect, the Self is systematically removed from the learning process and

placed in cold storage at a time when it most needs to interact with the fascinating world of ideas and abstractions. In its place we have a learning system designed to encourage kids to compete with one another for external appraisals and rewards. Only those with the most solid core sense of Self survive this assault without the loss of self-direction; the others will be pulled off base and left to flounder in a whirpool of academic flotsam and jetsam. Within the confines of the classroom, it's highly unlikely that their teachers will ever want to know about how students feel about their predicament. It's all about performance now and any problems not directly associated with that objective can be referred to the Counseling Department.

The more teachers, counselors and parents focus their attention on academic achievement and behavioral compliance, the more the essential developmental needs of the Self are ignored or repressed. And it doesn't get any better as time goes on. Step by step, the system sorts out the successes from the failures and slots them into their assigned categories on the performance scale. For those who defy such classifications, a growing list of alternative labels is readily available to assist in the processing: ADHD, Attachment Disorder, Oppositional Defiance Disorder and — are you ready for this one — School Refusal Disorder are just a few of the concocted options. For a growing number of kids, such labels are being offered these indelible identities as a replacement for what they are being so tragically denied – the opportunity to become who they *really* are in a society that *really* cares.

Is there any wonder so many kids are displaying their discontent about being imprisoned for six tedious hours, five days a week in these oppressive institutions. Acting-out, dropping-out, bullying, gang-warfare, apathy, drug abuse and violence, are all symptomatic of a system that has lost all meaning for those who are caught in its clutches with no way out. And it's getting worse. As our social, economic and environmental woes escalate, this archaic conspiracy we call education becomes increasingly embedded in the decay. For more and more kids, the future offers the dismal prospect of being unemployed on a planet that can no longer sustain the illusions that created the mess in the first place. Reactionaries cry out for schools to go back to basics and teach the old values that once supported the illusions of a world that never really existed. But, however hard they might try, they are fighting a losing battle against a generation that no longer buys into the mythology. We can drug them, incarcerate them or distract them with false promises, but the days of unquestioning obedience are coming to and end. Thank God!

A Child & Youth Care Response

1. Don't harbor the illusion that the schools share your perspective. Even if individual teachers seem to be on your side, they are part of a system that advocates the opposite and demands allegiance.

2. Rather than commit to collaborating with the system, do whatever you can to

remediate its impact. Begin by offering kids an opportunity to share whatever they experience on the inside as they sit at their desks, walk the halls or play with their classmates. In other words, invite and encourage them to bring the Self and school experiences into your time together. Be a model by bringing your own Self fully present and be curious, compassionate and non-judgmental in listening to whatever they have to say. And mirror, reflecting back what you have seen heard and felt (see Commandment 6). Remember this is what all kids need and, in time, the lost voice will begin to speak – guaranteed.

3. Work with parents and caregivers to make sure that they understand the youngster's experience beyond, "So what did you do in school today?" It's important for significant adults to know that this is a critical developmental time – particularly in the early years, when the child's sense of Self and identity is in its most formative stages. Their responsibility is to a child, not to a 'student.'

4. Encourage parents and caregivers to visit the school – not simply to talk to the teacher but to sit in the classroom and take in the experience first hand. Facilitating parent-teacher communication can be an effective strategy but keep a close eye on these relationships. It's so easy for parents to be drawn into an alliance with the expectation they will become the teacher's representative in the home. It is absolutely critical that they remain focused on what their child is experiencing rather that what the school is expecting.

5. If you are part of a team that includes the classroom teacher, take it upon yourself to promote the child's perspective – without disclosing details of your regular reflective sessions. It isn't your job to promote the academic agenda, even if you believe that scholastic achievement has an impact on self-esteem.

6. The above statement is particularly true for Child & Youth Care practitioners who work alongside teachers in the classroom. Even if you find yourself working with arithmetic or spelling, keep in mind that your primary concern is with the child's experience and well-being. If this puts you in the position of advocating on behalf of the child, then so be it. But always keep in mind that the teacher is in charge of his or classroom and your place their depends upon your mutual respect and collaboration.

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

My Hope for 2012

Kiaras Gharabaghi

I guy can hope; at least I think we ought to accept the premise that it is better to have hope than to expect misery and disaster. I don't quite know what it is, but I have high hopes for this coming year, Euro-crisis and bizarre American Presidential elections notwithstanding. So here are my top 10 hopes for 2012 that relate to child and youth care practice.

1. I hope that more practitioners than ever before will have an opportunity to connect with practitioners from other countries, be that by attending conferences such as the International/Canadian Child and Youth Care Conference in Alberta in October 2012, or by actively participating in the CYC-Net discussion forum, or by connecting with local programs and services while vacationing overseas.

2. I hope that we will bear witness to the disappearance of the very last point and level system in any residential program anywhere in the world.

3. I hope that the Isibindi Model of community-centered child and youth care practice pioneered by the NACCW in South Africa will be considered for replication in many other places, including Canadian regions characterized by the on-going injustices imposed on the Aboriginal Peoples of this land.

4. I sincerely hope that child and youth care practitioners who aren't very good at their job will give serious consideration to a career change.

5. I hope that we will be able to convince institutional administrators to proceed with graduate degree programs in child and youth care practice in multiple locations, notably in South Africa and in Toronto.

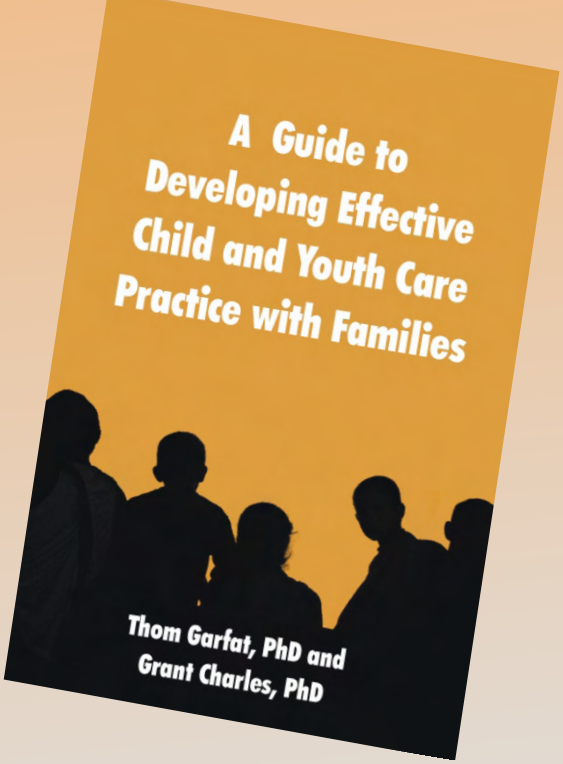
6. I hope that the rise of youth voices this year will transcend tokenism and translate into youth choices and decision-making.

7. I hope (really, really a lot) that all young people around the world will have access to nutritious food every day, and that all child and youth workers around the world do at least one concrete things to make that happen.

8. I hope that my good friend Pat from Burlington, himself one of the best child and youth workers ever, will call me in January and buy me lunch.

9. I hope that governments around the world will stop talking about children's rights, and investing in children, and children as the future. I would prefer they lied about something else.

10. On December 31, 2012, I hope to come across a young person in care, slightly impaired, a little disheveled, and when I ask him how he is doing, he will say "Man, it's been a good year".



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THE ENGLISH RIOTS AS A COMMUNICATION

Winnicott, the antisocial tendency and public disorder

Adrian Ward

This lecture is based on two chapters in the book:
Broken Bounds. Contemporary reflections on the antisocial tendency.
Reeves, C. (ed.) London, Karnac Books, 2012.

In the middle of the summer of 2011, an extraordinary whirlwind of public disorder swept briefly through London and a number of other English towns and cities. These 'riots' were apparently triggered by conflict in Tottenham between police and the friends and relatives of a young man who had been shot dead by police, although many questions were left unanswered as to what else may have contributed to the rapid rise and fall of this disorder, either in terms of broader social and political discontent, or in terms of the psychology of crowd and individual behaviour.

In this paper I want to promote debate about the extent to which these 'English riots' may have been an expression of the antisocial tendency, and the extent to which they may have expressed other aspects of societal anxiety about order and disorder.

I will begin with a brief résumé of some key points in Winnicott's account of early development, leading to a discussion of his views on the antisocial tendency and on 'delinquency as a sign of hope'.

1. The Antisocial tendency: its origins and development

Winnicott on infant development and ego-integration

In simplified terms, Winnicott saw the infant at birth as not yet having a formed ego but of being a 'bundle of instincts' and impulses, including 'primal fears' such as the fear of going to pieces or falling forever (Winnicott, 1965, p.58).

The baby has a natural tendency towards growing and maturing, and in the vast majority of cases this happens through the loving devotion of the parent, normally the mother, who holds the baby's experience together in a way which ultimately enables the baby to hold him- or her-*self* together through establishing an ego. This is the process which he called ego-integration, literally the bringing together of bits of experience and awareness, bodily and mental, conscious and unconscious, into a relatively organised and stable whole.

What is most critical in this process is that the mother enables the baby to thrive within this state of absolute dependence, through providing what Winnicott calls a *good-enough* environment – meaning that the mother doesn't have to be perfect or to get it right every time, but does have to provide an overall good enough experience which the baby can internalise and use as the basis for a fundamentally healthy orientation towards both self and others. It is this process of ego-integration which is the foundation of the individual's subsequent mental health.

Building on this early experience the baby very gradually develops out from this relatively short time of total dependence into a more autonomous and rather less dependent existence, as he or she develops the capacity to relate healthily with others in their environment, firstly within the family and then beyond into the outside world. This second stage in the maturational process is the foundation of the child's growing ability to relate with the social world.

If the very earliest experience does not work well enough, and the baby is unable to form a sound relationship with the mother for whatever reason, the capacity to develop a secure ego is undermined and the child may be left prone to those original primal fears and anxieties, unable to relate positively and securely with parental figures and thus without a sound basis on which to relate to the social world in which he has to live. Alternatively the baby may cope with the ever-present chaos and fears by developing a false self, built upon compliance and equally unsound as a basis for relationships.

These are most serious propositions and much of Winnicott's work deals with the consequences of such early distortion or disruption of experience, and with the ways in which therapeutic experience at a later stage may help to repair the damage. His focus on regressive emotional states, for example, deals with the way in which if we have had an early failure of experience we will, when under stress in later life, tend to regress emotionally to the point at

which things went wrong, in an unconscious attempt to re-live and hopefully re-work the experience towards a better outcome.

He also makes a critical distinction between what he terms *privation* and *deprivation* (Winnicott 1958). Privation refers to the situation just described in which those very earliest needs have not been met, such that the child is just unable to develop an ego and may be prone to psychosis and other related states. Deprivation, on the other hand, refers to things going wrong at a slightly later stage, when the child has made a secure enough beginning but when some subsequent and serious failure in care or experience leaves the child with a sense of incompleteness, inadequacy and personal insecurity. These feelings, often held unconsciously, may develop into a more long-lasting sense of yearning for what the child once had, however fleetingly and however unconsciously, but of which he/she has then been deprived – and perhaps later still he or she will become more troubled (or troubled again) by this deprivation.

The antisocial *tendency*

Since the theme of this paper is the anti-social tendency one might expect that we will be focusing on those children whose earliest start in life has been so disastrous and who may be incapable of sustaining themselves in relation to their own mental processes and especially in relation to other people. However, Winnicott was always precise, though sometimes quite idiosyncratic, in his terminology, and he reserved the term the anti-social *tendency* for a specific scenario.

The first thing to be clear about is that he sees the antisocial tendency as being universal: in a refreshingly 'normal' way he acknowledges that every child has, in effect, both social and antisocial tendencies. At this point I must ask those readers whose own childhood was without blemish to 'look away now' – those who never deliberately swore, broke anything, shouted at their dear mother or pushed their sibling off his or her perch from time to time. Winnicott's point is that, as he says:

> 'A normal child, if he has confidence in father or mother, pulls out all the stops. In the course of time he tries out his power to disrupt, to destroy, to frighten, to wear down, to waste, to wangle and to appropriate. Everything that takes people to the courts (or to the asylums, for that matter) has its normal equivalence in infancy and early childhood, in the relation of the child to his own home. If the home can stand up to all that the child can do to disrupt it, he settles down to play.' Winnicott, 1984 p.115

Not just to play, of course, but to live a life, though for Winnicott the capacity to play was of enormous importance. And naturally this process of challenge and reconciliation is not a one-off process but a repeated set of tests and challenges through which the child needs to establish what the boundaries of self and autonomy really are – and each time the boundaries expand a bit as the child grows up, the testing out may have to be repeated. So long as appropriate boundaries are there, offering both a sense of being held but

also of the potential for further growth and development, the antisocial tendency remains simply that – the capacity for challenge and perhaps 'devilment', for independent thought and maybe also for creativity – though Winnicott finds the roots of that more in play.

Winnicott also had much to say about the role of the father in terms of providing clear boundaries and the security within which the original relationship with mother may flourish. Of course patterns of family and societal expectations have changed enormously since Winnicott's day, and around gender roles in particular, so these stereotyped distinctions between maternal and paternal roles may need re-examining. What remains unchanged, however, is the need for boundaries as the limits of love and relationship are necessarily challenged.

However, if the child's challenges don't meet any or enough resistance, if the boundaries are not sufficiently holding but are either absent or on the other hand too rigid, then the story is quite different – the child is left unclear, unheld, and without the sense of safe autonomy and personal freedom which should have come from living within a secure relational framework. The instinct and need for boundaries and for the security which they offer remains, however, and the child's search for these emerges in other forms.

In the first place this search for boundaries may be shown in the family, and in the form of stealing, disrupting, or doing other things which will draw attention to himself, giving him some sense (however negative) of agency in the world. But if the boundaries are not found in the family, these same behaviours may emerge at school or out on the street. As Winnicott says:

> 'The antisocial child is merely looking a little farther afield, looking to society instead of to his own family or school to provide the stability he needs if he is to pass through the early and quite essential stages of his emotional growth' Winnicott, 1984 p.116

It is as if, in Jan Abrams's words, 'the individual is searching for an environment that will say no – not in a punitive way, but in a way that will create a sense of security' (Abrams 1996 p.54). This is largely an unconscious search of course, in which the child is repeatedly driven to seek out something which is instinctively felt to be missing.

Delinquency as a sign of hope

Here we come to the central element in Winnicott's thesis, which is summed up in his phrase 'Delinquency as a sign of hope' (Winnicott 1967). The argument is that the antisocial tendency is found in children who *have* had a good enough start but for whom things have not developed so well from there on – so they are left with the tantalising sense that things could be better but that they don't consciously know *what* could be better or how to achieve that.

This is why the initial appearance of delinquency in the form of the anti-social tendency is seen as a sign of hope – because there is an implication in the child's actions that they instinctively know that things are not right for them, that things could be different and better – and that

indeed they once were different and better.

These antisocial acts can now be read as an unconscious expression of the need to go back to that lost state of security and of feeling held. Such a child's greatest need is to encounter the metaphorical enclosing arms of a loving boundary – one which will certainly say no, but which will do that without taking retribution or causing further damage, one which will hear the communication behind the act, and offer a response which reaches the need hidden within the delinquent act.

This was and still remains one of Winnicott's most remarkable and profound insights, and one which has had considerable impact for better or worse. We all know about the public thirst for retribution in relation to delinquency – it was certainly unleashed after the riots – and how important it is to be able to articulate a different position.

So when trying to make sense of antisocial behaviour we always need to ask ourselves what a given delinquent act signifies – why *that* act rather than another, why *now*, why *this* young person was in this situation at that time and so on, what they may have been hoping for. There is a whole spectrum of the antisocial tendency, which is why the term 'tendency' is so rich and so apt.

It will sometimes be the case that there is some particular symbolism in the antisocial act – and for instance Winnicott makes a clear distinction between stealing as a form of seeking love and destruction as a way of testing the environment's capacity to tolerate. But there may be more significance in terms of the quality of longing or a deeply hidden sense of loss and deprivation which the act indicates – and which it may equally evoke in others. What is critical for the young person is that the act needs to convey something to someone in a form which will be heard. If it is unheard it simply remains an act; if it is heard it realises its potential as a communication.

Many minor antisocial acts will be heard and contained within the family, many of them within the school or other institutions, but if this does not achieve what the child needs, the antisocial tendency spreads out into society as a whole, with stealing, petty vandalism, drug taking & drunkenness and everything else which follows. And unfortunately, the further it spreads beyond those who do know and have any relationship with the child, the less likely it is that the act will be heard as a communication and the more likely that it will evoke a harsh punitive response from society and its representatives.

This is where the antisocial tendency begins to turn into real delinquency: if the hoped-for communication does not develop, because the act is either ignored or is read as solely negative rather than partly positive, things become more serious, and reactions harden on both sides:

> 'By the time the boy or girl has become hardened because of the failure of communication, the antisocial act not being recognised as something that contains an SOS, and when secondary gains have become important, and great skill has been achieved in some antisocial activity, then it is much more difficult to see (what is still there, nevertheless) the SOS that is a signal of

hope in the boy or girl who is antisocial'.
— Winnicott 1967, p. 90

So we have moved from something hopeful to something much less hopeful although it is essential to recognise the point added in parenthesis here – that the hope is still there. It is that hidden hope and the confused and confusing signals which it sends out, that we will need to seek out when trying to help these young people. This is an approach, then, which encourages us always to look for the need behind the behaviour, for the communication hidden within the act.

2. The antisocial tendency and public disorder

If we accept Winnicott's argument that every child is likely to show signs of the antisocial tendency as part of their innate need to test the boundaries of their environment, we can perhaps envisage the dilemmas of public order and disorder at least partly in terms of the task of the holding environment. In these terms we can read some of the spontaneous wild behaviour of young people and others on the street as equivalent to the young child's need to try out his "power to disrupt, to destroy, to frighten, to wear down, to waste, to wangle and to appropriate" (Winnicott, 1984, 115). If such bids for power (in children) are handled too harshly or in a spirit of retaliation **they** may either be temporarily suppressed or they may escalate into something more damaging – and likewise on the street; – while if they are treated too leniently or with too *little* concern, they may also escalate (in either context). The point is for there to be a healthy and if necessary conflictual engagement, in which the strong feelings on both sides are expressed and perhaps acted out, but which can then often lead to some resolution through the renegotiation of relationships. The child expressing antisocial behaviour is seen as unconsciously seeking a suitably containing response which will recognise their growing potency but will also provide the next appropriate level of response and containment.

As we have seen, however, where the antisocial tendency is not effectively engaged with, there are real dangers of escalation, although in the 'on the streets' scenario, such escalation may quickly find expression through more distorted means, in which the behaviour may seem to become less focused and more 'meaningless', and because effective communication has broken down, it may well emerge in the form of more serious violence and destruction.

It is through this lens of the task of responding to the antisocial tendency that we will now attempt to read the 'riots'

Social or antisocial rioting

When we apply this approach to the recent riots, a number of questions arise.

Firstly, is rioting antisocial? It is certainly seen as such when groups go wild and ransack their neighbourhoods; this is 'antisocial' in the sense that it is experienced by society as a direct attack. It is clear that most of the communities affected by the 2011 riots experienced them as pro-

foundly antisocial in that they seemed to challenge and subvert many of the commonly accepted social values in these communities. Such behaviour is not necessarily antisocial in Winnicott's sense, though, unless we have evidence that individuals are motivated in part by an unconscious wish for containment and a creative response. If we are to be clearer, we need to understand more about crowds and mobs and how they behave.

It is likely that within a large unruly crowd there will be a variety of subgroups of shifting composition and diverse motivations, and expressing a wide range of emotions (Waddington 1992). Some participants may be taking (or attempting to take) a lead, perhaps implicitly '*crying havoc'*, which was the signal given to the military in the Middle Ages to direct troops to 'pillage and chaos'. Others in turn may be following such a lead, although research does seem to indicate that 'leadership' in these situations may be extremely fluid, and very different from the media's fantasy of identifiable and powerful 'ringleaders' egging the crowd on either from the front or from the side-lines. Other participants still will be further out on the fringes, excited by the mayhem and perhaps greedy for the spoils though maybe not actively looting or burning. This last group may be engaged in what has been called'recreational rioting'(e.g. Jarman *et al* 2001), but I would suggest that it iswithin this group that we will find another sub-group of those letting rip with their antisocial tendency: pushing hard at the limits, but perhaps unconsciously hoping for those limits to be re-established so that they can actually feel safe again. They are perhaps wanting to be stopped, though not necessarily to be caught. In the English riots it is evident from the later charges that the ripples spread out much further, beyond those actively participating, as some were charged with receiving looted items (in some cases supposedly unwittingly) although not present at the events.

Secondly, how do we connect – and distinguish between – individual 'disorders' and public 'disorder'?

We cannot easily assume that each individual makes a conscious or rational decision as to their level of involvement in this kind of atmosphere. Levels of emotion run very high and change very quickly in these situations, and people may move in and out of 'trouble' rapidly. Early but very influential theories of crowd behaviour in terms of 'contagion' (e.g. Le Bon, 1891) suggested that individuals tend to subsume or even lose their identity into the mass of the crowd, although more recent views (e.g. Reicher, 2001; Reicher *et al*., 2004) suggest more of a process of identification and re-identification into emergent and shifting groupings,through which people find what they believe to be their place in the crowd - though this may not remain a fixed place for long, because 'the crowd' is not a fixed quantity or in a fixed location.

Trouble attracts the troubled, however, and public disorder will hold a magnetic power for some of those who feel disordered within. It is hardly surprising that when disarray and destruction breaks out on the streets, some people will identify readily with the unfolding chaos and may even feel that their 'moment has come',

and that at last they have the opportunity to express in a public setting whatever their private distress and disturbance, or wish for containment, may be. Moreover, because others appear to be doing the same, these individuals may imagine that they can express their feelings with impunity – perhaps because they now see themselves as 'the group' rather than as solo individuals, and thus (at a fantasy level) immune from detection or prosecution. The wearing of hoodies seems to feed straight into this fantasy – combining the effect of anonymity and uniformity with the imagined power of the magic cloak of invisibility.

Far from being the agitators and trouble-makers, however, these storm followers may be the most vulnerable of all, because their hold on the rational and the individual self may be much less secure than others. They may be the most prone to getting 'carried away' by the excitement, and indeed to being tipped over into greater personal distress. (We do not yet know whether levels of psychiatric referrals changed in the immediate aftermath of the riots)

This leads us to our third question: Why do some episodes of community anger become disorder and then turn to riot while other occasions do not?

We have already seen that there are sub-groups and interactive processes *within* the crowd or group and now we can consider interactions *between* the crowd and its constituent parts on the one hand and the police and other public bodies (including the media) on the other. There are few inevitable riots and probably few inevitably peaceful protests.

As policing of public disorder has developed in recent years, more account has been taken of the fact that mobs and rioting crowds are rarely monolithic or static, and that they therefore need intelligent and tactical policing if they are to be effectively contained and managed. However, it appears that in the London riots in particular, the approach taken by the police on the first two nights was perceived by many as being too disengaged, and was felt by the rioters as unrestricting, which may have contributed to rapid escalation. On other recent occasions the Metropolitan police had been criticized for being ***over***-containing, especially in the use of 'kettling', in which an unruly crowd is aggressively penned into a tight physical space – often for many hours and indeed sometimes illegally so, as a high court judgement only four months earlier had found (*Guardian* 14 April 2011). By the third and fourth nights police tactics in London changed completely, as we shall see, and order was quickly and effectively restored.

It is likely, then, that our best understanding of the riots themselves will come from looking at the interactions both within and between the various groupings involved, especially the groups and sub-groups of rioters, and the police and related authority groups. With these questions and observations in mind, we will now briefly consider the story of the English riots.

London August 2011

On 6th August, two days after the police shooting of Mark Duggan, a young black man in North London, a (largely female) group of his friends and family gathered outside Tottenham police station to seek answers. They were following a well-established procedure in that area for communication between police and the community in times of high tension, and they were supported by community representatives.

However, this situation seems to have been handled clumsily and with great anxiety by the senior officers on duty, so that after some hours those asking the questions had obtained no answers, communication had broken down and the group came away frustrated and angry. These feelings soon spread to others in the immediate neighbourhood and within two hours had escalated into anger and violence: two police cars were set alight, and later a bus was burned. Shops were looted, TV crews attacked, fires were started. News spread quickly across the borough by word of mouth and by social networking and other media. Episodes of unrestrained looting and arson continued throughout that night across the borough.

The following night there was similar trouble in the neighbouring borough of Enfield and then in Brixton and Hackney, with more fires and looting. There was increasing alarm in the community that things were getting out of hand, and that the police had appeared unable or even unwilling to intervene. On the third night the destruction spread outwards to Croydon with a very serious fire, and to Birmingham and elsewhere in England – though not to Scotland or Wales. By the fourth night – 10th/11th August – the last of these troubles had erupted but had also been contained.

Police tactics changed markedly from an initial state of apparent unreadiness, helplessness and even retreat, into a far more containing response with much greater numbers and more assertive action, though largely (apparently) without indulging in the sort of violent counter-attack including water-cannon, baton rounds and even live ammunition which was already being called for in parts of the media by some politicians. By now these short-lived English riots had firstly erupted and spread and had then either been subdued or had exhausted themselves. The aftermath of the riots has lasted much longer than the riots themselves, which began and ended within those four nights. Even though the violence on the streets subsided relatively quickly, the repercussions for those brought to court have been extreme, with many reports confirming that sentences have been far heavier for these offences than for equivalent crimes at other times. Repercussions for the victims were also great, with many people losing accommodation, possessions and livelihoods. I must emphasize that I did not personally witness any of the disorder taking place, though I was in Ealing shortly afterwards and saw not only the signs of damage but the cards and

bunches of flowers left at the spot where a man died after trying to intervene to prevent further violence. I have full sympathy for those terrified and even bereaved by the effects of these riots.

Perspectives on the riots

So what were the riots about? How do we explain the sudden pandemonium, ('the loosing of all the devils'), with gangs of people emerging apparently from nowhere, ransacking, looting, burning and running wild, some of them apparently oblivious to the risk of being identified and caught? Were the riots in Tottenham the same as those in Ealing or in Manchester? Why did they not spread to Glasgow or Bridgend? Why did they stop again so suddenly?

There have been many suggestions as to what was going on. Some observers were only surprised at the fact that it had taken so long to explode, having anticipated that the rapidly worsening economic climate over the previous two or three years would lead to social unrest (as in Greece) once its impact was felt more broadly in terms of increased unemployment, poverty,and consequent despair.

Some of the comment was to the effect that these were riots of envy or greed, rather than 'real riots' or in other words political riots focused on a 'cause' or demand, or stemming from immediate need such as the food riots experienced in Gujarat in 2002 (Samudhay 2002). In this scenario the looting was viewed as an orgy of consumerist excitement, an unauthorised version of 'supermarket sweep', no holds barred. Some, on the other hand, did see the riots as indirectly political in their mirroring of the greed and lawlessness of bankers or of politicians and even of the police themselves, on the basis that if those powerful people can 'get away with it' then so can we. This view found unexpected sympathy in a Daily Mail editorial:

> the bankers have the same contempt for the law-abiding public as those looters and the same sense of entitlement to wealth as the teenagers who smash shop windows to steal flat-screen televisions. (*Daily Mail* 14 Aug 2011)

There is probably something in each of these views, though I also think other factors were at play. My suggestion is that for many of the rioters this was 'acting out' on a grand scale – the unthought-out actions of delinquent excitement in which people had become temporarily caught up in wild and illegal behaviour. There will undoubtedly have been agitators and opportunists as there are in all such situations, and probably an instant network of spivs and fences for those wanting to dispose of high-value looted items for quick cash. But a good proportion of the young people out on the streets will have been whipped along into the whirlwind, perhaps briefly sensing a distorted feeling of power and agency which they may never have experienced before, and finding that, for a few brief hours, there was almost nothing or no-one to restrain them.

One group of girls interviewed in passing on the street on the second night said things like: "We're just showing the police

we can do what we like" and "We're going to keep on rioting till someone stops us" – as well as 'it's payback time' and 'it's our turn now'. (*See Appendix A for transcript*) This is where it starts to sound like Winnicott's antisocial tendency, the combination of resentful act, hopeful gesture but the wish to be caught or at least stopped – and I will return to that theme later.

What was also noticeable was the polarising effect of the riots in society and especially among young people themselves, with many of them extremely angry and distressed about what was happening, while others felt more sympathy and looked for more explanation. There was much demonising of young people, and of teenagers in particular, as well as of their parents, and the word 'feral' was used frequently, often uttered with spitting contempt.Such language has the effect of conveying both disgust and rejection and the wish to distance oneself from the problem. The printed and broadcast media became extremely excited, with many live broadcasts from the scenes around the capital in particular. Many conclusions were jumped to, especially that the rioters were primarily gangs of teenagers, although even the Prime Minister and Home Secretary soon had to revise that assumption – relatively few of those arrested seem to have been gang members (Ministry of Justice 24th Oct 2011).

In fact it probably never made sense to see this as gang-related behaviour – in most places it was far too impulsive and random for that. It seems more likely that the riots arose within groups rather than gangs – *large* groups, the instant groupings in which crowds gather together in a moment, turn into mobs and renounce individual conscience for immediate gratification. Levels of anxiety within the rioting groups appeared to be extremely high, with both fight and flight operating simultaneously. It is very difficult to speculate as to what may have been going on in each of the individuals who made up these groups to make them so ready to riot, but we do need to try to explain it. We have already seen how the questions of the patterns of interaction both within and between the various groupings, including the police, may have affected the course of events. It may also be helpful to draw upon some of our professional experience of working with antisocial and troubled youth.

Working *with* adolescent disorder

My own early social work experience was in working with extremely troubled young people in residential settings and trying to help them understand themselves and take control of themselves and of their lives so that they could (as Melvyn Rose memorably expressed it) 'convert their thoughtless acts into act-less thoughts' (verbal communication) – in other words so that they would be less prone to destructive or violent behaviour and more able to express themselves effectively.

One of the most useful pieces of theory which I drew upon constantly in those days was Barbara Dockar-Drysdale's view that violence is nearly always the result of a breakdown in communication (Dockar-Drysdale 1971) – it was very

rarely completely mindless, even though it might often be unconsciously driven. If it was truly mindless you needed to be very worried and take serious action. In the great majority of cases, however, even what appeared to be mindless and sometimes vicious violence turned out to have indeed been triggered by some breakdown either of communication, of understanding or of relationship. Once the nature and cause of this breakdown was identified and understood and where possible resolved, the need for further violence usually disappeared. Ideally there could also be learning from the situation so that the next time a similar breakdown occurred, the young person could speak rather than fight. To restore order we would first have to restore some form of communication.

What this approach calls for in those working with these young people is the ability to see beyond the behaviour and try to understand the need behind it, and to persist doggedly in helping the young person to identify and explain whatever sense of wrong, or pain or impingement which they had experienced, but which they had not been able to recognise or articulate. The most challenging part of this work was often to identify exactly what was the communication which had broken down and how or why this had happened.

Sometimes the breakdown will have consisted of the absence of a wished-for response to a verbal initiative on the part of the young person, or perhaps disappointment over a long-awaited parental visit which was cancelled or just didn't happen. Sometimes it would be at a much more hidden or symbolic level, although there was still something of a sense of grievance, or absence or other breakdown – leading to feelings of hurt and impotent rage and then to actions including violent attack, all escalating extremely rapidly.

When all this happens in a regulated planned environment like a therapeutic community it is hard enough – but when it happens free-range, in the open environment of life on the estate or on the high street, it is much harder to deal with. Likewise when it happens within one individual it may be possible to respond and contain the rage – whereas when it happens within fluid and evolving groupings it is much harder to do so effectively.

In fact the people of Broadwater Farm where Mark Duggan lived had more experience than most of learning from the pain of violence and disorder.

Following the riots in 1985 there seem to have evolved effective liaison groups and youth leadership, and well-established ways of handling breakdowns when they happened. As I understand it, these semi-formal procedures of consultation between police and trusted community members had led to a relatively peaceful co-existence. Unfortunately on 6th August this collaboration was disrupted, probably because of anxiety, and communication clearly broke down, so that the initial delegation of family and friends came away hopeless and furious – and the scene was set for that same rapid escalation.

One of the most de-stabilising aspects of that first night was the apparent lack of an effective policing response. The job of police in such situations is primarily to keep order: to prevent disorder, to re-

store order and to contain and then dispel the explosive atmosphere on the streets. On that first night in Tottenham they seem to have been unable to do so, or to have lacked the confidence or will – or orders – to do so. In this context it is worth remembering that only two weeks earlier the Metropolitan Police Commissioner had resigned with immediate effect in connection with the phone-hacking scandal and allegations of extensive police corruption, so the police may have had good reason to feel directionless and uncontained themselves.

For whatever reason, the riots – and especially the mass looting – in Tottenham that night were largely uncontained. The controls were off, and the crowds in the streets quickly slipped the leash of the law and raced through selected stores, breaking and taking. It may perhaps have been these repeated images of unharnessed looting which then excited those elsewhere to have the confidence to take similar risks on the following nights, and which led those girls to talk about looting 'until someone stopped them'. It was an invitation to go large on the antisocial tendency.

Stopping them, of course, is exactly what did happen. On the third and fourth nights, national policing resources were co-ordinated so that much greater numbers could be deployed in the key areas. Controls were re-imposed, the boundaries re-established, and the circle of expectation that each night would bring further disorder was broken. This is a very familiar pattern for those with experience of residential care for adolescents: on some occasions you have to be made to experience the very worst, and to fear and even expect further deterioration, before you can find the real resolve and ability to de-escalate and restore order, both external and internal – to establish peace of mind as well as calm on the streets. By the fifth and sixth nights after the riots had started, although community anxiety was still very high in some areas, there was almost no trouble, and no real expectation that there would be. What was left was some serious clearing up and self-examination all round, and an awful sense that society had temporarily exploded to reveal its capacity for destruction – but also for re-creation and in some cases for vengeful justice.

It may also have been that (just as with adolescents running amok in other settings), after four nights there may have been some self-policing or simply a need to retreat from the madness. People may have had enough, and felt sated after all the excitements.

As Winnicott made clear, delinquency does bring temporary excitement and thus secondary gain, which in turn can bring more risk. In the residential context, Dockar-Drysdale (1968) wrote about 'converting delinquent excitement into oral greed' (or possibly converting it *back* into oral greed). In disorder in adolescent institutions the sooner you could find a way to provide food or warm drink in a form in which it could be accepted and gulped down (though not wasted), the sooner you could restore order. I don't know how you could manage that in a street riot, but soup kitchens down side-streets might not be a bad idea (and in this context it was not at all surprising

that some looters made their way into fast food stores and helped themselves). In fact what was most important in residential care was, through the use of food, to restore a nurturing relationship by means of which the young people could feel genuinely cared for at a personal level, and this is what may turn out to be the task facing us all in relation to the more troubled young people of our generation: to care more fully both *for* them and *about* them.

There has been some debate as to whether these riots were 'proper riots' or just 'mindless violence', as if 'mind*ful* violence' would somehow have been preferable. It is very hard to know in what sense any of these rioters and looters may have been expressing political anger rather than collective delinquency, although evidence is now emerging on this point from the Guardian/LSE research, but there may be another way of looking at the passions which were driving these activities. I am suggesting that there is unconscious political anger – varying from 'rage against the machine' to sustained resentment at oppressive policing, and to the outpouring of frustration at relentless tedium and meaninglessness, though we are still left with the question 'why now?'

The effects of the riots

Finally we can return to the question: In what sense were these riots social or antisocial? This paper has tried to answer this question by speculating on the possible intentions, motivations and needs of those directly involved.

However, a different way to answer it is to turn our attention away from the intention of the rioters and to look instead at the impact and outcome of the riots, which is still only gradually unfolding. While there was undoubtedly a broad public reaction of horror and anger at the destructiveness, and demands for justice, there was also a sense of these riots having been a 'wake-up call', a reminder that when there is increased poverty and despair there is always the potential for serious disturbance motivated by anger, and as we have seen, the parallels with the apparent antisocial behaviour of bankers, MPs and police were widely remarked. There was increased recognition that some young people had indeed been affected powerfully bythe economic difficulties facing the country. There has been some increased awareness of the destructive effect of some police actions such as the over use of Stop and Search policy. As the Guardian/LSE 'Reading the Riots' research (2011) is starting to show, many of the initial assumptions about the riots were completely wrong.

The effects of the riots might therefore be argued to be social rather than antisocial, and even to be *pro*-social in the sense of reminding us all – reminding Government too – that there *is* such a thing as society, and that it does include many very deprived and disadvantaged people.

This is not to deny, of course, that there was also a great deal of serious delinquency on the nights of the riots. But delinquency, in Winnicott's view, can also be seen as a sign of hope – because it suggests that it is *worth* being delinquent, worth pushing the boundaries, that some of those involved may have been wanting to assert for the first time some belief that

they are important enough to be able to act and exert power. The hope within this delinquency will only be realised if the underlying communication is heard, though, and that is up to the rest of us.

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Appendix A: Voices from the riots

(U-Tube clip of *BBC News* Item, uploaded 9 Aug 2011)

A. Like everyone was just going on a riot & just going mad, like chucking things, chucking bottles, (it was good though)

B. Breaking into stuff, breaking into shops. Yeah it was madness

A. It was good though, it was good fun – Yeah

B. 'course it is

Q: So you're drinking a bottle of rosé wine at half nine in the morning?

A. Yeah, free alcohol

Q. And you've been drinking all night?

B. Yeah – Like, it's the government's fault - yeah

A. I dunno – conservatives

B. Yeah, whatever who it is, I dunno

A. It's not even a riot, we're showing the police we can do what we want

B. Yeah that's what it's all about, showing the police we can do what we want

A. And now we have

Q. So do you reckon it will go on to-night?

A. Yeah hopefully

B. Definitely. Hopefully

Q. But it's like local people, I mean why is it targeting local people and your own people?

A. It's the rich people. It's the rich people, the people who've got businesses and that. That's why all of this has happened, because of the rich people.

B. So we're showing the rich people we can do what we want

Comment by another young person on YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjdhEvosC3I

HaHa, sad twats like U will ALWAYS be dependent on the poor. U need us more than we need U twat. We can take wot we want, but you NEEEEEEDDD us to work for your shitty wages. U NEEEED and U NEEEEEDDD and U NEEEEEEEEEEEEEDDD, SO MUCH!!!!

Raising Children in a Global Village: Lessons from South Africa

Merle Allsopp

The title of this article speaks to the contradictory notion of the "global village" and the great benefits associated with the sharing of knowledge-a key advantage to our shared globalized context. This *Commentary* seeks to articulate some of the lessons we are discovering in South Africa related to children, families and close relations, in the hope that some may be applicable elsewhere in the world.

We live in one world and yet our "worlds" are so very different. But wherever we live, we live in a globalized world. In the words of Irish philosopher John O'Donahue, "the 'global village' has no roads or neighbours; it is a faceless, impersonal landscape from which all individuality has been erased." Belonging, in this context, is more elusive than ever before. Daily entire cultures are lost with the demise of languages, and the empty

icons of international business become what we all know and share. In the context of the impersonal connectedness offered by technology, many people yearn for a sense of connectedness-something which cannot be manufactured or simulated. Recent brain research suggests that the part of the brain which tells us that we feel connected and at one with others is that very part stimulated by deep and consistent meditation-the way of the lamas now spread through the Western world by the occupation of Tibet. In decades to come we may know more about how to bring about a sense of belonging through methods currently inconceivable.

We are all familiar with the African saying "It takes a village to raise a child." If the adage is true, how do we do what is needed for children-when the village has been replaced by the "global village."

South African lessons on work with vulnerable, orphaned, and at-risk children and youth must be contextualized in order to draw out their usefulness to other countries. Two elements of our context have particular relevance. First, South Africa enjoys the dubious pleasure of being the world's leader on the Gatt index – the instrument that measures income discrepancy between highest and lowest earners. Secondly, we have the world's highest HIV infection rate, and the highest number of children affected by the pandemic. In a population of 46 million, there are 2 million children orphaned. A phenomenon related to this is the increasing number of child-headed households-a concept unthinkable a few years ago-that we now provide services to. HIV/AIDS impacts whole families as children care for dying parents and grandparents take on parenting roles for many children.

It is in this complex and at times tenuous social and economic context of the post-apartheid South Africa that I share 10 lessons from direct experience on what have we learned about raising children that may be of use in the global village.

Progressive Policy

The democratic South Africa was faced with an enormous law reform process requiring dismantling apartheid legislation and constructing new democratic legislation governing a society inclusive of all. In relation to services to children, a thorough overhaul of legislation was necessary. An interim amendment to the legislation on children from the apartheid era served to maintain existing services; the past decade was then used to develop an integrated, national legislative framework for services to children, one that takes into account the limited resource context, as well as the extent of the need for services, given that 60% of our country's children live in poverty.

This process has been exacting, but the lesson learned is that participation does indeed work! Over the decade of its gestation, the Children's Act and the Children's Amendment Act have been shaped with input from not only academics and politicians, but also grassroots workers across the breadth of South Africa, and indeed the children whom the legislation most affects-those at-risk, vulnerable, and orphaned. In a country where citizens have been deprived of a voice, this consultative process has been of immeasurable value in creating commitment to policy

and service delivery change; in including practice wisdom in legislation; and in creating a unified commitment to the fundamental principles of the legislation. Complex debates have raged over these past ten years as a human rights framework was set against cultural imperatives, resulting in controversies in many areas, but especially in relation to the cultural practice of virginity testing and corporal punishment (a comprehensive ban on which was excised from the Children's Bill by parliamentarians in an eleventh hour compromise as being too far too soon for the South African public). Social service workers feel a sense of pride in relation to this legislation, and the process of participation has brought about a commitment to massive policy shifts in a relatively short time. We have learned, then, that resources spent on ensuring policy and legislative change have broad base support, are resources well spent.

The Limits of Residential Care

The apartheid government, like many other governments committed to social control of many by few, invested in residential care – mainly for children considered White, Indian and Colored. The democratic South Africa thus inherited many children's homes – but few community-based services for children in difficult circumstances. One of the policy decisions within the legislative reform process was the limiting of residential care services, and concomitant promotion of community-based services at early intervention and as well as at treatment levels. Commitment to this policy was complicated by vested interests of some in the business of residential care. It was further complicated by the challenge of developing non-residential services without any blueprints or historical precedents.

Ironically as this process of dismantling the dominance of residential care was taking place, the enormity of the HIV/AIDS predictions became real to South Africans as the numbers of children orphaned clearly could not be accommodated in residential care – even if this had been considered desirable. The lesson we have learned from this process is that it is only possible to promote a move away from reliance in policy on residential care if community-based service delivery models are available to be seen and experienced.

The Transformation of Residential Care

The shift to a more limited use of residential care which is at the same time in line with a child rights framework is still in progress in South Africa.

This transformation process has involved a shift in the understanding of the function of services to being short-term, goal directed, and treatment oriented. It has required the introduction of minimum norms and standards, mentoring of organizational reform, and (most importantly in resource-poor environments) a shift in focus from the *appearance* of facilities to a focus on the care of children-the staffing and program component which determines quality of care.

At the facility level, this transformation process includes bringing about a paradigm shift in facility management from a control and punishment approach to a developmental care approach contextualized

within a child rights framework. Additionally, at the facility level creating therapeutic environments which respect cultural diversity has been of fundamental importance in South Africa, where two short decades ago children's homes were not permitted to offer services to children who were not from the racial group for which they were registered to offer services. This process has included ensuring that adequate and appropriate indigenized training takes place, and that workers have access to the international residential care literature.

Further focus has been on organizational change in resource-poor settings, where the following elements of transformation are of value:

- The creation of smaller living groups and the promotion of group identity;
- The use of volunteers to augment staff numbers;
- The introduction of shift schedules for workers to ensure they are not overworked and are able to carry out their duties in a child-friendly manner;
- The devolution of "power" to the worker level so that children are engaged with self-respecting adults in their life space.
- The provision of adequate and supportive supervision for child and youth care workers.
- The procurement of resources from varied non-government sources to augment state subsidies.
- The use of *all* staff for work with children, so including in the job descriptions of administrative and support staff the expectations and limits of their engagement with the children;
- The careful consideration of the geography of buildings so that administration blocks are as integrated into the living environment of the children as possible;
- Creating a culture of caring amongst staff as a precursor to being able to care for children.

Individualizing care in the context of large groups is a further challenge overcome by the application of some of the following:

- Cultural understanding of groups
- Building on culturally appropriate ways of doing things
- Avoiding imposing a set of behaviors or values
- Using the positive value of the group
- Emphasizing play and activities
- Accessible theoretical frameworks
- Developmental assessment
- Providing regular individualized attention
- Acknowledging birthdays and other special days and celebrations
- Rituals and routines to contain and care
- Rules.

The Impact of a Capitalist Context

The globalised world is impacted very strongly by capitalism where consumerism feeds the need for novelty, change, and the lure of something better.

Borrowing concepts from the world of business has helped to introduce new and different services. The Isibindi model for the care of children affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (www.naccw.org.za/isibindi),

for instance, is run on a "social franchise" basis where:

- the model is clearly described and packaged
- implementation processes and standards are articulated
- training requirements are outlined and are not negotiable
- national monitoring and evaluation systems are followed
- mechanisms of accountability have been designed
- marketing packages including visual aids are available for use at implementing agency level
- it has been approved by government as articulating national policy.

This has facilitated the rapid development of Isibindi projects in areas where there is little in the way of infrastructure to support the emergence of projects.

Wresting funds from government and donor bodies alike is aided by packaging and re-packaging service delivery models to appeal as new and interesting. Constant development and innovation is essential in order to maintain ongoing interest at the local, provincial, and national levels. We have learned, therefore, that a pragmatic approach that incorporates some core capitalist principles can expand our capacity to deliver services to children and youth who otherwise might not receive any assistance.

The Value of Lifespace Work

Social services in apartheid South Africa were dominated by the social work profession; one of the recent lessons learned has been the value of life space work-direct care services offered by people called child and youth care workers in South Africa and other parts of the world, including Canada and the United States, and social educators and social pedagogues in parts of Europe. Life space work is about working with children, youth, and families where they live, in their own communities, and in the context of their everyday activities, challenges, and experiences. Remaining invisible to many who miss the subtlety of child and youth care work, a challenge in the South African context is the appropriate articulation of the work, its complexity, professional requirements, and what would be missed in children's lives without this kind of intervention. The value of life space work in the context of the large numbers of children needing social services in our country is speaking for itself. The training of child and youth care workers has quadrupled over the past decade, with auxiliary level qualifications being introduced to allow drawing into the profession people previously deprived of access to education in our country. The value of child and youth care workers lies in the specialist/generalist capacity of the workers who are trained to operate within a child rights framework to work and who deal with all areas of a child's life in poorly-resourced contexts.

The Value of the "Wounded Healer"

Imagine yourself as a skilled social service practitioner coming across the Smith family during a door-to-door search for families in need of assistance in an informal settlement. You find the family of five liv-

ing in under a corrugated iron lean-to (in an area where temperatures range from 48 degrees Celsius in the summer to minus 8 in the winter) with virtually no income at all. Mother is very ill with TB, an opportunistic infection often associated with AIDS, and three children huddle around her, the youngest obviously ill, all of them not attending school as there is no money to buy school uniforms and the fear of leaving the sick mother is too great. The eldest girl of twelve has lost an eye through medical neglect, and the father, himself also showing signs of being ill, is drinking alcohol with any money he earns through itinerant work.

Where would you start working with this family? Nomsa, a trained child and youth care worker from the very community where the Smith family lives, was not daunted by the overwhelming and apparently intractable hopelessness of this family's circumstances, and she set to work right away. Food parcels were accessed to relieve immediate hunger; the matter of possible infection was approached with Mother Smith and she was taken to the clinic, treated for TB, and then placed on antiretroviral (ARV) medication; Father and baby were also placed on medication, and Nomsa, herself infected with the virus and familiar with the regime of antiretroviral treatment, supported the family in successfully administering their medication; the children were placed in school, and Nomsa found a donor to supply school uniforms. Over the months she pressed authorities from the department of housing and managed to secure a brick house for the Smith family. Social security was accessed, and the family now lives together in circumstances manageable and safe. Three children still have parents as a result of Nomsa's commitment to the concept of preventing orphanhood.

The lesson in this story is that people who know the communities in which they work often demonstrate a capacity to work in circumstances that to others may have appeared impossible-and are therefore very significant in taking service delivery to the most difficult to access areas.

Valuing the resourcefulness of Child and Youth Care Workers

A child and youth care worker in a very poor province visited a family whom she had recently got to know, only to find the mother in a state of hopelessness. The child and youth worker learned that the mother's hopelessness was linked to the hardship of poverty. It was her young child's birthday that day, and the mother had not even told the child it was her birthday as she had nothing-literally nothing-to give to the child and no way to celebrate. The child and youth care worker was initially also flummoxed. The home was far from the agency, which may have been able to help with something to celebrate the child's birthday, but there was no way of being in touch with the center at that point in the day. But this was a child's second birthday, and she came up with an idea. A party was held for the little one and instead of the real but unattainable thing, mud cakes were made! The "cake" was decorated, the "table" was laid out, friends from the neighborhood were invited to join the cel-

ebrations, the child was sung to, and felt special and noticed. The worker knew that for a child of this age imagination and reality blur, and the most important thing was to celebrate the occasion of the birth of this child-not to have the actual cake. The day went by well, the mother was less ashamed of her poverty and the little girl knew she was valued, despite the material hardship of her life.

Stories like this abound in community-based projects where child and youth care workers are working in family homes. These are stories of such small actions that help to link children to the adults who are trying so very hard to care for them in situations of material hardship, stories of imagination that are the result of the training that fosters the individual spirit of the worker-whilst training them on childhood development, methods of communication and the importance of belonging to family and other people.

Community-based services and working with families

Malfunctioning of service delivery systems is not uncommon. Cases are dropped or misplaced, or are passed on from social worker to social worker resulting in children and families losing faith in "the system" that is there to help them. But workers skilled in moving into the life space of children and~ families are often successful where "the system" has failed.

One worker connected with an intergenerational household (headed by a grandmother) in this way. Noticing that this grandmother was struggling to make ends meet through doing odd bits of beadwork in the community, the worker approached Granny in her home. She was chased away by Granny who told her that she had been to the "welfare" too many times-only to be let down. Persistence and skill led to the worker eventually sitting down with Granny to find out what had happened. As she took up the broom to help Granny sweep the yard, the worker learned that Granny had applied for the child support grant, not once, but twice. The first time her application was lost, and the second time the social worker herself had died and there was no one to take her place. She thought her application was jinxed, so did not want to incur further bad luck by applying again. Repeated visits from the child and youth care worker built Granny's hope and trust through helping her with the load of everyday living. She helped the children with homework which illiterate Granny could not do. She helped prepare the evening meal and tidy the house, chores that the elder Granny was struggling to do. The worker knew that when life was more manageable, the thought of incurring bad luck would be more remote, and one day she broached the subject again. To Granny it now seemed that the process of filling in all of the forms, getting identity documents, and traveling the many miles to and from the social service offices in an overcrowded taxi seemed impossible. It was only the thought of the worker's support that convinced her to try-and as a result of the worker's skillful intervention, within a few weeks Granny was able to devote her life to caring for her granddaughters-on the tiny, but manageable child support grant.

There would have been no way of

working with this Granny outside of her home. She had accepted her fate in life and was trying her best to keep her granddaughters-in the face of her limited capacity and the added burden of the grief of having lost her three children to AIDS. The value of work in the family context is that it allows the child and youth care worker to build relationships rooted in doing ordinary things together, to move at the family's pace and gradually introduce measures to enhance family functioning.

The Cultural Context

South Africa, Desmond Tutu's rainbow nation, is a place of many peoples, where centuries of cultural imperialism and apartheid have left a nation very sensitive to the dictates of culture. Social service workers must be sensitive to culture-in a manner that leaves them not naive and open to manipulation by children and families. Cultural competence of workers is essential in order to protect children. Illustrating this point is a story of a family of seven orphaned children. Contrary to customary responses, the extended family was not present in the time of the parent's illness. Rather they entered the world of the children after their parents had died, when the meager (but for them substantial) funds from the social security grants for the seven children came through. Anxious to use the funds to their own advantage, many cleansing and thanking rituals were deemed by the family to be essential rituals all involving the slaughtering of animals and celebrations that would have been very costly. This situation required a combination of skills from the community child and youth care worker, who had built up a position of authority in the family through being with the children through the terrible time of the parents dying. She needed to be able to hold a family group conference, know when to talk and when to allow her elders to speak, but carefully steer family decisions in the best interests of her clients, the seven children. In order to do this she needed not merely a working knowledge of the rituals of the Zulu culture, but an intimate understanding of which rituals were essential for the ongoing well-being of the children in the community and which rituals would simply be desirable for extended family members for the status they would bring for themselves. This would ensure that precious funds would be preserved for the children's basic essentials such as beds and school uniforms. In a culture where so much has been denigrated, it was only a worker with strong cultural competence who could have held the needs of the extended family in balance with those of the children.

Emphasizing Integrated Service Delivery

Increasingly we see the roles of social workers, child and youth care workers, and others being used to orchestrate care in community-based settings-care that is made possible through the application of skills associated with the integration of different social service professions. Nowhere has this been as obvious as in a recently-developed child protection program for children from under resourced rural areas who had been sexually abused. In bringing these children together from across the province of Kwazulu-Natal,

child and youth care workers created a therapeutic life space experience for these 25 children while social workers and therapists provided one-on-one counseling, and analyzed family circumstances in order to create protective mechanisms for the children when they returned home at the conclusion of the program. Even in resource-poor settings the value of integrated work is obvious.

Thus we learned that in a world of increasing specialization, the roles of different social service professionals must be integrated in order to ensure that children and families are afforded the kind of services that they need.

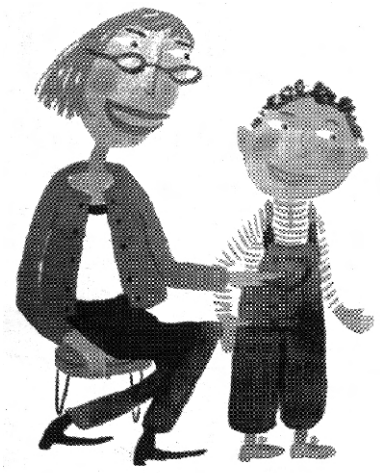
Final thoughts: keeping "Spirit" in Caring

The word "spirit" is often frowned upon in the context of social service delivery. It is uncomfortable for many who see us functioning in the context of the social sciences, and for those legitimately afraid of undue influence of personal belief systems of workers on children and families. But in the context of work in South Africa, the concept of spirit is paramount for clients and workers alike. Perhaps this is true in many other countries. Where suffering is as it is in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the spirits of those who work in that desperation every day, who must also face this in their own families-these spirits must be carefully nurtured. Concepts like burn-out seem trite in the context of the rawness of work faced by those in the life space of children and families. Feeding the spirits of workers is essential and must be done through mentoring, through supervision, and through review and celebration of achievements. Informally it is done through gathering together with others, through song, and through dance.

And so in the context of understanding the role of families and other people in creating a better future for children today, the "global village" cannot recreate the village to raise a child. But our connections across cultures and nations leave us with possibilities gained from the realities of others to apply in our areas of responsibility in the global village. Central to all of these lessons is the knowledge that we can only help children and families to connect, belong and to survive, if we connect with them. At the center of all our work is the connection that we have with others. In the words of Desmond Tutu, "Africans have this thing called Ubuntu. It means I am because you are." It is the spirit of Ubuntu that is driving good service delivery to children and families in South Africa. And it is this spirit of Ubuntu that may be helpfully shared as we collectively confront the challenges of raising children in a "global village."

From: *Child and Youth Services* (2011). Vol.32, No.2, pp. 78-87.

The Power of Peers



It's a world out of a fanciful children's book: a place where parents and teachers don't matter, where the company of other kids is most meaningful, where nothing much would change if we left children in their homes and schools 'but switched all the parents around.' That doesn't describe an imagined never-never land, however, but the environment that every one of us grows up in, contends Judith Rich Harris.

The maverick writer and theoretician believes that peers, not parents, determine our personalities, and her unorthodox views have made the very real world of psychology sit up and take notice.

Harris, who is unaffiliated with any university or institution, laid out her radical theory in a 1995 Psychological Review paper, which was later cited as one of the year's outstanding articles by the American Psychological Association. Like behavioural geneticists, Harris believes that heredity is a force to be reckoned with. But she sees another powerful force at work: group socialization, or the shaping of one's character by one's peers.

Central to this theory is the idea that behaviour is 'context-specific': we act in specific ways in specific circumstances. 'Children today live in two different worlds: home and the world outside the home.' says Harris. 'There is little overlap between these two worlds, and the rules for how to behave in them are quite different.' Displays of emotion, for example, are often accepted by parents but discouraged by teachers or friends. Rewards and punishments are different too. At home, children may be scolded for their failures and praised for their successes; outside the home, they may be ridiculed when they make a mistake or ignored when they behave appropriately.

Preferring peers

As children grow older and peer influence grows stronger, says Harris, they come to prefer the ways of peers over those of their parents. She likes to use language as an example: the children of immigrants, she notes, will readily learn to speak the language of the new country without an accent.

They may continue to speak in their parents' tongue when at home, but over time the language of their peers will become their 'native' language. Adopting the ways of their contemporaries makes sense, says Harris, because children will live among peers, and not among older adults, for the greater part of their lives. 'Parents are past, peers are future,' she says.

It's evolutionarily adaptive, too. 'Humans were designed to live not in nuclear families, but in larger groups,' observes Harris. 'The individuals who became our ancestors succeeded partly because they had the ability to get along with the other members.' The group continues to influence us in a number of ways: we identify ourselves with it, and change our behaviour to conform to its norms. We define our group by contrasting it with other groups, and seek to distinguish our group by our actions and appearance. Within the group, we compare ourselves to others and jockey for higher status. We may receive labels from our peers, and strive to live up (or down) to them.

Finally, we may be most lastingly affected by peers by being rejected by them. People who were rejected as children often report — long term self-esteem problems, poor social skills, and increased rates of psychopathology.

Parents don't matter?

Our personalities become less flexible as we grow older, says Harris, so that 'the language and personality acquired in childhood and adolescent peer groups persist, with little modification, for the remainder of the life span.' It's a startling conclusion, but Harris claims that her greatest challenge lies not in persuading people that peers matter, but in convincing them that parents don't. She calls the belief in parents' enduring importance 'the nurture assumption,' and her forthcoming book by that title will argue that it's simply a myth of modern culture. She doesn't deny that children need the care and protection of parents, and acknowledges that mothers and fathers can influence things like religious affiliation and choice of career. But, she maintains, 'parental behaviours have no effect on the psychological characteristics their children will have as adults.'

In fact, she says, 'probably the most important way that parents can influence their children is by determining who their peers are. The immigrants who move their children to another country have provided them with a completely different set of peers. But a less dramatic shift — simply deciding which neighbourhood to live in — can also make a difference.' From one area to another, she notes, there are substantial variations in the rates of delinquency, truancy, and teen pregnancy — problems parents can try to avoid by surrounding their offspring with suitable friends. Beyond that, however, children will make their own choices. 'It's pretty easy to control the social life of a three-year-old.' says Harris. 'But once the kids are past age 10 or 12, all bets are off.'

Annie Murphy Paul in *Child & Youth Care Vol.16*, No.7, July 1998. Originally from *Psychology Today.*

Breaking the Trust Barrier with Troubled Students

Nicholas J. Long, Ph.D

Recently in Florence Italy, Jody and I toured the Contini Collection in the Uffizi Museum. Our guide, Guido, spoke Italian in rapid fire sentences, and I realized I could not keep up with him, so I wandered around on my own to see what might be discovered.

Soon I was standing before the familiar painting of The Madonna and the Bambino. I must have seen hundreds of them as various versions are everywhere in Italy. What did surprise me was a similarity in how all these artists portrayed Mary and her baby. In every portrayal, Mary holds her son Jesus on her lap or against her shoulder, not looking down at the child but away from him. Her body is rigid and her face looks troubled, and there is no sense of joy or fulfillment. She appears sad and detached from her infant. In attachment theory, there is a clear lack of bonding between the two of them.

The accepted interpretation of this scene is that Mary is gazing into the future and sees her child will someday be persecuted and crucified, accounting for her detached appearance. I was reminded of all the troubled and alienated children and youth we try to nourish in today's Society, and those who seem destined to live a life of rejection.

I walked away from this painting feeling discouraged and depressed. But two rooms later I saw another picture of the Madonna and Bambino painted by Farrarra from the 1400s. This Mary holds her baby to her breast nursing, and her face glows as she looks down at her child lovingly. This is an ideal picture of emotional bonding, the way a trusting bond begins. The care-giving bond forms the foundation for all future relationships.

Connecting with Troubled Students

The core of our work is developing a trusting relationship with a troubled student. We have written and lectured for

decades on the significance of connecting in times of crisis. If we are not successful in developing this interpersonal bond, then all the subsequent treatment and pedagogical techniques are mechanical. It is like racing a car engine without any oil. It is not going very far before it heats up and shuts down.

We believe all interpersonal change with troubled students evolves and revolves around an adult relationship. But, what kind of relationship? How is this relationship described? How is it similar and different from all the other relationships in our life?

The Helping Alliance

Adults have many different kinds of relationships: social acquaintances, work relationships, family relationships, a few intimate relationships, and one or two significant life-long relationships with persons who know us at our worst and still are there for us. Not all of our relationships are healthy; some are toxic to our well being.

Our relationship with a troubled student is different from all the other relationships we have in our life. As messengers of mental health, our goal is to develop a professional relationship which is therapeutic without being personal. This is a healthy, helping alliance with clear boundaries. It is a meaningful relationship although we do not plan to invite a troubled student over for dinner or share our daily and emotional historic issues with him. The relationship is based on the young person's needs and not ours! To further complicate matters, the student often does not even seek our help and may not even want us around. The child in crisis has an overwhelming concern of stopping the pain. As a result, we initially are faced with a one-way relationship and not reciprocal altruism. We want to help, while the youngster is often reluctant to let us help.

Navigating a One-Way Relationship

I do not recall having any course in psychology, counseling, or social work that provided skills in working through one-way therapeutic relationships. Our Life Space Crisis Intervention [LSCI] work with troubled students gives us a deeper look into this process. There is still much more to learn, but this is what we have learned so far. This is advice for a person who wants to build a helping alliance with a youth in crisis:

1. Crisis intervention work is not for everyone. You persist in spite of rejection, being the target of displacement without taking it personally.

2. You believe that every student you see in a crisis has an unvoiced desire to tell his or her story, to be treated fairly, and to have a happier life.

3. You accept the fact this student almost always has had a painful experience with parents or authority figures and has developed a successful shield of mistrust. There is no reason why you should be different, and there is every reason to mistrust you.

4. You accept any resistance to your

initial intervention as a predictable reaction, a sign of strength, believing this person is worthy, interesting, and appealing.

5. You use the first crisis encounters as an opportunity to demonstrate your advocacy. Few experiences contribute more to bonding than when two individuals share a common and successful crisis together. It creates an emotional connection, a therapeutic alliance, or a meaningful experience which cannot be denied or broken. Long afterward, the emotionally charged event can be called up and relived with mutual satisfaction. Such even happens with our close friends: "Do you remember the time when we ... ?"

Being trained for crisis does not provide the same experience as living through one. The analogy that comes to mind is Chuck Yeager's 1947 flight in the X 1 attempting to break the sound barrier. It had never been done before. Yeager was well trained, but there were many unpredictable concerns. How long would it take to break the sound barrier? What impact would this have on Yeager's plane? How would it affect his judgment and performance? What would happen to him and the plane after the sound barrier was broken?

As Yeager's plane reached the speed of Mach 0.94, he described strange events that started to happen. Shock waves were shaking and buffeting his plane around. The wild turbulence was causing him difficulty in concentrating. Then the needles on all the gauges started dancing back and forth. Everything he was told he needed to fly the plane was not working. All of his training appeared to be in vain-everything except his belief that he should persist ... not give up. He had to believe his situation would get better without knowing if it would. He had to overcome his state of distress in order to focus on his current task. Then it happened. He suddenly broke through the sound barrier. The shock waves disappeared and he was flying at Mach 1.2. The resistance was gone. There was no sound except for his accelerated feeling of success, an experience never to be forgotten.

Such is our experience in developing a therapeutic relationship with a troubled student. We persist without knowing if the student's resistance will ever stop. We believe our caring, acceptance, and skills will win out over time. And when this barrier of resistance is overcome, the winds of suspicion diminish and trust begins.

From: *Reclaiming Children and Youth* (Spring 2008) pp. 56-58

Letter from Sheridan Institute …

Hello Thom,

I am following up to let you know that the CYW Peer Mentors here at Sheridan College in Brampton organized a Holiday Party Social Event for CYW students and Faculty on Dec 7th. Great food, fun, mingling, and networking was had by all!

The 10 CYW Peer Mentors raised $100 for CYC-Net — by selling home-made baked goods, holding a raffle, and offering photos with Santa! Attached is a picture of my amazing CYW Peer Mentor team (with me crouched in front) at the Social Event. If you look closely — on the left is a notice that all proceeds go to CYC-Net.

The CYW Peer Mentor team is planning a large social event in March 2012, at which time they are again planning exciting initiatives to raise more funds for CYC-Net.

Please let me know how to send our $100 donation to CYC-Net. If you are able to make an announcement and post the picture on CYC-Net, perhaps this will inspire other students to follow suit! (It will certainly inspire my team to keep going — perhaps it can become a bi-annual event in our program!)

Wishing you a very pleasant holiday season!

Warm regards,

Deborah Megens, MSW, Professor
Faculty of Applied Health and Community Studies, Sheridan Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning
7899 McLaughlin Rd, Brampton, ON

That darned thing called sex

Leanne Rose Sladde

The call came to me on the local radio. The giggling girlie voice of the radio announcer annoyed me as usual and amidst wishing that women announcers could represent themselves more maturely and with grace, I heard the word SEX. "Ahhhh … there they go focusing on sex". I reached over to shut the radio down and switched to the real sex expert, Eminem, when I noticed that there was an added voice. It was a rare interview on a rock station. The woman was discussing children, youth and sex education. Okay, this I could listen to in spite of the silly comments being made by that female radio announcer.

The captivating idea that caught my attention was the number one myth amongst children and youth today — that Mountain Dew (yes, the pop) kills sperm. I laughed, remembering the same myth in my mom's days, except the beverage then was Coca-Cola.

I assessed the value of the discussion from a parental stance and decided to continue listening. Oh yeah … sex education … this too is my job as a parent. I was instantly amazed at my ability to overlook this critical element of my children's development. How could I, an educator in the field, forget about paying attention to the fact that the time was fast approaching? The Saturday hike was the time pegged for the big discussion and although it was on my agenda, the spirit moved the events appropriately. After a long climb up the rocks with my boys, mom trying not to over-state their need to "be careful", we flopped down in a moss clearing to grab our breaths — my 10-year-old, seven-year-old, and me.

Appropriate information

I wasn't sure how to approach the subject, nor to what level of specificity I would go, but I was damned sure my kids would not be stocking up on Mountain Dew!

I mentally scanned my developmental information before I made the calculated move into the conversation. An age gap of three years seemed like a lot for this subject and I had to discern what the "appropriate" amount of information to share might be. Philosophically I know that the more information, the better; however the question of how information may move them prematurely towards sexual behaviour became my internal focus. I embrace the notion that Gerry Fewster and others discuss the need to honor and develop our sexual self. But I found my old familiar mother-bear instinct coming in, believing for a moment that I could control the destiny of my children's

sexual development. Given that sexuality is a critical part of who we are as humans, what would I want my children to know at this time and what information is critical to their development as healthy sexual beings? Like most of my interactions with my children, I decided to just wing it and see where it took us.

Many times in my parenting, I have been amazed at the brilliance of my children, and their knowledge of this topic was no exception. We started with the usual mechanical information about how babies are born, what the word sex means, etc. My youngest responded to every piece of information with "Yuck", but remained attentive to the discussion. I decided that, given the age gap, my children only needed to have two critical pieces of information about sex, these being that every time you have intercourse you can get pregnant and every time you have intercourse you can get a disease. This seemed to be enough for the youngest, while the oldest wanted a few more details regarding the purpose of the practice he'd heard of where you put a "bag on your dick".

I have since broached the subject with other parents who have children the age of mine, and for the most part they are waiting for the schools to provide their "booklet and film" and are trying to deal with the questions their children bring forward — some with the response "You don't need to know that yet" or "Don't talk about that here"— and some with a much more open communication style. The common denominator that appears to be true for the parents I talked with is a sense of unknowing and discomfort in talking about sex with their children. The critical piece for me, as a professional, is that we are working with sexual beings. How are we creating space in our relationships with them to allow them to explore this side of themselves? How are we opening the dialogue with our students being educated in the field?

My Monday class at university started out with a discussion of the idea of internet dating and the internet as a social entity for adolescents today. Through the discussion, students shared their experiences of living in the internet world where sexuality, a private aspect of who we are, is available in a very public way and I realized that their sex education and idea of their own sexual self was also in development. The age-old questions and struggles with intimacy, sexuality, sex, etc., emerged in the dialogue and I sensed a great interest in discussing and exploring the many facets of sexuality. I noticed that the pressures of relationships and sexual self are still present in spite of their ability to access information more easily, and I marveled at the fact that, as progressive as we think we are in education, we still do not address the idea of the "sexual self" much past the mechanical discussion that I had with my 7- and ten-year-old sons.

My children showed me that day that with relationships and openness there is a place to explore this side of self. I am confident that because of this opening to talk candidly about sexuality, they will be in a better position to ask the questions and in turn make healthy informed decisions, and not resort to the myths of society which will have them all sugared up on Mountain Dew.

— Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

Power to the people?

Jack Phelan

Most CYC agencies have case conferences which are intended to review progress and discuss future goals for youth and families. These meetings occur somewhere between one month and three month intervals, and involve the team of adult professionals. We have also invited the youth and family members to these meetings, so that they can be fully involved and empowered to give input. Often the youth is coached by a CYC practitioner beforehand so that he/she can be able to say something meaningful to the assembled professionals. Family members are also invited to attend.

My experience in sitting through many such conferences is that youth rarely disagree or even interact with any enthusiasm, often just mumbling a reply when asked a direct question, such as "Do you agree with us?" Family members are rarely in attendance. Yet we continue to pat ourselves on the back for empowering youth and families to participate in developing treatment goals.

One amusing and challenging example is a youth who was coached for several days prior to the meeting to use "I" messages during the conference. After the one hour meeting, he was asked by his CYC worker how he felt, and he replied, "It was really hard, my eyes are killing me".

A colleague from Scotland, Judith Furnival, had been part of a project which attempted to empower youth in this type of case conference to be able to speak without being intimidated by all the surrounding adults . This SIRCC study found that even with everyone focused on doing this, the result was similar, the youth felt overwhelmed. The format was too intimidating, even with maximum adult cooperation.

The reason that family members do not attend is also fairly obvious, and I would like to suggest one more reason, when we schedule these conferences we accommodate the convenience of all the professionals, in descending order of pro-

fessional stature, and then announce the time to the family.

If you asked the youth who is the most important person to accommodate, they would not do it the same way — perhaps not even choosing to invite some people to attend.

One excellent example of taking control of the meeting by a youth, who effectively managed to get all the team to focus on what she needed and to work for her goals, is an example I have used before. I attended this case conference in 1998, this is a true story.

A 12 year old girl went into residential care because of her mother's alcoholism. She had a younger brother at home about whom she was very worried and felt that she needed to be there with him to keep him from being neglected.

Her social worker told her in December that if she attended school regularly and passed all her subjects, she could go home for good in June. At the April case conference the social worker changed her mind because the mother was not motivated to work with her, and stated that this girl was going into foster home care in June. This was a surprise to everyone at the meeting, but the girl did not react at all when it was announced. As the meeting was ending, the girl was asked if she had anything to say. "Yes, I do", she said and turned to the steno and asked her to write it down, "If I do not go home in June I will kill myself" she said, "Do you know how to spell suicide?" . The meeting was hastily adjourned. There was another case conference without the girl in a week, and everyone agreed that they needed to figure out a way to motivate the mother, etc. The girl went home in June.

This is an extreme, but effective example of young people being empowered to get what they think they need. I regularly hope that we can figure out a better way to accomplish this for all our youth and families.

The Rusty Nail

Estella Abraham
CEO, *Fostering First International*

Some people think blogging is a new activity, but it's actually as old as the hills! The formats may have changed, but communicating everyday observations is not the domain of the cyber generation.

In ancient times, stories were told through hieroglyphics drawn on walls or on papyrus. In my lifetime cinematography, print, radio and podcasts have all been used. What blogging has made fashionable once again is expressing thought and opinion. How do we help the children and young people we care for express themselves?

Recently I was watching the premier of a film recorded by some of our carer leavers; they had left over a 12-year period and all had aged out of our care, having stayed with us for between 2 and 7 years. They were talking about their experiences, the highs and the lows, the fun and the pain.

The focus of the film was a reflection on what belonging means — and they did so with such eloquence. Each had a slightly different perspective on their journey through care. Not one said they didn't want to belong; some said they didn't need a second mum and dad, but they did want someone to care for them and defend them.

As adults not many of us can easily move on to a new emotional relationship immediately after we have left or finished one. So why do we expect children and young people to?

Being removed from birth parents or moved from one foster carer to another is not something a cup of tea and a piece of toast can heal. For some they never get

over it and for others they may manage, but in their time, not yours.

I can remember when I was 9 years old, my mother went abroad to meet up with my father. She was away for 6 weeks so my adult sister looked after me in her home. She took me to the doctors because all I would do was sleep and she was worried about me. I can recall some of my feelings and thoughts: 'Was I adopted?' 'Was my mother really going to come back?' and 'Why hadn't she told me?'

One day whilst she was away, I walked into a piece of wood with a nail sticking out and needed treatment for the hole in my leg. But at the time of the incident I was numb to any feeling and didn't know it had happened until I changed my clothes and saw the blood.

I was emotionally and physically numb. I was the youngest of 5 children, securely attached and with both birth parents at home. My mum was my primary carer because my dad was in the merchant navy and away for long periods. She had always been there ... and then she wasn't. I suddenly had to live with my sister and her family and do things the way they did. I can't really imagine what the children we care for have experienced, or what they feel or think.

Let's not second guess and afterwards try to make amends; let's try to let them just be, and create a safe space for them to belong in.

THE ROLE OF A PSYCHOLOGIST IN HELPING A CHILD WITH LEARNING DISABILITY IN INDIA

Preeti Tabitha Louis
Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT University), India

A learning disability is defined as a disorder in which one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, manifests itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia (Ryan & Michael, 2004). Learning difficulties could be identified at an early age and are usually exaggerated in the early school years. It is estimated that 20 percent of Indian children suffer from learning disability (Thacker, 2007). These children are often termed as clumsy and inattentive in classrooms and teachers often complain of their day dreaming habits. Parenting such a child could be an overwhelming experience and caretakers often benefit from professional involvement. The purpose of this paper is to enhance the joint efforts of professionals in providing assistance to a child with a learning disability. We must understand the focus in on enabling the child to cope well not just perform well.

A "struggling" child is most often identified by the teacher who takes note of the child's constant failures despite having taken efforts to improve. The teacher may then contact the parents and may be willing to have open discussions with them regarding the child's performance. Discussions must focus on the child's positives and not just on the "complaints". Most often parents are not willing to accept what is told but want ready results. This involves the child in further stresses of having to attend tutorials, remedial classes and in doing more homework. This could reduce motivation levels and also hurt the self-esteem in these children.

Teachers play a vital role by enabling parents to contact professionals who can help. Initially many would express reluctance of having to seek help but, if encouraged by teachers, many parents comply.

Professional intervention for a child with learning needs begin by meeting a child consultant, usually a pediatrician. The earlier the intervention begins the better is the response (Coleman & Buysse, 2006). Often, in the Indian context, the pediatrician does the initial neurodevelopmental screening and then the doctor suggests psychological assessment. In any Indian Child Development Centre (CDC) the psychologist begins by first discussing with the family about the primary needs of the child. Information regarding school work, home behavior, communication skills and social ability will be discussed. The family requires sharing as much of information as is necessary for helping the psychologist to understand the child. The psychologist also is required to build a good rapport with the child so as to understand and elicit responses to questions asked during the session. A good assessment may require 5 to 6 sessions with the family, preferably with the child, in order to gather all necessary information to plan for intervention.

The psychologist administers standardized tests to assess the learning of the child. The performance of the child enables the psychologist to make inferences of probable difficulties experienced, areas that will require assistance and to also prepare an individualized learning plan. The psychologist will also have to educate the family about the purpose of developmental assessments. Standardized tests that are usually used for identifying learning issues include the WPPSI (Wechsler's Pre school and Primary Scale of Intelligence-2 years 6 months to 7 years and 3 months), WISC (Wechsler's Intelligence Scale for Children- 6 to 16 years) and the Stanford Binet Intelligence Test (SBIT- 2 to 23 years). These tests measure reading, writing, number skills, copying ability, memory and reasoning skills through verbal and performance subtests. Before administering the test the psychologist will need to help parents understand that these tests are not diagnostic labels but are only used to identify gaps in learning.

The learning style of the child (visual, auditory or kinesthetic) can be identified and that may further help in recommending ways to improve problem areas. Suggestions are given to help the child organize, memorize and understand complex ideas using simpler methods. The psychologist will have to design an Individualized Learning Program which will include the learning objective, performance expectations and a review of pertinent skills and concepts. The approach to each child is unique and specialized and the basic objective is to present information in an organized manner, using examples, demonstrations and visual prompts wherever necessary to enhance learning.

The psychologist will have to enable the child in making choices about the curricula he desires to learn, the subjects that he likes to focus on and the methods to be employed so as to perform well. The most delicate task for the psychologist is in winning the confidence of the child. It is

certainly necessary that the psychologist communicates to the child that he needs help and that performance needs to be assessed periodically. Hiding information from the child or making him feel that he has a disorder or a "problem" will bring adverse effects. Once the child feels assured, then he is ready to comply. Not to forget, the child is the active participant of the therapy and suggestions given have to be tailored according to his or her needs.

The family will need to be encouraged to implement the suggestions and to report changes periodically. To begin with, visits could be once a month and then gradually tapered down. The feasibility of making the visits to the CDC must be considered and must not be a cumbersome experience. Phone call conversations, reports from teachers and even visits must be welcomed. Sibling issues too need to be addressed. At times families compare abilities and performances between siblings and this may lead to increased stress reactions in home and school.

A child with a learning disability is often termed a slow learner in a classroom and it is not uncommon that schools recommend grade retention. Parents become anxious and want to see immediate differences. They require time and adequate information about the child's needs in order to cope (Healey, 1996). These children are often at a greater risk for developing psychosocial problems as they are subject to increased demands from both the family and the school. Coping becomes stressful and too tedious. Many times they are wounded emotionally and depressed and some may require counseling, behavioral modification, and also social skills training. Children may also suffer from being made fun of in school, bullied and even emotionally abused or neglected at home.

In young children it is necessary to increase self regulation and to support the child through the crisis experienced. Self affirming experiences are important in raising the self-esteem in children or else it could result in fewer grades, increased negative classroom behavior and also school drop outs. If special education services such as mainstreaming or remedial tutoring would benefit the child then intervention will have to be sustained and the outcomes periodically monitored.

In helping children with learning needs, it is important to build self awareness of abilities and enable them to take pride in their accomplishments (Colorado, 2008). Employment possibilities and vocational skills also need to be addressed. The psychologist will have to explore leisure time activities, hobbies or interests that the child could develop. The child should be encouraged to set realistic and achievable goals and the family has to help him be perseverant. The child should be given the opportunity to be proactive (Ryan and Michael, 2004).

Therapy cannot promise instant or tremendous change. Efforts have to be consistent and parents will need to continually support and accept the differences in their child. Providing individual assistance and attention to the child can be a demanding experience but it is crucial that we support the child through the crisis experienced. Self affirming experiences are important for these children and families

need to encourage social experiences.

Parents are our co-therapists and they have the right to information regarding the welfare of their child. It is the responsibility of the professionals to disseminate information and to keep them actively involved in the decision making process and in also implementing the therapeutic recommendations. Professionals should work in liaison with many other organizations that can render help in training and in providing vocational inputs especially for adolescents. Every child with a learning need has the right to a dream and to persevere in fulfilling it. We have to acknowledge that every child is unique yet special and therefore we need to accept and appreciate the differences we see in them. In doing so, we help them experience the world differently - a secure place. They need us and in serving them we learn, grow and help them experience the fullness of life.

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Attitude

John Stein

The first social worker I ever knew (aside from Jane Addams of history books) was Dick Cass. It was the early 1970s. With three years of college in psychology and sociology, I had just gotten a job with the local poverty program directing two neighborhood centers in public housing projects. I thought I knew what I was doing. After all, I had three years of college.

Dick Cass was directing another neighborhood center in the town's third housing project. He had an MSW specializing in community organization. He knew exactly what he was doing and took me under his wing to work on various projects of mutual interest to the people in our neighborhoods. We would assemble some of our tenants to discuss these issues, most notably, organizing tenants' councils to negotiate a new and less demeaning and restrictive lease with the housing authority. After our meetings, Dick and I would go for a beer (or two) to discuss progress and strategies for our next meeting.

The thing that amazed me about Dick, was that he was always bragging about his people and their accomplishments. He never had anything negative to say about

them. He might talk about some of the obstacles they faced, like discrimination whenever they applied for a job and had to list an address that everyone knew was in the 'projects.' But he never, ever, even once talked about any limitations they might have had, about problems or diagnoses or any personal limitations. It seemed that he saw only their strengths and their accomplishments in overcoming challenges. He never saw weakness. To hear him talk, these 'marginalized' people were as normal as any others. More, they were only to be admired for how they faced challenges. His continuing positive regard inspired them and gave them confidence. More, when he spoke about his people with city leaders in preparing for meetings, his unequivocal positive regard changed the attitudes of the city leaders — politicians and the power brokers. His unconditional positive regard was contagious. It was truly amazing.

It was an attitude, and it stuck with me, both with my own children and later when I worked in residential treatment programs. Although I did at times fall short, focusing perhaps a bit too much on the 'problems' we were to manage or 'treat,' I hope that I did not fall short too often.

With our own children, there is a tendency to be concerned about problems. As parents, we feel the need to do something about problems. We want our children to be the best they can be. Especially in residential treatment, there is tremendous pressure to focus on problems. After all, it is problems that bring children into residential treatment. Problems with behaviour, problems with relationships, problems, problems, problems ...

But it is strengths that lead to resolving those problems, and in my experience, thanks to Dick Cass, all of these children have more strengths than they have problems.

That is what I think sets the great Child and Youth Care workers apart from other professions – attitude. A belief in the strengths and resiliency of our children. They see the potential of our children rather than their limitations. It is their strengths, their struggles, and their accomplishments that make us like them and respect them and give us hope for them. It is that hope that keeps us going. They can overcome, and so very often, they do. When that attitude is contagious, when it spreads to other workers and to parents, miracles can happen.

Have you ever asked parents of troubled children to describe their children? You get a list of problems, shortcomings, and complaints. Sometimes the list is very long. If that's what parents think of their children, what do the children think of themselves? When workers start talking about these children in a positive way, you can see parents' expressions change. They begin to see their children in a new and different light. I sometimes think it is the most important thing we can do for parents. And for their children.

There is nothing more rewarding than seeing troubled children strive towards their potential and experience success in approaching it, at times, even surpassing what we thought their potential might be.

Nothing.

Ontological assassination

Not often we can fit ten syllables into two words, but a caution this month to the child and youth care worker (perhaps you and me) who may be less than careful with the essence or the being (*ontos* in Greek) of one of the young people we work with.

Scenario: Roger (care worker) yells down the stairs: "Stop Keith before he leaves for school!"

His colleague Mike shouts back: "Which Keith? Johnson or Van Dijk?"

Roger (care worker): "Keith the bed-wetter. He hasn't moved his stuff to the laundry."

Ouch! There you are, for everyone in the house to hear: Keith the bedwetter. And the violence we do to the *ontos*, the being and essence of Keith, is not so much the crass breach of confidentiality and regard, but the reduction of the person into a unitary and simplistic notion: the bed-wetter.

We have this little guy in our program who is a complex mixture of guts and pain, of trying and failing, of what has happened to him in the past and what he hopes to do with his future ... mix and match your own words to suit the kids you work with. In other circumstances Roger (care worker) might have used a different word — druggie, clown, smoker, epileptic, whatever — and by so doing have taken the rich mix of all the qualities, experience, troubles, hurts and hopes of a person and wrapped them up in a single label — a label of convenience, of judgement, of diagnosis. There's nowhere much to grow from such a start (end?)

We also do this unconsciously in another way. The young person may become for us the piano player, the goal scorer, the woodworker, the artist ... and again, though seemingly positive, we have reduced the compound and intricate essence of a person into a single tag. Picking one quality is to overlook all of the others and to deny the richness, the diversity. Perhaps it is also to place on kids the unbearable obligation to succeed in the selected ability, and that their sense of being will come to hang on this lone quality.

The children you work with today may be saying to you "Never let what I do be seen as who I *am*." Yes, it's just words, but the message is vital: we can notice and comment on and work with and applaud what young people do, but never undervalue who they are. If ever we cease to be in awe of the complexities and the possibilities of each young person we work with, we move ourselves dangerously away from the central principles of our profession.

A *Practice Hint* from CYC-Net

Criticized

George Dean

Think back to when you decided to get in the field of child and youth care. Why did you decide it? Everyone has a different reason for getting into the field but hopefully it was for all for the right reasons. Some people chose to get into the field because they wanted to make a difference with the youth. Others because the money might be better in this field than it was in their last job. Take me for example. I got into the field because I wanted to make a difference with the youth I work with. I know that some of these kids have been abused and neglected, and I know that it is not their fault and definitely not something that they asked for. Being in care in either a foster home or a group home is not something they asked for either. I know first-hand what it feels like to be one of these youth because I used to be one. I spent 14 years under the care of 'The System', in foster homes and group homes, and I feel my knowledge can be useful in the field. I feel as if now I know the system from two angles; as the youth, and now as the staff. The only issue here is that people question me working in the field. Some people don't think it is right for a former 'kid in care' to be working in the field where he grew up in. Think of it this way. How many police officers do you know that may have a juvenile criminal record? Do you think it is right for someone that has a record to apply to be a police officer? If you were doing an interview would it be right of you to say "OK, I see that you had a youth record, and even though you have learned from your mistakes and now live a stable life with a good education, you still cannot be a police officer. What do you think of that, for example? What about this? You are working with youth and you tell them that you want them to grow up and do good things in life. You want them to be whatever they want to be whether it is a fireman or a policeman, but they are not allowed to be a youth care worker! How right would that be?

I had a job interview not too long ago, and the interviewer told me to my face word for word: "I think I would feel pretty uncomfortable working beside you because you used to be a kid in care". Want to know what my response was? I simply told them that they are supposed to here for the kids they work with and to put them on the right path. I told them that they should have a great sense of self, knowing that they used to work with a youth that is now doing great things. That person obviously is burnt out and has forgotten why they came into this field in the first place. Even though I eventually got the job, I did it with more fighting than most. I go to work when needed but that

doesn't mean I don't feel uncomfortable working beside that person. I always feel like I'm being 'watched', so to speak, and it's not right; it's not right at all.

Some people want to test my knowledge to see exactly what I know, and let me tell you it's here in my head and more will follow. I am a youth care worker to help youth get on the right track. To help them try to put their past aside for a minute while they face the future with open arms. To help them forget all the negative things that have happened to them before, and face all the positive things in their future. That is why I do what I do. I do it every day with a smile on my face even if I have had a bad day because I know I'm doing it for someone else.

I am a youth care worker.

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end."
— Seneca (1st Century Roman philosopher)

The Meaning of Mountains

Laura Steckley

This time of year gets me reminiscing. I used to love working on Christmas Day. The unit was always quiet and the kids who didn't go home seemed to appreciate our efforts to make the day special. In one of the centers where I worked, we developed a tradition of skiing on Christmas followed by a lovely meal afterward in a nice restaurant. Not a bad day's work.

I remember, one Christmas, sitting next to Victor on the chairlift as we ascended his first mountain. He'd been in a beginners' class all morning and had demonstrated the basic skills necessary to go up his first 'real' slope. Lots of discussion was had about how to disembark from the chairlift, and then they sent us on our way.

I'm not much of a skier or snowboarder myself; it would be more honest to say I fall a lot with wood and fiberglass strapped to my feet. So I was more than a bit nervous about what was going to happen when it was time to get off the chairlift. It's hard enough not to wipe out when I've only got myself to manage. Not only was I worried about how to help Victor through the scary part of getting off, there was a good chance I'd be the one to cause him to fall.

So as we gradually floated through the sky towards the top, I mentioned to Victor that I wouldn't be angry with him if he felt the need to grab onto me, but that he had a much better chance of not falling if he didn't. He seemed to take this on board while quietly rehearsing the moves in his head.

It was one of those spectacular Colorado winter days, with cold, crisp air, warm sunshine and a stunning blue sky. I tried to engage Victor with talk about the weather, but he was having none of it. I figured the looming ejection from the lift was on his mind. When I checked in, asking how he was doing and whether he was okay, he gave a short, unconvincing nod.

So I begin to prepare myself for the worst, and really, how bad can it be? It's a little ramp that we slide down, so there's no chance to gain enough momentum to

seriously hurt ourselves. Damaged pride is probably the biggest risk.

Then, about halfway up the lift, Victor starts screaming bloody murder. No words, just screaming. There are skiers directly below us, and they're beginning to look up to see what's going on. I almost shout down that, really, I'm not hurting him. I try to reassure Victor that it's okay, and the worst that can happen is that we have a little tumble. I'm not even sure whether he can hear me through his piercing screams.

He's clinging onto me for dear life, and I'm just hoping he doesn't decide to try to jump out of the lift early. I think I might have put my arm around him, as words didn't seem to be having much affect, and I probably tried to get him to look at me.

Somehow or another, he managed to calm down enough to talk to me, and do you know what? He wasn't even worried about the mechanics of getting off the lift. His concern was far greater than that. Victor had never been up a mountain before, and he didn't have an understanding of its shape. In his mind, the part of the mountain that can be seen – the part we were going up – was like the long side of a 90 degree triangle. So once at the top, he envisaged a complete vertical drop back down. Hell, I'd scream bloody murder too.

We were so busy going through the moves so he'd be able to get off the lift that no one had stopped to consider what he thought was going to happen, overall, once he was up there. When he understood that this mountain is more like an equilateral triangle, Victor seemed to pull it together a little bit (as I look back on this, I give thanks to my geometry teacher Mr. Spang).

Do you know what else? I don't remember whether or not we made it off the lift without falling. I was just so bowled over by the difference in meaning that the mountain had for Victor compared to me, that's mostly what I remember. Victor picked up the skiing (and chair lifting) just fine. We even looked back on that first journey up the mountain and laughed about it from time to time.

I hope y'all out there are having a happy festive season.



A Brighter Future for Young People

The Kibble Centre in Paisley is one of Scotland's leading child and youth care organisations. Young people are referred to us from across Scotland, and we operate at the intersection of child welfare, mental health and youth justice. Our uniquely integrated array of preventative and rehabilitative services encompasses intensive residential and community services, a full educational curriculum, throughcare and aftercare, intensive fostering and a secure unit.

Rehabilitation in a Secure Setting

Kibble's Secure Unit serves the community by looking after those children and young people who need a safe and controlled environment in order to prevent harm to themselves or to others. We provide safe and secure accommodation only after all other options have been considered. Young people are received into Kibble either through the Children's Hearing system or through the courts.

We recognise that those who arrive at Kibble are at a point of crisis in their lives. Our duty is to care for them with humanity and to respect their rights, including their individual and diverse backgrounds. We work in a collaborative manner that will allow us to address the problems that have contributed to their situation, and we work with other agencies to achieve the highest standards in childcare planning, and provide for their long-term development. It is hoped that, by positive intervention, real progress can be made towards gaining a sense of purpose and achievement that will give a solid base for the future.

"Staff treat you with respect and people also respect your privacy in the unit."
Young person in our Secure Unit

"We are quite happy in here and it is definitely a good place to stay in."
Young person in our Secure Unit

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Partners in Child and Youth Care

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Post Card from Leon Fulcher

Air Mail

Hi again. As 2011 draws to a close, I've been thinking about the influence of music and art in child and youth development. Indeed, much is being reported about a choir of young wives and partners of British soldiers in Afghanistan who took up singing in the past 6 months – many hadn't sung before – all now surprised to find themselves at the top of the UK Christmas charts!

Hawkes' Bay Hillbilly Band

Good fortune offered opportunities during the past month for me to sample a variety of local bands. Some featured youthful enthusiasm, some were young adults seeking to stay youthful, and some were oldies like myself, playing songs from our youth. It reminded me of Blackford Brae youths who performed *Maggie Mae* with Rod Stewart every time he featured on Top of the Pops.

Music features whenever youth are together!

Music has brought people together for ages. Have you ever stopped to think about how music features in the lives of the young people with whom you work? What music is on their list of favourites, and are these sounds listed amongst your favourites? What about the success of iPods and other MP3 players one finds glued to the ears of young people world-wide?

Black Out 38 – A Ruatahuna Rock Band

Whilst driving home from Auckland to Lake Waikaremoana, I stopped off in Ruatahuna – a 3-horse village in the middle of the Urewera country. At the local shop (the only local business in the valley) I learned about a new local band named Black Out 38 who have released a CD called *Children of the Hillz*. In order to grt a copy of the CD, I was directed to the garage behind a house where the Band was rehearsing for their weekend gig.

Black Out 38 Rock Band's Lead Singer

I asked *Black Out 38* band members under what genre they thought iTunes might classify their CD. They thought it would be Rock and New Zealand Rock in particular. Thrash and heavy metal was well 'out there' beyond their Band. They thought old bands like Deep Purple or even AC-DC were influences which have shaped their sounds. They performed their title song, *Children of the Hillz* for me and I was stunned by the voice of the lead singer – there practising in her gum boots and baseball cap! Throughout the rehearsal, on the floor in front of the band was a child on the floor, growing up around music.

Music and art appreciation starts from an early age

This commitment to music and art appreciation amongst children was highlighted in a conversation with Art Therapist Fay, who has been involved with what are called Art Houses. The basic idea is that one creates opportunities for children and young people to engage with art – as with music – helping them find opportunities for self-expression, enhanced self-esteem and all the other positives helpers seeking to promote.

Have a look around your programme. See what opportunities may be right there in front of you to use art and music as purposeful activities which help to to nurture growth and development with children and young people. I'm reminded of how we all sang ***Stand By Me!*** at the FICE Conference in Cape Town last year! Be sure and listen to the music around you in 2012! Be well!

EndNotes

When we step outside of our labels and our roles we can discover whole worlds of possibilities — out there, in ourselves, about each other.

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I made no resolutions for the New Year. The habit of making plans, of criticizing, sanctioning and molding my life, is too much of a daily event for me.

— Anaïs Nin

—

Good resolutions are simply checks that men draw on a bank where they have no account.

— Oscar Wilde

"The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul and a new nose; new feet, a new backbone, new ears, and new eyes. Unless a particular man made New Year resolutions, he would make no resolutions. Unless a man starts afresh about things, he will certainly do nothing effective."

— G.K. Chesterton

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New Year's Day: Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving the road to hell with them as usual.

— Mark Twain

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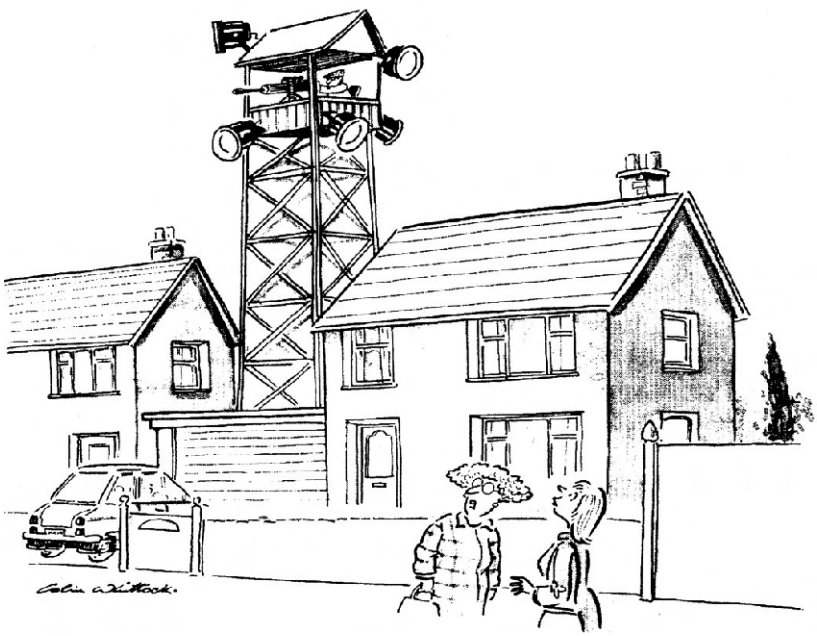


"He claims he operates his group home very democratically, but believe me, he runs a heck of a tight ship!"

Life as it is

Whether you like Bill Gates or not ... this is a rumoured bit of advice Bill Gates recently dished out at a high school speech about 11 things they did not learn in school. He talks about how feel-good, 'politically correct' teaching has created a full generation of kids with no concept of reality and how this concept sets them up for failure in the real world.

RULE 1: Life is not fair — better get used to it.

RULE 2: The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE you feel good about yourself.

RULE 3: You will NOT make 40 thousand dollars a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice president with car phone, until you earn both.

RULE 4: If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss. He doesn't have tenure.

RULE 5: Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping they called it Opportunity.

RULE 6: If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.

RULE 7: Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parent's generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.

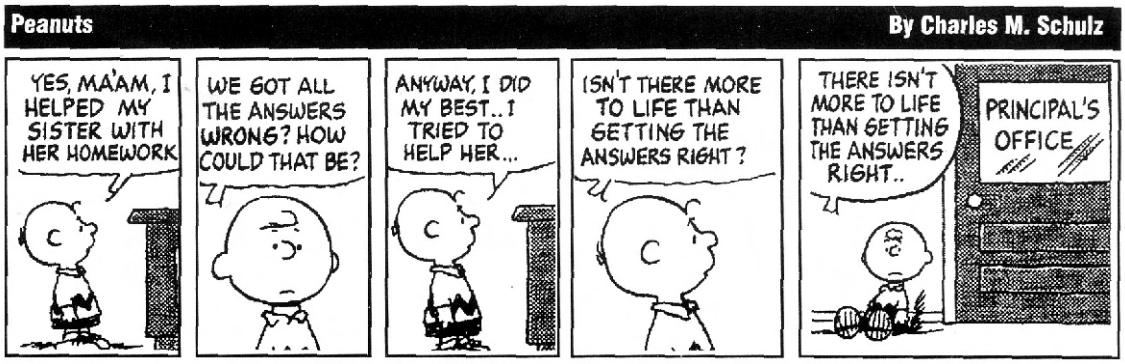
RULE 8: Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades and they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to ANYTHING in real life.

RULE 9: Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.

RULE 10: Television is NOT real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

RULE 11: Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

www.truthorfiction.com/rumors/b/billgatesspeech.htm



information

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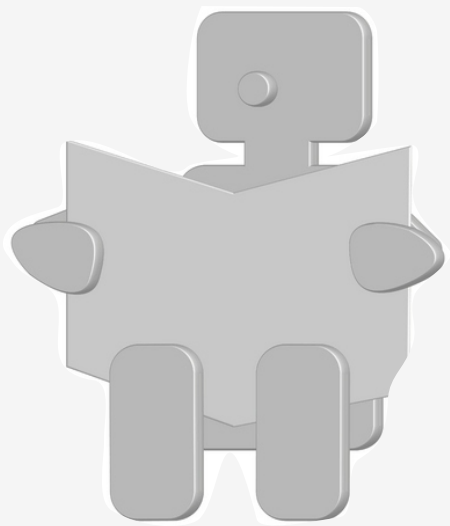

ONLINE JOURNAL OF
THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK (CYC-NET)

www.cyc-net.org

ISSN 1605-7406