

# CYC-Online

Online journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net)



**A Journal for those who live or work with  
Children and Young People**

**Issue 191  
January 2015**





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**H**ere in this part of the world, in my culture, we celebrate the changing of the year – New Year’s, we call it – as in New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day. For many it is more important than the traditional celebration of Christmas with all its hoopla, presents, and commercialism. Somehow, New Year’s has avoided much of that commercialism. But that is neither here nor there.

Christmas wishes tend to be of the more immediate kind – as in Happy Christmas (Bonne Noel) – whereas New Year’s wishes seem to be somehow different – wishing you well, in all areas, as the year progresses – wishing you happiness in the future, rather in the immediate.

It is, unlike Christmas, a ritual of transition – from one year to the next. It marks a ‘passage’.

Rituals, especially rituals of passage, are important in our work. Transitions from one year to the next – whether a birthday transition or an annual one; transitions from one place to the next; transitions from one school to another, one stage to another, one way of being in the world to a different way of being. The lives of

young people, especially young people in care, are filled with multiple transitions.

And yet, while we often consider the ‘big ones’ (like moving into care) we often fail to realize the importance, and the impact, of so many of the others (like going from ‘unsuccessful’ to ‘successful’). Perhaps, for example, because some of us lived in fairly stable environments, surrounded by

support, we thought transitioning to a new school was not a big deal – maybe it was even filled with the excitement of the new, the unknown. But if your life has been filled with traumatic unresolved transitions, perhaps each seemingly simple transition takes on greater meaning. Perhaps it is more disturbing.

When most of the transitions in your life have created experiences of pain, and even of trauma, each subsequent transition must fill you with dread. If every time a change has occurred it has led to more pain, more confusion, more trauma, must it not be disturbing to face yet another one?

And, yet, young people in care will continue to experience these transitions – it

# Rituals in Our Lives



is not as if we might prevent them. So if they are going to experience these multiple, almost continuous, transitions, what might we do? Except for the following statement, might I just say that we might ‘notice them’!

Well, ‘what to do’ is way beyond a simple editorial – but, and this is important – the 1<sup>st</sup> electronic issue of *RCYCP* (28/1) is all about transitions – so, wait and read. I have read all the articles and it is worth the read!

Is this PR for *RCYCP*? In a way ‘yes’ – because we, at *RCYCP*, are making the transition from being a ‘paper’ journal to being an e-journal – quality remains the same, accessibility is greater.

But in the meantime, think about this – every change for a young person is a transition – every change – so does your practice acknowledge this? Are you constantly aware of transitions – rituals help us move through transitions – what are the transitional rituals in your program?

Have a great new year, or whatever transition might be appropriate for you.

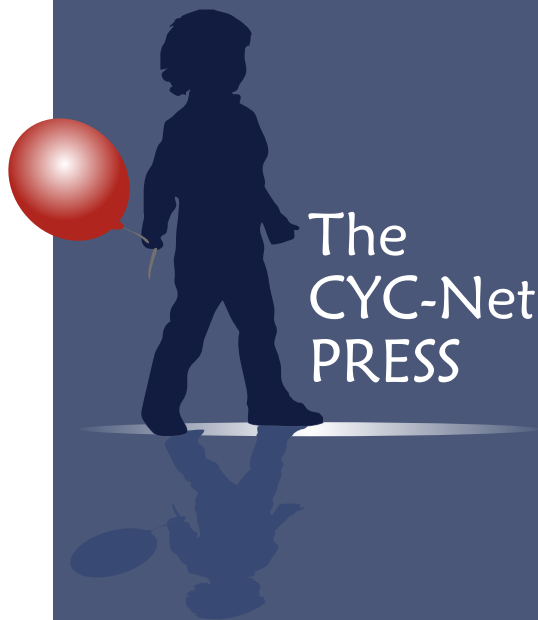
– Thom



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# A Good Year Coming

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**2**015 should be a good year for the field of child and youth care. I say this partly because every year for the past twenty or so has been a good year. Slowly but surely the field has evolved into one that features research, excellent practice, an expansion into additional sectors and service settings, and an increased capacity to respond to changing trends and needs in the child and youth serving fields generally. A notable feature of the development of the field has been its global context. In Canada, the level of grassroots organizing within the field is substantial; many of the provincial associations have stabilized and are ready to move toward formal regulation and even legislation. Very smart and hard working people have come forward to lead this charge. In the US, there still is much work to do, but certification drives and organizational growth have been

prominent there too. In the UK, the field has taken interesting and often very fruitful excursions into related disciplines, none as prominently as that of social pedagogy. Indeed, social pedagogy has become an enormously useful addition to the language and theoretical framework of child and youth care, and has been strengthened by increasing partnerships with colleagues from Austria, Germany and Switzerland. One example of this is the current planning process for the FICE 2016 conference to be held in Vienna, which will represent a partnership between the FICE movement in Europe and the Global CYC conference initiative that began in Newfoundland in 2013.

In South Africa, 2015 features the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference of the National Association of Child Care Workers, to be held in Cape Town in June/July 2015. These





bi-annual conferences are life-altering experiences for anyone who attends, and recent conferences have attracted increasing numbers of scholars, practice leaders and interested observers from Europe, Australia and North America. Indeed, I am aware of a contingent of 20 Canadians planning to attend this year. And why wouldn't they? ([www.naccw.org.za](http://www.naccw.org.za) for more information). The NACCW has arguably been the most successful child and youth care organization in the world, currently entrusted with the training of no less than 10,000 child and youth care workers to be deployed in rural South Africa by the government.

The capacity of the field has never been this impressive. I don't think it is excessive to describe it as a beacon of hope in an otherwise often depressing landscape of life circumstances for children and youth. And with that capacity comes the responsibility to act, to engage, and to expand the agenda for social change and social impact. To this end, I would suggest several areas

of focus that might usefully be integrated into our scholarship, research, practice and advocacy.

First, it is high time to seriously engage the challenges faced by indigenous communities everywhere. This issue is of great importance in Canada, for example, where indigenous communities continue to suffer unacceptable levels of poverty, social problems, political marginalization and cultural alienation, all resulting in disproportionately high levels of child welfare involvement, youth justice involvement, mental health adversity, education exclusion, substance use troubles and other social challenges. All of this in spite of Canada representing one of the richest countries in the world. Indigenous marginalization, with its historical roots that include genocide, traumatization and cultural destruction, is prevalent everywhere; aside from Canada, Australia, South and Central America, Mexico and the United States are obvious places where our field must really begin to focus its attention.

Second, we must embrace our diversity within the field, and begin to work collaboratively across the different approaches and concentrations we bring to the work. Children's Rights, postmodern and post-colonial thought and critical theory, as well as relational practice and working with Daily Life Events in the life-space are not separate endeavors, but elements of our field's far-reaching and highly ambitious reach and activity. Similarly, the work unfolding in areas of brain science, trauma-informed care and evidence-based practice will, inevitably, form important components of our field. It al-



ready does, and this means we have to ensure that we represent our field in ways that are inclusive of all of this work.

Third, we ought to engage the emerging field of social innovation, regardless of obvious critiques and misgivings associated with the entrepreneurial context of innovation. In reality, much of child and youth care practice, including some of the best examples of relational practice, are already emerging from within the private, entrepreneurial sectors, and at any rate, we have to come to terms with a changing political, economic and social context (not to mention a transformative communications context) in which the binary of public/private is appearing as increasingly antiquated. Indeed, as my friend Ben Anderson-Nathe recently argued at the

National Child and Youth Care Conference in Moncton, Canada, binaries of many kinds are no longer particularly useful, including distinctions between local and global, between theory and practice, and even between child and adult (a point often made by my friend Hans Skott-Myhre).

Finally, I think 2015 ought to be the year in which we present to the world our field with a renewed confidence that we, the theoreticians, the researchers, the practitioners and the advocates can indeed impact the well being and the political position of children and youth around the world.

On that note, I want to wish all of you a happy, successful, healthy and above all relationally satisfying New Year!



# EXPLORING SEXUAL DIVERSITY:

## Helping children and young people develop understanding and respect for differences in the human family

**Lorraine E. Fox, Ph.D**

*This is part 2 of a 3-part article. Part 1 appeared in the December 2014 issue of CYC-Online. Part 3 will appear in the February 2015 issue of CYC-Online.*

### **New “Lingo” and Working Toward New Understanding**

Almost all homes have a television, even the very poor. When your brain is young and unformed, it can mistake “hearing something on television” with “hearing something true”. The same thing is true of the internet. Many young people assume that what they read on the internet is true. Conflicting interpretations of news events occurring simultaneously and a wealth of misinformation on the internet put us, as adults, clearly in the position of needing to clarify our own facts and positions so that we can help developing minds navigate the sea of conflicting information.

We will now review each of the groups represented by the letters LGBTQ, which stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning people.

### **Homosexual (Lesbian or Gay) People**

Whether one is emotionally and sexually attracted to someone of the same sex or the opposite sex is called “sexual orientation”.

Sexual orientation exists along a continuum. The continuum ranges across a scale from purely heterosexual to purely homosexual. This continuum is true of affection, attraction, inclination, fantasy and behavior. The fact of a continuum, first proposed by Kinsey in the 1940’s, continues to cause anxiety for people who like things simple. (What are you, gay or straight?)

The term sexual orientation is NOT to be confused with the term “sexual preference”, which is a term that was basically invented by people who want to believe that sexual attraction is a choice and can be changed. Sexual orientation is an enduring



ing emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction to another person. This cannot be changed. The only thing that can change in this regard is whether someone **acts** on their feelings. As we mentioned earlier, it is important that adults working with young people never use the term “sexual preference” because it implies an emotional choice that gay people can’t make.

**Sexual orientation is NOT necessarily related to sexual behavior. Who one is, is different from what one does**

Sexual orientation is a matter of the heart and may be separate from behavior. Having “gay sex” does not make one gay. At the same time, abstaining from gay sex, or engaging in heterosexual relations does not make one not gay, or “straight”. One can be gay, but celibate. One can be in a heterosexual relationship but be gay. One can engage in homosexual relationships due to circumstance but be heterosexual.

- Large numbers of adolescents and college-age young people engage at some point in sexual experiences with members of the same sex that could be classified as “experimenting” (McMillen; Kinsey).
- Homosexual thoughts and fantasies are common in both adolescents and adults.

There is no “common” age when people become aware of same-sex attraction. Some do not “come out” (to themselves and/or others) until late in life; others are

clear and relatively open at an early age. In the past, there was usually a span of years between the awareness of same sex attraction and the self-labeling as gay. This seems to be changing as society becomes more tolerant of sexual diversity.

Homosexual people are in the minority, so because of general discomfort with difference there is a good chance that a young girl or boy who is “detected” as being gay will be the brunt of some cruelty or harassment. It is important, therefore, that parents be the first to notice their own children’s inclinations to be able to validate them and get them ready to function as a sexual minority with their self-esteem intact.

Being a gay person is about loving others, and wanting to express that love.

There are people who are gay and promiscuous, just as there are straight people who are promiscuous. There are gay pedophiles, just as there are straight ones, although it is much more common for straight men to buy sex from teenagers. Concepts of good and evil are not related to sexuality but to ways that people express or use their sexuality. The important thing to communicate to our children is that choices about how to live our lives is not related to who we choose to love.

### **Bi-Sexuality/Ambi-Sexuality**

We continue our exploration into nature’s tendency toward difference and diversity, specifically recognizing how individuals develop their emotional, affectional, and sexual feelings and behavior. People



whose emotional and sexual “orientation” is toward persons of their same sex, given a situation in which they had free choice about who they would like to “give their hearts to”, would choose another person with the same biological features as themselves. This is an important fact to tuck away in your minds because when we talk about “gender” we will see that one’s biological makeup does not necessarily influence whether they think of themselves as “male” or “female”. The terms male and female are biological designations, which are not the same as gender designations. More on that later. Homosexual, or “gay” people are emotionally and sexually oriented toward others who share their biology.

People who are referred to as “bi-sexual”, or “ambisexual” feel attraction to both males and females. We know that being “ambidextrous” refers to people who can use both hands equally well to write or perform tasks. If you are a baseball fan, (and who wouldn’t be?), you know that ambidextrous players are particularly valuable in the line-up because they can hit the ball equally well from either side, using either hand and arm to swing the bat. That is where we get the term sometimes used to refer to bi-sexual people as people who can “swing both ways”. So there are, indeed, people who have equally strong emotional and sexual attraction to both men and women.

There is no social construct for “ambisexual” people. No other group accepts bi-sexual people. There is no bi-sexual “community”. Bi-sexual people do not have

roles on television. Bisexual people are often not invited to either “gay parties or events” or “straight parties and events”.

Bi-sexual people, even more than gay people, can stir up fears in many individuals because they infer that we are not necessarily “fixed” in our sexual inclinations. In fact, most bisexual people, and many sex researchers, believe that all people are born ambisexual and have the capacity for bisexuality, but that socialization is able to repress that urge toward sexual flexibility on a large scale, leaving most people feeling either “gay” or “straight”. Many would argue that discomfort from this fact is why bi-sexual people get the least welcome from others.

Bisexuality has become one of the most controversial issues within both the “straight” and “gay” communities. While some straight and gay people will state that they don’t believe they have a choice with regard to their orientation, bisexuality can seem to imply that some of the people who have sex with others of both genders do have a “choice”. Those who are gay and do not believe they have a choice about their orientation believe that bisexual people give tormentors “evidence” that one can choose their affections, and therefore can be “fixed” from being gay and made to enjoy heterosexual relationships. This animosity is actually about an issue, but is often personalized toward bisexual people, causing difficult relationships and contradictions in a community striving for acceptance and affirmation.

“Biphobic” has emerged as a term for categorizing doubters and detractors of

true bisexuality much as “homophobic” has long been used as a label for antigay forces.

The primary challenge for bisexual people is adapting to a culture that stresses and expects monogamy: choosing **one** other person to share life with as a sexual and emotional partner. If a bisexual person wants to have a “life partner”, this would be the one time that the term “sexual preference” would be accurate, in that they would have to choose the person they prefer, while being very capable of having a similar relationship with a person of the other sex. Knowledge of this “flexibility” can cause considerable tension in a monogamous relationship, complicating issues of commitment.

Although bisexual people suffer from lack of a “support community” they also benefit from their involvement with both sexes and do not seem to elicit as much fear and hatred from others as homosexual people do. Their ability to engage in socially acceptable pairing with the “opposite” sex seems to spare them from the violence and overt discrimination often experienced by gay people. At the same time, being bisexual can be very lonely with no other group really trusting or understanding you.

To some in the gay community bisexuals are frauds, fence sitters, “closet cases” who are afraid to come out and/or who feel that being attracted to persons of the other – as well as the same – sex means they are still “real” men or women.

Being bisexual as an adolescent or young adult may be part of seeking out one’s true “orientation” or it may indicate

a true bisexual nature. A parent cannot change the developmental direction of their teen, but they can be supportive by providing clear information about sexual diversity and by assuring their child of un-failing love as they discover themselves.

## Sex and Gender

**Sex** refers to biological differences between male and female bodies.

**Gender** refers to social and cultural expectations and norms ascribed to that sex distinction.

**Gender identity:** refers to whether a person identifies as a female or male, regardless of that person’s biological sex.

### **Sex is biological, gender is sociological; sex is born in nature; gender is socially constructed**

All people have subjective experiences of what it means to be male or female. As a result, we all have reactions to behaviors we encounter that do not mesh with our deeply held expectations and assumptions about gender. Being confronted with a young person or adult who is dealing with gender identification confronts our values, our beliefs, and our customs.

Predominant sex difference theories rely on two central assumptions:

- That the division of the human species into male and female categories is natural and fixed;
- That the physical (genital) bodies of the male and female indicate **internal** features that define us as male or female



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You may recall reading that Sigmund Freud famously wrote that “anatomy equals destiny”. However, the ideas of inherent and fixed masculine and feminine traits do not hold up well under scientific scrutiny.

Gender traits are influenced by dominant ideologies and power dynamics: worldviews that rise to prominence through repeated reinforcement by people in positions of control and influence.

That is, powerful people who are allowed to influence how others think and live have decided – in various time periods, and in various cultures, how people “should” act if they happen to be one sex or the other. Without looking at how history defines “appropriate” dress and behavior for one sex or the other, it can begin to seem that some things are “natural” that actually have nothing to do with nature! In fact, social customs are decided entirely by people, and not at all by a “natural order”. The development follows a pattern whereby each generation has a different experience dealing with how “men” and “women” should be. Eventually, it is thought that it is how men and women are.

### **Social customs**

- 1st generation: “This is how we decided to do it”
- 2nd generation: “This is how our elders did it”
- 3rd generation: “This is how it is done”
- 4th generation: “This is the way the world is ... this is reality”

But in fact, different cultures have different definitions of what is “masculine” and what is “feminine”. The same is true in nature, where males and females of different species behave differently.

A person struggling with “gender” issues find that social structures reinforce girls and boys into distinct patterns, which some people believe to be wrong for them. Currently, in clinical circles, when people experience dissonance with their sex and their gender they are said to have “gender identity disorder”. It is called a disorder based on the assumption that there is a natural “order” to the feelings and behaviors of the different sexes.

A person who is called “transgender” is someone who does not feel or act like others of their biological sex. A transgender female feels and is most comfortable dressing and acting as a man in her culture would be expected to feel and act. A transgender male is a boy or man who feels and is most comfortable dressing and acting as a woman in his culture would be expected to feel and act. Many transgender people talk about “feeling like strangers in their own body”. These feelings are private and cause transgendered young people to feel lonely and out of place in any group of peers, since their struggle is not with sexuality, but with their own sexual identity. It is not about how they feel about others, but how they feel about themselves.

Gender struggles become very complicated, and each young person has to decide whether to be honest with other people about their feelings since most

people they encounter will find their situation quite a challenge because it is so unfamiliar.

Complications increase and challenge relationships because personal feelings of discomfort with one’s “assigned” sexual identity are separate from one’s feelings of affection and attraction toward others. One could be a young man, who feels inside like a young woman, who is sexually attracted to **either** someone of their own sex, or someone of the other sex. The same is true for a female who feels like a boy/man, and may be attracted to either girls/women or boys/men.

Life as someone not comfortable in your own skin is probably the most personally challenging of the issues we’ve been discussing. This is supported by findings of serious depression in this group of people and high rates of addiction and suicide. One of my personal goals in writing this piece is to give us all enough information to increase our comfort level with others of different feeling and attractions than our own. This is particularly important for the most marginalized group who need others who will be prepared to be the friend a transgendered person needs.

People who are transgendered are probably the least understood and most mistreated of the diverse groups we have discussed.

It is particularly difficult for young people having this internal experience because of the extreme loneliness it often produces, and because lack of knowledge and understand often result in very harsh and punitive responses from parents and other



adults in a young person's life.

Research and experience spells out some of the many difficult obstacles for transgender youth:

- They may be thrown out of the house when their family or foster family discovers their identity, forcing them to live on the streets
- They typically face harassment and abuse in school to such an extent that they quit, which makes it hard for them to get a decent paying job
- Even if they are able to complete their education, they have difficulty finding and keeping almost any kind of job because of overt or covert discrimination
- If they live on the streets or are a sex worker (due to poverty and lack of other options) they are at greater risk for abusing drugs, becoming infected with HIV, and being subjected to anti-transgender violence
- Many lack access to health care, including proper counseling and medical supervision. Even if they do get medical care they frequently face discrimination and hostility from health care workers. As a result some decide to treat themselves by buying underground hormones, which may be dangerous.
- Gender reassignment surgery is beyond the means of most who identify as transgender and is not covered by most health insurance policies
- The result of their particular challenges is high rates of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and thoughts of suicide (more than 1/3 report such thoughts)

- Transgender people who can “pass” often seek to remain closeted, so transgender youth often do not have visible role models and mentors.

Young people who feel like the other sex and would like to start living congruently with their feelings often would like to begin hormone treatments as many transgender adults do but this is often either difficult to find for someone still legally a “child” or is outright denied because of prejudice or inability to understand the dilemma such young people face.

Most young people do not have exposure to other people who feel like they do and so they often are deprived of a “support group” of people who understand them and can provide encouragement and company.

Fortunately, we do not have to be like someone to offer them support and friendship. If we are truly to “love our neighbor” as we have been commanded we must try to find ways to show love to these members of our community. The greatest gift will be to listen to their story without judgment, and to offer opportunities to become involved with whatever communities they choose to affiliate with in a full and equal manner. It is okay to tell a transgender that you are uncomfortable and unsure what to say or ask: this is showing respect and offering friendship. We don't have to wait to be comfortable or fully knowledgeable before reaching out as one child of God to another. Such an extension of good will is good for young



people and adults who are transgender and it is good for us as we seek to embrace the whole of creation, those like us and those different than us.

### **Being transgender is not the same as being a “transvestite”**

A person who is transgender dresses as the opposite sex because they identify internally **as** the opposite sex. People who are “transvestite” dress in the clothing of the opposite sex because they receive some sort of psychological and sexual gratification from wearing the attire of the other sex, but they do not believe themselves to **be** the other sex. Being “transgender” refers to an **internal experience** of feeling like the sex other than what nature has “assigned”. Being “transvestite” means enjoying dressing like the other sex, but not believing oneself to be the other sex. This group is sometimes referred to as “cross-dressing”. Cross dressers may be of any sexual orientation.

A transvestite will not want to have surgery to change them from the sex they have been assigned to the other sex.

Most transgendered people would like to become the sex they identify with if they can afford it. We might not be able to tell whether a person is transgender or transvestite unless we ask them. Why guess? Why not have an actual conversation with someone you encounter and let them know you are interested in them as a person and would like to get to know them. It will be a treat for you and for them. Isn't the world interesting?

## **Understanding Gender Non-Conforming Young People**

Another group of people on the “diversity spectrum” are referred to as “gender non-conforming”, which is not so much an internal experience as a clash with social expectations. Non-conforming people do not comply with social standards, attitudes, or practices of their immediate cultural group. In reality, this is not really a sexual difference, but a social difference.

We are talking about this issue because of the fact that many assumptions are made about ones' sexuality based on appearance and mannerisms, and people then get treated as they appear to be, rather than as they are.

Research has found that gender non-conforming youth are at high risk of being targeted for harassment and bullying, with proven lasting negative effects. Because of this problem, those concerned with gender differences and gender roles are shifting focus to the wide varieties **within**, not just between, genders.

This new focus has coined the terms “femininities” and “masculinities” to address this diversity within genders.

Terms you may have heard for gender non-conforming people are “effeminate” (woman-like) for males and “butch” for females.

These terms are applied based on: dress that goes against expected appearance for ones' sex – pink clothing or a lot of jewelry for males, trousers instead of slacks for females; appearance – short



close-cropped hairstyles for females; or for gestures normally associated with the opposite sex – ways of walking or running, voice register, ways of crossing legs when sitting, etc. Because children are taught how to appear like “boys” or “girls”, when someone does not comply with these

expectations it is common for others to decide that their appearance and mannerisms “give away” their sexuality. Some of the terms used for homosexuals, such as “fairy”, “queen”, “dyke” are applied based on being gender non-conforming and thus consigned to a group one may not belong to.

I have a good friend who was “warned” by everyone in her circle, including all of her family and friends, that she was being “blind” for not seeing that the man she was dating was obviously gay.

Not only was the man very effeminate, he was a Florist! Despite all the dire predictions she went ahead and married him – 35 years ago! They are a very happy, well-adjusted couple with a grown son and a grandchild, who have one of the best marriages I know of. Life was not easy for

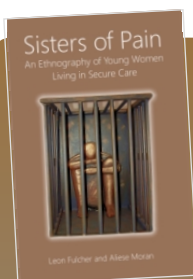
them when they started, however, based solely on the tendency to make assumptions about sexuality from appearance and gestures.

Society, for whatever reasons (we could discuss them but you can probably figure them out), is easier on gender non-conforming girls than boys. “Hitting or running like a girl” or being called a “sissy” usually has more of a cruel edge to it than being called a “tomboy”.

When relating to gender non-conforming boys and girls we want to begin teaching them about issues of “prejudice” and “stereotyping” which lead to the cruel treatment of boys and girls who do not look or act like their peers and as they are expected to look and act. These issues (prejudice) require more time than we can give them this month so we’ll pick up this discussion next month, after spending some time talking about those young people referred to as “questioning”.

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The last part of this article will appear next month.



### **SISTERS OF PAIN: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF YOUNG WOMEN LIVING IN SECURE CARE**

by Leon Fulcher and Aliese Moran (2013), Cape Town: CYC-Net Press.

“This is a powerful read that starts from the heart, captures a rich depth of humanity, and weaves together private, personal and professional voices; an utterly rare resource in our field.”

— Jennifer Davidson, Director, Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS)

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# “Light Bulb Moments” in Child and Youth Care

Frank Delano

I have always thought of Kiaras Gharabaghi’s article “*Three Profoundly Stupid Ideas*” (Gharabaghi, 2010) as brilliant from a number of different angles. I often use the articles for discussion in trainings I facilitate with direct practice Child and Youth Care workers and even use them in activities with senior agency leaders, challenging them to analyze where some of these ideas might be structured into their programs. A recent discussion thread in cyc-net inspired me to do more thinking

about it a different way. I thought of how many times in my career I was guilty of participating in, or even developing, profoundly stupid ideas in my practice. I was thinking how easy that can be for all of us since in many ways the entire framework of residential care of children is based on them. For instance, I think of how much focus is placed on the importance of “consistency” for children to be able to grow in a healthy way. Yet, so many programs have “shift changes” 20 to 30 times in a

week. Many also have a different person wake a child up in the morning than the one that put them to bed. I also thought about how very few would disagree with the idea that the most crucial component of residential care would be the relationships a child develops while there. Yet, when we agree a child is “getting better” (whatever that means) the first thing we start thinking of doing is to move the child to a lower level of care, effectively severing many of the relationships that were a big part of the reason for the growth. I acknowledge the practicality of these practices given no CYC worker can work a seven day, 24 hour a day week and ideally a child would be reunited with their family or primary home caregivers, but it doesn’t make them any less profoundly stupid conceptually.

Garfat (2001) and Phelan have talked about the developmental stages of a Child and Youth Care worker. I started to think about my own developmental progress as a CYC practitioner and how that fit in with hopefully lessening the amount of times I got trapped into joining in with, or practicing, these profoundly stupid ideas. I came up with a series of what I would call “light bulb moments” for me when the core of what excellent practice should be started to appear so much clearly in my mind. It would be important for all Child and Youth Care practitioners to focus on these moments through the developmental process to validate our instincts about how the work should be done when there are so many other factors around us discouraging what seems so logical to us.

One I would like to share goes back to much earlier days when I was the Recreation Director at a very large residential treatment center near New York City. I developed a “student work program” for kids that was very different conceptually than anything the program had seen before. I was beginning to realize that tradition there said that kids became eligible for most recreation/activities programs only if their behavior allowed them to “earn it”. I had never framed it in my mind as eloquently as Kiaras did in his article, but it instinctively felt like a profoundly stupid process to me. It would seem that positive and ego-building activities were exactly the formula to help improve those behaviors. I was not in a position of enough authority to change the concept of the whole program, but I did manage to convince senior administration to let me try a work program that was built entirely on the experience being a successful one for the child. Of course, the idea that a child was able to get and keep a job without regard to behavior in other areas of the program was seen as profoundly stupid by many others there. I countered that perhaps the most prevalent thing missing in many of the kids’ lives were experiences that “worked”. I would review applications for a job for a child based on the ability of the person advocating for it being able to convince me the experience would work successfully. For instance, a child might have an already established positive relationship with the Unit Secretary, so a job as an assistant with that secretary seemed perfect. I weathered the storm of those



who felt the process was unfair and stuck to the core value of the program. Of course, the Recreation Department was fertile ground for jobs and one of them was given to a girl named Chrissy. Chrissy was quite a handful in the living unit and was often limit testing when at recreation. But, I did see a strong work ethic in her when asked to help out with tasks at recreation. She was given a job as an activities assistant and I was to be her supervisor.

She was doing very well in the job but the concept of the program was not very popular with the “just punish away the bad behavior” ones there. I was constantly intervening to be sure they let her come to work despite a bad day in school, or the day after cursing out one of the unit staff. One day at work she was given permission to make a phone call to her mother on the office phone. The conversation got hot and ultimately Chrissy ripped the phone out of the wall. When I entered the office to see if she was ok she began yelling at me to get away from her. She looked frantic and tossed the phone toward me (but clearly not at me) and ran out of the door back to the living unit. The phone did not hit me and crashed into the wall a few feet away.

The next day she was scheduled to work at 3pm but did not show up. I waited until 3:15 and called the living unit to talk with her. She would not come to the phone. At 3:30 I asked a worker there to send her to my office. When she came in I asked her if she had any idea why I called her to the office. She growled and said “No” in a sarcastic tone. I said “Well, you

were scheduled to work today at 3 o'clock and didn't show up. There is a lot of work to do so what time are you planning to start work today?” She looked startled and said “You're kidding, right?” I said I was not, and she replied incredulously “I am not fired?, You're crazy!” I assured her she was not fired and said “Please get to work young lady. There is a lot to do and you are an important part of this program”. Still not believing her ears she said “Why am I not fired? I threw the phone at you”. I said “If I fired you after yesterday, what would it have taught you...that you might lose your job if throw a phone at your supervisor?” She said “Well, yes!”. I replied “Did you not already know that before yesterday?” She said “Of course I knew that, this is stupid”. I said “Case closed, now get to work”.

The look on her face at that moment was precious and memorable. She was struggling to comprehend it all and when she realized I was serious she just sobbed quietly and went over to her desk and started working. As she left work that day she looked down and said “I still think you are crazy, but thank you” and quickly walked out. I initially thought of it as a very big deposit in the “Money in the Bank” philosophy that guided my practice throughout my career. The concept being that in these special moments we deposit “relational money” with a child that can be drawn out by the CYC worker in a crisis, or by the child as they grow to feel trusting relationships are more possible in their lives. She did very well in two more years of work in the program and we never



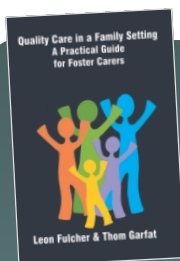
talked about the phone meeting again. Looking back, I definitely see it as one of those “light bulb moments” for me that accelerated my development and helped me avoid some of the “profoundly stupid idea traps” along the road in the future. It validated the simple thinking that if “successful experiences” are primarily missing in a child’s life then we should avoid the “But, you are reinforcing bad behavior” thinking favored by so many and stay the course on what we know is a profoundly good idea...providing the successful experiences that are missing.

Unfortunately, in those days, we did not place emphasis on formal follow up studies but much anecdotal evidence pointed to a very large percentage of children who participated in this program doing very well in later work experiences in the larger community. The moment was made even more memorable because about two years ago I received a call from Chrissy, now in her 30’s. She told me she struggled for about 10 years after leaving the program but then life began to turn in a better direc-

tion for her. The reason for her call was to tell me she had just achieved her Registered Nurse license. You might guess that in the course of our conversation she asked if I remembered that day in the office when she threw the telephone at me. Was achieving her RN license connected to that meeting after the phone incident? Hard to prove, but it is probably a “profoundly stupid idea” to think it was not.

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**QUALITY CARE IN A FAMILY SETTING** (2008) by Leon Fulcher & Thom Garfat, offers theory, practice tips and everyday advice for helping young people in Foster Care develop the strengths and skills necessary to navigate life’s challenges. Training and practice standards are now frequently used to enhance, monitor and evaluate the quality of care for children and young people in out-of-home care, yet Foster Carers are often expected to perform miracles without practical assistance. This book helps to bridge that gap.

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# The Role of Intellectuals in CYC:Part I

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**A**s someone who spent most of my adult life in direct service work before shifting over to the academic side of the house, I have been challenged by the ongoing tension between theory and practice in our field. For myself, I was always deeply intrigued by, and invested in, the constantly shifting array of theories that either overtly or covertly inform our ways of interacting with the young people and families we encounter daily in our work. When I was working in direct service, I found myself seeking theoretical understandings that could help me to become as flexible and versatile as possible in the work that I did. My reasoning was, that the only tool I had to work with on a daily basis was my self. The only person I could change was, similarly, me.

I tried to think about my self in the same way that a craftsperson or tradesperson understands their tools. That is through using the tool but also, through reading the manual that explains how the tool is supposed to function. Once one

has a basic understanding of how a tool can work, then the next task is to try it in a range of different applications and to reflect on the ways that the tool interacts with different materials, conditions and circumstances. For the gifted artisan, crafter or worker, the tool expands in both range and subtlety over the course of a lifetime.

Of course, one seldom uses one tool alone. Any creative project requires the use and understanding of a multitude of tools, some of which are used regularly and become quite familiar and some of which have quite specific practices that require re-learning and reflection when they are brought into play.

There is a complex relation between the tool, the tool user and the material to be shaped by the tool. It is an entangled relation that always involves both material and abstract elements. Brian Massumi, in his users guide to *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari, outlines this in relation to wood. He suggests that the woodworker doesn't pick just any random

piece of wood, but carefully selects exactly the right piece of wood that has the capacity to become what the woodworker has conceived. That is the craftsman chooses “the right piece for the application.” The approach to the wood is also carefully engaged. The wood is worked with sensitivity to its grain and texture, not simply cut into from any angle with thoughtless force. Massumi tells us that the woodworker interprets the wood through the signs the artisan reads in the grain, texture, density and so forth. However, this reading is not a simple logical reading of the qualities of the wood as it sits there. It is a reading of possibility, of how the wood might respond to different levels of force or what Massumi refers to as the “different capacities to be affected.” What is notable here, is that Massumi does not simply mean the responsive relation between the craftsman and the wood, but also how the crafted wood will respond to future users in its crafted form as tables, chairs, bowls etc. This means that the sign read by the woodworker takes into account both the current status of the wood as well as its future possibilities. As Massumi puts it,

*A thing has as many meanings as there are forces capable of seizing it. The presence of the sign is not an identity but an envelopment of difference of a multiplicity of actions, materials and levels. In a broader sense meaning even includes the paths not taken. It is also all the forces that could have seized the thing but did not. It is an infinity of processes.*

To read the wood as an entanglement of sign, means to be subtly attuned to the way in which time and materiality interact to produce the creative capacities of things to become through a specific, but randomly configured set of relations. It is specific, in the sense that the wood and the woodworker have particular sets of properties and capacities, but random, in the fact that there is no particular reason that the wood and the woodworker should encounter each other at this place and this time. The wood encountered by a non-craftsman might well be appreciated for its intrinsic beauty, ignored, burned for fuel, cleared for farming and so on. The gifted artisan, however, apprehends the wood as sheer capacity to become something beyond the obvious.

The ability of the woodworker to read the wood is not a skill that is founded in individual or idiosyncratic instincts or capacities alone. A rich capacity to read the object to be crafted, as a set of signs and significations of what it could become, is learned at both the level of intentional teaching from master to student and absorbed through the language, customs and rhythms of a particular way of life in a specific geography and a moment in time. That is to say that craft, as an act of interpretation, is deeply embedded in what Bourdieu would call habitus. Habitus, in this sense is the way in which the artisan or crafter expresses a reading of possible worlds rooted in the values and modes of living derived from the activities of daily living. The possible worlds that the artisan expresses are the absolutely material in-



carnations of a people's hopes, expectations and needs. The shaping of a material object such as wood into a specific form of table, chair, cupboard, door and so forth is an entangled relation of reading the wood through the predetermined realm of language, as a socially determined form, extended and pushed beyond its limits by the encounter between the idiosyncratic capacities of the wood, the mind/body configuration of the woodworker and the historical demands of a moment in time.

So, how might we use this reading to return to the child and youth care worker as a self-reflexive tool? The first step is to determine the set of relations involved. Often, the work of CYC is defined as a field of endeavour that is designed to change, mould, or shape the lives and behaviours of young people. Quite a lot of writing and thought seems to endeavour to offer practice as a set of tools the worker can engage and apply rather generically. One can attend a class or seminar on this or that current set of behavioural strategies. Then, go to work and apply them to the young people one encounters with some degree of optimism that the young people will change in ways that will please the administrators, parents, teachers, funders and so forth. This, in turn, will offer the worker a sense of accomplishment as a competent technician of social change who is preparing children to live in the "real world."

The psychiatrist Franco Basaglia refers to those who practice in this way as technicians of practical knowledge. He defines them as functionaries who work on behalf

of the ruling class. They are deputies of whatever group is in power. Their work promotes the social agendas and current beliefs of their age. In this kind of work, the consent of those being assisted is seldom sought. Consent to be socially re-shaped and modified is assumed a priori through the faux logic that socially deviant behaviour implies the right of the state to intervene. Those being "served" should welcome the opportunity to become happier and more productive through the resolution of their individual maladjustments, traumas and neuronal deficits. To refuse help is to be resistant to care and to indicate an even deeper source of individual maladjustment.

To engage with young people in this way, as technicians, is a vastly different way of reading the entangled set of relations described for the woodworker/artisan above. It reduces the capacities of all of those involved, by subjugating them to the abstract demands of the ruling ideologies of any given historical period. Perhaps more poignantly it removes the complex and subtle reading of signs as indicators idiosyncratic capacity and replaces them with a monochromatic reading of signs as indicators of the ability to conform. In this, it violates the fundamental relation between the woodworker and the wood. That relation, as we have delineated it, is both an expression of the real needs of a people in a particular historical moment and the sense of capacity the woodworker reads in the particularities of the wood.

For us, who engage the life world of young people, this relation is particularly

complex. We are, as workers, both the woodworker and the wood. We are the tool and the thing tooled. While we imagine we are working to shape the young people we encounter, that encounter is reciprocally shaping us. Basaglia teaches us that the work that occurs between people is the constant crafting of new forms of subjectivity. He suggests that such work is always operating under and within the machinery of domination and control. The crafting of new forms of subjectivity is to be found in the reading of the other as a signification of the capacity to be discovered in ourselves. That is to say that to understand CYC as a field of relational work means to always understand ourselves as a mutually entangled set of capacities we share with the young people we encounter. As artisans of shared lived experience, our capacity to read the signs that open the reciprocal capacities of living force is what differentiates us from the technicians of practical knowledge.

For those of us who have the luxury of academic reflection and access to rich sets of theoretical knowledge, there is a responsibility to work with our front line colleagues as they develop the living artistry of the encounter that shapes the field of child and youth care work. Indeed, it is the intellectuals that Basaglia critiqued most harshly. They, more than those in direct care, work in ways that develop and sustain the ideological constructions and fallacies of domination and control. They do so, based in their ability to claim truth in the name of science. So often, the frameworks we use for our work such, as

development, normalcy, neurological templates, attachment, bio-chemical explanations and so forth, are premised in received knowledge from the intellectuals writing and teaching in CYC.

These forms of knowledge, Basaglia proposed, need to be interrogated and questioned to see whose needs are truly being met. Do these modes of knowing simply allow for more control by the dominant system of rule or do they actually meet the material needs of young people and workers? I would argue that those of us who comprise the intellectual cadre in CYC need to be rigorously accountable in this respect. If the craft of our work is premised in the ability to read and interpret the raw material of social relations in its infinite capacity for social invention, and if interpretation is a founded in the habitus of our age, and if the habitus of age is defined by the strictures of truth and language premised in the capacities for thought and reflection, then CYC intellectuals are key players in the best and the worst of what we do. The question is, how might we think about that responsibility in ways that are useful and responsive to living concerns of those involved in the work itself?

To be continued . . .



# Ten CYC Hacks to Maximize Your Impact

**James Freeman**

*This article presents ten foundational and straightforward strategies for child and youth care practitioners to integrate into their practice with children and families.*

**C**hild and youth care is one of the most important fields in our world today. Being a part of such a vital practice is both a privilege and a responsibility. Each of us, no matter how long we have been in this work or how extensive our preparation, can benefit from an occasional examination of how we can do what we do in better, more effective ways.

This list (which is neither exclusive nor exhaustive) reviews ten basic hacks that have the potential to improve our daily practice. Hacks are simply new ways of doing things, skills, or strategies to increase efficiency. Some might call them shortcuts because of the pain and frustration that result when we forget to use them.

So, join me in committing (or recommitting) to some foundational and cherished practices in our field. Maybe

along the way we will feel refreshed and rejuvenated in the difficult and deep work that we do together.

## **1. Show up**

Good care happens when we make ourselves present. You might be in your present role or position with a view to move on to something different or simply dealing with the numerous demands of our daily world. That's not a bad thing, but don't let it distract you from the moments that are placed in front of you. It's also important to be there with our whole being. Find ways to put the distractions aside and communicate to those you're working with that they've got your full attention.

## **2. Keep learning**

Your preparation for a career in child and youth care doesn't end with your formal schooling or practicum. It's your responsibility to search out and find ongoing training that exposes you to new ways of thinking, challenges you, and continues your learning experience. Don't wait until someone invites you or an employer sends you to a conference or training. Take the lead for your own learning and get engaged. If there's nothing close to where you live and work, there are wonderful resources online and through your own colleagues.

## **3. Listen**

Too much of the world is talking at us. Each young person, family member, and colleague needs and wants to be heard.



Someone recently explained to me that the most important tool we have in our work is the ability to keep our mouth closed. Someone else recently shared that they use the acronym w.a.i.t. to remind them to ask the question: Why am I talking? Let's listen more to what is being said (and what's not) and we will learn a lot about those we want to help.

#### 4. Get comfortable with silence

This is related to the concept of listening, but distinct enough to consider on its own. Sometimes silence comes in the form of a young person or family member who seemingly refuses to talk with us. Don't worry and don't rush them. It's possible that the silence is actually part of the process of building trust. Let it happen. Other times silence comes in the form of being together and being comfortable enough that the moment doesn't have to be filled with words. Those moments are important. Don't lose them by feeding the pressure to talk.

#### 5. Make self care a priority

No one else is positioned to take care of you better than yourself. Care work is work for the long haul. Sure, there are days when we spend every last drop of energy we have, but caring for yourself is essential. The physical, mental, and spiritual drains of this work will take a toll on you if left unchecked. Make sure you find a rhythm that works for you. For some it's hitting the gym or taking a run every day.

For others it's being with a group of people and others making time alone. It may involve making sure there's a dependable cycle of engagement and withdraw from the action. Whatever it is that keeps you healthy and sane, make a plan and do it.

#### 6. Be yourself

We each have our own style and personality. We are different and diverse and that's exactly what the world needs from us. Of course, we should be noticing the characteristics that draw us to others, learning and assimilating new ways of being into our lives and work. But don't trick yourself into thinking that if you could just be like that other person that you would be more effective. Use the style, voice and personality that you've been given and use it well.



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## 7. Make the present meaningful

Later. Someday. Maybe another time. How often do we find ourselves deferring to the future what we could do in the present. Of course there are reasons and timing to plan for the future, but there's also a trap of putting off all good things, failing to enjoy and find meaning in what's around us in the moment. It may be taking a few moments to shoot hoops in the driveway during a family visit, getting grandparents to play a game with a grandchild, or taking a hike across town to get an ice cream. Yes, plan for the future, but don't let the future go by in a way that you will regret later.

## 8. Get the right supports around you

Child and youth care involves a certain lifestyle. It's a way of giving of yourself to others. This kind of work requires that you have the right supports and people around you. A supportive friend, spouse or partner, a caring supervisor, dependable co-workers, a mentor or two that you can reach out to when needed. It's up to you to make sure this happens. Don't sit around waiting for the right people to land in your life. Seek them out.

## 9. Enjoy your work

We are all in this work for a reason and, very likely, something specific brought you into this field. Don't forget what that reason is. Hold on to it and keep it close for reflection. The day that child and youth care become regular and routine to you is

the day you might need to consider other work. There are things in every role that aren't enjoyable, but overall we should enjoy our practice. If you don't, take a day off to rethink why and discover what you need to change to make it right.

## 10. Contribute to the bigger game

You are not alone. We are each a part of a larger system. Whether it's constructive feedback to a colleague, financial support to an important project, or facilitating a training or small group discussion for colleagues we can all support the development of our field together. Don't just be a user of our field, be a contributor. You are part of something big. Some call it a movement. Some think it's powerful enough to change the world. You have a role to play and we can only achieve our purpose together.

What CYC hacks have you found work for you? You might even make your own list and share it with your colleagues. Which of those listed here are you willing to commit to trying out or refocus on in your practice? They are both foundational and straightforward and will set you on a path for success. Use them to think about what's next for you in your own development and make it happen.

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# To See or Not to See: Hidden in plain view

**Maxwell Smart and John Digney**

*Like the winds that we come we know not whence and blow whither so-ever they list, the forces of society are derived from an obscure and distant origin. They arise before the date of philosophy, from the instincts, not the speculations of men.*

**Adam Ferguson**, Scottish Philosopher

*You see things; and you say 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say 'Why not?'*

**G.B. Shaw**, Irish Dramatist

## Invisible Moments

That which is not apparent to the naked eye can be referred to as imperceptible, invisible or hidden and each of these terms refer to something which in reality actually exists but for whatever reason is blurred to our vision or not seen at all.

We can easily accept that it is not possible to 'see' what is felt by ourselves or other, just as we can accept it is not possible to observe that which is 'thought'. Yet we can often have difficulty with accepting that others might make interpretations of the world and events that occur differently



to ourselves. Interpretation and the subsequent effects on us (internally) whether by design or chance, are also invisible. This will be the topic of our first column in 2015 – 'invisible moments' of transitioning that occur for young people in care settings.

## Change Before and Change Thereafter

It has been written before that exposure to all types of transitions can be a much more common experience for 'in-care' youth when compared to their peers (Smart, 2006a; Smart, 2006b; Smith, 2009). This greater exposure requires the

full attention of caring professionals, for these experiences, if not supported and managed well can have detrimental effects on young people.

By definition young people in care settings are vulnerable; they often come into our care with their unique set of growth needs being unmet and with a life history that has been insecure and unpredictable. As experienced care professionals, the writers see characteristic of their life circumstances having involved major disruption to any chances for stability and continuity of their lives. They have probably had a greater exposure to changes of school, home address, breaks in continuity in their care and frequent changes in those whom are caring for them. Each time changes occur for these youngsters subsequent adjustment to the new is also necessary ... All this and then they encounter us!

To add to lives already in flux we then add a 'care system', bound by rules and regulations. A system which directs us to; 'assess', 'review', 'admit' or 'rule in or out' and 'design interventions' - a system which seeks to; regulate contacts with families and peers, manage behaviour, reward appropriateness and sanction that which is inappropriate. We expect kids who enter our care programmes to settle in and adjust well and to fit into our rhythms, routines, expectations and systems. Yet as we ponder such seismic change in the life of a young person, we begin to wonder how we as practitioners and writers would cope if we were that kid and we were the ones having to cope with and adjust to such disruption to our own lives?

This raises the question about whether we have become too insouciant about how we expect young people to cope.

## **The Invisibility Cloak**

Human sciences have taught us that adaptation is predicated on making the world predictable and secure, hence why we have rituals and routines in our life. It is not that we are opposed to change in our world; it is more about a need to have some control or regulation of the changes in such a way that whatever is to be altered can be coped with. In essence most people like time to adjust to what has to be different. Yet, as we recognise that WE all need time to adjust we seem to forget this as we apply of thinking and intervention to the kids we work with.

Coming into care brings with it substantial changes additional to the obvious 'change event' of living somewhere new and adjusting to that. There are many other adjustments or transitions that emanate from such single events and colloquially we have come to call these 'hidden' (or invisible) transitions. These are moments, events and feelings about change and transition encountered by our young people on a regular basis. These moments lurk in the shadows of 'changed or changing' situations. They are cumulative, with one adjustment heaped upon another in what can become to be perceived as a bewildering constant change; as one former resident recently informed us, "I felt I needed an invisibility cloak, to disappear from it all".



## Transition Dominos

So what are the “invisible moments” we are talking about here? As young people start talking about their experiences of transitioning in care, staff are beginning to understand a little more about what happens to our youth when seismic change brings them into our care. For changed situations are not merely changed events they bring with them a succession of other adjustments to what has altered. Like a chain of dominos, the alteration of one situation can alter its entire pat - one change creating other changes substantially alters the way someone sets about living their life. Consider this list:

- Where you live
- How you live
- Who you live with
- Where you go to school
- What you can eat
- What time you go to sleep and get up
- What you wear
- When you get to see family, friends, relatives
- How safe you feel (will you be bullied or abused?)
- How you get on with others / Do they like you.

All of the above were noted by a former resident in a residential programme in Scotland. He opened our eyes to the magnitude of the worries and anxieties of coming into and living ‘In Care’. These considerations, these transitions, were just part of one episode of coming into care, a process repeated seven times in four years, in a succession of placement failures. As each placement commenced and terminated, his transitions continued unabated and we appreciated why he needed his invisibility cloak.

## Beyond the Cloak

Successful adjustment to what has changed requires what are a set of mental or psychological processes. These aim for an eventual reconciliation between that which is the past and acceptance of what is now the present. The transition is that ‘in between’ piece and it is within that space that our young people experience discontinuity, a lack of control, little or no choice, and what will eventually occur. As we go about our business of caring for youth in difficulty we need to bear in mind the invisible moments of unseen and un-noticed anxiety as young people encounter an unpredictable future in our care. This ‘invisibility’ blurs the vision of both the kid (in the midst of transitioning) and the caring adults (in the midst of trying to be supportive and helpful). Both cannot see clearly and neither knows the extent of this being ‘trapped between the twilight and the dawn’. Both the helped and the helper struggle to see light.

Over the next couple of months we hope to expand on this topic further so that we can create a view of the dawn through different eyes.

Best wishes for another year filled with hope, joy and anticipation.

*Maxie & Digs*

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# Dream a Little Dream a Lot

**Carol Stuart**

I know many people who have been working for close to half a century in the field of child and youth care. I started a little over 30 years ago. When my career in child and youth care reaches half a century, perhaps I'll recognize that it is, or was, a career. I've always thought of careers as "planned," you start with vocational aptitude testing in high school to see what you are best suited for and then you take training to "become" a member of that vocation. I didn't really "plan" to be in child and youth care, it just happened. I think it is a marker of the professionalization of the field that young people now plan for a career in child and youth care. They have options for training and education; college or university? major or minor? They have varied settings that they can work in: Residential? School classroom? Hospital? Street Outreach? There are "career ladders" that include supervisory, management, and teaching positions. I wonder about how these options and the capacity to be more planned will affect our

future work as a profession.

While I have never really "planned" my career, I do dream a little to test out which path I might take next. I also like to imagine where the field will be and encourage others to dream a little or a lot about their contributions to the field. I recently asked a group of first year students, just entering the field, to imagine what they might be doing in 30 years and what difference they would make to the life of a child. These are students who planned for a university education in child and youth care, and worked hard to get accepted into university. They spent the term, their first term in a program that would direct the rest of their career, listening to the options available in child and youth care practice, reviewing the visions of others, and listening to the (sometimes harsh) reality of what working in professional child and youth care is about. I was really curious: What were their dreams? What would they be doing when they reached the age that I am now? How did they





“identify” with child and youth care?

There are themes that run throughout the dreams of these students. While they still have several more years of learning left before they can officially begin to accomplish those dreams many have already begun this journey, some with their own children and some with children in their communities. All of them hoped and planned to connect with at least one youth and to make a difference in the life of that youth. I sometimes imagine for a moment that I went a different direction in my life; perhaps more technical like applied mathematics or more physical like sports and recreation. What do dreams look like in those fields? Winning a gold medal or coaching a young person to that win? Developing a new technique for Tiger Woods to improve his golf swing? Defining a new approach to reducing financial risk in difficult economic times? Using statistical applications to track and prevent the spread of the latest influenza? I’m not sure that these imagined accomplishments would have the same sense of satisfaction as “making a difference” in the life of at least one youth. As vague as that dream seems initially, students were able to bring it to life and express the depth of **passion** that is present in the people that work in this field (and they haven’t even started yet!).

- My greatest passion right now is to be a youth probation officer. I hope to make a contribution to young people’s lives that gives them hope and reassures them that while they might have made

the wrong decisions it is not too late to make a 360 degree turn around.

*(Kirdeen Matthews, 30)*

- I am absolutely convinced that in thirty years I will be a child and youth care worker because this career enters into my heart. I love it and I want to devote my next thirty years of my life contributing to this field. I see myself as a youth worker or councillor devoted to helping children of immigrant families pass through the transition from their old country to a new one. *(Radostina Ivanova, 19)*
- I want to be the person that a child one day looks back on when they are all grown up and thinks “she was the one who made a difference.” My aim is to show kids that no matter what, they are special and can do great things when they put their mind to it. I believe that the heart of the child and youth worker is caring. *(Jenn Gettel, 19)*
- I hope to challenge those around me to take the time to discover what they are passionate about and not be afraid of failure. *(Danielle Grumley, 21)*

There was a sense of **caring, dedication** and **service to youth** that ran throughout the visions that students developed. The idea that we need to give back something to the youth community and to help youth understand the importance of giving back was evident in their dreams. This concept of service and helping young people at risk or in trouble to develop a commitment to service to others is one that has formed a basis for many

youth work programs. Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern (2002) describe the importance of *generosity* to children's growth and development. Students were dreaming about helping youth to change their hurting behaviours and teaching youth the importance of giving back to others. Many students were themselves giving back and encouraging fellow students to join them in the service work that they were doing.

- So I guess I'm here in my community as the youth mentor to make sure that children are not left out because of family circumstance. Using everything I've learned I want to bring youth together, bridge any gaps, and give them the opportunities that were inaccessible to me when I was younger. (*Yusuf Ismail, 18*)
- To be able to create an environment where they know they are loved and cared for, and challenge them to use what they learn to impact others. (*Danielle Grumley, 21*)
- Although I will have helped a lot of youth in the same predicament, this particular youth came back a year later and started volunteering his time at my practice. I then gave him a scholarship to attend university and he is now a CYC worker himself. (*April Iuliano, 18*)

Students have a growing awareness of **the role of political advocacy** and how it can contribute to programs and services for youth. As child and youth care practitioners we spend time and energy on

equalizing power and engaging youth to work alongside them. It takes a different set of knowledge and skills to identify the politicians and the funding sources where money and power can contribute to changes that will impact a greater number of youth. They dreamed about being able to do this.

- As our country experiences financial woes, I would like to involve myself in more political matters concerning child and youth care. To speak up for our profession and ensure that money is evenly distributed and that all communities (especially those in northern Ontario, First Nations reserves etc.) see the benefits from those funds. (*Robyn Kennedy, 21*)
- Listening to the news and becoming more aware of my surroundings these past few years has made me realize that this world is not an easy place and a lot of the time it is not a fair place. I want to be the person who creates a fair chance for kids who don't get one from the beginning. (*Jenn Gettel, 19*)

The dreams of these first year students reflect the **globalization** of our world. They understand the poverty and difficult social conditions present in their own communities. They have a sense of the needs of youth from other countries as well as the needs of youth and families in isolated communities in our own country. They want to change the conditions that First Nations children and families experience and better meet the needs of



immigrants and refugees. Increasingly I meet students with personal experience; they come from countries at war, from communities and countries where the rights of children are violated daily, they have a curiosity about difference, and a commitment to working with and understanding many different cultures and histories as a basis for ensuring all children's rights are protected.

- My current work at the First Nations daycare is to design and illustrate language books with an Ojibwa language teacher. I hope this is the beginning of a curriculum that supports the renewal of native language and culture in the classroom. I believe that my hope, care giving and ability to teach through the years will contribute to a child embracing their language, culture and history. *(Rachel Smith, 26)*
- One of my greatest priorities is to fight for the children in Ghana, a country in West Africa where I hail from. Growing up as a child in my country of birth was a treacherous experience. It's my dream to form an organization to fight for children's rights and to make children a priority in all aspects of their policy making. I'd like to convince the government of Ghana to create a separate Ministry for Child and Youth Affairs like Canada so that children have mandated services including child rights, protection and youth justice services. *(Nana Asiedu, 26)*
- Since I'm a first generation Canadian from a war-torn country in Africa there

One aspect that helped to contribute to my determination and commitment to seeing the fulfillment of my dream was my understanding of the importance of self. Because I learnt from the very onset of my career to value myself, take care of myself and to be intuitive to my needs, feelings and desires as well as those of others, I knew that I could not give up on something that was so important to me. Also, from my training I learnt the importance of self care which allowed me to survive some of the more challenging moments of my career. The hard work, stress and all the troubles I have had to face over the years have been completely worth it and I would very gladly go through them all again in order to have the same outcome. The only thing that matters to me is that I helped young people. If I was able to give one young person hope and help them to turn a negative circumstance or experience in their life into something better, then that is the most important thing. As I begin to look towards retirement, I realize that my life has been and continues to be a journey of discovery. My greatest success has not come from a position or title but rather simply from self discovery and awareness and being able to help others do the same. My life has developed from a very average life to one that is anything but average. My life has made an impact.

*(Katie Crosier, 22)*

were large barriers my parents had to overcome and sacrifices I had to make. I'm sure now that this is my path for life. I want to engage youth in how to deal with those barriers and hurdles. (Yousuf Ismail, 18)

- I will have traveled to several parts of the world, working in different cultures and with different purposes. Regardless of what I am doing or where I am at; I hope to still be passionate about the work I am in. (Danielle Grumley)

As with most child and youth care curriculum students learn that **SELF** is core to the practice of child and youth care. Their dreams reflect this core value of the field. They have seriously undertaken a journey of self discovery and understanding, with the knowledge that as they come to know themselves they will help children, youth, families, and communities create a safer more respectful world. The little dreams and big dreams all come down to one thing — **passion** for con-

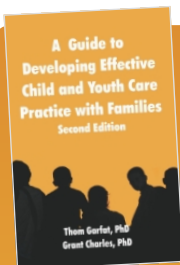
necting with a youth and making a difference in his or her life. They see themselves in 30 years — not much different from myself — still passionate about the work they do and passionate about children and youth. I see them as more prepared to start that journey and carry that passion beyond just one youth — to many, some of whom they may never meet.

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# I Needed My Wife's Kelp

Nils Ling



**F**irst of all, and I want this known right up front, it wasn't my fault I got stuck in the snowdrift.

I was backing out of my driveway after a big snow recently. As usual, I gave the car a lot of gas, just the way you're supposed to, and it was going great. But just before I got to the end of the driveway, I chanced one more quick look ("Safety first", I always say) and sure enough some bozo was coming up the street, so I had to slam on the brakes.

At that point the car sank like a stone, and I was up to my axles. Big time stuck.

This was the worst possible turn of events, for two reasons. First of all, I was late for an appointment. But second, and most importantly, it meant I had to go back in the house and announce that I was stuck in the snow and needed my wife's help.

Moments like this, you must know, are the highlights of my wife's life. She loves hearing me say "I'm stuck in a snowbank, and I need your help."

She'll pretend she didn't hear me the first time. "I beg your pardon, dear?"

"I'm stuck in a snowbank, and I need your help."

"I'm sorry? You're eating kelp?"

"I need your help."

She can be a very cruel woman, my wife. She knows how this hurts me. And why should something like asking my wife for help with the car hurt? It's the testosterone, of course. Testosterone is a hormone we men have coursing through our bodies that reduces our IQs and makes us act goofy. In large enough quantities, its effects can be

remarkable. For instance, laboratory rats injected with massive doses of testosterone actually begin to care about regular season NHL hockey. You can see why it's a controlled substance.

Anyway, it's the testosterone that makes me ashamed to ask my wife for help with the car. But I did, and after rubbing it in for awhile, she got her coat on and came out.

The first thing she did was get in the car and put it in gear and try to drive out of the snowbank. Like I hadn't thought of that. "Hmmm. Put it in "drive" - why didn't that occur to me?"

I suggested – in a very even voice – that maybe we'd get further if we picked up some shovels and cleaned around the wheels. Which we did, and soon it was time to try it again. My wife hopped in, slammed the car into drive, and put the pedal to the metal.

Well, of course the tires spun like crazy, polishing that ice underneath them to mirror finish. And they kept spinning and spinning. Her strategy, apparently, was to melt the ice by friction. Of course, that doesn't work, and I tried to tell my wife that – but she was inside the car with the engine roaring. Finally, by thumping on the

hood, I got her attention and suggested she take her foot off the gas.

Okay, her version is, I didn't so much "suggest" she do that as, "yell" at her. And I guess my voice was raised. But she was revving the engine, so it was hard to hear. Anyway, she took off into the house in a huge snit, leaving me to fend for myself.

Fortunately, my neighbour came out. He's a guy, so we could approach the situation analytically and talk about the best way to get the car out and how we miss rear wheel drive cars and scratch our crotches. And finally, I hopped in, he pushed, and the car popped out almost of its own accord. As it did, I felt a little testosterone rush. *Zzzzzz*.

For the rest of the day, I felt a strange need to watch football on TV and debate the merits of baseball's designated hitter rule.

That's about all there is to the story, except my wife wants me to point out that it's been several years since she's been caught in a snowdrift. And that when it happened, she got out on her own. And that she didn't have to ask for help from a spouse. Unlike some people.

Ouch.

twitter 

@CYCcareworkers





# Postcard from Leon Fulcher

**JANUARY 2015**

*From Hockley Valley Resort  
North of Toronto*

**H**ello Everyone! This Postcard got caught up in the Seasonal Holiday slow-down because it dates back to October when I joined foster carers engaged with Broken Arrow Youth Services in the Province of Ontario. That agency supports youths in specialist foster placements from Eastern and Northern Canada. In addition to other supports provided, this agency also hosts an annual Foster Parents Appreciation Weekend. All foster homes get respite and Carers go off for a 'flash weekend'!



Broken Arrow Carer Appreciation Weekend  
at the  
Hockley Valley Resort & Spa  
18-19 October 2014

**Autumnal Colours at the Hockley Valley Resort for Foster Carer Appreciation Weekend**

The 2014 Event was at the Hockley Valley Resort and Spa north of Toronto. We shared the facilities with a wedding party. A Saturday afternoon activity involved foster carers working in pairs – as Carer Buddies – to plan and complete 10 photos taken using a shared Smart Phone that would be included in a Powerpoint presentation for display at the evening awards dinner.



**Purposeful Activity and Play with a Smart Phone Photofest**

The Photofest involved Carers working together on a mission of discovery, working with a Carer Buddy who was not well known to them. Each pair received 5 Outcomes that Matter Recording Statements with some Pairs focusing on Belonging; some on Mastery; some on Independence; with the rest focusing on Generosity.

Carer Buddies wandered about the Hockley Valley Resort during the course of the afternoon – along with the Wedding Party – and created 10 photographs (5 for





**The Inaugural Broken Arrow Photofest Award for Artistic Merit**

each Carer) using their list of 5 Developmental Outcome statements as prompts to capture word pictures of relational events. Four varieties of Smart Phones were used.



**What Outcomes really Matter when Focusing on Belonging?**

Carer Buddies brought their photos back to Mission Control at the end of the afternoon for downloading from Smart

Phones onto a laptop and from laptop files into an Awards Dinner Powerpoint presentation. Whew! A technical challenge!



**What Mastery Outcomes really Matter with Young People in Care?**

In addition to word pictures that told of Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity, Special Achievement Awards were presented for photos that demonstrated artistic merit and creativity, wizardry and guile, as well as technical geekiness! How many foster carers do you know who carry and use iPhones?

The Photofest Award for Wizardry and Guile was presented to the Foster Carer who managed to entice two Wedding Party Bridesmaids to stand with him in one of the many photos taken about Independence that Hockley Valley Resort Saturday!

A Special Paparazzi Award was presented for Carer Buddies who successfully captured meaningful moments that mattered with competing photojournalism



**Independence Outcomes and a Photofest Award for Wizardry & Guile**

teams! How might your staff group or youth group engage with such an activity?



**Generosity Outcomes that Matter – Learning to Give and Share**

Somehow, I don't think we give enough consideration into how to create safe yet useful learning opportunities with child and youth care workers as well as youth groups using Smart Phone technologies that are accessible to all – at virtually no

cost! 10 Stills for a Proposal used to plan and create a 3 minute video? Everyone can have a lot of fun and as well has having safe opportunities for learning! Just Do It! ;-)



**Photofest Special Paparazzi Award – Others Photographing Others!**



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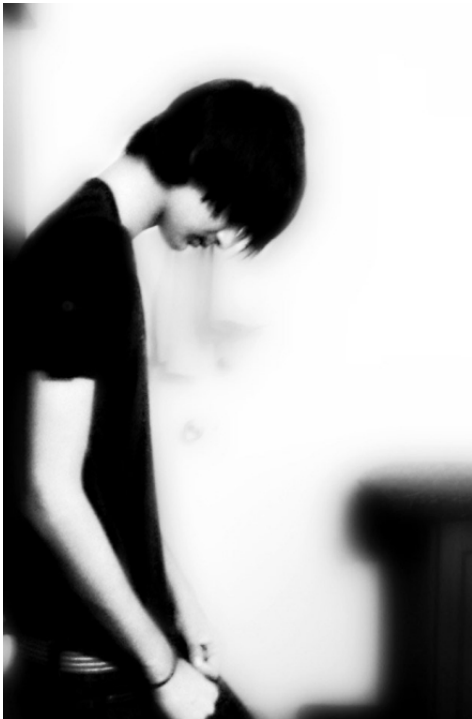
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## EndNotes



“I have learned now that while those who speak about one’s miseries usually hurt, those who keep silence hurt more.”

— **C.S. Lewis**

“To be in your children’s memories tomorrow,

You have to be in their lives today.”

— **Barbara Johnson**

“Enjoy your youth.

You’ll never be younger than you are at this very moment.”

— **Chad Sugg**

“When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young.”

— **Maya Angelou**

“A fit, healthy body—that is the best fashion statement”

— **Jess C. Scott**

“It takes a very long time to become young.”

— **Pablo Picasso**

“When you’re young, you think everything you do is disposable. You move from now to now, crumpling time up in your hands, tossing it away. You’re your own speeding car. You think you can get rid of things, and people too — leave them behind. You don’t yet know about the habit they have, of coming back.

Time in dreams is frozen. You can never get away from where you’ve been.”

— **Margaret Atwood**

“At the age of six I wanted to be a cook. At seven I wanted to be Napoleon. And my ambition has been growing steadily ever since.”

— **Salvador Dalí**

“I was not a hypocrite, with one real face and several false ones. I had several faces because I was young and didn’t know who I was or wanted to be.”

— **Milan Kundera, The Joke**



"I'd like to get away from earth awhile  
And then come back and begin over.  
May no fate wilfully misunderstand me  
And half grant what I wish and snatch  
me away

Not to return. Earth's the right place  
for love:

I don't know where it's likely to go  
better."

— **Robert Frost, Birches**

"There is a fountain of youth: it is your  
mind, your talents, the creativity you bring  
to your life and the lives of people you  
love. When you learn to tap this source,  
you will truly have defeated age."

— **Sophia Loren**

"You are only young once, but you can  
stay immature indefinitely."

— **Ogden Nash**

"Some are young people who don't  
know who they are, what they can be or  
even want to be. They are afraid, but  
they don't know of what. They are angry,  
but they don't know at whom. They are  
rejected and they don't know why. All  
they want is to be somebody."

— **Thomas S. Monson**

*Pathways To Perfection.*

"Sure, everything is ending," Jules said,  
"but not yet."

— **Jennifer Egan**

*A Visit from the Goon Squad*

"I was not a hypocrite, with one real  
face and several false ones. I had several  
faces because I was young and didn't know  
who I was or wanted to be."

— **Milan Kundera, The Joke**

"To tell the truth is very difficult, and  
young people are rarely capable of it."

— **Leo Tolstoy**



"Since today is Charles Darwin's birthday, shall we begin with  
a moment of silent evolving?"

"Love is what makes two people sit in  
the middle of a bench when there is plenty  
of room at both ends."

— **Barbara Johnson**

"Life goes on. Get over it. You're still  
young. It'll get better. Blah, Blah, Blah."

— **David Levithan, Marly's Ghost**

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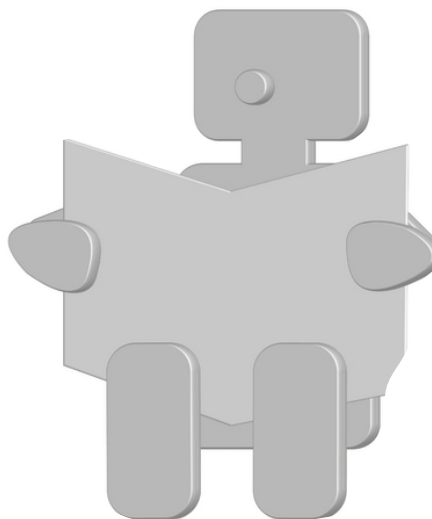
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