

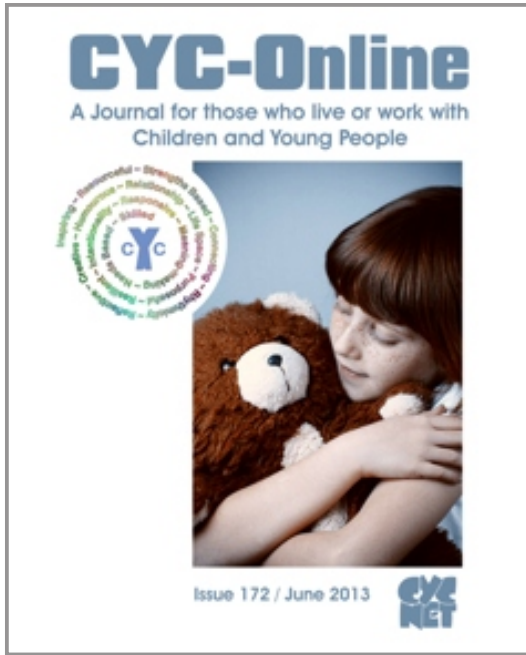
CYC-Online

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



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Two sides of the same coin



It's summer here, winter somewhere else: two sides of the same coin. As is so often the case, this issue of CYC-Online also reflects two sides of the same coin as it relates to child and youth care development – hope and discouragement. But as always in this wonderful field of ours, even the voice of discouragement comes coupled with hopeful, even visionary, solutions as you will see in this issue.

It is, really, time for us all to make a decision. Do we step-up and declare the value of Child and Youth Care or step aside and let others decide our future? Whew! Important question, eh? Recently Adrien, whoever he might be, challenged us all to consider our own responsibility for the future (in the CYC-Net Discussion group). The response to this challenge has been limited – is that because, as he (she?) suggests, we really don't have the passion anymore?

I don't think so! As I look around, I see ever hopeful signs. Over 500 people have registered for this month's CYC World Conference www.cycworld2013.net The South African government is training and hiring thousands of new Child and Youth Care workers. New literature moving our field forward is abundant.

But there is also a message for us to heed. The future of our field depends on

no-one but ourselves. No one else is going to ensure our professional development, no one else is going to write the books, no one else is going to advocate for, create and develop the field. And in many areas, at least where I mostly work, this seems to be the main issue.

Not enough people take responsibility for their own professional development and the development of the field – it seems many would simply just complain and do nothing – which is so 'unlike' CYC practice.

In CYC practice we see a problem, step up and help solve it – practicing CYCs do it every day! And we would benefit if we all did the same for our field. In CYC practice we encourage people to take charge of their lives and create them as they would like them to be. We could do the same for ourselves.

The first ever CYC World Conference will become a reality in St. John's NL, Canada this month because a relatively small number of committed CYCs said



they wanted it to happen. So it is happening. And this conference, I am sure, will impact our field for years to come. Now that is CYC field development in action!

The South African government is investing in all those CYCs because of the advocacy and actions of that country's National Association of Child Care Workers – now that's CYC field development in action.

And we can all do the same.

I hope you can come to the World and meet many of the amazing people who are making a difference – in the lives of children and families, and in the evolution of our field.

But even if you cannot come, you can still follow their examples and take responsibility for creating the field as you think it should be. And this would be a good thing – not just for yourself, but for all who will benefit — the children, youth, and their carers, and their teachers and administrators.

I leave you with this question: which side of the coin is *your* side?

Thom



Martha's Message

Varda Mann-Feder and Carol Kelly

*On the eve of the first World Conference in Child and Youth Care, we cannot but think of **Martha Mattingly**, our colleague and friend from the University of Pittsburgh. She had looked forward to this auspicious meeting in Newfoundland, but passed away in February.*

The World Conference provides an opportunity to celebrate Martha's legacy, present two Martha Mattingly Scholarships to early career professionals, and for all who participate to commit to making our world a better place for children, adolescents, families, and communities both in our own locations and around the world. For those who are not familiar with Martha's profound contributions to the development of our profession, there is a commitment to document and share that legacy starting now and in the future.



Martha was a leader in the development of Child and Youth Care Work, an articulate advocate who was outspoken and passionate in her many efforts on behalf of the field. She had a significant role in creating the academic foundations of our practice. We were privileged to have worked with Martha in the fall of 2012 to create a workshop which we had hoped to deliver together. It was built primarily around a keynote speech that Martha had made last year at the 32nd Annual Conference of the Ohio Association of Child and Youth Care workers.

What follows is Martha's message to us all, mostly in her own words.

Let us celebrate the truly amazing path we are walking but not lose sight of the fact that our future as a field is not guaranteed.

When Martha first became part of the professional cyc community, it was customary to meet at conferences of the American Orthopsychiatric Association. This was the only national event in the U.S. where child and youth care folks met. At the same time, it was very difficult, if not impossible, to have cyc presentations accepted at those conferences, although talks on the topic of Child and Youth Care practice were in fact accepted from psychiatrists, social workers, special educators and psychologists.

Martha had her own perspective on how one such event influenced the history of Child and Youth Care. As she told it, at the 1975 meeting in Washington D.C., in a huge room with a large stage and scattered field microphones, there was a panel with assorted professionals who were discussing cyc work. A graduate student from the University of Pittsburgh took a floor mike and asked “Why are we doing this? Why are other professions telling us who we are?” Several other cyc workers spoke and the panel collapsed. A colleague invited her and others who wished to pursue the discussion to come to his room to continue. Many of those present became the leaders in our field, and out of this conversation, the National Organization of Child Care Associations in the U.S.A. (or NOCCWA, the precursor of ACYCP) was also born.

The field has come a very long way in the intervening years. Not only do we have a sense of identity, a massive, almost

entirely unfunded volunteer effort by Child and Youth Care professionals has resulted in a range of impressive achievements. We have developed certification and accreditation initiatives based, in part, on the North American Competency Project, a 7 year plus initiative which Martha herself initiated and managed. When the competency document was first completed in 2001, she finally felt that the days when other professions could define Child and Youth Care were truly over.

What else have we accomplished?

We have an evidence based description of the field, crafted with broad input and well before being “evidence based” was in vogue. It stresses the developmental-ecological foundation of our interventions and the broad range of settings in which we practice.

We have an articulated knowledge base and a significant literature which provides a coherent basis for education and training.

We have established the importance of self-care, whereby, early on, cyc workers were considered disposable. Identifying the resources needed to deal with work stress has been central to building our profession, and for us, self-care is actually now an ethical consideration.

We have a Code of Ethics which represents the wisdom of the field. There are multiple presentations on ethics at all of our conferences, and “doing ethics” now constitutes a positive practice in its own right.

We have professional communication, as evidenced by a strong set of international, national, regional, provincial and state conferences that are unique and fea-



ture a depth of content. We have a range of journals and CYC-Net, with its outstanding resources, information and ongoing listserv.

We have international connections that are available to all. The very differences in our governmental structures have helped us to clarify our theories and our applications.

HOWEVER at the same time, Martha would admonish us in the following way:

Continued and sustained effort from all is needed to guarantee a bright future for the field of Child and Youth Care Work.

What is required?

That we continue to respect ourselves, our identity, our knowledge and our skills.

That we continue to work towards the development of a horizontal (not a vertical) structure for the field in which all voices can be heard and respected.

That we encourage all of our colleagues to join and support professional cyc associations: local, regional/state/ provincial and international organizations.

That we mentor new presenters and writers whenever possible.

That we work on developing technology that supports practice.

That we get ourselves certified and accredited.

That we push for statutory recognition.

And that we each become the voice for effective evidence based practice in child and youth care work, insisting on the integrity of all that we do.

Martha is not with us, but her message endures.

Martha would want our gathering at this historic conference to focus on our INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY to NETWORK, COLLABORATE and COOPERATE... to be constructive change agents at local levels through international levels. Martha would encourage us... indeed challenge us, to use this historic opportunity to pioneer new networking, new ways of collaboration, new realms of engaging children and adolescents in maximizing the strengths and unique contributions each has... voices heard... and to continue to strengthen our profession by each and all working together. Martha would challenge us to use this rare opportunity to start where we are, envision where we want to go/be, and plan strategically about how we can make our vision a reality. Martha might smile and comment, "The time is NOW. Be thoughtful, respectful, collaborative. Dialogue, and ACT".

Let's accept Martha's challenge!

The Twitter logo, consisting of the word "twitter" in a lowercase, blue, sans-serif font, followed by a blue bird icon.

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The St. John's Connection: CURING GLOBAL ATTACHMENT DISORDER WITHOUT THE USE OF DRUGS

Cedrick of Toxteth

When my editorial butcher declared himself “too busy” to decimate my column for the June Online issue, the irrepressible Thom Garfat stepped in to request ‘at least a token phrase’ from CYC-Net’s most widely depreciated and abused columnist’ in celebration of the upcoming World Conference (or words to that effect).

Under such pressure, even my recalcitrant editor agreed to scan a maximum of four sentences — a commitment he failed to fulfill by the way. For some reason the old fart (a common term of endearment in Canada) believes that my stuff might be even more offensive to ears uncontaminated by North American ‘cultures’. You mean they might get pissed-off? I asked.

“You’ve just proven my point,” he replied. “OK, so I’ll watch my language.” “Well stick with your lousy English ... your French is even worse,” he muttered before disappearing into the Bog (an English term for toilette).

Being a strong believer in celebrating diversity and respecting differences, particularly for members of repressed minorities like myself, I decided to offer a few uncensored words of welcome and leave the publishers to call the shots. So, if you’re reading this, you can hold Messrs. Gannon and Garfat completely responsible for any offence given, and yourself for any offence taken.

First and foremost, I will certainly cele-



brate watching all you global CYC types stumbling over each other along the rocky shores of Newfoundland. And you can be sure of a warm welcome from the locals — recently listed as one of the top ten friendliest cultures in the world. So, if you don't have a Celtic, French or English connection somewhere in your genetic code, you don't have to invent one — come as you are and you'll soon be downing a few pints of their finest ales and the odd dram of barley juice (bring your own wine). If you don't drink booze, nobody else will notice.

You might even be fortunate enough to meet some real natives, Micmac or Inuit perhaps, and learn something about the founding cultures, but don't be pushy. On the mainland they still refer to them all as "Newfies" but I suggest you keep this to yourself, unless you happen to run into my old beach-combing buddy Ben Saffron, who will introduce himself as a "Jewfie" with unabashed pride. After a few scoops, you might remind them that they are actually a part of Canada, but your timing will be critical.

Don't worry about language barriers. For over fifty years CYC folks across North America have struggled to speak the same language with only minimal success, so God only knows what will come out of this multi-cultural mayhem. Come to think of it, they haven't even agreed upon which God they're all talking about. And this is certainly a cause for celebration.

You're bound to 'bump into' a number of folks who live south of the border. This is a metaphor for us, but our American friends take it literally. Watch out for the

likes of Mark Krueger, Lorraine Fox and, perhaps, Karen VanderVen. They've been stirring the pot of CYC on this continent for a long time and the occasional bump is a small price to pay for a spontaneous mind-bending encounter.

There are bound to be "Brits" hanging about, especially in the pubs, but don't make the mistake of lumping them into the same cultural package. The Scots, Irish, Welsh and English are rather passionate about their differences, but they have yet to learn how to recognize, let alone celebrate, their similarities — even if it comes down to their shared obsession with football (i.e. soccer and rugby). And, just a reminder — the terms 'Pommie' 'Limey' and 'Plonker' should only be used when referring to the English.

I expect there'll be Ozzies and Kiwis making their presence known in their inimitable ways — I just love 'em. As in Canada and elsewhere, the 'newcomers' to these nations still struggle to create celebratory connections with their aboriginal brothers and sisters, but I hear they're working on it — "good on yer mates." By the same token, delegates from South Africa will be able to report on their challenge to bring the colours of their shimmering rainbow into a unified spectrum. As in child & youth care practice, the global issues all boil down to creating relationships and you'll have countless opportunities to practice your skills while bumping into each other at the crossroads.

My hope is that you won't turn the whole freaking shindig into an insipid cocktail party, full of nice friendly gestures and superficial chit-chat. There's work to



be done. Listen to what others have to say but don't renege on your own experience and beliefs. If you really want to respect differences you need to know what they are, so don't get stuck in the old bullshit about who's right and who's wrong. Take a risk — put your own stuff on the table and let the chips fall where they may. In other words, bring your *real* Self to the party and not some postured professional persona seeking new friends on Facebook.

From my grubby hole in the wall, celebrating diversity and respecting differences can serve to remove tensions, but there's a much

deeper matter to be addressed. As long as we continue passing our parochial beliefs and historical resentments onto the next generation our world will remain fragmented. For me, the ideal of 'peaceful co-existence' sucks. It's a cover-up for a simmering crock of distrust, hatred and racism waiting to boil over whenever the flags are raised. So, to hell with striving for some negotiated peace, our challenge is to find ways of living in *harmony* and

passing on whatever we've learned to the kids who are destined to follow in our footsteps. And, as in child & youth care work, the first step is to take a close look at ourselves and stop projecting our crap onto each other. Now that's really getting down to connecting at the crossroads.

We might begin by acknowledging that many of our cultural habits and beliefs can be a pain in the ass (i.e. arse) for those who travel a different pathway. Since my own seem to raise the hackles of even the most insensitive wart hogs (delightful animals really) I'm something of an expert in this matter. As my faithful readers know only too well, my favourite response is to laugh

at my own pathology and take a friendly poke at the fixations of others. Sure it's a dubious strategy that frequently finds me heading for the 'Can' (a North American term for toilet) but, for me at least, it's far better than stuffing it all behind a mask of niceness and postured sensitivity. It keeps my mind and heart open and affirms my non-cultural belief that, when we can laugh at ourselves and each other, we throw the connecting doors of relation-



ships wide open. As yet, nobody has accused me of being a racist peddling hatred and discrimination, but adjectives like 'insensitive', inappropriate', 'irresponsible', and nouns like 'pig', 'nut-case', 'bird-brain and 'shit-head', are labels I manage to live with.

Personally, I'm hoping to celebrate the occasion by gathering a sack full of new material for my upcoming book on "Stupidity as Cure for Insanity" (a title derived from an article written by the inimitable Kiaras Gharabaghi). So, if you see me lurking around in the corners (you'll recognize me immediately), please make contact — even if you've already tagged me as an 'idiot'. You never know what might come out of it. A glass of single malt would be the least you can expect. Behind all my frivolous nonsense, lies a deeply rooted commitment to Child and Youth Care because I believe this profession can become an effective global force in sowing the seeds for a more harmonious and fun loving world.

But I also want to know about the kids you work with. I want to know about their differences and similarities in places that lie outside my familiar little ghettos. I want to know what lands them on your doorsteps. Is it because they challenge the arbitrary boundaries of 'normality' or you see their troubles as stemming from some internal disorder? Do your appointed experts turn them into involuntary patients requiring medical/pharmaceutical intervention for conditions like clinical badness and juvenile dementia? What are you expected to do for them, or to them? Who pays for your services and why? And how do you know

if you're being 'successful'?

And I want to know what's happening to kids generally in your neck of the woods. How are they coping with the prevailing social, political, environmental and economic turmoil? Are they able to speak out, or are their voices suppressed by the guardians of normality and morality? To what extent can they make their own choices, establish their own values and create their own lives in their own way? Do they gang together in anger and discontent, or do they remain as outsiders, isolated and alone? Who cares and who listens? And, what can those who work with kids do to bring them into the action, not as passive followers but as active participants in a world that is crying out for change? So many questions....

Dear folks, it's time to get down to business and join together at the crossroads. And for Kid's sake, please make it fun.

Your devoted friend,
Cedrick



Re-Thinking Child and Youth Care Education

Kiaras Gharabaghi

Although there are currently many efforts underway to think about the nature of child and youth care education, including efforts to introduce accreditation standards for post-secondary CYC programs based on identified competencies, I wonder whether we, as a global CYC community, have created the right space, or enough space, to really re-think pre-service education in our field. I find myself increasingly concerned that what we currently provide through College and University programs (at least in Canada) is not a particularly good fit with our field. Somewhat simplified, one might describe the current path to completing a pre-service education in child and youth care like this: at age 17 or 18, following the successful completion of secondary school, a young person enters a three or four year College or University program. In either case, the program will require the young person to complete a series of discreet

courses, typically about 30 in College and 40 in University, and demonstrate through a range of assessment methods, competence in the course material at least at 60% of that material. In addition, the young person will complete two or three field placements that on average will result in about 1000 hours of field experience (or exposure, as it is not always clear that simply being in a placement results in an experience *per se*).

A fairly large part of the course curriculum consists of elective courses that can include a wide range of subject areas, but that are very often quite specific in what they cover. For example, in my University-based program, students often take courses such as Human Sexuality, Homelessness in

Canada, the Sociology of the Family or Introduction to Spanish. Almost never do they take elective courses in the Sciences, in Math or in Business, as these are fre-



quently thought to be more difficult or less related to child and youth care (a problem in and of itself).

Aside from such elective courses, students take typically about 20 courses that are labeled CYC courses. In terms of content, these courses cover anything from theories of change to therapeutic intervention, from inter-personal communications to professional issues, and from advocacy to children's rights. The courses are usually well structured and they are regularly updated to reflect new content or new areas of exploration. For example, in my program, my colleagues have incorporated into their courses themes such as trauma-informed care, cyber-counseling, anti-oppression, and various intervention models such as dialectical behavior therapy, narrative approaches, resilience frameworks, and many others.

In addition to courses, students participate in field placements. This is a challenging area, at least in my geographic jurisdiction (the Greater Toronto Area), where the demand for placements (not only for CYCs, but also for Social Work students, Early Childhood Studies students, nursing students and others) far outpaces what is available. Largely for lo-

gistical reasons, therefore, many students end up in placements that at best provide exposure to children and youth, but that provide relatively few opportunities for substantive practice. Many of our students, for example, end up in elementary schools, usually supervised by a teacher, and often limited to administrative tasks and/or one on one support to students struggling with academics. Others end up in group homes, shelters or community agencies where the core principles of CYC are not always reflected, and where supervisors (of placement students) are somewhat arbitrarily assigned, with limited attention to their readiness for this task.¹

As a faculty member in a University-based CYC program, I teach mostly 4th year courses. This provides me with an opportunity to experience what students may have learned during their education journey. Often, I am amazed by students' incredible transformation from naïve and under-educated individuals² to dynamic, critical, ethical and well-educated professionals. More often, however, I am left deeply concerned with the outcome of four years of education ostensibly in our field. Here are some of the gaps I would readily identify³:

- 1 Some students do end up in excellent placement and are supervised by highly competent child and youth workers.
- 2 Embedded here is a criticism of the secondary school system in Ontario, where students appear to graduate with a limited base for further studies.
- 3 I should point out that my program also has 'direct entry students', many of whom return to complete their degree after years of practice in the field. These students are quite different than students entering from high school, and much of what follows below is not really reflective of their experience.



- A very large number of graduating students are very poor writers, regardless of whether English is their first language or a later language. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that for many graduating students, expressing ideas that include even a modicum of complexity in writing is an impossible task.
- Many students demonstrate limited skills in terms of becoming present. By this I mean that they lack confidence in their posture and their communication strategies, they struggle to speak persuasively, and they are challenged to adapt their language, their tone, their voice and their force to diverse contexts.
- In spite of having taken courses in theory, and presumably having performed to a passing level in assessments of their understanding of theory, the overwhelming majority of graduating students are unable to incorporate theory into their exploration of themes and issues related to CYC practice. This I find particularly concerning. It is extremely rare that a student in any of my 4th year classes will make reference to any of the core theoretical frameworks of our field (except for ecological perspectives, which happens to be a separate course in my School).
- Many students have very limited knowledge of the world. In one of my

courses, I ask students to come together in smaller groups and to imagine what it might be like to be a CYC in a range of different countries. I use only large, well-known or currently in the news countries, such as, for example, South Africa, Israel, Germany, Brazil, and Russia. Amazingly, many of the students know virtually nothing about any of these countries, and in surprisingly many cases, are unable to identify the location of these countries on a world map.

- In spite of having completed about 30 or 40 courses by the time they graduate, many students have read very little literature that is specific to our field. Perhaps one exception to this is this journal, which almost all students are familiar with and have used repeatedly in their course work. However, beyond short CYC Net articles, columns and opinion pieces, students often are unfamiliar with scholarly literature in our field, even though they have referenced this literature in their many essays and assignments over the course of their education journey.
- Finally⁴, very few students leave their post-secondary education with a plan for their on-going professional development; most either have a specific professional career plan (such as becoming a teacher), or adopt a 'wait and see what happens in their employment'

4 I say 'finally' because I have to complete writing this article sometime soon, not because I am suggesting that this is an exhaustive list of gaps.



approach. Pro-active, targeted and self-initiated plans for professional development are very rare.

I want to be perfectly clear that I am in no way suggesting that students are not doing enough; quite to the contrary, they are doing everything we ask of them. The vast majority of students in my program are intelligent, well-intentioned, enthusiastic, ethical, and highly competent individuals. The gaps in their education are not the result of their negligence, but instead reflect what we, as educators, are not doing. Here is the fundamental reality I have observed amongst students, not just in my program, but across programs at other universities and colleges: students are taught that they must achieve good grades, and their efforts therefore are geared toward achieving those good grades, whether they learn (and retain) anything in the process or not. In fact, the experience of a post-secondary program in child and youth care is not at all different than the experience in any other academic program, in the arts, the social sciences or the natural sciences. Fundamentally, the experience is one of going to class, meeting the expectations of the course outline, completing assignments and moving on to the next class.

When I think about the discipline of child and youth care in North America, I am conscious that much of this discipline

has been organized, defined, promoted and advanced by a relatively small number of individuals, who for about 40 years or so have taken the ideas of an even smaller number of individuals (Redl and Wineman, Trieschman, Maier, Bettelheim, Bronfenbrenner, Freire, and a few others) and shaped these into a coherent framework for thinking about being with children and youth facing adversities, in any setting. The outcome of those 40 years of thinking and writing, of experimenting and arguing, is well captured in an article by Garfat and Fulcher in which they list about 25 characteristics of a child and youth care approach.⁵ Aside from the substantive outcome, however, these relatively few individuals have also been responsible for creating the field as we know it, through their promotion of and participation in CYC conferences, scholarly journals, and teaching at various post-secondary institutions. In fact, CYC Net itself is the contribution of this small number of individuals, either as creators of this medium or as on-going and long standing contributors to it.

I raise this in this context because I am wondering about how the field will sustain itself and build on the accomplishments of the relatively few movers and shakers, most of whom are approaching potentially at least a more quiet period in their lives. Will it be sustained by graduates from Colleges and Universities who have com-

5 Garfat, T., & Fulcher, L. (2011). Characteristics of a child and youth care approach. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, 24 (1/2).



pleted an education experience focused on their externally assessed performance in relation to artificial assignments and exams? Will graduates who are unable to continue writing about their ideas and concepts of child and youth care sustain it? Will graduates whose world is so local that they have scarce knowledge of the experiences of their practitioner colleagues in places like South Africa and Israel sustain it? Will it be sustained by graduates who look to their employers for direction and commands, and who are ill-equipped to be confident, assertive and articulate about their field of practice and the principles that underwrite it?

I am worried that all of this is unrealistic, and that as a field, we are not taking meaningful steps to address what undoubtedly is already happening: the slow but clearly observable disappearance of child and youth care *per se*, and its replacement by a generalist workforce equipped to do the work which the managerial class within the human services would rather not do. This workforce will be expendable (as evidence by recent dismissals of CYCs in many hospital settings), at the bottom of professional hierarchies (as evidenced by the on-going struggles of CYCs in education settings), characterized by variable training and professional development (witness the completely unregulated human resource of residential care in Ontario and most other jurisdictions in North America), and professionally without identity and representation (as evidenced by the complete failure of professional associations across North America to establish themselves as legitimate even amongst their own con-



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stituents, let alone government or employers).

We have looked to various processes to intervene in this dynamic. The drive to impose accreditation standards on post-secondary programs is one initiative. Professional certification is another. Ironically, we have even contributed to the proliferation and dramatic expansion of college programs in child and youth care (in Ontario), which may seem like a good thing but ultimately results in even more graduates who identify themselves as CYCs and thus confirm the irrelevance of the field once other professionals realize the knowledge gaps of these graduates. I worry that all of these approaches are doing exactly what we should not be doing. These are all approaches that try to organize child and youth care workers bureaucratically; some will be certified and others not, some will graduate from accredited programs and others not. Some will be members of irrelevant professional associations and others not. But none of these approaches speak to the experience of young people's education in the field.



That experience has almost no resemblance to the field itself. It is not relational in any way (getting As in assignments is not a relational task), it does not promote the exploration of Self (course outlines don't ask who you are, they impose what you must do), and it does not build a capacity for presence (being herded into the gym to write a final exam along with two hundred other students explicitly negates presence).

I set out to propose an entirely different approach to organizing the post-secondary education experience of CYC students, but this column is getting too long; therefore, I will end rather abruptly by just raising some possibilities, and ask that you, the reader, write to me, or post on the CYC Net discussion forum, your ideas and thoughts on this topic, so that we can continue this discussion. But to end, here is some food for thought:

- What if CYC programs were organized not around courses, but instead around relationships? We start the program by enhancing our relational capacity amongst the students, then between students and faculty, then between the program and the community, and then between the community and the world.
- What if the assessment methods in CYC programs were not based on the regurgitation of facts, theory and performance, but instead on the growth of Self?

- What if 'field placements' were not separate course or program segments but actually integrated into all curriculum and program activity?
- What if getting to know our literature were more like a scavenger hunt and less like a performance expectation?
- What if CYC programs had international visitors built into their core curriculum?
- What if CYC programs exposed students to the worlds of culture, science, language and art instead of asking students to complete and pass 'electives'?
- What if we measured the success of CYC programs not in terms of graduation rates, attrition rates or subscription rates, but instead developed a measure of 'presence'?
- And finally, what if we gave ourselves permission to assume that we are not doing what we could be doing, and there might just be something else?



Tilting at Windmills: The Professionalization of CYC

Hans Skott-Myhre

I titled this piece after the famous scene from the novel *Don Quixote* where he mistakes a group of windmills on a hill for evil giants. Believing himself on a holy mission to defend the honor of his equally mythical ladylove, he attacks the windmills and is badly hurt. The scene is often used to indicate an honorable project founded on mistaken perceptions and bound to end without palpable positive results. In another reading, it indicates an overly idealistic project that ignores the actualities and difficulties of a real world situation.

I am using the title and its implications in relation to the professionalization of Child and Youth Care in two ways here. In the first, I intend it to refer to the fact that I believe my colleagues, who are attempting to professionalize our field, to be both honorable in their intentions and mistaken in their beliefs about the effects of the project. I also think that my own efforts, to challenge the ideological freight train of professionalization, are both futile and necessary to my own sense of honor. Perhaps we might say, that we both hold CYC as our chivalric standard to defend and valorize, but we are tilting at windmills from different angles.

As those of you who have read Don

Quixote may remember, his servant Sancho Panza accompanies him on his quest. Sancho Panza plays the voice of reason to Don Quixote's delusional idealism. He tries to warn Don Quixote of the dangers of ignoring the realities of any given situation, alas to no avail. In spite of Sancho's repeated warnings, Don Quixote persists in his honorable, but delusional, battles with windmills. Let me begin, with my comments on why I believe professionalization to be an exercise in tilting at windmills.

The foundational argument, for me, as to why professionalization is an impossible project, is that the field has missed its historical moment. Indeed, there may have been a time thirty years ago where achieving the acknowledged status of being a profession would have had significant impacts on wages, benefits and an expanded arena of designated practice. Psychology and social work established themselves as professions during that time, along with marriage and family therapists and licensed professional counselors. The heyday for the struggles for professional identity and access to associated streams of funding was in the 1970's and 80's. In the last twenty years,



these professions have solidified their positions and areas of practice and have set in place significant relationships with insurance companies and government funding agencies. The pecking order is fairly rigid with continuing minor struggles for the LPC's to gain a bit more ground against the other helping professions. The opportunity for CYC to be seriously entertained as a profession in concrete ways, such as increased wages, benefits or expanded domains of practice is significantly hampered by the existing hierarchies and established relationships and funding mechanisms.

There is, however, an even bigger impediment to CYC getting to play ball with the big kids. The funding, for even the established professions, is under assault with the advent of globalized late stage capitalism. The fact is, that wages and benefits for all workers in the public sector are coming under scrutiny by those claiming the need to do away with the "nanny state" and the "welfare state." The drive for the top one or two percent to accumulate increasing amounts of capital to themselves has led to cut backs in services, not expansions. There is simply less and less money available for the addition of any new professional categories that hope to increase their wages or benefits.

Of course, under the conditions of postmodern capitalism, the ideological construction of a profession without actual increases in concrete benefits is to be applauded. In other words, to be a profession that disciplines itself and its members in ways that support the beliefs and practices of the dominant society, without increasing costs, is an activity to be highly

supported by both government and private sources of funding. CYC is certainly welcome to be a profession and to feel good about the accolades accorded it for its wonderful work with children, provided it keeps its costs under control and continues to provide low cost, high quality measurable services.

To come into one's own as a valued member of the current society, is to accept the terms of that society as one's own. The driving impetus of the current society is making money. Everything is subject to this logic. The very term profession derives, in large part, in the distinction between being an amateur who doesn't get paid and a professional who does. Without a doubt, this distinction is amplified by the subtler and less obvious class bias, wherein a professional is a person of middle or upper middle class standing. Such a person is expected to have a higher degree of education or training than someone who is a tradesperson or blue-collar worker. It is not a coincidence that in a historical period where the middle class is disappearing, that anxiety about the class status of activities such as CYC might drive a frantic attempt to attain or sustain a certain degree of bourgeoisie respectability. Unfortunately that train has also left the station, very likely never to return.

So, having played Sancho Panza, let me now play Don Quixote and tilt at a few windmills myself. From my perspective as a youth worker of twenty five years and an academic who has thought about the work for more than a decade, professionalization is a betrayal of everything I hold dear about the field of



encounter we call Child and Youth Care or Youth Work. As someone who has spent my career seeking to find sources of liberation and greater freedom in the force of living encounter between young people and adults, the bureaucratic impetus behind professionalization troubles me deeply. The introduction of regulation of thought and practice introduces top down discipline that holds no benefit to the establishment of actual relationship in the day-to-day today encounters that occur in our work. Indeed, I would argue that no amount of professional training or knowledge will ever add a single element to the flexibility and creativity of the work on the ground.

In my experience, the best preparation for the work is to be found in training that challenges our commonly held, and often times, rigid beliefs about ourselves and the others we encounter. Such training is actually impeded by standards and norms of practice that solidify a body of ostensible knowledge about the other. In this respect, any education or training about who young people are and how they are different from us, as adults, significantly amplifies the distance between us and hence our capacity for actual encounter. If we are to be a field that defines itself through relationship, then we need to be open to such encounters. Pre-conceived beliefs and ideas about who we are and who the other is, significantly limit the amazing possibilities latent in the heart of our field.

I would argue that we should take seriously this notion of an encounter between bodies working together in common in the mundane moment by moment actual-

ity of our work. The only standard that we should seek to uphold or adhere to is the functional politics of mutual liberation of youth and adults working together. Professionalization offers us nothing that advances this agenda.

We are told that we are undervalued in the larger society and that we should seek after our own interests as workers. No longer should we toil humbly and invisibly at the bottom of the social service hierarchy; this is our day to shine, to have our work recognized and rewarded by those social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers and the general public who have ignored us. Child and Youth Care, as an identity, should be a source of pride. I find this logic profoundly upsetting.

This narcissistic fetishism of our work that focuses on ourselves as disadvantaged and undervalued ignores young people. In making ourselves the center of the show and placing our own need for self affirmation as the new major impetus of our work, we reduce young people to, at best, a secondary role. Of course, it will be argued that this is all for the benefit of the children, but I find this claim to be dubious for two reasons.

First, the drive towards professionalization seems to me to be premised in long standing resentment over working conditions and a substantial misunderstanding of the nature of our common project. I would assert that improving working conditions is best done in political collaboration with the young people most impacted by changes in our work place. Professionalization does little or nothing to engage young people in this project. Our common project as Child and Youth



Care workers is ostensibly to build relationships with young people. Then why are they left behind here? Secondly, professionalization promotes a version of worker self assertion and care that can easily lead to the advancement of policies and practices that advance the well being of workers at the expense of young people. This is already a battle we fight daily in our programs over issues of discipline, control and staff safety. Professionalization can only make these battles more contentious.

Finally, I would argue that our field of practice has a long history of resisting and opposing the ways in which our society has dealt with young people. We have posited ourselves as offering young people a different set of relations where they might be met as fellow travelers rather than social pariahs. I might refer to this aspect of our field as the tradition of revolutionary love. Love, I would define as an encounter that maximizes the capacities of all parties involved. Such love is revolutionary, because the social norm of the current regime of capitalist domination does anything but maximize our capacities. To jointly work together to see how we might creatively maximize what each of our bodies and minds has the capacity to do is to resist and revolt against the constraints of global capitalism. This is not the work of a professional trained to think and practice within the confines of standards, common beliefs and restricted practice. It is an open field of experimentation unconstrained by common adherence to an abstract common definition of who we are. Instead, who we are is defined by our day-to-day encounters

and our rewards are sought in the work itself.

Tilting at windmills can be exhausting and painful. In the end, of course, you always lose. Perhaps we will lose both the fight to be professional in any real sense and the fight against becoming more professional at the same time. If that should occur, then the solace, for me, is the fact that there will continue to be actual encounters between young people and adults that will continuously challenge our ability to makes sense of them or to absorb them into the status quo. The force of revolutionary love will always operate quietly under the surface, undoing all efforts to contain it or discipline it to abstract ends.

Tilting at windmills in *Don Quixote* is, in the end however, less about idealism vs. reality, than about struggle. To engage our work seriously entails ongoing struggle and no small degree of psychic and emotional pain and discomfort. We need find a way to productively engage this struggle together as adults and young people in order to find creative, local and common pathways through our confusion and pain. To do this takes love not professional affiliation, radicalization not professionalization, love and joy rather than discipline and standards.



Is Life-space a Threshold Concept?

Laura Steckley

Child and Youth Care is practiced across a quite a range of countries and contexts. One thing that unites Child and Youth Care practice, regardless of context or physical location, is an orientation towards life-space work. So I thought it a fitting focus for this special issue celebrating the first World Child and Youth Care Conference in St. John's Newfoundland. For the purposes of my column, I will be exploring the possibility of life-space as a *threshold concept*.

Threshold concepts were the subject of Mark Smith's column in Nov. 2008 (<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cyconline-no-v2008-smith.html>). In that piece, Mark described threshold concepts as those ideas that students sometimes 'get stuck on'. By breaking through this 'stuckness', students don't just have a change in *understanding*, they have a change in *being*:

Those breakthroughs happen not because you learn some new wonder technique of how to deal with kids, (although this is often how policy makers think these things occur). They happen because there is some fundamental, often irreversible, change

in the way we are in relation to kids. We feel it and they feel it; the relationships change (Smith, 2008, n.p.)

Threshold concepts have their name because they make new ways of thinking possible – the concepts function as thresholds, opening up new worlds or ways of looking at the world. Threshold concepts have some other characteristics in common, too:

- they are **transformative**, once they're understood;
- they are **irreversible** – it is virtually impossible to forget them once they're understood;
- they are **integrative** in their capacity promote the connection of previously unconnected ideas;
- they are **bounded** in that they often help to define the scope or boundaries of a subject area; and
- they are **troublesome** in that they can initially be counterintuitive or hard to grasp.

This last point, that threshold concepts can be troublesome, is worth looking at a



bit more closely. Sometimes a threshold concept is troublesome for the learner, and sometimes it is troublesome for other people who are coming from a different discipline or discourse. People can often mimic understanding without really grasping the concept. Getting through this stage to a more robust understanding of the concept is transformative – not just in terms of understanding, but sometimes in identity and world view.

A broad range of disciplines (and people who teach in these disciplines) have become interested in the idea of threshold concepts. People are beginning to identify those threshold concepts that are particular to their own discipline, and those that apply across disciplines. There is a growing consensus that threshold concepts are key to adopting a disciplinary way of thinking about the world. For example, in certain respects, economists see the world differently from non-economists. The threshold concept of ‘opportunity costs’ has frequently been identified as central to what means to think like an economist. Similar to opportunity costs for economists, I think life-space might be a threshold concept central to what it means to think like a Child and Youth Care practitioner.

The term ‘life-space’ was coined by Kurt Lewin and was first applied to residential child care by Fritz Redl in the 1950s, as Graham puts it, to help “care workers to address the totality of the care task.” Redl was one of the first to recognise the therapeutic potential of the residential milieu and the possibility for therapeutic relationships between residential workers and young people –

relationships that had a different focus and different possibilities than those between the young person and the therapist.

[Life-space intervention] offered an opportunity to develop relationships which have therapeutic potential using as the medium those interactions that arise from the variety of natural situations which are part of the daily run of life ... It is a technique and also a way of being which becomes more effective as the relationship between the life space worker and the young person becomes more secure and trusting .

Sharpe’s description of life-space intervention characterises it as way of thinking or being, which is one of the characteristics of threshold concepts. In a seminal practice paper on life-space in Scotland, Smith’s definition reflects its integrative capacity:

Working in the lifespace then, involves the conscious use of the everyday opportunities that present themselves in residential work, to engage meaningfully with children and young people about what is happening in their lives.

For practitioners to understand what it means to work in and with a young person’s life space, they must also understand certain concepts central to Child and Youth Care – including the use of the everyday for developmental gain as reflected above. Other core concepts necessary for an understanding of



life-space work might include *presence* , doing *with* rather than doing *to* , and the central importance of the relationship, to name just a few. The concept of life space – what it means and what the implications are of working within the life space of children and young people – has an integrative power to bring together these and other core Child and Youth Care concepts.

At this point I'm thinking about some of the 'troublesome' aspects of writing this piece. Should I use 'lifespace', 'life space' or 'life-space'? Should I be referring to 'life-space' as a threshold concept, or 'life-space work', or 'life-space intervention'? I'm not really sure. While this concept has been around a long time, it has morphed and developed, theoretically, with slightly different spellings and uses of the word. It's also troublesome from a disciplinary perspective, and a brief exploration of Keenan's writing on life-space reveals this. He describes the concept of life-space as "the most effective framework for the development of a coherent theory of social work method and practice in group care settings" . This is interesting because some argue that residential child care is not social work and that it is this orientation towards life-space work that, at least in part, distinguishes it from social work. What's even more interesting is that Keenan does go on to state:

Life-space work is neither individual casework nor group work, nor even individual case work conducted in a group context, but a therapeutic discipline of its own.

I would suspect that Keenan means a sub-discipline of social work, given the other things he says in the chapter. It seems to me, however, that an appreciation of the nature of life-space work is troublesome for many social workers (and other professionals), especially if they haven't experienced it directly or come to understand the core concepts associated with it. It is a significantly different context and orientation than that of field work or case work. Indeed, Keenan himself mentions 'fieldist' assumptions and their problematic impact on the way groups care is understood within social work.

The concept of life-space can also be troublesome for those who do life-space practice, whether student or practitioner. Allsopp captures this beautifully in her description of how workers fail to really grasp the meaning of the concept:

We see around us typical bastardizations of lifespace work — distortions of the concept designed to pass as the real thing. A common one is seen in child and youth care workers merely 'being with' children in their lifespace but failing to engage in processes taking place in that context to maximize learning and development opportunities for children. In this situation child and youth care workers are flotsam, being moved by the tide of the lifespace instead of subtly directing the flow of interactions and happenings around them.

Another misinterpretation of the concept is seen in child and youth care workers missing the potential



value of 'being with' children in the lifespace. Workers with this distortion think that they are only really doing something useful when they are counseling youth — preferably one-on-one and in an office. This perception is of course reinforced by perceptions of the status of sister professions that are talking and office-based.

Allsopp's excerpt reflects the mimicry and disciplinary difficulties associated with the troublesome nature of threshold concepts. It also integrates some of those core Child and Youth Care concepts mentioned above. This makes me wonder about the possibility that life-space is a threshold concept not simply for individuals but for the sector as a whole. The articulation of what we do and why it is valuable is essential for disciplinary identity. The concept of life-space may indeed help us to offer a stronger articulation of this, as McPheat asserts in his introduction to Smith's practice paper (in a SIRCC re-issue):

I would say that of all the terms introduced into the vocabulary of residential child care in Scotland in the last 10 years, lifespace is perhaps the most accessible and relevant. As a SIRCC student, being introduced to this concept for the first time was something of a revelation. Here was a way of beginning to think and talk about the residential child care environment that resonated with my experience. Little within my training had connected with the tasks

undertaken in the residential setting. When asked to explain my role, I often struggled to capture in any meaningful way what it was that I thought I actually did ... Lacking any sort of conceptual framework upon which to hang my experience, I fear that I merely described playing with children and engaging in a range of other activities which sounded merely routine...

Beginning to think about operating within the lifespace changed that... Reflecting back now, I think I always realised this but struggled to express or explain it. I do not think I was alone as I have consequently witnessed staff teams, individual workers and students experience the 'light bulb' moment when beginning to engage with the concept of lifespace. It provides an overarching framework to explore the delivery of group care and individual care plans. Perhaps more importantly, it goes a long way to explaining clearly what it is that is distinctive and different about the residential child care task, where 'practitioners take as the theatre for their work the actual living situations as shared with and experienced by the child'.

In many ways this may be the most significant contribution of the concept of lifespace to residential child care. It has long been the case that residential child care has struggled to assert itself as a placement of positive choice, despite many calls and



recommendations to the contrary. Contributing to this, arguably, has been the inability of the sector to establish and communicate clearly with a wider audience what it is that we do, or indeed do not do. As this paper concludes, lifespace can provide a language by which residential practitioners can do just that.

There is something powerful in being able to put into words something that was previously only tacit. And by bringing that understanding into an explicit, articulated form, it becomes available to scrutiny and further development.

My experience of coming to understanding life-space was a bit different than McPheat's. I was familiar with the term from the life-space interviews we did as part of our post-incident approach in all of the places I worked. So initially, I didn't fully appreciate the meaning or implications of working in the life-space. You could say I mimicked understanding rather than fully grasping the concept (though I wasn't aware of it at the time). So rather than a more dramatic, 'light bulb moment', I came to understand the concept of life-space work more gradually, through a cyclical process of discussion, reading and reflection (with a bit of writing sometimes in there too).

Instead, I had the more immediate 'aha' moment when I saw a presentation on life-space based on the work of Gharabaghi and Stuart. You see, life-space as a concept is itself transforming (as concepts do), and these two authors/Child and Youth Care practitioners have made a significant contribution

to this transformation. One of the things they've done is to bring *agency*, or the ability to exert influence, into clearer focus. Gharabaghi and Stuart chart the conceptual development of agency within life-space work, starting with its early formulations where most of the agency was located in the structure of the residential establishment and the worker was seen as a conduit for delivering that structure. As relationships became an increasing focus in the 1990s, a conceptual shift began to locate a proportion of agency with the worker, whose values, biases and ethics are involved in the use of self – a self that moderates institutional structures for the young person rather than mechanistically implementing them. As we now become increasingly aware of the importance of resilience, strength-based orientations and the empowerment of children and young people, Gharabaghi and Stuart rightly emphasise the importance of incorporating the agency of children and young people into our understanding of life-space work.

Another key development in the theorisation of life-space, as offered by Gharabaghi and Stuart, has to do with seeing a young person's life-space as a *unified space*, rather than a series of discrete, disparate spaces. Also, rather than simply seeing it as a physical location (or a series of physical locations), it is being re-defined as the place(s) *where life unfolds*.

So while the different locations where our lives unfold may be varied and complex, for the vast majority of us, they are experienced collectively as singular and whole. This singular, unified notion of life-space, however, has different dimen-



sions. Gharabaghi and Stuart offer four:

- the physical dimension, which not only involves physical locations but the experience of those locations by the five senses;
- the mental dimension, which involves thoughts, feelings and how a young person constructs or makes sense of his or her life-space;
- the relational dimension, which is about what young people do with and within their relationships. This dimension can have a profound impact on how the various physical locations of life-space are experienced (and constructed) by the young person; and
- the virtual dimension, which includes “those environments in which we interact and relate to others, but where all the senses are not fully utilised” (p.16). This might include social networking or other mediums supported by technology, but also includes madness, imagination and the spiritual world.

The implications of understanding life-space in this way are many and profound, and the authors explore this in depth in their insightful book. A brief summary, however, would be the following:

... by understanding and entering the life-space, we can recognize the young person’s agency over that space and how that agency ... might be usefully employed... [I]ntervention from a life-space perspective must take into account the relative discreteness and connectivity, or the entanglement, of all places, real and virtual, in which young people live their lives through understanding and engaging with the various dimensions of their life-space” (pp.18-19).

Considering the multi-dimensional nature of life-space, and how a young person’s agency “might be usefully employed” in “all places, real and virtual, in which young people live their lives” holds



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promise for a more positively impactful Child and Youth Care practice.

So back to the original question – is life-space a threshold concept? I'm becoming more convinced that it is. As we begin to identify and understand our disciplinary threshold concepts, we not only become more able to articulate what it means to be a Child and Youth Care practitioner, we also become more effective at supporting the process of others as they, too, begin to really think and practice from a Child and Youth Care perspective.

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"CYC-NET Live"

Jack Phelan

Near the end of this month of June, there will be a gathering of CYC practitioners from around the world in Newfoundland, Canada. I will be there and I am looking forward to seeing many old friends, but also meeting new friends and absorbing lots of new perspectives and ideas about working with youth and families. I almost feel like it will be a "CYC-NET live" event for all of us, since I really believe we have a monthly meeting of the world here on the web.

Being physically present together is more powerful and fun, but we are also together every time I log onto CYC-NET. The randomness of the interactions and the expanded possibilities for learning and support for each of us makes the live event worth the time and cost. I know that I will come home with better energy, more ideas and a renewed sense of how useful our collective energy is for changing the world. We are, in fact, changing the world with our work. Unfortunately, we also spend lots of energy re-inventing the wheel or going around in unproductive circles, doing things that do not help anyone. The good news is that this type of coming together often disrupts some of those negative, repetitive patterns and expands the possibilities for change.

I spend a lot of time thinking and reading about CYC work and trying to figure

out how to explain/teach it to others, particularly front-line people. There are many well thought out CYC concepts and approaches which need wider distribution and some good practice/bad practice ideas that managers and directors need to hear about. I hope that a lot of seeds will get planted in many brains while we meet in Newfoundland, and that great results will be seen in how youth and families succeed because of what we create at the conference.

Knowledge and insight are often generated when people are gathered to learn from each other. This is what I hope to create in a classroom and what the conference committee hopes to create for the hundreds who will gather for a few days. Praxis, the combination of mental awareness and physical doing, is the hopeful end result of learning, and whether this occurs often depends on how powerfully received and practically applicable the new ideas seem.

We all learn better from believable role models, so when I encounter congruent CYC practitioners at this conference, or in a classroom, I pay attention and remember the experience. A good friend and longtime CYC practitioner, Tony Macciocia from Montreal, explains it well by stating that CYC people can find each other in the dark. I believe that when we CYC people gather in a large group, such as the World CYC Conference this month, the potential for individual and collective learning and change is enormous, and the ripple effect of this event can be stunning. I hope to see many of you in a few weeks, please come up and say hello, we have a lot to learn.



Experiencing Certification

Rick Kelly

For the past several years, there has been a buzz within our community here in St. John's, Newfoundland, about Child and Youth Care Workers becoming certified as professionals. When I became aware of the possibility of certification, I knew only one other Child and Youth Care Worker in our province who had completed the entire certification process. This person was a great Child and Youth Care Worker, mentor and friend. After several conversations, I made the choice to go through the entire process of becoming certified myself.

When I first started in the field of Child and Youth Care we were seen as people who worked in group homes. We were seen as workers who got paid to do weird things, like go to a movie with kids, play ball, go fishing and hang out with children and youth. Other professionals struggled to put a name on what we did. Some people referred to us as group home workers, some babysitters, while some did not have a clue who we were or what we did. Throughout the years, although people did not know what to call us or who we are, they all noticed something: those workers (that today we call Child and Youth Care Workers) had the ability, the belief and skills to develop a great relationship with the children and youth

whom they worked with everyday ...

As a Child and Youth Care Worker, I have always been interested in trying to be involved in setting the required standards for the field. At first, I joined a sub-committee of our local Child and Youth Care Association and we started the process of setting standards for our field. This task was huge and involved several processes that were far beyond our reach as a local Child and Youth Care Association.

So the decision was made and I signed up to complete the certification exam offered by the Child & Youth Care Certification Board (<http://www.cycb.org>). I had over 25 years as a Child and Youth Care Worker including working on the front line, as a Program Coordinator and now Executive Director. Yet, as the exam day approached, I kept saying to myself "what will I tell people if I am unsuccessful?" What happens if I fail? This was a new experience and just like the youth we work with day in and day out, I had to work through my own anxiousness.

I certainly remember the day I wrote the certification exam. It was a Friday; I had taken the day off from work. The exam was long and contained lots and lots scenarios with many descriptive details. As I went through each question and each



scenario, the answers to each became very clear to me. I completed the exam in the required time and felt good about the process. A few weeks later, I was informed I had passed the exam and I then proceeded to the next step in certification. This involved getting professional references, completing an updated resume and listing my training and education in various competencies ... I completed the whole process and received my professional certification as a Child and Youth Care Practitioner.

As I reflect back on the entire process of certification, I am delighted to support the process. This process demonstrates the need for a professional approach to the field which is supported throughout the testing and demonstration of skills required by each and every Child and Youth Care Worker.

Certification has also increased the professional standard within our province and has gained the attention of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

It is very nice to reflect back on the growth and the development of the profession of Child and Youth Care Worker within our Province. We now have a new job description within our community: Child and Youth Care Worker 1 and 2. We

have Child and Youth Care Workers in the hospitals, completing work placements within the schools and many community agencies. We have several colleges offering a course on how to become a Child and Youth Care Worker. Imagine driving to work and hearing on the radio a commercial advertising a Child and Youth Care Course ... and who would think over 25 years later the field would have grown into a known profession!

After completing this process, I attended the Educator's Day offered at the International CYC Conference in Canmore, Alberta and became a part of a discussion group which looks at certification throughout other provinces and countries. I certainly see many benefits of certification for our field and our province.

I wanted to go through the process of certification before we started to encourage other employees to sign up for this process. So, when I hear another Child and Youth Care worker inquire or stress about the process, I have the ability to say "I know what you are feeling", and help them through the entire the process with ease and confidence. I am very pleased to say that we have over 21 employees currently completing the certification process.

As I reflect back on my 25 years and see the growth in the field of our approach and our profession, I am very pleased to see a certification process that sets us apart from other professionals as Child and Youth Care Practitioners. It is another step that highlights the effective work that Child and Youth Care Workers do every day, on every shift, in every moment with every child.



“What’s a thief?” my five-year-old son asked recently.

“If you steal something you’re a thief,” I replied, happy to answer the simple question.

“So, were they ever little, the thieves (sic)?”

“Yes.”

“So, they were kids before they decided to become burglars?”

“Yes.”

“So they knew it was wrong to take stuff from other people that didn’t belong to them, but they grew up and decided to do it anyway?”

“Yes,” I said, realizing this was not actually such a simple question after all.

“Humph, I wonder why they decide to do it anyway?” he says.

The pivotal decision to steal is made for a variety of reasons; hunger, the need to survive, greed, envy, among others I’m sure. Are some people truly born “bad”? Or is it their experiences that shape them, the behaviour that is modeled for them by the people they are in relationship with, their parents, caregivers or peers, who show them that it’s acceptable to steal? Realistically, I know that it’s some combination of both, but how do I explain this to my son, who is still open and trusting and lacks the experience of life to recognize the motives of others?

Part of me wants to lay it all out for him, explain that there are unpleasant

people in this world and that he needs to be vigilant of them. We have discussed that he shouldn’t talk to strangers or go anywhere with someone he doesn’t know. But then I am prompting him to answer the stranger’s question in the grocery store about how old he is. I have also forced him to sit on the lap of a peculiar and plump man, dressed in red with a white beard, and have his picture taken. It was not a happy photo, but I was driven

to make him do it out of some weird sense of parental responsibility. How can he process these conflicting messages? Part of my job as a parent is to educate my children in the ways of the world, even when the

world is not such a nice place, and I am also somehow to be the protector of their innocence. How do I discern what is to be revealed and what is to be kept secret?

Last fall, my then eight-year-old daughter came to me with a pressing question. “Are Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy real?” she asked.

“Why, what have you heard?” I blurted. Just as I was about to lead her in a discussion about the spirit of Christmas, she interrupted me.

“I’m just not really sure about the tooth fairy because I haven’t lost a tooth for so long.” It had been over a year since she lost a tooth so the memories of the legendary gatherer of tiny teeth were

The Loss of Innocence

Liz Laidlaw



weak. Part of me wanted to be the one to break the news to her. I wondered if everyone in her class at school already knew the truth? I thought I'd be the one to try and ensure her conviction in all things magical for as long as possible, but there I was actually considering spoiling my daughter's enchanted beliefs. I thought it might be better if I could control her discovery of the truth rather than have her find out at school and be teased or humiliated about still believing.

I am surprised at the lengths my husband and I have gone to perpetuate certain myths. We've ended up creating some kind of super-sized tooth fairy mega-experience for my daughter, complete with fairy dust (on the night stand table, window sill, even her nose), notes written in sparkly multi-coloured pencil, and special ceramic and wooden boxes for the teeth. I have been on my way to bed late at night on the day of a tooth loss and suddenly been gripped with anxiety as I realize I have forgotten to perform these small and somewhat complex miracles. I have had friends tell me of midnight trips to the nearest late-night convenience store in search of anything that sparkles because they only then realized they were out of glitter powder. My son has yet to lose a tooth, so it comes as quite a shock that we've set the bar so high. Theoretically, we have his twenty baby teeth plus whatever is left of my daughter's baby teeth to lose. What on earth were we thinking?

Later, when I spoke to my mother, she reminded me that the discovery of the truth of this kind is a more gradual realization. Most kids try to prolong their beliefs

in the miraculous and mysterious when the first doubts start to appear. I can see that this is what my daughter is doing now. She is the oldest, and has a little brother whom she adores, so she will keep the charades up for as long as possible. I can see the little chinks showing in the armor though. Recently, she saw in a store exactly what she received from Santa and muttered, "Guess Santa shops here too." She left a note for Santa last year requesting his autograph. We dutifully ate the cookies, drank the milk, and I signed "Santa Clause" – erroneously adding the "e". Spelling has never been my forté. Apparently she and my father had a good laugh about it. I couldn't make eye contact with either of them, and grumbled something about how Santa can't spell without his elves and everyone knowing that reindeer can't spell to save their lives.

I hope my children will enjoy their innocence while it lasts. I will treasure it, more than they will, because I have the hindsight to know it will eventually come to an end. I will try not to be the one to shatter the many mystical and supernatural beliefs they have of the world, although I'm off to a reasonably good start. I realize that these revelations and discoveries are beyond my control, but I'm suspicious that the exposing of some of these secrets, purposefully or not, might even be one of the ultimate parental responsibilities.

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A narrative approach to life and career construction in Child and Youth Care practice

Werner van der Westhuizen

Borgen & Amundson (2001) state that young people are confronted with the challenge of meeting their personal and career needs while the labour market undergoes rapid and escalating changes, and especially in the areas of career and relationships young people are left unprepared. The writers suggest that a broader view of career counselling is needed. Child and youth care practitioners are also faced with the challenging task of helping young people to make sense of and find direction in their lives, and often this involves helping them make sense of career choices. Narrative career construction is an emerging approach to helping young people make career decisions within the larger context of meaning in their lives,



and will be explored in terms of the potential it offers the child and youth care practitioner in working with young people.

Social Constructionism

Narrative career construction is a social constructionist, post-modern

approach in which reality does not exist independent of the experiences of people. The focus is not on whether reality is real or accurate, but that realities are socially constructed, based on the use of language and a

function of the situation in which people live (Corey, 2007). The lived experiences of people are the focus in a narrative approach, similar to the child and youth care focus on the everyday, seemingly simple



moments which occur in our lives (Fulcher & Garfat, 2012). A problem can only exist when people agree that there is a problem, it cannot exist objectively outside of human experience. Language and the use of language within stories create meaning. Each story is true for the person telling it, and each person telling the story has a different perspective on the “reality” of the situation or story. The role of the practitioner is not that of an expert, but rather collaborative, where young people become the experts of their own lives. The collaborative partnership is considered more important than the technique or method, as language and language processes become the focus for understanding individuals and helping them construct their desired change.

The Narrative Approach

The narrative approach as a therapeutic application of a social constructionist perspective helps people construct the meaning of their life in interpretive stories. We live our lives by the stories we tell about ourselves and that others tell about us. These stories shape our reality in that they construct what we perceive, see, feel and do. The stories we live by grow out of conversations in a social and cultural context. Using this collaborative narrative approach, the practitioner is not interested in diagnosis or labelling, but rather listening to the stories of children and young people, helping them to identify times in their lives when they were resourceful, and using questions and curiosity to open up possibilities for the emergence of alternative life stories with positive and empowering themes. This

approach emphasises the capacity of people for creative and imaginative thought, which is also why it is well suited to young people.

Career Counselling

Career counselling has traditionally been the domain of the psychologist, and usually takes the form of various psychometrics tests performed at critical stages of the young person’s life when decisions about career choice must be made. Many young people who participate in these tests do so when it forms part of a career counsellor or testing campaign at school. If test results are not discussed individually with each young person, or related to the larger context of the young person’s life experiences, the personal meaning can be lost in the process. According to Cochran (in Maree, 2007), traditional career counselling has other important shortcomings:

1. It leaves out personal meaning, the realm of the story that a person actually lives.
2. It often lacks the depth to address issues of meaning and resolve career problems.
3. It does not provide a way to facilitate decision making when values collide with one another.

Narrative Career Construction

Career construction is a narrative approach to career counselling that engages the narrator to spin the larger story of one’s life and career in a way that bodes well for the future. This strengthens the actor to become a main character in his or



her story. The emphasis is not only on a single choice to be made in terms of a career, but also on how meaning can be found in career within the larger context of the life story. Personal values form an important part of this process, since it is not only about the career, but rather what the person wants to realise in a career. The focus is on constructing a life story and clarifying the person's role in that story, which includes a career direction. Standard career counselling is not rejected in this approach, but rather incorporated into a larger view of practice that prepares the individual to resolve many career issues that have been beyond reach.

Narrative career construction provides the practitioner with an approach that extends beyond the *event* of career counselling, to become a *process* that is extended to the whole life script. It provides the child and youth care practitioner with an opportunity create the context within which career planning can form part of the larger process of creating a positive life story. Within a child and youth care approach, helping a child to script a life story is not an event; it is the full utilisation of the daily life events of the child or young person to help him or her to create a life story within which meaning can be found and positive directions and solutions can emerge as themes. The nature of the child and youth care profession places the practitioner in the immediate life-space of the young person, making the child and youth care practitioner ideally situated to be among the most influential and healing helpers in the young person's life. From this position the practitioner can intervene proactively and responsively

as everyday life events are given meaning and used to become opportunities for in-the-moment learning (Garfat& Fulcher, 2012). In this manner the child and youth care practitioner experiences the young person's life with them, living it as it unfolds. What greater opportunity is there to help the young person construct a positive life script in which career issues are addressed and meaning found?

Within this meta-approach to life storying, resolving personal issues and constructing a career direction, traditional career counselling can very effective in clarifying and crystalising decisions that make sense for the young person.

The Narrative Approach

The narrative approach holds that people always tend towards unifying life story, making meaning from pivotal experiences to help shape a pattern of meaning their lives (Cochran, 2007). When young people are then able to live their lives in accordance with a constructive unifying plot, their lives are experienced as meaningful, productive and fulfilling. When young people are helped to construct life plots and to actualise them in present and future enactments, this facilitates the *uncovering* and *shaping* of a life plot that can be projected into future career possibilities, and young people are enabled to begin enacting the desired role in present opportunities. This may help to position them for future actualisations.

The life plot is essentially hidden from conscious awareness by distortions, current events and influences. These themes of meaning can be uncovered in narrative



career construction so that it becomes more obvious how they form part of the unifying life plot. For the young person the life plot is still forming. It may include negative themes especially when the young person's life experience has involved direct or prolonged exposure to circumstances that are not optimal for his or her healthy development. The practitioner may then help the young person shape a life plot by emphasising strengths, correcting misguided learnings from past experiences, and providing encouragement. The task is to help the young person uncover and shape a possibility that is constructive and reachable, focusing on who the young person is and where he or she most wants to go. Since this process is not meant to be an intrusive intervention, the child and youth care practitioner is already ideally situated to be strongly influential in this process.

The Normative Story

Stories equip people for dealing with the demands of daily living by making meaning of situations and events. From the meaning that is given to a situation, an attitude is shaped with which to approach a situation. When actions are added to the attitude, this becomes a strategy for dealing with a situation. Child and youth care practitioners are especially attuned to this process of meaning-making in everyday events and interactions, and due to their in-the-moment life-space approach to working with young people, they are "there" when life stories are constructed. While some communities still contain a common pool of stories regarding how to approach life tasks such as career deci-

sions, many communities no longer have such a narrative resource. When young people are left to draw these stories from friends, families, websites and other sources, it may be too fragmented to form a unifying life plot and may leave the young person unguided. The aim of the narrative career construction approach is therefore to script a person with a meaningful role in a clearer story line (Cochran in Maree, 2007).

The Use of Daily Life Events in Career Construction

There are various methods that have been developed within the narrative career counselling approach to aid career counsellors in their task, each of them requiring appropriate training in the method being used, such as memory box making, the use of a sand tray, card sorting, life-lines, collages, journal writing and career story interviewing. These methods are useful to help the narrative career counsellor accomplish their task within the limited amount of time available to them in the process of career counselling, and are therefore quite specific in their application within the context of career counselling. The child and youth care practitioner has the benefit of observing and interacting with young people in a natural manner, often without the constraints of time imposed by an "interview hour". As such, they are ideally positioned to utilise the daily life events of young people to aid in the meaning-making process, from which themes can emerge naturally and life stories can be scripted through natural, everyday interactions.

The intention is not that child and



youth care practitioners take up the task of career counselling *per se*, but that everything leading up to career decisions being made, be fully utilised to help the young person build a positive script for career life. It is suggested that the use of daily life events as described by Garfat and Fulcher (2012) forms the method of the child and youth care practitioner to engage with young people in the process of life and career construction within a narrative paradigm.

The Promise of a Narrative Approach

Narrative career construction provides an approach with a strong emphasis on how personal meaning is created, something that is both overdue in career counselling and also directly relevant to role and task of the child and youth care practitioner. As young people “story” their lives, they may be enabled to become stronger agents in their own life stories, adopting the role not only of the central character, but also of narrator.

The greatest promise of the narrative career construction approach is that it can be extended not only to other problematic aspects of career, but to the entire life story of the young person, so that career planning is not only an event that takes place at a specific stage in the life of the young person, but a process of growth and development that forms the context within which effective career choices can be made. And since “storying” is a human universal experience that is especially relevant from a multicultural perspective, the possibilities for application within the field of child and youth care work are endless.

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Sustained, Intensive Television?

Marshall Ingwerson

An incisive viewpoint expressed in the 1990's on youth programs which "keep the kids occupied", but which utterly fail to address real rehabilitation needs. How different are things today?

As an assistant Florida State Attorney, Tom Petersen spent 1985-89 on leave, working as a sort of entrepreneur-idealist in Dade County's most troubled neighbourhoods. He achieved national recognition for turning empty community centres in public housing projects into convenience marts which employ welfare mothers and establish healthy centres of enterprise and activity.

In 1990 Mr Petersen was named a juvenile court judge here. Still candid and innovative, Judge Petersen was again tinkering with bureaucracy and trying to make it work. In a interview at the time he said he found the juvenile justice system to be a bureaucratic facade that ultimately offers only "sustained intensive television" instead of rehabilitation. The interview ...

What happens to young people in the juvenile justice system?

Not very much happens one way or another. Traditionally the argument is between punishment versus rehabilitation. But here (in Dade County) we don't do either one. The longest time a kid can spend in a program is 90 days, and what's the program? They sit there and watch TV. Recidivism (failure) rates are 80%.

Say I'm 16 and I steal a car. What happens to me?

The first car is free. After that the next time a kid comes through he cleans the park. The kids don't really clean parks. I know that. By the third time, you're talking about sustained, intensive television.

Could it be different?

Yeah, it could. We could be involving universities, community groups. While these guys are sitting there they could put on a play, charge admission, script their own television show.

A lot of these are creative kids, but we'll never know it.

What's expected of them is that they won't disrupt the institution - no more than that. That perpetuates the institution. It doesn't do anything for the kids.

Has the public come to doubt that such programs work?

Yeah, and we're confirming it. It's a self fulfilling prophecy. When I first came here as a VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteer, there was a lot of excitement about government. We were integrating things (racially). What has happened 25 years later is we've learned that



black, white and brown - we all burn out. We've lost our energy. There's no money like in the '60s to reinvigorate the system. It sometimes seems that the only people who believe that the system can effect drastic change are the kids. Matthew means it when he says he not going to get in trouble again - but he will, because he's going right back into the same bad situation.

So what works?

Ironically, that little Teen Cuisine program is one of the most encouraging thing we've got. (In Teen Cuisine, Petersen has convicted juveniles work under a professional manager to provide the food service in the Dade County Juvenile Justice Centre.) We treat them like human beings. These kids have long records but we don't have any trouble with them. They don't run off or anything.

The best way to change behaviour is with economic incentives. We learned that with women on welfare in the marts (set up in housing projects to serve and employ residents). When you pay people, you change their behaviour.

Why aren't there more Teen Cuisines?

It's hard for governments to start programs like that. It involves handling money. We wanted to make Teen Cuisine part of the (Florida Health and Rehabilitative Services) program, but a lot of little rules

blocked doing thing like that. They never get excited about new ideas. They're so defensive.

I go back to the pay cheque theory of human development. You don't get extra pay to go out and re-recruit the drama graduate student to put on the play. You need incentives and encouragement from above.



Where did things go wrong?

The juvenile system is based on the ideas of thirty years ago: Johnny is off the

track; let's get Johnny back together again. But these kids are the product of whole neighbourhoods off the track. We really run our juvenile justice system on semantics. Half-way houses used to mean something: half-way between incarceration and a place in the community. In reality, they're not half-way between anything. We call them half-way houses because it sounds good.

So it's all a facade?

It comes back to power relationships. The kids don't have the power. Neither do the case managers. The kids are either patronised or intimidated. The sad thing about saying that, is that a lot of the people who work in the system care a great deal - especially the case managers - with case loads of 200. They get crushed by these things, too.



My 360 view of Homelessness

Kathryn Gullage

Picture yourself being 18 again. Who did you hang out with? Where did you live? Imagine that, for whatever reason, you chose to leave your home situation. Picture yourself working a minimum wage job and having to pay rent for a bed sitting room, the best you are able to afford. As a typical teenager, you spend more money on fast food than groceries; you go to a few movies with friends and enjoy being a teenager. Then, due to the falling economy, your hours get cut and soon you start to worry about rent money. You drop out of high school to make money, but still struggle monthly. After a month your boss tells you it isn't working out and you get laid off. You are unable to pay your rent and you get evicted. You spend time with friends and even go back to your family home but soon overstay your welcome. You end up going to the youth shelter, only to be told they have no spare beds. You have no choice but to sleep on the street.

It was because of stories like this that Blair Trainor and his classmates, Child and Youth Care students including myself, created **Sleep Out 120** in 2010



<http://www.sleepout120.com>. Sleep Out 120 is a five-day, 120-hour campaign highlighting youth homelessness and the need for more affordable and supportive housing in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Since its inception, the campaign has had over 50 volunteers and raised over \$60,000 for the local non-profit youth serving agencies in the community.

Raising the Roof defines homelessness as "the absence of a place to live. A person who has no regular place to live stays in an overnight emergency shelter, an abandoned building, an all-night coffee shop or theatre, a car, outdoors, or other such places not



meant to be living spaces.”¹ Since being a participant in Sleep Out 120 I’ve learned that homelessness exists everywhere, even if you do not physically see an individual on the street panhandling for change. Youth homelessness is challenging because youth who find themselves homeless and their reasons for it are very diverse. But young people need stable environments to grow, experiment, and discover what life is all about with support. The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association states, “Homelessness continues to be an unacceptable reality in many Canadian communities, and youth are one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population. It is estimated that 65,000 young people experience homelessness at some time during a year.”²

Youth who find themselves homeless often have complex mental health concerns, addictions or are under-educated and have trouble finding employment. It is important for us as Child and Youth Care Workers to be educated about Youth Homelessness and housing concerns because it is something we will come across in our careers.

Young people who age out of care often do not have the skills to live on their

own. Canadian Housing and Renewal Association states, “40 to 45 per cent of homeless youth in Canada have been involved in the foster care system.”³ It is an essential part of our job to teach life skills to our young people so that this statistic decreases.

For the five days I was on the streets I carried everything I “owned” on my back. We were permitted to take a backpack, sleeping bag, pillow, journal, pen, water bottle, one change of clothes, a toothbrush, toothpaste and a bar of soap. These were all items that people who are homeless can obtain access to through shelters and supportive programs. Keeping warm was a struggle. We often had to rotate going inside to keep warm, and would layer our clothes to ensure we did not get too cold. We were mindful of the fact that the temperature would drop in the evening and we needed to prepare for the cold nights ahead. On the coldest night the temperature dropped to minus eight degrees Celsius, which made it extremely difficult to sleep.

I didn’t always know where I would sleep from one day to the next and often faced the fear of being kicked out of where were sleeping by security guards or

- 1 Raising the Roof - Long-term solutions for Canada's Homeless. (2009) What is Homelessness. Retrieved from: <http://www.raisingtheroof.org/Get-Informed/What-is-Homelessness.aspx>
- 2 Canadian Housing and Renewal Association. (2011) Youth Homelessness. Retrieved from: <http://www.chra-achru.ca/en/index.php/our-work/youth-homelessness/policy-statement-on-ending-youth-homelessness/>
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less than inviting individuals. We would be up late and have to get up early to leave our sleeping locations before business owners arrived for work. One night we had a security guard confront our group. He was understanding and empathetic, but politely assured us that we could stay the night, but would not be able to return. I never knew when I would get something to eat or what I would be eating until someone arrived with food. We ate what our community would donate to us. We were also able to reach out by sharing the food we did receive with the people living on the streets or shelters in the downtown area.

We have three key messages:

- 1) focusing on the need for more affordable and supportive housing
- 2) educating about and fighting stigma and stereotypes
- 3) raising awareness of barriers which influence youth homelessness, including youth identifying as LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Transsexual, Bisexual and Queer), aboriginal youth, substance abuse and addiction, sexual exploitation and youth aging out of care.

I have been involved with this campaign since the very beginning in 2010. I have been “homeless” for 15 days — 360 hours. I was uneducated about housing

and homelessness issues until I started to volunteer with this campaign.

People become homeless for a variety of reasons. “The long-term or “chronically” homeless person – the individuals we see on our streets – represent less than 20% of the homeless population.”⁴ We experienced this ourselves while on the streets. We know there are more people on the streets than those we have encountered. Every year when we do this campaign we look for familiar faces, but oftentimes individuals have moved elsewhere or have found more stable housing. Unfortunately, people also pass away while living on the streets or in shelters.

We chatted to homeless individuals and heard their stories, many of which I will never forget. We met a man who plays the guitar and sings downtown. He was our ray of sunshine. He had an apartment, but had no heat or light, no food and had received his eviction notice. Despite all this, he would sing a traditional Newfoundland song about being happy despite the circumstances. He would come find us to share what he made that day. We would tell him “No, you need the money!” He would say, “No, I believe in what you are doing and no one should be homeless.” Every time we spoke with him, he would remind us why we were outside away from our daily life and comforts. He made the campaign worth doing. On the Friday night of the campaign in

4 Raising the Roof – Long-term solutions for Canada’s Homeless. (2009) What is Homelessness. Retrieved from: <http://www.raisingtheroof.org/Get-Informed/What-is-Homelessness.aspx>



2012 we stood outside the hockey stadium while people were lining up to go to the game and made over \$700 in a half hour. That same night there was a youth in grade seven who approached us to ask some questions because he had to do an essay on social justice and recognized our campaign as just that.

So how was the experience? In a word, overwhelming. Living on the streets is a different world. When you are homeless, unless you have a watch, you lose all sense of time. It really is the little things that matter. While living on the street, having someone stop and chat seriously made my day when I was cold and hungry. Whether that someone was a participant's family member, friends, strangers or youth themselves it helped to lift team spirits. When we ask the participants on the last day what the hardest part about doing this campaign was, the answers are things like not having my cell phone, missing family and friends or not having the ability to take a shower, or grab food from my fridge or having a bed. This campaign has truly made me grateful

for the small things in life such as having a bathroom down the hall in my house rather than having to go down the street in the cold to a local business.

When I arrived home, I was shocked at how quiet my neighborhood was and how clean and soft carpet is compared to hard concrete. One piece of advice that I want to give to you after this experience is: don't ignore homeless individuals; if you do not feel comfortable giving them change, buy them a coffee or something healthy to eat. At the very least as you walk by, give a kind look or a smile or a greeting. If you have the time, have a conversation and treat them the way you would want others to treat you if you were in their shoes. As Gandhi once famously said, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

If anyone has any questions or would like more information about the campaign please feel free to email sleepout120@hotmail.com, find us on Twitter and Facebook at Sleep Out 120 or check out our website www.sleepout120.com



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Do We Really Care?

Eileen Scott

I have worked in residential child care for a number of years and it never ceases to amaze me how the term “safe care” is used frequently but without any real guidance on what this means when working with young people in care. I have also observed how this lack of clarity often led to cultures in units which were very hands off or where there were little or no real displays of affection towards the young people. Staff perceptions of safe care frequently appeared to be more about protecting workers from allegations. Whilst I do not minimise that abuse can and does occur in any profession which involves the care of vulnerable service users, this should not have the end result of workers being fearful of how they engage with young people in care.

The Scottish Government’s (2011) guidance on how agencies should respond to allegations against residential workers advises on the duty of residential workers to safeguard children in an authentic and caring manner. Despite this advice, the caring aspect of our roles as residential workers is often lost in translation due to the fearful cultures that are prevalent, particularly due to historical, high-profile enquiries into alleged abusive practices in the United Kingdom. Agencies and workers are often defensive in

their practice (Smith 2009) and this, according to Corby, Doig and Roberts (2001), often leads to workers being afraid to form relationships or attachments with children and young people in their care. I recognise that; I and a number of my colleagues had fallen into that category of defensiveness over the years. However, I now feel more strongly than ever about the need to make children’s units more nurturing, where workers are confident and comfortable enough to give a child a hug when they need one and without being worried that this is wrong. I also hold the view that it is essential for all young people in care to feel that workers genuinely care about them unconditionally. When I started my career in residential child care, this was the type of worker I had hoped to be.

My first experience in residential child care involved working in a temporary post with children of primary school age. I had the pleasure of working with a staff team who gave a great deal of nurturing to the children. Giving and receiving hugs, sitting on a child’s bed reading a bed-time story and huddling up on the couch watching a movie were all everyday occurrences and when reflecting on this experience, I have very fond memories. When I moved on from this short term post to a larger unit,



I remember a worker asking me if anyone had ever spoken with me about “appropriate touch”. No one ever had and he nor any other worker offered advice on what practice was appropriate. What did strike me when I reflect back on this is that the early experience of working with what I would now describe as a nurturing staff group,

was greatly different from my later experiences where it was clear that a high proportion of workers appeared to be uncomfortable offering or receiving hugs from

young people. Sadly this also impacted on my own practice in terms of how I engaged with young people for a number of years.

I recall when working a night shift a girl had woken up crying. I immediately went to her room, sat on her bed and gave her a hug; I just wanted her to know she was okay, she was safe and that I was there. However, after this initial response, my next thought was how my actions would be perceived by the other worker on shift still sitting in the lounge. The other worker knew where I went, as she heard the girl crying too. The bedroom door remained open which provided me with some relief, but on reflection I realise I gave no consideration to



the privacy of the young person. My natural instincts when working with young people who are upset has always been to offer comfort, which involves the use of touch (e.g. a hug) and this has been my own experience growing up. When I reflect on my thoughts during this incident with the girl, it still saddens me when I re-

member how what in my view is a natural reaction for me, could leave me feeling anxious about whether or not a colleague would view my actions as wrong.

In recent years while on placement for my degree, I remember being in the office of the organisation I was placed when a young man came into the project visibly upset. What was significant to me was that the worker who responded to him immediately sat with him and gave him a hug without hesitation. I realised from this experience how my own practice and often the practice of my colleagues was often impacted upon by being worried about how others will perceive displays of affection. Worries about how others view our practice in terms of showing affection to children and young people we care for is a contradiction when considering the big drive from National guidance which places greater focus on providing nurturing environments



for young people in care.

The unfortunate reality of safe care and how this impacts on practice is that it often means protecting ourselves from allegations (Howarth 2000 as cited by Smith 2009). When I think about how practice has been impacted upon over the years due to historical abuse and misconceptions of safe care there are times when I feel angry because of how detrimental this has been to ensuring positive relationship building and attachments for children and young people and the workers who have been so significant in their lives. Children and young people often live in residential units for years and workers involved with them get to share their achievements, their hurt, their anger and all the other issues which impact on their lives. When interviewing a young person in care for my dissertation study, he said it was nice to know there was somebody who could give him a hug when he was upset or having a hard time. He went on to say that this made him feel better and that there were staff he loved because he felt they really cared about him and when he was upset he could see staff hurt for him. Comments such as this reflect just how significant residential workers can be in the lives of the young people they are responsible for.

Hennessey (2011 p 19) identifies social work as belonging to a professional service which can be described as 'personal'. He states that who workers are as people is likely to affect the process or outcome of the professional engagement for better or worse. When I relate this to working with young people in care it makes me realise how important genuine, caring re-

lationships are. Skinner (1992 p19), who was the author of a seminal review of residential child care in Scotland, suggests that a positive care experience can be provided by staff who genuinely like children and young people and who feel personally involved and responsible. Skinner also cites a respondent to his report as stating that young people often do not feel good enough to be cared about.

Kent (1997), who authored a review of children's safeguards following reports of abuse in children in care, states that children are entitled to loving care and that if child protection (as opposed to child care) is the driving force, we may create a safe climate which is a sterile climate. I started in residential childcare four years following the Kent report and the focus for workers and agencies was to learn from past mistakes and protect children. However, there was no real regard for Kent's comment about the entitlement of "loving care". Relationships and the use of self cannot be underestimated in terms of the positive impact this can have on a young person in care who, more often than not, has been let down numerous times by adults in their lives whose responsibility it has been to raise them and protect them. In the Frizzell report (2009), which is the most recent inquiry into abuse in Scotland, it is identified that disclosures of abuse are more likely to be made to someone that a young person knows well and has an on-going relationship with. Providing these kinds of positive relationships requires an ability to genuinely care, and this, in my view, requires the ability to provide demonstrations of genuine affection for young peo-



ple which will often involve the use of touch.

Extraordinary Lives (2007) refers to the provision of nurturing environments for children which includes emotional warmth and how this promotes self-worth through relationships. A hug or a friendly hand on a child's shoulder can convey affection, appreciation and value more than words. On a positive note, I do see a shift in residential care where workers are striving to develop themselves through training and there is more focus on evidence-based practice. Taking this into consideration, I am positive that the learning achieved and the knowledge from evidence will encourage workers in our field to be more committed to young people in care and more committed to providing the warmth and caring that they deserve. Turney (2010) suggests that a key positive in the relationship between a worker and service user is 'reciprocity'. This involves the willingness of the worker to share something of themselves instead of seeing the relationship as only being one-way. I do not think that this would in any way suggest that we cannot maintain the professional boundaries which would be appropriate to our practice in social work settings. However, what I do think is that in terms of safe caring, as workers we should have the confidence to express to a young person that we genuinely care for them and by doing so, a young person might just have an experience of living in a residential care setting where they have been able to build positive relationships and gained feelings of safety and security whilst feeling that those carers genuinely cared about them.

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Has this ever happened anywhere else in the world before?

Merle Allsopp

The South African child and youth care field is excited. We think that something really good is happening for children in our country.

Two years ago the South African national Minister of Social Development announced her intention to train and deploy a new cadre of 10 000 workers to service our country's children – child and youth care workers. The child and youth care field, and indeed the field of social services in our country is delighted by the opportunity in this leapfrog moment – for children, for child and youth care work in South Africa, and we think, perhaps, for the field of child and youth care work internationally.

We are asking ourselves: “Has this ever happened before? In the history of child and youth care work across the globe, has there ever been such a focussed, government-led initiative to put in place an entire workforce of child and youth care workers?” If this is indeed an innovation and a first time occurrence – what does it mean for our field in South Africa, and what does it mean for child and youth care work in other parts of the globe? What

can South Africans learn from this experience that can be shared with others – both in the developing and the developed world?

Undoubtedly, the exploration of these questions will be the subject of many academic theses, conference papers and articles over years to come. And right now, many in the South African child and youth care field are so busy making this vision a reality, that opportunities to elaborate on the implications of the initiative are few and far between. Offered here then, are a few preliminary thoughts about what we, as South Africans, think may be a moment for us all, across the globe, to learn from, engage with and ... dare I say ... celebrate!

What can we learn from this initiative?

1. Firstly, it is collective effort that has brought us to this position. Over four decades South Africa's National Association of Child Care Workers has relentlessly, creatively and demonstrably advocated on behalf of the field of child and youth care work.



The organisation has sufficient support both within the child and youth care sector and, more broadly, the social service sector, to be able to provide a unified voice on child and youth care work. Holding together movements such as this is not an easy endeavour, and there are many lessons to be learned and articulated *just* in this process of maintaining a national profile and reputation. But we have learned that the value of a strong unified voice in our field has been essential in attracting a national unified response.

2. Linked to the point above, political action is essential if we are to reach more children with child and youth care services. Whilst the value of the generation of clinical knowledge in child and youth care work cannot be underestimated, we have seen the value of careful advocacy, and political positioning of the field. Taking on the responsibility of engaging with the context in which the children we serve are serviced, has been, and will in the future be essential in realising the potential of the child and youth care work field.
3. Thirdly, local contextualisation of child and youth care work is critical in ensuring its usefulness to children. In South Africa, two million children are orphaned, and over 10 million children live in poverty. This workforce development initiative has come about, not because South African child and youth care work has confined itself to the 14,000 children accommodated in residential care

settings, but because our field has pushed the envelope to apply child and youth care skills in contexts, and in ways, that are needed most by children in our country.

Contextualising child and youth care services within the local reality in South Africa has demonstrated that child and youth care work is not a luxurious social service endeavour for developed countries, but a cost-effective contribution to child rights in resource-poor settings.

4. Demonstrating the effectiveness of child and youth care skills and knowledge within the context of a model is helpful. Child and youth care work, well executed, looks easy to do – in any setting. Practitioners know, often only too well, the complexity and skill of what goes into well-performed child and youth care work. Packaging professional practice within a model, where its elements, processes and outcomes can be universally and simply articulated, helps in providing not only practitioners themselves, but others outside of the child and youth care field, with a conceptual understanding of the provision of a child and youth care work service. The NACCW developed the Isibindi model for the care of orphaned and vulnerable and at risk children, and it is in the context of this model that the new cadre of workers will be deployed. The model has become a symbol of what can be expected from community-based child and youth care workers in South Africa, and thus in one word conveys



something of the complexity of child and youth care work practice.

What can be engaged with in relation to this initiative?

1. We believe that the manner in which the development of this workforce unfolds will be important to document, consider, and learn from. In many other settings across the globe child and youth care workers may add a significant positive contribution to the lives of children in very difficult circumstances. In engaging with this process of the development of an entire workforce over a short period of time, our field can learn lessons that will help to reach many more children over time.
2. In engaging with the practice of child and youth care work in resource poor, community-based, and often traditional settings, more can be added to child and youth care work praxis, both in local contexts and internationally. Documenting and articulating what child and youth care workers do in the life-space of children, in contexts where such articulation has not yet been readily available, may provide an energy, and impetus that has the potential to benefit child and youth care workers not only within the specific setting, but more broadly through the contribution to knowledge development.

What is there to celebrate in this initiative?

Here in South Africa, we are celebrating the thought that over one million

children will be cared for by the child and youth care workers who are to be trained and deployed. These will largely be children who previously did not have access to social services, and whose lives may be changed dramatically by people who are trained to become child and youth care workers, and who will step into their lifespaces.

But in doing so we celebrate also how it is that we got to be doing this for children. South African child and youth care work did not invent the field; we learned it from others from distant shores. Over the years, our colleagues abroad have been willing to share their knowledge and expertise in the field of child and youth care work with us. We have learned from them, and made this knowledge our own. Concepts developed in the first world have been applied in very different settings, and now feel indigenous! So we celebrate all who have helped us to get to this point. The world of child and youth care work is a generous world, and we hope as South Africans to be able to give back – maybe not directly to those who have given to us, but to our field internationally, and to other equally less privileged countries and children through what we learn in this extraordinary opportunity.

In this way what may never have happened before in the world could get to happen again, and again, and the field of child and youth care work could spread the world over – and our children will be way better off for it!





Child and Youth Care During a Natural Disaster

James Freeman

On Wednesday May 1, 2013, Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families celebrated the internationally recognized *Thank a Youth Worker Day*. Employees wore orange ribbons, gift bags welcomed residential care workers as they arrived at work, and notes of thanks and encouragement were shared. No one expected that the following day, the emergency shelter, residential and transitional living programs, and the special education school situated on our

25-acre campus would be evacuated and all of our child and youth care skills would be tested by fire.

Having grown up in the local area, I was used to an occasional brush fire. When I passed a fire crew on the road at 6 am that morning, it didn't raise much concern. I was travelling two hours north to facilitate a child and youth care course for community and residential workers. Around 8 am I received a text from the emergency alert system saying the fire



posed no immediate threat to people or structures. By 9:30, things were getting more serious. The weather had grown hotter with low humidity. The wind had picked up, spreading the fire quickly through surrounding hills. My plan was to wrap up the course early and get back to the campus as quickly as possible.

This was both a professional and personal event for me as I live only a mile and a half from the campus, on the other side of some rocky hills. Sometime around 10 am, I received a text from my wife Julie, saying "A bit of a fire emergency here. Please call." I called Julie who immediately asked, "Do you need anything from the house?" She had our youngest son in the car and was grabbing a few belongings before emergency evacuation. Later I would learn that Julie had spotted the flames approaching our home as a reflection in the car windows as she looked out our living room window. Soon Julie and our youngest were clear of the fire and our two other kids were picked up from their schools. Knowing my family were safe (at a friend's home where we stayed the night as the fire burned through the hills surrounding our neighborhood), I headed for the campus to catch up there with what was going on with staff and the young people.

Disaster response teams involving staff from across all programs had set up a command center and were implementing emergency procedures that we routinely practice. Staff members working at a location across town and safely away from the fires were preparing a staging area with possible overnight shelter.

Child and youth care workers imple-

mented activities and outings to surrounding communities. These were sustained over the next few days due to the smoke pollution. Relations between caregivers and youths provided a distraction from the immediate threat as well as offering opportunities through important relationships to role model how to manage and talk about how we cope in times of crisis and stress. Later that night, as the immediate threat subsided at the residential campus, both staff and residents returned but kept sheltering indoors to avoid the smoke-filled air.

The day after the fire, Casa Pacifica CEO, Dr. Steve Elson, praised the exemplary work of our child and youth care workers: "This was a different kind of disaster because it affected an entire community, not just our organization. Nevertheless, the concern for, care of, and quick response in assuring the wellbeing of the kids in our care was exemplary – that's the bottom line for us. Staff involved in responding to this emergency should not only feel the thanks of the Board of Directors and the community, but also the gratitude of the youth we serve."

What has become known as the Spring Fire in our part of California eventually burned more than 240,000 acres. The fire was visible from space through NASA satellites and left an area of scorched earth twice the size of Manhattan. It took a week before emergency workers brought the fire under control. Fortunately, no lives were lost and just over a dozen structures – mostly rural ranch buildings – were damaged or lost.

In the days and weeks that have followed the wildfire, we have continued to debrief and learn from our crisis response



process. We continue to update and refine plans that will be put in place so that we can be even more ready in case of future emergencies.

The young people in our care have also been processing and recovering from the trauma of this experience. One resident during the fire was struck with the reality of the threat when she asked “*What if Casa Pacifica really burns down? Where would we go? There is literally nowhere else for us to go.*” Interacting through social media, some alumni of our programs declared, “*I hope we don’t lose Casa Pacifica – for some it’s the only home we’ve ever had.*” Another former resident posted, “*So true, that’s the only place that took us when we needed a home.*”

The real strengths and growing resilience amongst these young people is

showing up through personal reflections and expressions through both art work and various media. In this, we share experiences that are commonly found across the field of child and youth care, amongst different cultures and in different parts of our world.

At home, having lived through the shared experience of evacuation and the potential loss of homes and belongings, our neighborhood seems more connected. My two year-old can now distinguish between clouds in the sky and smoke from a fire. My four year-old talks about how he is “*so frustrated that everything burned*” in the fire. Both of them – along with the staff and young people in our programs – are learning that restoration and re-growth can indeed rise from ashes.



“In Confidence”: Understanding and applying principles of ‘daily life events’ during a tragedy

Jim Donnelly and John Digney

The essence of effective child and youth care practice lies in the worker’s ability to recognise the value of, and use of, everyday life events as they are occurring, to help facilitate change for children, youth and families (Garfat & Fulcher, 2011). It is this focus which distinguishes contemporary Child and Youth Care practice from other forms of helping. This is especially true in situations where the worker participates actively in multiple aspects of a person’s daily living in the community, the family home, the school, the group care setting or any other area of engagement with young people and families¹.

There are moments that occur during our lives that leave an enduring legacy. Such moments can be joyous (such as falling in love, the birth of a baby) yet others leave us with a sense of wondering, ‘why did that just happen?’ How we process, learn from and use this learning is what can make even the most saddening event an opportunity for helping and healing.

In March 2012, Jim Donnelly shared a personal document with John Digney for consideration and feedback. The docu-

ment was titled, “JD in confidence: A statement of events”. Jim explained the raison d’être for the documents in the opening statement:

My rationale for writing this statement of events is primarily to reflect and understand the circumstances regarding a situation of major significance in relation to a young person I worked with.

The original 15 pages was a chronicle of a devastating and significant event and

¹ <http://www.transformaction.com>



its aftermath – discussing how this issue has an on-going effect on the lives of all connected with the young person involved and young people and families in the area.

This paper provides an outline of the content of the document and examines how, as events unfolded, the focus remained on being future orientated and use was made of this tragic event to facilitate therapeutic advancement ‘in the moment’.

A Preamble

Jim is a community based youth worker and activist and works with a group of young men who had been deemed to be vulnerable and at high risk. Establishing trust with these young men was seen as essential to maintaining the aims of the project; to support, influence and at times challenge the participants to bring about change in their behaviour. The title and mission statement for the project is – Generating Opportunities and Learning through Sport (G.O.A.L.S).

A young man from the group, the young man to which this document speaks, was unlike many of the others. His behaviour did not require significant challenging, rather he would have been a role model, a person who could challenge his peers to look at life in the way he did. This made it even more difficult to comprehend when he took his own life.

Jim explains his belief that learning can come from any situation and acknowledged, *‘I am very aware however that a young man has lost his life; a family has lost a son, a brother, an uncle, a grandson, a nephew, a cousin and a boyfriend: someone who was loved very dearly by all that knew him and therefore I have endeavoured to ap-*

proach this in the most empathetic and respectful manner possible’.

A Statement of Events

A phone call shortly after I am was to create an indelible memory. The call was from a member of the project group. The message on the phone was, “‘he’s dead, he’s dead”’. A call back to this young person elicited the name of the young man in question and the statement, ‘he hung himself in the graveyard and I’m here with his Da’.

Moments later there was a knock on Jim’s door and there stood two other young men from the group. They entered, sat down and both of them began to cry. They explained that they had found their friend ‘hanging in the graveyard’. They recounted the events leading up to finding his body and they raised concerns about others who were present when the body was discovered. Jim went with them to find and talk with the other young men.

Outside the home of the young man were around 15 others. Jim spoke with them and in that moment asked how they were. They were very honest, with some of them explaining how they had found the body, the experience of cutting the body down and then attempting to resuscitate the young man. They spoke about the events leading up to his death and how there was no indication to them of what was about to occur. There was great concern that the young man’s brother was still at the scene alone. Jim went to the home of the girlfriend with the young man’s brother. He explains, ‘This was a new experience for me and I wasn’t sure what I should do or say’.



The following day another young man from the group requested some photos be printed for the family. These were readied and brought to the family home. At this point, the planned meeting of the G.O.A.L.S group for the following day was postponed. The consensus from the group was that they felt it would be better to come together, so this was agreed and that evening the group met.

A community meeting was arranged by a local Councillor where those attending were made up of youth workers, community safety, drug & alcohol, family support, and suicide prevention representatives. At this meeting it seemed everyone was searching for answers and guessing on the best way forward. Back at the young man's home, the young men involved in the G.O.A.L.S group were present. Jim stated that he was there for them and also encouraged them to speak to mental health professionals.

Much of the next day was spent being available to the young men. Jim also prepared for the group planned for that evening. A photo of the young man was printed and put it in the centre of a flip chart page. At the top of the page was written, *'I promise everyone here tonight that I will not take my own life'* – this was described as a 'group contract'.

Some of the discussion surrounded how this young man's death hurt and affected group members, about the last time people had spoken to and been with him and how he had promised that he would attend the group session that was currently taking place. People questioned their own actions and why they hadn't seen any sign or indication of his inten-

tions. Wallet cards with telephone numbers were also distributed. Commitment were asked for and given, not to drink or take drugs.

The following day brought fresh revelations from three of the young men from the group — one disclosed that he was self-harming and two others spoke of how low they were feeling. Later in the day, yet another young man disclosed that he had been writing a suicide note for a long time and he wanted to 'do it'. After just spending some time reassuring and hanging out with him, Jim spoke to him about his disclosure. A short while later another person from the group rang to say he was very angry and wanted to hit someone. Jim met up with him and spent some time just walking and chatting. Jim contacted a local Integrated Services Manager for support.

On the day of the funeral, following the service, a group meeting was held. 37 young men and one young woman, the young man's girlfriend, attended. During the sessions there were tears, laughter, pain and a lot of questioning why. The young people found it difficult to understand why he had not been able to talk to anyone. On this day all were offered and five availed of professional counselling. Over the next few days things remained much the same, there was good attendance at the group and the discussions that were happening were very open and honest where the young people spoke about their thoughts, feelings and fears. The feeling was that 'what was occurring in this moment' was having a positive impact.



One of the songs played at the young man's funeral was, 'The World's Greatest'. Jim wrote this title on the flipchart and said, 'you know, my son thinks I am the world's greatest Daddy and at some time in your life you will be seen as the world's greatest something by someone who loves you'. Whilst it was conceded that it may be too late for the people in the room to become a 'world champion boxer', they still would have lots of opportunities and could even get the opportunity to coach the first World Champion to come out of their area. Strength needed to be drawn from the loss, the sorrow and the tragedy that had occurred less than one week earlier and here was a sprinkling of hope.²

An overview of 'the therapeutic use of daily life events'

This event and the ensuing actions are a great example of 'praxis'³ of the child and youth care philosophies. There are many well-defined principles associated with the relational approach to child and youth care and description has been given to how we can be effective in our work with children and youth. Some of the fundamental principles include; being aware

of and using the opportunities available in the moments of daily life, thinking not only about the crisis, understanding how we think in everyday interactions and thinking about *how* to do. Additionally, when following a daily life events ('dle') approach we want to be effective in the moment, where effective workers / carers understand that everything occurs in a specific context and that knowing 'how to do, what you do' is critical.

Those working with young people are quick to realize that, 'a moment can change a life forever', for better or for worse and that therefore the 'moment is everything, especially when you are in it'.

When we consider this chronicle of events and the use of relationships and interventions, we can see on first glance that many of the 25 characteristics of a contemporary child and youth care approach, discussed in the literature (e.g. Garfat, Fulcher & Digney, 2012) were present during the tragic event that unfolded in Spring 2012.

During the entire episode, Jim as the principle mentor, participated with people as they lived their lives, working in the present, meeting others where they were at and remained emotionally present

- 2 In the original 15 page document, 'JD in confidence: A statement of events', much more of the unfolding tragedy as it engulfed some of the young people connected with the event is written about and reflected on, in particular the sense of hopelessness experienced by many young people in the community and also the very 'in your face' suicide prevention campaign. Jim reflected on how suicide can be seen as a final solution to a temporary problem and that more needs to be done with young people to look at their reasons for thinking suicide is their only option.
- 3 **Praxis** is the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practiced, embodied, or realised. "Praxis" may also refer to the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas (Wikipedia).



whilst tending to the rhythmicity of the situation.

When seeking to find a way to move forward with the group of young people, connection and engagement with the young people were of primary importance. Being 'in relationship' and 'hanging out' were followed naturally, in that these responses occurred in a manner that was genuine.

After analyzing the series of events and seeking to make sense of them, it can be reported that there was significant reflection as it related to the context of the various moments, along with awareness of individual meaning-making and personal experiencing. During the response to this tragic event there was focused in-the-moment counseling with the individuals and groups of young people. Many other attributes of effective working were displayed and indeed it is through these that other tragic incidents were averted.

This paper does not seek to rewrite that which has gone before, so for explanation of the terms used above please see the paper by Garfat and Fulcher (2011) and the many associated writings. It does seek to draw attention to the plights of many young people who suffer from hopelessness and long for someone to help them make sense and give them hope. Additionally, this paper seeks to expose the reader to the enormous potential each and everyone has to help. Knowing and understanding how to be effective, has to be a root function for each of us, as a worker, a neighbor and a family member. The use of 'daily life events' and having an attitude directed towards making moments meaningful gives a potential

for influencing the direction of a person's life, it provides a framework for intervening in a way that can facilitate a positive outcome.

On the www.Transformaction.com website, Garfat, Fulcher and Digney offer a 'dile' process for change; 'in the context of a relationship of safety, I notice that I might benefit from change and am supported in taking the risk to try something different. Having a positive experience of that new way of doing or being, this becomes my new way in the world'. An awareness of principles like this, and a confidence to live in the now, empowers people and facilitates them to intervene effectively into the daily lives of young people and families, which in turn gives some semblance of hope.

Providing opportunities to belong, to be connected and engaged in meaningful activities, is part of the daily ritual of the GOALs project. It provides hope, not because it is a 'project' but because it is delivered by 'real' people with a 'genuine' desire to 'be there for' and 'hang in with' the participants.

A Conclusion

In communities such as North and West Belfast that have been massively impacted by 'The Troubles', consideration must be given to the legacy effects of conflict and how this has left a trans-generational trauma and which is now mixing with a new culture of drug and alcohol misuse among our young. One young person on the project said, 'when I'm high, the hurt isn't here and I feel no pain'.



Over the course of ‘the armed conflict’ the response of the community to anti-social behaviour was a violent one; armed groups are only too willing to exploit this. A young person drinking on the street on a Friday night knows that someone may come along and shoot at them. Despite the bravado however there is a recognised effect on their mental health and ability to remain resilient — just how do we continue to develop and promote resilience within our young people? The ‘daily life’ of many of our young people includes the problems faced as a result of the social and economic situation that exists and the high levels of deprivation. In North and West Belfast there is no employment for anyone. Yet it cannot be accepted that drug abuse or suicide becomes a daily life event or an option for young people when they attempt to ‘problem solve’.

In the conclusion of the ‘In Confidence’ paper, Jim wrote, ‘what I hope this paper will do is begin a discussion on how we can develop resilience and hope within our young, sorry I should say how our young can develop resilience and hope within themselves, I’d like to finish with a quote I read while on a training course recently –

‘Let us build communities and families in which our children and youth, especially those who are most troubled, can belong. Let us build a country in which our children and youth can learn to care for and respect others so that one day they, too, will build a family, a community, and a country which is well and strong’. – Nelson Mandela.

The power of being present in the daily lives of others and assisting them to make moments more meaningful cannot be over emphasised, and using the tools and skills that are ‘naturally available’, in the moment, can bring about a therapeutic shift for all involved. If we are to truly learn from the tragedy that prompted this paper we need to be available and invested in all our youth.

Epilogue (taken from the GOALS evaluation report 2013)

Since writing the initial ‘In Confidence’ paper and the drafting of this paper, the University of Ulster has finished an evaluation of the G.O.A.L.S project and in it make mention of the tragic event and subsequent actions:

“The death of a young man who was a member of the group in February 2012 was tragic ... Other young men were attracted towards GOALS at this time as it offered late night support to the wide circle of people traumatised by the death. The project coordinator made his home available to the group and put in some very late nights consoling and helping to keep group members safe. There was genuine concern that some members may have attempted to harm themselves ... in the autumn of 2012 individual group members confirmed how vital this support was.

The planned program of work was appropriately suspended for a time following the death. A great deal of one-to-one work was undertaken. There was a powerful group meeting in which the project worker challenged the glamorisation of suicide and gained the commitment of the



group to staying alive. Some of the group disclosed to the authors that their friend's death had made them feel suicidal and that the work GOALS did had helped them through those feelings.

The strongest element of the programme was the mentoring and individualised support provided by the full-time project worker. The relationship that the worker formed with the group motivated them to undertake positive activities and supported them through crises which might have diverted them from making progress. The sporting and vocational activities proved effective in providing the young men with structure and purpose in their lives. Through them the group developed confidence and the motivation to seek employment.

The GOALS project has developed an innovative and effective approach to working with groups of young men whose behaviour makes them unpopular with their community and difficult to engage by statutory services ... This approach needs to be more fully developed and then disseminated so that other organisations can benefit as the problem of groups of anti-social young men will continue to trouble communities.

The authors find resonance between the work of GOALS and the insights offered by Heath and McLaughlin who studied the characteristics of effective youth organisations in inner city USA. Their work illustrated how successful youth organisations represented "embedded contexts" for youth. They have focused on the primacy of relationship, on the personal strengths within young men, on their dignity and value as people and

have added to their sense of possibility by widening their choices and strengthening their connections to others. Staff treat the young men as individuals, active "agents" in their own lives who "plot and navigate a chosen course through the uncertainties and challenges of the social and ecological environments". GOALS has proven that its practices do add to the social capital of participants, strengthens their identity around pro social values and aspirations and leads to positive outcomes for the majority of participants.

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The Search for Belonging and Knowledge Exchange

Heather Sago

In a world dominated by power and control, I do my time and often pay the price as I go about working to create a culture of care. For the most part, I have worked in the absence of other CYC's and thus bask in the same labels applied to the youth I spend my days with. I am forever non-compliant and resistant as I challenge authoritarian residential structures and seek flexible individualized plans of care. I am quickly reprimanded when I

state that the solution is the creation of therapeutic relationship and play. But regardless of consequence, like the youth, I continue because there are unmet needs. In order to continue, I re-frame my non-compliance and like to think of myself as a master negotiator and advocate.

Feeling alone in this journey, I began searching for belonging with like-minded individuals. I first found hope that this was possible in the CYC community at



Lethbridge College where I added teaching to my career path. Not only could I now share my values of working with children, youth and families but I was also surrounded with daily affirmation that these values were worthy. My colleagues, Wendy, Donna, and Carol were inspirational. I found solace and stimulation in their conversations and was repeatedly amazed by the sense of agreement and innovation on direct practice. Wanting only more of these types of encounters, the three of them encouraged me to join them and attend the 8th International Child and Youth Care Conference in Montreal in 2006. Enriching experience to say the least – 38 nations with varying perspectives brought together to push the boundaries of the field. That was it – I was hooked! I just didn't quite understand the reason or the extent of my connection at that time.

Fast forward four years, a cross Canada move, and the birth of my second child, I was given the job of creating Sir Sandford Fleming College's CYW program as well as to assist a justice service agency take their residential programs from within the spectrum of power/control to one that was much more relational and strength-based. Making connections would be key to all of this and I knew just where to start... the 16th National Canadian Child and Youth Care Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This time though, it was I who was encouraging others to attend and was able to bring 4 direct care justice staff with me in hopes they would discover the value of relationship building and therapeutic play. As we were all captivated by Thom Garfat's keynote speech

and his enticement to make bids to connect, I reached out to Thom to see if he walked the talk. Needless to say that he did and I am forever grateful for the friendship that has since developed. At a time when I very much needed to grow as a professional, I found a mentor.

With adventures of personal, professional, and program growth, I must say it is easy to get exhausted. No worries now though – I have discovered I can easily rejuvenate by finding a Clan Gathering to attend. This realization came last year in Scotland sitting with colleagues from Canada, South Africa, and Australia over dinner at Loch Lomond. There was a candelabra in the middle of our table and the wax was creatively dripping in every which direction. We began to notice that as it melted, the wax remained connected drop by drop never plummeting to the table while at the same time every bead took a different path. Then suddenly the words from our field came flowing from everyone's heart. It was like a symphony and for me an epiphany – Wow, these are my people – we are one! It was such a reprieve from my everyday defending of the profession.

Just six months later, I ran into a glitch. I was heading to the 10th International and 17th National CYC Conference but as I had received my funding only a month prior to the conference I was met with a full hotel when I tried to reserve my room. I reached out in a post to my colleagues to see if anyone was willing to share their lifestace for that week. Not even a minute later, one of my peeps from the candelabra experience, Heather Modlin, offered to have me bunk with her



for the week. Coincidental I thought, as at the time I was selecting readings for inclusion in my integrative seminar course and I had just finished reading Heather's 2004 CYC-Online article titled Making Connections whereby she stated:

I have called on so many amazing individuals, for so many different things, that I don't think I will ever be able to adequately repay them all. In turn, I am regularly called on by others and I do what I can to continue the chain of generosity. That's the way it works in this field — we all give freely of ourselves — our time, knowledge, and expertise — to help each other. You can be a part of this community, too. Just get involved.

And so in Canmore, I closely watched this woman of her word, following behind in her footsteps consuming the energy and enthusiasm she exuded all the while picking up courage to put myself out there more and more. I figure the best way to thank Heather for giving me that final push that I so very much needed is to share the same kindness she showed me. Two of my new faculty will mark the world congress as their first venture into the conference circuit and I will be sure to be there for them as Heather was for me.

I am invigorated in my continued quest for sharing and building connection as well as the potentials for knowledge exchange with others! Recently a new bond has emerged with Leon Fulcher while examining how to measure *Outcomes that Matter* and demonstrate the good work being done by the staff at my justice agency. In

my conversations with Leon though I discovered something much deeper. I finally realized why I am hooked on conferences — it's all about the Te Whare Tapa Wha. The Te Whare Tapa Wha is an ancient meeting and gathering ground offering consistency of a place to return, be welcomed and maintain your well-being. This is exactly how I have come to perceive CYC specific workshops, gatherings, working groups and conferences — my home, our home.

Finally a sense of professional belonging! I can't wait to come home to the WORLD and see those of you I've grown to know and get to know those of you I haven't yet met! See you in Newfoundland!



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One Particular Harbour

I was recently attempting to find something especially new and inspirational to include in upcoming training this Spring for our foster parents when “it” struck me.

I had nothing!

My first response to this phenomenon was ... “Writer’s Block”.

Actually my *first* response was Single Malt Scotch but I digress.

Then, my ever-loving and supportive wife, Darlene, pointed out a small flaw in my epiphany (while subtly hiding the Glenlivet): “In order to get “Writer’s Block”, Honey, don’t you first have to be ... well ... a writer.”

Note to self ... “Quickly, access usual sarcastic jab or cutting, witty retort!”

Again ... nothing.

Follow up note to self ... “Check DSM for etiology and criteria for ‘Thinker’s Block’”.

I then decided that it would be a good idea to stop, take a break (from what, I wasn’t sure) and “clear my mind” which, fortunately, or, perhaps, unfortunately, depending on one’s perspective, didn’t take very long at all. It was like a bald guy getting a haircut.

During these few seconds of silence, a voice spoke to me from the heavens ...

... What would Jimmy Buffett do? ...

It took just a moment to realize that the “heavens” was the radio playing softly from the credenza.

Could it be that simple?

Not my usual source of inspiration in these circumstances.

Usually, it was ... What would Jack Phelan say ... Dennis McDermott ... Dr. Paul Steinhauer ... Doctor Thom ... Heather Modlin ... Doctor Carol ... Doctor Kiaras ... Dr Leon Fulcher ...

Then again how many CD’s have THEY sold?

Although I did hear that Mike Burns once opened for the *Grateful Dead*.

So, being a man of faith, I decided not to consult my usual library of books but to look to another source of knowledge ... music.

And there “it” was ... in one of my old Jimmy Buffett albums (yes, Virginia, there was a record player).

One Particular Harbour

Isn’t that what we want to be to the youth and families we work with?

***But there’s one particular harbour
Sheltered from the wind
Where the Children play
On the shores each day
And all are safe within.***

What do storm-battered sailors look for in **One Particular Harbour**?

Well, first, naturally, is a place of safety, a sanctuary from the gale force winds, bat-



tering, relentless waves and rain, hidden hull-ripping reefs, and pirates at sea!

A place that is accessible even when their boat is broken and difficult to steer.

A place to repair and heal from the aftermath of their travels.

A place to relax, rest and revitalize.

A place to replenish and restock their spent pantries and galleys for the next phase of their journey.

A place to reconnect, revel, and ally with others in the harbour and share each others' experiences, knowledge, joys and travels — or to rest and reflect in solitude.

Do our youth or families deserve any less?

A most mysterious calling harbour So far and yet so near ...

What do we need to do to be perceived as being

One Particular Harbour?

Well, first, naturally, we need to be ... particular.

We need to be **fiercely** particular about who we give access to in our harbour. We want those who come to be safe from those who prey on their weaknesses, misfortune, or vulnerability.

Yet we also need to balance that by being accommodating, non-judgemental, and accepting of those truly seeking shelter.

A **Particular** harbour needs to have rules or expectations otherwise, it is not a place of sanctuary.

A **Particular** harbour needs to be able to meet the needs of many.

It must possess the **Particular** ability to assist in making repairs to various craft and heal various wounds. Therefore, the Harbour must have access to, employ and utilize current knowledge and technique.

It must possess the **Particular** ability be able to console the seemingly “inconsolable” who have lost so much in the voyage and assist in helping to develop the strengths and competencies to go back out and face the inevitable storm again.

***I know I don't get there often enough
But God knows I surely try
It's a magic kind of medicine
That no doctor can prescribe.***

We have an **obligation** to try to get there often enough.

We have an obligation to be that ***One Particular Harbour.***

Don't we?

Jimmy Buffett ...

Who knew!

What else has he got ...

... it's Five O'clock somewhere ...

Darlene ... I love you ... Where's the Glenlivet?

— **Andy Leggett**



Ingredients to remind you ...

Every year (for the past 10 years) I have the privilege of teaching Child and Youth Worker students. Although I am in the role of 'Professor' they always teach me so much – about themselves, about myself, and about the field. And every year I am inspired by them. I hope they leave my classes feeling a little better equipped to wear the many hats each may need as a Child and Youth Worker and inspired to make a difference. So, in my true Child and Youth Worker fashion, I walked around my house late one night after everyone else was asleep, collecting objects so that I had enough for 85 people, in hopes of creating something that would encourage and renew my students' motivation on more challenging days.

I stalked my pantry, ravished my crafts supplies and cleaned out my desk. I then sat down to create a take-away for each of the students, a bag filled with random goodies with specific meanings. This concept is not new and has been used by many. My twist on this recipe consisted of labelling each object and connecting it to one of the lessons discussed in class with this group of students. As I prepared my recipe I giggled and groaned to myself at the corniness of some of the statements. Then in class facilitation I had the students package their own ingredients as an activity. Once they had completed the process I read out the meanings of each of the

items in their bag, and gave them a printed copy of the recipe. I shared with them my process in coming up with the meanings and challenged them as they move forward to look at objects with an infinite number of possibilities – to look and see through a Child and Youth Worker lens. I encouraged them to share the recipe with colleagues and coworkers and to modify it as needed to for their work situation.

The students appeared to enjoy this activity. And one in particular has contacted me to let me know she has shared it with a group at the Children's Aid Society and reused it in a modified version within her role in the Children's Aid Society Foundation – presenting it to the audience with the goodies packaged in cracker form (how creative is that modification!) I am grateful my inspiration from teaching has created a ripple effect. A good reminder that you never know far your actions and words may reach.

Andie Fournier



Influences to remind you ...

- A Ziploc bag to remind you that every child is worth protecting
- A paperclip to remind you that attachments will happen – it is important to set and keep boundaries
- A flower seed to remind you that the words and kindnesses you show today can bloom into a flower tomorrow without you ever knowing
- A ticket to remind to plan and intervene with intent – once submitted you are in for the draw
- A rock to remind you that you are often one of the only stable people in a child's life and to honour the responsibility attached to this
- A crayon to remind you to be creative - your imagination is one of your best tools
- A jewel to remind you to look for the sparkle among the rough – sometimes it is just buried a little deep
- A sticker to remind you to reward and praise – baby steps are huge achievements
- A string so you always remember to put the child first
- A candy to remind you to have fun with children
- A toothpick to remind you to pick your battles
- A QTIP to remind you to *Quit Taking It Personally*
- An elastic band to remind you to be flexible
- A fish to remind you that if you never risk getting into deep water you will never learn how to swim
- A tissue to remind you that you are human, and being touched and affected by a client's life is natural, it's important to have your own support systems in place
- A piece of photo paper to remind you that every moment can be a cherished memory – make it count!

From me to you.

Child and Youth Work Intervention 2012



Making Bags: Holding Hope

A story about the CYC World Conference bags

What do a group of women in Rusthof, a community about forty kilometres outside of Cape Town, South Africa, have in common with an International Child and Youth Care Conference being held in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada? When considering the question, and taking into account only the physical environment, one has to conclude that they are very different. St. John's is picturesque, idyllic, affluent, clean, and safe. At worst Newfoundland dwellers have to contend with extreme weather conditions, like blizzards and snow storms.

The pictures alongside speak volumes. The Rusthof community is bleak and depressing. The poor living conditions are hard to ignore. Where Newfoundland is a beautiful environment (from all accounts) in which to host an international conference, Rusthof is a venue most conference organisers would avoid.

The physical conditions as contrasted above are very different, but it is the human conditions that have greater effect on the inhabitants and visitors to the



Rusthof community. The social problems are numerous – poverty, violence, gangsterism, teenage pregnancy, school drop-outs, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, etc., In South Africa we read about these problems every day and encounter the victims/survivors first hand.

Girls and Boys Town South Africa’s vision is “Youth, families and communities; South Africa’s strength and future” – and the teams work tirelessly with youth and families living in Rusthof and many other similar communities. The Girls and Boys Town Family Services vision is “Strengthen the Family, Strengthen the Child” and our

work is focused on strengthening families by helping families learn the skills they need to solve problems, to survive crises, and to maintain a stable, safe home environment for children. In our daily work with families we recognise that families face unique challenges and have unique strengths and it is our belief that every family is capable of success.

The bag making initiative evolved from our work with one individual who had been screened and recruited as a transitional parent for a young man moving from a Girls and Boys Town residential centre into the community. A family ser-

The Bags in the making



VICES worker supported and strengthened Jane*, the host parent. Jane is a stable, competent, skilled individual who was willing to take the young person into her home to support, nurture and guide him into independence. The Girls and Boys Town Family Worker recognised her strengths: she is community centred, aware of the challenges faced by people in the community where she lives and has always been involved with community organisations and programmes that aim to empower women. She has shared her skills with other women in her community, teaching them to use a sewing machine, make basic garments/items, cut patterns and to make alterations.

The women were able to use the skills to create an income or to supplement the meagre incomes they had - some were subsisting on Child Support Grants (R290.00) per month. When Lee Loynes, CEO of Girls and Boys Town, first mentioned that the CYC World Conference organisers needed bags to be made, Family Worker Ann Jacobs immediately identified Jane as someone who could take on this project. And so it was that fate, luck, chance and providence conspired to get this project going.

The connection was made between two seemingly disparate groups. We have heard that the conference organisers are delighted to give the opportunity to the women from Rusthof: it may seem like a gesture of goodwill and it is, but it is so much more than that. It is an opportunity for the women to use their existing skills, to earn an income by producing the bags and it may possibly create opportunities into the future. The women have made

great strides – they are completing reparations for a local hotel and have a flow of regulars whose garments they alter or fix.

Reflecting on the project with the ladies as we near completion, they are happy that they were given the opportunity. They expressed that they were a little frustrated initially, when the “specifications” kept changing. It was also difficult to deal with a “middle-man” rather than the “client” directly. But they have learnt from this experience. They say they will make sure of exactly what the “client” wants before they take on a job in the future.

The ladies hope that as you carry your conference bag with you, during and after the conference, that you remember the makers in Rusthof, Cape Town, for whom the bag carries the Hope of a better life. The women will be linked to a Women’s Empowerment group in the next few weeks, they want to increase their skills and take on more projects like this into the future.

(*Name has been changed).



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Post Card from Leon Fulcher



needed a break after 1500 school trips!

As zoos go, Denver has done a great job of balancing the needs of the animals with managing the public – whose at times behaviour at times belonged in a ‘zoo’. There were plenty of opportunities for ‘people watching’ along with viewing the animals! An early observation was the number of very young children brought by parents, mostly mothers, and grandparents. Limited attention spans on a hot day meant that most of ‘the youngest showed little interest in the animals. They were attracted by the souvenir ‘tat’ with flashing lights, junk food or popcorn offered at stalls cleverly located between dis lays.

Postcard from the Denver Zoo

June, 2013

Hi everyone. On the way to the CYC World Conference, we stopped off in Colorado for a visit with family and one of the highlights was a trip to Denver Zoo with our grandchildren. This came at the end of the school year which meant the place was swarming with kids of all ages, most on end-of-year school outings. The Ranger said she



Storks Watching Kids



Zoo planners seemed to appreciate this dynamic with very young children so had carefully establish clever play areas near to, but away from the animal compounds. These were crawling with young children who had been smothered in sun cream and hats to protect them from sun-burn. Parents kept dragging their kids away from the play areas to 'go see the animals'.



Kid watching

The seal and sea lion 'show' offered children and adults a good opportunity to compare differences between these two species of Pinnipeds, or wing-footed sea mammals. A seal and sea lion had been trained to slither, walk and swim from one end of the display area to the other, offering opportunities to view these animals in a way that few might see in the wild. Well

before the show ended, however, most of the young children were ready to move on.



Waiting for the Elephant Show

The next scheduled event was the elephant show to which the masses surged. Before long, Groucho the bull elephant rescued from a 'wildlife park' somewhere came walking towards the seating area. Here in an extensive compound sponsored by Toyota, Groucho has begun to transform from the overweight Proboscides that he was, with tusks that prevented him from eating properly. He has transformed into a beast with improving health having daily opportunities to walk the length of 3 football fields and swim or soak in a large water compound. Groucho kept everyone engaged, more than other animals.





Groucho the Rescued Elephant



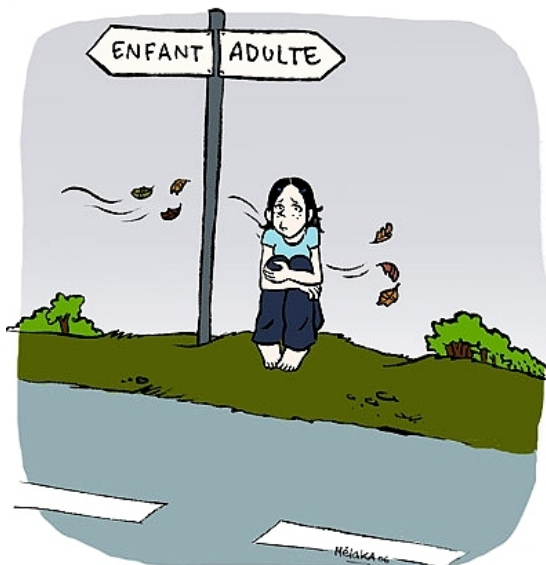
Don't Feed the Animals – Canadian Geese on the Prowl



Denver Zoo has strategically posted signs everywhere reading 'No Smoking' and 'Don't Feed the Animals', especially the Canadian Geese prowling everywhere. In grassy picnic areas, young adults clustered in talking groups while their kids chased the geese. Other young parents offered up bags of popcorn so their kids could 'feed the geese' and geese waddled about snatching sandwiches. Boundaries were further challenged by parents smoking cigarettes when they thought nobody was watching, role modelling how adults teach their kids early on it's ok to ignore rules, just don't get caught!



EndNotes



Adolescence ...

Change is for the better,
they tell me,
But the *doing* of change,
the process,
Can be cold and scary,
and lonely.

The world is as many times
new as there are children in our
lives.

— Robert Brault

You can learn many things
from children. How much pa-
tience you have, for instance.

—Franklin P. Jones



“In the real world, there is
no such thing as algebra.”

Children are contemptuous, haughty,
irritable, envious, sneaky, selfish, lazy,
flighty, timid, liars and hypocrites, quick to
laugh and cry, extreme in expressing joy
and sorrow, especially about trifles, they'll
do anything to avoid pain but they enjoy
inflicting it: little men already. ~Jean de
La Bruyère, Les Caractères, 1688



“Lengthy discussions are not appropriate
for belligerent groups.”



The prime purpose of being four is to enjoy being four — of secondary importance is to prepare for being five.

— Jim Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, 1985

Children are unpredictable. You never know what inconsistency they're going to catch you in next.

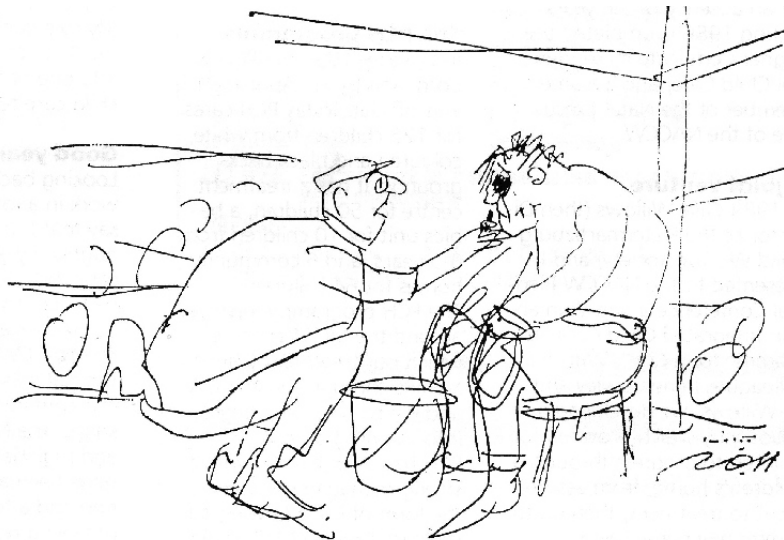
— Franklin P. Jones

All our lives long, every day and every hour we are engaged in the process of accommodating our changed and unchanged selves to changed and unchanged surroundings; living, in fact, is nothing less than this process of accommodation; when we fail in it a little we are stupid, when we fail flagrantly we are mad, when we suspend it temporarily we sleep, when we give up the attempt altogether we die.

— Samuel Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*



“The children must get plenty of love and affection whether they deserve it or not: they must be assured of the basic quota of happy, recreational experiences whether they seem to have it coming or not. In short, love and affection, as well as the granting of gratifying life situations, cannot be made the bargaining tools of educational or even therapeutic motivation, but must be kept tax-free as minimal parts of the youngsters’ diet, irrespective of the problems of deservedness” — Fritz Redl (1952).



“Try ignoring him.”





Connecting at the Crossroads

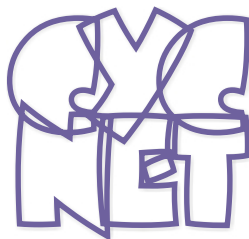
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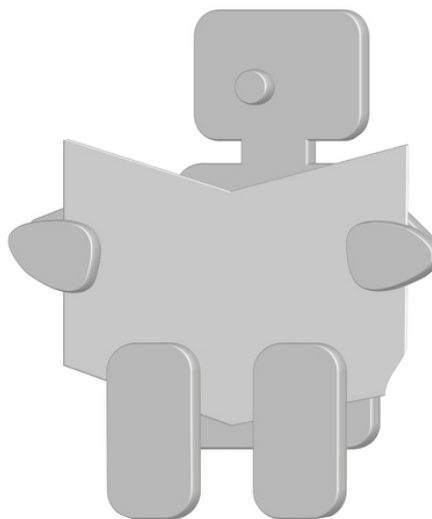
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