CYC-Online

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

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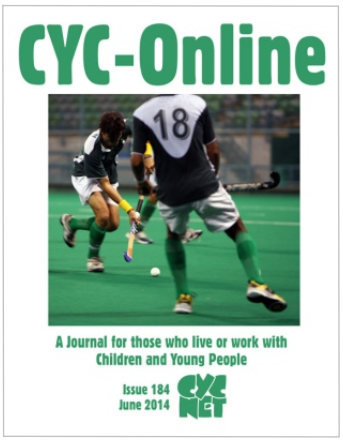

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Storms

There is a storm coming – the weather network predicted it – but more importantly, I can see the dark, drawing clouds on the horizon headed this way, from what I can tell of the wind patterns and the air has that pre-storm smell that one notices on some basic level – and so, hey, time to get ready – never mind what I have to do – we all have storms coming, we can usually sense them coming and know what we need to do in our own corner of the world.

I am reminded of a time when Kelly Shaw and I were working together in Nova Scotia. There was a girl in our program who had these unexplainable (then) outbursts of anger which she randomly directed at anyone close to her. She was hard to live with in residential care, so one can only imagine what it was like to live with her at home.

We were working on narratives back then, looking for exceptions, ways to externalize and exercise control over one's experiences. The idea was that if 'we' (young person and CYC) could find a way to externalize a young person's struggle, experience of pain, whatever, then we could work together to take control over the experience and help the young person to find ways – however bizarre they might seem to an outsider – to be in control of their own lives and experiences .

I know, I know – it may not sound like child and youth care as you know it – but it is a way of taking charge over your daily life – controlling your daily life experiences for your benefit – experiencing and living your life differently - and that, regardless of how it is framed, is CYC in action.

Don't get me wrong – we had structure, programming, and all the other

things associated with a good residential CYC program – and in the context – yes, context - of such an environment we sought constantly to find ways for young people to be more in charge of their lives, to be, in essence, the masters of their own life. Relational Child and Youth Care creates the context, and the general approach to *being with* and intervening, and then one uses whatever seems right and helpful.

Kelly and the young woman decided – together, and that is important – to define her unpredictable outbursts of anger as 'storms' (and you wondered why I began this editorial with a commentary on storms, eh?) They identified the characteristics of the storms, their impact and process and then Kelly encouraged the young woman to let her know when a 'storm' was coming, so that, together, they could prepare to deal with it.

So, one day, I walk in to the program and there are the young woman and Kelly, going around the building closing, and locking, all the windows. Not being as aware as I should have been, I ask them what they are doing. "There is a storm coming", Kelly said, "and we are just getting ready for it." I was confused for a minute, because it was a nice spring day, but then I remembered the metaphor – and just admired how they were 'living the externalization'.

And so, eventually, when they were ready, the storm came (it had waited for them to be ready) internally to the young woman, not outside in the natural environment – but because they had prepared, and the young woman was in control, her storm passed - with anguish, anxiety and fear – but with no damage to her or her relationships with others. As the storm raged, Kelly and the young woman processed her experience, found ways for her to be in control of it, and, ultimately, found ways for her, at that moment, to find a few little ways to be in charge of her own life. Talk about 'making a moment meaningful'!

So, I look out my window and see that the storm is still coming – but one cannot control Mother Nature, eh? Only the nature of our experiences – with the help of a skilled child and youth care worker.

Thom

"I suppose this means my train will be late again today!"

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Educating the Masses

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Much of our effort over the past decades has been on refining the way in which we educate aspiring child and youth care practitioners. There have been many useful debates on the best way of organizing child and youth care diploma and degree programs, and on preparing young practitioners to carry the values of our profession into the fields of practice. This has, of course, been a good approach to ensuring a gradual increase in the quality (and perhaps even effective- ness) of the work we do. Lately, however, I have been thinking about the places and the relationships that young people facing adversity encounter in their lives, and in particular before they become subsumed in the various formal service systems.

In the much criticized lingo of the day, we often refer to

these young people as being 'at risk', even when it is not always entirely clear what precisely they are at risk of. Nevertheless, there clearly are many young people everywhere who are facing various kinds of adversities for various reasons but who do not ultimately come into contact with child protection, youth justice or residential care. So who do they come into contact with?

An obvious professional group that invariably comes across these young people are teachers. Other equally important but not necessarily professionalized groups include sports coaches, camp counselors, recreational leaders, and even private individuals, moms and dads, who regularly convene the friends of their own sons and daughters and drive them to various activities in their mini vans. In fact, it is probably no exaggeration to state that young people facing adversity spend most of their time in the presence of adults who could have a role in providing meaningful experiences that might mitigate the adversity faced. This, then, raises the question as to whether or not the time has come to deliver a child and youth care education module to the masses.

I know this sounds a little odd, but consider some of the already existing examples. First Aid is widely available to the masses and many individuals and professional groups strongly value the completion of First Aid training modules. Driver's training is not only available but in fact required in most places around the world. In a more professional context, teachers are already presented with learning modules on mental health, suicide prevention, and other themes in order to be better prepared for the range of issues they might encounter on the job. So why not develop and offer a child and youth care module for the masses, so that more of the adults in the lives of young people facing adversities are prepared to contribute something to the mitigation of the impact of such adversities.

One question that inevitably will loom large is whether or not it is possible to provide a useful child and youth care module in just one or two days. How can we possibly capture that many nuances of what we do in such a short time? Then again, First Aid training captures the basics of medicine, itself not a simple profession, in a day or two, and people who complete First Aid training seem to enjoy it and find it useful, even if heart surgery is not covered in that training (but keeping the heart pumping is covered). I therefore think that it is quite possible to teach relational practice, concepts of self, engagement and life space, as well as aspects of developmental, ecological and systems theory, in a very short time. I would imagine that a soccer coach equipped with some of this knowledge could play an important role in the well-being of young people facing adversities. And teachers not burdened with the sudden expectation of having to diagnose young people's mental health challenges might actually be able to connect to young people in a way that is

meaningful to those young people.

So, in the spirit of entrepreneurial innovation in child and youth care practice, this is, I think, the next step for our field. Aside from continuing the discussions about improving formal education and training of aspiring child and youth care practitioners, we should develop a child and youth care education module, or Child and Youth Care First Aid, for the masses. The process of doing so is itself a useful one, because it will force us to connect to the many contexts where young people's lives unfold, but that we often ignore just because we are so focused on the formal settings of the child and youth serving systems. I am conscious, for example, that in my home province, Ontario, there are no formal relationships between the professional association of child and youth care, and the Ontario Soccer Association, even though the latter has a membership of 700,000 young people and about 30,000 coaches! Add to that minor hockey, baseball and football (and many other sports), and in no time at all child and youth care values and core practices could proliferate across the societal spectrum far more quickly and effectively then they do with our current focus on aspiring practitioners.

Fundamentally, it seems to me that the provision of training on very specific topics, such as suicide, for example, is valuable but not enough. Indeed, if prevention and early intervention continue to be held in high regard, then a Child and Youth Care First Aid certification program for the masses is just what we need. Making it happen requires little more than engaging the right people in the right places, navigating the systems of lifespaces where young people's lives unfold, and starting the conversation with the masses in a relational way. Who better to do that than us?

"Let me say, at the risk of sounding ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love" – Che

The gravitational pull of common sense and personal reference

Jack Phelan

There is an enormous gap between what is taught about CYC practice in colleges, or written in books and journals, and the actual reality of daily CYC life. Youth are faced with programs that demand constant behavioral adherence to expectations that are really far removed from what they would choose to do, or even believe is useful to do. Families are expected to radically shift parenting behaviors simply because there will be external interventions and controls imposed.

In spite of a growing, fairly sophisticated body of CYC knowledge, little has changed from the practices common 30 years ago in CYC agencies. Behavior change is the main focus, with rewards and punishments as the methodology. Staff are poorly motivated to shift from external control strategies to creating youth and family led directions for change agendas.

Newly graduated CYC professionals know CYC theory and have been trained to use relational and developmental approaches, yet they inexorably succumb to the gravitational pull of common sense. The focus on everyday order and adult comfort manage to trump any attempts to let things get a little messy, which might create some learning over a longer period of time. The focus on good order is well-meaning, but theoretically misguided. However, when the first order of business is keeping the staff safe and happy, then common sense, a personalized point of reference becomes the way to see correctness and appropriate behavior. Terms like "logical consequences" creep into the everyday explanation for why things occur, which unfortunately are only logical from the point of view of the adults who judge every event from how it makes them feel.

When a program struggles with youths' and families' attitudes and behaviors because they make the administrator, or the staff, or referral agents uncomfortable, the issue gets resolved by the common sense method of seeing the problematic behavior as not logical or appropriate, which really

means that it is not appealing to the powerful adults.

When personal adult beliefs or values are challenged, the common sense answer (based on these same personal beliefs) is that the other person is wrong. There is little effort expended trying to uncover the strengths and resiliencies embedded in the problematic behavior. The focus of too many treatment attempts is to create compliant behavior, which is really just useful for the adults, and actually will only last as long as the external control imposed still exists.

When we let go of our personal logic and attempt to understand what is happening from a relational or empathic point of view, real opportunities for connection and learning occur. However, when the objections of others who appeal to common sense arguments loudly intervene, it creates the pull back to an unprofessional, easily adopted belief system that keeps us stuck in simplistic approaches.

"Remember, you cannot be both young and wise. Young people who pretend to be wise to the ways of the world are mostly just cynics. Cynicism masquerades as wisdom, but it is the farthest thing from it. Because cynics don't learn anything. Because cynicism is a self-imposed blindness, a rejection of the world because we are afraid it will hurt us or disappoint us. Cynics always say no. But saying "yes" begins things. Saying "yes" is how things grow. Saying "yes" leads to knowledge. "Yes" is for young people. So for as long as you have the strength to, say "yes'."

— **Stephen Colbert**

"All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.

From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king."

— **J.R.R. Tolkien**

"The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."

— **William Shakespeare**

THE CEDRICK METHOD

Part Two: Sussing Out the (Hidden) Agenda

Cedrick of Toxteth

*This is the second segment of the author's new training manual for rotten kids with rotten parents. Following up on his recent book "**The Best Stuff Ever Written About Rotten Kids**", this manual is being made available in serial form to CYC practitioners through CYC-Online. Please let the author know if you find this relevant to your work and whether you think he should continue to offer this preview. He can be reached through his editor, fewster@shaw.ca*

Do you sometimes wonder where your parents are coming from, why they say what they say and why the do what they do? Are you at a loss to understand why they demand things your buddy's folks don't give a toss about? And, do you keep trying to make them happy, when you really want to tell them to sod off and bother someone else?

If so, you'll be like most kids and, like most kids, you'll be a "patsy". From the moment you popped out into the world you'll have learned how to follow simple directions, take in whatever you're told and dedicate the rest of your life to becoming whatever Mommy and Daddy had in mind. The trouble is you never *really* know what lurks in their devious minds so you have to learn by trial and error, ground into submission by their arbitrary rewards and punishments. When they're not around, there's a good chance your infantile imagination will conjure up images of a happy Mommy, angry Daddy, or vice-versa. Over time, these creepy phantoms become blended into something we call conscience and then you're stuck for life.

On the other hand, you might be like my old chum Albert Snartch who never actually developed a conscience. He now works as a corporate lawyer and, to make up for his learning deficit, he keeps happy, sad and angry pictures of his deceased parents in his desk draw. Before leaving work, he chooses the two pictures that best reflect his performance that day and places them next to the photograph of his beautiful wife Molly and their six smiling kids. Not having a conscience, this stupid little ritual helps to control his nasty urges and naughty thoughts, and reminds him to get back on the straight and narrow.

According to his Shrink, Albert became developmentally arrested around the age of nine, but I don't buy all that psychological bullshit. For my money, his problem can be traced back to the time his old man, a high court judge, told him to forget about becoming a ventriloquist and start preparing for law school. At that point my old pal lost the will to live. He even asked God to take him back but Judge Snartch wasn't about to let the matter be decided in a lower court. So he called Albert into his chambers and placed him on probation - for life.

What Albert didn't realize was that Papa had a plan for his son's life even before the old goat had it off with the future Mrs. Snartch at the rowing club picnic. An ambitious young attorney, he became fixated with the idea that a male offspring would continue to entrench the name of Snarch in legal circles long after his own portrait had taken up its frightful place in the hallowed halls of justice. If you think it was unfair for him to plan another soul's life before any sperm had poked it's snotty little nose into the old egg carton, I would agree with you. But there was one redeeming aspect of this ill-conceived plan - it was clear and unshakable from the get-go. At no point was Albert given any indication he would be enrolled in the Havard School of Ventriloquism. In other words, our Albert knew exactly what he was up against and finally threw in the towel.

You have to understand that all parents have agendas for their offspring, even if they never wanted their kids in the first place. All too often, the details of these schemes are wrapped up in seductive little packages like, "I just want you to be happy" or, "We want you to be the very best you can be." Then there's the most sinister of all, "I want you to have all the advantages and opportunities I never had." If you settle for this candy-coated crap, you're destined to spend the rest of your days trying to make it all happen. On this topic, the Cedrick Method is loud and clear. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE. All you'll do is turn yourself into a life-long loser, a pathetic patsy for other life-long losers.

Take Rosie Renshaw, for example. She bought into a package labelled, "Mommy just wants you to be part of a loving family." What Mommy didn't say is that she and Daddy were about to call it quits and she thought a baby might bring them back together. So she stopped taking her birth control pills without letting Daddy know he wasn't shooting blanks anymore. Once he realized he was stuck, Daddy finally accepted his part in the predicament and settled into his fantasy that a son might end up playing in NHL.

Poor unsuspecting little Rosie had no idea what she was in for. Giving Mommy all the love she wasn't getting from her husband while doing her best to keep Daddy in the picture was more than any little girl could handle. When I first met Rosie, she was twelve years old and still trying to get into the school hockey team. She was already a worn out worry-wart who had no idea who she was or where her life was leading. Fortunately, she came to one of my "Managing Rotten Parents" groups and, with my help and guidance, finally began to see the plot that was driving her nuts. Little Rosie is now big Rosalind and God help anyone who tries to screw her around now.

If the stories of Albert and Rosie seem obvious and extreme, don't be lulled into believing you're off the hook. As sure as God made little maggots, your folks have some devious plan for you, and it's likely to be more subtle and disguised than the ones you just read about. In many cases, it's so disguised they don't even know about it themselves. But, if you have any hope of taking charge of your own life someday, you'll have to flesh it out one way or another. If you don't know what you're up against you'll just keep running around in ever-decreasing circles until you finally disappear up your own bottom in a puff of smoke - not a very pleasant prospect.

To set out on the road to independence you must begin by getting rid of all that 'patsy' bullshit. But whatever you do, don't trade it in for the role of a rebel. Remember, kids who automatically oppose their parents are just as stuck in the web of demands and deceptions as those who buy into the program or spend their valuable time plotting revenge. Try thinking of yourself as a researcher, carefully sifting through all the available information and gently prodding and probing to fill in the missing pieces - real researchers call this "participant observation". Make this shift gradually and your parents will come to realize you're actually interested in what they say and do. This will take the pressure off on all sides. Keep in mind that nobody learns anything from a snot-fight and you're almost bound to end up as the loser anyway.

I can't give you a step-by-step prescription for setting up your research project. Every web is different and there are many things to consider. For example, only you know whether you're swimming in a cess pool or stumbling around in a minefield; only you can predict whether your enquiry will be treated as genuine curiosity or yet another threat to the authority of the webmasters; and only you can tell if your folks are likely to come out and tell it as it is. What I can offer are the following pointers for your consideration:

1. Begin by listening carefully to what they're saying when they're not talking directly to you, or about you. Avoid asking questions or making comments at this stage. Your task is to get a sense of what's going on in

their minds when they're not pulling the parenting trip. Remind yourself that these are not your parents, they're your subjects.

2. Don't go snooping. If you're caught hiding in the broom closet, or slipping a recorder under their bed, you're dead in the water. Make use of natural opportunities until they get used to you lurking around. Once you've decided on location, don't just sit there gawking at them like a half-baked idiot. Do something that suggests your attention is elsewhere, like reading Harry Potter or The Financial Times. Playing with your I Pod is a great option because you can type what you're hearing without creating any suspicion. But don't get too carried away with fancy techniques. My ex-student J. B. Pinkerton came up with the brilliant idea of wearing a pair of perforated head-phones and nodding in time to non-existent music. After only three sessions he figured he had enough information to begin formulating his counter offensive. Unfortunately, he left his strategic plan in his school locker on the day the cops came rooting around for naughty magazines and shotguns. So the Cops called the Principal, the Principal called the counsellor, the counsellor called the parents and the parents called the Shrinks. As a devoted patient of the Good Doctor Pickersgill, J.B. still nods to non-existent music - he just doesn't need the fake headphones anymore.

3. After every observation session, go to your journal and write up what you've seen and heard. Make a note of what you think is important, along with anything that requires further investigation. This will help you draw up some questions for clarification and further investigation. Word your questions carefully and omit any hint of judgement. For example, beginning with "So why did you retards decide to ...?" isn't going to do the trick. Attitude is the key to gaining trust and collaboration, so practice your delivery ahead of time. Even reasonable questions like "When did you first fall in love?" or "How did you feel when you knew you were pregnant?" can backfire if delivered with a smirk, or an expression that suggests you're about to throw-up. I always recommend a mirror for training purposes.

4. Once you've gained the trust of your subjects, you can set up some individual sessions. This is essential because some of the stuff you really need won't have been shared between them. In some cases, they may have even kept it from themselves. But a word of warning - you're not digging for dirty little secrets here. Stay with the program and flesh out only the information that fits your project. If your subjects

get the idea you're walking around with a head full of classified information, you could easily find yourself working as a double-agent and you'll be back to square one. I remember the case of Jennie Braddock who got sucked into hanging around outside Daddy's office building to find out why he was always home late on Thursdays. Caught in the act, she was made to atone for her sins by creating a dossier on Mommy's yoga teacher. It took three months for me to help Jennie disentangle herself from this little cock-up.

5. Always begin with what real researchers call "open ended" questions. The idea is to get the webmasters talking, so you don't want "yes" or "no" answers. On the other hand, you don't want them to just ramble on about insignificant twaddle for hours on end. "How did you first get together,?" is a good open ended question. If the answer starts to meander in all directions, you can always draw it back to your agenda with strategic interventions like, "Tell me more about ..." With dedicated practice, you'll have them spilling the beans in no time.

6. Finally, steer away from any references to their sex life - you just don't want to know.

Even the most 'progressive' parents will come to regret indiscreet revelations and, let's be honest, most kids don't want to lose sleep thinking about their parents banging away in the next room. The fact is that whatever bliss, boredom or bedlam is happening in bed will play itself out at the breakfast table.

Next Time: Development Theory for Rotten Kids.

p.s. Don't forget to let the author know if you have any interest in this stuff. (fewster@shaw.ca)

The Passive Aggressive Conflict Cycle

Signe Whitson

Persons who are passively aggressive can provoke angry responses in another while not overtly appearing to be aggressive themselves. By identifying this pattern, we can avoid mirroring back anger in reaction to this oppositional behavior.

The Passive Aggressive Conflict Cycle® explains how rational, straightforward, assertive adults can momentarily and unexpectedly depart from their typical personas and take on inappropriate, childlike, and unprofessional behaviors (Long, Long, & Whitson, 2008). It describes and predicts the endless, repetitive cycles of conflict that occur when passive aggressive individuals succeed in getting others to act out their anger for them.

Understanding the Passive Aggressive Conflict Cycle (PACC) helps observers to be able to look beyond behavior and better understand what is occurring beneath the surface. Take this real-life example of a seemingly minor conflict between a teacher and child that elicited an apparent major overreaction by the adult:

Teacher: Jessie, can you please wheel the lunch cart out into the hallway?

Jessie: OK.

(Jessie does not move from his seat.)

Teacher: Jessie, will you please wheel the cart out now?

Jessie: Just a second.

(Again, Jessie does not move.)

Teacher: Jessie, that cart needs to go out now so that we can get started with math. I don't want you to miss anything.

Jessie: I will. (Smiling.)

(For the third time, Jessie sits still in his seat.)

Teacher: I see you must be working in slow motion today, Jessie. Let's see if another student can move just a tad bit faster than you. Lisa, will you please wheel the lunch cart into the hall?

Jessie: No. I said I would do it. (Gets up slowly.)

Jessie wheels the lunch cart toward the classroom door, banging it against several desks along the way. He runs the cart over a classmate's foot. Just before reaching the door, he knocks the cart into the teacher's desk, knocking over a vase of fresh flowers. The glass vase shatters all over the floor. The teacher loses control and lashes out verbally at Jessie. The teacher from the classroom next door hurries over when she hears all of the noise.

Teacher: Jessie, you can't even carry out the simplest job in this classroom. Why can't you do anything right? You are going to clean that whole mess up, young man. And you'll do it after school because you are not going to interrupt my math lesson. I know that's what you were trying to do. Are you happy with yourself?

Jessie: (Looks briefly at the teacher from the classroom next door then speaks.) *No, ma'am. It was just an accident. I didn't know you'd be so upset about a kid making a mistake. I'm sorry.*

Teacher: (Caught off guard with Jessie's response and embarrassed at her outburst.) *I'm sorry too, Jessie. I shouldn't have said that. Everyone makes mistakes. Let's all help Jessie clean this up.*

To the observing teacher from next door, Jessie's teacher seems to have overreacted to her student's mistake and engaged in cruel, humiliating behavior. Truth be told, it is any educator's responsibility to maintain emotional control and refrain from responses that belittle students. Still, the Passive Aggressive Conflict Cycle explains how this seemingly minor classroom incident escalated so quickly and is useful in providing educators and other adults with insight into how passive aggressive behaviors can so suddenly provoke relationship-damaging reactions in unsuspecting adults. Without insight into the PACC, adults are doomed to engage in these no-win conflicts time and again.

The following is a breakdown of the five stages of the PACC, with reference to how it played out between Jessie and his classroom teacher.

Stage 1: The Self-Concept & Irrational Beliefs of the Passive Aggressive Person

Stage I represents a passive aggressive person's developmental life history. Based on specific formative events during his early life, Jessie has developed the belief that the direct expression of anger is dangerous and needs to be avoided.

His psychological solution to this prob-

lem is to conceal his anger behind a facade of infuriating passive aggressive behaviors, as we will explore further in Stage 4.

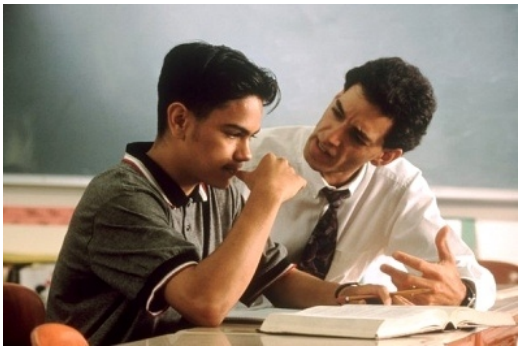
Jessie is proud of his ability to control anger and to remain rational and calm during conflict situations. He feels smart and clever about his ability to devise various ways to get back at others indirectly and without their knowledge. This awareness gives the person an emotional high and a feeling of power and pleasure at manipulating others so easily.

Stage 2: The Stressful Incident

When a passive aggressive person is asked or told to do a specific task, the request often activates irrational beliefs, based on early life experiences:

- *I have to do everything in this classroom.*
- *That teacher is always picking on me.*
- *She is singling me out. I'll get back at her and she'll never even see it coming.*

Indeed, for people like Iessie, ordinary, everyday requests from authority figures often trigger angry responses based on such irrational beliefs. Instead of expressing these angry thoughts aloud, however, the passive aggressive person reserves his feelings for the moment. He pushes them below the surface because he is guided by the powerful set of irrational beliefs that anger is unacceptable.



Stage 3: The Passive Aggressive Person's Feelings

The passive aggressive person has learned over the years to defend against his angry feelings by denying them and projecting them onto others. Because the normal feelings of anger are unacceptable to him, they are masked and expressed in passive aggressive behaviors.

Stage 4: The Passive Aggressive Person's Behavior

The behavior of most passive aggressive individuals is both purposeful and intentional. What is more, the passive aggressive person derives genuine pleasure out of frustrating others to get someone else to act out his or her anger. A variety of behaviors are designed to "get back at" or infuriate others, including:

- Denying feelings of anger
- Withdrawing and sulking
- Procrastinating
- Carrying out tasks inefficiently or unacceptably
- Exacting hidden revenge

Jessie procrastinated. He verbally complied with his teacher's request ("OK," "Just a second," "I will") but

behaviorally delayed. He eventually wheeled out the cart in a manner that was intentionally unacceptable. All of these purposeful passive aggressive behaviors proved quite successful in eliciting an angry response from his teacher, who had no awareness of the trap she was falling in to.

Stage 5: The Reactions of Others

In a stressful situation, the person who behaves passive aggressively will create feelings of anger in a target. If the target is unaware of this dynamic and acts on the feelings of anger, she will behave in uncharacteristic, relationship-damaging ways.

The passive aggressive person has learned to defend against his angry feelings by denying them and projecting them onto others.

As is quite typical of a PACC, at first Jessie's teacher remained calm, accommodating his procrastination and temporary compliance. By the second and third requests, she was surely beginning to feel more agitated, though she continued her polite, assertive manner. At the fourth request, her irritation is apparent in the form of the sarcasm in her response. For adults, sarcasm is often a red flag that they have begun to be caught up in a conflict cycle and are beginning to mirror a child's behaviors. With knowledge of the PACC, this could have been a good time for the teacher to check her own emotions, think about what was happening beneath the surface, and disengage from the dynamic with Jessie.

Instead, before she even knew it, she had the clamor of banging desks, a student crying out in pain after having his foot run over by a heavy lunch cart, and a vase of flowers shattered all over the floor. She reacted in an instant, in frustration and with anger, her words belittling her student in front of all of his peers.

Jessie, still in perfect control of his emotions, feigns shock. He apologizes to the teacher, using appropriate words while also sending a clear, un-stated message:

- *I don't know why you got so angry. It was just a mistake.*
- *I didn't yell, swear, hit, or break anything. But what you did was scary. I don't like to have someone blow up at me.*
- *I don't deserve to be yelled at in front of my classmates. I think you overreacted to this situation and mistreated me. Don't you believe you owe me an apology?*

The teacher, immediately feeling guilty about the temper tantrum, also feels embarrassed to have been observed in the moment by her colleague. She ends up apologizing profusely. When this happens, Jessie reluctantly accepts the apology, but in the meantime, his deep-rooted beliefs about the danger of anger have been confirmed. The only thing that is truly resolved in this situation is that the destructive interpersonal relationship between Jessie and his teacher will continue.

The majority of teachers, parents, spouses, and co-workers involved in daily interactions with passive aggressive individuals are ultimately beaten down by the relationship. Most end up feeling confused, angry, guilty, and doubtful about the stability of their own mental health. How is it possible for this destructive interpersonal pattern to occur over and over again with reasonable adults? How does it happen that the targeted adults end up accepting the blame and responsibility for this dysfunctional dynamic? The answer is clear and painful: they are unaware of the psychology of passive aggression (Long, Long, & Whitson, 2008). Understanding and insight into the repetitive nature of the Passive Aggressive Conflict Cycle can help adults disengage from destructive conflicts and choose relationship— building responses.

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"He took that kinda hard."

No More Heroes

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I once heard a story about a guru who advised his followers that if they ever encountered someone who offered to help them, they should run as far and fast as possible in the opposite direction. I am reminded of this often when I think about the work we do with young people. Often times, our work is framed as being helpful. We want to be of assistance to those we serve as youth workers and care givers. On the surface this seems kind, generous and laudable, but if we take a closer look, helpfulness may not be the soundest foundation for working with young people or anyone else for that matter.

The problem of helpfulness is both subtle and complex. As an intention and an act, helpfulness influences the way we see the other and ourselves. At its most vulgar, the impetus to help is founded on a view of the other as needing help. That is to say, it begins with the idea that the other is lacking in some way. Further, that we are able to perceive both the nature of the lack and what is required to remedy it. The desire to help the unfortunate, the needy, the poor, and the disenfranchised children of the world is founded on just such an impetus and analysis. The problem with this way of perceiving the other is that it centers the lack in the individual to be served. The child or young person is unfortunate, needy and so on. Their deficit and need are in some way constitutive of who they are as a person.

This would seem logical at one level. Certainly, the young people that we encounter in our work seem to lack any number of things such as housing, food, education, medical care and other basic amenities. In addition, we often assess less tangible needs such as emotional support, stable and nurturing family configurations, moral guidance, developmental opportunities, neurological robustness and in some cases spiritual guidance. When encountering a young person in care of one sort or another, such lack seems glaringly obvious and even painful. We want to remedy the pain, to provide the missing elements of physical, social and emotional support. In

short, we want to help.

How might we make sense of this? Let's start by looking at this from an ethological point of view. Ethology is the study of the capacities of a given organism. In this case, I am going to propose that we take a small liberty and modify the term so that it refers to not just organisms, but also ways of thinking. If we do that, then we can ask, what are the capacities of thinking about helpfulness as a remedy for lack. In other words, what does thinking of the other as in need of help do?

If we pose the question of helpfulness this way, we have to ask two questions, 1) what does it do to the young people in question and 2) what does it do to us as CYC/youth workers? Let's start with the effect on the young person perceived to be in need of help.

As we have noted, if we see the young person as the object of our helpfulness, then it is difficult to avoid seeing the problems they are encountering as arising in personal lack. I would argue that this line of thinking has powerful and unintended effects. First, it immediately distances the young person from us. The lack is theirs not ours. It also isolates and separates the young person from the broader society, in that localizing the lack within the person to be helped can obscure the sets of social relations and political forces that produce the apparent scarcity in the first place. In other words, in basing our help on the idea of the young person as lacking we can lose track of the need to address the system of inequities, oppressive practices and power relations that impinge on the young person in such a way as to obscure their capacity to thrive. In missing the importance of the broader social and economic ecology, we can find ourselves distanced from the young people we encounter, in that we can forget that the same forces that restrict and mute their creative capacities are the same forces we contend within our daily lives. In short to be helpful on the basis of lack interferes in our ability to see what we hold in common as a political project with the potential for the liberation of both parties.

Which leads us to the impact on ourselves as workers and subjects under the rule of global neo-liberal capitalism. To be helpful can often imbue us with a sense of heroism. We can be seduced by the illusory seduction of being the one to rescue the other. As a friend of mine once put it, we want to come riding to the rescue on our white horse but often our armor is rusty and we are facing backwards. The idea of rescuing others psychologically, morally or socio-eco-

nomically has a rather bad history. It has led, among other things, to the culturally genocidal projects such as the residential schools for aboriginal young people in North America and Australia. After all, those were well-intentioned projects to help instruct the other in the ways of the dominant society and save them from themselves. They were heroic projects in the eyes of their promoters and practitioners. In retrospect, of course, they were colonial war crimes designed to erase a people's culture and ways of living. But they were, at the time, thought to be helpful.

This drive to be heroic encompasses within it a subtle desire to obtain a kind of pass or get out of jail free card. When we perceive ourselves to be heroic rescuers, we exempt ourselves from collusion in the power relations that produced the situation from which we intend to rescue the other. In being the good guy (and it always a guy not a gal, even when it is a woman) we are specifically not the bad guy. This is the kind of pernicious thinking that drives the desire to claim exception from involvement in racism, sexism, environmental degradation, and privilege of all sorts. It is a slippage of accountability premised in a kind of Faustian bargain. If I rescue the other or take actions that are helpful in remediating social ills, I get to claim a moral pass and sit in judgment on my less enlightened and far more complicit colleagues, friends and family.

What are lost here are the profoundly productive set of social relations that include both complicity in existing power relations and the effects of those power relations on us in our lived experiences. To acknowledge and be accountable to our daily complicity in both micro and macro social practices allows us to confront those practices in ourselves rather than projecting them onto others. This opens our encounters with others to the possibility of creative struggle as we wrestle with the complex social field that we both produce and that produces us. In this there is the possibility that we are all in this together with mutual accountabilities and common struggles and hardships. This is not to say that this is a level playing field in which we are all equally complicit and all suffer to the same degree. That would be an attempt to bargain for a different kind of exemption. Indeed, each of us is produced as social subjects through a very specific and ever shifting set of cultural and social coordinates. We are all complicit, but in different ways and to different degrees. Our work is to determine in each relationship our degree of complicity in the system that is mutually limiting for ourselves, and the others we encounter.

This determination of accountability cannot be discovered through broad universal categories or homogenized historical accountings. That is to say, the categories that are shaped by the colonial project such as race, gender, class sexuality and so on can provide rough indicators of where our struggle might lie, but they cannot give us the specific coor-

dinates of the terms of engagement in any given set of relations. Indeed, to refer to these broad historical categories can also be problematic in offering certain fields of exemption premised in the common sufferings of a people rather than an examination of the subtle layering of privilege as constituted in the micro-politics of daily life.

However, accountability to the complex and ever shifting web of complicity that forms our lives and relations under capitalism is only the opening to a far more interesting struggle; to find what we hold in common as the capacity to act together. When we give up the constant bargaining to gain moral exemption, abandon heroic projects and cease to frame lack as a personal quality, we engage the possible world of working together to explore and extend our idiosyncratic and unique capacities towards common purpose. We willingly work with the other to expose our micro-complicities, not as a moral project to uncover our social sins, but as a common clearing away of the obstacles to the power of our mutual creativity. Our work becomes a mutually transformative encounter with all others, human, non-human and post-human. Our encounters become actually relational premised in the material struggle to engage our common lived experience as it opens between us, in all its astonishing complexity and richness. No more heroes. Instead, an infinitude of artists, poets and musicians of living relations who are unafraid to encounter and shape the forces and powers that constitute the world we share.

CLOSING THE GAP

Things don't change.

Professor D.W.S. Austin *writes, 48 years ago, in the yearbook of the* British Residential Child Care Association *on crossing the barriers of time, social class and personality into the world of the child as one of the difficulties in the child care worker-child relationship.*

The need to make true two-way identifications is a foundation of positive child care.

I think that the first thing we should remember when we look at a youngster in care is that he represents a disaster. Something has gone wrong, very wrong.

When speaking with people who know nothing of the work, I often get the impression that they regard entry into care as a sort of panacea for all ills, bodily and psychological, that may afflict the youngster. In he walks, dirty, undernourished, defiant, unloved, unwanted, asocial; six months later out he comes, a brand new personality. What these people do not realise is that when a youngster arrives at the point when he has to come into care, has to be severed from his family and from his background, disaster has already struck. Coming into care may be the answer to his problems; on the other hand, it may not. It is healthy that we should realise this. Too often we are ashamed to admit that we are doing nothing for a particular child beyond feeding him and clothing him. It is better to be grateful for what we manage to do for those whom we do help.

Barriers

One of the greatest problems in dealing with these youngsters, whether they be delinquent or not, is crossing the barrier into their world. It must be remembered that a basic reason for their coming into care is economic. It is rare to find a middle-class child in care, not because such children are less delinquent than their working class brothers, nor

because their parents are necessarily any 'better' or love them any more, but simply because they come from a stratum of society which enjoys the support of a permanent and sufficient income, so essential to stable family life, and the lack of which mercilessly exploits any weakness there may be in the family structure.

The atmosphere of all children's homes, be they small group homes or institutional, is basically rooted in those middle-class ideals which form the trunk of a nation's social life, and which may be summed up by saying that appearances are more important than reality, clean faces more important than sound minds. It is at once the only possible outlook to have, and yet it is also completely opposed to the ideals of most of the children who come into care, and especially to the ideals of the delinquent youngster, who is not only anti-middle-class — a healthy enough attitude for a working-class child — but is anti-social. What do we do?

Rights

As a start it must be remembered that the child is a human being and he is not to be treated as a number or as a person without rights. For better or for worse he has a certain personality and nothing is to be gained by trying to change that personality from without, only from within. He must want to be changed; he cannot be forced to change. For this reason the atmosphere in the institution must be co-operative, not authoritarian or manipulative. In the final analysis the youngster is helped only if he chooses to be helped. I still remember with something of a shock that in England in the 1960's the youngster may not be present when the final decision is made as to his employment. I was told he 'would not know what he wanted', 'would only be confused' and so on. Perhaps, perhaps not, but in either case I think it wrong for a youngster not to be consulted, not to be present at a decision on his own future.

The way the youngster is changed is of course to present him with a pattern of living, a mode of life, which is so attractive that, despite himself, he is tempted. This pattern of life, which necessitates a sense of identification with those who are presenting it, is the path, the only path, by which he can reorganise himself. Dr. Bettleheim, a leading American authority, has this to say:

"In helping to bring order into the child's personality we rely mainly on his desire to get along in a world that provides him with ample satisfaction of all, or almost all, of his needs and not only the ones that are commonly accepted by adults as legitimate. We feel that before anything else a child has to be utterly convinced that — contrary to past experiences — this world can be a pleasant one, before he can feel any impulse to get along in it. Once such a desire has sprung up and has really become a part of his personality then, and only then, can we expect him to accept and to come to

terms with the less pleasant aspects of life."

But this alone does not solve the problem. There remains the question, the question that should at all times be present in everyone's minds; Where is the child going? What future are we planning for him? For the delinquent youngster, being taken into care is not an answer to his problems, but only an initial step towards what might be an answer. Obviously our aim should not be what it sometimes becomes, a steady progress from foster-home to institution to industrial school to reformatory to prison. Obviously our aim should be to reintegrate the youngster into society so that he can lead a normal life. The question remains, and it is a vital one. What society?

Reality

I have heard too many child care officers talk glibly about college and university when the youngster cannot even get good marks at his secondary modern school. Too often it is forgotten that the child belongs to his background, which in this case usually means the slums of some large city. We may hope to change his attitude to it, but we cannot change the background itself. Most youngsters, when they leave care, return to their old haunts. To fill them with false pretensions is to prepare them for a fall even worse than the first; to give them insight into their realistic possibilities is to fill them with hope.

If a youngster is to be realistic about his place in the world then it is essential that the link with his past be maintained. Nothing is more stupid than to attempt to break this bond. A children's home should not be a goldfish bowl. A youngster's parents are his parents, and no matter how bad they may be for him in the opinion of the child care staff, they are still the only ones he has. As Keith Lucas has pointed out, too many social workers see themselves as championing the child against his parents, against this background, against life. For the child, his parents are the most important people in his life, and we should never forget this. He may have run away from them, his father may have beaten him, his mother may have deserted him, but they remain his parents. How strong this tie can be, in even the most unlikely circumstances, may be shown by a case in which I am involved at the moment. The subject is a college undergraduate. Recently, from being an apparently stable person, he began to exhibit all the symptoms of major disturbance. Eventually he came to me for counselling. He had, he said, to go to Germany. This was a surprising statement in view of the fact that he was already heavily in debt, and to go to Germany in the summer might prove a financial disaster and thus cause his withdrawal from college. Slowly I arrived at the truth. I found out that he is illegitimate and is living with his mother and stepfather. Quite suddenly, for no reason that he could give me, he had conceived a strong desire to see his real father. He

had eventually approached his mother, who had told him that she had known his father for a mere four months in Germany at the end of the last war, and that he had disappeared. Thus, not only was he illegitimate, but his father had not even known him, was not even aware of his existence. Nevertheless, nothing will now content this young man but that he go to Germany in search of his father.

Child care workers

To my mind the key person in the jigsaw is not the Children's Officer, nor the Child Care Officers, nor the Superintendents, least of all the chairman of the Children's Committee, but the residential child care worker. It is he or she who must represent the youngster's link with reality. Because of the nature of residential care, and because of the overloaded caseloads of most Child Care Officers, the houseparent becomes the only person with whom the youngster can possibly identify and, if you remember, we have stated that this process of identification is a pre-essential to the child's reorganising his personality in the right direction. But there remain certain factors which are basic to the realisation of this process.

Firstly, the houseparent must be permanent. When I was in Naples it was some eighteen months before the youngsters accepted me, and in case it should be thought that this was because they were Italian, let me state that in my eighteen months in England I do not think that the children accepted me at all. Identification is impossible where the house parents change every few months, not only because the houseparents themselves do not settle down, but because the children are aware of this and sense the transitoriness of their position. Nor, of course, can it take place where the *children* are changed around. I cannot stress this factor of permanency too strongly. At one place where I worked the turnover of staff during one year reached the astonishing proportions of 60 per cent. The effect on the children can be imagined. Maas has reported that children seem to be able to overcome the effects of one separation, but not of several. Too many children in care never have a chance to form a relationship with anyone.

Secondly, the houseparents must be supported by an adequate and permanent staff. The supporting staff are obviously not as important as the houseparent himself, but equally obviously if the houseparent has to spend all his time training and relating to new staff every few months the children in his care are going to suffer.

I would say that these are the two factors essential to the youngster's identifying with the house parent.

Understanding

There remains the problem of the houseparent's identification with the child. With delinquent youngsters espe-

cially, love is not enough. To bridge the gap, understanding is required, and there are I think certain prerequisites to this understanding:

- The institution, home, or whatever, should be in the area from which the youngster comes, or at least close to it.
- The houseparents should have a thorough understanding and knowledge of the background from which the youngster comes. This is of course difficult unless he lives there.
- The houseparent should receive training regarding the type of youngster he is likely to be called upon to deal with. This is no substitute for experience, which in this sort of work is often the best kind of training, but it is a help.
- There should be constant contact with the parents, with the neighbourhood. Once again this is only possible if the institution is geographically situated in the vicinity of the child's family.

I realise that I have skimmed over a very large subject, but despite the many points I have missed I hope that something of what I am trying to say has come across. It I were to have to put my argument in one pithy sentence, I would say that the direction in which any youth service should move is towards integrating the youngster into his society, that the prerequisite for this is identification with the house parent on the part of the youngster, and finally that this is impossible without a similar identification on the part of the houseparent and the child care service as a whole with the child.

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Taking Child & Youth Care Outdoors: How Nature Experiences Impact Development

James Freeman

Abstract

Young people today are experiencing increasing isolation from the natural world. Child and Youth Care practitioners have the opportunity to support their development by engaging them in nature and the outdoors. This article provides research highlights and encourages practitioners to support young people in direct, unstructured, and shared outdoor experiences.

Keywords: *Relational care, child development, nature experiences, outdoors*

Over the past weeks the warmth and rhythms of summer have been arriving in much of the world. For those of us in child and youth care this opens a season of greater flexibility in engaging young people in outdoor activity. This is important because experiences in the natural world play a significant role in their growth and development.

Nature exposure impacts development

Most of us are experiencing a growing disconnection — or isolation — from the natural world (Louv, 2011). Young people in particular are experiencing less time in unstructured, creative play in the outdoors than ever before in history (Louv, 2008). Those who are in care, especially in highly structured or restrictive environments, are impacted by this even more.

Exposure to nature has a significant impact on multiple developmental domains, including physical development and stress management. Burdette & Whitaker (2005) found that preschoolers who played on uneven, natural surfaces surrounded by trees and rocks over the course of a year demonstrated greater agility and balance control than others who had access to flat playground surfaces. When given the choice, adolescents choose natural environments to

refocus and center themselves (Korpela, 1992) and this contact with nature has also been found to help the brain recover from mental fatigue and restore the ability to focus attention (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2005).

Regarding trauma and stress, young people who live in settings surrounded by nature were found to experience less distress from adverse life experiences than those living in more urban environments going through similar adverse experiences (Wells & Evans, 2003).

These effects span multiple areas in the developing brain, including the cerebellum (e.g. physical agility and motor control), limbic system (e.g. stress modulation and response), and the frontal cortex (e.g. emotional control and attention). Fresh air and open space, it seems, may be more helpful than our best intentions with medication and restrictive interventions.

So what can we do differently in these coming summer days and nights? Consider engaging young people you support in direct, unstructured, and shared experiences in nature.

1. Ensure that young people have opportunity to experience nature directly

When we look at the world through the eyes of children we see there is a basic need to explore, play, and interact with the natural world. This takes place in a variety of forms depending on the personality of the individual, the influences of culture, and the demands placed on the growing child. "Dirt is proof that we are living life, participating, exploring and experiencing – something kids today encounter less than our generation did" (Persil, 2013). This direct exposure to the elements of nature is a critical component in the developmental task of developing our sense of place in the world (Freeman, 2013). Challenges faced by some young people in care — such as multiple placements, displacement, homelessness — make this even more challenging.

Just the other evening while walking on the beach with two friends, we discussed the immensity of the ocean and how it affects our perspective as individuals living in the world. On our drive along the coast we stopped to watch dolphins playing and jumping out of the water and were reminded that sometimes we need to set aside the worries and stress that life brings and simply enjoy the moments it brings. Both experiences, as brief as they were, left us more centered and balanced in our own being.

2. Provide a balance of structured and unstructured experiences

Unstructured doesn't necessarily mean unsupervised, but it may mean loosening up on the time limits, agendas, and forced organization. If you're caring for multiple young people or a group, give them opportunity to explore, experience teamwork, and experiment with problem-solving.

Recently I watched a group of kids with nothing to do join together to build a dam in a small creek. They each took various roles, exchanging them as the group developed and tasks were completed. They gathered rocks and placed branches, mingled their working and playing with occasional splashes, and in the end felt the satisfaction of their accomplishments together as they sat back and watched their creation.

The Story of a Sandpile shares a perspective of a summer ritual discovered by a group of young boys. This classic text written over a century ago provides a reminder that simplicity can be best for engaging imagination, peer relationships, and group development. It tells the story of the development of a pile of sand by young boys without the interference of adults. At the end of the summer the parents assessed that the experience had "been of about as much yearly educational value to the boys as the eight months of school…[and] the boys have grown more companionable and rational, learned many a lesson of self-control, and developed a spirit of self-help" (Hall, 1897, p. 19-20). It was the unstructured nature of activity that led to these benefits.

3. Make your experiences in nature shared experiences

Outdoor adventures are prime opportunities for attachment building. This is something every child needs and even more so those who have experienced disrupted relationships. It is, in its purest form, simply being with another, sharing the experience of a sunset, a walk through a eucalyptus grove, or digging in the sand.

The intentional use of outdoor activities can be used as a common third, a concept from social pedagogy which approaches shared activity as a means to strengthen the relationship and develop new skills. We can "teach by the example of our own attention and wonder… being there with them as they climb on rocks, play in streams and waves, dig in the rich soil of woods and gardens, putter and learn" (Nabhan & Trimble, 1994, p 31). There are endless opportunities to do things together outdoors without overly structuring the time.

Conclusion

Getting young people outside and involved in direct, unstructured, and shared experiences in nature can provide a range of developmental benefits. What will you do this season to maximize those benefits for those in your care?

...

James Freeman will be connecting with CYCs this month at the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Counsellors in Canada and the Scottish Institute for on Residential Child Care in Edinburgh, Scotland.

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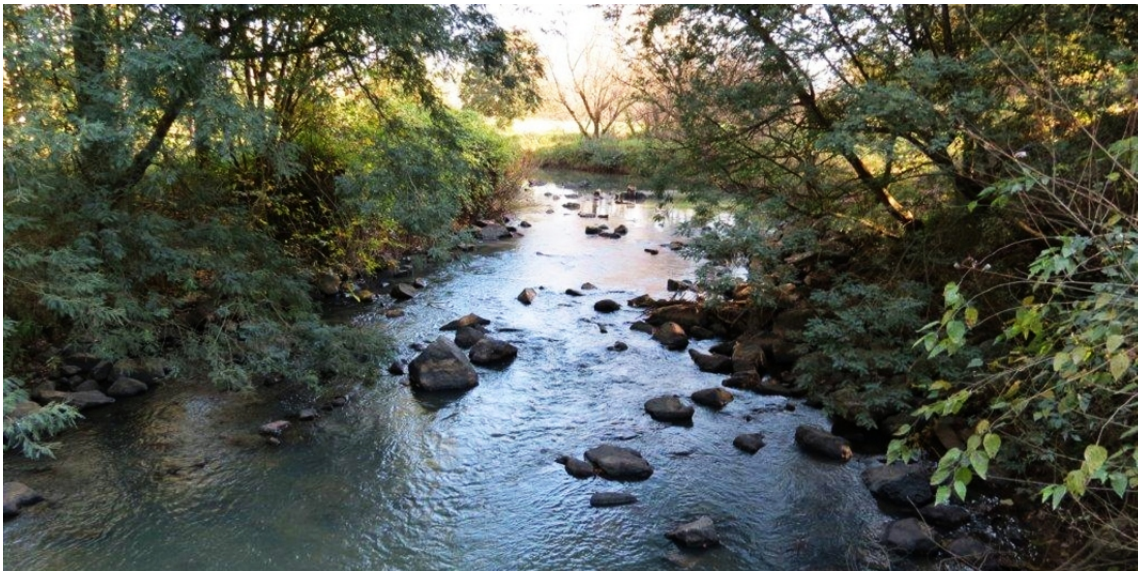

Adolescence: Learning to Cope with Stresses and Strains

The second in a two-part series in which **Gisela Konopka,** *one of the century's best known writers and practitioners in the fields of social work, child development and child care work, reflects in a classic paper on the essence of adolescence and the ways in which adolescents learn to cope with difficulties.* The first part appears in the May 2014 issue of CYC-Online.

To present the question of coping with stresses and strains of adolescence, I discussed (last month):

- My concept of adolescence, including the specific qualities of adolescence;
- The content areas of life especially significant in adolescence;

(... and this month):

- How human beings in general, at all ages, cope with stresses and strains;
- The specifics of adolescence, such as how adolescents deal with stresses and strains;
- How to develop the strength in adolescents to cope positively with stresses and strains.

Concept of Adolescence

It seems to me best to let an adolescent talk first before I say anything about that age group. A girl wrote:

> I am a bottle sealed with feeling too deep for anything else.
> I am a bottle floating in an eternal ocean of people trying to help.
> I am a bottle keeping my fragile contents inside. Always afraid of breaking and exposing me.
> I am a bottle frail and afraid of the rock. And afraid of the storm.
> For if the storm or rocks burst or cracked me, I would sink and become part of the ocean.
> I am a person in the people of the world.

This 16-year-old expresses clearly that an adolescent is part of humanity, is a person. This should be self-evident; yet in recent years adolescents have been treated often as if they are a species apart, to be feared or occasionally to be flattered.

The period of adolescence is as signif-

icant a period in life for the development of the total personality as are the first years in childhood. It is a time of rebirth.'

To me and this differs from many textbook descriptions of adolescence — this period does not represent only a "pre", a preparation for adulthood, or worse, a "no-man's land" between childhood and adulthood. Adolescents are not "pre-adults", "pre-parents", or "pre-workers", but human beings participating in their particular way in the activities of the world around them. Adolescence is not a passage to somewhere but an important stage in itself, though all stages of human development connect with each other. There is an "adolescenthood". The key experiences of adolescence (which always include stresses and strains) are certain *firsts* which need to be worked through.

It must be understood that no generalization about human beings ever totally applies to one person and that in working with people, we will have each time to look afresh at the human being with whom we interact.

A 15-year-old said this best:

I used to be
a grape in a bunch
and all the other
grapes were the same.
But now I'm an apple, crisp
and fresh, and every
one is different.

My, how life has changed!

Some of the "firsts" I refer to are:

1. Experiencing physical sexual maturity. A phenomenon particular to adolescence that never occurs again in the life of the individual is the process *of developing* sexual maturation, different from the state of *accomplished* sexual maturation. Biologically this is a totally new experience. Its significance is due both to its pervasiveness and to the societal expectations surrounding it. It creates in adolescents a great wonderment about themselves and a feeling of having something in common with all human beings. It influences all their relationships with each other, male or female. Entering this part of maturity also stimulates them to a new assessment of the world.

2. Experiencing withdrawal of — and from — adult benevolent protection. Along with the biological maturity attained in adolescence come varying degrees of withdrawal of, and from, the protection generally given to dependent children by parents or substitutes. We know that some young people were never protected, even as children; but, whatever the degree of previous protection, the adolescent is moving out from the family toward interdependence (not independence, but interdependence) in three areas: (a) with his peers, his own generation; (b) with his elders, but on an interacting or questioning level instead of a dependent level: and (c) with younger children, not on a play level but

on a beginning-to-care-for-and-nurture level. This process of moving away from dependency creates tensions and emotional conflicts.

3. Consciousness of self in interaction. The development of self and the searching for self starts in childhood. but the intellectual and the emotional consciousness of self in interaction with others is a particular characteristic of adolescence. It is a time when personal meaning is given to new social experiences. What may have been clear and explicable may suddenly become inexplicable. This makes for inner excitement, frightening and yet enjoyable.

4. Re-evaluation of values. Though the formation of values is a lifelong developmental process, it peaks in adolescence. It is related to both thinking and feeling. In our culture, where young people are likely to be exposed to a variety of contradictory values, (and I welcome this) questioning begins even in childhood. But adolescents become more philosophers concerned with "shoulds" and "oughts" and they may be subtle or outspoken about it. Value confrontations are inevitable in this age period. The young, because of their intensity, tend to be uncompromising. They may opt clearly for a thoroughly egalitarian value system, or they may give up and become cynics. They often are "true believers", rigid, and therefore feel deeply hurt when others do not accept their value system.

5. Wanting to be an active participant in society. Adolescents encounter their world with a new intellectual and emotional consciousness. They meet it less as observers who are satisfied with this role, than as participants who actually have a place to fill. I see this wish to participate as a most significant "first" in adolescence. In the old, mostly European, textbooks it appears as the adolescent quality of rebellion, and for years we have considered rebellion an inevitable attribute of adolescence. I think that this is true in authoritarian societies — and we are partially still an authoritarian society — but basically it is not rebellion that characterizes adolescence, but this extraordinary new awakening to the fact that one must develop one's values, and not only by imitation. This is a terribly hard task and brings with it enormous stress. Another key characteristic of adolescents is their enormous *life force*. It is an age of extraordinary physical capacity. This is sometimes at variance with the emotional development, and that again makes for great strain. It is an age where the mood swings with utmost intensity from omnipotence to despair. Adolescents can go without sleep for a long time; they run, jump, dance. In one of the Youth Polls done by the Centre for Youth Development and Research in which the subject of health was at issue, it became clear that adolescents define health as "activity and energy". One said, "I think I am healthy when I am able to walk and run and run around all day and not be tired."

Content areas of life significant to adolescence

The major institutions in which adolescents move have begun to be the same all over the world. Cultures change rapidly. For example, the teenage Bedouin, until recently, had to develop predominantly within the extended family and handle stresses within this system. His work environment was static in terms of its tasks, namely herding goats, but it was changing geographically because of the tribe's nomad existence. The girl had no decisions to make, only to obey. Yet, today, most of the Bedouin teenagers have to deal with a smaller family unit, with school, with a variety of work tasks, and with less nomadic movement. These changes impinge on the girls, too.

Now, discussing institutions, the most significant ones in adolescent life today are: the family, the school, the place of work, and the peer group.

1. The family. It is a myth that North American young people do not care for the family. In every survey the Centre for Youth Development and Research has made, the yearning for close family ties emerges clearly. Even a runaway wrote:

> The first night was cold damn cold.
> And walking around the avenues,
> we would mock the whores.
> The big man and his badge
> would give us a cold eye.
> And without hesitation,
> we would flip him a bird.
> I wished for my mother,
> and I wished for sympathy —
> For a warm bed, and not the cold
> shipyard or the park swings.
> I feel really old for 15,
> there just isn't any place to go.
> Mama I miss you —and I just spent
> my last dollar
> for cigarettes.

The major frustration for an adolescent within the family is to suffer the role of an inferior at an age when the wish to be taken seriously, and as an equal, is very intense. Frustrating experiences range from being treated "like a kid" to serious abuse. And additional frustration can result from the youth's keen awareness of problems between parents.

Younger children suffer deeply from strife between parents, but adolescents often feel that they have to do *some*thing about it, that they have to take on the responsibility in the situation. I found again and again a deep resentment of divorce, and at the same time, a feeling that the adolescent should have done something to prevent it. Also, adolescents, unlike younger children, begin to look to the future. Many expressed a wish for starting a family, but also feared it.

2. The school. Some of the same dynamics as in the family apply to the relationship of the adolescent to school. Again, the strong sense of self comes in

conflict with possible violation of the vulnerable self-integrity. The youth wants to be seen as an individual as expressed by the wishes: "There should be a one to ten ratio of teachers to students." They should treat young people 'like adults, not like two-year-olds, unless students just don't co-operate. Discuss all material that will be tested. Make every effort to answer all questions. Do best to help each student by keeping classes smaller. Not like we are their slaves or workers and they are the boss."

There are other stresses in school. It is the place where the students expect to learn. Adolescents in their own way begin to evaluate whether they learn what they need, and whether they measure up. They feel strongly injustice and discrimination:

The teachers are sort of scared of Blacks here. I'm not the kind of person that shows how much I hate them. I just sit back and do mostly what I' supposed I'm supposed to do. But teachers are still scared. If I ask a question, some of the teachers just ignore me. And I sit back and I watch this and I feel it.

Sometimes, I don't understand what they are saying. The teachers, they talk but when you go up to the desk and ask what they mean, they don't say nothing.

They just say, 'Go on and do it!' They don't explain. They just say, 'Go back to your desk and do it.'

3. The place of work. Many adolescents do work while in school, though others see it as part of the future. We found in our observations a generally quite strong work ethic. Two students expressed themselves: "... looking forward to starting a job because it gives one a sense of responsibility," and "want to work ... because we've trained for it for so long and we're anxious to start." Contrary to popular assumption, adolescents felt a responsibility for the work they were doing. They frequently regretted not having an opportunity to work on something that would prepare them for a future career. Young people can rarely find work related to special interests. A 16-year-old volunteered to work in the Rape Centre of the Attorney General's Office and saw this as an opportunity not only for feeling significant at that particular time in her life, but also to find out what her specific interests would be. But a recent study showed that usually adolescents felt frustrated because their jobs had no connection with their interests and were not realistic experiences. They make us work like people in yester-years, like out of the 18th century. With machinery, the government could accomplish something with more speed, efficiency and effectiveness. Instead, they give you old-time machines to do the work.

4. The peer group. For adolescents it is a most important one. In our culture this world exists within organized institutions and in informal encounters. School is seen by practically all adolescents as the major formal institution where they can find friends. Youth orga-

nizations may also provide friends along with very positive experiences.

> On midsummer's eve the moon was high in the sky.
> We danced all night in the moon's smiling, gleaming face,
> We ran about the park with youngness and freedom,
> We sang songs of old and new.
> We played on midsummer's eve as though it were never to leave us.
> The morning soon followed,
> so we left.
> But we will be back on midsummer's.

But for others, school may mean the unpleasant strain or, for a variety of reasons, painful rejection by one's peers. The world of peers is really the lifeblood of adolescence. Friendships with both sexes, intensified by growing sexual maturity, are exceedingly important and complex. They demand decision-making about oneself, about others, about the present and the future. Decision-making is written large all through adolescence, and no decisions are more important than those about peer relationships.

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Action Transforms

On Being Stuck
Stalling, restarting and something different

John Digney and Maxwell Smart

A thing is not necessarily true because a man dies for it
– Oscar Wilde, Irish playwright

People who are unable to motivate themselves must be content with mediocrity, no matter how impressive their other talents
– Andrew Carnegie, Scottish Businessman

Preamble

It's interesting how the themes in our work lives can often reflect those in other aspects of our life. A phenomenon that is not only Celtic but one that is most definitely universal. In the *'dle'* training[1] this has been recognised and is explored some more. But how does that fit with the June Celtic Connection contribution?

As mentioned previously, the manner in which the topic we agree upon for discussion in this monthly column can be varied, but is usually as a result of something that occurred in the recent weeks for one of the writers. This month's collaboration began similarly, though the process that followed is slightly different, the issue being discussed actually entering into the writing process (in a manner of speaking) and also the 'theme' of the article linked to a current CYC-NET discussion thread.

At the beginning of June one of the authors sent a message, '… *about the June Celtic Connection article, how's about the idea of "getting stuck"? You know, the way*

1 See http://www.transformaction.com/dle-training.html

staff (both individually and as a group) can get stuck in particular ways of thinking and doing that become entrenched and hard to shift'. Sounded good and relevant (for several reasons to be discussed below), so away we went to our individual caves and commenced reflection and writing.

After four or five days, along with the initial paragraphs of the article (below), a second message was sent – *'this topic seemed like a good idea at the time, but I have got blocked. See if you can help unblock'*. Getting 'blocked', 'stuck', 'caught-up' – interesting how these words are different and yet so connected. A different context than the ones we anticipated, but stuck none the less. But let's retrace our steps which should return us to the article.

On Being Stuck

As we reflected on the concept of being stuck at the time of writing we recognised that probably, every worker and every team can hit a 'sticking point' – such as; stuck about what to do with a young person, stuck about how to shift the morale of the team, stuck in relation to our own personal thinking and doing. Being stuck is therefore part of the territory of being in the business of providing help and support to children and families.

Of course this doesn't mean that we are clueless about our interventions. It could be interpreted as in fact meaning the opposite, as we must constantly be in a process of reflection about our encounters, interventions and engagements. Yet despite our reflections we can encounter points along the way where we can become entrenched in a particular way of thinking and doing and struggle to break free from the chains that bind us to particular theories and practices.

Anecdotally, a friend and colleague once suggested that when we are stuck it often means that a need individually or collectively, is being met. Being stuck maybe an 'unconscious' method for us to keep ourselves safe – particularly when we encounter something new, challenging or surrounded with difficulty. It may also be that individuals or the team wish to delay or subvert a particular change (such as policy or intervention) by 'blocking' or undermining implementation.

Opening up the Block

Opening up the block can be a difficult thing. Open conversation in team meetings, individual supervision and group supervision can be forums to try to unblock. However blocks can be very sophisticated, and discussions individually or collectively can often reinforce the *private logic* behind a block and rather than opening up what is stuck can, paradoxically, the very processes we use to open the block can actually reinforce and entrench the situation. This seems strange, for as CYC's we are trained to try to understand the views of others are we not? However attempts to unblock can unfortunately backfire on

those trying to bridge the gap between what we are doing and what may need to be done.

An article by Maria Popova (n/d) entitled, 'The Backfire Effect'[2], where she quotes David Raney (2013), got us thinking about how we can get over-attached to our ways of thinking and doing — just as much as we can also get attached to particular theories and hypotheses. Popova quotes Raney as stating,

> *Once something is added to your collection of beliefs, you protect it from harm. You do this instinctively and unconsciously when confronted with attitude-inconsistent information. Just as confirmation bias shields you when you actively seek information, the backfire effect defends you when the information seeks you, when it blindsides you. Coming or going, you stick to your beliefs instead of questioning them. When someone tries to correct you, tries to dilute your misconceptions, it backfires and strengthens those misconceptions instead. Over time, the backfire effect makes you less skeptical of those things that allow you to continue seeing your beliefs and attitudes as true and proper.*

Popova makes the point that when considering our attachment to particular theories, it must be recognised that there is evidence to show that once we have established a particular way of thinking and later challenges to that theory or thinking, can actually make us more entrenched in this way or thinking – even if there is credible evidence to back up the challenge. This assertion should be a wake-up call to how we think we should go about unblocking situations, for the very interventions that can be used to free thinking from rigid positions can 'backfire' on us.

An Interjection (a change to the process)

So, stepping away from the 'article' again, is it not interesting that the second message came from one author to the other advising that he was 'blocked'? As with many such partnerships, the usual response in 'taking up the mantle' is to read the work to date, make some edits and then add their subsequent thoughts on what might logically follow or what fits with the content to date.

Well on this occasion the authors (in the context of the quote from McRaney, 2013) got to talking about (i) why did they get stuck at this point and (ii) is there something about the process they have used historically to 'unblock' the writing? The usual result of this 'stalling' and what has become our unique 'unblocking process', usually results in a

2 See http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2014/05/13/backfire-effect-mcraney

'restarting'; where we get 'back on track', following what seems to be a predefined 'scheme of work' and then deliver on an 'article / column' that reflects on a particular aspect of practice.

The insertion of this little 'interjection' is something different, it is something which just now feels somewhat uncomfortable – it's different from what we usually do.

Individual reflection of Author A

As I introduce this 'change' to the way we normally write I am trying to be fully cognizant of what I am experiencing. My initial thoughts are:

(i) I do not know how my co-writer will receive this 'break' with convention — will he want to get back to the agreed topic and complete the article the way we usually do (well, if you are reading this I suppose he has decided to travel this new path with me – at least for now).

(ii) I am wondering if this change in structure will meet the requirements for inclusion in the CYC-NET Online journal (again, if you are reading this, somewhere the decision was made for inclusion).

(iii) I am wondering if this 'method' is so far away from where I want to take it that I will become blocked and unable to demonstrate the relevance.

(iv) I am feeling the need to go back to the 'old way' and delete all this part … but no, I will persist because this is different and difficult.

OK – enough of that for now. But what was the point?

In the first instance, it was an exercise in change and about going with a 'notion', a 'what if?' Going with a notion, a feeling or an instinct is often something we are dissuaded from doing by our managers or colleagues – you know the comments; 'we don't do that, this is the way it's done here'. This little exercise was about doing something differently, something that was not 'the way we always do it'.

It was also an exercise in reflecting on the new information we mentioned above from McRaney– *'coming or going, you stick to your beliefs instead of questioning them'*.OK, this was not a major 'questioning of beliefs' – but merely an exercise is trying something different. Instead of the usual unblocking processes, this was 'tangential'.

A Slightly Different Path

One of the main points that we wished to get across is that very often we can get far too 'caught-up' in, invested in or become blindly accepting of a particular set of beliefs to the extent that we become 'closed' to considering other reasonable options – we get locked-in. Consider, for instance, were we to have a belief that 'bold behaviour' will only improve through punishments, than we are dismissive of the last 30 or 40 years (plus) of research and practice wisdom telling us the opposite.

Or, if we believe in some more reasonable or better-informed approach *BUT* are closed to considering other methods or disciplines which may approach 'troubled' kids and families with the same relational philosophy but with a different (and possible as relevant) focus. Then we are again dismissing years of knowledge and wisdom and assuming an 'all knowing' position.

Do we think we are better and know more than ... teachers, youth workers, parents, social workers, doctors etc? Do we think we are more learned than our 'junior' colleagues? Maybe we do have knowledge they don't have BUT consider that they also maybe have knowledge we don't have! Do we not all carry pieces of the same jig-saw puzzle?

If we become stuck in a way of 'thinking and doing' that excludes reasonable options, we are not only doing ourselves a disservice – but we are doing a huge disservice to the people for whom we work. We therefore need a fuller picture, we need to get better at sharing and being open to 'hearing more' about other ways; we need to try other methods – especially if the ones we are using don't seem to be working or are causing us frustration.

An interesting comment was made via the CYC-Net Discussion forum – *'I am hearing more about social pedagogy these days. Is it not just a different name for child and youth care work? I look forward to hearing your views'*. The act of asking to 'hear more', acknowledging that 'I don't know every thing', and are seeking to see 'does this fit and can it help' is a part of the logic behind the discussion groups and certainly in this case, in the opinion of the authors, is an act of someone who is certainly not blocked or stuck in a particular way of thinking or doing. The responses have been many and varied, but the result is a discussion where we see another part of the puzzle, another way of looking at things and possibly a way of 'un-sticking' ourselves from a particular way of being. The need to share is almost as great as the need to care.

An additional link to what is current for the authors is that, in November (2014) there will be a building on to this notion of 'sharing, reflection and looking around'. In Dublin, Ireland, there is to be a week-long International event designed to bring together people from the various professions working with kids (CYC, Social Work, teaching, etc.) and those from different backgrounds and disciplines. The details will be posted on CYC-NET soon and everyone is encouraged to come along and be part of this 'un-sticking'.

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Digs & Maxie

Q & A

A verbatim transcript from a discussion on the CYC-Net's email group

Motivating a shy child

From: Jessica Prins

How can I motivate a shy pre-school child to participate in a group, talk to other children and feel comfortable enough to openly talk to me?

...

Replies

Hello, Jessica.

How old is the child ? This issue has different meaning for a 5 year old than a 2 year old. How does she show her 'shyness' ? Does she speak at all ? If she speaks at home but not in school that could be another issue. All of this kind of information might affect what kind of approach might be recommended.

For now, though, I'd say, "easy does it" and "start small". Try not to make her self-conscious or put her in a spot where she feels she has to speak. As I said, "start small". What does she like to do ? What are her favorite play activities ? Use these to initiate a 'gentle conversation'. You do the talking (without chattering) and don't act as if you expect a response - while making sure there are openings in case she wants to make one, e.g. " Mary, we got some new play dough today and i was just going to open some. Why don't you come with me while I do it and you can play with it if you'd like ? Hold out your hand."

If she refuses, just say something like " Maybe you'd like to do something else right now. But come over if you change your mind".

If Mary comes, after she has started, you can invite one or two others. "Cindy, Mary likes our new play dough. Maybe you'd like to sit here at try it too" (or some such).

Be alert to clues that she might like some attention from you or to join something (she's watching an activity intently, hovering tentatively at the edge, etc.) Go over to her, ask her if she'd like to join in and hold out your hand. If she approaches the group you can say something to ease the way like " Mary would like to join the water play. Can you move over just a tad, John ? Perhaps you could show her how to pour water down the funnel" (or some such).

If there's imaginative play going on (if the children are old enough for it) and you can see the players need somebody to fill a role, you might say, "Maybe Mary could be the nurse, or baby, or mother", or whatever. But make sure it's a role

with which she would feel comfortable so a rejection from the others does not occur.

Make sure circle times don't put her on the spot, with those 'go around the circle and each child says something' kind of thing. At least if you have to do it, if Mary doesn't respond, say, "Mary's still thinking about it" or some such and pass quickly on to the next. If you sense she's feeling comfortable with you, you can inconspicuously have her sit next to or near you at such group times. After a while, you might encourage play with just one or two other children.

In other words, accept her feelings of shyness, engage her in 'conversations' without expecting a response, avoid putting her on the spot to respond in front of a larger group, encourage her to relate to one other child through a common activitiy interest first, then find opportunities to include her in small groups by helping her with the entree into it.

All of the staff can work to be sure that the climate and values of the program make all children feel comfortable and safe, ensure that rejection and preschool style bullying do not occur (or are responded to if they do), (that's a whole other story) and the like.

Karen VanderVen

...

I don't think it's about motivation, I think it's having patience and building the relationship with the child. They'll come out of their shell when they're ready and when they trust you. The simple fact is, if they are shy, they may never talk "openly." What is your motivation for needing them to participate in these activities? Is this in a preschool? Judging by the age of the child, try playing with them while you're talking.

Jillian Viens

...

I would suggest that you first start small so that you don't overwhelm the child. Maybe if you do activities that require groups of 2 or 3 so that the child would then have to interact with his/her partner to have fun or to complete an activity. This I think will allow the child to open up, interact and feel comfortable.

Aisha Lawal

...

I would like to recommend *The Highly Sensitive Child* by Elaine N. Aron.

"A highly sensitive child is one of the fifteen to twenty percent of children born with a nervous system that is highly aware and quick to react to everything. This makes them quick to grasp subtle changes, prefer to reflect deeply before acting, and generally behave conscientiously. They are also easily overwhelmed by high levels of stimulation, sudden

changes, and the emotional distress of others. Because children are a blend of a number of temperament traits, some highly sensitive children are fairly difficult — active, emotionally intense, demanding, and persistent — while others are calm, turned inward, and almost too easy to raise except when they are expected to join a group of children they do not know. But outspoken and fussy or reserved and obedient, all highly sensitive children are sensitive to their emotional and physical environment."

This is a great book for all youth workers.

Barry Smith

...

Hi, not sure if this thread still open, but first is trust - between you and the child, and this takes time and lots of gentleness and consistency, moving at the child's pace with some gentle support and encouragement.

Regarding playing with others - check what level the child is at first - he/she may be watching and playing parallel to others, or may be very content in playing alone or alongside. Really getting to know them, watching for tiny cues and picking up on those when they want to join in with others.

As for group participation, you may have a principle that when group activities are happening that each child has to take part, but if this child is not yet ready for that have a safe place nearby where they can observe and perhaps engage in something quiet themselves like looking at books. Gradually as trust comes both trusting you and the other children then these things will happen.

This child may have a natural disposition to observe and play independently, so it is good to learn that and honour it.

Read about the theme of Identity and Belonging, also theme of Well being and the one on Communication in our [Irish] National early years curriculum in Aistear [irish for journey] http://www.curriculumonline.ie/en/

Imelda Graham

Q & A

Email your question to:
discussion@cyc-net.org

Follow the link below for an archive of previous topics:
http://www.cyc-net.org/threads

In many cases, due to space constraints, not all replies are reproduced here. Visit the link above for complete transcripts.

My development stages as a child care student

Chris Beneteau

Abstract

Nervousness, apprehension and fear are only three of the words I associate with the beginning of my second year placement. This was a time of many questions: Will I make a good child and youth worker? Is this what I really want to do with my life? After six months of field placement at a residential treatment centre, the answer is yes. In this paper, I outline events that support my decision to become a child and youth worker. I will also address my "coming of age" as a child and youth worker; the times that I have asserted my individuality and independence, and have grown through my successes.

Acceptance by the children

The night before my first shift at the residence was a sleepless one. After getting up and eating breakfast, the butterflies began to flutter in my stomach. It was the kind of nervous anticipation I have experienced numerous times before, while preparing for a test or sporting event of great importance. Considering the intensity of these feelings I was amazed that I actually arrived at the front door of the residence without throwing up.

Upon entering the building, I was greeted by a male worker who briefed me about the rules and routines of the residence. He seemed to be a very nice gentleman and this helped subdue my feelings of anxiety. One of his first suggestions was that I, being just a student, should remain in the office for the duration of the shift. He was trying to protect me from any stressful situations that might arise due to my inexperience in working with problem kids. Initially this seemed to be a great idea because I was very nervous. As the hours passed, however, I began to feel like I would go

crazy if I read another procedures manual. I then decided to take my chances and join the staff and residents at the dinner table for their evening meal. I had intended to sit quietly and not force myself on any of the residents, yet I found myself conversing with them in a quiet, honest manner by the end of the meal.

After dinner, I moved to the TV room with the residents and sat at a distance, listening and observing. As the evening progressed, the kids began to ask me questions such as, "What are you doing here? Are you a student?" I responded by saying that I was a college student who was training to become a child and youth worker. The kids then began to disclose their reasons for being in care. One young girl said that she was a victim of sexual abuse, while another young boy indicated that he had been beaten up by his dad. These statements suggested to me that the kids were comfortable in my presence.

Upon the completion of my shift, I said good night to the kids and told them I would be back the next day. One young girl responded by saying, "It was nice meeting you. Maybe we can continue our talk tomorrow." Smiling faces and courteous comments made me feel good inside and were a great way to end the day.

The drive home that evening was very peaceful. It was as if a big weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I said to myself, "Hey, that wasn't so tough, I can do this." The shift provided me with an injection of confidence which replaced my earlier nervousness. To have the chance to work with kids was very exciting and my only regret was that the shift had ended.

The big question

As the weeks progressed, my fear of the unknown decreased and my anticipation of the future increased. I looked forward to each shift with an enthusiasm I wanted to share with the residents and staff.

The second major event occurred during an outing to a shopping mall. At

this point in my placement, I felt that I wasn't favouring any of the residents and was distributing my time equally to each kid. I did not feel that my relationships with the residents were "convenient vehicles to be used in a process of coercion disguised by a veil of altruism" (Fewster, 1982, p. 72). I really liked these kids and they were my friends as well as clients.

While walking in the mall with three residents and two staff members, I noticed that the kids were playing a game that involved touching each other on the shoulder. The kid being touched would turn around and the kid doing the touching would disappear. This game proved to be quite fun for the residents. Even with all the laughing and giggling, it was obviously not excessive nor were they hurting anyone, so I decided to join in their game. I would touch a resident on his/her shoulder and then move away, only to watch the kid turn around in confused delight. The tag game lasted about five minutes and then ended as quickly as it started.

As we were leaving the mall, I noticed that the two staff members seemed emotionally distant from me. The first thought that entered my mind was that I had done something wrong. I had a hunch that it was an issue revolving around the tag game that the residents and I had engaged in. Upon leaving the mall, the residents and one staff member left in one car and I and the other worker left in a separate car.

The deafening silence that was present in the vehicle on the way back to the residence was just waiting to be shattered. The worker then turned to me and asked one of the toughest questions I have ever had to answer, "Do you feel you have to be friends with the kids?" Without telling me what I had done wrong, this question implied that there was only one correct answer, and was obviously a set-up. With my heart beating at an abnormal rate, I took a deep breath and replied with an honest, "Yes, I feel I do." To say the worker was stunned by my response would be an understatement. The look she gave me was one of disbelief as if to say, "What are they teaching you at that school?" I then went on to explain to her that by establishing a friendship, the kids will respond to me more positively. The worker responded by saying that I was "feeding into negative behaviours" by engaging in the tag game. I could not believe that she felt the kids were engaged in negative behaviours. They were not loud or hurting anyone, but were just being kids full c energy, enthusiasm and a zest for life. Rather than expressing these feelings her, I decided to remain quiet due to tension that filled the vehicle.

At first this event really hurt me. I a hard time sleeping that night and ev experienced some self-doubt and rea praisal of my child care skills. When I awoke the next morning, I decided th the worker who confronted me was of crap," and that this incident would influence my future interaction with t kids. I also came to the realization tha

was overreacting and accepted the fact that this field is full of very different personalities, each with his/her own philosophies and beliefs.

Consequencing and choices

The following incident outlines a situation that occurred when I allowed a kid to be responsible for his own behaviour instead of immediately "bringing the hammer down" and consequencing him.

One of the young residents, while playing Nintendo, was slamming the control pad on the counter top whenever he made a mistake. This slamming persisted for a couple of minutes before I decided to intervene. In a firm, but calm tone, I said to him, "I know how much you like to play Nintendo and I want you to continue to play. You know that Nintendo is a privilege and if you abuse the privilege you will lose it for a period of time." I continued to reinforce that I would like him to keep playing, and then left to play pool, adding that I would be back in a few minutes to see what he had decided. Upon my return, I noticed that he was playing quietly and not "slamming" the controller info the table. He then informed me that he decided to keep playing and not lose his privilege.

This technique was successful because I think the kid was provided with a sense of empowerment. I could have taken the easy way out and immediately consequenced him, but instead I allowed him to take responsibility for his behaviour. He made a decision that met his needs and I provided him with that opportunity. I felt quite positive about the way I had intervened and it was good to know that I could produce a change in behaviour without the kind of commands and demands that I saw being used so often (e.g., "you had better; if you don't...").

I believe this experience was a very important part of my skill development as a child and youth worker. I was now beginning to take the positive therapeutic techniques learned in the classroom and apply them successfully in my placement.

Alone in the community

This next incident occurred during my third month of placement. My supervisor asked me if I would like to take a kid into the community by myself in the near future. I responded with an assertive "yes," and then was immediately filled with all kinds of questions. "What if he runs? What if he insults someone out in the community?" My supervisor then provided me with some advice. She said that if he is rude, obnoxious, loud or inappropriate in any way he should be "cued" to discontinue his negative behaviour. If the behaviour persists, do not be afraid to bring him back to the residence. If the kid ever decides to run, initially try to talk him out of it and make sure he understands the consequences.

The day finally arrived and I was asked to take a 13-year-old resident swimming at the YMCA. There was no other staff

member who was a swimmer, so when this kid found out that I would join him he seemed surprised and happy. He said, "You're actually going to swim," with a grin on his face that ran ear to ear. "Of course," I responded enthusiastically.

It was very cold that night, so we walked at a brisk pace discussing our feelings about friends, family and life in general. He discussed his relationship with a developmentally delayed resident saying that this boy made him "mad." He also talked about his mom who was manic-depressive and his father who had recently died. I was surprised at how much he had to say and how introspective he became in my presence.

While at the YMCA, he was generally well-behaved and we both had a great time. We played a game of "pool volleyball" but spent most of our time using the diving board. There was only one time when he did not follow the rules. He used the sauna after being told that it was reserved for adults only, but stopped when cued by me.

This outing really increased my confidence level and made me more independent. I could now move away from the security of the residence and other workers, yet still be an effective child and youth worker. Instead of worrying about the problems that can arise while out in the community, I now view community outings as a source of fun for both the residents and myself.

Conclusion

When I reflect on these four incidents I wrote about, a smile spreads across my face. These events are still so vivid in my mind, that I often wonder if I have done them justice by writing them down. With the first shift, I overcame my initial fear of working with "problem children" by taking a chance.

When confronted by the worker in the car, I learned that I could state my mind honestly and not be intimidated. By dealing with the child who was abusing the Nintendo, I learned to over-ride my urge to follow the usual disciplinary methods and try something more effective which had been learned in the classroom. Finally, when I was able to handle a community outing entirely on my own, I felt I had "come of age" as a child and youth worker with a variety of skills. I know I have a lot more to learn, but passing through these developmental stages makes me feel confident about the future stages.

References

Fewster, G. (1982). You, me and us [Child Care Commentary]. Journal of Child Care, 1(1), 71-73.

Postcard from Leon Fulcher

June, 2014

Guten Tag and *Gid'aye* Colleagues! Warm Greetings from Vienna where I recently participated in a planning meeting for *Vienna 2016 – Towards a Better Future for Our World's Children, Youths and Families* – to be jointly sponsored by *FICE Austria*, *The International Child and Youth Care Network* (CYC-Net) and *City of Vienna* Social Pedagogues during the week of 22 August, 2016!

Vienna Town Hall – site of Vienna 2016 Grand Opening & Reception

This event will bring together Social Pedagogues, Child and Youth Care Workers, Social Workers and others engaged in child, youth and family services from across Europe, across Oceans and from around the World. Vienna 2016 offers a rare opportunity to join together in an historic centre of learning that shaped therapeutic care and education everywhere in our World.

Austria's Parliamentary Buildings in the Centre of Vienna beside Town Hall

Consider how the following scholars have influenced our professional thinking about therapeutic work with children, young people and families: Anna Freud; August Aichhorn; Bruno Bettleheim; Fritz Redl; Rudolph Steiner; Hermann Gmeiner, Karl König, Kurt Lewin and

Empress Maria Therese: the only Female Head of the Hapsburg Dynasty helped Establish Public Education throughout Austria with the Catholic Church.

others! All have their roots in and around Vienna, around Austria and the wider Hapsburg Empire!

Plan to arrive on the weekend before the start of Vienna 2016 so that you can wander around this historic city! Imagine a CYC-Net Clan Gathering near the Emperor's Palace or The Spanish Riding School! Or perhaps sailing up and down the Danube! You don't have to travel far to find learning everywhere!

Vienna 2016 will start with a Formal Reception hosted at the City of Vienna Town Hall and one of the annual Vienna Public Lecture Series focusing on Our World's Children and Young People!

[Fachhochschule Wien University of Applied Sciences – Conference Venue

Conference participants will be housed in a central part of Vienna where they can use the public tram system for travel to and from The University of Applied Sciences in District 10 where formal plenary, workshop and paper presentations are planned. I anticipate that home stay opportunities will be explored to see whether students might be offered budget accommodation opportunities with local social pedagogues.

Visitors to Vienna from abroad should be in no hurry to rush off after the 2016 Conference. Travel by train to Innsbruck and Salzburg to take in some history! Check out a visit to SOS Children's Villages International Headquarters in Innsbruck or cross over the Danube River and check out what is happening in Hungary. The United Nations European Headquarters are also in Vienna.

An International Gathering Place for the Hapsburg Empire and the World!

Even Viennese Horses Dress Up to Welcome Visitors to their Amazing City!

Seriously folks! Put these dates in your diary or mobile phone calendar! Go open a special savings account at your bank named **Vienna 2016**! Try saving $10 a week in that account from tomorrow so you won't miss out on the next Big World Event for our profession! Don't wait to convince somebody else to pay for you to present at and attend this conference! Let's all use the Nike motto – ***Just Do It Colleagues!*** I look forward to sharing more about what Vienna 2016 will offer you on a personal and professional level!

THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK

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Unpredictables

At home there were many things
Horrible, unpredictable,
Which scared the life out of me.
But here there are so many *more* things
New to me, strange, unknown,
Customs, rules, boundaries, roles,
Which I have to learn, to understand,
Before I can feel safe.

The teacher

I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized.

— Hiam Ginott

Be kind to your knees. You'll miss them when they're gone.

— Mary Schmich

"In our early youth we sit before the life that lies ahead of us like children sitting before the curtain in a theatre, in happy and tense anticipation of whatever is going to appear. Luckily we do not know what really will appear."

— Arthur Schopenhauer

"One does silly things when one is twelve."

— Cassandra Clare

"Children are very wise
intuitively; they know who loves them most, and who only pretends."

— V.C. Andrews

"Mysticism keeps men sane. As long as you have mystery you have health; when you destroy mystery you create morbidity. The ordinary man has always been sane because the ordinary man has always been a mystic. He has permitted the twilight. He has always had one foot in earth and the other in fairyland. He has always left himself free to doubt his gods; but (unlike the agnostic of to-day) free also to believe in them. He has always cared more for truth than for consistency. If he saw two truths that seemed to contradict each other, he would take the two truths and contradiction along with them. His spiritual sight is stereoscopic, like his physical sight: he sees two different pictures at once and yet sees all the better for that. Thus, he has always believed that there was such a thing as fate, but such a thing as free will also. Thus, he believes that children were indeed the kingdom of heaven, but nevertheless ought to be obedient to the kingdom of earth. He admired youth because it was young and age because it was not. It is exactly this balance of apparent contradictions that has been the whole buoyancy of the healthy man. The whole secret of mysticism is this: that man can understand everything by the help of what he does not understand. The morbid logician seeks to make everything lucid, and succeeds in making everything mysterious. The mystic allows one thing to be mysterious, and everything else becomes lucid."

— G.K. Chesterton

" 'Oui, oui, oui all the way home'? — was he a pig, or a French diplomat?"

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

— **Maya Angelo**u
(Died 28 May 2014)

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

— Eleanor Roosevelt

"I got in trouble at school today. I got a A on my test and they said it was discriminatory and unfair to the kids who didn't study as hard."

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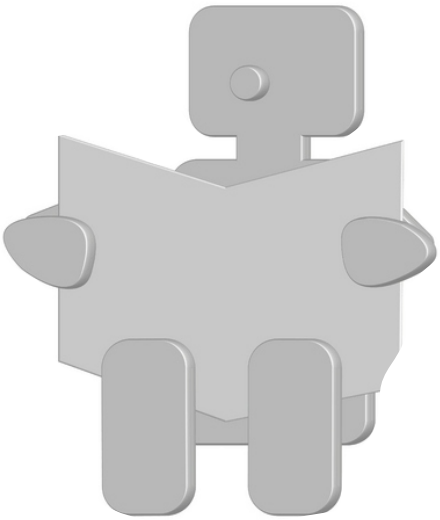

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