CYC-Online

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

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

Issue 196
June 2015

The CYC-Net PRESS

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CYC as Weapon in the 'War on Terror'?

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Over the course of the past decade or so I have often reflected on the limits of our profession. We usually think of child and youth care practice as being rooted in particular kinds of settings, even if these have expanded significantly over the course of time. These days, we have very good discussions about our profession's role not only in residential care, but also in schools, in the community, in hospitals, n shelters, on the streets, in outdoor adventure program and so on. Still, there are many other, perhaps less traditional, contexts in which child and youth care practice may have some relevance. In past columns, for example, I reflected aloud on the role our profession might play in responding to the devastating earthquake in Haiti, becoming involved in the lives of young people in refugee camps, and even expanding our basic concepts to cover a sort of 'child and youth care first aid' training for recreational sports coaches.

Garfat has often used the phrase that child and youth care is "a way of being in the world"; clearly from his perspective, our profession is not merely a collection of skills and competencies, but instead a deeply embedded belief system, set of values and commensurate range of responses to what is within and around us. I like this way of thinking; it allows for relational practice to be understood as a foundation for thinking, being and doing, not just for doing.

These days, I am reflecting on an entirely new context that may have some relevance to 'our way of being'. In Canada, and I suspect elsewhere, there is a lot of discussion, or more accurately panic, about young people joining the activities of ISIS and other extremist groups around the world. Just this week there was another news bulletin about ten young people in Montreal having been stopped at the airport where they were found to have intention of travelling to Syria for the purpose of joining the 'war on terror' on the wrong side. Not very long ago, two female teenagers were recovered just in time in

Turkey as they were on their way to join ISIS in Syria. The panic that is ensuing is simply this: We seem to be able to understand young people who may have faced considerable adversity in 'poor countries' or countries experiencing active conflict becoming converted to the cause of the extremists. But these latest incidents involve young people born in Canada, who have attended 'good' Canadian schools, and who often have lived middle class, protected and nurtured lives in good families. Why does it seem so easy to enlist these young people in the extremists' causes? How can they be convinced that risking their lives for the purpose of destroying the lives of others, is a reasonable thing to do? And what can be done to stop this seemingly increasing trend?

The government's response, generally supported by much of the population, is surveillance, harsher and more punitive responses to those caught, and a rhetorical attack on the work of the extremists' public relations people. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there has been virtually no comment on the young people who may be vulnerable to the manipulation of extremists; it turns out, I think, that no one here seems to know these young people, or be engaged with them in any kind of relational context. They are somehow different, mere pawns in the mind games of the manipulators, and largely irrelevant as human beings other than their potential service to the bad guys. This, it seems to me, opens up some possibilities for the child and youth care profession. And so I wonder what we could do given our general disposition to value young people, and to provide opportunities for them to voice their thoughts. Are we prepared to step in here?

It occurs to me that the overwhelming majority of CYCs I know in Ontario likely have a very limited view of and engagement with issues related to Islam, world politics, and social alienation that may be felt by young Muslims living in Canada in particular (although the manipulation of the bad guys, and their recruitment strategies, are not necessarily limited to young Muslims). This might be a first step; perhaps we need to get up to speed on these things sooner rather than later, so that we have at least a basic context for what is unfolding. I do believe that it is important for CYCs to begin engaging young people on these issues, especially in schools. And I think this engagement should come specifically through CYCs rather than teachers, because these are not the kind of issues that can be engaged authentically and meaningfully outside of a relational context. In fact, I think this is why the bad guys' recruitment strategies are so effective; they are very good at using social media in 'relational' sorts of ways.

It seems to me that a young person attracted to the rhetoric of extremists is probably not that different than a young person attracted to street gangs, groups of thugs, or drugs. Ultimately, the non-confirming, challenging, and clearly extraordinary context of live associated with the bad guys provides a framework for one's discomfort in the mainstream social context of everyday life in Canada (or the UK, or US or Australia or elsewhere).

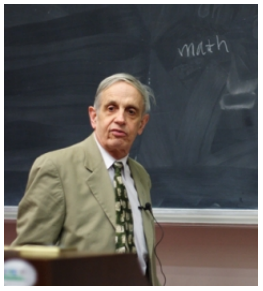
Child and youth care practitioners surely have considerable expertise on issues of belonging, self-identification, and social alienation. And surely we are not unfamiliar with young people who need to 'hate' in order to feel autonomous (I vaguely remember Fritz Redl writing about this 60 years ago!).

So, for now I don't have any specific answers or suggestions. I do think, however, that if you are reading this, it is time for you to consider changing the way in which you receive news bulletins about young Canadians (or English, Scottish, Irish, Americans, etc.) joining ISIS. This is not some distant, strange, incomprehensible issue to be dealt with by politicians and bureaucrats. Whatever the pain beneath a young person's decision to go this route, this is an issue about our profession, and our willingness to look beyond the familiar categories and context of our practice and engage the issues that are current, significant and potentially quite tragic today. So let's start thinking about what we could do. For school-based CYCs especially (because every young person who has been manipulated to join the bad guys probably was within an arms reach of a School-based CYC at some point), this means getting up to speed on the issues, and making a conscious effort to engage the context of Muslim youth in Canadian life. Just like other groups of young people, I suspect that engaging these youth is not an easy task because they do like to stay at a distance. Then again, isn't that the kind of scenario that we are good at?

THE NASH EQUILIBRIUM and ADVANCING CHILD and YOUTH CARE ? WHAT'S THE CONNECTION ?

Karen VanderVen

Of course it is crucial to define the field of child and youth care – its scope, what actions it identifiably embraces, what knowledge, attributes, skills are needed to practice it in areas subsumed in its scope. Over the years a great deal of effort, mostly successful, has occurred to accomplish this.



However, it is also is essential to look at areas that are not only outside of the field but on first scrutiny seem totally unrelated to it. *Why ?*

Any field or profession is predicated on knowledge and we are challenged to find this knowledge, create new knowledge and apply the knowledge in a variety of situations.

This process generates new knowledge in a dynamic cycle that continues to advance the enterprise. In fact, according to some scholars, 'analogical scholarship', the applying of one concept or conceptual system to another is the most powerful form of knowledge generation there is. In line with that then , if the members of a field never look outside of it, they may find their thinking and actions solidified.

In my career I continually looked for concepts formally outside child and youth work that I could import into it even though I was sometimes looked at askance with people saying "What does that have to do with it ?" As the due date for this "Soapbox 500" moved closer, I knew I wanted to write about what's "outside" the field but wasn't quite sure about how to bring it up.

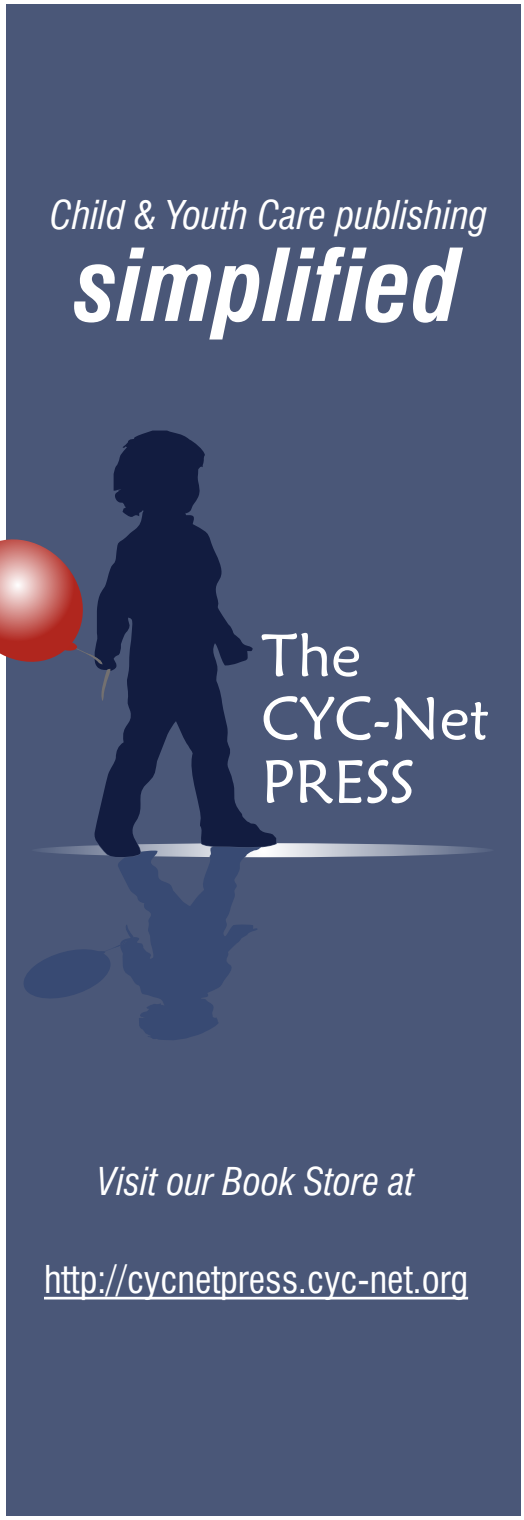
Then I heard some sad news, as did the entire world, of the death of the famous mathematician John Nash, a pioneer in game theory, renowned for the "Nash equilibrium having to do with strategy selection in a competitive game (a vast simplification) , in a car accident. For several years I had studied the biography of John Nash (the well-known *A Beautiful Mind* by Sylvia Nasar which undoubtedly some of you have read yourselves and perhaps seen the film based on it) and other works describing his mathematical accomplishments. Truth to tell, of course, I sorely lacked the mathematical background needed for true understanding. However, I still got a lot out of it for two reasons.

One was game theory itself. I came to

appreciate how important games are in the world, in business and economics, daily interaction, and… in child development. I was encouraged to study the role and function of games for children and youth in greater depth which yielded a deep appreciation for the significance of participation in games for people of all ages.

The other is the fact that Dr. Nash , who displayed 'quirky' behavior as a child, became mentally ill as an adult and experienced a variety of treatments in the mental health system. So reading about him provided a great deal of insight about topics directly related to our work. I was intrigued by the fact that he was a patient at the famous – and infamous – Trenton State Hospital in New Jersey at the same time I worked there in 1961, running an activity program for the children in residence there. I have plenty of stories about what I learned in that job and perhaps will write about it in a future column.

So what's the point of this? Develop and continue your own liberal education. Read a biography or non-fiction work about a person or subject *outside* the more established borders of the field as you see it. Look for connections between what you learn and your current perspectives. Watch your thinking change as you look look at your work and thoughts about it through new lenses. There will be a dynamic, fluidly bounded, interaction between what you already know about what's 'in' the field and what's 'outside' but relevant and empowering just the same. You will increasingly be a 'thinking' force in advancing and developing this exciting field.



Playing Games

Wolfgang Vachon

In the last of six articles on the Characteristics of A CYC Improviser, the author presents a variety of improvisation games that can be used to foster the characteristics discussed in the series.

Over the past year I've been writing about improvisation as it relates to child and youth care (CYC) practice. Improvisation has many concepts that are useful for CYC workers. Some of these that I've covered over the series which are directly applicable to working with children, youth and families include attending, accepting, advancing, saying yes, creativity, spontaneity, voice, and listening. This article will look at ways to develop one's CYC skills through the use of improvisation activities and games.

I was recently talking about improvisation and CYC practice with a friend of mine named Peter. Peter is a theatre artist and a businessman. He runs a successful company that trains people using simulations, or improvised learning scenarios. Much of what I know about simulation training I learned working with his company. Peter hires theatre artists to do the simulations because he needs people who can play a variety of characters, but he also hires them because many actors have metacognitive capacities. Metacognition, or the ability to think about one's own thinking and to make adjustments based upon this, is a required skill for improvisers. To improvise is to be in character and out of character simultaneously. The actor must be the character while thinking about being the character. Simulation training requires additional metacognitive capacity, and meta-affective abilities as well. Meta-affect has been described as knowledge about how affect works, awareness of what feelings are being experienced in the moment and how these impact an individual, and the skills "to coordinate meta-affective knowledge and meta-affective experience" (Burleson, p.13). The skills "to coordinate" are similar to the idea of emotional regulation.

In simulation training, the actor is playing a role, is adjusting his or her character based upon how the learner is responding, and at the same time is assessing what the learner in the simulation is doing. After the scenario is completed, the actor gives feedback. What feelings did the character have, how did these impact the character's

choices, what was effective in the choices the learner made, what are some areas of improvement for the learner, how did the learner respond during the simulation to various offers (and how is he or she responding to the feedback), what happened in the relationship during the simulation?

For actor/trainers there is a focus on self, on their character (their role), on the other, on the emotional states present (in the simulation and in the feedback), on the relationship, and on the reason for the relationship (both as character and as educator). This metacognitive and meta-affective analysis is similar to what the CYC does. We are present in the moment while we reflect upon the moment. What is working in what we are doing? How is the young person responding? What feelings are coming up (for us and for the young person)? What does the young person need in this moment? How must I adjust? These are all examples of attending, accepting, and advancing, as well as examples of metacognitive and meta-affective processes.

During our conversation, Peter asked me what the purpose of this improvisation writing project was. I talked about in-service workshops, publishing, conferences, and pre-service CYC training. He said, "Those are all products, which is fine, but why do you want to do this? What is the purpose?" This was a crucial question for me and I have been reflecting upon it since.

Improvisation gives us a framework for understanding CYC practice and a means to develop our capacities as practitioners. Using the concepts of improvisation can provide a way of working with young people that recognizes common challenges in CYC practice and supports a flexible approach. Teaching improvisation skills helps to develop metacognitive capacities (Biasutti, 2015; Johnson, 2002). Playing, which is a core aspect of improvisation training, is "generative", which means that it fosters diverse responses, multiplies the number of alternatives, and supports numerous, even conflicting, interpretations (Ross, 2010). Improvisation is collaborative (Sawyer, 2004), fosters ethically responsible agency, and helps build community (Fischlin, Heble, and Lipsitz, 2013). The characteristics of a CYC improviser allow practitioners to adjust to any milieu, life-space, or work environment and operate from a strength-based and relational approach. Improvisation allows us to roll with resistance and see challenges as opportunities, whether they come from young people, colleagues, or supervisors.

This article, the final in the series, describes a variety of games and activities. These games are chosen for their ability to capture some of the concepts identified as characteristics of a CYC approach. I am only doing a fraction of the many games and activities that I have used in supporting CYCs. Think of these as a starting point. I provide several resources in the references, and ones that I find particularly valuable are identified in the body of the text. Next to each game is one or more of the eight improvisation concepts identified in the first paragraph.

Very few of these games I made up, although I am not sure where I learned all of them. Where possible I provide references,

and where that's not possible I share where I think the game came from. I am writing these games with the intention that they will be used by and with CYC practitioners in order to develop and hone our CYC skills. These games will elicit a variety of feelings in the participants. Some people may feel uncomfortable or silly. If everyone is playing the games with commitment then such feelings tend to lessen. If a few people "sit out" while everyone else does them this tends to diminish safety in the room. For this reason I rarely allow people to watch how I do activities, without participating themselves (I make exceptions for ability issues). If people are experiencing difficulty (emotionally, cognitively or otherwise) I generally see this an opportunity for discussion, either as a group or individually. I encourage you not to ignore any challenging (or other) feelings. Meta-affect is developed through experiencing, identifying, reflecting upon, and acting from a place of emotions.

I have ordered the games starting with the most accessible, or ones I do earlier in a process. Please do not think of this order, or indeed any of the instructions, as prescriptive. I encourage you to expand, play, and improvise with the games to make them your own, for your own purpose.

When debriefing any activity, I generally start by asking the participants why they think we did an activity. It gives me a sense of what they received from the activity and it will often reveal new insights into the activity for me. I encourage you to do the same.

Some games

Change Three Things (Attending)

This is a simple activity that can lead to fascinating conversation about comfort, being seen, observing, space and boundaries. I remember first playing it while developing a play about harm reduction and drug use in the late 1980s.

Start with two lines of people facing each other; ask them to just look at each other for a short period of time (30 seconds — which we will seem like 3 minutes to some). This time can be lengthened, or shortened, depending on how much you want to focus on the (dis)comfort of observing and being observed. After the watching, have one line turn so their backs are turned to the other line. The people who have not turned change three things about their appearance (un-tuck shirt, flip collar, move belt buckle, untie shoelace, let hair down, take off glasses, etc.). The first group then returns to facing, and tries to identify the three things that have changed. After they have identified, or not, you can switch who turns and who changes. A variation of this is to have everyone turn around at the same time and change three things while turned; they then come back and face each other.

The post-activity conversation usually leads into discussions about comfort being watched, what are we noticing when we look at people, and how comfortable it is being the observer. I've had some surprisingly thought-provoking discussions out of

this simple activity. While people are looking at each other I see who maintains the observing and who does not. Who fidgets when looking or being observed, who speaks, giggles, avoids, etc. One of the things that often comes up in discussion is how we relay to young people what we observe. When do we state our observations and when do we make a note in our heads but not bring it up (and when do we miss seeing things). We'll talk about the risks of having people feel observed by an authority figure and then having those observations commented upon. This thread can lead to useful conversations about privacy for young people. It can also provoke conversations about surveillance in general and even about the presence of CYCs online. As you can see, many rich conversations can be had from this easy activity.

Three Guesses About A Famous Person, Living Or Dead
(Listening and Attending)

My first exposure to this activity was in a suicide intervention training session. The purpose was to talk about the efficacy of open questions. In this game open questions are often discussed in contrast to closed questions. I try to emphasize, the conscious choice for an open or closed question depends upon the intention of the question.

Here is the explanation I provide for people: "You are in a pair, person 'apple' and person 'skateboard' (when not using "1" & "A" to designate people in pairs, I will use two random non hierarchical nouns — bike and apple, building and speaker, whatever comes to my mind in the moment; my personal little improvisation game). Apple, think of a famous person that you believe skateboard will know. Skateboard you can ask three questions to figure out who the person is. You cannot ask me any questions, begin."

People then usually ask three closed questions such as "Is the person living or dead, male or female, were they an actor/musician". I remember only once having someone ask; "who is the person you are thinking of?" Which of course is a closed question, and closed questions are appropriate when direct with a specific intention, such as to gather information like the name of a person. Some people do ask one or two open questions, but then ask a closed guess question of the person's name at the end (is it... ?).

In the discussion afterwards, I ask how many people identified the person, what questions were asked, and why no one asked; "who is the person?" (if indeed, no one did). They almost always say they did not know they could ask who the person was, or that asking that seemed like "cheating". This leads to wonderful conversations about asking direct questions, thinking about where our ideas of rules come from, and when do rules (or our perception of them) inhibit us from doing what makes the most sense. In the context of asking about suicide for example, closed questions can be crucial "are you thinking of ending your life?"

It is also not uncommon for people, despite using closed questions, to guess the

person (I'm amazed at how frequently this happens). This can also lead to fascinating discussion about why people figured it out through closed questions (culture, shared experiences, "tells", etc.).

Poetic Exquisite Corpse
(Attending, Advancing, Spontaneity)

This is a relatively new activity to me; I'm still exploring but I've found it quite delightful and a game that can be played at different points when working with people. I've used it in rehearsals, classes, conference workshops, and with a single other person as a brain-sailing technique (a term a colleague of mine always uses instead of brainstorming). This game comes from the book *Exercises for Rebel Artists: Radical Performance Pedagogy* by Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes (2011). Both of the authors are well-established performance artists. This book has numerous ideas, games and activities, but it goes to a place that most workshop participants would likely find extremely uncomfortable. Many of the exercises I can't use with young people, students or CYC practitioners I work with.

Exquisite Corpse is an old Surrealists' parlor game. In the original game one person starts drawing, they then fold the paper with only the tiniest bit of the drawing visible and pass it to the next person, this person continues drawing, folds the paper and passes it on. The drawing continues until the paper is full. As you can imagine, there are some delightful images that come out of this game.

Poetic Exquisite Corpse is a call and response game. The caller (or poetic DJ as Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes call the role; they credit early hip-hop as the originator of this version) starts with a catalyzing phrase. After calling out the phrase members of the group call out a response. The example that Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes use to explain the game is "I do what I do, because if I didn't then…" someone then calls out a response such as: "…life would be empty", or "…I'd be sad", or "…I wouldn't". When starting the activity it tends to be a little stilted; however, once people pick it up it can be quite provocative, beautiful, and fun. Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes suggest using contrasting phrases such as:

- "My community is…/is not…"
- "My identity is…/is not…"
- "I draw my strength from…/ I struggle against…"
- "I am feminine when…/ I am masculine when…"

There are many variations you can use. I've explored things like: "Child and youth care is…/is not", "justice is…/is not…", "family is…/ is not…". Play with it, be creative, have fun. I usually let people in the group I'm working with become the DJ after they understand the basic structure. If desired, someone can record the responses to then be posted on wall or some other place. A couple of other suggestions that Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes (2011) make:

- Ask people to speak clearly and loud in their response

- If several people speak at the same time, have each repeat it individually so nothing gets lost (p. 80)

Poetry creation that starts with a stem and then asks people to build upon it can be effective in a variety of contexts. I know one group, Heal the Streets out of Oakland, CA. that use stem phrases as a starting point for Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) projects. One YPAR project they did about money and violence started with, "If the streets of Oakland could talk, they would say…". Each young person was asked to write a poem based upon that stem. After creating the poem each person read what they wrote while everyone else listened for, and wrote down, themes in the poem. They then categorized all the themes and used these as the focus of their research project.

I use Poetic Exquisite Corpse as a warm up, a check-in, a fun ritual that one can come back to, and as a way to open things up when ideas are not flowing.

Emotional greetings
(Attending, Accepting, Advancing, Saying yes, Creativity, Spontaneity, Voice, and Listening)

Developing an *understanding* of emotional states, a vocabulary of feelings to *label* those states, and knowing the difference between the two, are important aspects of CYC practice. Emotions are non-conscious physiological responses to stimuli, rooted in the limbic system (Carter, 2009). Feelings are the conscious awareness, and identification of, those responses (the words we use to label feelings). Identification happens when the limbic system sends the information to the cortex and words are formed. Most of us have had experiences where we are aware we are having a feeling, we are conscious that something is happening, that the feeling is present, but we don't have the language name the feeling. When asked we may say we feel "bad", or "good", rather than identifying ashamed or hopeful. Increasing one's own vocabulary of feelings can take time; I'm often struck by how limited the vocabulary of students and newer practitioners is. Given the amount of time CYCs spend in emotionally heightened states (our own and those we work with) it's important for us to have a large "feeling" lexicon and to develop meta-affective capacities. This will help us in our own awareness, and allow us to support those we work with to sort through and understand what they are experiencing.

Emotional Greetings comes from *Acting For Real: Drama Therapy Process, Technique, and Performance* by Renée Emunah (1994). As the title suggests, her book focuses on drama therapy. While I have used many of these activities for explicitly therapeutic purposes, most can be used outside of this agenda as well. I've drawn on exercises from this book constantly since it was published two decades ago I highly recommend it.

I will first describe Emotional Greetings as Emunah does, and then explain the variation I use. To begin, people go into in pairs and stand back to back. The facilitator calls out a feeling, with little hesitation

people turn around and greet each other based upon that feeling. After 10 seconds or so people stop the greeting, and they return standing back to back. The facilitator then calls out a different feeling and the process repeats. I usually start with some of the "primary emotions" (joy, sad, trust, disgust, fear, anger, surprise, anticipation) and then go into more nuanced feelings. This version by Emunah starts to develop a basic awareness of feelings and if people aren't familiar with a particular feeling then they might be able to learn from their partner (or looking around the room).

A variation that I use (and I use it now more than the original) is to give people scenarios and then have them greet each other. I say the scenario, count to three, and then have people turn around. The scenarios are designed to elicit different emotional responses. Some examples I use include, "You have not seen this person in a very long time. You used to be best friends. You run into each other unexpectedly. Decide why you have not seen this person in so long." This last direction (decide why) will frequently change the nature of the greeting (I've learned from debriefing). "You went out last night and met someone. You ended up going home with them. It's the next morning and you have just left their place. You see your (partner/boyfriend/ girlfriend/spouse/lover - whichever one is appropriate for the context)." This scenario can elicit some very strong feelings in people; decide whether it is a group that would be open to exploring such things. "You bought a lottery ticket with this person, you just checked the number and you've won." You can do variations on this such as "and you can't find the ticket; and the other person has the ticket; and the other person doesn't know, and the ticket has been stolen", etc. One can also make the scenarios more related to CYC practice: "You are ending a relationship." Determine roles in advance, such as CYC and young person, two young people, colleagues, or you can let it play out and see what happens. "You think someone has lied to you." Again you can be specific about relationships or what the lie was about. You can also do things like "first day in a new group home/jail/school", "graduation day", etc. If there are particular feelings you want to explore design situations for those feelings.

Depending upon the group you may choose to start with the first variation or the second, or only do one. Watching and then debriefing gives a strong indication of peoples' feeling vocabulary. In debriefing the second version I ask what feelings came up. I emphasize feelings because frequently when I ask what feelings came up, people will not identify a feeling, they will explain their reaction, or their partner's reaction, or talk about the situation but not label a feeling. I will listen, respond, and then re-ask "what did you feel", sometimes I need to probe a little to uncover actual feelings or to go beyond "happy" and "angry". With both variations, I ask if there were harder or easier feelings to explore and what their thoughts are on this. The debrief can also lead into discussions about the idea of

"positive" and "negative" feelings, which I generally critique as an unhelpful distinction that has more to do with judgments and our own comfort with feelings.

One-line repetitions
(Attending, Accepting, Advancing, Creativity, and Listening)

This activity also comes from Emunah (1994); it's one of my "go to" games. People pair off and the facilitator gives everyone one of two scripted lines. The only thing the participants can say (to start) is their one line. The lines are often set in direct opposition to each other: "yes/no", "I want it/ you can't have it", "please/ sorry", "help me/ I can't", "I want to go/ I need you to stay", etc. People say their lines in any manner they want and express any intention they choose. They repeat their lines for at least a minute, and sometimes up to five minutes, depending on the situation and group. I usually have them do at least three different line couplets. It's a very simple activity, which can be quite challenging and fun- even for experienced improvisers.

I use it with the intention of exploring emotions, listening, helplessness, and communication. In discussion after doing One Line Repetitions many things can come up for people, for example a sense of frustration at not being able to get what they wanted, of not feeling listened to; or helplessness at not being able to say anything different to communicate or comfort the other person. The game also reveals how many ways we can say the same thing. When I'm about to have a difficult conversation or I'm not sure how to say something I often remind myself that "how I say it, is at least as important as what I'm saying". This activity gives me some practice in saying things multiple ways.

You can also let people build upon the lines. Keeping the intention of the message ("help me/ I can't", for example) encourage people to use multiple words to convey the message. There is something both freeing and limiting with this variation. In the first version, people do not have to think about what they are going to say, so they can focus on the intention rather than all the words. In the second version, they quickly move into what is top of mind for them (workload, conflict with colleagues, challenges with a particular young person, etc.). Some people freeze at the idea of improvising and don't know what to do when the activity is opened up. If this happens encourage them to just keep responding with the original line. This activity can also lead into longer improvised scenes, using whatever text come up, starting with the stems. If so desired the facilitator can give themes or context related to CYC practice.

Yes Game
(Attending, Accepting, Advancing, Saying yes, and Listening)

This game seems impossible to do, until you see it done. I learned this from a colleague who works at a community arts program for street identified and other young people called 'SKETCH'. Explain the game to the group and then have one person leave the room. Once the person

leaves the room, the rest of the group comes up with activities that the person who left will do once they return (the game can be done with as few as two people — one in the room and one out, although it is much more fun with more people). The activities really can be outrageous; they tend to become more creative as people see what can be done, and the group tests to see what are the limits. An example of activities for the person to do could be, put a chair on top of a table, crawl under the table, standup, twirl in a circle three times, and then jump up and down — all of these would be done by the same individual who left the room. Once the group decides on the activities, the person outside returns to the room. The goal of the person who returns is to do all the activities that the group has decided upon. Here is why it's called the Yes Game, when the person returns to the room the only thing the rest of the group can say is "yes". When they do something that is going to result in the desired behaviour, or at least going in the right direction, the group says "yes". When the person does something that is not leading to the desired behaviour, the response is silence. I tell the person who comes back into the room that their best choice is to keep doing things, don't stop doing, do something, do anything, and see what the response is.

The post activity discussion focuses on how much can be achieved by saying yes, the difficulty for the person doing the activities, and the emotional states experienced by all participants. I use the activity to discuss the power of positive affirmation; that as CYCs we frequently don't need to say no, if we keep finding things that people do well, they will respond to that. It can also lead to a conversation about non-attending, when do we decide not to focus on what the person is doing? When do we decide that we are going to ignore a particular behaviour? It's quite fascinating to see that through praising alone, the person does achieve the goal.

Some may justifiably object to this activity as an example of "shaping" or manipulating the person into doing what we want them to do. An argument can be made that the Yes Game is not really so much a strength-based activity as an example of coercion. This is a legitimate critique, and one that can certainly be discussed with the group as part of debriefing, the facilitator may even choose to bring it up.

***Story telling in a group* (Attending, Accepting, Advancing, Saying yes, Creativity, Voice, and Listening)**

This is a classic improvisation and ensemble-building activity. It can be particularly effective in developing listening. I learned this game in theatre school; you can find variations of it in Spolin (1983) under the title "Story-Building" (p. 179). Everyone stands in a circle. Four to eight people tend to be the best number for this activity, more than that and it can take too long to go around and people may lose interest. Fewer than that and the

game changes quite significantly, it becomes much quicker. Occasionally (rarely) I will play the game competitively and if people make a mistake they leave the circle to become a judge, one can really notice a difference as the group shrinks. When beginning to use this game, I don't recommend the competitive version.

The game is a group story telling creation process. The first person starts a story, they stop speaking after a sentence or a short thought, the next person continues the story without pausing or repeating what the previous person said. The idea is to develop a coherent story with a clear beginning, middle and end. The first several times I play this game with a group, we start with a topic decided collectively, I tell the participants how many times it will go around the circle before it ends, and who will finish the story.

There are many variations of this game. Each individual can say a single word at a time; rather than being in a circle four people are in a line and then a fifth person points to who will say the next line (this is the version Spolin describes); four people line up with their backs to the audience, the person telling the story turns to face the audience as they speak their line, and when they have finished they turn back to the wall, someone else then turns to continue the story. The group does not discuss (or otherwise cue) who will turn. You can also do rhymes, song, first letter of the word spoken matches the last letter of the previous speaker, first letters go through the alphabet, etc.

The debrief starts off about listening, there can be some wonderful conversations regarding how difficult it is to follow the story, and the balancing between what the story needs and what we want to do (echoing what the young person needs and what we want to do, as CYCs).

The actor as "subject"
(Attending, Accepting, Advancing, and Saying yes)

This exercise is from Augusto Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (2002). This book is a must for anyone who is interested in doing justice-based/anti-oppression theatre work. I use this game as one in a series of trust exercises. I like this particular one because it seems quite daring and yet is very safe. People perceive it as risky; this is relevant to our work because what we do does involve risk. As practitioners we are never 100% sure what the outcome will be of a particular choice we make. This can be frightening at times and this fear can prevent us from doing (or allowing) things that are uncomfortable. The discomfort we feel can result in our avoiding making choices, and not allowing young people to develop the capacity to learn about risks and danger. There is a substantial body of literature that sees adversity and risk-taking as healthy and important aspects of child and adolescent development (Ungar, 2005).

Trust activities often develop in a progressive format. If the group would benefit from a progression of activities then you can do The Actor as Subject a little later on in the process. Some early trust activities to start with can include:

- **Glass Bottle:** Everyone in a circle around someone in the middle. The person in the middle puts their arms over their chest and closes their eyes. People around the circle put their hands on the centre person and the person in the middle allows the group to pass them between each other while the person in the centre keeps their feet on the ground.
- **Falling Back:** In pairs, one person stands about 50cm behind the other. The person in back places one foot in front of the other so they are in a stable stance, their arms are up, situated about 10-20cm away from mid-back of the person in front of them. After the person in back says, "ready", the person in front falls back onto their partner's hands. The person in back then stands them up again and it is repeated. The person in back can move further away so the fall is longer, if everyone is comfortable with that.
- **Blind Walking:** Walking around the room blindfolded or eyes closed while being led by someone else — through touch or sounds.
- **Falling From a Height:** Stand on a chair, table, etc. and fall back into the arms of nine people- four pairs lined up facing each other, holding each others wrists/forearms and one person at the end to make sure the head is safe).

I would place The Actor as "Subject" around the blind walking activities in regards to level of progression.

In **The Actor as "Subject"** one person is in the middle of a group of about 6-8 other people. It's helpful to have a spotter as well. The person in the centre (the actor) keeps their eyes open (at least to start). The actor moves and one of the other people fill in the space to support that person in the new position (for example the actor lifts her foot up and someone places their thigh under the actor's foot), the actor then moves again and the next space is filled to support the actor (providing a hip for the actors hand), this continues on as the person moves through the space. The group does not move the actor; the actor moves (as the subject) and members of the group fill in the space. The actor may move onto his or her back, may walk, may go sideways, etc.

If you have two groups going at the same time you can give direction for the actors to move between the two groups. Again, the actors do the moving, not the group.

The discussion points from this activity are numerous. "How does this relate to your work as CYCs?" (This is almost always a good debrief question.) "When do we move people, regardless of where they want to go?" "How was it to work as a group and be responsive to one person? When do you do that in the workplace with young people?" "How did you feel only responding and not directing?" "What was needed to work as a group?"

As an improvisation activity this is a wonderful one. It can be done in silence or with speaking. It can be simultaneously joy-

ful and scary. It takes so many of the core aspects of CYC practice and embodies them. It is also an activity that some people are reluctant to do, this too, can also lead to fruitful discussion.

Of course remind people to respect their own limits and to not do anything that puts themselves in danger. For example, if someone has a herniated disk, they should not have people putting weight on their back. I recommend doing this with socks or bare feet (also something that can be uncomfortable for some people).

Voices in the head
(Voice and Listening)

About a decade ago I started a program called *Connect To Youth*; it has since become *Acting Out* and is now run by SKETCH (Sketch.ca, mentioned above). Acting Out uses improvisation and scenario-based learning to train service providers (pre-service and in-service) on different aspects of working with youth. These can include working with LGBT*Q+ children and youth, access to justice & legal knowledge for those working with street involved youth, having difficult conversations with young people, and a plethora of other communication & relationship building skills. One of the things that make Acting Out so powerful and effective is all the young people doing the scenarios are current or former youth with direct personal experience in the youth social service system. (For more information about Connect to Youth see Vachon, 2011.) I came up with *Voices in the Head* during one of our performance-based workshops on communicating with young people. I'm sure I was inspired by other games (such as one-line repetition from Emunah and the concept of "cops in the head" by Boal). Voices in the Head has since become a staple of Acting Out workshop.

One person stands in the middle of a circle of about six-eight people. Everyone in the circle thinks of something that has been said to them (or they've heard said, or maybe said themselves) in the past by an authority figure (parent, teacher, CYC, etc.). This phrase was something that was meant to be helpful but that was received as less than helpful. Each person around the circle says, out loud, the line they remembered. After each person speaks, ask the person who said the line to remember their line (sometimes it helps to have someone write them down, as people frequently forget). Lines that I've heard recently include:

- "You have such potential"
- "You can be gay, but you don't have to be *that* gay."
- "You sound so articulate" (said to a black woman).
- "Why can't you be more like your sister?"
- "You could succeed if you tried harder." "I understand."

Once everyone around the circle has stated their line, one person starts saying and repeating their line. The only thing the person from the circle says is their one line. Like One Line Repetitions, they can change how they say it, but it is all they say.

The person in the middle responds to the line, they respond however they want (without touching the person saying the line, and without leaving the circle). They can change their words, change the way they speak, not answer, change themselves physically, etc. The only direction I give to the person in the middle is to respond to the line that is said. During performance-based workshops, I usually have the person from the circle repeat their line 3-5 times. When I'm using this as an exploration with a group outside of performances, I sometimes have it go on longer. The facilitator then signals the person saying their line to stop, and directs someone else start saying their line. The person in the middle responds to the new line. The facilitator has everyone in the circle say their lines, one after the other. Once everyone has said their lines, the last person does not stop and the voices start to amass. The facilitator layers the voices upon each other. One person says their line, then a second is added, a third, etc. until everyone around the circle is saying their line at the person in the middle. The person in the middle still responds to the voices as best they can but there are now 6-8 people each repeating their line over and over to the person in the middle. At a certain point the facilitator stops the voices. If the person in the middle is not trained to do this, I always start with checking in on them. The facilitators should watch the person in the middle closely; it can be a very difficult place to be. When I do this as part of performance-based workshops (such as Acting Out), I never have the same person do it more than once in a day.

In debriefing I start with the person in the middle, I ask how they are. Then what that experience was like for them. What was going on inside (their head, their heart, their body) for them? I then ask what the people around saw. I ask how they felt saying those lines. I then move into **Why did we do this activity?** Part of the purpose is to recognize that we (as CYCs, or other service providers) are one more voice in this person's head. So that when we say something that we think is going to be helpful, such as "You have such potential", and the person yells at us, we have a context for their response. Those we work with have all those other voices, in addition to ours, in their head at the same time. When we say "you have such potential" they may hear one more person saying, "you're not okay as you are", "you're not good enough", "I want you to be different", "I don't accept who you are right now", they may hear rejection.

I've done a few variations on this that can be quite useful as well. If it is part of a larger workshop you can come back to this activity at the end and have messages that are actually helpful. For example, **Acting Out** uses **Voices in the Head** when training child welfare service providers around supporting LGBT*Q+ youth. We will start the workshop with **Voices** and then at the end of the workshop, once people have learned new language, and have listened to young LGBT*Q+ youth about what is helpful, we will have people say these new things to the person in the middle. It can be an amazing

process to have such a dramatic change of language. If you are working with a group that know each other you can jump right into saying positive things that they admire/like/notice about the person in the middle. Another variation is to have people become allies with the one in the middle. Have someone join the individual in the middle to talk back to the voices; this can then be added to, having three, four or more people in the middle responding to a voice, or multiple voices. If you are doing an exploration around being an ally this can be very effective.

Images
(Attending, Accepting, Advancing, Saying yes, and Creativity)

Using images created by the human body is a foundation of Augusto Boal's work. There are dozens of variations on image-based theatre, if you are interested in exploring this approach see Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. Here I will write about a couple simple versions of image work. I've built entire complex full-length theatre productions starting with very simple image exercises, like the ones below. This is the last activity covered in this article. I have chosen to end with this because it leads into dozens of other activities and ways of working.

If there is time to play and explore images, then you can start by having people go into pairs. One person is the sculptor and one is the clay. The sculptor molds the clay through moving different parts of their body (lifting arms, tilting and twisting the torso, bending the knee, etc). Some people prefer not to be touched; I always have people start by gaining permission to physically move the clay. If someone does not want to be touched then the sculptor can use imaginary strings (like a puppeteer manipulating a marionette), the sculptor can also use imitation to show the clay what to do. This is particularly helpful with facial expressions. It is important that people do not say what to do. Part of the purpose of this process is to work non-verbally, to move and have the clay ascribe meaning through what the body reveals, not words. To begin, have people just play with the shape possibilities of the clay without trying to create anything in particular. Then give people a specific theme to explore. People create a static sculpture of the theme/idea. For example if you were doing a session based upon Garfat and Fulcher's Characteristics of a CYC Approach you might say concepts such as: love, relationship, hanging-in, reflection, rhythmicity (take a photo of this one and send it to me, I'm fascinated to see how people would represent it), strength, etc.

If you have less time or don't want to do a lot of pair work, there is a group version that I frequently use. Bring everyone into a circle. Explain that they are going to be making images/representations of different concepts. I tell people to think of it as a photo, or a screen capture from a video. I generally show an example or three. Have everyone turn around so they are facing out of the circle. Call out a word/phrase/idea based upon the theme you are exploring. Give everyone a few

seconds to think of how they will represent the idea through an image made with their bodies, I usually count "one, two, three" out loud and then say "turn". When they turn around, everyone freezes with the image and they hold this for a few seconds. Ask them to try and keep the shape but look around at what others are doing. Everyone then turns back around. I do this with a variety of words. If I'm exploring a particular theme I may start with more concrete words and then move to more abstract or expressionistic words. So if I was exploring boundaries as a CYC practitioner I might do a sequence such as: close, stop, touch, friend, professional, acceptance, distant, discomfort, comfort, rigid, balanced, entangled, and breach.

If it is a large group, I'll have half the group do an image while the other half watches the images, they can switch after each image or after a short series of two to five.

If you're interested in looking at relationships, having people share, or building some scenarios, then have people go to someone else whose image they think somehow relates or connects to their own (you can also do this with the first version above). They then form a relationship with those two (or more) images. This moves into "tableaus", images with more than one-person. From here there are endless variations. Make other tableaus from before and after this tableau/event. Show the tableaus to the rest of the group and have people give it a name/title. Ask people who are looking at it whom the different characters are. Ask people in the tableaus to start speaking, as their character. Have the characters move on a clap to "the next frame, as though it was a movie". Create ideal and worst case tableaus inspired from their original images, and then create tableaus that tell the story (going either way- from worst to ideal or ideal to worst). Develop scenes (with or without words) based upon the tableaus. Where you go from here is limited only by your creativity and the group's desires. Look at *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* for many additional ideas.

The debrief process with image work really depends on what you are trying to explore and what you want to achieve. Standard questions I ask are: what did you see, what was the story, how were the characters in the image feeling, what did they want, what was preventing them from getting what they wanted, etc.

Conclusion

The games above are small windows of encouragement and, hopefully, inspiration. I want to encourage all of us to think about how we support learning with each other as CYC practitioners, how we see our work, and how we understand our roles. The concepts of improvisation that have been outlined over this series of articles, saying yes… and…, attending, accepting, advancing, creativity, spontaneity, voice, listening, and playing games, are all ways of understanding what it is that we do. Improvisation takes years to become good at, and one is never done improving. It is a skill that needs to be exercised, practiced,

and performed. Within all that work, it can be scary and it's also a huge amount of fun. Great improvisers enjoy improvising, when they make mistakes they learn from them. They look at what went wrong and they return to the basics. This is true of theatre, dance, music, sculpture, and every other form of improvisation that I'm aware of.

This approach would serve CYCs well. We need skills & technique to work with young people and their families, we will never be finished making mistakes (and hopefully never stop learning from them either), and our work will only remain fulfilling for us if we can find the joy. While we as CYCs face many obstacles, when we approach those we work with the characteristics of a CYC improviser we will find the opportunities in the challenges. We will find the joy. We will find ways to say yes to the people we are with, in relationship.

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Are we there yet? Oxymoron or paradox

John Digney and Maxwell Smart

What do I know of man's destiny? I could tell you more about radishes.
Samuel Barclay Beckett – *(Irish novelist, playwright, theatre director, and poet)*

It's the steady, quiet, plodding ones who win in the lifelong race.
Robert W. Service – *(Scottish poet)*

Introduction

In 2013 our good friend and CYC colleague James Freeman wrote a paper titled, *The Field of Child & Youth Care: Are We There Yet?* In this article James spoke about many of the factors that have contributed to the growth of the 'Child and Youth Care' field. He explored practitioner motivation, reviewed contemporary themes and debated the pros and cons of the professionalization of our field (Freeman, 2013). So, our recent re-reading of this article has given rise to this months title … of course it is usual and healthy for people to question each other and themselves in this way BUT it was the sub-title to his paper that have directed us and asked us to ask each other, '*are we there yet*'?

Thinking about the Journey

How often do we hear this annoying little phrase when we are on a journey (mostly being uttered by an anxious or impatient kid)? Indeed one of the authors had a very recent experience that scored 101 on the 'annoy-o-meter'. The car was loaded (for a relatively long journey), all passengers had climbed in and just as soon as the seat belts were clicked into place the youngest child (with a smile on his face) asked the dreaded question, 'are we there yet'?

Maybe our reaction could be described as disproportionate; after all it IS reasonable to ask about our progress when on a journey - particularly when children are developmentally not at a stage of conceptualising time or distance. When the phrase is uttered it is no more than a

checking in, a wondering, a request for an update – but in the search for a new response, one that might slow down the incessant asking, one of the authors has overanalysed the question and come to the conclusion that the phrase is illogical (yes, Mr Spock) and can only be answered in one way, i.e. '**no we are not'**. If the hypothetical answer to the question was to be 'yes' then this would indicate an arrival at the destination – so in all earnestness we cannot now be 'there' – because we would be (in a proximal way) 'here'. This is why we have posed the question, 'paradox or oxymoron?' in our title.

Word Play – It's only Words, or is it?

Words and phrases are part of how we communicate with each other and young people and words help us piece together the immense yet forever incomplete jigsaw that is our field. Words contain meaning and intent, nuances and inferences, with many theories on how this all works. For example, Ferdinand de Saussure conceptualized language as a system of differences where each element is defined by its difference from other elements. He referred to words and phrases as 'signifiers', with a particular meaning attributed to them using various conventions.

On occasion though, we use words or phrases which seem to exist outside the normal conventions, paradoxes and oxymora being two examples. A paradoxis a sentence or group of sentences which is seemingly contradictory to the general truth but contains an implied truth and an oxymoron is a combination of two contradictory or opposite words, which may produce a dramatic effect but does not make sense. So, does the phrase 'are we there yet' fit into either category?

From Here to There

Now neither of the writers wants to embark on a piece of intellectual navel gazing, nor do we wish to pretend that caring and thinking in our field are not necessary parts of the same process: - thoughts, feelings, actions and interpretations are the very essence of Child and Youth Care. What we wish to do is generate debate and discussion relevant to direct practice however we can … so making sense of whether we **are there yet**, is probably only the eternal search for the truth about our place in the scheme of things (Fewster, 1990).

The 'truth' (if there is one) is that we are never 'there yet' because we are always in a state of evolution and with that in mind we must always seek to meet youth where they are at and not where we expect them to be. Consequently we will never have a clear terminus to end our journey, there is never going to be a 'there' but there will always be a here. It is here that we are now and it is here that we prepare for the next part of the journey, to the next here.

Yet, as carers we are often pushed towards an illusionary destination, via the plans and pens of our ill-constructed social care systems; 'find the pathway plan for this young person to reach independence'

(as they near chronological/legal adulthood) and 'we need to help this child be independent and not dependent of the help of social services' - statements we regularly encounter in reviews and hearings as we examine the arbitrary progress of a youth in care – somewhere in here lies a professional paradox.

For kids in difficulty, independence is not about whether they can simply make a meal, or even budget, (though these are helpful life skills to have), true independence is about making good decisions and having skills to take positive control of one's life and they live in the 'here'. It is about being secure and supported in positive relationships - a more accurate measure of progress and a more truthful destination.

Are We (T)here Yet?

Going back to our undergraduate essay writing days we have decided to examine the words in the title of our article – to look at the possible definitions and ways to interpret.

- **Are** – When we hear this word in the middle of a sentence it can be in the context of listening to someone giving us their 'statement of fact' about a 'group' of something – such as, 'pigs are smelly', children are small, 'all staff are pigs'. It can also be used to inform us about the intent of several persons – 'we are going on holidays to Spain this year', 'we are getting the bus to the cinema later', 'we are gonna smoke some weed in our bedrooms and there's nothing you can do about it'. However, when used at the beginning of a sentence this word takes on different usage. When we hear someone being a sentence we immediately know that we are about to be asked a question (maybe a rhetorical one) - 'are you keeping well?', 'are you aware you left your lights on', 'are you going to try and stop me?'
- **We** – If like us you have a Celtic origin, hearing the word we can make us think of something small (wee) or it might even make you think of urine (wee). If you are French you will likely believe someone is saying 'yes' (oui). The spelling however in this case (we), makes us think in the plural, referring to the person saying it and at least one other (who may or may not be yourself); 'we would like to watch MTV please', 'can we all go to the zoo?', 'you must be joking, we aren't eating this shit'.
- **There** – This is an especially complex word, one that can be used as an adverb – 'we went there last year', a pronoun – 'I comes from there also', an noun – ' you're on your own from there on', an adjective – 'ask that man over there', an interjection - 'There! I've finished at last' or an idiom – 'been there, done that'. Also the word can projects a sense of distance – either in time or location – 'there was once a land, far, far away' or 'he is living way over there'.
- **Yet** – mostly used as an adverb – 'please don't leave yet', 'there is yet

time' and of course the hated, 'are we there yet'. The word can also be used as a conjunction, 'it was really good, yet there was room from improvement'.

So THERE you ARE – an English lesson from two Celtic scholars and YET as WE write this we can almost hear you ask, if there is a point to all this and if so, 'are we there yet'? The points, for there are two that we are raising relate to communication is individual and is very much open to misinterpretation and secondly, our preoccupation with getting to a perceived destination or end point can adversely affect the enjoyment of or potency of the journey.

Hermeneutics

Making meaning is a complex and everyday process, where we are expected to decipher the meaning behind behaviours and the hidden meaning contained in the words that are spoken to us. When we are asked, 'are we there yet?' do we make meaning that the young person is bored and eager to arrive? Or do we think that they are really enjoying the trip and your company and will be upset or disappointed when the destination is reached? Or perhaps we think that they are nervous about arriving and are dreading what is on the other side of the journey. Knowing the kids, knowing their context, knowing their previous experiences all give us something to work from when we set about making meaning about what a kid says or does.

One 'arrival place' can be a new placement, requiring 'admission'. When meaning-making is considered by people from within our profession we discover that lots of youth in care view the experience of 'coming into care' very differently to staff. For young people the experience is full of trepidation of an uncertain future and questions like, 'will I be okay?', 'will I be safe?' or 'will I be bullied, hurt or abused'? For staff it might be full of intent of providing safety, positive relationship and future support. It may also be anticipation of future difficulties ahead; perceiving and judging the youth that before knowing them at all and based only on passed experiences of kids encountered in similar situations.

The place where a youth anticipates the journey will come to an end (or whether they consider it will end at all) is probably not even on the radar, for them or us at this time. And yet we know that if young people are to be helped to heal it will happen during the journey and not at the end. The potent effects of our work occur in the time we have from the start of the journey until it ends – so what's that big rush?

Enjoying the Journey

As we travel along through the journey of life, we can often miss what is occurring around us and yet the tiny moments encountered in our day-to-day interactions with kids can point the way to a better future rather than a reinforced troubling past. For this to be the case we must pay notice to the journey and get the kids to do so too, these moments come into existence along the way. We need to be present in the 'here and now' – 'then and there' is no gone to us now.

Noticing the moments when young people build capacity, learn a new skill, engage in a generous act towards another all assist in creating enjoyment on the journey and when we are enjoying ourselves we are not in such a hurry for it to end. Kids start to see that there are adults who value them for who they are. As they see us recognising these moments of growth they also begin to see staff as people alongside them in this life journey, which can help them be who they can be.

As moments come along in the most unexpected of situations; in outings and activities; in journeys to and from; in the jokes and shared remembrances of fun and laughter (and also pain and crisis) a shared experience is cast. These moments (which are happening all the time in our shared life-space) if missed are gone forever and if we are preoccupied with the destination, they will be missed for sure. These are the stations along the way in the 'here and now'; they are the moments in which the life destinations can be determined, they hold the keys to hope and courage.

So if the paradox is that, 'we can never be **there**' maybe the here needs to be our focus with kids. As we gaze upon the here and now, rather than giving it an occasional glance, we are reminded that 'getting there' is not always the goal … after all Robert Service did advise us, 'the steady quiet plodding ones often win the lifelong race'.

Maxie and Digs

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IKAMVAYOUTH

How a simple tutoring programme can make a difference

Zoe Mann

What began 12 years ago as a small group of volunteers and learners tutoring on a Saturday morning at a school in Khayelitsha, has now become a national organisation operating in five provinces, replicating seriously impressive results.

Does it work?

IkamvaYouth's results have been continuously notable since the programme's establishment and over the last 5 years:

- 894 learners have reached matric
- 87% have passed; 87% of these were bachelor or diploma passes
- 66% of those who passed accessed tertiary institutions
- Overall, 84% of those who wrote matric accessed post-school opportunities (tertiary, learnerships, employment or upgrading key subjects).

How does it work?

These results are achieved in a simple and cost-effective way. IkamvaYouth offers free homework help and tutoring to young people who are living in contexts of poverty and who are disadvantaged by a lack of quality schools or out-of-school structures that support their learning.

Volunteer tutors work with small groups – we aim for a ratio of 1 tutor to 5 learners. The learner brings the work they are struggling with and the tutor facilitates questioning and peer-to-peer learning which builds the learners' problem-solving and critical thinking skills, their confidence and proficiency in speaking English, and enables real-time and individualized feedback so that learners can identify the gaps in their own knowledge and build their understanding from there.

This pedagogical approach allows learners to drive their own learning agenda. Learners self-select to be part of the programme and there are no academic pre-requisites to join. However, in order to keep their place in the programme, learners need to meet a minimum 75% attendance requirement at sessions 3 times per week, and every day for two weeks in the June/July holidays. This is a key lever in the significant academic gains that are made. We are working with learners who want to learn. There is no teaching only learning.

A large proportion of the volunteer tutors are ex-learners who are paying forward the help they received and enabling the next generation of learners to overcome the odds, just as they have done. These inspirational role models shift the perception about what is possible. It is also due to the volunteer's familiarity with the context that they are able to offer relevant advice and guidance from experience. The positive supportive relationships that form between the tutors and learners builds a strong sense of family and belonging.

Why does it work?

All of IkamvaYouth's activities and the organisational culture that supports these programmes and activities are based on a strong set of values. It is not so much the values themselves that are important, (although responsibility, collaboration, honesty, integrity, and giving back are pretty important!), but the way in which staff, tutors and learners are encouraged to relate to these and their own values and model them in their behaviours and actions.

> *"IkamvaYouth is not just an educational organisation, it is also an organization of personal growth and empowerment, which takes youth through a journey of self-discovery where one gets to build their personal values and learn the importance of respect, loyalty, dedication and self-discipline. IkamvaYouth has truly lifted me off the ground to new and better heights."*
> — Benny Matlou, Learner.

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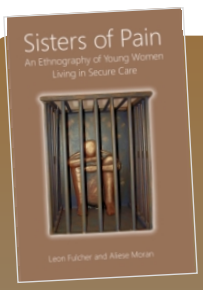
It is this combination of tutoring, role-modeling, and career guidance that produces a sustainable change and is ultimately helping people to lift themselves and others out of poverty. In 2013, IkamvaYouth tracked down and surveyed 70% of all the young people who'd ever been a part of the programme. The results were extremely encouraging and showed that IkamvaYouth learners are far more likely to hold a degree (48% compared to 5.3% of total population) and their median income once graduating is far closer to the median income for a white South African, thereby redressing the racially aligned inequality that plagues the country.

This is the long-term aim of the programme, and most educational programmes that are being offered to learners in the after-school space. The objective is to produce productive, active and happy citizens who are able to access jobs that not only provide economic stability for themselves and their family, but that also increase the individuals overall well-being and positions them to be able to pay forward the help that they received so that inequality is gradually but tangibly redressed. IkamvaYouth is now looking to work with other such organisations offering similar programmes in order to replicate these results.

There are many ways that collaboration can occur. Currently IkamvaYouth is exploring ways of training and supporting other organisations, engaging in skill/training exchanges, connecting organisations with funding opportunities and holding communities of practice that begin to share best practices in the field. The aim is to help build a sector of effective after-school organisations and programmes that can provide learners with the safety, support, exposure, skills, resources, connections, experiences, and the love and attention that allows them to reach their full potential.

If you would like to find out more about the organisation; volunteering, donating or working together, do not hesitate to contact me at zoe@ikamvayouth.org



SISTERS OF PAIN: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF YOUNG WOMEN LIVING IN SECURE CARE
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Facilitating positive change for children, youths and families

Key working and the quality of relationships in secure accommodation

Amy McKellar and Andrew Kendrick

This article discusses the findings of a study which aimed to gain an insight into the views of young people in secure accommodation and their residential workers about the quality of relationships and, in particular, to explore the role of the key worker. Five themes were identified in the research: participation in the matching process between young people and residential workers; the level of consistency in the relationship between key worker and young person; the scope of the key worker role in secure care; the frequency and purpose of key time; and the barriers to achieving key time. The findings are located in the broader literature about the importance of relationships in social work and residential child care.

Key words: Looked after children; key worker role; secure care; worker-child relationships

Introduction

Secure accommodation occupies a unique position that encompasses both the child welfare and youth justice systems (Harris & Timms, 1993; Walker *et al.,* 2005). Although secure accommodation is as 'accommodation provided for the purpose of restricting the liberty of children' (Secure Accommodation (Scotland) Regulations 2012, 2(1)), it is expected to provide care and control and also to effect behavioural change (Walker *et al.,* 2005). Barclay and Hunter highlight that, 'secure accommodation caters for two populations, those requiring care for their own safety and those who present a risk to others' (Barclay and Hunter, 2008, p. 167). Young people among both populations have been shown to display significant levels of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Goldson, 2000; Walker *et al.,* 2005). As such, residential workers in secure care are tasked with working with the most vulnerable young people in society (Cameron & Maginn, 2008). They are a key component of the care package and are expected to be confident, knowledge-

able and skilled in order to provide a consistent approach to the young people's care and establish a safe and stable environment (Gibbs & Sinclair, 1998; Whittaker, Archer & Hicks, 1998).

Relationships in Secure Accommodation

Over twenty years ago, the Skinner Report stated that in residential child care, '… the role of the establishment can only be achieved through positive relationships between staff and young people in a safe, stable and caring environment' (Skinner, 1992, pp. 18 -19). However, there has been a concern that the focus on the scandals of abuse in care has led to a distancing of this relationship which has hampered residential care practice (Kendrick & Smith, 2002; Kendrick, 2013). Similarly, in the youth justice field there has been a shift from relationship-based practice to a focus on risk assessment and programmed interventions (Batchelor & McNeill, 2002). There is a wide variety of programmed interventions used in secure care and this type of intervention is generally credited as being effective in changing offending behaviour. Some, however, have questioned the appropriateness of this type of intervention with young people who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties (Pitts, 2002; Bullock *et al*, 1998). McNeill *et al*. (2005) contend that 'relationship skills in particular are at least as critical in reducing re-offending as the programme content' (McNeill *et al*. 2005, p. 5).

Relationships can therefore be viewed as fundamental in enabling positive change to occur (Burnett & McNeill, 2005). However, building strong, positive relationships with young people is not an inevitable consequence of being in secure accommodation. While the locked and closed setting has been described as 'fertile ground' for relationship building, the 'enforced nature of the placement could lead to superficial rather than meaningful engagement on the part of the young person' (Smith & Milligan, 2004, p. 188). It is the qualities and skills in relationship building possessed by residential workers which have been asserted as fundamental.

Research has consistently shown that young people evaluate a service primarily on the personal qualities of residential workers and the relationships established with them (Hill, 1999; Kendrick & Smith, 2002). However, research also indicates that many young people struggle with the residential worker's 'dual remit of care and control' (Barry & Moodie, 2008, p. 60).

Positive and effective working relationships should be strived for. The reality of working in residential care, however, can make this a difficult aspiration to achieve, particularly in light of high levels of staff absence and restrictions on the time residential workers have to allocate to building good quality relationships.

In addition, these relationships are initiated at differing times during a young person's placement and in conjunction with the establishment of new relationships, previous relationships end. This can occur on numerous occasions including on

admission to secure care, on allocation of and changes in key workers, on changing units within the secure campus and at the end of placement. Because the official guidance stipulates that secure accommodation should be used for the minimum amount of time required, these changes can occur over a relatively short period of time and this instability may compromise the young person's ability to trust others (Smith *et al*., 2005).

A further significant barrier to building positive relationships is the effect of the numerous scandals and inquiries into residential care. These have highlighted the potential for relationships between residential workers and young people to become abusive (Kendrick, 1998; 2008, 2012). The fear of possible allegations has become a significant deterrent for residential workers in building close, working relationships with young people (Kendrick & Smith, 2002; Whittaker, Archer & Hicks, 1998). However, Kent (1997) illustrates the consequences of discouraging close relationships and the potential for this to lead to, 'sterile care environments that may be equally abusive in terms of their impact on children and young people' (Kent, 1997, p. 23).

Key Working

The Skinner Report (1992) emphasised the importance of every young person having a 'special person' during their placement in residential care. Within secure accommodation this 'special person' criterion is fulfilled through the allocation of a key worker (Scottish Executive, 2005).

The concept of key working was introduced in a report published by the Residential Care Association (RCA) and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW). This concept was based on 'link worker schemes' operating during the 1960s in children and families services and was an attempt to blur the boundaries between practice in field social work and residential care. It was proposed that a key worker would be allocated and the key worker would have full responsibility, including decision making, for the care of a service user admitted to a residential establishment (Mallinson, 1995).

This document promoted accountability in decision making and collaborative working as a means of improving standards of practice and providing continuity of care for service users. Despite the endorsement given to the importance of joint working between field and residential workers, this report was criticised for ignoring the, 'power and value dimensions of entrenched cultural and organisational rigidities' (Mallinson, 1995, p. 13). Sinclair and Gibbs (1998) highlighted the point that the role of the residential worker has historically been characterised by low status, poor pay and conditions, high staff turnover and low staff morale. As a result, the role of the key worker became increasingly ambiguous with a focus on key working as an internal function of residential care (Mallinson, 1995).

Within this limited scope each residential establishment began to interpret and develop their own general description of key worker duties. In essence, the key worker became an individual worker with whom the service user could relate to whilst in placement and who would enable their individual day-to-day needs to be met within a group care setting. Key workers were involved in activities such as supporting daily living, acting as an advocate, counselling, recording, arranging activities and liaison with family members (Mattison & Pistrang, 2000).

However, the daily contact with the service user enables the key worker to develop an extensive and detailed knowledge of the service user and their needs. This information is a vital component in decision making and care planning and it has been argued that the key worker becomes a crucial and integral part of the service user's network. There has been a renewed drive to strengthen and develop the role of the key worker and it has been proposed that the key worker should become involved before, during and after a young person's admission to residential care (Mallinson, 1995; Mattison & Pistrang, 2000).

Methodology

The research was carried out in one secure care unit and involved six interviews with young people and six interviews with residential workers. While this is a small scale study, given the lack of research focused on the role of key worker, it offers useful insights into the benefits and tensions of key working from the perspectives of young people and residential workers.

Participants and the Secure Unit

Six residential workers participated in this study; five were female and one was male. All of the residential workers had HNC and SVQ Level 3 qualifications and two were undertaking the SVQ Level 4 qualification. The six young people who were involved in this research were all male, ranging in age from 15 to 17. For five of the young people this was the first time they had been placed in secure accommodation; the other young person had been admitted to secure care on one previous occasion. The length of time the young people had been placed in secure care ranged from two weeks to 21 months.

The secure unit in which this research took place is part of a network of schools operated by a non-profit organisation. At the time of the research, the secure unit had 24 secure beds divided into four units of six, each with distinct and specific objectives.

Research Method and Design

Semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate tool for use in this study as they allowed specific areas to be covered whilst providing the opportunity for participants to discuss matters important to them. This also allowed for participants' responses to be probed and explored further (Robson, 2011).

Two activities were incorporated into the interview process. Barker and Weller (2003) suggest that the incorporation of informal participatory techniques may reduce young people's anxieties and encourage them to participate. However, they caution that activities created by an adult researcher may not be viewed by young people as 'fun'. This may provide an explanation for the reluctance of the young people and residential workers to participate in these activities during the interview process.

The head of the secure unit and the head of care services were approached and both authorised access to participants following discussion with the organisation's board of managers. Prior to undertaking this research, ethical approval was sought and gained through the University of Strathclyde's procedures. Ahead of the interviews all participants were informed of the purpose and process of the research. Information sheets were provided and informed written consent was sought and obtained from each young person, their parents if they were under age 16 and the residential workers who participated. The information provided to the young people was designed to be age appropriate.

The participants' and the parents' permissions were sought to allow the interviews to be recorded and all agreed, except one young person who agreed for handwritten notes to be taken. It was explained that their responses would remain confidential and identifying information would be withheld. However, it was made clear that if any child protection concerns were disclosed this would have to be shared.

Analysis

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim using the interview schedule as the initial framework. Thematic analysis was carried out, and primary themes of relationships and key work were used to organise analysis. Further sub-themes were identified: participation in the matching process; consistency in relationships; the scope of the key worker role; the frequency and purpose of key time; and barriers to key time. The responses of residential workers and young people were compared and contrasted (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings

Participation in the Matching Process between Young People and Residential Workers

The effectiveness of key working has been directly linked to the quality of relationship between service user and residential worker. Mallinson asserts that the matching process between residential worker and young person, 'is not an end in itself' but 'marks the beginning of a relationship' (Mallinson, 1995, p. 126). However, the majority of residential workers and half of the young people who participated in this study stated that their views had not been sought regarding the matching process.

... I didn't really have a say...because when you move in (the Unit Manager) tells you, tells...the staff who's gonna be your key worker... (Young Person).

Of the young people who had been consulted they stipulated this was not the normal procedure. Therefore, it would appear this decision is made independently by the management team of the secure unit. The young people in this study, however, felt it was important they had a say in who would be allocated as their key worker. The young person's right to have their views taken into account in matters that affect them is a key principle of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1990. This could be considered as applicable in this decision making process, particularly as the key worker becomes the individual responsible for ensuring the young person's day-to-day needs are met (Mattison & Pistrang, 2000). Given the significance of this process, discussion and negotiation between the young person, residential worker and management should be promoted.

The young people who participated in this study suggested their Key Worker should be:

...the person you get on best with... (Young Person).

The young people in the study identified a number of relational factors as significant in a positive relationship with a residential worker, as shown in Table 1.

These are consistent with findings of previous research into important positive traits of residential workers (Hill, 1999; Kendrick & Smith, 2002).

However, there may be tensions in allowing young people to select their key worker according to these criteria, for example in terms of the relative popularity of residential workers. Such potential difficulties serve to highlight the importance of open discussions and negotiations between the young person, residential

TABLE 1: RELATIONAL FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

Important Relational Factors	Positive Traits of Residential Workers
Approachable and Easy To Talk To	Easy To Talk To
Listening To You	Good Listener
Having A Sense Of Humour	Good Sense of Humour
Respecting You	Respectful
Believing You	Honesty

worker and management (Mallinson, 1995).

Level of Consistency in the Relationship between Key Worker and Young Person

At the time the interviews were being conducted all of the young people had an allocated key worker. Only two, however, had been allocated the same key worker throughout their placement. The other four young people stated they had experienced numerous changes in their allocated key worker. The reason for experiencing a number of changes in allocated key worker was explained by a residential worker and young person.

> *They (young people) go to the Assessment Unit and they have a worker there and then they are put in a unit, it could be the Remand Unit and then they are sentenced and they are put in the Sentenced Unit but the member of staff doesn't move with them...* (Residential worker)

> *That's just it, you get a worker in every unit...* (Young Person)

This exemplifies not only the potential number of key workers a young person could be allocated but also highlights the number of units within the secure campus a young person could be resident in. Therefore, it can inferred that the young person does not only experience the relationship with one key worker ending and beginning with another, but also the relationships they had built with residential workers and young people are terminated and established dependent on their experience of changes in unit. A study carried out by Garfat (1998) showed the importance of continuity in relationships for young people and the detrimental impact this level of instability could have on the quality of relationships between residential workers and young people.

The relationships established in residential care have been shown to assist young people to break the cycle of poor relationships and provide them with a secure base (Gilligan, 2009). However, given the level of variance and unpredictability of relationships in secure care, a young person's ability to trust others may be compromised and their reluctance to commit and invest in relationships with residential workers may be reinforced. Research has consistently highlighted trust as an important characteristic of the relationship between a young person and residential worker. (Barry & Moodie, 2008). For the most part, young people this was reflected in this study, although some young people who participated felt that residential workers were reluctant to trust them.

> *...most of the time they don't give you much trust, like with the cutlery and stuff...they always, always check...* (Young Person)

It would appear that although the residential workers stated it was important to trust the young people in their care, the

safe care measures they undertake as part of their remit to ensure safety within the unit are perceived by the young people as acts of mistrust. This could make the establishment of positive working relationships increasingly difficult and their use as a catalyst for change less likely, particularly as it has been shown that reparative work with young people is embedded in the relationship with the worker and can not easily be taken over by another (Batchelor & McNeill, 2002).

The Scope of Key Worker Role in Secure Care

The key worker role has been firmly established as an internal function of residential care. Within secure accommodation, however, the scope of this role appears to be further reduced to within an individual unit. The key worker should provide continuity in the care experience of the young person, although it would appear the practical implications of being resident in secure accommodation prevents this from being achieved (Mallinson, 1995).

There was to a degree consistency between the residential workers' and the young people's views on the tasks and role of the key worker. This was illustrated by one young person.

> *...it's like another worker but they do your paperwork and phone your social worker* (Young Person).

Although this perhaps minimises the role of the key worker, the responses gained from the residential workers also tended to describe administrative tasks such as writing reports, liaising with other agencies and attending meetings.

Another function of the key worker role highlighted by both the residential workers and young people was to ensure that key time with the young person was undertaken. Key time is generally defined as the young person and key worker spending individual one-to- one time together.

Frequency and Purpose of Key Time

All of the young people who participated in this study advised they did receive key time. However, the frequency of this varied significantly, ranging from once every two weeks to once every back shift, which could potentially be four times per week. Although all participants agreed that a young person could request key time, it would appear the frequency is primarily dependent on the key worker.

The importance of this one to one time with the young person was discussed by a residential worker:

> *...it maybe makes them feel good that you want to spend time, you're actually signalling I want to listen to you, so come on it's our time...* (Residential Worker).

It can, therefore, be inferred that key time can assist a young person to feel important and appears to be a key element in ensuring an individualised service is provided in a group care setting. However, given the variance in the frequency of key

time, there is the potential to signal to the whole resident group that some young people are viewed as more important than others dependent on how often their key worker makes individual time to spend with them (Barry & Moodie, 2008).

There was general agreement between all of the participants that both the residential worker and the young person could contribute in deciding what was covered during key time. The Social Work Services Inspectorate (SWSI) (1996) concentrated on the implementation of services to address the difficulties that had resulted in a young person's admission to secure care. The extent to which these difficulties could be addressed during a secure placement, however, has been challenged (Walker *et al.*, 2002). It has been argued that being resident in secure accommodation can make it more difficult to address the reasons for placement because of the need to focus on the priorities for the institution rather than the individual young person (Walker *et al.*, 2005).

This appears consistent with the descriptions provided by the residential workers and young people who portray key time as an opportunity to gain a general overview of how the young person is feeling and managing within the placement. There does not appear to be a distinct focus on addressing the difficulties which resulted in the young person being placed in secure care but rather it seems there is a reliance on identifying and implementing programmed interventions to target these issues.

All of the residential workers consulted felt that key time was beneficial for young people and provided them with an opportunity to 'offload'. However, for most young people, there was more ambivalence about the benefits of key time.

> *Doesn't make a difference...* (Young Person).

Barriers to Key Time

Difficulties in ensuring key time was undertaken were attributed to what was happening in the unit during a shift, including shortages in residential workers, family visits, mobility and leisure activities. It was suggested by a residential worker that there should be

> *...a slot for key time...and say that's so and so's key time...even if it means bringing in another member of staff to cover...* (Residential Worker).

This suggestion could ensure every young person is allocated individual time with their key worker. In residential child care there tends to be a greater focus on what could be described as informal key time and working within the life space using day–to-day interactions to both build relationships and effect change (Smith, 2009). However, the need to have specific, allocated one to one time may be indicative of the drive to evidence work being undertaken with young people.

Conclusion

This article gives an insight into the views of young people in secure accommodation and their residential workers about the key worker role and the quality of relationships.

The original concept of key working was introduced as a means of bridging the gap between field social work and residential care. However, the scope of this role became limited to an internal function of residential care (Mallinson, 1995). This study found that the key worker role within secure accommodation appears to be further limited to within a single unit of the secure campus, and that a young person may move unit on a number of occasions during their placement. Subsequently, relationships between a young person and key worker, residential worker or other residents are established and terminated on a regular basis during placement. This could potentially lead to a high degree of inconsistency and instability for a young person which has been shown to be detrimental to the quality of relationships established, and reduces the continuity of the young person's care experience. This may also reduce the ability to effectively promote a reduction in re-offending as it has been shown that young people require consistent and enduring relationships to meet this objective.

The role of the key worker, as described by the participants in this study, is predominantly an administrative task. These responses are also consistent with role outlined in literature, which suggests that the key worker is the person who meets the day-to-day needs of the young person and is their main point of contact. An important function highlighted by all participants was to ensure that key time was undertaken with the young person. However, this study shows there is a high degree of variance in the frequency in which this occurs. This could potentially lead to difficulties within the resident group, particularly if the young people perceive the level of one-to-one time with a key worker as dependent on the relative value placed on some residents over others.

Within key time it would appear the predominant task is to review the young person's day- to-day needs and there appears to be no direct work undertaken to address the difficulties which resulted in placement, a predominant function of secure care. This may be indicative of research which suggests that the needs of the institution take priority over the needs of the young person. There also appear to be a reliance on identifying and implementing structured programmes to address the difficulties resulting in admission which reflects the current trend emerging in the youth justice system.

Overall, there appears to be a high level of inconsistency and instability within the young person and key worker relationships in the research site and changes can occur frequently over a short period of time. There could also be more clarity on the role and function of the key worker and key time. These insights point the way

to improving and strengthening policy and practice in relation to the key worker role in residential care and in focusing on the relationship between residential worker and young person.

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From: *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care* – June 2013, Vol.12, No.1, pp46-57

It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.

— Frederick Douglass

Metaphor and Poetry

Laura Steckley

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I had the pleasure, this week, of experiencing my first year students' group presentations for their leadership module on the MSc in Advanced Residential Child Care. The students had synthesised their prior knowledge and experience with some of their new learning on the course in order to apply it to a hypothetical practice situation. One of the many things that made their presentations such a pleasure was the creativity they brought to the exercise. Imagery, metaphor and even poetry were used to communicate and impress. By 'impress' I don't necessarily mean to make us think favourably of the presentation; instead, I mean their use of these forms of communication left a lasting impression.

A metaphor transfers some aspect of one thing onto another, for example, 'he has a heart of stone'. The cold, hard properties of a stone are being applied to the person's heart. The use of metaphor adds colour to our communication, but it also can help to convey the complex, elusive or intangible. Ideas and emotions are often better understood when they are conveyed using metaphor.

In a piece on *CYC-Online,* Tobin ask why, in times of decreasing resources and increasing problems, we should attend to something as 'literary' as metaphor. He goes on to make a compelling case for the therapeutic benefits of using metaphor in our work with children and young people. I would expand his argument further to include consideration of metaphors and even poetry in relation to staff development and self-care.

One of Tobin's key points is that metaphors not only reflect but shape experience and meaning. He encourages us to explore with children the functionality of the metaphors they use, and to encourage them to engage with metaphors that will serve them better in navigating their worlds.

I think this is good advice for us too. How useful are the metaphors we use to express the thoughts and feelings we have about our work, or the shared ways we understand why we do what we do? Might we use metaphor to help a colleague who is struggling to understand some conceptual aspect of practice? Do our metaphors have explanatory power and deepen our understanding? Do they reinforce our resilience and the rich possibilities in our environments, or do they strengthen our sense of deficit and impoverishment?

I'll offer an example here. I don't know who first coined the term 'bridging experience' but I first became aware of it in Anglin's work . For me, this term captures something that was previously harder to communicate – that for children and young people to get to a more functional place, developmentally, they often need certain kinds of experiences to help them to get there. The metaphor, here, is the bridge that enables travel from one place to another. Part of why I find this so useful is that it places the onus on us as 'experience arrangers' (Phelan) to build such bridges and it implicitly discourages blaming the young person for not being there already. What a neat and tidy way to convey something complex and (for some) counterintuitive – in just two words.

Sometimes our metaphoric thinking and communication is so embedded that we don't even notice it, so the first step might be to step back and look afresh. What are the ways in which we use one thing to stand in for something else that we're trying to understand and convey, even if just to ourselves? For example, I'm beginning to notice when my metaphors are more fixed and negative ('that experience was shit') as opposed to when I use ones that are more fluid and nuanced ('that experience was a mixed bag').

Bullis identifies four levels of consciousness and makes links between two, alpha and beta, and the different ways we use our minds. This has direct implications for the use of metaphor. Beta consciousness is associated with normal, waking awareness; our direct, sensory experience; functions of rational thinking; and linear notions of time and space. Alpha consciousness is characterised by a more physiologically relaxed state and is the realm of dreams, imagination and intuition. Bullis describes the difference between beta and alpha consciousness as the difference between reading a newspaper and reading a poem. The newspaper (in his analogy) is a literal account concerned with analytic questions of who, what, where, when and why. Poetry uses imagery, symbolism and metaphor to move and sensitize the reader. Its purpose isn't to be understood intellectually in a direct, rational way; its purpose is to shift the reader's consciousness.

Mark Krueger frequently included poetry in his contributions to *CYC-Online* (and other CYC publications). He told us that it helped him find hope and understanding – both his own poetry and that of others. Connecting with a sense of hope can have a profound impact on our consciousness, which in turn affects how we experience and make sense of practice.

So I'll close with an offering of a well-known and beloved poem, rich with metaphor, which gives me a sense of hope and deeper understanding about the human condition.

Until next time…

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Wild Geese

by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about your despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting —
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

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Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

At the Kitchen Table

The Time When

Andy Leggett & Gena Morrow

We are back! Sorry about going missing last month.

Gena and I want to thank all the foster parents who have submitted stories so far.

Not surprisingly, many of you are wondering the same thing and I quote one of you… "I am not a writer! What in the blue blazes do I write about?"

And if I may paraphrase one of my heroes in this field, Thom Garfat, who as recently as this morning was kicking my butt to get busy myself " Don't think…just write!"

We want to hear your stories. And w know foster parents can tell stories!

That is what sitting around the Kitchen Table is all about!

Telling stories!

How many times have I heard one of you say "You know, Andy, this reminds me of the time when…"

And, as Thom says... Can you hear the story coming?

"I will never forget the time when ..."

Can you hear the story coming?

"You know, something just like that happened to me yesterday ..."

"I have to tell you. Mary called me yesterday right out of the blue! You remember Mary, my foster daughter. What a handful she was when she first came. She was so small and scared, just a "fart in a mitt" ... but did she give us a run for our money. Remember her first day at school?...Well... "

Can you hear the story coming?

Still its hard sometimes to think of stories to "just write"!

So let us help you do that.

We want you to write about your favourite memory as a foster parent ... don't over think it ... just close your eyes and write about the first thing that pops into your head.

We want you to write about "the time when!"

We want you to write about "the time when" a foster child taught you something.

Or "the time when" a foster child touched your heart….or broke it. or "the time when" a foster care experience touched the lives of your children and

family, or about "the time when" you won't believe what happened during a family vacation.

We want your ideas about other "times when".

Gena ... tell us about "a time when" ...

I remember a time when we were reconsidering fostering. We are "career" foster parents, and we were down to one child; this was not looking like a wise career choice. I had been fostering for years, and had recently married Tony. We had 5 "bio" kids between us, all still at home, a new mortgage, and I had found a new job. We really had no desire to leave fostering, but they wanted us to stay home to care for high needs kids, and we did not have any…a familiar story for many of us I am sure.

One night, as we were chatting before bed, trying to figure out what was next for us, the phone rang. It was a girl I had fostered for a year and a half, several years ago. She had been an angry teen, fighting attempts at direction, home as little as possible, and had made her share of allegations. She moved out at 16, and disappeared from my life. Tony never knew her. I knew that I never reached her, and that I would not see her again.

She said that she had been looking for me for a while, and had discovered through an old neighbor that I had married, changed my name, and moved. So she was going through the phone book, calling everyone with the new last name. She was getting married , and wanted me to stand for her! Her family was alienated from her, but she said that I was her family, and that I had made a real difference in her life. She spoke of the tiny teddy bear ornaments I had collected for her, and how much they meant to her; I had forgotten that I had done that…they were only inexpensive trinkets. She spoke of the example I had been and how she could not forget what I had been to her. By this time Tony "lost it".

And when she heard that we were considering leaving fostering, she "lost it". "Don't you ever!" she said. "Don't you know what a difference you make?" "You can't! Promise me you won't!" There was not much we could say at that point. We were astonished to say the least. So we went to her wedding, and I stood for her. I think Tony had more tears in his eyes than I did! She played an old Carpenters song, "There is Love" that I used to sing and play when she was with me. And she came to visit many times afterwards with her husband and children.

We did not leave fostering. Fifteen years have passed since then, and the memory is as fresh as the day she called. So often we never get to see the impact we have had in the lives of our foster kids. I can live with that. There is such a stigma to being a foster kid that many want to forget they were ever there. But what a difference it made, when my girl let me know that I helped. It was enough to keep us going for many more years.

Now ... somebody else tell us a story. Send it to aleggett@barts.ca

Of Lineages and Callings

Hans Skott-Myhre

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I had reason recently to think about something my old friend and colleague Jim Nelson once said about working with young people. Jim was director, for a time, of one of the most innovative and overtly political youth work projects in North America. The agency was The City Inc. and it was located in South Minneapolis Minnesota. I was reminded of Jim and the city because of a graduate student, here at Brock, Nicholas Saray, who is completing an M.A. thesis in which The City holds a central role. Nicholas' work focuses, at least partially, on the ways in which the rise and fall of City Inc. is demonstrative of certain ways community is formed and foiled by dominant constructions of race, danger and crime.

I am interested in the ways that City Inc. is a part of our history and lineage as Child and Youth Care/Youth Workers that has been largely forgotten and seldom valorized when we give an accounting of who we are and where we came from. Perhaps, this is in part because, in the end, the City Inc. was a failed project.

But I would argue along with Antonio Negri that it is the failed revolutions that hold the most possibility for new worlds and new peoples to come. The successful revolutions are quickly expended and appropriated by new forms of social control and discipline, but the failed revolts still hold the possibility of all that was frustrated and unfulfilled. I would suggest that the legacy of the City Inc. falls into this category.

In his forthcoming thesis, Nicholas Saray notes that the City Inc. began as a youth club in 1967 called the Pychotic City. It was initiated by parents whose children were in the juvenile justice system. I want to pause briefly to note the name of the organization. We, as a field, have largely elided the portions of our history in which grass roots programs emerged in the 1960's across North America to provided space, food and shelter to young people who were dropping out of mainstream society or finding themselves at odds with the justice system because of truancy laws, runaway laws, marijuana and psychedelic drug use or simply racism and homophobia. Such organizations carried the counter cultural ethos of the times with names such as The

Psychotic City and the very well known program in Austin Texas, Middle Earth among others.

The development of these programs was founded in the emerging needs of communities, rather than the dictates of funders and established government commissions. In time, they all succumbed to the bureaucratic impetus of the late 80's and 90's, but their roots and founding memberships were in the communities where they were formed. They were not developed as sites of discipline and conformity, where young people could learn to be well-behaved bourgeois citizens, but as alternatives and havens where one could experiment in alternative modes of living for both staff and young people.

According to Saray, The City Inc having left the moniker Psychotic behind, continued to be focused on healing, growth and advocacy that took account of "contextually relevant systemic forms of oppression." Jim Nelson maintained that it was essential that the agencies development be driven by the needs and aspirations of the community in which it was imbedded. Further, that the struggle of the community should be reflected in the agency's evolving mission and structure. This should include an attention to the tensions derived from the interaction between the agency, the community and governmental agencies and funders.

This was reflected perhaps most dramatically when the community, in which The City was embedded, began to struggle with gang violence in the 1980's. Jim Nelson did something extraordinary at that time. He hired the leaders of key gangs into leadership positions in The City to recognize their legitimate role as leaders within their community. He also, at the same time hired aboriginal elders in key positions for the same set of reasons. In doing this, he acknowledged the actuality of political and social relations in the community the agency served. It was an extremely controversial move and in the end it led to the undoing of The City and Jim's leadership of the agency. (I will refer anyone who is interested in what happened to Nicholas Saray's forthcoming thesis for the details of the unraveling of The City.) For this column, I want to return to the reference I made at the beginning to something Jim once said.

In a talk to a group of youth workers, Jim asked "Who called you to do this work?" It is a provocative question and one that is quite difficult to answer for those of us who work in agencies and environments at some remove from the communities they serve.

Who call us? In Jim's case, The Psychotic City was called forth by the actual community who directed and shaped it in its early years. As time went on, Jim made sure that the community was directly involved by including leaders called by the community on staff. I am reminded of a story I was told by Charles Waldegrave from New Zealand.

Charles was hired to direct a program called the Family Centre in New Zealand. The agency did family work using traditional family therapy techniques using a one way mirror and a team of therapists.

They had reasonably good results with non-indigenous populations, but were having significant issues addressing the needs of the Pacific Island and Maori families who came to the clinic.

Charles decided to seek guidance from an elder in the Maori community he had come to know. He invited him to sit behind the one-way mirror and observe some sessions of the staff working with Maori families. After a short time, the elder just burst out laughing and said this cannot work. Charles then asked him if he would be willing to train his staff in a more culturally appropriate way of working. The elder told him no. He said, the agency needed to hire a Maori counselor to work with the Maori seeking services. Charles agreed to this and put an ad out for just such a counselor.

When the Maori elder saw the ad, he came and saw Charles and said, you cannot pick who this person will be. Our community will send you someone we have selected. If you don't accept who we send, no Maori will come to seek services from you again. The way that you are working is not only ineffective it is harmful. Of course, what was being suggested violated a whole range of labour laws, but Charles persisted and was able to do what he had been asked and the agency began a long process of decolonization. (I would refer anyone interested in that work to the writings of Charles Waldegrave and Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese .)

The question of calling and lineage is complex, nuanced and of critical importance to doing any kind of work with young people, communities and families. Most of us are called to the work by personal trauma, lived experience or a desire to help others. I would suggest that these forms of calling are insufficient justification for imposing our assistance on others. We need to have our calling premised in a common lineage with those we serve. Absent that, we should seek permission from the elders and community leaders to work with others. Before we ask permission to serve, however, we should be sure that we have given the elders an opportunity to provide their own healers and counselors. As Charles' example demonstrates, no amount of training in multi-cultural counseling can prepare us to do the work only those within a certain lineage and tradition can provide.

I would propose, that we all need to investigate our lineages, both as field and as child and youth care/youth workers. Who are our people and how are we defined? By the living and ever shifting needs of a community of people who has called upon us to serve? Or by Bureaucratic fiat or professional dispensation. We cannot call ourselves to serve. And abstract entities like universities or licensing boards cannot provide a sufficient lineage of living struggle and historical grounding. That can only come through actual encounters with those we serve and the humility to ask permission to enter their lives.

Sacred Moments

James Freeman

Abstract

This brief article explains the term "ichi-go ichi-e", a concept from the ancient Japanese tea ceremony and it's application to moments in daily life.

Life is full of both the ordinary and extraordinary. Sometimes we see moments clearly as one or the other as they unfold. Sometimes we have no idea until later reflection. Yet in each moment or interaction there is a sacred element to the experience. The patterns of our everyday life may range from the routine to the remarkable, but all may be regarded with deep respect.

Learning Japanese

Last month at a CYC gathering in Pittsburgh, my friend Will shared a greeting from the Japanese language. One simple phrase got my attention and jolted me in my chair. As soon as the session was over I asked him to tell me more. Moments later we were downloading Japanese text on my phone and digging for deeper meaning around this ancient Japanese idiom.

The phrase, "ichi-go ichi-e", translates roughly to "one encounter, one opportunity". The idea comes from the Japanese tea ceremony and is used to remind those present of the special attention which should be shared for one another during such a gathering.

Those who study the theory and practice of the tea ceremony describe ichi-go ichi-e as "the desirable mental attitude for a chakai tea gathering is…that we should attend…with the earnestness of our

knowledge that this [moment] can never be experienced again" (Omotesenke, 2005, p. 24). One writer describes it as "an art and a spiritual discipline…an occasion to appreciate the simplicity…the company of friends, and simply a moment of purity [with] the objective…to create a relaxed communication between the host and his guests" (Japanese Tea Ceremony, 2011).

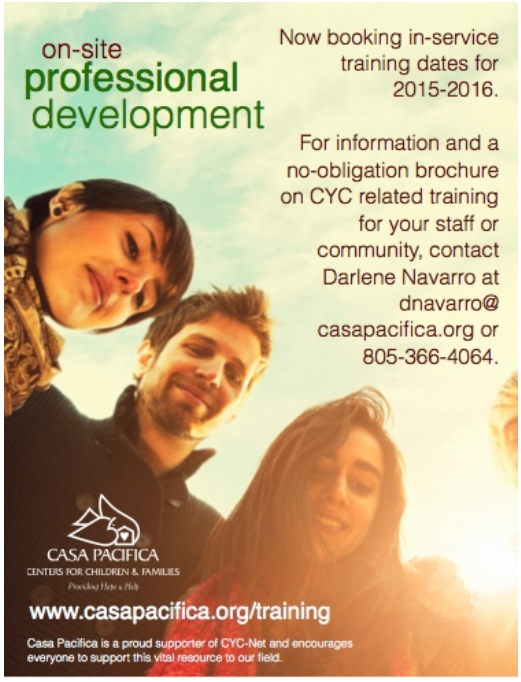
The concept is intriguing because it blends simplicity, depth, and the power that we find in moments of our daily living. It offers a value and depth to our experience because "one day's gathering can never be repeated exactly…[each moment] is indeed a once-in-a-lifetime occasion" (Varley, 1989, p. 187).

This Moment, Right Now, Never Again

Every moment, every exchange has the potential to become deeply meaningful. To our selves, to the other in our interactions, or to both of us. It's a reminder to approach each moment with respect for both what it is and the potential it might bring.

A number of personal moments come to mind when I think of special or extraordinary times: a special wedding anniversary with my wife, the birth of my daughter, a recent special meal with friends, and certain times I've found myself speaking before a crowd. When I reflect on the ordinary or things that "may be so familiar that it feels routine" (Reynolds, 2008) I think of: picking up a child from school, making plans together for the weekend, driving to an event, or cooking a meal together. Each of these moments are unique and can never be recreated. One might attempt to resemble particular people and situations, but they will never be in the same way.

Part of what makes every moment unique is that we are all changing and growing from moment to moment. In child and youth care we don't approach a young person the same way after an event as we did prior to it. Whether the event was a celebration of a school graduation or a struggle through a time of crisis, this is mostly because we are both different, have learned things about each other, and when such a "sacred moment is used… the child's belief in being helped [can be] strengthened" (Winnicott, 1971b, p. 4-5).



Presence in the moment

Ichi-go ichi-e is also the subtitle of the film *Forest Gump* (Abe, 2001), chosen, perhaps, because Tom Hanks' character reminds us that the power of a moment is something we can make a choice to attend to in our daily living. Forest, with all his setbacks, truly experienced his life. When we focus on attending to and noticing moments we find that "[t]he potential space between [us] depends on experience which leads to trust [and] can be looked upon as sacred to the individual, in that it is here that the individual experiences creative living" (Winnicott, 1971a).

Perhaps moments are sacred because of their power to create and build trust. If so then we might benefit from viewing them as set apart and regard them with deep respect.

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JAMES FREEMAN is the training director for Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families. This month he will be hanging out, training, and learning from CYC colleagues in Scotland, South Africa, Idaho, and his home state of California.

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Hey Mister, Your Eyebrows Are Smoking

Nils Ling

Some friends invited us to a bonfire on the beach last weekend. I'm hoping my eyebrows will grow back, say, around Labour Day.

Bonfires on the beach are one of the great joys of summer. There's just something about a bonfire ... it awakens some primal instinct within us. We become just like those first human beings, hundreds of thousands of years ago, who huddled in front of a fire and said "Okay ... who brought the marshmallows?"

When we got to the beach, the first order of business was to make a proper, safe, firepit, then to build the fire. For some reason, I was given the task of turning a pile of driftwood, fallen branches, and loose sticks into the towering inferno.

Which would be fine, except that my major Boy Scout badges were for sewing and making a little leather case for my comb. I was not much for woodsmanship, or fire-startership, or whatever they call it.

I'm okay with kindling – in fact, I'm a whiz when it comes to getting kindling to ignite. And sure enough, in no time flat, I had the tiny stuff blazing merrily away.

But the second I put anything larger than a pencil on any fire, it goes "Sssssssss". And goes out like I'd poured water on it.

This has happened to me before. In fact, I'm sometimes called in as an expert when a really big forest fire breaks out. They fly me in, put a log in my hands, and I throw it on the fire from a helicopter. Sssssssss. "No need to evacuate, folks. Go back to your homes. The danger is over".

So, when it comes to putting fires out, I'm a rare talent. Starting them, not so

much. I'm what the police call an "anti-arsonist". Or "arse" for short.

Fortunately, my wife was there. With one well, placed match, both the wood - and the final vestiges of my male pride - were up in smoke. Ah, well. Not like I had any use for it. My pride, I mean.

We got the fire going just as it got dark, which was thoughtful of us. After all, the mosquitoes would have had trouble finding us, otherwise. As it was, they were drawn from miles around towards this giant beacon, and we became what entomologists call "a smorgasbord". They attacked with a vengeance – the mosquitoes, not the entomologists.

But they couldn't have known they were attacking a more highly evolved species. Back at the dawn of time, man learned that throwing grass or leaves on a fire produces copious quantities of smoke, which keeps mosquitoes away. It does this by making the air unfit to breathe. So as long as we were willing to go without breathing, and d idn't mind our eyes stinging and having tears stream down our faces, we were safe from the bugs. Small price to pay, I say.

After awhile someone broke out the marshmallows and weiners. I'm not a big fan of toasted marshmallows. My wife loves them, especially the burned part - she'll pull it off and eat it, then back goes the marshmallow to blacken another layer. It seems almost barbaric, to me. Now, hot dogs - taking a chunk of raw, unidentifiable meat on a stick and thrusting it in the fire till it bubbles - that's civilized.

Alas, tragedy struck on my third hot-dog, when one of the kids thoughtlessly and recklessly swung her stick so that it knocked mine - and my frankfurter was shaken loose and fell into the fire. I tried a number of heroic rescue attempts, braved the roaring flames ... but in the end, all I could do was watch helplessly as it shrivelled, blackened, and burned. The humanity ...

I figure that's what happened to my eyebrows. Like I said, I hope they'll grow back by Labour Day. And they needed thinning anyway. But the important thing is, they gave their all in a good cause.

And after all ... what more could we want from our eyebrows?

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Postcard from

Leon Fulcher

JUNE 2015

Kia Ora Everyone! As those of you in the Northern Hemisphere change gear and move into the Summer school holidays, for us in the Southern Hemisphere it's feeling Wintery! Still, with the FIFA U-20 World Cup Football Tournament kicking off here at the end of May, we're celebrating The Beautiful Game (eh, soccer) with the World.

Qualifying Teams for the FIFA U-20 World Cup in New Zealand 2015

It is important to remember that every national football team in the World went through a knock-out competition to determine the 24 teams that will compete at a World Cup Final. If there is a world map or globe around where you live or work, see if you and the youths around you can find Myanmar on the map. Where is Mali? And Serbia?

Reigning World Champions Argentina will be Tough to Beat

In keeping with the tradition of strong South American teams, the reigning U-20 World Champions Argentina will be in the mix for the Finals. The European contenders are notable for which nations are absent: all 4 nations of the UK, Ireland, France, Spain, The Netherlands and Belgium! Germany and Austria are threats. Uzbekistan?

The African teams will be a serious threat but several national are also notable for their absence from the teams qualifying for the U-20 World Cup Finals. Ghana will surely be a team to watch, along with the youths from Nigeria.

Qualifying African Champions Nigeria will be Amongst the Contenders

Maori Welcome for the New Zealand Team Gathering in Auckland

As each national team arrived in New Zealand, they received a formal Maori welcome to Aotearoa – The Land of the Long White Cloud. The first team to gather together in Auckland were the New Zealand players, several playing with overseas teams in top rung competitions. No matter how much I supported my team, I could never have contemplated joining a 'keepie-uppee' competition at the top of Auckland's Sky Tower!

New Zealanders Playing Keepee-Uppee on Top of Auckland's Sky Tower

The first Pool Games of the U-20 World Cup kicked off in New Zealand within hours of events in Zurich reaching a crescendo with the representatives of World Football re-electing Sepp Bladder to head FIFA for an unprecedented fifth term of 4 years.

Youth throughout Provincial New Zealand are Keen Football Supporters

48 hrs earlier, the American FBI with Swiss police cooperation arrested 7 top FIFA Officials on charges of corruption over the award of World Cup competition venues to Brazil, Qatar and Russia. Sepp Bladder blamed America and the UK for the arrests while Russia called foul and called it an American conspiracy! Brazil has started a Congressional Inquiry into the charges of corruption around the last World Cup in Rio.

Prince Harry Scored Winning Goal in Auckland Pre-Cup Exhibition Match

Meanwhile back in small town New Zealand, children and young people are playing a lot more football (soccer) than they have been previously! And FIFA have been rolling out a new 20-minute warm-up routine that has solid evidence which shows that it will reduce ACL and Hamstring Injuries by up to 50 percent! Young people see role models and football (soccer) is less of a physical contact sport than Rugby. Most know about the New Zealand All Blacks but fewer know about the New Zealand All Whites – the national team hosting this FIFA U-20 World Cup within the Oceania Region of FIFA. Where is the Oceania Region of FIFA you might ask and who else is represented? Watch out for Fiji and see if you find it on your World map!

New Zealand has never seen The Beautiful Game Played like this at Home!

Preliminary round matches for the FIFA U-20 World Cup are being played all around provincial New Zealand. Thanks FIFA (and Sepp) for daring to take Football Tournaments to places that really benefit from having the World come visit! If the youth with whom you work are into football (aka soccer) then pick different teams and have fun watching the youth of our world play The Beautiful Game with excellence!

THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK

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1/4 page	Portrait	95mm	125mm
	Landscape	200mm	60mm
1/8 page	Portrait	40mm	125mm
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EndNotes

"If we couldn't laugh we would all go insane." — **Robert Frost**

"There's nothing more contagious than the laughter of young children; it doesn't even have to matter what they're laughing about."

— **Criss Jami, *Killosophy***

"It's better to die laughing than to live each moment in fear."

— **Michael Crichton**

"You don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing."

— **Michael Pritchard**

."Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning to do afterward."

— **Kurt Vonnegut**

"You could pretend at anytime, but please not when laughing."

— **Toba Beta, *Master of Stupidity***

"Something can be humorous without being funny. The difference is when it's humorous, a person says, "That's funny," and when it's funny, a person can't say anything because they're too busy laughing."

— **Jarod Kintz, *This is the best book I've ever written, and it still sucks***

"The human race has only one really effective weapon and that is laughter."

— **Mark Twain**

"Among those whom I like or admire, I can find no common denominator, but among those whom I love, I can; all of them make me laugh."

— **W.H. Auden**

The ability to make someone laugh… AWESOME! The ability to make someone LAUGH when they have every reason to break down and cry? PRICELESS!"

— **Comic Strip Mama**

"Laughter is like a windshield wiper, it doesn't stop the rain but allows us to keep going."

— **Auliq Ice**

"Life is too important to take seriously."

— **Corky Siegel**

"He didn't laugh when he thought something was funny — he laughed when he was happy."

— **Rainbow Rowell, *Landline***

"Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."

— **Victor Borge**

"Happiness is laughing together..."

— **Orhan Pamuk, *The Innocence of Objects***

"The tots both started laughing. On the same day. I'm now obsessed with getting them to do it. Babies laughing is like opium."

— **Neil Patrick Harris**

"Humor can make a serious difference. In the workplace, at home, in all areas of life – looking for a reason to laugh is necessary. A sense of humor helps us to get through the dull times, cope with the difficult times, enjoy the good times and manage the scary times."

— **Steve Goodier**

"If fate doesn't make you laugh, you just don't get the joke."

— **Gregory David Roberts**

"It is the test of a good religion whether you can joke about it."

— **G.K. Chesterton**

"Not being funny doesn't make you a bad person. Not having a sense of humor does."

— **David Rakoff, *Fraud: Essays***

"With a sense of humor, you can tackle any situation in life. Moreover, you'll also learn to see the funny side of things."

— **His Holiness Divas**

"Humor can make a serious difference. In the workplace, at home, in all areas of life – looking for a reason to laugh is necessary. A sense of humor helps us to get through the dull times, cope with the difficult times, enjoy the good times and manage the scary times."

— **Steve Goodier**

"Life is too important to take seriously."

— **Corky Siegel**

"I thought maybe she was trying to be funny but then realized this was impossible to do without a sense of humor."

— **Chelsea Handler, *My Horizontal Life***

"I'm too grown up for kids' books. Where do I find the children's literature?"

CYC-Online is published monthly by The CYC-Net Press. It is an e-journal and therefore not available in printed form. However, readers are welcome to print out pages or chapters as desired.

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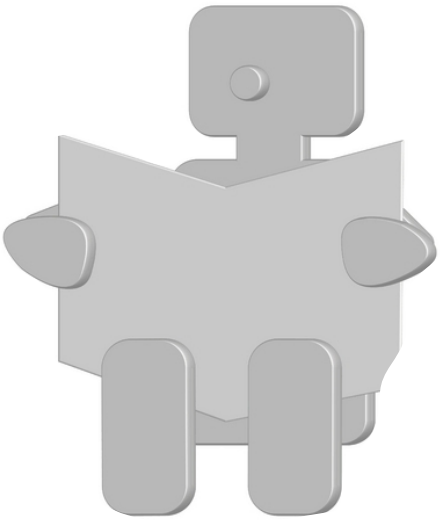

ONLINE JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK (CYC-NET)

www.cyc-net.org

Published by

ISSN 1605-7406