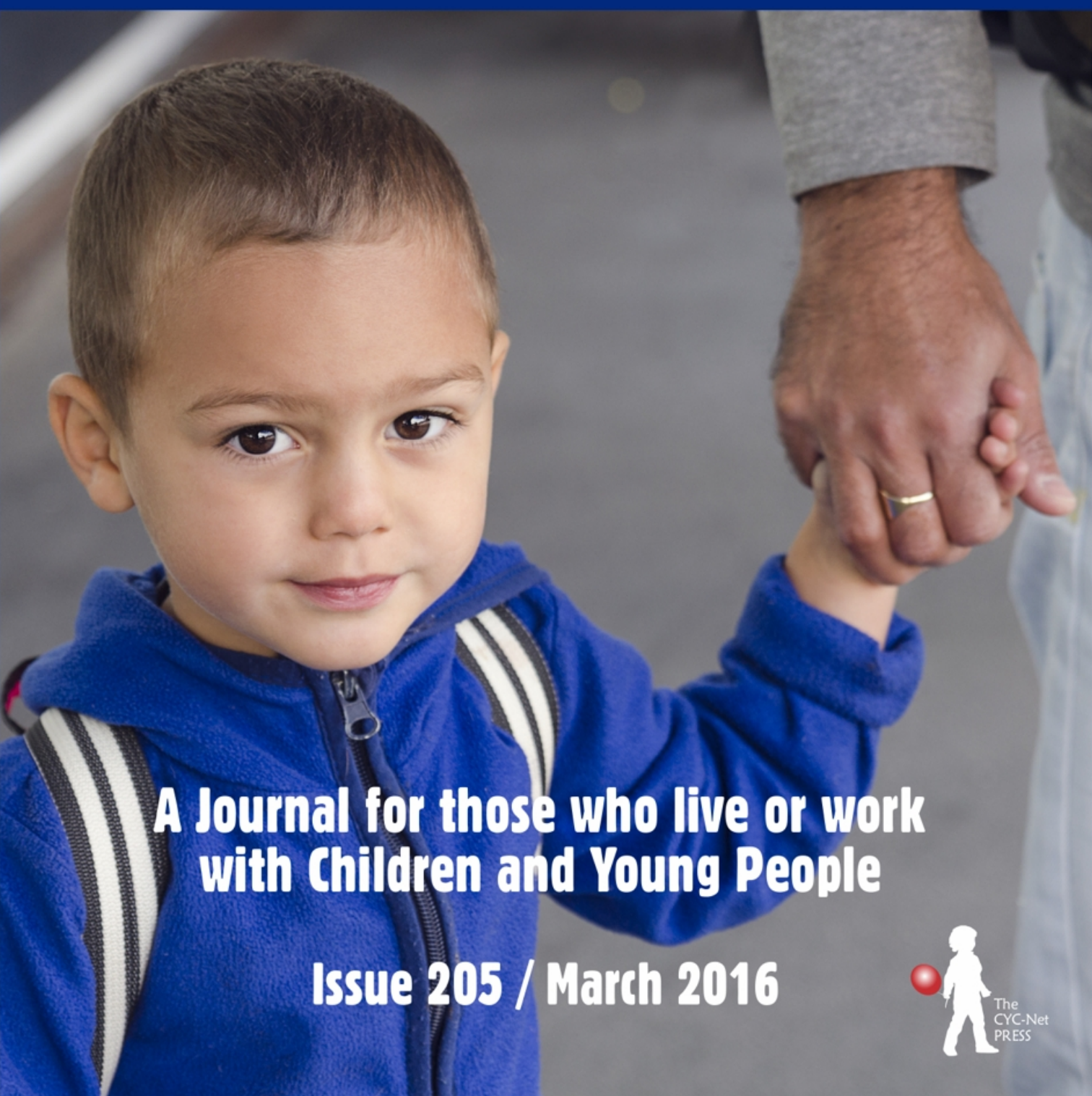


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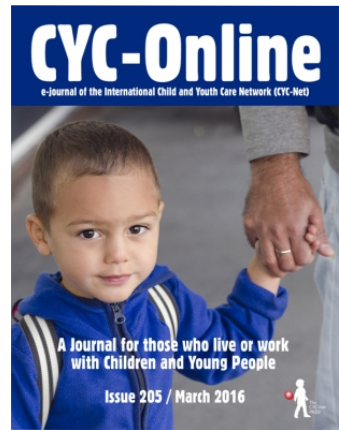
e-journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net)

A close-up photograph of a young child with short brown hair, wearing a blue zip-up hoodie with white stripes on the sleeves. The child is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. An adult's hand, wearing a gold ring, is visible on the right side of the frame, holding the child's hand. The background is a blurred grey.

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

Issue 205 / March 2016





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Your Contribution

Last month on the discussion board a call was posted for submissions to *CYC-Online*. We received a number of responses such as “I’ve kind of always had this idea...” or “Would it be ok to write about...?” It’s encouraging to see practitioners from around the globe thinking about how they might contribute content to the most frequently published journal for direct care workers in the world. You’ll see the fruit of new submissions in the months to come – and there is still room for more, including yours.

CYC-Net, of course, depends on your contributions. Many of you are able to support with a financial gift – for which we are very grateful. CYC-Net is a lean operation – in fact the writers, editors, and board members provide their time and support in-kind without remuneration. Others of you are able to contribute content. You have practice experience working with children, youth, and families. You have innovative ideas and ways to articulate a particular angle on a helpful theory or concept. You have ways to illustrate the values of child and youth care and its value in our communities. So, we remind and invite you to contribute. In whatever way you are able.

It reminds me of our engagement in

the larger field of child and youth care. We can’t afford to let ourselves become isolated. In what ways are you connected with your practice setting and your community? Do you have peers you can turn to for support? Have you sought out someone who can provide the type of mentoring guidance you need to grow in your own practice and life? Are you mentoring someone else? What reading are you pushing yourself to explore and digest? Which conference are you making plans to join in? What are you doing to support the growth of other practitioners you know? Do you speak up in support of the families and young people we all work alongside? Asking these questions is in no way meant to add to the burden of our everyday tasks, but are intended to get us thinking about how we are engaged with our own field and communities of practice.

Someone asked me the other day for a reason they should renew their local CYC association membership. I wondered - why wouldn’t you? There are a number of logical reasons (such as building voice for the field, advocacy for children and families, connectedness among peers, staying current with changes in legislation and in our work). But why choose a movement to-



ward isolation rather than connection?
Isn't that what we do in the rhythms and routines of our work with young people? Connect rather than isolate? Engage rather than detach? Relate rather than retreat?

There is too much need in our world for us to try to meet it alone. What are the ways in which you give back to the field and engage your broader practice?

Think it over. Assess it. Make changes as you see fit.

If there is any way that CYC-Net fits in your commitment to the field we would be honored.

– James

CYC-Online



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-**Growing Resilient Kids**
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& Steve Van Bockern

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The End of Treatment!

Kiaras Gharabaghi

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Lately I have been thinking a lot about the use of the term treatment in child and youth care practice. In Canada, at least, this term is ubiquitous; it appears in both residential and non-residential contexts, and it is no exaggeration to say that many CYCs use the term as a way of elevating their perceived self-value. Treatment sounds important; it evokes images of doctors and psychiatrists, people with the scientific (in fact, magical) power to fix things. Given my involvement in recent months in an intense process of reviewing residential services across Ontario in particular, I have been especially focused on trying to understand what people mean when they say things like “we do residential treatment”, and suggest that this is somehow different from residential care, which is left for the small, largely irrelevant

service providers to do. I also wonder what CYCs mean when they claim the mantle of treatment. Why does this sound good to them? What are they doing that sets their work apart from that of others CYCs, who make no claim to be in the business of treatment?

I thought this might be a good time to just come right out and say it: *There is no place for treatment in child and youth care practice.* This is not because we can't do treatment (for example, I fancy myself a very good hobby heart surgeon), but because we should not want to. Treatment is, in fact, the enemy of child and youth care practice, and if we have any ethic at all, we should tell our treatment-claiming employers that they are full of it, and that we don't do no such thing. Here are some reasons why:

1. The term treatment is inherently based in a medical model of practice. It implies experts who know what to do, and objects that are broken. We provide treatment in response to sickness, but not in response to difference, or to uniqueness, or to rebellion, or to resistance. Therefore, anytime a CYC claims to be engaged in treatment, they are also laying claim to expert status, and they negate the rights, capacities, and unique identities of the young persons they work with.
2. Treatment does not require relationship in any form. In fact, in most traditional and medical models of treatment, the concept of relationship is still very much a contested one, and one that could be seen as a distraction to the full implementation of expertise in the quest to fix something. Sure, even doctors are told these days that good medical practice requires some level of connection with the patient. But this is not evidence of the validity of treatment in a CYC context; quite to the contrary, it is evidence of the necessity of child and youth care practice to supersede the superficiality and scientific fallacy of treatment.
3. Residential treatment means nothing at all. I have for over thirty years been trying to figure out what people mean when they say 'residential treatment'; so far, the overwhelming response from CYCs, supervisors, managers, clinical staff, psychiatrists and

psychologists has been one that elevates in value the concepts of containment, conformity and compliance. In fact, when I ask people to describe what secure treatment means, they typically describe this by talking about very high levels of structure, routines, and rules. Of course, it is easy to say that this is effective, but perhaps its effectiveness is based solely on the reality that young people can't walk away in a locked setting. The risk, of course, is that secure treatment is little more than hostage taking, and then forcing the hostage to adapt to the harsh and relentless rules and routines of an environment that has no parallel in communities, families or peer groups.

4. On a good day, people have gone beyond the citing of structure and rules in describing residential treatment. Sometimes, they have talked about the multi-disciplinary team involved in the case management of the patient or client. Aside from the unfortunate use of the terms patient and client, as well as the term case management (how would you like to be case managed?), simply having a psychiatrist and a psychologist, and a teacher and a CYC and a Social Worker do 'their thing' in manipulating the object of treatment (also known as the child or youth), does nothing at all to enhance the concept of treatment in my books. In fact, I think it is abhorrent and profoundly unethical to

subject young people to the often narrow and rejecting perspectives of not just one kind of professional expert, but a whole bunch of them at the same time.

5. On a bad day, treatment is heavily weighted in favour of chemical interventions and psychiatric expertise. Not only do we impose structure and control, I have been told, but we also reinforce that structure and control by chemically breaking down any resistance a young person may otherwise have to becoming conforming and compliant. This part of the treatment argument is quite explicit in its medical model orientation and celebrates the objectification of young people to the fullest. It also violates the argument of multi-disciplinarity, as it inherently privileges one discipline over all others.
6. And finally, sometimes I am told that treatment, and in particular residential treatment, incorporates family work. This argument is almost compelling in that it mitigates the centrality of 'the young person as the problem' construction. Sadly, however, the way in which family work is actually unfolding in most residential settings is pathetic. It generally involves front line staff facilitating the pick up and drop off of young people for home visits on weekends, and occasionally taking calls from concerned parents. From the

perspective of the service providers, treatment readiness is assessed in part by the level of engagement demonstrated by the parents (or, in exceptionally progressive settings, the parent-like caregiver). Many young people have been discharged from their residential treatment settings because their parents did not show up for 'family sessions' when asked to do so. Help me understand the ethical basis of that!!

So, we go on merrily claiming that we provide treatment. Let us stop making that claim. It isn't a worthy claim, and perhaps even more importantly than any of the above, it devalues child and youth care practice. Treatment, at least the way it is described in the field, is a ridiculously simplistic process of control accompanied by fancy talk of multi-disciplinary approaches, family systems orientations, and pharmacological science. This is child's play really; anyone could be trained to do that. Child and youth care practice, in contrast, is a very complex undertaking. It starts with love, moves through a relational engagement in the form of dance as Krueger used to say, and takes account of the enormous pain felt by young people, as Anglin likes to remind us. It then proceeds with life space interventions steeped in relational practices focused on the everyday experiences of young people and practitioners. It explores spaces that have largely been left untouched for far too long in the lives of young people, all the while allowing the process of being together to unfold

under the direction and leadership of the (apparently sick and broken) young persons themselves.

Given the problems associated with term 'treatment' in the context of child and youth care practice, and given the devaluing of our practice we engage in when celebrating our treatment work, why do we do this? Are we really that fragile that we need to hang on to a largely bankrupt tradition in human relations? I don't think so. Let's just say it loud and proud: Child and youth care practice opposes the use of treatment in non-medical circum-

stances. The young people we engage and are engaged by rarely are sick or in medical discomfort. They are edgy youth with good reason to seek out their own way of being in this world. They are subjects, not objects. They have a right to self-determination, and we have an ethical obligation to promote that right, not to control it.

Lap coats and stethoscopes have a purpose; I am glad some people know how to use them, especially when I or someone I care about needs a doctor. But they serve no purpose in child and youth care practice. Let's stop pretending otherwise.

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Many years ago I was involved in running a CYC conference where the keynote speaker was an NHL hockey player. I was a bit skeptical about the value of having him, but I ended up being very impressed with his talk.

He spoke about professionalism and the fact that a competent professional evaluates his/her practice regularly to maintain a standard of skillful practice. Without rigorous self-scrutiny, it is easy to lapse into inadequate performance and poor results.

In the course of a hockey season, there are weeks during which everything seems to be going well, you score a lot of goals and always seem to be in the right place at the right time. Then there are weeks where nothing seems to happen well, and your goal output suffers. If you believe that you are doing well based on your results, it is easy to over-estimate yourself during the good times and under-estimate yourself during the unproductive times. A professional has to not be too distracted by these external factors and consistently look inside himself to determine if he has been really performing at an acceptable standard, not just be swayed by external events. Every professional career has ups and downs that often

are not really controlled by the practitioner, but by other factors, so when you let outside events too strongly influence your personal opinion of yourself, your competence will not be self-determined. The real test of success is the standards and ethical guidelines of your profession and your own personal goals and beliefs about how you should be performing.

This young man described a recent summer project where he led a hockey skills camp for inner-city youth, many of whom were typical of the ones encountered in CYC practice. He described his surprise and frustration with the difficulty in reaching these often mistrustful and suspicious youngsters

and how it was a hard lesson for him. In fact, that was the reason why he wanted to speak at our conference, because he had a glimpse of the complex work that we do. He said that if we only judged our performance by immediate results, it would be close to impossible to have a long career in our field, since the obvious responses to our efforts are often not encouraging.

He ended his remarks by advising all of us to keep looking inside ourselves to determine competence and to have a clear standard of professional practice that is

How Do I Know If I Am Doing A Good Job

Jack Phelan

not too directly deterred or inflated by external results. A professional's career is guided by an inner locus of control that is not unduly influenced by outside factors.

There has been some exciting research done by Heather Modlin lately about adult thinking processes which is very pertinent to this hockey analogy. Basically she describes the need for an inner locus of control in adults if they are to truly perform at a professional practice level in our field (or in any professional endeavor). People can have elaborate training and experience in CYC practice, but they can be still stuck in thinking about how to do the work which limits effective treatment. When a practitioner is overly dependent on other people to confirm whether he is doing well, or even is a good person, then he is thinking in a way that prevents acting professionally.

For example, if you make a friendly overture to a distraught youth, and she responds with anger or aggression, some staff will respond with anger, since they think that this youth has ruined their mood, while other staff may be curious about what is bothering the youth. If you believe that others are responsible for how you fell, and vice-versa, then you may not have a strong inner locus of control.

Students and young people living with parents have often not developed this adult thinking process yet, because they are determining self-worth based on the evaluation of trusted older adults and do not fully rely on themselves yet.

I will describe these thinking processes more next month.



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Squatting CYC

Hans Skott-Myhre

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I have been teaching a class this term on what I have called Serious Play. The course is centered on a book chapter in a section on Play edited by Andy Bennet that I wrote for Johanna Wyn and Helen Cahill's massive and impressive *Handbook of Children and Youth Studies*. The central idea of the chapter was that under 21st century virtual global capitalism, political revolt needs to be responsive to a society largely produced as a series of codes. I argued that, in that context, effective modes of resistance and revolt might well require the capacity to scramble and disrupt economic and social coding.

In the class we have been reading Antonio Negri on shifts in the form of capitalism in the late 20th and early 21st century that move us from industrial capitalism to what he terms immaterial labor or, in another term, the direct appropriation of our intellectual and social creativity. We have also been studying Jean Baudrillard on the idea that our current society is made up of copies of copies of actual living relations or what he calls simulacrum. We might think of the Matrix films as an extreme example of what he says is happening to us now.

Finally, we turned to Gregory Bateson and his theories of play and began to explore the possibility that play might be a tactic to use in resisting the appropriation of social and intellectual creativity by global capitalism. Bateson proposes that play has the ability to scramble traditional social codes, because it allows for those playing to confuse levels of signification. If we take the example of two dogs play-fighting, at one level their behavior is difficult to distinguish from actual signals of aggression, and yet at the same time they are able to signal that this is not aggression. In play, the interactions of those playing, mimic, but are not the same as, the actions and signals they appear to be giving. Play includes an implied negative statement that requires all parties to be able to comment behaviorally on the fact that this is play not real. Jokes, threats, teasing and theater all operate on this principle of play.

The reason this becomes relevant under global capitalism is that the current regime of value in our times is the money form. For a range of complex historical reasons beyond the scope of this short column, the money form now operates

pure code. For example, if a major capitalist transfers a million dollars across the globe, from banking institution to banking institution, no physical money is involved. The “money” is just a string of binary code relayed from computer to computer. Similarly, if the stock market gains or loses value nothing actual changes in the world as a direct result. It is simply a complex algorithm of binary code played out on a network of computers calculating long and involved ranges of probabilities. The trick is that we, as social subjects, have largely lost track of the fact that the money form is a system of code that in many instances seems take precedence over the material needs and desires of living beings. What we have become confused about is the fact that money and capitalism are not actually real, but constitute a form of very serious play with profoundly real effects.

In the class, we have just begun to explore the possibility of forms of resistance and revolt that might act, as play, in revealing the fact that capitalism is not real, but a system of code. This alternative form of serious play would poke fun at capitalism theatrically, while at the same time acting out an alternative. We could tell if the forms of play were having an effect, by the reaction of the regimes of rule to what appears to be playful behavior.

In that regard the class has begun to look at the youth driven countercultural movements of the late 1960's such as the Yippies, White Panther Party, The Hog Farm, Merry Pranksters, and WITCHES. These movements are interesting, I would argue, because of their use of playful tactics,

which they used to engaged in theatrical assaults on conventional social practices. The countercultural practices of these groups were unlike other youth driven political organizations of the time, such as the Students for Democratic Society, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee or the Free Speech Movement, who aimed at political reform or revolution. Nor did they share the hippie's disdain for political involvement of any type. Instead they proposed cultural revolution over a form of politics that aimed at overthrowing the government and seizing the reigns of traditional political power. They argued that the first step in a meaningful revolt is to change the cultural morays of a society and then the political system will follow.

It was in this context that we watched a documentary on The Diggers who were a revolutionary collective of young people who originated in the mid 1960's in the Haight Ashbury section of San Francisco. Their political program consisted of living as though society were already free of the money form and its constraints and appropriations

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6sPo2Yi3jE>). Derived from another more traditionally Marxist theatrical collective called the San Francisco Mime Troupe, The Diggers used radical theatrical forms that blurred audience and performers by acting out alternative cultural forms of exchange. They “performed” by creating free stores, distributing free food, clothing, and giving away money. Free medical care was provided at the Haight Ashbury free clinic, which still exists today.



What really caught my attention, however, was the fact that The Diggers opened their homes to anyone needing shelter or a place to sleep. They reclaimed empty buildings and re-purposed churches as open spaces where the young people flocking to San Francisco in the heyday of the hippie movement could find a safe place to stay.

I have written often in these pages and elsewhere about the dubious foundations of residential care in the residential schools, poorhouses and asylums of the 19th and 20th century. What I want to point to here is what Deleuze might call a minor history or Foucault a subjugated knowledge. Hidden within the history of child and youth care/youth work are lineages of free and voluntary collective forms of housing for young people. These were not programs, but cultural experiments produced by and for youth and young adults. The Diggers were one group among several that provided communal living opportunities of free housing. Free, both in the sense of not involving money, but also free in the sense of not being limited by funders, governmental regulation, disciplinary guidelines and so on. This was DIY housing and carries on today in the appropriation of space by young people across the planet. In my teaching, I am often asked by my students how they can work within agencies and still operate as agents of social justice and equity. Perhaps the answer is DIY youth work/CYC.

In this regard, perhaps we need to re-think our entire relation to street involved young people and recognize that

they may be offering some possibilities in the development of DIY youth work/CYC. After all, they find ways to build powerful networks of affiliation and support outside institutions and sometimes in spite of them. Franco Basaglia (1987), the father of de-institutionalization, remarked that those freed from the asylums but who remained on the streets, rather than allow themselves to be inducted into the asylums-without-walls of the newly emerging mental health system, held the true potential for reconfiguring society. His argument was that in avoiding induction into the machinery of diagnosis and treatment, even if it meant living in the streets, was a powerful statement of a refusal to be co-opted into the emerging society of monetary abstraction and consumerism.

The refusal of an increasing number of young people to sign up for our market driven economy, either because they are excluded from the marketplace, or because it does not meet their needs, may hold some potential for how we deliver services. Indeed, we have a proliferating array of examples of young people creating new forms of culture and sociality today, but I am not sure we have taken them as serious options for creating new systems of care. I would argue that this is particularly pressing as youth work programs are under severe financial constraint and programming is increasingly driven by external regulation and bureaucratic control.

Andy Bennett in his introduction to the section on Play in the Handbook mentioned above, notes the appropriation of both urban and rural land by young people

who turn it to their own ends. In some cases this was the deployment of abandoned factory and warehouses into music venues and clubs. In other instances, it has been the reclamation of deindustrialized tracts of land by groups such as The Land Is Ours who make them habitable through use of existing material and building methods that use environmentally sustainable materials. Bennett notes, how in 1996 five hundred members of The Land Is Ours took over 13 acres on the River Thames in England. Apparently the land had been designated as a site for a new superstore; one of nine already existing in the immediate area. The occupiers cleared the land of rubble and built a village entirely out of recycled materials.

In another example cited by Bennett in a rural area, the Exodus Collective occupied several abandoned farm buildings. They were threatened with expulsion by the local governmental agency who owned the land, but the collective invited the authorities to come and see what they had done. The bureaucrats were so impressed with the reclamation activities that they gave the Collective right to the land as ongoing tenants.

I would argue that these examples can be situated in a continuous lineage going back to the collective land usage patterns of the Common in European history and in many indigenous patterns of land usage prior to colonization that constitute forms of resistance into the present day. Bennett notes how the lineage of the Common played out in the 1960's in the back to the land movement of communes and retreats

that offered resistance to what he calls "technocratic domination."

It is important to note that these movements did not disappear or fade away at the end of the hippie period, as is often implied in contemporary accounts of the counter cultures of the 1960's. In fact several of the communes established at that time still exist and function. Perhaps the largest of these is The Farm in Tennessee that has functioned as a freestanding agricultural counter-cultural collective since the early 1970's. These movements are also to be found in what Bennett terms "free party movements and travelers, grunge punks who have appropriated greenfield sites in the UK and parts of Europe." Kevin Heatherington in his work *New Age Travelers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity* notes an alternate logic in these movements harkening back to older patterns of relationship to the land rooted in European culture,

Earth mystery practitioners adopt a more holistic approach that refers back to ancient folkways of understanding and interpreting the landscape: dowsing, ley line hunting, recovering folklore and customs associated with particular sites. The earth mysteries tradition challenges the modes of understanding offered by modern science and seeks to find in the landscape forgotten practices of knowing and understanding.

Perhaps most cogently we have the foundational comprehension of a non-colonial relation to the earth to be found in the Idle



No More movement and the writings of authors such as Lee Anne Simpson in her work on “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation.”

How does this all relate to CYC/youth work practice? First, I would argue that it points to alternative set of relations and cultural practices that could inform what we do in our relations with young people. The noted activist Grace lee Boggs, in her interview with Bill Moyers (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzeezIsTZ_o) on “we are the leaders we have been waiting for,” states that one of the most powerful political actions we can take with young people is to plant a garden. She suggests that in this simple activity there are alternative ways of knowing ourselves, our relation to time and to our capacities for self-sufficiency. Certainly, the alternative modes of community engagement found in the collective production of food in international movements of community gardening constitute a cultural movement of some force.

Perhaps it is this re-appropriation of our collective capacity to do-it-ourselves-for- ourselves that I am looking to as a way of reclaiming our work with young people. Just as the Land Is Ours Movement occupied and re-shaped the land they squatted, perhaps we need to squat our field of work, our programs and our relations with young people in order to return it to ourselves as both youth and adults working together for common purpose. In this we might mount an assault on the culture by acting as though we were already free.



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Professional Boundaries in Child and Youth Care Work

Nancy Marshall

Working with children and youth takes a lot of skill, genuine desire to help young people on their journey and an ability to create boundaries that reflect care and concern while highlighting our trustworthiness and professionalism. Finding and maintaining this distinct balance is challenging. Nancy Marshall illustrates, through research, the importance of maintaining balanced professional boundaries that include showing warmth, nurturing and love in order to create healing relationships as a Child and Youth Care Worker.

Reported incidences of litigation, abuse, and slander against youth workers, coupled with concerns related to client-helper relationships becoming too “friendly”, have led practitioners to create clear and often strict policies around boundaries. In the summary of his study on the issue, Professor Scott Okamoto (2003) says, “in the case of the practitioner/client relationship, boundaries provide a limit that allows for a ‘safe connection based on the client’s needs” (p. 303). Unfortunately, some agencies and workers get so concerned with this “safe connection” that the love and nurturing in the work is lost. Although there is a defi-



nite need for boundaries and limits, it is equally important we not lose sight of the fundamental love and nurturing needed to build therapeutic relationships.

In a study examining practitioners’ fears in working with troubled teens, two hundred and forty eight professionals from 15 agencies in Hawaii were surveyed. There were three main fears highlighted in the study: “fear of being physically harmed by a client, fear of being sued by a client or client’s family, and fear of damage to one’s professional reputation” ((Okamoto and Chesney-Lind, 2000, p. 374). It is fears like these that compel agencies into developing boundary policies.

Although these fears may be well-founded, practitioners must remember that policies and rules that are too rigid can impede the development of therapeutic relationships.

Teens in care were surveyed regarding their viewpoints on professional boundaries (Richmond, 2005). Many of the girls' responses reflected frustrations regarding the rigid professional boundaries implemented at the centre. Of the 10 girls, 8 reported feeling frustrated with the agency's rules on hugging. Teens explained that staff felt hugs to be "unprofessional" and a violation of their personal boundaries. One girl stated, "if you want affection like you have to ask and even then, it's not warm" (p. 61). Another teen replied, "here, you're not supposed to touch anyone — you'll get your privs. [privileges] taken or you'll get on a time-out which means you can't do anything" (p. 61-62).

Strict boundaries such as these disregard the human need for affection and often ignore clients' common sense regarding personal space. As one teen described, "I know I feel a lot better when um, I'm feeling bad and you have someone to hug ... I mean like hugs are good. Especially like if they're nonsexual that's great" (Richmond, 2005, p. 62). Yet another teen stated, "I think they should provide a nurturing environment for us. So I think that should be a part of their job description — provide warm hugs" (p. 63). When asked the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch, one teen explained, "Appropriate would be like

playfully poking someone in the arm, giving someone a hug, um, play wrestling or something — you know, things that are consensual between two people. And inappropriate is things you don't like — like people in your bubble [personal space] all the time when you don't want them" (p. 63).

In a different study on youth perceptions, young people expressed various attributes that they looked for in a child and youth worker. These included, "someone who genuinely cared ... loved the kids ... talked 'with' rather than 'to' me ... felt warm ... felt loved ... a friend ... feelings of comfort", and so on (Weisman, 2006, p. 49). Weisman suggests that child and youth workers share the common belief that "these relationship reluctant" children need to learn to love and trust adults. Yet at the same time, workers are "given a message that it is inappropriate to love the children and youth we work with" (p. 49). Isn't it ironic that in our work there are distinct rules and limitations dictating how not to model love and trust.

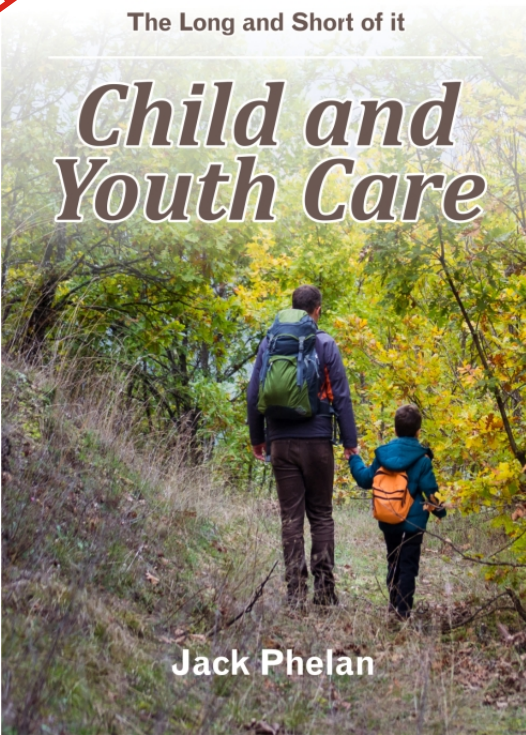
There is no doubt, as a Child and Youth Care Worker, that there is a significant need for certain boundaries to be in place, in order to clearly define our relationships with clients. But it is important to remember what purpose these boundaries serve in our relationships. We need to question how 'blanket policies' such as "no-touch" rules are effective and for whom they are effective. After all, "if we, the helping adults, are relationship reluctant too, then no meaningful therapeutic change can occur" (Weisman, 2006, p. 49).

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Child and Youth Care

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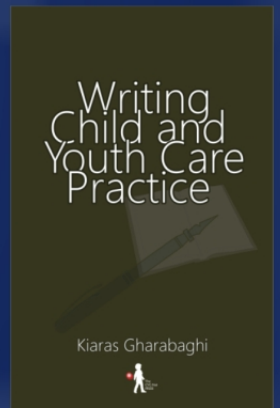
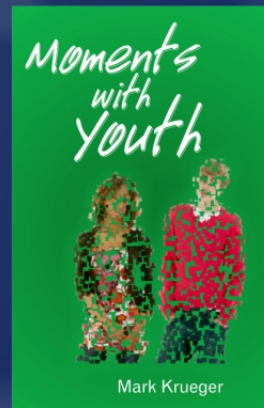
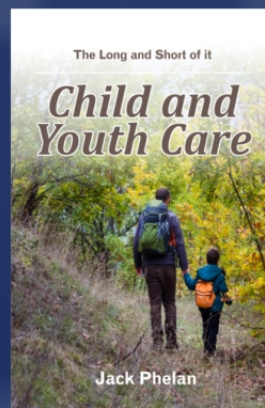
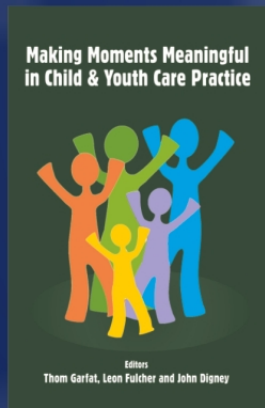
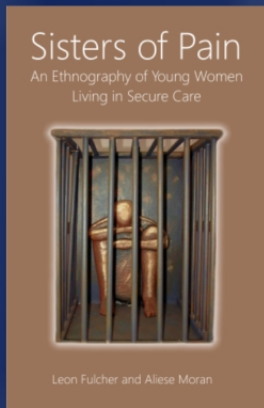
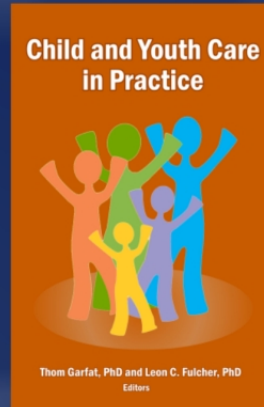
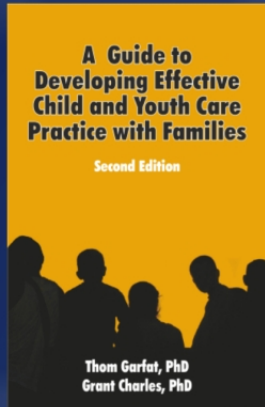
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The Use of Group Data in CYC Practice

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One of our former students at the University of Victoria worked for an agency whose purpose was to help parents improve relationships with their children. The agency used multi-systemic family therapy (MSFT) approaches, with intensive family support and community work. At that time several studies suggested that MSFT led to significant, meaningful improvements in parenting commitment. The agency was following common exhortations to “evidence-based practice.” They adopted the practices recommended by research, and they were interested in evaluating their work.

The student, with the help of Dr. Gordon Barnes, decided that the simplest, most direct way to evaluate the program was to use the same measurement instruments for the evaluation that the researchers used in their experiments. They began with data from four participant parents, collecting data over several months. The performance of two of the participants improved, and the performance of the other two declined: Same program, same parental issues, but different results. The intervention and support

was based on high quality research, and yet there were “mixed” results. What do we make of this?

Consider the results of an experimental study of the effectiveness of an intervention or, for that matter, any study that aims to say that one approach is better than another or better than doing nothing. Imagine a situation in which doing nothing results in 40 percent of the sample improving and 60 percent of the sample not improving or getting worse. We can compare that to an experimental intervention effect in which 60 percent of the sample improves and 40 percent stay the same or declines. This is a meaningful and likely to be statistically significant difference. Still, 40 percent of the participants did not improve or became worse, even with the cutting-edge program. The implications of this should get our attention.

The positive effects of MSFT were an interpretation of group data, and that interpretation applies to groups. On the basis of studies like these, we can often predict accurately how other groups will perform. What we cannot do on the basis



of this data is to predict the performance of individuals. (If we did know this, we would have perfect results, presumably, since we could refuse to work with someone with whom we knew would not be successful.) The MSFT program can probably predict the performance of a group of its participants, but it cannot predict the performance of any of the four people with whom their study began.

This is an empirical fact, and there is a corollary in logic, the fallacy of *accident*: "...applying a general rule to a particular case whose "accidental" circumstances render the rule inapplicable" (Copi, 1978, p. 95). The empirical and logical problem turns up in many different corners of our world. The phrase "cycle of violence" has been used for decades to describe how young people become violent adults, even though most children exposed to violence do not become violent adults. Children who suffer abuse are said to be at risk for being abusers themselves, even though the vast majority of abused children do not become abusers. What is true is that the risk is elevated and higher than the risk for the general population, significantly so, yet it is still a minority of the population, and it is a measure based on group data. It is empirically, logically, and ethically troublesome to apply the label of "at risk" to individuals on the basis of group data.

One more example: The idea of "white privilege" has made its way into public discussions, into classrooms, and into professional settings. It is a "thing," with lots of research and demographic documentation. It is a description of group

privilege, and yet not all white people benefit. For example, in Canada and the U.S. the proportion of white people who are poor is higher than some other racial and ethnic groups. Again, there is a general rule that is true of the group, but it would be a mistake to casually apply it to individuals.

The MSFT agency was doing many things right. They provided services for which they had research evidence and practice experience. They collected data from and about participants so that they could identify when it was going well and when it was not. Their next challenge was to study whether they could improve their performance as measured by their own group data. Of course, it was going to take them some time to have enough participants so that they could draw their own conclusions based on group data.

They also had an advantage in comparison to other agencies who were not doing that extra work, because the research provided them a baseline against which they could compare their own performance, and the data they were beginning to gather about their own performance could later be used to compare future performance. The research evidence and their own data helps keep them humble, because they are aware that some participants do not benefit, and it reminds them to remember they cannot predict which individuals will be successful. Interpreted properly, these research studies provide a sense of realism about expectations, and they caution us to ask for documentation – evidence – when others claim to have a "better" approach.

In services where we aim to ameliorate distress, improve the quality of lives, and reduce vulnerability, we have some obligation to provide participants in our programs with evidence for our competence. We *can* provide probabilities, based on group data. What we cannot usually do, except in the very simplest services, is

make promises to individuals that they in particular will benefit. Rarely do we know, and frequently we are surprised.

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CYC-Net Clan Gathering 2016 – Vienna

Bridging the Gaps

The CYC-Net Board of Governors invites you to join the 3rd CYC-Net Clan Gathering Pre-Conference Day Event in Vienna on Sunday, 21st August from 9am to 5pm, with an optional Dinner (but we hope you'll stay for that too!) The first CYC-Net Clan Gathering was held in Paisley, Scotland in 2012 and the second in St. John's, Newfoundland in 2013.

It is said that in some circles, discussions have focused on different kinds of gaps which exist in our field – like between academia and practice; between different service sectors; between training and service delivery; between North America and elsewhere, and between differing philosophies, etc.

As we gather in Vienna (Wien), the historic centre where our child and youth care field really started, join us and spend some quality CYC-Net Clan time together on Sunday, 21 August 2016 from 9am to 5pm!

Sign-up for the additional pre-conference programme [here](#) and join us in this important Gathering of the CYC-Net Clan!

**Leon, Thom, Martin, James, Heather and Jennifer
on behalf of the CYC-Net Board!**



Strengthening Relationships through Alternatives to Physical Restraint

Yvonne Bristow

For many Child and Youth Care Practitioners, crisis prevention and intervention strategies are a core component of our daily work. We learn how to react in dangerous situations and we try our best to understand the motives of aggressive behaviours. Many of us begin physical restraint education while still completing our diploma or degree in CYC practice and for the majority of us, this type of learning continues throughout our career.

An Experience with Physical Restraint

One of the most memorable and early experiences I had with restraint was when I worked in a clinical psychiatric environment. This environment was full of Child and Youth Care Practitioners and other social service staff who were all thoroughly trained in verbal and physical restraint techniques. I remember working with a boy named Raheem who could be explosively violent at times. He would throw furniture, punch, kick and cause bodily harm to others or to himself in a quickly escalating manner. He was seen as

a boy who needed physical intervention in order to keep him and others safe.

The thing that was the most interesting about this boy was that the moment he was restrained by staff, his body would go limp and his face would appear calm. He was bigger than most boys his age, yet he didn't resist or put up any 'fight' once he was restrained. The restraint itself appeared to make him comfortable which was quite unusual for me to experience. I always knew restraints were meant to maintain safety, but I couldn't understand how anyone could appear so joyful and at peace once restrained. When this boy was released from a restraint, he was quick to return to violent and injurious behaviour and it was hard for our team to determine how to move forward with this information. At the time it was difficult to find any other technique that would keep this boy as calm as he was when in restraint, yet not one of us wanted that to be our primary intervention option for him. It puzzled and challenged all of us to think of how to meet this boy's needs in new and creative ways.

The Power of Caring Physical Contact

I know in most environments where adults work with children, they may be discouraged from physical contact from children such as a hug. Expressing our genuine care by giving a hug or a pat on the shoulder can be seen as unprofessional by many people who work with children and youth. After working with Raheem for a year, it appeared that he wanted nothing more than an adult close to him. Although he could communicate many thoughts and feelings, asking for a hug was something he couldn't bring himself to do. Since this young boy had moved from various clinical, residential and educational settings he had very little experience having trusting and consistent relationships with adults. This boy appeared to be searching for new ways of coping while also struggling with the emotional confusion of being cared for (Isaacson, 2002). As our relationship was able to grow, we were able to meet his need for physical contact through appropriate and comforting alternatives. We would go for walks together, give high-fives and laugh together. Supporting this boy to ask for a hug or to ask for time together was a slow and difficult process, but no one could blame him for feeling apprehensive to experience caring relationships with adults.

Looking for Better Ways

I always think of Raheem when I begin a new relationship with children and youth in care. A child may be throwing furniture and calling you every name in the book,

but every child has their own personal history that needs to be respected. We should always question our actions to see if there are "better techniques than those which just involve exercising power and control over other" (Garfat, 2001). Physical restraint is not the means to an end. We can never assume the actions of children and youth are strictly malicious and it is important to pay attention to the true message they are communicating. When we do we may find more appropriate and comforting alternatives.

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@CYCareworkers





A Perfect Lasagne (Perhaps)

Maxwell Smart and John Digney

Success is a science; if you have the conditions, you get the result.

Oscar Wilde, Irish Dramatist

That man is a success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much.

Robert Louis Stevenson, Scottish Writer

Introduction

It seems odd for two Celts to be writing an article about the perfect Lasagne, indeed as we write we have the image of our friend and colleague Frank Delano, frowning and saying 'yo, wadda you two wise guys know about classic Italian cuisine'? We'll maybe not exactly like that

(right Frank?) but you get the idea ... especially when you consider our national dishes include the likes of cabbage with ham, haggis and of course the internationally ridiculed 'deep fried Mars bar'. Frank, we apologise and maybe you can forgive us when you consider our thinking. We wish to borrow the metaphor of the 'perfect

lasagne' to talk a little about the importance of the right ingredients, proper blend and optimum cooking instruction required for a good recipe for 'effective child and youth care practice'.

The Ingredients

As with all wonderful products one needs to begin from a place of appreciating quality; whether it is to create an amazing gastronomic experience or about providing nurturance and opportunity for growth. The ingredients always need to be better than good. In gastronomy it might be expected that fresh local produce is used to make a quality dish; whereas to create the effective child and youth care experience one needs to consider a complex balance of mature and 'fresh' talent, with considerations given to age, experience, skills and gender balance and that 'X-factor'. The balance of tastes and textures must be considered in cooking, and the balance of knowledge, personality and responsiveness in child and youth care.

When considering our perfect lasagne, what do we begin with? Of course it depends on individual tastes and needs but there are the essentials, for instance; prime quality lean beef, lasagne leaves, cheese, tomato, herbs, a couple of good cloves of garlic and salt & pepper. Of course there are those amongst us who do not eat meat and so we substitute the beef for good quality vegetables such as peppers, onion, aubergine and mushroom. So it is in child and youth care, different ingredients for different needs.

In search of the perfect lasagne we taste from our pans as we combine the ingredients for our sauce and béchamel (into which we infuse a blend of cheeses) and we carefully roll out the fresh pasta sheets. Happy with the component parts we blend and layer before baking for the optimised time; the dish metamorphoses into one the tastiest and most satisfying meals known to man. Yet, from time to time, despite having the prime ingredients and cooking as recommended, sometimes the recipe just does not seem to work as advertised. It is at this point that our Italian-American friend would likely advise that it is not only the ingredients and the cooking – but the 'preparation and blending' that results in the dish being; 'meraviglioso', mediocre, plain or worst still plain awful.

Gathering the components

We now go to Child and Youth Care practice as this little article is not really about food, and hopefully here the metaphor of 'ingredients, preparation, blend and cooking' holds firm. Bringing together quality ingredients is not the only target; it is about having the right ingredients, properly prepared, blending and cooked. This is what creates a nurturing and supportive culture. Gathering the right 'top quality' personnel; preparing them individually; blending then together; and developing the right environment in which to 'cement' and cook together into a single and effective unit, is the goal. A team of committed, skilled and motivated staff 'cooking' away



in a nurturing, caring and growth enhancing oven.

When we talk about quality ingredients, we might begin to consider where this begins – is it about people who are academically ‘qualified’ (qualifications bestowed by third level institutions) – or does the qualification come from personal-ity and life experience? What is it that will enable them to engage in highly complex work with troubled youth – the book knowledge or the life knowledge? For in our experience we have witnessed many highly qualified people demonstrate little competence or compassion when dealing with youth in difficulty – so, how do we qualify the quality?

It is also true that some staff ‘without qualification’ can demonstrate great empathy towards youth in difficulty and seem able to relate well to young people whom are troubled or troublesome? However once again we often have experienced in our many years of practice, that many a talented practitioner on the floor has been unable to attain the qualification bars of our increasingly regulated profession.

It is here that we stop to think a little on the prerequisite competencies required to be considered ‘a quality worker’. But where can we start? A longitudinal study, or perhaps a ‘survey monkey’? Instead let’s turn to suggestions from our CYC colleagues (<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cyconline-oct2010-digney.html>). That might be a good start, so below is a sample taken from this list, where we believe that a good worker and effective worker:

1. Will be proactive.
2. Always remembers they are in it for the kids.
3. Understands that relationship is not just a one way street.
4. Doesn’t worry too much about behavior.
5. Hangs on to their dreams.
6. Has learned to step back!
7. Knows they do NOT know it all.
8. Can think outside the box (whatever the box looks like!)
9. Will roll up their sleeves and get in the thick of it.
10. Isn’t reactive.
11. Knows that trust must be earned.
12. Gets that they ‘cannot fix’ another person.

Check out the link – some of these CYC people actually know a thing or two!

Preparing and Blending

So let’s return briefly to our Lasagne. As we might engage in the separate acts of ‘browning’ our ground beef, peeling and slicing our carefully chosen vegetables and sieving and mixing our sauces, consideration must be given to proper preparation. We begin by mentioning our belief that much of what is taught and learned (either in colleges or through the ‘university of life’) does not always translate well when working with relationally wary youth. The rule books for ‘normal’ engagement therefore often go out the window.

Just as good food preparation begins with the chef, we believe that selection of

a good manager (an essential ingredient to our recipe for quality care), will help in our quest. A good quality manager is essential in leading and guiding, they will create positive structures in which to base quality caring practices and they will be familiar with relational practice and be focused on restorative and reclaiming behaviours. Glancing back at the advice from our CYC colleagues, we hope that our effective manager can shape individuals to value the need to:

1. Learn not to be afraid to play and have some fun.
2. Look for at least one positive about everyone.
3. Believe that change is measured in moments.
4. Become comfortable laughing at what is going on around them (including themselves).
5. See that crisis can be 'chance to connect'.
6. See possibilities and potential in everything.
7. 'Show up' every time they come to work.
8. Take risks and go with their gut.
9. Work to become aware of their 'own stuff'.
10. Learn to follow the advice of Douglas Adam ... 'don't panic! After preparing our individuals we start about blending then together, into a cohesive and consistent 'crew'; a team working in unison.

A naive analysis might consider seeking to blend traits and characteristics, focusing on single issues such as age and gender. Reflection reminds us that care settings have often been staffed by big men, physically able to impose control where cultures of dominance existed and contributed to siege mentalities of 'them and us', thus negating the possibility of a nurturing environment being created. In reverse, there have been programmes staffed predominantly with females, which may seem more nurturing, but were bereft of opportunity for youth to experience positive male role modelling, opportunities to counter the 'toxic' male role-modelling they may have had in their lives up to that point. Negating any positive male involvement in care can be just as problematic. So, what is the proper blend and how is this achieved?

On this point we each have an opinion; but committing this to paper in a cohesive 'recipe style' manner seems somewhat elusive. People change, they have good days and bad. Those who were once novice can quickly become expert; those who were 'the best of the best' can become fatigued. Blending is an ongoing activity, just as we taste from the various pots and pans as we monitor our lasagne sauces, we must observe and support each other; regardless of age, gender, experience or qualifications. Holding on to the central tenets associated with a CYC approach, will help in the blending and mixing.



And on to the preheated oven

What exactly does the correct baking instruction tell us, a pre-heated oven (180 degrees Celsius), cover in foil and cook for 30 minutes? In CYC practice the oven and conditions will be like shifting sands. Could it be that a calm and nurturing environment is an essential ingredient to quality care? Well maybe? Certainly the provision of nice physical surroundings is always a help in people feeling valued. However when working with angry and disillusioned youth, it is often the physical environment that is likely to be targeted as youth act out their emotional pain. In such cases the perfect baking environment comes from the 'sous chefs', the staff and their ability to tend to the emotional needs of the youth. Those who can convey trust, love, caring and commitment are the primary 'heat-source' necessary to bake this dish, but figuring out the correct instructions at the right time can be quite a talent – one that can be innate or learned.

Eating the tasty dish

So, as we conclude we see that perhaps the CYC venture is somewhat more complex than creating the perfect lasagne. In seeking our quality ingredients there can be problems in even agreeing what the prime ingredients for our perfect recipe should be, there are some staples for sure (such as capacity for love, willingness to care and ability to see beyond that which is manifest) but these will need to vary with individual tastes and requirements. Preparation is complex, requiring individual

work and attention to detail. Then to the blending; the mixing and the ensuring the constituent parts come together in a way that works and does not end up in an ugly mess. Monitoring, supervision and support are key at this time – and this time is all the time. The finished product then is what?

Well often our finished product is seen in what Child and Youth Care feels like and tastes like. The finished product, if the product is ever really finished, results with youth entering relational spaces with helping adults in a healthy way. It may equally be that youth remain connected in relationship after the tenure of their physical stay in the setting ends. It may be that former residents in the programme become your culture carriers for other youth, mentoring, supporting and helping youth engage and relate better. The finished product may result in fewer instances of 'restrictive practice', absconding and reduced or elimination of placement breakdowns.

Whatever we consider good outcome (an efficient system or an intangible feeling that something is going well), whatever it is, we might not be able to describe it well, but we sure as hell know it when we smell or taste it!

Digs and Maxie



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The Immediacy of Childhood

James Freeman

Childhood, by its very nature, involves daily experiences of awe, mystery, and wonder. It's one reason that childhood trauma and abuse is so devastating. It robs a child of the natural opportunities to experience the joy, beauty, and surprise such wonder brings. We see immediacy in the experience of a child by the way one is so urgently involved with in their moment that everything else fades away.

I saw it in the eyes of a South African boy this past summer on a trip to Cape Town with friends. A group of grade fourth students were staying in the same hotel on a school trip to the coast. They were on their way to visit Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. As we stood together on the fifth floor waiting for the elevator I asked him, "Where are you headed today?" I was thinking of his anticipation and expectation in visiting the island. His reply was, "To the first floor!" In his childhood he was absorbed by the joy of riding the elevator regardless of whatever else was on the day's agenda. I was glad he choose to share it with me because I was missing out - and together with his friends we rode the elevator down to the first floor.

I see it in the eyes of my daughter (in

the midst of my frustration) when she rides her bicycle across the intersection without looking both ways for traffic. I worry (lovingly and rightly so) that she not get hit by a moving car. But I forget that she's focused on the immediate - the joy of riding free, how to steer and brake and maneuver her large bicycle, how to impress others with the opinion that she is competent and knows what she's doing.

I see it in the eyes of the teenager in our residential care program who blockades herself in the office until someone responds to her demands. She has important things to say and logical needs that should be met, but can only feel the immediacy of her frustration. In her outburst she swings and curses at everyone. It's hard for her to see the support being offered. Slowly she calms herself and begins to regain an awareness of her surroundings. What is in focus for her is the immediate, the "right now", not tomorrow or the next day.

Immediacy impacts how a child experiences the world, makes meaning of their experiences, and relates to others. It enriches life and in its various forms enhances our experience of life.

Human life is relational. From birth, we are sustained and stretched by our interactions with others. The ability to respond to another [in the present moment] is what makes it possible to develop the delicate patterns of mutuality between children and their caregivers. [I]mmediacy ... is a quality of being a child that adults need as well. Imagination, play, and celebration are variations of immediacy that enrich all human life. So is wonder.
(Anderson & Johnson, 1994, p. 25)

This “quality of being a child” is not only necessary for the healthy development of young people, but for us adults as well. Think about what is required in our everyday exchanges with those we support and work alongside. We must focus on long-term goals, but at the same time be present in the immediate moment of the relational exchange. Perhaps nowhere more than settings of group care is this so true:

When on the job one has to act, to reply to each situation while it is still happening. Also, one is immersed in the continuous flow of happenings without control over their timing or sequence. “Immediacy”, the concept we use to capture the realm of occurrences in residential group care as well as their rhythm and timing, includes the experiencing of a situation, becoming aware of its effect on oneself, and acting while it is occurring, as part of the flow of events. It is acting on an incident and knowing that as soon as it is over or most

probably even before it is, another incident will follow, yet not knowing what that one will be like. (Guttmann, 1991)

We can take a cue from the experience of a child or young person who seems caught up in the immediacy of the moment. It may be what we need to help ground ourselves and see the value of a particular exchange, or the benefit of slowing down to connect in a meaningful way with someone. A way to focus on the value of future goals and lessons, yet appreciate the wonder of the present moment.

When was the last time you paused and thought about the mystery, wonder, and awe of childhood? Perhaps in doing so just now you might change your next experience or interaction with someone important to you.

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Nurturing Creativity

Aurora De Monte

I love the metaphor of Child and Youth Care as modern dance (Krueger, 2000). I think it conveys the rhythmicity, fluidity and uniqueness of our practice, but also the creativity required. Our relational approach fosters and nurtures creativity. The relationship, along with our ability to identify with and relate to others, can be driving forces of creativity. I believe that our work is creative work: the work we do requires curiosity (explore ways of being, doing and interpreting), as well as innovation (applying new ideas to practice), all with the caring intention of supporting growth, change and development for the young people, families and/or settings in which we work.

Relationships as a driving force for creativity

Humans are emotional and social animals. We require attachments to others in order to maintain safety and security, as well as for optimal development (Howe, 1995). This is also a bi-directional process; as we engage in relationships our understanding of self expands and develops (Garfat, 2012; Ward, 2010).

Relationships are central not only to our own well-being but also to the growth

of ideas and skills. In trusting relationships, our interdependence allows us to try new things. Take for example the supervision relationship. Once the supervisee and supervisor feel as though they have established a co-created space that nurtures presence, trust and confidence, the supervisee is supported to try new things; to be creative and take risks so as to develop increased awareness of self and effectiveness in practice.

Vulnerability in the driver's seat

Brene Brown shares about the need for vulnerability in her TED Talk (http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability), when she states “vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change”. When we are in relationships in which we feel seen and heard (our thoughts and feelings are validated and incorporated into creating change), we are encouraged and nurtured to share more, engaging at greater depths in the creative process.

The dialogue between two people (both verbal and non-verbal), not only creates familiarity, but the growth of relationship also challenges us to bring new and novel things to the table. I remember hearing a story from a teacher

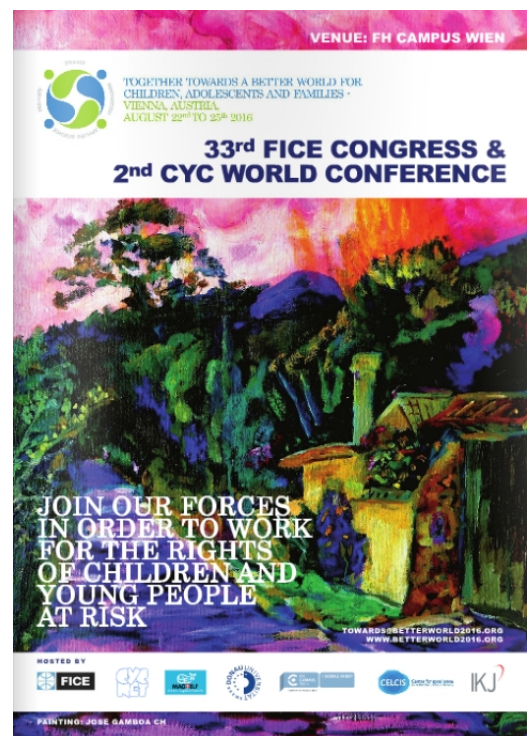
about doing writing retreats and I was curious about the process of these retreats. She described a small group of individuals coming together, each dedicating time to write on their individual pieces of work. At times throughout the days, they would come together to discuss challenges that might have presented themselves, coming up with solutions or simply sharing perspectives, thus supporting the creative process and new thought. The ability to come together with a shared common ground, in the safety of the relationship, allows for vulnerability; by sharing differences we are able to support success in the process.

In our relationships with young people, family members, and colleagues we search to create opportunities of connection and growth. We engage our curiosity to identify moments to support individual growth, and use our creativity to (as Krueger states) 'choreograph' interactions. Our use of creativity and curiosity in relationships are tools, which we use together to create ever-unfolding masterpieces.

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Leighanne's Amaryllis

Laura Steckley

My amaryllis plant sends up a set of big, bodacious blooms this time of year, and it always reminds me of Leighanne. Leighanne was the first kid I made a connection with when I started working in the second residential treatment center of my career. This was the point I had made the decision not to pursue a law degree. I had come to realise I wanted to spend my professional future contributing to and benefitting from working with children and young people in their life-spaces (though I wouldn't have used that language then).

My first few days in this new center were uncomfortable. I didn't know the program or many of the rules, and I had no relationships with the young people or my fellow practitioners. I felt incompetent and inadequate, and was keen to move as

quickly through this necessary phase as possible so I could be of more use to the team and the young people. I was impatient to resume a level of effectiveness that I had experienced at my first treatment centre. This of course took time and was more of a process than an event.

One of the first indicators that I was on my way was the connection I made with Leighanne. This connection was borne of a simple event, really, and I misunderstood its significance at the time. Leighanne had this plant which was dying. Some of its leaves had already died completely and others were a sickly yellow. She asked me if I knew about plants and whether I could tell her what was wrong with hers.

Despite my fondness for houseplants, I had no idea what was wrong, though it

looked pretty grim. So I dug out a book on houseplants and brought it into the center. Together, we looked through the photos until we found one that looked like her plant. I expected we might get some clue as to the nature of the problem from the section on pests and diseases, but that wasn't needed because we came to find out there was no problem. You see, Leighanne's plant was an amaryllis – a bulb plant. Part of its natural annual cycle is a period in which all of its leaves turn yellow, then brown and then fall off. As they die, they feed energy and nutrients back into the bulb. As soon as the plant has shed its leaves, the bulb sends up a big stem that produces large, trumpet-shaped blooms.

Now I could claim all sorts of CYC magic contained in this interaction. On a basic level, Leighanne may have had the simple but important experience of me holding her in mind such that I remembered her and dug out that book when she was outside of my direct contact. This, coupled with me being reliable in following up with what I said I would do, might have been a wee drop of minutiae – the kind of minutiae that Henry Maier and others have written about (you can see an example [here](#)) – that helped to make a small sea of compensatory experiences she may have had at the center.

On another level, the experience of using a book to find something she wanted to know about might have served her well in the future. Furthermore, I might make some kind of claim about the metaphoric value related to metamorphosis. This plant offered a very tangible demonstra-

tion of a process of positive transformation. Like the leaves which had formerly served the plant, Leighanne had ways of thinking, relating and behaving that she no longer needed and could shed.

Best of all was our shared discovery that, despite all outward appearances, there was nothing wrong with the plant. Without an understanding of the plant's own process, we might have made things worse for it – too much water, some sort of treatment for pests, or the worst possible response of assuming it was a lost cause and throwing it away. Not the end of the world if it's a plant, but of course parallels could be made with young people making their way through their own processes of recovery.

I could claim all of these things, but it wouldn't be honest. At the time, I was probably aware of the importance of reliability and follow up, but all the rest would have been lost on me. My development hadn't progressed enough for me to be aware of or have incorporated the rest into my practice. Moreover, Leighanne was on her way to completing the program. She went back home soon after I started working there. Truth be told, the one who gleaned most benefit from that interaction was me. I was able to feel a bit more competent and useful, and because we had made a wee connection, she responded to me with far less disdain after that. And that was okay.

Until next time ...



From the editors –

Child and Youth Care practitioners in the province of Ontario, Canada are getting excited about the upcoming conference in Thunder Bay. They are expecting 250 people from across the province to gather together. This column features some thoughts from Andy Leggett about the conference and the act of CYCs coming together to share and improve the quality of support offered to young people and families. It is featured here in this column as an example of thinking more about the why and how we come together for such events. May it encourage you, wherever you are in the world, to seek out colleagues who will share mutual encouragement and stimulate growth in your work.

Every two years ...
An Opportunity
arises.

Every two years ...
An Opportunity
arises for EVERY
Child and Youth Care
Practitioner in On-
tario to change their
life ... every two years.

This Opportunity
is coming up on May
25th-27th in Thunder Bay, Ontario. It is the
Ontario Association of Child and Youth
Care (OACYC) Provincial Conference and
it will be in Thunder Bay, Ontario! This
year, the theme is:

CYC... Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: a Profession in Motion

And WHAT an Opportunity it is.

You will have the Opportunity to hear,
see, learn, and hang out with Zeni
Thumbadoo, Director of the Isibindi
Model in South Africa, perhaps THE larg-
est and most dynamic and inventive
program in the world involving Child and
Youth Care Practitioners! She is also the

Every Two Years

Andy Leggett

Assistant Director of
the National Associa-
tion of Child Care
Workers in South Af-
rica AND Child and
Youth Care Practitio-
ners in South Africa
ARE LEGISLATION
PROFESSIONALS!

You will have the
Opportunity to hear,
see, learn, and hang

out with the heroes and legends in our
field such as; Thom Garfat, from Montreal,
Jack Phelan, from Edmonton, and James
Freeman, from California just to name a
few, and of course, as well, Christine
Gaitens, The President of the OACYC!
And the list is growing!

You get the Opportunity to hear, see,
learn, and hang out with a number of the
“up and coming” leaders in our field, Pro-
vincially, nationally, and internationally!
They will be presenting on a wide variety
of topics. Why would you not come?!

You will get the Opportunity to hang
out in one of the most vital, relational and
supportive CYC communities in Canada.

And you don't want to miss the CYC NOW experience first-hand! It is where it all began!

And you will get the opportunity to see and enjoy the wonderful city of Thunder Bay and all that the beautiful "True" North has to offer!

We can all find reasons not to go to conferences... "It is too expensive"... "My boss won't pay for it"... "It is too far"... "I don't have the time"... and my personal favourite... "conferences are a waste of time and do nothing for me"... LOL

Those who complain that professional associations and conferences do "nothing for them", are like those who join a health club or gym, don't attend or work out for a year, and then complain that the gym has done "nothing for them"! Instead, I challenge you all to think about all the reasons that you NEED to attend!

Thom Garfat often says, "Child and Youth Care is not what we do, it is who we are... It is "How" you are, "Who" you are, "While" you do, "What" you do!" It is our way of being in the world with others. Don't we owe it to ourselves to be the best Child and Youth Care Practitioner that we can be?

Don't we owe it to the Children, Youth, and Families with whom we work, who are RELYING on us to be just that, to be the best that we can be?

One of Zeni Thumbadoo's favourite quotes is:

"When there is an encounter with another, when there is mutuality, when there is presence, when there is a giving

and receiving, and both are changed in that encounter; that is the moment when you can begin to move forward towards transformation. Don't let the word "transformation" scare you. You just allow what you have met to change you. You look back at it with different eyes. Now you are able to look at the rest of your life with different eyes." (Richard Rohr)

This conference will be the catalyst to just that! You will leave looking with different eyes! We, as Child and Youth Care Practitioners, should be welcoming "Moments of Transformation". We have an OBLIGATION to be constantly striving to "look at the rest of our lives with different eyes".

Don't we? THAT is what conferences are all about... "Moments of Transformation"... Opportunities to "look at the rest of our lives with different eyes".

Zeni Thumbadoo must think so... she is coming... Thom, Jack, James and Christine all must think so... THEY are coming...

I truly believe that if you want to be successful at what you do, you surround yourself with people who ARE successful at what you do, and do what THEY do.

On May 25th to 27th, in Thunder Bay, Ontario, COME and surround yourself with successful and inspiring people... experience "Moments of Transformation"... and begin to "look at the rest of your life with different eyes!"

The link to the OACYC Conference is <http://www.oacyc.org/conference2016/2016-provincial-conference>

See You There!



Women's Lives

SOS Mothers tell their stories

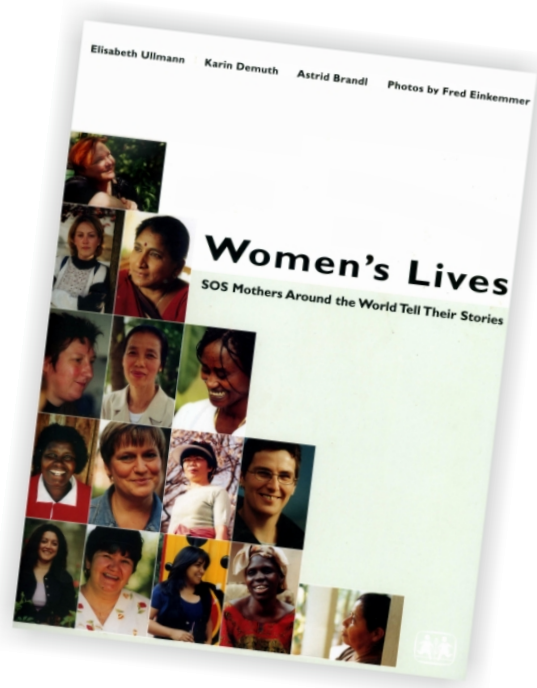
Part 5



Thi Do Nguyen

Born 25.4.1949, Vietnam

“Everybody from the village came to our house to see me and my children. There I'd been for seventeen years with no children and all of a sudden I had eleven children, including a baby. They were all happy and smiled at me.”



Do marries when the Vietnam War is at its worst. Her husband is a soldier and only returns home years after the war has finished. The land reform, carried out by the communist party, means that the two of them are able to build a small house and tend their own fields. In addition, Do works as a kindergarten teacher for the local authorities. She is paid in rice. However, the two of them are not to be granted a future together. Their wish to have a child, which society also expects of them, remains unfulfilled. After being married for seventeen years, Do makes a decision: She finds a second wife for her husband, one who will be able to bear him children, and she becomes an SOS mother. Her long-cherished desire to live with children is at last fulfilled by this new career and new way of life.



The Story of Her Life

“Rice was the salary we earned in our country.”

I was born in a district of Hanoi called Soc Son. I am fifty-four years old. My father is dead and my mother is eighty-five years old. We were four brothers and sisters, but one of my brothers was killed in the war. I was able to go to school as a child and when I was older I went to a training college for kindergarten teachers. Before coming to the SOS Children’s Village, I worked as a kindergarten teacher for nineteen years. I got married when I was twenty-two and lived with my husband for

seventeen years. We didn’t have any children and then I heard about SOS Children’s Villages, so I left my husband and started working as an SOS mother. I was happy being with the children in my previous job, but I did think it would be better to have a permanent home. I heard that SOS Children’s Villages were founding new families and I applied for the job of an SOS mother. I wanted this job, so that I could have children just like all the other women in our society.

Could you describe your parents? What did they live on?

My parents wanted all of us children to have an education. They were farmers and, as you know, people from rural areas don’t often have the money to send their children to school. We all went as far as secondary school, except for me. I was confident and committed enough to be able to work and study at the same time. I finished grammar school and then completed the training course for kindergarten teachers. At that time my parents didn’t have land of their own. They worked for a landowner. They did all the work and had to pay rent for the land by giving up part of their rice harvest. Thanks to the communist party, they were then given their own piece of land to work. My parents supported me until I married and moved out.

What role did your mother play at home?

My mother was a farmer. When she was young she went out to the fields twice

a day. Once we were born she had to work very hard to earn enough rice to feed us all. We didn't have any machines to remove the husks from the rice. My mother had to do it all by hand. She had to get up early in the morning to work in the fields and in the evenings she husked the rice by hand. For a long time she was a member of the women's association in our community. Their aim was to support each other as women and to help the poorer women.

What memories do you have of your father?

Even though he was poor, he loved us a lot. When I was ten years old, I wanted to stay at home to cook for my parents but my father worried that it would be too dangerous. My family was poor and we knew that we only had rice or sweet potatoes to eat. He ate the sweet potatoes, so that we could have the rice.

Perhaps you could tell us something about your grandparents?

Both my grandparents were farmers. They died when I was quite young. I didn't know them but my father told me quite a bit about them. He told me that they were very poor. They worked as farmers for a landowner and were paid very little. Rice was the salary we were paid in our country. My mother's parents had three children and my father's parents had four.

What do your brothers and sisters do?

They all completed secondary school. My elder brother went into the army in



1961 and served until he fell in 1967. My younger brother got married as soon as he left school. He has got five children and is a farmer. My younger sister is also married and she lives with her husband in the place where we all grew up. She is a farmer and has one son who got married last month. My sister looks just like me and we both take after our mother.

You've already mentioned the war. What did you experience during that time?

I burst into tears on the evening I heard that my brother had fallen in the war. We had a funeral ceremony for him but we didn't know where he had died.



We still don't know, because he was never found. One of the soldiers tried to rescue his body and dig him a grave, but the bomb had been so terrible that they couldn't find his body. My brother had always worked hard. He had worked and studied at the same time. A lot of men who were studying had to go to the front in the war. Before he was sent to the south of the country, he sent me a pen, which I value very much. He said I should try to study. My brother's life was so short. If he were alive today, he would be sixty years old.

When the war broke out up here in the north I was fifteen. The war reached our community in 1971/72. It was very noisy when the bombs exploded outside the village. The bombs falling killed nobody in our

village, but some of the bombs landed in the fields and people were killed later when they were working in the fields. Even though there were a lot of bombs, our house wasn't damaged. I was working as a kindergarten teacher then. We didn't have any tables or chairs and just sat on the floor. When the air-raid warning came, all the children and teachers had to put on straw hats and hide in the underground bunkers.

What did your husband do?

My husband was also a soldier. He was responsible for distributing the weapons. We got married in 1972, when the war was at its worst. His base was just one kilometre away from my home village but

he still didn't come home very often because he was always being sent into action a long way from home. The war in Vietnam finished in 1975. However, my husband only came home in 1982. When he returned, the co-operative gave us our own piece of land. We built a house and he worked as a farmer. My mother lives there now and looks after the house. The place where my husband comes from is about a hundred and fifty kilometres away from Hanoi. After we got divorced, he married another woman and lived in my village for a few years. Now he and his second wife have moved back to the province where he came from.

Did you and your husband ever think about adopting?

There was a poor family with eight children who lived about ten kilometres from our village. They really couldn't afford so many children. They didn't have any furniture, no beds and no table. Therefore, all their children had to grow up in other families. My husband and I also adopted a boy who was four years old. When he was nine, his father died and there was no man in the family anymore. This is very important in Vietnam and so the family asked us if we would give them the boy back. Now he's married with two children. He's still in touch with my family and my mother and comes to visit me in the holidays. Sometimes I visit him too. I'm happy that my boy still thinks of me as his "mother". After he went home, I looked after one of my nieces. She lived with me for three years until she was eighteen. Then she married a

young man from the same village and now has two children.

Have you got a friend to talk to?

I have a close friend that I can share all my private thoughts with. She lives in my village and is also a farmer. When I find time to visit my mother I go to visit her too. I have another close friend too. Both of them now have grown-up children.

You worked as a kindergarten teacher and a primary school teacher before you became an SOS mother?

There was no school in the nearby town for the children from our village, and so I worked as a primary school teacher in the mornings and as a kindergarten teacher in the afternoons for seven years. I wasn't paid anything for this work. When a new teacher came to the village, the headmaster said that I should carry on working as a kindergarten teacher. I would have been paid a small salary for teaching primary school, but a kindergarten teacher isn't paid anything, because the kindergarten belongs to the village and the village can only pay with rice. I was an excellent teacher and was given a certificate by the local authorities in recognition of my work. All the people who lived in our community were impressed by my teaching methods.

What are your particular talents and strengths?

I really care for my children with all my heart. Apart from that I don't have any special talents. I'm just an ordinary woman.



Motivation for Her Choice of Profession

“I felt good when I imagined being able to live together with my new children.”

SOS Children’s Villages sent information to my local authorities and the women’s committee passed it on to me. The advertisement informed me that, as an SOS mother, I would have a family and would have to look after ten children. That meant that I would be living like a mother and that made me happy.

My family tried to stop me from sending off the application forms, because I would have to go so far away to work and they didn’t understand what SOS Chil-

dren’s Villages was about either. I told them, “If I mean anything to you, please let me work there. I think it would bring me the right balance in my unlucky life.” They were able to understand this and gave me permission. I explained SOS Children’s Villages more to them once I had completed the basic training, and they were able to understand it better. My friends were also very understanding and were happy about my new job. My mother was happy, because it meant she would have more grandchildren and my brother and sister were happy, because it meant that I too would now have children, even if I couldn’t have any myself.

I had spent a year previously looking for a second wife for my husband. I di-

forced him in the hope that he would have a happier life with another woman. I asked a younger woman if she wanted to marry my husband, in order to bear him children. And I felt good when I imagined being able to live together with my new children. I thought to myself, "This is my village, this is my family, these are my children. I don't want to live as I did before anymore."

Could you tell us a bit about your training to be an SOS mother?

When I went on the training course, we were taught about the philosophy and values of child rearing. We were given the confirmation that we could become SOS mothers and also an introduction to the SOS family. The trainers all came from external institutions such as the psychology department or the teacher training college at the university. They taught us how to look after a baby, how to guide a family and what sort of daily schedule the children of different ages should have as well as how to bring them up. We learned about motherhood and the love between a mother and a child. We all make mistakes and so does a child, but despite all these mistakes a mother loves her child. A mother has to care about all aspects of the child's life, whether it be his career or personal development and to support him at all times. When the child grows up, she has to care for the youth too. I had to learn how to prevent illnesses, how to treat children when they are sick, or how to deal with the children arguing with each other. When I had finished the training

course I had to do a practical in a state-run orphanage. The training course lasted a total of seventy-five days for both the theoretical and practical parts. In the meantime the village was finished. It was the first SOS Children's Village to be built after the war. I went home for a week after the training course and then we started work. Everything went well except that my husband didn't want a divorce. So I explained SOS Children's Villages to him. Then I wrote an application for divorce and sent it to the courts.

Experiences as an SOS Mother

"I had to change and learn new things, in order to be able to cope with the demands made on me."

I arrived in the village in October 1989. I was given my first children in January 1990. By the end of that year I already had eleven children and we were a family. I had to get up early in the mornings to feed the baby and make the children's breakfast. I didn't have an SOS aunt to help me and so I did all the housework myself. After I had fed the baby, I helped the three-year-old. As soon as I had made the older children's breakfast, I got them ready for school. There wasn't an SOS Kindergarten in the village then and we had to leave the babies and smaller children with another SOS mother if we wanted to go to the market. When I got back from the market, I prepared lunch. Then I washed the little ones' clothes until the children came home from



school. As soon as they came home, I taught them to wash their faces and hands before sitting down to eat. In the afternoons, I would play with the little ones, give them a bath at about half past four and then cook dinner. We all sat down to dinner together and afterwards we would watch the children's programmes on television. During the night I had to feed the youngest one twice and I would keep checking that the children were all lying in the correct position. I don't have a small child at the moment, but at night I still check to see that the children have got all their arms and legs under the mosquito net. That's a day in the life of an SOS mother.

How has your working relationship with the other SOS mothers developed?

I get on well with all the other SOS mothers in the village. We are like one big family. If there is a sick child in one of the families, we all get together to find out what has happened and to see if we can help. We have been the same group of SOS mothers since the village opened. Only one woman left, because her family did not agree with her being here. The woman who replaced her was on the same training course as us and worked as an SOS aunt until she was made an SOS mother.

What is your working relationship with the village director like?

I have never had any problems with the village director, nor with the other co-workers. Every time I had any difficulties in bringing up my children I asked them for advice and they helped me. Basically, all the staff here, the SOS mothers, the village director and the other co-workers have the same job and that is to support the children's development and to ensure them a secure future.

What has your experience been of having a female village director? As you probably know, most of our village directors are men.

If the village director is a woman, she will help us with the babies. The first village director was married and she lived in the village with her family. Because she had her own children, she knew how difficult it was to look after a baby. When I took the



baby in, she helped me to feed and bathe it. She also always had a lot of understanding for the other SOS mothers. She supported us in carrying out our tasks and explained things to us that either we did not know, or did not understand. I think that the village director's main task is to be there so that I can talk to him or her when I need support.

Have you, as a person, changed since you've been in the SOS Children's Village?

When I lived in my village at home and taught, I only had to do a teacher's job. Here in the SOS Children's Village, however, I have to work with the children who

live with me all day and every day. I had to change and learn new things, in order to be able to cope with the demands made on me. I also had to change my way of thinking entirely: how could I bring the children up to be useful and helpful citizens? When I was a teacher, I only had to fulfil the duties of a teacher but now I have to be a mother and a teacher at the same time.

In addition to that, I have a double role in bringing up the children. I have to be both the mother and the father. When a young boy grows up with a father, he obeys his father. However, in my family there is no father so I have to try to talk to him like a father. They accept that. The

boys listen to me and obey me when I'm in my father role. I try to explain to them that they are growing up in the SOS Children's Village, because they don't have any parents and that they have to try hard at school so that they can achieve the same as the other children.

Have you received any in-service training?

Generally I go to the monthly meetings where somebody holds a lecture on different topics and where we are given more training in bringing up children. Since early 2001 we have had an SOS Vocational Training Centre here in Hanoi. Last year they offered six courses and this year the SOS mothers from Hanoi will take part in a refresher course.

What has been your best experience since you've been in the SOS Children's Village and what has been the worst situation that you have had to deal with?

The best thing has been to have a big family and to feel the harmony within it. The most difficult thing for me was in the early years when all the children were of different ages and all came from different places.

Can you remember a moment when you were particularly happy?

I can remember the day when I first took my children to my village. My mother and my brother and sisters were very happy that we came to visit. Everybody from the village came to our house to see

me and my children. There I'd been for seventeen years with no children and all of a sudden I had eleven children, including a baby. They were all happy and smiled at me. You should have heard the driver who took us there! He told our first village director that he had been to my village with me and that it was as if he had been in a foreign country that was full of harmony.

How would you describe your job to an outsider?

Anybody who doesn't know anything about SOS Children's Villages thinks that an SOS mother works like any other care person in an orphanage. Some people think that the work is very easy. That's why I like to explain what the SOS Children's Village is all about. Each of us has to take care of ten or eleven children of all different ages. I go to the market every day and look after each child as if I were a real mother. Now people from outside can understand our work better and even admire us for it. They say, "You are amazing. You have a large family with lots of children and even have to look after the babies. That's hard work."

What do you think is the difference between yourself and a single parent outside the SOS Children's Village?

I don't have to worry about earning money to feed my family. I can save my energy for caring for the children and for bringing them up. I base my methods of child-rearing on the theories we learned on the training course - a natural mother can bring up her children however she





feels is right. An SOS mother has to be very careful how she treats the children and what she says to them, so that the children don't get the impression that they're not loved. A natural mother can sometimes be cross with her child but that child will never doubt that his mother loves him. However, the children in my family can't depend on being loved, because I'm not their real mother. That means that I have to be very careful.

What do you do in your free time and holidays?

In my free time I stay at home with the children and we do the housework or play together. Sometimes I take the children to

the market and we have a wander around, or I visit my daughter who is already married. I like to read the newspaper and I like to watch the news or programmes on television about bringing up children. When I take my annual holiday I usually take the children to visit my mother. I normally only take three days' holiday and not the full twelve.

If you were granted three wishes, what would you wish for?

First of all I'd wish for all the children and SOS mothers to remain in good health. My second wish would be for my children all to become useful and independent citizens - that's my biggest wish in

life. My third wish is for my children all to manage to find good jobs and to have regular incomes so that they can lead good lives. I also hope that the emotional tie between us, the children and the village, will last even after I've retired one day. I hope that the ties will last forever.

And what do you wish for yourself for the future?

Personally I hope that my children will still come to visit me even after I've retired. I hope that there will be a home for retired SOS mothers by then, where I can live together with my former colleagues. If I can stay near the SOS Children's Village, my children will be able to visit me. If, however, there is no such house by then, I will have to go back to my village and live with one of my cousins or my nephews and nieces.

The Children in Her Care

"An SOS mother has to ask the children questions; she has to guide them and advise them."

I was given my first child on the 2nd of January 1990. He came from the outskirts of Hanoi and his name is Tuan Hai. Two days later I took in two more children. One of them had been abandoned by her parents. The mother was disabled and knew that her daughter was also mentally disabled. She left her in a very poor house in the centre of Hanoi. Luckily there was a neighbour who gave her a bit of rice every

day. She was lying on a thin mat and looked terrible. She was three years old at the time. When I picked her up, she cried. She couldn't speak clearly and only used ugly words. When I took her in, I let her sleep with me. My family house wasn't equipped to cope with a whole family yet, because the SOS Children's Village had only just been completed. So my children had to sleep on the floor. Thanks to the care given her by everybody in the village, she began to eat and soon began to grow. Because she was disabled, though, she was never able to recover fully. She often had a high temperature and wasn't able to move one side of her body. She was in hospital a lot, but there was no treatment for her illness. Even though she did not get better, I didn't want to send her to an orphanage. The village director tried to convince me that it would be better for her to go to a specialist facility where they could help her more. I asked her to leave the child in my care, but she said, "The SOS Children's Village doesn't have the specialist equipment needed for disabled children. She's still small now and you can lift her onto the toilet, but what will happen when she's bigger and heavier and we can't lift her anymore? You've got other children in your family who need looking after too. Please send her to the orphanage for disabled children." I couldn't sleep for a week after she went to the orphanage, because I missed her so much. The village director didn't want me to go with her on the day she moved, because she knew that I would cry. Two years later I visited her in the orphanage. I had made clothes for her. When



I got there I saw that she was able to sit upright in a chair. She even remembered me and smiled when she saw me. However, her illness was very bad and she died a year later.

Two more children arrived two months after this little girl. They were brother and sister and their parents had died. They were living in extreme poverty and only had potatoes and sweet potatoes to eat, but no rice. When the two of them came to me, the boy, who was the older one, was very ill. His younger sister was three years old and also extremely malnourished. She had a big bald head. Her arms and legs were very small and she had a very fat tummy. The village director showed me what I had to do to make her hair grow again. I took her to the doctors to have her examined and given medicine. After three months she was eating quite well and she started to grow and so did her hair. Now she studies in the evenings and is healthy and fat. Her name is Hanh and her brother is Tien.

My eldest daughter is Na and she comes from a suburb of Hanoi. She's the one who already has a baby. She had seven brothers and sisters and was only seven months old when her parents died. She lived with her brothers and sisters after that. She was seven years old when she came to the SOS Children's Village. A lot of people thought that she was only five, because she was so weak. Thanks to the care that everyone has given her here, she quickly grew bigger.

I was given another child in October 1990. She had been abandoned outside

Hanoi. Her name is Hien. When she arrived, everybody from the village came to look at her and a lot of them had to laugh, because she was so dirty. She had black skin and curly hair. I said to the village director, "Perhaps she comes from the mountains, or from Africa?!" I looked after her and bathed her and a week later she was already a shade whiter. She ate a lot and grew so quickly that I got worried. As she grew bigger she also got prettier. She always did well at kindergarten and school. She's now the class representative and takes part in all the school activities. I took good care of her, woke her up at night to see to her when she had a high temperature and now she has grown quickly and is healthy. I've been very lucky with this child.

None of the other children had any problems with their health when they came here. Those I've described were the difficult ones. Including the one who died, I've cared for eighteen children. Seven of them are either in the youth homes or the SOS Vocational Training Centre, or they've got married.

You've already mentioned where some of your children came from. Do you know all their histories?

I know all the family histories. Most of the parents are dead and two of them have parents who are mentally ill. I know all their relatives. They come to see the children and realise that I'm taking good care of them. They are thankful for that and I'm often invited to visit them. They also come to visit the children.



Do the children ever ask where they come from?

I've explained it to them and told them about where they come from. Whilst they are still small, I keep this information to myself and don't tell them about their tragic pasts. I only tell them about where they come from and how they used to live, once they've grown up a bit. When they are about fifteen or sixteen years old, I tell them their stories. At that age they are able to understand these things. All my children should know where they come from and be familiar with their family histories.

How do you interact with the educators?

We have got five educators altogether. Three of them are in the village and two are in the youth home. The educators visit each family every day and are in close contact with the SOS mothers. If something is wrong with one of the children, if for example, the child is developing slowly either physically or mentally, I'll ask the educator for advice. Each of them has their own field of expertise. One is for learning, one for general activities and another for music and movement. Generally I work with them all. They all do their best to support the children's development.

Do you have development plans here in Vietnam?

We work out a development plan for each child in the village. This means that the village has information about which training centre would be most suitable for a particular child and which children will be allowed to continue their studies. If I have a grown-up child, who is about to take his “A”-levels and go to university, I ask that child, “Which university would you like to go to and which institute would you like to be at? And, if you don’t make it, what sort of job training would you like to do?” An SOS mother has to ask the children questions; she has to guide and advise them. Then she has to tell the village administration, who gets in

touch with the training centre. The village director and the educator both write regular reports on each child’s development.

Are you still in touch with those children who have already left your family?

Normally my children all come to visit me when they have time off. If they’re very busy, they’ll phone me to see how I am and sometimes I visit my children who are living in the youth home, or who are married. If one of the youths living in the youth facility is ill and has a temperature, I go to visit him, to take care of him. All the SOS mothers do the same.



What do you wish for your girls and boys?

I hope that they will find good jobs with a good income. I hope that the boys will lead good lives and will marry good women. I hope that the girls will find good jobs and have regular incomes and I hope that they will choose good husbands. I hope that they will all have happy family lives with their own families.

To My Colleagues Around the World

I would like to send my respectful greetings to all other SOS mothers in the world. From the bottom of my heart I wish them all health, and luck and happiness with their children. With best wishes from Mrs Nguyen Thi Do, SOS mother from SOS Children's Village Hanoi.

Do on the Situation of Women in Vietnam

Vietnamese women are simple, religious and hard-working. They can do all sorts of work, not just the housework; they are also able to do hard work like farming. They look after the children and their husbands within the family and, if there are grandparents, they look after them too. Women are also responsible for doing the administration for the local authorities. Vietnamese women work very hard, because they have to do both things: They have to do the housework and either work in an office or in the fields. They also have to feed the chickens and pigs, plant the vegetables and work in the fields. If they have to feed the buffaloes, they have to mow the grass around the sides of the

SOS Children's Village Work in Vietnam

SOS-Kinderdorf International started working in Vietnam in 1967. The first two SOS Children's Villages were opened in Go Vap (Ho Chi Minh City) and Dalat in 1969. They were both closed down by the government in 1976. In 1987 it was possible to reach an agreement and a new SOS Children's Village was constructed in Mai Dich (Hanoi) whilst the existing SOS Children's Village in Go Vap was renovated. In 1989 Mai Dich, Go Vap and Dalat went into operation and construction started on another SOS Children's Village in Vinh. Since then a number of SOS Children's Villages and ancillary facilities have been added.

Existing SOS Children's Village Facilities

16 SOS Children's Villages, 12 SOS Hermann Gmeiner Schools, 15 SOS Kindergartens, 1 SOS Vocational Training Centre, 2 SOS Medical Centre and various SOS Youth Facilities.



fields first. When they've done all that, they come home to cook dinner for the family.

Women do more work than men and work harder too. If one of the children starts to cry, it is the woman who has to get up. Unlike the men, the women try to improve their standard of education and their qualifications. If a woman marries and has children, she normally carries on working. She can spend four months at home after the birth and continues to receive her salary during this time. Afterwards she has to find either a babysitter or a kindergarten. In rural areas, the woman normally just spends one month at home and then either takes the child to her mother or an older sister, so that she can continue working in the fields.

In terms of education no distinction is made between girls and boys, but in real life there is still a difference. Vietnamese tradition means that the difference between girls and boys lies in the fact that we have to teach the girls to be able to look after themselves once they are grown up. We show them that boys are different. Sexually speaking, you see. The girls have to be careful of their morals and are only allowed to live with a man once they are married.

It used to be thought that men were more important than women. Today society has improved in that women are now also considered to be important, and the men love their wives and help them around the home. It is just a small mental step forward for the men.

VIETNAM	
Area	331,114 km ²
Population	78 523 000
Population density	237 per km ²
Average number of children per woman	2.2 *
Life expectancy for women	71.5 *
Life expectancy for men	66.7 *
Infant mortality	3%
Illiteracy rate amongst women	9%
Illiteracy rate amongst men	4%
Percentage of population living below the poverty line	37%
Religions (the two most common)	55% Buddhists, 5% Catholic
Languages	Vietnamese
GNP per capita	USD 390

Sources: *Der Fischer Weltalmanach 2003*; * WDI Database



“Hurry, Hard!” It’s a Canadian Thing

Nils Ling

I had to explain the game of curling to an American friend of mine the other day. It’s hard to do when someone is snickering at you. I was talking to my friend in Florida, and mentioned that during the winter I spend a fair amount of time watching curling on TV.

She said “Curling? What’s that?”

So I explained to her that curling is a game where people slide forty- pound chunks of granite down a 200-foot ice sur-

face to a target at the far end of the sheet.

She said, and I quote: “No, really . . . what’s curling?”

I said, “Of course, if you don’t throw this forty-pound rock hard enough, your teammates have to run ahead of it with brooms and sweep the ice so it will get down to the far end.”

She said “OK, fine. If you don’t want to tell me what curling is, just say so.”



I was finally able to convince her that I wasn't making all this up. She was hesitant, but in the end she was buying the whole concept, right up until I told her that Canadians tune in from coast to coast to watch a curling match. At that point she just threw up her hands and accused me of lying about everything. She was quite miffed.

I have to admit, it does sound like a stretch. If someone told me that Americans tuned in to watch televised shuffleboard, I would snort in disbelief. Brits? Oh, sure, Brits will watch anything. They'll watch hedgehog hunting on the BBC. Or snooker. Or darts. And really, a lot of people think of curling as darts for people who can't be trusted with sharp, pointy objects. So I can absolutely see Brits watching a curling game.

But Americans? No way. Americans would laugh if you tried to put curling on ESPN, unless you changed the rules to include full body contact, added halftime and scantily-clad cheerleaders, and allowed slam dunking.

So I can understand my friend's incredulity when I told her there were Canadians across the country hanging on every televised takeout and draw. I mean, curling is a sport where the term "slow motion replay" is redundant: "Let's watch that shot in slow motion, Vic, for those viewers who didn't follow it the first time."

Well, hot news, pal. Given the size of a curling rock and the excruciatingly glacial velocity at which it moves, it's a safe bet that anyone who didn't catch the shot the first time around just isn't receiving and

processing visual signals today. Slowing it down won't help. These folks are going to have trouble keeping up with a test pattern.

I mean, really. Have you ever listened to the play by play in a curling match? There's lots of time to fill. Each shot takes about 30 seconds to get down the length of the ice. It's like chess by mail without the thrills and breakneck action.

Of course I'm kidding. Sort of. But even the most ardent curling fans – and I count myself among them – would admit it's not the most fast-paced game in the world. It's a spectator sport for people with no places to go, few things to do. Nothing unfolds quickly in a curling match. And that's the beauty of it – as a spectator, you're free to doze off, or get some paperwork done, or have surgery without being afraid you'll miss a whole lot. Soap opera plots develop faster than curling matches.

We have to remember that this a sport where up until a few years ago you could drink beer and smoke on the actual playing surface while you were competing. I can understand my friend being a bit skeptical.

I love curling, but I recognize that it's something you either get, or you don't. And she doesn't get it. Maybe I didn't explain it right. But somehow, I don't think the phrase "Hurry, hard!" is going to catch on in Florida any time soon.

I guess it's a Canadian thing. That's OK. We're allowed to have our own things.

Hey, they have Jerry Springer, Madonna, and the WWF. I'll take curling any day.



Postcard from
Leon Fulcher

MARCH 2016
Weir House, 1996 re-union
Wellington, New Zealand

Kia Ora and warm greetings everyone!
This month's Postcard is about memories and relationships sustained over the course of time. Think for a moment about young people who have featured prominently in your personal and professional lives. Think also of opportunities that may have arisen when you meet up with someone with whom you've worked – 20 years



Weir House Hall of Residence at Victoria University of Wellington – Est. 1932

later! That happened with us over New Zealand's Waitangi Day weekend as we joined a 1996 Re-union of Residents of Weir House at Victoria University of Wellington.

As the Wardens of Weir House, we had selected each of these residents and located them for a year within a residential community as they transitioned from rural New Zealand and the Pacific to career paths starting in the Capital City. A private Facebook page was created for all who came to study at Victoria University of Wellington and live at Weir House in 1996. Built in 1932 and historically endowed as a residential college for men, Weir House was nearly closed in the 1970s as a costly 'garbage tip' inhabited by young men. Amendment of the formal Deed of Trust at the High Court in 1978 to admit women residents enabled Weir House to be saved for future generations.



The 20-year Reunion involved moving back into our old rooms for the Waitangi Weekend

100 former residents and partners 'checked in' to Weir House during the first weekend in February (before the start



of term), most returning to the rooms in which they had stayed 20 years earlier. 6 married couples were amongst the group. Facebook posts showed views of Wellington Harbour – the same Harbour that greeted them each morning when opening their curtains to face another day.



We never grew tired of our Old Rooms View looking out at Wellington Harbour

There was once a blind student, a returning, senior student who asked if he might have a top floor room overlooking the harbour. When asked how he could tell the difference between one room and another, he said it was his visitors who very much noticed his good taste for rooms. And visited often!

One might ask how a university hall of residence for first year students from provincial and rural communities, and from the Asia-Pacific Region, is related to child and youth care. We thought of Weir House as a refugee re-settlement centre for young people leaving home for the first time. We welcomed mixed groups of 265



Weir House Residents of 1996, Victoria University of Wellington – The Official Photograph

18-year old youths arriving a week before the start of University classes for orientation to living and Belonging at Weir House within particular Living Groups.



A Welcome Reception in the Old Weir House Common Room before Dinner

Each floor had a Senior Student Resident who was tasked with engaging all who lived on their Floor so that by the

end of Orientation Week, each resident knew the names of the people around whom they lived, what classes they were attending, and where their first lectures took place. 1996 alumni commented about how coming to live at Weir House helped them build relationships in a great community and that offered a good start. 100 out of 264 residents at the Reunion says heaps.



Floor photos for all reunion participants, and one with couples formed at Weir House

Preliminary events were planned so as to include people who would be away during New Zealand's National Day. Most joined the Welcoming Reception in the Weir House Common Room for nibbles and drinks, along with welcoming speeches before dinner. The place was buzzing, with people there from London, Brussels, Australia, the US, Singapore and all parts of New Zealand.

It made me think just how easy it is to overlook the importance of relational moments that matter when working with young people – any young people. Two decades on, there were parents who were also Barristers, Accountants, public ser-



After dinner speeches were filled with tales of mischief, laughter, photos and memories

vants, a former MP, teachers, artists, farmers, Home-based Mothers and also Fathers, along with interesting business women and men, all acknowledging what Belonging meant for them at Weir house as they launched down personal and professional career paths. Along the way, they formed relationships still meaningful in their lives today.



Into the Early Hours, Sharing Memories of Earlier Times and Relationships that Mattered

endnotes



Take one of these whenever you can get the cap off.

Youth is happy because it has the capacity to see beauty. Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old.
– **Franz Kafka**

Stories you read when you're the right age never quite leave you. You may forget who wrote them or what the story was called. Sometimes you'll forget precisely what happened, but if a story touches you it will stay with you, haunting the places in your mind that you rarely ever visit.”
– **Neil Gaiman, *M Is for Magic***

Young people don't always do what they're told, but if they can pull it off and do something wonderful, sometimes they escape punishment.
– **Rick Riordan**

What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.”

– **Kurt Vonnegut, *Palm Sunday: An Autobiographical Collage***

What a weary time those years were – to have the desire and the need to live but not the ability.

– **Charles Bukowski, *Ham on Rye***

It takes a very long time to become young.

– **Pablo Picasso**

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

– **Salvador Dali**



Didn't you get my SMS?

information

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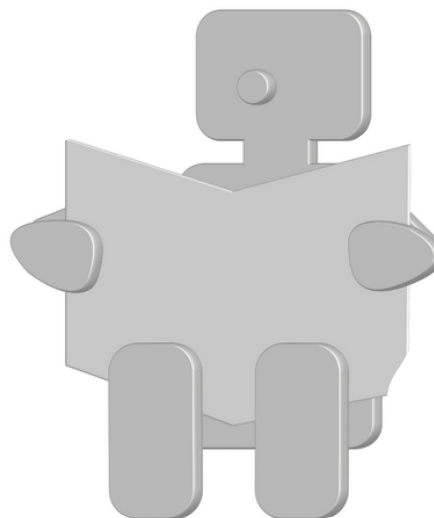
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