

CYC-Online



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

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Reminding Myself

So, I forgot to write my editorial for this month – I know, this looks like I did not forget it – but this is only here because a supportive, reminder/nag from the Cape Town Team of CYC-Net.

It is kind of ironic – here it is, International CYC Celebration time and I, one of the editors of perhaps the most supportive of CYC resources, forgot to write an editorial. All week, I have been reminding, nagging and encouraging people re: CYC Week, and yet, I still missed my obligation.

Funny how that goes – we worry about what others are doing and sometimes neglect our own personal obligations – obligations to ourselves, really – because for me, supporting CYC is a passion, something I believe in.

We often do that I find – get so focussed on other, we forget to focus on self. And, yes, I know, it brings up all kinds of thoughts about self-care, etc. but I won't go there because it is too obvious. And it brings up other thoughts about how easy it is to neglect the contributions we should be making to the development of our field – but that too is too obvious to dwell upon.

Now, I was reminded about my editorial by Brian and Martin, working in Cape Town to get this issue out, by Leon who is in Vienna negotiating around the next World, and by the Board of Governors from Scotland, the USA, Canada, and

other CYC-Net Board members during our recent, first ever, cyberspace meeting. And as I was reminded, I found myself feeling a little embarrassed – well, you can imagine. Here I was telling everyone on the Board about how we had had over 1.3 million visitors from around the world last year, an me, editor and all, forgot my editorial.

Well, once I felt my embarrassment, I wanted to 'defend myself' – offer up reasons and excuses, blame the weather, say the dog pissed on my computer, whatever. Fortunately, I caught myself and did not do it.

Instead I went with 'you're right, slipped my mind, this is embarrassing. Do I have time to make it up?'

Simple, eh? Accept that you blew it and get on with it.

And all my 'reminding-friends' had a good laugh and helped me get on with it.

If you are at all familiar with our training in the therapeutic use of daily life events, you will know that we believe we all live life according to themes – and one of mine is 'do it right, or get out'. I think I am going to change that to 'if you can't do it right, find some supportive friends'.

Thanks for listening to my babble. Hope you have a great International CYC Week.

Thom



The truth is this: I am hopelessly in love with the Child & Youth Care of the 20th century, and quite disturbed by the field of the 21st century, at least as it is evolving in North America. I know that in part this reflects my aging process, and my alienation from this era of performance. In the old days (meaning last century), the divisions amongst child and youth care types was quite dichotomous: there were the anarchist radicals, who resisted rules, structure, order and especially boundaries (which, in some articulations are really nothing more than rules, structure and oppressive order) on the one hand, and then there were the power players, who held on to structure and order in the name of teaching or training young people to be perfect, inventing along the way things like token economies, point and level systems, and the ever-popular behavior charts and behavior contracts. The battle was quite simple; the power players made the rules, the anarchists ignored the rules, and the young people rejoiced in playing the two against one another. Out of this battle came some pretty good thinking; as we all settled down a bit, we learned to appreciate relational practice, engage the Self, re-focus on care and love, and expand our interactions to include families, neighbourhoods and communities. We became interested in

culture and diversity, genders, indigenous ways, restorative practices, and so many other things. And we began to take seriously people like Garfat and Fewster, Fox and Frances, Krueger and Ward who kept talking about the Self. We even became interested in ethics, and we began to realize that being present with young people might not be about asserting either power-centric or anarchic social contexts.

Dilemmas of a Romantic

Kiaras Gharabaghi

So far, so good. But something has changed over the past few years (this century). At some point, a new conversation emerged, one that is not about being present, but instead about achieving outcomes or results. This

is a conversation that still talks about the old concepts, but doesn't quite walk the talk. It is the conversation about evidence, about proving one's worth, and ultimately about performance. Performance as it applies to young people, to Child and Youth care practitioners, and also to programs, organizations and systems. We all know this conversation, and to some extent, we all participate in it. The former radicals quote evidence when it is convenient; the power players work the evidence as they are told; and the new scientists talk relationships to soften their stiffness, to warm up their cold scientism.

The dilemma of the romantic is not about the scientism per se. We have had scientism in child and youth services for a long time, represented first and foremost by the psychiatrists and their pharmaceutical industry friends. But this didn't really pose much of a dilemma for the romantic, because child and youth care practitioners never really had access to the decision-making about medications anyways. The dilemma for the romantic is simply this: in the context of post-secondary education in child and youth care practice, what do we teach? Do we teach the ideas of the radical anarchists, of the power players, or of the scientists? Do we teach the more nuanced and balanced ideas of the era of reconciliation between the radicals and the power players? Do we teach what the romantic believes to be the best concepts, the best ideas and the best approaches in child and youth care practice?

Or do we teach what might help our students get a job?

Increasingly, I am hearing a very different kind of feedback from potential employers of child and youth care practitioners. They are not asking me how we prepare students for relational practice. They don't want to know how we instill a sense of Self. Being present, being in the moment, or navigating life space are not on the agenda. Instead, I am asked these kinds of questions:

- What are you doing to prepare your students for the clinical complexity of

our clients?

- Will your students be able to understand psychometric instruments and manage the data that comes from these?
- What sort of clinical assessment skills are you teaching?
- How well equipped are your students to work in an evidence-based context with fidelity?

I am hearing some other things from employers, including proud statements that supervision has been replaced with knowledge acquisition events, and team work has been replaced with professional accountability.

So, this is the dilemma of the romantic. Do we continue to journey with our students in search of becoming (relational, engaged, in tune with Self and other), or do we give them what they pay for – an education that will qualify them for an actually existing job? I'd love to hear from you on that.

...

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



“Playing the Expert”

Jack Phelan

I have used a metaphor to explain the difficulty of playing the expert when advising, coaching, controlling and otherwise attempting to help the youth and families in our care. Picture a person stranded on a desert island or some other dangerous place, fearful and desperate. Suddenly a rescue plane appears in the sky and drops a small parachute with a note attached. The quickly opened note just says “You should not be here, it is a bad place”.

Many common sense approaches to helping youth who have suffered abuse and neglect resemble this laughable advice. Because we do not appreciate the fear and pain experienced by the other person, we have little to offer. The youth and families we try to help often see us as quite naïve and unrealistic about how to handle life’s threats and challenges. Their neediness and lack of concern for others is seen by us as bad manners rather than as legitimate survival skills. The unfortunate focus on “appropriate behavior” just creates an enormous gap between us and

them.

It is not commonsensical to attempt to see the world through the belief system of another, yet this is what we need to get skilled at. When mature CYC practitioners, who have become personally safe and competent in keeping others safe, try to build connections with a youth who is pushing them away, they see the fear and pain being expressed,

“The youth and families we try to help often see us as quite naïve and unrealistic about how to handle life’s threats and challenges”.

not inappropriate social skills. So the response to swearing or a rude comment is a personal awareness that you are getting too close too fast for the other person and the CYC practitioner looks at her own behavior, and adjusts her attempt to connect so that the anxiety created will be

reduced to a manageable level.

Using punishments and rewards to teach new, more socially appropriate behaviours will work for the length of time that we are in control of the situation, but this approach will have no impact on long term beliefs or behaviours. Our logic about how the world works is not shared or even understood by the youth

or family, and they truly believe (rightly so) that we would not survive where they actually live.

Sophisticated CYC practitioners understand the initial need for safety and behavioural techniques can be useful to manage unsafe youth until they settle down, which generally takes a month or less. After this immediate need for security is met, there is little use for external control as a therapeutic tool. Relational CYC work requires both people to move toward a place where individual experience and beliefs can be shared without fear or reprisal. Expanding the options beyond the black and white world of a person in survival mode is a slow process of building trust and credibility based on relational connecting, which is constantly being undermined by every illogical punishment, no matter how logical it seems to the adult.

When we try to control a youth or parent who is acting logically (by their



logic), we are impeding our connection with them and demonstrating our inability to see what they see.

So when we label a hyper-vigilant youth (survival skill) as ADHD, we are creating negative help. When we label ego-centric, self-protective youths who only can trust themselves, as ungrateful or deceptive, we are losing our connection. When we label youth as having an attachment disorder because they do not let other people, especially adults, get close to them, we deny their legitimate experience of the world.

I do not ask you to agree with them, but to appreciate their point of view and legitimize it with clear language and behaviours of your own.

When we listen and respond by validating the youth's beliefs about life, they will slowly begin to open up and be able to hear another view, but they cannot do this with someone who doesn't understand them.



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Action Transforms

Punishment

Laura Steckley

There was a time when punishment was considered a necessary part of raising children, whether in traditional families or alternative care settings. When I started working in residential treatment for adolescents, punitive approaches were already becoming less accepted – at least superficially. As I look back I realise that a central preoccupation throughout my career has been around how to have boundaries, set limits and create safe environments that promote development and healing without resorting to punishment. The next two or three columns will be dedicated to this area of practice. They will be primarily exploratory, as I still struggle with some of the questions I expect to raise.

For the purposes of clarity, I should start by offering some definitions. My online dictionary unhelpfully defines *punishment* as ‘the act of punishing’. If you click on *punishing* you get ‘causing or characterized by harsh or injurious treatment; severe; brutal’. It’s no wonder we don’t want to see ourselves as engaged in the act of punishing. In terms of practice, I will define punishment as the act of imposing some level of physical or psychological pain or discomfort in an attempt to address or bring about a desired change in behaviour. The use of

the phrase ‘physical or psychological pain or discomfort’ might not sit comfortably, but I think few would choose an act as a punishment if it caused no pain or discomfort whatsoever. So I’m guessing that most readers of this journal would not identify themselves as in favour of punishment in practice.

Yet, I think it’s hard not to punish. Looking back, our use of ‘consequences’ or ‘sanctions’ were often thinly veiled punishments, and we incorporated punishments into complicated point and level systems – despite our efforts to get away from punishment in our practice. Why this might be?

Why is it hard not to punish?

I’ll explore some possible answers by considering my own journey and that of some of the teams I worked with, while also assuming that these struggles and experiences are still relevant to practitioners and teams today – please do let me know if they’re not.

First, while we increasingly spoke about a desire to shift away from punishment, I think that we were actually ambivalent about removing it from our practice. We still live in a society with firm attachments to a punitive orientation towards child rearing and human interaction, and I think it influences our



thinking. Punishment is often conflated with conceptions of justice, and the media serves up stories that name and shame culprits daily. I must admit that the imagined pain experienced by a corrupt politician or banker exposed and punished sometimes gives me pleasure. I haven't evolved past my own primitive attachment to retribution. In terms of our own practice, how many times have you heard a colleague make comment about a kid 'getting away' with something? How many times have you said or thought something similar yourself?

I'd like to think that I didn't regularly feel vengeful towards young people and that when such feelings did arise, I managed them without acting on them. This is less straight-forward than it might initially seem – even once I did manage to move away from a 'kids not getting away with things' mentality. The urge to affect retribution is not just emotional; it has a physical component. We are hard-wired to react to perceived threat in ways that were essential to our survival in previous times but are now deemed primitive. Yet when under threat, we continue to have a rush of neuro-biological chemicals which magnify feelings of counter-aggression or fear, physically preparing us for fight or flight and interfering with clear thinking. Sometimes we can get caught into repeated rumination that starts with one or more instances of perceived threat, but had no outlet that safely resolved its emotional, social and physical dimensions. Managing such thoughts and feelings requires robust self-awareness

and honesty, and brave collective candour amongst teams. This takes a great deal of commitment and energy; the alternative is often a redirection of that energy into rationalising our punitive reactions and structures.

One of the ways that we rationalised punishment when I was in direct practice was through a misinterpretation of theories of behaviour modification, and I think this is another strong reason for why it's so difficult not to punish. It seems like a chicken and egg situation to me – do we misinterpret behavioural approaches because of our ambivalent attachment to punishment, or do we still have this attachment because of our misinterpretation of behavioural approaches? Probably a bit of both.

John Stein offers some helpful clarification about misconceptions related to behavioural approaches in issue 77 of this journal, and I think his piece is well worth reading. I'm still unconvinced about the role of behavioural approaches and their place in relational practice, but I do think that he tackles many unhelpful ways of thinking and offers very tangible advice. There is so much in this article that I like and find interesting that I might return to it to examine what Stein is saying through the lens of relational practice, which may help me gain some clarity about the place (if any) of behavioural approaches in a team's/ programme's/individual's practice that is decidedly relational.

In the meantime I'll close with a few thoughts about another reason I think it

is hard not to punish, and that has to do with organisational influences. The organisations in which we work are simultaneously shaped by the individuals within them and the societies they sit within. In addition, they are strongly affected by the heady dynamics that emerge from the alchemy of all of this coming together. Each organisation will have its own particular mix, but I'd wager that a common feature of many will be mixed-messages related to punishment. In my experience, this sometimes came about due to the emotional proximity those in leadership positions had to incidents that might provoke a punitive reaction: when they were too close or strongly affected, they were just as (or more) vulnerable to punitive reactions. When they were too distant, they were more likely to criticise staff for being punitive. Looking back, I wonder if a few were just further developed in their thinking about all of this than I was. At the time, I sometimes had the perception that they were too laid back or didn't understand the realities of direct practice. And over time, my thinking has developed. From my position of indirect practice, I'm well aware that it is much easier to encourage alternatives to punishment than to actually practice them.

Organisational mixed messages can take a variety of forms. There can be contradictions between official proclamations (e.g. mission statements) and specific policies, protocols or practices. There may be other contradictions between what is explicitly promoted and

what is strongly implied. A blatant manifestation is when those in authority react punitively to staff while espousing non-punitive approaches to the kids. Most organisations struggle with differing priorities, beliefs and interpretations about what kids need and how the work should be done. This can often result in competing factions within the overall staff team, and an understanding of group dynamics can help to make some sense of this. At the core of organisational mixed messages, however, is a lack of clarity and congruence about my original question: how do we have boundaries, set limits and create safe environments that promote development and healing without resorting to punishment? And while I am indeed at a comfortable distance from the sharp end of direct practice, I think it is a pressing question that warrants further attempted answers.

Until next time...

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I'm Back! So What?

Cedrick of Toxteth

CYC types like to babble about empowerment. By this they usually mean handing out a couple of trivial options and letting kids choose for themselves. The more radical approach is to let the kids create their own options and then deal with the fallout through strategic interventions. Either way, it's about as empowering as handing out voting cards in Syria.

Real empowerment takes place when we come to know we can influence and modify the dis-empowering authority through our own experience, knowledge, beliefs and actions. This is the form of empowerment we now need to get off our asses and get on with the job of preserving our precarious place on this pummelled planet. And who better to start with than our kids? And where better to begin than in that nifty little power hierarchy we call "the family?"



So, to play my part in the uprising, I decided to write a training manual for kids - known as "The Cedrick Method."

Having been a rotten kid with rotten parents, I believe I'm exquisitely qualified for this life-affirming challenge. For reasons I could never justify, I'm offering the introductory segment for the dedicated

readers of CYC-Online to peruse. If you can appreciate the wisdom in these words, you might like to obtain a copy of my latest book: "The Best Stuff Ever Written About Rotten Kids" (available through the

good old CYC-Net). Then you might be ready to take the whole manual in your stride. Meanwhile here's the introduction for your edification. If you don't like it, I really don't give a donkey's doodle. It was never written for you in the first place.

Introduction

I don't care who you are, how old you are, or where you hang out - if you're stuck with parents, you're stuck with problems. Even the most educated, dedicated and caring Mommies and Daddies manage to find ways to screw their kids up one way or another. And that's the way it should be. Can you imagine what it would be like to have a pair of perfect parents running around attending to your every need so you can be a perfect kid and become a perfect parent when your time comes? What a crock. Problem parents are a gift. They challenge you to give teddy the boot and begin to take charge of your own life in your own way. Then *you* become a problem to them and it's game on. In other words, rotten parents have rotten kids and they all live together in rotten little houses in a rotten little neighbourhoods. That's just the way it is.

So let's hear it for rotten parents. They might be in your face every day, flare up at weekends, or strike whenever you make a move toward freedom, but they all take you to where the action is - the combat zone. Some parents are scared of open conflict, preferring under-cover tactics and random acts of sabotage (I call this the "Cold War" approach) but it all amounts to the same thing. If you happen to come from one of those nice families where everybody's programmed to say "I love you" three or four times a day, don't be fooled by all the Good Fairy crap. This probably

means your problems run much deeper than you think and, as sure as God made little bed bugs, they'll be biting at your ass sooner or later. When the shrieking starts, as it always will, don't expect love and understanding from those who run the show and shout the odds. By that time, the only problem will be YOU.

Then there are the rotten parents, like mine, who never wanted kids in the first place and don't give a monkey's toss whether you end up in the swamp or win the Nobel Prize for Noble Deeds. Sure, you might feel neglected and worthless, but you never have to feel guilty about not being able to make them happy. Your very existence pisses them off and their only ambition is to offload you at the first opportunity - so you can relax and do your own thing. If you end up in the Toxteth Home for Undesirable Kids, as I did, the only expectation is that you'll be rotten. If you're not, they'll kick you out and you'll have to try your luck somewhere else. Eventually you learn how to do what you want, and not be stuck in doing what others *don't* want, just for the Hell of it. My cousin Charlie, who's doing two years for armed robbery, still thinks this is freedom. The Shrinks say he's a psychopath but I think he's just a pied plonker with a learning deficit.

But me and Charlie are what they call "extreme cases". If you're like most kids, you have to deal with problem parents every day of your life. Well, what I have to offer won't only help you to cope with the daily frustrations and injustices,



it will show you how to change the name of the game to your own advantage - to get what **you** want for a change. Now wouldn't that be something?

But you'll have to be fully dedicated to the project. This isn't a quick-fix remedy for PPPDD (Persistent and Pervasive Parental Deficit Disorder). Nor is it a training program for teenage terrorists bent upon turning their dysfunctional families into an all-out snot-fight. In the following pages I'll introduce you to the widely acclaimed Cedrick Method (CM) for effectively managing your parents and changing the way your family works, from the inside out. Whether you want to modify a defiant attitude, offensive behaviour, or shake up the whole shebang, the CM will work for you.

To take advantage of the wisdom that follows, you'll need to be curious, thoughtful and, above all, patient. You'll have to believe in yourself and stay the course, even when the odds seem stacked against you and the missiles of authority are coming at you from all directions. But this is your chance to change the world - well, *your* world at least. With the Cedrick Method you'll have the tools to help your folks cut the crap and learn how to live together in peace and harmony. Don't be put off by the magnitude or complexity of the task. If you can understand what I've said so far, you have everything you need. So, if you're ready for the most exciting ride in your life - read on. If not, piss off and perish.

Getting Prepared

The famous 'romantic poet' Willy Wordsworth once wrote "The child is father of the man" and other romantic retards agreed this was a pretty cool idea. My uncle George once said "My kids have taught me everything I know," after the Judge pronounced him to be an "incorrigible rogue and a threat to public decency." Don't get sucked in by this kind of misplaced mush; parents don't really want to learn from their kids because that would be a threat to their authority and make them feel inadequate.

If you want to practice the Cedrick Method, you must begin by thinking of yourself as an 'educator' rather than a downtrodden flunky. I'm not talking about the kind of know-it-alls who read a couple of books and spend the rest of their lives spouting off in classrooms and staff rooms. You have to become the kind of educator who knows exactly what the learners need to learn and put it out there at just the right moment, whether that happens to be in the kitchen or on the way to the Shrink's office. You have to be confident in what you know, not what you've been told (there's a huge difference) and be able to say it so even the dumbest and most opinionated meat-heads will listen and get with the program.

If you have any doubts, one of the smartest people on the planet, a guy called Dalai the Lama, said that all kids are born knowing more than their par-

ents. So, think how much you know by the time you're twelve. By then you can smile knowingly when the reptiles tell you kids know nothing worth knowing until they're told by those who already know (this is what *they* call 'education'). And you can keep cool when your parents tell you what to think, how to feel, what you want and what you should do (they call this 'child-rearing'). But, if you take it all in like a trash can, they'll keep dishing it out until your head is crammed with the same bullshit.

In some cases, bullshit is the glue that holds the family together and questioning it will get you tagged as a "wilful," "unruly," "disobedient" brat. But, if you want a life you can call your own, then question it you must. Remember the old motto "No pain, No gain" so keep your stick on the ice, as the philosopher Red Green used to say. If you find yourself having fun with all this, you're probably off course and into revenge.

Keep in mind that good educators always consider the feelings of the learners. If you're out to get your folks, expect to get the same in return and you'll end up licking your wounds in a place of their choosing. If what you have to say is heard, it may shake things up for while, so be prepared to hang in there. Think of it this way - for new ideas to take hold, the old ones have to come unstuck, and this takes time. Meanwhile, keep reminding yourself that you are the only expert on you because what you know comes from the inside. You can still listen to what others have

to say on the topic and, if you don't agree, gently let them know and move out of the firing line. If you decide to tell them to shove it, go right ahead but consider the consequences first. Remember, most adults haven't a clue what Dalai Lama was taking about, which proves my point.

If you think I'm just dissing your parents, let me tell you otherwise. Most parents are caring well meaning folks who truly believe they're acting in your best interests. The trouble is they can only know what they were taught by *their* parents, and if this doesn't work, they go off the find some expert who knows even less about you. And then the bullshit really starts to flow until you finish up as a "patient" being treated for something that doesn't exist. Now you're a sicko with 'symptoms', and everybody's off the hook, including you. The only expectation is that you take your medication. Obey the command and whatever you thought you knew about yourself becomes a blur. But your "symptoms" start to disappear and everyone's happy because you are more like the kid your parents always wanted. In a nutshell, you're fucked.

There are three ways to avoid getting tangled up in this madness. One option is to do what you're told, repeat what others want you to believe and spend your spare time plotting revenge. Alternatively, you could turn inside and drift around in an imaginary world where everything is just the way you want it to be. These are popular choices but, in the



long run, they end up producing the very thing you're trying to avoid — being pegged as an angry kid or a weirdo. You can then wait for the cops and shrinks to come slithering out of the swamp. Or you can come to know who you really are, what you really need and what you would really like to do with your life. Then you can learn how to make all this known to those who call the shots in ways they can understand and appreciate. In other words, you can use your own free will and choose the Cedrick Method.

For most of you, becoming a teacher won't be easy. Up to this point, you've probably come to think of yourself as a son, daughter or student, always expected to do, think and believe what others tell you. Well, you can't just toss all that codswallop out of the window and order your parents to "smarten up or else." My friend Reggie tried this approach and ended up in the Blackthorn Correction Centre for Really Rotten Kids. To avoid Reggie's fate, you must prepare yourself carefully for your new role. Nobody's going to help you with this but, by the time you've worked through my manual, you'll be on the way to getting the parents you always wanted and deserved.

Now, before you set out to use the manual, there's a couple of documents you'll need along the way:

I. Make a list of what you really want from your parents

Only you know the answer to this.

Don't ask what others think, or read the garbage put out by so-called parenting experts. When it comes to what you want, *you are* the expert. Begin by making a list in your own words. Nobody else is going to see this, so you don't have to worry about what you say, or how you say it. Just don't do what that dumb chick Annie Marshall did and ask your teacher to check the spelling and grammar (It just dont matta). Take your time and know you can always change or add to your list whenever you wish, just like your parents have always done.

Review your list frequently. If you're being honest, you may be surprised to find that your folks are already giving you some of things you want. If not, I suggest you start looking for alternative living arrangements, leaving the Blackthorn Correctional Centre as your final residential resort. Then place a check mark next to the good stuff and a large X next to the items that need attention. This will rate your parent's current performance and help you shift into the role of teacher (If you're not as rotten as some rotten kids, you may like to whisper a wee "thank-you" for each check mark, but that's for you to decide).

Now pay attention to those items that really get your balls in an uproar, or your knickers in a knot, and learn to stay cool. Pissed-off teachers always end up with pissed-off students and, if you're a rotten kid, you already know where that leads. You may think you have every reason to feel this way but that's not the point. Really good teachers always put

the learning of their students first and it's impossible to do this if you're frothing at the mouth or beating the brains out of your little sister's favourite dolly. Really good teachers also listen to what their students have to say, even if it makes them puke. From here you can choose the most effective ways to free up their fossilized minds. You may have to suffer through your mother whining about the mess in the basement or listen to the old man rabbit on about your repulsive friends. But, however much your head spins and your stomach turns, remember this is all important information and, if you can stay the course, it won't be long before they're telling you about the stuff you really need to know. If it becomes too much to bear, you can always tell them it's time to get on with your homework and go off to revise your list.

Really good teachers also ask questions and take careful note of the answers. But be careful here. The key is to stay curious and not get wrangled when they pull the 'because I say so' tactic. If you're smart, you'll recognize this a defensive manoeuvre designed to protect their authority, or a reluctance to expose the obvious defects in their reasoning. But if you try to point this out they're likely to show you who's boss by taking steps to put you back where they believe you belong. Quietly accept their stance and make a mental note for later inclusion in your performance evaluation. Remember, the learners can only know what they were taught, usually by very bad teachers, so be kind and understand-

ing. If there's a snot fight, you're bound to end up as the loser.

2. Get yourself a journal

Unlike problem parents, good teachers are always interested in their own learning. The best way to do this is to keep a special journal and record what you're learning about your parents and yourself. Pay particular attention to what works and what sends you running for cover. Jot down any ideas you have about new approaches and what the next lesson might include. Every so often, review your notes from the beginning of the project. Even if you've just had a couple of non-starters, you'll probably be surprised by how much you've already achieved. And, of course, keep your journal in a place where only you can find it. This won't only preserve your privacy, it will also stop your folks from cheating.

So, if you're ready to take your life into your own hands — read on and prosper. Just know, Cedrick is with you all the way.

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

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Relational Ecologies: What is at Stake?

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In the latter part of his life, the Lacanian psychoanalyst, political activist and progenitor of schizoanalysis, Felix Guattari, turned his attention to the question of ecology. He proposed that there were three ecologies that we needed to attend to under the current global condition of postmodern capitalism: social, mental and environmental. For us in Child and Youth Care/Youth Work the first two are central to what we do both institutionally and in our day-to-day interactions with young people. The latter we tend to think of as outside the given purview of our field of endeavor. However, Guattari suggested, that to focus on the social or mental without taking the environmental into account would be an exercise in futility. Conversely, he also argued that any attempt to do environmental work without accounting for the mental and social ecologies would similarly result in frustration and failure.

In his book, *The Three Ecologies*,

Guattari warns that our human relations in all three areas are suffering not just from various forms of mental, social and physical pollution, but also from what he called “the ignorance and fatalistic passivity with which those issues are confronted by individuals and responsible authorities.” We can see this pernicious influence in our own field in the rise of cynicism and irony among ourselves as workers and within the social world of the young people with whom we work. It is also extant in the rise of depression and political passivity and fatalism both in our institutional politics and in the broader politics surrounding the well being of young people.

Guattari argued that the solution to this is not simply the development or mobilization of political engagement along the lines of previous sociality, such as unions, political parties, mass mobilizations, reformist legislation and so on. Instead he argued, that there is task that

needs to precede any development of a collective or individual political set of responses to the current crisis in our living ecology. The old politics is no longer effective because, as Foucault has pointed out, capitalism, as a social logic, is deeply embedded within our sense of who we are, both individually and collectively. Any politics built within the logic of the existing global capitalist social will simply be absorbed into the notion that all social action must be justified on the basis of the dollar sign. Until we can break the hold that the value system of money has over us, political action will be reduced to those actions that benefit the market regardless of the impact on the three ecologies of mind, sociality and the bio-sphere.

To break this powerful hold, Guattari proposes that the first political task is the development of new forms of consciousness and subjectivity. I would argue that this should also be the primary focus of our work in Child and Youth Care/Youth Work. What is our relational task, if not to mutually experiment with new ways to perceive the world and our place in it; to find new ways to develop our capacities together and to seek out new configurations of identity that we could not have imagined before our encounter with the “other” in our work?

In this, perhaps as I have argued before, our work with young people stands on the front lines of new world politics. Which might be why it is under such assault from bureaucrats and politicians, within and without, who would trans-

form it into a profession rather than a political ecology. In this regard, Guattari insists that we must refuse what he termed the infantilization of discourse that leaves us with cynicism, fatalism, and rage as our primary responses to the complex issues we face.

Obviously, if we are talking about a disruption powerful enough to break the logic of money and its attendant bureaucratic structures, we will need to find a new logic. To begin to see the complex ecologies through which living humans actually engage the world, we need to leave aside the monological thinking that reduces everything to the desertification of consciousness and sociality that is the money form. It is this kind of thinking/consciousness that separates us from our environment, as though the abstraction of money is as important to living things as air, water, or our relationships with other living things. It is when we forget this in developing our institutions, our individual sets of relations within programs and/or our personal ecologies of thought and consciousness that we become impoverished in our work leading to burnout, rage, depression and alienation.

This is why Guattari tells us that the logic of the ecologies at stake requires a radically different mode of thought and analysis. The old models of linear western science can only offer fragmented and incomplete accountings of the dilemmas we face. The intersection of the social, the psychical and nature is at its essence interdisciplinary. As such these



systems are better analyzed in complex ways using the tools of art and literature as well as “hard” science.

Regrettably, in our field we are often seduced by the allure of science through our appropriation of reductive models of developmental psychology, the pseudo-science of diagnosis or the new phrenology of neuro-science. In this we have often come to neglect our foundations in phenomenology, existentialism and the richer psychological traditions of psychoanalysis and humanism. These traditions, in combination with new modes of analysis such as postmodern deconstruction and genealogy, nomadic feminism, post-Marxism and work on the post-human, draw on a rich interdisciplinary set of resources inclusive of science, art, philosophy and literature. The roots of our field, as such, offer the kind of radical thinking and analysis that Guattari calls for, when he tells us that the mental, social and environmental ecologies need a transdisciplinary mode of analysis, because they collide and overlap in ways that are not easily or fully accounted for in ordinary social communication.

Indeed, like the relations we engage every day in our work, these collective ecologies operate not through what they signify, but through what they produce in an infinite “movement and intensity of evolutive processes.” Each of us knows that in the course of the day, there are aspects of what occurs between us (both staff and young people in varying combinations) that cannot be accounted for in

linear terms. There are simply processes that are too complex for words. Such events can, at some level, only be sensed. Such sensed experience defies an easy description in SOAP formatted notes or a quick summary at shift change. We can’t produce the meaning of these events through language or signification. They operate through intense feelings and connections that move faster and deeper than linear thought can manage. They are in a word, process not content. Process in this sense, as Guattari describes it, functions outside what we consider the ordinary ways things run. It violates our common understanding of evolutionary process, challenges our ability to construct our lives and our relationships as an ever-increasing progression towards order and structure, and refuses our efforts to minimize the chaotic and unpredictable, as anarchic and entropic intrusions into our capacity to order the world to our own liking.

For Guattari, our attempts to refuse the non-linear realm of sense and the productive elements of chaos can no longer serve us under the current massive and accelerating deterioration in the psychic, social and bio-spheric conditions for living things on the planet. Indeed, he suggests that we invest our energies in investigating modes of life and thought that operate discordantly in relation to common sense and signification. Through this, we might begin to discover a certain kind of intensification of thought and living force that could break through and rupture our capitalist modes of subjecti-

fication and open what he terms “new existential configurations.” That is to say new ways to configure accountabilities to action and creativity premised in innovative collective and singular modes of subjectivity and consciousness.

Such work would entail a certain suspension of meaning so that new understandings could emerge. Guattari acknowledges the risk this kind of work entails. He notes the possibility of sustaining too violent and sudden a break from our common understandings of the world. This can lead to the eradication of any sense of ourselves as a social subject, implying a radical disconnect from our collective understandings and affiliations. To counter this danger, a more gradual form of de-structuring our common sense understandings might be engaged. This could open the possibility of experimenting provisionally with letting go of the master signifiers that structure and order our lives under capitalist rule.

It is, however, an “a-signifying rupture” that is at the heart of all ecological praxis according to Guattari. In this gap between meanings, there is a catalyst for a radical re-configuration of the conditional and relational aspects of our existence. Such a catalyst, in this liminal space, lacks the full capacity for expression, since it is not fully connected, yet, to the new conditions out of which the new descriptions of existence will arise. In the absence of an ecological praxis that can account for this transition, the catalysts may well remain inoperative. When this happens, Guattari tells us we

might well see global anxiety, guilt or other repetitive forms of psychopathology. However, when the rupture is able to connect to expression, derived from the actual lived material conditions of all three ecologies, repetition opens onto creative assemblages that have the capacity to form new modes of living force.

This is the delicate balance of our work. To engage with ourselves, both youth and adult, in such a way as to unsettle our previous understandings of who we think we are and what we think we can do, at a pace and level of intensity that does not move so fast as to leave us adrift in existential paralysis. When we are courageous enough to take the risks, wise enough to manage the process, and kind enough to weather the failures and disruptions, then we might well have those amazing moments of absolute joyous creativity and effortless purpose. To do this, however, entails a comprehensive understanding of ecology as not simply related to species and the environment but also to our thought and sociality.

Guattari argued forcefully for a full accounting of the ecological field so as to include human thought and consciousness. He felt that one of the great dangers of our time is the reduction of the notion of ecology entirely focused on nature. Any form of an ecological understanding that was driven by new forms of law and governance concerned him deeply. He worried that legalistic protections of various species would both be too narrow a focus and lead to authoritarian social programming. He felt

that it was very important that a material ecology focused on the bio-sphere be coupled with an ecology of thought. To be specific, he argued that just as species of animals and plants are disappearing, creating an increasingly sterile homogenous terrain controlled and manipulated on the basis of monetary value, so also the ecology of subjectivity was being strip mined and exploited by postmodern capitalism, in such a way as to decimate entire species of thought and consciousness. In particular, he specified values such as solidarity, universes of fraternity, sociability, neighborhood, human warmth and inventiveness as being in the endangered species list of thought and praxis.

He argued that the species of the biosphere and the species of thought/consciousness are interrelated in ways that make it profoundly dangerous to separate them. The danger lies in how impoverished thought eschews or cannot account for our collective being in common. As such, it cannot possibly think clearly about an ecological remedy for the evisceration of living species. To the degree we are able to think collectively in complex and heterogenous ways, we hold the capacity to engage praxis in the same manner. In this, we are responsible not just for the maintenance of living things, but the ecology of thought and consciousness that produces the machinery and conditions of value that produce the human generated global system of production. In an essay entitled, "The Vertigo of Immanence" Guattari

referred to this as ecosophy which he defined as "a responsibility for the future . . .with regard to being, grasped as creativity . . . not only the wisdom of inter-human relations but also that of relations with the environment, with machinic phyla, with universes of sense, with existential territories."

When I think of our field of endeavor, I wonder if it wouldn't advisable to have a code of ethics that extends beyond the bureaucratic and the bourgeois. Perhaps we could in some way instantiate the importance of praxes that include a concern with the degradation of the ecologies of thought and sociality for the next generation. We might highlight the importance of a list of threatened social practices such as solidarity, universes of fraternity, sociability, neighborhood, human warmth and inventiveness. These delicate but resilient human ecologies might be understood as fundamental not as utopic impulses towards good behavior, but as essential to our relations with all living things, human, non-human and post-human. To do this, we might develop an ethics of ecosophy with a deep regard for the future becoming creative force of children, human and non-human and their children after them. Then we might indeed see the true force of our relational work as a constant opening of the questions of existence, sense and the ongoing production of a rich web of living things.

Professional attitudes are considered essential to good practice, the overt and superficial expressions of competence that leave a good first impression.

The definition of attitude involves an emotional expression of what we value, believe in, and what we consider to be “right.” When my youngest daughter was four years old, we bought her a T-shirt that said: **“I’ve got attitude”**.

Whenever she expressed her opinion, and it was usually an opinion that was different from ours, and one that was directly and forcefully expressed, we tried to remember that being different from us was an important aspect of her development of self. The T-shirt helped us maintain a sense of humour about it.

I like youth with attitude, it usually means that they are outspoken and I know where they stand, even if they “stand in a place” that is different from where I stand. Their feelings and emotions are clear and therefore readily dealt with. Attitude has many aspects to it:

- “I’ve got attitude!” — A manner or feeling toward someone ...
- “You’ve got (positive) attitude”— A body posture that expresses an emotion.
- “Change your attitude”

If we think about this from the perspective of professional attitudes — they embody the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that compose our professional responses to others: children/ youth/ families and co-workers. Professional attitudes have aspects of self, as well as aspects of how we communicate with others, embedded within them.

Communicating our attitudes definitely includes a physical component; just think of the four-year-old or the teenager when they disagree with you.

What are professional attitudes? Unlike the attitudes of the children and youth we might work with, professional attitudes are a

balance between the personal and the professional. Why is that? Why can professional attitudes not be codified into simple rules and guidelines that all members of a profession follow consistently, leaving the personal out of it?

Professionalism has become equated with status and respect, and therefore many vocations and groups seek professional recognition and include it as an expectation for their members. From a historical perspective, professionals were those people who were not beholden to an employer but worked for themselves, and were therefore free to pursue some leisure activities in free time. Their status

Exploring Professional Attitudes

Carol Stuart



was greater than those in the trades or manual labour, but less than those in the aristocracy. More recently, professionalism has been equated with a set of ethics based on values and beliefs about what is moral and “right.” These professional attitudes are codified — the code of ethics — to guide members of the profession and inform the public about what they could expect from members of the profession. Professionalism, in lay language, is often meant to include how you look, dress, behave, speak, and interact with others. These are your professional “attitudes.”

The dictionary definition of attitude includes the feeling one holds towards something and the expression of an emotion. Attitudes are often described as positive or negative, when in reality they are simply what you value and think of as important, and attitudes include your feelings. Often the feelings component of attitude appears when something of importance is denied. Parents might be heard telling teenagers to “change your attitude or move out” as those teens develop and assert their identity and parents deny them the freedom they desire to explore who they are. In the process of developing and asserting themselves as individuals, adolescents disagree with the values of parents and express their feelings with strength and intensity. Child and Youth Care practitioners are sometimes not much different from adolescents in their interactions with other professionals (Modlin & McGrath; Salhani & Charles, 2007).

Attitudes represent the mind-set of

the practitioner in relation to the environment or milieu that you work in, as well as your own feelings and emotions. They include the values, beliefs, and ways of being that form your worldview. Your attitude is the manifestation of your self, the emotional expression of who you are within the surrounding environment. As you enter a new working environment, it takes some time to figure out the nature of the values and beliefs in that program.

Your attitudes will change as you are exposed to different philosophies and agency programs, and as societal norms and values shift. Initially, your attitudes and ways of being are determined largely by your personal history. Your culture, represented by your ethnicity, religious beliefs, family practices, or country of origin, brings with it certain attitudes, values and beliefs. Your membership in particular communities also strongly influences your attitudes. The communities you belong to likely hold relatively consistent values and beliefs common to people who have membership within that community, and those attitudes are part of the socialization of people into the community. Professional Child and Youth Care is a community that practitioners are socialized into, but you bring to that community your attitudes from other communities that you belong to. Attitude is important enough to Child and Youth Care that the professional certification requirements for practitioners describe some of the core beliefs for the profession (CYCAA, 2000;

Mattingly, Stuart, & Vanderven, 2003).

These fundamental orientations to world view, beliefs and values within the field of Child and Youth Care are integrated with the practitioner's personal attitudes to guide their day-to-day actions, thoughts, and feelings. Professional and personal attitudes also guide the development of professional skills and knowledge, directing and focusing your receptiveness to learning new things and how you apply that learning. Ricks & Charlesworth describe this as an evolving theory-in-action and note that:

"A closely watched practice can reveal how your "theory-in-use" is evolving. You may see your strengths and limitations reflected in the use of certain theoretical orientations and methodologies, or you may discover how you engage with others in seeking and giving support in relationships." (2003, p. 19).

"A closely watched practice" includes the exploration of attitude and the integration of attitude with knowledge and theory, and then taking the learning from self-reflective praxis and moving it into behaviours and actions, moment to moment, with children, youth and families.

As people develop their practice, they will adopt the attitude of Child and Youth Care professionalism. Contemporary Child and Youth Care practice has an underlying orientation towards growth and development, and a focus on abilities and strengths. This orientation is founded in the social pedagogue and psycho-educateur movements in Europe and adopted within the Child and Youth

Care field in North America. However, in settings where the multi-disciplinary team is heavily influenced by medical professionals, there may be a strong influence from the psychopathology approach to development common in the discipline of psychology and medicine. Children and youth are labelled and categorized and responded to in terms of their label. Other disciplines and professions may speak clinically about the children and focus only on problem behaviours, diagnosis, and curing or managing illness. The challenge of the Child and Youth Care practitioner is focusing on positive development and expressing a strengths-based attitude to change when other professional attitudes are different.

The dictionary definition of attitude includes the positioning of an airplane relative to the ground and the wind. In other words, attitude could also summarize your position or location within a set of environmental conditions. These environmental conditions might include the multi-disciplinary team in a community mental health centre or a hospital or the child protection team in a children's aid society. In this case, professional attitude is a reflection of the jurisdiction in which you work, and having a professional attitude and stance on what happens in the best interests of the child, and what the quality of care concerns are from the perspective of the Child and Youth Care profession, is critical.

Consider for a moment the Child and Youth Care practitioner in a



school-based program where the policy of the Board of Education is “zero tolerance” for violence. What is our professional attitude toward this, what are our values and beliefs? How do we feel, as professionals, about removing young people who are vulnerable to violence in their home or community, who are angry and reactive, who are already disadvantaged, and blocking them from one of the few opportunities that they have to get an education, leading to a well-paying job. What do we think the conditions that they live in are like? How do we help them manage and be involved with other youth from a variety of different families and communities?

Consider the housing of teenagers in jails staffed with corrections officers. The mandate of the Corrections system is punishment, and “correction” is a focus. How do those values conflict with a strengths-based approach? What effect does jail have on a youth’s development; physical, emotional, cognitive? While the law often doesn’t hold young people responsible until their teen years, due to developmental immaturity, at the same time the consequences for those who are in jail may not recognize their developmental needs.

Professional attitudes go beyond the basic code of ethics of the professional association to include thinking about the conditions that children and youth experience within the systems that care for them, raise them, and socialize them to society’s expectations. As Child and Youth Care practitioners we need to be

prepared to “have attitude” and be clear about whether those policies and programs are in the best interests of youth we work with. We need to point out when children’s developmental needs are not being considered and they are being excluded from places that can develop their strengths and support them to manage the environments they live in. We also need to do this in a way that is respectful of other disciplines, and which expects that they will respect us and our point of view.

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Last month I shared some reflections on what I want my kids to experience as they grow and develop in their early years. In this reflection I share a few things I want for myself in that process. My hope is that it might encourage you to reflect about what things you want on a personal level in your work with young people. And what better timing as we celebrate the 2014 International Child and Youth Care Workers' Week?

Both parenting and relational care are roles that touch multiple areas of our life. We can't fully step in or out of those roles. They are more about who we are - and how we are - with others than where we are or what it is we find ourselves doing in a particular moment.

While personal gain is never a good motive for becoming a parent or engaging in relational care, reflecting on our expectations can help us stay grounded and consistent when things get tough. So, in that context, here are some things I expect to find for myself along the way.

Being surprised

I have dreams for my kids, but I notice they are also developing their own dreams. In some places they match, in others they don't. Whatever their future

holds, I want them to exceed whatever unintentional limits I might communicate or place upon them. Their life is their journey and it may or may not go the direction I expect it should go.

I think of the young man I ran into unexpectedly today who years ago, when I was one of his youth counselors, was one of the more challenging kids in our program. Today he shared with me about his service in the military and his experiences completing a college degree. As our brief exchange passed, I also noticed the kind way he was treating his lovely date to a special time together. The whole exchange was a happy surprise.

In contrast, some of the young people we work alongside are not doing so well - like the young woman who had been in the after school program where I worked and now was visiting her own children at the emergency shelter. These situations are reminders that their journey is still unfolding. The surprise may be just around the corner. Or, as my boss says, don't give up on someone just before the miracle happens.

Becoming a better person

Through the process of parenting and working in relational care, I want to be-

The Personal Gain of Working in Relational Care

James Freeman



come a better person. Parenting, or any form of caring for someone, is a two way process. My kids impact me as much, if not more, than I impact them. That's true for all of our relationships since every exchange we have with someone leaves us different. I learn from the things I find myself doing well and I learn from the moments that don't go well. Both exchanges leave me a different person.

Working in relational care requires a commitment to continual refining, renewing, and sharpening of our own understanding and skills. I don't know of any other field of work - and I've tried a few - that lead to the deep personal growth we can experience in relational care.

Enjoying the adventure

The best days I have are usually related to clearing as much off of my calendar as possible and pushing myself to be present in the moment with others. Whether the day allows for that or not, I want to find myself enjoying the adventure of life more often than not.

In a recent discussion with a group of child and youth counsellors, we discussed how the concept of fun has been defined by some as a basic human need. We listed some of the ways we interpret what is fun and how experiencing it in our lives make us more effective in our work. Then we realized how sudden the fun things in our life take a back seat when the pressures of work and life start to weigh down on us.

The world often equates growing up with putting aside fun and focusing on other things. I'm still learning, but I think it might be that growing up involves finding fun and joy in the moments of every day life. Enjoying the adventure - each day as it comes - is important for our own survival and well being.

So here are three things I want as I parent my own kids and as I work in our field of relational care. Being surprised by kids that surpass my expectations of them. Becoming a better person as I relate, engage, and learn from others. And enjoying the adventure of life as it unfolds.

How about you? Which of these fit with your own wants and desires? What's on your short list of things you want for yourself? Drop me a line and we'll learn from each other.

...

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Coming in & Going out: Events or Process

Maxwell Smart and John Digney

Whoso in love is true and plain, he shall be loved well again
– Alexander Arbuthnot (1538-1583), Scottish ecclesiastic poet.

... there are better things ahead than any we leave behind
– C. S. Lewis, Irish novelist, poet and essayist.

'There are two certainties in life...' the old saying goes, '**...death and taxes**'. Well, having seen salaries diminish over the last six years (plus seeing an additional diminishing of the purchasing power of what isn't taxed) and in noticing our hair (the few remaining strands) increasingly taking on the colour of salt and pepper, the relevance of these two certainties have come more into our consciousness. But these are not the 'double whammy' of certainties we wish to highlight this month. The mentioning of these two 'life certainties' opens to door to two other certainties that exist in the world of child and youth care - specifically 'admission & discharge'.

Coming in

At some point in time the young people with whom we spend most of our lives, those who come into to the care, are 'admitted' – either into the system or into a residential/foster placement. This concept is known by many names but we have found that the three most commonly used; 'reception', 'admission' and 'entry'.

Very quickly we can see that these terms are clearly adult centric, clinical sounding and probably, like many things in our profession, borrowed from other fields. Indeed it is no coincidence that medical and 'penal' institutions also use these terms. But what does it mean to a family or a child to hear the phrase, 'entry to care', 'received into the

programme' or 'admitted to the group-home'?

Entry to the care system and admission to foster or residential care is often referred to in a manner that would lead one to see it is a moment in time; a moment of 'shift', in effect an event. To the on-looking eyes of those outside what is going on, the event would seem self evident; a physical state of change by moving into a new system, establishment or placement. However this physical 'event' has ramifications beyond just the change of the physical place of residence for the youth. This 'event' brings with it gross uncertainty and unpredictability and not only for the young person but also for their families (Smart, 2006). This 'event' requires huge change in life situation and huge consequent adjustment.

Whilst the actual moments of entry into care or to a new placement are clearly events, these changes in circumstances have other aspects which take it beyond just the change of residence. And to be a useful intervention, admission into care or a new placement must only occur when considered in the context of the whole person and family - yet for years this has been largely overlooked.

A moment of moments

More recently, this 'event' has begun to capture the attention of writers and researchers where the voice of youth experiences has started to be considered and is helping inform and transform

our professional understanding about the 'event' of coming into our care, (Maier, 1979, Bridges, 1991, Smart, 2006, Aitken, 2007, Smith, 2009) and as a result, the taking or receiving into care has subsequently been shown to be multi – dimensional, for the event itself brings with it concertinaed and accelerated transitions (Smith, 2009) that can be often troubling and overwhelming to young people.

The moments occurring during this transition usually remain indelibly stamped in the minds of young people - the moments of wondering: 'what's happening now?'; 'what will become of me?'; 'who will I meet next?' In addition there are the moments of 'feeling'; the explosion and implosion of emotions occurring as these 'events' occur - anger, fear, upset, and frustration of being lost in the wilderness.

As we listen more to those whom experience these situations we begin to understand that admission to care or to a new 'home' has such significance because it is laden with symbolism about the life of the youth, it requires the closing of old doors, the opening of new ones and the adjustment that is necessary on the other side of the threshold. For some young people their experience of 'admitted' may be positive and straightforward, but for most youngsters it is both traumatic and overwhelming but what has become clearer as we examine youth experiences is that 'admission' goes beyond being an 'event' and it is in fact a complex process; a pro-

cess requiring adjustment, alteration and movement.

Going Out

If 'coming in' is problematic, what sense or understanding can be made of another certainly of being in care - the 'going out' or what is often referred to as the 'discharge'. The moving on, the leaving, the transition – call it what you will, this again has great similarity to the process of admission and usually these are synonymous, the two sides of the same coin, the 'yin and yang'. And this is particularly true when a young person moves around within the alternative care spectrum of residential, foster placements and special arrangement.

Despite our recognition that multiple moves for youth in trouble are not a good thing, sadly they still occur with unfortunate frequency. When a young person is about to 'transition', to have a move or to be 'discharged' (another clinical term and quite unpleasant a word by any standard), they are not only preparing themselves for the new living arrangement, they also are going through a process of saying goodbye to what has been their norm, their home, their 'stability' and the relationships.

Of course this does not mean they will never see their carers again, it just means that, 'it will be different'. Mann-Feder and Thom Garfat (n/d), are very clear, 'Discharge from residential care is not just an ending, it is a critical, distinct phase of the treatment ... a

common tendency on the part of Child and Youth Care Workers is to frame a discharge as a positive graduation, yet most clients leave residential placement with mixed feelings'.

In their article they suggest that during this transition phase young people may try to; reactivate old methods of mastery (such as rejection of care giver); evoke reassuring reactions from care givers; do to you what they are afraid you are going to do to them or bring about the very thing they are afraid is going to happen.

They also state that the intensity of reaction (emotion, thinking and behaviour) will be based on a number of factors, such as the; (i) *quality of relationships between young person and carers*, (ii) *meaning or value of the people and the place*, (iii) *number and meaning of previous separations*, (iv) *value or meaning attached to the place*, (v) *person or thing they are moving towards* (admission), (vi) *responsiveness of the placement environment* and (vii) *ability of the young person to understand what is happening*. With all this going on, it seems a little disingenuous to refer to discharge as an event!

Change and Transition

Whatever way we look at the concepts of admission and discharge, they can only be seen as times of 'change' and 'transition'. Jackie Winfield reminds us that these terms might be interchangeable in our adult world but they are not the same thing, 'Change is situational',

that is to say we encounter things like; a new place, new peers, new staff, and new rules. But transition is a, '... psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation'. In other words, 'change is external, transition is internal' ... 'change is about endings and new beginnings, Psychological transition requires that one let go of the old ways of doing things'. (n/p)

So, if these **occasions** are so laden with distressed thinking, dissonance, and heart wrenching nuclear emotions, how can we possibly think of them only as an event? Or just as importantly, how can we allow their portrayal as mere events? The processes involved in 'moving in and moving out' are complex, dynamic and involve real people with real feelings.

To move beyond thinking that is merely event focused, workers need to become transitionally aware and ensure they have a clear understanding about what these situations mean to the kids and families. We need to understand the processes at play in 'coming in and going out' and pay these special regard. Whilst these times of change and transition can provide opportunities for emotional growth and maturity, they also hold fear and trepidation of a world spiralling out of control.

The symbolic meaning of these experiences for both the youth encountering them and for staff attempting to help youth navigate them required deep consideration if we are to avoid emotionally 'shut down' and our subsequent blaming of them for their not cooperating with

our programmes or interventions.

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Maxie and Digs

Adolescence: Learning to Cope with Stresses and Strains



Introduction

Way back in the earliest years of this new century I first had occasion to talk personally with Gisela Konopka, truly one of the doyens of our profession. I had read some of her writings, and she'd had a lot to do with bringing another friend of mine, Prof. Jerry Beker, to the University of Minnesota where he was to enjoy a distinguished career. I wanted to publish in *Child and Youth Care* (South Africa's journal for our field) a piece she had written on adolescence (Learning to Cope with Stresses and Strains), and struggled to get hold of her to get her permission for this. I telephoned people I knew at Minnesota, and learned that she had been ill, but they advised me to try her home telephone number anyway, adding that "she wouldn't mind this".

I worked out the time zone differences between Cape Town and Minnesota and chose what I thought would be a convenient time. I had never met her personally and was therefore rather hesitant about this, but called, told her who I was, where I was calling from and why I was calling.

There was a pause, and then in an unexpectedly loud voice she said "Brian Gannon, calling from half-way around the world in Cape Town, and asking a favour from me! It's like an answer to a question I have just asked myself!"

She went on: "I have been in hospital, they just let me out this morning and have just dropped me at my front door. So now I walk into my quiet and empty house and say to myself: 'Well, Gisela, what is there left for you to do in your life now?!' And the first thing that happens is that someone calls me from another country and asks of me a favor! Thank you very much for calling — and yes, of course use my writing!"

When I was visiting the Twin Cities some months after that, Mary Burnison of the University of Minnesota kindly set up a face-to-face meeting for us to have morning tea with Gisela, and this turned out to be one of the highlights of my visit. Strong of opinion, loud in expressing it, encouraging of what we were doing with child care in South Africa, she came across as an inspiring and affirming colleague in our field.

It was clear she still had much to offer.

— Brian Gannon

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

To discuss the question of coping with stresses and strains of adolescence, I will present:

- My concept of adolescence, including the specific qualities of adolescence;
- The content areas of life especially significant in adolescence; ... and next month:
- How human beings in general, at all ages, cope with stresses and strains;
- The specifics of adolescence, such as how adolescents deal with stresses and strains;
- How to develop the strength in adolescents to cope positively with stresses and strains.

Concept of Adolescence

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

*I am a bottle sealed with feeling
too deep for anything else.
I am a bottle floating in an eternal
ocean of people trying to help.
I am a bottle keeping my fragile
contents inside. Always afraid of
breaking and exposing me.*

*I am a bottle frail and afraid of the
rock. And afraid of the storm. For if the
storm or rocks burst or cracked me, I
would sink and become part of the
ocean.*

*I am a person in the people of the
world.*

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

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

To me and this differs from many textbook descriptions of adolescence — this period does not represent only a “pre”, a preparation for adulthood, or worse, a “no-man’s land” between childhood and adulthood. Adolescents are not “pre-adults”, “pre-parents”, or “pre-workers”, but human beings participating in their particular way in the activities of the world around them. Adolescence is not a passage to somewhere

but an important stage in itself, though all stages of human development connect with each other. There is an “adolescent-hood”. The key experiences of adolescence (which always include stresses and strains) are certain *firsts* which need to be worked through.

It must be understood that no generalization about human beings ever totally applies to one person and that in working with people, we will have to each time look afresh at the human being with whom we interact. A 15-year-old said this best:

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

Some of the “firsts” I refer to are:

1. Experiencing physical sexual maturity. A phenomenon particular to adolescence that never occurs again in the life of the individual is the process of *developing* sexual maturation, different from the state of *accomplished* sexual maturation. Biologically this is a totally new experience. Its significance is due both to its pervasiveness and to the societal expectations surrounding it. It creates in adolescents a great wonderment about themselves and a feeling of having something in common with all

human beings. It influences all their relationships with each other, male or female. Entering this part of maturity also stimulates them to a new assessment of the world.

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

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

cable. This makes for inner excitement, frightening and yet enjoyable.

4. Re-evaluation of values. Though the formation of values is a lifelong developmental process, it peaks in adolescence. It is related to both thinking and feeling. In our culture, where young people are likely to be exposed to a variety of contradictory values, (and I welcome this) questioning begins even in childhood. But adolescents become more philosophers concerned with “shoulds” and “oughts” and they may be subtle or outspoken about it. Value confrontations are inevitable in this age period. The young, because of their intensity, tend to be uncompromising. They may opt clearly for a thoroughly egalitarian value system, or

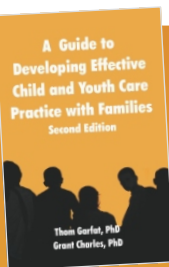


they may give up and become cynics. They often are “true believers”, rigid, and therefore feel deeply hurt when others do not accept their value system.

5. Wanting to be an active participant in society.

Adolescents encounter their world with a new intellectual and emotional consciousness. They meet it less as observers who are satisfied with this role, than as participants who actually have a place to fill. I see this wish to participate as a most

significant “first” in adolescence. In the old, mostly European, textbooks it appears as the adolescent quality of rebellion, and for years we have considered rebellion an inevitable attribute of adolescence. I think that this is true in authoritarian societies — and we are



A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE CHILD & YOUTH CARE PRACTICE WITH FAMILIES

2nd Edition (2012). Revised and updated, this book by Thom Garfat & Grant Charles, continues to be used worldwide as a guide for students, practitioners, educators and others in developing their CYC family practice knowledge and skills. The 1st edition of this volume has been translated into German by Vienna-based Hermann Radler for use in Austria, Germany and Switzerland!

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partially still an authoritarian society — but basically it is not rebellion that characterizes adolescence, but this extraordinary new awakening to the fact that one must develop one's values, and not only by imitation. This is a terribly hard task and brings with it enormous stress. Another key characteristic of adolescents is their enormous *life force*. It is an age of extraordinary physical capacity. This is sometimes at variance with the emotional development, and that again makes for great strain. It is an age where the mood swings with utmost intensity from omnipotence to despair. Adolescents can go without sleep for a long time; they run, jump, dance. In one of the Youth Polls done by the Centre for Youth Development and Research in which the subject of health was at issue, it became clear that adolescents define health as “activity and energy”. One said, “I think I am healthy when I am able to walk and run and run around all day and not be tired.”

Content areas of life significant to adolescence

The major institutions in which adolescents move have begun to be the same all over the world. Cultures change rapidly. For example, the teenage Bedouin, until recently, had to develop predominantly within the extended family and handle stresses within this system. His work environment was static in terms of its tasks, namely herding goats, but it was changing geographically be-

cause of the tribe's nomad existence. The girl had no decisions to make, only to obey. Yet, today, most of the Bedouin teenagers have to deal with a smaller family unit, with school, with a variety of work tasks, and with less nomadic movement. These changes impinge on the girls, too.

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

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

*The first night was cold damn cold.
And walking around the avenues,
we would mock the whores.
The big man and his badge
would give us a cold eye.
And without hesitation,
we would flip him a bird.*

*I wished for my mother,
and I wished for sympathy —
For a warm bed, and not the cold
shipyard or the park swings.
I feel really old for 15,
there just isn't any place to go.
Mama I miss you —and I just spent
my last dollar for cigarettes.*

The major frustration for an adolescent within the family is to suffer the

role of an inferior at an age when the wish to be taken seriously, and as an equal, is very intense. Frustrating experiences range from being treated “like a kid” to serious abuse. And additional frustration can result from the youth’s keen awareness of problems between parents.

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

2. The school. Some of the same dynamics as in the family apply to the relationship of the adolescent to school. Again, the strong sense of self comes in conflict with possible violation of the vulnerable self-integrity. The youth wants to be seen as an individual as expressed by the wishes: “There should be a one to ten ratio of teachers to students.” They should treat young people ‘like adults, not like two-year-olds, unless students just don’t co-operate. Discuss all material that will be tested. Make every effort to answer all questions. Do best to help each student by keeping classes smaller. Not like we are their slaves or workers and they are the boss.”

There are other stresses in school. It

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

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

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

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

3. The place of work. Many adolescents do work while in school, though others see it as part of the future. We found in our observations a generally quite strong work ethic. Two students expressed themselves: “... looking forward to starting a job because it gives one a sense of responsibility,” and “want to work ... because we’ve trained for it for so long and we’re anxious to start.” Contrary to popular assumption, adolescents felt a responsibility for the work

they were doing. They frequently regretted not having an opportunity to work on something that would prepare them for a future career. Young people can rarely find work related to special interests. A 16-year-old volunteered to work in the Rape Centre of the Attorney General's Office and saw this as an opportunity not only for feeling significant at that particular time in her life, but also to find out what her specific interests would be. But a recent study showed that usually adolescents felt frustrated because their jobs had no connection with their interests and were not realistic experiences. They make us work like people in yester-years, like out of the 18th century. With machinery, the government could accomplish something with more speed, efficiency and effectiveness. Instead, they give you old-time machines to do the work.

4. The peer group. For adolescents it is a most important one. In our culture this world exists within organized institutions and in informal encounters. School is seen by practically all adolescents as the major formal institution where they can find friends. Youth organizations may also provide friends along with very positive experiences.

*On midsummer's eve the moon was
high in the sky.
We danced all night in the moon's
smiling, gleaming face,
We ran about the park with youngness
and freedom,*

*We sang songs of old and new.
We played on midsummer's eve as
though it were
never to leave us.
The morning soon followed, so we left.
But we will be back on midsummer's.*

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

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From: *Social Development Issues*, 4.3. Fall 1980

Q & A

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

Only passion required?

From: Vincent Hlabangana

Dear Colleagues,

I have often heard Child & Youth Care Workers complaining about earning generally low salaries. The argument is that there is a quick “defensive rationale” to say that CYCW’s need passion for children and their families more than anything else. As much as this may be true, I however think that online child and youth care workers in particular need to be rewarded what they are worth. These are colleagues who are, in most cases, in the front line in young people’s living environment. Many of these Child and Youth Care professionals have spent many years studying towards their National Higher Certificates, National Diplomas and Professional Degrees. That is commitment. That is passion as this ultimately benefits young people and families in the long run.

The question that many CYC colleagues ask is “why do we earn so little



and yet we do so much?” I think we need not continue treating the subject of salary as a “holy cow” as this, like it or not, has direct or indirect impact on service delivery to young people and families. It is a known fact that thousands of CYCW’s around the world struggle to get ends to meet and this is a fact to be reckoned with. Thank you letters, a card of recognition, worker of the year award and days off are some of the things that keep Child and Youth Care Workers motivated and in my opinion, salaries for CYCW’s should also fall within this category. I believe that

what keeps CYCW’s focused, committed and dedicated to their work is a combination of many of factors of which salaries form part. One would assume that the organizational business determines one’s salary. Does this therefore logically mean that young people and families are not important? As much as the CYC sector advo-

cates for the professionalization of the field, we need to take cognizance of the important role that many CYCW’s play and the positive impact they have on many children and youth at risk and their families.

Replies

Hi Vincent,

I can only wholeheartedly agree with you on this matter. I feel strongly that the “passion and commitment” “for the sake of the child” is a convenient position for many NGO’s and Government

alike, providing them with an excuse to pay poor salaries. I would imagine that you need passion for your career — no matter what it is. We cannot advocate for the professionalisation of child care work, and at the same time say “oh but you have to do it for the love of the job”. Are doctors, lawyers, architects, psychologists, etc. not also passionate about their work, and do they not find strong personal meaning in what they do? Would those professions settle for a low salary because they love the job? I doubt it.

It can be taken for granted that many (probably most) child care workers operate in the non-profit sector where salaries cannot quite compete, but salaries should still reflect the degree of training and expertise required from the practitioner.

I am sure most child care workers enter the profession because they have a passion for what they do, and we will probably all agree that a worker with a passion for what she does is a good practitioner and an asset, but when workers cannot make their own ends meet, we should be sure that this will eventually get them down.

We cannot ignore the salary issue, we have to engage with it and open dialogue with practitioners in the field to find solutions. And it is not just a matter of organisations forking out more money — NGO's face real budget constraints — but collectively looking for solutions.

Werner van der Westhuizen

I think that a very good book on this subject is: Ward, Adrian & McMahon, Linnet: *Intuition is not enough: matching learning with practice in therapeutic child care*. London, Routledge, 1998.

Alan MacQuarrie

.....

Workers who don't get paid enough, eventually quit. This does not benefit clients. I agree we should put on some gloves and fight for what is due to us.

Bryce and Becky

.....

Hi Vincent,

Some of us have been asking this question for DECADES! And yet it never seems to change. After almost 50 years I cannot help but think that, unfortunately, you are correct. Our families, our children/youth, are NOT seen as important. Most are poor. Many are disenfranchised. And we get treated in accordance with the value they are seen to have to societies. I wish it was different, but I don't think the salary levels have changed for direct care staff since I started in the early 60's. Live with it. Change it. Or leave it.

Lorraine Fox

.....

In the USA there is no standardization. For a doctor, lawyer, and I forget what other professions were mentioned, there are specific criteria and SCHOOLING that is needed for the LICENCE to practice.

I know that some of you are certified under a University or have taken classes at a University, but most of the people in the USA are not and have not and don't want. Since the new HFS 52 qualifications in Wisconsin have come out and called for some criteria they still don't have a standardized USA 'take this class and have this certification and you are licensed to work any where in the USA'. NO instead they say you can have one of four. See below for some, or look it up for yourself. HFS 52.12.

Now lets talk about standardizing the certification. Let's talk about going to school at all. Let's talk about the direct care staff not needing much then let's talk about a pay increase.

I'm not saying that I wouldn't like more pay (especially when my bills are due) but even lifeguards need a certification to save a life and that certification is good around the world. Where are our certifications! Where are the youth care workers yelling, "Give me standardized certifications!" "I want more and I should get it!" "I deserve better treatment than this."

AND why are some youth care workers NOT willing to GET certified? I'm one of a few that I know ARE certified! Before you start crying about your pay and feel there needs to be a walk out start by taking responsibility for your field and de-

mand standardization of ALL our certifications! Start becoming certified and recommending more to do the same. Stand up and be counted. Stand up and be heard. Join a local group and voice your opinions. Get involved in your field and get into an organization that can make a difference where it counts..... with YOUR pay check.

Where else? List the organizations that others should join to be heard and where we can make a difference. Spread the word and let all know where to join. What Youth Care Organization do you belong to? Which one should I be part of next? Which ones should we connect together? Do the organizations all talk together? They should!

Donna Wilson

Q & A

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... from this journal, 6 years ago

Reaching resistant youth through writing

Teresa Skramstad

When this author's students started telling their stories through writing, it was as if the floodgates opened: "Students who had used aggression or anger to express their every emotion saw that many others before them had used the tool of written language instead." This article shows how helping students "find their voices" through writing can crack tough exteriors and help youth reconnect to school and themselves.

John came into my writing workshop in his high-top shoes — the heavy athletic kind — without laces, so they flopped on his feet like flippers. The backs were tromped down, and he had colored the tongues with a fluorescent orange marker. He didn't wear socks, his pants were too short, and he was wearing a T-shirt even though the temperature was close to freezing. Boasting that he didn't need a jacket, he rubbed his skinny arms and said he was cold. His dark curly hair was wild, uncut, and uncombed. His glasses were askew, and he looked at me through the bottoms of the lenses as he tipped his head back and spat out a greeting.

I could read parts of his past in his face — growing up in a troubled family, no money, not enough to eat, no new clothes, probably not even a notebook when school started. He had been teased, had no friends. I learned later that his family moved frequently, often to trailer parks or campgrounds where they would live in tents for months. School had been torture for John, and I was going to pay for it. When I spoke to him, he usually responded with a scowl, "So what?" or "I don't care." But sometimes he would form his hands into cat's claws and hiss at me to show that he would have none of me, my smooth talk, or my games designed to seduce him into an education. He was a master at keeping everyone away.

John was as angry about the writing workshop as he was about everything else in his world. He hated it. He hated

writing. He had nothing to say. He sat solemnly at his desk, searching for an opportunity to make trouble with classmates sitting near him. He refused to let anyone read his work and promptly shredded and dropped on the floor the folders I gave him to keep his papers in. He stated over and over, "This class sucks."

John loved the computer, though, and would spend as much time as possible sitting behind one, glowering at anyone who came too close. Once he told me he was writing a story about a dysfunctional family where the dad hit the children all the time and there wasn't any love. "It's all from my imagination, you know," he told me. Eventually, he would ask my advice about a line or a punctuation mark, or have me listen to something he was writing. He always cocked his head to the side, looked at me through the bottoms of his glasses, and said "Hmmm" when I answered.

One day, he approached my desk warily. "Do you want to read my poem?" he asked. He didn't slide away this time, but stood near me as I took his poem and read it. I don't remember any of the exact words or even the title. But the meaning of the poem and that moment are crystal clear in my memory. He had written a four-stanza poem about the hole in his life, about what was missing and where it had gone. At the end of each stanza, he asked the question, "Will it ever be filled up?"

John wrote about the way he viewed the world and how he felt about his

place in it. His poems spoke of the things he felt were wrong with him and wrong with his life, as in *There's Something Missing*:

*There's something missing
there is an empty place where
it should be,
but I can't
seem
to fill it.*

*I have looked
at myself and
said "what's
wrong with me?"
but still there
is a space
that I cannot fill.*

*maybe I'll find it someday
maybe I'll fill
the hole
but until then
there's something
missing.*

what can it be?

Finding a voice

For me, helping John and other students reveal themselves through writing was not a short or easy journey. I had been a teacher for 20 years and was accustomed to spending much of my time at the front of the room, making most of the decisions about what students were

writing in my class. Then I started reading about writing workshop formats like Nancie Atwell's (1987) and the writing process. I learned that U.S. high school students spend less than two percent of a typical school day reading and writing, although they can only improve these skills by spending regular, extended periods of time practicing them (Goodlad, 1984).

I knew that part of helping my students become writers would be helping them connect with their "voices." Thus, when I first moved to a writing workshop format, one of my top priorities was to allow students to choose their own topics and the kinds of writing they did in class. But many students protested, "I don't have anything to write about!" I resisted the temptation to give them something from my stockpile of teacher-created topics. Instead, we had writing conferences where we explored the things they had been thinking about, things that had troubled them, and events or people from their lives that they remembered clearly. I tried to find a way to help them put their own stories into words. Students eventually learned that this process is what all writers do, whether they are writing a letter to the editor or a novel. All writers begin by finding a topic.

Although finding that voice was the most difficult, critical part of the writing process, it was also the most powerful. As students discovered that they had things to say and a way to say them, it was as if the floodgates opened. Students

who had used aggression or anger to express their every emotion saw that many others before them had used the tool of written language instead. They found that writing about something helped them not only to sort it out, but also to put it into perspective. Some ideas lost power when they were written down, some gained power, but as Natalie Goldberg (1993) says in *Writing the Landscape of Your Mind*, "nobody ever died from writing it down."

This shift was especially difficult in the special education school where I teach, due to my students' lack of confidence in their academic abilities. When encouraged to make decisions based on what they cared about, they drew a blank. School had not been the scene of success for them in the past, and many were not about to take a risk like this. But like all of us, these troubled adolescents had stories to tell — stories of rejection by family, loss of friends, ordeals with the court system, abuse at the hands of biological or foster parents, abandonment, uncertainty about where they would be living, and death. Encouraging them to incorporate their life experiences into their writing was the most compassionate and effective way to promote their growth as writers.

For example, Dennis's father had died, leaving him to struggle with grief along with other factors that eventually brought him to residential treatment. Dennis was able to find a voice for some of his feelings when he wrote this poem:

To let go

*Dad, when you passed away
part of my childhood went
with you.*

*Because of the choices you made
most of my memories are vague.*

*Dad, I wish I could give you
part of my life.*

But I can't.

*I just wish
that I could see you again.*

Dad, I love you.

The writing process

The writing workshop format I adopted for my class facilitated many of these student breakthroughs. This format segmented the writing process into a number of stages:

Warm-up session. I started each writing workshop with a 10 minute warm-up session to get the words flowing onto the paper. Students were encouraged to use their own idea lists to find topics for warm-up, but we talked about how what they wrote during this time was not as important as the simple exercise of writing. I usually wrote along with my students, and we spent the last few minutes of the warm-up time sharing pieces of what we had produced. These pieces often provided seeds for future writing projects.

Status of the class. Many of my students needed a lot of structure and

guidance in the workshop, especially at first. So I used a status-of-the-class procedure daily, during which students reported the titles of the pieces they were working on and what stage they were in (e.g., first draft, second draft, self-editing, etc.). I reviewed these status self-reports at the end of the week and guided students who were not making progress toward set goals and due dates.

Mini-lesson on aspects of writing. After the writing warmup, I taught a 20-minute mini-lesson on some aspect of writing, like using quotation marks, writing a good lead, or adding sensory details. Sometimes we examined the writing of a professional like Paul Gruchow's *Journal of a Prairie Year* or Jim Heynen's *One Room Schoolhouse*, looking for writing traits. The six-trait writing model I adapted from Vicki Spandel and Richard Stiggins (1997) also provided a wealth of material for mini-lessons: idea development, voice, organization, sentence fluency, word choice, and conventions/mechanics. But in choosing mini-lesson topics, I was always guided by the needs of the students, not by a rigid scope and sequence curriculum.

Creating a first draft. After students settled on a topic, they worked on a first draft. I made sure they knew that content was the most important thing at this initial stage, whether they were writing a poem, a personal narrative, or a letter to a family member. They worked hard at ignoring what Natalie Goldberg calls the

“monkey mind,” or the editor inside all of us who tells us our work is not good enough, that we cannot spell well enough to be a writer, or that we really should not be writing about this subject.

Self-assessment. An important part of Spandel and Stiggins’ six-trait model was teaching students to assess their own writing and make revisions based on criteria for each trait. As we looked at professional and student examples of writing, and talked about what made them work and what could make them better, students began to see that all writing is a process of revision in order to have the greatest possible impact on the reader.

Conferring. Students worked together during many of the steps in the writing process. It was important for them to hear from other readers — their peers — whether or not their pieces said what they wanted them to say. Atwell calls this part of the process “conferring,” and it was not an easy one to learn. Everyone (including myself) wanted to slip back into the mode where the teacher circles the errors and the student corrects them. The conferring step was critical, though, as it helped us reflect on what we had written and ultimately improve it as a result.

Self-editing. After many self-assessments and a lot of conferring, the next step was self-editing. No matter what their skill levels, students worked on ed-

iting their papers themselves by looking for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization mistakes. They learned to use the spell-checker on the computer to self-edit, they kept a list of frequently misspelled words to check, and they were responsible for using skills they had learned during previous writing lessons in future works.

Teacher-editing. After they had self-edited, students let me edit their work, and we met for a conference. I chose only two or three things to point out and teach, like spelling mistakes to add to their personal spelling lists, a way to use quotation marks more effectively, how to divide a piece into paragraphs, or a suggestion for a more interesting conclusion. At this conference, I also pointed out the things they were doing well. All the skills — the ones they already knew and the ones they learned — were documented on a writing conference report to provide a record of their progress.

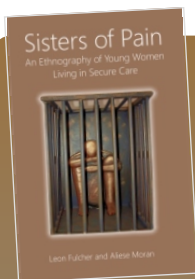
Preparing a final copy. After their work was teacher-edited, students prepared a final copy to be kept, along with all drafts, in their permanent writing folders. This folder was yet another record of their efforts to become better writers. Some students preferred to do these final drafts in handwritten form, but many were eager to use the computer. The computer proved to be a valuable motivator for writing, keeping all drafts on disks (easier than keeping paper copies in a folder), ed-

iting, and producing and publishing final drafts. Students who were resistant to editing for errors because it meant handwriting another draft now were willing and sometimes even anxious to use the spell-checker or to have me or another student read their work in progress. Students who saw no value in saving all copies of their written work now felt pride when they saw the accumulation of documents on their own computer diskettes. Above all, no one was embarrassed by poor penmanship. All drafts from the printer look professional.

Posting and publishing their work. Research shows that writing for a real audience, not just a teacher, is an important part of the writing process. Students in my class were encouraged to post their work on a student writing bulletin board and often requested copies of their writing to send to family members. A binder on the writing table had information on periodicals that publish student writing, and many mini-lessons were about the various ways that writers

find audiences for their work. Some students asked to have their work laminated to keep it safe, and we frequently published student writing in our school newsletter. One student volunteered to put together a book of poetry with submissions by many classmates and teachers.

Reading their writing. At the end of the first quarter writing workshop, students requested a class period to read their work to the other members of the class. Although it was a risk for many, even students who were reluctant to answer questions or read aloud in class were willing to participate. They treated the reading as a solemn occasion, posting notices around the school, and serving refreshments at the event. The readers sat in a rocking chair in the front of the room, and each one received a round of applause and encouraging comments from the audience. Many times since then, students have requested time to read their writing when they feel they need an audience for their work.



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

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

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

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

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Writing changes hearts and spirits

Anne Lamott's book, *Bird by Bird*, inspired me when I needed encouragement for writing workshops. She says, "Writing and reading decrease our sense of isolation.... [They give us] a shot at dancing with, or at least clapping along with, the absurdity of life, instead of being squashed by it over and over again. It's like singing on a boat during a terrible storm at sea. You can't stop the raging storm, but singing can change the hearts and spirits of the people who are together on that ship" (p. 237).

Anne Lamott's beliefs confirm what I have learned through my own work with adolescents: that teaching kids about anger management, relationships, and self-esteem do not have to be separate courses or programs delivered in little pieces apart from their real lives. The things we want kids to know about becoming healthy, happy human beings can be an integral part of the way we teach them about language and communication. Learning to write can be a way out of the shadows for them — a way for them to regain a sense of control and find a voice.

Possibly my most reluctant English student ever, Steve brought me his last piece of the semester. He had read an article about trapping mink and had written a two-page summary. There were a few mistakes, but it was the writing of a student who had confidence in his ability to use written language. He pointed out that it was quite a contrast

to his first written work last year — a piece with four sentences, many spelling errors, and no capital letters. He had learned many writing skills in the past year, but more important, he had learned that reading and writing are not just for English teachers and honor roll students. Language can be a tool for him to use for the most basic of human needs: documenting his thoughts, hopes, fears, and dreams, and communicating them with other people.

The perspective of a poet

At the beginning of the year, John's melancholy words described his pain and isolation. He continued writing poetry saying all the things he had been unable or unwilling to say — that the people closest to him had hurt him, that he was afraid of his past, that his future terrified him. Most of his early poems were beautifully articulated, but were melancholy, reflective, solemn, and mournful. He usually entered the class and sat down to write without speaking to anyone.

But John's progress as a writer mirrored his emotional growth and the development of his relationships with adults in school. By the end of the year, John had published a book of his poems on the school computer, published a poem on an Internet website for student writing, and handed out autographed copies of his writing to everyone in school. Two years later, he called to let me know he is still writing. These are the words he used to describe how he sees

the world now that he is a writer:

The perspective of a poet on the world

I love the world.

Everything has something to tell.

I see the world as a breathtaking rhythmic poem.

I show how I feel with dramatic images and words.

I see every day as a new poem waiting to happen.

Everything has something to tell.

I love the world.

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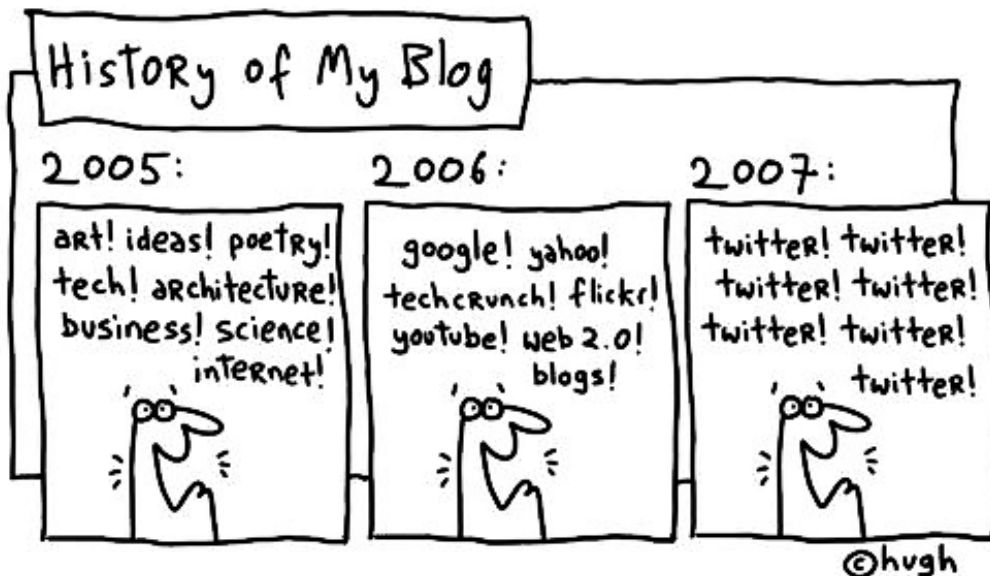
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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

May, 2014

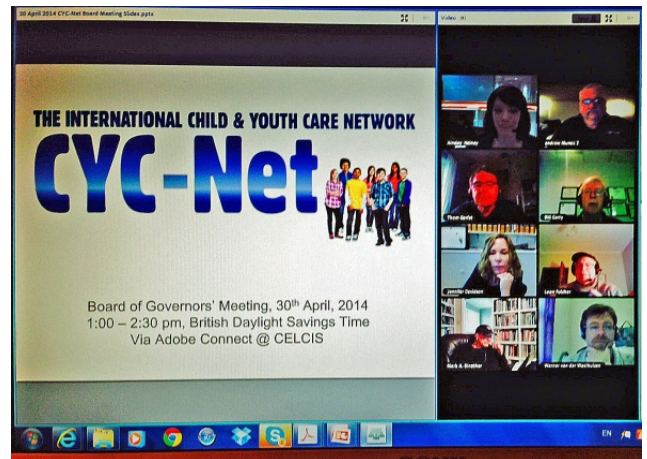


Greetings friends and visitors to CYC-Online! May starts with Child and Youth Care Workers' Week! Have you done anything to publicize this or to acknowledge the work of a youth worker or a child care worker this month? I hope so.



Countdown to the CYC-Net Board Meeting

A significant milestone was achieved at CYC-Net this month. May sees Issue Number 182 at CYC-Online! For more than 15 years, The International Child and Youth Care Network has supported child and youth care workers throughout the World with accessible, practical and useable information and training materi-

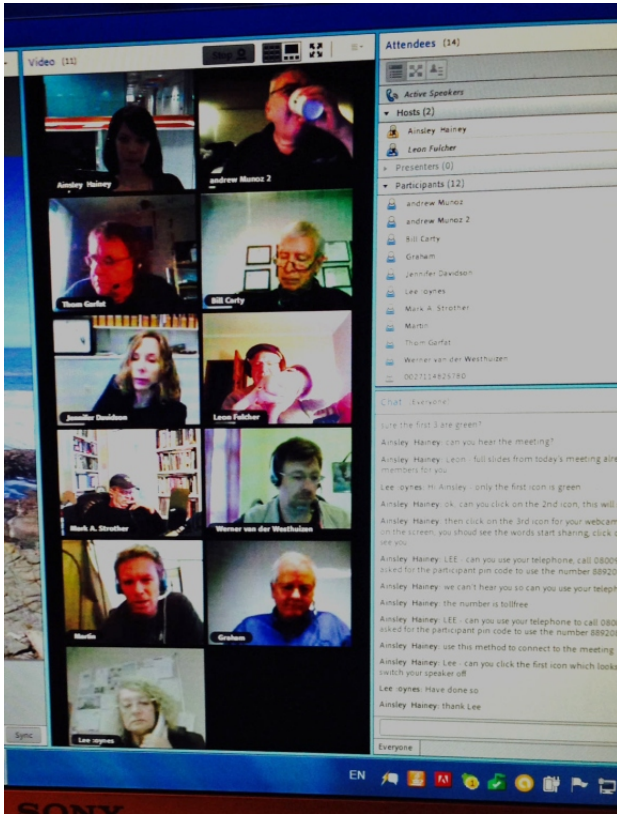


CYC-Net Board Meeting

als. That makes this May Day achievement all the more notable!

At 1 pm British Summer Time at the Centre for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), the first ever CYC-Net Board of Governors' Meeting was held in Cyberspace using Adobe Connect. The meeting of the Board started at 1 pm Glasgow-time. So to start with, one has to start calculating time zone differences. What an amazing experience!

First of all, think of the geography! It was just past midnight in New Zealand



Members added to the meeting

when I joined the meeting and just past 1 pm for the three UK participants in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. The three South African participants in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and the NW Cape were within an hour of the UK time zone, even if at the other end of the globe. Canadian participants in Montreal and Toronto had an early start to the meeting, as did the American Board members signing in from Washington DC and Texas. Two new members of the Board were endorsed, one from Bangladesh helping to make CYC-Net more accessible in South Asia, and the other

based in Singapore with involvement in Indonesia and Hong Kong.

Thank you Adobe Connect for help-



CYC-Net Editors Report

ing to make this meeting possible! And thank you Jennifer Davidson, Director of CELCIS and Dr Ainsley Hailey, Learning Technologist at CELCIS for helping to make this historic event possible! CYC-Net is here to support YOU, every week of the year but especially this week! The CYC-Net Board of Governors send their best wishes!

The CYC-Net annual readership statistics for the past 12 months are noteworthy. Two statistical programs are used – SmartStats and Google Analytics. Based on SmartStats figures, CYC-Net has had 1,360,000 unique visits during the past twelve months where someone has visited the site and spent time reading something. By contrast, Google Analytics, using a different statistical measure, recorded nearly 650,000 visits! Mighty popular site, eh?!

Board Members were particularly in-





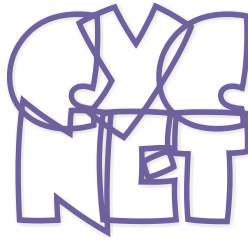
The CYC-Net Press

terested in the launch of The CYC-NET Press that has begun producing specialist reading material via e-Book and paperback at accessible prices for child and youth care practitioners. Your CYC-Net Board of Governors wants to hear your ideas about how to help the International Child and Youth Care Network better respond to your learning and reading needs and ideas! We will be meeting more regularly in cyberspace now.

C U there! ;-)



Board Members Close-Up



THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK

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1/8 page	\$100.00	\$ 75.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 30.00

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Please send all relevant artwork to admin@cyc-net.org

Files: Only TIFF, PDF, EPS or high resolution JPG will be accepted. All images should be CMYK.

Image resolution 300 dpi at 100%

Fonts: If using PDF, either embed fonts or please supply ALL fonts with the documents, or convert fonts to paths.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Size	Layout	Width	Height
Full page	Portrait (5mm bleed)	200mm	260mm
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	Landscape	200mm	125mm
1/4 page	Portrait	95mm	125mm
	Landscape	200mm	60mm
1/8 page	Portrait	40mm	125mm
	Landscape	95mm	60mm



... end notes



No one likes; Mondays. Homework. Fake friends. School. Being ignored. Drama. Liars. An empty fridge. Being replaced. Slow Internet.

— Amit Verma

(I don't know how people can fake whole relationships... I can't even fake a hello to somebody I don't like!)

“The young, free to act on their initiative, can lead their elders in the direction of the unknown... The children, the young, must ask the questions that we would never think to ask, but enough trust must be re-established so that the elders will be permitted to work with them on the answers.”

— Margaret Mead

“Saki says that youth is like *hors d'oeuvres*: you are so busy thinking of the next courses you don't notice it. When you've had them, you wish you'd had more *hors d'oeuvres*.”

— Philip Larkin: Letters to Monica

“There is a certain part of all of us that lives outside of time. Perhaps we become aware of our age only at exceptional moments and most of the time we are ageless.”

— Milan Kundera

“It is easy, when you are young, to believe that what you desire is no less than what you deserve, to assume that if you want something badly enough, it is your God-given right to have it.”

— Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild*

“Our lives were just beginning, our favorite moment was right now, our favorite songs were unwritten.”

— Rob Sheffield, *Love is a Mix Tape*

“Adolescence is like having only enough light to see the step directly in front of you.”

— Sarah Addison Allen,
The Girl Who Chased the Moon

“Enjoy your youth.
You'll never be younger than you are at this very moment.”

— Chad Sugg

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

— Thomas S. Monson,
Pathways To Perfection

“It must be wonderful to be seventeen, and to know everything.”

— Arthur C. Clarke,
2010: Odyssey Two

“That's the duty of the old, to be anxious on behalf of the young. And the duty of the young is to scorn the anxiety of the old.”

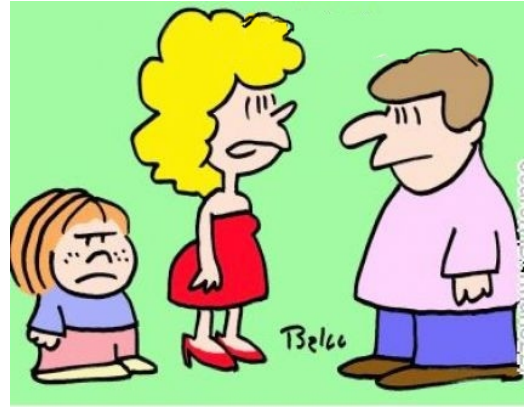
— Philip Pullman,
The Golden Compass

“You young people never say anything. And us old folks don't know how to stop talking.”

— Carlos Ruiz Zafón,
Shadow of the Wind

“A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do we know that his future will not be equal to our present?”

— Confucius



I took her to register in kindergarten |
— and they wanted a damage deposit.

“The first door in the hall leads to youth, the second door leads to middle age, and the third door leads to the bathroom. But knock first, because I think grandpa's in there.”

— Jarod Kintz,
This Book Has No Title



‘I have to hide my
smoking from my
parents.’

‘I have to hide
my cigarettes from
my children.’

information

CYC-Online is a web-based e-publication and therefore not available in printed form. However, readers are always welcome to print out pages or chapters as desired.

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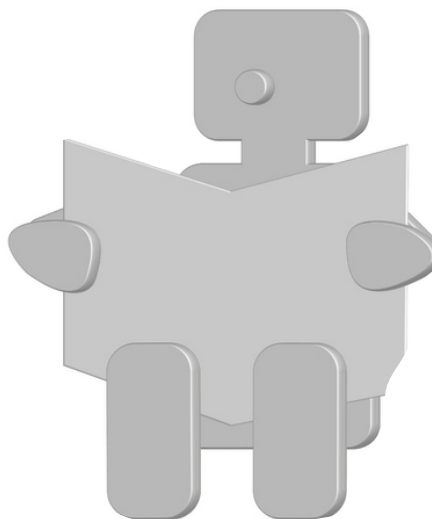
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