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

The CYC-Net
PRESS

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Taking a Break

I am taking a break today – well, for a few days actually. I just got tired of all the stuff I am working on and decided to set it all aside for a few days. It is not that I am going to do 'nothing', just that I intend to only do things I want to do, not those I am supposed to do.

I had an email from a friend the other day – she said she was going away, removing herself from work for a few days (or maybe it was a week) and was just going to relax and do whatever she wanted.

Most of my friends do that every once in a while – one goes fishing, another heads to the beach, some just stay at home and putter in the garden, others bake up a storm – anything to just get away from the daily grind – and on a regular basis, many just take off for the weekend and do what they feel like doing – not focusing on 'what they are supposed to do'.

Ah, the benefits of being an adult, eh?

I was thinking about this residential program I used to work in. Young people were regularly allowed to take what we called 'mental health days'. On those days they did not have to 'work on their program'. Make no mistake, they still had to respect the basic expectations of the living environment – respect for others, etc. – but for the more specific, individualized as-

pects of their 'program' on for this 'mental health day' they could let it go and just be who they wanted to be on that day. In other words, they got a break from working on their program. Staff did not spend time reminding them to focus on their program, or making interventions related to their program; they just let them have the day off ☺

It was really quite amazing how well so many of them did on those days – perhaps being a little more relaxed took some of the pressure off and they responded in a more relaxed manner. It was sometimes difficult for the staff to remember not to intervene, though.

I think about this a lot – and I wonder what it must be like to be expected to be working on your program 24/7 with no breaks.

And I wonder, be it in a group living program, or a school program, or any 'treatment' program, why we don't think the young people (and their families) could use a break too?

Just like the rest of us who are simply defined as people.

Because, as someone once said, 'kids are people, too!' And as they often like to say 'gimme a break!' Maybe we should.

Thom

The Desire for Control and the Need for Learning

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Surely if there is one message that the field of Child and Youth Care has hammered home for quite some time now to just about anyone who is in some way involved with young people facing adversity it is that behavior ought not to be the focus of our work. We are instead to concentrate our efforts on relational engagement, meeting young people where they are at, working through Daily Life Events, be present within the life-space, and so on. Indeed, I would suggest that we have become quite good at delivering this message, using a range of media, and adding the appropriate emotional guilt and humility to ensure that this message is received. Every audience I have encountered in the past ten years or so, be that residential child and youth workers or foster parents, nurses from the adolescent psychiatric unit or children's service workers from the child welfare sector, has done well to absorb the message. People, I find, listen politely, even get excited, and nod their heads energetically while I quote the likes of Garfat, Fewster, Ganon, Stuart, Phelan and so many others, and make the case for a kinder, gentler way of being with youth. Inevitably, however, this wonderous love fest on behalf of relational engagement gets interrupted by a courageous soul, expressing what he or she is really thinking, and what undoubtedly has been on the minds of everyone else in the room too. Someone will say something like this:

> *I understand the importance of relationships, and being present and all the other stuff, but our kids are rude, violent, irresponsible, use drugs and make bad decisions every day. They see no consequences for their behavior. What are we supposed to do; just look the other way, let them get away with it, pretend that this is all ok? Are we supposed to let them break the law? Should they not have some respect for authority? Surely some control is necessary to teach them what is right and what is wrong? Surely, I have to be in*

control of my own house (foster parent) or program (practitioners)! If nothing else, it is a matter of safety!

These kinds of comments leave us with much to unpack. Concepts like consequences, the law, safety, authority and control are complex, loaded with social construction, and generally used as catch-all phrases for basically expressing the speaker's anxiety, ambivalence about their own value and work, and general resentment of not being appreciated. On the other hand, these comments come from a deeply embedded place in the speaker's experience, his or her desire for doing good, and his or her understanding of what is right and what is wrong in the world. It also reflects the speaker's need for something that is more concrete, that speaks to his or her everyday reality, and that transcends the sometimes esoteric feel of our focus on relational practice. Holes in the dry wall, strung out teenagers, and being told to fuck off are the kinds of things that don't mesh all that well with our relational aesthetics.

This raises the question of how to respond to these comments. We can't ignore them, because doing so devalues the experience of real people trying to do good. It also devalues the power of relationship and all the other things we like to talk about, because it positions these things as ideals to be hoped for but not as real concepts and processes to be expected and pursued. So, I think it is time to re-introduce behavior as a central concern in our work. Behaviour happens, always and with-

out fail, and it really is often disconcerting, unsafe, or just annoying. As a teacher, researcher, writer and trainer it is easy for me to marginalize bad behavior, but as a caregiver it is an entirely different story. So what to do?

Increasingly, my thoughts turn to the distinction between control and learning. I know what control is and how it is implemented; anything from literally exercising one's greater physical strength to developing more nuanced but still very totalitarian control mechanisms such as point and level systems, token economies, rewards and consequences. I also know that while these kinds of moves take care of the problem in the moment, they generally lead to nothing, and often perpetuate the problem and promote it gaining strength as time goes by. My experience tells me that conforming and compliant young people are at far more risk than rebelling and resisting young people. In fact, many of the now very successful child and youth care personalities I know, people like Thom, Gerry, Jack, Karen and Lorraine, were themselves quite the idiots in their youth (I mean that in the most loving and supportive way possible). Somehow this served them well as their lives progressed.

So what should a child and youth care practitioner or a foster parent do when a young person behaves badly, rudely or dangerously? How should they respond if we tell them to not exercise control? The answer, I think, is to focus on learning rather than control, recognizing that learning can take very much the same shape as control, at least in the moment. Responding to be-

havior does in fact matter; as a parent, I do this all the time. The choice of how we respond to behavior, on the other hand, provides an opportunity to ask some simple questions before becoming overly committed to any particular response: "What can be learned, by me and by the young person, from this response?" From the perspective of a young person, this speaks to the penultimate dilemma of growing up: "If you care about me, you will not seek to control me, but if no one seeks to exercise control in my life, I am clearly not being care for".

I think 'learning', or a pedagogic context for child and youth care practice, might well be the bridge we need to translate the beauty of relational practice into the ugly world of being an ass; it's ok to have rules, it's ok to set limits, and it's absolutely ok to say 'no'. But the accumulated purpose of doing so is to further the learning about the lesson few of us have really learned: "How can I be in charge of the process by which I allow others to exercise control in my life for my own good"? Helping a young person figure this out can probably not be done outside of a full commitment to relational engagement. But if we want there to be anyone left prepared to take on that task, we may have to ease up a bit on our anti-behavior rhetoric, and find ways of responding to behavior through a pedagogic lens rather than a control-oriented one.

Henry Would Have Loved These Squirrels!

Karen VanderVen

This inaugural *Soapbox 500* follows my earlier *From the Soapbox* and *From the Soapbox... Again* columns. *500 words* was earlier penned by Henry Maier. How, I asked myself, could I possibly follow the wise, compassionate, beloved Henry whose influence on us and the field of child and youth work was so profound?

As I reviewed all of my past Soapboxes, it hit me – how much my own thinking was implicitly shaped by my decades of contact with Henry face to face, in correspondence, and reading and re-reading his work. Perhaps my Soapboxes could help to keep his memories and values alive so that they could help shape the future of his notion of 'developmental care' as our mission and use it as a lens to look at the continually escalating and compelling problems in the world?

But that didn't address the first challenge: What would I write about for my initial column?

Little did I anticipate how I'd get some inspiration.

Squirrels? Nobody loves squirrels. Generations of bird lovers have concocted

Henry Maier

diabolical methods to keep them out of their seed-stocked feeders. Admittedly my back-yard feeder has a baffle that keeps the persistent creatures from getting up to the feeder tube. But— saying to myself that squirrels as well as the birds are also God's creatures, I decided it was best to accept rather than to fight them. I always make sure a handful of seeds drops on the ground for the squirrels, and what the birds push off the feeder tray adds enough to keep them happy and coming back. I realized that this somewhat more sympathetic perspective on these pesky creatures was fueled by something. A subsequent experience confirmed it.

The other day I was out walking with my camera and I heard a scruffling sound up in a second floor window of a nearby house. I looked... and what did I see but this squirrel mother, who had hurriedly scurried up from the ground closely followed by a smaller squirrel. She carefully arranged herself and her 'squirrelet' in the window corner keeping her soon comfortably sleeping baby warm and safe, while she protectively shielded it with her bushy tail and looked around for potential threats. Perhaps a stored nut for dinner was in her paws. I was immediately reminded of Henry. This was attachment, the protective caregiving that allows it, and its utter significance in positive development is one of them.

The squirrel mother and child scene literally brought a tear to my eye. Why, this was Henry. Henry would have loved it. Thank you, Henry.

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Caring for 'Our Kids'

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If our society really wanted to solve the problem, we could; it's just that it would require everybody saying, 'this is important; this is significant.' And, that we don't just pay attention to these communities when a CVS burns, and we don't just pay attention when a young man gets shot or has his spine snapped, but we're paying attention all the time because we consider those kids our kids and we think they're important and they shouldn't be living in poverty and violence.
– President Obama on the situation in Baltimore

I have been watching the "situation" in Baltimore and thinking about Ferguson, New York, Oakland, Chicago, San Diego, Washington D. C. and on and on. There is meme on the internet right now that kind of sums up what has been going on recently. It goes like this:

Did you hear about the young black man who was killed in police custody? You mean Freddie Gray, who had 80% of his spine severed at his neck? No, the other one. You mean Trayvon Scott, who in February died in a police holding cell without any explanation? No, the other one. You mean Tyrone West, who despite never committing a crime, was beaten to death in an abandoned lot last year, and Baltimore refused to release the autopsy? No, the other one. You mean George King, who was tased 5 times in 10 minutes while laying in a hospital bed, suffering from meningitis? No, the other one. You mean Anthony Anderson, whose death was determined a homicide by the state's medical examiner after being brutally beaten by police? NO, the Other one!

Without a doubt, young people in the U.S. and across the world are facing increasing difficult economic and social realities that are creating conditions of marginalization and disenfranchisement that we have never seen before. Of course, in the U.S. it is hard not to be reminded of the riots of the mid 1960's, such as the Watts riot. I recently watched footage of those riots and they do look disturbingly like the Baltimore riots.

The calls within the black communities, across the U.S., for self defense with pictures of cadres of young black men with rifles patrolling their communities, harken

back to the Black Panther party of that earlier era. In fact, we are also revisiting the debate of the 1960's over peaceful protest and violent insurrection. To see the Back Muslims walking the streets in Baltimore, during the riots, brings back memories of Malcom X and the call for revolution by any means. The truce between gangs in order to mobilize gang members to "protect" their communities is resonant with the history of the Blackstone Rangers in Chicago that was founded at the St. Charles Institution for Troubled Youth. The gang's original mission was as a community organization for black youth in the Woodlawn area of South Chicago.

All of these echoes from the Black liberation and civil rights struggles of the 1960's would seem to indicate that not much has changed for poor and marginalized young people in the U.S. Indeed, in 1965, Guy Debord wrote an essay, *The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy* on the Watts riot in which he asks the question, "How do people make history under conditions designed to dissuade them from intervening in it?"

It is a provocative question given the media and popular discourses on the internet that would propose the violence and looting in Baltimore as mistaken at best or the work of savages at the worst. Debord argues that the situation in Watts in 1965 was, like Baltimore in 2015, a case where the system itself was operating illegally. The police were violating the law in the ways in which they were policing the community. Debord argues that it is nonsensical, under such conditions, to attempt to address such illegalities by appealing to the legal system that is already violating its own codes of conduct. He states that, "What is irrational is to appeal legally against a blatant illegality as if it was a mere oversight that would be corrected if pointed out."

The reaction of the communities in Watts and in Baltimore, he contends, are not about correcting an aberration in how the system should work, but a response to socio-economic conditions that do not operate within the scope of existing law. In other words, we might be able to get the police to behave with less brutality, but this will not fix the underlying conditions that put young black people on the streets. Debord cogently argues that, "What American blacks are really daring to demand is the right to really live, and in the final analysis this requires nothing less than the total subversion of this society."

Debord goes on to argue that looting is not an irrational or misguided activity under such conditions. Speaking about the burning and looting that took place in Watts (and we might note in Baltimore) he states,

> Like the young delinquents of all the advanced countries, but more radically because they are part of a class without a future, a sector of the proletariat unable to believe in any significant chance of integration or promotion, the Los Angeles blacks take modern capitalist propaganda, its publicity of abundance, literally. They want to possess now all the objects shown and abstractly accessible, because they want to use them. In this way they are

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challenging their exchange-value, the commodity reality which molds them and marshals them to its own ends, and which has preselected everything. Through theft and gift they rediscover a use that immediately refutes the oppressive rationality of the commodity, revealing its relations and even its production to be arbitrary and unnecessary.

He argues that to loot and burn under the conditions of global capitalist totalizing socio-economic oppression, is to assert the force of one's humanity over the primacy given goods and property over human life. It exposes what capitalism really cares about, which is commodities and property. Until these are threatened, the value of human life, in marginalized and abandoned communities under global capitalism, is negligible. In this sense, looting and burning exposes the fact that property and commodities always represent the implicit force of the state in the guise of the police, army and other forms of institutionalized violence. As Gille Deleuze has stated regarding human rights and capitalism, "What social democracy has not given the order to fire when the poor come out of their territory or ghetto?"

The response of the Black community to the humiliations and brutality of the police has less to do with the police, and more to do with the ongoing humiliation of the Black community socially, culturally and economically. In this sense, police behavior is the logical extension of the logic of a system that believes life is expendable.

The answer to the question of what has changed in the 50 years since the Watts riot, is that things have actually gotten worse. Global capitalism is far more extensive, less constrained and more brutal now than it was then. As Shawn Gude remarked, on the Baltimore insurrection, in an essay in *Jacobin*,

> *Baltimore, then, is like so many other cities with their own Freddie Grays: a place in which private capital has left enormous sections of the city to rot, where a chasm separates the life chances of black and white residents — and where cops brutally patrol a "disposable" population.*

So, what does this have to do with Child and Youth Care/ Youth Work? The fact that, as a writer, I have to worry that my audience of Child and Youth Care/ Youth Workers might not see the connection makes me despair a little bit about our field. But, perhaps I am wrong and the connections to our work are both obvious and urgent to those reading this and thinking about what is happening to young people under global capitalism. If so, then we all realize that, if we propose to care for young people, that caring cannot stop at the doors of our agencies or when the workday ends.

Of all fields, ours should be able to take seriously Obama's statement that these are our kids and they deserve to live a better life, just as they deserve our attention on a daily basis. We shouldn't have to ask the question, who are our kids and are the one's rioting in Baltimore ours to care for. The answer should be obvious. They

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are our kids and they are in trouble.

We, as a field dedicated to care, need to act in ways that show that conditions for the young people we encounter must be improved. We cannot afford to continue to lose young people to incarceration, addiction and death without acknowledging that these are symptoms of an ever growing systematic malaise. We need to use the platforms of our "profession" to do more than advocate for a better deal for us as workers. We need to understand that what is happening to young people in Baltimore and across the globe is the canary in the coal mine for all of us who are not members of the global capitalist oligarchy.

There was recently a study published in *The Journal of Adolescent Health* that ranked adolescents in Baltimore as faring worse than their counterparts in Nigeria. The study was an international survey that examined the living conditions of 15-19 year olds in poor areas in Baltimore, Shanghai, Johannesburg, New Delhi and Ibadan (third largest city in Nigeria). Young people in Baltimore and Johannesburg, South Africa, were more negative about their living conditions and their communities than the other locations in the study. Indeed, adolescents felt less safe in these two cities, than the other locations surveyed. Poverty was a common denominator in all the cities in the study but,

> *When you look at how they perceive their environments, kids in both Baltimore and Johannesburg are fearful. They don't feel safe from violence … This is*

something we didn't really see in other cities. In Shanghai, for example, there wasn't a great deal of violence. You'd ask kids about their safety concerns, and they would say something like, 'I'm afraid of crossing a busy street.

In Marx's analysis of capitalism, he notes that one of the effects of capitalist economics is that it weakens social cohesion. In the study above, the authors note that one of the major factors influencing the fear young people feel in Baltimore and Johannesburg is a deteriorating sense of social cohesion.

This is something the field of Child and Youth Care has worked on for decades. We know something about building relationships of care. These relationships of care, I would argue, have immense political implications for assisting young people (and the rest of us) in rebuilding community premised on the value of human life rather than property and commodities. To do this, however, we need to take seriously the necessity of political analysis. We cannot continue to act as though our work is somehow outside the logic of the events in Baltimore. While working relationally with one young person within the confines of a program is good work, it is not enough. It will not inoculate young people or us from the predations of a brutal and uncaring system. We need to work together with young people to make significant changes.

These are our kids and we owe them at least that.

My last column talked about creating safety for neglected and abused youths. Once a program can establish a safe and predictable environment, then the real work begins. Even though the physical effort expended to create safe spaces for troubled youths is often exhausting, the work is relatively unsophisticated, requiring more common sense and practical experience than theory or training. The skills demonstrated by workers to manage behavior are mainly learned on the job and require no more training than a 40 hour In-Service program.

Once abused/neglected youths feel safe and unthreatened, they need to learn new ways of thinking about themselves and the world. This learning occurs when the youths gradually experience more control over what happens to them and begin to experience useful personal power. External control was very helpful to create safety, since many youths have habits and behaviors that are self-defeating and destructive. However, external control is no longer useful when the youth settles down and

Sophisticated CYC Practice; Creating Powerful Possibilities

Jack Phelan

now external control is experienced as stifling and even as bullying by the adult. Like the 2 year old who needs to do it himself, the youth starts to shout "No" when confronted with behavioral directions and rigid rules. Adolescent 2 year olds prefer swearing to a simple "No".

This is the place where real change can happen and it is often the place where behaviorally based CYC programs fail to be helpful. Developmental theory is very useful and guides the CYC practitioner in strategic interventions. Before any self-control can be learned or even practiced, the youth must first experience him/herself as strong and self-directed. Behaviorally focused external reward, etc. programs are actually counter-productive at this point, creating compliance rather than self-direction. The adults working with teens often attempt to skip over this critical developmental stage because it is uncomfortable living with 2 year old sounding teens who want to run their own lives, without having yet developed social skills or self-control. This is why

trained, mature CYC practitioners are needed, people who are professionals, not behavioral paraprofessionals. The life space experiences that can be arranged by skillful CYC practitioners will create developmental progress that won't be possible otherwise.

Early in treatment, a youth will become loud and demanding soon after feeling safe in the environment. This is a time to loosen the external control and create opportunities for personal power and control. Unfortunately, untrained workers see this as a time for more external control because of the obvious lack of good manners or compliance with rules and routines. The best way to deal with a demanding, loud youth is to give them more control and personal choice. This sounds counter-intuitive to someone who is unaware of developmental processes, and can be easily forgotten in the heat of the moment by poorly supervised CYC staff.

The goal of treatment is to eventually create in the youth a need for the adult to be the "more knowledgeable other" whom the youth can trust to guide him when he does not have enough experience to move forward. This goal is accomplished slowly, through myriad daily experiences which can be arranged by the CYC staff, where the youth experiences himself as powerful and capable, even though still lacking social awareness and self-control skills.

Power and strength at this juncture in treatment is based on an ego-centric belief system where everything is evaluated by what use is it to me, not whether anyone else got benefit or liked me more. The youth at this stage of development is (like the 2 year old) very self-focused, not really caring about others very much.

Adults, especially people not trained in CYC practice, want these youths to make socially responsible decisions and future oriented plans, but this is like asking a child to do advanced math equations, it is simply outside of their ability or awareness. When a newly safe youth who has serious abuse and neglect issues is permitted to begin choosing to do what he/she wants, the choices have nothing to do with creating a resume or planning a budget. We have to support power expressions like dying my hair green or buying a video game. The process is neither short nor simple, but it does effectively move the youth forward.

I want to acknowledge that this process is not easy or obvious, which is why we need professionals doing it.

Close enough encounters: Close to Me – Close to You

Maxwell Smart and John Digney

The only service a friend can really render is to keep up your courage by holding up to you a mirror in which you can see a noble image of yourself.
George Bernard Shaw – *Irish playwright, essayist and novelist.*

The race of mankind would perish did they cease to aid each other. We cannot exist without mutual help. All therefore that need aid have a right to ask it from their fellow-men; and no one who has the power of granting can refuse it without guilt.
Walter Scott – *Scottish novelist, playwright and poet.*

The sun has begun to display its warmth once again here in the Celtic Kingdoms of Ireland and Scotland (at least this past 7 days) and with that comes some scent of newness, a fresh-beginning, a feeling of togetherness and a sense of hope. Bruce Perry reminds us that, 'Hope is the powerful protective force that gets us through distressing, even traumatic experiences … it (hope) is the internal representation of a better world, in essence a memory' (2009 n/p).

Like a family of bears emerging from winter hibernation and looking for companionship and connection, we as a species seem to have a similar draw towards each other and we even can appear to be a lit-

tle friendlier than usual. Something drives us in this positive vector, something hidden, beneath the surface and perhaps this may be past memories of spring, 'and we use this memory to warm us during the cold; to give us the strength to keep on going because it always isn't going to be like this; things will get better' (Perry, 2009).

Our observation has pointed us in the direction of wondering what it is to seek to be close to someone else – how does this fits different individuals in different contexts, for as we within the child and youth care profession are astutely aware, relationships and relational care is really our 'bread and butter', the very essence of

our field. So what are the issues that come up for us when we stop to consider this metaphorical bread and why should this butter matter so much to us?

Considering the Bread and Butter

When considering the 'bread', we need to pose a fundamental question to carers, 'What kind of relationship do you want with the children you care about'? This question seems very simple and one might expect a simple question may elicit a simple answer - but a question like this, when deeply considered will draw forth complex responses, and each of this myriad of individual responses will have validity. We are sure that the majority of workers want to have supportive, nurturing, developmental, and empathetic relationships with young people (and co-workers) – though as we know, often wanting isn't having, and desiring, isn't doing.

Relationships should be the thing we know most about and yet when drilled into we can see that sometimes we talk the relationship language but do not necessarily walk the relational walk. Relational practice is complex and challenging, as Freeman & Garfat (2014) pointed out, relational care involves aspects of; being, interpreting and doing. Even a cursory glimpse of these aspects of relational child and youth care practices suggest that being in relationship is different than having a relationship.

Relational care, 'requires that one directs attention towards what is happening between the young person and his or her carer' (Fulcher, 2013), and equally to what is happening 'between' the adult and the youth. The 'bread', so to speak, focuses on the felt senses of patience, gentleness, trust, listening, acceptance and kindness as a way of being, interpreting and doing that relationship.

The 'butter' aspect can be very different – and thanks for asking BTW. The butter of relational caring is the very embodiment of how we demonstrate care and caring, it is the micro-culture or inner climate of relational care, (McDonnell, 2014) and how we think about a relationship which leads to how we do relationships. Fulcher (2014) advises that relational care involves more than just having a relationship, it involves working to establish and maintain a co-created relationship and that has more to it than just the individuals involved in it, (p.79-80).

The Basic Building Blocks

Laursen (2002) wrote about various components associated with effective relationships and listed these as: trust, attention, empathy, availability, affirmation, respect, and virtue; referred to as 'habits of reclaiming relationships'. In his paper the voice of the youth was sought to give validity to previous findings and these seven attributes and behaviours were affirmed. Trust was identified as a keystone of caring relationships (a trusting relationship was seen as bringing safety and stability). Trust was strengthened when adults would follow through on what they said they were going to do.

Adults who are seen as 'listening' are viewed as being supportive and interested - especially if they encourage dialogue. Some young people even pointed out that adults who attend to them by 'just being there' are also perceived as 'listening' as they are *hearing* what is needed at that time and of course this links well with notions of empathy and understanding, both essential components of all healthy relationships.

Empathy is seen as being as important as listening and 'being there' from a young person's point of view because having empathy is seen as being open to feeling and understanding from the young person's perspective. The youngsters Laursen interviewed all expressed that they wanted to spend time with adults and where an adult 'offers time', relationships become solidified. Laursen states, 'when adults make time for them, young persons find peace and gratitude in the midst of their struggle'.

With this comes affirmation, even in the midst of struggles, relational adults convey that the youth has strengths and ability – thus providing a sense of self-worth. Respect is the sixth 'habit' and of course is an essential constituent of any caring relationship. Such adults have a confidence that youngsters can and should be involved in decision making and work with them in a collaborative manner – fully respecting their opinions. Finally, the inclusion of the concept of 'virtue' comes from the idea of practicing what you preach where participants described 'caring adults' as those who conduct

themselves in the manner they ask kids to do. Interestingly this aspect (virtue) was also referenced by the young people as being able to set limits and holding kids accountable when necessary.

So, these seven habits all seem fairly simple, clear and obvious – but ask ourselves, in our 'relationships' and in our relational practice, do these emerge? And if they do, do they do so naturally and unforced?

Lines of Demarcation

When we get into an analysis of what makes a worker or indeed any person effective or useful, we often list particular characteristics, behaviours and attitudes. This type of exercise produced registers of many human traits, all of which are of course necessary and important to understand – but do we ask the question to ourselves often enough? Knowing how to behave towards children and youth is only the start though, we must also ask ourselves, 'From WHERE should we deliver our behaviour?' Do we do it from near or from afar – this really is a component that can be often overlooked or misread.

There are of course various personalities involved in care provision and all bring unique experiences, values, beliefs and approaches. We have invented labels to describe some of these type and will share four here. Firstly, we note the existence of the '*office hawks*', the staff members who conduct their caring from a different room (the office) – whilst being officious and 'steering the shift' and 'controlling the

logs'. Then we have the '*profes-sional-distancers*', those who all but carry a tape-measure to ensure they don't get too close. Of course we have the opposite type with our '*embedded journalists*', getting right into the middle of all that occurring, not afraid of stepping into whoever's space is on offer. Fourthly we proffer the '*proximity balancers*' – dipping in and out of person space and proximity to youth at varying levels and degrees, depending on what feels right at any given time. This observation is not about passing judgment, it is about reflecting on the questions, 'where is the best place to be situated? and what is the zone of proximal influence?

On occasion writers speak of proximal influence in terms of temporal proximity, for instance in 2002 Martin and Martin noted how theories of stress and adaptation in adulthood typically focus on recent influences on developmental change but that a stronger emphasis on the relationship between proximal and distal experiences should be present. They spoke of the benefit of an approach which would combine biographic variables with current situations – the proximal influences. In this article we are placing more emphasis on the immediate and literal proximity (actual space and emotional space) between adult and kid.

From Coach to "Coach"

On a recent trip away with young people one of the authors noticed how effectively these zones of influence can be

in developing trust through direct relational engagement. As young people and caring adults engaged together previously absent connection started to emerge as young people and staff engaged in different ways from their normal day-to-day rhythms.

Connections grew as the trip's activities unfolded and grew; and whilst there is a whole host that could be written about the activities and challenges on these activities such as; 'quad-biking' over rough terrain, 'white-water rafting' and 'cliff jumping', we will take what might appear to be a 'passive activity', travelling together on the coach to the activity centre, to examine the power and influence of proximity. For workers who have participated in wilderness programmes it will come as no surprise to hear that the act

of travelling with youngsters struggling with emotional containment can have the potential of being an opportunity, as well as a problem. Occasionally the closed (and close) space needed for this type of travelling can bring about an outpouring of stress and anxiety from young people.

However as staff sit with young people, framing and reframing the possibilities of the events we are all about to encounter, a different dynamic emerges. Distress can turn to eustress (enjoyable stress) spawned from excitement. Bolstered by communal singing in the minibus a forum is often created that turns from the journey on the coach to being a coach and mentor.

On this trip it was no different; as staff connected with kids, almost immediately the framing began; anxieties dissipated and excitement grew - no doubt in part attributable to the willingness of staff and kids to belt out Mr Tom Jones hit "Delilah", at a million decibels and to sing a collection of favourite song, over and over, for hours on end. Moving from coach to 'coach' beings, the communal ownership of the group begins; reducing the anxiety of the new and unknown and builds connection and trust. An added benefit is the engagement in the joint fun of it all, adding real value in the guise of new shared stories and memories, which will be referred to in the epic tales that will be retold time and time again.

'A Good Use of 3 Feet'

In their RAP training programme (Brendtro, Brokenleg and van Bockern)

note a study from Boystown which postulated that adults who try to keep a distance from youth are impotent. This same research postulated that troubled youth who spent more time in close contact with staff – within 3 feet or less – became more cooperative and less oppositional. The message from the adult being, 'I trust you so much that I feel safe in your space' and the interpretation by the youth being, 'If they feel safe with me perhaps I really can trust them'. This interplay has the net effect of emphasizing the point that 'trust can transform behavior'.

Having our cake and eating it

It is not always possible to get what we want in life, be that in our work and our personal lives. But it can be possible to create the right environment that will make our aspirations more likely to be realised. In our work we want to see our children and youth flourishing (whatever that means for each individual), like the horticulturalist working to grow the healthiest plants. A major difference here though is that research in horticulture has help discern the best conditions for each individual species, such as; the type of soil required, the best watering and feeding routines and the most suitable temperatures and other climatic factors.

In child and youth care each person is unique and individual, but similar rules apply and one of these relates to the 'right places' from which to connect and relate. This CAN be discovered and it is through this discovery with each individual that we

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can tend to the notion of rhythmicity, because that distance (actual and emotional) will of course fluctuate. However, we believe and the evidence and voice of the youth will tell us that those who are 'distant' are seen as 'not being interested' and those that get 'too close, too quick' can be seen as 'smothering'.

Some things are clear though if we want to have our cake and eat it, we need to be genuinely interested in the person; we need to be actively introspective and continuously reflective; we need to know when it is safe to 'get in their space' and we need to be able to read when we should back off. Leon Fulcher noted, '… each young person's *zone of proximal development*' merits respect and engagement. When Carers aren't 'working in the zone' with young people, it's not surprising to find youths such as these zoned out …' Additionally he notes that we must, 'take time 'outside your Comfort Zone' to reflect on how *'zones of proximal development'* – that relational place nearest to our point of connection with a young person – impacts daily in child and youth care work'. (Fulcher, in Garfat, Fulcher and Digney, 2013 pp133-134).

So let us make the most of the zones of proximal influences - we need to create opportunities for 'close encounters' with youth and when these occur we must make them potent and meaningful.

Maxie and Digs,

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How to Show Up and Be Present in Conversation

James Freeman

Abstract

Effective communication involves various skills for connecting with young people in meaningful ways. Practicing and strengthening basic communication skills can help us remain open to their needs and equip us to be more responsive to them. This article reviews some basic skills and offers example of they can be used in everyday practice.

Keywords

Relational care, communication, attending, reflecting, reframing, silence

Every conversation, every exchange, we have with a young person is an opportunity to contribute to their self-worth and growth. How we approach and orient ourselves - and especially our words - makes the difference between being helpful or causing harm:

> *In short, with each of the thousand-and-one problems that present*

themselves in [daily] life, our choice is between controlling and teaching, between creating an atmosphere of distrust and one of trust, between setting an example of power and helping children to learn responsibility, between quick-fix parenting [and caring] and the kind that's focused on long-term goals. (Kohn, 2006)

Communicating effectively is a complex task. There are various "micro skills" (Ivey, Ivey & Zalaquett, 2015) to learn and integrate and a "perceived failure to listen is often interpreted…as a sign of not caring" (Bulach, Pickett & Boothe, 2007). Poor communication skills can also be a source of tension between carers and young people.

Adolescents may experience adult talk as… a tactic designed to prevent or divert them from doing something [or] as a way to slow them down, confuse them, or transform their adventure into something…without excitement or risk…. Kids, like all of us, want from others support, encouragement, trust and confidence. Instead they often hear "don't" or "you shouldn't" or "you'll see" or "you'll be sorry!" They want to hear "You can do it, but let's talk about it first." The tension isn't between talk and action, because both are action. It is between encouragement and support, on the one side, and the misguided attempt to control on the other. (Baizerman, 2003)

So what are some basics of communication and how can we become more effective?

Attending & listening

Effective communication doesn't happen without focusing on how we are being with the other person. I'm not communicating I care about someone when my eyes are focused on a screen or my thoughts are somewhere else. Some call the physical and mental act of being present the process of attending. It includes a turning toward someone, coming closer as appropriate, and giving our focus to what they are doing and saying.

Open ended questions also help communicate our interest and help move the conversation forward. When I ask a young person how their school day was, the answer is almost always, "fine" or "OK". But when I ask, "What was the funniest thing that happened at school today", or "What was your favorite place to be today?" I'm more likely to get a story full of opportunities to learn more about the young person and how I might be helpful to them.

Of course encouraging (e.g. "yes", "oh", "right"), paraphrasing, and summarizing what they are saying - all in moderation and responsive to their needs - helps build conversation and momentum in the exchange.

Reflecting content & feelings

Reflecting content is simply restating, often in a persons own words, what they

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have said. Think of a conversation you have been part of in which you really felt heard. You likely had that feeling as a result of something the other person did or said. One way we can give this feeling to a young person is to sensitively reflect what they are saying. For example, if someone was to say, "I always mess this up", we might choose to reflect back in a caring voice, "Always?". There are times even humor might be appropriate. We are simply acting as a mirror to help the other person see what they are saying and perhaps believing.

Reflecting the feelings expressed by another supports them in developing a greater awareness of how they are experiencing self and their environment (Ivey, Ivey & Zalaquett, 2015). In the same example, when a person might say "I always mess this up", we might reflect their feelings in the words "You're feeling like you've dealt with this before" or "What is it that's frustrating about this?". Of course reflecting the feeling or emotion of another person is part guess work and their response will let us know if we're on track or not.

Reframing & reflection of meaning

Reframing is the process of reflecting meaning and interpretation. It opens the possibility for re-interpretation and helping others create story from their experiences (Ivey, Ivey & Zalaquett, 2015).

My son was once playing a game of bingo with a group of others. After several rounds and no winning cards, he held his head down and said quietly, "If I don't win this one, I am never playing this game again". Now, I could have criticized his quick judgement, but my guess is many of us have said similar things to ourselves in different situations. He's also six years old, so this was a big deal in the moment for him. He was making meaning of his loss of the game and in the "process a person goes through in making sense of their experiences" (Garfat & Fulcher, 2013, p. 18). A simple reframe or reflection of that meaning which might move him from frustration to a place of more enjoyment might use words such as "this game is frustrating", "you're really wanting to win one of these", or "I wonder how long we'll have to keep at this to win".

There are many different ways to reframe or offer the possibility of another

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meaning or perception in our conversation (Eckles, 2007). Consider a young girl who has been at a new school for only a few weeks and seems despondent because of her lack of good friends. Any of these five ways to reframe meaning or perception might prove helpful:

1. Introduce new possibilities or alternatives (e.g. Up to this point you haven't had many good friends?, I wonder if it might just take some more time to make those friends?)
2. Assume positive intent (e.g. When you start making friends how are you going to treat them?)
3. Focus on what exists (e.g. Who are the people you can talk to no matter how your day is going?)
4. Anticipate success (e.g. It might be you haven't got to know the right people yet.)
5. Clarify goals (e.g. Are you saying you want some good friends?)

Reframing doesn't work when forced or constructed as if there is a right or wrong way to see a situation. It does work best in the context of a trusting exchange when we demonstrate to the young person our motive is one of caring and helpfulness.

When kids won't talk

We've all been there with a young person who won't say a word. Or when they do talk it is simply, "I don't know" or "I don't care" (which is usually "I don't know" in disguise). It's helpful to remem-ber a young person who is quiet or says these things may have been so rarely exposed to someone who wanted to listen and be helpful that they need time to process what they are thinking. So, try out some phrases like these to give them room to think:

- "In a few minutes I'm going to ask you about..."
- "Do you know what you want to say, but you're having trouble saying it?"
- "Mind if I take a guess? Let me know if I'm getting warm."

They may also need reassurance that we're not going to blame, threaten, or crit-icize them. Such reassurance can sound like: "I'm not saying you have to…", "I'm not mad.", "You're not in trouble." Show empathy, provide reassurance, and simply be curious about what they want to say. Don't rush the process and take the time needed for the young person to feel safe and open to communicating. The more experienced we become, the more comfortable we can become with the power of silence together.

Every opportunity

Every conversation, every exchange is an opportunity to contribute to the self-worth and growth of the other. How we approach and how we do what we do makes the difference between offering help and causing harm. Practicing and strengthening basic communication skills can help us remain open to their needs

and equip us to be more responsive to them.

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What have I been missing?

Rethinking the Way We Work with Adolescent Sexual Offenders: Building Relationships

Grant Charles

Introduction: The Program

I worked a number of years ago in an eight-bed residential, adolescent sex offender program in Canada. At that time it was one of the only residential programs in the country. As will be seen in the paper, it was also quite unique. This paper will explore the treatment of adolescent sex offenders through the use of relationship rather than the prescriptive, manualized model that is still too often used in residential adolescent sex offender programs. The following is a brief description of the formal interventions we used in the program at the time I worked there. It is important to note that I strongly believe that these interventions structures served to help focus our work. They were the vehicle for interaction rather the interaction itself. The interaction comes from the relationships we have with the young people (and others).

The average age of the young men in the program when I worked there was 15 years of age (Charles, Dale, & Collins, 1995). The average stay in the program was one year. Prior to coming to the program most of the young men had committed multiple sex offenses. Some had committed over 100 offenses. The

young people came to the program from across the country. When the young person came into the program an assessment phase took place. This time period, which was usually about a month in length, allowed the staff to assess whether the program was the appropriate place for the young person to stay for treatment. This phase was also used to help acquaint the young person with the program, the staff and other residents. The program therapist carried out a therapeutic assessment with the young person and available family members. This assessment involved individual and family interviews as well as having the young person complete some psychosexual testing material. The interviews involved the therapist obtaining, among other information, a beginning under- standing of the young person, their family context and dynamics, offense information, and feelings and attitudes toward treatment. The purpose of the assessment was to identify the young person and his family's needs and strengths and to use this information to plan treatment and aftercare goals with them.

Group therapy was a large part of the treatment program. A number of groups were held on a weekly basis. The groups were generally run by front-line staff and program therapists. The focus of the groups varied. Some focused on the offending behavior while others looked at more general relationship and emotional issues. The offending behavior groups involved inviting the young people to explore the cycle of their offenses along with ways to detour out of the offense

cycle. One group was devoted to looking at issues related to relapse prevention, which included not only behavioral strategies but also ways of improving emotional and relational health. A psycho-educational focus was used in a different group to challenge views that were abuse promoting. In this group the young people were also provided with information about the impact of abuse on victims. Healthy sexuality was also addressed in a group format. Additional informal groups focused on issues around the dynamics and relationships in the program and were called as needed by staff or the young people.

Another component of treatment was individual therapy. It was offered to help the young person address issues, such as aspects of their sexuality, which initially may have been too threatening to address on a group basis. Often young people worked on abandonment, victimization, trust, and family of origin issues. Family relationships were often sources of pain or confusion for the young people so they chose to talk about with their individual therapist. Work around managing and expressing feelings was dealt with as well.

Whenever possible, families were invited and encouraged to be part of the young person's treatment. This included family therapy. Families often used this time to address feelings and questions around the offense behavior. However, a number of other issues were also addressed relating to family relationships and past issues of familial abuse. The focus was on conflict resolution, building on family

strengths, feeling expression and developing ways to support the young person. Time was spent focusing on what the young person and family needed in order to prevent relapse and to assist the young person in re-integrating back into their family, where possible, and into their community.

Drama work was also done with the young people in the program. This group work was led by a community playwright in conjunction with front-line staff. The purpose of this group was to provide an avenue for the young people to express emotions appropriately, to explore their creativity and to deal with painful or challenging issues in a safe manner. The nature of the group also required the young people to act in cooperation and use problem-solving skills. The young people wrote their own scripts with assistance from the group leaders and then put on drama productions. The group met once a week for ten weeks concluding with a performance for parents, child welfare workers and other individuals of importance to the young people. Through this group the young men achieved a sense of accomplishment, mastery and esteem. In many cases we saw that the young men were more willing to engage in individual and group therapy after the competition of the theatre program.

We also provided massage therapy for the young men. This was, to the best of our knowledge, the first time this type of intervention had been used with young people who were sexually intrusive. The intervention was based on the premise

that most if not all of the young men in the program had themselves been sexually victimized often for an extended period of time. One of the consequences of their abuse was that they had no sense of anything other than 'sexualized' touch. Our belief was that if they could experience non-sexualized human touch that they would begin to find ways to get their needs met in a non-victimizing way. We hoped that is would help them learn that relationship was about more than 'sex'.

Based on this premise we began a series of massage therapy sessions with any of the young men who wanted to engage in it. We believed it was critical that they only took part in it if they wanted to take part in it. We did not want to recreate the dynamic that touch should be anything other than completely voluntary. Many of them had experienced involuntary touch and all had imposed it on others. With this in mind, students and their instructors from a local school of massage worked with the young men using a graduated touch method. A member of the program team was always present in the room. The touch tended to be around the shoulders. We were quite happy with the results in that many of the young men became more open in their individual therapy sessions regarding talking about their own victimization.

Apart from the drama work and the massage, the program was similar to other residential programs at the time in terms of the range of therapeutic options that were offered to the young people. We believed what was different about the

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program was how we conceptualized the work we were doing. The next section of this paper will provide a sense of how we interacted with the young men in relationship as well as the philosophic foundations of the program.

A Framework of Practice

Child and youth care workers like using definitions, or labels. Walk into most residential programs and you'll hear staff talking about the clinical descriptions of young people. We talk about the need not to label people yet we often do so. We know that labels describe clusters of behaviors rather than the actual person. We know this, yet we still use labels.

There are some positive reasons for using labels. They help us talk a common language. We think that the label gives us a common understanding about a young person. In some cases this is true. For example, when we use the word depression we can usually commonly visualize in our minds what this label means. This helps us develop a common response to the needs of the young person.

We are not always in agreement on the labels that we use as child and youth care workers. Some labels have different meanings to different people. Unfortunately even when we attach different meanings to the same label we think we are talking in a common meaning. This creates confusion both in our conversations with each other and in our interactions with young people. Nowhere is this more evident than in the use of the term 'sex offender'. The label it-

self is value laden. We often have a strong emotional response to the term. Some of us have an almost primal response to the label. We often think of sex offenders as violent crazed outcasts who lurk in the shadows of our world.

This is the view held by many people. It is a common view in our society (a lesser extent in our field) that sex offenders are animals and should be treated as such. We tend to develop programs for adolescent sex offenders that reflect this view. We disguise our response to these young people under a clinical mask yet our response is dictated by our belief that they are somehow less than human. We would never call these young people animals because child and youth care workers don't use such language. We hide our true feelings behind gentler sounding words, yet inside we still think of the young people as being less than human. We usually think of them as being the worst of the worst.

We often lock these young people up. Even in open programs we severely restrict their movements. If we don't actually put them in physical cages then we put them in metaphorical cages that set them apart from others. We set them apart from others as if their mere presence contaminates the rest of us. Of all the young people we work with these are often the ones most in need of our help. Yet they are the ones who receive the least services. They are the ones who are the most marginalized. They are also among the most needy of the young people we come into contact with in our work. Paradoxically, we reject those individuals from our

midst who most need to be brought into the fold if they are to change.

I have long thought that in our programs we are at risk of recreating the conditions that created the young people in the first place. Many of the programs focus upon control and punitive measures. The emphasis is usually upon the 'sex offender' and not the young person as a whole. The belief seems to be if you can correct the sex offender's wrong thinking than their behavior will change. However, it seems to be a commonly held belief that even with the best of treatment they will always be dangerous and that once a sex offender always a sex offender.

This just doesn't make sense. By far the majority of the adolescent sex offenders we worked with responded well to treatment (Charles, Dale, & Collins, 1995). With the proper assistance and a supportive program these young people find more appropriate ways of getting their needs met. Most of the young people begin to make healthy connections with other people. Most are capable of integrating back into their communities. The key is to treat the young people like humans, not dangerous animals.

Defining terms

One of the first tasks when the program was established was for the staff to develop a commonly held definition of what constituted sex offending. This was much more difficult than was initially anticipated. Indeed, it took a number of years to complete this task. Initially, the definition reflected the views put forth by the criminal justice system. That is that a sex offense is a crime. Sex offending is, of course, a crime. However, we found the definition under our criminal code to be too static to be helpful from a treatment perspective. We needed a definition that would help the young men move toward developing healthy relationships rather than just stop committing a series of outlawed behaviors. As such we began to discuss the young men's behavior in terms of appropriate versus inappropriate sexuality. This seemed to us to be a critical step in determining how we would interact with the young men.

We initially tried to develop a simple, one statement-fits-all kind of definition about what makes sexuality appropriate versus inappropriate. However, it proved too difficult of a task to develop an all-encompassing, simple statement. We found that a more detailed framework allowed for a more experiential view of sexuality. One needs to consider the dynamics of a situation rather than hoping to slot behavior into static definitions. Sanders (1996), the program's psychiatric consultant at the time, proposed a framework that we found to be very useful to guide our thoughts about what was appropriate sexuality, and to provide part of the basis for treatment with adolescents who have sexually offended. He suggested the following five words and the corresponding dynamics be used to understand healthy sexuality. The five words are: volition, mutuality, arousal, vulnerability, and trust.

The first word, volition, refers to both people in the sexual encounter having

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made a free choice to be sexually involved in the activity. Mutuality involves both people having an understanding of what each of them intends from the experience. When both people are aroused physically and emotionally this tends to mean that they do not need to worry about the other's arousal as the arousal of each person feeds off that of the other. The fourth aspect of healthy sexuality involves both people feeling free to be physically and emotionally vulnerable and open. Lastly, we consider trust to be part of healthy sexuality. This ties in closely with the idea of vulnerability. One needs to trust that the other partner will not betray, make fun of, or in some way respond in a diminishing manner to one's openness and vulnerability.

These five words were put into three groups to further understand them. Volition and mutuality together speak to people acting with *loving responsibility*. This is responsibility that ensures both oneself and the other person are making mutual, free choices about their involvement. Secondly, arousal is in a group of its own where the arousal of each person indicates a sense of *selfullness*. Selfullness is in contrast to selfishness, as the former refers to taking personal responsibility for one's arousal and allowing oneself to fully feel it, which in turn can heighten the other's arousal. Selfishness means that a person is achieving their own sexual arousal at the expense of the other. The third group involves vulnerability and trust under the heading of *loving intimacy*. Trust and intimacy need to occur in order for there to

be loving intimacy between two people who are involved sexually.

Some people would have liked to add some extra words, such as romantic love and commitment, to this framework. If these extra aspects were present in a sexual encounter the experience would likely be pleasurably heightened even more. However, while these extra aspects would add to a sexual experience they are not necessary in order for the experience to be respectful, enjoyable and healthy.

Appropriate sexuality

This framework of the five words and three groupings helped us to look at the appropriateness of sexuality. When applied to 'real life situations' the application of the framework becomes even clearer. Let's take the example of a person who trades sex for a place to sleep. In this instance, both people have made a choice about engaging in an act. However, they do not share mutual experiences or intentions, or arousal, or vulnerability in their interaction. In the example of an adolescent who sexually assaults another person, none of the five words are applicable. There is not mutual choice or experience. Arousal is not the same for both persons and there is obviously not openness and trust.

We found that the young people we worked with most desired, and were even desperate for the sense of connection and pleasure that a sexual experience with these five conditions would bring. However, for many reasons, they focused on the sexual behavior itself thinking that this enactment would bring them what they

wanted. They exploited others in a sexual manner. Yet as part of treatment it was critical to assist the young people with understanding that specific sexual behaviors are not what make up sexuality. Following from this is the understanding that sexual assault isn't about sex, it is about assault. The young people thought that because they were doing a sexual act during their assault that they were therefore having sex. This is of course not the case, so this understanding was critical in order to begin to guide the young people toward an understanding of what sexuality is truly about and what it involves. This is where the five conditions come into play.

In teachable moments, in conversations, in individual and group therapy we used the framework and its five conditions. While we didn't always necessarily use the specific words, we spoke of the dynamics around each of the words and tailored the language to the young person as needed. These discussions allowed for the young people to have a clear idea of where they were headed. The framework provided a place to grow toward rather than just expecting the young people not to commit sexual offenses anymore.

Hierarchy of abuse?

There is no doubt that it is very hard to work with adolescent sex offenders. However, a large part of the difficulty is the way in which we see these young men. Many of us have stereotypical views of sex offenders. We see them as monsters and deviants who are beyond help. We create

an image of them as untreatable and then treat them as such.

This is not really surprising. Collectively we do not know much about the dynamics of sex offending. However, we do know quite a bit about the suffering caused by offenders. As such it is easy to come to the conclusion that the young men who offend are somehow beyond the pale of human experience. It is much easier to reject what we don't understand.

This view of adolescent offenders is compounded by the way many of us perceive abuse. It seems that many of our colleagues have developed what can be labeled as a hierarchy of abuse. In this hierarchy there are different levels of abuse. These levels range from emotional to physical to sexual abuse. Emotional abuse is seen as the least detrimental while sexual abuse is seen as the most harmful. This is a clear-cut model for determining the impact of abuse. It is simple and easy to understand. It is also incorrect.

There is no hierarchy of abuse. We worked with the belief that abuse is subjective. Every person who is abused subjectively interprets the experience. What is devastating to one person can have much less of an impact on another person. We worked with young people who had been almost destroyed by the experiences of emotional abuse. We also worked with young people who had been horrifically sexually abused yet who have come through the experience relatively intact.

Abuse isn't hierarchical by the type of act committed. In this sense there is no

need to see sex offenders as being any different than other kids who bully or batter. Adolescent sex offenders can be difficult to work with but in many ways no more difficult than the many other young people who end up in our care.

Victims and offenders

These kids are not monsters. They are extremely needy young people who have not yet learned how to make appropriate connections with other people. They are often victims of abuse who have learned through their own victimization that it is okay to use others to meet their own needs. They are kids who have taken a different path to deal with their own victimization.

If these young people are seen as victims as well as offenders then treatment becomes easier. Child and youth care workers have lots of experience working successfully with victims. We know how to set up effective programs for victims. The basic premises for these programs are really no different than what is needed in an effective program for adolescent sex offenders. Solid child and youth care practice works well with all populations.

This is not meant to downplay the seriousness of the abusive behavior of these young men. However, you can't successfully treat them if all your attention is on stopping the offending behavior. We believe that the best way to stop the abusive behavior is to help the young people to learn healthier behavior.

Thought and action

One of the central premises of the program was that thought is not the same as action. While this may appear self-evident, the traditional view in sex offense treatment is that having a thought highly increases the chance of, or necessarily leads to, acting on the thought. However in our experience in the program this was not the case. The traditional idea that thought leads to action is disempowering. This can lead one to giving up to some extent because if one has a thought about sexual offending supposedly this means that the person will carry it out. Instead of reinforcing this belief, we worked to support the adolescents in their understanding that although they might have had thoughts that would have been inappropriate if acted on, they had the power and choice not to act on the thoughts. So the focus shifted from trying to change the thoughts to inviting the young people to find appropriate ways to handle their thoughts and act respectfully.

Following this first premise is another which indicates the belief that self-stimulation (masturbation) is healthy. Again, a traditional view of sex offense treatment might not support this belief. However, we approached this premise from the stance of encouraging young people to be responsible for their own sexual feelings. Instead of trying to deny and blunt sexual feelings as part of treatment, we wanted to teach the young people to learn how to respond appropriately to their own sexual urges. Rather that forcing themselves on others, we wanted them to have a way to

take ownership for their feelings and urges in private.

Another important aspect was the teaching of healthy sexuality. For many of the young people we worked with, the boundaries between what was sexually appropriate and inappropriate had become blurred as a result of their own experiences of abuse. They also confused any genital activity with sex instead of seeing that sexual assault is not about sex. Rather, it is about assault.

Many of the boys had definite but limited ideas about the definition of violence. They tended to see violence in only its extreme forms and often had not have regarded more subtle actions as being violent. For instance, they might not have seen aggressive language or diminishing views of others as a form of violence. To them, only fights resulting in physical injury were seen as violence. We invited them to see that violence is defined by the experiential. The experience of the other is what matters. This focus on the experience of people in relation to others encouraged empathy and taking the perspective of another. This is an important component of sex offense treatment. This premise also helped to create respect of differences within the milieu (i.e., orientation, ethnicity).

Feeling safe or unsafe

Following the idea that violence is defined by the experiential is that the adolescents needed to experience safety in the program. This safety was obviously needed for general well-being and health

and also in order for the young people to address the painful and difficult issues in their lives. When a young person was feeling unsafe it was often related to rejecting views and attitudes from others with respect to a difference (i.e., orientation, ethnicity, physical appearance). These disrespectful actions and attitudes needed to be addressed in the context of violence being defined by experience and encouraging the young people into a stance of respect and responsibility for their actions.

Many of the young people in the program had experienced profound loneliness and disconnection. They desired to have safe intimacy with meaningful others. Yet due to their own traumatic past experiences, they did not know how to meet this need appropriately. Within the milieu we tried to ensure that there was safety and acceptance leading to care and appropriate intimacy. A large part of treatment involved helping the young people become familiar with and create healthy relationships and intimacy.

Separation of behaviour and the person

A common premise we held was the separation of the behavior from the person. This meant we needed to look at having clear consequences for inappropriate behavior set out ahead of time. By having consequences set beforehand, the young people were less likely to see consequences as punishing. This opened up space for the young person to still feel val-

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ued while the behavior was seen as inappropriate.

Along with this premise was another seemingly simple yet extremely effective premise of noticing positive aspects, intent and behaviors of young people rather than focusing on the negative. Sometimes it can be easy to slip into negative noticing. However, we found that negative noticing often lead to more of the unwanted behavior while positive noticing increased times of positive behavior and experience. Positive noticing involved shifting our perspective to look for the positive aspects in a difficult situation. It also involves keeping ourselves open to seeing and commenting on positive moments and actions, no matter how small they may seem.

Lastly, we needed to keep in mind the influence of the larger systems that the young person was involved in on them. This meant that during treatment the inclusion of family members, child protection workers, probation workers, as well as others, was vital. Without the involvement of the larger systems, treatment gains can unravel once a young person leaves the program. Larger systems and families need to be part of the changes. It was also critical that they saw the changes and growth young people made in order for healthy behaviors to continue after treatment. If a young person went back to a system that still expected him to act sexually inappropriately, was disbelieving of the growth of the adolescent, and was unaware of what he needed to maintain emotional and behavioral health, he was a set up for relapse into inappropriate behavior. Larger system

awareness also involved helping the young person during treatment to connect with services, people and communities that were vital to their continued growth and health.

Reasons for offending

Probably the most important dynamic to be aware of when working with adolescent sex offenders is the diversity of the young people (Cashwell & Caruso, 1997; Charles & MacDonald, 1996). They are not a homogenous population. There are many manifestations of sexually intrusive behavior. There are also many different reasons why people offend. These have to be kept in mind when interacting in a therapeutic milieu. Lumping the young people together as sex offenders without acknowledging the differences is counterproductive.

The type of sexually intrusive behavior exhibited by these young men varies a great deal (Charles, Dale, & Collins, 1995). The most common is fondling, however it ranges from obscene phone calls to rape. Some young people commit one or two offenses while others will offend hundreds of times. Most adolescent offenders usually have one or two victims. These victims are usually chosen from among family members or people in near proximity. Other offenders assault strangers although this is less common.

Adult offenders tend to have victims of choice such as a preference for a particular age and/or gender. Adolescent offenders are less likely to be as selective (Edwards & Beech, 2004). There are exceptions to this, but the ages and gender

of their victims were often not yet fixated. The young men we worked with were more likely to have been opportunistic offenders (Charles, Dale, & Collins, 1995). They victimized the people they could access. However, most victimized people younger than themselves.

The majority of the young men we worked with tended to be 'seductive' rather than violent offenders. They selected vulnerable and needy children, befriended them and then assaulted them. The assaults usually progressed over time from fondling to penetration. Not all of the victims saw themselves as victims. Some 'consented' (for lack of a better word) to the activity as part of the price of the so-called 'friendship'. This helped the offender rationalize that there was nothing wrong with what they were doing.

The reasons for offending often vary a great deal. It is a common belief in the human services that most offenders engage in sexually intrusive behavior because of a need to have power and control over other people. The reasons people offend are more complex. We did not deny that the need for a sense of power and control was the reason why some people offend. However, there are other reasons for why these young men offended. This included reasons behind the need for power and control.

Many of the young men we worked with were lonely, vulnerable and socially isolated individuals. For them sex offending was a way (however inappropriate) of trying to reach out to other people. They chose people younger than them because

they lacked the skills to have appropriate relationships with people their own age. For these young people the offending was about fulfilling a need to attach to another human being.

Other kids offended as a way of gaining control over their own abuse. These young men were repeating what happened to them when they were younger. This form of undoing their experience of abuse was often very ritualized and compulsive in nature. These kids often talked about feeling that they did not have any control over what they are doing.

We worked with other kids who seemed to really believe that they were doing nothing wrong. Many of these young men often grew up in sexualized environments where they were victimized by numerous other people. Sexual victimization was a 'normal' part of their lives. They were simply engaging in what they were taught to believe was appropriate behavior.

Confrontation

There are many additional reasons why people offend. The important point is that the reasons are complex and need to be treated as such in the residential milieu. The milieu needs to be flexible in order to accommodate the many needs of the young people. A rigid program that tries to fit all the young people into a 'power and control' box is doomed to failure. Confrontation is a key component in sex offender treatment. It is the process of immediately challenging inappropriate behaviors shown by a young person. For

example, if John grabs Bob, the staff confront John on his aggressive behavior. Traditionally this confrontation has been used as a means by which staff exert their power over the young person. This type of confrontation is often loud and aggressive (and unsuccessful). We called this 'penis whacking' confrontation because of the 'in your face' and aggressive style that some think is needed in sex offender treatment. This may work (although we didn't think so) with 'power and control' offenders but we think it misses the point. It teaches the young people that you get what you want by being the most powerful one which only reinforces their offense-type behavior.

Confrontation should be used as a means of teaching appropriate behaviors. It is a powerful 'life space' intervention. In the case we mentioned the staff can help John learn other ways of dealing with anger or frustration. The moment can be used to help Bob to learn how to protect himself against victimization.

Conclusion

In many ways the young men we worked with were complex kids. Yet working with them did not have to be difficult. Like all kids, they needed opportunities to learn, to be respected and to grow. The key to all of the interventions was helping the young people to learn about respect. They needed to learn how to respect themselves as well as other people. Every intervention needed to take this into account.

We believed that the most powerful and influential work with these young people occurs in the milieu. Therapy is an adjunct. It provides important education and opportunities for self-awareness but the day-to-day modeling, support and teaching moments that happen within the daily lives of the young people is often where the real change occurs. At the core of all of our interactions was the belief that relationship was the key to change.

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GRIT
A Skeptical Look at the Latest Educational Fad

Alfie Kohn

This article is adapted from [The Myth of the Spoiled Child](),
which contains references to the relevant research.

A new idea is hatched; it begins to spread; it catches on; it inspires a flurry of books and articles, conferences and seminars. And then it fades away. In the last couple of decades, this cycle has played out many times in our field. Yet no matter how many iterations we witness, it can be hard to recognize that the pattern applies to whatever idea is currently stirring up excitement — or to understand the limits of that idea.

Consider the current buzz about self-regulation: teaching students to exercise self-discipline and self-control, to defer gratification and acquire "grit." To discipline children is to compel them to do what we want. But because we can't always be there to hand out rewards or punishments as their behavior merits, some dream of figuring out a way to equip each child with a "built-in supervisor" (as two social scientists once put it) so he or she will follow the rules and keep working even when we're not around. The most expedient arrangement for us, the people with the power, is to get children to discipline themselves — in other words, to be *self-disciplined*.

Proponents of this idea like to point out that cognitive ability isn't the only factor that determines how children will fare in school and in life. That recognition got a boost with science writer Dan Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* in 1996, which discussed the importance of self-awareness, altruism, personal motivation, empathy, and the ability to love and be loved. But a funny thing has happened to the message since then. When you hear about the limits of IQ these days, it's usu-

ally in the context of a conservative narrative that emphasizes not altruism or empathy but a recycled version of the Protestant work ethic. The goal is to make sure kids will resist temptation, override their unconstructive impulses, put off doing what they enjoy in order to grind through whatever they've been told to do — and keep at it for as long as it takes.

Emblematic of this shift is Paul Tough's 2012 book *How Children Succeed,* which opens with a declaration that what matters most for children are qualities like "persistence, self-control, curiosity, conscientiousness, grit, and self-confidence." But that's the last time the reader hears about curiosity or self-confidence. Neither of those words even appears in his index. By contrast, there are lengthy entries for "self-control" and "grit," which occupy Tough for much of the book.

"Grit" — the sort of self-discipline that's required to make people persist at something over a long period of time — was popularized by Angela Duckworth, a University of Pennsylvania researcher, and the idea has met with mostly uncritical acclaim in our field. In fact, it's treated as a fresh insight even though basically the same message has been drummed into us by Aesop's fables, Benjamin Franklin's aphorisms, and Christian denunciations of sloth.

Make no mistake: Duckworth is *selling* grit, not dispassionately investigating its effects. "As educators and parents," she and her colleagues wrote in her very first paper on the topic, "we should encourage children to work not only with intensity

but also with stamina." She acknowledges that "grittier individuals, by staying the course, may sometimes miss out on new opportunities." But she doesn't see this as a problem. In fact, grit *means* doing "a particular thing in life and choos[ing] to give up a lot of other things in order to do it." For example, she has no use for children who experiment with several musical instruments. "The kid who sticks with one instrument is demonstrating grit," she says. "Maybe it's more fun to try something new, but high levels of achievement require a certain single-mindedness."

This is our first clue that Duckworth's recommendations emerge not from evidence but from her personal belief that people should spend their time trying to improve at one thing rather than exploring, and becoming reasonably competent at, several things. If you happen to favor breadth and variety, Duckworth offers no reason why you should accept her preference for a life of specialization – or for the idea of grit, which is rooted in that preference.

And I think there are several other reasons why the idea merits our skepticism. First, while we're encouraged to see grit, *per se,* as desirable, not everything is *worth* doing, let alone doing for extended periods. The amorality of the concept enables the immorality of some individuals who exemplify it. This would be a better world if people who were up to no good had *less* grit. To that extent, persistence is really just one of many attributes that can be useful for reaching a (good or bad) out-

come, so it's the choice of goal that ought to come first and count more.

Second, as with self-control more generally, grit can sometimes be inappropriate and unhealthy — even if the activity *isn't* morally objectionable. I'm not denying that it sometimes pays to stick with something over the long haul; few of us want to see our students throw in the towel at the first sign of difficulty. But there are many occasions on which it doesn't make sense to persist with a problem that resists solution, to continue at a task that no longer provides satisfaction. When people *do* keep going under these conditions, they may be displaying a refusal to disengage that's both counterproductive (in terms of outcome) and pathological (in terms of motivation).

Anyone who talks about grit as an unalloyed good may need to be reminded of the proverbial Law of Holes: When you're in one, stop digging. Gritty people sometimes exhibit "nonproductive persistence"; they try, try again even though the result may be either unremitting failure or "a costly or inefficient success that could have been easily surpassed by alternative courses of action," as one group of psychologists explained. And the benefits of knowing when *not* to persist extend to the effects on the individual. Following a year-long study of adolescents, Canadian researchers Gregory Miller and Carsten Wrosch concluded that those "who can disengage from unattainable goals enjoy better well-being … and experience fewer symptoms of everyday illness."

Just as the *effects* of displaying unqualified grit may not always be optimal, the *motives* for doing so raise important psychological questions. A theorist who is focused only on measurable behaviors won't bother to ask whether a student who persists does so because she loves what she's doing or because of a desperate (and anxiety-provoking) need to prove her competence. As long as she doesn't give up, we're supposed to nod our approval. (Interestingly, people who are passionate about what they're doing tend to need a lot less self-discipline to stick with it.)

To know when to pull the plug requires the capacity to adopt a long-term perspective as well as a measure of gumption. Because continuing to do what one has been doing often represents the path of least resistance, it can take guts to cut one's losses and say ¡Basta! And that's as important a message to teach our students as the usefulness of perseverance. Or, to put it differently, what counts is the capacity to *decide* whether and when to persevere — or to exercise self-control, which can also be maladaptive in some circumstances. That's very different from the message that perseverance or self-regulation is valuable in itself.

* * *

The main rationale for teaching children to be gritty is to promote academic achievement. That sounds like a worthy goal, but take a moment to reflect on other possible goals one might have — for example, helping them to lead a life that's

happy and fulfilling, morally admirable, creative, or characterized by psychological health. Any of those objectives would almost certainly lead to prescriptions quite different from "Do one thing and keep at it."

Moreover, if you look closely at Duckworth's research, the benefits she claims to have demonstrated turn out to be either circular or simply dubious. In one of her studies, she found that freshman cadets at West Point who scored high on her grit questionnaire ("I finish whatever I begin") were less likely to quit during the grueling summer training program. But what does that prove, other than that people who are persistent persist?

Another pair of studies looked at an elite group of middle schoolers who qualified for the National Spelling Bee. Duckworth reported that they performed better in that competition if they were higher in grit, "whereas spellers higher in openness to experience — defined as preferring using their imagination, playing with ideas, and otherwise enjoying a complex mental life — perform[ed] worse." She also found that the most effective preparation strategy was "solitary deliberate practice activities" rather than, say, reading books.

What's striking here aren't the findings themselves but the lesson Duckworth seems to derive from them. If enjoying a complex mental life (or reading for pleasure) interferes with performance in a one-shot contest to see who can spell more obscure words correctly — and if sufficient grittiness to spend time alone memorizing lists of words helps to achieve that goal — this is regarded as an argument in favor of grit. Presumably it also argues against having a complex mental life or engaging in "leisure reading."

(Ironically, even if we were interested in how well kids can spell — by which I mean (a) most kids, not just champion spellers, and (b) as judged by their actual writing rather than in the contrived format of a spelling bee — other research has found that reading, apart from its other benefits, is actually more effective than drill and practice. But to at least some proponents of grit, reading is less onerous, demands less self-discipline, and is therefore less admirable.)

The relevant issue again has more to do with ends than means. How important is it that kids who are exceptionally good spellers win more championships? Should we favor any strategy or personality feature that contributes to that objective — or to anything that could be described as "higher achievement" — regardless of what it involves and what it displaces?

Duckworth is particularly interested to show that self-discipline and grit produce better grades. Her very first experiment found that teachers gave more A's to students who tended to put off doing what they enjoy until they finished their homework. But suppose the students with the best grades were those who nodded and smiled at everything their teacher said. Would that argue for encouraging kids to become more obsequious? Or what if self-discipline on the part of adults was associated with more positive evaluations

from their supervisors at work? We'd have to conclude that employees who did what their bosses wanted, regardless of whether it was satisfying or sensible, elicited a favorable verdict from those same bosses. But so what?

Good grades, in other words, are often just a sign of approval by the person with the power in a classroom. And even when they serve other functions, grades suffer from low levels of validity and reliability. Moreover, students who pursue higher grades tend to be less interested in what they're learning, more likely to think in a superficial fashion (and less likely to retain information), and inclined to prefer the easiest possible task whenever they have a choice — because the goal isn't to explore ideas but to do whatever is necessary to snag the A. Those who snag a lot of them seem, on average, to be overly conformist and not particularly creative.* So if students who are more self-disciplined or persistent get higher grades, that doesn't make a case for grit so much as it points up the limitations of grades as an outcome measure.

* * *

Social psychologists sometimes use the term "fundamental attribution error" to describe a tendency to pay so much attention to character, personality, and individual responsibility that we overlook how profoundly the social environment affects what we do and who we are. This error has political implications: The more we focus on people's persistence (or self-discipline more generally), the less likely we'll be to question larger policies and institutions. Consider Paul Tough's declaration that "there is no antipoverty tool we can provide for disadvantaged young people that will be more valuable than the character strengths…[such as] conscientiousness, grit, resilience, perseverance, and optimism." Whose interests are served by the astonishing position that "no antipoverty tool" — presumably including Medicaid and public housing — is more valuable than an effort to train poor kids to persist at whatever they've been told to do?

The eagerness among educators to embrace concepts like grit and self-regulation can also be understood as an example of the fundamental attribution error. Driving the study of student performance conducted by Duckworth and her mentor

* For evidence, we need look no further than research Duckworth herself cites to prove that self-discipline predicts academic performance. One such study found that such performance "seemed as much a function of attention to details and the rules of the academic game as it was of intellectual talent." High-achieving students "were not particularly interested in ideas or in cultural or aesthetic pursuits. Moreover, they were not particularly tolerant or empathic; however, they did seem stable, pragmatic, and task-oriented, and lived in harmony with the rules and conventions of society. Finally, relative to students in general, these superior achievers seemed somewhat stodgy and unoriginal."

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Martin Seligman, for example, was their belief that underachievement *isn't* explained by structural factors — social, economic, or even educational. Rather, they insisted it should be attributed to the students themselves and their "failure to exercise self-discipline." *The entire conceptual edifice of grit is constructed on that individualistic premise*, one that remains popular for ideological reasons even though it's been repeatedly debunked by research.

When students are tripped up by challenges, they may respond by tuning out, acting out, or dropping out. Often, however, they do so not because of a defect in their makeup (lack of stick-to-itiveness) but because of what and how they were taught. Perhaps those challenges — what they were asked to do — weren't particularly engaging or relevant. Finger-wagging adults who exhort children to do their best sometimes don't offer a persuasive reason for why a given task should be done at all, let alone done well. And when students throw up their hands after failing at something they were asked to do, it may be less because they lack grit than because they weren't really "asked" to do it — they were told to do it. They had nothing to say about the content or context of the curriculum. And people of all ages are more likely to persevere when they have a chance to make decisions about the things that affect them.

The most impressive educational activists are those who struggle to replace a system geared to memorizing facts and taking tests with one dedicated to exploring ideas. They're committed to a collaborative approach to schooling that learners will find more engaging. By contrast, those enamored of grit look at the same status quo and ask: How can we get kids to put up with it?

Duckworth has insisted that grit allows people to meet their own goals, but the focus of her research, particularly with children, is on compliance: how to make students pay "attention to a teacher rather than daydreaming," persist "on long-term assignments despite boredom and frustration," choose "homework over TV," and "behav[e] properly in class." In her recent research, she created a task that's deliberately boring, the point being to devise strategies so students will resist the temptation to do something more interesting instead.

This is the mindset that underlies the campaign for grit and self-discipline, even if it isn't always spelled out. Which is why it's critical that those of us who don't share Duckworth's values — and are committed to changing the system rather than just making kids adapt to it — maintain a healthy skepticism about that campaign. While we're at it, we might bring that same skepticism to bear when the next bandwagon rolls through town.

A pal of mine is in big trouble. I mean B-I-G trouble, with a capital T and that rhymes with C and that stands for couch - which is where he's spent the past few nights.

See, he had a memory lapse. Just a little slip, he says, in his own defense. He got his days mixed up. His wife's birthday was last Sunday and he thought it was ... well, in February. So he kinda sorta ... missed it.

Oops.

So his wife is kinda sorta mad at him, which happens from time to time in any relationship. But my buddy went and dug himself in deeper. He was sitting around the office and happened to mention his little faux pas to a bunch of the women he works with ... and now none of them will have anything to do with him either.

This turn of events completely baffled my buddy. He came to me for an explanation, like I know the first thing about women. But in this one instance I was able to help him out.

I explained it to him this way: all the women he works with are married, which means they all have husbands. Most of them have kids, too. These women have mothers and fathers, and sisters and brothers ... and all these people have birthdays and anniversaries. That's a lot of dates to remember. But here's the thing: once these women got married, they suddenly found themselves with a whole whack of in-laws - their various husbands' equally various mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, and whatnots. And all of them have birthdays and anniversaries.

And guess who has to keep all these dates straight - make sure cards and presents get sent, phone calls get made, best wishes or congratulations or deepest sympathies get conveyed?

Well, that's a rhetorical question. There's no guessing at all. Invariably, it seems to fall to the women. I don't know why this is, but ask any woman, it just is. Maybe there's some fine print in the marriage vows, something like "love, honour, cherish, and keep track of family dates". I don't know. But of all the couples I know, I can't think of one where the guy can rattle off his own childrens' birthdays without stopping to think - let alone the birthdays of his nieces and nephews. But if I ask my wife what her older sister's second child's birthday is, she'll have the answer before the question is out of my mouth.

"Well," I said to my buddy, "All those

Mr. Birthday Forgetter

Nils Ling

women have to remember all those dates - and they look at you and think "The only thing you have to remember is your wife's birthday. That's it, that's all. Okay, maybe your anniversary, and Valentine's Day would be nice. But her birthday for sure - and really - is that so very much to ask?"

(That's another rhetorical question, by the way - just in case any guys out there were giving it some thought.)

So my buddy was feeling the wrath of women acting in solidarity with a sister who had been wronged. He would have been better off had he kept his mouth shut, but he didn't. And now he wanted to know how to get out of the hole he had dug.

In this regard, I couldn't help him much. I had to tell him the truth - that for the rest of his life, no matter how virtuous and sweet he may be, he will always have this horrible blemish on his record. And even if years go by, and the whole incident blows over, it will be there, hanging over his head, like one of those great huge cartoon   s afes the coyote used to suspend over the canyon to try and get the Roadrunner.

And one day, in the middle of a gentle disagreement about something entirely un-connected with birthdays ... KA-BOOM! She'll drop the safe on his head and he'll be as flat as a pancake. "Oh, sure, easy to say it's my turn to do the dishes. We all know how good your memory is, don't we, Mr. ... Birthday Forgetter?" Game, set, and match, pal. Or as the Roadrunner would put it: "Beep beep".

I can hear all the women saying "Rightly so." And I can hear all the men saying "There, but for the Grace of God, go I."

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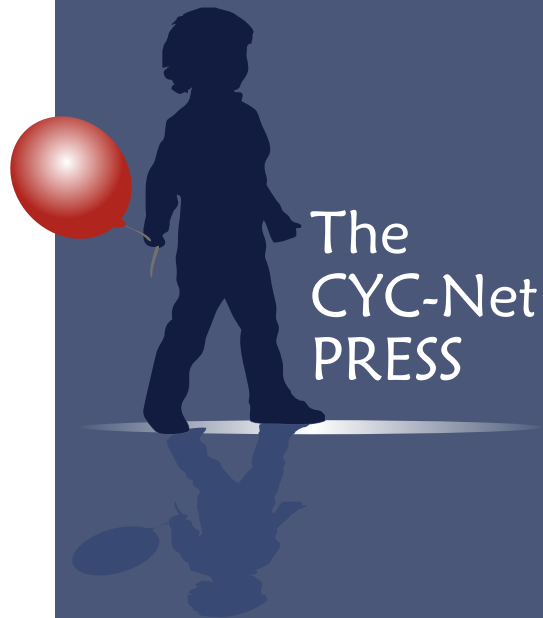
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Postcard from

Leon Fulcher

MAY 2015

Kia Ora and Greetings Everyone! We have just celebrated ANZAC Day here in our part of the South Pacific. The Australia and New Zealand Army Corps was formed in 1914 and were sent to Egypt as part of the World War I Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to prepare for an assault on Germany's Southern Allies, the Ottoman Empire centred around Constantinople or today's Istanbul.

Waiuku primary school children pay respect for ancestors who fell 100 years ago

Allied and ANZAC Forces landed in the wrong place on the Galipoli Peninsula and during the futile 8-month battle that ensued, more than 130,000 young men were killed – 87,000 Ottoman soldiers defending their homeland and 44,000 Allied soldiers of whom 8700 were Australians and 2779 New Zealanders, along with British and French forces, and a Canadian squad of Newfoundlanders.
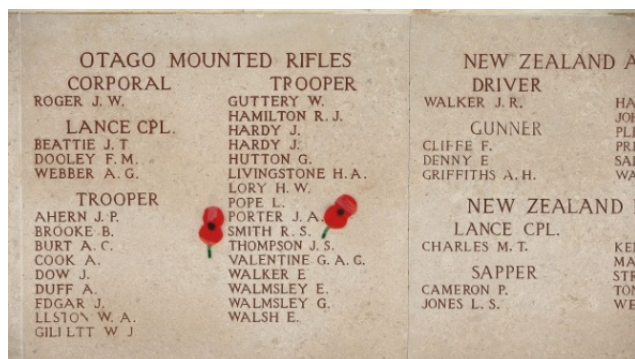
Names of New Zealanders' inscribed on the Chunuk Bair Memorial at Gallipoli

Young men from New Zealand villages, farming hamlets and towns moved in droves to enlistment offices to 'sign up' for this OE (Overseas Experience) of Life Time – if they lived to return home. The war that ended all wars was to have been wrapped up in months. It is very difficult to fathom the impact on families living in small villages and communities in the South Pacific when all but one of the brothers in large families marched off to war in what they believed was defending the Empire. Some went off to war having never experienced Winter conditions and many died of pneumonia. Major Flu and

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Measles epidemics wiped out a huge part of the World's population in 1918.

A Child Remembering with Family at the Chunuk Bair Memorial, Gallipoli

One out of five young New Zealand men who landed at Galipoli died there, while two in five returned home wounded. After surviving a sea landing at the bottom of cliffs guarded by machine guns, New Zealand ANZACs were centrally involved in taking Chunuk Bair, a key hilltop on the Galipoli Peninsula, holding it for several days and then retreating back to the sea.

The main problems faced by the young men at Galipoli were sickness and disease because of inadequate sanitation, unburied bodies and swarms of flies. Young Ottoman soldiers fortified trenches fewer than five metres away from young Allied soldiers. There was even a point in the 8-month Galipoli campaign where both Ottoman and Allied forces to clear fallen comrades from the battlefield and bury

them before resuming combatant readiness the following day.

Young ANZAC men who survived Galipoli moved on to the Western Front where thousands more died in trench warfare during the Battle of the Somme. The carnage of war wiped out a substantial portion of a whole generation of 16-21 year-old youths.

Postcard commemorating the Te Awamutu, North Island ANZAC Service

ANZAC Day is viewed as a time when a national identity formed. Contemporary New Zealand youths remember because it is part of who they are. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, served as a divisional commander at Gallipoli and went on to become the first president of modern Turkey. His
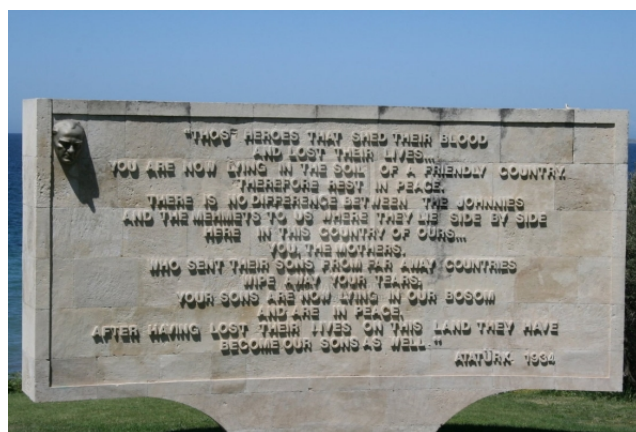
ANZAC Day wreath laying service at the Cenotaph, Wellington

Miss Lucy all ready for Dunedin's Dawn Parade

Ataturk's 1934 speech to the family members of fallen ANZAC soldiers

words on memorials at Galipoli, Wellingon and Canberra read: Those heroes who shed their blood and lost their lives, you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side in this country of ours. You, the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries wipe away your tears, your sons are now lying in our bosoms and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they become our sons as well.

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EndNotes

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

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

"It's better to die laughing than to live each moment in fear."
— **Michael Crichton**

"You don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing."
— **Michael Pritchard**

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

"You could pretend at anytime, but please not when laughing."
— **Toba Beta,** *Master of Stupidity*

"Something can be humorous without being funny. The difference is when it's humorous, a person says, "That's funny," and when it's funny, a person can't say anything because they're too busy laughing."
— **Jarod Kintz,** *This is the best book I've ever written, and it still sucks*

"The human race has only one really effective weapon and that is laughter."
— **Mark Twain**

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

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

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

"Life is too important to take seriously."
— **Corky Siegel**

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"He didn't laugh when he thought something was funny — he laughed when he was happy."
— **Rainbow Rowell**, *Landline*

"Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."
— **Victor Borge**

"Happiness is laughing together..."
— **Orhan Pamuk**, *The Innocence of Objects*

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

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

"If fate doesn't make you laugh, you just don't get the joke."
— **Gregory David Roberts**

"It is the test of a good religion whether you can joke about it."
— **G.K. Chesterton**

"Not being funny doesn't make you a bad person. Not having a sense of humor does."
— **David Rakoff**, *Fraud: Essays*

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

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

"Life is too important to take seriously."
— **Corky Siegel**

"I thought maybe she was trying to be funny but then realized this was impossible to do without a sense of humor."
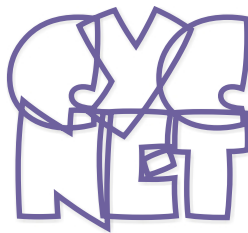— **Chelsea Handler**, *My Horizontal Life*

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