

CYC-Online



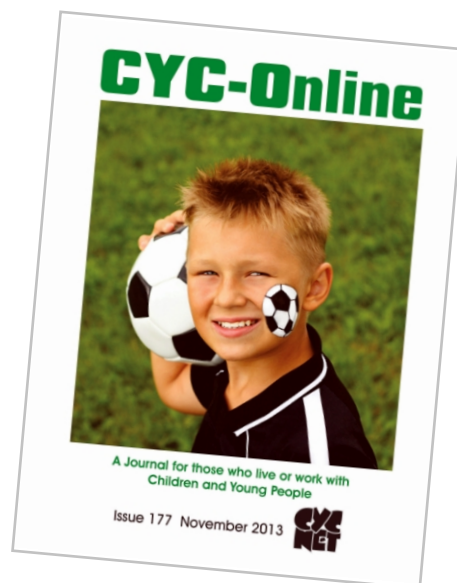
**A Journal for those who live or work with
Children and Young People**

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Pausing to Appreciate

Time to start planning for **International CYC Week!**

This is our one opportunity each year to globally celebrate together – to join across teams, programs and nations to recognise the special features of this field which is so much about connectedness and relationship.

So, what can you do during International CYC Week to recognise the field and the people who work in it?

These kinds of moments are important. In everyone's busy world we often forget to do this – pause and appreciate. It is true for kids, true for families and true for us. It is easy to get bogged down in the quagmire of the everyday; easy to focus on the struggles; easy to miss the good things. We do it all the time, often without even noticing that's what we are doing.

Okay. I know it is months away – not until the 1st week of May actually — but I was thinking that if 'we' started thinking now, what a wonderful week it could be! That's what we are doing here at CYC-Net.

And we are doing it early because we were thinking maybe we could do something different this coming year and we want your input.

How do you think CYC-Net could promote and sponsor International CYC Week? Should we have a special issue of



the journal, CYC-OnLine? If so, should it have a special theme? What could that theme be? Should we have some special activity on-line? If so, of what sort? A webinar? Some special videos?

Let us know what you think.

And while you are at it, perhaps it is a good time to remember that we need to pause and appreciate with families and kids as well. Perhaps it is timely to pause and notice, with them, the good things in the midst of the struggles. This noticing of 'exceptions to the current everyday experience' can help us all to experience hope: allow us to feel hope-full instead of feeling hope-less.

As for International CYC Week, well, start planning now – and tell us how you are going to acknowledge this time, and how we at CYC-Net might be helpful to you. Let's plan to pause and acknowledge together.

Thom



Outcomes, Complexities and German Stories

Kiaras Gharabaghi

As I continue my time here in Germany working with German colleagues in academia and visiting German practice settings, I am increasingly forming a picture of what is different here as compared to my home setting, Ontario. Indeed, just last week at a conference in Frankfurt I was asked to articulate some of these differences after I had delivered a presentation about institutional responses to migrants in Ontario. I had to carefully assess my relationship with the audience before responding, but in the end I decided to just be honest and to the point with my response. So this is what I said:

It seems to me that Germans use extraordinarily complicated language and deep concepts to describe what they do, even when what is being described is not all that complicated, or at least doesn't appear to be such to me. I further notice that no matter how seemingly trivial the object of my curiosity, Germans will provide answers that are linked to large theoretical frameworks, clearly steeped in a disciplinary home (usually one of the many branches of social pedagogy), and that inevitably point to the limitations of

time to really fully capture the nuances of concepts and philosophies underwriting the specific object. And as a final crescendo, whatever explanations follow my inquiry includes a passionate defense of the approach taken, integrated into a historical lecture on the marginalization of the discipline of social pedagogy in the professional dance of multiple disciplines seeking the highest possible status.

As one might imagine, this response resulted in additional conversations.

Fundamentally, these revolved around the idea of legitimation, a need that is equally strongly felt by my German colleagues engaged in social pedagogic research and those engaged in practice settings for children and youth. From my perspective, the need for legitimation in the academic context sounds familiar, as child and youth care as a professional or academic discipline certainly engages in its share of legitimation attempts. Less familiar sounded the need for practice settings to legitimize what they do. Upon reflection, however, it occurred to me that in fact legitimation does indeed form a major part of what we, in Ontario, do as well, how-



ever, the way we legitimize is clearly differently manifested. In Ontario, and I suspect in much of North America and perhaps even the UK, the work of human service organizations is legitimized through the citing of outcomes. This is the case more so today than ever before, and it has deteriorated in a sort of name

calling exercise, whereby the names are now thinly disguised as outcomes rather than swear words. Our kids graduate from school, increase their metrics in various psychological instruments, and

reduce their occurrences of whatever is deemed to be destructive (aggression, running away, conflict with the law, etc.). Indeed, it is no longer necessary to really speak to what we do so long as we can cite outcomes that sound good. I don't mean to dismiss such outcomes, but I do think that we often become blinded by positive outcomes and misinterpret those as therapeutic change. Positive outcomes, after all, are only positive within specified normative contexts, and at any rate, can easily become disconnected from subjects. Objectification is itself an outcome of an outcome-focused treatment regime.



Nevertheless, the language of outcomes is relatively simple and certainly highly resolute. All questions can be answered numerically, and the legitimacy of approaches to service provision can easily be reinforced by the appropriate identification of numerical changes in the right direction. In Germany, in contrast, the

term 'outcome' is a dirty word, one that is dismissed quickly as positivist ideological engineering with little regard for the humanity, and especially the biography, of real children and youth.

Indeed, for the ultimate insult in German social pedagogic circles one merely needs to hurl exclamations such as this at the opposing team: "you are talking about outcomes"! or "is that an outcomes you just cited?" This is the oratory equivalent of "die, bastard, die", or, reflecting the German propensity for complex logic and at least a hint of Nietzsche, "may your grandmother's now historical life biography be adjusted to such levels of misery that your mother's birth never actualized, thus negating your very existence!"

In the absence of outcomes, Germans need to legitimize their work by citing processes that are interdependent, com-

plex, subject-oriented, and that reflect very different power dynamics, relational engagements and contextual factors. This, obviously, takes some time and doesn't always work out particularly well. Although I suspect it all makes sense to my colleagues, from an outsider's perspective, the legitimizations sometimes sound a little formulaic, defensive, and ultimately not all that impressive or compelling. On the other hand, there is a substantive richness that sometimes emerges in these comments that is sadly lacking almost entirely in outcome-focused discourses. Indeed, I have never detected even a hint of substance (except for the actual substance, nay, drug) in medication-focused and outcome-legitimized therapies, for example.

Currently, I am struck by the forces occupying my thoroughly cynical mind. On the one hand, I have always maintained that an excessively empiricist approach to understanding our work, especially when this is reduced to simple (and, in many ways, quite random) outcomes, is a serious misstep of great negative consequence to children, youth and families. On the other hand, I am not quite as enthusiastic about the total rejection of outcomes as useful information as I had anticipated. I hate to admit it, but I think I miss 'outcomes'! Interestingly, I find myself drawn toward the progressive voices in both Canada and

Germany, which are, however, voices on a dialectical path. Progressive in Canada means maintaining critical views on outcomes; progressive in Germany means developing thoughtful approaches to integrating outcomes in social pedagogic theory. All of this simply reminds me of the unresolvable dilemma that I like to frame like this:

What is the better outcome: a young person leaving care, having graduated from high school, never having come into conflict with the law, abstaining from drugs, and scoring high on every measure, but nevertheless identifying him or herself as sad, unhappy and disillusioned? Or a young person leaving care who dropped out of school, has no academic or employment prospects, regularly uses drugs, and has moved backwards on every measure, but identifies him or herself as happy, optimistic about the future, and all around



enthusiastic about what might come next?

As I once again ponder this question, I am reminded of the possibility that human services, and the academic disciplines behind these, probably don't hold the answer to this riddle.

Recognition and Naming of Human Strengths

James Freeman

This article describes the process of seeing and naming strengths in others as a core responsibility in the field of child and youth care. It provides an introduction to the VIA Classification of Character Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) as a helpful framework in organizing the range of human strengths. Also included are some personal examples along with suggested action steps and questions for reflection.

Keywords: *child and youth care, strengths, gifts, character, responsibility*



Over the years in my career in child and youth care, I have learned that the more I focus on the positive and strengths of a person, the more effectively I can relate with and support them in a helpful manner. With this in mind, I recently surveyed a group of child and youth care workers in a short-term

residential care program on their perspectives on the strengths of the young people participating in the program. This is an especially important factor to consider because one of the greatest predictors of child maltreatment is a caregiver's inability to see the positive or strengths of the child (Milner & Chilamkurti, 1991).



Perceptions of Strengths

In the program were fourteen boys ranging in age from school age to adolescence. Approximately 60% (8 youth) were described in terms of their compatibility with the program. Responses in this category included:

- Polite and friendly with staff and peers (five of them shared this identical description)
- Respectful to others
- Helpful to staff and younger peers
- Great with following directions.

Around 20% (3 youth) were described in terms of the activities they enjoyed. Responses in this category included:

- Energetic and engaging
- Enjoys basketball and one on one attention from staff
- Athletic and likes to participate in activities

The remaining 20% (3 youth) had no identified strength from the perspective of the staff.

What do you notice in this list of strengths? I found myself wondering: What

does “friendly” mean? This was used as the description of over a third of the youth. Does it mean he is kind or sociable? Is he approachable and welcoming? Or does it mean that he simply doesn’t argue or complain when asked to do something?

From one perspective, this list is a notable attempt. The young people in this program have been through seriously traumatic experiences in life. A number of them are working through some

significantly challenging behaviors. For anyone to care enough to get close enough to them and want to see them as a valuable person is a good thing.

From another perspective, this list falls far short of what it could be. You and I are part of something big – this field of child and youth care. Is this the best we can offer? Do the “strengths” listed above capture a sense of the giftedness of the individual? Do they begin to describe what the young person brings into the world in a unique way? Highlighting a person’s disposition toward compliance and their affinity for sports does not even begin to do so.

Our Responsibility as a Field

Around the world in the field of child and youth care we have a responsibility to see and name the strengths in others. Seeing them is important because most of the



world isn't even looking. Perhaps some of the behavior we see in young people today is a result:

What is the likely behavior of a young person who does not feel seen and valued for the essence of who they are? [I]f the older people in a community do not take the primary responsibility for this task, what does that say about how we value our own gifts? We are living, in our families, schools, and communities, with the devastating results of what happens when adults do not take a commanding and unrelenting role in helping young people feel seen and valued for who they really are. (Anderson, 2006, p. 142)

This is a role for which we are responsible. Part of that responsibility is also naming the strengths we see. Naming

something is a way of giving life and meaning to it. What help is it to recognize a strength in someone and not speak to that strength in them? One program in Ireland led young people through a process of discovering their strengths and were reported as experiencing "delight [which] soared to elation when they began to read about their strengths [because they] had never seen such a positive report on themselves" (Digney & Digney, 2013). If anyone is equipped and ready to change the world by seeing and naming strengths in others it is you and me and the greater field of child and youth care.

A Framework for Classifying Strengths

One helpful framework in organizing



the range of human strengths is the VIA Classification of Character Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This classification describes twenty-four specific character strengths organized around the following six categories:

- Gaining and using knowledge
- Accomplishing goals in spite of opposition
- Nurturing and relating with others
- Supporting healthy community life
- Protecting against excess
- Connecting with a larger purpose and meaning of life.

Each of these categories is identified by a core virtue and three to five corresponding strengths and descriptions. The list of virtues and strengths includes: wisdom and knowledge (e.g. creativity, curiosity, critical thinking), courage (e.g. bravery, honesty, vitality), humanity (e.g. love, kindness, social intelligence), justice (e.g. teamwork, fairness, leadership), temperance (e.g. self-control, forgiveness, humility), and transcendence (e.g. appreciation of beauty and excellence, optimism, humor).

What do you notice in this list of strengths that is different than the survey results? Do these begin to capture a sense of the giftedness of the individual and describe their contribution to the world?

Over twenty years of research has been documented related to this classification of strengths, including applications across the lifespan. It has also been applied across a range of specific populations including homeless, abuse survivors, and

college students. A particular emphasis in the design and research of the classification is in the parallel findings across a variety of cultures around the globe. The strengths were found to be highly similar across fifty-four countries including remote cultures such as the Maasai of Kenya and the Inughuit tribe of Northern Greenland (Biswas-Diener, 2006; Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2006).

This classification is not the only guide for identifying strengths, nor do the initial developers claim that it is comprehensive of “every imaginable character strength” (Peterson, 2013, p. 12). It is a helpful list, however, and when we get to know it well it has the potential to widen our capacity to see what is strong in ourselves and others.

Some Personal Examples

Last month I was at the home of a friend celebrating the birthday of her three year old daughter. When one of the boys at the celebration fell and scraped his knee during a game, she responded by coming alongside him, kneeling down, and placing her hand on his back. I was not close enough to hear what was said, but I was witnessing a clearly recognizable gift of kindness. When I shared this with my friend, she agreed that it was not an isolated example – kindness is part of her character and it was evident on a daily basis. Her act of caring for her peer was one of the ways she was bringing that gift into the world.

A young woman in one of the residential programs where I work recently commented on her peers and how they felt like



sisters to her: "...we may be dysfunctional, but this is my family and we may have our issues and we may not get along some days but in the end will always be there for each other". When you look closely at her words and emotion it's possible to see strengths of love (in which she values relationship and being close to people) as well as perseverance (in which she hints at her persistence and loyalty to others).

Seeing these strengths, however small, provides opportunity to name them. Naming them helps others gain more clarity and empowers them to make a positive impact in the world around them. This is our responsibility – and opportunity – to support people in seeing what they have to offer and how they can make a difference in the world.

Action Steps and Questions for Reflection

How might you use these ideas to help identify the strengths of young people with whom you work? As a follow through point of application, download the two page VIA Classification of Character Strengths and discuss it with a few of your colleagues. Perhaps you are interested in completing an online assessment to gain clarity about your own character strengths. Both the classification and assessment (there is a free option) are available at www.viacharacter.org.

What other resources are available to you in helping young people see what they have to contribute to the world? What are some ways in which you might improve your own skills or program focus on identifying strengths?

Conclusion

You and I are part of the most important and meaningful field of practice in the world. What we do affects both the present and the future. It changes lives and meets young people at the most critical moments of their experience in this world. What will you do to equip yourself to recognize and speak to the strengths our young people have deep within and with which they might change our world for the better?

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Incomes and Outcomes

Cedrick of Toxteth

People often ask why I'm always running off at the mouth about Child & Youth Care when I don't work with kids myself. No, that's a lie: only Buster Bradshaw B.A., CYC, has actually asked me this question: and that was only last week after I caught him taking a leak in my piranha pond. Being Buster, it was more a competitive accusation than guileless curiosity. Nevertheless, it occurred to me that this question probably troubles my many silent readers (I know you're out there) so I decided to put your minds at rest with the following personal disclosure:

Why I Don't Work With Kids

The truth is, I love being around kids. I just don't enjoy being told what to think and what to do by some free-loading authority demanding measurable outcomes in return for a pauper's handout. If that's what 'working with kids' means, they can stuff it in their policy manuals and feed it to the chickens. Now you might think this qualifies me for ODD certification but I believe I'm being reasonable, rational and responsible.

If you devoted the rest of your life to

sifting through all the research on working with 'troubled' kids, you would *definitely* be certifiable, but you'd be left in no doubt that the theories are arbitrary (i.e. junk), the techniques are meddlesome (i.e. sneaky) and the outcomes are glaringly equivocal (i.e. pathetic). In other words, you'd spend your time flopping around in a sea of psychological sputum only to discover that, with the exception of drugging kids into submission, the only unequivocal finding is that none of this codswallop actually works.

And the closer you look, the worse it gets. Let's begin with those elusive measurable outcomes. When you cut through all that seductive mush about serving the "best interests of the child", the desired outcome is always about what adults really want – kids that do exactly what they're told and without complaint. Do you honestly believe a program dedicated to enhancing the self-esteem of kids who tell them to "fuck off" will be widely acclaimed and generously funded? And, whatever the sweetly packaged mission statements might say, about recognizing the "whole child" as "a unique human



being,” the elusive outcomes can always be boiled down to the same basic proposition - “do as we say and you’re free to go.”

In the old days, there were only two categories of problem kids – those who were “wilful” and needed consistent discipline, and those who were “impaired” and needed to be hidden away. With the growth of competitive professionalism, this target population (i.e. problem kids)

was sub-divided into three serviceable categories - the bad little buggers, the sad little buggers and the mad little buggers. Educational and Correctional

Institutions

were charged with dishing out the discipline for the baddies, leaving the real professionals to practice their own magic with the demonic, the depressed and the deranged.

Depending on what certificate they happened to hang on the wall, the new breed of professionals peddled one of two service options – the reward and punishment package designed by B.F. Skinner, or the oral and anal fixations relished by Sigmund Freud. Since psychoanalysis was far too expensive for the likes of a screwed-up kid with an Oedipus Com-

plex, Skinner’s behavioural model of ‘operant conditioning’ was always going to be the preferred option.

Because kids, like donkeys and junior executives, are inclined to chase after carrots, impressive positive, observable and measurable outcomes were proudly demonstrated and recorded. The trouble was that, soon after the manipulators stopped manipulating, their ‘subjects’ either sank back into their old ways, or went off chas-

ing totally inappropriate rewards of their own choosing. Somewhere along the line, Dr. Skinner had overlooked a critical element in his equation but, by that time, he had been

rewarded to the point of satiation and he passed-on to seek new rewards from the Great Manipulator in the sky.

Meanwhile, unhappy with their second-class standing, psychologists set out to find the missing piece. After much academic deliberation, they came up with the radical notion that kids who smash shop windows, or behave in really weird ways, probably plan and justify their actions with improper thoughts. With this stunning insight, they opened the door to vast new opportunities for manipulating what goes on inside the human head, regardless of



age, creed or culture. In the 1970's and 80's the cognitive theories and therapies of these thoughtful pioneers flourished and were handed over to the folks who actually work with kids. But once again, their efforts to convert these practices into sustainable and measurable outcomes failed to impress the judges.

Faced with the obvious conclusion that “nothing works,” behavioral and cognitive manipulators reluctantly joined forces in an unprecedented gesture of collaboration. The result was the formulation of the classic intervention technique we now call Cognitive-Behavior Modification Therapy. Of course there was no guarantee that the whole would be any better than the sum of the parts but, when the medical manipulators joined in the fun, they tied up the package with a simple proposition - when the Cognitive-Behavior Model is judiciously lubricated with appropriate chemicals it would run like a charm and produce the measurable behavioral outcomes we've all been seeking. Eureka!

But now the story becomes even more sinister. The historical evidence clearly shows that the men and women of medicine, whether psychiatrists or podiatrists, don't work in collaboration with any other pretenders to the throne. As the only 'true' scientists in the barn yard they will always preserve their jurisdiction over life and death, health and happiness. Whether they happen to be working in a hospital, geriatric facility, group home or refugee camp, no self-respecting medical doctor will ever accept a subordinate status to non-medical meddlers - it's just the way it is.

Over the last decade, we've been overwhelmed with reports about the 'amazing' discoveries in neuroscience. Of course, we don't really understand what the boffins are talking about, but we can rest assured that Doctor Proctor, down the road, or an affiliated Specialist, can interpret the information and help put our brains in order. Please don't get me wrong. I have every respect for the scientists that are using new technologies to understand the workings of the meat between our ears. It's how we use, or misuse, this information that freezes my hypothalamus and rattles my frontal cortex. Above all, I fear that once we come to believe that we are the servants of our brain, rather than the other way around, we become junkies to the most insidious forms of manipulation imaginable. In other words, we are well and truly fucked.

If you think my fears are those of a de-ranged idiot, take a look at the number of programs now claiming to remove the problem from the kid through 'non-obtrusive' brain centred interventions - free diagnosis included. If positive measurable outcomes remain elusive, I guess there's always ECT, Psycho-Surgery and Remedial Education – as last resorts, of course. So if I really wanted to work with kids at the leading edge, I'd be adding a whole range of exciting new interventions to blend into my undoubted relational skills. With this stuff in the tool box, perhaps even a de-ranged idiot could become a professional.



Why I Hang Around Child & Youth Care

When it comes to working with kids, CYC is my one and only hope. In my fibrillating heart, I know that kids need more than well-meaning manipulators bent on turning them into acceptable and successful participants in an insane world. They need to be nurtured by curious and caring adults who can see and hear them for who they really are. They need to know that the resources for growth and change are already within them, waiting to be recognized, expressed, and celebrated. They need to be assured that their own experiences are valid, whether we approve of them or not. And they need to laugh a lot.

I don't give a monkey's toss what amuses them, as long it turns into full-blooded belly-pumping laughter.

Relationships that incorporate these qualities and understanding are not a means to an end - they are both the means and the end. Over the years I've come to despise the prescriptive remedial crap. There's nothing wrong with the kids: the problem lies in our unwillingness to engage our own hearts in creating opportunities for personal and relational growth. However soppy it might sound, this is where we will find the unconditional love we need, not only for kids, but for ourselves.

In its purest form, Child and Youth Care is the only discipline committed to becoming unconditionally involved in the lives of young people. I've always hesi-

tated to use the term 'professional' to define this role. I'm tired of listening to upwardly-mobile-morons seeking to carve out a niche for themselves in the pretentious pursuit of professional status. It pisses me off no end when I see these people clamouring to implement the latest theories and strategies devised by the remedial manipulators. And when I hear them spouting off at CYC conferences about their scientifically validated programs and peddling the products of their superiors my lower body craves for the nearest washroom. If this is the pathway to professionalism you will always find me on my bike, peddling in the opposite direction.

This doesn't mean science has nothing to offer child and youth care work. The problem is we become mindless peons when we rely on others who hand down interpretations and misinterpretations according to their own agenda. If we really want to make science work for us, then it's time to come out of our mouse holes, ignore the crumbs and go find out what's coming out of the cheese factory. But first we need to realize that much of the research is funded by vested interests seeking positive measurable outcomes in their quest for more power and wealth. The second is to understand what the scientists are talking about, interpret their discoveries for ourselves and incorporate only what fits into *relational* child and youth care. The third is to find sources of information that are reliable without being



tied a particular agenda or distorted by somebody hoping for a place on the New York Bestseller list¹.

This is a formidable challenge but even a moronic wastrel like me can dig some morsels out of the scientific pot. Over the last few weeks, for example, I've been igniting unused synapses to understand what neurobiologists are now babbling about. While much went over my head (literally), I became fascinated with the idea that the human heart is actually more intelligent and responsive than the human brain. To take this one step further, it seems that when we tune into this storehouse of 'intuition,' the heart is more likely to inform the brain than the other way around. Now there's something for CYC folks to consider. You can bet your knotted knickers this research was not sponsored by Eli Lilly Pharmaceuticals. At this point, I've no idea how to incorporate this into working with kids but I know some smart and creative folks who could do just that. Meanwhile, I'm coddling some new insights about my 'jimmycoddling' heart.

So that's all folks. Rest assured I'll continue to spend my time messing about with kids and, who knows, someday I may even decide to "work" with them again.

Your old Pal, Cedrick

Cedrick is a freelance idiot whose life commitment is to experience every known addiction (except work). He can be contacted through his therapist Gerry Fewster (fewster@shaw.ca), or his editor Gerry Fewster (fewster@shaw.ca), or his parole officer Gerry Fewster (fewster@shaw.ca). All communication will be handled with the utmost confidentiality for at least 24 hours.



"I'm not being a tittle-tattle; I'm being a reliable source!"

¹ The book I found most useful was Joseph Chilton Pearce's latest work *The Heart-Mind Matrix*

Looking after a Shelf of Beans – Decision Making, Philosophy of Care and Congruence

Max Smart and John Digney



'When deciding what to do, we need to consider all the prima facie duties that are relevant'.

W.D. Ross, Scottish Philosopher

'Every action of our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity'.

Sean O'Casey (Irish playwright)

An odd title, you say.... this month's article is about Decision-Making in CYC.

So, what on earth has *Looking after a Shelf of Beans* to do with decision-making? Well, a comment was once made to one of the authors by the mother of a child in care. 'You lot couldn't look after a shelf of beans!' The parent, referring to confused decision-making by and communication between professionals about her son's care. We are still not totally clear on the context of the 'shelf' and/or the 'beans' but we understand well what she meant. This comment opens the door to discuss decision-making and communications in our field. So let us look a little closer on why it is so difficult to look after a "shelf of beans"!

The Illusion of 'Rationality'

Let's face it, child and youth care does not operate in a practice vacuum; we live

in a world that is legislatively governed, where many rules abound. This complex world constantly changes for us all; practitioners, managers and administrators with new agency policies, guidance documents and individual practice wisdom that often govern what we are and are not supposed to do. Practice decisions therefore can be complex affairs, often requiring balancing issues such as safety, risk, need and sometimes potential criticism. So, when we refer to risk we speak not only of risk to a child but also risk to ourselves (such as risk of criticism if the decision has not got a great outcome and therefore risk to our reputations, positions and ego).

Given the recognised complexity of our every day mission, decision-making can sometimes appear inconsistent or even erratic to some players and observers, for instance, we can be at 'hand-over meetings' and be confused about why a particular team has made a particular deci-



sion. Before making decisions, we need to 'make sense' of; what is going on, what we want to happen and how we need to do whatever needs to be done. Making sense is to 'make meaning' and as Garfat & Charles (2010, p57) note. 'We all do it. We have to do it [for] it is a necessary part of being in our world'.

As our decision-making processes can be as complex and individual as our meaning-making processes, it is fair to state that we all will use our own perceptual frame (our values, beliefs, experience and individual 'lens') when we also interpret the decision-making of others. In saying that, it may sound contradictory and it probably is, that we assume decisions made by people and organisations, are rational and thought through. Well think again! Rational decision-making may be assumed, however it is also felt to be illusionary.

Many professions and organisations struggle with decision-making, particularly when things are in a state of flux politically or economically. So, is it reasonable to ask, '*is erratic decision-making the result of poor management, incompetence and or poor staff performance?*' And why are we being conditioned to think that all decisions are based on rational actions? Stapleton (2002) made the observation about decision-making when he advised that organisations often seek to create 'rationality' in decision-making and portray decisions as being rational.

An attempt to 'rationalise' decision-making in the Irish Health System a number of years ago resulted in the publication of a 'decision support model' (MWHB, 2004). In

the introduction to this policy we get the overview; '*The Decision Support Model incorporates provision for business analysis, risk assessment, options appraisals, cost/benefits analysis and other critical considerations. Adopting this model will foster enhanced quality and effectiveness in decision-making processes throughout the [Health] Board*'. Says a lot, eh!

Yet, despite this taking from 'business' and other areas and aspiration to create a rationality, in reality, decision processes still appear erratic, inconsistent, arbitrary and downright confusing and that is probably because they are. Stapleton's observation is quite reassuring written from the perspective of business and organisational structuring; at least erratic decision-making is not the prerogative of the CYC profession but is consistently difficult in most organisational structures.

The Tom Jones Test

The well known Welsh crooner Tom Jones recorded the song. 'It's not unusual'. So, how usual is it for people from all walks of life to have difficulty with this most every day of actions? Do we take it too seriously, or not seriously enough?

Let us make an assumption here; our organisations are staffed by intelligent people, who with joined-up thinking and understanding will think issues through before acting. If organisations are staffed by intelligent people, including our leaders and administrators, why is it projected that they then behave in ways that are interpreted as irrational and unintelligent? We all know that it is easy to stand outside the glass house peering in and being criti-



cal of those trying to do the right thing.

A very recent event occurred in Ireland where in two separate incidents the Gardai (police service) removed 2 children from 2 families (both families being ethnic 'Roma' families). These events occurred in the context of massive media coverage on a young girl being discovered living with a 'Roma' family in Greece who was not their own child.

In Ireland citizens reported to the authorities their concerns; the Gardai attended both homes and sought proof that the parents present were either the natural parents or legal guardians of these kids. When this could not be provided by the adults present the Gardai removed the children via child protection grounds pending DNA analysis. Within 48 hours the parentage was confirmed and the children returned.

Trauma; stress; distrust; bigotry; abuse; system failure are all words used to describe these decisions – however, if the DNA results had been different, it would have been great police work! If the kids had not been temporarily removed and the family 'absconded' with kids that were not their own, there would be calls for dismissals and investigations. Were the decisions made by the on the ground officers the right decisions? We have our own opinions on this and everyone else is entitled to theirs – but surely opinion (as decisions) should be made on having the full set of facts and circumstances.

At a meeting recently one of the authors was present when a very senior manager stated, '*what is it with you people, you are so preoccupied with fairness you*

can't make decisions. Just make a decision, it doesn't matter if it's right or wrong, just make a decision'. Sort of runs at odds with the fancy publications and decision-making models, one would think! Also, this is a very scary statement when one considers the power of this person to make decisions that can have such wide reaching implication on the delivery of services to children and families in the whole country.

And what of philosophy?

A fool's brain digests philosophy into folly, science into superstition, and art into pedantry. – G.B. Shaw

When we make decisions that affect our clients; we must of course base these in a certain framework of what we think is best and why we believe this to be so. If our philosophy of care or our model of service delivery is, for example, based on concepts such as; assisting families in making positive change, being therapeutically focused, planning for the long term, building of capacity and doing with kids and families, we have some idea about what we want to achieve and how to do (and measure) this.

However, if our philosophy is not clearly articulated and senior decision makers are removed from the day-to-day coalface operations, and equally not well-versed in what works well, are poorly advised and are concerned with political or media fallout, then the expectations change. So too does the approach and possibly even the level of care. If our colleagues from related professions, also



involved in decision-making for kids and their families, have very different philosophies or expectations, then of course it will appear to the outsider that we could not 'look after a shelf of beans'.

Congruence

Congruence is thought to be symmetry (*Webster's Dictionary*), and decision-making related to a particular philosophy of care would be one felt to be in symmetry with the principles of that philosophy of care and caring. If our care regimes articulate a philosophy of care related to understanding needs rather than reacting to deeds, then decisions about care practices and regimes require decision-making where an organisation's beliefs, strategies and behaviours are fully in agreement and oriented towards securing a desired outcome.

Oh, if it were so simple! For, as practitioners we have often encountered decision-making which seems totally at odds with our philosophy of care, for example, when we know that punishments rarely work but we wish to react to behaviour punitively when young people do not cooperate or act in the ways we wish.

Decisions, Risk & Certainty

Decisions are thought to occur within a decision environment in which information is weighed up. Making a decision implies that there are alternative choices to consider in line with our values and preferences that reduce uncertainty, doubt or risk. Yet as we know, very few decisions made in child care have this certainty; indeed it could be argued that risk elimination is neither possible nor desir-

able as we have seen in the past by organisations that have been so risk averse as to make the caring task sterile.

Maybe we need to accept that decision-making is in reality messy and the processes involved are nonlinear and recursive.

Practical experience of working in care teams shows that we often revise the criteria we have previously identified and make another decision based on this revision. Maybe it is just the reality that we have to live with trying to look after a "shelf of beans" which is constantly on the move and like all children's lives, never static.

So in conclusion, let us have the articulation of an informed philosophy, the support to deliver on the desired outcomes and the tools that are required and let there be congruence – other than that we have reactive decision-making based on nothing but chaos. Without the same expectation and values, without similar priorities and aspirations, without good leadership and informed direction ...

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The beans will jump off the shelf and self-destruct

Good Intentions with Bad Results

Jack Phelan

Residential treatment agencies work with the most challenging youth, with the goal of supporting them to function better and learn successful life strategies and skills. Almost by definition, these youth have experienced serious neglect and abuse in their lives, generally over an extended period of time. The majority of these youth living in residential treatment have also been in multiple placements, and have endured an extensive array of professional helpers. Unfortunately, the fact that they still require residential treatment demonstrates a lack of successful approaches by these helpers.

I would like to offer an explanation for the lack of success and perhaps persuade the reader to re-think an often used helping strategy. Developmentally, children begin to think logically at 7 or 8 years of age, what Piaget has labeled the concrete-operational stage. Before this, magical thinking and simple focus on impressions dominate thought. The acquisition of logic creates a whole new way to understand life. This new stage is sometimes referred to as the age of reason. Most of our CYC work is with youth

who have experienced abuse and neglect before this age, so that when they become capable of logic, they struggle with making meaning out of their experiences. The first logical explanation is that “I must be very bad to have had these things happen to me”, this logic must be rejected, so the next logical idea is “My parents/family must be very bad” which also gets rejected, so I end up, with my new ability to be logical, believing that “things just happen, I do not cause the results that occur”. My ability to be logical has unfortunately led me to the illogical belief that my actions do not cause the results I ex-



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perience. Fritz Redl identified this issue in 1951, the *evaporation of self-contributed links in the causal chain*, (Children Who Hate, p.128).

Our most difficult to manage youth often exhibit this illogical logic, refusing to be responsible for causing the reactions they evoke in others. In fact, these youth interpret all attempts to reward or punish them through this belief, so that when an adult rewards them, it is because the adult is in a good mood, and when they get punished, it is because the adult is in a bad mood and is taking their bad feelings out on me. The connection between what I am doing and the reinforcement being used by the adult is lost.

This factor, which we cannot ignore, makes the use of logical consequences as a learning event very problematic. The fact that the consequence which is administered by the adult is logical to the adult (and other logical adults) is irrelevant.

Imagine that you are living in a highly controlled environment where the people in charge do not act logically. In fact all the responses you experience from them are illogical and random. You would have a hard time describing this place as therapeutic and helpful. Many of the youth in our residential settings have experienced our “helping” as quite unhelpful, which they occasionally tell us in a rather loud way.



Remembering Why I'm a Child and Youth Care Worker

Melissa Hare

I just finished talking to someone, explaining the CYC field, and as I sit back I realize I often do this in everyday life, explaining it to various people. Especially being a single person. And after I explain the field and why I am in it, I ALWAYS get asked “so do you enjoy it?” To which I always reply, “I Love It!”

I realize people asking “do you enjoy it” is not an odd question, and that people are often working jobs they go to just to get paid but don't enjoy. However, being a CYC you have to enjoy the field, and your job. It's important. We, surely, did not get into the field for the amount of money we get paid. And the kids we work with would, undoubtedly, recognize when we don't want to be there, when we don't care.

And when that is the case who are we really helping? No One!

So why did you get in the field? What was it that attracted you to want to work in this line of work? For me, personally, I've been in the field for 9 years. When I was in high school trying to decide what I wanted to be when I grew up, all I knew was I wanted to work with kids. I knew I wanted to help people, and when I researched being a Child and Youth Worker, it interested me. I went to school at Fanshawe College to obtain my CYW diploma. I had the privilege of learning from some influential teachers who taught me about treatment in families, family structures, behaviour disorders, gave us case studies, and where I watched and analyzed the movie 'Trouble with Evan' every

year. They made me look in myself, challenged me to grow, and stressed the importance of continuing to learn. They taught me that “everyone does the best they can with the knowledge and skills that they have.” While obtaining my

diploma, I knew ‘this is the field for me.’ 9 years later, I still know that this is the field for me.

I know that I may never hear a “Thank You,” that our clients may not realize everything we have done for them until



much later in life. And that is 'ok' with me. I just want to have the opportunity to be the person that a child needs in their life in that moment in time. Whether it be as a guardian, friend, or confidant. I have come to learn that, children don't have to like me. That realistically, they may not view me as any of those things, but I vow to be a constant in their life, treating them with respect, and no matter what I won't turn my back on them. Often, that is just as an important lesson for the children to see, as are the messages they learn from the adults they do like. It is not easy being that person, but we learn to be that person. And it's thanks to our co-workers and fellow CYC's that it becomes possible. It's through building friendships with our co-workers that makes us not feel alone.

This career challenges me, allows me to constantly learn and grow, and it's helped shaped me into the person I am today, a person I am proud of. I have had to learn to let go of who I thought I was, and be open to learning things about myself I never recognized. I have had to let go of my fears; fear of embarrassing myself or doing something wrong, and the fear of not fitting in or being liked. I've had to realize that being able to be silly, singing or dancing, and just having fun are important in this field. And I've learned that the most important thing for me is to focus on the following: focus on the small positives and gains a child makes; focus on the times that make the job fun and enjoyable; and to focus on and count my daily blessings in my personal life.

Just as I know that, I also know that I have the chance and ability to be someone

in the life of a young person that helps make a small difference. After you just restrained a child for however long, that same child doing or saying something that makes you laugh. It's when you've been used as a personal punching bag, had your hair pulled, been bitten, or called every name in the book, and you're not taking it personally, not letting it ruin your relationship with the individual, and playing a game with the child once they've calmed down. That is what challenges us. It's driving in a van full of kids with the music on, and everyone rocking out and singing in the van. It's dancing in the hallway or living room with them. It's when they come running towards you, saying your name and giving you a hug. It's being able to have fun with them both out in the community and at your place of work. That's what makes my job enjoyable. When you can see a child turn their behaviours around 180 degrees, gain the confidence to raise their hand in class or a program, and when you see a child slowly start to use the skills we are teaching them. This is what makes our job rewarding. And this is why I love this career.



The Question of Liberation

Hans Skott-Myhre

In their provocative and compelling book “Towards Psychologies of Liberation,” Mary Watkins and Helene Shulman offer us what can only be described as a relational form of liberatory practice. The question of liberation is an interesting one for the field of child and youth care/youth work. As I have noted throughout my columns here, the question of what we do and why we do it cannot be ethically separated from the lived suffering, social and cultural marginalization, and direct oppression of the young people with whom we engage. Indeed, we can take it a step further and say that, as workers on the front lines of the war against life that comprises late stage capitalism, we are not exempt from the same social effects and trauma experienced by the young people we encounter in our work (and dare I say in our daily lives). The fundamental question, as I have been suggesting, is whether we accede to the demands of an ever more indifferent and

brutalizing system of abstract economic rule, or respond with new forms of value, ways of living and caring for one another. If we are to engage in the latter, then it becomes imperative to explore how we might constitute the terms of engagement.

On the one hand, we might consider petitioning the state for redress or protection from the predatory practices of global capitalism. We might work with young people to increase their participation in liberal democratic projects and local initiatives designed to increase their voice and build forms of grass roots leadership capacity that would allow a gradual transfer of power as they achieve ages of majority that would put them into key roles within

governmental structures. While this may have held some minor resonance in decades past, it is hard to imagine that liberal projects of state governance will have anything more than an extremely mild palliative effect in the face of the oligarchical and plutocratic global empire

that is instituting state driven austerity agendas during a period of unparalleled accumulations in personal wealth. The fact is, that the state form has entered a period of rampant and endemic corruption that makes it an unlikely ally in either protecting or redressing the inequities facing young people and ourselves.

We might also consider working with young people to protest or resist



through confrontation the inequitable and unjust conditions we encounter with them in our daily work. However, again, to whom would we protest? The locus of political force has shifted far from the traditional avenues of power into the amorphous and ever mutating terrain of virtual corporate rule, where there is no center to attack or identifiable leadership to address in protest or resistance. That is not to say that efforts such as the Occupy Movement, Idle No More, Zapatistas, Femen and the Bolivian Law of Mother Earth and other such efforts, largely driven by young people and older people working together, are either ineffectual or unimportant. However, as we have seen, it is difficult to sustain such efforts and their impact on corporate behavior is hard to gauge.

What is perhaps more interesting, about such efforts, are the new forms of social relations between generations and among diverse groups of people that are engendered by the collaborative effort of working together. It is here that the practices of relational affiliation and liberation come together in ways that might inform an emerging politics of child and youth care/youth work. Such a politics is essential in a time when our services have become increasingly dependent upon ever shrinking and more highly regulated (read compromised) sources of government funding. Rather than try to fit ourselves and our work into a form, that will appeal to the bureaucratic whims and fads of a profit driven austerity model of service, we might instead return to the roots of our work and produce new forms of ser-

vice built on common concerns and purpose held by young people and adults together.

For example, we might consider revisiting the genesis of drop in centers and runaway/homeless shelters as they evolved out of the crash pads and free clinics of the late 1960's. In this regard, we might note the forgotten history in the U.S., of the way in which head start and school lunches sprang out of the appropriation of projects initiated by the Black Panther Party. We might reconsider whatever class allegiance we might have to the dreams of a disappearing, but ever-valORIZED middle class and abandon our fantasies of becoming professionals. Instead of experimenting with new approaches to changing young people's lives through dubious science and stale replicable practices, we might become empirical investigators of a new and more equitable future. In short, we might seek to investigate the processes of liberation for all.

But, what sort of liberation? Too often we think of liberation as a way to free individuals from the constraints of daily life and the obligations to the collective whole. I would propose liberation, in this historical moment of profound alienation, as liberation into the lived experience of our common collective desires and aspirations. As Watkins and Shulman point out, if we are to found our work as child and youth care workers on a psychology of liberation, rather than a psychology of development, then the definition of liberation needs to be cleared of some of its problematic history.



Liberation, according to Watkins and Shulman should not be, in fact or principle, a term for occupation, military or otherwise. They refute the possibility that a group can liberate another group, either militarily or by working on its behalf, however benevolently. In the world of child and youth care/youth work, I would suggest that this means that we cannot liberate young people by disciplining them. The mythology that young people seek and want our control and discipline, either corporeal or moral is not rooted in a desire for freedom, but in what Michel Foucault would call the micro-fascisms of daily life. Watkins and Shulman propose that any form of “helping,” “freeing,” or “doing for” others is not a form of liberation, but comprises what they call “missionary work.”

Such missionary work is riddled through with the power relations inherited from the most dubious aspects of the European colonial project. They point out that, liberators of this type already constitute themselves as superior to those they wish to help. “They have become more complete and advanced people who are carrying to the ‘underprivileged’ messages of faith, rationality, adaptation or ‘development.’” Tragically, this form of what they term “cultural invasion,” is endemic in the thinking of child and youth care/youth workers indoctrinated in models of care that see youth as inherently less developed, knowledgeable, or morally capable. These practices and ways of thinking are the furthest away from the practices of liberation one could imagine. If we are to become empirically interested in promot-

ing the common welfare of all, we must abandon all such missionary work in favor of a far more cautious and exploratory set of joint practices.

In this, we might well explore the ways in which none of us can escape from some degree of complicity in the set of relations that constitutes the oppressed/oppressor binary. We all function on both sides of this divide under the current system of global empire, in which nothing operates outside the regimes of value determined by capitalism. Indeed, it is only through a rigorous examination of the ways in which we all participate in the system, that we can begin to see the cracks and fissures through which we might find a way through to something else.

Watkins and Shulman suggest that liberation might be re-thought, psychologically, as a way of understanding the ways we hold in common the “wounds to our humanity.” Such a process should be understood as radically distinct from the expertise driven current models of care that ascribe PTSD and formulaic diagnostics and treatment to marginalized and disenfranchised young people. That is not to say that there is not trauma, it is to suggest that trauma is not isolated to certain acts or certain groups. Nor, that any of us is exempt from complicity in the wounding or the conditions that allow such traumas to continue and escalate. However, this is not to propose a new-found justification for social paralysis in the face of narcissistic grief or shame. Such indulgences like compassion fatigue are founded in the mistaken attribution of false privilege and serve no one’s interests,



least of all our own. Watkins and Shulman state, "Liberation must involve insight, restoration, and an opening for greater humanity for victims as well as perpetrators, bystanders and witnesses."

Such insight and restoration involves a common accountability without exception. We are all victims, perpetrators, bystanders and witnesses in our daily lives and, as child and youth care and youth workers, in our daily work. At various times, these roles will assume more or less dominance in our lives. Sometimes, we will be more victimized and at other times we will harm others whether intentionally or through error. Sometimes, we will be engaged as witnesses to trauma or grace, and at other times we will be deeply, profoundly and actively involved. Our alienation stems in part, from lack of acknowledgement or denial of the palpable reality of this common experience. While trauma and our common human wounding is at times overwhelming and unbearable, it is even more so under conditions in which it is not shared. As workers, if we shield ourselves through the denial of our own or young people's experience of pain and trauma, we do both the young people and ourselves a disservice. In this sense, all projects that propose an objectivity and boundaried experiential distance from our work are a social and cultural disaster.

In their book, Watkins and Shulman propose psychologies of liberation as a kind of jailbreak. It is something we do with each other, but we cannot do for each other. The jail referred to here is the alienated life style of late stage capitalism.

What is imprisoned is our desire for life itself. That is to say, the ability to express fully all that it is in us to express. To live and affirm all that is denied through work, ideology, limited forms of identity, restricted modes of sexuality, truncated and bounded social relations and so forth. The jailbreak is not so much out of capitalist relations, as it is into life. Watkins and Shulman propose that to abandon our role as the jailer of our own thwarted desires, we must abandon our expertise and learn to let go of "already learned expectations and specializations." We need to "create space for listening and imagining, where one can dream new scripts and alternative ways of being in the world." This they say, cannot be done within oneself, but requires engagement with others. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari, thinking can only be done among friends. Such thinking together challenges the center of all we know and calls on the edges of what we are not sure of, the people we are not yet and have not yet fully entertained as radical possibility. They state that, "liberation psychologies begin at the edge of what has already been known and named. This [kind of liberation] begins with a wandering in the desert, where one questions and deconstructs in dialogue the fixed compass that has been orienting one's identifications." Perhaps, this might be a reasonable terrain upon which to re-think the practices and identities that comprise child and youth care/youth work as well? If so, then it is well past time to leave the land of pharaoh and find our way to the desert where we might find our lives together again.



Absorption

Part 2

Laura Steckley

Last month I wrote about a conference presentation that got me thinking about absorption, and I explored the question of what is actually being absorbed in the work of containment. On a literal level, we are coming to understand how human beings send out energy and vibrations, and therefore how they might possibly absorb them from others. Information, often in the form of social and emotional cues, is also being absorbed through the senses, and when the processes of containment are effective, this absorption can be defined as received communication. The conference presentation was particularly helpful in highlighting, for me, the importance of empathic acknowledgement as the first step in a containing response.

I've done a bit more reading on the subject, or re-reading, actually. Hazel Douglas has provided an in-depth discussion of the concepts of containment and reciprocity in her very interesting book by the same name (see reference below). I previously read her chapter that describes what containment is, but had forgotten that Douglas also questions what it is that is being absorbed. It was nice to see that we reached similar conclusions – that it is

emotional content that is being absorbed, especially in relation to working with children. She leans towards a metaphoric interpretation of absorption, in that it is *as if* the emotions are being absorbed, but she also draws from more recent advances in neurobiology to discuss the physiological effects of absorption.

I ended last month with a question about why we might not 'give back' in a more manageable form the emotional content we absorb in our work. I guess the simple answer is because it's bloody difficult. So this month I want to explore some of what makes it so difficult.

I think it might make the most sense to start with a definition. Douglas offers an excellent one in her book and it is particularly useful for this month's discussion. Her definition of containment is this:

Containment is thought to occur when one person receives and understands the emotional communication of another without being overwhelmed by it, processes it and then communicates understanding and recognition back to the other person. This process can restore the capacity to think in the other person.

This reference to overwhelm is key. One of the reasons why we don't 'give back in a more manageable form' is because sometimes we also become overwhelmed. This overwhelm might be obvious, like in situations that become so chaotic, frightening or intense that we lose our ability to remain calm and think clearly. Sometimes we might even be aware of our own state of overwhelm, but often,



self-awareness is one of the first things to go. Other times, it is less about the situation or the intensity of emotion that is being absorbed, and it is more about what gets triggered within us when we absorb it. In either case, we tend not to process well when in a state of overwhelm.

The potential to become overwhelmed by what we absorb can also take form subtly, without any obvious crisis or catastrophe. Painful or frightening emotional content, times when our resilience is running low, or events that trigger uncontained emotions from our own past experiences can provoke reactions that shut down what is being communicated, preventing us from processing it. It can even be the unconscious fear of overwhelm that drives such behaviour, and sometimes neither the young person nor the practitioner is even aware of what is happening. So while on some occasions we might come away with a vague sense that we didn't quite get things right, there may be other times where the whole process of shutting down remained invisible to all involved. One of the most common examples of this is the use of humour to stop the sending and receiving of emotional content. I think this is interesting because I have also seen the use of humour to convey empathic understanding and to make situations more manageable. So humour can be commonly used to obstruct containment, but it can also be effective in facilitating containment. It really depends on emotional presence and reflection.

Bion, the originator of containment theory (and cited in Douglas), described a

person's internal process of containment as having two parts. One part is essentially a state of calm receptiveness. The other is the active cognitive processing of the absorbed communication. It's this process of thinking that brings the emotional content into consciousness and names it, making it thinkable, 'speaking' and more manageable. Bion's choice of the term 'container' is deliberate, as he wanted to give the sense of a space within which things can be thought about.

This state of calm receptiveness is one of the components of emotional availability. It can be thought of as openness to receiving emotional content generally, and, more specifically, openness to thinking and talking about emotions. It is, perhaps, a natural way of being for some, but not so for others and so must be learned. It probably isn't natural for anyone when under physical or emotional threat. The capacity to be calmly receptive to emotional content when it isn't natural, then, requires significant organisational support. Similarly, the capacity to actively process what is absorbed also requires organisational support. So another reason why we might not 'give back in a more manageable form' is because the organisational environment isn't conducive – it isn't containing. Certainly, those in management positions can also become overwhelmed by their responsibilities and the conditions under which they are expected to carry them out. When this happens, containment at organisational level becomes less effective (or even absent).

In a previous column, I wrote about how organisations might provide containing



processes for their staff (see the March 2011 issue of this journal), and some of those processes I described were evident in the presentation that kicked off this two-part column on absorption. In the presentation, it was clear that the staff were working with children who had very significant needs for containment, and the kind of emotional content they conveyed to staff was, at times, extremely painful and distressing. One of the presenters spoke of the early experiences of the management team, stating that they didn't always know exactly what to do, but that their central message to staff was this: "You're not alone and we're gonna try and give you what you need to do the job." Another key message was: "The things you think you can't do, sometimes you can do."

Now for me, these statements reflect elements of containment. The first demonstrates an empathic acknowledgement of the sometimes lonely and terrifying path of working with kids who are in significant pain, and the need to know support is there. The second statement, if effective, represents the one of the fundamental ways of understanding containment – that containing environments make things more manageable. A good container is recognisable by their ability to enter a situation and make everyone feel that bit more able to handle whatever is going on.

Now I can't claim to know for certain that this particular programme is doing good containment work at the levels of direct and indirect practice, but there was plenty of indication that management were attuned and responding to the emo-

tional content of their staff's work and that they were providing spaces for that content to be collectively processed.

The support for cognitive processing necessarily should include space for reflecting on the impact of absorption. We know that absorption has both a physiological and emotional impact and that a lack of containment, which necessarily includes cognitive processing, can make those impacts worse. Yet it's important to be clear that containment doesn't make the difficult emotions go away – for the young people or for the staff. Nothing really does, though there seems to be something about our human condition that keeps us looking for the thing that will eliminate pain and discomfort, even if just temporarily. It's instinctive. This instinct tends to get us in all sorts of trouble and I think it might relate to my final suggestion as to why we don't 'give back'. Perhaps it's the best part of us that somehow thinks, probably unconsciously, that we can somehow take on and therefore take away part of the pain and suffering of the children and young people we serve. Giving back pain does indeed seem counterintuitive. We can't, however, take it away; the best we can do is be fully present in the face others' pain while working to create spaces that promote an improved capacity to manage it and, ultimately, heal from it.

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Maybe you smiled for the rest of the day? Some comments on relationships and their infinite variety

Karen VanderVen



Consistent warm, caring, stable and long term relationships for children and youth in care are the fundamental feature of the child and youth work field. Yet, 'relationship' is not a unitary construct. There are many variations in contexts for relationships, ways in which they form, and in their potential to offer pleasant surprises. So, taking advantage, perhaps, of my years of life experience, and using an anecdotal approach to provide illustration, I will discuss some of this variety in this informal, undocumented essay.

Activity is as significant in developing relationship as is a relationship itself!

I've offered this idea before: "We are what we've done and become what we do". It's like the chicken and egg problem – which comes first, a relationship that then leads to a shared activity or an activity that initiates the relationship and guides how it evolves.

Here's one of dozens of examples from this little trip of mine down Memory Lane.

Back to my "direct line" days when I was a milieu coordinator and right in the trenches daily, as the saying goes, with a

number of large, aggressive adolescent boys.

I also was able to have individual activity sessions with this group. One boy in particular had chosen me as his target for provocative, acting out behavior. Around him I was nervous for good reason, since he was tall, muscular, explosive and impulsive. Interestingly, however, I heard 'via the grapevine' that he wanted – of all things – to make something electrical. Not my expertise, but I managed to find a little kit with which, by following some not-too-impossible instructions, one could build an little electric motor that would cause a small slab to rotate around an axle. We spent some time together each week in my activity room poring over the instructions putting this together. While he still gave me constant grief when I was out on the floor, his behavior while we worked on the motor was absolutely impeccable.

There was something in this mutually shared activity that altered our relationship – towards the better.

When working in my crafts and carpentry shop for the youth in an old 'state hospital', many years ago, the youngsters would easily become frustrated, and often as not fling their project across the room and insist, "I ain't gonna do this any more!" There was no discussion of what their anger might have 'meant'. Rather, the rule was "Finish the project properly before you get another one". So eventually they'd come around and finish (there wasn't much else for them to do besides come to my shop).

We traditionally think of relationships

as a movement towards closeness and mutual understanding. Sometimes, and perhaps especially, with challenging children, a relationship can be formed if the adult maintains some distance. Here is where having an activity at hand can be a major asset for the worker.

What does 'maintaining some distance' mean? Perhaps it means *not* letting the youth know that 'you understand how he feels'. Rather, the focus is on dealing with the here and now and the surface reality of the situation. Why? This is less intrusive and threatening. I wonder if that factor is why so many child and youth workers mention how kids 'open up' when they're doing something. It always helped me to have an activity at hand so we'd have something to talk about – especially when the kids were non-verbal!

So, paradoxically, using an activity focus to keep a relationship on more neutral ground so that it doesn't get too close too soon – can actually enhance the relationship.

I emphasize here the essential connection between relationship and activity because while it is so obvious, it still seems as if the 'activity' dimension of child and youth work is not considered nearly as important as the 'relationship' dimension. If we can enter and develop a relationship through an activity, we get double the power from the relationship – the benefits of the activity and the relationship itself. An activity can also help to bypass the barriers to relationship formation that youth often offer us.



If they want attention – give it to them!

I always bridle at that stereotyped response to supposedly ‘attention seeking’ antics. “Oh, he just wants attention. So I won’t give it to him!” Rather, I’d say – acknowledge the wish and need, and set about meeting it at once! In my love of playing basketball, I would often find that there were adults who would be happy to move me off a court on which I had been practicing. However, I rarely experienced youngsters who wouldn’t interact with me – even if to challenge me – if I showed interest in what they were doing.

They warmed to the attention. It didn’t matter who was giving it. Once I was on a fence-bounded court by myself. I looked up from my eternal dribbling to notice a number of small faces pressed against the fence. “Do you want to play?” I called. They wanted some attention and they wanted to play. Suddenly there were enough kids on the court for a real game – and a nice memory for me.

Relationship and activity are the core of treatment and the substance of positive development and must never be ‘earned’ rewards.

Whatever aspects of relationships we recognize, one thing remains compelling. Relationships (and activities) are the sun, moon and stars to all human beings. Thus we must *never, never, ever*, have children and youth “earn” a relationship by amassing “points” and/or being on a certain “level”. Nothing insults and demeans our field more than practices such as this and if we see them we should fight them. Children and youth need our relationships as much as they need air, and perhaps the more difficult the youth are, the more ‘unacceptable’ their behavior, the more they actually need us. I once saw a “point and level” manual that listed how many points a youth would need in order to “spend time alone with an adult”. To me this was appalling and against every principle of good practice.

The worst kid is the best in some way

To illustrate this, I must tell a sad but true story. I was a consultant to a comprehensive residential and day treatment agency. My more formal business temporarily over, I took the opportunity to migrate out to the basketball court. Several youth were playing under one hoop



and ignoring my plaintive “I want to play” glances. Finally one, who was playing by himself around one of the baskets, called, “Hey, lady, ya wanna play?”. I was out on the court like a shot. The young man graciously proceeded to give a basketball lesson to his eager pupil. He showed me how go under the basket and make a reverse lay-up – among other things – and applauded me when I practiced a new move successfully. I thanked him when the dinner call came, and we went about our business. When I returned a few weeks later I asked after him. “Oh, he’s not here any more. We had to send him to a closed setting; we couldn’t maintain him here,” was the response.

I’d always remember this. It makes me hope that in anybody’s relationship with difficult youth, he or she will try to use it to find that special area of talent, skill, or sensitivity that the youth has.

The most memorable relationship can be formed under non-favorable circumstances

This gives me the opportunity to tell you about a young man named Tom Jones (and that really was his name). I had signed up with a dive shop to dive off the Florida West coast. The divers were to meet there to pick up equipment and be assigned buddies. I didn’t come with a buddy. They’re few and far between for the “mature woman” (read white-haired and over 60) on a dive boat. A young man, also without a buddy arrived after everybody else, except me, had paired up. He had just received his certification and had no more than a half dozen additional dives

under his weight belt so to speak. “Uh, oh” I thought.” We’re going to be buddies by default”. The tall, slender red-head was 16 years old and his non-optional buddy had fifty years on him. “I can see it,” I thought. “Either I’m going to have to tote him along the bottom, or he’s going to be out of sight the minute we hit the sand wanting to ditch me just as soon as he can”. Before the buddy pairs dove in, the divemaster suggested that any diver over 40 should take an extra long safety stop on the way up (this is when the divers suspend themselves 15 feet from the surface to ‘offgas’ nitrogen accumulated in their system during the dive). “That means me. I just turned 40,” I joked. Tom went in the water first where our task was to move forward to the anchor line. It turned out the current was fierce. He had no trouble pulling himself along the drop line that was connected to the anchor line from which we’d descend. It took all I had. As I approached the anchor line connecting rope at the bow, there was Tom holding it out to me, to make it easier to grab on. At the end of the dive, Tom preceded me up the anchor line and took his three- minute stop. I would have to take five. I expected him to go on to the boat, leaving me to complete my dive by myself. *Wrong*. When I was ready to surface, I turned around and there he was behind me as he had been all the time, suspended, watching, and waiting to accompany me to the top.

The contrast to Tom came on another dive the next day when I was paired up with a young woman who claimed to be an experienced diver. As we swam to-



wards the anchor line towards the end of the dive, she disappeared. What happened? Without a signal, she just swam up and over me, made her own three-minute safety stop, and went back to the boat. I looked for her as long as I could on the bottom, and then went up by myself, taking my required five-minute stop, to find her complacently sitting on the boat. Go figure. I'll always remember Tom Jones – in the very best way.

Be yourself in a relationship – and offer a surprise now and then

Here's another of my many basketball stories – and it's true! In my weekly pick-up games, there was a young man about 14 years old who would join in. I don't blame him for targeting somebody who probably reminded him of his grandmother, to hassle. That he did. I would be dribbling the ball up the floor and he'd go out of his way to steal it – and succeed all too frequently. Then I went to a basketball camp and came away with one wonderful new move. A cross dribble, followed by what I think is called an "inside" dribble, that enables the player to evade a tenacious defender.

Soon my chance came. The young man approached, I enacted my fast move, and swooshed by him. He was flabbergasted and looked at me with new respect. No, this may not have been an approach "the books" would recommend, with the adult trying to outwit the youth. But this was a time I had to be myself.

Oh, what humor can do!

Redl and Wineman called it "Tension

decontamination through humor", so I certainly didn't think this one up myself. Yet, in these days of emphasis on control and "point systems", I don't think it hurts to remind ourselves how powerful humor can be in our relationships.

A participant in my "Dealing with Difficult Behavior" workshop said, "Every time I come on duty, Johnny comes up and sticks his tongue out at me. What should I do?" "Oh," I said, "You have all kinds of options, but especially to understand the meaning of the behavior and to use a sense of humor. The group was astonished. "But that's not *respectful*. We have to *punish* him".

I continued: "You can say, 'My, what a fine tongue you have! Thank you for showing it to me'. Or, you can put out your own tongue while saying, 'Now I've seen your tongue. Would you like to see mine?' and 'Can you do this trick?' (winkle or fold your tongue). Or, you can simply say, (ignoring the protruding tongue), 'Hi, Johnny. Good to see you're letting me know you're here. Let's go get a snack and you can tell me how your day went.' By the way," I went on, "it looks as if Johnny wants a relationship with you. Singling you out for a tongue display is just the only way he knows how to ask for it."

Gradually they began to smile as we discussed – and demonstrated – the different 'tongue tricks' we could do, and recognized that there is more intent to some behaviors than simply to annoy us.

Even a manipulative ploy is a relationship opportunity

Sometimes people will initiate a rela-



tionship with you because they want something, and I say, "What's wrong with that? Don't we all do that sometimes? So take it for what it is and enjoy it". Here's an example:

I was entering a building for a meeting and stopped, putting my things down, to take out my make-up and 'put on a face' as I call it before I met my public. "Stop right there!" boomed a voice from a group of chairs in the lobby. "Don't you *dare* put on that make-up! You look beautiful just the way you are!" Oh, *right*, I grumbled to myself, knowing better. But before I could start the repair job the man got up, approached me and started a conversation. Soon he whipped out a tattered wallet to show me photographs of his family and told me about each person, including his elderly father. "I'd love to go visit him," he said, "but I don't have the bus fare". Then I 'got it'. But you know what? That didn't matter. I gave him a large bill, much more than the fare. As I left he reminded me to leave off the makeup.

I smiled for the rest of the day.

That reminds me of the times when I've heard of young people referred to as 'manipulative' – e.g. "Watch her – she's a real little manipulator". Maybe so, but in context of her environment this quality is probably a survival strength.

I remember all the 'manipulators' from my days of front line work. They were the ones who got discharged.

There are positive relationships with things

We all still nod our head in the direction of something Freudian, don't we? Sophie Freud (a relative of Sigmund)

pointed out in an excellent book called *My Three Mothers and Other Passions* that certain possessions become continually more meaningful and provide comfort and a sense of connection with the past. Transitional objects, the hallmark of toddlerhood, have meaning across the ages and stages of life ... The college students' stuffed animals ... the older adults' photo albums and old pressed prom flowers ... We seem to have an important relationship with these special objects life long. This does have an implication for child and youth work. It simply heightens the fact that we need to respect the personal property of youth by protecting it and permitting them as much as possible to have access to it. Similarly, we need to help youth recognize how *our* things are meaningful as well and that they need to be viewed and handled with respect.

Along these lines, I've always favored any activities that help youth take a caring and proprietary stance towards their living quarters. Such activities can include having youth contribute towards maintenance, and by having them, rather than others, make decorations and the like on special occasions. Throw those canned holiday decorations in the trash and have the kids do the job the next time around.

The more familiar one is with a category, the more one's perspective and understanding of it changes.

Any of us might assign a negative connotation to a labeled group. Maybe we once had a bad experience with one person who was a member of such a group and we generalized it to everybody who might be subsumed under that heading.



Or, and perhaps more frequently in child and youth work, a child has a label such as “Oppositional Disorder” which leads us to anticipate the worst even before we know him or her.

The Pennsylvania State Police have a negative reputation. Everybody who drives the Pennsylvania Turnpike tries to drive 80 miles an hour – 15 miles an hour over the posted speed limit – while trying to elude the enemy, the state police, who would surely give speeders a very expensive ticket.

Then came the time I lost my purse – yes, money, credit cards, keys, everything – while driving the turnpike. It’s a long story involving several state officers as to how I got that purse back – without a dime missing. But I can mention the officer who made sure that I was safe while another officer checked all the turn-offs where I thought I might have left it. I can mention another officer who not only made a special trip to retrieve the purse when he received a call from the honest service plaza employee who actually found it but also called me at work to tell me that it was safe at a nearby police station. My perception of the Pennsylvania State Police changed radically and I now view them as my protectors.

What are the implications for child and youth work? Something we all really know: We don’t form a relationship with a diagnostic category, no matter how tempting this is; rather we look past it to understand the individual.

Sometimes you have to prove yourself to form a relation- ship – right or wrong!

Another dive boat story! I was

buddy-less again on a commercial dive boat. I knew nobody, and was obviously the oldest person there. As the boat ferried us out to the dive site at least 10 miles off shore, there was the usual dive boat banter among everybody – except me. Nobody said a word. We had the first dive and then it came time to get back on the boat. This isn’t easy. You have to get a foothold on a ladder that may be swooshing and clanging up and down in the waves. Then you have to climb up with your heavy tank and weight belt containing as much as twenty pounds of lead. As I was pulling myself up the ladder, everybody was gaping at me. Then I got it! This explained the silence. They were wondering if I’d be able to get back on the boat! “Please, God, let me climb back on this boat all by myself,” I prayed as I reached for the railings that would enable me to heave myself up on deck. It helped. I made it! People had just stared and nobody had offered a hand. However, as I sat down at my spot and started taking my equipment off, the chatter began. “Good dive?” “Where are you from?”, “Where else have you dived?” Suddenly I belonged. But I was the one who had to make the special effort.

A significant relationship may be a random, one time event

I’m a sushi lover and when by myself in another city, quickly locate the nearest sushi restaurant and go there. I usually, as the saying goes, “belly up” to the sushi bar. This is a counter right in front of the area that the sushi chefs work, making it easy to watch them and for them to hand an order to the customer. I’ve also found



sushi bars provide an opportunity to converse with a strange person nearby, exchanging notes about favorite roll concoctions.

Recently I was alone in a sushi bar. In the middle of my meal, the chef, noting I had ordered salmon, asked, “You like salmon?” “I love salmon and avocado,” I replied, thinking of my invention of a “Pittsburgh Roll”, with salmon, avocado, scallions and spicy mayonnaise that I sometimes ask chefs to make. I noticed out of the corner of my eye that the chef was making a handroll – a cone shaped affair in which ingredients are tastefully stacked inside a piece of seaweed. Suddenly the handroll was set at my place! It was packed with salmon and avocado. As I finished that and the rest of my sushi, I glanced up to notice the chef carving the skin of an orange to make it look like a graceful swan. “Hmm, wonder who’s getting that?” I was amazed when the chef again placed it in front of me. As I left, I smiled and thanked him profusely.

So all I can do now is be warmed by the memory and by the idea that there was something, and I don’t know what it is, about me that generated the generosity in this chef. Such generosity, noticing when somebody is alone and taking action, are perhaps behaviors we want to model for our youth, and encourage them to use. Similarly, we need always to look for ways to give to youth, not take away from them.

Random and varied relationships are important to us, just as are those that are more permanent and longer term. One might ask, “How can the random relation-

ship influence one’s work as a child and youth worker?” Perhaps not directly – it’s not necessarily a strategy for working with youth. Rather it’s a way of living that inevitably will “rub off” on one’s perspective towards life and other people, with implications for showing our children and youth perhaps the most fundamental characteristic of relationships – they vary in many ways, and they are everywhere, every day.

From: *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, Vol.19 No.3, pp50-55



“I’m looking for a position in the unemployed sector.”



Situations in Child and Youth Care

Liz

Henry Maier

Elizabeth (Liz, to her friends) is fourteen years old. She has been living in our group home for four months now. We know that, she has lived in numerous placements since her parents abandoned her at the age of six. At that time, they both disappeared and have never been found or heard from since. The file material says that her previous foster home placements broke down because of her inability to accept limits and her excessive demands to be the centre of everyone's attention. She was, it seems, just too much for anyone to handle. This is her eighth placement since living with her parents.

She's not what one would call a pretty girl. She's twenty pounds overweight, is plagued by adolescent acne and some of the boys call her 'horseface' when they are angry with her. That's usually because she's trying to participate when the others don't want her to. It seems she'll do almost anything to be accepted and when they call her 'horseface' she makes neighing sounds that cause them all to laugh at her.

At the staff meeting last week team

members shared their frustration with how demanding and needy she is. We agreed to try to meet that need rather than try to extinguish it. Unfortunately, we never got around to detailing how we might do that on a day-to-day basis.

When I came on shift tonight Liz was acting like she was especially needy. From the moment I walked through the door, she has been clinging to me, throwing herself on my lap when I am sitting down and following me everywhere I go. I feel my own frustration creeping up but I don't want her to feel that I am rejecting her. I need to meet this need, not punish her for having it.

At this moment I have a particular problem.

I need to intervene in an argument that is going on between two of the other kids and Liz won't let go of my arm. She wants me to stay and talk with her, but I need to attend to them. I don't want to do that with her dangling like an unimportant appendage. Yet I can't focus on them without getting her off of me. I've told her that she needs to let go so I can deal with the others but that has just caused her to hang on tighter. I don't know how to handle this moment.

Situation Response by Henry Maier

This is an important inquiry that you raise. You present so clearly a frequent youth care dilemma: that care workers are asked, even challenged, to meet the insatiable demands of some youngsters. The workers, however, are often not receiving the necessary guidance as to how to proceed. I shall try to fill in by suggest-



ing a few (in your words), “day-to-day” *care work interactions* that might be helpful.

First, I want to convey my pleasure for your own as well as your co-workers’ help to Liz as a *person* by attempting not to “extinguish” her behaviour in order to obtain a smoother life within your group. Your brief summary highlights her unsatisfactory life of eight moves within eight years; a life of rootlessness and an apparent void of experiencing any semblance of being actually wanted. Yet, she exhibits enough strength to reach for growth-furthering human contacts. Let’s nourish that! And now, what can actually be done?

If at all possible, *you* must take the initiative. You need to seek her out and you must take the reins when she “lassoes” you, by creating some mutually satisfying moments in being together like sitting or walking arm-in-arm, or listening together to a tape. You could also promote an activity to be done together, hopefully playful: such as finger-play (e.g., cats-cradle), a brief game of cards, table tennis, hang-man, or other alternatives that the other youngsters in the group tend to play with each other. In taking the initiative by seeking her out or in readily accepting her overtures, you and your co-workers will convey to her that *you* welcome contact and the opportunity to play and do activities with her! Refrain from phrases like: “How well she is doing”; instead accentuate *your* experience in being with her. Liz has to become aware of the other person’s outreach (want) for her rather than a conditional acceptability. When group members rival for your attention, or make

disparaging remarks, underscore your presence with Liz:

“Yes, I am with Liz!” It conveys a mighty message that she is another valuable kid. The latter should be offered in place of censoring her peers for picking on her.

Clarify the above strategy further in your daily action plan. First, if appropriate, *you* need to seek *her* out. Try to create positive brief joint activities with instances where you will have (within the span of your own personal tolerance) mutually satisfying engagements. When she “captures” you before you have had the chance to take the initiative, and provided you have the time and disposition; it is then up to *you* to reconstruct the occasion. You can elaborate that you had hoped to do something with her, following with suggesting a spontaneous *joint* activity — fixing a snack, for instance, or whatever fits. It is important to note here that we tend to feel more reassured of another person’s closeness when we experience the other person’s active outreach beyond our own efforts to connect. This occurs, for instance, when one experiences an invitation to join.

Before continuing with other suggestions, let me highlight a point I mentioned earlier. I said that care workers might introduce and favour activities which Liz’s group mates typically play. This may further Liz’s skills in peer activities and will also provide occasional opportunities to invite other peers to join you and Liz.

I can sense and sympathize with your uneasy concerns that by always reaching out to Liz, you will become her prisoner



even more. Such concerns might be correct. Yet, as a genuine care worker, you have to risk and prepare yourself for the concrete care task of learning effective separation skills. This means you have to acquire added capabilities in acting out “leave taking” to Liz in order to be able to provide her with a relatively new experience; and that is the element of continuity, of attachment even while you are gone, with the assurance of eventual return. In short, sound attachment experience is essential; but it becomes more relevant when it is punctured by separations. To put it another way, we are working toward allowing the individual to experience her or his attachment to the longed-for person even when absent.

Such separating attachment behaviours are typical of most of our farewell gestures where we tend to add an extra squeeze and a verbal reassurance that we will be back, as in “See you later!” or similarly, giving the other a phone number or the information on how we can be reached. All these symbolize continued but invisible presence.

In your day-by-day contacts with Liz, the events of separating from her are essentially therapeutic care interactions. Consequently, while taking leave of Liz it is important that you restate your satisfaction in having had a chance *to be with* her and the fact that you will be back for her. A person as starved for personal contacts as Liz, can only feel her own hunger! Note, don’t tax Liz with the charge that you have already been with her, or that now you also have to lend your attention to the other group members. Basically,

she has to experience your involvement and that’s what counts.

Thus, in your leave-taking, clearly, if at all possible in an assured way, give her one or two extra firm squeezes or other fitting turn-off interactions; for example, “give-me-five,” or another look back with a wave or for an eye contact, or whatever comes spontaneously to you. These same forms of disengagement are also appropriate when she tries to capture your full attention and you cannot actually be with her.

Let me add that, within the context of such a basic orientation, it is also assumed that there are occasions when you either do not have the time or you are too exhausted to struggle with a situation as you described in your note. Then, it is very appropriate to convey quickly and clearly as a matter of fact:

“No, I cannot be with you just now.” By your staking out your boundaries, you also deal with her boundary formation process.

In situations which you so well describe in your letter, you may also consider techniques that we tend to employ most naturally with young children and infants in our daily lives. We share ourselves symbolically. We give them something to hold on to during our absence (a hanky, a cuddly object, a piece of candy, or whatever). I hope that you will have a few extra give-away items like an emblem pin, a ribbon, a little toy, or possibly for Liz an extra inexpensive bracelet or rubber-band on your wrist, ready for such occasions. Such interactions can readily lead to a “transition object” experience (Maier,



1987, pp. 57-58). It is a popular fear that sustaining attachment leads to unwanted dependency. This is *not* so! Solid research as well as common experience have established that genuine attachment development *fre*es (Maier, 1987, pp. 121-128). Probably, you can find the same experience in the course of your own life. The more you can be assured of a friend's connectedness with you, the more confident you can feel and act apart from that person. I trust that Liz can eventually develop such a sense of self by experiencing, however brief, genuine moments of intimacy. Hopefully, these moments of togetherness may become satisfactory and enriching events for you.

Within all of these suggestions there is one overriding factor which you were so honest to imply: Liz is so hard to like and consequently a youngster so very difficult to deal with. You bring up one of the most vexing issues in our child and youth care work! It might be reassuring for us to remember that there is no requirement in our work that we *like* all (or most) of the youngsters with whom we are working. Our challenge, however, is that we face what bothers us about them and then we accept the task of having to engage ourselves with them for *their* therapeutic gains. The task is yours; that you work effectively with them.

In your letter you also cited Liz's difficulties amidst her peers, describing her ineffective handling of being called 'horseface.' Here, I think Liz requires special help with her self-management in order that she can negate that namecalling by responding neutrally and with an un-

concerned posture, as if it doesn't apply to her. This requires more than advice; probably it will be necessary to provide real behavioural rehearsal (by the use of role playing) in order that she can acquire more adequate interpersonal social skills. Liz, once she has gained some experience of attachment development, will look to the care worker who can then be supportive of her in such social skills practice. It is important to remain aware that all of these processes, both attachment development as well as added social behavioural learning, take time to emerge.

Parenthetically, the apparent practice of name-calling has to be taken up with the whole group, not just for Liz's sake, but as a feature of peership and growing up.

All of these above issues are important. I think the initial step would be to work with her attachment development. There is no doubt that Liz and you, including your co-workers, have to climb many steps within such a genuine youth care situation.

I shall be most interested for my own learning to hear of your reactions to these suggestions and about your progress in your work with Liz. Your inquiry suggests to me that you are *doing pioneering youth work*. More power to you!

Henry Maier

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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

NEW ORLEANS



Warm greetings from the 'Big Easy'! Our visit to Colorado and Utah National Parks planned for last month required a change of plans during the US government shutdown. Thus New Orleans became our new 'bucket list' destination of choice.



New Orleans Steamboat Natchez a reminder of life on the Mississippi River

'Nawlinz' has been a significant feature of North American geography for 3 centuries. A natural port on the Gulf of Mexico, whoever controlled this city controlled the Mississippi River. Established in 1718 by the French on land inhabited by the Chitimacha

peoples, this strategic port city was traded back and forth between France, Spain and Britain until 1803 when it was 'purchased' for \$15 million as part of The Louisiana Purchase. Then as now, there was heated opposition from conservatives in the US House of Representatives about such action by a President!



Jackson Square and the Cathedral-Basilica of St Louis, King of France

Overlooked by North America's oldest Catholic Cathedral in continuous use, Jackson Square commemorates the achievements of America's 7th President who – according to that old song – chased the British out of New Orleans at the end of 1812. The Louisiana Purchase via the Mississippi River opened North America to exploitation.



The 1803 Louisiana Purchase more than doubled the size of the USA

The Big Easy has a well-established reputation for partying. Youths were arriving by the bus loads from Florida and across the South for the annual gridiron clash between the LSU (Louisiana State University) Tigers and the University of Florida Gators. Sorority House girls and Fraternity House boys were everywhere – spending their parents’ money like you wouldn’t believe! We didn’t see many ‘poor’ students.



Youths flooded Bourbon Street for Weekend Action

Live music of the jazz variety was happening everywhere – in pubs, on street corners and on the riverboat. Busking has developed into an art form there, and it is good!



The Birthplace of Jazz offers live music throughout the French Quarter

But lingering everywhere behind the glitzy lights and partying was another side of this city, heavily defined by what European friends would call influences like ‘social class’ and ‘race’. Few Americans talk about social class, and there is also reluctance to talk about poverty and unequal opportunity. Social Darwinism is alive and



Honouring the people and remembering Hurricane Katrina, 29 August 2005

well there!

Hurricane Katrina really highlighted these issues. The poorest parts of the city took a direct hit when storm surges broke through the City's poorly constructed federal protection system, flooding whole communities like the Lower 9th Ward with more than 10 feet of water that stayed around for weeks rotting the foundations of houses. Roughly 20-40% of the city's half million population never returned. The US Army Corp of Engineers responsible for installing substandard levy barriers could not be held financially responsible for their engineering failures, and FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) became a new four-lettered F-word amongst locals.



Houses in Lower Ward 9 damaged by flood waters remained unoccupied

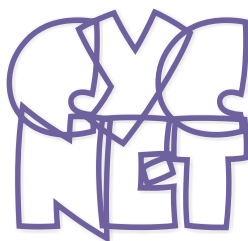
Some communities were untouched by Hurricane Katrina while others were devastated, and remain ghost towns nearly a decade later. It all depended on whether your house was built on higher ground, a distinctive feature of rich and poor in the

city. Individuals – not government – have helped to rebuild, people such as Brad Pitt or the Winton Marsalis family – who with Habitat for Humanity – helped recreate a Musician's Village complete with play areas for children. New Orleans has retained its soul but there is still a lot of sadness around. Y'all visit though if ya can!



Rebuilding communities such as the Musicians' Village

Leon



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

Image resolution 300 dpi at 100%

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

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Size	Layout	Width	Height
Full page	Portrait (5mm bleed)	200mm	260mm
1/2 page	Portrait Landscape	95mm 200mm	260mm 125mm
1/4 page	Portrait Landscape	95mm 200mm	125mm 60mm
1/8 page	Portrait Landscape	40mm 95mm	125mm 60mm



EndNotes



“When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.”

— Helen Keller



Build and add

A lot of energy is wasted trying to make unwanted behaviors disappear as opposed to providing alternative choices that are useful to these children in meeting the standards of personal independence and social responsibility expected by their age and cultural group.

You cannot eliminate a behavior, whether it's useful or not. A particular behavior once owned is always there. Embrace those behaviors that appear irrational or inappropriate in the present context knowing, at one time, this behavior kept them alive (at one time it was the best choice with what they had learned up to that point in time). Everybody's doing the best they can with the information available to them.

Avoid getting caught up in the “unwanted” behaviors. How often does one hear “don't do this,” “don't do that,” — not real effective communication. Current research indicates that the mind refuses to recognize negatives. It hears and imagines “do, do this.”

— Sue Rose

Rose, S. (1985) Heart notes from the desk of a child care worker. *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*, vol. 1 (2), p.74

“All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt.”

— Charles M. Schulz



**“You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes. You
can steer yourself any direction
you choose. You're on your own.
And you know what you know.
And YOU are the one who'll de-
cide where to go...”**

— Dr. Seuss,
Oh, the Places You'll Go!

**“Do what you can, with what
you have, where you are.”**

— Theodore Roosevelt

**“Time you enjoy wasting
is not wasted time.”**

— Marthe Trolly-Curtin

**“We're all a little weird. And life is a
little weird. And when we find someone
whose weirdness is compatible with
ours, we join up with them and fall into
mutually satisfying weirdness—and call
it love—true love.”**

— Robert Fulghum,
True Love

**“What we *are* communicates
far more eloquently than anything
we say or do.”**

— Stephen Covey

“That is to say, forget to some extent
that we are trying to bring this person to a
different way of being or thinking. Approach
them as we would any other developing re-
lationship ... with openness and acceptance.
Keep in mind that we want this person to let
us into their world, not drag them into ours.
After all it is getting a picture of how they
see or experience the world around them
that will allow us to truly connect. It is
through this connection that we get a feel
for where they are with the world and
where they may go forward into it.”

— Joe Markey



information

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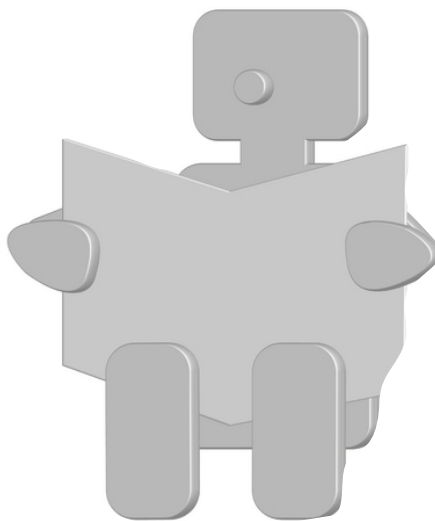
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