

# CYC-Online

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

**Introducing  
Children's Rights  
in Child and Youth  
Care Practice**

**Relational CYC  
Teaching**

**How to Ask  
for Help**

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

**Issue 225 / November 2017**



# Contents

<b>Editorial: Along for the Ride .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>James Freeman</i>	
<b>Infants May Not be Able to Speak but Their Voice is Important .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Linda Davidson</i>	
<b>Introducing Children’s Rights in Child and Youth Care Practice.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Tara M. Collins</i>	
<b>The CYC Waltz: For Brian Gannon.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Hans Skott-Myhre</i>	
<b>Father and Son .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Kiaras Gharabaghi</i>	
<b>Relational CYC Teaching .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Jack Phelan</i>	
<b>How to Ask for Help.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Doug Magnuson, Ashleigh Martinflatt and Priscilla Healey</i>	
<b>Living Elsewhere: Stories of Successful Women Who Lived in Group Care as Girls .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>Holly Kreider</i>	
<b>Postcard from Leon Fulcher .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Information.....</b>	<b>42</b>



# Along for the Ride

James Freeman

**T**ogether, wherever you are, we are all experiencing a transition of season. Those in the northern hemisphere are beginning to anticipate winter. Those in the southern hemisphere are getting ready for summer. All of life seems to be a transition between seasons. Just when we think we understand something, a new perspective arises and puts us in a transitional state. Just when we are used to the rhythm and pace of daily life, something new enters and stretches us from our norm.

Wherever you are and in whatever 'season' you find yourself in, we hope you are carrying CYC-Net along with you in your journey. It is, perhaps, one of the best ways in the world to stay connected with your colleagues across borders and individual viewpoints.

This month we introduce Tara Collins as a new writer who will be focusing on children's rights. Hans, Kiaras, Jack, and Doug join us as they usually do. We are grateful for their generosity in writing regularly in ways that challenge and support us in our daily work.

The lead article this month is a reprint from Linda Davidson at the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow.

Linda writes about infants, however, when I read it earlier this month I felt it applies to most any of the children or young people we work alongside. Consider her reflection:



*One of the greatest challenges...is that they do not have a 'voice' and can so easily be ignored or overlooked. All too often, we view [them] as belonging to [someone] rather than being an individual in their own right. [They] can become lost in the conflicting priorities of decision makers. A focus on the rights and voices of adults can so easily overshadow those of the [child or youth]. (Davidson, 2017)*

We are also pleased to offer a selection from Holly Kreider as an archive feature this month. Holly provides us an example of both the complexities of residential care and the resilience of young people in spite of the challenges our systems place in their way. We often speak of young people 'on the edge' and the voice of youth in this column expresses such in their own words. Gender, in all of its diversity, is a challenging aspect of human diversity in residential care. This column highlights some of the positive aspects of men working with young women. Notice the themes of belonging, mastery, and generosity as well. These are strong women.

Their sense of adventure, their strong self-reliance, their ability to observe cultural realities and injustices, their courage to protest these injustices even if it means forfeiting a "place" in society because they have already known and survived displacement before, and their compassion for the underdog, can make these women powerful voices for the ways we care for and nurture children. (Kreider, 2001).

Leon Fulcher, as always, give us something to think about in his monthly 'postcard'. This month he writes from Cape Kidnappers at Hawke's Bay on the East Coast of the North Island of New Zealand.

Next month's issue is a special issue featuring a number of presentations from the second Worlds CYC conference and FICE gathering in Vienna, Austria last year. Emmanuel Grupper joins me as a guest editor and we are confident the coming issue will be both edifying and challenging. Don't miss it.



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

Speaking of not missing out, if you haven't yet checked out the details of the third CYC World Conference gathering in California USA in January, visit the CYC-Net homepage to access the links to the conference agenda and venue details. Over 300 people will be gathering in January in my hometown of Ventura, California USA and I hope you will be one of them.

Thank you, as always, for being a faithful reader of *CYC-Online* and especially for your daily work alongside resilient and strong young people.

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**CYC-Online November 2017**

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**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**5**

# Infants May Not be Able to Speak but Their Voice is Important

Linda Davidson

**E**very child needs sensitive and responsive care, particularly in the early months and years of life when we know these experiences will lay the foundations for life-long well-being.

Infants identified as being 'at risk' within their birth families, and who enter our care system from birth or in the early months of life, are an increasingly large group of children in Scotland. This group is particularly vulnerable. Infants depend on adults understanding their care needs, being able to interpret their behaviour and provide appropriate and responsive care.

## The data

The number of looked after children in Scotland has been steadily increasing, with children under the age of 5 representing the biggest increase. Here's what the stats tell us:

- In 2006, 30% of our looked after population was under 5 years old, by 2016/17 this had increased to 38%; with a large proportion of these children aged under one.
- From 2006 to 2017 the number of looked after 0-1 year olds has increased by 59%.
- 25.8% of all Child Protection Orders granted in Scotland in 2016/17 involved a child under 20 days old.



**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

- 48.9% of all Child Protection Orders granted involved a child under two years old.

The increase could be attributed to any number of changes in practice including: services identifying risk during pregnancy; the early intervention, support and assessment of parents; and a developing understanding across children's services of the crucial importance of the antenatal period and first few months of life. A number of serious case reviews have also highlighted the inherent vulnerability of this age group, with 36% of all child deaths in the UK involving a child under 1 year old.

## **Challenges in meeting the needs of infants**

One of the greatest challenges in representing this age group is that they do not have a 'voice' and can so easily be ignored or overlooked. All too often, we view an infant as belonging to a parent, rather than being an individual in their own right. Infants can become lost in the conflicting priorities of decision makers. A focus on the rights and voices of adults can so easily overshadow those of the infant.

We often think of an infant as simply too young to understand, remember or be harmed by their experiences. This can lead to an infant's perspective being ignored, or not adequately acknowledged, recorded and included in recommendations and decisions about their future.

## **Understanding the needs of babies**

Infants have unique nonverbal ways of expressing themselves and have the same capacity to feel, experience stress and form secure relationships as any other child. From birth, babies communicate by crying, listening and displaying a vast range of facial expressions. Many infants in the care system will have experienced trauma in





their early months of life and might exhibit physical distress through disrupted sleep patterns, feeding problems, toileting difficulties, as well as emotional anxiety and distress. All behaviour is communication and we need to pay significantly more attention to the unique ways that infants express themselves and educate parents, caregivers and professionals to recognise and respond to relationship-based attachment behaviours.

As part of our PACE (Permanence and Care Excellence) work in Orkney, a well-being baby tool has been used to support parents in understanding their baby's needs. This simple visual tool presents to the parents or carers what the child's needs are by sharing what's required for them to develop i.e. 'I need you to think of me as an individual. I need you to understand how I feel.'

In writing this blog, I typed the words 'infant' and 'baby' into some of our key children's services search engines in Scotland and failed to find anything. I found no information to support an understanding of the needs of infants, or information that might best support practitioners working with them and their families. On each website, an assumption was made that all children have the capacity to participate, have a voice and 'be heard'.

Children's services need to work closely with families to help them understand their child's stage of development, which will have been influenced by their early experiences. Pre-birth assessment is also key. A recent study in England, carried out by Lancaster University, looked at vulnerable birth mothers who have had children repeatedly removed from their care and what can be done to break this negative cycle.

Given the growing population and vulnerability of looked after infants in Scotland, I think we need to consider them with the priority they deserve, as a distinct group with their own needs. Services need to adapt to ensure that all those involved in their life (parents, extended family, carers and professionals) understand their needs, give them the voice they deserve and ensure we get it right from the start.



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

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Pre-birth support and early assessment is the topic of a free workshop on 30 November 2017. Visit the following link for information and to register: <https://www.celcis.org/training-and-events/events-pages/pre-birth-planning-and-early-assessment-where-are-we-now>

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**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

# Introducing Children's Rights in Child and Youth Care Practice

Tara M. Collins

**H**ow do children's rights connect to your work? What relevance do they have to your relationships with children? It can be challenging to think about children's rights in practice. This new column will allow us to explore these and related questions together.

Why are children's rights important? Human rights essentially mean respect, which for children and youth require that they understand themselves and that others appreciate them as human beings, not simply as clients or files. There are examples of how institutions and people can respect these rights of young people but there are too many instances where these rights are ignored, dismissed and rejected resulting with objectification, harm, exploitation and death. As three 12 year-old young people in a focus group in Ireland named Maxine, John and Stones (self-chosen pseudonyms) explained: "Adults have power over children. Children aren't as respected" (Collins, 2013, p. 591). But another young person outlined: "I have the right...to be treated like a human" (Del Monte and Akbar, 2012, p. 19). Child rights are significant because as another young person described: "I think making it a rights issue kind of escalates it from just something that is like unpleasant or annoying to a really serious problem. It really makes people think" (Collins and Paré, 2016, p. 769). But children's rights can be difficult to understand and practice especially when one is busy. But I think it is useful to remember what Michael Freeman (2007) highlighted: "For the powerful, and as far as children are concerned adults are always powerful, rights are an inconvenience. The powerful would find it easier if those below them lacked rights. It would be easier to rule,



**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

decision-making would be swifter, cheaper, more efficient, more certain” (p. 8). This type of decision-making should not rationalize continuing our efforts with children and youth without respecting their human rights.

In terms of my background, I have been working in the area of children’s rights since 1996. But I have been interested in meeting others where they are at and hanging out with children and youth since I was a young person myself. When I first learned about human rights (as a young adult (!), which illustrates the issue of children’s rights education...), it was like a fire was lighted within me. Since then, I have been intrigued by the possibilities and the demands of children’s rights offer in terms of how we relate and understand young people. Young people themselves can inspire and continue to guide us in this direction. For example, a young Paraguayan exhorted others to “better understand human rights and the implications their actions have over people’s lives” (UNICEF, Global Compact & Save the Children, 2011, p. 8). My efforts to better appreciate these rights over the years have led to various voluntary pursuits and work in the non-governmental, government and most recently academic sectors.



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**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

There are several topics that will be explored in this space every two months including background to children’s rights, children’s participation, protection, terminology, child rights education, the role of play, work, advocacy, criminalization of young people among others. There will be various local, Canadian and international examples and issues that can be discussed. I don’t have all the questions or the answers, so your contributions to support the dialogue about children’s rights are warmly invited.

I look forward to your ideas of what we can explore together in this space and to the child rights journey that we will take together.

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# The CYC Waltz: For Brian Gannon

Hans Skott-Myhre  
hskottmy@kennesaw.edu

*The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways.  
The point, however, is to change it.*  
Karl Marx

*So, we can agonize all we want over these incongruities and paradoxes in our starting relationships, but at some point we will simply have to transpose from weighing up the odds into letting go and trusting, from thinking into doing. To stop our questioning and philosophizing and our verbal egg-dance and just do the relationship. Let's go waltz.*  
Brian Gannon

I was talking with my CYC students the other day about how they will begin their life work of engaging with young people. We had spent several weeks reading the key authors in the field, discussing the importance of the characteristics of CYC, the importance of life space, the contradictions and antagonisms of professionalism, the centrality of self-reflection and so on. They had done a wonderful job of giving thoughtful consideration to these ideas and facilitated rich discussions of how these ideas have impacted and might impact on their interactions with the young people they will encounter in their life and work. As we talked, suddenly an issue emerged that I had forgotten would be a central concern for someone just beginning this work. They were terrified about how it will go when they actually get out there and start doing this for *real*.

Part of the reason I had forgotten this was that, like many of my generation of CYC practitioners, my entry into the field didn't start with an academic



**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

introduction. If we take a look at the profiles of some of the main thinkers, teachers, practitioners and scholars in our field, we find that initially they had little or no academic orientation to working with young people. Indeed, their introduction to the field was often quite accidental (all of the following profiles and many more can be found at <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-people>)

Kiaras Gharabaghi describes his entry into CYC –

*I answered an ad in the local paper for a group home worker. I showed up, was asked what I would do if two kids were fighting over the TV and apparently answered correctly, so I got the job. This wasn't supposed to be my career, but I think I was hooked after the first three weeks on the job.*

Mark Krueger tell us –

*A friend told me about an opening for a night watchman at the residential treatment center where he worked. I applied thinking I would use it as an opportunity to get a masters in a human service area. I had studied economics as an undergrad and was looking for something else.*

Gerry Fewster began as a teacher and probation officer –

*I began working with kids as a school teacher in the UK in 1961. From 1963 to 1966 I worked as a probation officer in Liverpool before moving to the British Columbia Probation Service. Being convinced that too little attention was being given to the families of 'troubled kids' I went back to graduate school and emerged as a Family Therapist working at the Burnaby Mental Health Centre.*



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

Carol Stuart began her career as a waterfront counselor at Browndale's summer camp and Thom Garfat describes his entry into the work as –

*I was working as a janitor and asked Betty how you got a job working with people. She sent me over to see her friend and then next week I was working part-time in a residential emergency shelter for adolescents. No real experience, no training, no relevant education – but that's the way it was in those days (1971).*

Sybill Artz started out as an artist and fashion designer –

*After graduating from high school and traveling, although I was taking courses in education, I was really interested in art and design and for a time, believed that I wanted to work in the fashion industry and even attended an applied arts school, but while I pursued these interests, I was almost inadvertently inducted into what for me, became a more compelling calling . . . I became distracted from persuading people to try the latest in fashion and consumer goods, by an odd assortment of children and young people that congregated near the door to the shop. On a regular basis, a group of about ten or so children from an infant in a stroller through to a seventeen year old boy, appeared in front of the boutique to spend their time in the street and to take shelter under Angel's awnings. I soon got to know these children and found that they were members of three families whose fathers I never saw, and whose mothers worked and left them in charge of each other until the mothers returned at the end of the work day. These children were far more interesting than the clothes, and they seemed to need involvement and help more than the customers did. I only realized later that when I became more concerned with those children than with selling clothes, I was in fact choosing a profession and a life-long vocation.*



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**15**

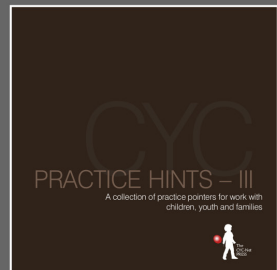
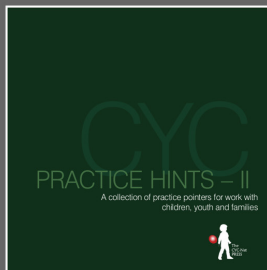
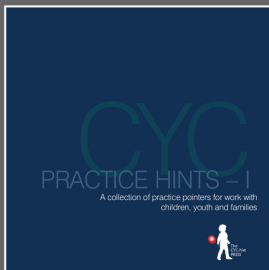


For myself, I had completed my B.A. in literature vowing never to return to academia. Instead I joined a troupe of street poets in Seattle called the Dogtown Poetry Theater. I worked blue collar jobs and ended up working the canneries and fishing boats in Alaska. When I returned to the lower 48 I had some money and decided to do some volunteer work. Up the street there was this mental health clinic and I started working with young adults there.

Very few if any of us in the 60's or early 70's started out by getting a degree or seeking formal education in working with young people. Of course, today that is different. Rather than plunging into the work headfirst and seeing what was possible, my students have been inducted into believing that a university or college degree is an absolute necessity for pursuing a life working with young people. As an academic, I certainly have mixed feelings about this. From my own experience, I believe there was some advantage to accidentally stumbling into this work and then seeking some education as a way of making sense of my experience. That said, I have questions about whether or not education makes you a better youth worker. I do think exposure to the rich ecology of ideas and theories available to

## AVAILABLE FROM THE CYC-Net PRESS

A collection of pointers written by Brian Gannon  
for work with children, youth and families



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**16**

university/college students opens possibilities for intellectual and emotional flexibility that can be quite useful in working with other human beings. Is university the only place where this kind of human depth is available? I would argue absolutely not. Some of the best CYC workers I have known had no formal education whatsoever.

So, for me there is a balance to be struck between thought and practice. I would argue that universities and colleges are quite good at teaching us the value of thought. I am not so sure that CYC departments and programs are as good at teaching practice. In fact, I would suggest that when CYC academics are driven by competencies that reduce practice to rehearsal they risk giving students the following experience –

*My first year of grad school was split. You split up your week between being in school where you are pretending to be a therapist with your class mates and professors watching you pretending to be a therapist (and then tell you how to give a better therapist performance) and the other half of your time you are at your internship, which is where you play therapist, but the people are real and you are pretending into their real lives and real problems.*

<http://snapjudgment.org/confessions-of-a-baby-snatcher>

It is stunningly difficult to strike the right balance between thought and practice when attempting to educate and train CYC workers. On the one hand, we risk producing CYC workers who are incredibly adept theoretically and philosophically but have no real sense of what they will do when they get out there. On the other hand, there really is no way to simulate effectively what it will be like when they get their first position and start really doing the work. No wonder my students are terrified.

Perhaps we can draw some solace from the wisdom of the late Brian Gannon who was a true visionary for our field. Writing in the context of the complexity of what he called an improbable relationship (<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cyccol-0408-gannon.html>) he states –



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

*We stand rather deflated at the threshold of any relationship we enter into with kids and families. Some or all of their expectations may be unreasonable and unrealistic; and our assurances quixotic, extravagant, even misleading. We feel the need to resolve the ambiguities. The values and good intentions which probably brought us to this point suddenly look a little thin. The toys we brought along seem embarrassingly inappropriate. We don't even know the language.*

I think that Brian has this right and we will miss his nuanced voice for that reason. Nothing in the field of human relationships is without contradiction and antagonism. Marx teaches us this and Gannon echoes it. But neither Marx nor Brian Gannon suggest that this should lead to a paralysis of action or analysis. It just means that thought and action go hand in hand and require continual revision and experimentation. At the end of the day, Marx tells us that what drives history forward are the material struggles of real living human beings, not abstract systems of ideal philosophical precepts. Brian brings this home to CYC when he says that,

Tomorrow morning we are different people setting off upon a different day. What makes it all different is that yesterday we set out. We are already on the journey by virtue of the fact that yesterday we started. We worried about all of those questions and the answers we wanted to make. But the terror was not in the words and concepts; it was in the joining, in the fact that we touched hands and started out together for who knows where. Yesterday we didn't know each other; today we do.

My students are justifiably terrified, because the act of touching hands and forming living relations is daunting. But as Brian says in the epigraph that opens this column, at some point we have to simply join the dance, even when that means that at first, we may be a bit clumsy. Over time if we keep at it we might truly learn to waltz with some degree of grace. Certainly, Brian Gannon danced well and we can only hope to aspire to that level of grace.



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**18**

# Father and Son

Kiaras Gharabaghi

**T**he events depicted below may or may not be real (they are). All characters depicted may or may not be fictitious (they are not).

*Father:* Son, I would like to talk to you about something I am concerned about. First, let me say that I love you very much.

*Son:* Thanks, father, I love you too. What are your worries?

*Father:* About a month ago, I received a call from your school. It said that you missed a class that day. I didn't think much of it and assumed you might have forgotten to sign in. Then I received another call about two weeks ago, again that you were absent from a class. Again, I wanted to give you the benefit of the doubt. But today, a third call, and now I am concerned about you skipping classes at school.

*Son:* Father, I am not skipping classes at school *per se*.

*Father:* What does *per se* mean?

*Son:* Like you father, I am making decisions about time management. I am proud to have learned what I know about time management from you.

*Father:* I am not sure I understand ...



**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

*Son:* I want to make sure that the little time I have at school is spent wisely. I am a little offended that you would call this 'skipping'.

*Father:* But you are in fact skipping classes, right?

*Son:* No father, I am trying to be responsible about the things I do, and I weight the benefits and costs of different opportunities. That is good, is it not?

*Father:* What do you do when you don't go to class?

*Son:* I spend time with my girlfriend. We work on our relationship.

*Father:* So instead of going to class, you go and hang out with your girlfriend?

*Son:* I knew you would understand, father. And I am glad you value what is important to me. Not every youth has that support from their parents. And I want you to know that my girlfriend appreciates it too.

*Father:* Son, I don't think you are responding to my concern. I don't want you to hang out with your girlfriend. I want you to attend your classes.

*Son:* It sounds like you don't like my girlfriend. Or that you don't respect my choices. Or that you feel the need to make me do things I don't want to do. Father, I am worried about our relationship.

*Father:* There is nothing wrong with our relationship! And I like your girlfriend, respect your choices, and feel no need to make you do things.

*Son:* It will take time for me to really belief you mean what you say, father. Trust is not something automatic. Please, father, let us not grow apart. I ask only



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**20**

that you think about why you would be so critical toward your son. Am I not a good son?

*Father:* Son, you are the best son I can imagine.

*Son:* Words are easy to speak, father, but please take some time to think about how you could have hurt me with your words today. I won't mention this to my girlfriend; we should work on these issues together and avoid distractions from others. I suggest you don't mention this conversation to Mother so that our relationship work can be authentic.

\* \* \*

*Mother:* Husband, did you speak to our son about skipping school?

*Father:* Yes, I did.

*Mother:* Were you clear that is unacceptable? What did you say to him?

*Father:* Darling, first let me say that I love you very much ...

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**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**21**

# Relational CYC Teaching

Jack Phelan

I am aware of at least two CYC graduate students who are researching the idea of Relational Teaching in our field. The development of CYC faculty has been an area of interest for several writers over the past 20 years and we are getting clearer about the professional experience and teaching approaches that fit best for CYC education at the college, university and graduate level. The various schools that offer CYC diplomas, degrees and graduate credentials in CYC practice have different, sometimes contentious criteria for hiring new faculty, and this mirrors the hiring practices in our field for both practitioners and supervisors. This focus on relational teaching approaches is a healthy trend and hopefully is also becoming a theme in building robust CYC programs where relational practice, rather than behavior control, is the overarching treatment strategy. I would also like to suggest that there are many CYC trainers and CYC training programs where relational teaching approaches can also occur. So what exactly is this approach and how does it make a difference?

Adrian Ward, the author of *Intuition Is Not Enough* (1998), looked at this twenty years ago. He is a faculty member, teaching at a university in England offering a Social Work credential with a CYC emphasis, which is the professional standard there. While not a totally new idea, the way we look at relational practice has continued to develop, so there is real interest here in Canada and I have decided to add my thoughts to the issue.

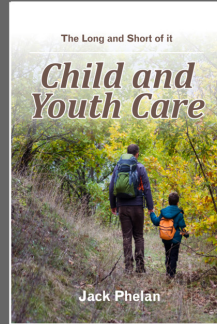
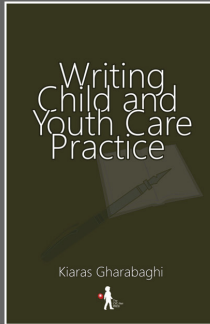


**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

**22**

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I have written about teaching in college and university CYC programs about 10 years ago (Phelan, 2005) where I discussed the backgrounds and credentials that faculty should have in order to be legitimate CYC teachers. This is an extension of those ideas, with some more fully formed understanding of relational practice.

I believe that professional development in our field involves at least three significant shifts in both perspective and capability for both practitioners and supervisors, and that the journey through those shifts takes about five years (Phelan, 2017). I am thinking along the same lines of there being three significant shifts in the teaching professional, which may take a longer time. I also strongly believe that an essential qualification for new faculty is that they have significant experience in the CYC profession prior to becoming faculty in a professional school.

The initial years of CYC teaching typically involve a competent professional, who identifies as a CYC practitioner, whose teaching identity is focused on being a CYC practitioner who happens to be teaching. The main issues for this new faculty are on putting as much content as possible into each course and covering many



**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

**23**



concepts in a short time frame. Students usually describe new faculty as being very smart and often are impressed with how much the new teacher knows.

After a few years, the person begins to be curious about teaching as a separate and analogous profession that needs more exploration, and curiosity about learning theories and teaching strategies become a focus. At this point the developing faculty member starts to pay attention to how content is delivered, not content per se. Other presentations are remembered not because of the topic but because of interesting teaching strategies that were observed. The developing faculty member now describes him/herself as a teacher who happens to be teaching CYC ideas.

The third stage/level of development is where being a professional CYC practitioner and being a professional teacher merge and the person now sees him/herself as a person who is a congruent CYC teacher. This is the point where relational teaching becomes a truly integrated part of the dynamics in the classroom.

At the first level of faculty development relational teaching is limited by the self-conscious focus of the teacher, where being competent is based on delivering content and coming across as skillful in CYC ideas. The ability to model relational practice is less integrated and becomes another topic to be explained and studied.

At the second level of faculty development the concept of relational teaching becomes a way to deliver learning, a theoretical construct which can be an effective way to transmit learning and support the integration of a key part of CYC methodology.

At the third level of faculty development, relational teaching is the only way to think about what teaching should be, and the belief that students need to feel connected to the teacher and cared about as an individual become integrated into everything that happens in the classroom.

CYC practice is described as a relational and developmental activity in the life space of people. CYC teaching can and should mirror this professional practice so that students can experience a congruence between what is being done in the



classroom and what they will be doing in practice. this is why faculty need to have CYC practice experience and be capable of performing at a relational level so that they can actually perform as a CYC practitioner in the classroom.

Some of the hallmarks of relational teaching include –

- Knowing every student’s name
- Connecting through small interactions in many ways throughout the teaching period
- Using the life space of the classroom to create a safe, connected environment
- Creating the belief in each student that you care about their success

There are several more do’s and don’ts, but this is enough to stimulate further discussion.

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**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**25**

# How to Ask for Help

Doug Magnuson, Ashleigh Martinflatt and Priscilla Healey

**M**ost of us are inept at the skill of asking for help, even though our profession assumes competence at “helping.” Sometimes it is the mechanics of asking, and sometimes it is the social psychology or assumptions about learning and expertise that are difficult. We can do better, and we have to because our professional and educational worlds are too complicated and too big for any one of us to master them. If we do not learn to ask, we learn less, and we work less effectively. As David Weinberger (2014) says about the modern world: “...we are less sure about what we know, who knows what, or even what it means to know at all.” This is a good thing, but we have to adapt.

Knowing how to ask is an important evaluation and research skill, for everyone from first-year students to executive directors and instructors. We have learned a lot about this skill from paying attention to how data analysts are working these days, and we have learned some things about what does not work from our experience asking bad questions, from listening to students’ questions, and reading comments and questions on the CYC-Net discussion group. The best guidelines we have seen recently have been developed by data analysts, statisticians, and computer programmers for online communities. Here we borrow a few ideas from a help site for data analysts and computer programmers (<http://stackoverflow.com/help/how-to-ask>).

The first step is surprising. Before we ask for help we “search and research, keeping track of what we find.” Some kinds of questions are lazy or can perpetuate learned/taught helplessness. First look for the answer yourself. We also look to see if others have encountered the same problem; if they have, we can include this



**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

information in our request. Second, even if you are asking in person, “write a title that summarizes the specific problem.” In an email, this is the subject line. See if you can summarize the issue in one sentence in a way that clearly communicates the exact problem. Here are some example of good and bad titles from education because that is the context in which this essay arose.

Bad: Frustration with the paper

Good: How to describe youth participants in a pilot study

Bad: Group issues

Good: Group scheduling incompatibility

Bad: Software doesn’t work

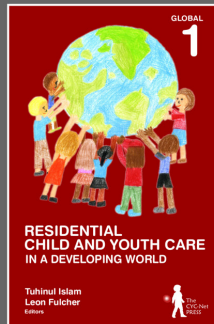
Good: Online quiz question drops a score

Bad: I need help

Good: Reading online is hard for me.

Bad: Aaarghhh!

## AVAILABLE FROM THE CYC-Net PRESS



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**27**

Next provide an expanded concrete, precise description of the problem, the circumstances or the issue. Provide enough detail so that the responder or reader can duplicate or imagine the situation. In education it means explaining exactly the problem or the goal, the circumstances in which it is needed, the resources you have available, and what you have already done. In professional settings it means describing the circumstance when the problem arises including who was involved, the antecedents and consequents, the purpose of the setting, and examples of when the problem shows itself and what you have already tried and why it did not work. Describe the diagnoses you have already done. The goal here is that the respondent can reproduce the problem if it is a material difficulty or recognize the problem if it is a practice or educational issue. Here are some additional clues that make it more likely you will receive good help.

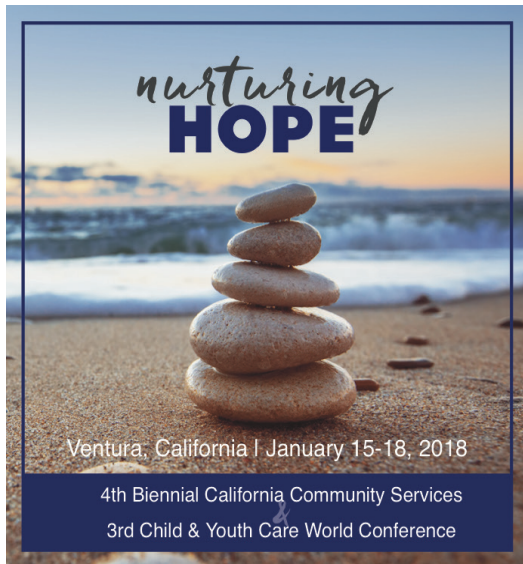
- A. Describe the symptoms and the facts of the problem--not your guesses. A symptom or fact is that "dad does not show up for appointments." A guess or inference is that "dad does not care about his kid."
- B. Avoid extremes of emotion, especially accidental arrogance or groveling. "This class does not meet my needs, and other students are not interested in learning." "I know I am wasting your time and a pathetic excuse for a human being."
- C. Only speak for yourself. "A few students and I have been talking, and we think that the due date for the assignment should be changed." Even the computer programmers talk about taking responsibility for oneself.
- D. Ask for help--not solutions. The solution is your responsibility, not theirs.
- E. Do not ask, "How can I use X to do Y?" Ask how to accomplish Y, and let the responder provide the best solution they know.
- F. Provide a question, not a "shout out" or cry for help.
- G. If you are a student, do not post homework questions. Understandable, but it is lazy.



- H. Do not flag questions as urgent, unless the person you are asking has a moral or supervisory responsibility to you.
- I. When you figure out the solution, share it with those who helped you.
- J. If those who respond to your question behave badly, and some will, take the high road and ignore them. Submit one request at a time.
- K. Select a method that is best suited to the need, whether face-to-face, email, text, on-line forum, listserv, or passenger pigeon.

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**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

**29**

# Living Elsewhere: Stories of Successful Women Who Lived in Group Care as Girls

Holly Kreider

**M**uch of group care research has overlooked girls and women, as well as the positive outcomes and resiliency fostered by some group care experiences (Kreider, 1997). Such group care success stories and gender-sensitive analyses are vital to strengthening providers' morale and knowledge. So how do girls' experiences in group care connect to positive outcomes in adulthood? Interviews with eleven former group care residents who are now recognized for their professional, community, and educational accomplishments shed light on this question.

First, it must be said that several of these successful women remember much of their group care experiences in negative terms, despite their many positive outcomes. Many recall feeling uncared for and set apart as girls in group care, an experience which often echoes the early turmoil and separations they had already suffered in their families of origin.

In this general context of nonbelonging, certain positive group care practices and people took on special significance. Specifically, women fondly remember practices that led to caring relationships and a sense of membership in a group or second "family." These group care supports combined with girls' active roles in maximizing opportunities to experience care and belonging.



Women connect these group care experiences to later life and success, including their choices in work, education, community involvement, and relationships. As Laura says, "I recognize its tendrils in my life." Specifically, these women describe becoming adventurers, advocates for relationships, and fighters of justice in ways that have earned them professional recognition, academic achievement, and leadership positions. Each of these themes are addressed more fully below.

## Living elsewhere

*I think the worst thing about the orphanage that I went to and the impact it has on me was to believe that I was different and inferior and somehow rejected by my family, by society, you know? — Hope*

*In [students' and sometimes teachers'] minds you were either a murderer or you were an orphan, and one was about as bad as the other. — Susan*

*You develop a sense of belonging when you're a part of a family and mainstream society, a part of something as you're growing up. But if you're always an outsider, how do you develop that sense of belonging? — Marion*

Many of the women in this study describe a powerful psychological experience of being set apart, rejected, and unloved. They use a variety of words and metaphors to convey this sense of relational and societal alienation: "not belonging," "not fitting in," "beyond the pale of humanity," "on the outskirts of a social order," and "elsewhere." Cat recalls a pivotal moment in group care when she realized her place as an outsider:

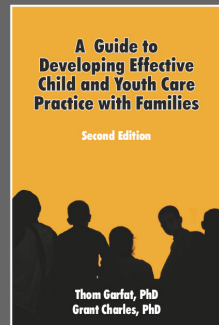
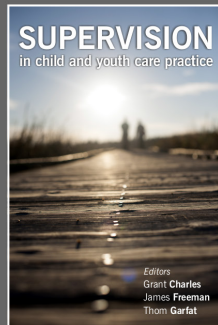
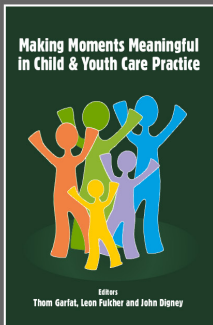




*I still remember the day that I stood at the skating rink. We had an outdoor skating area outside the walls [of the orphanage] for the neighborhood. Watching these families skating around, and watching these friends skating around together, holding hands. There would be whole family groups those days that would skate together. And I still remember standing there with my skates in a bleak winter in Wisconsin, and suddenly getting, really getting completely, that I was outside the pale of humanity. And I'll never forget that day.*

Repeated images and stories of girls set apart from relationships and society pepper women's interviews. While a few women recall a powerful experience of belonging and being cared for in group care, the pervasive themes of isolation, rejection and abuse were psychologically interesting in light of the exceptional strengths these women possess. As Changing Leaf reminds me, former group care residents are not like "pupp[ies] needing to be rescued" — a typical misconception of those who have grown up in group care. Rather, these women have become

## AVAILABLE FROM THE CYC-Net PRESS



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**32**

capable and concerned citizens, mothers, friends, daughters, partners, and professionals.

As girls, however, many of the women felt defined by who they were not: biological or "real" children, promising future citizens, and/or human beings worthy of respect and love. They also felt defined by where they were not: in a home, in a family, in a neighborhood or community.

These perceptions were gleaned in part from the behavior of those around them. Abuse or abandonment by family members, unequal treatment by foster parents, nonrelational group care practices and structures, and social stigma in school and the community, each contributed to these women's experiences of alienation. This experience was often compounded by social factors—girls found themselves discriminated or devalued based on their gender, age, economic status, and educational level. Amazingly, it is partly out of this experience of extreme marginalization that these women built a strong sense of themselves and their relationships and came to locate a meaningful place for themselves in society. Of course, women also attribute much of their strength and success to experiences of being truly cared for in their families, group care settings, and later life, as described below.

## **Experiencing the "care" in group care**

*I've always considered myself very lucky, because even through all the changes that I've gone through, there's always been somebody there who's been good to me, and who've made me feel good enough about myself enough to keep it together. — Sunny*

Several women in this study attribute much of their success to the group care settings in which they were raised. Often the positive group care factors named are described as ones that counteract the absence of care and belonging so prevalent in women's descriptions of early life. In particular, women name group care



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

structures, programs and staff that helped them as girls to recognize and rely on their own strengths, relate deeply to others, and feel prepared to participate in a larger community and society. In this way, these women describe aspects of group care that fostered psychological health (Gilligan, 1991) and led to future success.

The younger women in the study—April, Sally, Cindy and Sunny— tend to describe these positive supports more often, perhaps because they lived in smaller group care settings common in more recent decades. They frequently describe those settings as instrumental to their health and later success by providing a sense of home and family. For a few of the women in larger facilities, mainly Changing Leaf and Marion, they remember group care providing a sense of safety and opportunities to play and socialize with other children.

*It's just a group of people that were really an example for seeing what's possible, and what you can do and how you can do it. They really gave me everything I needed to go out in the world. — April*

*[It] means a lot when somebody's really showing you their interest and not just being phony to get through the day and earn a paycheck. — Michelle*

*It's like you finally have someone who really loves you and cares for you and you just want to keep giving. — Sally*

April, Michelle, and Sally are among the women who describe a common support for several girls: valued relationships with certain male caregivers in group care. Given the abuse several women experienced by men prior to and after exiting group care, relationships with men that did not become sexualized or abusive were of great importance. These safe and authentic relationships with male caregivers in group care often provided one stable, valuable connection with an adult over time. In more than one case, these relationships lasted well into women's adult lives,



with men becoming like father figures, attending their weddings, the birth of their children, and other significant life events.

## **Coping creatively**

*I think that everything is based on that [experience in group care]. I mean my whole psyche responded to that. — Hope*

*The friendships that I developed there made it possible for me to have relationships away from there. . . the fact that I stayed in touch with some of them made it easier for me. — Cindy*

*Part of what bothered me so much as a kid is the fact that there are all these laws and rules and regulations and yet the kid never had any input or any say. In order to have your say, you had to really really fight hard. — Susan*

Women also actively shaped their group care experiences and responded to a lack of care and belonging in ways that contributed to their later success. Women responded in a range of psychologically and relationally creative ways to group care settings that often seemed very restrictive. As adults, these women have continued to approach life and relationships in these creative ways or have discovered new and better ways of coping with difficult situations.

Women's responses often created a sense of connection to themselves, others, and the world. For example, Cindy sought therapy as a creative way to identify her own thoughts and feelings, but it also provided her with a lasting connection with an adult figure, her therapist. She also made close friends in group care and went to great lengths to maintain these friendships over time. On the other hand, some of the coping strategies that fostered these women's psychological health and professional accomplishment, were also harmful psychologically. For example, by focusing her energy on academic and athletic performance, Laura excelled in ways



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**35**

that brought her the recognition and attention of those around her. At the same time, she observed that this singular focus distracted her as a girl from many of her feelings and became a way of numbing herself emotionally. As an adult, Laura practices and teaches tai chi; she has transformed her love of physical conditioning to one that also creates a sense of spiritual and relational connection.

## **Transforming experiences into a gift to others**

*I think it does have something to do with that little saying "If it doesn't kill you, it'll make you stronger." — Laura*

*There's some very evolved children being born. I know of a lot of kids who've grown up in a lot of suffering. A tremendous amount of suffering, and who come out just pure. It's like a lotus coming straight through mud. — Changing Leaf*

My decision to focus on women who have earned professional recognition, educational accomplishment, and/or community leadership arose in direct response to research literature that focuses on adult deficits linked to group care life. Yet other self-definitions of personal strength and success arose, many of which relate to these women's early experiences of nonbelonging and represent hard-earned psychological transformations in their lives. Laura shares an evolving recognition of her strengths, which are unique yet universally human. "I think I know that I'm a viable member of society. And I feel like I've really healed a lot and have something to give to people. But a lot of it involves, I think the best of it involves, feelings that are not the regular run-of-the-mill feelings."

These women's sensibilities are unique and complex, and yet accessible and commonplace. They describe becoming adventurers, advocates for relationships, and fighters of justice in ways that have earned them professional recognition, academic achievement, and leadership positions.



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**36**

Many of these strengths encompass personal, relational and political dimensions. The relational and political dimensions are particularly notable, and suggest that these women should be looked to for agency in social and political change. First, their combination of strengths makes it likely that they will risk the costs of speaking out against social conventions that omit or disregard relationships and caring. Their sense of adventure, their strong self-reliance, their ability to observe cultural realities and injustices, their courage to protest these injustices even if it means forfeiting a "place" in society because they have already known and survived displacement before, and their compassion for the underdog, can make these women powerful voices for the ways we care for and nurture children. Their collective experiences of nonbelonging, their seemingly endless strategies for coping, and the caring supports they sometimes experienced as girls, suggest that the changes they would fight for would honor relationships in new and important ways. Also, the nature of these women's accomplishments show that they have used their strengths in this very way—to transform practices and policies in professional, educational, and community life so that relationships are valued. For example, their achievements include directing group care programs, leading community groups, and studying and advocating for underprivileged children. Each has transcended her trauma and maximized her positive moments in group care by engaging with the world and transforming her experiences into a gift to others.

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This article originally appeared in 2001 in issue 26 of CYC-Online: Kreider, H. (2001). Living elsewhere: Stories of successful women who lived in group care as girls. *CYC-Online*, 26. Retrieved from <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0301-kreider.html>



**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

# Postcard from Leon Fulcher

*Cape Kidnappers at Hawke's Bay, East Coast NZ North Island*

**K**ia Ora and warm greetings from Cape Kidnappers! This is one of those special places well worth a visit. A tractor-trailer ride along the beach at low tide with a climb up 240 steps is one option to visit the Gannet colony. Alternatively, one can take the overland 4-wheel drive route across 'The Farm' that has been transformed into an exclusive golf course and lodge with a New Zealand bird sanctuary. If you have loads of money, check it out at <https://www.robertsonlodges.com/the-lodges/cape-kidnappers>. We stayed at a beach house!

Like so many places in New Zealand, Cape Kidnappers was named by Captain Cook when on 15 October 1769, Captain Cook and the crew of the HMS Endeavour made landfall on the



*Cape Kidnappers, Hawke's Bay on the East Coast of New Zealand's North Island*



*One of four Australasian Gannet Colonies at Cape Kidnappers*



**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

**38**

east coast of the North Island, in a region today known as Hawke's Bay. While moored close to shore, a Tahitian servant to Cook's interpreter, was the victim of an attempted kidnapping by local Maori who mistakenly believed he had been kidnapped by the crew of the Endeavour. The crew of the Endeavour opened fire, killing two Maori and wounding a third, while the servant managed to escape and swim back to his ship. It was a big mistake. As a child and youth care worker have you ever introduced children or young people to bird-watching in the course of your practice? There is something very special about hanging out together in different environments where you can listen to and watch the bird life around you – whether by a stream or beach, in a forest meadow, a rain forest or urban park. It gets even better if you have binoculars. Free applications can be loaded on to your smart phone to help identify birds by markings and sounds. Learning to whisper is fun.

Cape Kidnappers is now the largest private sanctuary in the country for New Zealand's endangered birds and reptiles. A major predator challenge involved clearance of introduced stoats, weasels, feral cats, rats, mice and possums from the 2500 hectare sanctuary.

With the fence and predator clearance,



*Students check the new 10.6 km predator-proof fence that crosses the peninsula*



*New Zealand's endangered Brown Teal or Pateke protected at Cape sanctuary*



*The Australasian Gannet with 1.8 m wingspan soar and then dive into the water*





endangered native birds have now been re-introduced in partnership with the Dept of Conservation. The endangered Brown Teal or Pateke Duck has been re-introduced, along with the Spotted and Little Brown Kiwi. Check it out at <http://www.poutiri.co.nz/partners/te-matau-a-maui-cape-kidnappers-sanctuary>.

Recently flightless *Takahe* have been released here, declared extinct in 1934 but a small colony was discovered in 1947 in the South Island's remote Fiordland. *Tuatara* lizards – the world's oldest link to the dinosaur – have also been re-introduced!

But we were there to watch the Gannets, and there they were! If you ever have the opportunity to sit by the seaside watching Gannets dive into the water, you will never forget.

The colonies are also unforgettable. If you go with young people, don't be in a hurry. Take a thermos and some cookies and take time to watch the dramas that unfold in front of you.

Notice how nests in the colony are located equidistant from the others, made of dry seaweed that the male birds gather for their prospective mates. Take offs and landings are awkward. Initial fly-over to locate and then land beside a mate is followed by ritual greeting.



*Nesting colonies start gathering in July and one egg is laid in October*



*Male birds gather early and collect seaweed to attract female nest builders*



*Social space is carefully managed with pairs greeting after returning to the nest*





*Colony behaviour involves life on the top of cliffs that begins one egg per nest*

Leon



**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**41**

# Information

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**John Digney** – Tusla, Ireland

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**Leon Fulcher** – Transformation, New Zealand

**Aurora Demonte** – Fleming College, Canada

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**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**42**

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In general:

- Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words
- The style of a paper is up to the author
- We prefer APA formatting for referencing
- We are willing to work with first-time authors to help them get published
- We accept previously published papers as long as copyright permission is assured
- We are open to alternative presentations such as poems, artwork, photography, etc.

Articles can be submitted to the email address below for consideration.

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**CYC-Online November 2017**

ISSN 1605-7406

**43**



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½ page	\$200.00	\$150.00	\$120.00	\$90.00
¼ page	\$125.00	\$100.00	\$75.00	\$50.00

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**CYC-Online November 2017**

**ISSN 1605-7406**

**44**