

CYC-Online

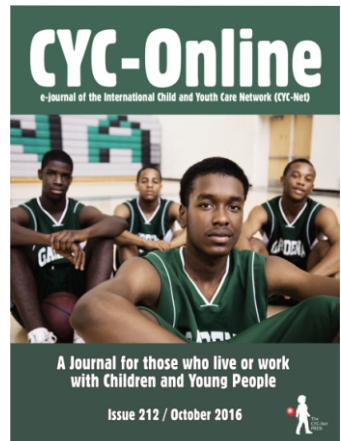
e-journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net)



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

Issue 212 / October 2016



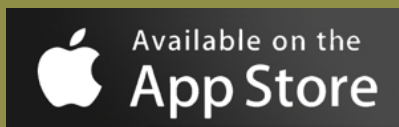


Contents

Editorial: Soul Care	/ 4
The World Beyond our Practice	/ 6
<i>Kiaras Gharabaghi</i>	
The Challenge of Relational CYC Practice	/ 10
<i>Jack Phelan</i>	
Dancing Lessons	/ 13
<i>Hans Skott-Myhre</i>	
Embracing Dual Roles in Child and Youth Care: Researcher and Practitioner	/ 18
<i>Marleigh Pirnasar</i>	
Preparing Child and Youth Care Practitioners for the Field	/ 23
<i>Theresa Fraser</i>	
How Wounded are our Healers?	/ 34
<i>Maxwell Smart and John Digney</i>	
Embodying Self and Body in Practice	/ 40
<i>Aurora De Monte</i>	
I Spy with My Little Eye ... Something that is Grey	/ 43
<i>Sacha Fellers</i>	
Women's Lives – SOS Mothers tell their stories, Part 7	/ 45
Postcard from Leon Fulcher	/ 64
Endnotes	/ 67
Information	/ 69



The CYC-Net app is now available!



Soul Care

This morning I read a note from someone who recently lost a close friend to cancer. The pain was fresh, like a wound that has not yet begun to close. He reflected about how in moments of pain we gain a more acute awareness of what's happening around us and how it impacts us.

You may have experienced something like this through the loss of a loved one, an unexpected and sudden transition, or a difficult life event. The rest of the world keeps on going at full speed and we wonder if anyone even notices the pain we feel. It's like life slams on the brakes and comes to a full stop while everyone else passes by at full speed.

Yesterday while driving home from work I stopped on the roadside as a motorcade passed by on the way to a firefighter's funeral. The man had lost his life in an accident while defending a nearby community from a wildfire. The slow, somber procession of the fire trucks and firefighters was in sharp contrast to the ongoing traffic and the occasional observer who was taking pictures of the passing mourners.

Earlier this week I watched a mother and father drop their son off at a residential program. I see this type of event nearly everyday, but was caught by this moment as it unfolded. I wondered what events had happened in their lives to lead them to this very moment in the parking lot with bags packed and attempts to say goodbye for a time. What difficulties, what pain had they been through? It was the end of a school day and they, too, appeared in to be living in contrast to the busy pace of everyone else around who was coming and going.

Just as we become more aware of the suffering and pain, we also become more aware of the things that help us. Things like silence, sunshine, coffee with a caring friend, dipping our feet in the edge of a lake, a fresh breeze in the outdoors. "Soul care" the note writer called it. What activities, places, or people help you care for your soul? We need to do more of these things.

Caring for ourselves has been on my mind as I've just come from a busy season myself. Last week my friend and colleague and I facilitated a workshop on trauma in

organizations. We called it “Sharing Wounds: Trauma in Organizations” and we were struck by the sense of trauma and burdens which participants seemed to be carrying around with them. Without making time for meaningful ways to take care of ourselves we become overstretched and lose our capacity to be fully present with others. This, of course, is critical for us in our work of caring for others.

This October issue of *CYC-Online* is full of readings to provoke deeper thinking, inspire reflection, and support you in your caregiving journey. As always we are grateful to our writers and those – like you – who support CYC-Net as you are able.

Happy October reading.

– James



How might your program or school benefit from a deeper understanding of trauma and vulnerable young people?

The PersonBrain Model 2-day training is helping caring adults across the world connect with young people in proactive and brain-informed ways that promote positive change.

Contact us today for information or to schedule a training at your site.



The PersonBrain Model™

www.thepersonbrain.com
info@thepersonbrain.com
888-651-1597

Safe • Significant • Respected • Related

The World Beyond our Practice

Kiaras Gharabaghi

School of Child & Youth Care, Ryerson University

k.gharabaghi@ryerson.ca

It is undoubtedly a good thing that much of the focus in our field is on the everyday context of being with young people, regardless of setting. Practitioners are engaged in relational practices, busy with daily routines, committed to caring for and about young people, and where the context permits it, deeply engaged with families, neighbourhoods and communities as well. Not surprisingly, the reflective components of our work are therefore inward focused, by which I simply mean that we look to the inner workings, the best practices, the practice-based evidence that is generated every day within our field, our profession and our practice. Ultimately, the goal of child and youth care practitioners is to practice well; to be with young people in ways that are respectful, kind, and effective in changing the prospects for these young people to have a good life characterized by personal autonomy and a strong sense of Self.

We should continue to focus on all of these things. Indeed, this focus is what often serves to remind us why child and youth care practice is such a special, and one might argue, one-of-a-kind, endeavour. Nevertheless, I think there are other things that might usefully be within the purview of our field, and that might be important for practitioners to consider. There are things going on in the world beyond our practice that may shape this practice in the future as much as our practice may impact these things as we move forward. Interdependence is a familiar concept to all of us. I would



CYC-Online October 2016 Issue 212

www.cyc-net.org

6

suggest that the following five issues, themes and processes exercise a structural impact on our field and our practice, much like our practice may contribute to shifting the structures within which we do our work.

Migration – there is no question that while migration has always characterized the organization of human societies, we are experiencing a period of large migratory flows of people, including young people. The impact is one of spatial disorientation, whereby what was ‘the local’ has become ‘the global’, and the global has found new forms of local space. Cultures, customs, faith, and community are less and less delineated by geography and more and more by social relations and a sometimes uneasy collision of diversity. Child and youth care practice cannot escape this newly emerging global-local moment. Concepts such as ‘life-space’ will have to engage the transnational context of people’s lives, and ideas such as ‘making moments meaningful’ will increasingly encounter the diversity of what constitutes ‘meaningful’.

VISIT OUR CYC BOOK STORE AT
<http://press.cyc-net.org>



The Collision of Ideas - ideas are migrating along with people. Child and youth care practice has never really been isolated to one geography, but the transcending of ideas across geographies has been slow. Moving forward, we will be challenged by South African ideas about practice in a Canadian context, and Israeli concepts of residential care in an American context. Will social pedagogy find roots in the UK, and will the collective soul of indigenous peoples begin to change the individualist notions of practice common in many Western jurisdictions? At some point soon we will have to seriously engage our ethical obligations with respect to considering the best ideas from around the world; this will include major adjustments in post-secondary education and training, as these forms of infrastructure for the field can no longer draw on the familiar, geographically-based paradigms of child and youth care practice.

Environmental Crises – child and youth care practice has always been grounded in theoretical approaches to safety; whether the focus is on the physical safety of young people, their emotional safety, or their safety in the context of inadequate systems and bureaucratic processes. In a world where the environmental conditions of everyday life are deteriorating through manifestations of climate change, unsafe and unstable provision of water, and risks associated with genetically modified food and otherwise toxic food sources, practicing child and youth care in the absence of a direct engagement of global environmental conditions becomes absurd. The time is quickly approaching where practitioners and young people will have to work in partnership to either fight against environmental irresponsibility or to find ways to mitigate the impact of environmental crises on the prospects of meaningful life circumstances for young people. First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth in Canada's far north, for example, already are experiencing a life-space that cannot meaningfully be engaged outside of the realities of the absence of safe drinking water and the impact of global warming on traditional ways of life, including the migration patterns of land and water-based hunting game.

The Democratic Farce – there is little doubt that the nature of democratic process is changing rapidly. While the trappings of that process, including national and regional elections, independent judicial processes, and ongoing legislative initiatives to ensure equity are still present, we are surely aware that these processes and structures can no longer be seen outside of the political economy of democratic process. In the modern era, democracy has never existed outside of its relationship to wealth, but the



manipulation of entire populations to perpetuate the concentration of political power in the hands of the very few has clearly become embedded in most societies (current dynamics in American electoral politics are symptomatic of this). Child and youth care practice is, in the first instance, a commitment to social justice. Such a commitment will have to adjust to the broader shifts in democratic process around the world, and everyday practices, including attempts to facilitate youth voice and participation, will have to adjust to function at grassroots and social movement levels rather than to fit within formal, state-sponsored and typically institutional forms of democracy.

Fragmentation of Work – the nature of work in post-industrial societies has changed dramatically over the past few decades. Whereas work was, at least from the 1950s to the 1970s, perhaps even the 1980s, associated with an employment relationship between employer and employee, it is now transformed into an exchange of goods and services in which the worker is a mere object in the acquisition processes of the employer. Contract work, work without benefits, short-term work, and part-time, casual or occasional work have become the norm. For child and youth care practice, this impacts not only the way in which practitioners connect to the employment base of the field, but also the way young people experience the transition to emerging adulthood and the associated requirements to earn an income. Surely it does make a difference whether we are engaging young people for the purpose of connecting them to a long term, relational, and secure employment context or an insecure, short term, and socially disconnected one, and moreover one that almost certainly requires an acceptance of exchanging work with chronic placement at the threshold of poverty.

I have listed here merely five of the more obvious and easily identifiable transformations taking place in front of our very eyes. These are not future trends that may or may not come into being; these are trends that are well established and that are already impacting the way child and youth care practice unfolds. In light of these kinds of trends (and others could easily be added here), our field will need to be prepared for reconceptualising its practices to be relevant in the emerging world. Child and youth care is, as so many of my friends and colleagues have convincingly said, a relational practice; it is difficult to imagine practitioners trained in relational practices but blissfully unaware of the transformative movements within social relations at local and global levels.



The Challenge of Relational CYC Practice

Jack Phelan

Supervision of CYC practice becomes more complex after one year of experience. The practitioner is now ready to fully focus on the needs of the youth and family, since her/his own anxiety about safety and competence is under control, and the shift in perspective from behavioral thinking to a more developmental lens is possible. The supervisor now is supporting the use of relationships rather than behavioral methods to motivate youth and families and the practitioner is gaining confidence and expertise in using relationally based skills.

Both the supervisor and the practitioner have to be Self-Authoring thinkers for this to become fully integrated, so part of the supervisory focus may have to be supporting a developmental shift in the thinking of a Socialized thinking practitioner.

The process of relational supervision is more complex than being a manager of staff behaviors. It is a professional development activity that expects a commitment to excellent practice from both parties and a theoretical awareness of CYC approaches that is beyond the common sense thinking of Level I practice. Basic supervision includes passing on technical skills from a more experienced person and an apprenticeship model of learning that works well for Level I workers. Supervisors manage staff behavior to assure that everyone is productive and not slacking off. A big part of the role is checking that safety guidelines and proper procedures are being followed. The management and oversight of the paper trail is also a major job function. Supervisors are also hiring and firing agents, with administrative support. Relational supervision is the next step after these supervisory competencies are mastered.

Relational supervision, like relational CYC practice, is a deeper and more complex activity that requires professional competence in CYC practice that is not available to

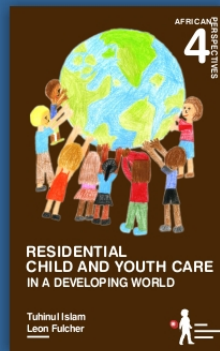
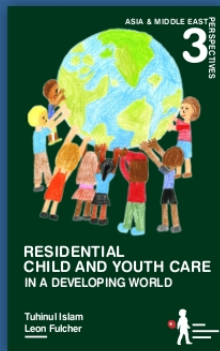
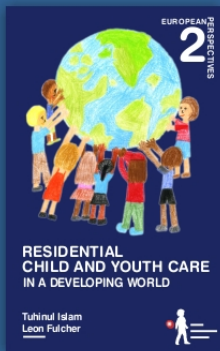
untrained staff. Many newer workers who seemed to be naturally suited to working with young people can adequately function as Level 1 practitioners, but hit a professional wall when expected to engage in relational and developmental approaches.

Relational supervision involves creating a safe relationship with each staff member. The relational connection is focused on professional growth and effective practice, with the supervisor in the role of “more knowledgeable other”. The supervisor will have individual expectations and frameworks for each staff member, based on the developmental dynamics of both parties. Each practitioner will be seen as displaying a specific level of development as well as a particular stage within that level (early, mid or later) that will assist the supervisor in determining the zone of proximal development of the staff and the scaffolding strategies that will be useful in their interactions. The ability of both people to openly join together in the inter-personal in between space where they can compare perceptions and judgements about how to be professionally effective in the difficult work we do, will mirror the actual practice of the program and practitioner in the life space. Supervisors who are reluctant to engage this way with the staff will also be unable to expect the staff to practice relationally. Level 1 supervisors dealing with skilled staff are especially vulnerable here. This level of relationally based supervision is not possible for non-CYC trained supervisors or supervisors who are functioning as competent managers (Level 1), and are unwilling or unable to engage more theoretically and have more intimate boundaries with staff. The dynamics for a Level 1 supervisor transitioning to becoming a Level 2 supervisor are very similar to the process for the Level 1 Competent Care Giver who is expected to develop relational and developmental expertise in order to grow into a Level 2 Treatment Planner and Change Agent. Supervisors who are comfortable with the skill set of being a Competent Manager may be reluctant to reduce the use of external control in order to develop relational skills to motivate people. The return of competence anxiety as relational supervision is being learned will be uncomfortable, but necessary.

Relational CYC practice is a desirable, but often unattained goal because either or both supervisor and practitioner resist the necessary levels of thinking maturity and commitment required to practice at this level.

RESIDENTIAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE IN A DEVELOPING WORLD

Tuhinul Islam and Leon Fulcher
Editors



Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World builds from a critique of Courtney, M. E. & Iwaniec, D. (Eds). (2009). *Residential Care of Children: Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford University Press) which evaluated de-institutionalisation policies in the residential care of children in 11 countries.

It also builds on the comparative efforts of Whittaker, del Valle & Holmes (2015) *Therapeutic Residential Care for Children and Youth: Developing Evidence-Based International Practice*. We started from an intellectual claim that residential child and youth care “places” exist everywhere – whether called homes, orphanages, schools, centres or institutions. Unlike Courtney & Iwaniec or Whittaker et al, we include private boarding schools, madrasa and other religious learning centres in our definition of residential child and youth care. Residential establishments involve any building(s) (and sometimes tents) where children or young people are brought together to live in shared community life spaces for given periods of time, whether as refugees of war, poverty, disease, abuse, famine or natural disaster.

Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World captures some of the challenges and changes faced by residential child and youth care workers in 73 countries – places that rarely feature in the international literature. Each contributor has highlighted challenges and opportunities facing residential child and youth care in their own country’s.

VOLUME 1 AVAILABLE NOW AT
<http://press.cyc-net.org>



Dancing Lessons

Hans Skott-Myhre
Kennesaw State University

hskottmy@kennesaw.edu

The recent thread on CYC-Net on the question of compliance has got me thinking about how complicated and contested our views on behavior have become or perhaps have always been. The comments made on the thread were well stated and very rich and I refer anyone interested to have a look and possibly add something to what is being offered there. For myself, as I reflected on the discussion, I was reminded of the long trajectory of “bad” behavior that has informed my work and scholarship in CYC.

Certainly, I could start with my own lived experience as a young person. I was remarkably compliant as a youngster. I was the kind of child that wanted to please the adults in my life. I was well behaved, dutifully attended church and school. I was polite and well mannered, and fervently believed in the conventional wisdom of the American middle class.

And then two powerful life events converged that changed my life forever. The first was the twinges of adolescence and the second was the advent of 1960’s. As Bob Dylan says in *Tangled Up in Blue*, “There was music in the cafes at night and revolution in the air.” I was ten years old in 1963 and could already feel the coming rupture in the conventional values that had shaped my life up until that point. From 1963 to 1964 the world shifted for me, with the Beatles on Ed Sullivan, the Hells Angels on the cover of Life Magazine and television coverage of Vietnam and civil rights protestors being assaulted on the streets of Birmingham.

Of course things got crazier after that and so did I. My behavior became remarkably non-compliant and, as I remember it, there were very few rules that I didn’t set out to break. From age 10 until my late 40’s, much of my life was devoted to pushing every

limit I could find and challenging the status quo wherever and whenever I encountered it. Of course, this made me a somewhat difficult person both personally and professionally, but I also think it also made me a pretty good youth worker.

Part of the reason for that, I would venture, is because unconventional and rebellious behavior neither impressed nor threatened me. It was, at the end of the day, familiar. When a young person used to get up in my face and tell me to “Fuck Off!” they may as well have said, “hi, how are you.” It was simply not a significant event. If a young person refused to do something demanded by program protocols or by my request, I was not surprised or taken aback. I assumed that such “bad” behavior would be almost expected.

I think, to some degree, that this expectation springs from my perspective that most people don't like to be told what to do. Given the opportunity, many of us will exhibit some degree of refusal, rebellion or resistance to being bossed about. While quite a lot of us find ways to mask our discomfort about being ordered about in our work or family relations, most of us will be outwardly compliant and passive aggressively non-compliant. This is the dirty little secret we tend not to tell the kids when we are attempting to sell them on the virtues and rewards of good behavior. So, as a youth worker I anticipated and to some degree welcomed “bad” behavior, because I saw it as evidence of spirit and the living assertion of the right to say no.

There is a scene in the movie *Short Term 12* (see last month's column as well), in which a youth worker is doing an intake with a rather recalcitrant young woman. In the course of the intake the worker goes through the young woman's things and informs her that they will have to take her scissors and keep them for her while she is in the program. The young woman responds, “Yep, I know the rules. No belts, no razors, no scissors, no fucking freedom.” To which the worker responds, “No cussing.” “Shit, I forgot that one” says the youth. The worker responds with wry humor and look of subtle complicity, “I am going to let that one slip because it was clever.”

Often times, in thinking and talking about non-compliant “bad” behavior, we focus our analysis on the origin of behavior in terms of trauma, cries for help, signals of dysfunction or inadequate socialization. I suppose all of these things are possible, but I also wonder as I have indicated above, if it isn't more useful to just see refusal as normal. That it is ok to say no and to refuse the commands of another. Not just because you were abused and couldn't say no before (although that is a pretty

compelling reason), but because saying no to commands is something we all do, and need to do, to negotiate our relationships so that they function for us.

Milton Erickson, the noted psychiatric hypnotist used to suggest to his students that they go to a public place and observe people. He said that his students should watch people's behavior and ask themselves what their behavior *means*, but not *why* they do what they do.

This is a subtle but notable distinction. In the case of trying to understand why, we are in the realm of understanding another person's motivations. This is very tricky business. One model for this kind of understanding is to see motivation in terms of contemporary theories of why people do certain kinds of things. These models of human behavior vary from decade to decade, but cries for help, attention seeking behavior, and trauma informed care have currency for many of us now.

The problem with such an approach, according to Erickson, is that generalized theoretical frameworks of understanding don't account for what he considered to be the absolute uniqueness of each and every person. Theoretical views of human behavior tend to work from the general to the specific and ask us to interpret each young person we encounter within the framework of what might be true for the kids we have studied, but quite possibly not for the kid in front of us. To understand what behavior *means*, rather than exploring *why* people do stuff requires a relational understanding of behavior in the current moment. It means paying attention to the effect rather than the cause.

In the scene from Short Term 12, we could certainly see the young woman in question as non-compliant. Or alternatively, we could wonder about the relational effect of what she does and says. If we pay attention to what the effect is, then we have to think about what the impact of her behavior is on us as it occurs. We have to consider what we might do in response in terms of what *our* behavior will *mean* to her.

When she curses the first time what does she mean? At one level she is telling us that she has been in places like this before, accepts rather fatalistically the constraints of such a setting, but that she doesn't like it much. She is also relationally asking, who are you in this kind of setting, can you be trusted, will you interact with me as a client or a person, do you have a sense of humor, and are you rigid?

The worker responds predictably with the response of "no cursing," but there is a non-verbal aspect to her response (that can only be seen by watching the film) that

says— I am going to enforce the rules here, but I am not going to base my relationship with you fully on that basis. There is a subtle use of eye contact and body language that conveys clearly that cursing, while prohibited, is not a big deal and it is not impressive. The young woman reads these cues quite well and responds with a bit of sarcastic humor that technically breaks the rules, but also says I heard you at all those levels and I am willing to engage with you. The worker catches the nuances of the joke and acknowledges both the rules “I am going to let that one slip” and the humor and intelligence of the young woman in front of her “because it was clever.” In doing this the worker is also signaling that the rules of engagement can include sarcasm, intelligent repartee, and an understanding that this situation is anything but ideal. At the same time, the worker is signaling some of the limits and constraints that will define the institutional aspects of their relationship.

There are several other things that I find compelling and familiar about this exchange, such as how short and yet rich it is. An experienced worker who is skilled at working relationally knows that those first few moments set the tone and the terms for everything that will follow. Human relationships engaged under high levels of social pressure are extremely dense with meanings and negotiations. They require the ability to pay attention both consciously and unconsciously to the relational field unfolding moment by moment. This means that it is quite useful to know how to read what behavior means. To the degree we have our experience filled up with wondering about why someone is doing what they do, we will have less ability to pay attention relationally to what is actually happening.

Perhaps even more compelling for me, about the exchange, is that the issue of compliance is there, but it takes a back seat to the relationship. In other words, for the worker, the most important thing to do is to build the relationship - not rigidly enforce the rules. In fact, she bends one of the rules almost right away, but not the important one— she doesn't bend the rules about keeping dangerous objects. Instead, she picks a rule that has negligible consequences. In doing that, she strategically builds an alliance of perversity that challenges the sometimes-arbitrary rules of any facility, while giving the unstated message that, I will sustain rules that maintain your safety.

For many new workers this distinction is hard to grasp. There is a tendency to see all rule breaking or challenges to authority as requiring a disciplinary response. I can remember many a long and hard conversation with staff and among staff over bed

making or whether to feed a young person off cycle when they had returned from running away. While it is certainly simpler to go with the old adage that young people require discipline, rules and consistency, I would argue that this is a clumsy and inelegant way to work. To engage with young people and each other relationally means a constantly shifting subtle set of negotiations. It means thinking carefully and strategically about how to work with and not against young people's strategies of refusal and rebellion.

There is another moment in the film, when the worker is showing the same young woman her room. She tells her that she can put pictures on the wall but only if they are appropriate. The young woman responds with the sarcastic comment "no penises then." The worker thinks quickly and says with a smile "only if they are very scientific." The next time she does a room check there are a number of pictures of penises on the wall from medical texts. She smiles appreciatively.

What is remarkable about this scene is the way that the worker manages to accommodate and frame the moment of rebellion so that it can both happen and be restrained within the bounds of the relationship. What is not as obvious, is that in the same exchange, the worker tells the young woman that the door has to be left open and that this goes unchallenged by the young woman. We learn later that this rule is because the young woman has a history of self-harm. In choosing to allow one form of rebellion, the worker is able to sustain, once again, the rule that actually matters and will make a real difference. The young woman is able to assert her autonomy at a level that is low risk, while acceding to the discipline that might actually save her from harm.

Mark Krueger used to say that working with young people is like a dance. It takes flexibility and spontaneity. I would argue that this is nowhere clearer than when dealing with rules and issues of compliance. We as workers cannot afford to stand outside the dance and wonder why young people move the way they do. We have to get out on the floor and dance with them. As co-dancers we have to find a rhythm in which sometimes we lead and at other times we follow. We need to know when to bend and when to hold our posture firm. We need to develop an elegance to our interactions and be fast on our feet. In short we need to pay attention and be responsive, not reactive in our work. Perhaps, the question is not whether or not we should expect or hope for compliance from the young people we encounter in our work. Perhaps the question is – can we dance?

Embracing Dual Roles in Child and Youth Care: Researcher and Practitioner

Marleigh Pirnasar

It is rare for a Youth Worker to do research on top of their front-line duties. Even when we are asked by senior management to partake in research initiatives, we often start complaining and act bitter as if to say: “Do they know what other tasks we need to accomplish?” Youth Workers take on many roles across diverse settings. For one we are educators: a word that not only involves teaching but also suggests someone who engages in the learning process.

Punch and Oancea (2014) defined a practitioner as an individual who has the ability to engage *with* rather *in* their research: someone who is not just consuming but doing. Before the idea of a researcher-practitioner became one, the two terms identified separate communities that often had little direct contact with each other. One problem was that many researchers would develop reports that were hard to understand as many of the research topics did not seem directly relevant to practitioners and their professional concerns (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

I remember having a conversation with my professor before I started my research journey in the last year of my Masters. When I first began to reflect as a Youth Worker on being a researcher-practitioner I had an ethics question: “We are exposing our children and youth as objects! How do we ensure that the programs that we deliver are still genuine and meaningful for the children and youth?” My professor replied, “Marleigh, your youth are not objects, they are subjects, they are a key ingredient to changing how you facilitate, where you facilitate, what you facilitate, and your own mindset as a Youth Worker” (Personal Communication, 2015). The benefits of



CYC-Online October 2016 Issue 212

www.cyc-net.org

18

embracing dual roles, researcher and practitioner started to emerge for me.

It was not until I did graduate studies that I learnt about Action Research (AR). According to Punch and Oancea (2014), AR is interested in finding solutions to problems in everyday field work: the outcomes from doing the research are useful and practical in nature. It changed my mindset once I started to gather, collect, and analyze data: embracing the researcher-practitioner mindset allowed me to evaluate my own core values, principles, and ethical leadership as a Child and Youth Care Practitioner. Between the start of my second year of this Master's program and the field trying to promote Child and Youth Care (CYC) as a regulated field, there were discussions about what this would look like. As Child and Youth Care was implementing a certification board and encouraging youth workers to obtain the certification, we were assessed on the following competencies: (1) [Professionalism](#); (2) [Cultural & human diversity](#); (3) [Applied human development](#); (4) [Relationship & communication](#); and (5) Developmental practice methods (Child and Youth Care Practitioner Board, 2010). I felt that that the 5 core competencies were accurate in how Child and Youth Care Workers should continue to observe their own interactions with young people in order to ensure children and youth are receiving the best form of care.

Developing Youth Programs

Many of my reflections and questions surround quality programming for children, youth, and their families. That was why I started to embrace my role as a researcher-practitioner for the last couple of years: developing curriculums for various organizations, I became critical during the program planning stage, to program delivery, to program monitoring and evaluation.

Before I was employed in a children's mental health organization, many of my previous positions involved coordinating and facilitating children and youth programs, I had free rein in developing the curriculum. But this children's mental health organization wanted me to take a pre-existing curriculum for children with anxieties and facilitate the content. I was required to do two months of job shadowing in order to get familiar with the content that was delivered to parents and the children's group. Through many debriefs and post-interviews with other social service professionals and families, it appeared that a little more than half of the children who completed the

program were successful in using the coping strategies outside of the program setting. For the other children, there was either an increase of problem behaviour or they were not able to attain the group content throughout the 10-week period. As a practitioner, I found the current practice and the social skills that were being taught in the program were not effective. I started to believe there was a missing gap in the content.

Therefore, I decided to do my own investigation. I took the whole binder for the 10-week program and examined each session, each learning outcome, and each activity. At this point, I came to a realization that the program did not provide a clear outcome: while coping strategies were identified, the way the facilitator delivered the material was not clear. I faced a couple of barriers when I offered to change this 'manualized program'. First my supervisor told me, "Marleigh, we understand that you have a lot of knowledge in program development but please be aware that this is an evidence-based program". There was no encouragement or support from management or my fellow co-workers. In my researcher mindset, I tried to find ways to incorporate what the agency wanted while keeping the content socially relative for the children. I used each intake session with the child and the family to get to know the child's interests and learning style: How do these children best learn and get more engaged? I had a set of interview questions that I used with each child that would help me shape the activities and cater to the unique needs of each young person.

I noticed a qualitative difference when I started to implement these individually designed learning activities. During post-group interviews, children were not only able to recognize the key terms but they were able to relate the material and identify how learning these coping strategies could help them in their everyday stressful situations. In addition, the children applied the coping strategies and provided examples of current life situations in which they would be useful: I was successful in ensuring that the group was meaningful and engaging. Embracing a researcher-practitioner mindset in my work allows me to continue to promote and advocate for quality social skills programs.

Relational Care with Children and Youth

Embracing a research-practitioner role allowed me to have closer connections with the children and youth. What does this mean? In Child and Youth Care, we promote



the building of therapeutic relationships: What is our role as CYCs in building these therapeutic relationships? In my personal view, it looks different for each Child and Youth Care Worker.

One of my biggest challenges thus far has been the ability to maintain cultural competency. Although I come from a mixed-ethnic family, I did grow up in western ideology. Many of the youth that I encounter may come from families which hold ideas and values which might not be popular to western society. A situation that challenged me was when I was a residential staff worker for a semi-independent group home. I was working with a 16-year-old female who was mandated into care by Children's Aid Society (CAS) due to a domestic violence in the household. Her story, as she told it to me, involved familial cultural and religious norms that she was breaking: that was her explanation for the verbal and physical abuse that she was experiencing.

As she told me her story, I felt like I removed my Youth Worker hat and began to start the conversation with this young woman with my own personal biases about following certain norms. I began by expressing "This sort of parental behaviour was unacceptable and inappropriate." I was so mad and I felt I was bringing forth my frustration and anger towards the issue: I personalized her issue and made it 'my' problem to fight.

This was her story and her experience, this was not about my experiences. I was lucky enough to stop myself as I was surveying her facial expressions. When I reflect on my body language, I remember how I physically pulled back my body and my own personal biases when I started to see that my comments and questions were heating her up. It was from that moment I grew to be a better listener and supporter in my future discussions when interacting with children and youth. Judgement and stereotypes was something that this young person did not need. It was also an opportunity for me to acknowledge the diversity of human experiences and to keep a cultural context in mind when working with children and youth.

In my new mindset as a researcher-practitioner in this particular situation, I was not afraid to admit that the interaction that occurred between myself and the young person involved much needed reflection and feedback. In every moment I have with a young person, I learn more about their strengths, capabilities, and unique needs. Relational care is when we work with children and youth and there is a process to building a positive and supportive relationship.

Let's embrace our new Role: My final push

When I was in the process of collecting data for my final action research report, I realized that the youth in my program, other youth workers, and senior management all wanted to get involved with the process. At the end, my manager expressed to me that she wanted to see the final product as it might help to alter certain aspects of the program when applying for funding in the near future. There was a shift from my previous mindset. While I was always being encouraged to be a researcher practitioner, I felt like the youth in my program were used as objects. I now see them as subjects and contributors to future program improvements and developments that can be implemented with other young people in the community.

I would like to say to all Youth Workers that it is time to embrace being a researcher and practitioner. This new found practice can allow for effective collaboration and new relationships which will ultimately build a community of learners (Punch & Oancea, 2014). We do not debrief much but when we take an extra 5-10 minutes after the end of group or after an individual interaction we have the opportunity to receive and provide feedback. What did work? What did not work? And how can we move forward? In doing so we develop a more proactive response to our current practise. Ultimately, Youth Workers and youth become co-researchers and collaborative partners in forming quality programs and relationships that will foster healthier communities.

References

- Child and Youth Care Practitioner Board (2010). *The 5 competencies*. Retrieved from Child and Youth Care Certification Board Website <https://cyccb.org/competencies/>
- Goldstein, S., & Brooks, R. B. (2007b). Creating sustainable classroom environments: the mindset of effective teachers, successful students, and productive consultants. In S. Goldstein & R. B. Brooks (Eds.), *understanding and managing children's classroom behavior: Creating sustainable, resilient classrooms* (2nd ed., pp. 3-21). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Punch, K., & Oancea, A. (2014). *Introduction to research methods in education*. London, England: Sage.



Preparing Child and Youth Care Practitioners for the Field

Theresa Fraser

theresafraser@rogers.com

In a recent column in the CYC-Net Online journal, by Kiaras Gharabaghi, Legitimacy in Child and Youth Care Practice <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/aug2016.pdf>, he proposed five criteria that should be included in discussions about the legitimacy of our field so that discussions are inclusive of various perspectives, approaches and identities in our field.

Others have published widely about the various criteria necessary to professionalize the child and youth care field. Yet, Gharabaghi did not reference these criteria. For example, as early as 1990, Carol Kelly provided a literature review about the process of professionalization and cited other CYC authors such as Karen VanderVen and Martha Mattingly, who also rigorously reviewed the sources of these claims.

Dr. Gharabaghi states:

“there is, in my view, reason to argue that the field itself will gain legitimacy when practitioners, and also instructors in post-secondary institutions, researchers, writers and commentators, are themselves the product of the formal child and youth care programs

A brief response from Dr. Gharabaghi follows this article

at colleges and universities where these exist (in Canada, South Africa, and minimally, in the US)”

Whereas Dr. Kelly states:

“Educational opportunities which will prepare competent child care personnel need to be expanded just as continuing education and in service training need to be further development. Efforts to identify our body of knowledge, develop self-regulation, and research need concerted attention. Development of a code of ethics is a task requiring completion. Inquiry into how we “fit” with other helping professions is desirable. We must establish our own identity, not merely assume we should follow the traditional professional model” (Kelly, 1990).

Simply put, he states what he believes is necessary for legitimacy, seemingly without attribution to the many CYC authors who have discussed this topic for many decades now, (e.g., Anglin, Denholm, Ferguson and Pence, 1990) and then proceeds to dismiss decades of scholarship to present a very narrow focus on the field. It seems disconnected from the history and context of CYC in Canada and, specifically, Ontario.

Gharabaghi stated that his hope was

“that these five criteria are relevant to debates about who should be able to call themselves a child and youth care practitioner, who should be able to teach child and youth care in post-secondary institutions, and what types of issues, themes, interests, and activities we might recognize as part of our field” (Gharabaghi, 2016).

From a position of having over 30 years’ experience as a Child and Youth Care professional, beginning my career with an advanced diploma as a Child Care Worker (a CYC in the 80’s), I share the following.

Before the establishment of formal CYC in the Ontario, Canada Community College system (Gilmour-Barrett, Pratt, 1977) CYC workers were trained “on the job”.

In the 1960’s, the movie Warrendale was released and it portrayed Child Care Workers as committed caregivers. Children and staff were seen “living” with the



children for 12 to 24 hours a day. The movie didn't explain all of the interactions that occurred and interventions demonstrated may not and should not be used today however, these staff demonstrated that they believed in the power of relationship and the therapeutic milieu (Redl & Wineman, 1951; Trieschman, Whittaker & Brendtro, 1969).

Gharabaghi states further that:

"I think the continued valorizations of residential care as the Legitimacy in Child and Youth Care Practice ultimate legitimizer of child and youth care practice is a little passé; too much has happened in the last fifty years to continue defining this profession on the basis of what on a good day is a chequered history of practice".

It is true that residential care has a checkered past, However, then, and now, effective CYC's recognized that children are not living in the staff work environment, rather, CYCs are working/living in the children/youth/family life space so we are all co-creators in the treatment plan (Redl & Wineman, 1952).

David Wencer, a Toronto Star reporter, wrote in 1965 that "Warrendale's supervisory people are trained social workers or psychologists but, surprisingly, the

The new CYC-Net app is now available!



child care staff get most of their training on the job and through personal psychotherapy” (Wencer, 1965).

Our field has these humble beginnings and our literature is full of others telling us what needs to be done. This was reflected in the early years of CYC in Ontario. In those early years, as a female and as a CYC, it was often the case that I would attend a school meeting about a young person living in our program and pass my case notes to the program Social Worker who would then be called on to speak. The Social Worker had often only seen the child once before the intake meeting, yet the Social Worker’s role was legitimized while the CYC role was not. Years later, when CYCs had gained some recognition, the role of school CYC was acknowledged by being invited to an IPRC (Interim Placement and Review Committee meetings in Ontario school settings) but not being allowed to talk; being invited only as a “professional courtesy”. This silencing of others dominates the CYC scholarship in those decades (Gilmour-Barrett, Pratt, 1977).

Only now with additional credentials have I been called on as a consultant because my expertise is considered unique and beneficial but that is because it is coming from the CYC in me versus the Attachment Specialist or the registered Psychotherapist Play Therapist.

The early Toronto Star reference to CYCs and psychotherapy alludes to the ongoing importance of self-reflection for the new or experienced CYC. Child and Youth care as a field has morphed and developed into a field with many opportunities for practitioners to support and “walk the talk” with children, youth and their families. This is a good thing as we know.

Change over the years in our field is good. Our roles have extended into different settings and with various populations. Reflecting on how change has impacted our field is even better.

As a professor in the College system in Ontario, however, I need to be clear about my CYC identity and experiences that support what I am sharing in the classroom. I know from teaching experience that education and experience as a CYC allows me to teach in a way that those from other disciplines simply cannot. This can be asserted because I have also been educated in a secondary discipline to CYC.

Kelly (1990), Anglin (1990) and many other CYCs have explored training frameworks many times before and the consistent conclusion is that CYCs will be a



profession when CYCs are educated and trained by those with one educational credential above that being trained. This is common in other disciplines. I would add that perhaps even having Professors with at least 1 CYC credential and then additional related credentials makes sense however, only if that Educator has front line experience as a CYC (not just as Supervisor of CYC's).

It is my belief that we need to have done the job that we are training students to do.

Students *should* be angry when they complete their field work in a program and have no opportunity to be supervised by a CYC throughout any of their placements. They *should* be horrified if they leave an educational program having never been taught by someone with CYC educational credentials and front line experience.

Colleges and universities in Ontario are required to obtain credentialed personnel to teach in programs in order to meet Post-Secondary Education Quality Assurance Board requirements. This requires that program must have at least 50% of the instructors with terminal credentials. Most community colleges only require instructors/professors to have a lone (1) degree higher credential in order to teach (but not necessarily a CYC credential). Many do not expect instructors/professors to have currency in the field or worse they advertise that they do and therefore students believe it to be true. It seems that the universities do not even have this minimum standard.

These rules are instituted by the institutional system for the benefit of institutional system and are not about quality education or eventual quality service provision. For some institutions it is more about income and “bums in seats” then graduating effective CYC practitioners

Students need to develop the identity of a CYC practitioner. I have had students share that they want to see instructors/professors who have done the work that they are about to do. They want to hear their stories as a way of learning and acculturating. Connecting theory to practice requires the ability to have experience in order to reflect. Through this self-reflection, the instructor / professor is able to explain how they applied a theory and how they might do it differently now, after reflecting on the relationship or intervention outcome.

Professors/instructors who have CYC experience know what it is to multi-task, creatively treatment plan with limited resources and essentially “live” with children

which is a different role when compared to the Social Worker who sees children in an office during office hours. Living in the milieu shows the CYC's true colors on holidays, 24 hour shifts and in extended crisis situations. Who you are as a person shines through.

It is my opinion that students need mentors who are high on the emotional intelligence scale and CYC front line practice in residential care is a good training ground for this because of the skills in conflict resolution and interpersonal interactions that are at the heart of the day-to-day residential milieu work.

It is my belief that students need someone who has had to make dinner in a group home, knowing that the police are about to show up to receive a Missing person's report, while being cognizant that a teen in a bathroom might be planning to self-harm. The foundation for teaching that skill is learned when working and from experience in the frontline therapeutic milieu, not in a college or university classroom (again, child and youth care placements are important learning).

In the last few years the notion of certification has raised its head yet again (www.cycgb.org). The purpose of supporting eventual regulation is to ensure that children/youth and families get the best service available by ensuring minimal educational standards and front line experience.

The risk is that certification could be used as a backdoor, to allow entry to those without the necessary foundational knowledge gained through CYC education and experience. When the National Certification (www.cycgb.org) process was introduced, I expressed grave reservations with education and field colleagues. However, with reflection, I realize that I can either help drive the bus or complain about the schedule. There are many people in our field trying to promote certification for reasons that will be valuable to our field and I stand with them. It is time to stand up for our profession.

External reviewers for program review in Community Colleges and Universities need to ask: "What are the educational qualifications of those teaching in the CYC programs? What is their currency in the field? Are they members of their CYC Professional Association?" And if the answer is no, note this in program review documents. Colleges and Universities then need to support faculty with maintaining their currency (which doesn't happen in all educational institutions) as well as support Child and Youth Care Professional Associations or at the very least expect their faculty to be active members.



Program Advisory committee members should be drawn from qualified CYCs and need to be able to provide feedback to institutions about the importance of having qualified instructors and relevant curriculum.

Students need to be okay with asking their instructors/professors about their CYC educational and experiential background. Conversely, professors and instructors should be transparent about their front line CYC experience.

Students need to be comfortable complaining to their Administrators when they have faculty teaching them who do not have the at least 1 CYC educational credential and vocational background expertise in the course(s) that they are teaching (even if they have Masters or PhD's in other helping professions).

Students also need to be more vocal about the availability (or lack thereof) of child and youth care placement opportunities as well as the lack of CYC supervisors given these placements are an integral part of their educational programs.

Respectfully, I have to state that if we don't as a field strive to maintain our historical knowledge and challenge institutional values about what a CYC is, then we run the risk of only hearing the voices of those who lack front line experience or have education outside of the discipline and it prevents our field from advancing.

CYC voices are important. It is important also to be challenged to reflect (as Gharabaghi invites us to do), but such challenges should not silence or talk-over those not writing in the CYC zines because they are still making dinner and waiting for the police to come for that Missing Person's report.

References

- Anglin, J.P., Denholm, J.C., Ferguson, R.V., and Pence (Eds.) (1990). *Perspectives in Professional Child and Youth Care*. The Haworth Press. New York.
- CBC (Producer), King, A. (Director). (1967). *Warrendale* [Motion Picture]. Canada: CBC
- Gilmour-Barrett, K. & Pratt, S. (1977). *A New Profession*. In J. Shamsie (Ed.), *Experience and Experiment*. Toronto: Canadian Mental Health Association. Retrieved from: http://spin.mohawkcollege.ca/cyw/intro_to_cypractice/history_module/readings/reading2/reading2_b.htm
- Kelly, C. (1990). *Professionalizing Child and Youth Care: An overview* in Anglin, J.P., Denholm, J.C., Ferguson, R.V., and Pence (Eds.) (1990). *Perspectives in Professional Child and Youth Care*. The Haworth Press. New York.

- Redl, F & Wineman, D. (1951). Children who hate: The disorganization and breakdown of behavior controls. The Free Press. New York.
- Redl, F & Wineman, D. (1952). Controls from within: Techniques for the treatment of the aggressive child. The Free Press. New York.
- Trieschman, A.E., Whittaker, J.K., & Brendtro, L.K. (1969). The Other 23 Hours: Child-Care Work with emotionally disturbed children in a therapeutic milieu. Aldine De Gruyter. New York.
- Wencer, D. (1965) The Warrendale Centre at Oak Ridges as referenced in (2013, March 30) Historicist : Warrendale a mental health treatment centre for children. Torontoist.com. Retrieved from:
<http://torontoist.com/2013/03/historicist-warrendale-a-mental-health-treatment-centre-for-children/>

THERESA FRASER graduated with honours from the Child Care Worker program at Humber College in 1983. She has over 30 years' experience in the field. She is a Professor at a community College in Ontario Canada, international speaker, published writer and parent of 8 amazing children.

A Brief Response to Theresa Fraser

I love a good debate; and I always honour and respect those who are willing to engage in such debates. And so I am quite thankful that Theresa has done exactly that. I really like the spirit and the passion that clearly informs her text. Since I know her personally, I know it is real and authentic. Rather than arguing with any of Theresa's points, I thought it might be useful to simply point out some common things that happen when debating this topic.

One thing that happens is that we sometimes learn of our limitations in really 'listening' to each other, which is a little ironic in child and youth care contexts. My original article is about 'legitimacy' in child and youth care; indeed, that is the title of the article. Theresa's response, or critique of my original piece, is about 'professionalization' in child and youth care. These are completely different topics, which makes it difficult to really explore either topic particularly well within a debating framework.



Another thing that happens, and this I think is relevant whether we are talking about legitimacy or professionalization, is that we seem to struggle with ensuring a consistent argument. Theresa's passionate appeal for formal CYC education as the basis of her approach to professionalization is referenced with six or seven authors she refers to as CYC authors; ironically, none of these 'CYC authors' have any formal CYC education! It is hard to understand why an argument that suggests professionalization in child and youth care relies on people with formal CYC credentials itself relies entirely on the writings of those who do not have such credentials.

Here are some other people who, to the best of my knowledge, don't have any formal CYC credentials: Carol Stuart, author of the best selling and widely used CYC textbook *Foundations of Child and Youth Care*; Gerry Fewster, author of hundreds of articles and many books who arguably has done more for CYC than anyone else; Varda Mann-Feder, who, quite aside from being a brilliant scholar in child and youth care and a much cited one at that, developed and led the second graduate program in Child and Youth Care in Canada, at Concordia University; Mark Krueger, who arguably was the godfather of child and youth care in the United States and some might say globally; Brian Gannon, who established CYC-Net; Hans Skott-Myhre, who literally 'owns' the phrase 'radical child and youth care'; Francis Hare, who developed the only university-based child and youth care program in Ontario; and pretty much the entire tenured faculty group at the University of Victoria, the longest-standing university-based School of Child and Youth Care in the world, and the only PhD program in Child and Youth Care in the world. Also included in this list could be Zeni Thumbadoo and Merle Allsopp, the leaders of *Isibindi* and the National Association of Child Care Workers in South Africa respectively, who, in their spare time successfully prompted the government of South Africa to create 10,000 new child and youth care positions in that country. They also have been chiefly responsible for the professionalization of child and youth care in South Africa, by far the most advanced country in the world in this respect. The list could go on ...

I am not suggesting that I disagree with Theresa on the importance of formal credentials in child and youth care as the field moves forward. But I think this is a process that will take some time. The launch of the Masters program at Ryerson University this fall, only the third such program in Canada (after the University of

Victoria and Concordia University in Montreal) will go a long way to ensure that we have more people with a graduate level education in child and youth care who can teach at colleges and universities very soon. The future is therefore very bright; we will get to where Theresa wants to go: We will have more instructors and faculty with graduate level CYC credentials teaching new CYCs, and we will have more field supervisors with CYC credentials supervising students in field placements. I agree with Theresa that this is a good thing.

Perhaps the only statement in Theresa's text I take exception to is that my original article about legitimacy (not about professionalization), belies the history of our field. Quite to the contrary, I think any suggestion that the many, many people listed above and not listed there who have build our field in the first place are somehow no longer to be included in our profession is an affront to our history. I, for one, embrace them as my friends, colleagues and partners in what has surely been an awesome journey.



Follow CYC-Net at
@CYCcareworkers



Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

Volume 29 Issue 3 / 2016

**FREE
DOWNLOAD
from
www.rcycp.com**



CYC EDUCATION

ISSN 2410-2954



press.cyc-net.org

How Wounded are our Healers?

Maxwell Smart and John Digney



The tears of the world are a constant quality. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh.

Samuel Barclay Beckett, Irish playwright

When I think of those who have influenced my life the most, I think not of the great but of the good

John Knox, Scottish theologian

Introduction

Child and Youth Care practice is a unique profession in so many ways. Every day brings fresh challenges to be overcome and new and exciting opportunities to be with children, youth and families with the joint objective of making positive changes. It requires a very particular type of person to work in this field; one who is caring, reflective, non-judgemental, measured and creative. It also seems to be a profession

that draws together people who are open, honest and willing to share.

Yet, with over a half of century of direct practice with troubled youth and sharing our lives with trusted colleagues, we can each recall many occasions where this very openness and honesty has led to conversations with colleagues where there have been frank and candid reflections on personal adversity and trauma, often occurring in childhood. These frequent conversations lend themselves to a feeling of curiosity regarding the driving force behind entering the Child and Youth care profession, a job where the primary focus is on caring for children in difficulty and healing deep seated emotional pain.

Of course this might be a bit of generalisation, but anecdotally at least a straw poll has shown us that a surprising number of people caring for troubled kids have suffered similar adversity. But is it that surprising when we consider the work of Carl Jung and his identification of a phenomenon he called 'the wounded healer'? It is here that we wish to locate this article and understand how this phenomenon links to Child and Youth Care.

A Recognition

It seems true to us, that very few escape childhood and adolescence totally unscathed, but for many in our field there seems to be a legacy of pain and hurt, adversity and trauma. At the same time, it also seems that those who can survive such times and experiences can create a force within that compels a helping of others. Recognising our rather un-scientific anecdotal observations of such childhood adversities of practitioners leads us to wonder about its true prevalence within our professions and also about the overall impact.

Is wounded healing a common currency of Child and Youth Carers and is this a phenomenon that can help lead to positive outcomes and or problematic consequences? Our friend and colleague Jack Phelan has in the past written about wounded healers and reminded us that, wounded healers who successfully develop the ability to be present in ever expanding moments, are both benefitting themselves and the other simultaneously. Phelan's comments demonstrated the complexity of this issue as wounded healing can therefore be a source of potential healing and destruction, leading to the question about whether this phenomenon is a resource or a problem. An observation which is congruent with that of Jung.

Who's healing Who?

Jung's wounded healer phenomenon talks to processes whereby an analyst (or in our case, CYC practitioner), is compelled to treat patients or children, because they themselves have been wounded and need to 'help'. Jung was also clear that Freud himself accepted his suggestion that every doctor should 'submit to a training analysis before interesting himself in the unconscious of his patients for therapeutic purposes' and that, 'a good half of every treatment that probes at all deeply consists in the doctor's examining himself, for only what he can put right in himself can he hope to put right in the patient' (Jung, 1966).

Jung linked the archetype of the wounded healer back to a Greek mythology, postulating that the myth of Chiron (a story of a centaur who was wounded by an arrow from Heracles and instead of dying suffers excruciating pain and because of his wound became known as a legendary healer). However, our concern is much more contemporary and not based in mythology. Child and Youth Care workers exist to aid and support the healing of hurt children, wounded healing suggests that CYC practitioners may also be seeking their own healing in their practices, so are these inseparable? This article seeks not to suggest that wounded healing is either a good or bad thing, merely it seeks to open some discourse on the topic and to begin to ask what its impact is on our caring practices.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Without presupposing any outcomes to this consideration, we begin to explore aspects of the phenomenon which might be seen as being positive, some which are not so good and then those which could be viewed as problematic.

Wounded healers who survive their challenging ordeals ... can acquire healing skills for repairing the human spirit. Their special skills are a result of developing their intuition for survival – a skill that cannot be easily taught in a classroom ... Wounded healers can also guide others and show them the way back from emotional underworlds of depression, dark thoughts and hopeless despair. (Wells, n/d)

Good

To start, we go back to the work of Phelan (2009), where he talked of the practice of recruiting and training people who have experienced specific problems, 'in their own lives, being trained to work with others who are struggling with similar issues, as something which could be something positive and helpful. Consequently, notions of a 'wounded healer' as both being helper and helped becomes conceptualised in the support that can be given by workers who have experienced a similarity of experience as to those whom the worker is helping. This can be highly supportive and enabling, as there is a high 'credibility' factor.

Phelan cites the Isibindi projects in South Africa as an example of such helping and support and suggests ... 'many of the CYC staff in the Isibindi projects have been personally touched by the same dynamics [AIDS] that are present for their charges, and the process of working to create change and hope for others also creates healing for them'. Phelan does not suggest that workers don't experience or relive some of their own hurt and pain; but that with training and support they bring with them self-awareness and personal integrity, 'all of that must be present in any helping interaction'.

Bad

The bad of wounded healing seems almost self-evident; it is linked to issues of needs, as in, who's needs are being met by taking on the role of carer or helper. Of course we all have some needs met by taking this role in life and that is as it should be. The 'bad' to which we allude is when practices are motivated by an overwhelming self-serving intent of the therapist or practitioner. It is here that the fundamental human growth need for altruism becomes distorted and potentially damaging to others.

If we are to avoid such circumstances and situations it is incumbent on the worker to reflect intensely to endure that s/he is fully aware of their own struggles and wounds and how these may be driving them in a particular direction, reading from a script and playing out a drama that is written within 'their' unconscious (or even conscious) thoughts and which makes use of kids and colleagues as unwitting players.

People who are still struggling with their own healing are particularly vulnerable, as each new encounter with the painful experience of another can be a potential reminder of their own bruising' (Phelan, 2009).

Ugly

What we might wish to consider here are issues of cynicism, depression, burnout and the descent into defensive care giving. One's own wounds may be re-activated in certain situations (especially if one's client's wounds are similar to their own). 'This is the nature of healing and why many people go on a journey of self-discovery before embarking on a healing path' (Duffy, nd).

The concepts of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma are very current in the literature and discourse of most caring professions. It might be an interesting exercise to build on the work of Barr (2006) and consider the levels of such 'ugly' consequences within both our population of wounded healers as compared to our 'general population'.

Barr's results showed that 73.9% of counsellors and psychotherapists have experienced one or more wounding experiences leading to career choice and that despite the exact causes of the wounds vary enormously, the majority of the wounds were caused by events experienced directly by the respondents. Main categories being: abuse, family life as a child, mental ill-health, bereavement and physical ill-health. How would we stack up in CYC practice?

Back to the Celts

Lest we be berated for being too critical or thinking harshly about our wounded healers, we wish to point out that the Celtic way of the Shaman has been described as 'the way of the wounded healer', for to be human is to be wounded.

Shamanic experiences are, 'part of everyday life; the cycles of birth, death and re-birth, an intrinsic part of our reality ... a pattern repeated throughout our lives as we are continually being born into new experiences and dying to old habits, behaviour patterns and belief systems' (Duffy, *ibid*). In this tradition, the wounded healer is required to take a journey, one which takes him to the brink of death. This is necessary

for two reasons. Firstly, it allows him to travel to the 'underworld' or afterlife, so as he can return with vital information. Secondly, it is oft believed that the shaman must become sick in order to be able to understand sickness and those who are in need. Having overcome sickness, he is best placed to heal others.

As always, there are more questions than answers! But, we should, we feel, at least explore these in depth if we are to gain from and mitigate against the problems that can emerge in caring for others.

Digz and Maxie

References

- Barr, A. (2006). An Investigation into the extent to which Psychological Wounds inspire Counsellors and Psychotherapists to become Wounded Healers, the significance of these Wounds on their Career Choice, the causes of these Wounds and the overall significance of Demographic Factors. Retrieved on 18th September 2016 from <http://www.thegreenrooms.net/wounded-healer/>
- Duffy, M. (nd) About Shamanism. Retrieved on 18th September 2016 from <http://www.shamanismireland.com/>
- Jung, C.G. (1966). *Practice of Psychotherapy*, Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 16, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Phelan, J. (2009) The Wounded Healer as Helper and Helped: A CYC Mode. Retrieved on 18th September 2016 from <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cyconline-mar2009-phelan.html>
- Wells, P. (nd). The Healing Path of the Wounded Healer, retrieved on 18th September 2016 from <http://everydaygoddessart.com/?p=350>

Embodying Self and Body in Practice

Aurora De Monte

Embodiment of practice requires acknowledging that our self and body are forever inseparable and that the significance of this human experience is a magnificent and evocative piece of the co-created space that is relational practice (Garfat, 2012).

I have been struggling with both the idea that our practice is one that is embodied (one in which we strive to ‘be’ the characteristics and core values) as well as one in which congruence is developed as we come to understand ourselves (body and self), embodying this experience in genuine ways in our relationships with those with whom we work. In this piece I continue to work through the idea of embodiment as a greater understanding of our selves and the benefits of that in our practice.

Sally Gadow, a nursing professor who writes about nursing philosophy, helps to identify the inseparable connection between body and self: “The body that a patient experiences and the body that a practitioner treats are seldom the same. For the person in pain, the body may be an excruciating immediacy. For the clinician, the same body may be an object to be examined, or—still more abstract—a problem to be solved” (Gadow, 1980, p.172). Gadow notes how dehumanizing this phenomenon can be to the person being treated, as well for the practitioner. How do we experience ourselves? Do we separate the body from the self in order to respond? Do we do this with the people with whom we work in order to ‘get through the day’? What are the implications of this for both others and us? How we experience others and our



CYC-Online October 2016 Issue 212

www.cyc-net.org

40

abilities/capacities to be with, understand, and support them/us requires integration rather than fragmentation to overcome limitations and challenge.

Some may view the self and body as two distinct entities, the body being an object that the self must overcome, one part seeking mastery over the other. However, the body informs us of so much as it is readily occurring, that there is a desire to have mutual awareness within self and body so that the information can be used to promote positive lived experiences and responses, rather than those that may be oppositional to our selves and our practice.

I am moving towards thinking of embodiment as a way of being in the world whereby we use our active awareness and acceptance of self (mind and consciousness) and body to act upon the world as well as be affected by the world (Gadow, 1980). There is an aspect of harmony when we can experience and witness the reflexive engagement of our own agency and vulnerability within a lived moment, holding these mutually present.

Phelan (2015) in discussing empathy identifies that “effective attempts at empathy require you to let of of your own personal ideas and to uncritically listen to the other” (p.64). To be able to effectively let go of personal ideas, and truly listen to others requires a mutual awareness to do so, within and between self and body; to actively step into the vulnerability of being affected by the world (by others), choosing to listen and to attempt to stand in the shoes of others (with all of ourselves – self and body). To experience empathy means that we may feel, think, and understand the experience of others. To do so requires information from both our body and self.

There is another aspect: the meaning-making lens through which we see and understand the world and ourselves. When we both understand self (our meaning-making) as well as pay attention to our body as we step into spaces whereby we exhibit agency or vulnerability, we are better equipped to engage in meaningful reflective practice in the moment, sharing what is needed (or not) to strengthen and connect with others. In those moments of clarity, we can transform the information we receive from self and body into the co-created spaces that make up our relationships with others.

As I continue to explore self in practice, I think about the stages of emerging practitioners (Garfat, 2001; Phelan, 2012) and how it is that we support practitioners to understand and ‘become’ relational. I have heard students question the intense

focus on self in educational programs; however, if we do not look at self and become attuned to listening to both self and body we may only be relying on one part of the human experience, rather than embracing all that we are, seeing both as core components of our ever-evolving practice. McMahon & Ward (1998) note the words of a worker who stated, “Intuition is individual and precarious and it is not good enough for me. I need to be self-aware, informed and closely supported within a suitable environment if I am to make good use of the intuition I have” (p. 39). This may be the beginning link to the embodiment of practice (‘being’ the practice), when we have developed a level of self-awareness of both self and body that can be clearly articulated in the co-created spaces of our relational practice.

References

- Gadow, S. (1980). Body and self: A dialectic. *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 5(3), 172-185.
- Garfat, T. (2001). Developmental stages of child and youth care workers: An interactional perspective. (*CYC-Online*), 24. Retrieved from <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0101-garfat.html>
- Garfat, T. (2012). The inter-personal in-between: An exploration of relationship child and youth care practice. In G. Bellefeuille, D. Jamieson, & F. Ricks (Eds.), *Standing on the precipice* (2nd ed). (pp. 7-34). Edmonton, AB: MacEwan Press.
- McMahon, L. & Ward, A. (1998). Helping and the personal response: Intuition is not enough. In A. Ward & L. McMahon (Eds.), *Intuition is not Enough: Matching Learning with Practice in Therapeutic Child Care*. (pp. 30- 39). London: Routledge.
- Phelan, J. (2012). Building developmental capacities: A developmentally responsive approach to child and youth care interventions. In G. Bellefeuille, D. Jamieson, & F. Ricks (Eds.), *Standing on the precipice* (2nd ed). (pp.73-106). Edmonton, AB: MacEwan Press.
- Phelan, J. (2015). *The Long and Short of it Child and Youth Care*. Cape Town, SA: The CYC-Net Press.



I Spy with My Little Eye ... Something that is Grey

Sacha Fellers

As an Early Childhood Educator, I am presented daily with a variety of experiences that require me to respond uniquely to each child that I'm in relationship with. There is no equation to follow to ensure the desired outcome is achieved. What works with one child may not work with the next or the six that follow.

In many fields there is a right or wrong. One operates in the black and white. An item costs \$10.00 and you pay that amount...you enter data and a precise answer is given... there is a straightforward protocol in the manual for most scenarios. In child care we work in relationships, where black and white answers don't often apply and the uniqueness of each individual is the common denominator. In child care we spend much of our time in between the black and white – in the grey area - to support each child from one day to the next. I believe being in an authentic relationship with each child is about feeling... it's a sense. It's a connection that will confidently guide me to support the children individually using our relationship as the indicator. However, I didn't always feel this way.

In the beginning, I was confused and frustrated with many things. In particular, my ability to effectively guide and support the children consistently and effectively using positive guidance strategies. I found myself asking "Why doesn't the technique, solution or plan that worked today, work tomorrow or even work with a different child today, tomorrow or the next?" I would ask myself, "why doesn't it work from one child to the next? Or even with the same child in the next moment? Is it me? Am I doing something wrong?" Self doubt lurked because there were no absolutes when supporting 16 children each day. I wish I was told that it would not be easy – that is, guiding and caring for young children and that no experience will be the same or that each interaction may require a different facet of me.

I remember learning "relationship, relationship, relationship" in the child and youth care degree program...this however did not transfer in the ECE curriculum that I

studied. Even if it had, I don't think I would've fully understood it at that time. I understood the black and white definitions of it all but I really had no context to understand the depth of what was intended. What is relationship? What is connection? What does it mean to be in relationship and be connected? How will being in relationship nurture your connections? I had written countless papers and quoted all kinds of theories - the black and white. Needless to say, I was confused to experience that the real world of being in relationship was not black and white – a learning curve I was not prepared for when I entered the professional world.

Over time I realised that my tools, techniques and strategies will not work perfectly each day with each child but still I wasn't okay with that because it was uncertain and not concrete. I felt anxious and unsure much of the time. I was fearful of doing or saying something wrong. It took time... patience... understanding... trial and error... trial and error... trial and error... experiences... experiences and more experiences. I had to consistently and consciously get out of my own head and not second guess myself but rather be present and connected in the moment with the child to support their needs... not my own.

What do I mean, it's not about me, my needs, my abilities, my plans or my control? Well, essentially that. It's not about me! It's about the children I care for. I'm there to support their developmental journey in whatever capacity they need. That was a huge hurdle to overcome for me because I had a lot of messages and beliefs that were being contradicted in my mind and body. However, over time with two incredibly amazing mentors and countless hours of self reflection, I was given endless opportunities to gain a different and much larger perspective.

As I said earlier, I believe connectedness is a feeling... it's a sense. Somewhere along the way I discovered that even if my initial response was ineffective, I could keep trying because we were in the in- between - and there are no definitives. I need to be flexible. I can regroup, be present and open to the experience, and our connection will guide my choices to best support the child.

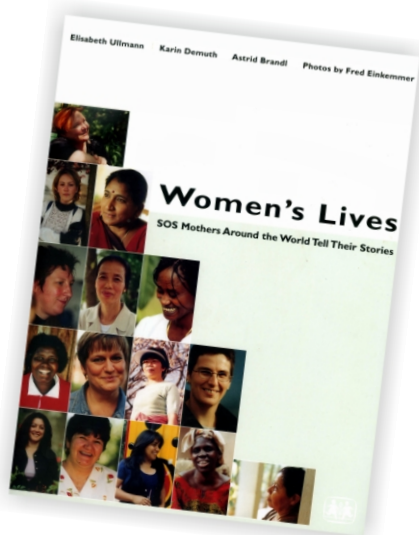
Today I often find myself saying "it's all relative". Every part of me is relative to each and every connection I make with the children. I need to be able to bring my whole self forward in each moment to navigate the many dimensions of each relationship. There is no manual to guide me through each child's uniqueness just as there is no manual to navigate them through mine. We are in relationship together. We are connected.



Women's Lives

SOS Mothers tell their stories

Part 8



Waltraud Nagiller

Born 24.3.1966, Austria

“I am a ‘one-generation-mother’. I said, when I started, that I could imagine bringing up one generation and, after four years, I still feel the same. I know through my self-awareness and self-assessment that I will be able to do that well.”



It is not easy for Waltraud to make the decision to become an SOS mother: “I had to consider it very carefully,” she says. Finally she decides to take on one generation of children and then to do something else afterwards, whatever that might be. She describes her life as an SOS mother as a way of life, not as a profession and in no way as a vocation. She thinks it is important to draw a realistic picture and to do away with people’s idealistic impressions. She does not want to be placed on a pedestal as some sort of “super-person,” but wants to be seen as a co-worker like all the others. She says, “I could never manage it all on my own.”

She also has a realistic view of the children. Despite her maternal feelings for “her” children, she knows that it is they who stipulate how close she can become to them. They all still have their natural parents and have regular contact with them. Waltraud is aware that these ties are important and perhaps more important than their ties to her. She finds nothing wrong in this: “That’s where they come from; that’s where they’ve spent a certain amount of their lives. That is of vital importance to the children.”



The Story of Her Life

“Meeting my intimate friends means a lot to me.”

I come from Hall in Tirol and was born on the 24th of March, 1966. I grew up with strict and conservative parents and with two sisters and four brothers. I'm the second-youngest. After primary and grammar school, I started to study archaeology and history of art, but I gave that up and trained in commerce instead. I left home when I was eighteen and worked part-time whilst I was at university so that I could support myself. I never lost the support of my parents, but I wanted to be independent. I tried a number of jobs, but gave most of them up after the trial period because I never felt totally happy. There was always something which made me say, “I can imagine doing this for a few years, but what then?” I'm the sort of person who always says,

“either - or.” Everything has to be right. For a while I worked at various jobs, including the hotel and restaurant trade, for example. Then I came across a job advert from SOS Children’s Villages. I was a little bit sceptical at first and didn’t reply straight away, but in the back of my mind I was thinking, “I’ll check this one out.” Eventually I did and was given a lot of information at our first meeting. It flooded through my head. Until then I’d only known the name, that it was in Imst and that children lived there who were being taken care of. My interest had been awakened and I had more meetings until eventually I was employed.

Let’s go back to your family. What did your parents do?

My father had a tobacconist’s. He was wounded during the war. Our family never saw his crippled arm as a handicap. My mother was mainly a housewife, but during the last few years of my father’s working life she helped out in the tobacconist’s a bit. The door is always open at home for anybody. Everyone is welcome at any time.

Did you know your grandparents?

I only knew my grandmother from my mother’s side. Sometimes I worked in her hotel during the holidays. Later, my aunt took over the business. She would always employ me for short periods too, because there was always something to be done. I didn’t mind what sort of work I did, because I knew it was only for a limited space of time. My grandmother had a sister who was also somewhat of a grandmother to me.

So you had a big family and that has continued now in a certain way...

Yes, I do think that there’s a connection between what I experienced then and what I’m doing today. My brothers, sisters and I were all very sheltered. My parents were very strict, but that was all right, because they did it because they cared about us. I can remember that it was a long way to our school. It got dark early in the winter and our father would come at least half the way to meet us, so that we didn’t have to walk home alone in the dark. We never had a car. I think they took a lot on themselves to protect and shelter us. Just yesterday, I was talking to my eldest about it, and she asks questions like, “Your father did things like this and that, didn’t he?”



Who do you consider belongs to your family?

My family includes my natural family and my SOS family. My best friend is also included.

Has there been a particularly important time in your life, or have you had a particularly important experience?

I went through a terrible crisis after I finished my studies. I had been disappointed and was asking myself about the meaning of life and all that goes with it. Perhaps that's why I gave up university. I learned a lot about myself during this period. I also learned a lot about the people who meant a lot to me. Thank goodness it was mostly positive. It was like a sieve and I could see who stood by me. Even though that was a difficult time, I'm glad I went through it. I grew up and was able to re-orientate myself. It was an intense time that was important to me in order to be able to conclude an old story.

And do you have a particularly good memory?

Yes, of my childhood. We had a house on the edge of the forest. We had the countryside and freedom. It was simply wonderful sharing all that with six brothers and sisters. It's difficult to think of one particular memory but, for example, I can remember making friendships which have lasted over the decades and become even stronger. Those are true, honest friendships and I have some wonderful memories in connection with them.

What do you like to do in your free time?

You don't have much free time in the SOS Children's Village because of living with the children, but that goes for all SOS mothers. When I'm here I like to do quiet things such as reading, writing or listening to music. I still have my own flat and that means a lot to me. I find it important to keep my friendships up. Sometimes I just feel like hitting the town with my friends and going out until the early hours. Sometimes I like to have a cosy evening at home with my friends, and other times we just go for a stroll around the town. Meeting my intimate friends means a lot to me. We keep in touch, even when I'm here. We phone and we e-mail one another.



Is there a person that you consider a role-model?

No, I always pick the best bits out: a little bit from here and a little bit from there. There is no one person of whom I could say they were my idol.

What would you say were your particular strengths and qualities?

I think I'm patient and reliable. I don't accept everything at face value and I'm generous. This may sound strange, but sometimes I've noticed myself being cold and hard and then I've thought, "This isn't me." I think I'm exact but not nit-picking. I'm consistent, but there are exceptions. I think I'm helpful, but the real evaluation always lies with the observer.

Motivation for Her Choice of Profession

“I took me a long time to make up my mind.”

As an SOS mother trainee, I did my practical training as an SOS aunt but I did have my doubts. I thought, “Can I do this? Is this really for me?” I took a long time to make up my mind. After about six months I said to myself, “Yes, this is what I want to do. This is the right way of life for me.” I see it neither as a profession nor as a vocation. I see it as a way of life.

Decisive, for me, were that SOS Children’s Villages offers a family-based system and that you can work independently and are given responsibility. Also, it’s a mixture of all sorts of things. There’s housework, caring for the children and I also deal, to a certain extent, with the areas of psychology and therapy. I have to think about things such as, “Why is it like that? What makes a child behave like this or that?” What was very important to me, was that the children can remain here on a long-term basis if need be.

How did your family and friends react to your decision?

My parents were, of course, the first to know. My father was over the moon from the start. My mother took a bit longer. She said, “Do you know what you’re doing? Do you know how much work that will be?” She brought up seven children herself and just, well-meaningly, wanted to make me aware, in a good-natured way, of the amount of work involved. A lot of my friends were also very happy about my decision.

Experiences as an SOS Mother

“That just includes everything: housework, school, tears, highs, lows, joy, pain, laughter, singing, dancing - everything.”

I can describe my tasks relatively briefly. It is the daily life of - and now I’m purposely using inverted commas - a “single mother with five children,” but one who is financially secure and has a wide-ranging network of help and support. I can dedicate

myself to bringing up the children without the double burden of a family and a career, because my family is my career.

The children have been formed by their histories, which haven't always been easy, and that always plays a role in our day-to-day life. Despite that, my motto for my family and myself is, "as much normality as possible." We are atypical and are aware of that, but we also try to live as normally as everybody else. That just includes everything: housework, school, tears, highs, lows, joy, pain, laughter, singing, dancing - everything.

Could you tell us what your early days in the SOS Children's Village were like?

I was on my own in the house for the first few days. It hadn't been completely furnished, was cold and uncomfortable and I didn't feel at home at all. Then I found out that the children were coming and I was very nervous. I had met them before, but it was nothing more than an initial contact. And then they were actually at the door. My heart was beating like mad. I can remember that Stephanie was a bit ill when she arrived because she was so excited too. We had lunch together with the social-worker, the driver and the person who had been caring for them up until then. It was a very strained situation. Then I was all on my own with the six children.

Initially, nobody knows anything about anyone else. We had to grope around and slowly get to know one another, and that was the case for everybody. It was during the school holidays, so we could make the most of the time we had together. And then something started to develop. It was different from child to child: I was quite close to one of them straight away, and, with another, I felt as if we were still miles apart. But it gave you goose-pimples and was so exciting. I often asked myself whether I was doing everything right: "Is that the right way? Am I getting too close to the child or not? Are they accepting it? Do they accept me?" Mostly in the evenings I would ask myself about my behaviour: "What was that? Why was it like that? Why did that child react as he did?"

I was busy trying to find a structure and to develop co-operation. That was tense, but it was a great task. It was also a bit chaotic, but even today I think that it had to be like that until everybody had found a place in the family. It was a wonderful time.



Then everyday life caught up with us. That happened quite quickly. We would often sit down together and have a sort of family conference where we tried to set down rules for living together. We would make agreements about concrete things too, such as a rule for watching television. That was an important process in the beginning and the children were brought into it. Everybody was allowed to present their ideas.

These days we only have these meetings when I realise that things are becoming a bit out of control. Then I say, "Right, now I want you all together." It's always possible to make changes, but I'd like the children to be a part of that process and for everything to be clear to them. It wasn't so easy in the beginning, because the children were very withdrawn. It was all new to them. What I noticed, to start with, was that they would always stay near the house. They didn't dare go down to the village square or the sports ground and they had to get used to the other children too. I had to keep motivating them to do that.

Have you, as a person, changed during this time?

No, I don't think so, but my life has changed. There's no comparison to living alone, closing the office door after eight hours work and going home. There are days in the SOS Children's Village when I'd rather close the door and go home, but, if you have been given people to take care of, you can't just switch off. I have the responsibility for the children, the worries and the joys. I'm relieved to know that the children are in good hands when I'm on my days off or on holiday, but for me not to think about them at all? That's unimaginable.

What have been particularly good and particularly hard experiences during your time in the SOS Children's Village?

I'll start with a particularly good one. If anybody had told me this story five years ago, I would have said, "Oh God, isn't that sentimental?" It was Christmas and we were giving each other our presents. There was a box amongst my parcels. It was colourful and beautiful and had all little bits of wrapping paper stuck to it. There was a note stuck to the box which said, "Mummy, I love you very much." If anybody had told me a few years ago that a note like that - it even had a spelling mistake - could move me to tears, I would have said, "You're crazy. Why should I cry about something like that?"



But that was one of the most beautiful moments I've had here. It was such a small thing: a piece of paper with something on it and left-over bits of wrapping paper. But I was so moved, touched and happy that I can't describe it.

The hardest thing is saying goodbye. Melanie moved out and, even if you think you've prepared for it, it's still difficult, especially when you've not parted on the best of terms. That's how it was for us. Even needing an explanation for yourself, or seeing that the children need one, but you can't give it to them, is difficult. But I won't give up hope that our relationship will normalise again some time.

Do you have anyone with whom you can discuss matters that concern you?

Yes, there's somebody here in the SOS Children's Village, as well as amongst my family and friends. I need that. Sometimes I just need to go and unload. I just have the

feeling that I have to tell somebody but, of course, I'm careful of how much I tell and to whom. Sometimes I need some advice. A while ago, I noticed that I was only talking about the difficult things. I took myself by the scruff of the neck and said, "The good things outweigh the bad and I'd like to share that too." I had to drag myself out of that a bit. If somebody asks me, "Do you like your job?" I say, "Yes, I like it. It's not without its problems and complications, but I find it wonderful." I'm very happy that I've regained this attitude.

What sort of contact do you have with the neighbourhood?

I'm pretty busy with my five children, so I don't really have the time to invest in making friendships. I did try to make an effort in the early days, but I've realised that I've gone back to relationships that I already had and that will last in the future too. It's easier for the children to make contact because of school and the things they do together. I like having the neighbours' children here and my children are allowed to go to them too. I feel they have to build up contacts if they want to have their roots here, but I've also got children who find that difficult.

Could you tell us something about your working relationship with the village director, the SOS aunts and the educational co-workers?

We have a village director who is always willing to listen and who will jump in if there's an emergency. What I find great about the SOS Children's Village in Imst is that everything is sorted out on an individual basis. If I felt I had the need for an SOS aunt in our house, and could give good reasons for it, I would be given one. If I need something particular for one of the children, I get it. I don't even have to do all the work with the authorities on my own. Or, for example, if one of the children has to go to therapy, most of the time I can drive him or her there myself; but if, for some reason, I can't go, I'm more than happy that our person doing community service can take them. And the whole system would fall apart if we didn't have our family assistants.

Then we have talks with the psychologists during our "family discussions", for example. That's when we look at the problems and the positive elements and determine what the actual situation is. We work out a development plan from this. That's where we put down what our aims and intentions are for each of the children. I

find this plan very useful, because somebody is keeping tags on what I'm doing and I don't lose sight of my aims. If you have so many children, it's sometimes easy for one or other of your intentions to get put to one side, because something else seems to be more important at the time. These plans are done in writing so that I can keep looking at them to see how much has happened and what I need to keep an eye on. It's a bit like a timetable. We also use this as the basis for our reports to the youth welfare department.

At the moment, our educational co-workers are busy with looking after the children in their free time and giving extra help with schoolwork. There is one educational co-worker who has more to do with our family. He comes for one afternoon a week. Depending on what I need, I can ask him, "Please do their homework with them," or, "Should we go on a trip?" In addition, there are also boys and girls groups where gender-specific work is done. Therapeutic painting is on offer and we've even had ballet on the leisure activity options, when a schoolgirl came here to dance with the children once a week. Recently we had the first SOS mothers meeting after the summer holidays. Together we thought about what leisure time activities should be offered. Are there enough children who are interested in painting or model-making? If so, it will be reintroduced. Our two village caretakers are also involved in the educational side of things. The youths all do a so-called "village practical" with them. That means that they spend one hour a week working with the caretakers and they gain some practical experience. Some of the youths help the caretakers; others help the cleaning ladies, or the lady who runs the home for retired SOS mothers, during the holidays. If they do the work well, they even get paid for it.

The basis for a good working relationship is simple: you need to build a good communication basis where everyone can speak, and even criticise, openly. I would also like to know what I could do differently. In addition, we all have the chance to go to supervised sessions. I find that very important, in order to have time to reflect and to gain new perspectives.

What happens during the SOS mothers meetings?

The SOS mothers have a meeting with the village director once a month. Usually it's about appointments that have to be made, or we reflect on activities we've done together. The village director has his points he wants to tell us and each of us can talk



about how she perceives things, or what the village director and other colleagues need to know. We also develop guidelines between us, such as what time the youths have to be back if they go out in the evenings. The SOS mothers' meeting is also a communication forum and it's always very pleasant.

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

Before you do the training, you get to know the practical side of the SOS Children's Villages. I did that in East Tyrol. I still did my theoretical training in Mörlbach, Bavaria. It was in a beautiful house with a huge terrace, a field and a lake. I think there were twelve of us, including some prospective SOS mothers who had their own children. Special child-care facilities were laid on for them.

The contents of the course were split into three. We had an educational, a creative and a housekeeping part. Some subjects, such as remedial therapy and psychology, were taught all year round. There were also very interesting seminars on subjects like literature for children and young people. In between, we would do a practical. This school year was an opportunity to rethink our decisions. Especially when we were dealing with a particularly difficult subject, I'd think about the difficult questions for days. I often thought, "Can I do this? Am I up to it?" Every now and then I thought that I wouldn't be able to do it. I wouldn't be able to live with children who'd been through so much, or to be confronted with their relatives, who would bring more problems with them. But, in the end, you get it into perspective again. It's also a challenge to live together with so many other women. We weren't always of the same opinion but, on the whole, we stuck together well.

The training was the basis I needed to be able to start as an SOS mother. I can't remember everything I learned there, but I know where I can look things up. I often need what I learned in psychology and remedial therapy.

Have you had any in-service training since?

Yes, I've had a lot of in-service training. SOS Children's Villages offers a course every year and you are expected to attend if possible. The last one we had was also open to participants from other organisations. I found that good, because it prevents you becoming blind to the shortcomings of your own organisation. The topic was,

“Co-operation with the System of Origin”. People from the youth welfare department took part, as well as foster parents. That was a great mixture and was good fun. The Social Educational Institute (*Note: a facility belonging to the Austrian SOS Children’s Village Association*) also offers courses and now we have the Family Education Centre (*Note: SOS mothers have been trained here since 1999*), where we can also take part in courses.

I did a course in the use of games as an educational tool, which took about two and a half years. SOS Children’s Villages supported me there. I also did a private computer course to be one step ahead of the children, which isn’t easy.

Is there such a thing as a village community here in the SOS Children’s Village?

It seems to me to be like any other neighbourhood. I get on better with some than with others. There is contact between everybody. There are aspects where the community becomes important. If, for example, I have to take one of the children to hospital, I phone one of my neighbours to ask if she could keep an eye on my children whilst I’m gone. Or, another example is, if I’ve got a difficult relation in my house, visiting one of the children, I’ll phone my neighbour and ask, “Can you come over? I can’t cope on my own.” Then she knows what’s going on. I can rely on that. And then we have the festivities which we organise together, such as the children’s advent market, carnival, or other such things.

How would you describe the four SOS Children’s Village principles to our readers?

The four principles are: the mother, brothers and sisters, the house and the village. Each of these principles plays a role in our lives. The children are able to grow up as brothers and sisters, which is not the case in many other facilities. The house is a home: our own four walls and something intimate for the family. That doesn’t mean to say that we don’t let anybody else in. We don’t close the door and say, “That’s none of your business.” That’s where the village plays a role. There are co-workers who help to bring up the children and who have a say in the decision-making process. The SOS mother is simply the mother. I personally have very strong maternal feelings for my



children. To what extent I'm allowed to be a mother is, however, determined by the children.

What do you like most about your work and what do you like least?

What I like most are that I work with people, have a lot of responsibility and can work relatively independently. And then - and this is a very personal thing - that I get so much from the children. You go through the highs and the lows. It's also great that I get so much support.

What don't I like? I can't say, in that respect. I would rather express it as wishes. I would like to have more free time with the children. The family's time is taken up with school, therapy and other appointments. You can do so much in your free time that is good for our daily lives, and I miss that. But I also know that I need my holiday, whilst the children are at the holiday camp in Caldonazzo.

Another wish that I'd like to present to SOS Children's Villages, is that some families, if it suits them, could be transferred to other surroundings: a rented property or a detached house somewhere. I know, in practice it would be quite difficult, because as an SOS mother you need the support of the village. I'm also far from wanting to dissolve the village, but it is an idea which might be worth considering. So many possibilities and solutions have been found so far, and I'd just like the association to think about it.

What do you think is the general public's opinion of the profession of an SOS mother?

I think that we receive a lot of recognition and sometimes it's exaggerated. I've experienced that myself. You often hear people talking about a "vocation" and then I say, "Stop! We're no different to any other mother!" I don't do all this on my own. I don't like this - "being placed on a pedestal" that happens within the organisation, either. It's not very pleasant to be presented in that way. Yes, I'm the SOS mother, but how far I'm allowed to be the mother is, as I already mentioned, determined by the children. I just see myself as a co-worker, because I couldn't manage it all on my own with such a big bunch of children. I'm aware that I wouldn't be able to manage without the family assistant, the village director, the educators and psychologists. So I see myself

as a small cog in a big machine. It is important to me that the public is given a realistic picture of what we do, but, of course, it is nice to receive recognition for what we do too.

What do you associate with Hermann Gmeiner?

The first thing that comes to mind is his grave, because he is buried here in Imst. I didn't know him personally. I only know the stories that the retired SOS mothers tell and the anecdotes one hears. I think he was a very approachable person. I thought about hanging up a picture of him in our house, but he's too far away for me. I do want to tell the children about his role, though.

If you try to look ten years into the future, how do you see yourself then?

In ten years' time our family will be coming to an end because I'm a "one-generation-mother". I said, when I started, that I could imagine bringing up one generation and, after four years, I still feel the same. I know through my self-awareness and self-assessment that I will be able to do that well. I can imagine perhaps taking the last children with me as foster children and perhaps working part-time, but I do want to give these children a good start in life.

The Children in Her Care

"But they still belong to me."

I had a group of six brothers and sisters to begin with. The eldest was away at boarding school for his last year of school, and so he was only here at weekends and during the holidays. He still belongs to the family, though. He's moved out now and is living in Innsbruck, where he's being cared for by another organisation. Melanie moved out this summer. Now I only have four of the brothers and sisters living here and two years ago I was given a baby, Jutta. She's two years old, Jasmin is seven, Daniel is nine, Dominik is thirteen and Stephanie fourteen.

Stephanie is the eldest in the house now. It's not easy with her at the moment, but I know what she's capable of. Her strength lies in her creativity and I hope that she will find something in this direction that will fulfil her. Another one of her strengths - even



though I'm experiencing the negative side at the moment - is her persistence. She's got a lot of staying power.

Dominik is very helpful. Even though he sometimes reaches his limits, he makes the effort and he does things wonderfully. He's charming. I don't think he has an easy time with children of his own age and he also finds it difficult to do as well as he's expected to. I see his strength in the fact that he never gives up, and always sets himself new goals. Apart from that, he loves to cook and helps me in the kitchen. He does that superbly.

Daniel always wants a cuddle and is always seeking attachment. He's not always able to do justice to the things that school demands of him, but he's hard-working and ambitious. He'll say, "They've learned to write in joined-up writing and I want to learn that too." He sees that as an incentive and that's his strength. He doesn't withdraw, but uses it as motivation. I admire that. He's a family person. All the children are, to a certain extent, but not as much as he is. They accepted Jutta, who is not their real sister, quite naturally.

Jasmin is also loving and seeks attachment. Everyone can laugh and cry with her. She has a lot of good friends, both within the SOS Children's Village and outside. It's not easy for a lot of the children to build up friendships and maintain them. Jasmin is also hard-working, dependable and is amazingly well-balanced.

And then there's Jutta. She is a real ray of sunshine. She was like that as a baby. She had us all under her spell, and wrapped us round her little finger. She's cheerful, lively and inquisitive. She has everything she needs and seems to be happy.

What are your hopes for the children?

Only the best. Well, at least that they manage to have their lives under control, because nobody can be spared all difficulties. I hope that they stay healthy and that they can be sure of what they want. I hope that they will find jobs that they enjoy, because that's a big part of our lives. And I hope that they find good partners for life.

What would you like to give them to help them on their way?

I'm trying to teach them values: belief, honesty, helpfulness, a feeling of community, thankfulness and a dose of healthy egoism. And friendship: what does that mean and

what do I have to give for it? These might be slogans, but it's important to me to teach them these values.

I would, of course, like to stay in touch with my children after they've moved out. At least I'd like to know what they're doing, how they are and whether there's anything I can do for them. If it's more than that, then I'll be happy and grateful. However, I am realistic and I know that I can't force it. It will have to come from both sides. I'm aware that the children have their natural families and that they will probably go back there for periods of time. That's all right.

Do you know all your children's family backgrounds?

Yes, I know everything, and they also have regular contact with their relatives. It's not just the parents but also the grandparents. I'm in favour of that because these are the children's roots. I think you have to play with an open deck of cards and not make anything worse or better than it is. The children have to have the chance to be in touch with their families, because that's where they come from and where they've spent a part of their lives, and it's very important to the children.

Do the relatives come to the SOS Children's Village or do the children go out with them?

There are various possibilities, depending on what we hold to be right for them. Sometimes their father picks them up and they spend the day with him. Occasionally, they stay overnight with him. Then we have accompanied visits. These happen if, for example, the mother is not able to come here on her own. We can envisage that at some stage in the future she will come alone, but, to begin with, we've needed the presence of a social-worker from the youth welfare department. It's not always easy. One mother, for example, needed years before she could face the situation. We kept talking to her until eventually she did come.

Do your children see anything of your own family?

Yes, we visit them a lot. The youngest ones find it easier. For them it's just "grandma Nagiller" and then they have another grandmother. My father is 84 years old and, of course, he's a grandfather figure to them. I've explained to their relatives that the



children can't just call him "Josef". We're also welcome at my brothers and sisters and their families. That means a lot to me and I don't take it for granted. It would be nice if all SOS mothers could have that sort of experience.

We are all aware that I'm caring for these children and that they are not my own. But they still belong to me. That's my way of life and what I've chosen to do.

To My Colleagues Around the World

One message goes out to all the women who are thinking about becoming SOS mothers. All I can say to them is, "Have faith in yourselves and do it! It is something enriching and fulfilling. It is not an easy job, but the good aspects of the work outweigh the rest."

My message to my colleagues is that I hope they feel as satisfied as I do. I know it is not always easy to fulfil this task, to be happy and, at the same time, look after yourself. That can sometimes be difficult, but it is possible.

SOS Children's Village Work in Austria

Austria is the cradle of the SOS Children's Villages. In 1949 Hermann Gmeiner founded the first SOS Children's Village in Imst, in the Tyrol, in response to the post-war poverty and the needs of many children. Three years later, more than fifteen thousand friends and donors were supporting SOS work, and so Hermann Gmeiner started to think about realising more SOS

Children's Village projects. Construction of the second SOS Children's Village in Nußdorf-Debant began in 1954. Seven more SOS Children's Villages and a child therapy centre, where children with special needs or behavioural problems are taken in and cared for, were added in the 1950's and 60's. These were followed by further SOS Youth Facilities and specialist facilities, such as for children and youths in crisis situations, or others where youths are assisted to integrate into the workplace.

Existing SOS Children's Village Facilities:

9 SOS Children's Villages, several SOS Youth Facilities, 8 SOS Kindergartens,
8 SOS Social Centres,



October 2016 **From the Czech Republic**

Hi Colleagues. One of the delights of retirement was not having to hurry back home after a successful Vienna Conference.

Thanks again, Hermann Radler and Bettina Terp for believing in

CYC-Net! We caught the train to Prague for a few days post-conference.

Our train was a limited-stops express, all the way to Prague. Seats booked early, we travelled through Austrian farmlands noticing how prosperity faded on entering the Czech Republic. There are still big challenges facing the rural sector in this EU country.

Trains arrive some distance from the city centre so working out the public transport system and walking via main thoroughfares was important. Prada Square is pretty much the centre of activity although all the roads and paths leading to the Square were also noteworthy.

A city divided by the Vltava River, important features of the history of central Europe unfolded on both sides of this waterway. Houses of legislation feature on one side of the river while palaces and religious power feature on the other side. Prague is historically remembered for the



Rapido Train from Wien to Prada



Playful-minded Adults and Multiple Bubbles-Making at Wenceslas Square



democratic exercise of ‘defenestration’ – perhaps more accurately, 16th Century mobs throwing politicians out the fourth floor windows of the Council Chambers.

Today, Prague is a beautiful and active city where children are provided with ample play opportunities, including many different ways of blowing and generating bubbles and chasing after these. Youths moved around on Segways inviting tourists for guided tours.

Across the Charles Bridge, one gains access to the old royal palaces. The tour guide told us how the buildings were to have been demolished by the Communist Regime but lack of funds in the public coffers meant they are now art galleries and museums.

We’ve been asked about the extent to which the Iraq and Syrian immigrants were noticeable. Nothing we noticed in Prague nor later in Budapest. It is worth noting that the Czech Republic and Hungary are two EU Border countries that have closed their southern and eastern borders from asylum-seeking war zone immigrants from the Middle East. These countries have joined with Slovenia and Poland to demand open immigration with Britain as a Brexit condition of UK access to European markets.

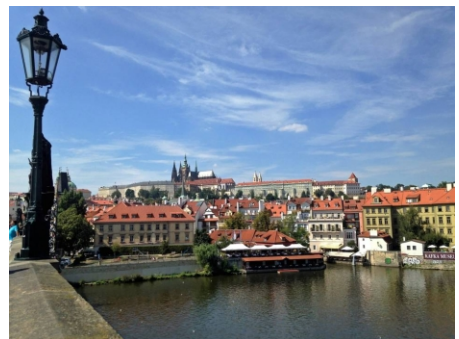
Prague was the birthplace of existentialist writer Franz Kafka who



Prada Square and the Windows from which Defenestration was



Much Playful Activity in Prague Square



Prague Castle from Charles Bridge



**Where Prague City meets Vltava River
Skyline at Night**

[Wikipedia](#) refers to as “a German- language writer of novels and short stories, widely regarded as one of the major figures of 20th-Century literature for work that fuses elements of realism and the fantastic (think of child and youth care work!), typically featuring isolated protagonists faced by bizarre or surrealistic predicaments (think of you and another at the end of a crazy Saturday late shift) and incomprehensible social-bureaucratic powers” (just think of whomever you write up an incident report on that same crazy Saturday evening late shift). Kafka is said to have “explored themes of alienation, existential anxiety, guilt and absurdity”(a pretty good description for anyone facing an incident inquiry or charged wrongfully for abuse).

There is much to learn from Eastern European countries about child and youth care praxis.



**Sculpture honouring the life and
works published by Franz Kafka
of Prague**



**Where Prague City meets Vltava
River Skyline at Night**

endnotes

Education is the best friend. An educated person is respected everywhere.
Education beats the beauty and the youth

Chanakya

Youth is the gift of nature, but age is a work of art

Stanislaw Jerzy Lec

The foundation of every state is the education of its youth

Diogenes

The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those
who think alike than those who think differently

Friedrich Nietzsche



"I wanted to be a musician, but the only record deal I could get was ten for a penny if I bought just six more in the next two years."

Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength
Betty Friedan

I survived many a youth hostel bunk room reading Tolstoy by flashlight.
Maria Semple

Youth is easily deceived because it is quick to hope
Aristotle

Older men declare war. But it is the youth that must fight and die.
Herbert Hoover

Youth comes but once in a lifetime
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



information

CYC-Online is a free-to-access e-journal published monthly by [The CYC-Net Press](http://www.cyc-net.org). Readers are welcome to print out pages or chapters and use these as desired.

Editors

Thom Garfat (Canada)

thom@cyc-net.org

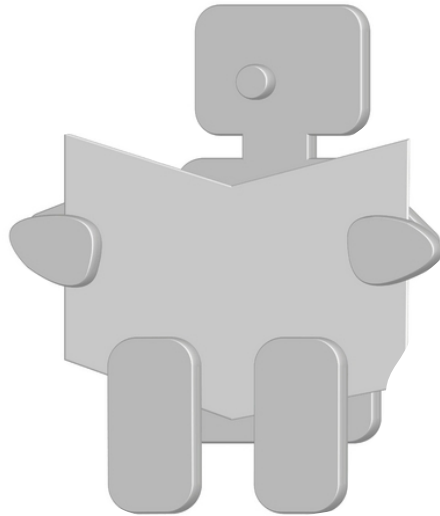
James Freeman (USA)

james@cyc-net.org

Founding Editor

Brian Gannon (South Africa)

brian@cyc-net.org



Correspondence

The Editors welcome your input, comment, requests, etc. Write to cyconline@cyc-net.org

Advertising

Only advertising related to the Child and Youth Care profession, programs, courses, books, conferences etc. will be accepted.

Rates and specifications are listed over the page, or email advertising@cyc-net.org



CYC-Online October 2016 Issue 212

www.cyc-net.org

69



Writing for CYC-Online

CYC-Online welcomes articles, pieces, poetry, case examples and general reflections from everyone. We are a monthly journal which reflects the activities of the field.

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.

Please note that authors retain joint copyright privileges.

Send submissions to: cyconline@cyc-net.org



THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK

CYC-Online Direct Advertising Rates

Size	Standard	x3 insertions	x6 insertions	x12 insertions
Full page	\$250.00	\$200.00	\$150.00	\$100.00
1/2 page	\$187.50	\$150.00	\$112.50	\$ 85.00
1/4 page	\$125.00	\$100.00	\$ 75.00	\$ 50.00
1/8 page	\$100.00	\$ 75.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 30.00

Price is per monthly issue, per insertion. Full amount payable at first insertion. Deadline - 7 days before monthend.

MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS

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

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

Image resolution 300 dpi at 100%

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

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

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



CYC-Online October 2016 Issue 212

www.cyc-net.org

71



**ONLINE JOURNAL OF
THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK (CYC-NET)**

www.cyc-net.org

Published by



ISSN 1605-7406