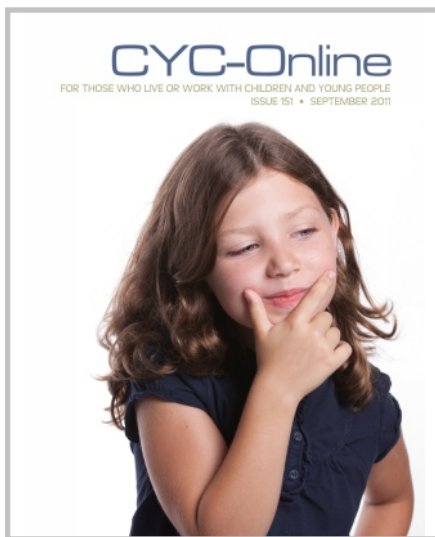


CYC-Online

FOR THOSE WHO LIVE OR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
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Contents

Editorial: “Back to School” / 3

Humility / 4
Jack Phelan

Everyday life in focus in residential child care / 6
Helle Schjellerup Nielsen

Commandment 5: Encourage Responsibility, Not Accountability / 16
Gerry Fewster

Relationships: thoughts on their origin and their power / 22
Penny Parry

External Supervision / 30
Kiaras Gharabaghi

Creating Safe Spaces for Feelings / 33
Jackie Winfield

Janusz Korczak. / 37
Sandra Joseph

Hope and the Imagination / 43
Herbert Kohl

Talking to Kids About the News / 49
Estella Abraham

Law & Order / 51
Nils Ling

Postcard from South Dakota / 53
Leon Fulcher

EndNotes / 56

Information / 58

“Back to School”

On the radio this past week, they have been reminding everyone that next week it is ‘back to school time’ in Canada. These are not public service announcements designed to remind the ‘forgetful parent’ that indeed ‘it is that time of year again’. As if a reminder is necessary. Imagine if it was – I can see it now, the school principal, looking over the attendance sheets for the 1st day, notices Mary was not at school. He phones Mary’s mother and lets her know that he noticed Mary was not there for her first day.

Mary’s Mother: “Oh goodness, is it that time of year again. I guess I just forgot.”

Or maybe the principal had to phone Mark’s dad, the farmer.

Mark’s Dad: “What? He’s gotta come back again? How is that boy gonna learn to work if every harvest time, you drag him into that place. Anyway, how was I to know it was time? Nobody told us. They should announce it on the radio or something!”

Right? I guess I am wrong – those announcements on the radio really are just being helpful, especially if you want to buy the products they sell as if promising that somehow school will be a better experience for the children if they use their pencils and pens, write in their notebooks, and dress in their fashion.

A close friend tells me that she always loved the first day of school. For her it was a great opportunity – to connect, reconnect and, more importantly, to learn. Me, on the other hand, I dreaded the start of the new school year. It was an opportunity alright – an opportunity to feel

dumb, experience myself as an outsider and, above all else, a chance to recognize my own inadequacies.

How different everyone’s experience might be, eh?

For most of the kids we work with, school is not a positive experience – and so, I think, it is our job somehow to increase their enthusiasm, reduce their fears, help them to see this as an opportunity – or at least a possibility. See, it looks like this to me ...

Most of the kids we work with experience school as a confirmation of their limitations or inadequacies – okay, so the school system should change, but the reality is that is not likely to happen. So, in the face of this, how do we help kids develop the ‘right attitude’ or at least a cautious approach which will let them be less pessimistic?

But, I believe this, every child has some positive experience at school. It may be a particular area of study (biology?), or it may be an activity (soccer?) or it may simply be the opportunity to connect with others. Our job is to find out what it is that the young person experiences as positive about the school experience and build on that.

When we help young people to focus on the positive, we help them take a step on the pathway to succeeding.

And, overall, that’s not a bad outcome, eh?

So, what are you going to do this week? How are you going to help some of those young people find a positive reason (however small it is) to look forward to going to school?
– Thom

Humility

Jack Phelan

CYC practitioners are aware of the laundry-list of skills and abilities that have been compiled over the years by employers, academics and professional bodies in an attempt to quantify the qualities of an effective CYC professional. The telephone book sized documents make the average saint look quite average by comparison.

At the risk of adding to the unmanageable, I would like to discuss humility as a key ingredient.

My favourite post-modernist couple Hans and Kathy Scott-Myhre often reject the use of developmental approaches in our work because it contains a built-in assumption of superior knowledge in the helper. This destroys any genuine relational possibilities in the helping process because of the unequal power balance in the relationship. I admit it took me a while to absorb this idea in a useful way, but I now see it as a helpful perspective. This is where humility becomes important.

Humility is the ability to stay curious and unthreatened when confronted with attitudes and beliefs that contradict your own cherished ideas about life truths. Respect for the other person is an essential piece, but, also, the courage not to react defensively is important.

Culturally different people challenge

our humility as well as people with different political and religious views. The usual response to people who differ from our beliefs is to tolerate their right to that opinion because we are not responsible for what they believe. However, this is not true when our own children are involved. Parents often try to shape and create values and beliefs that mirror theirs in their own children.

CYC practitioners are in powerful and parental roles much of the time in their work. Sometimes the need to be controlling is a requirement foisted upon them by employers or funders; at other times it is a personal need. Unfortunately, the youth and families sent to us for help need us to be humble and respectful of the differences between us rather than powerful and controlling. So far in their lives everyone who has been challenged by the different, often asocial or illegal, behaviours they display, has tried to coerce them to change. Telling these youth and families to act differently has not been helpful, even when the teller has great power and influence.

The same person who would not tell someone of a different culture, religion or political persuasion to be more like them, often does exactly that when working with vulnerable people who think and act differently. Just because we have the

power to control people, is not a good reason to do it.

Safety is an important issue when working with youth and families, and I am not advocating standing by passively when people are creating dangerous situations. However, safety does not create change, it only creates safety. If your goal is to support change, then you must do much more than just control the situation for safety.

Humility leads to curiosity about differences. Our approaches should build bridges between our differences, not create no differences. Our helping assumptions and intentions need to be regularly examined and challenged in team meetings so that we do not try to manage our anxiety about what is challenging about the other person's beliefs by forcing our framework onto them.

Many youth and families in our care have no hope that the future will be better than the past, so they live in the moment, which creates lots of difficulties. When we tell, yell at, counsel and modify them through our power position, it does not create bridges between our differences. It may be very challenging to respect a person who lives in the moment, trusts no-one and values little that does not personally benefit them immediately.

Humility, the ability to stay curious and unthreatened when confronted with attitudes and beliefs that contradict your own cherished ideas about life truths, is a quality that consistently will keep you focussed on the real goal of helping, which is to create bridges and new understanding for both you and the other person.

The Therapeutic Use of Daily Life Events

Thom Garfat, PhD

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Dr Thom Garfat (Canada) is the president of TransformAction Consulting (www.cyc-net.org/transformaction), the co-editor of the International Child and Youth Care Network (www.cyc-net.org) and is an international speaker, consultant and trainer with over 40 years experience in the field. His most recent books include *Quality Care in a Family Setting and Developing Effective Child and Youth Care Practice with Families*. This training is held in conjunction with the **Circle of Courage Islands Seminars**

Everyday life in focus in residential child care

Helle Schjellerup Nielsen



This paper is based on a study of relationships within a community-based residential establishment in Denmark. The residential unit involved in the study receives children from 4 -17 years, though the average age is 14. Admission on an emergency basis is possible and often used. However, most children are in long-term care (1-2 years) and a few of them for the rest of their childhood.

The unit has two sections, each with six children. The sections work separately, but they are within the same house, connected by a corridor and they share playgrounds, meeting rooms and office facilities. Eleven young people were interviewed. Two of the young people, aged 14 and over, still lived in the residential unit, while the rest of the interviewees had moved out of residential care and lived independently. All the statements included in this paper are from the latter group. The study was conducted in cooperation with Karen Zobbe and published

in Schjellerup Nielsen & Zobbe (2003).

Three young people, who formerly lived in residential care, talk about residential life:

It was good that you could take your bicycle and ride home [to my parent's home]...

you had your friends in the neighbourhood, and you also went to the local school, so, well, it was essential, really.

It was like this, if you didn't do something, they kicked you out of the door, you were supposed to be active either with leisure activities or calling someone or it could be just going to the public swimming pool.

The positive side was that I knew the neighbourhood. I knew where to go if I wanted a soft drink...that matters a lot, when you have so many other things in your head. That you don't need somebody to accompany you to go to places, or drive you. And I knew which

leisure activities were available, if I felt like it. I knew where the parties were if I felt like that... well I felt like I was home.

The residential setting where the young people lived is situated in the neighbourhood of their parents' home. All the children in this unit attend local school or local day care. The manager of the unit attaches great importance to the children's relationships to different social arenas outside the unit. She emphasises this as an important part of the work from the viewpoint of social pedagogy:

Our task is to maintain the good relationships that they have. If they don't have any, then they need help to foster them. To get them to take part in a leisure activity, have some playmates or friends... it is for example about celebrating their birthday here and also seeing to it that they participate in birthdays out there. It goes both ways to push them out to get relationships and to help them maintain these. This also goes for interests, and to attract peers to come here, so it becomes natural to bring home playmates or have someone staying overnight at weekends. We want them to have a leisure activity in the neighbourhood and they cannot go together, that is a part of our values, they can have the same interest but not on the same team, it should not be like 'here come the ones from the children's home'.

The statements of the young people and the manager alike are about having ordinary relationships, in spite of living in a

residential care establishment, and to interact in the same social arenas as their peers. This paper discusses the role of residential child care arrangements from the viewpoint that children socialise in a variety of social arenas. The paper will include recent research and discuss this in relation to guidelines and demands in child welfare policy in Denmark.

A recent review of effort and impact in residential child care (Schjellerup Nielsen, 2006) points out a consistent theme in the studies that suggest a risk of institutionalisation and thus a need for cooperation between different social arenas and social services and to create mediating links to obtain an everyday life for the children, which includes social arenas outside the residential establishment. The recommendations of the review are similar to other studies (Egelund & Hestbæk, 2003; Andreassen, 2003). While on basis of the studies it has not been possible to state definitively what constitutes best practice, nevertheless the review paints a clear picture of the practices that have a good probability of being effective:

- There should be extensive cooperation with school and local community, as well as the social services, and schooling should take a major priority;
- Treatment in residential care contributes to and matches the social and cultural competences required in order to interact in different social arenas while living in residential care as well as afterwards;
- Residential care units should represent a predictable and clear but warm combination of structure and culture.

As to how residential care arrangements can help create competences that increase the life chances of the children and their societal integration the studies recommend: a) links between the residential care setting and the outside community, b) good inter-professional collaboration, c) cooperation with and involvement of the family in the child's everyday life, d) working with aftercare when the children move back home as well as when young people start an independent life.

The key issues for social pedagogical work with children in residential care in this paper will thus be family cooperation, homeliness (as in feeling at home), school and leisure life, and friends and social networks. These are issues of a general character in social pedagogical work with all children in any setting, not just residential child care.

Everyday life in different social arenas

Socialisation for children today is wide-ranging in terms of interaction with many different social arenas. Socialisation does not just happen in the family, or (for children in residential care) within the residential setting, in the way that traditional primary socialisation is usually understood. Changes in society have produced childhood conditions that entail new social challenges for children, which need to be managed in the everyday life of the children (Dencik, 1999).

Important social arenas for school-age children are family, school, friends, leisure time and their neighbourhood. These social arenas are just as crucial for children in residential settings. A key principle which

informs Danish social services law is that all children have the need for a variety of everyday life experiences in order to develop. The law governing the residential placement of children makes it mandatory to provide developmental opportunities that give the best possible childhood in order to obtain the same developmental potential as their peers. The local authority in cooperation with staff from the residential unit writes a 'plan of action', preferably ahead of or within the first two months of the placement. The plan identifies different points of focus which include important socialisation arenas for the child, as the plan has to establish goals with regard to:

- 1) the child's general development,
- 2) family conditions,
- 3) schooling,
- 4) health,
- 5) leisure time and friendships, and,
- 6) any other relevant circumstances.

In the Danish Placement Reform policy (Anbringelsesreformen) issued in January 2006, it is a stated aim that admission to out-of-home care is not just about removing a child from an unacceptable situation at home, it is also about contributing to helping the child in getting on with his or her life in the best possible way. That is, an objective that wants to strengthen vulnerable children's life chances through working within the above-mentioned focus areas.

Family involvement and cooperation

It is characteristic for many of these children that admission to out-of-home care has weakened the bonds with their

family. They often feel lonely and isolated, as they are without supporting networks and it is not easy for them to create new networks (Egelund & Hestbæk, 2003). As the children are often occupied with thoughts about their family, the development of cooperation with the family and ensuring that the child feels that their parents are still significant, are crucial to create coherence between the life with their family and everyday life at the residential unit. The role of the staff should focus on mediating between child and family rather than on completely taking over the care function. Research shows that when residential child care units work together with the family, it is a key factor in positive development during residential life. Conversely if the parents are not involved or integrated in the pedagogical work it is the greatest single barrier in terms of maintaining positive development during placement when the child returns to the family (Schjellerup Nielsen, 2006).

Schwartz and Madsen (2003) demonstrated that the residential setting can be understood as a part of the family's network. The unit can be part of a joint arrangement of care for the child, where the parents participate in the everyday care work with the child. The purpose of a joint arrangement is to connect the different social worlds of the child instead of dissociating them. In this way, admission to out-of-home care is not seen as the main solution only; it can be a solution for a shorter period if the situation breaks down at home.

The placement is thus seen as a supplement, either as a solitary arrangement or in cooperation with other social service arrangements. The everyday life of the

child is in focus, as great importance is attached to the maintenance of the child's different customary relationships.

To feel at home

As one of the young people states at the beginning of this paper, it is crucial that you feel at home at the residential unit. While a child is resident there, the unit is the child's home as it is there that the everyday life of the child is lived.

Sadly, in Denmark, many placements have a character of being temporary as opposed to an overall sense of being homely. To take a child into care can enhance the feeling of breakdown and being rootless or 'homeless', which is why the general purpose of many residential child care establishments is to provide a safe and homely environment, with stability and care. A residential child care setting is by definition a public institutional arrangement which seems to reflect a public life rather than a private life in an understanding of how a 'home' usually appears. The children's rooms are in principle private, while the other rooms or spaces in the unit are public. Research shows that everyday life in a residential care unit is characterised by routines and structures that are adapted to the entire group and that the children require respect for their privacy (for example, to be able to be on the phone privately; to spend time alone with friends; peace and quiet to get on with homework) (Egelund & Hestbæk, 2003). The following statements from young people show that they have different experiences of the unit in terms of being a home or a familylike environment. Two of the young people emphasise com-

munal or caring traditions, as being important in creating homeliness:

[It] is an institutional setting, but they have made an immense effort to make it seem as a home. They pulled us out of bed in the weekends to have brunch together... it is the homelike traditions that makes it so wonderful. It doesn't have to be like an institutional setting, where everything is scheduled... it is not, but sometimes they would say: 'You are not going anywhere tonight', then you lost your temper, but that also happens at home, your mother also tells you that 'you should not go out tonight, you have been out everyday this week, you can stay home tonight'. To me it is my family... though it is an institutional setting they do an incredible amount to make it look like a home. And that is what I really miss, that we watched a video every Wednesday, there were holidays both at summertime and skiing holiday, and outings and during the weekends we bought sweets, lit candles, played games. Two other young people that lived in the same residential group felt there were too many people assembled in one place, and that the rules were undifferentiated: It is obvious that I would make the unit more homely... I think there are too many people – it seems very much as after-school care – I would prefer to divide the unit... to have a place with more tranquillity, a place where you cannot run about... it is a very big place, if you have to live there for a longer time. It seemed more like after-school care to

me. Well, that's something that a family's about, when you are older you can watch a film once a week...but if we for example went to the cinema, it had to be a film that we could all watch... and then it is the smaller children that get to decide and then it's going to be Bambi or something like that.

On the basis of a study in several small-scale residential child care establishments in Denmark, Højlund (2006) demonstrated the dilemmas when residential units define themselves as a home and when they make use of homeliness and a family-like concept as a pedagogical strategy. Tensions occur, for example between closeness and distance, or intimacy and alienation. This is because homeliness is perceived by the children as togetherness and sincere personal engagement, while the role of the staff is blurred in this concept, as in reality their role is governed by their job description and working conditions. The pedagogical staff aim at providing an authentic home, while the children to a greater extent focus on authentic relationship. Højlund refers to pedagogical staff who state that the idea of homeliness is not consistent with the many rules and decrees of a public system. A residential care unit is a part of the public system, and this interferes with the good intentions of being homelike. Hence the notion of homeliness struggles against something else. The difficult task for the staff is to locate the effective but still warm combination of structure and culture that research shows is effective in pedagogical work. (Schjellerup Nielsen, 2006)

Schooling and leisure time

Research identifies many problems in the prioritisation and establishment of children's schooling while they are looked after. Children who have had multiple placements have often also had many school disruptions. Collectively, research emphasises the relevance of increased co-operation across disciplines, as well as a call for a particular focus upon the schooling and educational needs of the children and young people in residential care, including support and help to do homework as well as informal aspects like having positive expectations and motivation. To get support in school is a constituent element in successful adaptation after the discharge. (Schjellerup Nielsen, 2006)

Studies that have compared leisure activities of children in residential care with peers in general show a great difference in application and frequency among the two groups. Children in residential care spent less time in public arenas and to a greater extent they use activities at the residential establishment than in public.

To children who do not live in residential care, friends have a great influence on their more frequent use of leisure activities, while children in residential care often require that one of the staff are present. Improving leisure and friendships for children in residential care requires both active pedagogical effort and the participation of the children. However a recent review from the Danish National Centre for Social Research on leisure time for vulnerable children (Dahl, 2007) shows how children in residential care seem to get more help in participating in leisure activities than other vulnerable children do.

The review concludes that leisure activities have a positive connection with vulnerable children's wellbeing in school and/or with their personal wellbeing. Leisure time, formal as well as informal can serve as breathing spaces for vulnerable children in a complicated everyday life. The friendships and social networks that the children create in connection with leisure activities have significance rather than the actual activities themselves.

Friendships and the residential group

It is not only social networks and friends outside care which are important for the children. When children move into a residential care unit they have to be a part of a new children's community. The relationships with the staff are 'scheduled' and replaceable, whereas the other children are permanent fellow-residents. The community in a residential child care unit differs radically from other children's communities as it entirely consists of children with a variety of difficulties and care needs. Also, because it is full-time, it is somewhat like a family or sibling relationship. Some of the young people put it this way:

I felt it was fine. The same young people, peers and that was okay... It was not like siblings.. it was evident that it was a different kind of relationship we had. I think we were like flatmates. It was like we had something together and we had something in common. We all had problems and a reason to live there, so we had like something in common that stuck us together.

We had such a love-hate relationship [in regard to the smaller children] from Monday till Friday you just wished them all dead. But when we got to Friday, there was just cosiness in the sofa, the smaller children climbed up on your lap and farted and it was all forgotten. I think it is the same with siblings, you really hate them – still you wouldn't be without them.

From studies in residential child care in Denmark, Stokholm (2006a; 2006b) points out that group life with the other children is of great importance for children in residential care. She shows how the children's desire to be part of something and to belong is so strong that it becomes the motivating force in their interaction and striving for togetherness. As a consequence of admission to residential care the children have often had to sever all ties with other social networks. Group life, however, is made up of unequal social positions, a sort of social hierarchy, where one has to know one's place. This requires struggle, negotiations, acquisition of specific competences and understanding of unspoken rules of the resident group. Stokholm (2006a; 2006b) puts forward the argument that the children spend all their energy to position themselves.

It is not until they know their place in the resident group that they are open to pedagogical treatment, though on the other hand the dynamic that is within the resident group could profitably be included in the pedagogical work. Rather than just focusing on the development of the individual child, focus could be on both the dynamic of the entire resident

group and on involving the group's influence upon the individual child in the pedagogical work.

From ideal to reality

The author's ongoing research queries the inclusiveness of the system outside residential care. Local schooling and leisure activities for children in residential care predominantly paint a picture of non-integration. The children either do not have relationships with other children outside, or they have relationships with children like themselves (marginalised) or with children that also live in a residential care establishment. This research emphasises the importance of interaction in a variety of social arenas; however, creating links between these is additionally problematic as these social arenas are apparently not accessible to the children. The arenas where the vulnerable children are supposed to have the same developmental opportunities as their peers, are areas where it is difficult for the children to find an equal place. Thus it is necessary to rethink traditional routines and ways of practice in the normal as well as the special system if social pedagogical work wants to take research, child welfare policy and today's circumstances for the socialisation of children seriously.

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Commandment 5: Encourage Responsibility, Not Accountability

Gerry Fewster

I know a lot about accountability. At my 'Christening,' my parents and God signed an agreement that I should become a "good boy," directly accountable to all three parties, or their appointed representatives. It took a while for me to figure out my part in the contract but, according to evaluations kept by my beloved elder brother, my infant demands were excessive, my howling was intolerable and I did things in public that should only have been done in the bathroom. Not a good start.

Thankfully, God never showed up in those days, although we always passed his house on the way to the park. Still, my parents persevered and slowly I began to understand my obligations. While it was never actually stated, somewhere in my infantile mind I just knew I'd end up with the monsters in the Welton Canal if I didn't. So I learned to smile a lot, hug my aunts and uncles, say "sorry" to my victims, shed the odd perfunctory tear and shrink in shame for my transgressions. At times of crisis, "I love you Mummy" was a guaranteed life-saver.

At the age of three, I was so successful that my mother actually told the butcher I was a "good boy" and my brother noted

in his log that I'd become a pathetic little suck – or words to that effect. By that time, I was smart enough to make sure that my contract violations were rarely spotted and my only punishments were occasional admonishments and transitory bouts of guilt that kept me awake and prevented me from making eye contact for a couple of hours. It was a small price to pay. But then I was sent to Sunday School in the garage beside God's house. He wasn't there but his agents were out in force to spell out the details of the contract – as it was written in the big black Policy Manual my Grandmother kept by her bedside. The accountability thing became a pervasive and diabolical trap.

The problem with God is that His monitoring system is impeccable and His evaluations are indisputable. Because He knows all and sees all, He was onto me before I actually said or did anything. Denial was no longer an option – I was a wretched sinner and there was no point in pretending otherwise. I couldn't even hide my failings from my parents as God was surely spilling the beans at their team meetings. So I hid from my own blackness and continued to keep up appearances as well as I could.

Then there were the consequences. No quick slaps or lost privileges from the Big Guy, only the threat of thunderbolts and eternal damnation – pretty powerful stuff when you’ve only just graduated from diapers. As I discovered later, my parents had foolishly signed the Protestant contract so there was no forgiveness dispensed by surrogate ‘fathers’ in carved packing cases. For me, guilt and punishment were identical. All I had to work with was the “forgive us our trespasses” line but that was too general and I gave up all hope of every getting a favorable evaluation.

When I was dragged off to school I decided my teachers were not part of the Holy alliance so God would not be hanging around the classroom or playground. I wanted to do well, to be accountable, but my grade one teacher made it painfully obvious that my academic potential was no better than my moral and behavioral inclinations. When I was drafted into the school choir I thought it might be an opportunity to get God on my side. So I sang his praises loudly at the daily services in the hope of redemption. But even this was shattered when I was identified as one of the terrorists responsible for the mysterious death of the vicar’s beloved budgie.

I won’t trouble you any further with the details of my youthful struggle to become accountable to a higher authority. Suffice to say that by the time I entered High School I had given up on God, just as He had obviously given up on me. I still had the sneaking suspicion He was watching me playing solo in my bed at night, but since I was already condemned, it didn’t really matter if I did go blind. At the same

time, I was firmly convinced that I would never meet the expectations of parents and teachers, so they could all join me in Hell. I did only what was absolutely necessary. I cheated when I could and did everything possible to deflect my accusers and avoid the consequences of my transgressions. The quest for survival was so all-consuming that I had no idea of my own ‘rightness’ and who I really was. But that didn’t seem to matter either.

Then I met my savior – a renegade schoolteacher who made his expectations clear and convinced me of my ability to succeed. At last I had a chance to become accountable and, within a matter of months, my academic performance turned around. To the delight of my parents and the bemusement of my teachers, I was heading for success, and with God no longer in the equation, I delighted in my newfound ability to comply with what was left of the original contract. I still had no idea who I was and made no decisions on my own behalf but, thanks to my mentor, I was on a roll. When I received my Ph.D., my parents and my guide had passed on but I had something to show to whoever might still want to hold me accountable – a professional at last.

Self-responsibility or Accountability: Take Your Pick

So, why have I told you all this? Hopefully, my story has illustrated how the demands for accountability can confuse and sabotage the simple quest of the fledgling Self to become known and expressed through relationships. When we use these external expectations to control children, we may believe we are encouraging them

to overcome their assumed deficits and develop their true potential. Well, chances are we will be doing the very opposite – suppressing the Self by imposing our expectations and dishing out rewards for becoming who we think they *should* be and what we think they *should* do. This is a very seductive prospect for kids who already feel they are failures in the eyes of significant others and external authority. The successful ones may bask in their achievements, but on the inside, a fledgling Self remains a passive observer, unseen and, for the most part, unexplored.

Self-responsibility denotes the Self in action. People who are self-responsible become the authors of their own lives rather than follow the prescriptions laid down by others. Their central concern is with their own integrity and their sense of worth is drawn from mastery and personal satisfaction, rather than achievement and acclamation. They are more likely to feel ashamed than guilty, and purposefully avoid the role of ‘victim’. What they present to the world are expressions of their own authenticity, rather than images of who they have come to believe they should be.

From a developmental perspective, Self-responsibility, Self-Esteem and Self-Actualization are integrated aspects of the same process. All can be encouraged and nurtured externally, but the essential driving force comes from the inside – an acknowledged Self seeking to become expressed and elaborated through contact with other Selves. Obviously there’s no stage of completion – no absolute state of Self-responsibility. Developmentally, the key issue is to determine in which direction

the person is moving along the continuum and take it from there. The one certainty is that if there is no Self in the action, there can be no Self-responsibility.

So, as a child and youth care professional, you have a choice to make. Do you want to nurture the development of a young person’s sense of Self to become responsible– or are you more inclined to make kids accountable to whatever the criteria your program specifies? Your answer will, of course, depend upon whether you are moving toward Self-responsibility yourself, or trying to be accountable to those who want you to fix kids? Sorry to be so blunt about this, but that’s just the way it is. If you’re ready to support kids in moving toward higher levels of Self-development and responsibility you must work toward creating a space for the Self to find its voice. For this, I would offer the following suggestions. Many of these approaches have been, or will be, discussed more comprehensively other articles in this series.

Self-Work

Always be curious about what a young person is thinking and feeling. Gently let your interest be known, but don’t push. Unless you’re conducting some meaningless diagnostic interview, or investigating a triple homicide, any response to your curiosity is acceptable – including no response at all. If you can’t stand rejection, take another look at your own abandonment stuff before moving on. Keep in mind that the primary object is to invite a fragile, and often fearful, Self to step forward and be known. I like to call this “Self-work”. The focus is upon process

rather than content so try not to get hooked on your interpretations or judgments for whatever might be expressed. Focus on being fully present and engaged in the moment – there’s nothing for you to do but show up, so breathe and relax. Above all be patient – remember that, deep down, every kid on this planet wants to be seen and heard by a caring and trustworthy adult ... yea, even *that* kid.

It’s always possible that Self-work opportunities will arise spontaneously, but a professional will make sure they occur as appropriate. The most spontaneous form is to take a few moments during and event or activity to examine what might be happening on the inside – thoughts and, particularly, feelings. All that matters is for both parties to be fully present and connected. This doesn’t mean the inside experience has to be shared – only that it’s there to be explored. The more familiar and comfortable a person becomes with their inner world, the more they are likely to accept a standing invitation to share.

More predictable opportunities for Self-work can be built into the daily routines. Most of us move through the day with very little reference to the Self, but this is particularly the case for the kids we work with. Setting aside time at the end of the day for reflection often works best. It’s not about what happened at school or over dinner but what was being experienced on the inside at the time. This is not a counseling session. The object of the exercise is to bring the Self into the action after the fact, as a reflective entity – a vital aspect of Self-responsibility. The skill of the adult during such sessions is to learn

how to stay out of the reflective process other than to facilitate and seek clarification where appropriate.

The most direct access to feelings, and the dormant Self, is unquestionably *through the breath*. Effective breathing releases the natural flow of energy that has been frozen within the Self’s defensive structures and one full breath will often be more effective than hours of talking. In my opinion, learning how to use the breath in this way should be a natural element within the stock-in-trade of all CYC practitioners and I will have much more to say about this topic in the next article.

The Mirror in the Face

In the journey toward the rediscovery of the Self, what kids need most is an effective and accurate mirror. I’ve written so much about mirroring over the years because I firmly believe it’s the most valuable skill in the CYC tool kit. As this will also be a central topic in the next article, I will offer a brief overview of the concept here and elaborate later.

Within the literature, the term ‘mirroring’ is often used interchangeably with ‘reflective listening’ – a verbal communication technique made popular by Carl Rogers in which the therapist uses his or her own words to paraphrase what the client has just said. This is not what I mean by the term. From my perspective the only mirror that can reflect the Self is another Self. Words are effective to the degree that they express the internal experience of whoever is offering the mirror but there is much more involved when two Selves reflect the experience of each other. This is most powerfully observable

in the spontaneous interaction between a mother and her baby. On the surface they may appear to be imitating one another, but beyond the sounds, movements and facial expressions it is clear that each is reflecting the experience of the other from the inside-out.

What happens between the mirror and the subject is more energetic than cognitive or verbal. Professionals who have mastered the art of mirroring are able to engage all facets of the Self in sensing and responding to the experience of an Other. Their very presence offers an unconditional invitation for Others to be seen and heard.

No Boundaries No Self

In order to exist as a separate and known entity, a Self must have a boundary. We define ourselves cognitively and experience ourselves emotionally but the Self is also an energetic presence that moves beyond the skin to make contact with other Selves. Gestalt Therapist Fritz Perls coined the term “contact boundary” to identify this place where one person ends and an Other begins. In child and youth care, we often talk about boundaries when determining how far we will allow kids to impose themselves on our personal lives. Of course, people who have clear and effective boundaries are able to protect the Self by saying “no” but they are also able to make contact by saying “yes”. Because these decisions are made from the inside, they are, by definition, Self-responsible choices that reflect the ever-changing sensitivities at the contact boundary.

Working with kids who have poorly defined boundaries, or have constructed defensive walls in their place, is a delicate

and sensitive task that reaches well beyond the scope of this article. Briefly stated, there are three major aspects to be considered. First and foremost, the practitioner must be able to show the way by establishing and maintaining clear personal boundaries that serve to enhance contact rather than create distance. Secondly, conditions must be created in which the young person can explore his or her own boundaries and experiment in sustaining them through relationships. Finally, both parties must be able set their own boundaries while recognizing and respecting the boundaries of the other. This is fascinating relational work and foundational in the development of Self-responsibility.

Working With Behavior

While Self-responsibility is essentially the reflection of an internal state, it is also acquired, affirmed and reinforced through behavior. This is important for parents and professionals to understand, since much of their time with kids is focused on actions rather than reflections.

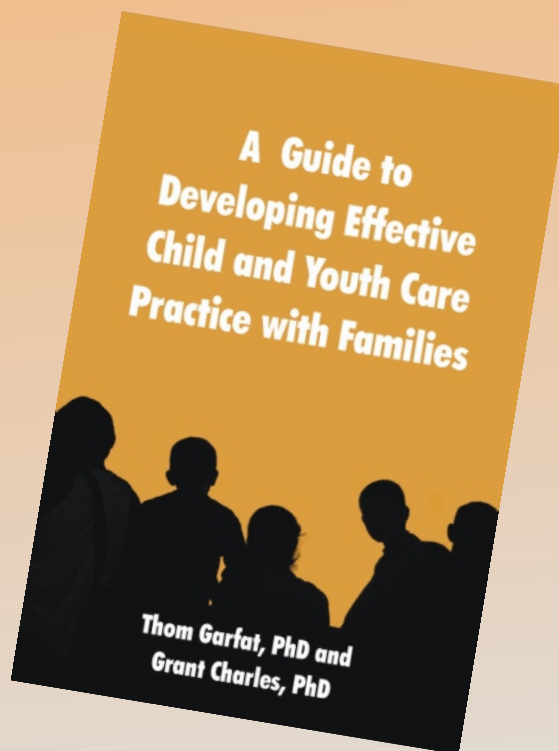
To encourage young people in bringing their Selves into the action, significant adults can move things along by simply enquiring about, and mirroring, unexpressed thoughts and feelings – don’t forget to breathe. Meanwhile, it’s generally the task of the adult to set limits and apply consequences, both negative and positive, for specific behaviors and actions. In moving toward Self-responsibility, the connection between the behavior and the consequences needs to be understood clearly, though not necessarily accepted amicably. The most essential ingredient in the se-

quence is that the internal experiences are expressed and heard – but NOT debated or turned into a power-struggle. This may mean that the adult must be prepared to tolerate brief outburst of excuses and accusations before getting to the central issue – the authentic feelings of a discontented Self. It is equally important to work through this same process when the consequences are perceived to be positive and the Self can enjoy some well-deserved satisfaction.

As a final note, if you're looking for a practical behavioral model that incorporates the notion of Self-responsibility, you may wish to read (or re-read) William Glasser's book *Reality Therapy*. Written in the 1960's this still makes far more sense to me than the current psychiatric fad referred to as 'Cognitive/Behavior Therapy'. The basis of Glasser's thesis is that there are always choices to be made and people can be supported in reviewing their options, making their own decisions and recognizing the outcomes as a Self created 'reality.' For me this will always be the preferred alternative to coercing kids into complying with an external authority in the name of accountability. You may or may not agree, but this is just one of the many questions child and youth care practitioners are obliged to consider somewhere along the line.

This is the fifth in a series of ten articles.

*If you have read this article, please email the author at: fewster@seaside.net
You don't have to make any comments although these would certainly be appreciated. All responses will be acknowledged by the author.*



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Relationships: thoughts on their origin and their power

Penny Parry

Abstract: *For all of us, relationships can only be understood as “lived-in” experiences. In this article, the author describes the development and the power of personal relationships from her own “lived-in” perspective.*

I remember my excitement on first reading the practical description of relationship building and nurturing in Brendtro and Ness’s *Re-educating Troubled Youth* (1983).

At that time in British Columbia’s social service realm, relationship was both the bane and the hallmark of child and youth care work. A popular criticism of the day was that youth workers were described as individuals who were forever “relating” to children and youth and that neither they nor anyone else could articulate this fuzzy, reportedly critical skill. While staunch supporters of the youth work approach held to the importance of



relationship, those in government who held the purse strings became more and more demanding of an explanation of exactly what this mysterious function was! So I feel this article must open with a thanks to Larry Brendtro and Arlin Ness who legitimized the con-

cept and in doing so, provided flesh to what I do believe is the pivotal leg of child and youth care.

Now that years have passed, and other professions are recognizing and/or re-discovering the power of relationship, I must say that Brendtro and Ness provided a beginning to the concept of relationship — which may, in the end, be all one can do on paper when speaking of art rather

than science. For relationship is in the realm of art. And art must be directly experienced to be truly understood. If I must describe it, some of the keys to relationship for me lie in the nuances of observation, empathy, trust and risk that are best understood in first-hand experience. Since I cannot offer you this direct experience in an article, I offer you what I consider to be an appetizer — something to whet your appetite, to send you to your own kitchen to search out the full meal. The appetizer? Reminiscences and narratives of experiences. This article contains a hodge-podge of memories — of relationships that have stayed with me. They are not filed in any particular order in my brain but seem to creep out or jump out at the most opportune times — a word or image will set off the memory and with it some insight, that I knew long ago and had forgotten, and which proves equally applicable to whatever the current situation is.

People tell me that I relate well to others — apparently to a wide variety of folk. I would agree with this. Since this seems to come easily to me, I do wonder sometimes where it came from and how I might share this skill with others. So, here are some beginning thoughts:

What about the origins of relationships? Why do I relate to people the way I do?

“You get to sleep a long time when you’re dead, so ...”

In the culture to which I belong — say, middle-class English Canadian — there seems to be a stage of human develop-

ment where young people find it natural to sleep through most of Saturday or Sunday, or just generally “sleep in.” My father’s reaction to this typified his overall attitude to parenting, which I would describe as the “just a thought” approach. In this case, where I seemed to him to be sleeping my life away, he said the above in passing one afternoon of a gorgeous summer day when I was just waking up. His words may have been too powerful, as I now have a partner who constantly is after me to rest a little, take it easy, sit still. And my typical thought in my head is “I’ll get to sleep a lot when I’m dead — so not now.”

Ah, but you might say, what kind of relationship existed that phrases here and there, neither pushy nor loud, would have such influence? A good question. Let me think of some of the ingredients that might provide the context of influence. Three come to mind immediately: I had a very strong attachment to my dad as can easily be seen in photos, in letters I wrote to him as a pre-schooler that were addressed to “Bill Boy” and signed “Pen Girl,” etc.; I was physically and personality wise a carbon copy of my dad;² and my dad generally walked his talk. You may wish to show cause and effect between these three factors. I think of it more as a delicately balanced mobile on which you keep adding parts so they are, in the end, inextricably interdependent in influence.

Mostly unconsciously, and until pressed to teach someone else “how to,” I seem to have used these same three fundamental elements and the general “just a thought” approach in building relationships in my work with children, youth, and

families. For example, take the well known fact that we will be influenced by those with whom we strongly identify. An easy example for me is that being short offered me a quick connection with preschoolers, children in general and, interestingly enough, short teenage boys. I also happen to really like some of the silliness of little kids, so there was another inborn [?] connection. The Bill Boy /Pen Girl terminology that horrified some of my parents' friends — since it showed disrespect in their eyes — was a very early lesson in valuing mutual respect. So, my world is actually filled with equality across age groups. As for walking my talk, this is a constant challenge. However, I have found that having the intention to do so — even as I catch myself or am caught not doing so — is apparent to those around me and, when asked, seems to translate into a description of me as genuine and/ or integral. Finally, I find myself using and teaching what I calling “noticing” as a fundamental skill in influencing change in others. And, you see, I take no credit for these features that have served me well. Rather, I believe that I learned them early in my experience of my relationship with my dad.

“If you want a girl, that’s not a problem.”

This was what was said to my parents who wanted to adopt a little boy when I was about four. Everything was going along well in the adoption process until it was discovered that my dad was Protestant. I remember hearing a woman say we could have a girl but not the little boy my mother had taken such a liking to. I was ready to write the pope. Unfortu-

nately, my mother talked me out of it. My relationship with organized religion? Well, I’ll leave you to guess if you have a spare moment.

Now, in this case, a person totally unknown to me had great influence on my development, not just in the area of religion but in terms of my sense of equity and fairness in general. I suppose I should thank that unknown woman for contributing to my strong commitment to equality. I must credit the foundation of my sense of respect and equality, however, to my mother. The following moment, one of many such, has stayed with me for well over forty years and, as do all of these moments, rises to the surface whenever I need it:

When I was 7 or so, I came home from school one day announcing that people who went to university were very important. Now, my dad had left school after grade 6 and my mom left before finishing high school, and with the exception of one uncle, no one in our family had gone beyond high school. My mother, who shared the “just noticing” parenting approach with my dad, looked at me and said in a very casual tone: “Penny, what would happen *in your life* if the university professor didn’t do his job for a month? And before you answer, think about this: what would happen if the man who picks up our garbage didn’t do his job for a month? Now, who is more important?”

I recall both Mark Krueger and Gerry Fewster speaking of teachable moments. I

think my mother was a master of these! [No offense, Mark and Gerry — just want to give you a standard to work towards!] Looking back on this example: to be able to use the teachable moment, one had to both be genuinely interested in the growth/health of another and at the same time believe that humanity will choose good over evil, and so gently and respectfully *challenge, not control*, the person you are wanting to influence. Upon reflection, those are the ingredients I sense were my mother's skills.

**What about the power in relationship?
Where does that come from?**

To some extent, I have touched on this in the previous recollections. However, I offer you a few more stories — this time of more recent relationships.

"I suppose this is as serious as children starving in India."

Now these words of wisdom were uttered by *mon amour*, Tim Louis, several years ago when I was installing a suite in the basement of our house. I had finished almost everything and was outside cutting the baseboards for the living room area; the sun was setting, it was starting to rain, and the tenant was due to arrive the next day. I was tired and ready for this work to be finished. To my horror, I discovered that I had cut all the comers the wrong way and the baseboards all joined together pointing outwards instead of inwards. The air was blue with my frustration at myself! After asking what was wrong, Tim started to laugh. I told him it wasn't funny ... and he turned on his most serious expression and said in an earnest

tone: "I suppose this is as serious as children starving in India." This stopped me in my tracks as I said haughtily, "Of course not." At which point he resumed his peals of laughter. At which point I said this was nothing to laugh about. At which point he resumed his serious face saying, "It must be as serious as the floods in" I only need to be hit with the same ping-pong ball seven or eight times in a row to see the obvious. Yes, after several exchanges, I was hit smack on my bloated self-centred perspective.

What kind of relationship can not only tolerate but incorporate a good poke to one's core every so often? To probe the centre and move a person a little way along a road that is wider than themselves? Well, Tim Louis is the only person with whom I have ever been entirely myself. Somehow I know that in this relationship, all of me - admirable, silly, warts, irritations and all — are acknowledged. That "just me" is more than OK. In romantic relationships, we ascribe this to luck or magic, etc. What about the application of this powerful aspect of relationship to work with children, youth, and families?

While sometimes it does just happen, that is, a child/youth will take a particular liking to one staff person over others [in which case, I would argue, we should make use of this by having a system flexible enough to allow for individual matches], I also believe that this aspect of relationship-building is based on two concepts: trust and risk. I think of the trust part as descriptive, that is: trust is or is not present in a relationship. While some people talk of building trust, I have found that

I have more control over setting the stage for trust to emerge. I would challenge you to ask yourself or someone else exactly what you could do so they would fully trust you. Inevitably, when I've done this, there is no one thing I can do that ensures that the person will trust me. However, what I can do is act from a position of personal risk taking, or as my grandmother might have phrased it, "act like a regular person" — be myself. In the work realm, this includes throwing aside unnecessary and condescending "professional" stances, believing and acting in ways that show I believe the person I'm working with has capacities, not just problems. I take the risk of being equal: knowing that I would be equally as vulnerable as the person I am with — if I were in their situation; knowing that while I have some skills that may be of help to that person, they have the intimate knowledge of themselves and their situation — so we both hold valuable parts of any solution. Putting myself out and out-there requires risk AND only I can decide if I will/will not risk. My experience has been that people trust individuals who strive to take this type of honest risk.

So, I followed him into the garbage can ...

Actually, this is a bit of an exaggeration. The truth is I kept asking the questions on the IQ test even while Michael was in the garbage can. Why was he in a garbage can? This was just one of his stop-offs in my office during my early days as a psychologist. Michael was five and truly hyperactive. In those days, an IQ number had a lot of sway and many children and youth I saw who seemed bright to me were labelled

as slow because someone had assessed them *according to the book* — that is, under very standardized conditions. Standardized conditions of course precluded continuing the testing as they jumped into the garbage can, and so there was often a note to the effect that the child was unmanageable, intellectual ability unknown as testing was not possible at this time, etc. Standardized conditions — what kind of relationship is that?

These early experiences in testing young children whose files so often described them as untestable gave me time after time to practice what came naturally to me: be where the other is — wherever that may be. Where did I learn this? Hmm ... I have to think here because this concept of being with the other person rather than inside myself has felt almost like some automatic pilot response on my part. However, that won't do for an answer. So, let me think ... Well, perhaps I'll return to an example from my mother again:

I was a picky eater — and a lover of Alice in Wonderland. So, my mother invented a series of dishes called "Humpty Dumpty [a poached egg] fell in .. , [insert whatever food she wished to tempt me with]." She even went so far as to cue restaurant people to what a Humpty Dumpty was. So when I ordered my meal and my order was taken without the batting of an eye ... well, you can see how influential this was. Talk about an adult getting outside of themselves and setting up an environment in sync

with a child's. Again, she seems to have been a master/mistress of another fundamental concept in relationship building. So often, young people have told me that the workers who truly influenced them were the ones who took time to, from the young person's point of view, put themselves out and who did so in a way that met the youth in their world.

Relationships and Expectations

And then, he dropped his drawers and peed at everyone.

Yes, there was once a young man of about 15 who decided to get back at the staff of a residential centre. He waited until shift change, which was occurring outside as it was a nice summer day, and then in full view of all he dropped his drawers and peed to the wind. That is, until he realized that the paper delivery boy was behind him and an observer of all this. The young man ran after the paper boy assuring him that he wasn't crazy. It was just, he explained, that they expected weird behaviour from you in this place. I was not alone in my horror of realizing that this expectation was part of the relationship between this young man and those who were trying to help him. A similar situation occurred for me as I was standing beside a tall 14-year-old when she suddenly asked me with concern how I was going to physically restrain her. After concluding that I could only do this if I ran and got a chair and she made sure to be within jumping distance so that I could hurl myself at her in the hopes of over-

powering her physically, I couldn't help but puzzle at what kind of relationship she felt she and I had: should I be concerned that she saw physical restraint as a likelihood of this relationship, or should I be more concerned that she felt I would not be able to carry out my part of the job, or should I be concerned that she felt I wouldn't be able to keep her safe if she needed someone to do that by stopping her from hurting herself?

I offer you these recollections as contrasts with the other relationships I've described in this article. To me, the startling contrast is between relationships built on influence versus relationships where control plays a fundamental role. When I think of the contrast in these terms, I know which I feel more comfortable with, which might ultimately be more powerful. But then, maybe I prefer those built on influence because that is my personal background and because, being small physically, control was never a workable approach for me. The words "influence, control, manage, suggest" are more than just a list of words to me. They describe the essence of various approaches to relationship.

What does the magic look like?

I began this article by saying that the fundamentals of powerful relationships must inevitably be experienced rather than read about to be fully understood. And so, I will take the next little space to reference the most memorable power of relationship I've had the privilege to experience: the twinkle in Henry Maier's eyes.

Perhaps a painting or a photo might give you some impression of this power.

But only the spirit of the living person is experienced in the twinkle of an eye. This twinkle has a power in and of itself that moves out from Henry and focuses on you. This twinkle let me know that here was fun and sharing — not someone with a serious thought of being better than me. The challenge for all of us is to find our equivalent to Henry’s twinkle. And, of course, you can’t make a twinkle just because you wish it to be so. No, it will come only inasmuch as we are like Henry: genuinely out there, genuinely believing in others!

In closing, I will share with you one more relationship which has impacted on me over all these years. It is a relationship with a little girl who continues to be appealing to me in her directness, her lack of guile, and her insatiable curiosity. These are her powers that attract me. And I believed that if these were attractive to me, then if I sought to develop these powers, I might be able to attract others to me and so share with them whatever I can. Here are a few words from that little girl:

*In another moment down [!] went
never considering how
in the world [!] was to get out again
Well ... after such a fall as this I shall
think nothing of tumbling downstairs!
How brave they'll all think me at home!
Why, I wouldn't say anything about it,
even if I fell off the top of the house!*

— Lewis Carroll,
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

I am still trying to expand my curiosity of others and their worlds, to pass over the little things and to remember what is really important. These I believe are essentials in building relationship.

Notes

1. Most recently, I heard on the CBC that a curriculum for medical practitioners is being developed at the University of Western Ontario, focusing on ethical and interpersonal aspects of health care.
2. My mother tells of folks seeing her with my cousin and me and having people say of my cousin: “I see this is your little girl,” and of me, “Who is this one?” As for personality, both my dad and I used pouting with great effectiveness.

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"Staff treat you with respect and people also respect your privacy in the unit."

Young person in our Secure Unit

"We are quite happy in here and it is definitely a good place to stay in."

Young person in our Secure Unit

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External Supervision

Kiaras Gharabaghi

Supervision has long been recognized as an essential component of effective child and youth care practice. In fact, it is probably fair to say that supervision is or at least ought to be a central component of all disciplines engaged with young people and their families. In child and youth care practice in particular the importance of supervision, and also the approach to supervision, is based on the construction of effective child and youth care practice as a reflective activity; guidance in reflection strengthens that process immeasurably. Given that much of the workforce in child and youth-serving agencies and organizations is often young, relatively new to the concept of reflective practice and eager to receive guidance and feedback, the provision of supervision becomes, in my view, not just a matter of effective practice, but also an ethical obligation. Meeting this ethical obligation is made easier by virtue of the excellent material available on supervision in child and youth care; the work of Frank Delano for example has consistently been great and always relatively easy to translate into practice. Others, notably Garfat, Mann-Feder and Krueger (and many others) have also provided excellent reflections/conceptual

approaches and stories in this respect.

Logistically, on the other hand, meeting the ethical obligation of providing supervision has been much more tenuous. In far too many service settings, practitioners go for months without any offer of supervision beyond the more administrative type of meetings that might settle issues related to vacation time, performance concerns or other relatively trivial matters. Equally concerning is that many supervisors whose job it is to provide supervision to practitioners have themselves very limited training in how to do this. In so many cases, supervision is an ad hoc process often performed more as a way of checking in with one another than an approach to guided reflection. Moreover, if the supervisor is under pressure to attend meetings or deal with unrelated issues elsewhere, supervision meeting invariably become the last priority and are cancelled or rescheduled.

In fact, in spite of the recognition of its importance, there has been a long standing culture in many areas of our field to become complacent about its non-existence. This is why I think it is important that we consider an entirely different approach to supervision, either instead of what we have been doing or to comple-

ment what we are doing. I suggest that we take a serious look at developing supervision models that rely on external supervisors rather than supervisors who form part of the agency management structures. This is not, of course, a novel idea at all, and there are many places where external supervisors are already in use. In North America, however, external supervision has not taken hold in many settings, in part because of anxieties about what might go wrong.

External supervision models in North America have typically focused on executive type positions, where an executive leader within an agency hires an external supervisor either through her or his own funds or with the blessings and financial backing of the Board of Directors. What I want to argue in favour here, however, is a little different. I want to suggest that this external supervision model would be particularly useful in the context of residential care and treatment. In fact, external supervision is the common set up in residential group care facilities in Germany. Teams of practitioners are provided with the necessary resources to pay for a supervisor who can provide group or individual supervision depending on the need at any given time. The team can select a short list of possible candidates, choose its preference from amongst those short listed and then seek agency approval; the agency, in turn, typically maintain a veto right on that choice, but not the right to install an individual based on management preferences.

In the larger residential group care programs in Germany it is taken as a given that agency management could not possi-

bly provide effective and meaningful supervision to front line staff; the contradictions between having the authority to fire workers and guiding them through some of their more challenging moments is too great. At the same time, there is a strong commitment to ensuring that practitioners have access to someone to guide them in their reflections, personal/professional development and also in their processing of traumatic or near-traumatic experiences on the job.

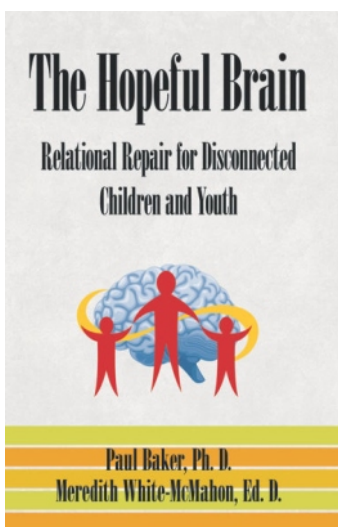
The benefits of external supervisors are many, and I think it is time for North Americans to get passed their professional arrogance and agency loyalties and consider doing what is necessary to provide practitioners with what everyone seems to agree is needed: skilled supervisors who are reliably present and attentive to the experiences of practitioners. A commitment to using external supervisors would allow for the development of a highly skilled group of external supervisors that is unencumbered by the everyday politics of agencies or employee-management relations. Moreover, it would then be possible to ensure that supervision unfolds consistent with the principles of child and youth care practice, at least where it impacts primarily child and youth care practitioners. It also guarantees that supervision actually happens, and practitioners can rely on having access to someone at regular intervals. Finally, an external supervision model allows for confidential reflections on themes and topics that otherwise might be suppressed or simply deemed too risky to bring up.

An external supervision model does not require the abandonment of internal

supervisors altogether. These positions are still necessary and require access to ongoing professional development opportunities as well. With the external supervision model in place, however, internal supervisors can focus on some of the logistical aspects of managing a staff team more effectively. Most importantly, this would allow the internal supervisors to really focus on issues of team development and team dynamics, which often are not captured effectively in any supervision model.

It is unfortunate that the North American context of service provision is often structured along extremely competitive and territorial lines; agencies rarely cooperate within their own service sectors (they do often cooperate across service sectors), and prefer instead to create redundancies and inefficiencies in order to protect their turf. From a child and youth care perspective, a related area of major concern is the ever-expanding workforce

of casual workers, sometimes referred to as 'relief workers' or 'contract staff'. These are practitioners who are hired by agencies to be available for shifts on an on call basis, or whenever needed. In many agencies, these workers are hired with fewer pre-service qualifications and are provided with no supervision whatsoever. They also often are not invited to professional development or training events or even to team meetings. One would think given that most agencies have such casual workers it would make some sense to hire an external supervisor for several agencies in geographic proximity so that supervision could be provided to these practitioners as well. Sadly, this is not happening and children and youth in group care facilities across Canada and the US continue to be served (or dis-served) by practitioners who we hope know what they are doing. I often wonder whether 'hoping they now what they are doing' is good enough.



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Creating Safe Spaces for Feelings

Jackie Winfield

Thinking about emotional development

As child and youth care workers, we aim to promote the development and health of the young people with whom we work. This means that we need to give conscious attention to not only the optimal use of the moments which are presented to us during the fairly unpredictable course of daily life events, but also to the creation of particular moments, in which we can take considered and planned actions towards our purpose.

The tangible nature of our work with regard to aspects of physical development (e.g. feeding, clothing, rest), social development (e.g. communication, building relationships, teaching “manners”), cognitive development (e.g. school and homework, problem-solving), and spiritual development (e.g. prayers and attendance at religious ceremonies), makes the use of such opportunities for promoting development within the lifespace almost second nature (and as such, at least partially un-

conscious). However, I often wonder how much of our conscious action is directed at the creation of moments conducive to healthier emotional development.

Of course, many of the above-mentioned activities do have important emotional dimensions to them, and indeed, human development cannot be truly divided into pieces which are independent from and unconnected to each other or their environment.

Such fragmentation would reduce the human being to a collection of quite unrelated

elements, without cognisance of and appreciation for the whole in its interdependence and humanity. However, I continue to question how much energy we give to the conscious creation of moments which are primarily and clearly focussed on development in relation to



feelings. I expect that I'm wondering about this because I'm unsure about how much time I have given to this matter myself ... And I write about my wonderings because I'm uncertain about what it really means to consciously and actively engage in promoting emotional development.

Context and Culture

Modern life moves quickly. Stimulation and entertainment are always available, with music, conversation, pictures and other information available at the press of a button. We fill time and space with activity and noise, with the fleeting pleasures of consumption and incessant busyness which sweetly promise success and happiness. When there are no scheduled or urgent activities (e.g. work, appointments) requiring our attention, we might chat or call friends. We might check our e-mail messages or listen to music. We might watch television or tidy the house. We fill time and space with activity and noise, with little thought given to being in the stillness and listening to the silence.

Perhaps, the busyness distracts us from our emotions. Perhaps, we mask them, and forget that they are even there. Perhaps, we knew them once but were scared by their intensity or their irrationality. Perhaps they were confusing or painful, uncomfortable to be with, and frightening in the darkness. Perhaps we tried to tell someone about them and they reacted defensively as though our feelings and our thoughts about those feelings were experienced as accusing and threatening, triggering the other's self-protection that ricocheted explanations and spat out its own accusations

with eyes of fire and confusion.

So perhaps we covered our feelings with thoughts and hid the thoughts behind other thoughts. We buried them in fantasies and convinced ourselves they were gone forever. We locked them away as though they were alien beings which had broken all the rules of decent society and needed to be caged for a lifetime. But even though we had hidden them so well, to the point where we were no longer even aware of their presence, they had not gone away. They remained, awaiting an opportunity for their release. And when we catch a glimpse of another's pain or sadness, perhaps we shudder at the memory of our own — unexpressed and seeking a place to be seen or heard.

Our responses show our discomfort at being in a place where there are no smiles and laughter, or not even a veneer of contentment. So we spread the message that a show of feelings, especially those perceived to be inherently negative, is unseemly, that erupting with joy or collapsing in misery, or even the admission of experiencing such feelings, might be something to be despised.

A few thoughts about promoting emotional development

As child and youth care workers, we have the responsibility to promote all aspects of development including the emotional. In order to do this effectively, we need to also give attention to our own emotions and development.

In the Re-ED model, Hobbs (n.d.) states a principle: "Feelings should be nurtured, shared spontaneously, controlled when necessary, expressed when too long

repressed, and explored with trusted others ...” I suspect that in many societies and communities, perhaps especially in those influenced and dominated by Western culture, there tends to be a focus on the idea that feelings should be controlled. However, I am not so confident that attention is given to ideas of nurturing feelings, sharing them spontaneously, expressing and exploring them. And yet, in these words, Hobbs provides us with clear indications of what might be necessary in order to assist young people in their emotional development. And surely, the same guidelines could apply to how it is that we, as child and youth care workers, might develop our own capacity to be with our emotions in order to help children and youth to develop emotionally.

Perhaps, we could seek ways to create safe spaces for feelings to be.

Perhaps, we could sometimes sit and try to find a silence where the thoughts are stilled, and the feelings are felt and known to be present.

Perhaps, we could try to see our feelings as visitors to our being, and to welcome them as reminders of the depth to our earthly existence.

Perhaps, we could try to understand them, to trace a path through our histories and identify the places where we’ve fallen or been hurt.

Perhaps, we could talk to trusted others so that the trust serves as a bridge between us, and our feelings can be given to the waters that flow beneath the bridge into the oceans, and to the wind that blows through the mountains to the heavens.

Perhaps, we could express our emo-

tions through art or poetry or journaling; through music or dance or prayer. We could share the joy of our laughter and the sadness of our tears, recognising that all emotions are signs of humanity, and not indications of weakness or inferiority.

Summary

We work with children and youth who have experienced many uncomfortable feelings in their lives. Many of us too have suffered pain and trauma. If we wish to assist young people towards optimal development, we need to feel comfortable being with our own and their emotions. We need to take time to feel them and to know them, for “. . . one’s suffering disappears when one lets oneself go, when one yields — even to sadness” (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Southern Mail*, 1929, translated from French by Curtis Cate).

Reference

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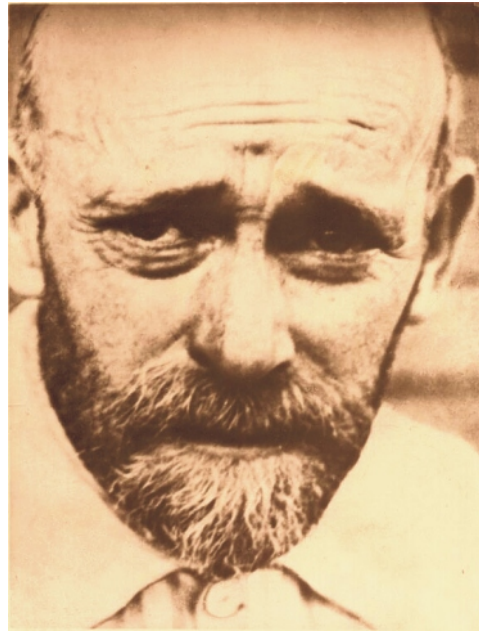
Janusz Korczak

Sandra Joseph

“I am not here to be loved and admired, But to act and love. It is not the duty of people to help me, But it is my duty to look after the world, And the people in it.” J.K.

Janusz Korczak (1819-1942) the Polish Jewish physician, writer and educator, was a man who took his convictions and sense of responsibility so strongly, he was prepared to go to his death rather than betray them. A legend was born, when during the Nazi liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, after rejecting countless attempts to save himself, offered by his many Polish admirers and friends, he led his two hundred orphans out of the Warsaw Ghetto onto the train that would take them to the gas chambers of Treblinka. This man, who had brought up thousands of such Jewish and Polish children refused to desert them, so that even as they died they would be able to maintain their trust in him and their faith in human goodness.

Most writings about Korczak begin by recalling this noble deed. However, the legend of the tragic and heroic death of this man, should not be allowed to obscure the richness of his life, and the way he lived it for both sides of the story shine with equal brilliance.



He was to die as Henryk Goldszmit, the name he was given at birth, but his pseudonym Janusz Korczak was known universally. He left as a legacy not only living and topical educational ideas, but also his rich achievements as a writer. He was the receiver of Poland's highest literary prize which guaranteed him a permanent place in the history of Polish literature and the hearts of hundreds of thousands of small readers and adults. One of his children's books "King Matt the First" was as famous as our Alice in Wonderland and Peter Pan.

He was a renowned doctor, specialising

in paediatrics. Medical students came from far and wide to listen to his lectures. Korczak's personality and methods of teaching can best be illustrated by a lecture he gave at the Institute of Pedagogy in Warsaw entitled *The Heart of a Child*. "We were all surprised by Dr. Korczak's instruction to gather in the X Ray lab", one of his students recalls. The Doctor arrived bringing along a four year old boy from his orphanage. The X Ray machine was switched on and we see the boy's heart beating wildly. He was so frightened so many strange people, the dark room, the noise of the machine. Speaking very softly, so as not to add to the child's fears and deeply moved by what could be seen on the screen, Korczak told us "Don't ever forget this sight. How wildly a child's heart beats when he is frightened and this it does even more when reacting to an adult's anger with him, not to mention when he fears to be punished." Then heading for the door with the boy's hand in his, he added, "That is all for today!" We did not need to be told any more — everybody will remember that lecture forever."

Anticipating the field of juvenile justice, he spent one day a week, defending the destitute and abandoned street children, who were often given long jail sentences. "The delinquent child is still a child. He is a child who has not given up yet, but does not know who he is. A punitive sentence could adversely influence his future sense of himself and his behaviour. Because it is society that has failed him and made him behave this way. The Court should not condemn the criminal but the social structure."

He was the director of two orphanages one for Catholic children and one for Jewish children where he lived in the attic of one of them, for most of his life, receiving no salary. In these he promoted progressive educational techniques, including real opportunities for the children to take part in decision making. For example his Children's Court was presided over by child judges. Every child with a grievance had the right to summon the offender to face the Court of his peers. Teachers and children were equal before the Court, even Korczak had to submit to its judgement. He envisaged that in 50 years every school would have its own Court and that they would be a real source of emancipation for children teaching them respect for the law and individual rights. His insights into children were unclouded by sentimentality, but were based on continuous clinical observation and meticulous listing and sifting of data. He was endowed with an uncanny empathy for children and a deep concern for their rights.

He was wise, loving and utterly single minded, without a thought for such needs as money, fame, home or family.

He founded a popular weekly newspaper, *The Little Review*, which was produced for and by children. "There will be three editors one oldster, bald and bespectacled and two additional editors, a boy and a girl." Children and youth all over Poland served as correspondents, gathering newsworthy stories of interest to children. This was possibly the first venture of its kind in the history of journalism.

He was well known and loved all over Poland as The Old Doctor which was the name he used when delivering his popular

state radio talks on children and education. His soft, warm, friendly voice along with this natural humour won great acclaim and acquired an enormous audience. As one child listener reminisced: "The Old Doctor proved to me for the first time in my life, that an adult could enter easily and naturally into our world. He not only understood our point of view, but deeply respected and appreciated it."

Korczak spoke of the need for a Declaration of Children's Rights long before the one adopted by the League of Nations in 1924. He said: "Those lawgivers confuse duties with rights. Their Declaration appeals to goodwill, when it should insist. It pleads for kindness, which it should demand." In 1959 the United Nations produced a second Declaration on the Rights of the child, but this was not legally binding and did not carry a procedure to ensure its implementation. Significantly enough during the Year of the Child (1979) it was Poland who proposed that a convention should be drafted based on a text manifestly inspired by the teachings of Korczak. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was passed unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989. It took countries over fifty years to hammer out the "Rights" that Korczak had already laid out in his books.

When UNESCO declared 1979 "The Year of the Child" it also named it "The Year of Janusz Korczak to mark the Centenary of his birth. He has been compared to Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King and Socrates. Books have been written about his life and educational theories.

His own books have been published

and republished in over twenty different languages, including Arabic and Japanese. (They are currently republishing all his educational works in Germany.) His work is studied at European universities and symposia are devoted to him. Films and plays have been produced about him. Schools, hospitals and streets have been named after him. Many monuments have been erected to honour him. He was posthumously given the German Peace Prize, Pope John Paul II said, that "for the world of today, Janusz Korczak is a symbol of true religion and true morality." Yet he is hardly known in the English speaking world.

I hope that now as a result of my book *A Voice for the Child The Inspirational Words of Janusz Korczak* (published by Thorsons a division of HarperCollins Publishers) people in the United Kingdom will finally become aware of Dr. Janusz Korczak and his work. The book is a unique gift collection of his writings. Over 100 of his inspirational quotes are included together with a short biography. Most of the quotes are taken from *How to Love a Child* and *Respect for the Child*, books he wrote over fifty years ago but their insights and simple truths concerning children are as fresh and valuable today as they were then, for he was a man years ahead of his time.

How many of us go down the road of parenthood alone, unprepared and frightened of losing our way in the multitude of different theories and ideas on childcare that bombard us every day? We are afflicted by guilt because we didn't do this or that that specialists say we should. We become confused when points of reference move almost daily. There are

hundreds of books on childcare but they either concentrate on practical aspects or delve into areas of child psychology. How many of us need the simple inspiration and reassurance of being told and revel in the words:

“I do not know and there is no way for me to know how parents unknown to me, can bring up a child unknown to me, in circumstances which are also unknown. I want everyone to understand that no book and no doctor can replace your own intuition and careful observation. For nobody knows your child as you do.”

How often have we questioned children on some misdeed only to be confronted with a wall of silence? How comforted we would have been had we been guided by Korczak’s simple wisdom: “The child is honest when he does not answer, he answers. He doesn’t want to lie, and he is too frightened to tell the truth. To my surprise I have stumbled upon a new thought. Silence is sometimes the highest expression of honesty.”

By fate I fell into the world of Dr. Janusz Korczak whilst studying psychotherapy. Alice Miller, the renowned psychoanalyst, who achieved international recognition for her work on child abuse, on violence towards children and its cost to society, described Korczak as one of the greatest pedagogues of all time. I tried to find out more about this Dr Korczak, especially his theories concerning education and childcare. At libraries I drew a blank. I asked teachers, social workers, therapists and everyone I knew, but no-

body had heard of him.

This was the start of a journey that would change my life. He showed me two books by Korczak that had been translated into English. One was his famous children’s book *King Matt the First* and the other was his *Ghetto Diary*, written at the end of his life. “But what of his work on children” I asked. Sadly Felix shook his head. Very little had been published in English. I left with two treasured books *How to Love a Child* and *Respect for the Child* by Janusz Korczak but they were written in Polish. I felt so frustrated. Slowly the idea dawned on me that there was no way I could enter into his world until the books were translated into English. A year later a biography on Korczak by Betty Jean Lifton was published called *The King of Children* as well as the brilliant film *XorczaW* directed by Poland’s greatest film director Andrzej Wajda. This convinced me even more.

At last the translation was complete. I was amazed by what I read. He did not theorise, or give ready-made answers, but presented the fruits of his experience in such a clear simple way. Almost like that of a child, direct but at the same time poetic, so that every reader could not help but be inspired. He acted as a guide on a journey into the mind of a child, offering insights we all need to learn in our modern society to get back in touch with the child within us all.

Korczak’s basic philosophy was his belief in the innate goodness of children and their natural tendency to improve, given the opportunity and guidance to do so. He felt that childhood was perceived as a preparation for a future life, when in fact

every moment had its own importance one should appreciate the child for what he or she is and not for what he or she will become.

He believed in respecting and understanding the child's own way of thinking instead of perceiving him or her from an adult's point of view. The children in the orphanage lacked the emotional support of a parental figure and as a result were likely to assert themselves on the basis of anti social norms. Korczak's approach was geared to prevent such development.

First and foremost, he knew that they needed to be able to trust and rely on adults. He therefore made it his goal to return to his children the very thing that adult society had deprived them of respect, love and care. This is what Korczak stressed in his lectures and books. That he achieved this is revealed by one boy who, on leaving the orphanage said: "If not for the home I wouldn't know that there are honest people in the world who never steal. I wouldn't know that one could speak the truth. I wouldn't know that there are just laws in the world."

I went to Israel to interview his 'children' now in their seventies and eighties the few surviving orphans left in order to gain first hand knowledge of the man himself. Their faces lit up when describing Korczak. He was a loved father to them all, at a time when they desperately needed one. They all spoke of the feeling of warmth, kindness and love they felt in his company; about his smiling blue eyes and great sense of humour. I asked how they would explain to people who knew nothing of Korczak, why he was so important? One of them replied.

"It is difficult for me to explain to you in words the impact Korczak had on my life. He had so much compassion and a readiness to help all people. We used to say that Korczak was born to bring the world to redemption. What was so special about him was that he knew how to find a way to the child's soul. He penetrated the soul. The time spent at the orphanage formed my life. All the time Korczak pushed us to believe in other people and that essentially man is good.

He was an innovator of the educational system the first to reach the conclusion that the child had the same rights as the adult. He saw the child not as a creature who needs help, but as a person in his own right. All this was not just a theory he applied it in our orphanage.

There were no limitations in the framework of the rules. The child had the same rights as the teachers. For example, the Court's first mission was to protect the weaker child against the stronger. The rules were based in such a way that only children had the right to serve as judges. The teachers did all the paper work. When the war broke out and I was starving and ready to do anything, I didn't because something of Korczak's teachings stayed with me."

When I asked if history had been kind to him or was he really a man like this almost an angel? an elderly man with a broad grin answered:

"In my opinion this was his very nature. Maybe it was because he had witnessed such poverty and hardship among abandoned street children when he was a doctor that gave him

the strength to dedicate all his life as he did. I cannot remember any negative side to Korczak's character, even now, when I myself am a grandfather and teacher, and understand more about children and their education. I honour the memory of a man who was my father for eight years; a man who has healed my physical and psychological ailments and who instilled a code of ethics that served me throughout my life."

I have shown Korczak's writings to young people, parents, teachers and anyone whose life is involved with children. They all encouraged me to pursue this book validating the value of it's message in today's world. However, it was the children I have counselled over the years, many of whom had experience of abuse and neglect, whose reaction surprised me the most. Without exception they all wanted to know more about him.

If only my parents had read Korczak, they could have seen things from my point of view. Instead of feeling so isolated and misjudged, I could have quoted his words back to them. "Maybe then they would have understood me".

They agreed with Korczak that every school would benefit from a Court of peers which could help eradicate the social ills of today such as bullying and theft. They found it difficult to believe that fifty years ago he had set up a Committee (consisting of older children, himself and teachers) giving pupils a base to voice their ideas on improving the orphanage. They felt that if teachers listened to their opinions and valued their feelings in

schools today it would help minimise truancy by creating a happier and more democratic environment. Korczak had always stressed the importance of 'listening to and learning from children'.

I hope that as a result of my books *A Voice for the Child The Inspirational Words of Janusz Korczak* (Thorsons) and *Loving Every Child* (Algonquin Books) people will finally become aware ... [see here](#).

"Children are not the people of tomorrow, but people today. They are entitled to be taken seriously. They have a right to be treated by adults with tenderness and respect, as equals.."

— Janusz Korczak.

Hope and the Imagination

Herbert Kohl

The imagination is an essential tool for creating hope in oneself and rekindling hope in one's students. The author describes ways of understanding the hopeful power of the imagination and strategies for encouraging it in youth.

For many young people, a lack of hope stems from a sense of isolation, a sense that no one shares their values and that they are not cared for by others. Caring about people outside of one's own circle of friends and family presents a challenge in a world where such concern is not a common value. I remember a quote from a song that was a favorite of my students in 1962 (Kohl, 1967):

Goodbye cruel world, I'm off to join
the circus. I'm going to be a
broken-hearted clown.

For many of these children, running
away to the circus represented a dream of



living in a magical world where every-day strife did not exist. Being broken hearted was a common experience. Caring was what they longed for and often could not find.

Caring for youth and helping them develop the strength to face the challenges in their lives involves fostering hope and not promising the impossible. Optimism, which conveys the belief that things will turn out right, is not the same as hope,

which is an abiding, psychological, sociological, and political faith that the world can be better if only you try. Hope promises nothing material but promotes dignity, self-respect, and a spirit of struggle..

Creating hope in oneself as a teacher and nourishing or rekindling it in one's stu-

dents is the central issue educators face these days. After 30 years of teaching and trying to reform public schools while continuing to work in a framework of hope, I have had to examine the sources of my own hope as well as my struggles with the temptation to despair and quit. This examination has taken me on a personal journey that has led to some ideas about how hope can be instilled and nurtured in young people. One of the most powerful of those ideas concerns the value of imagination in creating hope. The first step in gaining that value is to create an environment in which the imagination can thrive.

Creating Hope Through the Environment

The novelist George Eliot wrote in *Middlemarch* that “if youth is the season of hope, it is often so only in the sense that our elders are hopeful about us” (p. 590). This is a profound truth that caring adults must internalize and practice. We cannot teach hope unless we ourselves are hopeful, not merely in a general sense but in specific ways for individual children. Teaching hope involves focusing on strengths and cultivating a hopeful learning community.

Focus on strengths. One way to teach hope is to get to know children, not merely their weaknesses, but also their strengths and beauty. It is easy to discover what children do not know just give them a high-stakes test. But to know the strengths they have, their dreams and aspirations, you have to be in affectionate dialog with them. That is the challenge of creating hope-to establish a condition of

mutuality where you and the young people you work with are curious about each other and share history, experience, and knowledge.

One way to identify strengths is to have children talk about what they love to do outside of school. The skills involved in these activities can become the basis for learning in other areas and the basis for dialog and mutuality in the classroom. Another way to identify strengths is to introduce games, puzzles, and complex building toys into the classroom and watch how young people relate to them. You might be astonished at the strengths that emerge in the context of play.

Cultivate a hopeful learning community. This attitude should not be mistaken for the notion that young people and the adults who work with them are the same and know the same things. Adults have knowledge and experience that young people cannot possibly have. It is vital that a hopeful learning community of adults and young people acknowledge that they have things to teach each other.

In such a community of learners, the development of a moral and social imagination would be central. The imagination is best thought of holistically, as a mode of mental functioning that supplements the conventions of ordinary experience. The imagination does not merely represent the everyday physical and social world. It conceives of other possible worlds. And it is this opening of possibility that leads to hope. If the world can be imagined to be different and if young people have experiences imagining better, more caring

possibilities, they have a resource from which to draw on their own strengths.

One strategy to help students imagine better possibilities is to have them build their dream community. The best way to do this is to discuss what they would like to see if they had the power to build a city or a neighborhood—they may even build a model of the world they imagine. Another strategy is to have students invent things no one has seen before, such as computers that walk, new secret languages and codes, and new musical instruments. The act of invention teases the imagination and helps to develop an awareness of the possible.

Creating Hope through the Imagination

Once a supportive, strengths-based environment exists, you can begin to create hope for children and youth by encouraging self-expression through their imaginations. There are many children on the verge of despair who echo, in their private moments, the sentiments expressed in a poem attributed to a Canadian high school senior who committed suicide. In the poem, the young man describes a picture he drew that explained things he felt no one else cared about—a picture that said things about himself he could not say otherwise:

- He kept it under his pillow and would let no one see it.
- And he would look at it every night and think about it.

- And when it was dark, and his eyes were closed, he could still see it.
- And it was all of him. And he loved it.

The youth took the picture to school with him, to remind him of who he was and what he knew about himself. He struggled to preserve his individuality as his teacher and his mother encouraged him to conform. When he began to behave like the other students, the picture lost its power. After he threw the picture away,

... he lay alone looking at the sky.
It was big and blue and all of
everything, But he wasn't anymore.
He was square inside, and brown,
And his hands were stiff.
And he was like everyone else.
And the thing inside him that needed
saying didn't
need it anymore. *

This poem illustrates the power of imagination to help one cope with the adversities of life. It also illustrates the responsibility adults have to preserve and nurture hope through imaginative thinking. The creations of youthful imagination may be just the strengths we need to try to understand in order to cultivate hopeful learning communities.

Feeling-thinking. How can we encourage and understand youthful imagination? In *The Book of Embraces*, Eduardo Galeano (1992), introduced a new word, *sentipensante*, that applies to such imaginative activity:

* This poem originally appeared in *Generation* magazine, which is no longer being published. It also appeared on a poster for a Canadian educational group.

Why does one write, if not to put one's pieces together? From the moment we enter school Or church, education chops us into pieces: it teaches us to divorce soul from body and mind from heart. The fishermen of the Colombian Coast must be learned doctors of ethics and morality, for they invented the word *sentipensante*, feeling-thinking, to define language that speaks the truth. (p. 32)

The imagination is *sentipensante* in an extended way. It does not speak the truth, but allows one to play with possible truths, to transcend everyday reality. As we begin to merge thought and feeling, we begin to define values. Thought and feeling merged in imaginative play or reverie can at times suspend the laws of logic and reason, and we begin to dream new worlds. Both thought and feeling are elements that can be played with within the realm of the imagination, and at the same time used to weigh and balance the values that emerge from these imaginative worlds.

Tutors of hope. The imagination is a major source of hope. What this implies is that the arts, music, drama, dance, literature, and poetry are not just things that have to be studied but essentials in the development of creative hopeful learning. They do not preach. Instead, they invite participation and creation, and allow for dreaming and interpretation. For me the arts are the tutors of hope. One of the major challenges teachers face today is to find ways of using the arts to reach out to

young people, to foster hopeful learning, and to express values not explicit in the results of comprehensive tests. Young people can create their own dances, develop plays about a future they might like to live in, write imaginary diaries about imaginary worlds, or create their own songs. Making something lively, expressive, and worth sharing with others is a way of affirming the self and inspiring strength and hope.

We need to take youthful creativity seriously as valuable self-expression with the hope that our learning communities are healthier, more caring environments in which individual lives are honored and can flourish. When I think about the poem by the Canadian high school student, I see a young man who was reaching out, crying for help, and demonstrating creativity, insight, and intelligence. What if a caring adult had read this poem and had become part of an imaginative rescue attempt? Maybe the young man would have become hopeful and not taken his life. Maybe not. But good teaching always involves "maybes" on the hopeful side.

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Dr. Larry Brendtro (USA) is a licensed psychologist and special educator who was formerly president of Starr Commonwealth; he continues to serve as Dean of The Starr Commonwealth Research Council. He has co-authored many books in the field, most famously, 'The Other 23 Hours' (1969) and more recently, 'No Disposable Kids' and 'The Resilience Revolution' and 'Deep Brain Learning'.

Dr Thom Garfat (Canada) is the president of Transformation Consulting, the co-editor of www.cyc-net.org, and is an international speaker, consultant and trainer with over 40 years experience in the field. His most recent books include *Quality Care in a Family Setting* and *Developing Effective Child and Youth Care Practice with Families*. He is a Senior Trainer with the Circle of Courage.

Dr. John Digney (Ireland) is Deputy Director in High Support Services. He has over 20 years 'specialist residential' experience. He has presented at conferences worldwide and has been contributing to the body of knowledge for several years. His area of special interest is in the 'utilisation of humour in therapeutic intervention with youth'. John is a certified RAP and DA trainer.

Talking to Kids About the News

Estella Abraham

CEO, *Fostering First International*

Most people reading this blog will have grown up when news broadcasts happened at breakfast, teatime and before bed. The constant stream of news that happens today can lead to a compulsive tendency to watch all the time, just in case something in the world is happening.

To have live visual reports from war zones or natural disaster areas is a relatively new phenomenon that can have a disturbing impact on children and adults alike.

Next time you watch the news, watch it with the mind-set of a child or young person... what impact would it have? The headlines are often sensational; murder, war, disaster, catastrophic financial collapse, mass unemployment, riots, shootings, stabbings, etc. Writing this, the news coverage tonight is mass murder in the USA and devastating floods in Queensland, Australia.

It's important to pay close attention to

what children see in the news because studies have shown that kids are more afraid of violence in news coverage than in any other media content. By creating a proper perspective and context for news and current events programs, we can help children develop the critical thinking skills they need to understand news stories and the news industry. Children are growing up anxious and living in fear from being bombarded with doom and gloom stories.

We as the adults need to discuss and explain current affairs at a very basic level, reassuring them and helping to develop

perspective. Just saying 'don't worry about it' or 'you're too young to understand' is not reassurance!

Furthermore, don't assume they haven't really heard and understood what is said about a disturbing news event –



ask first and, if they have, discuss it. Talking honestly and reassuringly about traumatic events will go a long way in assuaging their fears. Reassure children by giving them the facts. For example, explain that terrorist threats are very real in certain places, but not in their community.

Understand what news frightens children at different ages. School-age children are beginning to distinguish fantasy from reality and to worry about real-life dangers. Help them to develop a realistic sense of danger by explaining that traumatic events such as fires, fatal car accidents or plane crashes are rare, which is why they're considered newsworthy. As children get older, the closer an incident is to the reality of their lives, the more disturbing it will be to them. For example, a story about a high-school shooting may be more disturbing to a teenager than a younger child.

Encourage older children to watch the news and discuss current events with you.

It's important that young people understand what is going on in the world and their community. Watch the news with them and use it as a springboard to discuss difficult topics such as racism, sexuality, terrorism, war, death, drug and alcohol use.

Create "teachable moments". Keep a globe, or bookmark a world map on your computer, so you can access it after watching the

news to look up countries or areas mentioned in stories. News items often lack context or thoughtful analysis, so use an encyclopaedia or the internet to get more in-depth information about an issue or a country that kids show interest in.

Social workers need to be discussing these matters with each other to heighten awareness. And in turn, they need to discuss it with their foster carers. This is a great topic for discussion in foster care support groups.

Finally, try to find positive news stories. Call attention to stories that emphasise positive actions and people making a difference – stories about new medical research, peace accords, activism on social or environmental issues and exceptional achievements in sports, the arts or sciences.



Mrs. Hammond! I'd know you anywhere from little Billy's portrait of you.

Law & Order

My daughter picked my grandson up from day care the other day and got a surprise.

My grandson loves day care. He can't wait to go play with his friends, and comes home with all sorts of stories about the fun he has. It is a delightful day care in a private home, and the other kids are mostly girls and almost all a year or so older than him. What's not to enjoy?

And because he is such a wonderful child, so well-behaved and smart and easy-going (I did mention he was my grandson, right?), my daughter was a little non-plussed when she arrived to pick him up the other day to find out he had spent part of the day in solitary.

Yes, he was on the receiving end of a time-out.

My daughter called him over. "Buddy, you got a time-out?"

He nodded, looking down at the floor.

"Why?"

"I bited Lily."

Now my daughter was aghast. "You bit Lily? You know you're not supposed to do that!"

He nodded again.

"But why? Why did you bite her?"

He looked up at his Mom, filled with remorse.

"We were playing Shark. I was the shark. I caught Lily. So I bited her."

Well.

Esteemed members of the Court of Appeal, I submit that this young man was unfairly charged with a crime, wrongfully convicted, and incarcerated for no good reason.

The facts of the case seem clear, I know. The defence stipulates that he did, on the date in question, bite

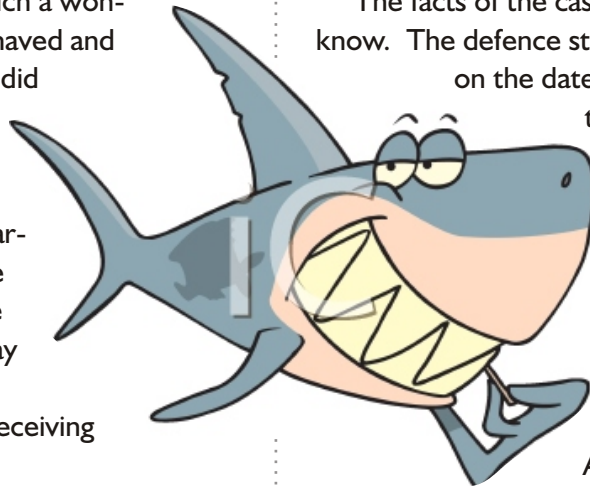
the alleged victim. There is, to be sure, prima facie evidence of a heinous crime.

But if it pleases the Court, we live in a society governed by laws.

And what are laws

but rules? And if we are governed by rules, then surely if one plays by the rules of a game, one cannot then be punished simply because one played well enough that one caught another player and bited her.

The game was "Shark". Clearly that implies, nay demands, that one of the players be the Shark and all others the Prey.



Now, ladies and gentlemen of the Court, I ask you: he was a three year old boy vastly outnumbered by older girls. What are the chances *he* decided what game they would be playing, or what his role would be in said game?

I believe we all know the answer to that. I believe we all know that on a daily basis, his mother is lucky not to show up and find this poor young man dressed in doll's clothes with lipstick smeared on his face.

So if the defendant did not in fact choose the game, nor his role in it, can we reasonably expect that he would have a choice whether or not to follow the rules of said game? I submit that following the rules was expected, nay, demanded of him by the very girls who later cried crocodile tears when the outcome of the game was not what they hoped.

For what is a shark, if not an animal that bites? And what is prey, if the shark does not follow through with what is, after all, its essential nature? So if Shark bit Prey, I submit that those who designated the defendant as Shark and knowingly took on the role of Prey are, in fact, the responsible parties and, if caught, should reasonably expect they will be bitten.

Ergo, pursuant to Common Law and the very principles of fair play, justice, and sportsmanship under which the alleged victim began the game, I make the argument to this esteemed Court that all charges against the defendant should have been summarily dismissed and that in fact, this case should never have gone to trial.

But go to trial it did, and based only on circumstantial evidence, including teeth

marks and the tearful, inflammatory testimony of the alleged victim, my client was wrongfully convicted and was given the cruel and unusual punishment of a five minute time out.

Now, honourable members of this Court, we cannot undo what is done. That excruciating time my client spent in solitary confinement can never be regained, nor can the scars from this experience be completely healed.

But in the interests of justice, I ask this Court to clear my client of all charges. I ask that his conviction be overturned and his record, and his good reputation, be restored. And further, I ask that he be given a great big hug and perhaps an extra story at bedtime.

Esteemed Members of the Court of Appeal, the defence rests.



From Nils Ling's book *Truths and Half Truths*. A collection of some of his most memorable and hilarious columns. Write to him at RR #9, 747 Brackley Point Road, Charlottetown, PE, C1E 1Z3, Canada.

leon fulcher's postcard from South Dakota

Greetings from South Dakota! I recently had the opportunity to spend some quality time with the Circle of Courage gathering there for 2011. I treated myself to a RAP Training (Response Ability Pathways learning) used in helping with reclaiming children and young people who exercise extreme flight or fight in their dealings with adults, especially adult authority figures. It was also fun joining with a small group of experienced teachers, social workers, paedagogues and youth workers in our Training for Trainers course offered by Mark Fraedo and Larry Brendtro. What fun learning! And what fun course members! Thanks all!



Rapid City, SD – Eastern Gateway to the Black Hills

It was especially nice to spend the week with Thom Garfat and spend quality conversing about the Circle of Courage approach. I think it is very significant that this approach to thinking about child care and youth work draws from ancient sources of traditional knowledge. I am fascinated by the Native American Lakota knowledge traditions that identify 4 developmental domains of importance. Facing eastwards towards a rising sun one locates that sense of *Belonging*. Then, moving with the sun, one faces the cultural domains of *Mastery*, *Independence* and *Generosity*. These domains of developmental care are endorsed by contemporary research on human development, deep brain learning and re-learning approaches to daily living.



Family Time at the Rapid City Street Festival

Response Ability Pathways (RAP) Learning invites one to consider how to *Connect* with ANOther. Without making a connection, there is little that is relational. We must remain ever mindful of how it is

through relationships that really positive things happen. As one *Connects*, it is then possible to *Clarify* what brings us together with a child, young person or family member. Our challenge with each young person – any person – is to help *Clarify* what they are facing emotionally and intellectually, and to *Clarify* what competencies they already have and what may also be needed during stressful times, and when faced with predictable life challenges, crises or transitions.



Child & Youth Care Work on the Streets of Rapid City

It is through *Connecting* and *Clarifying* that young people of all ages find opportunities to *Restore* and to regain their resilience, or capacities for new ways of being and living in their worlds – at home, at school or work, during recreation,

when travelling and during their alone time – whenever and wherever they spend it. *Connect – Clarify – Restore* is what we learned about at RAP Training. This is good material for child and youth care workers wishing to better understand what they're doing in daily practice and how they go about their care and life education duties.



Startling Resemblances!

Our time in Rapid City coincided with the annual Street Festival there. Thom and I wandered, listened to the Rock Band and engaged in People Watching. It shocked me to see the *First Stop Gun Shop* right there on Main Street! I've lived outside the USA for so long that I really notice the issues around guns!



First Stop Gun Shop on Rapid City Main Street!

Those of you in training or looking for some fresh practice ideas, check out the Circle of Courage approach to reclaiming efforts in child and youth care work!

"Connect! – Clarify! – Restore!"

MY FAMILY, BY PARKER THE CAT, AGE 10



LATTE IS DUMB
AND STINKY AND
I DON'T EVEN KNOW
WHY SHE'S HERE



ERICA GIVES
GREAT HUGS
AND SNOOGLES



FUZZY FEEDS
ME. HE COULD
BE QUICKER ABOUT
IT, BUT HE CAN
STAY.



ME! THE
BEST CAT
EVER.



EndNotes



“Each day, and the living of it, has to be a conscious creation in which discipline and order are relieved with some play and pure foolishness. It’s kind of fun to do the impossible.”

— Mary Satton

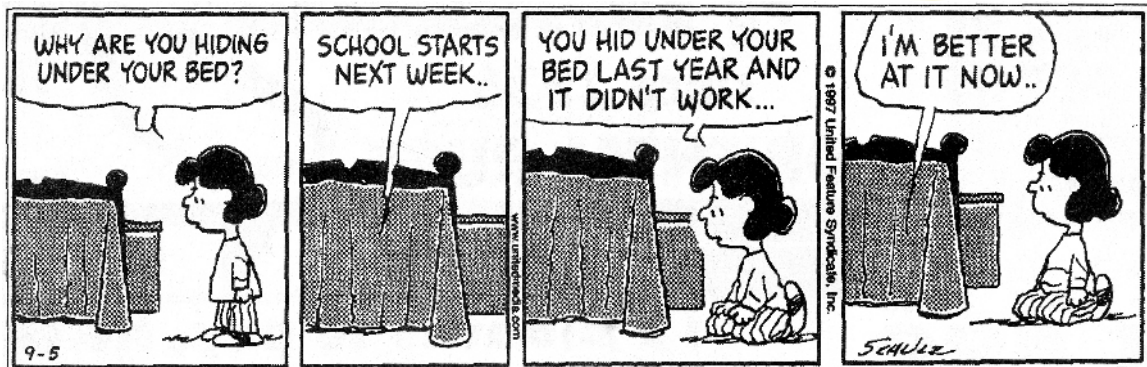
“Unless each day can be looked back on by an individual as one in which he has had some fun, some joy, some real satisfaction, that day is a loss.” — Anon.

The child — a skilled actor with a hundred masks: a different one for his mother, father, grandmother or grandfather, for a stern or lenient teacher, for the cook or maid, for his own friends, for the rich and poor. Naive and cunning, humble and haughty, gentle and vengeful, well behaved and willful, he disguises himself so well that he can lead us by the nose.

— Janusz Korczak
How to love a child

“Innately, children seem to have little true realistic anxiety. They will run along the brink of water, climb on the window sill, play with sharp objects and with fire, in short, do everything that is bound to damage them and to worry those in charge of them, that is wholly the result of education; for they cannot be allowed to make the instructive experiences themselves.”

— Sigmund Freud



“There is no pleasure in having nothing to do; the fun is in having lots to do — and not doing it.”

— Attributed to Mary W. Little



Nobody “heads up” this family, darling, we work democratically!

“For a small child there is no division between playing and learning; between the things he or she does ‘just for fun’ and things that are ‘educational.’ The child learns while living and any part of living that is enjoyable is also play.”

— Penelope Leach



“Jessica compromised by getting a tattoo that looks like a piercing!”

“The word ‘silly’ derives from the Greek ‘selig’ meaning ‘blessed.’ There is something sacred in being able to be silly.”

— Paul Pearsall
in *The Heart's Code*

Don't yell at your kids!



Lean in real close and whisper,
it's much scarier

information

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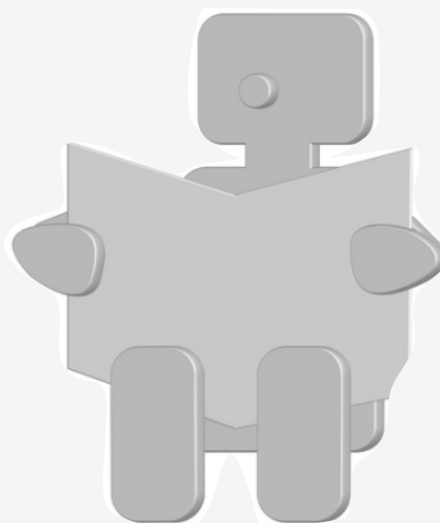
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