

# CYC-Online

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



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

**Issue 255 / May 2020**

ISSN 1605-7406



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# Disruption

James Freeman

*“For the moment it feels like both of our hands are tied behind our backs. To some degree they are. But our minds are unbound and our hearts are not chained. We can care and through caring we will help each other and will prevail. Caring is as close as the eye can see. It’s right in front of you at all times if you just have a look.” – Johnny Depp*

There aren’t too many specific things that bring our world together in such a connected way. There’s a basic human experience we all share for sure. But when you think about it there are relatively few experiences that transcend the boundaries of language and culture in a profound way. Sport, story, and music. Cooking food over open fire and sharing meals together. Acts of caring for one another. These all bind and strengthen human connection when shared together. And now we can add to that list the current viral pandemic that has our world in shock.

Our lives have been disrupted. Over the past months COVID-19 and the resulting fear and responses to it have scared and impacted us all. It has also proved again that when humans are stressed and stretched that Child and Youth Care is one field of dedicated people who show up when needed. It only took days to overtake the world - by surprise for so many of us. And in just as fleeting of a moment the response of many of you was to show up in the face of personal threat and danger in order to be a quiet source of strength for



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someone else. We have had several others who did so with us – public health workers, public transportation drivers, grocery clerks, cooks and food servers - just to think of a few. I, along with you, am thankful for them.

Perhaps the only group stronger and more resilient than any other is the kids we all serve alongside. The fear, the unknown, the obstacles and barriers, the stigma, the odds, the overwhelm that we have all felt (and still face) are an everyday experience for many of them even when the world is not facing a shared global threat. The fact that a young person has the guts to 'run away' to protect themselves when they feel threatened, the struggle against taking an active role to ease their pain through self-harm, the strength they show in waking up to face a new day - it is admirable. Everything we've experienced these last weeks in the overwhelm of our world is all too familiar to them. And for some it is every moment of every day of their lives.

Whatever good comes from the tragedy of COVID-19 for us and for the field of Child and Youth Care, perhaps it will include a new and deeper empathy and understanding of what the young people on our planet and in our neighborhoods experience every day. If so, it would be a bright spot in our history.

Soon I hope we can get back to the pure and simple 'everyday' routines. Until it does, let's continue creating experiences of sport, cooking food, sharing music and story, and the acts of caring that connect our human lives. Caring is right in front of us, and I am honored to be in this work with you.

View Johnny Depp's full talk at [www.instagram.com/tv/B\\_DPmUfj-Th](https://www.instagram.com/tv/B_DPmUfj-Th)

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## Writing for *CYC-Online*

*CYC-Online* is a monthly journal which reflects the activities of the field of Child and Youth Care. We welcome articles, pieces, poetry, case examples and general reflections from everyone.

In general:

- Submissions should be as close as possible to 2 500 words
- The style of a paper is up to the author
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- We are willing to help first-time authors to get published
- We accept previously published papers as long as copyright permission is assured
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# Caring in the Context of Covid

Thom Garfat

How quickly the world can change. It seems only a few months ago that we were all simply going about our daily, taken-for-granted lives – and now some of those things seem like special pleasures and experiences – ripped away without warning. A walk in the park, a trip to the shop, chatting with the neighbour, playing with a young person – simple pleasurable activities which are now not only frequently denied but, indeed, are filled with anxiety and threat.

Formerly safe spaces and places don't feel so safe anymore.

Some of our colleagues have reflected on social media about how our current lived experience shares commonalities with many of the young people and families with whom we work or some of the marginalized people in our profession and world. Myself, for now, I want to reflect a little on the in-between between us and the impact on our everyday caring interactions with young people and others.

The in-between between us is a part of the context of our caring interactions and, as such, is impacted by the context within which it occurs. When we discuss the in-between, we talk about the characteristics of our relationship as we ask questions like 'is the in-between between us a safe place?', 'is it a place of learning, of trust of anxiety, of fear, of love?'.  
And always, in doing so, we wonder if it is a place of relational safety – a place where *in this moment, with this person, I feel safe from harm or threat from self or other.*



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Normally, as we approach our engagement with others with whom we have an established relationship, we know what we are getting into and, because of our skills and awareness, we are able to assess any potential threat in the engagement. We know, for example, how to position ourselves, the clues of which we must be aware, and, because of our history in this relationship, we can recognise potential triggers. But now there is an additional factor influencing our engagement.

There is an invisible, potentially deadly, possible danger here in the in-between between us – Covid 19. Now, the in-between between us is impacted by something over which we have little control. And this changes the experience of the in-between between us.

The anxiety introduced by this unseen threat is a constant and varying in intensity depending on the context in which the interaction occurs. For example, in close contact in which two people are jointly self-isolating, it may not exist and in a context within which one or the other is not 'taking care and making responsible decisions' it may be high.

As Child & Youth Care workers, we practice relational engagement and central to that form of practice is relational safety in the in-between between us. We are constantly monitoring the characteristics of that relationship. So, if in this time of caring in the context of Covid, you find a difference in how you are experiencing the in-between between yourself and others, it might well be because of this unseen threat.

While we can only do so much to reduce the threat, our awareness of how it might be impacting our engagement might help us to understand any changes in our experience of the in-between. As context aware practitioners, this awareness and understanding will help us monitor and guide our interactions with others.



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# Make Magic

Hans Skott-Myhre

In a land of mad takers,  
Can I be a mad giver?  
In the land of the forsaken, can I be a forgiver?

*Rising Appalachia*

In the midst of this pandemic, I have been appalled by the way in which the [sheer brutality](#) of the current global system of rule has been exposed and made visible. At some level, I wanted to make this column about that. I wanted to point to intersectionality and its effects in the real time materiality of the virus. The effects of [racism](#), [gender](#), and [class](#) in particular have had very real effects on the ability of people to survive the impacts of the virus on their bodies. There has been a drive to place the “economy” above the health of living things. Of course, we already know this to be true in terms of climate change and the economic calculus that has resulted in [escalating levels of species extinction](#) and [climate refugees](#). The information is available about the kind of risks we are running for future generations, but it has become frighteningly real within the lived experience of the current pandemic. While these are all extremely pertinent to our work with young people and the world they face, I want to talk about something else. Something I believe to be deeply and profoundly related, but struck in a different key. Perhaps, a key of possibility.



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I want to start with something that Thom Garfat, James Freeman, Kiaras Gharabaghi and Leon Fulcher sketch out in their [revision of the characteristics of CYC](#). In that critical contribution to the field, they open with a concept that I would argue has not been given the attention I think it deserves. Before they turn to the actual characteristics, they set the stage for what is to follow with the idea that the center of our work, the “hub” around which the spokes are centered, is what they call, “the in-between between us.”

This isn't a new idea within the revision. It was also in the 2008 version, but here it is centered as the key element in CYC oriented practice. Indeed, they go so far as to say that, “Without a focus on the in-between between us, there is no relational practice.” (p. 15) So clearly, one would think, it would be given a high profile in our thought and practice. And yet, in my experience, it is largely invisible in our thinking about the work we do.

I would suggest that one of the reasons that this key idea has flown under the radar in how we define our work, is that it is a truly radical reconfiguration of how we imagine our relationships. It asks us to completely re-conceive ourselves. The authors suggest that the space in-between is a space in which we co-create a field of relations that goes beyond any of the individuals involved. They state,

*The focus, however, is more on the characteristics of the co-created relationship itself, than on those of the individuals in the relationship. As Gharabaghi ... explained “relational practice shifts the focus from the actors engaged in some form of interaction to the experience of interacting regardless of the specific actors.” (p. 15)*



This way of thinking about our work, as occurring in interactions and experiences that go beyond any of the specific actors involved, would seem to imply that the field that comprises our work is composed of actions and experiences that are composed in common. This is a major challenge to epistemological or ontological frameworks that would have us think in terms of self and other, or I-thou. It begs the question of what it means to have relations that are not centered in social categories such as young person/adult person. It breaks the holy binary of western philosophy which composes the world into this or that distinct taxonomic or hierarchical set of relations. The very idea that our work is composed in an “in-between that is between us” is extremely hard to wrap our heads around if we persist in imagining ourselves to be contained within this bag of skin, or centered within the neurology of the brain within our skull. It begs the question of what in-between are we referencing and *who* is the *us* it is between?

If this is the core of our work, the hub around which the spokes of the characteristics are composed, how are we to make sense of it? After all, most of what we read in the field still references a multitude of phenomenon clearly situated within young people. Many of the interventions that are proposed are derived from ways of understanding that posit the ability to objectively observe and categorize behavior and measure results. I would suggest that the dominant paradigms within the field of CYC practice remain clearly Cartesian in the sense that we have very few models that are not founded in the belief in an individual and separated self that is defined and shaped by internal processes of thought and reflection. But this dominant paradigm flies in the face of this concept of the “in-between.” How is one to approach the space between, if we are



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bound into an internality of self and a separation from the world and each other?

I ask these questions within the world of the current pandemic and escalating climate crisis. Given the global flow of materials and living things that is now our mode of living production, it seems unlikely this will be the last pandemic. And given our inattention to our impacts on climate, it also seems like a dubious proposition that things will get better soon. I make both these statements premised in my assertion that both these threats to living things are compounded by the dominant binary logic of our time. That is to say our refusal to truly acknowledge the in-between that is between us.

There is deep wisdom in this key element of CYC characteristics that holds a kind of magic. It is an alchemical magic that holds the force of relational transformation. In our field, to engage in the in-between that is between us, opens the relational capacities of our work through an exponential amplification of our joint capacities in encounter. This is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as “becoming other.” This is the idea that each encounter opens a field of difference that offers unimagined versions of who we might become, beyond the limitations of an encapsulated and bounded self. When we enter the space between, we engage a liminal space of infinite capacity and possibility. In the space that is not constrained by who we imagine ourselves to be, we open ourselves to new compositions of who we might become. In that space between us (that we hold in common with all human and non-human forms of life) we are entangled with space, time and matter as elements of composition and production. This is the magic of transformation, and I would argue it is specifically the power of the in-between space we share between us.



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I am borrowing the term magic from [Kathleen Skott-Myhre](#) in her book on feminist spirituality. In that book she defines magic as practices and effects that can't be made sense of within the logic of our historical period. I would argue that in periods of profound living crisis, this is specifically the kind of magic that is required. We need new practices and modes of thought that exceed our current ways of thinking and being. Our old ways have got us here: on a suicidal juggernaut of stubborn adherence to failed paradigms and subjectivities. We need magic as a shamanic practice of alchemical transformation. In short, I would argue that we need to seek new ways being together and understanding all our relations comprehensively and dynamically. Our times require us to go beyond ourselves into that space we hold in common, where all the capacities of life and living things become available to us.

While I have been sheltering in place, I have had the opportunity to listen to a fair amount of music that is new to me. One of the bands that has caught my attention is ["Rising Appalachia"](#) and their song "Make Magic." In the song they ask,

*What are we going to do with the Wicked of the world,  
Make magic  
What are we going to do with the smoke and mirrors,  
Make magic*

In times of crisis, in which the world as we know it is turned upside down and inside out, what does it mean to respond to wickedness and "smoke and mirrors" with magic? I would argue that it means to transform the sets of relationships and the logic through which we engage all life and living things. Too often, we use the inherited logic of conquest and war



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from the history of colonialism as a way of talking about how we might the challenges of those forces we feel oppose our capacity for living fully. We talk about “fighting evil” or engaging in wars such as “the war” on drugs, pornography, child trafficking, abuse, poverty and so on. If we are steeped in certain religious traditions that have investments in concepts such as sin and wickedness, those may become the ways that describe what we perceive to be threats to our way of life or even our ability to survive. In Rising Appalachia’s song they suggest an alternative to warring with the wickeds of the world,

*We believe in warriors and we don't believe in war  
And we'll arm ourselves in liberty.*

What might it mean to believe in warriors, but not war. Obviously, this is a different tradition, a different way of conducting ourselves in the face of the wickeds, or those forces opposed to life. To be a warrior in this way is to arm ourselves in such a way that we use liberty as our weapon. But, what does this mean? Does it mean to assert our individual rights to do the things we want in the face of the dominant social? To insist that no one can control us?

I would suggest that there might be a more magical form of liberty than that. To make this kind of magic means re-thinking liberty as a shared set of desires for anything that enhances the persistence of living things. It is to find freedom in the in-between, in the common desires of life to create and produce the world and all the elements of the world. It is not to become warriors who make war against, but warriors who bring the force of life to bear in moments of crisis such as these.



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In a recent editorial, [Thomas Friedman](#) (who I normally don't agree with) stated an alternative stance to war in response to the Corona virus. In the U.S. the popular discourse about our relation to the virus has been to describe our response as war. Friedman argues,

*That war metaphor is wrong and misleading. Wars are fought and won by humans. So, we could out-mobilize the Nazis and Japanese to win World War II. We could out-spend and out-innovate the Soviet Union to win the Cold War. But when you're in a struggle with one of Mother Nature's challenges — like a virus or a climate change — the goal is not to defeat her. No one can. She's just chemistry, biology and physics. The goal is to adapt. Mother Nature does not reward the strongest or the smartest. She rewards the species that are the most adaptive in evolving the chemistry, biology and physics that she has endowed them with to thrive — no matter what she throws at them.*

If we are to make magic in ways that produce and create worlds in which humans and non-humans can co-evolve in ways that allow for mutual beneficence and the proliferation of a multiplicity of heterogenous forms of life, then we cannot premise our response as an opposition or battle against. Instead, we need to find ways to seek the in-between between us as the ground for adaptation.

In her beautiful and lyric account of quantum physics and post-human feminism, [Karen Barad](#) offers us a way to think about this key element of CYC work. She makes an elegant and complex case for re-think such fundamental concepts in our work as agency, subjectivity, reflexivity, and



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knowledge. While the scope of her work is well beyond the confines of this short column, I would like to explore her ideas just a little here at the end as a proposal for making magic.

Let's start with the between in-between us as a space that is not mediated by anything on the outside of it. As Gharabaghi points out, the experience of interacting goes beyond the individual actors. We, as individuals, contribute ourselves to the between in-between, but we don't have direct influence over the elements of co-creation that occur there. As Barad puts it,

*Knowledge making is not a mediated activity, despite the common refrain to the contrary. Knowing is a direct material engagement, a practice of intra-acting with the world as part of the world in its dynamic material configuring, its ongoing articulation. The entangled practices of knowing and being are material practices. The world is not merely an idea that exists in the human mind. To the contrary, "mind" is a specific material configuration of the world, not necessarily coincident with a brain. (p. 379)*

The between in-between, as the hub of relational work never operates outside the world. It is not a set of beliefs, theories, concepts, or linguistic descriptions of our relations with each other and young people. It is far more elemental than that. It cannot be thought, but has to be experienced in ways that lead to thoughts. It is a direct engagement of bodies, inclusive of all the complexities of the worlding moment in which the co-creation of relationships occur. We cannot fight the world, control each other, or manipulate ourselves or other living or non-living things. We cannot,



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because we are not separable from them. They are us and we are them. It is a question of how we are entangled that makes the magic of new possibilities. Barad tells us, “We are responsible for the world of which we are a part, not because it is an arbitrary construction of our choosing but because reality is sedimented out of particular practices that we have a role in shaping and through which we are shaped.” (p.35)

We have the responsibility to seek out the in-between as a space of co-creation that is truly mutually produced through attention to the effects we have on the ecology of which we are a part. This is a kind of magic, because this would profoundly re-shape how we pay attention. We would need to learn that our effects are not directly causal, but have myriad unanticipated productions that we need to trace as they occur, and to which we adapt to as best we can as a part of the world and not its center. Barad states that, “Learning how to intra-act responsibly as part of the world means understanding that ‘we’ are not the only active beings—though this is never justification for deflecting our responsibility onto others.” If we can begin to engage our spaces in-between seriously, we can begin to make magic that could create a much more life affirming space for the work we do.

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# Dear Self Care: Covid-19 made you disappear

Michelle Chalupa and Shelly Currie

There is that moment when you are running when you feel the strength in your form and the understanding that your body has the power and endurance to make you reach your desired distance and time – or the moment where you complete the final brush stroke of a masterpiece where you feel pride in all the hours and blending of colors that creates an understanding that you are an artist in your own way – whether it is simply for you or for others to be able to admire. There is the conversation that you long for with a cherished friend that allows you to make contact with someone who speaks the same language and understands every being of you as an individual that brings you back to center to be able to manage through the tough times that we all tend to endure and overcome. The moment when we battle the river or wind when we are rowing along the water trying to find the perfect spot to fish or just float to be one with nature and hear the peace all around us. There is the fizz of a bubbly cider or beer after a long week that quenches not only our physical thirst but to also quench the moments of stress from the week rushed past us leaving us thirsty for the much needed weekend – or for those working shift work – days off.

In the field of Child and Youth Care there are so many moments that we are required to care for others – as for any helping profession. Then we find ourselves wondering – why am I so tired, drained and stressed. Self-care is



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one of the newer focuses for a lot of Child and Youth Care Practitioners as we live our busy industrialized lives that we seek to prioritize and master. Self-care over the years has been focused on several things that have recently perhaps been taken away from so many of us. For many of us seeing friends and family, playing sports, dancing and having “sociables”, spa days, going to the beach or playing frisbee in a park are all things we enjoy on a regular basis. These have all been removed from the normalcy of how we can all manage to cope with the stressors of our everyday life due to the world invasion of Covid-19. Sound the quandary is really this – what can we still do to recharge, support and care for ourselves during this time?

First, we must identify why we are feeling burned out and needing to participate in self-care. According to Harvard Health when our bodies and minds experience stress, our amygdala engages the primitive portion of our brains, the hypothalamus, while our prefrontal cortex decides how to react while the stress is being experienced. Within normal limits an individual typically will respond within a reasonable amount of time and implement strategies to support regulation. With increased levels of stress hormones being released the hypothalamus signals the autonomic nervous system which in turn signals the sympathetic system – including the adrenal glands which secretes numerous hormones, but one is cortisol. Cortisol prepares the rest of the body to enter a response of fight, flight or freeze based on how we perceive the threat – “keeping the body revved up and on high alert”. After the perceived threat is no longer present our parasympathetic system takes over and releases new hormones that allow your body to rest and relax. Prolonged exposure to stress will delay this process of restoration and return to a normal state of being (2018).

Stress can impact numerous dimensions of wellness in our lives – physical, emotional, financial, social, spiritual, intellectual, environmental,



and occupation and in today's reality there would be few areas that would be untouched. So, recognizing this new way of life might be around for a while we need to be mindfully aware of the level of stress that we allow ourselves experience as according to *Psychology Today* stress can have multiple negative impacts on our overall general health (2014). When we reflect on the impacts of Covid-19 we can acknowledge that numerous aspects of our lives are changed – whether it is that you are unable to work, potential unwell due to the virus, unable to physically exercise at your usual gym location, unable to attend a religious or spiritual gathering, unable to spend time with a loved one or close friends, etc.

This new way of life that we find ourselves forced to accept leaves us searching for numerous new coping strategies for the prefrontal cortex to select to manage the stresses that seem to be continuing and within a space that perhaps we are not always comfortable with – isolation. Fortunately, we have access to the internet and there are so many great resources at our fingertips. Some resources we have found helpful are self-compassion suggestions, looking for the greater learning in each new moment, gratitude activities, establishing healthy boundaries, remembering what we used to enjoy at less busy times in our lives, picking up hobbies that we always wanted to try, reconnecting with professional supports virtually, listening to music, home delivery wine orders, home renovations and cleaning spaces we just haven't gotten to, virtual meeting spaces, virtual work outs, walks, sleeping in, new recipes, and yard work.

In brainstorming ideas around creating this article we discussed the connectedness of our wonderful field of Child and Youth Care; we thrive within our connectedness with each other so as a team we have decided to reach out across the globe and ask you all to start a new “Dear Abby” of self-care for Child and Youth Care Practitioners. Thom Garfat recently



commented in a CYC-Net discussion thread “We will survive! Together – if we stay together – we will make it through to the other end (2020).” We want to hear about what you are doing to restore your peace within the dimensions of your lives and allow your cortisol levels to balance as you recreate the normalcy that you once had within your daily routines. If you would like to participate in this community of self-care please send us an email at [dearselfcare2020@gmail.com](mailto:dearselfcare2020@gmail.com). Feel free to share links and pictures of things that you are in during social isolation. We are so grateful to know that the young people who are living out of their family homes are being cared for but really wanted to remind everyone that we all need to be sure to focus on selfcare during these newer and challenging times.

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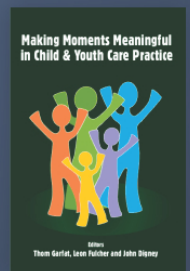
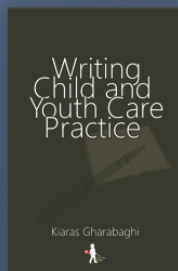
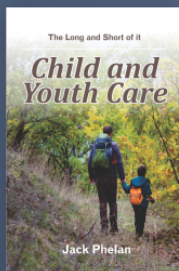
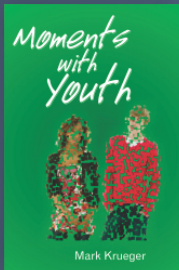
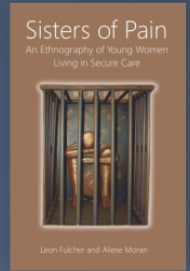
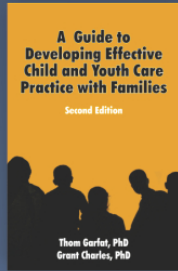
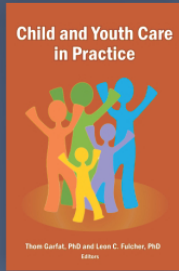
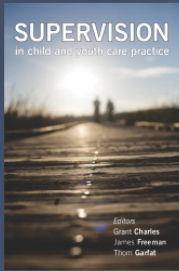
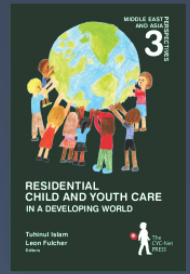
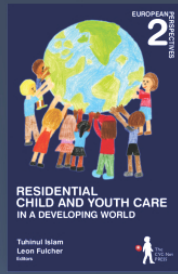
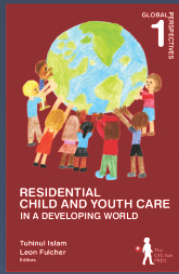
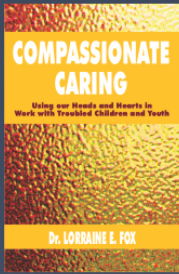
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# Preparing to Serve in the New World

Nancy Getty

*Any experience can be of worth  
The more difficult the process  
The more meaningful are the answers  
The outcome can become a lesson to be shared.*

**G**lobally humans and our freedoms are under attack by an invisible yet deadly foe which has forced upon us all to change our routines, expectations, and to incorporate extreme measures within our lives. This includes our physical distancing from others. The uncertainty of what the new normal will be has left humanity in a phase of limbo. These changes are an opportunity to learn as we survive together universally.

Children around the world depend on the adults in their lives to guide them and keep them safe through this crisis but the emotional and mental health impact could be devastating on our vulnerable children. Not all children are in a situation that provides the stability and safety they require as we are forced to distance ourselves from aiding them. But we also have an opportunity to prepare. We can prepare now in order to assist them once we reconnect by adopting new ideas and new approaches to engage with the child and youth on a different level considering how society will have changed globally.



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As a child and youth care worker the impact that you yourself are experiencing throughout the global pandemic can become a journal of bridging a gap later on. This isolation has forced us all to become more aware of our social connections and communication with others and the distance has forced us to reflect on the emotions that we are experiencing as we maneuver our way through the unknown. From sadness to dread and appreciation to triumph, our emotions are being challenged daily. It is in how we act and react to these challenges that can define us, teach us how resilient we are, and provide knowledge that can benefit others.

Connecting with a child requires being able to understand their circumstance also who they are, how they define themselves and what challenges they face that shapes their lives. So ask yourself, With the circumstances you are now in personally, who are you and what is your purpose as a child and youth care worker to create opportunities, engage and direct a child towards a better future? How can you be prepared when the call comes to step forward once again for the child and youth that depend on your services, your guidance and stability. What have you learned?

Isolation, lack of social connections, loss of resources, no routine, no purpose or goals can exasperate even the strongest personality but we must also add into the equation how a child sees and experiences these events to be able to bridge our gap in understanding.

By creating a personal journal of your experiences, emotions and challenges as you experience the changes in your lifestyle and loss of freedoms, a guideline can be created to share knowledge and a clearer understanding of what may have been normal for the children in care even before this crisis.



Include in your daily log the emotional impact you feel and what strategies you use to balance your mental health. What are your needs and what resources have you incorporated or created to fill those needs? How have you become more aware of the directions you have taken or want to take? Create categories that could assist child and youth care workers to better serve children since many lived in social isolation before the COVID-19 changed our world. For many of us, we are now living their reality.

The opportunity is at hand since we all are now socially distant reaching out in an attempt to connect and awaiting positive change with no definite answers of our future life directions. Learn from the experience and share the lessons of the answers you discovered. The children will be the beneficiaries of your wisdom.

“You had better like you since you are the person you spend the most time with.”

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# Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

Volume 33 Issue 1 / 2020



ISSN 2410-2954

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# **Crisis, Compliance and Connection: Pain and healing in group care**

**Maxwell Smart and John Digney**

*The wide world is all before us - but a world without a friend?*

**Robert Burns**, Scottish poet and playwright

*How strange a thing like that happens to a man. He dabbles in something and does not realise that it is his life.*

**Patrick Kavanagh**, Irish Poet and playwright

## **Introduction**

It may be cliché to advise that we are living in very strange times – but it has to be said. This break from the norm and evolution of a new norm will have far reaching consequences for us all and the kids with who we share our lives. Social distancing, self-isolating, cocooning, hand-washing etiquette, facemasks, and the recent pasta and toilet roll shortages are part of our new reality and the latter two of real concern to those of us with potato-based diets.

This current viral pandemic threatens us all equally. But what is encouraging though is how many have connected with the reality of the situation and complied with the restrictions that have been advised by our science and medical experts. We are seeing the worst that nature can



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throw at us and the best that humanity can respond with. Looking out for each other as we manage our own struggles and botheration with the restrictions. We continue to show kindness, compassion, empathy and understanding. We keep our hope alive as we await a way out of the horror that have been unveiled and thrust upon us all. We will not be beaten, we will continue to rally with the call of 'we shall overcome', we will continue to make sure people are cared for and about.

With this crisis comes a newly discovered appreciation of those who provide care and caring, we have seen a willingness to listen to and respond with 'the better angels of our nature'. In 2016 when we wrote our original article on 'crisis and connection', we could not have foreseen todays situation, times were vastly different for sure, but what remains true is our thinking about dealing with and understanding people in difficulty. Over the past 4 years we have come to believe more and more in the necessity of providing a secure based, one which provides a sense of hope and one which promotes optimism.

It holds true that children and youth the world over, when entering an alternative care living situation should be seen as living 'in crisis'. They have the various crises going on in their external world, in addition to the unseen 'internal crises'. These all contributed to their need for the invasive intervention of coming into care. We have come to understand and accept that these youngsters are generally exhibiting some deep pervasive emotional pain and that they (for good reasons) are unlikely to trust the people now seen to be charged with their care. Staff encountering youth in this situation are aware that young people are (or at least should be aware) that these young people are likely to exhibit behaviours that may be interpreted as defiant, self-defeating and abusive. And that is all before the effects of the pandemic!



The unwanted behavioural by-products of their survival techniques are now, without proper intervention, prone to become more deeply ingrained, as they seek to defend themselves against a world that is often perceived to be cruel and hostile. Even as our understanding of behaviour increases and we become more attuned to the internal working of the human brain, we still struggle with knowing what has to be done with such youth in crisis? And now in a time where close contact can be life-threatening; our interventions must still rely on proximity, closeness and expressions of trust and caring.

### **How Wide is the Span of the Bridge?**

As we salute our brave and selfless social care and health care workers, we are reminded of a quote from Albert Einstein, who said, ‘the value of a man resides in what he gives and not in what he is capable of receiving’. This wisdom is congruent with our belief about the values that carers hold dear. It is the wide span of the bridge that recognises that, things that are bad are remedied by the application of kind acts towards others.

### **Crisis and Compliance**

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift – ***Albert Einstein***

So, the world is different right now, different from what we knew only a few months ago. We have been asked to comply with some restrictions. Restrictions that have been demonstrated to keep us safe not just us as individuals, but everyone in our lives, our communities and our families. ‘I will probably be OK if I get the virus’, some think – ‘so why should I comply



with these imposed restriction'. Others think, 'yes I will be fine, but I need to protect my neighbour and to play a part in overcoming this invisible murderer'. We all have different thought processes, experiences, values and beliefs that impact on our thinking. Also, our thinking is changeable as the situation goes on for longer ... 'I can't take much more of this'!

It seems to us that all adults have now been placed in a position that most 'in care' kids are in. An alien situation, with people who have power, telling us what to do and expecting us to comply. Welcome to a new world! But it is not ok to just accept this, we need to figure out a way to manage the short-term emotional turmoil and at the same time figure out how we can work with the restriction to find solutions to the problems this new world brings.

Young people encountering this world are struggling to make sense of altered states of being in the pandemic context. However, they are also experiencing compromised safety in many other contexts simultaneously. These young people are in continual crisis due to the life experiences of trauma they have had in their lives. As Perry noted in 2001, '... the highest risk children... are safe nowhere [and] must learn and grow despite a pervasive sense of threat' (p.4).

## **Is the old rope bridge still safe?**

In these changing times we are called to think about how we have worked in the past and about the once effective interventions of our trade, and ask, do they still work? Before expanding too much on this, let us re-understand what might be happening with some of our young people now, in the midst of the present crisis. Brendtro et al (2005) advised '... when normal needs are frustrated, problem behaviour results', (p.15). Well, in recent weeks it has become all too clear that there has been an



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alteration to needs based understanding. Basic freedoms have been altered such as rights to associate, going to social places, seeing loved persons, grieving over those who are dying or have died, to mention just a few things that have changed in a noticeably short time frame. Things are going to be viewed differently.

In 1970, Beedel suggested that when working with young people in crisis that there is a requirement for a three- pronged approach to engagement and healing. Beedel suggested we needed to provide:

- protection from danger, discomfort and distress,
- opportunities for intellectual, social and physical growth, and
- enable the growth and maintenance of person integrity.

These three prongs all hold true at the time of this heightened crisis and times of the unknown and metaphorical darkness. A time where it might be even more difficult to even see how we can begin to provide protection, given that many kids are not complying with the restrictions and placing themselves are even higher levels of risk.

Cairns (2002) also recognized the impact of trauma on children and youth. She proposed three phases of recovery that enable growth and restoration of equilibrium:

- stabilization,
- integration,
- adaption.

It would be difficult to disagree with all, but we are struck by the challenges of dealing with the first aspect – providing stability in a world where the sand is constantly shifting under our feet. We ask ourselves, ‘are





these all still achievable'? The answer must be 'of course', but prior to providing these opportunities and entering into a recovery phase, we would assert there is still a requirement to get to a place of 'connection'.

## **Connection and Distance**

Our attempts to help the kids understand that social distancing is necessary to keep them safe, is incongruent with our attempts to create and maintain connection. It is also incongruent with the experience of many of our young people prior to admission to our care ... many do not understand how not seeing friends will keep them safe in the present – after all, to them their perceived safety comes from their friends. To helping adults the logic seems clear, so often we rely on the biological argument, some would say logical argument, using language about how this disease infects others, so logically, if you do not see your friends you cannot infect them or you get infected. The problem is that when such logic apparently falls on deaf ears, it is all too easy to react with the mantra of government rules and or agency guidance to reinforce that the youth must act with responsibility and keep themselves safe.

Unfortunately, the 'keep safe / protect from danger' argument is one which is problematic to young people who have experienced life-threatening trauma in the past, in any event. They will wonder, 'how is this threat any more dangerous than the life threats I have encountered in the past'. They can legitimately ask, 'how am I going to be in any way more safe by not seeing those whom I trust'.

## **Thinking about Healing**

Phelan (2009) advises that systems dealing with troubled youth often (unsuccessfully) attempt to tackle the 'crisis' issues by focusing on



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attempts to simply eliminate problematic behaviour. Phelan describes this approach as naïve. When adults do this, they encounter more resistance in young people rather than positive actions.

The reason being that the challenging behaviour being displayed, such as anger, verbal abuse and violence are symptoms of deep emotional pain. He does not advocate a tacit acceptance of problematic behaviour but he recognizes the need to work on how to remediate these difficulties without the “quick fixes” of physical restraint and or chemical cosh. This is a position supported by other contemporary writers (e.g. Garfat, 1998; Anglin, 2002; Smith, 2009; and Smart & Digney, 2013), who all refer to problematic behaviour and emotional pain, and who seek alternatives beyond adult power and control. Hope is always better than hopelessness, optimism beats pessimism hands down.

Our initial focus with these kids in crisis should still be to work on establishing a connection and at the same time seek to find a way to alleviate some of this pain, to provide reassurance and to let them know that even if we don't know the final destination, that we are going to travel there together. Whilst we also recognize that behaviour must be 'stabilized' in order to create a platform to work on the emotional pain; we wonder whether as a profession, we have the balance right, between control, compliance, containment and relational connection.

Anecdotal analysis would suggest that as a profession we can often struggle, along with youth, in getting the balance right for crisis often leads to counter aggressive responses from adults, who then disconnect rather than connect with the youngster. This principle has been demonstrated across the world in recent week. Kid who are living in caring situations with consistent and connected carers, have tended to cope better and been able to manage the current crisis better than those who are merely being 'looked



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after' by adults who have not taken the time to connect with them. The authors have noted in other writings that, '... angry kids who challenge authority, who often appear to hate authority, are often the same kids rejected by those charged to help and nurture them', Smart & Digney (2013) and of course this disconnection pushes us away from youth in difficulty and does little to create emotional safety and alleviate emotional pain.

We must look at how, in this time of challenge and new crisis, how we can continue to create healing connections with kids when they are in crisis. As White-McMahon and Baker said, change is all about relationship ... and hope is needed if we want to be motivated to work for change.

## **Those who See Opportunity**

As we reintroduce these topics for consideration, we also pose some questions:

- How is it that some skilled CYC's seem to see possibilities for connection where others see defiance and behavioural resistance?
- For those who have these skills, how do they find a method to pass them on effectively to colleagues? and
- Is such an understanding not only a desired skill but also an essential skill for those who work with kids in crisis exhibiting pain-based behaviour?

We know that effective practitioners seem to have access to some intrinsic 'relational radar' and that they are proficient in their timing skills. They always seem to pick the right moment and the right actions to generate a safe enough connection with a kid. Additionally, they can manage the kids and their own anxieties, whether the youngster is in crisis



or not, and they have an ability that overrides the child's fear response and can create moments that the child and adult can share without fear.

What is most astounding is that practitioners with these relational radars kick into action with apparent ease and comfort – seemingly without effort, yet we know these actions and interventions must be sophisticated and intricate. When observed they seem to fully understand timing, how to manage their body language, how to display comfort, how to use humour, and when to reframe or re-contextualize situations. The characteristics of staff with these gifts seem to occur so effortlessly almost as if they are simply intrinsic to their DNA. We are asking, can we teach those skills and characteristics in order that these become the ways of being in all CYC programs who deal with kids in crisis. These should not be just the gifts of special practitioners.

The workers with these skills come with the 'extra special' in their relational toolbox. They recognise that helping others starts with compassion and kindness which create a great antidote to both physical and emotional pain. These interventions create a felt safety, a far wider context in caring than 'safety' that is imposed by edict. As noted by Hamilton, (2010), "kindness involves treating people with equal respect, regardless of colour, creed, sexuality or social status, (p.19). Similarly, with compassion, when combined with kindness, we see that profound emotional change can take place in those that receive these acts. With compassion and kindness, comes the ability to empathise with others, creating a 'feeling for' and ultimately a 'feeling with' others, especially in time of crisis, uncertainly and change.

At a time of unprecedented flux in the life of 'caring about' and 'caring for', we would be wise to take onboard the profound Lyrics of a Scottish



Folk/ Rock duo called the Proclaimers, who in their 1992 anthemic ballad, 'Sunshine on Leith', wrote:

My heart was broken, my heart was broken  
Sorrow, Sorrow, Sorrow, Sorrow  
My heart was broken, my heart was broken  
You saw it  
You claimed it  
You touched it and saved it

What we are asserting here is that pain comes to an end and healing can overcome crisis when we connect in solid and significant ways. We therefore recognise that a rebalance will take place that brings us towards hope in gloomy times. So, rather than despondency at such a problematic time, let us look forward with optimism and hopefulness that even though lives have been massively altered by this crisis, we will bounce back stronger and with greater belief in what we can do to build strong relational foundations that help and heal effectively.

We send you all our best wishes and love and a hope that you find some laughter and joy in these strange times and would like to sign off from this little article with the inspirational words of the Dalai Lama.

*Compassion is not religious business, it is human business, it is not luxury, it is essential for our own peace and mental stability, it is essential for human survival.*

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# As It Turns Out, We Can Change Everything

Kiaras Charabaghi

Just about everything with my personal routines has changed over the past two months. I no longer drive to work. I don't buy coffee from a drive-thru window; in fact, I have not had my beloved Tim Hortons coffee (small, two sugar, one cream) for about six weeks. I don't shave anymore (but I do shower and brush my teeth). I am home almost always, interact with my adult children every day, all day, and I see my beautiful wife from morning to night. I don't travel, I don't meet up with friends or colleagues at cafes, and I have not had reason to iron a shirt in some time. Everything around me has changed too. There is virtually no traffic, lots of people seem to be staying mostly at home, there are no world events or even local news that don't relate to COVID-19, the air seems breathable, oil seems like an antiquated and unnecessary industry, and there are Kangaroos in the downtown of some Australian cities.

Of course, these past two months have also exposed some of the deeply embedded problems in most countries around the world. As people get sick, and many die, we become increasingly aware of how our complacency to the inhuman and profoundly unjust processes, institutions, and circumstances has rendered many people around the world at far greater risk of losing everything, including their lives. From the centuries of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racisms in Canada to the global neglect of caring for the elderly in dignified and honouring ways, and from the xenophobic constructions of the 'other' to the exclusions suffered by those failing to conform to dominant social norms and values, we can readily see how privilege operates in times of crisis.



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And we can see that the core defense mechanisms of privilege kick in rapidly and expansively – surveillance of the masses, with the intensity of surveillance directly related to the extent of marginalizations amongst sub-groups of the masses; hard borders and containment strategies, designed to keep out and lock in as needed; and a flexible ethic of humanity that permits decision-making about who lives and who dies in the name of protecting the interests of privilege.

Notwithstanding that we are bearing witness to some of this ugliness, we are also bearing witness to considerable evidence that whatever barriers we thought might exist for fundamental change are not nearly as formidable as we made them out to be for decades. It turns out that we can live life differently. We can relate to one another differently. We can live with a different view of the role of productivity, economic growth, social cohesion, the role of military force, the connections between countries and cultures, and the social, political and economic forces that threaten the very existence of the planet through their acceleration of climate change. Sure, at the moment, these differences are viewed as temporary, and there is already enormous pressure of going back to what we had a very short time ago. But 'short' in the context of this pandemic is a lot longer than what was deemed possible. As recently as in January, a rail shutdown in Canada was seen as potentially apocalyptic and entirely unsustainable after two weeks; in the political rhetoric of the day, the national security of the country, its very future, was seen as threatened and in need of forcible protection using military and police-state interventions. This rail strike now seems almost banal, a minor inconvenience in relation to an entire political economy having ground to a halt. While the current circumstances may not be sustainable in the long run, we have learned there is in fact a lot more fluidity in what can be, and how we can be, and in who can assume





what roles in our lives, in our economics, and in our social well being. We have even learned that some roles we deemed as expendable and trivial, and therefore not worth of investment, in fact are essential services that outweigh in importance the roles of brute force, wealth creation, and energy innovation. In the hierarchy of social value, soldiers are dropping ranks while those providing care to others have become indispensable. You don't get to cut the line because you are the CEO of a bank; but if you are a nurse, please step forward and come on in.

This, I think presents a previously unimaginable opportunity not only to the global society, but also to various sub-groups within that society, including those who see themselves in some way associated with the field of child and youth care. Specifically it presents the opportunity to think and act differently as we continue our development as a force of care and relational practices in how we are in the world. It presents the opportunity to bypass the technocratic objections to acting against those aspects of our field's orthodoxies that have for some time been challenged by various counter-movements embracing different ways of being with children, youth, families and communities. It presents the opportunity to not merely imagine a field that is engaged with multiple experiences, multiple identities, multiple ways of being, seeing and doing, but one that actually transforms itself overnight to make it happen.

For a long time, whenever we encountered a challenging scenario with respect to changing something, however small and trivial, we used the phrase "if we can put man on the moon, surely we can ....". But this phrase never really had much meaning; for one thing, it references only men (because we have only put men on the moon), and really, the men we did put on the moon were so few and under such unique circumstances that it is a difficult analogy to the every day contexts of child and youth care practice. But now we can say



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something different: “If we can fundamentally live, work, play, love, be, and die differently, across all social spheres, nations, borders, cultures, identities and material contexts, surely we can...”.

Equipped with this mantra, conscious of both the positives and the decidedly negative patterns and trends within the social context of this pandemic, we are experiencing a moment that allows for big ideas followed by immediate operationalization: Can our field be moved from its encampments of child and youth care orthodoxies representing primarily white experiences and ideas on the one hand, and counter-movements seeking space and validation for much more expansive and complex iterations of life, knowledge, wisdom and truth on the other hand, to reflect a relational global community inclusive of land, spirit, and the multitude of manifestations of care that have emerged through the dynamics of colonization(s) and oppressions as well as relational resilience and commitments to dignities beyond binary constructions of ‘the good’?

Whatever we might have thought impossible, or difficult, or painful yesterday, we ought to reconsider – this moment suggests that what is possible is far greater than what we have been imagining, but the time to act is now. The history of this pandemic will be written soon. If we don’t act now, if we don’t own our part of this history firmly and without compromise, the history of the pandemic will be written by those and for those who have always been at the centre of writing history. Just this once, let’s be authors of a history that actually changed something.

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# What Are We Doing? Who Cares?

Jack Phelan

**M**ay is the month that we celebrate CYC practice and try to get the rest of the world to appreciate the beauty, joy and complexity of our profession. The appreciation that should be most important is being valued by the young people and families that we support, but it may not be aligned with the appreciation which funders and other professionals express and value.

There is a basic contradiction between a behavioral control focus and a relational focus that creates a dysfunctional stance, a life space presence that is continually neutralizing the impact of our attempts to build connections.

CYC practitioners all function as implementers of a program, a framework that has been developed to guide the actions of both the practitioner and the people being supported by the program. School-based practice, street work, family support, mental health, residential and day programs all are constructed around a framework of behavioral expectations. Typically, a program consists of several discrete events or expectations that the young person or family should fit into. These can be as simple as going through daily hygiene routines, sitting together and having a discussion, doing some useful behaviors or avoiding some not useful behaviors, attending sessions or classes, and creating specific, pre-determined results. The underlying assumption is that the performance of



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the expected behaviors will inevitably create healthy people. CYC practitioners are expected to create incentives to motivate people to voluntarily perform the behavior prescribed in the program, or to build in disincentives to motivate people to reluctantly perform the behaviors. An unfortunate result of this mental model is that behavior is appreciated instead of people.

Safety and social control are major motivators in program construction, and indeed safety is a key issue in any attempt to intervene in a helpful way in a person's life. Until mutual safety is established there is no room to build any program attempting to support change. Social control is not the same thing and is usually valued by funders and administrators, with powerful incentives offered to programs and staff who can insure this result. There is a well-meaning belief that behaving in "appropriate" ways will result in health and success, with the social logic of the funders/administrators being used to define appropriate. The staff in most programs also share at least an appreciation for the social logic of the program and are reinforced to believe in the validity of this logic.

Mature CYC practitioners focus on creating relational and developmentally respectful connections in order to build support for people. Mutual trust and respect are foundational aspects of every relational connection, built on a shared basic safety. Creating a safe connection requires the practitioner to use both behavioral and relational energy, often in a paradoxical manner. The people we are trying to support have numbing experiences of abuse, trauma and neglect in their lives, which generally results in a fear of losing control and being vulnerable. Creating a safe environment sometimes requires the CYC practitioner to establish strong limits on behavior and a clear focus on behavior management, since unsafe behavior and poor judgement can often be



part of peoples' daily lives. As long as the external control is based on a need for safety, there is little damage done to relational work, but this has to be based on the safety needs of the people being helped, not the staff or program guidelines needs. There is a disconnect here because the social logic of the program and the staff is quite different than the social logic of the other person. The social logic used to construct the program expectations is based on the needs and beliefs of funders, administrators and eventually the staff, but really does not take into account the social logic of the other person. Every time the program creates expectations and required behavior that do not seem logical to the people being supported, and does not create safety for them, there is damage being done to any relational energy being built.

Behavioral programs do not value relational connection, believing that the doing of specific behavior is the actual treatment. In fact, it is important in a behavioral program for staff implementing rewards and punishments to appear to be unemotional and objective. In the preliminary stage of CYC practice, this behavioral stance can be useful to build safety through external control, but it needs to be abandoned and replaced with a more personal, relational stance as soon as safety is a less important dynamic. The program expectations and events can now become daily possibilities to build connection through modifying expectations to fit the circumstances of the individual, discussing the disconnect between program logic and the young person's logic, introducing caring moments and building personal power, and joining the young person or family in an attempt to fit the program to their needs, not the other way around.

Professional CYC practice is a relational, developmentally respectful interaction which creates a shared space where both people feel respected, safe and competent. The gradual sharing of power is part of the



process and the goal is to have a power-free connection, where each person is fully responsible and open to the other's influence.

To return to our title, what are we doing? Is the result of our practice being valued by the people we are supporting? My belief is that relational practice, when done effectively, has this result.

When what we are doing is implementing behavioral guidelines prescribed by a program built on a social logic that doesn't fit the logic of our young people and families, we do get appreciated, but by whom and for what?

**JACK PHELAN** is a regular contributor to CYC-Online. He is the author of *Intentional CYC Supervision: A Developmental Approach* and *Child and Youth Care: The Long and Short of It*, both available through the CYC-Net Press. Jack teaches *Child and Youth Care* at Grant MacEwan College in Alberta, Canada. Learn more at <https://cyc-net.org/People/people-phelan.html>



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# I am your CYC

**Samantha Malham**

I am your CYC,  
I will be here with listening ears,  
I will not show judgement, nor criticism.

I will show empathy.

I will walk beside you  
Not in front of you, for you to follow my footsteps.

Because your journey, is just that. YOUR JOURNEY

I will walk beside you  
Not behind you, to walk in your footsteps,  
Because I have not walked in your experiences that you have faced,  
I will walk beside you, to gain your trust, to be a confident, to lend a hand if  
you fall.

But please don't feel like you must, it is completely your choice if you want  
to reach out your hand.

And it is just as equally, if not more important to get up on your own, in fact  
it is admirable.

I **will not** cry your tears,



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because like fingertips, tears are different in everyone, they are your own unique identity

I will stand back and observe, not because you are under the microscope, but for the simple reason, things can just be as equally seen through your actions and expressions as if you were speaking out loud.

I will be your CYC, **when** I earn your **trust**.

I will sit down with you in silence, if that is what you prefer.

I will work **with you**, to get your voice back,  
I will work **with you** to help gain your confidence within you, that may be buried deep down.

**This is your Journey.**

There is no pressure or deadline that says you must be ok by this date and time.

This is your Journey.

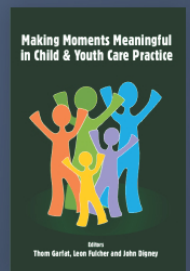
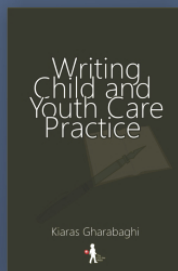
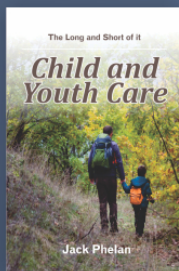
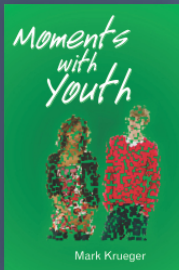
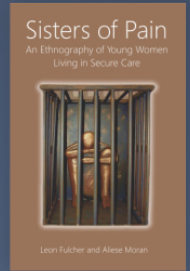
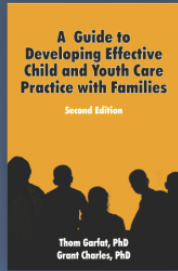
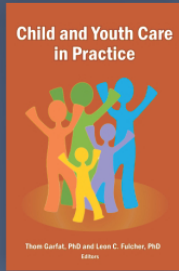
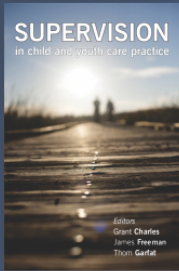
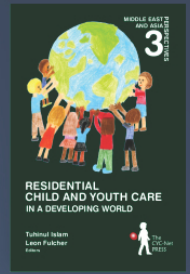
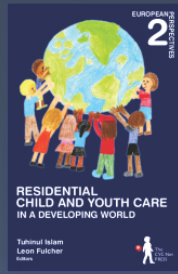
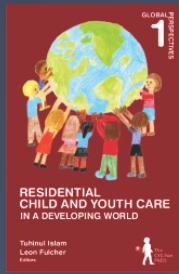
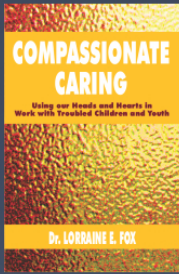
You are in the driver's seat.

I will be your CYC, because to me and others  
**YOUR ARE IMPORTANT AND YOU ARE WORTH IT.**

I will be your CYC, because you gave me **permission** to be.



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# **Boring, Boring this is Boring! Learning Zoom During a Global Pandemic: A CYC Journey**

**Libby Shaw**

## **Introduction**

When I was in High School, I struggled to find my potential. I was extremely unfocused and uncertain about the future. I hated that feeling. It would keep me up for all hours of the night. I would lie awake agonizing over the same questions, “*What does the future hold for me?*” and “*Am I going to be ok?*” As fate would have it, a wise teacher of mine suggested I do a placement at a Women’s Shelter. It was here that I found the field of Child and Youth Care (CYC), and I was saved. I went to college and got a CYW diploma. I worked in residential settings, school boards, did in-home care support and all the while I felt like I was on fire with a drive that was unstoppable. I finished a BA in CYC and went on to complete two Graduate Degrees. One in Early Childhood studies, and the other in Child and Youth Care. I had found my calling.

It has been 15 years since that first day in the women’s shelter. I remember it well. I did not know a thing about CYC, and I only had my green instincts to draw from. However, with time, research, and supervision I became a committed CYC. I honed my craft, always reflecting on what I



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can do better next time. Always thinking of new and creative ways to reach the child where they are at (Garfat, Freeman, Gharabaghi, Fulcher, 2018). As the years went by, I continued to excel and learn my profession. The satisfaction this gave me is impossible to put into words, although I am sure many of you know exactly what I am talking about if you love this field or any field, as I do. Earlier this year, I began my private practice, a dream I have had from the beginning. In total, I had four jobs that allowed me to juggle different roles and keep me on my toes. I felt life pump through my veins as I immersed myself in the joy of CYC.

And then, suddenly, one day... I blinked.

## **The Change**

It has now been one month almost to the day since I last went to work. A month to the day since COVID-19 became a Global Emergency. In order to stay safe and in order to keep others safe, it is crucial to stay home. This means that unless you are an essential service, you do not leave your house.

I know that I am not alone in this experience, and to a great extent, knowing that is comforting. Many CYCs moved their work to an online format, as I had to. I continue to run sessions with children using the Zoom platform. My initial sessions with Zoom were exceedingly painful, both for me and for my clients. I had no idea that the 'tool-box' that I have been carefully tending to for the last 15 years was full of strategies that include: flexibility,, interest boosting, switching the activity and conveying a calmness that I am currently lacking within myself, making it impossible for me to transfer this energy to my client using an online platform. I am suddenly reduced to only being able to use my words, and my words are failing me.



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Between the issues with internet connections, staggered and clunky conversations, links not working, people being late for the session, noises in the background, distractions that are beyond my control, I quickly began to dread these sessions. I found that at the end of each session I was feeling the same way: relieved that it was over, and heartbroken that another opportunity had been missed. I felt like a failure. I did not have the answers anymore.

I found myself up at night once again, faced with those same questions I had when I was a teenager, *“What does the future hold for me?”* and *“Am I going to be ok?”* I was scared of the virus myself. My husband is a police officer, and still working each day. My mother and sister both work in a hospital. My sister-in-law is running a COVID-19 unit at a hospital. I worry for my parents, and I miss seeing them. These are thoughts that are inescapable. If I was able to go to work and have a session in my office, I know that I would be in a better position to turn off those thoughts. Unfortunately, I am running these Zoom sessions from the vulnerability of my own home. How do I do this? I did not know.

### **Boring, boring this is Boring!**

The loss I felt during those initial weeks was palpable. I felt the strong wave of grief rise up within my chest at various times throughout the day, it was beyond my control. I felt the loss for my work, a loss for the time spent with my family and loss for the connection I had with my clients. I continued to attempt to find ways for intervention, but alas I was not at all equipped to navigate through this new life-space, and I felt useless (Gharabaghi & Stuart, 2011). It was like I was a pianist without a piano. All I had were my ineffectual words, but how can I even talk when the sky is falling?



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Not surprisingly, my motto of “just keep going and get on with it” backfired under these circumstances. I became more depressed, more withdrawn and continued to dread the Zoom sessions. The field that had anchored me for so long now felt like those same anchors were pulling me under. It is a real sobering moment when you face the reality that you don’t know how to do your job anymore. However, I continued and had a Zoom session later on one of the days that I was feeling the worst. I had the session with six kids. One of the girls began to say “Boring, boring this is boring!” And I couldn’t blame her. It was boring. So, I did what any good CYC does. I owned it. I agreed with her, “Yes, I know. This is boring. I’m sorry, I wish that we could see each other in my office again.” There it was. The truth.

She replied, “I really miss you.”

That moment was pure magic. We had found a way to connect again. This created a door for us to continue about what else is missed. Some missed school, their friends, their grandparents. I identified with each of their losses, listened with purpose and validated each of their feelings. I was a CYC again.

Upon reflection of this time, I have learned that in order to embark on this new world, I cannot separate my own feelings of loss. Trying to do this depleted my genuineness, and this is the very quality that is needed most. It occurred to me afterward, that perhaps the sessions had been meaningful all along. Maybe, these Zoom sessions don’t need to be anything more than “Hanging-in” and through doing that, Moments are made meaningful (Garfat, et al, 2018).



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## Conclusion

This field once again has saved me, and I have been able to embrace a new way of being with clients. I have discovered that if we disconnect from that part of ourselves that holds the pain, we lose our humanity. I have found a true way to connect by being vulnerable and owning the shortcomings of the sessions that I was running. I am optimistic that this will continue to be an exciting learning experience for me as I continue to navigate away from super boring sessions. I thank my clients for their honesty, for making me laugh and for sticking with me through this unprecedented time.

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# Holding in Place

Garth Goodwin

Typically, being a columnist is an exercise in faith that something will emerge that will spark the next installment in a continuous series. Change has been an incremental process for much of our lives with the soap companies leading the charge shouting *new* repeatedly and consistently for a product that does not appear to change at all. People crave a certain amount of novelty and much of human enterprise provides that very thing through seasons of entertainment, fashion, architecture and interior design. While change is continuous, often clusters of elements take place to the degree that they earn a name for a trend or even a period of history like baroque, the 50's and modern as examples. And so it has gone for all of human history, waves of civilization usually expressed in dateline expressions illustrating the period covered. Now, imagine that all ending, it all is turning on its head and stopping, being stopped on purpose in fact, an historical first. For much of history it has taken great wars, famines, plagues and natural disasters to approach such a status. We are living through a time when a virus has the world, certainly the so called first world jurisdictions holding in place shuttered in their living spaces, asked to keep exposure to other people to a minimum or at least 2 meters or roughly 6 or more feet between ourselves and others. This column explores aspects of this historic time under progress currently.

For those of us who have known and loved the frontline, the actual work of caring for the children and youth our facilities serve, this has been an intense time. Some youth at risk often do not give a darn about others and



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indeed are drawn toward the negative. This virus is like handing them a loaded gun, the potential of their becoming in fact that loaded gun transmitting the virus to anyone they meet. Child and youth care professionals have always had to deal with the fact of life and death dealing with individuals who harm others or themselves but never to this degree. There have always been those who refuse placement and care as unworkable. Unfortunately, they can do a lot of damage in the process. The care system may have to turn to closed settings to process quarantine for such individuals. In the meantime, those on the frontline must double down on engagement, relationship building and creative living to see themselves and their charges through this vulnerable time. As the virus has progressed leaders have been forced to limit human exposure to numbers so low, 5 and under where they threaten group care, even some foster care situations with extinction, end of service. It would take legislated exceptions to allow the care system to progress. Of course, it is possible for carers to manage sheltering in place for youth and for themselves. Fortunately, youth at risk represent the smallest of minorities in each provincial jurisdiction with an equally negligible staff component. Like the majority, each foster, and group care facility has drifted by increments into a holding status in which there is no going out.

Remarkably, the care system is holding up a few weeks into this experience. While the care system usually avoids media attention there have been some indications of practitioners getting the virus. A Canadian, Shawn Auger, a life force has left his family, workplace and the local hockey scene devastated being the youngest Albertan to pass. <sup>1</sup> The state of

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<sup>1</sup> [https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/high-prairie-youth-worker-is-albertas-youngest-covid-19-victim/wcm/d6769561-d794-4e61-bb93-0cac3ff6eb82/?fbclid=IwAR0ioAbTcNkcf\\_sgysgjF44qVzC\\_GtpUs\\_BQJ95QOGUel\\_o4b-yRomnZx7Q](https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/high-prairie-youth-worker-is-albertas-youngest-covid-19-victim/wcm/d6769561-d794-4e61-bb93-0cac3ff6eb82/?fbclid=IwAR0ioAbTcNkcf_sgysgjF44qVzC_GtpUs_BQJ95QOGUel_o4b-yRomnZx7Q)



Minnesota reported 6 cases, 3 practitioners, 3 residents have the virus. The threat is real, and I believe should be treated as such. This pandemic has been the greatest levelers in history reducing whole countries to turn their backs on their economies and shelter in their homes. Youth in care deserve the respect of transparency and information through exposure to a reliable news broadcast and shared discussion. Not forced or threatened simply shared by old and young alike. They must work through the reality of being cut off from family visitation yet connected to the extent it is possible by telephone or internet. Enterprising social workers could facilitate digital connections where possible with arrangement of date and time. Like any of the routine miracles child and youth care professionals pull off daily, where there is a will, there is a way. Often, just knowing in a concrete way that people are safe is all that is needed for young people.

The one role of child and youth care practice (among many) that must emerge at this time is educator. In Quebec, the word for a child and youth care practitioner is just that. Home schooling is now the rule. Hopefully, the home has internet capacity. Expanding this could be considered. Where age appropriate set the youth to use online sources to learn about the progress of the pandemic to share with the group. Stay in the car road trips may be considered to show young people how isolated their cities are. Driving around is much like driving into one's shift on Christmas morning with few cars or people about. Seeing theatres closed, hotels and motels closed, malls shut down and so forth reinforces staying in place at home.

While this descent continues, the issue of emerging from this state of isolation becomes murkier. Early hopes to bounce back rather quickly are retreating as periods of sheltering are extended. As sectors of the economy such as airlines go into mothballs there is an acceptance it will take a long time to return to pre-pandemic traffic. The restaurant sector despite efforts



to hold it in place, is anticipated to shutter. It will take new investors, returning staff and the reemergence of discretionary income to revive to any extent. There was a rush of numbers in constant motion, so much so, people just went with the flow. This has all ground to a halt. The future depends upon a successful vaccination being found, manufactured and then applied to the entire world. A tall order. As health returns to societies, economic health will also return in successive, rolling increments. This will not be an automatic process. Following a yet undetermined holding of society itself, the reconstruction of society will take time. I think of my mother who was shaped by the great Depression for her entire life into a saver, a hoarder, a sacrifice who never did come around despite living through the high times of the age. She had two huge suitcases of recipes, cut out from magazines and newspaper and tucked away because you never know when you may need it. Society will literally have to be rebuilt from the ground up. Children and youth and their families will re-emerge into a tentative yet impatient world eager to re-establish itself. In frontier times children and youth were often left to fend for themselves and were viewed as extra hands to the process of homesteading. The social safety net we have known perhaps has an uncertain future in this era of political confusion and conflict.

The next several months, possibly years may involve this virus. Uncertainty is the only thing that is definite. Child and youth care practice will continue to hold in place as that is essentially what the profession is all about, creating a safe place for at risk youth. While this crisis points up how essential the profession is, recognition of the fact remains elusive. As care workers are celebrated with so many public demonstrations of applause, noise or sirens I always think of those on the frontline. Sadly, locking down society to the close quarters of a place forces incidents of abuse and harm



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of youth without any social recourse. Hot lines or web services will have to do and could be advertised more. For those who are helping youth at risk hold in place thank you for what you do. Society will need the health your care creates to heal once this is over.

**GARTH GOODWIN** spent his 41-year career in both practice and as a database designer and administrator. In over 30 years of frontline practice he worked for both public/board and private agencies. He was the first recipient of the National Child and Youth Care Award in 1986. He nurtured the Child and Youth Care Workers Association of Manitoba through its formative years and became its representative to the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations. He has been privileged to be the witness and participant in significant events in CYC history and remains an active observer in the field of CYC.



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# Granny Always Said

Traditional Parenting Tips for Today's Parents

Grant Charles, Hali McLennan, & Thom Garfat



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# Postcard from Leon Fulcher

*In a New Zealand COVID-19 Level 4 Lockdown Bubble*

**K**ia Ora Comrades and Greetings to you all! April 2020 will be remembered for the COVID-19 Alert Level 4 Lockdown in New Zealand, variations on this theme experienced all over the world. Only essential workers – including care workers – have continued their employment along with workers at petrol stations, supermarkets, health care centres – often via tele-health – and also pharmacies. Corner dairy shops were allowed to remain open – one customer at a time buying milk, bread and basics.



**New Zealand's COVID-19 Alert Level 4 Lockdown at Midnight on 25 March 2020**



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We entered Alert Level 4 Lockdown living as a 3-generation family in central Auckland. That experience in itself has provided lasting memories! New Zealand has benefitted from being an island

nation where there has been greater capacity to regain control of its borders. Then, detailed social profiling of COVID-19 confirmed cases and working through social connections with 16 identified clusters has given New Zealand a good chance of moving its economy back into full swing.

On the supply side, New Zealand continues to sell Kiwi fruit to Asia, along with other fruit, dairy products and meat.

It is interesting to note how the COVID-19 pandemic is now compared with history's last



**A pandemic like none other experienced in more than a century**

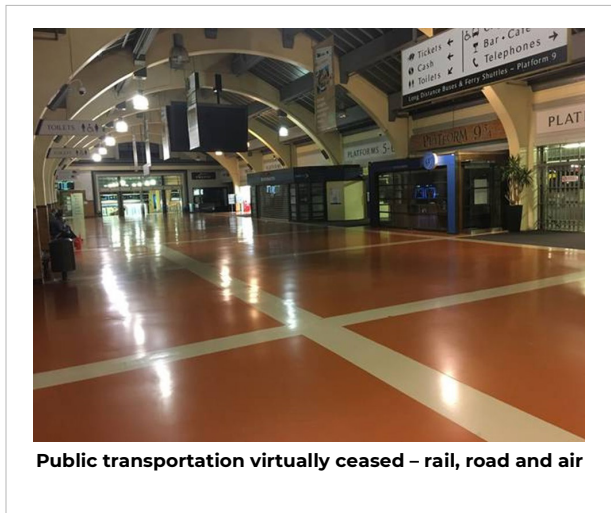


**Motorways and Freeways in the Developed World were emptied**

world health comparison, the Spanish Flu epidemic that killed millions in 1918-19. Maori and Pacific Island peoples were nearly wiped out as ships sailing back from World War I efforts in Europe spread the influenza virus at every port at which they stopped, in places without natural immunity to survive.

The COVID-19 virus was brought to New Zealand through international travel and upon arrival, it spread easily within intensive living environments – including high-density housing of older adults, residential homes for elderly and disabled adults, and not to forget the ocean cruise liners seeking ports to offload active and prospective COVID-19 cases? With national borders between New Zealand and other nations now closed or only marginally open, already we see a prolonged period during which national and international travel – once considered a matter of course – will be curtailed.

The volume of unused petroleum products in the World now exceeds all expectations. With closed borders, New Zealand anticipates an increase in local tourism. That is essential for an island country that locates international tourism as one of its most profitable exports.



Pause to reflect on what might be happening at about this time in a pre-COVID-19 environment. Many of us would be making final arrangements for our trip to Newfoundland and the Canadian Child and Youth Care

Workers Conference. So sorry that the pandemic robbed us of those opportunities.

Still, we are happy to sing out for the *Making Moments Meaningful* celebrations during International Child and Youth Care Workers Week; first week of May! Hat's off to new CYC-Net Board Member, Jessica Hadley and others for their terrific efforts to make this week an epic one!

Meanwhile, I keep thinking back to what is happening to neighbourhood pubs, bistros, eateries and



**Without motorcars and air travel, the price of petroleum plummeted**



**Small town New Zealand and owner-operated eateries, pubs, hotels, and motels suffered**



local clubs in the sport, recreation and leisure business after COVID-19 lockdown. One of New Zealand's virus "clusters" was a St Patrick's Day drink-up at an Irish Pub in rural heartland New Zealand, while another was traced to a Post-Wedding Dinner at a Southland restaurant.



**Re-engaging local communities - 'buying local' and doing less international travel**

With travel having been a key variable in this COVID-19 pandemic, pause and think back to the last time we transferred flights at a busy international airport, or regional hub in North America or Europe. Think, too, of how national and international sports have ceased, and even moved to the virtual world. It will take awhile for families to readapt to life after 5 weeks of lockdown! Home schooling, family breakout time and altered social patterns



**Family life and tensions, making moments meaningful and times for reflection**

are all new ways of being for children and young people. As a grandparent in intensive lockdown with family, I know how family life patterns have changed!

*Repeated handwashing was once viewed as a symptom of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder but how things have changed!*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon". The signature is stylized, with a large, looped 'S' and a simple, rounded 'i'.

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**May 2020**  
ISSN 1605-7406

# Information

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CYC-Online (ISSN 1605-7406) is an open-access e-journal published monthly by [The CYC-Net Press](#)

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*CYC-Online* is a monthly journal which reflects the activities of the field of Child and Youth Care. We welcome articles, pieces, poetry, case examples and general reflections from everyone.

In general:

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

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

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**May 2020**  
ISSN 1605-7406



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