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Unflinching, We Press On!

Zeni Thumbadoo

Last month South Africa voted in national elections. Some children's voices were captured on a video clip sending the following message to South African voters: "We are told that every vote counts but we have a question. Does every child count? Are there any leaders out there with plans for our safety? If we can't vote, is anyone voting with our protection in mind, our wellbeing? Sadly, we don't think so. If we could vote, we would vote for police to be present and a trustworthy justice system that doesn't fail us. Leaders who truly value our protection. We deserve to feel safe; we deserve to be safe. Elections take place on the first day of child protection week, we want to hear from party leaders, what will you do to make this country safer for us? To everyone else, we don't get to vote. This election day, would you vote with us in mind? Your vote could keep us safe. Does your leader care about our children, share this message with them and ask the question before you give them your vote". (More than one third of South Africans are not allowed to vote - a message from the ReStory Foundation, 2024).

The voting adults in South Africa gave none of the political parties who contested these elections an outright majority. South Africa now has a



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tenuous Government of National Unity (GNU) that will lead us. However, focus of the GNU is unlikely to be on the protection of children and promotion of their rights. Children were not a key focus in the manifestos of the different political parties. Members of the NACCW Youth Forum analyzed the party manifestos to assess whether children did indeed count. These are children and youth we provide child and youth care services for in residential care facilities, schools, families and communities. The sad fact was that they saw no direct reference to child protection and children's rights in the manifestos. Job creation for youth was always present. Some mentioned families, others mentioned education and health. But, it was our late President Nelson Mandela who signed the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1994. He was committed to the protection of our children and the implementation of Section 26 of the South African constitution, focusing on the rights of children. It was Mandela who said that the "quality of a nation is reflected in how it cares for its children."

Our children have called for basic rights like safety and protection to be front and centre for our new government. Rightly so, as the statistics show that:

- more than half the children in South Africa continue to live below the poverty line;
- one third of girls experience some form of violence before the age of 18; and
- two-thirds of children eligible for early childhood development (ECD) programmes do not have access to them. (UNICEF: 2024)

In addition, the psycho-social challenges facing the children that child and youth care workers serve include abuse, bullying, substance abuse, underage drinking, unsafe environments, gang activity, violence in homes,



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suicide, teenage pregnancy and young motherhood, learning difficulties, hunger and stunted growth.

There is a relationship between children being at risk in South Africa and validation of the role of child and youth care workers. If our child and youth care workers are unrecognized and unappreciated, children's services too are undervalued. Almost four decades after the start of a prolonged but successful effort by the NACCW to establish a national statutory regulatory structure for child and youth care workers (the Professional Board for Child Care Workers [PBCYCW] was established in 2005) the status of South African child and youth care workers remains concerning. These challenges were articulated in a presentation by the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work in International Child and Youth Care Worker's week 2024 as follows:



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- The need for political will to pressurise government to deliver to the sector. Unfortunately, the interest of the Department of Social Development in the professional development of child and youth workers is limited.
- The issue of there being limited opportunities for career progression for child and youth care workers.
- Very few child and youth care workers are deployed in the upper levels of the Department of Social Development at national and provincial levels.
- The provincial Departments of Social Development do not understand and appreciate the role of child and youth care workers and deploy them effectively.
- Only one university offers a child and youth care work degree and funding for bursaries remain an impediment to those who wish to study.
- Child and youth care workers employed in NGOs are not actively included and involved in the social sector service delivery vehicles.
- Poor salaries and delayed stipend payments to child and youth care workers undermines the development and dignity of the profession (South African Council for Social Service Professions: 2024).

The South African Child and Youth Care sector will, post elections, start on a new journey with a GNU, to advocate for fuller recognition of the profession of CYCW. And in a parallel process we will continue to advocate for the safety and protection of children. Our work is multifaceted – struggling for our own recognition and for the protection and rights of the children we service in a complex reality, now including a fragile political environment.



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We are strengthened in our efforts by perspectives on relational child and youth care practice that are grounded in our reality. Hans Skott-Myhre (*CYC-Online*, 2024), makes a powerful point on relational care noting that a deeper understanding is necessary ... “understanding the historic context in which the care is taking place, understanding the politics of a given historic period, and lastly understanding the kind of social subjects being produced by the social forces of the society in which the care is taking place”. He further notes that “of course one can certainly do the work without this kind of in-depth analysis, but I would argue that such work would lack the transformative power necessary, if our field is going to contribute to shaping a generation that can care enough about all our relations to avoid the ongoing brutality and suicidal impulses of our current system of human society”. He makes the important point that “to imagine that we can ignore this historic context in developing practices of relational care is a kind of wilful blindness”.

Kiaras Gharabaghi also refers to the concept of “contextualization of much broader and much deeper issues and dynamics that are societal in nature but experienced in very intimate and personal ways, and usually in ways that are difficult and rightly solicit resistance.” He further notes the need to challenge institutions and systems to avoid the “temptation to pretend that we can make meaning relationally with young people through our direct one-on-one interactions when we ignore the much broader and deeply embedded structures and systems that shape and sometimes define the way we are together.” (*CYC-Online*, 2024).

The South African Child and Youth Care profession is grounded in a deep awareness of past injustices and the current factors that preserve a status quo which is not yet in the best interests of children or child and youth care workers. The profession thus girds itself to begin a new era of advocacy with our new government, our new GNU. We will look out for



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openings in politician's agendas and participate in consultations on policy and legislation affecting children and our important profession. We will object and protest where necessary, and spot opportunities to activate political and governmental champions for child and youth care work and for our country's children.

Unflinching, we press on!

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DR ZENI THUMBADOO is deputy director of the NACCW, South Africa and a member of the CYC-Net Board of Governors.

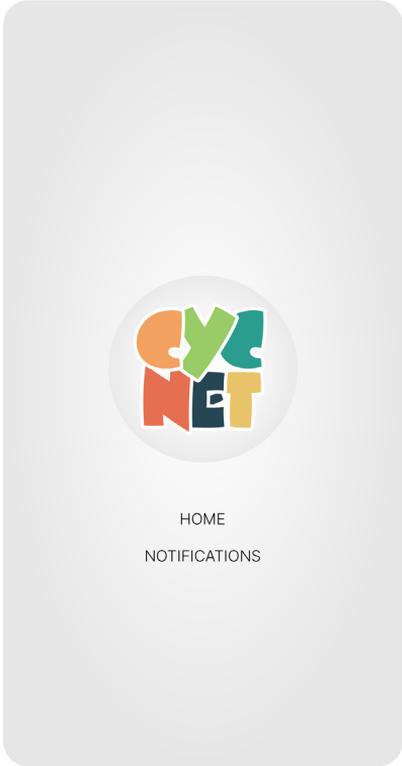
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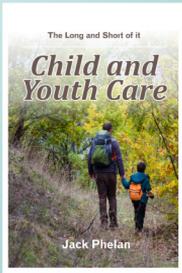
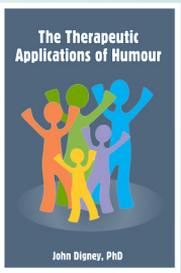
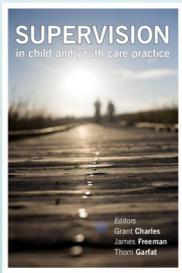
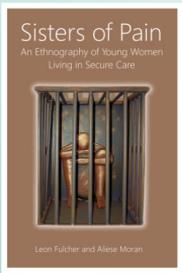
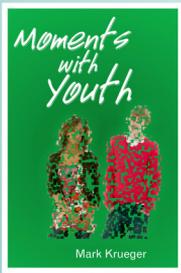
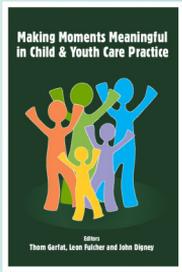
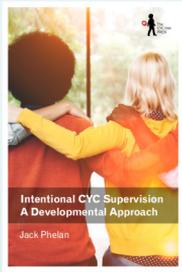
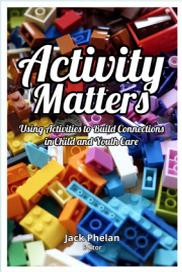
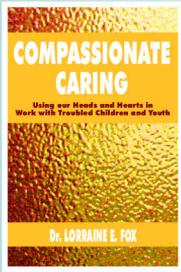
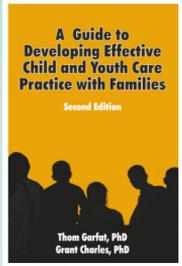
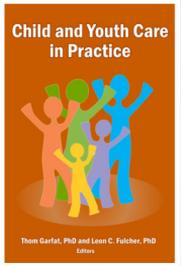
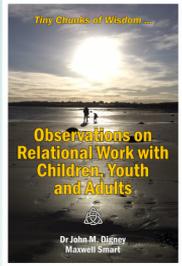
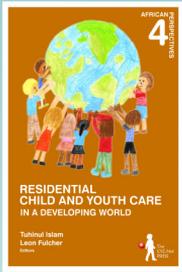
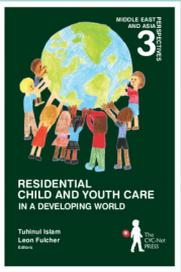
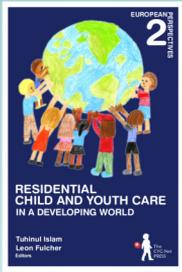
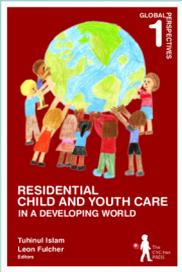
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The Importance of Personal Safety for New Youth Care Employees

Caroline Moore

Introduction

Youth Care Workers (YCWs) working within child caring environments often work with youth who have experienced complex trauma. YCWs working with these youth are tasked with creating emotional connections in a therapeutic manner to facilitate change within the youth's life. Each interaction with youth should be focused on the needs of the youth, not the needs of the YCW (Garfat, 1998). It goes without saying, YCWs come into this line of work with the intent to work with a purpose to be helpers. However, within the first year of practice, the YCW's interactions will sometimes focus on creating a safe space for self, instead of focusing on the youth (Phelan, 2015). This focus on safety for self is not only limited to the first year of a YCW's development, as youth care supervisors also go through similar development (Phelan, 2016). The supervisor may also have their actions guided by their need to maintain safety for self. Without the ability to maintain their own safety, the YCW and youth care supervisor are more at risk to rely on others to create the safe space for them.



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This research focuses on exploring if interactions within the first year of development are guided by a need to ensure safety for oneself, or if the interactions are focused on the YCWs or youth care supervisor's role. With a better understanding of personal safety, the hope for this research was that it would promote learning, to enhance the YCW's and youth care supervisor's first year of development.

Literature Review

Self-awareness in Youth Care

Self awareness, through self reflection, is arguably one of the most important aspects of youth care. If we are not able to recognize our own needs, we will project those needs onto the youth in our interactions with them (Fewster, 2013). Without a level of self awareness, the focus will be on the behavior without looking at the underlying cause. An intervention should be an intentional act to facilitate change, as without the intention the act is just another behavior (Garfat, 1998). Each YCW comes into their new role with individual perspectives based on their past experiences and may not be able to experience the present moment due to their perspectives being tied to the past (Phelan, 2015). Due to different past experiences, each YCW makes meaning of each situation differently (Garfat, 2003). The way a YCW makes meaning of a situation may contribute to how they respond, thus the focus of the intervention may be based more on self rather than on the needs of the youth.

Youth Care Worker Stages of Development

Phelan (2015) proposes three levels a YCW experiences in their development, with the first level focusing on developing safety and trust.



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He goes on to say that until safety and trust is fully developed, the YCW cannot focus on facilitating change in others, as their own self interest comes first. When considering the same issue Garfat (2001) argues, a YCW's development advances within the context of their relationship with the youth and identifies four stages in a YCW's development: doing for, doing to, doing with and doing together. The author identifies the first stage of development as one where the YCW feels unsure and overwhelmed by the new experience and relies on external structure to guide their actions as they do not yet trust their own internal processes. What both of these models identify is the YCW focusing on their own needs during their first year of development.

According to Modlin (2013), Robert Kegan's Constructive Developmental Theory helps to explain why YCWs move through developmental stages of youth care at different rates. Kegan identified, as people grow and acquire more life experience, they move through a process of transformation in their ability to make meaning. Modlin also states most adults live mainly in, what Kegan has identified as the socialized stage in which individuals may have a solid belief system. However, they are unable to separate self from another and therefore may assume ownership of the actions and emotions of others. In a child care home setting, this means YCWs may interpret the actions of the youth as a measure of their own success or failure as a YCW. The YCW in the socialized stage may remain in Garfat's (2001) 'doing for' stage longer as they do not want the youth to fail, since they will view this as a reflection of their own failure as a YCW.

Supervisor Stages of Development

When YCWs are promoted into a supervisory role the levels of development begin again (Phelan, 2016). A supervisor's level of



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development can also be categorized in Kegan's model of adult development. A supervisor in the socialized stage measures their own success based on the success of YCWs they supervise. A supervisor who has moved through the socialized stage into the self authored stage can examine the situation as a whole and evaluate other's actions, without linking them to their own measure of success (Helsing & Howell, 2014). The supervisor can help the YCW in their own self reflection, as the supervisor understands the separation between themselves and the YCW. This process helps YCWs enhance their relationships with youth as the link between the relationship created in supervision and the relationship created in youth care is a parallel process (Delano & Shah, 2009).

The Role of Supervision for the New Youth Care Worker

Garfat (2007) identifies that the role of the supervisor is to evaluate each situation and interaction to determine if the supervisee requires support, education, or training to enhance their development, and therefore enhance the quality of service offered to the youth. Although both parties are responsible to engage in the supervision relationship, there is a responsibility on the part of the supervisor to create the conditions of safety to enable the supervisee to engage in a self reflection process (Delano & Shah, 2009). The supervisor must be aware of a YCWs stage of development in order to 'meet them where they're at', just as a YCW needs to be aware of the youth's capacity in order to 'meet them where they're at' (Fulcher & Garfat 2012). For YCWs at the beginning stages of their development, the supervisor needs to focus on issues of personal safety and build up trust in the relationship (Phelan, 2015). Once the trust is established, the supervisor can help contain feelings of anxiety in YCWs, which could possibly inhibit them from creating therapeutic relationships



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with the youth (Steckley, 2010). With good emotional containment, YCWs will be better able to make themselves available to youth emotionally to offer support (Steckley, 2011).

Research Methodology

Qualitative research is focused on the meaning people attach to things, as well as understanding how people view situations (Taylor, Bogdan, DeVault, 2015). I chose a qualitative method of collecting data from both youth care workers and youth care supervisors within my organization, which is comprised of five long term community-based group homes and one emergency stabilization centre, all for youth between the ages of 12-18. This was done with a mixed methods approach by asking for participation in both online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. I also chose random sampling, as it attempts to diminish researcher bias by not limiting the data to a specific group (Shenton, 2004). Although random sampling helps to eliminate researcher bias, a disadvantage is little to no control over who chose to participate (Shenton, 2004). This was considered in data analysis. I chose to use a thematic analysis of the data. Thematic analysis requires the researcher to remain in touch with the raw data throughout the process, which helps to analyse the data in different ways and make links between the data and interpretations (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

Findings, Analysis and Discussion

The findings from this research were organized into the following three categories to best represent the experiences of participants during their first year:

- The most important part of their role during the first year;



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- The biggest concern during the first year;
- What is needed in order to be effective during the first year.

Through a combination of surveys and interviews, data was collected from 29 participants who were mainly youth care workers within my organization. These participants were both YCWs and youth care supervisors, speaking about their first year of employment in their role. Themes that were identified within each category tended to be consistent with what was presented in the literature review.

Most Important Part of their Role During the First Year

In this category two primary themes emerged. The first was personal safety, and the second was relationships with youth and co-workers. Many participants identified relationship as the foundation of their role and identified these relationships, with both youth and co-workers, as having a direct effect on the level of safety for them. Some spoke about the development of relationship contributing to an increase in physical safety, while others felt they needed to obtain personal safety first, in order to develop relationships. These two opposing views generate the question: is safety obtained through relationship, or is safety needed first in order to obtain authentic relationship? Many participants spoke of the link between the increases in familiarity of the role, which came with experience, to the decrease in their own anxieties. This may mean youth care employees are unable to focus on relationships within the first year, as they must first attend to their anxieties. I was interested in exploring this further as an argument may be that despite wanting to focus on what's most important, new youth care employees find themselves, instead, focusing on the difficulties that cause concern during the first year.



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Biggest Concern During the First Year

The primary theme that emerged in this section is that most participants identified their concern of how they, or their actions, were being perceived by others during their first year. By worrying about what others think during the first year, new YCWs or youth care supervisors may be acting to serve their own needs instead of the needs of the youth. This can be linked to ideas expressed by Fewster (2013) who states that an awareness of self is important in youth care, in order to be able to identify and manage our own needs. Without being intentional, the YCW may be putting their own values ahead of the youth's needs. This was illustrated by participants who responded that they felt once they knew they were accepted by their peers, they were more willing to introduce new concepts into their practice.

Fewster (2013) argues, we will respond to another based on the truth of our own experiences. Phelan (2015) argues the YCW may not be able to fully experience the present moment, due to their perspectives being tied to the past. Evidence such as this suggests that as the more experienced YCW creates relationships with both the youth and their colleagues, they gather more positive experiences in how their actions are perceived by others. This was identified by responses from participants who said the easiest part of their role was the part they were most familiar with or had the most experience with. Since the new YCW does not yet have these positive experiences within the organization, they are forced to draw from their own personal experiences. Modlin (2013) identifies that adults in the socialized stage will measure their own level of success based on others reactions. Many participants talked about not wanting to speak up during their first year as their main concern was being liked by their co-workers. They identified once they 'got over' a need to be liked, they were able to focus on creating relationships with youth. The new YCW will not be able to focus on



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facilitating change with the youth through relationship until they are no longer making decisions based on their own needs. Participants identified they were not able to fast track the ability to feel safe in their role as they needed to experience it in order to diminish anxiety. Garfat (2001) argues a YCW develops through the context of their relationships with others, therefore development often can't advance by learning alone. Participants were able to identify that this change comes about through a focus on self. One talked about getting a mentor in order to feel safe in their vulnerability with someone else. Another talked about actively working to diminish their own anxieties and insecurities.

What is Needed to be Effective in the First Year

In this section there was a strong theme of participants identifying their need for support for their own emotional vulnerabilities, and many used the words support and supervision interchangeably. Participants identified the benefits of having regular supervisions to address anything they find challenging, as well as to offer feedback on how well they're doing. Some identified just having the structure of supervision helped to reduce anxiety, as they knew if they had an issue they would have someone to talk it through with. As the theme of emotional vulnerability emerged throughout this research, it identified a need for the supervisor to first create conditions of safety with the YCW before being able to help enhance the YCW's development. Participants also seemed to recognize the benefit of having a supervisor help them frame thoughts differently. In order to do this, there must first be trust established in the supervisory relationship. Participants identified this as they spoke about the difficulties in talking about themselves as they didn't want to identify any faults. Phelan (2015) argues that YCWs who are in the first stage of development will need a focus on



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structure and trust in relationship in order to help diminish their emotional vulnerabilities to a point they can move forward in their professional development.

In order for supervision to be effective, the supervisor themselves must first go through their own stages of development to ensure their own emotional vulnerabilities are not projected onto their staff. Phelan (2016) argues level one supervisors strive to create personal safety, as they are also faced with their own anxieties in their new role. Participants in a supervisory role identified fear of new and/or difficult situations and also identified the need for support from others in order to help reframe situations and diminish anxiety.

Conclusions

The aim of this research was to explore the experience of YCWs and youth care supervisors within my organization during the first year in their development. In particular, the research focused on the importance of personal safety during the first year in a new role. Due to the small scale of the research, one must be cautious in generalizing the experience, and the needs of all youth care employees. However, this research may be used in supervision to help understand the possible concerns of new youth care employees that may hinder professional development.

The Importance of Personal Safety During the First Year

Within this research, participants identified relationships as one of the most important aspects of their role during the first year. It stands to reason then, the focus during the first year will be on creating genuine, authentic relationships with both youth and co-workers. However, this research appeared to identify participants focused more on maintaining their own



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emotional safety, than on being authentic in relationship. Participants identified a concern of how others would perceive their actions and decisions. This concern may result in the new youth care employee acting in a way, or making decisions, based on their own need of maintaining their own emotional safety, instead of meeting the needs of the youth.

Fewster (2013) argues the importance of self reflection to understand your own needs, so as not to project those needs onto others. The participants who were reflecting on their first year, were able to identify their actions during that time as being focused on self. They spoke about their need to be liked by the youth during the first year and recognized that need was diminished now that they were further along in their professional development.

Delano and Shah (2009) argue the supervisor is tasked with creating safe relationships with employees in order to promote self reflection. There may be a level of emotional vulnerability in the supervisory relationship as youth care employees may not yet be able to create their own emotional safety. This was identified by the participant who spoke about their perception of self-reflection, in supervision, as exposing their faults. The aim of the supervisor, then, may be to not only create the conditions of safety to allow for self-reflection, but to also promote the YCW's and youth care supervisor's ability to create their own emotional safety. Once the YCW and youth care supervisor are able to create their own safety they may no longer rely on others for this.

Phelan (2016) argues that, when a YCW is promoted to a supervisory role, the stages of development begin all over again. This appeared evident when participants spoke about their role during the first year as a supervisor. The same theme of emotional safety emerged as the biggest concern for participants in this role also. Helsing & Howell (2014) argue that it is not until a supervisor is operating from a self-authored stage that they



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can understand where self ends and the other begins. This research may indicate the importance of the supervisor also receiving support in their own supervision in order to enhance their own development. If the supervisor does not develop to the self-authored stage, they may continue to take ownership of others behavior and measure their own success based on the success of others. From this socialized stage, the supervisor may not be effective in enhancing the YCWs development. This may illustrate the importance of the supervisor working from a self-authored stage, in order to be effective in their role.

Although this research appeared to identify emotional safety as the focus for the new YCW and youth care supervisor within my organization, there may also be other anxieties within the first year. Once the supervisor understands these anxieties, they are better equipped to help support that employee in their professional development. As the YCW and youth care supervisor advance in their development, they will become more effective in their roles.



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CAROLINE MOORE has been working at HomeBridge Youth Society in Nova Scotia, Canada since 2001. She has worked as a CYC worker in settings that supported emergency placement needs of youth and stabilization services and in 2009, became a CYC Supervisor. Caroline helped plan and implement HomeBridge's New Employee Training program which supports new CYC workers in their initial stage of development. Caroline completed her MSc. in Child and Youth Care Studies at Strathclyde University, graduating in 2017. Caroline's interests lie in CYC worker and CYC leadership development. She is currently the Director of Youth Care Services at HomeBridge.

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Emotion Regulation and Sleep in Adolescents

Cranky in the morning? Sufficient sleep is necessary for control of emotions

Joseph A. Buckhalt

Every time I talk about how sleep is important for child and adolescent development, any audience can relate to how they feel and function when their sleep is of insufficient duration and quality. A common experience for all of us is to feel “out of sorts” after too little sleep or a bad night’s sleep. We are often more irritable than usual, and researchers infer that such behavior is due to emotional dysregulation.

Adolescence is a time of rapid changes in body, emotions, and behavior, and sleep researchers have demonstrated empirically that poor sleep can amplify negative emotions and affect their control. The implications extend to family relations, adjustment and performance at school, and, all too often, mental health problems.

Understanding what underlies the relationship between sleep and emotion regulation has been a scientific goal for decades, and advances in technology have accelerated research. One of my favorite studies is one reported in 2007 in *Current Biology*, “The Human Emotional Brain Without Sleep—A Prefrontal Amygdala Disconnect” (Yoo et al., 2007).



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In that experimental study, adults were sleep-deprived and then underwent fMRI scans. They concluded that when people were sleep deprived, the parts of their brains associated with emotions—the limbic system and, specifically, the amygdala—had an amplified response.

Moreover, there were fewer signs of connectivity between the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex, which is often engaged to regulate intense emotions. Typically, an aroused limbic system is calmed down both during waking hours and during sleep. But when the subjects were sleep-deprived, their emotions were poorly controlled.

While fewer studies have been done with children, those that have been done show similar results. In a 2016 study done at Emory University, researchers found that children whose sleep was shorter showed weaker connectivity between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex. A 2018 review in *Sleep Medicine Reviews* summarizes this line of research with children and adolescents. Another review published in 2020 looked at how sleep affects brain processes that can be the precursors of later anxiety and depression in adolescents.



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We now are beginning to understand some of the physiological mechanisms that underlie the link between poor sleep and adolescents' emotions. Emotion dysregulation is challenging for adolescents, for their parents and teachers, and for their social relations with peers. The take-home message, though, is the same one that we sleep researchers have known for a long time: Sleep of sufficient duration, quality, and regularity is critical for many aspects of adolescents' daily lives.

Key Points

- Emotion regulation is often challenging for adolescents.
- Poor sleep can impair people's ability to control their emotions.
- Physiological mechanisms underlying sleep and emotional control have been discovered.

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JOSEPH A. BUCKHALT, Ph.D., is Wayne T. Smith Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Auburn University. He and his colleague Mona El-Sheikh, Ph.D. conduct research on sleep, health, and development in children and adolescents.

From: www.psychologytoday.com - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/child-sleep-from-zzzs-to-as/202406/emotion-regulation-and-sleep-in-adolescents>

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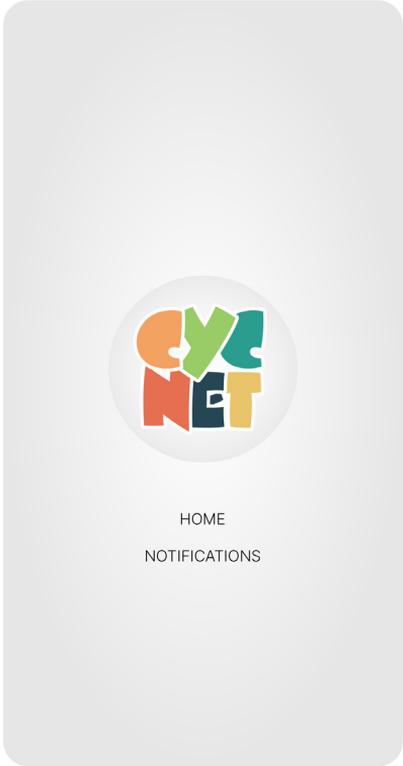
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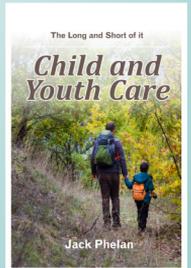
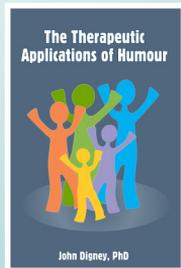
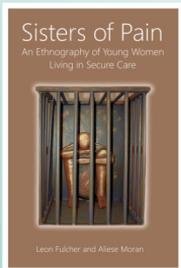
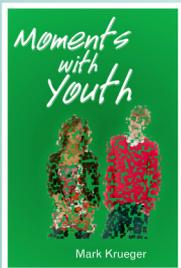
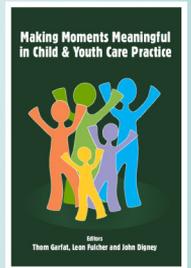
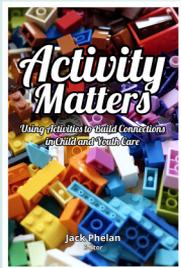
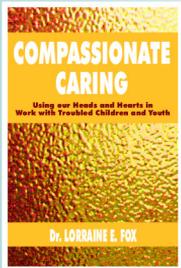
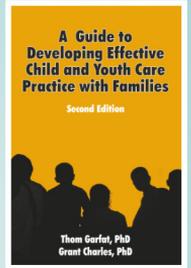
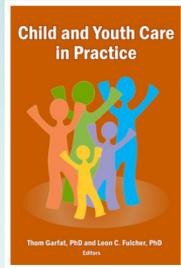
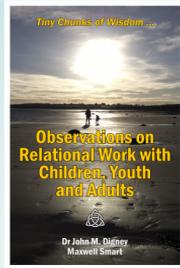
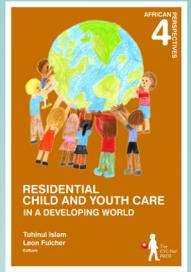
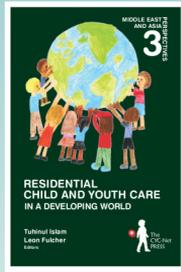
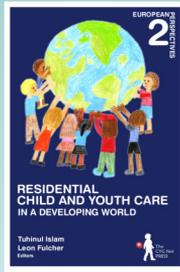
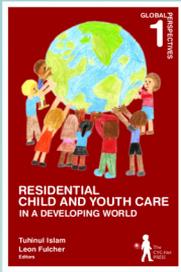
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Child Welfare Adventures in Australia

Kiaras Gharabaghi

I had the privilege of spending the entire month of June this year in Australia, participating in a range of activities related to child welfare. I brought along my wife and my daughter and together we embarked an adventure in Australia's child welfare system. We were accompanied by several colleagues from the Association of Children's Residential and Community Services (ACRC), based in the USA. Our stay here started with the Association of Child Welfare Agencies (ACWA) conference that pre-COVID took place bi-annually and was just relaunched this year in Sydney. I had been invited as one of several keynote speakers and the conference was well attended with over 800 registrants, most from the eastern coastline of Australia, but also some international participants. It was a wonderful conference, well organized and with a wide range of topics and themes covered by a series of excellent workshops and presentations. I noted that the conference started with a talk on the Aboriginal history of the country and some of the current tensions and issues within that context. All workshops and presentations thereafter started with a well-rehearsed 'welcome to country' opening, whereby speakers identify the 'traditional inhabitants' of the specific land where the conference took place and thank the ancestors, elders present, and elders of the future. I also noted that outside of the sessions and the one keynote that was specifically led by



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Aboriginal participants, there was minimal reference to any issues or themes related to Aboriginal peoples.

After the conference, we spent about ten days in Newcastle, where we facilitated and participated in a mini conference put on by a large service provider in the country for its staff and leaders. We also had a chance to tour some sights, ranging from residential care homes to education-related programs, all of which were quite impressive. I have to say that the host organization was incredible, fully transparent on their challenges, and eager to improve across all areas of activity. The level of commitment to child and youth centered service provision was apparent everywhere, as was a deep commitment to valuing staff at all levels of the organization. It was a very positive and hopeful experience to see a very large agency with about 1000 employees and an operating budget of over \$100 million demonstrate a grassroots approach to ensuring quality care was real not only in rhetoric but also in action.

From there, most of my group went home, but my wife daughter and I went further north and had an opportunity to come together and have conversations with a smaller agency (that had recently been integrated into the larger agency mentioned above) operating in a mostly rural and small town area of the country. Again, I was deeply impressed with the stories I heard, all of which pointed to a relational approach to practice that aims to be with young people as they journey through out of home care. This smaller agency, similar to its larger parent agency, is committed to the concept of family, and aims to help families to reunify where possible or at the very least maintain strong relationships no matter what the circumstances.

On a brief stopover in Brisbane, I had the absolute pleasure of meeting up for dinner with Howard Bath and his wife Jenny. Howard, for those who may not know, has been a leader in many international conversations about

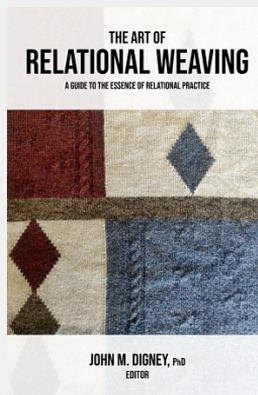


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trauma-informed practices. He also served as Children's Commissioner in the Northern Territories of Australia, and he is connected to Circle of Courage work in relationship with the likes of Martin Brokenleg and Larry Brendtro, as well as the work coming out of Cornell University, including TCI and the CARE model of practice. Howard is a class act whose work I have admired for many years, and it turns out that Jenny has been a major contributor to reconciliation work with Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territories as well as in the broader context of working with people impacted by disability. It was enormously meaningful to me to be able to spend an evening together.

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Finally, I moved from Brisbane to Melbourne, where I once again worked with a branch agency of the larger agency in Newcastle and again was deeply impressed by a work culture that centers young people and their families. In short, it was a wonderful experience working my way along the eastern shores of Australia and encountering child welfare systems and moments in action. It goes without saying that travelling along the shores of Australia, work aside, is an incredible experience. Few countries can match the beauty that is evident both at the ocean fronts and in the huge cities.

Nevertheless, I would not be true to my nature if I did not make some observations of a more troubling kind, none of which are to be associated directly with the people or agencies I encountered along the way. So here it goes ...

First, like all neocolonial states, Australia struggles to deal with its abhorrent history of genocide and brutality against Aboriginal peoples, and just as it is in places like Canada where I live, this struggle is especially prevalent in carceral systems such as child welfare. Although Aboriginal people in Australia make up only about 3% of the population, they make up over 40% of young people in care, and the number of Aboriginal young people in care is increasing more rapidly than any other group in the country. There is talk about reconciliation in Australia, but I heard very little truth in that context, and for me at least, reconciliation without truth is not really a thing. I am no expert on the Australian context, but as a visitor I found virtually everything I encountered in the context of Settler-Aboriginal relations to be highly performative and mostly centered on narrative. To be fair, most of the manifestations of these relations I encountered were in urban contexts, where Aboriginal leadership and ownership of service systems and of policy approaches is limited. Things might be different in rural areas and especially in areas of the country where Aboriginal people



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have strong roots and much greater confidence in their rightful ownership of the land and social context associated with that land. Still, attending a child welfare conference that is, to the best of my knowledge, the largest of its kind in Australia, and noting that it literally featured no engagement at all with what everyone agreed to constitute a major concern (the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and youth) struck me as disorienting. I did hear about policies emerging in some states, notably in New South Wales, that are meant to address some of the control issues embedded in this settler-dominated system of child welfare, but from what I heard, the policies too are largely performative and likely will cause a great deal of harm to Aboriginal communities as they aim to transfer care responsibilities for Aboriginal young people to Aboriginal-owned agencies without ensuring that the resources are in place for that care to unfold in line with Aboriginal practices and cultures. This approach has failed miserably in Canada, and Australian policymakers would be well advised to seek feedback from Indigenous leaders and community members (and youth in care) in Canada who bore witness to the implementation of similar policies there.



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A second observation is related to youth voice and participation, which was scarcely evident across most of my encounters. Certainly, at the child welfare conference it was at best an afterthought, featuring one single young person who was given a few minutes in the last plenary session to say something. Thankfully that young person disregarded the instructions and spoke for a good 20 minutes, blowing the crowd away with her passion and wise words. Still, I was somewhat disturbed by the limited efforts to ensure that a conference of this nature is at least partially informed by the lived experiences of young people.

I was pleased to see the efforts made by the agency hosting us in Newcastle to ensure young people's lived experiences were part of the learning and conversations. I met two brothers who had grown up in out of home care, mostly with that agency, who were simply phenomenal and inspiring in speaking to both the challenges and the opportunities that emerged from their experiences. Nevertheless, the main youth voice that was apparent throughout my time in Australia was that of a young person (now young adult) from the US who was part of my group and who successfully and very effectively inserted herself into just about every conversation, including an important conversation with the child welfare regulators in New South Wales. She served as a demonstration of how our work improves when we take care of ensuring varied forms of knowledge and expertise are represented. My only concern is that one voice representing lived experience cannot possibly represent the enormous diversity of such experiences, not to mention identities, encompassing young people in out of home care. Much more effort is required to ensure this part of child welfare evolution in Australia is strengthened.

Third, Australia is experiencing something that many countries in the global north are experiencing – a rapid increase in the delivery of child welfare services by private, for-profit organizations. This is deeply



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concerning to me, especially given that this privatization process is unfolding without any transparency and with limited public discussion. Like developments in Canada, the US, the UK, and elsewhere, many young people in out of home care are left without a meaningful placement, and as a result, are placed in hotels and other informal spaces where they are cared for by staff (often of questionable qualification) hired by for-profit businesses. A huge and increasing proportion of money designed to support young people and their families is being diverted to profit-seeking activity. Policymakers appear complacent toward this issue, in part because they are benefitting from the rapid and flexible ways in which private, for-profit operators can respond to delicate situations involving children and youth given that they are not subject to any of the (meaningful and important) constraints present in public and not for profit sectors. In the long term, however, this approach will destroy public and not for profit systems of care that have multiple accountabilities and that at the very least can be trusted to be trying to do the best thing possible for young people, even if that doesn't always work out. Privatizing care is a bad move. Everyone knows this. And still it is happening and supported by governments. There is advocacy and resistance work to be done here!

Finally, I want to share that despite some significant concerns about what I encountered here, I leave on an optimistic note. The country has benefited enormously from the wisdom, integrity, and commitment of people like Howard Bath, who continues to work hard even post-retirement to ensure conversations are going in the right directions. I met an incredible researcher from Monash University who is critical, wise, activist in a constructive sense, a strong ally to Aboriginal communities, women involved in carceral systems and especially prisons, and other marginalized communities and likely the future of driving excellence and ethical practice in places like Australia. She gave me hope and inspired me to continue



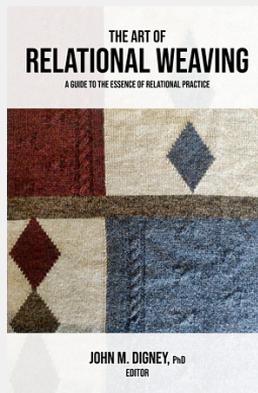
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learning. And the agency that hosted me is one that serves as an example that despite challenges and adversity in terms of funding and policy, good people can form communities that make a difference in people's lives. This organization exemplifies excellence through a culture of caring, generosity, and humility that is contagious.

DR KIARAS GHARABAGHI is Dean of the Faculty of Community Services at Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada and a regular contributor to *CYC-Online*. He can be reached at k.gharabaghi@torontomu.ca

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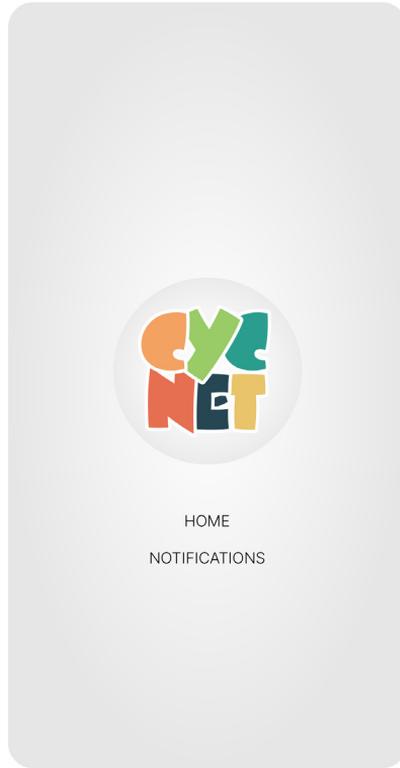


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The Learning and Development Approach for CYC Practitioners

Improving the quality of child and youth care through Family Strengthening and in Alternative Care Services

Elisabeth Ullmann-Gheri and Coenraad de Beer

SOS Children's Villages' core programme services, family strengthening (FS) and alternative care (AC), serve one main purpose, namely that every child and young person grows up with the bonds they need to become their strongest self.

These bonds are built on the supportive, reliable, and trustful relationships that parents and caregivers in alternative care offer children and young people in their care.

This sounds simple enough but those among us who are parents are under no illusion that it is not - even for those of us fortunate to live in countries with well-established social welfare systems. For parents living in



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unsafe and unstable societies, the challenges of providing a stable and nurturing home for their children become immense and grow exponentially.

That is why SOS Children’s Villages strives to support them in trying to overcome some of these challenges and develop the attitudes and skills required to provide quality care to their children.

In alternative care, where each child has, at a very minimum, suffered the trauma of being separated from their parents, caregivers are faced with the task of providing each child and young person with a new home (even if temporary) and a relationship that can grow over time and which supports the child in their healing, growth, and development. As a caregiver in Cameroon puts it: “My main learning is that I need to create a strong bond with each child in my care to ensure their development, their balance, and to boost their self-esteem.”

Therefore, strengthening the parenting competencies of parents through family strengthening services, as well as ensuring proper preparation and ongoing learning opportunities for caregivers in alternative care services are key elements in achieving our organizational purpose.

This is where relational child and youth care comes in. It provides parents, caregivers, and other CYC practitioners with the approach, methods, and tools crucial to creating a safe, caring, and nurturing environment for each child in a way that enables them to become their strongest self.

The term “strongest self” refers to the holistic development of the child or young person, including their physical and mental health, emotional and social competence, as well as education and employability. For children and young people to be able to become “their strongest selves”, they need to experience love, security, respect, and a sense of belonging.



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Relational child and youth care empowers children and young people, reduces their risks of harmful experiences, and the need for later interventions.

The L&D Approach and Framework for CYC Practitioners

CYC practitioners play an essential role in supporting such positive outcomes for children and young people who have lost their parental care or who are at risk of losing it. Their safe recruitment, decent working conditions, and continuous learning & development are therefore vital to achieving our mission.

We want them to be motivated and engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities to gain new and additional forms of skills, attitudes, and values, building on their own experience. When we appreciate each adult as an autonomous learner who wants to perform well and reach their full potential, L&D will be sustainable and will lead to positive outcomes for children and young people.

The organization's L&D approach and framework for CYC practitioners conveys relational child and youth care principles and methods to parents, caregivers, and other CYC practitioners, so they can strengthen their child and youth care competencies.

Most people want to thrive, develop, and build their skills in a meaningful way to improve their performance. When we experience direct positive effects of our learning in our job, we are motivated to take responsibility for our own development. If we feel acknowledged and appreciated as a unique individual, we will fill our professional roles with the richness of our human potential.



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The 4 Ds of Workplace Learning

In our workplace, we learn in four main ways - “The 4 Ds of Learning” (Jane Hart, Modern Workplace Learning, 20201):

- DIDACTICS - being taught or trained (formal learning) – 15%
- DOING - learning from the day job (experiential learning) – 30%
- DISCOVERY - finding things out for oneself (informal learning) – 35%
- DISCOURSE - interacting with people (social learning) – 20%

The maybe surprising part are the numbers: Only 15% of what we learn happens in traditional learning formats like classroom or virtual training or in online courses. Most learning happens through our own discovery, such as web searching and browsing, reading on- and offline, watching videos, films, TV, and listening to podcasts. We learn a lot by DOING things, such as daily work activities, and from feedback and guidance from other people like a supervisor or a coach. Finally, 20% of what we learn comes from interaction with our peers or in social networks.

In other words, individuals learn continuously in many ways, not just by being trained (didactics), but by finding things out for themselves (discovery) as well as by interacting with others (discourse), and by doing their job. For this reason, we are not recommending purely knowledge-based training but rather supporting CYC practitioners in these various

¹ Jane Hart: <https://www.modernworkplacelearning.com/cild/> ; <https://www.modernworkplacelearning.com/cild/mwl/5-features-of-ow-modern-professionals-learn/> ; <https://www.modernworkplacelearning.com/cild/mwl/how-much-people-learn-from-the-4-ds-of-learning/>



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ways of learning, so that they can continuously grow and develop their competencies in a self-reflective manner while doing their job.

Development of the L&D Approach and Framework

The L&D approach for CYC practitioners builds on the “human drive to learn” and takes the different above-mentioned learning forms and formats into account.

All regions that SOS Children’s Villages operates in participated in the development of this modernized L&D approach. A team of internal staff members in cooperation with external consultants - namely Jane Hart, L&D expert from the UK, Werner van der Westhuizen, RCYC and social work consultant from South Africa, and Maryvonne Lorenzen, coaching consultant from France - brought it together.

Based on inputs from the countries and from regional colleagues, a first draft was elaborated between 2020 and 2021.

In the 2nd half of 2021, amidst the Covid pandemic, eight member associations participated in a pilot process that tested the L&D approach and framework. The learnings were summarized in a pilot evaluation report and incorporated into the approach and materials.

Here a few quotes from caregivers who participated in the pilot training workshops:

- *“It was participatory and engaging. The learning process was amazing & enlightening.”*
- *“We learnt from each other’s experience. It gave us an insight that whatever one is going through in the family house is not peculiar to you alone.”*



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- *What are the 3 most useful insights for your specific role as an SOS parent you gained? “1. The role of caregivers in promoting gender equality. 2. Writing a personal life history book. 3. Introduction to a Learning Log”.*

From January 2022, the official rollouts in two African SOS regions started. Until today, staff members in 39 countries were trained in the approach and capacitated to implement it in their country.

Key Principles of the L&D Approach

The L&D approach and framework aims at providing guidance - for the practitioners and those who support them - on how they can develop and strengthen the required competencies to provide quality care. The focus is on performance outcomes in contrast to the traditional input paradigm. It is all about DOING and not solely about KNOWING.

The approach is underpinned by these 5 key principles:

1. **Competency-focused:** The L&D approach aims at strengthening the CYC practitioner in their role to provide quality care to children and young people by (further) developing the required competencies, so that they can unfold their potential and give their best.
2. **Ongoing:** The CYC practitioner never stops learning; they learn all the time, whether they realize it or not.
3. **Multi-modal:** The CYC practitioner learns in many ways, not just by attending training courses. We learn as we do our daily jobs, interact with people, and discover new things.



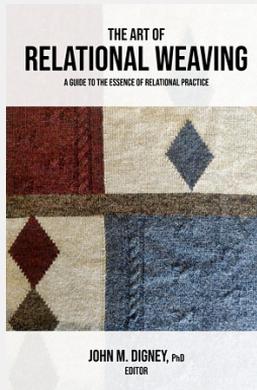
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4. **Learner-centric:** The CYC practitioner is in control of their own learning and development and cannot expect to be provided with everything they need to learn. They also need to take the initiative themselves to grow and develop.
5. **Highly reflective:** The CYC practitioner needs to take the time to think about what they have been doing, to ensure that they become aware of what they have learned and how they are improving, and what more they need to do to improve further.

The role of the organization is to provide as much support as the individual requires to thrive in this new learning environment.

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L&D Framework materials and tools

The L&D approach and framework consists of an umbrella-document, the L&D Framework for CYC Practitioners, three Competency Portfolios (for caregivers, youth development workers, family strengthening workers), workbooks for practitioners, a self- assessment tool, an elaborated 5-weeks Initial Training Workshop for Caregivers, and additional workshop outlines such as on Youth Development or Leaving Care. One on key competencies for family strengthening will be available by the end of 2024.

The Competency Portfolio for Caregivers, for example, describes 44 competencies, which are categorized in four main areas: self-development, child and youth development, family development, and cooperation with the organization.

To capacitate the main L&D support roles in a country, there are three training programmes available:

- (1) a “Train-the-Facilitator” programme for national and/or programme-based L&D facilitators;
- (2) an L&D support person and
- (3) a CYC mentor training programme. These last two are delivered by the L&D facilitators who have received an additional orientation on these training programmes.

In addition, “Rafiki” - an AI-powered Digital Care Assistant (DCA) available on mobile phone - provides CYC practitioners with instant access to information on child and youth care topics, based on the L&D competency portfolios.



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Localization and Contextualization

The L&D Framework provides an overall structure for the development of CYC practitioners. However, it may need to be contextualised and localised to ensure it is relevant:

- for local working conditions and legal requirements,
- for a wide range of educational levels,
- for local culture and practices,
- for language abilities, especially if English is not the working language.

Country and state regulations need to be adhered to, and the L&D Framework should be used to complement the required country training content and hours, based on a thorough reflection on the Competency Portfolios. In countries with no state regulations on CYC practitioner qualification requirements, the L&D framework can be used as an advocacy and capacity building tool to lobby for strengthening learning and development for CYC practitioners within the Social Welfare system.

Overall goal of the L&D Approach and Framework implementation

Caregivers and other child and youth care practitioners in Alternative Care and Family Strengthening Services play the essential role in achieving positive outcomes for children and young people. The focus of the initiated L&D initiatives is therefore to strengthen them in developing the required competencies to provide quality care and support to children, young people, and families.

The L&D approach and framework build a comprehensive approach to supporting the continuous personal and professional growth of caregivers



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and other CYC practitioners. By becoming autonomous and life-long learners, they can provide quality care and contribute to good outcomes for children.

If implemented properly, this approach will promote change in terms of real empowerment of caregivers and other CYC practitioners in our organization - and hopefully all CYC practitioners in the countries' social welfare systems - in the future. They will become the leaders and drivers of their own, unique profession.

This is the first article in our series. In future editions of *CYC-Online* we will take a deeper look at some elements of this "L&D approach and framework for CYC practitioners" and share some examples of the 25+ countries that are implementing it. The next article will focus on the main roles supporting the L&D for CYC Practitioners implementation process.

ELISABETH ULLMANN-GHERI: MA in Psychology; Quality Assurance in NPOs
Works for SOS Children's Villages since 1994 in various roles
CYC Practitioner Support Advisor in the International Office, Programme Department
Coordinating the L&D for CYC Practitioner Project

COENRAAD DE BEER: M.A. Development Support. Worked for SOS Children's Villages since 2002 establishing family strengthening and alternative care programmes in South Africa.
Head of Child and Youth Care Practitioner Support in the International Office, Programme Department, focusing on learning and development for CYC Practitioners.



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Gratitude: A Mantra for Thriving - A Young Care Leaver Story

Tuhinul Islam

About twenty years ago, I conducted research for my PhD involving 134 young care leavers from three types of child and youth care institutions: NGO-run homes catering to the most disadvantaged at-risk group, sex workers children, government-run homes supporting orphans, and faith-based community-run children's homes supporting all groups of children.

During my studies, I was directly involved with NGO-run children's homes and had access to government-run and faith-based community-run institutions. For my research, I analyzed the life stories of 33 care leavers.

After completing my PhD, I met with all of them to express my 'gratitude' for sharing their life experiences. Their stories helped me understand the system, policies and practices and influenced significant changes in the country's residential child and youth care policies. However, as my work increased, I struggled to maintain contact with all of them and lost touch with some.

Upon returning from the spiritual retreat, I received a Facebook request from a young man with a very familiar name. Before accepting his request, I



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decided to do some research. I discovered he was one of the 'brightest boys' in the children's home, where I used to be the director of programmes. Through him, it felt like I 'rediscovered the valuable connections' with all the young people I knew personally from that children's home.

Rouf, a young adult, currently works as a senior accountant in the parent organisation of the children's home where he grew up. He has specific responsibilities within the organisation's education and child development programme, which includes overseeing the children's home project budgets. The organisation supported Rouf's education, healthcare, and general upkeep. After completing his MA, he was offered a job. As the programme director, I knew Rouf as a 'talented but quiet' young man who faced serious health challenges.

Our children's home was for rescued boys and girls from brothels, but Rouf came from a different district where we had several projects. One of these was called "Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour," aiming to provide education and healthcare support to children who worked in the cigarette industry. We gradually withdrew them from work by consulting with their parents and the cigarette factory owners and implementing alternative income-generating sources.

During a visit to the project, my CEO learned that Rouf, a talented student, works in a cigarette factory due to his family's financial struggles. He also has a health problem that his family can't afford to treat. Our colleagues asked our CEO if our organisation could help with his treatment, as we have a health program and a hospital. My CEO didn't respond immediately. After returning, he shared the story with me and asked me to admit Rouf to the children's home. Initially, I was hesitant because the children we catered to came from a specific segment of society with a specific cultural background, values, and needs. After a long discussion, my CEO insisted that we bend the rules, and I agreed.



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Though I agreed with my CEO, I understand the problem wasn't completely solved. The children's home is just one of the 23 projects I was involved in. The children's home has different layers of management committees, which include the 23 project directors, mainly to minimise risk and ensure the safety and protection of these children. I had to convince the committee members, the principal of the children's home, and our donor, who partially supported the children's home projects. After numerous discussions, everyone finally agreed, and we could admit Rouf to the children's home.

Since the day Rouf was admitted, he experienced a problem. Both of his knees were severely swollen with bad bruising marks, causing him great pain. After a diagnosis, it was revealed that he had a rare form of 'haemophilia', which required monthly injections of a blood factor for the next few years. If lucky, this condition might be cured when he reaches adulthood. However, the treatment was not available in the city where the children's home was located but in the country's capital city, which was 150 miles away. Additionally, the treatment was very expensive. Additional funds had to be allocated for his treatment and different types of food and bedding, which disrupted the children's home daily operation. The staff requires constant attention and support to keep him functional. As a result, the children in the home began to feel that Rouf was receiving more privileges than them in terms of care and support.

The issue with the children gradually began to fade as Rouf was able to gain their trust through his love and affection. After his first final exam, we were all amazed to learn that he was the top student in his class. Over time, he became one of the most influential boys in the children's home due to his behaviour, knowledge, manners, and talents.

Rouf and I organised a Facebook call and spoke for around three hours, reminiscing about our experiences and time together. He shared most of his



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stories and talked about the young people I used to know during my time with them. First and foremost, he happily said he doesn't have his health problems anymore, and for that, he 'thanked me and the CEO' for going the extra mile for him and allowing him to be admitted to the children's home, which helped him survive and flourish. A big part of the conversation centred around his health and education, his support from the organisation, and the love and care from the staff and his fellow residents. He tearfully mentioned his principal and other teachers and how they had looked after him. He said 'I was lucky to have received this special care, love, and treatment for which I am here. If I had to work in the cigarette factory by this time, I may have died'. I asked why he was so humble and grateful to the organisation and those who looked after him. He replied, "I could not repay the debt you owe. I sincerely tried my best to use the resources you spent for me, and always remember that I would not do anything to disappoint you. So, my focus was on education and the activities I could do. If I am not grateful to you and Baro Sir (CEO), Allah will be very unhappy with the blessings I received." Rouf said gratitude is the main mantra of thriving. We also discussed the challenges the young people faced in care and after leaving care and probable solutions.

He shared the brief stories of almost 190 children in the children's home whom I knew personally. It was great to hear that many of them are doing well in their professional and family lives in different parts of the country, and some have even moved abroad for work. However, alongside the positive stories, there are some very upsetting ones. Some of the boys and girls we supported, who showed a lot of promise in their education and extracurricular activities like singing, dancing, and martial arts, didn't end up fulfilling their potential. Some of the brightest ones dropped out and couldn't progress due to getting involved with the wrong crowd—brothels



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and drug mafia. Two girls even tragically took their own lives after being betrayed by their partners after leaving the children's home.

During our conversation, Rouf repeatedly shared uplifting stories with me, including anecdotes about the staff and peers he grew up with. He mentioned that they talk about their children's home lives when they gather and compare it to young people who don't have the same opportunities. Sometimes, they focus on how the staff were able to help them think bigger.

Rouf asked me to host a gathering with the young adults I know from the children's home, and I agreed. Hopefully, it will be very soon, Insha' Allah.

The results of my PhD study indicated that young people greatly benefited from being in care and that the institution had a mostly positive impact on their lives. The findings also revealed a link between the experience of being in care and a young person's success in the outside world. The type of institution, its culture, systems and practices, the level of care provided, and socio-cultural-religious influences all contributed to this connection.

It's important to address the prevalent negativity surrounding residential child and youth care practices worldwide, particularly the way certain Western NGOs depict these institutions. They often emphasise the failures and problems, attributing them to weakened family ties and poor educational and health outcomes for children. The portrayal of child and youth institutions as hubs of abuse and neglect is widespread, but it's important to note that this is not the case for many such facilities around the world. In reality, most of these institutions are crucial in providing care and support to children in need, helping them thrive.

Rouf's gratitude for the support and guidance he and his fellow residents received and for being allowed to flourish convinced me that this children's home/institution is a place where we can see that residential childcare has



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the potential to provide a positive option for many underprivileged children and young people. It helps a special group of children become the responsible citizens they deserve to be in the world.

Rouf's stories have re-inspired me, and I find them refreshing and rewarding. I have decided to write about the young people I know personally, as well as those involved in my PhD process. I want to share their life's triumphs and challenges while growing up in the care home where they were raised, and after leaving care.

Stay tuned!!

TUHINUL ISLAM holds a PhD in Child and Youth Care and International Development from the University of Edinburgh and an MA in International Child Welfare from the University of East Anglia. Currently, he is the Director of Care Transformations International and holds the position of visiting Senior Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. Most recently, he served as the Director of Programmes, Knowledge, and Development at Muntada Aid, a UK-based global NGO that operates in 36 countries and serves over 100,000 children and youth in care. He has published extensively on residential child and youth care, alternative child care, care leavers, education, and development. He has recently co-edited a 4-volume book series on 'Residential Child and Youth Care in the Developing World,' covering 71 countries. Tuhinul also serves on the CYC-Net Board of Governors.

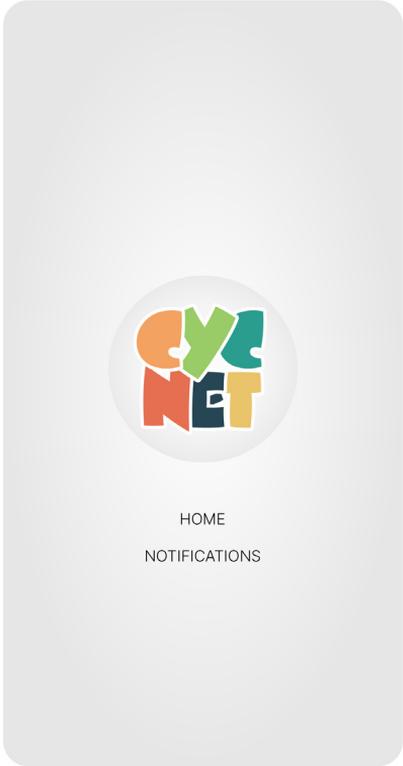


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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

From New Zealand: Preparing for the 2024 Olympic Games

Kia Ora Tatau
Katoa and
warm greetings
everyone! Brrr,
it's cold here in the
Southern Hemisphere.
We're relieved
however, not to be in
the North where
thermometers are
reading plus-50 C (120
F). A tragic loss of

hundreds dying of heat stroke during their Hajj journeys to Mecca.

We are left to question the extent to which the upcoming Paris Olympic Games will be impacted by heat and weather conditions. We already know that the political climate will feature prominently as the Paris Olympics make final preparations, given the call for a public election less than 3 weeks before the Games begin. There is nothing quite like a little turmoil in our lives.



**The 2024 Olympics are being hosted in Paris
and the French Republic**



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New Zealand is a small country of 5 million people that performs very well in the international sports arena. In addition to Eliza McCartney, New Zealand's Bronze medal winner at the Rio Olympics, Zoe Hobbs has become the first female sprinter to qualify for the 100 metres in 50 years. In the swimming pool, there are a handful of talented swimmers, all potential medallists.

New Zealand will also be challenging opponents for both men's and women's

Rugby Sevens competition. The Black Ferns women's team won the world's Rugby Sevens competition in 2024 and go to Paris in good form. The All-Black Sevens men's team were finalists in the world competition so they will present a strong effort at Paris.



Zoe Hobbs became the first female sprinter from New Zealand in 50 years



Both Men's and Women's All Black Rugby Sevens Teams qualified for Paris

New Zealand has a strong history in Olympics equestrian events and while they have not medalled in the last 3 Olympics, Paris offers opportunities to be testing opponents. The New Zealand canoeists have qualified a strong team that includes established medallists helping to set standards with new members, led me multiple Gold Medallist, Dame Lisa Carrington.

I've been thinking about what supports are available to individual Olympians,

let alone, Olympic teams of high-performance athletes in whichever country they claim allegiance. The life stories of former Olympians leave me feeling stunned when identifying the rigorous training regimes these young people follow. Parents or key adults are commonly identified as key performance supports in the lives of most high-performance sportspeople.



Since 1984, equestrian is one of New Zealand's most successful Olympic sports



New Zealand team qualified an impressive five Olympic and Paralympics places

In child and youth care work, how often do we acknowledge and support a young person's passion for say, football or basketball, or cross-country running? First, there is noticing an interest that each young person might like to pursue. School

sports teams, local sporting or arts clubs, all offer options for young people, hopefully supporting performance achievements. Thinking back to the Paris Olympics, some will have wondered how they would manage the surfing competition.

The Surfing competition will take place in French Polynesia, at Tahiti, some 12 thousand kms from Paris! It will be interesting to see how the world media manages to include the Tahiti Surfing competition into broadcasting the full



Luuka Jones will compete in her fifth Olympic Games in Paris, winning Silver in Rio



Surfing events are to be held in Tahiti, French Polynesia

range of other sporting events in the Games. It will be interesting see what televised performances of the surfing and wind surfing achieve.

Following on from the Olympic Games, it is pleasing to see how the Paralympics has

grown from strength to strengths. Encouraging participation in local sporting and artistic activities offer important developmental opportunities for young people. The Olympic Games in July offer opportunities for child and youth care workers to engage in small group activities with young people following high performance Olympians. And spare a thought for their supporters.



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Managing Editor

Martin Stabrey

Associate Editors

Dr Mark Smith, James Freeman, Janice Daley, Dr Shemine Gulamhusein

Correspondence

The Editors welcome correspondence at cyconline@cyc-net.org

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