

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 218 / April 2017



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Supporting Your Journey

James Freeman

If you're reading this issue of *CYC-Online*, you obviously have some interest in the care of children and young people. Perhaps you're a young person yourself who is trying to learn more about care settings in different parts of the world. Perhaps you're a Child and Youth Care Practitioner who is looking for practice tips to integrate in your daily work alongside others. Perhaps you're a foster parent looking for insights into supporting young people who come from difficult places in life.

Whatever your reason, this issue offers some special insights. Find a quiet place and a warm cup of coffee or tea and explore the highlights of this issue. There are several points of learning and opportunity offered to us this month.

- Read and reflect on the experiences of a worker who experiences her first opportunity to provide care (see Kate Morden) and a young person who has been in care and (see Inseo Chung)
- Visit with Lorraine Fox, an elder in our field, who offers a framework for enhancing 'connections' with others
- Reflect with Laura Steckley on the issue of shame and how inner experiences shape the outward actions of young people which we can interpret in so many different ways
- Hang out with Yvonne Bristow as she offers us a reminder of the simplicity of writing and drawing together



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- Reflect on ten discussion points provided by Kiaras Gharabaghi. These are so important that I will be using these in my own team discussions this month.
- Think critically about what you read as you read Phelan's reflections on an article from last month's issue.
- Learn about the experience of care in Kazakhstan in our ongoing series with the SOS Children's Villages as shared by Elena Serjegina.
- Sneek a peek into the postcard from Leon Fulcher on his experiences on Lake Waikaremoana in New Zealand. How will you enter into the 'zone' with a young person this month?

CYC-Net exists to encourage and support you in your journey of caring for young people wherever you are in the world. We know it is a challenging task at time and that going alone is not only risky, but dangerous to both you and the young person. That's why we are here month after month with a new issue and 24/7 with the thousands of resources and readings available at www.cyc-net.org

With you in the journey,

JF

The new CYC-Net app is now available!



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Over-identification as a CYC-P (a Letter to a Group Home)

Kate Morden

Group Home,

I'm sorry I left without saying goodbye
I'm sorry I left without explaining why
I'm sorry I left and never came back
I'm sorry I turned my back on you
I'm sorry I couldn't be there for you
I'm sorry, in a sense, I neglected you

You were all curious about me; perhaps suspicious, too – about who I was, what I was about and most of all, why the heck I was SO quiet. Many of you straight-out asked me: “Why are you so quiet?” I didn’t know what to say or do, other than to reply in silence with a shrug. At the time, I didn’t know the answer to that question. I didn’t know why I was “so quiet”. I mean, I had been so quiet for so long that it became a part of my identity, of who I was. I was quiet, private and perhaps withdrawn; everyone knew that. But, you see, nobody ever really questioned it; not even myself; not until you did.

But quiet didn’t get me too far then, did it? I was too quiet. Too quiet to have the ability to build relationships with you. Too quiet to have the ability to connect and engage with you. Too quiet to have the ability to speak with and to you. Too quiet to have the ability to feel a sense of connection and belonging with you. Too quiet to have the ability to make a difference in your life. I was too quiet. Period.



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I know it's too late now and you may not remember me, but let me try to explain why I was so quiet. You see, I feel extremely anxious in social settings, especially around strangers, new people and in new environments. I stay quiet as a way to: 1) observe my surroundings, 2) assess my surroundings, and 3) evaluate my surroundings. It is how I learn and it is also how I keep safe. To explain more in-depth, my mind works very deliberately, and what I mean by that, is, it responds to fear – danger and threats – a very early stage of development we all share. Picture an animal. A squirrel or rabbit that freezes or flights (runs for their life) when they hear the slightest sound. A dog that barks at the top of their lungs when a stranger is at the door. A cheetah slowly preparing to pounce, attack and fight. A porcupine with quills. A skunk that sprays. These animals feel the emotion we call “fear” and then (re)act as a result (by fighting, flighting or freezing). It is the only way that they know how to respond to fear, in order for them to keep themselves safe from danger. Similarly, the only way that I know how to respond to fear, in order for me to keep myself safe from danger, is to freeze or flight. That's why, for example, on that Sunday night, when the home was chaotic-like and overwhelming for all of us, I wasn't able to help. I couldn't. To tell the truth, I was scared just like you. But I think all of you knew that. And that was why I wasn't able to help calm any of you down...because I was too busy trying to calm my own Self down. My heart was beating so fast and I was shaking inside and out, and I knew that you were all feeling the same. I could see it. I could feel it. And I am sorry I did not, or rather, could not, help you feel any calmer or safer that night. I am sorry for reacting rather than responding that night. I am sorry about that night, Group Home.

Back to my quiet nature, it always takes me some time to truly feel comfortable and safe when I am with and around others; to be honest, it takes me a very, very long time. It has always been this way for me. Trust and safety isn't easy for me to build and work on in relationships due to many reasons, including some of my own past trauma and abuse, hurt and betrayal. Secondly, I have a learning disability in language and communication (Autism, if you've heard of it). It is challenging for me to maintain eye-contact with you, socialize, comprehend readings, understand or



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produce spoken language, and organize or express my thoughts and feelings into written/verbal language. It is also difficult for me to retell stories, understand meanings of words, parts of speech, directions, humour, sarcasm, etc. Because of this, I am different and I can be slow at times. It usually takes me some time to respond to you the way that I would like to when I am socializing with you. By the time my brain processes what you have said and when I finally gather the words to say to you aloud, you have already moved on to say something else. And I never seem to be able to keep up with others for this reason. Add anxiety on top of this and socializing becomes that much more challenging for me; so, for these reasons, I keep quiet and stay observant of those around me. My thoughts and feelings always come to me after, later, when I have the time to process what everyone has said and done, and everything that has occurred around and within me. Do you understand?

But, Group Home, I didn't leave because of my quietness. I left because of my triggers. I left because I did not have the ability to cope with and manage my triggers. Triggers – do you know what they are? It is when something someone says or does, or when something you see, hear, touch, feel, smell or taste, reminds you of a memory/flashback, sometimes to the point that it almost feels like you are reliving the experience (almost like when you rewind a movie that you have already watched, only to watch it again). This is what triggers are – and to be honest, I am still learning how to deal with them.

But when I was in the process of completing my placement here, I didn't feel like a CYC worker or a working student. I felt like a young child. I felt like a new resident. I felt like an individual in the child and youth care system. I felt like I was you and you were me. I felt like we were the same; we were each other. You see, I had been through so much trauma and abuse, like you. I had been hurt and betrayed by so many people or adults, like you. I had had my boundaries crossed and violated, like you. I had dealt with severe mental illness, like you. I had been dealing with the aftermath of such my entire life, like you. I was anxious and depressed, like you. I was traumatized, sad and angry, like you. I wanted to be left



alone, like you. I didn't trust people or adults either, like you. I wanted to fight or flight, like you. I wanted to cry, like you. I wanted to yell and scream, like you. I wanted to lash out, throw and break things, like you. I wanted to push, pull, kick and punch, like you. I wanted to hurt others, like you. I wanted to hurt myself, like you. I wanted to abuse substances, like you. I wanted to rebel, like you. I wanted to break the law, like you. I wanted to die, like you. I wanted to so bad, like you.

You see, as I watched you, I watched myself. And it hurt. It hurt me so, so much.

And every single time I tried to set boundaries, I was challenged by you. Having experienced trauma and abuse in the past, in which my boundaries were crossed and violated multiple times, caused me to develop unhealthy, blurry and weak boundaries with my Self and others as a child, adolescent and young adult. This made it extremely difficult and overwhelmingly stressful for me to set boundaries with you. When I attempted to set limits, or apply disciplinary actions based on the rules and expectations of the agency, I lacked confidence, strength, firmness, assertiveness and consistency; this led to many unsuccessful attempts of boundary setting. Whenever I had tried to set a personal or professional boundary and was not successful in getting anyone to listen to or respect me, it would trigger flashbacks and painful memories of times in which I was not listened to or respected by others in my past. And when an individual responded to me with defiance, anger, resentment, or a raised tone of voice, I interpreted these altercations as strictly negative – that it was my fault, I was not loved, valued or appreciated, and it was because of who I was as a person/worker. There were also many moments where I was not able to assert myself to even attempt to set limits and boundaries, especially when my boundaries were crossed. In these situations, I typically froze and became extremely agitated and anxious. The meaning-making I made from these encounters was that I was weak, inadequate, broken, damaged, worthless and underserving, which brought back similar feelings that I experienced during and after my abuse – anger, pain, fear, powerlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, shame and guilt. This caused me to further believe that I was solely



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the reason as to why my boundaries were tested, crossed and violated. To be more blunt: I believed the sexual abuse that I encountered was my fault.

Needless to say, it was one of the worst feelings I had ever experienced in my life, and emotionally I was only spiraling downwards. I needed to leave, for you and for me. I needed help – so much help. I needed to help myself before I could even begin to help anyone else. That is why I left, Group Home. And I knew what some of you were doing – you were pushing my buttons. You were pushing my buttons to see how much I could take, to see if I would leave you like every other adult has left you in the past. But I couldn't take much then, so that is why I left, Group Home. And while my decision to leave was probably the best thing to do for the both of us, I am just sorry – truly – that I ended up being another adult who left.

But just because I didn't speak and instead remained quiet, or just because I left and never came back, didn't mean that I didn't care about you. I cared about each and every one of you. I cared so much. Maybe too much. And I still care about you today. Believe me, I do. And I still think about you today. Believe me, I do.

And I still cherish all of the memories that I have of hanging out with all of you – going to the grocery store, going on road trips, driving to the suspension bridge or the chocolate factory (I go every year now, since then), seeing the horses up-close on the farmland, playing cards, playing Uno, making bracelets, playing games, watching movies, going for short walks, visiting the Humane Society, helping some of you with your chores and homework, taking interest in your interests, doing your laundry, etc. I remember it all – no matter how big or small the moment was.

But I had to leave. I had to leave for you and I had to leave for me. Otherwise, more damage would have been done to you and to myself. I needed to help myself before I could help you. I needed to love and take care of myself before I could love and take care of you. I needed to face and deal with my own inner-demons before I could help you to face and deal with your inner-demons. I needed to heal myself before I could help you heal. That was and is the only way I would ever become an effective and successful CYC-P. That was and is the only way that I would and could ever make a difference in a child/youth's life.



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Group Home, can I apologize one more time?

I'm sorry I left without saying goodbye
I'm sorry I left without explaining why
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I'm sorry I couldn't be there for you
I'm sorry, in a sense, I neglected you

Fast forward now – that was then and this is now. Almost five years have gone by. Time flies, doesn't it? I have changed so much, but at the same time, so much of me has remained the same. I'm still Kate, you see. And I bet all of you are still you, but I bet all of you have grown, like me, too. But listen to me – even though all of this time has passed, I still haven't forgotten about all of you. All of your memories live on in my heart.

I still wish nothing but the best for you.

KATE MORDEN lives in Ontario, Canada and is a graduate of the CYC program at Fleming College in Peterborough, Ontario. Visit her blog, *A Healing Journey*, at <https://kateoldsoul.wordpress.com>



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Guest Editors
James Freeman
Thom Garfat

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TRAINING



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From a Young Person's Perspective: Towards a Better Residential Care System for Youth

Inseo Chung

Editor's note

The voice and lived experiences of young people is critical in conversations about the state and future of care settings. While there are a variety of experiences - including length of stays and the quality of care provided - this article shares the recent experience of a young person with recommendations on the topics of food, safety, incident debriefing, recreation, and relationships. We especially resonate with the desire that "... all I wanted was a consistent caring adult who watched out for me [and] people to tell me I mattered ...".

Introduction

I lived in the care of a Children's Aid Society (CAS) for four years during my teenage years. Being in care is hard, even if you are placed in a "good" home. Put it this way: Imagine if you were taken away from everything you knew and were comfortable with. You are then placed in a strange environment and told to behave "good" otherwise there will be scary consequences such as placement breakdown. Well let me tell you, the majority of the youth who go into care have been exposed to physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, drug and alcohol use, threats, domestic violence and many other traumatic events. It is unfair and unrealistic to expect traumatized and hurt children to be "perfect", or even to behave well all of the time.



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When a youth in care shows negative behavior such as swearing or an emotional outburst, caregivers often use punitive and sometimes cruel and harsh methods to make the youth stop. This could range from taking the right to call your family away or denying you access to a snack. Sometimes, they take more harsh measures such as calling the police or discharging you from their home.

I know the system is not perfect because I was once the “bad”, “unlovable”, “out of control”, “impossible to help” child in care. I’ve had five different CAS workers, been kicked out of two foster homes, lived in a girls’ group home and been in psychiatric wards. The system (e.g. CAS workers, residential counsellors, foster parents and doctors) has let me down and I know I’m not the only youth out there who feels this way. However, I consider myself lucky. I used my inner strength, found something in me that told me not to give up and I fought for my life. Now, I’m in a better place in my life and I live with an amazing boyfriend in our own apartment.

But I know my journey with the system is not over. I will remember the good times but the bad memories will always haunt me. Now that I am older and officially an adult, I have a goal. The goal is to ensure all youth in care in Canada and one day worldwide receive humane, compassionate and caring support and help from the system and are treated like any other children in a loving home would. This is my goal and I will not stop pursuing this goal until every youth is living this goal.

I have written this small paper to help fulfil this goal. It is focused on changing the residential care system for the better and to benefit the youths more. That’s why it’s called “Toward a Better Residential Care System for Youth”. I want to focus on the things that actually matter to young people; the things that define our everyday experience. These things may seem trivial to the ‘experts’, or the ‘professionals’; but they are not. It is these things that shape our memories of growing up, and therefore also our expectations of society, government, and relationships.



It All Starts with Food and Nourishment

We all need food, water and shelter to survive. But what if you were only allowed food and water at certain times (doesn't matter if you are hungry or not) and you don't get a say in what you want. Doesn't sound very appealing, does it? Psychologist Abraham Maslow published a paper in 1943: "A Theory of Human Motivation". In the paper, he presented a pyramid of human needs. Maslow stated that in order to achieve your highest potential, we all need to have our needs met. These needs include: food, water, warmth, shelter, security, safety and positive relationships. I don't think all the youths in care are getting these needs met. I certainly didn't and I know a lot of my peers didn't either.

Everybody loves food. There's food I enjoy and also food that I don't particularly like. I want to talk about food first because this is where the majority of the complaints from the youth in care come from. In all of the placements I have been, there were a lot of rules regarding food and drinks. I don't like that. Why? Because food shouldn't be used as a method of control.

In my group home, there was a lock on the pantry door where 98% of the food was kept in. You had to ask a staff to unlock the door in order to get something to eat. In their defense, the agency will state they had food on the main floor kitchen too. Yes, sometimes there were fruit, toast, water and leftovers. The staff said that if the pantry door were unlocked all the food would be gone in less than five minutes. Maybe, maybe not. I don't think a lock is the solution. Instead, what if all the youths had access to proper nutrition education? What if the pantry or the locked food area was stocked with healthy food (e.g. yogurt, fruit) that you want youths to consume large amounts of? A lock is the easy solution but is it ethically the right one? I would never put a lock on my fridge to control a child. If a youth is hungry, she/he should be given access to food. Food that they enjoy and that is nutritious. If a youth demands for chocolate and ice cream, why not suggest a similar yet a healthier alternative? Instead of saying no right away, offer them a frozen fat free yogurt with fruit or a banana with a piece of dark chocolate. And if they are asking for food at three in the morning, they are obviously hungry. Give



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them a snack to last them till breakfast. My recommendation from personal experience would be: Have two different pantries. The first pantry would be a locked one but only because it has the ingredients for the week's meals. The rule is this pantry can ONLY have the ingredients for meals. The second pantry should be a lock free, 24/7 access to all youth regardless of what privilege level they are on.

I didn't like the menu in my group home, and I especially didn't like the breakfast menu during the weekdays. It was always the same: Cereal or toast. What if the night shift staff member baked some healthy blueberry muffins for the mornings? Or what if every Wednesday was a fruit parfait day? I don't think making a menu for a group of youth that is healthy yet satisfying to the residents is mission impossible. Thinking about food should include thinking about diversity (which many homes lack in), healthy eating and creativity. I think talking to youths about diversity and tolerance is essential and I believe it will be easier to talk about it if it's through food (for example: Eating a Mexican dinner together could lead to a discussion on the country itself, Mexican traditions and language). Youth should have some choices over the food they eat because it gives them a sense of control (a lot of youths feel a lack of power in care).

Talking About Basic Needs

Just like everybody else, young people in care have some basic needs which include safe shelter, access to hygiene products, clean bedding, access to laundry and appropriate medical care. The homes I've lived in (foster and residential) met the minimum standard of meeting my basic needs, but I can't help thinking that we I was good enough only for those minimum standards. Yes, they provided me with a shelter, shampoo and conditioner, bedding, clean laundry and medical care but what if I told you that I only got a certain amount of hygiene products a month and if I ran out I had to pay for more out of my allowance? I remember one incident very well. It still hurts because I felt my rights as a youth in care were not recognized. It was a hot summer day and it was the day before new hygiene items were given out. I was drenched in sweat but I had run out of shampoo so I couldn't



take a shower. I went to the staff office (there were two staff on shift) and asked for a bottle of shampoo. The staff told me I had to wait till tomorrow or I could do three chores to get one. Her reasoning behind this was because a chore was worth \$1 and shampoos usually cost \$3 at the store. I agreed but I still felt it was unfair. The three chores were: Take out the garbage, sweep and mop the kitchen floor and wipe the door handles. I did the chores and I got the shampoo. In a regular home, if a child ran out of shampoo, I'm sure many parents wouldn't think twice before giving them a new one. Why should youth in group homes get treated differently?

Many youths stay in care for couple months to a couple years. This means their placement becomes their second home. A home should be COMFORTABLE and SAFE. I felt neither of these at the group home I was in. My room was very basic and bare: a bed, a closet with a broken dresser and a side table. All the bedrooms had the same wall color. How I wished I could decorate it with curtains and paint. Or if that's not possible, at least get to choose my own bedding so I feel unique.

Safety should be the key. Yet, there were times in both foster and group home where I felt threatened and unsafe. My belongings were often stolen. The stolen items range from nail polishes, clothes and an IPOD touch. I would tell the staff but they told me there was nothing they could do. It distressed me greatly that my personal belongings were taken and yet there was nothing anyone could do.

There was also a lot of bullying which staff were witness to but failed to intervene. They only got involved if the situation escalated into a physical conflict. Name calling and verbal threats didn't matter to them. Yes, I wasn't getting hurt physically but I was emotionally drained and my self-esteem dropped after being repeatedly threatened and yelled at.

So yes, my basic needs were met while I was in care. But that doesn't mean that I felt good about how these needs were met, or that I was treated in a way that young people who are not in care can expect from their parents.



Psychiatric Interventions

When I was seventeen, I was admitted to an adolescent mental health ward in a psychiatric hospital for PTSD. By then, I was sick and tired of life in care and my traumatic past was haunting me. My team (CAS worker, group home, therapist, psychiatrist) thought I needed medication, seclusion (isolation rooms) and mechanical restraint to help me. I can tell you that's the opposite of what I needed. All I wanted was a consistent caring adult who watched out for me, people to tell me I mattered, more recreational activities, trauma focused therapy, non-judgmental doctors and a pet of my own. Researchers say positive physical contact is important. If I wanted hug, I didn't always get one. Some staff would give hugs but some were against it. And sometimes the hugs were worthless because they weren't genuine.

The hospital experience did not help me with dealing with my past. I have been traumatized by my time in the ward and I am still hurt that the people I thought I could count on (my CAS worker and group home staff) failed to properly support me during this extremely difficult time. I was hospitalized for four months and during that time, I was locked in an isolation room, physically hurt by nurses and security guards, medicated without knowing the side effects and strapped down on a mechanical restraint bed. Yes, I agree that sometimes in extreme circumstances restraint and seclusion is needed but I think the staff should always use less intrusive measures first and only go hands on in out of control situations where the youth is hurting themselves or somebody else. But is it fair to lock someone up in a small cold room for hours just for swearing and lack of compliance? Is it really necessary to call two security guards and seven nurses to drag a youth who refused to go to bed into an isolation room and then strap them to a restraint bed? I don't think restraints are being used properly and safely and too often they are being misused and staff use it on the youth as a method of punishment and control. It's also absurd to me that no proper debriefing took place after the incident where youth should be able to express their feelings and their views on what happened.



There was one incident in the hospital that stands out to me. I was upset because my group home had closed down and I was homeless. My primary worker came to say goodbye and said there will be no more visits after this. I was greatly distressed and started crying, yelling and threw coloring paper on the ground. Within five minutes I was getting dragged to the isolation room. Nobody came to offer comfort or to just talk. I sat there on the mattress for hours crying. When it was dinner time, I didn't get any because I was in the isolation room and was served a cold meal two hours later. The dinner was cold beef macaroni cheese with no utensils and melted ice cream.

Psychiatric intervention in a hospital is supposed to be the highest end intervention available. It certainly didn't feel like a high-end intervention. It felt abusive, and I am still suffering the consequences of this experience today.

Positive and Nurturing Relationships

Would it sound crazy to you if a child had to change parents eight times in their life? In my case I kind of had to and emotionally experienced very negative effects because of it. My biological parents weren't warm and loving and I still to this day I have a difficult and tense relationship with them. That was my first set of parents. Then came my first foster parents who ended the placement due to my inappropriate behaviour that was triggered by sexual abuse from my childhood. Transferring to a group home meant I had no consistent, caring, nurturing adult who I could rely on. Some days, when the full-time staff were sick or on vacation, I was looked after by complete strangers (casual staff). On top of that, I have had five different CAS workers. There were three workers in particular with whom I had a special connection. When my fourth CAS worker came to say goodbye, I was very distraught. I had just started trusting him and now I had to say goodbye and hand my trust over to somebody else. Some changes in workers and placements cannot be helped (e.g. worker gets a new job, goes on maternity leave or foster parents move to a different province). Often, however, the system chooses the easy solution: End the placement. It's easier in the short term but until you have lived



through the experience as a youth, you will have no idea how hurtful and emotionally damaging it is in the long term. What if foster parents were given more support and training on how to manage difficult behavior? What if CAS had a goal where children in care should not have worker turnovers?

When you are in care, a caring relationship with a loving adult is what you really need and crave. I can't say that this was provided for me.

Recreation and Fun

The next topic I am going to talk about is recreation. Youths need to have healthy fun. In my opinion I think children in care should have even more recreational opportunities to help distract them from worries and negative thoughts. What if we could help a youth with lots of energy by going for daily walks and swimming instead of diagnosing them with ADHD and giving them Ritalin? I remember feeling bored a lot in both group and foster homes. The group home had a recreational calendar but the planned events didn't always take place and were often very repetitive. Sometimes the planned events were cancelled because of "behaviour problems" or "lack of staffing". I do understand that some youths do not want to participate in activities and they should not be forced to or punished for refusing to. This is why it is important to offer a wide range of activities so that every young person can find something they might enjoy. Recreational activities should include activities related to sports, art, culture, and they should include things like team games, doing nails, arts and crafts, adventure activities, and cultural explorations. Group homes don't provide these activities enough.

Goodbye Care and Hello Future

I have officially aged out of care. I live in my own apartment with my boyfriend and expecting a baby in March 2017. Some people may say my life is a story of failure. I would strongly disagree. My life is what I make out of it. People can label me ("former crown ward", "mentally ill", "teen mom") but I choose to peel those labels off me and create my own identity. Yes, I am eighteen and I still haven't



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finished high school but I am very close to getting my secondary school diploma and I want to attend Ryerson University to get a degree in child and youth care. I am in a very happy healthy relationship (something I thought I would never be able to have) and I'm going to be a mother. I know I can break the destructive cycle here for my baby because even though I was not raised in a healthy loving home, I know what my biological parents have done was wrong and I love learning about positive parenting. My heart feels complete and I feel I am in the position now to advocate for youth who are living the residential care experience. I would be lying if I said, my happiness was all me and no hard work. It takes a lot of work for a youth who has been traumatized to feel secure and ok with themselves. And even though my group and foster home experience wasn't the best, I still met some wonderful people in my journey who have helped me recognize my strengths and showed compassion towards me. To all the youths living in care right now and who are feeling powerless, remember storms don't last forever and you have the power to write your own story.



INSEO CHUNG is a young person who lived in care in Ontario for a period of four years. She is passionate about sharing her experience of being in care with other young people and with professionals in the hopes that this might lead to improvements in residential care services in the future.



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Connections: Examining the Personal and Philosophical “Glue” that Connects Us to Our Profession, Each Other, and the Children, Youth and Families We Serve

Lorraine E. Fox, Ph.D

Let's face it, we in CYC work know very well how we are not connected. We can go to a Child and Youth Care conference, sit in workshops with others sharing our position title, and still encounter some people who would be our “colleagues” that we don't sense any kind of connection with at all. Even at work, there are some “colleagues” you wouldn't have lunch with if you were free to choose who to spend time with. And yet here you are, you and some of your colleagues, feeling like an old married couple raising kids together.

We work in a profession that many, if not most, people don't understand at all. It's hard to talk to others about our work – about how and why the kids come to us, about what it's like to group abused, neglected, troubled, disturbed, and troubling kids together in tight groups. Not just groups, but “living” groups. Groups where they spend all day, every day together. Or groups of kids suffering the effects of maltreatment in classrooms where they try to learn with FAS/FAE/FADE; ADHD; PTSD; LDs; BDs and undiagnosed limitations. Our lack of “connection” to the mainstream, even in the human services, makes it all the more important that we feel connected to each other. Isolation is not only lonely, it's spirit killing.



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Abraham Maslow told us that “belonging” is the third most basic need for human beings. I want to talk about the importance of recognizing how we belong to our work, and what connects us to those with whom we work.

Throughout history there has been a human tendency to create borders and boundaries between people, creating insiders and outsiders. Research reveals that children begin to experience this separation between people as early as pre-school, and difference and separation then continue for life. We have borders and barriers of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, intellectual abilities, ideologies, and class. These serve to keep people at a distance from one another.

In attempting to build community and connection we need to respect that we are trying to change a powerful status quo. The task is not for the weak, the weary, the unsure, or the unmotivated. It is entirely appropriate that we talk about “connection” in our work, because if we can’t do it among ourselves we have nothing to offer to those of our clients who are feeling outside, disenfranchised, and disconnected, and with whom we are trying to connect on a variety of levels.

We’ll consult our dictionaries to be sure we understand the meanings of our language.

- Connect: Join, Attach, Unite, Fasten together, Couple, Tie, Hinge, Combine, Merge, Associate, Relate, Compare, Correlate, Combine.
- Connection: Fastening, Link, Bond, Linkage, Connector, Attachment, Nexus, Tie, Junction, Relation, Relationship, Interrelation, Association, Correlation, Affinity

In this article, rather than focusing on what connects us to our child and adult clients, we’ll examine what connects us to each other. I would like to identify 21 ingredients that I think form the professional “glue” that connects – unites, joins, fastens together - those of us in Child and Youth Care Work.



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1. Commonalities

Like members of a family, or a group of old friends, we feel like insiders when we are together. We have, like many other inside groups, our very own language that leaves others wondering what in God's name we are talking about:

- “Going off” (workers with deaf children also have a “sign” for what we mean here)
- Redirect; He'd better be careful or “he's going down”
- He or she (staff person) just doesn't have “it”
- Calming rooms
- Mystery meat
- Having an ability to fix toilets as a criterion for evaluating potential job applicants
- etc.

As I pondered some of the language that only we understand, I suddenly realized that when CYCs talk about connection we are sometimes talking about a literal connection as well. We have in common with each other something that few other people with jobs can imagine – the fact that we are very likely to make a literal, physical connection with those for whom we work and with whom we work. These connections are particularly unusual because they may take dramatically different forms.

We may make nurturing physical contact as we brush their hair, hold their hands, give them a hug, play games with them.

But unhappily, research and our own experience tells us that violence begets violence. Our children and youth know more about violence than most people will ever experience other than through their televisions or movie theaters. Our kids never needed to go outside or turn anything on to see traumatic and violent attempts at problem solving. They saw it inflicted on their mothers. They felt it



inflicted on their own bodies. And now, unhappily, but not surprisingly, they sometimes attempt to use violence to solve problems with us or their peers.

And so it is that sometimes in our work, in order to keep people safe, we have to handle them in controlling ways. We have to interfere with their attempts to harm themselves or others using our own bodies. We sometimes connect with them in a literal, tangible way. It's hard to imagine what this kind of connection feels like unless you've had to do it.

Sometimes a therapeutic breakthrough happens during, or after, a young person has been held by two, three, four CYCs – literally connected on their arms and legs. Not because they've been controlled, but because they realize that we care enough about them not to let them hurt themselves or anyone else, even at our own risk. And during these tense moments we are also intimately connected to our team members, who we depend on to keep both the child and us safe. This is a way of connecting that is powerful, adrenaline pumping, intimate, and brings us together in ways unimaginable before we entered our world.

Our willingness to engage children and teens in this life-protecting and physically intimate way gives a message more powerful than any words or sentences could ever convey. Holding them safely says we value them. Working together in acts of mutual protection says we value each other. It is a scene that few people will ever witness – adults and a young person literally connected, one flailing, cursing and sputtering and the others reassuring, comforting, calming, protecting.

More benignly, as in families, we are also connected through our stories. Go to any staff meeting, any bar, any coffee house after work and you will be reassured that CYCs are great storytellers.

And the stories are real. I love to read stories written by Mark Krueger or Thom Garfat. Wherever I am when I'm reading one of these stories, at home, on the plane, in a hotel – I instantly feel like I'm in a group home or child care facility. I can smell the smells, hear the noise, feel the tension. My mind paints the picture and it's like watching a movie I've seen before but don't mind watching again. I've never worked with Mark or Thom, or in any of their facilities, but the themes of



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the stories are all familiar. The themes connect us to our work, and to each other. I sometimes wonder what it would be like to be someone from another profession reading the same stories. Would they get it?

2. Hope

We are also connected by hope. Isn't it amazing how we keep coming back to work? We throw up our hands, carry on with each other at the "attitude readjustment" watering hole, threaten to quit and daydream about an easy job – and then we catch a few hours' sleep and come back in. Despite all the rationale that tells us that most likely today will be just like yesterday – or even worse, we come in for another shift thinking that maybe things will be different. Hoping. It gets us up in the morning.

Maybe she will get up for school. Maybe he will call me by my actual name. Maybe they did all come back from the outing. Maybe we'll finish an activity without a tantrum or tears. Maybe.

We also carry the light of hope in every intervention – with a specific young person or with an entire family. We hope that with help, they will stop hurting themselves and each other. We hope that we can be the one who helps. If not for hope you wouldn't be reading this, you would have left ages ago.

3. Integrity

Integrity is the reason we have hope! We do what we do because it is the right thing to do. It doesn't always feel good, but it always feels right. Our kids did not get the beginning to life that they deserve. We know this. We know it is moral, and decent, to give them the healing they need to recover from their pain. They wear their pain all over their faces and express it in their angry, tormented voices. We are willing to catch the rage they throw because we know they are not responsible for the abuse and/or neglect that brings them into treatment. We are joined in our "mission" to give them a chance to have a better life than if we didn't try to help them heal.



4. Love

Love is both a Noun – a feeling, and a Verb - a practice. The Greek word for love – agape – combines feeling and action. Love means to will the best for others and to do all we can to see that it happens for them. This is what we do. Online discussions (CYC-online) have gone on for months with people from all around the world debating whether or not we should tell the clients that we love them. I haven't really participated in the discussion because it's not really that complicated for me. Of course we can tell them we love them. They're children. Wounded children. Lonely children. Confused about the word, yes, but human beings who have the need for love as one of their basic needs. Maslow told us it's our fourth most basic need. My partner and I had a history of adopting dogs from the pound that no one wanted. We tell our dogs that we love them!

Interestingly, one can practice love without feeling love. I'm guessing that's why loving one's neighbor is a commandment. If it was easy to always feel love we wouldn't have to be commanded to practice it. We are connected to each other because we choose to love these snot-nosed, swaggering, sulking, purple haired, multiply pierced, third finger wagging, creative, clever, funny children of God.

Some of our people need us to help them to love themselves. No one loves themselves if they are not loved by someone else. And because of the extraordinary character, quirkiness, and uniqueness of the people we work with, we love each other.

Whenever I go to a conference I run into CYCs that I love, and that I have loved for years. I am still friends with Don, who I worked with 52 years ago on my first job. Although separated by location, I keep up with my best friend Connie, who I hired twice, and who was my mentor although she technically worked "for" me. And Margaret, who lives in Philadelphia, is still in my life. We shared a job in the early 1970s. If I were to list my CYC colleagues that I love the column would be too long. They know who they are and my life is beautiful because of them. And my Partner, companion, and love of my life for 33 years was a CYC. There are no better people than those you will meet in our work.



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5. Detachment

In a paradoxical way, we are connected by the opposite of connection. Sometimes, in our work, learning to disconnect is as important as learning to connect. Detachment is defined as: separation, disengagement, impartiality, objectivity, neutrality. We are connected to each other because we need each other to remind us, constantly, that we are not the ones who hurt them so badly they need treatment for their hearts and minds. Their anger lunges toward us, but was not caused by us.

We are connected because we know when we hear some child or youth cursing vindictives toward one of our team mates that it does not mean that they actually did what the young person says they did. And so we whisper in our teammate's ear, "detach": Keep their anger separate from yours.

If we do not learn to construct our emotional barriers, to keep clear who is responsible for what, we cannot last in our work. And of course, if we cannot last, we cannot be connected. And so we move rhythmically between connecting and detaching.

6. Anxiety

We know all about anxiety. Our nervousness keeps us vigilant. Our anxiety keeps us from making assumptions. We know that quiet is not necessarily a good thing. We stay on our toes. We listen to everything, watch every gesture, and prowl around like a lurking jungle cat. We know we might have to "pounce" – interfere with potential chaos with gestures and/or words that we don't have much time to think about.

No one else goes into a building which is totally familiar and approaches it like someone on safari in the jungle. We give each other the same glances we see cops on TV give each other when they break into a house. Only they have weapons. All we have is our well-founded suspicion that they will not be able to stay safe if we don't stay on top of them. And so we do. And we count on our team mates to do the same. We are connected because we cannot afford any weak links.



7. Needs

Abraham Maslow spent his life trying to figure out how all of humanity was connected, what bound the human species together. Maslow's elegant theory of Basic Needs pointed out how we strive both individually and collectively to have our needs met. It's part of on-the-job training 101: Learn the six basic needs: Survival; Safety and Security; Belonging; Love; Self-esteem; Self-actualization.

It is the job of the parent to meet all six needs for babies and young children. As children mature, it is the job of the parent to teach them how to get these needs met in safe and successful ways. If these needs had been successfully met for our children, we wouldn't know them. And so we are connected to each other in our understanding that while meeting our own six needs on a continual basis, we are challenged with meeting the needs of children and youth who have learned to live without their needs being met, or who meet their needs in self destructive ways. Many of our young people have no idea that they deserve to have their needs met; they are threatened by their own vulnerability when they let us do what adults are supposed to do. They don't feel comfortable depending on others to meet their needs. But we are committed to doing what should have been done, and so we cook, and clean, go clothes shopping, read bedtime stories, come in on time, keep our word, post schedules, keep them without constantly threatening to throw them out, build on their strengths rather than their limitations, and find those "gifts" contained in the same brain that has been traumatized by maltreatment.

We are bound together because we get it. Chores are not scut work in child care. Chores are the act of saying you deserve clean, your muddled mind needs order at least on the outside, we want you to stay healthy, so pick up the broom and sweep, and we'll put up with all the muttering.

Every time we show up for work we are joined together by an hour by hour struggle to meet the needs of too many children by too few adults, respond to the behavior of children whose needs have not been met, and panic about our teenagers who shop in all the wrong stores in unsuccessful attempts to get their needs met.



And we connected because we have the same needs. We love the kids but meet our need for survival because although we don't get much, and we certainly don't get enough, we do get paid and thus can pay for food and shelter. We go to workshops and training to help us learn interventions to maintain our safety and security. We learn together, eat together, and laugh together and realize that work and CYC conferences are probably the only settings where we feel like we truly belong. We are reminded that we love the kids but do not look for love from them. We go to our stress management workshops to hear again how important it is to find your love away from work and then bring it in. It's not that the kids don't want to love us; it's that their own unmet needs leave them unable to love us. And so we love each other and love the work so we can love them. We look for even the slightest reinforcement that we've done some things right and thus feed our constantly wavering self-esteem. And we strive through it all to reach our potential – to be all that we can be even though we'll never get even one minute to sit and contemplate our navel as those self-actualized gurus that Maslow studied were able to do.

8. Our Differences

Look at any collection of CYCs and you'll see a motley crew. We are actually connected by our differences, because the needs of our clients demand that we not be clones. We've got Type A's and Type B's; We've got Right brains and Left brains; We've got introverts and extroverts; In working styles we've got Tortoises, Hares and Thoroughbreds; We've got our assertive team members, as well as our whiners; our chronically pissed; our passive-aggressives.

Thus, our world is arranged like the rest of the world. Nature is nothing if not diverse. Out there in nature we have our anteaters, aardvarks, spotted leopards and striped zebras; three toed sloths and winged birds of prey. In our group homes, foster homes, and institutions we have an equally sparkling array of various forms of humanity: the solemn and the ridiculous; the creative and the stodgy; the rigid and the wishy-washy; the outgoing and the introverted; the loud and the quiet.



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And it is this variety that allows us the greatest opportunity to connect with our diverse children and families, because it is definitely Different Strokes for Different Folks while we hunt for ways to connect.

9. Yearning

This is our raving, longing, aching and strong desiring. We yearn to give kids what they deserve; we yearn for our families to learn to have needs met in ways that are socially acceptable and actually successful. We yearn to be able to do what is required to stop the pain for our clients. We go about our jobs differently, and although we have different positions/titles, we are joined in our quest. We ache for those we are trying to help.

10. Openness

Everyone wants “the manual”. The source containing “the” answers. But it is clear that no such source exists. There are many answers, but none that are always clear, none that always work, none that apply to everyone. So we remain open, to others, to new ideas when ours aren’t working.

The fact that no kid is like any other kid, that no situation is exactly like any other, that even the same kid is not the same from one minute to the next is interesting, challenging, frustrating, sometimes overwhelming, but it plants the understanding that we will never know it all, we will never have a supply of guaranteed interventions that will work with all kids in all situations at all times, and so we remain open. Without openness we’d lose our ability to connect with some of our puzzling and wonderfully complicated kids.

There is a Buddhist concept I am very fond of – you’ll have to check with your resident Buddhist for a full understanding – but I’ll give you a brief and inadequate introduction. It’s known as “skillful means”. The concept is that the ability to bring out the potentialities of different people is achieved by statements or actions which are adjusted to their needs and adapted to their capacity for comprehension. We



learn to speak a truth in whatever way another person will be able to understand it.

Such an idea, and such a skill, will keep us open to our peers to see if they can provide a way of understanding something that we struggle with, and open to our young people to learn how we can adjust information in ways that reach them, that connect with them.

11. Understanding

Both the Native Americans and my professional mentor, Carl Rogers, taught the enormous value and effectiveness of “empathy”. The Native Americans used the metaphor of “walking a mile in someone else’s moccasins”; Rogers referred to “empathic understanding”. We get so stressed out knowing what it’s like to be us, working with them, that we sometimes forget to wonder what it would be like to be them, living with us. To help them, we must understand that everything they do makes sense. I think the first supervisor I ever had is responsible for my ability to stay in our field for over fifty years. Whenever I became frustrated and overwhelmed with a particular client, he would take me over to “pull the file”. What had happened to that young person to bring them into care? How does an understanding of their trauma, their neglect, their particular form of abuse shine a light on the meaning of their symptomatic behavior? Of course. Looking at things through their eyes helped me make sense of what seemed absurd in their thinking, or behavior.

We are able to keep loving them because we keep working on understanding them. And because we are different from each other, we can turn to one of our colleagues who seems to have a better understanding of someone we are struggling with, to help us find the window into their hearts and minds that will help us hang in and keep trying. Maybe we should try another approach. Maybe even ask them – the child - to help us understand them. What a novel approach! Ask the victim him or her self to open a window of understanding, help us take a look inside, give us more information about something they know that we don’t.



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12. Truth

We are connected by our willingness to face the unpleasant reality of our clients' lives. No psycho-babble. Just the facts of the matter. Most people don't want to know or believe what some adults do to some children. But we know. The kids know. They need to know that we know, that we do not shy away from the very unpleasant details of the harm they've endured.

Sometimes others find CYCs a "bit much" at inter-disciplinary meetings because we say things differently. Directly. Bluntly. We learn from the kids: put it out there. People long to have their reality validated and not sugar coated, and the kids will cut you no slack if you start talking jargon or junk.

We're not afraid to talk about what happened and what's happening. We're there when they wake up at night and scream out their nightmares. We're there when they return from their visit and once again got lied to, set up, blamed for something they're not responsible for. We're there when their parent shows up drunk or high, or not at all. We're there when the phone calls come in, or don't. We believe them when they tell us what someone did to them. We've heard it before. We know it's true.

It's tempting to turn away and look for the rainbow. We need each other to give us the strength and the integrity to keep owning what's true. Very few things make people feel crazier than having their reality denied. This willingness to acknowledge what's true is one of the great gifts we can give to our children.

13. Humor

As the archangel Michael (disguised as John Travolta) said in the silly movie Michael: "You need to learn to laugh." As bad as some of the things that happen can be, sometimes we're secretly enjoying the outrageousness just because we know how much fun it's going to be to share the story later.

I have some very good news from evidence-based practice. We all know about the "Stress hormone" cortisol and all the bad things it can do to us. We also know about the fabulous laughter produced hormone, endorphins. It has been proven



that endorphins counter-act cortisol. So enjoy the absurdities. Enjoy the ridiculousness. We are connected because we know that being “professional” has nothing to do with not being silly. We don’t laugh because we want to; we laugh because we have to. We laugh at the clients, and we laugh at the situations we get into, and we laugh at ourselves. Good for us. It is my belief that you cannot last if you cannot laugh.

14. Compassion

This is about tenderness, mercy, and benevolence. Please notice that the root of the word is passion. This is not some namby-pamby way of responding to people.

We are connected because we respond with compassion to children that many in society would like to lock away and not have to confront. We show mercy when they spit on us, call us bitches, and tell us to drop dead. We are connected because we respond with compassion to their families – the drug addicts and alcoholics and incest perpetrators that our children love and want to return to if only they can do so safely. When others think we should respond to hurtful behavior with anger and punishment, we know that what the child or young person needs is tenderness. We know we don’t forgive kids for what they’ve said to us or done to us because they deserve it, but because they are in need of maybe the first taste of grace in their lives. We talked earlier of how we can tell if someone who wants to work with our kids has “it”. The “it” is heart.

15. Anger

Let’s face it, we are the kings and queens of righteous indignation. We are connected because we share an amazing amount of anger at the way some children are treated. We are furious at the people who hurt them, and sometimes at the people who say they want to help them, but show no mercy, no understanding, have no heart. Sometimes the system makes us as angry as the clients do. There is so much to be mad about that we need each other to vent, to spout off, and to



help us sublimate our extreme anger into extreme action to help those are who are hurt, as well as to help those who hurt them to find better ways to deal with their challenges.

16. Reality

One of the reasons CYCs have trouble participating in meetings, I believe, is because they know more about the reality of the harm that's been done from abuse and neglect than others sometimes want to hear about. It's easier to blame the symptomatic behavior from their mental and emotional wounds on the inadequacies of the caretakers – foster parents or CYCs – than to face up to how much damage has been done. We know why it's a crime. We live with the effects of the criminal behavior every day.

At the same time, it's hard for direct caretakers to listen to platitudes, or diagnostic psychobabble, when discussing kids who spit on them last night, woke up with a nightmare, wet the bed or smeared feces on the wall. The real life consequences of maltreatment are seen, heard, and felt every minute of every day by CYCs. It's different than talking to a kid in an office for an hour, or having the ability to send them home from school. For us, it's in your face 24/7.

And frankly, some people don't want to know what we know. And so we often experience the subtle condescension or dismissal of our insights or feel the discussion turning to a failure to maintain the milieu as others would wish, while we recognize that what we see, what we hear, what we smell, what we feel, is real.

And so CYCs need to gather together – after work, at conferences, around a publication to be with each other, to share our stories and realize that none of our colleagues will do anything but nod with empathy and total belief.

17. Energy

Some display the necessary energy because they are still young, new, perky. Others – in a nod to us Oldies - because their batteries stay charged. We dinosaurs stay charged up by being with each other and with those of you who are



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just starting. We stay up for the task by reading Child Care Journal articles, settling in with a newsletter, checking in with CYC online to read the familiar questions and quandaries; to be part of the struggle to get it right for our kids. I've always noticed that we keep our energy up because when CYCs see each other they connect – they hug, they sit and stand close, they tell new and old stories, and feed off each other's energy. The emotional and spiritual fuel to do the work is as important as the knowledge and wisdom required.

18. Wonder

I think CYCs fit all the definitions of wonder, which is to think or speculate curiously, and sometimes doubtfully; To wonder about the truth of something; To be filled with awe; To marvel; A cause of surprise, astonishment; A feeling of amazement, puzzled interest, or reverent admiration; A remarkable or extraordinary phenomenon, deed or event.

Which makes all who do the work with love and persistence nothing short of wonderful. Excellent; grand; marvelous; exciting; and a wonder to behold.

19. Optimism

If we're going to last in our work, we must choose to see the glass as half full! Attitude is as much a part of our work as checking chores, helping with homework, and teaching how to get along and settle disputes. Perhaps you've heard someone say: "I can't help it – that's just how I think". Well, that's just pathetic. Of course we can help how we think. Attitudes don't just "happen"; Attitudes are chosen. If we're going to last, if we want to end our career with as much zeal for aiming to give our clients what they truly deserve, we must pay close attention to how we look at things. Under stress, it's easy to slip into negative, glass-half-empty thinking. We need to stay connected to our values, our strong beliefs in the value of helping and offering kids a connection to caring adults as nature intended.



20. Respect

The wonderful “person-centered” Psychologist Carl Rogers taught that all human beings deserve “Unconditional Positive Regard”. That doesn’t mean that we approve of everything they are or everything they do. It means that we value them, esteem them, as children of the Creator – capable of good and not-so-good – but always capable of change. We appreciate their unique journey and all that has gone into causing them to be who they are. We offer them affection, consideration, and kindness. We respect both our clients and our colleagues. Respect keeps people close; disrespect causes distance.

21. Kindness

The Old Testament Prophet Micah: What does the Lord require of thee? Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. Walking humbly, of course, is no problem. The tasks we are confronted with daily – repairing the damage from abuse and neglect, trying to build in strength and resiliency for the years ahead – these keep us continually humble.

We’ve missed the opportunity for justice. Child abuse is a crime where the victims of the crime do the time. Our young children, tween kids, and teens, are all in desperate need of kindness. If life had offered it to them, we wouldn’t know them. And so it falls to us. Kindness not because it has been “earned”, but because it’s the only “glue” that will help them, heal them, and give them at least a better chance at a satisfying life than if they hadn’t come our way.



Conclusion

The clever among you divined a pattern as you read. Indeed, put all of the ingredients in our glue together and they spell: CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK!

Commonality

Hope

Integrity

Love

Detachment

Anxiety

Needs

Differences

Yearning

Openness

Understanding

Truth

Humor

Compassion

Anger

Reality

Energy

Wonder

Optimism

Respect

Kindness



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Revisiting Pervasive Shame

Laura Steckley

A few years ago, I wrote about pervasive shame in one of my columns. Since then, I have incorporated the related content into my teaching and training, and often, this little nugget of learning really seems to light people up. It seems to be immediately applicable to one or more kids they work with. So I thought I would come back to it for this column. It's a bit of a recycle, but I want reduce a bit of the detail and incorporate some diagrams in an effort to improve clarity.

Before defining pervasive shame, it makes sense to start with shame. Shame can be understood as inwardly-focused feelings of humiliation and worthlessness. We first begin to experience shame at between 7 and 15 months of age and these experiences are very much a part of healthy development. In the context of a good-enough care environment, being scolded is enough to bring up feelings of shame in infants and small children. Shame is part of our socialisation process – it's how we learn not to fling poo or pull mommy's hair.

Of course, that's not the end of the story. Shame is only one part of this process of socialisation. Because shame is such a painful emotion, it is beyond our ability to manage when were very young. Very quickly after shame is elicited, children need help to feel okay again. This is often done through reassurance and soothing, re-establishing connection and harmony in the relationship. This has been referred to as 'disruption repair'. I think it's helpful to think of it as *relational repair* since the experience of shame or rupture happens within the relationship. This repair enables children to integrate their destructive impulses and begin to manage them. It also is necessary for feelings of shame not to destroy the child's developing sense of self-worth.



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Shame and relational repair are also key ingredients in the development of guilt, empathy and a conscience. While shame is inwardly focused, guilt is outwardly focused. It is associated with regret for one's actions and how those actions affect others. Interestingly, guilt doesn't develop in children until they are around 3 years old. There's a lot of foundational development of the self that must occur before one can genuinely feel for others, especially if it involves feeling bad about one's behaviour toward others. I've put together a simple diagram to illustrate this process:

The role of shame in the process of developing the capacity to feel guilt



A beautiful example of relational repair can be seen in the 'still-face' experiments. A very short clip is available [here](#). Not only does this clip illustrate the very normal process of repair that happens quite naturally between parents and their children, it also makes me think that it isn't just being scolded that provokes feelings of shame in an infant. It's the rupture to the relationship. The infant in this video hasn't been scolded or punished in any way, and yet in her distress, she turns away from her mother despite her clearly desperate need for connection. It also makes me think about how many times I've heard (and even said) that a young person simply "can't accept 'no'", and I wonder how many of those times were actually the intolerably painful rupture that the young person couldn't accept.



When children are repeatedly left in a state of shame – when there is frequently no relational repair – they are unable to feel guilt and their development of empathy is inhibited. Instead, they develop what is known as *pervasive shame*. Experiences of shame are painful. Pervasive shame is so painful that it must be covered up or disguised with anger and aggression. This anger and aggression pushes feelings of shame out of conscious awareness and defends the child against annihilation. It is not a conscious choice but a way of surviving the unmanageable experiences of shame.

This may be recognisable to you. It is likely that you will have come across a child or young person who is struggling with pervasive shame. He or she seem hostile and angry all the time, or with a hair-trigger temper than everyone tip toes around. Sometimes, maybe even often with children who display a lot of hostility or aggression, we may try to get them to face up to the effect their behaviour has on others. Essentially, we want them to feel some healthy guilt. And if we can't provoke a sense of guilt, we may at least try to provoke some other form of psychological discomfort – usually in the form of a consequence. It perhaps would feel like a dereliction of duty if we didn't.

If the child or young person has pervasive shame, then despite our good intentions, we may be making things worse both in the short run and in the longer term. I've put together another simple diagram (over the page) to illustrate.

Even when we are not actively trying to get a child with pervasive shame take responsibility or at least feel bad about something they've done, if we distance ourselves and become emotionally unavailable as a result of the aggressive or harmful behaviour, the child can end up in the same vicious cycle.



Vicious Cycle of Pervasive Shame



I'm not arguing here for a free-for-all, where we abandon all attempts to maintain boundaries and set limits with children and young people with pervasive shame. Rather, I am arguing that the development of the capacity to tolerate shame and eventually guilt as part of developing empathy and a conscience happens within relationships – relationships that can withstand the storms of aggression, hostility and harmful behaviour not just in the long term, but right there in the storm. The still face the mother shows her daughter in that video clip may mirror our own when we level a consequence or simply disconnect emotionally. Being able to



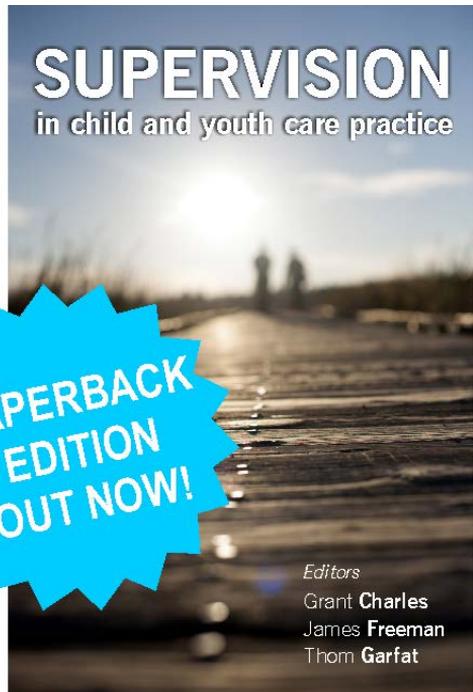
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genuinely convey care and connection as part of the process of exercising personal boundaries and setting behaviour limits is sometimes a huge demand; it is also absolutely necessary.



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Hanging Out and Drawing

Yvonne Bristow



I've always enjoyed how drawing together can help strengthen a relationships. I can think of countless times where I've sat and coloured in mandalas and print-outs of cartoons, or times where a young person and I have used drawing as a means to tell our own stories. I also have made sure that I have the permission of these young people to keep, collect and share some of their remarkable drawings. In my experience, most of these children have been pretty happy to do so. The drawing pictured above, was no exception.

Knowing about my interest in colouring and drawing, a twelve-year-old boy made this specifically so that I could, "add it to the collection". The young boy who I'll refer to as 'Raiyan' had moved to Toronto from Afghanistan the previous year. He came with his mother and younger sister, while his father travelled between the two countries to help provide for his family. As many of us can imagine, having



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grown up in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2014 had directly impacted many of Raiyan's experiences in life. He has seen and experienced things that most people would never have to go through, and it certainly shaped our relationship together.

One of the first moments I shared with Raiyan is when we were in a library together, and we both started talking about one of our favourite books, *The Kite Runner*, written by Afghan-American author Khaled Hosseini. As our conversation developed, I realize how mature and deep this boy was for his age. Raiyan was also very expressive and was very easy to talk to when it came to his experiences, thoughts and feelings. After some time knowing each other, he gave me this drawing and explained to me what it meant to him.

On the left of this drawing, we can see how Raiyan has chosen to depict a Canadian scene. There are tall buildings, a plane with a 'Will You Marry Me' banner, and a car driving down the street. The grass is *literally* greener on this side.

On the right side, Raiyan drew an image of Afghanistan based on his experiences. He drew "shacks" instead of buildings, and a plane dropping bombs onto the people below. The ground is all dirt and there is a tank driving down the dirt road.

There was so much information and clarity in this image, and it really helped me to understand parts of Raiyan's life that perhaps he couldn't put into words. I was also left with so many questions about his specific situation, and many of those questions were based on my own curiosity and fears for Raiyan. I think this moment really put into perspective how important *hanging out* is for Child and Youth Care practitioners, and how I often use this approach to build and strengthen relationships (Garfat, 1999; Shaw, 2009). While some may have walked by and saw us *just* colouring together, we were essentially developing a stronger relationship together. One outcome was that Raiyan was able to recognize differences in his current and past experiences - an important part of finding meaning in one's life.

Raiyan shared a lot about himself in this drawing and I was grateful to be able to see it. I am moved by his genuine and open message and will always keep this



drawing in a safe space with me. This drawing serves as a reminder to me that every person has a story, and sometimes we can express our stories in many different ways. It also reminds me to appreciate the times where young people in care share their struggles and experiences, even when we can't relate directly to those first-hand feelings. It is a privilege for any CYC practitioner to be a part of these small, yet deeply meaningful exchanges with young people.

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Can Residential Care and Treatment be Good?

Kiaras Gharabaghi

A few months ago, I gave a speech about residential services to the leadership of the child protection sector in Ontario. During the Q&A session that followed the speech, someone asked whether it was even possible to operate residential care and treatment these days that is actually good (for young people). This is a surprisingly difficult question, and based on my more recent observations in the sector, I was tempted to simply say 'no'. But then I imagined certain people in the audience who weren't actually there; people like Thom Garfat, whose positive and humanist ways of thinking about residential care have always inspired me. People like James Freeman, who applies a level of sincerity and authentic love for this context few people can match. People like Heather Modlin, who would never stand for anything but excellent service. James Anglin, Max Smart, Jack Phelan, Brian Gannon, Ernie Hilton and so many others who I think of when I want to feel good about my field. And I realized that I cannot reduce the aspirations, dedication, hard work and brilliant thinking of so many of my friends and mentors to a simple 'no'. Instead, I said 'of course it is possible, but it requires a different starting point, a level of commitment, and a partnership with young people that we do not find very often these days'.

Since that time, I have thought about what my top ten determinants of 'good' residential care are. I am sure this is hardly an exhaustive list of things that characterize good residential care and treatment, but it's a start. And for those of you directly involved in residential care and treatment, I suppose you can compare



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these ten things to what happens in your context. So this month my column is short, but hopefully provides some impetus for discussion wherever you might be.

- The focus of being and doing is the everyday experience of living rather than the treatment goals for youth or the performance goals of staff, which are important but not the focus.
- No one ever pretends that they know what is best for someone else; expertise is secondary to the wisdom of each person's (staff and youth) lived experience, which is validated, challenged, explored, and talked about all the time.
- The walls of the residence are porous; the outside comes in and the inside goes out. This includes family, friends, and people carrying wisdom (such as indigenous elders in Canada or community elders in other places).
- Supervision is an everyday practice that upholds a reflective culture, not a tool for performance management and human resource processes.
- Processes and structures that are invented to make life easier for professionals are reinvented with young people to reflect the relational context of residential care and treatment: this includes in particular processes such as case management, programming, the designation of primary or key workers, the staff office, etc.
- No one refers to 'the program' or 'the house' or 'the institution'; we recognize our togetherness as *community*.



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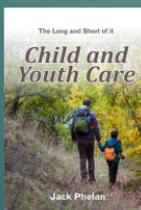
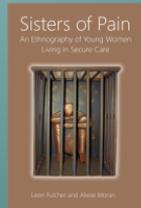
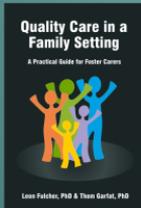
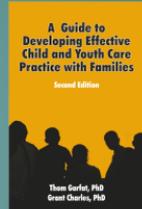
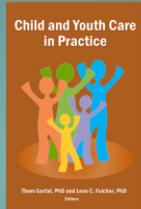
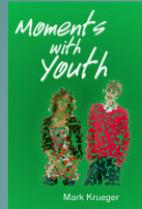
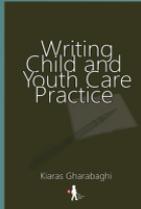
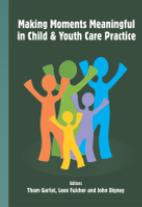
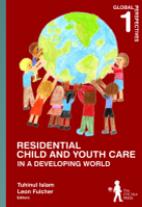
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- Safety is never priority number one; when we make it priority number one, we focus on control and expert interventions. Instead, safety is the community itself; as a community, we strive to be responsive, validating and respectful of everyone's unique sense of security/insecurity.
- There is always food; good, delicious, diverse, accessible food. All the time. Never locked up. Offered to everyone without anyone having to ask. Food provides safety for the soul.
- We value relationships, but not having them. Relationships are not a commodity one has or doesn't have. Instead, we are engaged within the community as a relational network, and we take interest in real and imagined relationships young people, and where appropriate staff, have.
- We give young people comforts that are unusually generous and staff members' salaries that are impressive.

So, there you have it. These are my top ten determinants of good residential care and treatment. I am sure there are many others you might identify, and I would encourage you to do so on the CYC-Net Discussion forum. You might have noticed that I did not say good residential care should be staffed by qualified child and youth care practitioners. That's because I am more concerned with excellent child and youth care practice than with who practices it. For the Ontario folks, who are currently engaged in debate about whether or not child and youth care practice constitutes psycho-therapy (a consequential debate as a result of some new legislation in Ontario), I would simply say that psycho-therapy itself would not meet many, perhaps any, of my top ten determinants. How about yours?



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A reply to the article “A New Conceptualization of Development in Child and Youth Care”

Jack Phelan

Editor’s note

The article **A New Conceptualization of Development In Child and Youth Care** was published in Issue 217 (March 2017). The article may be found at www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/mar2017.pdf. The author has been invited to respond to Phelan’s reply and, if provided, will be included in a future issue.

I was challenged to read this article with an impartial point of view, since I teach a course, included in most CYC degree programs, titled *Applying Developmental Theory in CYC Practice*. The author has the opinion that developmental theories are generally useful for supporting helpers to have a standard for “normal” growth and maturity which will then give direction to their efforts to impose this standard on the children and youth in their care. This view of how to apply developmental information is actually prevalent in the field of psychology, which is where most of her argument is based. It is not, however, supported in CYC literature, nor has it been for at least 15 years. Prominent writers since Henry Maier in the 1970’s, Mark Krueger, and many others since, including myself, have described developmental CYC work as an effective way to both reduce the use of behavioral approaches and increase the empathy of practitioners for children who have endured serious abuse and neglect in their lives.

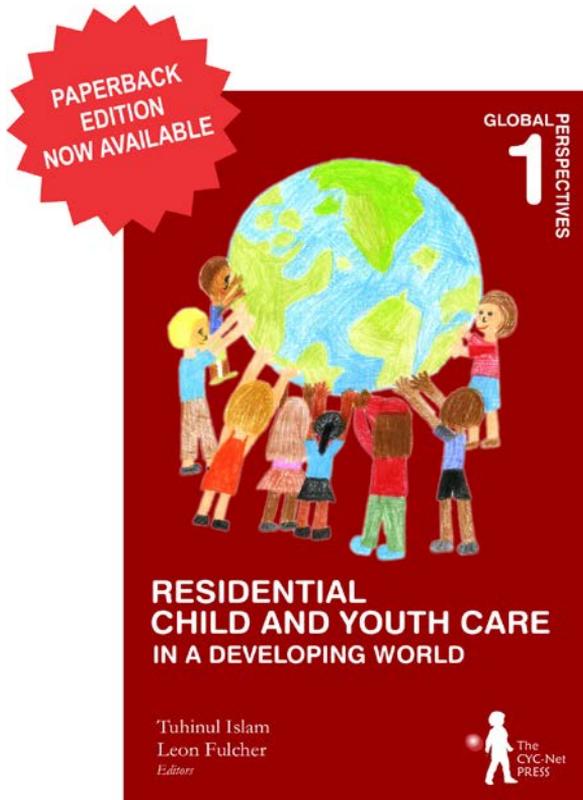


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The focus of CYC literature for at least the past 15 years, is on creating a relational and developmental practitioner who assumes a non-expert stance as she develops relational safety with a young person who sees the world quite differently from people who have not experienced abuse and neglect. This is in addition to the many cultural, economic and social ingredients which can challenge the CYC practitioner. I hope that the readers on CYC-Net will take the opinions offered in that article with a grain of salt.

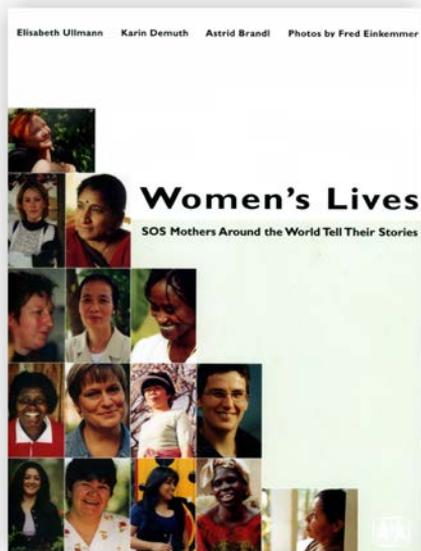


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Women's Lives: SOS Mothers tell their stories



Elena Serjegina

Born 25.10.1960, Kazakhstan

It was dreadful to see how underdeveloped and uninterested the children were. One of the girls behaved like a robot that was just waiting for the next command. It was a wonderful experience for me when she started trying to pull my leg because at least it showed she had feelings!

Elena is working as an engineer before she decides to become an SOS mother. She explains, "I had everything: a flat, a job and a good salary but I didn't have a family of my own." It was an intense religious experience which turned her life around. Elena describes the fact that she is now the SOS mother of nine children as "a gift from God" and she accepts this gift with all its consequences.

Elena sees herself as part of a huge family in the SOS Children's Village, as part of a team whose "hearts beat as one." She knows how it feels to be safe within a



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large family from her own childhood and wants the children in her SOS family to feel the same. They must learn to love themselves because Elena is convinced that if you love yourself, you will approach other people with the necessary respect. Especially in a nation made up of many peoples, as Kazakhstan is, this is an important criterion to enable people to live together in peace. According to Elena it is also a typical Kazakh quality, which must be continued.

The Story of Her Life

"My most vivid memory... is of us all sitting on the carpet playing dominoes."

I was born in Almaty in 1960. I have one older brother who lives in Almaty and has two children. My parents both lost their parents when they were very young and always tried hard to make it cosy and homely for us as a family. During the war, they both had too little to eat and when they got married they promised each other that neither they nor their children would ever go hungry or have to be afraid of anything. My mother originally came from the Ukraine; my father came



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from Russia, from Chastyunki. They met in Odessa where they were doing a two-and-a-half-year university course. They both finished with distinctions and became much sought-after engineers. They decided to move to Almaty because my mother's father lived there.

I was loved and spoiled from childhood on. Our parents did everything they could to make sure my brother and I had a happy childhood. At the time I found it quite normal that our parents spent their free time with us. My mother would spend the weekends baking rolls and making cakes, for example, or we went camping in the mountains. My most vivid memory of my childhood is of us all sitting on the carpet playing dominoes. The atmosphere was wonderfully warm, friendly and harmonious.



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What was your educational and career path like?

I studied at the University for Energy Industry and after that I worked as an electrical engineer in a power station and also taught at the university. When things started to change in the Soviet Union I left the state-run industry and moved to a private company. I was there for over a year and at the end I was the Deputy Director. Both my life and my career were very successful. I had a beautiful flat in the centre of town, a car and driver and I earned a lot of money.

Could you tell us about a particularly beautiful moment in your life and a particularly difficult one?

As I already mentioned, the most beautiful memories I have are of my childhood: it's snowing outside and the wind is blowing but indoors it's very cosy. I remember that the whole family often went to a beautiful place near Astana in the summers. We always rented the same house. We would go to the woods together and collect mushrooms and berries. Once we got lost: the countryside was so beautiful and we were united as a family, the atmosphere was very mysterious. Then we met a hunter who showed us the way.

One of the most difficult situations I can remember was when my mother went to Moscow with my brother and left my father and I alone at home. My father became very ill and it was a life and death situation. I was alone with this problem because I couldn't get in touch with my mother. That was in 1992. Times were difficult and medicine was in short supply. I had to gather all my strength to save my father. My friends were a great help at that time.

Do you have a good friend that you can talk to?

Yes I do. She's like a partner, a friend for life. I used to have a lot of friends but when I came here my interests changed. I've got two friends outside the SOS Children's Village. They understand me and I know I can always take my problems



to them. Sometimes they can't help me, though, because the problems I have are very specific. But I can always find good advice in the Bible.

Do you have a role-model?

Yes, my parents. My parents are honourable, honest and kind-hearted people.

What do you like to do in your free time?

Since I was a child I have always enjoyed needlework. I don't have much free time now because the children always keep me busy. But I do like to go for walks on my own and to enjoy the peace and quiet. I also visit my parents. We drink tea or have dinner together and chat. I also visit my friends, of course. So far I've always spent my holidays here in the city and have come to visit the children every



third or fourth day. They were afraid that I wouldn't return. The youngest children have only just stopped asking me if I would be coming back again.

What do you consider to be your specific strengths and weaknesses?

That's a difficult question. Strengths and weakness, they depend on the specific situation. I'm patient and can wait a long time for something but I can also be strict and can chastise but I don't bear a grudge. The children are aware of that and sometimes take advantage of it.

Motivation for the Choice of Career

"I wanted to be able to help a few children to become normal citizens."

I had everything: a flat, a job, everything. But I didn't have a family of my own. It would have been easy to marry a man. I had a few to choose from. But I had the picture of my parents in my mind and I set very high standards both for my future husband and myself. During the Soviet Union times, we were all atheists but then in 1992 I became a Christian. I believe in God. One day I went to church and prayed that I would have a family. Whilst I was praying, I saw myself entering the church with some children and heard a voice telling me that these would be my children. I knew that they would be children from the orphanage. It was all like a dream. I cried and knew immediately that I would have to change my life. I understood that it was a gift from God. Before, He had given me all the rest: the trips, the money and a nice flat and now He was going to give me a family and that was a real gift. But I couldn't come to terms with this thought.

Nothing changed for a whole year. I calmed down again and decided it had all been just a dream. Then I read in the paper that SOS Children's Villages were looking for women. I thought for a long time about whether I should go there or not. At that time, I was on a business trip and I met a group of children who had run away from an orphanage because they'd had nothing to eat there and there was



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no financial support. I was shocked to see that children of ten and fourteen were forced to steal and go into prostitution in order to survive. I found out that one mother had killed her child because she hadn't been able to feed him. I understood that this mother had had no choice and that those children would not have had to steal or become prostitutes if they'd had a place where they had enough to eat. I promised myself that I would help a few children to become normal citizens and to give them a happy childhood just like the one I'd had. After I got back from my trip I dug out the advert, wrote a letter and posted it. Normally our postal system doesn't work too well but in this case I got a phone call at five the next day and was invited for an interview. That proved to me that this was what I had to do. After the interview, I was invited to go on a course for future SOS mothers trainees.



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How did your family and friends react to your decision?

My father gave his blessing straight away. My mother said, "You don't need that. It will be too much for you." She'd had experience in bringing up children and knew how difficult it was to be a mother. But ever since she first set eyes on the children she has supported and helped me. Some of my friends said, "We've always known that you would go somewhere where you could help people." Most of them thought it was a wonder: "She's got everything, a career and a job and now she wants to go somewhere where she doesn't even know what she's going to have to do." But I was convinced that this was God's plan for me and I still believe that now.

Experiences as an SOS Mother

"Watching the sunrise and the sunset with the children."

It was difficult to begin with. I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing. I had to change my behaviour and had to learn to understand the children's needs. So I changed: my circle of friends, my interests, even my reading-matter. Now I read books on psychology or on how to bring up children.

When I took the children on a trip to Moscow, I saw everything through the children's eyes. That was an entirely new perspective for me. We went to museums and concerts and did everything together. I really enjoyed watching the sunrise and the sunset with the children and seeing how they were rediscovering the world for themselves. Now they don't see everything in grey and black any more. They see all the colours and the happy side of life. I'm proud that I've been able to make them see this.



What have been the most beautiful and most difficult experiences you have had in the SOS Children's Village?

It was dreadful to see how different the children were. They didn't know the basics and couldn't behave like normal children. They didn't think that adults ate because they had never sat at a table with an adult. You have to teach them all of life's rules so that they can get by. One of the girls behaved like a robot that was just waiting for the next command. It was a wonderful experience for me when she started trying to pull my leg because at least it showed she had feelings! Now they do everything that normal children do. They talk and they eat properly. That makes me happy and I'm proud of the children.

When the children's school friends come to visit us with their parents they think it's going to be like a normal orphanage at first. However, as soon as they realise what sort of family atmosphere we have here, they change their minds straight away. Usually the children want to stay with us, because there are so many children here and so many games to play.

How would you explain an SOS mother's tasks to our readers?

An SOS mother's main task is to awaken the children's joy in learning and to show them the right path. Even if this family is an artificial one, the children need to develop healthy roots within it. Only then will the tree grow beautiful leaves and be strong. The children have to understand that life is a gift. You have to teach them to see the bright and happy side of life. They have to be able to forget all the negative experiences they have had and all the suffering they have gone through. It is important to teach the children that they have to love others and themselves and that they have to be able to protect themselves. It is also important to make them realise that they are valuable members of society.

As far as education is concerned, SOS Children's Villages gives the children every opportunity to learn a trade, which is suited to their talents and abilities. Apart from that, if they are interested, the children are also able to go to sport or music clubs. That helps them to find enjoyment and to practice interacting with





other people. An SOS mother's task is to discover the children's interests and abilities and to stimulate them so that they can develop.

That doesn't seem to be an easy task. What sort of support do you get?

Of course you can't do all that on your own. We work together with psychologists. That was a new thing in Kazakhstan but I have always felt that they support and understand me. We also have a great team of SOS aunts and we work together well. Nobody can give us as much help as the SOS aunts do.

Has the working relationship in the team changed since you have been here?

Our village hasn't been here all that long. We all started learning at the same time and I know that the village's management is also still learning. All of us here –



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there are 100 children and 33 adults – are one big family. Those who didn't fit in and had other aims have left the children's village. It's hard work. Over the past five years we have built up a team and you could say that everybody's hearts beat as one. Even though we have people here with varying qualities, traditions, education and experiences, there is something that binds us all together. This variety of mentalities makes us richer. The children are also interested in the customs, traditions and food of other nationalities. For example, when Aunt Guschonat comes, the children run to her saying, "Auntie Guschonat is here and she's going to bake those sweet rolls for us!" We celebrate all the traditional national feast days in our village and the children are taught to respect other traditions and nationalities.

How did you find your training to become an SOS mother?

I found the course very interesting and I enjoyed learning. We were taught medical and psychological subjects. I learned about education and housekeeping for the first time. We were told that we were the only SOS Children's Village where all the SOS mothers had been to university. We found it a bit silly that SOS mothers came from foreign SOS Children's Villages to teach us how to cook and keep a house clean. Our mentality is different: our women can do everything in the home. You could say that this was one of the successes of the Soviet system. We were also given theoretical knowledge during the course and even today you sometimes have to look in your notes to find solutions to a problem you may have. In the meantime the programme has been further adapted, having taken our experiences and knowledge into consideration.

How long did your training last?

It lasted about three months but we are continually learning. Our educationalists and psychologists are constantly offering courses and they are learning all the time too. They learn together with us. We are the first in Kazakhstan and some of the examples we are given from Africa or other European



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SOS Children's Villages don't suit our needs. We have to rework them to make them suitable for our situation and mentality.

What do the four SOS Children's Village principles mean to you?

They represent the aims of the SOS Children's Village. According to these principles the child is brought up to be open to the world, to be good to other people and, as far as possible, not to have any aggression towards themselves. There's an old saying that states that everybody needs a house they can go back to with all their problems and joys. They should always be able to find warmth and understanding there. It is important that everybody has a family, because a family gives a person security and everything you need for life is taught you by your family. It is also important for everybody to have brothers and sisters. I'd like to tell you of an example: the first thing Aljoscha told me was that he had brothers and sisters. Everyday the first question when he woke up and the last before he went to bed was, "When will you find my brother and sister?" It took us a year to find his brother, Anatoli. It took us much longer to find his sister. She had been adopted and, according to the laws here, adoption remains a secret. It was thanks to the personal dedication of one of our educators that we eventually found her, but her parents don't want her to have any contact with her brothers.

Have you ever compared your situation to that of a single mother outside the SOS Children's Village?

There's a big difference. A woman who has a child does it for herself and for her ego. A woman who comes here to be an SOS mother puts the children's interests first and sometimes forgets about herself. She has to adapt to the needs of the children.



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If you had three wishes, what would you change in the SOS Children's Village?

What I would like most of all would be that the contacts between the various SOS Children's Villages be extended and strengthened. During Soviet times we had a children's camp. It was a sort of holiday home where children from all over the Soviet Union and from other countries came together. A lot of friendships were made then that have lasted until today. I am sure that nobody who has had an experience like that could possibly want to make war against, or be aggressive towards, other nations and traditions. If we had a camp like that, we shouldn't just invite SOS Children's Village children but also disabled children because they have a very hard time in our country. Any child who has spent at least a month in a holiday camp like that will have stored a lot of good for the rest of his or her life, and will also have developed the ability to look after weaker people. The basis for a person's being is laid in his or her childhood.

I would also like for a family not just to receive a house from SOS Children's Villages but also some form of transport. There is only the village director's car and a minibus and all the families and the administration are dependent on them. A car is a luxury in this country but it's not a luxury for a large family. You need some form of transport especially when you have small children. There are too many of us to take a taxi. Sometimes it is more important to be mobile than anything else.

How does the public see the job of an SOS mother?

People have different opinions. Some of them admire and respect us for what we do; others ask why we chose a job like this. I think that feelings are positive on the whole.

Do you have any contact with the community around the SOS Children's Village?

On the whole we have a good relationship with our neighbourhood. Sometimes our children steal fruit, that's quite normal, and other times the neighbours bring



fruit in for the children. Occasionally strangers come in with books, toys and food. There are no negative feelings towards us and never have been. I'd like to tell you of an example: There are twenty children from the SOS Children's Village in the Kindergarten here and all the others, that's more than twice as many, are from families outside. If their parents had any negative feelings towards us they wouldn't send their children to our kindergarten, would they? Sometimes when members of a family work and don't have anybody to look after the child, they leave him or her in the grounds of the SOS Children's Village. The child is safe here and they know he will be looked after. My children also go to visit their friends and school colleagues.



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The Children in Her Care

"The feeling of abandonment still lingers in their hearts."

The first child who came to me was Aljoscha. I had planned exactly what I would do with him, how I would play with him and how I would talk to him. Then I arrived at the orphanage and they said to Aljoscha, "This is your mother." He ran to me, flung his arms around me and asked, "My mother, where have you been?" All my plans went up in smoke. I realised that most of all I had to listen to my heart and do everything so that this child felt protected and received the love that he had been deprived of in the orphanage. Aljoscha was jealous of the children who came after him. He is a talented child. He paints, dances, likes music and is interested in everything.

All of the children have a deep emotional problem. The feeling of abandonment still lingers in their hearts. Nikolay - we call him Kolja – for example: you can still sense his suffering today. He was four years old when he came to me and still today he's not able to believe in the good side of life.

Then there's Tanja. When we picked her up from the airport I bent down to her and said, "Hello Tanja, I'm your mother." She was so shocked that she screamed for four hours and wanted to be taken back to the orphanage. She refused to be together with us for a long time. She would go to bed with her boots and jacket on and her bundle with all her belongings. She was five years old at the time.

When a child arrives in our family we all go to the shop to buy a few things that the child would like. Tanja was also allowed to choose things when we were in the shop. She had never had an opportunity like this before and she got "square" eyes, as we put it, because she was so happy. Then she started to try to manipulate me by saying, "If you don't do that I'll go back." That's when my patience ran out and in the end I said, "Right, then give me back all those lovely things and go back." She replied, "If all the nice clothes and things stay here, then so will I."



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It was also difficult with Anuschka to begin with because she couldn't speak. She just made sounds. Our speech therapist worked with her for three years and it's amazing that a child who was unable to speak when she was four-and-a-half years old can talk now. She does, of course, have problems with school but she's got a good heart, is happy and tender and everybody in the family loves her.

Dimitrij, or Dimka, wasn't able to talk or move when he came to me. He was ten years old. It's a miracle that this boy was able to catch up in his development. Dimka has the character of a man. He studies a person for a long time and if he likes that person he will become his most faithful friend. If he doesn't like the person, then they will have problems. I am a person of authority for him. If his teacher has a different point of view to mine, the teacher has problems with him. He's a good child and we call him "the golden son."

I noticed that the children help and look after each other

I try to make sure that the children look after and help each other. One day we were all outside together somewhere and the children found a wonderful tree for climbing. Anuschka finds it difficult to climb and I noticed that without my interfering, the children were organising themselves. The boys climbed down again and one of them helped her from above and the other from below. They were all happy then and so was I. I'm very proud of them when we're using public transport and the older ones give up their seat for the little girl. And when we get off, the eldest takes both the little girl and myself by the hand. Sometimes when the little ones are doing their homework and are taking their time about it, the older ones help them so that they can all go outside together to play as soon as possible. I do try to teach them, though, that it is important that each child does his own homework. It's all right to accept help but nobody should do anybody else's homework for them.

Anatol is the eldest child but he was the last to come to us. When he arrived he took a lot of my worries about the children upon himself. He carried out all the tasks responsibly and seriously. When he arrived he couldn't read very well and



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could only count up to 20. He'd caught up with everything within six months. I admire Anatol's great eagerness to learn.

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

First of all that they are able to see both themselves and their environment in a positive light. Also to be able to solve any conflict situations peacefully. That they are able to love and be loved. I try to make sure that I teach the children to look after themselves and others and to care cheerfully for the elderly and the young. I'm trying to motivate them to find careers that will suit their abilities and interests. I also try to make sure that they receive a musical education. They should be able to develop their creative skills so that they can turn their hobbies into professions. I would like to be able to teach them everything I know. I would like them to



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become independent and not to demand anything from society. They should be able to create things using their own strengths.

Do you think you will still keep in touch with the children once they have left the SOS Children's Village?

Yes, of course. I'm already thinking about grandchildren! My mother and I are already thinking about how we'll go to the children's weddings and bring up the grandchildren. We have become a family even though all the children have their own characters, problems and experiences. And the children are proud of this family. Previously they were able to say "mother" to any woman but now they call me "mother" and they know what it means. The first children, Aljoscha, Fedja and Anja, all say that I gave birth to them. The older children can remember their parents, of course, but they love me and to them I'm their mother. If you ask Anuschka what she wants to be she says, "I want to be a mother." Then she says, "I'm going to live with mother for ever and ever and help her." The others all chime in, "We will all live with mother! We'll build a big house and our grandparents will be able to live with us too."

What do you know about the children's backgrounds?

My children are all orphans. As far as I'm concerned, the important thing is to create a good and loving family. The children's backgrounds are not important. I have to love the children the way they are, with all their histories and all their experiences. The children arrive with problems that are not of their own making and I have to help them to forget this unhappiness otherwise they will spend the rest of their lives suffering. Sometimes the only way I can help the children is by studying their histories and documents so that I can see where their roots lie. Therefore, I know some of the children's histories but their backgrounds are not important for me. I just have to remove the black shadows of their pasts so that they can forget. Some of the children have relations whom we are in touch with.



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Could you tell us about a particularly beautiful and a particularly difficult experience to do with the children?

It was terrible to see how underdeveloped the children were. It was difficult for me to see how I could support them. Even today, now that they are old enough to do it themselves, they often ask me to feed them with a spoon. They missed out on that when they were younger. However, it's a great joy for me to see that they're catching up on all the abilities they didn't have before. If I see that they have worked hard I'm happy, even if they only come home from school with a "D". Together we have made a great step forward.

Are the social welfare services for children involved when a child comes to the SOS Children's Village?

Yes, there's a section for guardianship in the local authority and they choose which children are to come to the SOS Children's Village. There's also an orphanage, which is run by the Spanish Red Cross. They gather children up from the railway stations and try to find their relatives. Some of those children then come to us. Sometimes older people come with their grandchildren or nephews and nieces and ask if the children can be taken in here because they're afraid that if they die the children will be left on their own.

To My Colleagues Around the World

I wish for every SOS mother to be able to create an enclave of love within their own families and their villages. This love should extend across the whole world and then there will be no more war and no more abandoned children.

The Russian author, Dostojevski said, "It's impossible to create a happy world if, in order to do so, a single teardrop of one innocent child has to be shed." If we are successful in creating this enclave of love then we can do without the children's tears. That would change the way people think and they would only think good thoughts. I hope that the day will come when there are no abandoned children



anymore and no abandoned old people either. The first step towards this is that the child must be loved and respected within the family. The children have to learn to see themselves in a positive light. They have to love themselves and be loved just for the fact that they exist and are in this world. Once a child appreciates his own value then he can understand the value of others.

Elena on the Situation of Women in Kazakhstan

Kazakh women have never been as repressed as the women from other Asian republics. Kazakhs have always respected women, especially mothers and older women. The older women have always had a lot of say within the family. There were no orphanages here until the 1950's because the children would just be taken in by another family. I used to travel around Kazakhstan a lot and met families where children of all nationalities were living. They considered themselves to be Kazakhs because they had been brought up in a Kazakh family.

Kazakhstan became independent ten years ago. The difficult economic situation and the inherent uncertainty are not only problematical for the women, but they are the hardest hit as it is usually the women who lose their jobs first, even though it is the women who take more care of the family and children. People from rural



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areas often lose their homes. They come to the big cities and thereby lose touch with their clans and their families. Over the past ten years terms such as love, friendship, education, the honour of the family and children have been forgotten and drug abuse and prostitution have taken over.

A lot is being done to protect women and children. The wife of our president does a lot, for example. There is a Research Institute for Mothers and Children, there are sanatoria and a Medical Rehabilitation Centre for Women. Hope Centres have been set up in a number of areas for women who are no longer able to feed their children. They can bring their children to these centres and leave them there for a period of time. The only thing they have to do is visit them.

There are organisations for women in Kazakhstan, but for me a person's gender has never been important. I was able to make a career for myself in a male-dominated field. I know that women are not even considered for jobs like this in many western countries. At that time there were 128 people working in this power plant. Only nine of them were women. But no distinction was made between the men and the women. Everyone had the same conditions.

SOS Children's Village Work in Kazakhstan

Existing SOS Children's Village Programmes

3 SOS Children's Villages including 1 kindergarten, 9 youth programmes, 1 holiday camp and 3 social centres providing support to families in the surrounding communities.



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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

Lake Waikaremoana, New Zealand

Kia Ora Everyone! The Spring and Autumn equinox has now come and gone, and suddenly my Canadian Facebook Friends post photos of ice melting! The countdown has begun in some places for changing the Winter wardrobe for Summer gear. Seasons are important!

I've been thinking of that notion of '*zone of proximal development*' which the early 20th Century Russian psychologist, Vygotsky wrote about. He argued that learning is heavily shaped by socio-cultural influences – perhaps more influential than deep brain learning.

A rare opportunity presented itself recently during "Cicada Season" that let me become the learner with 3 highly skilled fly fishermen in '*my zone*' for a whole day! We were: local fishing guide, Davie Dodds who grew up around the Lake; New Zealand international competitor Aaron, and Paul, from the Australian fly fishing team. Catch and release all day!



Lake Waikaremoana from Lou's Lookout with inlets to both arms of the Lake visible



Lake Waikaremoana Holiday Park Cabins and Campsite



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Paul and Aaron had limited experience with fly fishing in a Lake like Waikaremoana as their experience was in the faster moving water of rivers and streams. Our Guide kept reminding them that as the fish takes the fly they must count to 5! That lesson took time.

In late Summer, when the cicadas come out in force around the New Zealand bush, so it is that the big Brown trout move in close to shore around the rocks and lay under overhanging trees waiting for these big flying insects to drop into the water and flutter about. Trout often cruise quietly in a circuit beneath the rocks, waiting for the cicadas warming themselves on the rocks to roll off into the water. Flick the fly onto the rock and then gently let it drop in.

Fly fishing involves much more than standing beside, or in a river sweeping a fly line back and forth. Lake fishing involves stalking quietly along the shore for fish without being seen.

Lying in the shadows of rocks or a fallen log, at certain times of the year like this, the action was pretty steady. Catch and release is the recommended option when fishing for the big breeding stock trout. Rinse hands before unhooking and return them to the water quickly.



Fishing Guide Davie introducing NZ & Australian competitive fly fishermen to our Lake



This was Cicada Fly season and the Big Brown Trout were hungry but no bait allowed





Australian Paul checking out lying in the shade of the rocks



New Zealander Aaron plays a nice Rainbow Trout to the Lake shore



Australian Paul caught the biggest fish at 2.5 kg (catch & release)



The Hilton @ Lake Waikaremoana Holiday Park, Site 20

We watched with Paul from the boat as this big brown trout cruised along the shore. His well-positioned dry fly drew immediate attention and then it was all go for the next half hour! Luckily, Paul had begun to master the requirement to count to 5 before securing the hook. Otherwise, the soft-mouthed Brownies just spit out the hook. What a memory!



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It was with some sadness and regret that we finally broke camp this year and took down our old tent, nicknamed the Hilton long ago by our co-ed Scout Troop. It's had a good 30 years, thanks to good people at Stirling University who gifted funds for camping equipment.

We have a replacement – Hilton 2, same style, canvas still boxed, with modern features.

As I reflect on that day, I wonder how often as child and youth care workers we give much thought to the idea of 'being in the zone' with a child or young person. Do you find yourself needing the kid(s) to enter 'your zone' because often it's easier that way? Far better to think of a daily activity where you can enter 'a young person's zone' and have fun!



The Sacred Bird (Kereru) or New Zealand Wood Pigeon lived in the trees by our tent

A handwritten signature that reads "Jelon". Above the letter "J" is a simple smiley face drawn with a dot for a nose and a curved line for a mouth.



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Information

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