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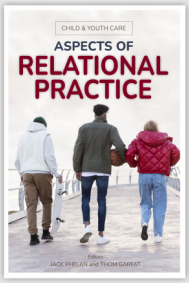

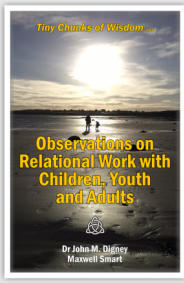

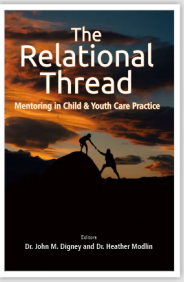

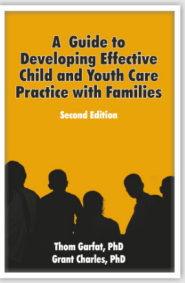

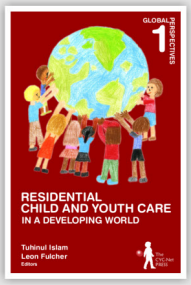

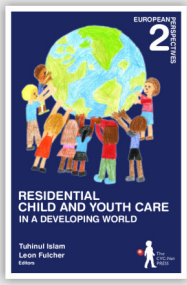

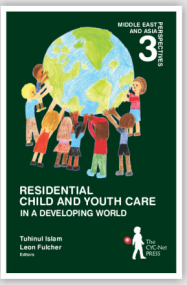

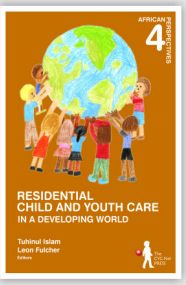

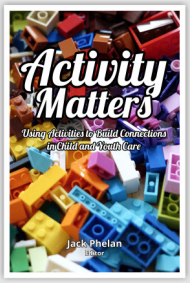

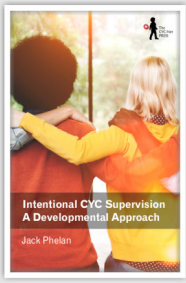

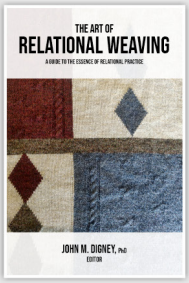

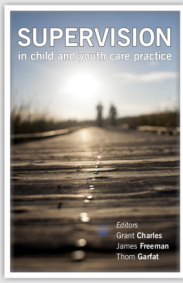

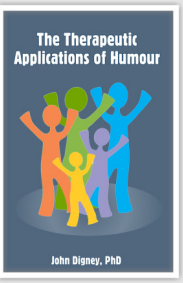

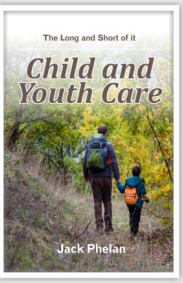

Editorial Comment

From Inspiration to Integration: What Happens on Monday Morning?

Janice Daley

Conference season is almost here.

Across the globe, Child and Youth Care practitioners will gather in classrooms, conference halls, and online spaces. We will reconnect with colleagues we have not seen in years. We will hear ideas that name what we have felt in our work but have not yet found language for. We will leave feeling hopeful — reminded that we are part of something larger than our own programs, our own agencies, our own shifts.

And then Monday comes.

The shift is still short-staffed. The paperwork is still waiting. The young person in front of us needs steady presence, not fresh theory. And without meaning to, the notes from the conference are tucked into a bag or saved into a folder, where they quietly lose their urgency.

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If you have ever felt that slide from inspiration back into routine, you are not alone. It is not a lack of commitment or care. It is simply the reality of practice.

In other fields, especially healthcare, people have paid close attention to this pattern — the way good ideas can fade once they meet the pressure of daily work. Quality improvement efforts often follow a simple rhythm: plan one small shift, try it in real life, notice what happens, adjust if needed, and then keep going.

It is humble advice. Start small. Pay attention. Learn as you go.

In Child and Youth Care, our hearts are big. When something moves us, we want to bring it fully into our programs, our supervision, our teams. But sweeping change is hard to sustain, especially in environments already stretched thin. Small, steady shifts often travel farther than grand declarations.

What if this conference season, instead of trying to carry everything home, we chose one idea that feels both meaningful and manageable?

One new way of asking a question.

One shift in how we respond during conflict.

One small adjustment in how we structure supervision.

Not everything. Just one thing we care enough about to try with intention.

Sociologist Everett Rogers observed that new ideas move through communities in stages. Some people are ready immediately. Others need time to watch and consider. Most of us change not because we were persuaded, but because we saw something working in real life.

When we try one small change and stay with it long enough to see its impact, we create something others can see and respond to. Not a speech. Not a policy draft. A lived example. And in a relational field like ours, lived

examples carry weight. They invite conversation. They reduce fear. They make change feel possible.

As our global community gathers in St. John's this June for the World Child and Youth Care Conference — and as many others participate in learning spaces closer to home — perhaps the invitation is not simply to be inspired, but to be intentional about what comes next.

Come ready to be inspired. And also come ready to choose one thing worth trying when you return.

Talk about it with your team. Ask a colleague to notice it with you. Revisit it after a few weeks. Let it grow roots instead of remaining a highlight in your notebook.

Children and youth are not helped by the notes we take or the slides we photograph. They are helped by what we practice on ordinary days — especially the tired Mondays when no one is applauding and no conference badge is hanging around our neck.

Inspiration connects us.

Shared practice strengthens us.

And small, steady change is what makes the difference.

JANICE DALEY is a Child and Youth Care practitioner in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, with experience across residential, family support, and community settings since 2000. She holds an MSc in Child and Youth Care Studies from the University of Strathclyde and serves as an associate editor with *CYC-Online*.

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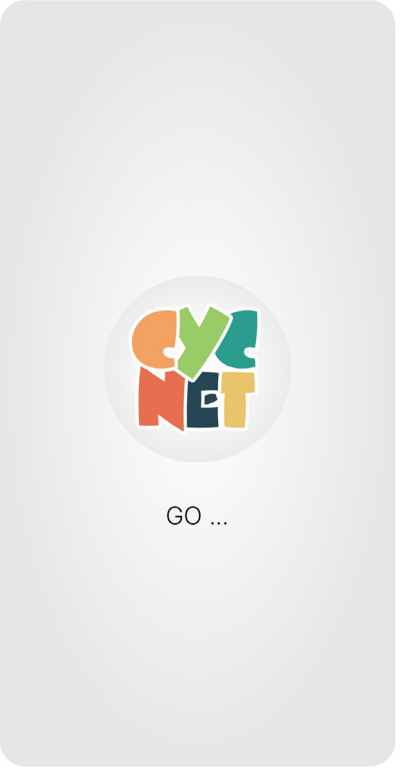

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Sleep, Eat, Play, Learn, Be You, Community (Part 2)

Kiaras Gharabaghi

Last month, I introduced six quality standards for residential care: sleep, eat, play, learn, be you, and community. I provided the context in which it is important to think about quality standards in residential care and some of the misguided ways that is currently happening. For anyone interested in avoiding the re-introduction of medical models in residential care settings, thinking about standards beyond clinical standards becomes very important. Last week I provided some possible framing of standards in relation to sleep and eat. This week, I will continue this process by focusing on play and learn.

Play

A child's right to play at developmentally and socially appropriate levels has been captured in much of the child rights literature and regulatory frameworks globally and locally. Play is a fundamental right; but it is so much more than that, and in the context of being a child in residential care, play takes on a significant new importance. Specifically, the importance of play in residential care is that it maintains the status of children as children and of youth as youth. This is not to be taken for granted. Residential care environments are designed to see children and youth as clients to be changed in some way, using methods that are designed by adults for the

purpose of achieving adult goals. It is not obvious or certain that one can be a child or a youth when living in a setting where the goal is to change or be changed.

There are multiple dimensions to consider in relation to play. First, play is an opportunity for the autonomous expression of identity, relational preferences and needs, and the discovery of one's personality, disposition, and social resilience. I need to make clear that play in this context is not therapeutic play; I am not referring to the ways in which many therapeutic processes and treatments utilize play as a method for assessment or for enabling change. I am referring instead to play as a series of moments in a child's life that are driven by the child's imagination, self-determination, and stimulants for experiencing joy. Play can include objects (such as board games or cards), natural things (such as trees or fields), or no material items of any kind. Although there are many philosophical and spiritual belief systems in which non-human objects and nature (or land) have agency as well, in this case I am talking about play that is driven by the agency of the child and that may or may not intersect with the agency of staff or other children. Play can unfold individually, but more commonly unfolds either in a dyad or in a group. It is critically important to understand that play is not connected to any therapeutic goals, processes, or activities. It is not connected to the reasons for why a child is in residential care in the first place nor to the perceived needs of the child based on various assessment tools. Instead, I am talking about play that is disconnected from the material reality of treatment, care, and the therapeutic process. Essentially, in the context of the 24-hour day of the residential setting, play is the time owned and shaped by the child in its entirety. The less purpose it serves through the eyes of the staff or the treatment team, the better.

Quality Standard

Every residential setting reserves time and space for children and youth to engage in self-determined play, individually or in groups. To the extent that children or youth may wish to involve objects or equipment in their play, residential settings are responsible for ensuring a menu of objects and equipment are available to children and youth, and that such objects or equipment are never withheld as a form of consequence or punishment. Play is recognized not as a privilege but as a right. Objects and equipment available reflect the cultural and identity needs of children and youth (including accessible materials appropriate for physical and intellectual disability and neurodivergence) and enable both individual and group play. While staff and other professionals may be invited into play, they are guests within that play and are prohibited from settings rules or providing structure, beyond the provision of safe spaces for play and the equipment itself. Group play often results in conflict and tensions, but unless such conflict and tensions become dangerous or violent to children and youth, there are neither interventions nor consequences to approaches to play that staff may find objectionable. Play is understood not as a vehicle for teaching children and youth or for building their capacity for behavioural self-regulation, but instead it is understood as time and space in which children and youth self-determine their responses to challenges that may arise, and in which feedback about their responses to such challenges comes exclusively either through their own experience or through other children and youth participating in the play.

A note on technology: for the purpose of meeting the standard for play, digital technologies are not acceptable and do not count toward play time. This is because digital technologies (social media, video games, etc.) exercise non-responsive agency (you can't argue with social media, but you

can argue with other children you are playing with) and reduce the autonomous nature of play. This does not mean that children and youth in residential care should not have access to digital technologies; it simply means that the time during which such access happens is not play time.

Learn

Children and youth have a lot to learn. Depending on chronological and developmental age, much of what they may experience or encounter is new to them. Furthermore, children and youth are in school, where learning is structured and based on a predetermined curriculum. In thinking about quality standards in residential care, structured learning (in school or through the program) is a performance-based activity that is assessed and has consequences for decisions made about the child or youth moving forward. Learn as a quality standard is not about such structured learning (but also does not negate the value of structured learning). It is about learning who you are in relation to the world around you. Learn is the opportunity to experiment in relationship, to explore one's own limits and comfort zones, and to be taught by self-talk, the method by which we help ourselves process new experiences. Learn is about everything that is not taught in structured ways. The goal of learn as a quality standard is to ensure that young people learn about how power operates in society, about grief, loss and sadness, and learn about how rules and regulations can be manipulated in ways that work for them. The standard of learn is about providing the opportunity (the space and the encouragement) for young people to learn how to become, whatever they might become, and how to make sense of the way in which the world either promotes or challenges their way of becoming.

Quality Standard

Residential care settings are prepared to prioritize children's and youth's informal learning processes and actively participate and engage in these. The environment itself is presented to young people as a learning environment as much as a therapeutic environment. To this end, all residential services provide cues for learning; this can include, for example, the display of globes or world maps in prominent spaces so that conversations about where we are from and what that might mean can unfold. Similarly, residential services provide access to news and current affairs, as well as to ways of exploring histories of peoples corresponding to the heritages of the young people currently living in the environment. Food and play similarly can serve to promote learning, with the caveat that such learning is self-driven by the young people and programs cannot predetermine the outcomes or methods of learning in these contexts. In an effort to promote opportunities for young people to learn, all programs must engage and provide specialized programming in at least three core areas outside of the therapeutic context that are closely associated with learning about oneself and one's relationship to the world: examples of such core areas include music (music listening, learning to play an instrument), art (visual, performance), non-human relationships (horses, dogs, farm animals), and body movement (yoga, dance, tai chi). All residential services chart learning activities for every individual client and together with the client, update what has been learned through child or youth friendly media such that the child or youth always owns a representation of their learning.

Next month, I will conclude the description of quality standards by focusing on 'Be you' and on community as quality standards. I will also provide a framework through which one can understand the

interconnectedness of these standards and operationalize these both in policy and in practice.

Until then, be well!

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

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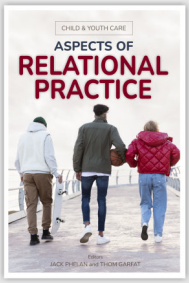

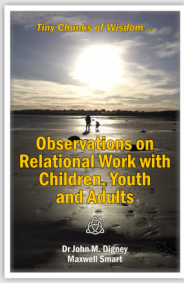

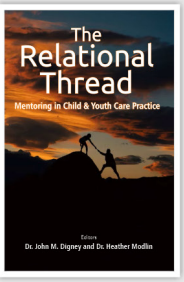

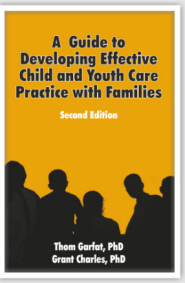

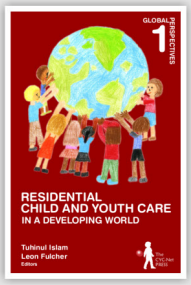

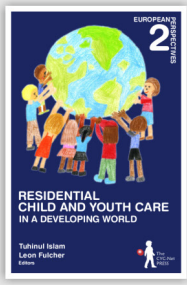

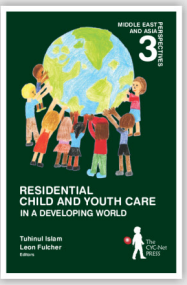

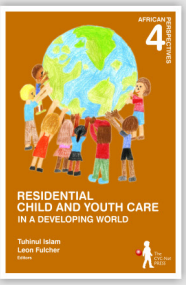

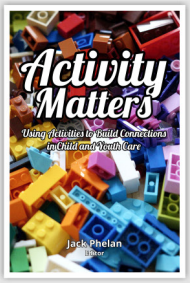

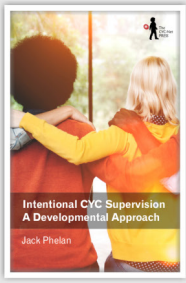

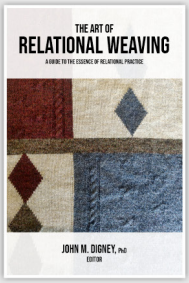

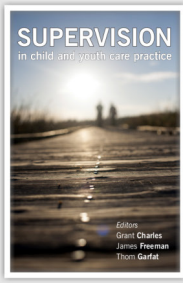

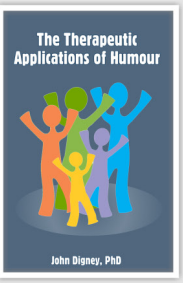

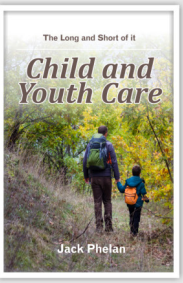

The Risks in Children's Use of Chatbots

What parents need to know about their kids' potentially harmful use of chatbots

Judith Lewis Herman and Frank W. Putnam

With growing horror, we have been following news reports of AI chatbots convincing troubled children and adolescents that suicide is a noble and acceptable release from their distress. Reading transcripts of these chatbot-child "conversations" literally brings tears at times—tears of rage that such dangerous devices are unleashed on unsuspecting and vulnerable children and adolescents.

Suicide is the second- and third-leading cause of death for children and adolescents, respectively. The rate of youth suicide is rapidly increasing, with girls making more attempts but boys having almost three times the number of lethal completions (17.3/100,000 males v. 6.4/100,000 females) (Khushboo et al., 2026).

What Do We Know About Adolescent Uses of Chatbots?

Never in the course of human history have children and adolescents interacted with seemingly intelligent entities capable of generating individualized responses to their most deeply personal questions and insecurities. Children are developmentally primed to have intense "personal"

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relationships with inanimate entities, from teddy bears to Pokémon. One of their primary developmental tasks is learning how to be in reciprocal human relationships where there are mutual expectations and accountability, both joy and disappointment. But chatbot relationships are notably "frictionless," without mutuality, expectations, or accountability. What children and adolescents learn from relating to chatbots will inevitably transfer into their human relationships.

Chatbots are carefully crafted to be experienced by users as friendly, trustworthy companions. They are low-cost, always available, and perceived to be private. With their still-developing reality-testing, children and adolescents are susceptible to unquestioningly investing these computer-simulated companions with unwarranted omniscience and beneficence.

The unrelenting exposure of today's youth to AI chatbots is inevitable. Encouraged by web developers who regard AI as essential to their platforms' success, chatbots are increasingly embedded in all manner of applications. Surveys indicated that more than 95 percent of U.S. youth ages 13 to 17 report using the internet (Pratt et al., 2024). In a nationally representative survey, 13.1 percent of U.S. youth (approximately 5.4 million children) reported using AI for mental health advice (McBain et al., 2025). Of the mental health advice seekers, about two-thirds reported at least monthly use, and over 90 percent reported that the chatbot advice was helpful.

Risks of AI Chatbots

These types of "therapeutic" interactions are just beginning to be studied. One flagrant red flag of the dangers posed by AI chatbots is that they can be easily "tricked" into giving children dangerous advice. For

example, researchers posing as 15-year-olds were able to convince a commonly used chatbot to describe how to avoid detection of drug or alcohol use, how to manufacture explosive devices, and how to outwit surveillance systems.

Chatbots can create risks in other ways. As engaging companions, they may replace important human relationships. As commercial systems, they collect extensive information about users, including children, which may be exploited. Many educators are concerned that a growing dependence on AI to do schoolwork may disrupt the powerful feedback that occurs when doing or solving a task by oneself.

Problems for Parents

Realistically, most parents have only a limited knowledge of what their children are doing and seeing on the internet. The older the child, the more parents tend to respect the child's privacy, and therefore the less they know about the content the child is exposed to. Parents often lack the technical knowledge to examine their children's digital devices or activate any parental controls that may exist.

In news accounts of chatbot-abetted suicides, grieving parents frequently express shocked bewilderment at how incredibly intimate and irresistibly powerful the "relationship" was between their deceased child and the chatbot.

Signs That a Child's Chatbot Use Is Unhealthy

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) issued a one-pager listing signs that a child or adolescent's AI use may be unhealthy (AACAP, No. 145; July 2025). These include:

- Spending time with AI applications at the expense of other interests and responsibilities.
- Decreased face-to-face social interactions.
- Emotional outbursts, lying, and rule-breaking when limits are set on AI or screen use.
- Sleep disturbances related to excessive nocturnal device use.
- Sharing inappropriate personal information or images with AI systems.
- Using AI to cheat on school assignments.
- Using AI tools to bully peers and creating sexual or violent content with AI.

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Ways to Help Youth Use AI Safely

The AACAP flyer includes recommendations that are shared by experts who study the influence of the internet on children and adolescents. Parents should:

- Explore the AI tools together with their child, both to look for questionable content and become familiar with an AI platform's features, such as parental controls and access to chatbot logs.
- Model skepticism and how to adopt a questioning stance toward information offered by AI.
- Encourage children to share and discuss online experiences and help them to understand that images, videos, audio, or depicted events may be fake.
- Discuss the difference between a chatbot companion and human relationships, as well as promote and support human social interactions.
- Set and enforce clear boundaries around AI and/or screen usage.
- Learn and enforce school rules governing AI use on assignments.
- Ensure that their child's sensitive personal information or images are not being shared with AI systems.

The Problem with These Recommendations

The problem with these recommendations is that they put a great deal of the onus on parents, who are expected to stay up-to-date in a fast-moving, youth-oriented cyberworld that is outside of their experience and interest. Meanwhile, AI and social media providers remain broadly immune from legal liability under a 1996 law (CDA in 47 U.S.C. 230). This 20th-century law was originally intended to protect providers from accountability

for libelous content created by others but posted on their platforms (Walker, 2023).

Thirty years later, the internet is a very different world. No longer composed of simple bulletin boards passively accepting user posts, AI-based websites are highly interactive, covertly, but profoundly, influencing users through sophisticated algorithms that are not well understood even by the providers.

In many respects, the situation has the feeling of a runaway train, and the nation's youth are tied to the tracks. It is past time for Congress and AI chatbot providers to meet their moral and societal obligations to actively deter dangerous AI-driven interactions, such as chatbots that enable suicidal impulses or risky behaviors, especially as they involve minors.

Key points

- At least 13 percent of youth are getting mental health advice from chatbots.
- Chatbots may form dangerously intimate "relationships" with vulnerable youth, promoting risky behavior.
- Most recommendations to protect children from chatbots place the onus on unprepared parents.

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JUDITH LEWIS HERMAN, M.D., is a semi-retired professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

FRANK W. PUTNAM, M.D., is a professor of clinical psychiatry at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

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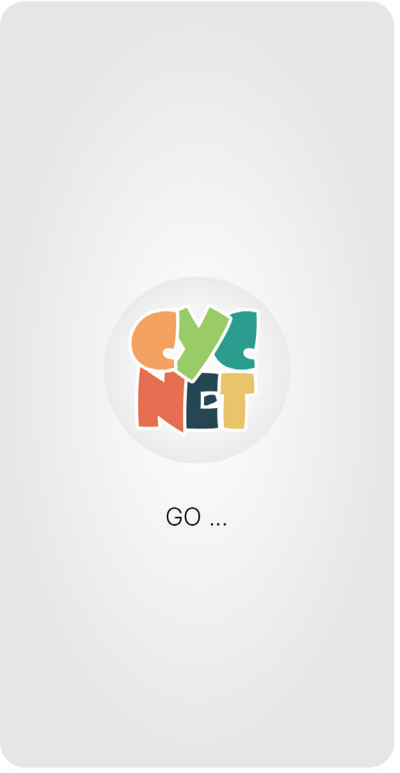

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The Power of Mistakes

Joanne Leblanc

In Child and Youth Care, we talk a lot about presence, relationship, and the importance of 'being with' young people, not 'doing to or for' them (Garfat, et. al, 2018). But one of the most valuable lessons I've learned in this work is something we talk about less directly: the power of mistakes.

When I first started working with young people, I was afraid of getting it wrong. I planned sessions meticulously, sometimes down to the minute. I built contingency plans for my contingency plans. I thought if I could just get it all right, everything else would fall into place—smoother groups, fewer meltdowns, more connection. And honestly, it worked. Until it didn't.

Kids don't show up according to plan—and neither do we. Our work is built on people, not perfection. And people are messy, unpredictable, and full of surprises. That includes the children and families we serve—and it includes us. Some professions may hesitate to break the fourth wall like that. "Wait, the human helping me is a human too? Just as fallible as I am?" I used to be afraid that if people saw that truth, they would trust me less.

In *The Resilient Practitioner* Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison (2016) describe how many practitioners feel responsible for solving impossible problems. I recognize this in my own work, where this tension lives in the space between how I am experienced and what I carry internally. For a long time, I felt that mistakes in that space would weaken the relationship or expose something I was meant to hold together.

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What I have come to learn is that the relationship is not sustained by getting it right, but by how we stay in it when things are not right. Now I see it as one of the gifts of my practice: to walk beside someone in my full personhood, offering not perfection or tidy answers, but care, presence, and regard for their existence.

The hardest part for me wasn't just getting it wrong - it was how getting it wrong felt. Mistakes don't just sting, they sit with me. There's that gut-punch moment after something doesn't land, when the room gets quiet or a young person walks away or a parent looks concerned - and all of a sudden I'm deep in that awful feeling: "I messed this up." I've had to learn to stay with that feeling. Not bypass it. Not excuse it. Just sit in the "blah" of it long enough to reflect.

That part's not fun. But it's where the real growth happens for me. If I'm brave enough to let the discomfort teach me something, I usually come out the other side stronger. Mistakes have pushed me to be more present, more curious, and -ironically- more confident in my ability to respond to what's actually happening, not just what I planned to have happen. Mistakes have helped me become less rigid and more relational.

What's helped me reframe all of this is understanding what mistakes do to our brains. Neuroscience tells us that we learn faster and more deeply from mistakes than from doing things right. Errors activate different parts of the brain (Moser et al., 2011) encouraging adaptation, memory-building, and creativity. I've seen this in my own practice. Getting something wrong has often led me to think more broadly, try new approaches, or deepen the relationships I have with the young people I support—especially when I come back to them with humility.

In therapeutic groups, I've started purposefully building in room for mistakes on purpose. I plan with flexibility now. I co-create ideas with kids and families, knowing that we might have to shift along the way. And I let them see me not know. I let them see me get it wrong and come back. That models something powerful: that getting it wrong doesn't break the relationship—it can strengthen it.

But let's be real—this doesn't always feel safe. Innovation, creativity, and outside-the-box thinking are wonderful, but they come with risk. You might try something new and discover a young person isn't ready for it yet. You might miss the mark. I have. I've suggested things that didn't land, introduced activities that unintentionally brought up discomfort, or shared something that didn't resonate. Those moments are hard. But when I've been able to stay in relationship, to check in and repair, those moments have also become some of the richest in my practice.

Because in the end, Child and Youth Care practice is not about perfection. It's about process. It's about connection. It's about staying when things get messy. The relational Child and Youth Care field invites us to evolve—not just in response to outcomes, but in response to each other. When we treat mistakes not as a breakdown, but as part of a living, breathing process—we open ourselves up to real growth. Not just for the young people and families, but for ourselves.

So no, I don't like getting it wrong. I still feel my stomach drop, the panic, the doubt. But I've learned not to let those feelings drive me out of the room. I stay. I reflect. I try again. Because I believe in the work. I believe in the young people. And I believe in the long-term value of growing—honestly, humbly, and relationally—even when it's uncomfortable.

And that's what I want the kids I work with to be known for—not for getting it right all the time, but for being a place that keeps showing up with care, no matter what.

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JOANNE LEBLANC is a Child and Youth Care practitioner from Ottawa, Ontario who works relationally alongside children, youth, and families. She values presence, connection, and everyday moments as opportunities for growth. Through play, curiosity, and shared experience, she co-creates spaces where young people feel seen, supported, and able to discover their own strengths.

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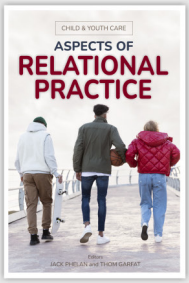

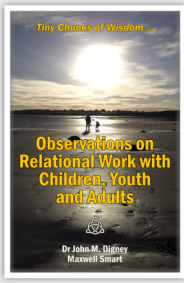

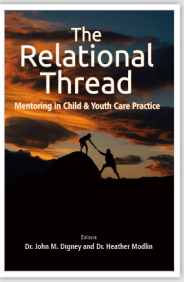

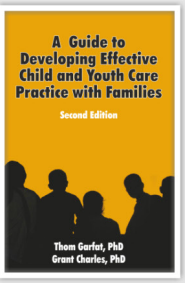

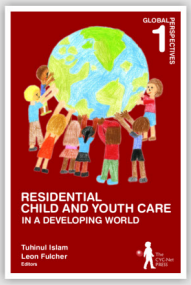

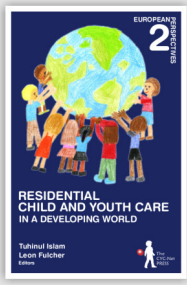

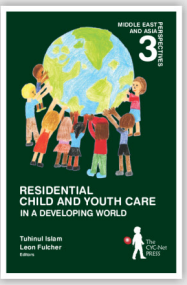

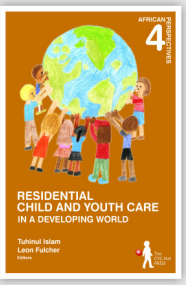

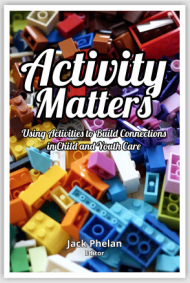

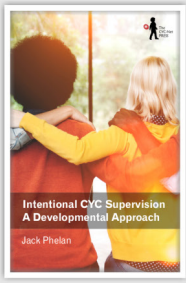

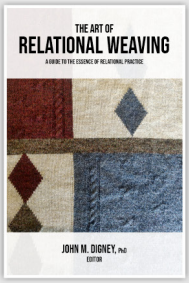

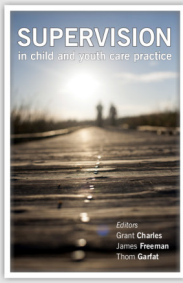

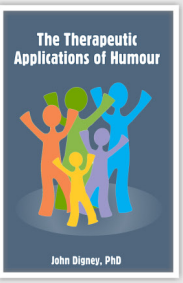

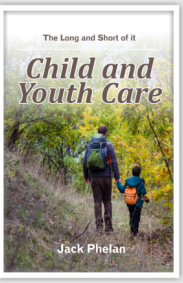

Caring for Youth and My Own: Reflections on Dual Caregiving in Child and Youth Care

Kathryn Colford

A Life Defined by Caregiving

I have been a child and youth care (CYC) worker since 2009. For the past fifteen years I have worked in community centre after-school programs, group homes, youth mental health treatment centres, homeless shelters, and supportive housing units. I have worked frontline—casual shifts, overnights, holidays, weekends, rotating schedules, and even mandated overtime. In 2025, I became a program supervisor, and so still relatively new in the broader scope of my CYC career.

Yet my most important role is not listed on my résumé: I am a mother to two young sons in elementary school. I am a caregiver at work, and I am a caregiver at home. This article reflects on the emotional, structural, and relational tensions of dual caregiving—being both a CYC professional and a parent—and how these roles shape, challenge, and sustain one another over time.

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Motherhood and Practice: Shaping Each Other

Motherhood has shaped my practice, and my practice has shaped my parenting. My life revolves around children and youth routines, relationships, responsibilities in both spaces. I have teared up at work watching a young person master a skill they once resisted. I also become emotional when asked about my sons or moments I missed with them. I have been told, more than once, "I wish you were my mom." I have received countless hugs from children and youth who needed connection. These moments fill my cup even as they sometimes break my heart. Each child only gets eighteen years to be a child, and now, as a parent, I see how quickly those years pass.

Becoming a mother made me more patient at work. I developed a deeper tolerance for emotional dysregulation and a clearer understanding of behaviour often reflecting exhaustion, hunger, overstimulation, or unmet needs. I frequently say, "Let's have a snack before we have a conversation." I say it at work, and I say it at home.

This dual perspective—learning patience at home and applying it at work—shaped how I now observe growth, both in staff and the youth in my care.

Observing Growth: Youth, Staff, and My Children

As a supervisor, I watch staff interactions much like I watch my own children play: curious, attentive, noticing moments of growth. The way a child plays this year isn't how they'll play next year. The same is true for staff learning relational practice. I notice small breakthroughs when a staff member connects with a youth who's been resistant, or handling a challenging situation with calm instead of frustration. And I notice moments of uncertainty too.

Being a mom helps me see how important patience, encouragement, and simply being present really are. The skills I practice with my children make me a better supervisor, and the patience I build supervising staff informs how I support my kids' development. Growth takes time, relationships take work and showing up consistently with care makes all the difference.

The Emotional Labour of Dual Caregiving

This patience comes with sustained emotional labour. What often appears as calm professionalism masks the mental load of day-to-day responsibilities: remembering appointments, managing homework, cooking meals, and navigating bedtimes and bathtimes. Compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, and ongoing exposure to young people's stories are not abstract concepts—they accumulate over years. We receive training on these realities but living in them is something different.

I bring calm, empathy, and problem-solving skills to the young people in my care, then return home to offer that same energy to my children. Some days I feel guilty about the screen time they receive so I can have a few moments to myself. How often have I left work thinking, I should have said that differently? How often do my children ask for one more bedtime story while I wonder who read to the children at work that day? A song comes on the radio and reminds me of a former youth. A name in the news prompts

the same reflection: If only we had reached them earlier. You do not stay long in this field without witnessing loss, suicide, addiction, and incarceration—lives that unfold with immense hardship.

This mental load follows me into every space, and sometimes the most visible symbol of that divided attention is in my hands: my phone.

Divided Attention: The Phone as Symbol

My children sometimes see me as distracted. They ask, “Are you working?” or “Get off your phone.” I explain its work, but the explanation only goes so far when home time feels like it should fully belong to them. I have stood in Costco responding to a staff member in crisis and tried to play a board game at home while managing a safety concern. In those moments, both roles demand my full attention, and I feel the constant tension of trying to be fully present in both spaces.

Early in my career, I left my phone in a locker and checked it discreetly during breaks to see pictures of their day and reassure myself that, even on the hardest shifts, I was providing a good life for them. Today, staff use phones to document notes, communicate discreetly, and manage crises without escalating situations in front of youth. I continue to integrate my personal and professional life, including volunteering with my provincial CYC association, a commitment I embrace out of passion and dedication to the field.

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The phone has become a physical symbol of divided caregiving, forcing the question: who receives my full attention, and what message does partial presence send to my children and to the youth in my care? It reminds me daily that the boundaries between professional responsibility and personal connection are constantly shifting, and that being fully present in either space requires conscious effort, reflection, and care.

Shift Work, Career, and Family Realities

Shift work shaped my parenting in ways I did not anticipate. I often left for work while my children slept and returned home to find them asleep again, standing quietly beside the crib with tears in my eyes. Day shifts on the weekend felt especially heavy, knowing society frames weekends as family time. Broken sleep—from overnight shifts or toddlers climbing into bed needing one more cuddle—left me feeling exhausted in every part of my life: at work, at home, and in between. Coffee became a lifeline, a small strategy for managing two demanding roles. Social isolation followed; while peers gathered on weekends or evenings, I worked. Connection with other adults—family, friends, colleagues—was essential. I poured so much into others' cups; I needed spaces where someone poured into mine.

Career, financial pressures, and family responsibilities intertwined with these personal challenges. Supervisors rarely asked how I was balancing dual caregiving, and while my return from maternity leave—one full year with each son—was acknowledged, the ongoing realities of parenting alongside CYC work went largely unexamined. I stayed in shift work for practical childcare reasons, even as it limited career advancement. I sometimes used annual leave to attend weekend or weeknight sports events or birthday parties, and I once imagined volunteering regularly at my sons' school, but practical limits required occasional field trips instead.

Financial pressures added another layer. I juggled multiple jobs at once to manage casual and permanent roles, worked overtime to afford family trips or birthday celebrations, and pushed through illness to preserve sick days for when my children might need me most. Rising costs, delayed government funding, and structural constraints intensified these pressures. Our systems depend on CYC workers showing up—through snowstorms, summer breaks, across shifting schedules, and using annual leave when childcare fails—yet rarely pause to consider who is caring for the caregivers at home. Many families manage through opposite-shift parenting, careful scheduling, and quiet sacrifice. But at what cost?

There is a particular grief in creating meaningful experiences for other children while missing irreplaceable moments with my own. After full days of emotional regulation, behaviour support, and activity planning, I returned home, often depleted. I wanted to rest yet also be fully present and intentional. At work, I rarely forgot themed days or celebrations because I was part of a team; at home, I sometimes forgot special school days or realized too late that my child needed a specific outfit or prop. The guilt is heavy precisely because I understand how much those moments matter. Now, as my children outgrow certain stages, I quietly reflect: *what could I have done differently*?

I was born into circumstances that allowed stability; the children and youth I work with did not choose the cards they were dealt. Some have no contact with their biological parents. Many have experienced multiple placements and adults meant to care for them. Sometimes I have been one more face in a long line of helpers. There are youth whose names I no longer remember, and others whose birthdays, favourite artists, or shared Dairy Queen outings I still recall. Two youths attended my wedding in 2013; I gave them flowers from my bouquet. Years later, I still remember their names. It is both grounding and eye-opening to recognize the depth and

limits of our impact—and to realize my children benefit from stability and nurture that some youth I serve did not consistently receive.

Navigating two identities

I move between identifying as a CYC professional and a mother. Some days I feel steadier as a CYC professional, others as a mother. Most days I navigate both simultaneously. If our field is grounded in relational practice, should that not extend to the people doing the work? What might change if supervision included open conversations about parenting strain and caregiver fatigue? What would it mean to design workplaces that assume workers have families and responsibilities beyond their shifts?

These questions linger, not as abstract policy concerns, but as daily realities shaping who remains in this field and who quietly steps away. I also recognize this is my experience as a mother in Canada; someone in another context, or a father, may experience it differently.

Supporting those who care

Years ago, colleagues nicknamed me “Mudder,” a Newfoundland and Labrador term for mom. Now, as a supervisor, I am sometimes called a “mother hen,” checking in on staff and youth even when I am off shift. That care is my strength, and my vulnerability. Perhaps the goal is not to be the best mother, or the best CYC worker in isolation, but to recognize that both identities coexist. This work is, at its heart, about relationships, and relationships require sustaining.

My hope in naming these tensions—the grief, divided attention, financial strain, and emotional labour, is to invite a broader conversation. Caregivers need care. Without deliberate support, burnout is inevitable, and both the young people we serve and our own children at home experience the

consequences. Sustainability is not about loving either role less; it is about ensuring we can continue loving both well. Supporting the caregivers sustains the profession, ensuring that the youth we serve and the children we raise at home both thrive.

KATHRYN COLFORD is a Child and Youth Care professional from Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, with over 15 years' experience in youth services. A wife and mother of two, she brings dedication to caregiving at work and home, and volunteers with her provincial CYC association to support the field she cares deeply about.

Academic, Organisations, Agencies, Individuals

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

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Relational Child and Youth Care Work

Lucky Jacobs

Relational Child and Youth Care practice should not be a difficult concept to understand. It simply means that for a Child and Youth Care Worker to offer any therapeutic intervention, a relationship must first be built with the young person. From the very first contact both the Child and Youth Care Worker and the young person begin a process of sizing each other up, trying to figure out the obvious traits each one carries.

We gather information through body posture, tone of voice, facial expressions, and sometimes even scars or marks on the body. From these observations, we often form quick, prejudiced conclusions, many of which we later discover were wrong.

It's natural for any human to become cautious when a stranger enters their space and their life. We must remember that this applies equally to children and their families. Our good intentions do not automatically qualify us to be trusted. Trust must be earned through rapport.

Relationship as the Foundation

While the end goal of our interaction with children is therapeutic support, this can only happen when a solid relationship has been built (Phelan, 2003). Facilitating this relationship is the responsibility of the Child and

Youth Care Worker. A young person will allow a worker into their lifespace depending on the level of trust established between them.

In many situations, Child and Youth Care Workers manage behaviour through the strength of their relationships. For example, if a young person behaves in a way that is not allowed, the team will often assign the worker who has the strongest relationship with that young person. That worker is more likely to succeed in helping the young person regulate. On the other hand, if a worker has no relationship with the young person, managing inappropriate behaviour becomes much more difficult.

Meeting Each Other

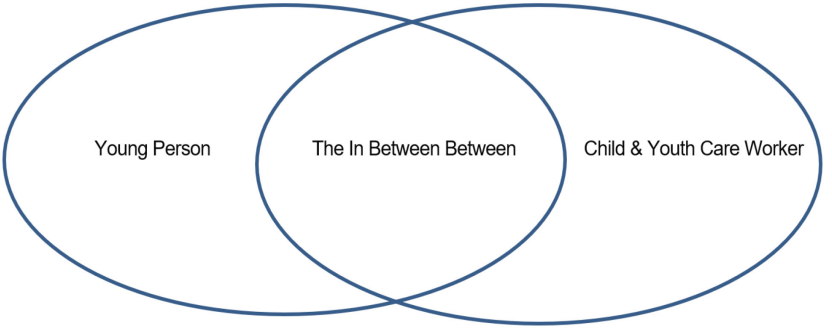
For the relationship to be experienced, both the young person and the Child and Youth Care Worker must be willing to meet each other halfway. Thom Garfat refers to this shared space as the "in-between between" (Garfat, 2008).

A simpler way to understand this concept is to imagine yourself alone in your personal space. When no one else is present, you enjoy a level of comfort that makes it easy to exist with your surroundings. But the moment you allow another person into that space, you begin to share it. Sharing space (physically or emotionally) creates closeness that can disturb the comfort you had when you were alone.

For harmony to exist in this shared space, both the Child and Youth Care Worker and the young person must temporarily set aside parts of themselves. The worker sets aside personal beliefs and steps into their professional self. The child may set aside their true behaviours or habits and behave in a way they think will please the worker. In this moment, neither person is fully themselves. Both have stepped halfway out of their

personal selves to meet halfway. That halfway space is the "in-between between".

At the point when the child becomes comfortable around the Child and Youth Care Worker, healing can begin to take place. Each young person reaches this point at their own pace. Our role is to be patient and allow them to arrive in their own time without attempts to hurry them up. As the child and worker coexist in this space, both over time learn to be comfortable with each other.



Ingredients That Strengthen the Relationship

As Child and Youth Care Workers, we remain cognizant that the relationship is the vehicle that brings us closer to children and drives healing in our work with them and their families. To build and nurture this relationship, the worker must add ingredients such as trust, honesty, loyalty, integrity, consistency, and respect. These qualities demonstrate our commitment to the young person.

We should also remember that many of the children we work with have been disappointed by adults many times in their lives. They approach new

relationships with hesitation and reluctance to protect themselves from further hurt. If we are inconsistent with the ingredients mentioned above, we make it even harder for them to trust us.

Professional Boundaries

The nature of this relationship must always be professional, never personal. There are some characteristics that must be in this relationship, for example, it must be time bound and guided by a code of ethics. Children will relate to us based on the depth and quality of the relationship we have built with them (Phelan, 2003b).

Relationships should begin forming from the very first engagement. It is helpful to reflect on the relationships we have with each child: How strong or weak is each relationship? What has each relationship allowed you to do—or prevented you from doing—alongside that young person? Which relationships would you like to strengthen, and for what purpose?

We are the professionals in the relationship with the responsibility to coordinate the pace at which the relationship develops. We must respect ethical boundaries and ensure that every relationship with a child or family is aimed at their best interest, not our own personal needs.

Child and Youth Care practice begins the moment we meet a young person and start that natural process of seeing who they are and allowing them to see who we are. It is at that first contact where both the worker and the child begin the journey of understanding and connection.

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LUCKY JACOBS is a Child and Youth Care Practitioner in Kimberley, Northern Cape, South Africa.

A Residential Care Horror Story: Life in the Camps

Hans Skott-Myhre

I live in the United States. Specifically, I live in the deep south in the state of Georgia. I have lived in other places like Canada. I am actually a dual citizen of Canada and the U.S. All of that said, I am not much of a patriot or enamored of nationality as a key indicator of who I am. However, I am also aware that I am culturally and historically American and cannot help but feel an affinity and accountability to my lineage as a settler subject. The rhythms of my speech, my points of reference, and my childhood memories are all deeply influential in the way I see the world. Although I don't identify with the nation state of the United States, I am still quintessentially American, despite my best efforts to distance myself from what that has meant historically and in our current moment. When the U.S. nation state acts, I feel responsible. When other Americans act out of hate and bigotry, I am personally embarrassed by the actions of "my people."

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Unlike many of my fellow Americans, I don't have any nostalgia for the American dream. Nor do I believe that the U.S. nation state has ever been an admirable institution. When the current nation state acts in truly reprehensible ways, I don't think or say that this is not who we are, because history would prove that to be a falsehood. My people and the nation state that ostensibly represents us have always engaged in truly reprehensible acts of violence and brutality over the past 250 years and before. When I teach my students about racism, misogyny, heterosexism, and classism, it is very difficult, if not impossible to find a historical moment free of astonishing acts of violence and horrific rhetoric against an ever proliferating and mutating set of "others."

Regrettably, I have to say that this historical moment is a continuation of the worst aspects of the American nightmare. At the same time, it is a time when good and decent people have taken a stand and done what they could to create new possibilities for those of us who live in this land. It is important to note that the acts of good and decent people have always provided a counterpoint to the excesses and corruption that has characterized the process of colonization and expansion of capitalism. It is Foucault who tells us that for every act of oppression there is resistance. And such acts of resistance have always been part of the American narrative.

However, to really understand what Foucault means by resistance, it is necessary to reimagine resistance as being a force that will always exceed domination. That doesn't mean that domination will be defeated once and for all. It means that the struggle to live as fully as possible never dies away no matter how comprehensive the force deployed to extinguish it. This is because for Foucault domination is the capture and appropriation of living force and creativity. In this sense, creative living force is always there before any attempt to turn it to a particular end. Resistance occurs in the

same way that water resists any attempt to dam it or restrict its flow. Given enough time the force of water will find a way through any impediment in its path. Similarly, living force will overflow any attempt to contain it as well. It is a trick of how we see social constructions that this appears as resistance that follows domination when the resistance to domination is always latent in all reactionary formations.

I try and remember this in the darker moments when what the U.S. (we) have done or are doing seems overwhelmingly horrific. There are many, many such instances of such horror in the world that is emerging in the early part of the 21st century. Events and actions that make me want to turn away and disavow any knowledge of what is going on. Certainly, I have friends, colleagues, and family members who have simply turned away. They have stopped watching any kind of news feed or information stream because watching what is happening immobilizes them and throws them into despair.

At a personal level I fully understand the necessity for some of us to turn away. In an age in which anxiety and depression are at pandemic levels, the prospect of tumbling into the abyss of helplessness and immobility is ever present. We are bombarded daily with admonitions about our emotional and psychological fragility. We have an ever-expanding industry of mental health professionals and pharmaceutical companies vying for our attention everywhere we look. And certainly, world and local events in combination with an ever-accelerating flow of information and workplace demands are at times simply too much to bear. The latest horrific account of pain and suffering, bureaucratic corruption, or egregious disenfranchisement of ourselves or the people we love or care about can seem like the last straw that will break us and overwhelm our capacity to walk this razors edge of functional “sanity.”

It would be well be well beyond my remit ethically and compassionately to try and tell anyone else that they are stronger than they think. I must accept and support my brothers and sisters who need to turn away for now. But that means that I and those others who can look, must look. And after looking, act to resist and reverse the trend towards total socio-political psychosis. At whatever level we can, those of us who are able must promote the sanity of actual life affirming collective action over the current social death drive that will surely destroy all we hold dear.

The stakes are existential and escalating. For those of us in Child and Youth Care I would argue that we hold a profound responsibility to halt the devastation to our lived experience of our social, environmental, political, cultural, psychological, emotional, and personal lives. If we care, then that caring must take concrete form that goes beyond assisting young people to behave, go to school, be nice to their elders, and get a job. Instead, I would suggest that we have an ethical imperative, an obligation to join with them in resisting assimilation into the machinery of cynicism and narcissistic nihilism that is default mode of subjectivity in the world of global capitalism today.

This is certainly true of the area of care where so much of CYC originated; residential care. While Gharabaghi has repeatedly and cogently critiqued the ways in which residential care is being practiced in traditional settings, I want to draw our attention to the incarceration of young people in immigrant detention camps as aspect of residential care being developed and expanded in the U.S.

Of course, there is a long and troubled history of the use of residential programs to incarcerate and subjugate colonized young people in the U.S. Residential schools are key exemplars of this kind of brutal effort to use “care” as mode of forced assimilation. The incarceration of Japanese American families in camps during World War II could well be seen as a

precursor to what can only be called race-based detention. We could also include “slave quarters” on the plantations during the long period of American enslavement of African peoples. The practice of incarcerating young people and their families in substandard housing with no real legal pretense has been an established pattern of governmental practice since the inception of the North American colonial project.

In the 21st century, this pattern has continued with the incarceration of migrant families and their children by several U.S administrations. The Obama administration used family detentions as a means of discouraging the migration of children and families attempting to escape violence in Central America. This included unaccompanied minors who arrived in the U.S. without families. Reports about these detention centers included accounts of depression, insomnia, lack of medical care, and jail-like conditions.

In 2015 the courts ruled that detaining young people under these conditions violated the 1997 Flores settlement which specifies that migrant young people must be released from any form of detention without unnecessary delay and if held, must be placed in the least restrictive setting appropriate to their age. The settlement also mandates that migrant young people be provided necessities such as showers, drinking water, hygiene items and medical assistance.

The current administration has done everything it can to ignore or violate the Flores settlement. It has incarcerated migrant young people and their families in facilities where they are subjected to, “food contaminated with worms and mold, limited access to clean drinking water, inadequate medical care.” There are reports of young people with no history of mental health issues developing nightmares, nightly crying and constant sadness. “I mean, a big kid, he was maybe 16 or 17 that he cries every night when he goes to sleep in the detention center where he's held with his father.”

Young people and their families with high-risk ongoing medical issues are not being treated or are incorrectly treated.

The ongoing maltreatment of parents and children has a damaging impact on their sense of self and relationship with their children.

Watching the dynamic between the parents and the kids is just painful," said Mr. Castro, a father of three. "To watch these parents suffer indignity while their kids are watching them — you see the illusion of being able to protect them melts away. I don't know that those relationships will ever be the same. There's a brutality and cruelty now even beyond what existed before," he said. "You can just feel it."

While these accounts of the ways in which young people and their families are being treated in these camps is deeply disturbing, recent actions by the Trump administration regarding pregnant minors is also deeply disturbing. Up until last July pregnant minors were housed in several different facilities across the U.S. These facilities were designed to provide services to pregnant minors with appropriately trained staff and medical personnel. In July that changed and all pregnant minors were sent to a single facility in Texas that was not designed to serve these young women. Over a dozen pregnant minors were sent to this facility with some being as young as 13 and about half pregnant because of rape. It is notable that Texas has banned abortion in almost all circumstances including rape and incest. As Diane Romero (professor and director of the Center on Immigrant, Refugee and Global Health at the CUNY graduate school of public health) puts it

> Forcing any individual to carry a pregnancy to term is an "egregious" violation of rights, and relocation from other locations around the country to states with more restrictive abortion laws "adds a whole other layer of concern".

Jonathan White (former top official working with children's programs under the Obama and Trump administrations) states powerfully that "making the decision for these girls whether they will give birth to their rapist's baby" is "an extraordinary human rights problem. Everyone attempts to write their politics on the bodies of these children."

Perhaps this is the question we must ask as CYC workers, will we allow others to write their politics on the bodies of the children we are ethically committed to serve? Horrifically, what is happening in the U.S. is also happening in refugee camps across the world. We in CYC must take a stand on behalf of migrant young people across the world. It is our obligation and our moral imperative to do so. I pass this on to us as a field that has high investiture in residential care for young people. Let us stand up and be counted. It is the very least we can do.

HANS SKOTT-MYHRE is a regular writer for *CYC-Online*. He is a Professor of Social Work and Human Services at Kennesaw State University in Georgia (USA). He may be reached at hskottmy@kennessaw.edu

Postcard from Leon Fulcher

From Auckland, New Zealand

Kia Ora Tatau Katoa and Warm Greetings to Child and Youth Care Workers and Supervisor wherever you live in our world! I want to focus on Auckland this month, taking a closer look at New Zealand's largest city. Since 1986 when we first arrived in New Zealand, Auckland has undergone major changes. Regionalisation expanded its boundaries in all directions.

Auckland, based around 2 large harbours, is the major population centre in the north of New Zealand's North Island. In the centre, the

Auckland Skyline from the North Shore

The Auckland Bridge replaced a cross-harbour ferry

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iconic Sky Tower has views of Viaduct Harbour, which is full of superyachts and lined with bars and cafes. Auckland Domain, the city's oldest park, is based around an extinct volcano and home to the formal Wintergardens.

The Māori-language name for Auckland is *Tāmaki Makaurau*, meaning "*Tāmaki* desired by many", in reference to the desirability of its natural resources and geography. After a British colony was established in New Zealand in 1840, William Hobson, then Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand, chose Auckland as its new capital. *Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei* made a strategic gift of land to Hobson for the new capital.

Māori European conflict over land in the region led to war in the mid-19th century. On 20 March 1840 in the Manukau Harbour area where *Ngāti Whātua* farmed, paramount chief *Apihai Te Kawau* signed the Treaty of *Waitangi*, New Zealand's founding document. *Ngāti Whātua* sought British protection from *Ngāpuhi* as well as a reciprocal relationship with the Crown and the Church. Soon after signing the treaty, *Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei* made a strategic gift of 3,500 acres (1,400 ha) of land on the

Auckland Walkway Bridges enable easy harbour access

Auckland Skyline looking North

Waitematā Harbour to the new Governor of New Zealand, William Hobson, for the new capital.

In 1865, Auckland was replaced by Wellington as the capital, but continued to grow, initially because of its port and the logging and gold-mining activities in its hinterland. Later development led to pastoral farming (dairy farming) in the surrounding area, and manufacturing in the city.

Easy access to Coromandel Peninsula Breaches

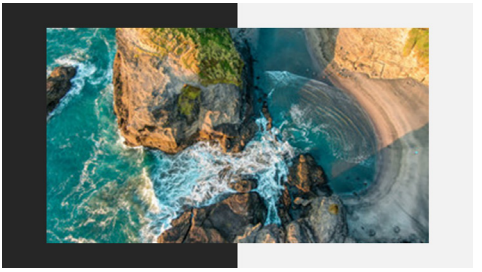
Auckland Regional Vineyards specialise in Sauvignon Blanc grapes

Auckland has been the nation's largest city throughout most of its history. Today, Auckland's central business district is New Zealand's leading economic hub. Europeans continue to make up the plurality of Auckland's population, but the city has become multicultural and very cosmopolitan in the late 20th century.

In 2016, Auckland had the fourth largest foreign-born population in the world, with 39% of its residents born overseas. The face of urban Auckland changed when the government's immigration policy began allowing immigrants from Asia in 1986. In 2023, Asians accounted for almost 35 percent of the city's population. Auckland is also home to the largest ethnic

Polynesian population in the world, including Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands, Niue and other island groups.

Economic deregulation in the mid-1980s led to very dramatic changes to Auckland's economy, and many companies relocated their head offices from Wellington to Auckland. The region had become the nerve centre of the entire national economy. Auckland also benefited from a surge in tourism, which brought 75% of New Zealand's international visitors through its airport. Auckland's port handled 31% of the country's container trade in 2015 and that has expanded further.



Easy access to coastal recreational activities

Auckland Harbour Bridge after dark

Auckland has become a thriving multicultural city, with people of all ethnic backgrounds.

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Managing Editor
Martin Stabrey

Associate Editors
Dr Mark Smith, James Freeman, Janice Daley, Dr Shemine Gulamhusein,
Dr Rika Swanzen, Dr Patricia Kostouros

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

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