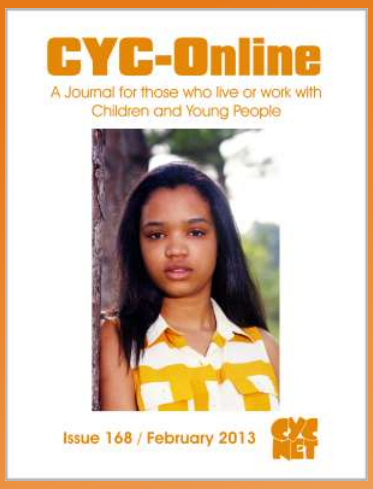
CYC-Online

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



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Professional Encounters

I have been fortunate in my professional CYC life to meet and be influenced – well, more than influenced, really, more like shaped by – a number of professional friends and colleagues.

Sometimes these influences have been huge – like:

- Like when I met Henry Maier at an early British Columbia 'Beyond Caring' *provincial conference*. I walked into his workshop and saw him blowing up balloons, and I was hooked – Henry became my mentor for over 25 years. In many ways Henry helped me to understand the real meaning of care-*giving*.
- Or, when I met Gerry Fewster at the *1st National Canadian* CYC Conference. I had never written an article for 'publication' before I met Gerry, but for some reason (and somehow) he nagged me into writing my first article – it was a poor piece of writing, but he helped me with it and eventually published it. Well, the rest, as they say, is history – once bitten by the writing bug, I could not shake it off.
- Or, when I met Brian Gannon at the *1st International* CYC Conference. We connected quickly and, for whatever reason, developed a friendship – maybe more of a familyship, which has spanned decades and continents. From Brian, I have learned about availability – making knowledge available, being available, and overcoming barriers to availability.

Well, I could go on about these people I have met who have been major influences on my professional life over the past 40 years or so, and I could probably make a list of 50 or 60 people who, in ways large and small, have influenced my professional life and whose impact shows up in my professional practice. When I am working, they are present!

Here is one thing I know: my professional life and practice is the outcome of all of these encounters, large and small. And here is another thing I know: if we open ourselves up to learning from our professional colleagues, we will grow and develop in ways we never imagined.

But here is something that is not evident from the foregoing – *I met all of these people, people who influenced my professional life incredibly, at CYC Conferences* of one kind or another.

Agencies often wonder if it is worth the expense to send their staff to conferences. And a staff often wonders if it is worth the personal expense to attend a conference. I can appreciate that wondering. The impact of a conference is seldom immediate – staff do not come back to work and, because of their attendance at a conference, effect an immediate decrease in length of stay, or costs – and unfortunately, these are usually the most important ☺

However, here is another set of questions:

1. For the agency, supervisor or manager: Do you want, over time, for your program to offer a better quality of service to young people and families – do you want to be an 'organisation of quality'?
2. For the individual staff contemplating personal expenses: Do you want to be an exceptional practitioner, offering the best of service available?

If you answer yes to those questions then the answer to the 'is it worth it?' question becomes obvious.

The encounters one has, the relationships one develops, the networks one becomes a part of all influence the quality and effectiveness of the CYC practitioner. And all of these develop best through encounters which occur at conferences.

If you want an 'average' program, or if you want to be an 'average' practitioner, then, indeed, keep close to home, doing only the standard agency treatment (which is usually designed to meet the objectives of funders more than the needs of young people and families).

But if you want to be an 'organisation of quality' or if you want to be an 'exceptional practitioner' then there is only one answer – CYC staff need the encounters, the relationships, the networking which occur only at professional conferences.

So, whether it is your local, provincial, national or even international conference, then, as a wise man once said, 'be there – or have your staff be there'. The encounters available at a conference can influence your program, your practice, or the field, for a long time.

So, go local, go provincial, go national, or go international – just go. The field needs you to be at the conferences, building the networks that will shape services for years.

Be average, or be exceptional – your choice!

But if you really want to 'knock your socks off' – well, go World.

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The Second Third: The Day Shifts

Kiaras Gharabaghi

The day shift starts when we leave our homes to make our way to the group home. In fact, the journey to work is arguably the most important time of the day shift, because this is the time when we must unburden ourselves of all of the baggage we carry going into the day shift on site. Whatever nonsense the young people might have been up to the previous day, whatever anticipation we might carry given the recent behaviours of one or more of the young people, by the time we get to the group home, our objective ought to be one thing, and one thing only: we want to start the day ourselves with the conviction and give the message to the young people that THIS DAY comes with boundless opportunity, unlimited joy and the possibility of great things. This is not an easy message to convey to others, and often it is just as difficult to really believe this message ourselves. Group home life rarely reflects the optimism of this message. Still, it is an essential message, because the impact of negativity is always cumulative, and negative anticipation almost invariably becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. No matter what the reality on the ground, every day must start with the conviction that it can be better than the previous one, for if it does not, it won't be.



Last month, I wrote about the first third of residential care, the overnight shift. Much like I framed the overnight worker as someone who fulfils a caring function for the rest of the team, the day shift worker also must focus on caring for his or her colleagues. When arriving at the group home, therefore, the day shift worker first turns his or her attention to the overnight worker, and ensures that that person's experience overnight finds a place for debriefing. Listening to the experiences of overnight workers is what connects that important shift with the other two, often more glamorous, shifts. Rather than complaining about

things left undone by the overnight worker, the day shift worker offers assistance to complete them now, so that the day can start with a feeling of readiness for everyone. In addition, the shift change in the morning must reflect a two away process; it is sadly common for day shift workers to receive information from the overnight staff, but not to provide information to the overnight staff. As we discussed last month, it is in fact imperative that the overnight staff is well informed about the specific issues facing each of the young people and the thinking that might inform the team's approach to working with each of them.

As Henry Maier often wrote about, the very first contact with the young people each day is arguably one of the most important moments in residential care. This first contact sets the tone for the day, prepares young people for whatever they might be facing that day, and also allows the day shift worker to settle into *being with* young people for another eight hours or so. It is the level of consciousness that is important here, for surely one of the first errors committed by day shift residential staff is the assumption that their being with young people will flow naturally and represent a smooth transition from whatever state of mind they may have had coming from home. In fact, there is nothing natural about this process of transition; as workers we have to shift our Self into gear to account for all of the complexities entailed in caring, relationships and engagement. It is essential, therefore, that the first contact with the young people, often unfolding in the context of waking them from their sleep, be gentle and inviting. This is not the time to list all of the tasks, challenges and obligations for young people for the coming day. Instead, it is a time for young people to gain confidence that this day will be a good day, and that they can indeed exert some influence on how this day will unfold. Particularly disruptive in this process of gaining confidence are reminders of on-going consequences earned the previous day, or of any sort of restrictions on the possibilities that this new day presents. These kinds of discussions must wait until the young person concerned is ready for them and able to absorb some of the less positive messages. That moment will vary from one young person to the next, and day shifts can therefore not be structured in such a way that all young people are confronted with challenges at the same time.

The first two hours or so of the day shift are often very busy (and also very loud) times in residential care, as young people are getting ready, usually at different speeds, for another day. Showers must be taken, rooms tidied, breakfast eaten, and preparation for departing for school must be made. Predictably, young people move through these first two hours at different levels of efficiency, and day shift workers must therefore muster whatever resources they have to exercise great patience. It is never the case that putting pressure on young people to be more efficient actually results in more efficient approaches to preparing for the day; quite to the contrary, such pressure almost always results in delays, arguments and negativity, and likely will produce great barriers to the process of confi-

dence-building for the young people. It may be helpful for day shift workers to remind themselves that even in perfectly functional family homes, where two or three children are getting ready for school, these first two hours of the morning are almost always characterized by a higher degree of chaos than any other time of the day. Morning laziness, slow commitment to getting ready, and a level of moderate compliance with instructions are developmentally 'normal' behaviours and dispositions, and the militaristic style of trying to make this process efficient in group homes is entirely misplaced.



Logistically, day shift workers must ensure that at least four things happen for young people during those first two hours:

- They are physically prepared to face the day, which means being dressed in ways that reflect their personal styles, they have had breakfast, and they have taken care of basic hygiene routines;
- They have had reminders that the group home is looking forward to their return in the afternoon, so that leaving for school doesn't feel like 'the staff can't wait to get rid of me for the day';
- They packed a lunch that is worthy of being looked forward to;
- They are aware of any meetings or other obligations that might be scheduled for that day.

Once the chaos of the first two hours subsides, day shift workers are able to take stock of what must be accomplished for the remainder of the shift. This includes planning attendance at Plan of Care meetings or case conferences, as well as thinking ahead to the evening shift and what contributions can be made to the planning for that shift. Inevitably, the day shift involves some administrative duties that can include everything from writing reports to making phone calls to update other workers and often parents of various happenings. Typically, day shift workers do so reactively; this means that phone calls are made in response or as a reaction to things that have already happened. An opportunity exists, however, to also make phone calls or have meetings that are pro-active and that contribute to the relationships between workers and the parents of young people or other professionals in the field. The day shift is often a very good time to connect with a

young person's father or mother (or sibling) for the sake of *connecting* rather than to update on anything in particular.

One area of particular note is the way in which a residential group care program supports young people in their schooling. Aside from connecting with teachers and support workers at school, day shift workers also can spend time exploring materials or learning plans that speak directly to that which young people are learning in school right now or will be learning in the near future. Ideally, the goal is to not only help young people catch up with school work, but to provide supports that allow young people to work ahead a little, so that the experience in school is one in which they feel competent and well prepared. All too often, residential care support for schooling is deficit-based, and merely seeks to ensure young people's attendance rather than their performance and academic success.

With respect to the physical environment, the day shift is a good time to ensure that this environment is safe, welcoming and clean. Day shift workers often neglect basic household tasks, relying instead on the overnight worker to look after these. This not only creates situations where young people return from school to less than cared-for environments, but it also sets a poor example to young people in terms of caring for one's environment as an on-going activity rather than a scheduled task. Moreover, it reflects poor teamwork and an inevitably negatively-charged dynamic of delegating 'undesirable' work to someone else.

There are many additional scenarios that can unfold during the day shift; often, some young people do not attend school due to suspensions or because they are transitioning from one school program to another. Sometimes, young people stay back from school because they are ill. In all of these cases, the work of the day shift worker changes, because of course the priority now shifts from administrative tasks to being with those young people still in the home. It is problematic when day shifts unfold with young people in the home but limited interaction between them and staff. The boredom that comes with passing the time is often the breeding ground for further challenges in the evening shift.

At a more general level, one might think of the day shift in residential group care as a 'connector shift'. Aside from connecting the overnight to the evening, it is also the time when day shift workers can give life to the network of connections of young people, including their families, their schools, their professional services and their recreational endeavors. Day shift workers have more opportunity than anyone else to ensure that the lives of young people in residential group care do not become isolated but instead are continuously connected and re-connected to the their lifespace and to the spaces where their relationships unfold or ought to unfold. In this way, the day shift becomes not an administrative shift, but instead one that provides for a much richer experience for young people, assisted by the pro-active and engaged work of the day shift worker.



What do we do after school?

Cedrick of Toxteth

True to form, I used the festive season as an excuse for two weeks of unbridled piggery and debauchery before settling into an acute case of the PITS (Post-Indulgence-Toilet Syndrome). Knowing that Garfat and Gannon would soon be on my back for another piece of offensive nonsense, I felt a desperate need for renewed energy, inspiration and, above all, humour.

So, with notebook in hand, I waddled down to our local factory of higher education to chat with some of the CYC fraternity entering their final semester of instructional fantasy. To my delight I found my quarry — a gaggle of enthusiastic and committed learners eagerly anticipating their contributions to this noble vocation. As you might expect, the topic of relationships was never far away but I managed to squeeze out a few other matters totally unworthy of consideration.

Using mindless interview techniques, dubious recording methods and strategic editing, I cobbled together snippets of our dialogue for your consumption (that's a disease you know). It goes without saying that my trusting subjects gave their unqualified permission for publication. Hopefully, the following will encourage them to be more cautious in future. Only the names have been retained to protect the guilty

Pissing-off Paula

Cedrick: After almost three years of hanging around this joint, have you figured out what child and youth care is all about?

Paula: Oh there's no doubt, it's all about relationships.

C: Yea, that seems to be the flavour of the day, but what does it mean?

P: It means we need to create mutual trust, honesty and understanding with the kids we work with.

C: Why?

M: What do you mean, why?

C: Well, what good will that do?

M: You're joking, right?

C: No. So you have a trusting, honest and understanding relationship with a trainee terrorist with links to Al Qaida. What's the point?

M: The point is that this is what all kids need — even if you choose to call them terrorists.

C: Well, I'm just giving an example. Are you saying that once that need is met, it doesn't matter whether the kid decides to go into terrorism or tourism?

M: Now your pissing me off. Of course it matters. But kids who learn to trust don't make choices that hurt others. They learn how to express themselves in more caring and positive ways.

C: And if they don't?

M: Well, they do, whether you believe it or not.

C: Sounds like a hypothesis based upon some kind of theory. Is this what you learned in school?

M: Yes. But it's also something I've learned from experience.

C: So they will make choices you approve of.

M: Stop twisting things around. They make better choices for themselves. What I want isn't the issue. My judgments are just my judgments and I have to own them. I might share them, but the final decisions belong to the kids themselves. It's called 'self-responsibility', in case you haven't heard.

C: So, as long as you have a caring, honest and trusting relationship, anything goes.

M: No, of course not. Healthy relationships are reciprocal. I have to trust my clients just as they have to trust me.

C: Trust them for what? Can you really come to trust someone who lies, cheats and farts at the dinner table?

M: That's disgusting ... no you're disgusting. All kids must learn that some behaviours are simply unacceptable.

C: Unacceptable to whom?

M: To everyone around them.

C: Including you.

M: Yes that includes me. We all have to learn how to live together. Kids need feedback about how their choices affect others. Honest feedback is an important part of the CYC relationship. Like, right now I'm finding your behaviour offensive.

C: So what are you going to do about it?

M: Well I don't want a relationship with you, so you can crawl back into your hole.

C: But if I <u>was</u> your 'client' what would you do?

M: I'd give you honest feedback and help you to consider different choices.

C: But, if I consider the options but stick to my guns. What then?

M: Then you would face the consequences.

C: And would you impose them?

M: Yes, if I have to ... and in your case it would be a pleasure.

C: So what happens to our relationship?

M: I've already told you. I don't want a relationship with you

C: Yea, I get that. We seem to have come full cycle.

M: Yes. Haven't you anything better to do?

C: No, not really.

M: Well I have. (exits stage left)

A Friendly Chat with Albert

Cedrick: Well are you ready to step out into the big wide world of Child & Youth Care?

Albert: Yea, I can't wait to get into the action.

C: Have you got a job lined up?

A: Not exactly. I wanted to work at 'Woodmere' (local residential centre) but they started laying off two months ago.

C: Funding cut-backs?

A: Yea, it's happening everywhere. I'm on the wait-list for a school aid position.

C: You don't seem to be bubbling over about the prospect.

A: I'm not really. It's cost me a bundle to go back to school and I end up helping teachers who don't want to deal with problem kids.

C: Oh come, come Albert old bean. That's pretty negative take on things.

A: Yea. I suppose I was hoping for more.

C: More of what?

A: More involvement with kids and more professional autonomy. The idea of hovering over kids who cause problems in schools, or can't keep up with their classmates, just doesn't turn my crank. I didn't make all this sacrifice just be a teacher's little helper.

C: Are you interested in getting some feedback Albert. Or are you content to go into a room full of kids as a useless pain in the ass?

A: Is that the feedback?

C: No. That's only an appetiser. There's more if you wanna hear it.

A: You mean you're going to tell me what you <u>really</u> think? Go ahead.

C: OK, you're acting like a disgruntled, entitled whimpering brat. If you expected to be handed a nice little niche customized to your personal requirements, you've chosen the wrong profession. Perhaps you should be an accountant.

A: All I'm saying is that, after three years of training, I expect to be able to practice child and youth care. Is that too

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much to ask for Godssake?

C: Get off the pot. Child and youth belongs wherever there are kids in need of connection, support, understanding and guidance. Classrooms are places where many kids struggle to survive for six or seven hours, five days a week. If you don't want to be there, resent following instructions, feel diminished by authority and dissatisfied with your place in the scheme of things, then at least you have some idea of how these kids feel.

A: Nice speech, perhaps you should have been a preacher. So I can understand how they feel but if I can't use my skills to do anything about, then what's the fucking point?

C: I'll tell you what the fucking point is. If you have the guts to look into the mirror, the school classroom might offer what you most need — an opportunity to confront your own fears and narcissistic pretensions. Unlike the kids, you have the resources, knowledge and skills to create your own identity and carve out a role that meets your needs. Then, through your own struggle, you can help the kids to deal with their own baggage and find their own way through the maze.

A: And that's what you call child and youth care.

C: You bet your little B.A. — or whatever they give you to stick on the wall. On the other hand, unlike the kids, you can choose to hang around the pool hall and wait for an opening at 'Woodmere'. Your choice.

A: I'll think about it.

C: Don't wait too long. You have to apply for the accountancy program by the end of February.

Pete Ponders Professional Prospects

Cedrick: You were working with kids for years before returning to school. How do you like the academic stuff?

Pete: I love it. Most of our faculty have worked on the front line, and I like that. I think you need to have both the experience and the theory to call yourself a 'professional'.

C: So now you'll be able to wear the elusive badge.

P: For me, being a professional isn't about having a badge — it's about the quality and effectiveness of your work.

C: Spot on lad. I couldn't agree more. But don't you want CYC to be recognized as a legitimate and respected profession in its own right?

P: Oh, absolutely, but that doesn't happen overnight eh?

C: You can say that again. I started marching with the CYC banner back in the 1970's but I'm still waiting for that big step up on ladder, to shake hands with the Social workers and schoolteachers

P: Well things have changed since then. Now we have local and national organizations, countless conferences, our own literature and university programs.

C: So, where do we go from here? What's the next step?

P: Well, we won't get respect from others until we believe in ourselves, value our work and begin to think of CYC as a life-long career. At this point I'm more

interested in competence and commitment that competition.

C: Touché Pete. I sure get the commitment part, but what do you mean by competence?

P: All professions have their specific knowledge and skills

C: Well that's what they want you to think. But isn't this just a way to claim territory, like dogs pissing around their own backyard? The people business is so crammed with self-styled experts, I wonder if there's anything left for child and youth care workers to claim as their own unique areas of knowledge and skill.

P: I don't think this is the issue. It's not about being unique — it's about where we direct our attention. No other profession is involved in the lives of kids to the same level of intensity. For us, experience is always the foundation — theory and techniques are secondary. Our interventions are essentially relational and this is what makes us different.

C: That could be hard sell Pete. People who buy services want clear explanations, replicable methods and measurable outcomes. They want someone to come along and fix the problem. They might be sucked in by the established experts but not by some upstart who says "just let me get involved with the little psycho and we'll see what happens."

P: I agree. We do need to be more specific about the principles and practices of our profession, particularly the relationship piece. This is the challenge we need to focus on. We have to prove ourselves before we can claim our place as professionals

C: Well, try as hard as you like but you'll have hard time coming up with something the others haven't already got under their belt. And don't expect to get the support of the experts.

P: You're making it sound like a competition again. Personally I believe in collaboration.

C: Oh you mean teamwork. From what I can see, this only reinforces the *status quo*. No psychologist is going to say, "hand this kid over to a CYC, they know more than I do and are a lot more effective. They are the relationship experts."

P: Cynical stuff Cedrick. I know what you're getting at but I think we're making great strides in this area.

C: Yea, so do I. I'm with you all the way.

P: You have a strange way of showing it, but I believe you.

C: Thanks Pete.

About the author

Cedrick was a regular columnist with *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*. Being of no fixed abode, he can be contacted through his ailing editor Gerry Fewster at: fewster@shaw.ca



Counterwill: Why children say No! Understanding Resistant Kids

Todd Sarner

Carl and Mary are the loving parents of a seven- year-old boy named Billy and a four-year-old girl named Lila. They came to see me for parent consulting because they were increasingly having a hard time with resistance behavior from both of their children. They explained that Billy hardly ever would do as he was told these days and that they were running out of ways to gain his cooperation. It was common to hear Billy scream "NO!" and "I don't have to!" when asked to do everyday things around the house. Lila wasn't as difficult but seemed to be becoming more and more like her brother. Almost every day she refused to get in the car when Mary told her it was time to go to school to pick up Billy, and at night she had started to refuse almost everything they tried to feed her for dinner. Carl told me that he thought this was happening because Mary was too "soft" with the children and needed to be stricter. Mary said that Carl just made things worse when he came home from work and started raising his voice to get the kids to do as they were told. They both expressed frustration and confided that the stress of the situation was starting to affect their marriage. They were desperate for help and just wanted to do what's right for their kids.

Introduction

It can be very frustrating to be the parent of a child who is resistant to our guidance and direction. Occasional resistance is normal and healthy, but it can sometimes get out of control. Like so many other dynamics, our reactions to resistance can actually make things worse and cause greater frustration both for our children and for ourselves. It is my goal in this article to help you better understand where most resistance actually originates so that you are able to transform this dynamic in a positive way in your home.

Resistance what it is (and isn't

The best way to explain what resistance is may be to explain what it isn't. Often when parents see the behaviors that Carl and Mary experienced in this case, they think their child is being "strong willed" or trying to manipulate them. This behavior has very little to do with either. Most often, resistance is an instinct and an indication that something is wrong. We call this kind of resistance counterwill.

Counterwill is a word first coined by Austrian psychoanalyst Otto Rank. He explained that counterwill is what happens when you perceive someone else is trying to coerce you into doing something. This is different from will, which concerns

doing what is necessary to achieve your goals. When we talk about a child being "strong-willed", we usually mean that we are experiencing counterwill.

Counterwill and Attachment

My mentor, leading developmental psychologist Dr. Gordon Neufeld (Hold On to Your Kids), explains that counterwill is an instinct that is directly linked to your relationship to your child and that this instinct is meant both to keep your child safe and to help him develop his own individuality over time. Understanding that counterwill is actually very healthy for your child can change how you look at resistance and lead to more successful (and less stressful) parenting.

We know from developmental psychology and attachment theory that the bond between parent and child is the most important factor in a child's development and behavior. When children are attached in a deep and meaningful way, they want to follow their parents' lead and will not, for the most part, be resistant.

A critical key to understanding how this works is that the connection between parent and child, their attachment, is not always "on". By this I mean that if your child (especially a young child) is currently very focused on someone or something else, you do not necessarily have his attachment energy. The relationship is not active in the moment. A child is not meant to take direction from someone to whom he is not currently attached, so you are much more likely to experience counterwill.

This often confuses parents like Carl and Mary because they have such positive relationships with their children. They assume that this means their children should listen to them because they are great parents. The fact is, children are wired not to listen in certain situations.

How counterwill keeps our children safe

Like I said before, children are not meant to take direction from those to whom they are not currently attached, and this is meant to keep them safe.

There is a beautiful intelligence about how a child's development is meant to unfold. When children are deeply attached to their parents this bond allows us to transmit our rules and values and guide them in a positive way. At the same time, attachment protects our children from outside influences and incompatible messages and values by preventing our children from listening to those to whom they are not attached.

This has wide-ranging implications. If a stranger walks up to your child at the park and asks your child to do something, your child is meant to say "NO!" because there is no attachment. It also means that if she is not attached to her teacher, she will not listen in class. Counterwill is meant to serve a child's attachments by protecting her from outside influence.

So when a child like Lila is very attached in the moment to her toys, as a four-year-old often gets, she is less likely to listen to something her mother or father asks her to do. It doesn't mean she doesn't love them or isn't attached to them for the most part, it just means she isn't right now.

Counterwill also prepares your child for becoming her own person

The counterwill instinct also serves another developmental purpose. It helps a child prepare for her own eventual individuation by letting her practice having her own thoughts and feelings. There are a couple of phases in your child's development where this is especially true.

In the preschool and kindergarten years, you will see much more unchecked counterwill. Part of this is because of the young child's brain development. They haven't quite developed the part of their brain that helps them balance things out and see things from multiple perspectives. This makes counterwill more severe because they are more impulsive than reflective.

Counterwill is also very present in the adolescent years. In this case, it is very developmentally appropriate because adolescence is meant to be a time of diminishing (but not total lack of) parental influence as a child more and more learns who she really is as an individual. This doesn't mean that we back off totally as parents. In some ways our adolescent children need us more than ever. We just have to be more conscious of giving them some space.

The keys to transforming counterwill

There are several principles I teach parents in our classes and in consults for managing counterwill, and I want to address a few of the most important. The objective is not to completely get rid of all resistance in our child. That would be impossible and not very good for them. What I would like to do is help you make counterwill a much more manageable dynamic.

The most important advice I give parents is not to let counterwill cause disruption in their relationship with their child. It is common for parents to react very negatively when their child is resistant. The temptation is to take it personally and to resort to saying and doing things that make the resistance worse — including taking things away from the child or using separation based discipline like time outs or 1-2-3 Magic. As I've explained, counterwill is strongest when there is a lack of connection, so creating more disconnection will only lead to stronger resistance.

The second thing I recommend is that you strive always to "collect" your child before you direct him. This is probably the most common advice I give and is directly from Dr. Neufeld's book and courses. Collecting means to connect with your child first. Do not assume the connection is there at all times. By providing some sense of connection and closeness before asking a child to do something, we can avoid a lot of resistance. With a young child, you might sit next to him and share in what he is doing. Get connected and then gently guide him to what's next.

Lastly, I recommend that you find ways of helping your child to exercise his "will muscles". Children (and many adults for that matter) do not yet have a well-developed sense of will and need to have the space and opportunity to practice building it. This means that you put your child in charge of something when you feel it's appropriate, or let him make decisions about

certain things — as long as you're OK with the potential decisions. Dr. Neufeld calls this the "little steering wheel". Think of those shopping carts at the grocery store that have a car attached in the front. Your child gets the feeling of being in control but you are really doing the steering. An example is giving your child the choice between two different foods you're willing to prepare at dinner time. The child gets the experience of choosing, but you don't have to cook something you don't want to (or can't).

"But sometimes I'm in a real hurry and I don't have time to wait for my child to be ready to go"

I understand this and realize that in some instances you will not be able to do things the way I am suggesting. However, if you started paying attention to how much time you spend right now with the fallout of counterwill — the frustrations, the punishments, and the meltdowns — you would realize that you can't afford not to change how you are doing things. Misunderstanding and disrespecting this counterwill instinct is not effective and, more importantly, is not healthy for your relationship with your child.

"Don't kids have to learn to listen when their parents ask them to do something?"

Of course parents need to know that their children will, for the most part, follow their lead and do what they say when needed. It's just important to understand that this works better when our children want to listen to us, not when we force them to listen. Children who are deeply attached to their parents want to follow their lead. In fact, it feels wrong not to.

How Carl and Mary transformed their relationship with their kids

I asked Carl and Mary to do an experiment for a week. I asked them to pay more attention to collecting their children. I suggested they especially pay attention to this around transition times (the morning, after school, before bedtime) and when they needed their children to cooperate. These transition times can be especially difficult, as the children are more prone to counterwill. Furthermore, I warned them not just to collect their children when they needed to direct them, but also to do so consistently throughout the day.

I also suggested that they find opportunities each day to let both of the children exercise their "will muscles" by finding appropriate situations where they could be in charge of something or help make decisions.

In addition, I invited Carl and Mary to be more aware of how often they were forgetting to collect each other. I told them couples often get into big relationship trouble when they start forgetting to greet each other warmly when one of them comes home. They smiled big, knowing smiles as they realized how much counterwill had played a part in their own relationship. Carl shared that every time he came home from work and was just "told what to do" he got angry and felt a ton of resistance himself. Now he understood why.

The results were nearly instant. After just a day or two, they noticed changes in their home. They weren't butting heads with the kids as often and they were getting along better with each other. After a

full week things were not perfect all the time, but they reported dramatic improvements.

Conclusion

Resistance in our children can be frustrating, but much of our frustration can be transformed when we realize this is often a natural function, an instinct, that is meant to help keep our kids safe and to help them become their own unique individuals over time.

When we are frustrated and reacting to counterwill in our children it is more difficult for us to do our jobs as parents. On top of that, when our children are stuck in resistance, things often get worse when we react to their resistance with reprimands and punishments.

Counterwill is especially difficult for us in our busy, fast-paced world because we have a lot to do. We want to feel like our children are on our team. The key to this is that we are the team's coach — the one with greater wisdom and experience — and we need to take the lead with our kids.

Some next steps …

1. Do what Carl and Mary did and spend one week, as an experiment at first, focusing on the three principles I outlined in the article.
   a. Avoid reacting negatively to counterwill in your child.
   b. Collect before you direct.
   c. Let your child practice making some decisions in his life.
   If possible, get your spouse to participate with you. If this isn't possible, enlist a like-minded friend with a child around the same age to do the experiment in their home at the same time.- Keep in mind the whole week that you are the "coach" and you are the one who is meant to take the lead and set the tone with your children. Stop yourself if you get in "reaction" mode.
3. Make an appointment with your experiment partner to check in after the week and share your experience. Talk about what worked and what you struggled with. Then discuss what changes you can put into place in your household to transform resistance long-term.

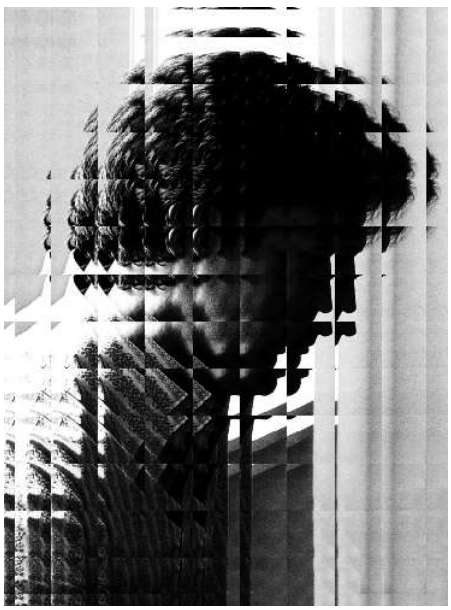
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Towards a critical Child and Youth Care - II

Hans Skott-Myhre

I have recently had the opportunity to be a visiting faculty member in the Psychology Department at the University of West Georgia. Because the department prides itself on being somewhat outside the parameters of traditional psychology, they offer courses not usually available within more normative psychology departments. As a result, I was offered to a course to teach in critical psychology. For many years I have included the critical psychological analysis of scholars and activists such as Ian Parker, Erica Burman and Lois Holzman in my writing and teaching on child and youth care. Up until now, however, in the hectic pace of my academic life, I haven't found the space or time to systematically investigate critical psychology per se.



In my last column I suggested that child and youth care might re-consider founding its practice and theory in developmental psychology and instead investigate other, less dominant psychological approaches. I realize, as I suggested in the last column, that such a suggestion goes against the grain of the dominant trends in our field. It seems that investigating critical or postmodern approaches has proven to be somewhat threatening to the gatekeepers of our professional identity. Indeed, a colleague recently told me that the field of child and youth care is defined by the *Competencies for Child and Youth Care Work Practitioners, Revised 2010*. This person reminded me, that this document has been endorsed by most, if not all, North American CYC associations and educational institutions and is also the basis for the on-going drive for CYC certification. They then noted, correctly, that the Competency Document is neither critical nor postmodern and therefore these approaches are not at all central to child and youth practice or theory.

It was Foucault who delineated the construction of professional disciplines as

being founded on the ability to make truth claims that exclude alternative ways of knowing. He indicated that the function of such practice was to give certain groups in society hegemonic modes of power and control over what the general population comes to believe to be true. Such power is premised on exclusion and marginalization of anything not controlled and distributed by those in the discipline or professional guild. It is not an error that the professionalization movement in child and youth care would found a significant portion of its competencies on another discipline's already established truth regime; developmental psychology. However, it does run the risk of undermining any sense of the field as having a legitimate claim to any original thinking about the work we do with young people.

In another context, Deleuze and Guattari ponder the best method by which to engage with the great philosophers. They ask whether it is better to repeat what they have done or "to do what they did, that is, create concepts for problems that necessarily change?" In our own context we might also ask what is the best way forward for our field? Is it to repeat the work of the theorists and practitioners who came before us or to explore and experiment with new ways of thinking and working that might be responsive to the dynamic social and political landscape within which our work is situated? In this sense, we might take the counsel of Deleuze and Guattari to heart when they remind us that it is necessary that our work is responsive to the problems we face. Working on such problems includes being aware of and accountable to our history but also, and above all, to the living creative force of youth and adults that is constantly re-shaping our field minute-to-minute, day-to-day. I sincerely doubt that any set of competencies or project of professionalization holds much potential to assist us in thinking our field in such a regard.

In considering other approaches such as critical psychology, one might object that perhaps these sets of practices and theories repeat the same pattern. Don't they also lay out a way of conceiving the world just as bounded and moribund? I would argue that critical psychology does not. This is because critical psychology proposes a way of challenging what we think rather than proposing a set of ideas or beliefs that we can memorize and apply.

If we were to experiment with re-thinking our field using principles from critical psychology, we would begin by investigating the root of practice and theories in terms of its relation to the dominant system of oppression and exploitation. In short, we would ask ourselves to what degree are we complicit in the social and cultural harm done to the youth and families we engage in our daily work?

To answer this question, we might well begin by interrogating the taken for granted assumptions imbedded in documents such as the competencies or in the foundational literature of our field. To take one small example, I have often seen Maslow cited as an important lens to making sense of the developmental needs of youth and families. However, when we in-

vestigate, we find that Maslow's hierarchy is founded on underlying principles of social Darwinism seldom explicated or critiqued in the CYC literature. Maslow unapologetically states in his writings that there are superiors and inferiors. The superiors should be supported even at the expense of the inferiors. He even goes so far as to say, that since it is likely the inferiors will feel resentment against the superiors and, indeed, may threaten them, we need to protect the superiors against any threat from the inferiors. He further suggests that those who are lazy and not working should be left to starve, and if consistently recalcitrant, they may need to be shot. The uncritical adoption of Maslow's ideas without an investigation into the underlying assumptions may involve us in the rather dangerous practice of inadvertently perpetuating concepts and ideas that are antithetical to something as basic as just and equitable relationally based work.

A critically based approach, on the other hand, would have us investigate more completely and critically the theories and practices we deploy. It proposes that we look into the ways in which the theories and practices that make up our field perpetuate, wittingly or unwittingly, assumptions about the young people and families that we work with that might place them, for example, in the category of inferiors. Such an approach might ask us to wonder about the effects of giving young people the idea that the most important thing they can do is obtain gainful employment and that hard work is, by definition, laudatory. Are we simply preparing them for a lifetime of exploitation? Do we have, somewhere deep within us, a preference for social hierarchies that support the values and lifestyles of the middle and upper classes? Do our programs structurally support the practices and beliefs of capitalism in the ways we structure rules and activities? Are we perpetuators of middle class morality when we insist on enforcing language and dress codes?

A critical child and youth care might propose having us use our staff meetings to investigate disciplinary and relational practices to uncover taken for granted relations of power and control. If we are serious about relational practice, we have to ask ourselves how much genuine relationship can be had if one party holds the role of police or guard? The tricky part of this is that policing others is both socially sanctioned and applauded. In addition, policing is something we have internalized and believe to be important in our own self-management. In spite of this, controlling others or ourselves is, at best, an ongoing struggle and, at worst, an ongoing series failures. Such failures tend to be disappointing and it is hard to avoid the underlying sense of resignation and despair that builds up over time. What we call burn out, I would suggest, is the result of such processes. A critical approach might well give us an important lens to look into these struggles from a fresh vantage point.

Investigating these taken for granted power relations between young people and adults, professionals and clients, supervisors and staff etc. might allow envisioning a different and less hierarchical way to manage others and ourselves. In

this we might wonder if the way we are conceiving of our work is founded in underlying beliefs about young people and ourselves that is deeply problematic. Do our practices and beliefs subtly and not so subtly support levels of inequality? Does our practice break down hierarchies of adults and youth or reinforce them? Is our agency structured as a collaborative and creative community in which everyone has a voice about daily activities and program priorities? Or is it premised in a business or corporate model with bosses, labor and the young people as product?

A critical approach to child and youth care would take such questions seriously and propose new ways of working, radical approaches to de-structuring hierarchies, collaborative technologies and attention to emerging theories and ideas. Of course, not all emerging theories and ideas fit the criterion for challenging inequitable and oppressive power relations. The existing regime of capitalist domination is constantly producing new technologies of control through proliferating frameworks that allow us to objectify others and distance ourselves from their struggles until we become, to paraphrase Franco Basaglia, technicians of social control. In this sense, we would be well advised to interrogate new modes of diagnosis such as the forthcoming DSM V or claims of biological and genetic advances in knowledge that allow greater ability to shape and mold the other so they fit seamlessly into the global economy.

Instead, we might ask ourselves as critical CYC practitioners and theorists, how does our work promote greater liberation, joy, creative freedom, increased capacity to love, and a full affirmation of life? Is the day-to-day organization and structure of our practice designed in any way to facilitate the affirmation of joy and creativity? Or are we organizing ourselves to please, what many have come to see as, one of the most brutal systems of social control ever devised; a system that hides its pernicious attacks on life itself through declaring itself the universal norm. A critical CYC would take a central task investigating the effects of such a normativity on the human capacities of all of us working together in the field. No set of competencies can assist in this. This has to be done in real time and with the courage to affirm rebellion and revolt rather than compliance and complicity. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Never, never be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way."

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Residential child care and the psychodynamic approach; is it time to try again?

Charles Sharpe

Introduction

Therapeutic approaches to residential child care in the UK have been greatly influenced by the psychodynamic theories of D.W. Winnicott (1965), Klein (1998), Bowlby (1965) and Bion (1970), among others. The psychodynamic model of residential child care stresses the importance of understanding the emotional development of children and young people. It places particular significance on the anxieties and fears which arise for children when healthy emotional development is disrupted in early childhood. These theorists acknowledge a debt to the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud which he proffered as an explanation of human development and behaviour. Freud (1977) proposed that painful inner conflicts borne out of unresolved developmental issues during infancy, though repressed in the unconscious, struggle for expression in our conscious behaviour throughout our lives. These expressions coming as they do from the individual's unresolved infantile inner conflicts were, according to Freud, manifested in behaviours or defences which were socially harmful to the individual. Research such as that done by Berridge and Brodie (1998) indicates that the vast majority of children in residential care have had early childhood disruptions or traumas such as physical or sexual abuse. Hence it would appear that this group of children could be helped by the use of psychodynamic approaches. Yet recent reviews such as that by Maher (2003) seem to indicate that the influence of psychodynamic approaches on residential practice is on the wane.

This paper is based on the premise that psychodynamic approaches still have a great deal to offer residential child care and that the time has come for all involved in this work to look again at the potential of such practice. Following an examination of the historical reasons why these theories are resisted by the mainstream of residential child care, the paper will use a case study to illustrate the use of one particular psychodynamic approach, based on the work of Klein and Winnicott.

Psychodynamic approaches: a growing resistance

Ward et al. (2003) reported that psychodynamic approaches to residential child care have existed in Britain in one form or another since the 1920s, particu-

larly in residential establishments which also offered education, such as Summerhill School and The Mulberry Bush. These establishments encouraged children to re-experience their childhood to help undo some of the damage done by their early childhood experiences. Following the *Social Work (Scotland) Act* (1968) and the *Children and Young Persons Act* (1969) (for England and Wales) the Approved Schools were re-named as Community Homes with Education in England and Wales, and List D Residential Schools in Scotland, and merged into the general child care provision. This legislation offered an opportunity for a new generation of pioneers in the field of psychodynamic residential child care, such as Peper Harow School (Rose,1990).

From the 1980s, the psychodynamic approach came under critical scrutiny. *Lost in Care,* one of a group of influential child care research studies published in the 1980s, concluded that residential care tended to isolate young people from their families (Millham, Bullock, Hosie and Hack, 1986). This criticism was linked to the geographic isolation of many homes. A number of these homes were therapeutic communities for children and young people based on psychodynamic principles. Research indicated that these homes were rarely accessible to the parents of children residing in them and it was argued that this made the re-unification of families impracticable (Millham et al, 1986). The research signalled the era of locally based children's homes and marked the beginning of a trend which saw fewer children placed in residential care while more were placed with foster families. This trend continues to the present decade (Crimmens and Pitt, 2003).

The 1990s saw the beginning of another trend which has had implications for children in care. This was the development of a symbiotic relationship between electorate and government which increasingly sought instant and finite solutions to societal problems where more emphasis was placed on defensive professional practice rather than on relationships (DoH, 1998). The policy initiatives of the Thatcher government introduced concepts such as value-for-money and cost effectiveness into the social care arena. These initiatives have continued in subsequent governments. The over-riding political ideology demanded that care providers attend to performance indicators, outcome measures and target setting to provide justification for their funding. For example, the Audit Scotland follow-up report (2003) on dealing with young offenders stated that more attention needs to be paid to 'evaluating the cost effectiveness of residential schools and secure units.' (2003, p. 3) It also highlighted the importance of performance indicators, saying that 'The Scottish Executive should publish annual reports on performance of youth justice teams against national standards.' (2003, p. 5) Dobson and Khatri (2000) argue that as society moves toward evidence-based practice and as litigation becomes more prevalent, then the need for interventions to have clear evidential support becomes more exigent. In such a climate, child care based on psychodynamic practice with its emphasis on taking time to reflect on and to 'work through' emotional problems can

hold limited attraction, and there has followed an inexorable drive towards seeking time-limited solutions using what are seen as evidenced-based outcomes of interventions such as cognitive-behavioural techniques. Cognitive-behavioural interventions lend themselves to clear descriptive and outcome measures. Stevens (2004), however, raised questions about the real nature of the evidence provided by research on the use of cognitive- behavioural interventions in residential child care.

The current decade has seen the growth of risk assessment in residential child care. While this is aimed at protecting children, it could be argued that it can also act as a straightjacket on the relationship between child and worker. The development of National Minimum Standards (DoH, 2002) while laudable, may reduce holistic care to a discrete set of criteria. In this atmosphere the 'whole person' approach of the psychodynamic ethos – that is working with the unconscious as well as the conscious — has struggled to flourish. It seems pertinent here to consider the influence of the group on the therapeutic relationship between a young person and residential child care staff. If this relationship is to flourish, then during the delicate time when it is being established, the young person and the worker need to be emotionally held by the other young people and staff who make up the group of people involved in the life of the children's home. Yet current thinking about residential child care does not acknowledge the significance of the group. For example, the National Minimum Standards make no reference to aspects of group living. Equally the mandatory units of S/NVQ level three Health and Social Care (Children and Young People), the required minimum qualification for residential child care workers, make little reference to group living. While it appears that the need for professional commitment to establish and sustain healing relationships in a group living setting is not a priority for those charged with strategic planning in residential child care, it is my contention that psychodynamic approaches still have much to offer.

Applying a psychodynamic approach to residential child care

For the purposes of this paper, the theories of Klein and Winnicott are used to analyse the case study of Roland. Klein placed great emphasis on the infant's relationship with the primary mothering figure. At first totally dependent on this figure, the infant, in 'phantasy' (*Klein's spelling*) splits the mother into the good mother who is present and able to provide continuous nurture, and the bad, absent mother who is not providing nurture. The infant finds the latter situation intolerable and cries out with distressed feelings of terror and fear of abandonment. This is what Klein called the 'paranoid-schizoid position'. To resolve the infant's distress, the mothering figure absorbs her infant's unbearable feelings and returns them to the child in a form that they can accept. The infant eventually becomes able to unify the good and bad mother and to realise that although the mothering figure may not provide continuously, she will return. Once the infant has reached this stage of acceptance, he or

she is said to have moved from the 'paranoid-schizoid position' to the 'depressive position' from which the infant has the psychological basis to deal with what life holds. Klein thought that children who experienced inconsistent and unsatisfactory nurturing had great difficulty in making any satisfactory progress towards the 'depressive position.' She believed these children were emotionally ill-equipped to deal with the vicissitudes of life and remained in constant fear of being abandoned (Klein, 1998). Winnicott, drawing on Kleinian theory, believed that while the infant needed consistent parenting care, it should not be perfect care. According to Winnicott, satisfactory parenting figures, though human and capable of mistakes, offered care which was 'good enough'. If the child was cared for by a parenting figure who was ideal, rather than real, then they would be ill-equipped to deal with the imperfect world. 'Good enough' parenting figures provided what Winnicott called 'the facilitating environment': a stable physical and emotional environment where the child was safe and yet allowed sufficient emotional space to grow in a way which enabled him or her to build healthy trusting relationships and so become resilient enough to deal with life's experiences (Winnicott, 1965).

It is this 'good enough' parenting and the 'facilitating environment' which those who work psychodynamically in residential child care are attempting to re-create for the children they look after. All too often the young people placed in residential child care have not experienced the nurture required to progress from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position. In Winnicottian terms they have either not been provided with good enough parenting or they have, in another category which Winnicott described, experienced good enough parenting which has been traumatically interrupted as a consequence of a change in family circumstances or as a consequence of emotional, physical or sexual abuse (Winnicott, 1965).

Achieving the 'facilitating environment' is a time-consuming and complex task and has implications for the training of residential child care staff. Residential child care workers need to be aware of the significance of 'transference.' Unhappy children entering a unit often express the fears and frustrations of their past by acting out. It can seem as if they hold residential workers responsible for all the emotional ills they are experiencing. In this they may be unconsciously 'transferring' on to the care worker feelings which relate to previous carers who are usually their parents (Rycroft, 1968). The worker, like the 'good enough' parent, processes the child's feelings and returns them in a way which they can tolerate. The unit becomes a place where painful emotions can be held safely while progress is made towards a more healthy emotional developmental stage. (Winnicott, 1971).

The residential child care worker must also be alive to the primitive infantile anxieties which a young person's behaviour can arouse in the worker herself. This is known as 'counter-transference' (Heimann, 1960). It is essential that residential child care workers do not act out their counter-transferential anxieties by responding to children in superficial authoritarian ways. Instead they should

reflect on the feelings the child has aroused in them in order to gain a clearer understanding of how the child is feeling. Again, like the 'good enough' parent, the worker processes these feelings and gives them back to the child in a way that will re-assure him.

Roland: a case study in the application of psychodynamic principles

Roland was a child who was received into care in 1994 and admitted to a small mainstream children's home in 2003. The issues in Roland's case are described in the words of the children's home's manager. After this description, an analysis of the case study will be given, showing how a psychodynamic approach was used to help Roland.

> Roland was removed from the family home at the age of 4 because his parents were unable to care for him due to their chronic alcoholism and frequent episodes of domestic violence. He had had two foster family placements before he came to our children's home at the age of thirteen. His previous placements had broken down because his carers said that they could not cope with his violent behaviour. Roland was a very angry young man who did not trust adults and was particularly angry at social services whom he blamed for taking him away from his parents. When he arrived at our home, the staff decided that before his presenting behaviour could be addressed he needed a period of holding and containing. He could then be helped to look at the anger generated by his denial of his parents' inability to care for him and to think about the splitting off of his angry feelings on to those people he held responsible for his removal from his family. The recipients of these feelings were Roland's social worker and the staff of our children's home.
>
> Our task was to gain an insight into Roland's inner world. We had to understand how he was feeling so that we could help him to get in touch with the emotions that made him angry. We also had to help him to make sense of his denial that his parents were unable to care for him. He could not at this time cope with the knowledge that the two people he most idealised were flawed. This part of him was stuck emotionally at the four-year-old youngster who had been taken away from his home. He had been led to believe by his parents that the only reason he could not live with them was that social services had unreasonably removed him from them.
>
> Roland's anger and violent behaviour led staff to question themselves and doubts began to surface about the efficacy of psychodynamic notions of containment and holding. He disliked taking part in activities with the group. In spite of this, the group supported him. At times staff themselves became dysfunctional when faced with the power of Roland's projection of fear, anxiety, hopelessness and, above all else, displaced anger. Before beginning to help Roland to make sense of these

overpowering feelings, the staff first had to make sense of how the powerful emotions projected by Roland were affecting them. They had to come to terms with their own anger at Roland's parents and also the inner anger they felt about Roland because of his difficult behaviour. They also had to manage their feelings of helplessness because they were aware of the main cause of Roland's unhappiness and felt powerless to do anything about it. As Roland's acting out became more difficult to cope with, staff, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, resorted to behaviourist strategies in order to convince themselves that they were in control. Effective management input and good supervision helped to contain and hold staff and encourage them to stay with the psychodynamic approach.
Our children's home is close to the young people's families and communities. We encouraged visits to Roland's family to get in touch with his real feelings about their inability to care for him. With the support of his keyworker, Roland began to understand the reality of his parents' situation. This was a painful emotional journey but it enabled Roland to develop and test coping strategies which eventually helped him gain confidence.
He became able to voice the opinion that the care he received from his parents when he visited the family was not in the qualitative sense good enough for him. He became able to leave the family home when he felt unable to cope. Though it brought him sadness, he reached his own understanding of why he could not return home more permanently. Today Roland still visits his parents but he now has sufficient control to ensure his safety. The pain and anger are still there but through confronting them with the help of the staff team, he is better able to order his inner world and respond in more socially appropriate ways.

Analysis of the Case Study

To avoid confusion, the child is referred to as 'he', while the residential worker is referred to as 'she'. Roland raised anxieties for the staff group as well the other young people. Kleinian theory related to the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions reinforced the importance of the workers' need to be aware of and reflect upon not only the anxieties of the young people but also their own anxieties. By being aware that their own primitive infantile anxieties were being aroused, they were able to contain them and so contain Roland's anxieties. It is clear that at the start of his placement Roland was in the paranoid-schizoid position. Roland's 'phantasy' was that the staff, like his parents and other previous carers, would not look after him and would abandon him. He expressed his fears by acting out in a regressive way and unconsciously 'transferred' these angry feelings to the residential workers. The staff's understanding of this process provided Roland with a mental space, 'a facilitating environment', which allowed him to regress safely

to where his emotional development had been arrested by unhappy events in his earlier childhood. Roland's positive developmental progress could be measured by his gradual acceptance of the reality of his parents' situation and his trust that, with the staff's help and his growing self-understanding, he would survive.

Psychodynamic theory tells us that each individual has relationships within an inner world as well as a relationship with the external world. It suggests that many of our fears and anxieties are representations of unconscious inner conflicts which are too painful for our conscious to bear, yet we are trying to resolve these inner conflicts as we try to cope with our external environment. Bion (1970) has argued that group living can offer its members the opportunity to give expression to their inner conflicts, at same time as being emotionally contained by the group. In Roland's case this was evident in the way the group was able to contain his unhappiness (which was expressed through the defences of angry and aggressive behaviour) as he worked through the loss of his idealistic fantasies of his parents until he was able to accept the reality of their frailties as human beings.

Roland's symptoms were not only contained by the residential staff, but also by those youngsters within the group who, though sometimes the targets of Roland's acting out, were more closely situated to Klein's 'depressive position' and further through the therapeutic process. They were able to re-assure him that he would neither be blamed for any dysfunction of the group nor rejected in the way he had been from his parental home and previous foster homes. The resident group received insightful and intensive support from staff and the home's manager to ensure that both they and Roland were protected from his acting out behaviour.

Discussion

If staff are to work with the emotional and intellectual intensity which those looking after Roland were attempting to achieve, then there are implications for the recruitment, management and training of staff. Working psychodynamically is complex and requires staff to have both intellectual and emotional insight into what makes a relationship. This can only be achieved with self-challenging training and supervision. The resource implications of this may in part explain why those responsible for the management of caring services resist the psychodynamic approach.

Human beings do not necessarily fit into prescribed categories or to prescribed short-term and narrow treatment programmes. Yet it can seem that the wider community has a need for something to be seen to be "done". Short-term finite solutions can be a dubious panacea which gratifies an unacknowledged general need of the wider community to feel that it is in control of troubled young people. The other side of this coin is the unconscious infantile terror of being out of control. Acting out this societal 'counter-transference' achieves as little in the wider community as it does in the smaller world of the children's home. For staff in the unit, it can seem that the communities responsible for placing young people have decided that they can do nothing else with

them. In this extreme situation, psychodynamic approaches offer staff the idea that there are times when it is better that nothing is 'done' to or for a troubled young person apart from providing the space to heal.

Waddell (1985) examines the different stances adopted by social workers and psychodynamically-trained workers. She argues that the psychodynamic worker attempts to create a mental as well as a physical place, where time is given for young people and adult carers to reflect and have a space where it is *safe not to know*, (my italics) and room to process what is happening in their relationships. I would suggest in the current social work and residential child care cultures, such an approach is not valued because it is not seen as specifically 'doing' anything and so challenges the 'finite solution' way of thinking. Waddell reminds us that this kind of 'doing'— always having a ready answer — is more about 'servicing' a system rather than 'serving' a young person.

A fundamental premise of the National Minimum Standards is that good residential child care must be based on the development of a stable, trusting relationship between a young person and a caring adult (DoH, 2002). A relationship of this kind is fundamental to the psychodynamic approach. Making a relationship is complex and time-consuming. It is a process which requires commitment from both parties if it is to be real. It needs time and space for reflection, particularly when difficulties occur. While the S/NVQs relevant to residential child care discuss relationships, they can read as if a relationship is something that is 'done' to looked-after children rather than an acknowledgment of the mutuality of a relationship. The training of residential staff, while encouraging a reflection on the importance of relationships, could do better by exploring these as complex mutualities which alter the behaviour of both parties. It could be that some placement breakdowns in children's homes are exacerbated by staff who may not be trained to deal *emotionally* with the behaviour of children. This view has some empirical support in the research of Heron and Chakrabati (2003). They explored the perceptions of staff towards children in residential units and found that rather than empowering residential child care staff in developing their relationships with young people, those who drive current developments in social work de-prioritise the needs of children by failing to provide staff with training which addresses the real issues and problems, in particular the relationship between child and worker.

Conclusion

It is all too easy to criticise a social work system where local authorities are 'driven by twin imperatives: the need to manage increasing levels of need and expectation within generally static or diminishing budgets and a need to avoid unacceptable levels of risk' (Maher, 2003, p. 279). Nonetheless, while residential child care remains a significant resource, we, the adults involved in residential work, should be able to acknowledge both intellectually and emotionally what is happening in residential child care and begin to imagine how we can provide

troubled young people with the time and space they need if they are to be helped to grow in a healthy way. I believe that relationships in residential child care informed by psychodynamic principles can be a creative force in achieving this.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Evelyn Daniel, Registered Care Manager of a children's home in Middlesex and Siobhan Degregorio, Managing Coordinator of a leaving care project in north west London for providing, and discussing with me, the case material for this paper.

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Thoughts on The International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC Net)

Laura Steckley

Recently, Thom and Brian (our fearless Editors) sent a call out asking for members' comments about CYC Net – positive, critical, suggestions for improvement, or whatever. My first instinct was to fire off a couple of lines and hit the reply button, but as I began to collect my thoughts I realised that a quick few lines wouldn't do.

So this month I want to commit to black-and-white what CYC Net means to me.

I remember my initial excitement when I first searched for and read articles on CYC Net. They were so relevant to the questions and experiences I was having in practice. And to see what we were doing referred to as 'practice' was a subtle but powerful revelation. How affirming it was to know that others, around the world, held this work in high esteem the way that I did. Reading these articles made my head nod in agreement, their content so resonated with my own values and experiences. They energised, fortified and motivated me.

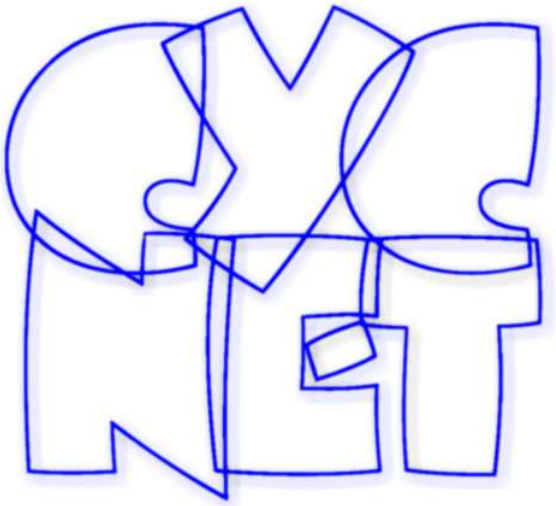
But CYC Net is more than just the best freely accessible repository of Child and Youth Care practice literature online. It is an international, intergenerational community of practice – a collection of people who are united not only by our membership in CYC Net, but by the shared activity of Child and Youth Care practice. Within this group, knowledge and meaning are collectively created. This can be seen in the development of certain ways of understanding the work: notions of lifespace; care worker development; or even care itself.

The discussion thread is another important place where community members come together to connect, share knowledge and construct meaning. It also shifts the balance from the majority of its members being relegated to passive readership to an ongoing invitation to all to give voice to their knowledge, wisdom, values, hopes, despairs, frustrations and triumphs. This exercise of voicing what we know, and in so doing coming to know it better, is centrally important to our sector. For too long our knowledge has been tacit and we have struggled to articulate the restorative power of the minutiae, the everyday, the relationship.

CYC Net hosts the Learning Zone, a set of online courses designed to enhance practitioners' skills and knowledge. It uti-

lises various formats to meet different learning styles and allows learners to proceed at their own pace.

The monthly online journal, CYC-Online, also makes a significant contribution to our sector. That other key journals in our field allow their articles to be reproduced here is a testament to how well it is regarded and to the growing solidarity in our sector – a solidarity due, in part, to the kinds of relationships Brian and Thom cultivate wherever they go.



The opportunity to write for CYC-Online, accompanied by the initial cajoling and ongoing support, has fostered the growth of many of us. Whether these contributions are one off, occasional or regular, the experience of writing and then having that writing published can mark an important milestone in one's professional development.

My own monthly column is a source of ambivalence. One the one hand, I feel honoured to be included in something for which I have such great respect. On the other hand, it is a monthly workout in my discomfort-zone. While my aim is for each column to be relevant and of use to those who read it (though a wee part of me still feels like these readers are just in my imagination), I'm pretty sure that I'm the one who gets the most out of it. I'm absolutely certain that the monthly practice of thinking through, 'on paper', some area of practice, theory, myself – or often all three – has improved my thinking, teaching and writing overall.

The home page is engaging, with interesting snippets, relevant news pieces, information about other journals, access to the learning zone, podcasts, personality profiles of community members, and even a daily cartoon. There is something here for anyone interested in Child and Youth Care, and once this engagement happens, many of us become connected to something that strengthens and nourishes us.

When all of these things are added together, it is clear to me that CYC Net has taken a developmental approach to the international child and youth care sector that is consistent with the kind of developmental approach we espouse for direct practice. It engages practitioners at all levels of their development, connects them and offers a sense of belonging to something good, to something that matters. Important relationships are cultivated in the process, and all of this promotes not only the development of individual members but the sector as a whole.

Safety and CYC Practice: A Poor Excuse For A No-Theory Approach

Jack Phelan

There is no learning that will occur in an unsafe environment. This is a very accurate statement and yet an incomplete one, because there is also no learning occurring in an environment that only focuses on safety. Because it is the first step in creating a useful climate for learning does not make it essential to the exclusion of other ingredients. Picture a classroom where the teacher manages to get all the students to sit quietly and face forward, then does not have any further lesson plan.

CYC practitioners in school settings often can be asked to work on behavior control almost exclusively, without an expressed learning strategy for difficult to manage students, while residential programs focus, almost totally, in reports and daily communication, on rule infractions and conformity to program expectations. The unstated, but obvious task for the CYC practitioner is to maintain a safe and orderly environment, not to create discovery or learning. Since creating a safe space is the first focus for both programs and individual practitioners, it has unfortunately become the only focus too much of the time.

When I speak with program managers, school administrators and mental health program supervisors, most of the discussion about desirable outcomes is based on maintaining order.

Family support workers describe success outcomes with a list of safety based behaviors and monitoring strategies that emphasize conforming to the imposed social service plan that really is focused on controlling unsafe or risky behavior. There is a need for families to be safe, but if that is your primary goal, then the relationship quickly becomes tedious and overbearing to both the family and the worker.

When I discuss desirable outcomes with program managers, I start by listing all the safe behaviors and program conformity expectations for both youth and staff. These managers all smile and say that if they could accomplish that goal they

would be more than satisfied. There is little thought given to going beyond these expectations, since it is almost impossible to maintain these standards at a high enough level. So, based on the goal of maintaining a safe, stress free environment, there is little energy left for adding learning or growth to the picture. Most CYC supervisors and practitioners have also been persuaded to see this goal the same way, which is very problematic.

To create a safe space, the adult needs to situate himself in an optimal position to monitor people. Lifeguard chairs, glass enclosed central desks with a 360 degree visual field, camera monitors with a security guard watching all the screens, are some of the mental pictures that come to mind. None of these involve interaction or relational energy. In fact, the fewer interactional distractions that occur, the better. Many CYC practitioners have a "fireman" approach to their duties, waiting for the emergency to arise and responding quickly to make it safe again. When everything is quiet, you can read the newspaper, have a break, etc.. The training required for this kind of job can all be done through experience and on-the-job workshops, with a minimal amount of theory and almost no educational preparation. When CYC practitioners describe moving on to another more challenging field after 12 – 18 months of practice, stating that they'd gotten tired of their CYC job, it is because they have gotten skilled at making things safe, but have not learned much about CYC theory or practice. Creating a safe environment does not require knowing much theory, it is based on common sense, and is more physically tiring than mentally challenging. The cat and mouse game that fills every day is both tedious and demeaning to both sides and everyone knows that it really has no lasting impact.

Youths often describe the fact that we are just waiting to catch them being bad, and that no one notices them when they are being smart and capable. In fact, there is little discussion where the youths' definition of smart and capable is acknowledged if it does not fit into the prescribed program goals. Logs and other written reports include little information about what the youth or family want to learn, and heavily focus on what we want to teach them. Actually, there is little focus on teaching anything, but a major emphasis on what we require them to do.

There is a need for safety, but only to a level that learning can occur. The unrealistic goal of having a totally monitored, no risk, highly structured environment has been very destructive to both CYC practitioners and the people we serve. When you can spend many weeks in team meetings with no discussion about the CYC theory you are using and the learning goals and strategies being attempted, you are working in a sterile and uninspiring place.

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Wilderness as a Powerful Tool for Youth Development

Interview with Kyle MacDonald



Kyle MacDonald *stands out in the movement for his commitment to overcome obstacles to get more youth outdoors and connect to nature as their birthright. He founded Bay Area Wilderness Training, one of two established organizations in the US providing both leadership training and free access to outdoor gear.*

MR: Thinking back to the earliest years of you life, what experiences relate to who you are now and your work with Bay Area Wilderness Training?

KM: My parents took me camping – and the outdoor and wilderness experiences of my childhood have definitely shaped who I am today. My very first memory is sleeping in a tent on a beach in Cape Hatteras and hearing the voices of my parents outside the canvas walls of the tent. I think I was two years old.

Fast forward from my earliest years to immediately following college, I began working for the Youth Opportunities Program of the Appalachian Mountain Club that quietly gets thousands and thousands of kids outdoors every year.

Through working summers with the Youth Opportunities Program in New Hampshire and Maine, I really got first hand experience with the model that I later brought to Bay Area Wilderness

Training. I grew to understand, "Oh, that's how you do this! That's the way that kids can have these experiences in the outdoors which are so vital and so powerful and sometimes life transforming."



One day I asked the director of the Youth Opportunities Program if this model was happening anywhere else and he said no – that was the moment I decided that I had to bring this model to the West Coast and, beyond that, to other places across the country.

MR: Can you tell me more about the model?

KM: The model is in its simplest form training educators, adults that work with youth in some shape or form – training them in leadership skills and providing them with the tools they need to be successful in taking kids outdoors. Bay Area Wilderness Training now has three gear libraries in San Francisco, Oakland, and in Milpitas. After we train the teachers and youth workers, they can borrow backpacks, jackets, boots, hats and gloves, tents, sleeping bags, cooking stoves and other equipment from the gear libraries at no cost. It is through this empowering model that we are able to get over 6,000 youth out every year – and over 20,000 youth in 13 years.

MR: Could you tell me more about the development of leadership skills?

KM: The trainings range from a one-night overnight, very entry level car camping training to a five night backcountry training in Yosemite or in Tahoe National Park. The goal for the training is to make sure the teachers and youth workers know how to keep the kids warm and safe and dry. Once they know how to do that, then they learn how use wilderness as a powerful tool for youth development.

We create opportunities to experience wonder and inspiration outdoors, the ability to connect to these moments in nature that are fleeting – experiences that are uncalculated and magical. One of the things I can say very confidently is that these trainings are also life transforming for the adults.

MR: Can you give me an example of this leadership experience?

KM: I can point to an incredible woman named Elizabeth, a youth worker with an organization that works primarily with young teenage women that are caught up with the sex trade in Oakland. She uses the outdoors as a tool to develop the young women's self-esteem and skills.

Elizabeth came to our wilderness training and was just blown away – she had a really powerful experience. The experience made a huge difference in her own

belief in herself – the feeling that she could take who she is and what she does into the world.

MR: What are you working on next?

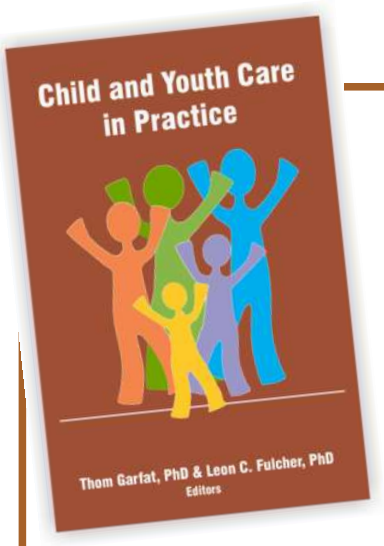
KM: For many years I've definitely asked the question, "Why isn't something like Bay Area Wilderness Training in dozens of cities across the country?" I recently made the decision that it is time to make it happen. I am creating a national organization, The Outdoors Empowered Network (OEM) that will support the existing organizations, offering wilderness training and access to gear, and seed new organizations – in Chicago, Atlanta, Seattle, Phoenix, and other places. That is the next chapter.

MR: You have such passion for leadership and working with youth. What do you see as your life purpose?

KM: I very much identify and see myself as an educator. I feel frequently most engaged, most alive, and most lit up when I'm teaching and engaging with other teachers about education.

My life purpose is to get kids outdoors – I also have this feeling that it is much bigger than that. Where I really find my passion is when I can talk about how incredibly important it is to get kids outdoors and connect them to nature as their birthright. To me, that is powerful work – and a powerful purpose.

This feature from:
http://www.cincbayarea.org/interviews/kyle-macdonald/



Child and Youth Care in Practice

Thom Garfat & Leon Fulcher - editors

Child and Youth Care in Practice brings together some of the best of contemporary writings on Child and Youth Care practice. Starting with an updated version of the characteristics of a CYC approach and ranging from practice-based evidence that informs evidence-based Outcomes that Matter through to direct care, supervision and management, through education to creative arts, Child and Youth Care in Practice demonstrates the application of a Child and Youth Care approach across many areas of our work.
Drawing upon writings from different parts of the world, this is a practice ideas book for college courses, teams, trainers, carers, managers and individual practitioners. Child and Youth Care in Practice shows the expanse and connectedness of our field. It is a testament to the evolution of a Child and Youth Care approach.

Child and Youth Care in Practice is available in soft cover ($19.95) or Adobe PDF e-book format ($14.95).

To order, visit www.pretext.co.za/shop or email info@pretext.co.za or thom@transformaction.com

Boom or Bust? ...I say BOOM!

A response to Garth Goodwin's article "Boom or Bust" which appeared in *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice* Volume 25 Issue 3 Fall 2012

Michelle Briegel



While reading the last issue of the *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*, I was happy to see Garth Goodwin's column, entitled "The Profession: Boom or Bust." Reading Garth's account of the multiple and varied changes to the profession over the years was quite interesting and informative. As a non-profit CYC Manager for most of my 20 years in the field I have seen some of the shift Garth speaks of, although I have noticed a rather large swing more recently, within the last five years I would say.

I have noticed there seems to be a sense of entitlement at times by some new CYC Professionals. Garth speaks of staff saying "oh, I don't work weekends" or "I don't work on statutory holidays". One of my all-time favorites is "these kids don't belong here." There are also comments like "I am just a babysitter", or "nothing we do makes a difference", and of course "they are just attention seeking". As an educator, service provider, and because my roots are in residential group care; I take exception to statements such as these. What this tells me is there is a serious disconnect between the "job" that CYC's are doing and understanding the "work" they are supposed to be doing.

In his article, Garth (2012) suggests that a system of standardization for the Professional could do much to sort out staffing levels and competence of staff people; with certification being the vehicle for such standards being taught and recognized. I was thrilled to see that Garth commended Alberta for taking the lead in designing an on-line learning program for its members, particularly because I am the one developing that exciting program.

Alberta's on-line learning program will be able to address the issues facing the field by educating front line staff in the very basic principles of CYC, providing a certification preparation learning course, and offering advanced professional development to seasoned and experienced front-line professionals. Our intent is to fill the gap that exists within the field.

Exceptionally exciting is that people from all over the Province (and Canada

for that matter) can participate in these programs, at their convenience, within their time schedule, all at the comfort of their home or workplace. This mode of delivery addresses the need for training and professional development of remote locations, which would not have regular access to such opportunities in a face-to-face setting.

The intention of these programs is not to replace post-secondary education, however, but to encourage those who do not yet have formalized education in Child and Youth Care to receive training and become interested in more formal education. Throughout the modules there are links to the various post-secondary institutions that offer Child and Youth Care among the provinces. Still, there is a concern about staff people who are working with vulnerable children and youth without formalized education. It is that group that we are hoping to target with the Level 1 Beginner Course; ensuring that a minimal degree of knowledge and academic rigor has been established, while hoping that people will be inspired to further their education.

For those who have completed post-secondary education in a related human service field, this program will provide them with information that is specific to the history and theoretical framework that is Child and Youth Care. Educated Child and Youth Care practitioners may find some of the material within the modules to be review, but will have the opportunity to look at the material through a professional lens in a working environment, which for some may be quite different than their first experience learning material through the lens of a student.

Level 2 is designed specifically for someone who is interested in becoming a Certified Professional in Child and Youth Care. This course package will provide the user with all of the specific information needed to pass the Certification exam. Users who enroll in this level will gain further theoretical knowledge to apply to professional practice.

Level 3 is geared toward professionals who have already become certified and are interested in furthering their knowledge and understanding of areas specific to their career focus. As this course package is designed to be for the use of professional development, there is a broad range of topic areas to explore.

The learning modules can be accessed on the Child and Youth Care Association of Alberta website, www.cycaa.com, as they are developed. In the meantime, I can leave you with a selection of topic areas that are being developed.

Courses and Learning Units

Level 1 (Introduction)

This course package is perfect for the new Child and Youth Care Professional or someone who is interested in refreshing their knowledge of the field of practice. Learners will understand what it means to be a Child and Youth Care Professional by gaining knowledge and skills in the following topic areas:

1. Professionalism in Child and Youth Care
2. Helping Skills

3. Activity Programming
4. Developmental Areas
5. Introduction to Family Work
6. Writing, Documenting and Recording

Level 2 (Certification)

This course package is designed in preparation of meeting the knowledge requirements learners need to successfully pass the Child and Youth Care Professional Certification Exam in Alberta. Learners will have a clear understanding of theoretical concepts and the transfer of such into daily practice. Topic areas include:

1. Professionalism
2. Therapeutic Milieu
3. Child and Youth Care Work with Families
4. Life Span Development
5. Systemic Framework
6. Client and Service Planning
7. Mental Health
8. Basic Care
9. Individual and Group Development

Level 3 (Advanced)

Advanced learning is for individuals who have already successfully become a Certified Child and Youth Care Professional in the Province of Alberta, via the Child and Youth Care Association of Alberta. The course package will take the learner to more advanced levels of best practice learning, involving innovative professional development areas of focus.

1. Leadership
2. Supervision
3. Trauma
4. Brain Development
5. Trauma Informed Care
6. Program Development
7. Advocacy
8. Special Topic Areas (to be determined)

As a professional practitioner it is important to engage in actives and learning that progress your career, while ensuring that you are knowledgeable in the most current and up to date innovations, trends, and practice models available. This allows for your clients to receive the best professional standard of care, as well as keeping yourself marketable as a professional.

Agencies need to support the ongoing development of their staff people to meet the needs of clients, to follow best practice standards of the field, and to grow a highly effective team of dedicated professionals. Investing in your employees is a smart financial decision establishing greater retention and loyalty to your agency; thus reducing the cost of advertising, hiring, and retraining a constant influx of new employees.

It is my hope that readers will join us in our mission to provide the best education and professional development to CYC Professionals in every learning forum we can possibly think of.

Michelle Briegel is the Director of Research and Development for the Child and Youth Care Association of Alberta (CYCAA), an Instructor in CYC at Mount Royal University in Calgary Alberta, and a private consultant. Michelle has been working in the field of Child and Youth Care since 1993, primarily in non-profit management.

Free Time

In formally structured times, troubles come in ones and twos: Greg and Richard are fooling around in the homework group, or Margie wouldn't go to the aerobics class she begged to join. In informal and unstructured times, the troubles can come in bunches: the kids are rough-housing in the lounge; the boys are ganging up on the girls in the pool. The informal and "free" times are as essential as structured times — but how can we keep these beneficial?

Check your groupings. Everyone off doing their own thing anywhere can lead to an out-of-control situation. Little kids can be at the mercy of the older ones and deserve protection. Your programme schedule could ensure that different age groups are free at different times. Some social engineering is sometimes necessary to create groups or to pull a disruptive member from a group which would function better without him. Without snooping, child Care workers can be aware of groups' activities, and spot those likely to become over-boisterous or destructive.

Be aware of brewing situations. Child care workers are most distressed when situations have got out of hand, when romping has ended in breakages, or arguments have become fights. We don't have to wait for disasters to deal with them; we can head them off at the pass, and we remain responsible for intervening when this is sensible to maintain realistic boundaries. "Let's put a paper down here for you to paint on", "Let's move this game out into the yard where things won't get broken" or "Let's see if we can settle this argument before we get into a boxing match".

Have a repertoire of things to do. Bored kids easily become rowdy and destructive. Your campus should have a number of features to draw and challenge youngsters: everything from a football, a rope swing, a basketball net and a tennis wall outside, to a computer, dart-board, library or workshop inside. The more of these attractions there are, the more occupied and the smaller your groups will be.

Use free time observations for your learning. During free time kids are living in a 'real life' situation, trying out new ideas, roles and behaviours in the wider group. How they manage (or mismanage) their free time, their choice of activities and their getting along with others, tells you something about their resources and development — and therefore something about what you still need to teach.

Never replace structured group activities. It is not enough to lament poor group behaviour or inadequate personal skills on the part of children. Structured groups are your classroom for teaching children to manage their unstructured times. You retain your initiative as a teacher when you involve youngsters in group activities: you model healthy participation, creativity and sportsmanship; you allow children to share achievement in teams. Whether in a pick-up swimming gala, a table-tennis league or a building project, children learn by doing.

Remember Fritz Redl's warning that if we offer the kids an empty programme, they will soon fill it up with their own stuff — and then *they* are calling the shots, not us.



Postcard from Lake Waikaremoana
February, 2013

Hi Everybody! I almost posted a sign saying 'Gone Fishing!' this month, but then it's fun sharing a few experiences from the past month while camping, boating and fishing at my favourite lake in the world in New Zealand's Urewera National Park. Being there for the annual family fishing competition is a highlight. Alas my fishing exploits came nowhere near to what some young people achieved during this competition!



Sunrise over Panekiri at Lake Waikaremoana

Lake Waikaremoana is an ancient lake with special significance to the Ngai Tuhoe, Ruapani and Kahangungu Maori peoples who lived around it before Europeans arrived. Europeans brought changes: they built a road through the most remote part of New Zealand's North Island in the early 1900s, opening the lake to outsiders; 3 hydroelectric facilities were built below the lake outflow in the 1920s; and in 1905 Rainbow and Brown Trout were introduced. These fish have thrived and are very wild!



Lake Waikaremoana Family Fishing Competition 2013

The annual family fishing competition has brought children, young people, parents and grandparents from all around New Zealand's North Island to Waikaremoana since the 1930s. The prize-giving ceremony after the day's fishing is always a treat. Spot prizes are given out and great joy is shared whilst kids explore their bags full of fishing gear, caps and lures all sponsored by Kilwell Hunting and Fishing, the premier outfitter.



Lake Waikaremoana Fishing Competition Prize Winner

Before the competition I met Angus and Briar whilst sitting in my boat preparing a line for an evening's fishing. Angus pointed to his father's boat beached next to mine and I asked how their fishing was going. Angus explained how he hooked a big trout at the lake's edge the night before. It had given him such a shock that he grabbed the reel and held on tight, only to have the line break and the fish escape. I chuckled whilst explaining how the temptation is always to grab the reel and hold on tight whenever it begins to whirr. One has to remember to keep the tip of the pole up so the tension on the fishing reelcan lets the fish run before you start reeling it in.



Angus, Holly, Briar & Little Sister with their Champion Brown Trout

Briar asked what lures or flies were the best to use because their parents had given permission for each child to buy one new lure or fly with which to fish for the week. I explained how Rainbows acted very differently from Brown trout. The Rainbows tend to stay in deeper water and sometimes take a fly when feeding, but they also have a 'strike response' when particular lures move past. Brown trout stay closer into shore. One needs to watch and study Browns, stalking a specific fish with a particular fly. Two evenings later, Angus proudly showed me the Brown trout he had caught after stalking it for two evenings! He was thrilled and explained how he had followed my advice. Then on the day of the fishing competition, Angus, Briar, Holly and little sister each caught a new prize-winning Brown trout and each received a new fishing pole!

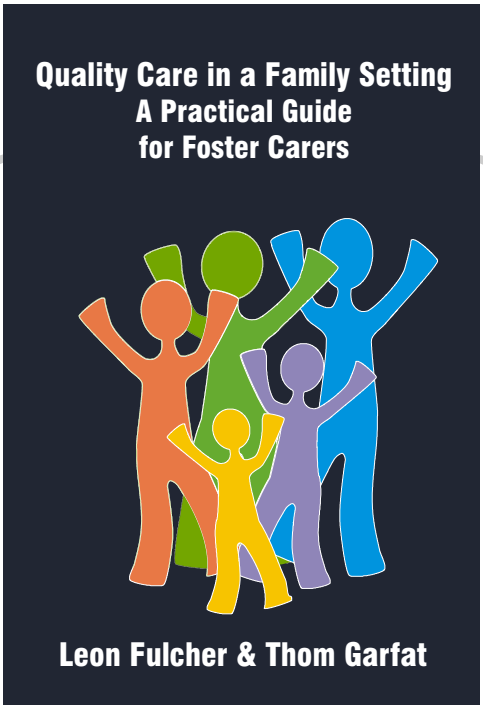


Small fry lands a really big one!

These experiences with Angus and Briar reminded me of how when someone (including a child and youth care worker) enters a child or young person's '*Zone of Proximal Development*', they are ready to learn new skills from experiences that have special meaning for them. Vigotsky's idea certainly applied to my encounters with Angus and Briar. After the prize-giving, I asked Angus whether he wants to be a farmer like his Dad. He explained *"Whatever I do, I want to make sure there is plenty of time for fishing"*! Shortly after the encounters with Angus and Briar, an item in the national newspaper caught my attention about 7-year-old Hunter Scott who caught a 133kg Striped Marlin that took over an hour to haul in. Hunter said: *"First the line was going out … and then I did a few winds but then it took all of that line back out. …I did a few more winds and dad said it was only 30m of line left so I kept winding"*. His dad confirmed that Hunter hauled the fish in by himself. Yay for activity-based learning!

Tight Lines, Everyone!





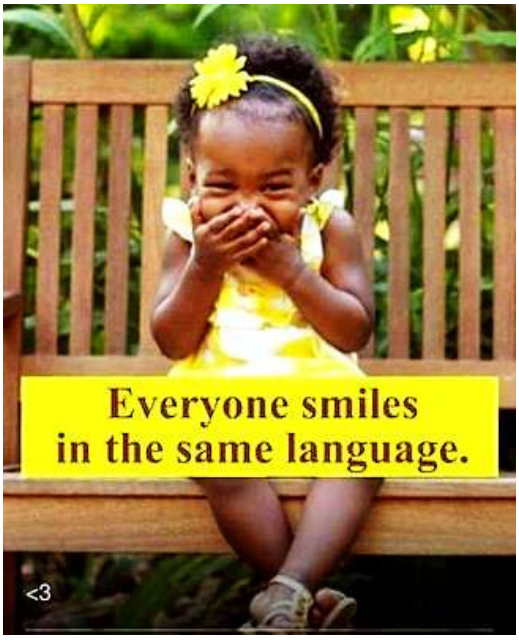
While training and practice standards are now used in many places to enhance, monitor and evaluate the quality of care given to children and young people in out-of-home care, Foster Carers are often expected to perform miracles without practical assistance. Building from a strengths-based approach, **Quality Care in a Family Setting: A Practical Guide for Foster Carers** seeks to redress that deficit, offering practical help for Foster Carers seeking to do extraordinary things with the kids for whom they care.

Written by Leon Fulcher and Thom Garfat, **Quality Care in a Family Setting**, offers theory, practice tips and everyday advice for helping young people in Foster Care develop the strengths and skills necessary to succesfully navigate life's challenges.

To order, visit
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EndNotes



Spare us a Thought

Somebody asked if I could 'spare a thought'. (Easier to spare a nickel was my first thought.) But here was my second thought. We don't think enough.

Children get up at a certain time because the program says so. They eat meals, clean the house, meet in groups and go to bed, when and as the program says. Nobody stops to wonder if this is a good idea, if the routine should be varied, or if the individual child needs something different. Everyone just follows the routine. (Hey, what am I supposed to be doing? I don't know, what time is it?)

When a child refuses to follow the program, nobody asks, 'what's going on here?' Everyone just looks up at the board, applies consequence number three, and moves on. It doesn't matter who the child is, what the circumstances are, or what might have been the precipitating factors. Different child, similar behaviour, same consequence. (Hey this intervention doesn't seem to be working. Well, it's all we got, so make it work!)

I went to a team meeting the other day while they updated their treatment plans. They may as well have used a rubber stamp. Goals: enhance self-esteem, increase compliance, control anger, attend school. Twelve kids, but only four different goals.

As they decided what strategies to use another pattern emerged: talk to her, consequence her, threaten her, punish her. Twelve kids, four goals, one approach. (Hey, why are we focussing on enhancing self-esteem with Mary? Because that's what we do here.)

So, here's my real thought. We should all have to take a thinking test before we get hired. (Hey, I have to take a test. No problem, it's multiple choice and here's the answers from when I did it last year.) Think about it.

— A. Freeman

———

"Creative people who can't help but explore other mental territories are at greater risk, just as someone who climbs a mountain is more at risk than someone who just walks along a village lane."

— **R. D. Laing**



"Of course, we come to conferences for collegial sharing, professional inspiration... but mostly we come for the food!"

"No use to shout at them to pay attention. If the situations, the materials, the problems before the child do not interest him, his attention will slip off to what does interest him, and no amount of exhortation of threats will bring it back."

— John Holt

I wake up every morning determined both to change the world and have one hell of a good time. Sometimes this makes planning the day a little difficult.

— E. B. White

Learning is something students do, NOT something done to students.

— Alfie Kohn

Something new is being added to the personality of the seventh grader. He seems wobbly inside and out. He is in the stage of a department store that is being remodeled. For a while it appears that everything is about to be ground into rubble but while the mess, dust and noise seem alarming, they are necesary because improvements are about to be made.

— **Fritz Redl**, *National Institute of Mental Health*



"It's from Jane. She's living in sin with someone called Tarzan! "

THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK

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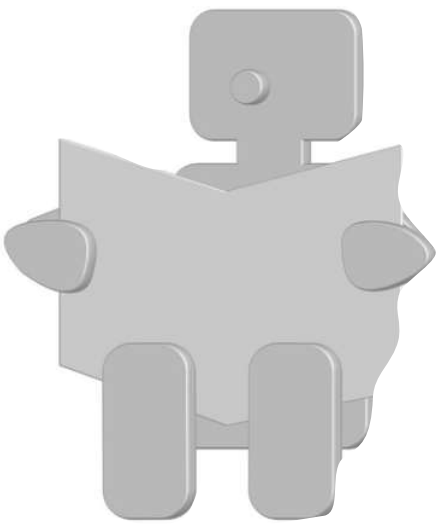
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