CYC-Online

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



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

Issue 265 / March 2021

ISSN 1605-7406

The CYC-Net PRESS

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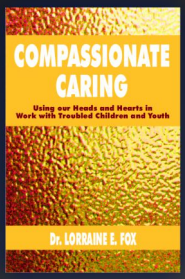
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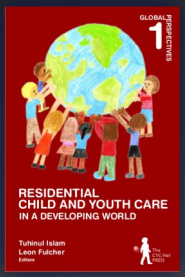
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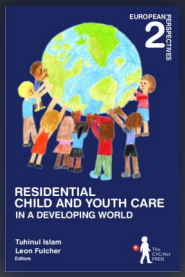
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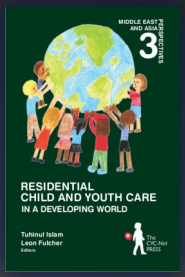
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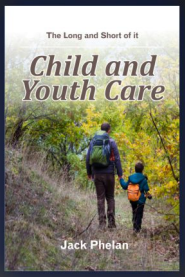
March 2021
ISSN 1605-7406





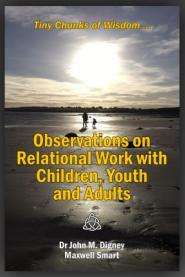


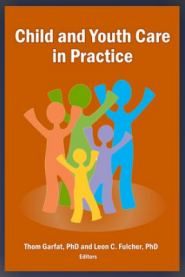


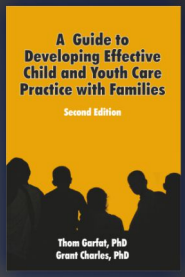


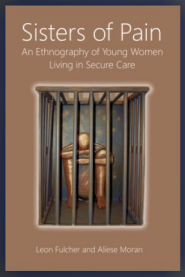


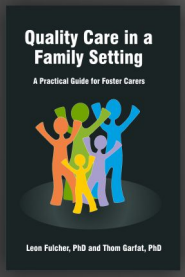






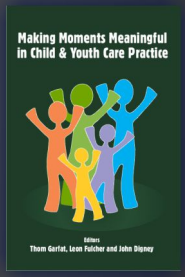


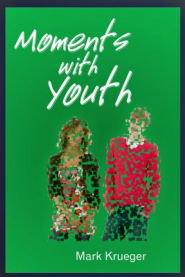


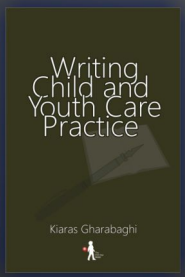


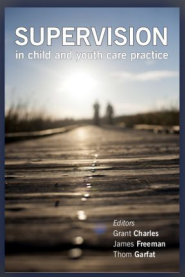


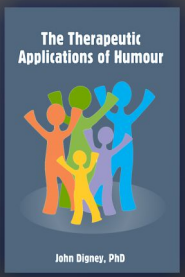














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Working Professionally with Children and Youth



Connecting Over Time

Mark Smith

It doesn't seem like a year since I last wrote an editorial for *CYC-Online*. And what a strange year it has been, a year that has changed and challenged so much of how we, as human beings, interact with one another. But, as I look out of my window and see Springtime and the hope of new beginnings begin to emerge, I have decided not to focus on Covid-19 and what that episode might say about the nature of human relationships to open up a different front on how we, as a field, engage with the relational core identified as the defining characteristic of child and youth care (CYC) practice.

In this regard, it is good to see ideas on the nature of such relationships further developed in the recent book *Relational Child and Youth Care in Action* (Modlin, Freeman, Gaitens and Garfat (Eds), 2021). Having only, as yet, seen the table of contents of this book, I'm not entirely sure what it might cover between the lines, but I suspect most chapters relate to present day practice. In this editorial, I want to expand on this to ponder the nature of relationships between adults and the youth they once looked after and who are now adults themselves. I will do so though some brief observations on my ongoing relationship with a number of boys, now men in their mid to late forties, I looked after in a Scottish approved school in the mid to late 1980s. I will call the school St Aidan's.

Theoretically, I fall back on the writing of the German social pedagogue, Klaus Mollenhauer, translated into English (2013), whose work on upbringing I would recommend wholeheartedly. Mollenhauer recognises that the asymmetry of the formal care relationship comes to an end when it has run its course, in most cases where the child ages out of the official basis for it. The grown child may still maintain a relationship with an adult who has acted in a care capacity in the past, but this relationship will (or should) no longer be asymmetrical. It should, instead, be mutual and reciprocal, meaning that the pedagogical or care relation has dissolved and been replaced by one of friendship or mutual attachment.

This description very much reflects my own experience. My present relationship with the group of former pupils began a few years ago when I was watching one of my sons play football for a boys club team. The coach for the other side was a former pupil of St Aidan's. There was reason at that time for me to want to re-establish contacts with former pupils and this opportunistic encounter allowed me to do so. We now have a Facebook community that includes around a dozen former pupils from that period and I have interviewed several of them for a book I am writing. The nature of these relationships has taken a number of forms. I guess my starting point in some cases has been to revert to the sense of responsibility that is a hangover from my erstwhile caring role and there have indeed been instances of offering advice and support over some of life's issues but, mostly, my engagement has been social and I now count the men among my friends. And that is an illuminating, humbling and rewarding experience.

One of the heartening realisations from this contact was just how important and positive their time in St Aidan's had been; almost all look back on these years as the most enjoyable and formative ones in their lives.

This was expressed in a number of ways from instilling a sense of the importance of a sense of rhythm and routine in their lives that they had carried over to their own parenting. But there was also a sense that they felt cared for and that they mattered to the staff who looked after them – and that we mattered to them in return. And it is this reciprocal aspect of the relationships that has been so telling. Over the course of the past few years, the housemother who was responsible for their direct care in the cottage they lived in took ill and later died. One of the lads was a central support to her in the paucity of other family supports and was called on to hold a chord on her coffin as she was buried. And he and a couple of others continue to visit her grave.

Another of the staff, Bob, the former Deputy Head, also became ill. Again, the former pupils were instrumental in arranging a meal in a local pub so as they could pay their respects before he died. And, one of the lads, who has gone on to do well in business, picked up the bill. And, when Bob was on his death bed, I and two of the former pupils were among the last to visit him to say our farewells. What struck me was how appropriate and genuine this intimate encounter was.

The relationships have also challenged me to consider some of the differences in experience and in worldviews that might be evident between myself and the former pupils. I am educated, financially secure and have become socialised in a particular manner over the years, pushed towards ways of seeing, or at least talking about the world that are expected of me; these are the ways of a liberal elite that sees their way as the only way, their views as the only views you're allowed to hold. Many of the former pupils expressed views that wouldn't fit with these expectations, that would be considered politically correct; a few might have qualified as among Hillary Clinton's 'deplorables'. They wouldn't be

among the voices that those who claim to want to build care systems around the voices of 'lived experience' would want to turn to – they are the wrong kind of care leaver; those who are comfortable in themselves and in their experiences and who are grateful for the experiences St Aidan's and the relationships they built there offered them. And, who, like adult children in family relationships, can discern when the power balance in a relationship needs to shift – when the caregiver begins to be the one who needs care – and to be prepared to step up to the plate to offer this. This is a dimension to our thinking on relationships that perhaps bears further exploration.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy this month's issue and let's hope we can look forward to a better year ahead.

Reference

Mollenhauer, K. (2013). *Forgotten connections: On culture and upbringing*. London, Routledge.

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Against Relational Pedagogy

Kiaras Gharabaghi

It has become common place in our field to speak of relational pedagogy. The basic argument is that since our practice is a relational practice, we ought to model that practice in our pedagogic approaches. And so, we do precisely that; we connect with students at a level far more engaged than what might be typical in post-secondary education. We are concerned for our students' well-being and mental health. We work with our students to explore Self and to really dig deep into their inner workings, their biases, their ways of being in the world. When the moment calls for it, we blur the boundaries of teaching and therapeutic intervention; not entirely, of course, but we do listen actively to student concerns, their stories, their circumstances, and the barriers they might be facing in their education journey. All of this has resulted in considerable creativity in the classroom. Lectures are a thing of the past. Instead, we are using activities, performance arts, group projects, simulations and various other kinds of frameworks to give rise to a relational engagement, and therefore a relational learning, in our classrooms.

Much of this practice has real and tangible benefits. It creates spaces for diverse students facing diverse barriers and adversities and bringing diverse learning styles. It creates environments in which everyone is someone by default. Relational pedagogy is inherently concerned about inclusivity, about rendering visible the invisible. Furthermore, we can

CYC-Online
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connect the way students learn about child and youth care practice to the actual practice. This is how you need to be when you are working in the field, we say. We are modeling for you what it looks like when we are relational.

I think all of this is just fine and dandy. But I don't buy any of it. I question whether relational pedagogy is something that should frame the way we prepare our students for child and youth care practice.

Let me explain. First, we are engaged in relational pedagogies in the context of institutions that don't care at all about individual students. Participation in post-secondary education, at least in Canada, the US, and the UK, is primarily transactional. The student pays the money, and the institution awards a degree if the conditions for doing so have been met. This is simply a fact. If you can't pay, you can't come. This does not sound particularly relational to me. But to be fair, within our Schools, we can mitigate some of this transactional process. We can embrace each student, care for their well-being, support their journey. With one caveat: every step of the way, we will evaluate how good they are at being a student. We will take their work, their contributions, their products and determine whether they are deserving of excellence, mediocrity or failure. Given the enormous proportion of assignments and activities that are self-reflective in nature, we are exercising quite the authority here: Sorry, your self-reflection is only mediocre. More precisely, the way you have presented your sense of Self to me is inadequate. This too does not sound very relational to me.

I know that we try very hard to mitigate the authority that we, as instructors, inevitably exercise in the classroom. The need to assign grades to student work, which we accept as a necessary component of post-secondary education, creates obvious power dynamics that are not relational at all. The fact that we have additional criteria for grading, such as

on time submission, APA format, and meeting the requirements of a rubric, really are not relationally helpful either. I am always reminded of the similarity between imposing a late penalty for a student's late submission and the way in which child and youth workers call young people's probation workers to report that they returned to the group home 20 minutes past their court-imposed curfew. Those are just the rules, we say.

I often wonder if the concept of relational pedagogy unintentionally is reinforcing, indeed, reproducing, colonial patterns of protection, surveillance and normative imposition. We know a lot about how protection, surveillance and normative imposition function in our society. These are the most effective tools to generate particular kinds of truths, and while these are also good tools to generate inclusion, the inclusion we are talking about is neither emancipating nor anti-oppressive, as so many of us have claimed. Our idea of 'relational' is quickly universalized. There is a right way of being relational and a wrong way. And it does not really matter who you are or how you are positioned in the world. To me at least, it often feels like the message to students is this:

> *The way I will teach you - my relational paradigm - is the way you need to learn. Even better, I will protect you if you are feeling not up to the task of learning my relational paradigm; your failure to learn my paradigm is, after all, indicative of a problem, and perhaps what you really need is a therapeutic adjustment to conform to the paradigm. And I will of course watch over you. In fact, I will create tasks for you to do and determine whether you do them correctly. And I will count the times you log into my course site. And I will monitor how much you contribute to your smaller*

> *groups of peers. And of course, I will assess all of this, and then tell you what you are worth using only 20% of the alphabet. Trust me, I will know what you are doing, what you are thinking, and what you are contributing at all times. And each time you stray, each time you suggest other ways of thinking that fall outside of my relational paradigm, I will use my power to control your future with the grades I assign to bring you back. Remember, we need to be relational; so please, get it right.*

This is protection, surveillance and normative imposition. This is not anti-oppression; and it most certainly is not emancipatory.

I worry a lot about our messages to students. I worry that we are fine with and celebrate mediocrity. And we have no concern about our students about to graduate having no idea what to do when there is no rubric, when no one offers an embrace, when we have to help someone while being in need of help ourselves. Here is the thing. Relational pedagogy is based on the assumption that it makes sense to learn about practice *not by doing the practice*, but *by being practiced on*; relational pedagogy suggests that if we as instructors practice relationally in our teaching of child and youth care, then students will eventually practice relationally in their work with young people, families and communities. I think this is a precarious assumption. I think it is much more likely that our students won't know what to do when they encounter moments in which others don't engage them relationally. Such as, for example, the principal who just suspended a Black Youth for being Black; or the judge who just sentenced an Indigenous youth to a facility a thousand miles away from home. Or the newcomer family that doesn't trust us because we seem to

not understand their cultural context. Or the young person who has been relationally engaged by child and youth workers dozens of times and still seems to end up getting judged, getting discharged, getting suspended or getting discarded.

Young people, their families and their communities are not living in a relational world. Their challenges are not an arts and crafts project. Racism is not a performance (but anti-racism often is). Group projects do not, in any form or shape, prepare our students to work with groups. The only context in which our relational pedagogy makes sense is the institutional context of post-secondary education. It is only in that context that we can control the environment in ways that our relational pedagogy can produce its protective, surveillance-based and entirely normative processes. To the extent that we dream of child and youth care practice actually unfolding as we speak of it these days, in community, with people, outside of oppressive institutional structures and coercive mechanisms, we have to equip students to be a little better prepared for and far more connected to a world that is filled with tensions and contradictions. Sometimes, they must learn, no one cares about you, your Self, or your relational practice. Sometimes, you have to find your way without a map. Sometimes, you actually have to be able to do very specific things that you won't like doing, and even when you have done them, no one will reward you. This is life. This is everyone's life outside of the institution.

It seems strange to me that we aim to create an environment for learning child and youth care practice that is so profoundly different than the environments where young people live their lives. I wonder how we expect a 21-year-old graduate of our programs to respond to systemic racism in contexts where we don't hold their hands. I wonder what part of relational pedagogy teaches our students to fight. What part teaches our

students to scream? What part teaches our students to confront injustice? What part, ultimately, teaches our students to be courageous in the face of being dismissed and invalidated?

This is child and youth care practice. At least this is the experience most young people I have ever worked with. They are not experiencing relational practice. They live their lives in environments in which they are a case, where their home is a program, and where their value is a function of their conformity to expectations, authority and coercion. I don't think relational pedagogy is a good way to prepare our students for the world that is awaiting them.

Not everyone who wants to get into child and youth care practice should. We cannot change that by being relational in our pedagogy. Let people figure out where they belong. Let them make those hard decisions themselves. Stop protecting. Stop the surveillance. And stop the normative impositions.

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CYC Family Practice

Jack Phelan

CYC practitioners have been working with families as their focus for many years, and our literature has grown extensively in the past twenty years to reflect this specialized area of our profession. Yet as I examine the teaching and training of students and practitioners, I am disappointed by the methods and content of too many college and in-service training programs.

When I read the course outlines for family treatment that many CYC colleges offer, I am surprised by the texts and readings assigned, which reflect a family therapy, office-based approach that is not suitable for preparing CYC family support practitioners. Too often the teachers and trainers also have a background in family therapy techniques which are the domain of office-based, highly structured approaches which do not represent an accurate picture of how to effectively practice CYC family support.

Although it is useful to learn about family systems theories that help all family workers to view family dynamics from a systemic perspective, texts and curriculums that describe highly structured interactions with families that occur in office-based environments misrepresent the reality of how CYC practitioners operate in the life space of family support interventions. I am especially challenged by the use of one-way mirrors and reflecting team approaches that come from the literature of psychology, which prepare students for family work strategies that they will never utilize.

CYC family support practitioners do not even look the same as their colleagues who practice in offices, they dress more practically and less formally, and relate physically to their families by clearly not over-dressing.

When a family course at a college is being taught by someone with CYC experience and expertise, the textbook may still reflect a therapy/psychology approach, which can minimize the effectiveness of the lessons taught. When both the text and the teacher do not reflect CYC expertise, the result is students who do not know about or respect the skills that they will need for relational CYC practice.

CYC family support practitioners describe visits with families where there are multiple distractions, noise, dogs, unsanitary households, interruptions from visitors and family members entering and exiting abruptly. This is not the reality reflected in office-based family work, which is a neutral environment but not a natural environment.

Life space practice is embedded in what we do and how we operate with families. There are many issues relevant to creating a safe space in the midst of often chaotic lives so that families can reflect on how to move forward and create the courage and hope needed to change. Families also must believe that the CYC practitioner is connecting with their distress by physically joining them, not just verbally reassuring them and offering advice from an unrealistic perspective.



Family support workers gradually progress through dint of experience and good supervision to view working in family's life space as a major positive ingredient. New workers often tremble as they approach the door of homes because of their own lack of skill and confidence, but gradually this is replaced by energy and enthusiasm, with the eventual belief that there is no other place they could imagine meeting with family members than in their own environment.

Mature CYC family support practitioners do not believe that it is a good idea to develop an assessment of a family in an office or any other neutral environment. The observation and interaction with people where they live is the best place to understand how to support them. However, the ability to interact and observe people in their real lives requires clear, focussed training and support to acquire the complex skill set needed.

There are many textbooks, journal articles and workshops developed and delivered by CYC practitioners which should be the resources utilized to build effective CYC practice, and we should stop using the formats and rules developed for other professional approaches which do not reflect the reality of what CYC family support work is.

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



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Do boys not care? Examining why boys are guarded in the classroom

Andriana Bergman

Author's Note

This article speaks to a generalized picture of "bro culture" and its impacts on male invulnerability in the classroom. This is an inquiry into the experiences, reasons, and potential solutions to the psychological unsafety certain boys feel to express their caring and vulnerability. The scope of the paper does not allow for an exploration of gender identity, sexuality, or other social locators that further complicate the issue for individuals through the intersectionality of identities. The intent is to start the conversation of how to invite boys into their soft-heartedness and encourage other voices, with diverse perspectives, to examine their experiences and culture surrounding males expressing vulnerability.

As a high school student, I noticed an academic dissonance between my male and female peers. The girls in my class seemed to engage with the materials, interact with the teachers, and dedicate free time to their studies. They openly expressed their caring and faced the futility of challenging assignments, grades, and pressures that often accompany academics. Simultaneously, I witnessed some of the boys avoid class engagement or interacting with their teachers. They joked about their academic outcomes and swore by their lack of caring. It was

CYC-Online
e-journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net)
March 2021
ISSN 1605-7406

not until I had two brothers in high school, who also appeared to not care, that I became curious about what was happening for boys in the classroom. The conclusion I have come to is that, behind the shield of nonchalant uncaring, there is a fear of facing failure that stems from a 'bro culture' promoting the suppression of vulnerability in the classroom. In other words, peer orientation cultivates a fear of failure that is masked by pretending not to care.

Exploring the Root of the Stereotype

Failure is a scary prospect to face. I understand that as much as anyone. Every time I took a test or handed in an assignment, I felt the psychological discomfort that my best may not be good enough. Every time I allowed myself to be vulnerable and care I was doing so although my caring could potentially be met with failure. And when I did fail, I expressed feelings of disappointment and self-doubt before digging deep into my resilience and trying again. What happens when the fear of failure is too great and the emotional risk of caring is too much? As my brother explained to me, the solution is "[you] act like [you] don't care so then it's whatever if [you] fail because it never mattered in the first place" (Lincourt, personal interview, 2020). This concept is further described by Matt Pinkett and Mark Roberts who say in their book "Boys Don't Try?" that the "fear of failure … is a deep psychological threat that can lead to self-sabotage: the person's motivation to avoid it exceeds their motivation to succeed" (Nolan, 2019, n.p., para. 16). By not caring about grades, boys can feel like they are protected from the vulnerability of being disappointed. I witnessed this concept in action when overhearing conversations in the school halls where boys would joke about their grades or attendance and mask their fear of failure with an uncaring persona. What leads boys to adopt this protective strategy?

Examining “Bro Culture”

A possible answer to this question lies within “bro culture”. Defined as “an inability to express emotion, show remorse or be vulnerable” (Homayoun, 2017, n.p., para. 2), bro culture has developed out of a social and emotional insecurity of males expressing vulnerability. To illustrate, my brother entered grade 9 with little confidence in his ability to pass his core classes. After sharing his concerns with his male friends, he was greeted with insults disguised as humor (Bergman, personal interview, 2020). His vulnerability was met with the toxic masculinity, referring to a “societal pattern in which stereotypically male traits are idealized as the masculine cultural ideal” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Science Direct, 2020, np, para.1), that sustains “bro culture”. Through toxic phrases like “man up”, “stop being a pussy”, and “grow a pair” the insecurity of being vulnerable is transformed into a culture where “men aren’t meant to show emotions” (Lamont. 2019. n.p., para. 11) if they do not want to appear “less masculine” (Lamont, 2019, n.p., para. 13). Impressionable and often insecure, adolescent boys have a limited choice as they enter puberty with its intense peer pressure during a time in which adolescents are defining their social identity. They must decide whether they will “man up” and mold themselves and their emotional expression to fit this box of toxic masculinity, or if they will “challenge this notion and be penalized” (Mayer, 2018, n.p., para. 3) by their peers. While much of Western society is witnessing a shift in gender roles, boys are often not offered the support or invitation to be vulnerable and still be deemed men. It should not come as a surprise to the school system that boys’ solution to this paradox is a flight from vulnerability, which in the classroom translates into the appearance that they do not care.

Long Term Implications of Suppressing Vulnerability

There is a plethora of implications for adolescent boys suppressing vulnerability to avoid failure. As shame and vulnerability researcher, Brené Brown (2011) shared "[we] cannot selectively numb. When we numb vulnerability, we numb joy, we numb gratitude, we numb happiness"...Vulnerability is the..."birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity" (6:36). When boys numb vulnerability in an attempt to avoid academic failure, they consequently numb these emotions as well. Emotional numbing has ramifications that can contribute to substance use, increased risk-taking, and inauthentic personality development that has been associated with greater emotional instability and lack of conscientiousness later in life (Jarret, 2018, n.p., para.25).

The second issue is that to avoid failure and futility boys avoid their full potential - becoming their most adaptive, emergent, and integrated selves (Neufeld, 2012, pp. 3 -6). Failure is what teaches adolescents how to "cultivate resilience" (Ng, 2018, n.p., para.8) and be emotionally resourced enough to face failure, not succumb to it. By avoiding vulnerability boys are not developing the resiliency to face the futility of failure. Psychologist Josephine Perry said that "in practical terms, how we cope with, and what we take from, failure is what can help us build success in the future" (Wallace, 2019, n.p., para. 27). When failure is perceived as the opportunity to develop coping mechanisms and strengthen resilience, boys can move forward empowered with the knowledge that they can handle life's next obstacle (Wallace. 2019. n.p., para.28). Regarding education, the resiliency to face futility and failure can manifest as boys reaching their full potential in the classroom.

Lastly, the developmental aspect of this fear of failure has to be recognized. Adolescents undergo rapid hormonal and neurological changes that, combined with the emotional and psychological stress teenage boys are feeling, can entrench neural pathways and influence the person they will become (Jarret, 2018, n.p., para.4). Emotional suppression can become more than a temporary stage of development, rather it can become a fixed mindset that, when uninterrupted, is carried throughout a lifespan. As a result, these boys will perpetuate the toxicity and emotional suppression that then hurts the next generation and continues the vicious cycle. The good news is there is hope. This does not have to be the reality; neurological pathways can be redirected towards a growth mindset (Ng, 2018, n.p., para.8) that becomes comfortable with males expressing a wide range of emotions so that academic opportunities can be seized.

Reframing the Stereotype

To summarize the identified issues: The emotional suppression of boys that is perpetuated through generations carries on the tradition of male invulnerability; boys being unable to reach their full potential in school due to a lack of resiliency against failure impedes them from reaching their full potential; and selective numbing impacts boy's range of emotional expression and increases inauthentic and delinquent behavior. It is clear that having guarded boys only hinders them, schools, and society. "Bro culture" is in desperate need of reframing. This leads to the question: How do schools help guide their boys away from insecure masculinity in which they need to fulfil specific toxic gendered roles and towards secure masculinity where they are psychologically safe to express their caring emotions and be vulnerable

As a starting point, it is important to remember that the stereotype that boys do not care about school is not the case for all of them. For example, a friend of mine with dyslexia required additional support in the classroom. He was able to face the futility of being unable to read class content and show his vulnerability by publicly requesting support. The result of his vulnerability was a shift in class culture, where fellow male students began asking for support as well. Rather than not receiving support and being constrained by "bro culture" my friend demonstrated secure masculinity by being able to ask for help (Johnson. 2020. Personal Interview). Like everyone else, boys want to do well and succeed, they just need to be invited to engage in class in a way that is empathetic towards the social constructs they have to navigate.

Finding the Solution

Be Present

Teachers play an essential role in finding a solution. Encouraging teachers to shift their lens away from judging defense mechanisms and towards peeling back the layers of boys' facades can help them recognize and focus on the root issues - an inability to stay present with vulnerability. With the solution of offering boys the simple but powerful invitation to be soft-hearted, a defended culture can shift. In action, this looks like meeting boys where they are at (Krueger, 2011, n.p., para.1) and offering them the space and skills to stay present in academic and social discomfort.

Adjust Teaching Styles

Another solution to inviting vulnerability in boys is to adjust the teaching styles. By fostering self-esteem and confidence using a

curriculum that emphasizes emotional intelligence, schools can nurture environments where it is safe for boys to express vulnerability free of stigma. This could look like having class discussions where *all* the students are celebrated for their effort, whether the outcome is a triumph or a "failure" and educating on emotional intelligence and expression.

Provide Positive Role Models

Lastly, it is imperative to offer boys positive role models. Male influences like father figures, "coaches, teachers and school administrators" (Homayoun, n.p., para. 4) who are secure in their emotional vulnerability and ability to face failure and futility can be examples for male-identified youth. By modelling emotional vulnerability, manhood can be reimagined for boys as something that values a soft heart and the resilience to care can be fostered.

These are big asks of a school system that exists within a society where some may not be ready to address the disservice it is doing to its boys. So, at the very least, the stereotype "boys don't care" needs to be shifted to illustrate the truth: It is not that boys do not care about school, rather society has placed the vulnerability to care outside of the boundaries of the typical Western idealized man. The resulting conflict is that boys cannot simultaneously care about school and be perceived as the idealized "macho" man. If we hope to see a shift in boys caring about school and male vulnerability, "bro culture" and the societally upheld parameters surrounding "maleness" are what need to be addressed. From here, boys can be validated in their emotions and invited to care when facing failure and futility in the classroom.

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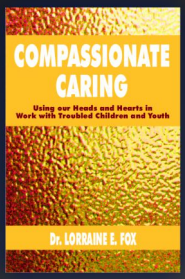
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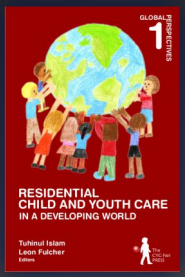
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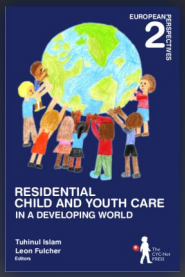
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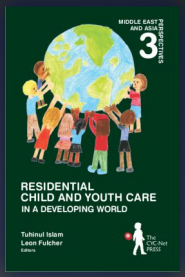
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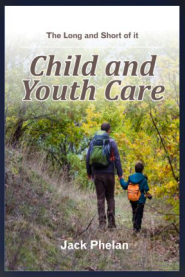
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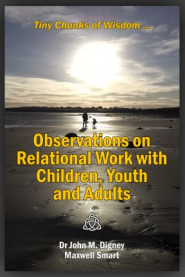


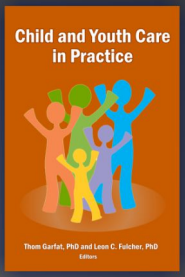


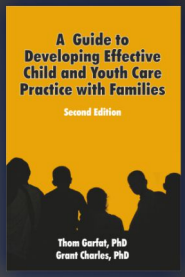


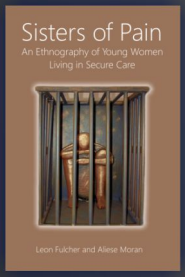


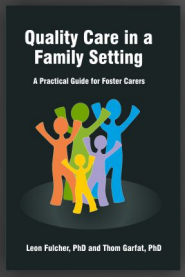






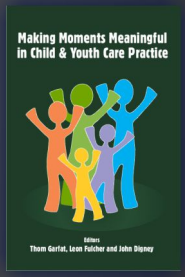


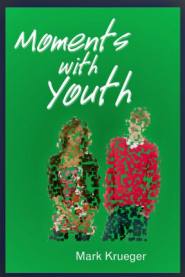


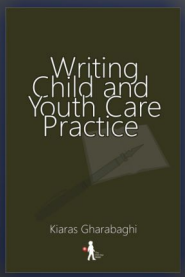


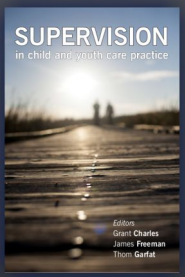


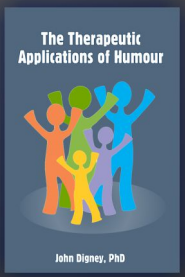














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Tree Brain: Fighting for the Things We Love

Hans Skott-Myhre

I have been fascinated lately with the new research that has been emerging on the ability of trees and fungi to communicate with one another. So often we see plants as inert and non-thinking. At best, we see them as aesthetically pleasing or annoying. We enjoy them and cultivate them for their beauty in our gardens and as houseplants, or destroy them as weeds and invasive species. Sometimes we go out of the way to immerse ourselves in their company by hiking, going to parks, or wilderness areas. In all of these engagements, we can be struck by a kind of ineffable awe. To stand in a grove of old growth redwoods can be a profound and sometimes spiritual experience. To see the first crocuses of spring emerge from the snow can provoke a complex array of feelings. Plants and trees have the capacity to be evocative in ways that we can't really articulate.

I had the opportunity to visit Butchart Gardens just outside of Victoria B.C. a couple of years ago and was awestruck by the absolutely magical quality of each vista. The amazing variety of colors, textures, and configurations of the plantings provoked a small cry of delight as I came around each bend in the trail. Of course, this is a highly manscaped environment in which plants are shaped to the desires and aesthetic preferences of European colonial gardening practices, and yet at another level, the plants themselves seemed to transcend the intentionality of their

captors. Each flower contained a living force that touched a core in me that took my breath away.

In an entirely different context, I was also powerfully struck by the smallest of artic flowers pointed out by the founder of Deep Ecology Arne Ness in the documentary Call of the Mountain. Standing in a rock strewn and apparently barren landscape high in the mountains, Ness bends over to show us a tiny mountain flower. He notes the capacity of life to assert itself in what most of us would see as conditions inherently hostile to life. But there is life and beauty everywhere if we know how to pay attention. This small artic flower is intricate, delicate, and to some degree infinite in its initial subtlety and then deepening complexity as we give it our full attention.

Ness scornfully asserts that these flowers are so much more beautiful than the commercially grown showy garden flowers that fill our yards and homes. I would imagine that this is because they require so much less attention in order to for us notice them and to see them for what they are. The big and brilliant tulips and roses force themselves to our attention, while the tiny artic flowers are hidden in crevices and rocks high in the mountains where few of us ever see them.

This is of course, not limited to tiny artic flowers growing on the side of Ness' beloved mountains. When I go for a walk along the roads that snake through the countryside and suburban areas near my home, I am constantly struck by the beauty of little wildflowers growing among the roadside gravel, crabgrass, and litter. Hundreds of tiny blooms largely invisible to those focused on their exercise and self-care regimes moving quickly past, or the cars whizzing past at speeds that make the appreciation of these small expressions of living beauty impossible.

Indeed, I might suggest that to truly appreciate the infinite panorama of beauty that surrounds us would require a depth of perception that can only be achieved by slowing down. We move through our lives at an astonishing pace. Indeed, our speed makes it difficult for us to connect in any meaningful way to the anything in our perceptual field, whether people, plants, animals, architecture, or even the weather. We speed through it on our way to somewhere else. Always on our way to somewhere else.

This way of speed walking through our lives has profound implications. Not the least of which is the ways in which we are simply missing our life. That is to say that our perceptual field, the ways in which our body encounters the world is the source of our thoughts, feelings, and our ability to shape ourselves into the person we identify as us. When we miss large amounts of information that could be readily available to us as resources though which we could become richer and more complex versions of ourselves, we are simultaneously losing our relational connection to the experience of our lives. In short, we are increasingly alienated from the world that we inhabit and that inhabits us.

Marx tells us that capitalism alienates us from our work by stealing both our control of how we work, as well as the products of the work we do. In the most perfunctory reading of his ideas, we might limit our understanding of this claim, to the work we do within the frameworks of a job. I would argue that this is far too narrow a definition. Our ability to work is framed by our interactions with the world around us. We can only discover what we can do through the exploration of the capacities of our bodies and minds as they encounter the ecology in which we are embedded. That is to say, that our labor is not just the job we hold, but extends into the ways in which we create our lives and the world in which

we live. We labor to produce ourselves and who that is cannot be limited to the social categories given to us by the economic system intent on the exploitation of our living labor. When we are raised by a system that has no respect for the inherent value of life in and of itself, we are robbed of the very value of our lived experience. We are rushed through the world on a conveyor belt of consumption and production that is moving so fast, that we can't even comprehend what exactly it is that we are producing. Our enslavement to capitalist labor blinds us to who we really are and what we are really capable of doing.

To be forced into speeds of production and consumption that produce the world around us as a blur, means that we not only don't see the tiny flowers by the roadside. We also don't see each other, except in passing. We slide by each other with such velocity it is almost impossible to connect in any meaningful way. When we think of our labor, it is important to remember that some of most important work that we do is social and relational. Without the expression of social capacity, we live a very impoverished existence. It is no wonder that in living at these high speeds, we find ourselves feeling alienated, lonely, and estranged. We might be incredibly productive in our jobs, creating and consuming with the voracious appetite of the psychically undernourished, but we are chronic underachievers in producing the elements of life that truly nourish us. In short, many of us are emotionally, psychologically, and aesthetically anorexic/bulimic. We are suffering from an inability to thrive, which we can see in the epidemic rates of profound unhappiness, anxiety, and psychosis. Our suffering, we are told, is founded within our bodies as a combination of chemical imbalances and genetic malfunctions. However, it might well be that our disordered brains and bodies might be the result of ingesting toxic social relations in the way that cancer, diabetes and heart disease can be

linked to junk diets of fast food along with chemically and hormonally laced food.

Of course self-care can mitigate the most severe effects for a time. We can slow ourselves down through meditation, yoga, and even prayer. We can learn to pay better attention to the things we ingest into our bodies. We can identify the most toxic elements of relationships through self-reflection, psychotherapy, and political awareness of power relations and violence. But, as long as we keep moving at the speeds required of us by the current mode of production, these inward focused reassertions of our isolated and individuated self will never fully remove the underlying loneliness and sorrow we can sense moving under the surface of our "well balanced" lives. Indeed, as long as we continue to measure our well-being by how well we are performing the life tasks assigned to us as a worker, parent, child, student, partner and self, none of these sets of relations will truly function for us.

The trouble is that the speed with which we must engage these roles robs them of any substantive creative capacity. We are presented with corrupted variations. In each of our interactions there is a Faustian bargain. Our "success" as a citizen of the capitalist state, in exchange for our ability to live fully. It is a dark magic that weaves a trance composed of empty promises of self-satisfaction that only arrive in momentary rushes like the ever decreasing high of the addict. And when the moment passes, we are left even more bereft and alone than before; shaky and insecure, on the hunt for the next fix.

The irony of this, is that we are starving in the midst of plenty. The world is jam packed with life and infinite webs of connection immediately available to us, if we can just break the addiction to the entropic seduction of money, power, and faux control.

It is in this context that I am fascinated with the living mind of entangled fungi and trees. The research on the ability of trees to communicate through the mediation of fungi has been developing over the past few decades. The work of Suzanne Simard and Peter Wollenben argue that trees communicate with one another. They argue that there is a community, a network of communication that spreads across miles and miles of forest. Wollenben describes,

> *a community of trees and microbes, aphids, fungi and birds, one in which dense connectivity and mutual interdependence are the norm (and are missing in the forest-farms of the modern world). Communication, shared and competing interests, learning and adaptation, all play a critical role. Even personality, or character, are in evidence in the forest. There may be two oak trees, side by side, one of which opts to shed its leaves at the first sign of weather change and, so, to protect itself against autumnal winds and weighty falls of ice and snow — and the other of which holds on and takes advantage of late heat waves to store up more sugar for the long winter ahead. Same soil, same air, same needs, same species, but different choices. Individual trees, like individual people, have different characters.*

Indeed, some scientists have gone so far as to suggest that forests comprise a kind of nervous system that has close correlations to the structure of the human mind, complete with capacities for communication, memory and learning. The ability of the forest to entangle

microbes, chemicals, fungi, and insects in a web of interactions that can allow communities of tress to communicate threat, share resources, and signal seasonal variations gives an entirely different meaning to the term ecology. We often think of ecology as a sort of complex physics comprised of cause and effect, with each element of the ecology playing a largely passive, if crucial, role. But what if ecologies were far more dynamic and agentic than we had imagined? What if ecologies were nervous systems or brains that can think, problem solve, remember, and learn? To the degree we see ourselves as somehow outside these ecologies, these ideas are interesting but somewhat abstract. Trees that think is a fascinating idea, but what does it have to do with me? Surely, it means I should treat forests with more respect and oppose clear cutting of old growth forests. Perhaps I should recycle, fight for clean water, and the reduction in toxic waste and decrease my carbon footprint. However, to the degree, I still see myself as outside of the forest ecology looking at it from a position of observation, I will never really see the power of the realization that trees think.

Of course our indigenous relatives have known the power of this kind of knowledge for generations upon end. And they have known the profoundly damaging effects of settler ideologies that claim dominion over the land and seek to control the natural world to the ends of "progress." This way of thinking creates a radical separation from the ecologies in which we are embedded and entangled. In her work in decolonizing the Anthropocene, Heather Davis argues that this settler logic is at the root of our current array of ecological disasters and that the settler history of chattel slavery and land theft cannot be separated from the ecologically damaging kinds of current settler practices. She powerfully asserts that we need to understand that the Anthropocene with its ecologically devastating effects is not the product of all human beings on the planet,

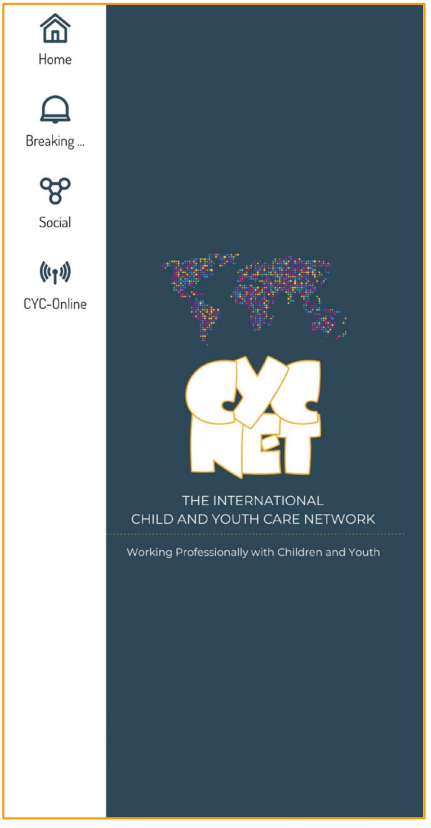
but a very specific group of people who have inherited the ideology and practices of settler colonization. The current belief that we can "beat" climate change through technology or sheer assertions of will are disastrous inheritances that continue to position us outside the ecologies we intend to "save."

We can see this kind of thinking in our field of CYC as well. We often position ourselves as workers and administrators outside the ecologies in which we work. We fail to see that programs, communities, families, and geographies are also thinking ecologies, like trees. They carry memory, communicate warnings about levels of toxicity, transfer chemicals between bodies, and have the capacity to learn. In fact, they are not just like trees, trees and fungi are all around us and an integral part of the "brain" that comprises eco-thought in the lived experiences of all of bodies entangled in CYC. We are not outside of this. We are a part of it in body, mind and spirit. If we are moving too fast we will miss it and that will be disastrous for us and all our relations.

So let's slow down and pay attention. Let's immerse ourselves in listening to life and all living things. We don't need to go to the forest to do this. We can do it in the course of our day to day work. This is work as social labor, to rebuild our connections to all of our beloved, human and more than human relations. After all we only really fight for those things we love.

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A Not So Good Thing …

Garth Goodwin

For much of my life I have been on my own. My parents had a pair of mantras they never abandoned. From my Father it was 'get your education'. From my Mother it was to be independent. She would never miss an opportunity to trumpet its values. I cannot recall when the term benign neglect came along. Formally it first was used: "The concept of benign neglect was coined by the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) in a January 1970 memo to President Richard M. Nixon while he served as the latter's Urban Affairs counselor. " [1] Essentially he argued racial issues should just run their course without government interference. Recently, I came across an article by Jeni Marinucci for the Canadian Broadcasting Company in which she stated:

> I was raised with heaping helpings of "do it yourself," in a manner I refer to as "benign neglect" — and it's been my own primary model for parenting. And here's the best part: it works! I'm only too happy to continue my family tradition of letting kids figure things out for themselves.[2]

The term has a hot quality for me as someone who lives with the ravages of the syndrome which can be very subtle, a source of constant

[1] Benign Neglect | Encyclopedia.com

[2] Benign Neglect Parenting is the Best Parenting of All | Learning (cbc.ca)

anxiety, occasional trauma and something that forced a lifelong dialogue with myself, my oldest case file. The convention for counselling was to know yourself to gain the objectivity to know others. The issue is more one of boundaries, keeping things sorted between yourself and your clients while being open to their presentation on yourself. This column will explore my career dealing with benign neglect.

One of the benefits of isolating alone is that you get gobs of time to pick through your mental attic with its memories, impressions and atmospheres. As a child you have hunches about what you are dealing with but no words or implications. Our neighbours started to build a cottage around the time I was 8 or 9. My best friend was their son, an age peer. In any case, they had set up a huge explorer's tent on a platform, so large it had rooms and it was all hands-on deck to find materials and build them into a log cabin. Our job was to fill a wash tub on a baby carriage chassis with sand to reinforce the trails of the camp which were muskeg, a combination of wet, rotting, forest debris. This took many trips as the sand had to settle and build up to bond the trail. Meanwhile the adults including their indigenous Grandmother, barked the poplar logs removing the bark without scaring the surface. Our job became gathering and hauling away the bark. The only perk was that at noon the two of us as kids got to stop and do whatever we wanted for the afternoon. It was all extremely exciting, warm, fun and family centered and remained so for several more summers until high school separated my friend and myself. It was odd but I did not think of the differences between our families until after the fact and how my parents never refused my going to the lake, something that became weeks long as we could look after ourselves and the place.

Upon reflection I began to see how intense this benign neglect was. As an infant one of my earliest memories is of me, in tears, being scooped up by my

mother, rushed to my crib and hurled over the rail and then hearing the door slam. This happened more than once and was notable for the heat of my tears as I would stand in my crib crying at our neighbour who worked at her sink next door. They burned. It was odd as I cannot recall what set things off but soon was to understand it more. My Mother had a relapse of tuberculosis and had to return to a sanatorium for almost two years. I went with my Grandmother to what became my second home and hometown. When you are that young you do not have memories as such as impressions of atmospheres. My room was light with blues and yellows on white, with white sheer curtains and the whine of the salt works about a half block away. My grandparents were seniors, my grandfather and his brother, known simply as Uncle were in their 80's. Yet, my grandmother found time to set me up with things to do, gave me tuck-ins and ran baths and orally guiding me through the wash routine. There were no up sets. I was a compliant child, often needing only a look or explanation to do what was expected.

In time, I returned home with my family following my Mother's discharge. Grandma's place was always home with saved things set in their place for each return. The family gathered each year when it was possible with the seven sisters could co-ordinate a spring or fall visit. On one such visit when I was around 9 or so they were gathered for my drowning. A neighbour's kid invited me to go to the swimming hole which was only a few blocks away down in a valley. I tip towed in until the water was level with my sight line, then nothing. I woke up to this man just beginning to stand and this circle of people looking at me. They took me home and my mother saw to it that I was swaddled in warm blankets on the settee in the dining room while the party went on in the kitchen. I was fed corn on the cob and it did not combine with however much river water I had taken in, enough to float face down for however long. Anyway, change of swaddling, clean up and reset so the party could go on. The word

lucky may have was used but no hugs, no discussion of what happened, just moved on to bed properly that evening. A few years on, the man who saved me and received the Eaton Award of a watch came north and visited and was properly thanked even if he was a total stranger. On the upside, suicidal ideation ended. There were no previews of the pearly gates. Faith and optimism returned.

Parenting, caring for the young is always an issue of constant tension between holding them close and letting them go. One moment your heart is in your hand as your little one is making her approach to the jump, the next moment a flood of gratitude and pride as she sticks the landing. Caring is a verb for an action of intention as well as being a noun for a relational status. When we travelled it was the rare moment when our family slept together such as a motel unit stay but for the most part I was bedded down in the car, the tent being off limits. In our home my bedroom was downstairs as my room upstairs was always being completed. It never was and always was my Mother's sewing room. Only when my brother left home did I get moved up there to the incomplete room, my brother's perfectly fine and larger one becoming the guest room. In adulthood, I could stay there. Children do notice such things as proximity. They do look, they do think.

Ironically, it all came home to me in a flashback in early adulthood sparked by a book. Completing high school, going onto university and finally into the profession of child and youth care had been an energizing revelation yet all that book learning often brought one up short against the reality of dealing with youth who do not want to be cared for, thank you very much. Finding material that related to the early days of residential treatment was a constant quest. Writers who addressed that reality such as Jack Phalen's outline of the work experience or Thom Garfat's effort to make it all everyday had not written yet. So, the happy accident of finding

Your Inner Child of the Past by W. Hugh Missildine, M.D. I vaguely recalled the concept of an inner child being a popular item for awhile but the book with its chapters on personality or character types that read so true to the youth I worked with and the chapter on neglect which more than spoke to me triggered a flashback: I am on the stairs of the home I was returned to after my Mother was discharged from the San as it was often called. I am perhaps three and a half years old, a little boy in his shorts on a spring day discovering if I sat and nudged forward, I would literally slide my way down the stairs, thumping my way through each tread. I may have been on my second run when my Father came in and shut me down. *As long as you are living under my roof you can expect a few things: you will have a roof over your head, you will have a room of your own, you will be fed, and you will have two pair of jeans and two shirts a year. In return you will be respectful, you will only speak when spoken to and you will not be loud.* I stood there shaking slightly, in shock, not breaking eye contact. His arm came up with his pointed finger only inches from my nose. *No one has to love you.* He turned and left the room. I left and rushed outside in tears with that last line ringing in my ears. It was the first such scene of many over my young years as typically any emotional or overly demanding request was shut right down.

Long story short, no one did love me in the overt sense. The language and expressions of affection were exclusive to my parent's relationship. There was relational affection, great conversations with my Mother, fond looks and considerations. As I learned their stories much was explained. However, neglect is unique as Missildine put it: "Emotional neglect is a phantom, elusive and empty thing. For the same reason, it is difficult to recognize and cope within adult life, it is again the absence of something."[3]

[3] Your Inner Child Of The Past, W. Hugh Missildine, M.D. , Simon and Schuster, New York, 1963

You learn to be kind to yourself. Ironically, my story is yet another instance of an itch finding a scratch in child and youth care which offered the distraction, acceptance, purpose, superficiality and belonging within deeply satisfying teams and the larger tribe of those who deeply commit. As a practitioner it instructs one to note the quiet ones, those referred to as having still waters that run deep. Often, the waters just run, the person is constantly making sense of novel experience and in need of explanation and cautious trust building. They are often not the preferred young person to work with. As parent/caregivers we attend to the young to protect them, instruct them in skill building and hopefully for the profound experience of loving them, taking that time out to simply enjoy the moments and to say so. There was a generational element of neglect. My Father, as an example, lost his parents and siblings within an eight-month period when he was 15. He grieved all his days. My Mother's family lost their home to fire and forever measured their lives in pre-fire and post fire views. Amazingly, I can see it running though the larger families on each side. This is not to excuse neglect but to understand its power.

Aside from instructing to believe everything a young person shares with me; the flashback was instantly freeing. Realizations such as giving myself permission at age 30 to have a dog. Life had been good yet became so much better with a renewed sense of personal command. Years of creative, influential and unique work followed. The weight of benign neglect continued like a constant hum on the edge of reality. A colleague became very toxic toward me for years with put downs, shouting, commanding and physical assault that made it clear there was hatred involved. I endured and efforts for support went no where. I must wonder if there was something at the gut level that fed this monster. Others treat me at times that leave me wondering if I do not exist as any respect for my feelings,

values and so forth get no consideration. The most painful has been the realization that romantic relations did not spark as there was no spark. I believe now that the young need much more than shelter, food and two pair of jeans. They need to be nourished by the touches, words, and laughter of connection and relationship. This hit me as a guest at one of the healthiest of families in my kinship group. The grandchildren arrived and soon it was like being caught up with Labrador puppies frolicking away with gusto hugging, dancing, and sitting close.

And so, I have to disagree with Jeni Marinucci on promoting benign neglect. Certainly, outside invitations can provide welcome respite or opportunity for new learning but if that becomes a lifestyle, someone needs to call a time out. That you only have 18 years tops to endure your offspring is also suspect. Being disinvited going home for Christmas and being thee only one in a residence for 200 stuck there certainly convinced me of that one. Being one blessed with professional offspring, several of whom stay in touch I can honestly say the best rewards come in adulthood and then compound yet again in grand parenthood. I cannot imagine what it would be like enduring this pandemic living with benign neglect. Friends, society, champions, and mentors are so essential for them.

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Truths and Consequences

John Stein

Abstract

People who deal with children receive a lot of advice about the importance of being consistent with discipline, of providing consequences consistently each and every time children misbehave. The consequences are, in effect, punishment. This paper will show that providing punishment consistently is not an effective strategy, neither from a behavioral perspective nor from a developmental perspective. Teaching children about real life consequences rather than imposing additional consequences is more effective, both behaviorally and developmentally. It promotes moral development and empowers children to manage their own behavior by anticipating and responding to real life consequences.

Introduction

People who have anything to do with children today – parents, teachers, care workers, therapists – are bombarded with messages about the importance of being consistent with discipline. It seems as if that is the most important thing. Tell children in advance what the consequences will be then follow through, consistently. Find something children like – an activity, a privilege, anything – and take it away whenever misbehavior occurs. At times, it would seem as though this is the only thing adults have to do to get children to behave. After all, it is science – behavioral science! Besides, it is only common sense. The word 'punishment' is rarely used. Punishment sounds so primitive. Providing consequences sounds much more scientific, perhaps even therapeutic, as in "Behavior Therapy." For

children who have problems with their behavior despite consistent consequences, there are often further diagnoses and medications designed to 'treat' them.

When I was Growing Up

Behaviorism and the emphasis on consequences and consistency is a fairly recent development. Before Behaviorism became so influential, when I was growing up in the late 1940's through 1960's, adults were not nearly so consistent with discipline. Rather, they were remarkably consistent with expectations. To be sure, there were punishments. "Spare the rod, spoil the child," was the operant philosophy and spanking was generally accepted. However, most adults did not take this to mean that they should spank children every time they misbehaved, but rather that they should not hesitate to punish children when they felt it was necessary. There was also standing in the corner, being restricted or grounded, getting sent to one's room, staying after school, and detention, amongst others. Such punishments were quite rare when compared with the present-day emphasis on consistency around discipline. Punishment was reserved for times when children did something that was really bad. Punishment was rarely the first response of adults to children's misbehavior and it was rarely the only response. There were, of course, exceptions. Some adults relied on punishment more heavily than others.

Instead, adults – parents, teachers and other adults in the community – tended to talk with children about their behavior. They taught what behavior was expected and why it was important. When necessary, they taught children specific behaviors. Once they felt children understood, they expected children to behave. They didn't feel the need to tell children in advance what consequences they would impose if they did not behave.

Because adults seemed to expect good behavior, sometimes they seemed surprised when children misbehaved.

When children had a problem, adults would "correct" them. Correcting children was basically the same approach – adults talked with them about their behavior. Children were helped to understand what was wrong with their behavior, how it affected other people, how it made them feel, and how others felt about children who misbehaved. They taught children to look at people's faces and learn how people's expressions often showed how they felt. They taught about fairness. They taught children to be aware of how people were responding to the behavior of others, including themselves. When children did something dumb, they helped them to see very clearly just how dumb it was. When children caused someone a problem for which they should be ashamed, they were made to feel the shame. When they felt children had "learned their lesson," very often there was no punishment. Learning their lesson meant that children understood what they had done wrong and why it was wrong. Learning their lesson also meant feeling some appropriate shame or remorse, and that they were willing to make some effort to correct the problems they had caused or otherwise make amends.

In short, adults were very good at making children feel responsible for their behavior – responsible for the choices they made and for the problems they caused. Many times, spankings or other punishment would have been easier. People who have been punished don't actually have to feel guilty or that they need to make amends. Punishment brings closure. At other times, adults would use the same approach for appropriate behavior; helping children understand how their behavior was good for both others and for themselves. Adults helped children learn to feel good when they had done something good. There was no need for rewards.

There were, of course, occasions when adults saw fit to punish children. But those occasions were less common than they seem to be today. Punishment was not a "consequence," it was punishment – adults knew it and children knew it. It did not happen every time for every misbehavior. Consequently, it really got children's attention when adults were concerned or upset enough to punish them. It involved making them take a really close look at what they had done and the real consequences of their behavior – not just their punishment.

The Teaching Approach

The psychologists tell us that behavior is controlled by its consequences. Specifically:

- Behavior that receives reinforcement is likely to be repeated (Lawson, 1960).
- Behavior that does not receive reinforcement is likely to extinguish (Lawson, 1960).
- Behavior that receives punishment may be suppressed whenever punishment is available (Deese & Hulse, 1967), to resume whenever punishment is no longer available (Hill, 1963).
- Punishment is not effective when behavior is receiving reinforcement (Lawson, 1960).
- Punishment is not an effective way to change behavior (Skinner, 1948).

Talking with children, teaching them how their behavior meets or fails to meet their social needs – things such as needs for approval, acceptance, respect, needs to be liked or admired – is a behaviorally effective approach.

When children understand these needs and how their behavior affects getting their needs met, they are more likely to behave in ways that get their needs met and less likely to engage in behaviors that interfere with getting their needs met. When children perceive that their behavior results in getting their needs met, it reinforces their behavior; when children perceive that their behavior is not getting their needs met, their behavior is not reinforced. In time, such behavior is likely to undergo extinction. Maier (1979) referred to this process of helping children to develop their social capabilities as "personal behavior training." Girls and Boys Town refer to the process as teaching social skills to children and offer a comprehensive curriculum and methodology for providers of child care to do so (Dowd & Tierney, 1992).

Contemporary Behavioral Approaches

Ironically, much of what passes for a behavioral approach today, where adults strive to provide consistent consequences for children's behavior, is not behaviorally sound for a number of reasons. No matter what adults may call them, the consequences they impose usually feel like punishment to children, and children have a way of living up to expectations.

Providing consequences does not teach children about other consequences of their behavior, social consequences that often are more important than the consequences provided by adults. Rather, they are likely distracted from considering the other consequences of their behavior. It teaches only that adults will provide consequences when they know about misbehavior (Stein, 2004). Here are some points to consider.

1. Punishment is not an effective way to change behavior. It does not extinguish behavior it merely suppresses behavior temporarily when

punishment is available. When there are no adults around and there is no likelihood of punishment then behaviors that had been suppressed by punishment frequently resume.

2. Punishment does not teach responsibility. Some professionals seem to believe that children's accepting responsibility for their behavior amounts to nothing more than admitting their guilt and serving their punishment. Very often, the consequences adults impose prevent children from doing anything to make amends. For example, Time Out or room restrictions often prevent children from cleaning up a mess they actually made or even from apologizing for the harm they may have caused others.

3. Punishment is not effective for behaviors that have received reinforcement. The popular "Time Out" procedure is supposed to remove children from reinforcement possibly provided by peers. But when children perceive, accurately or mistakenly, that their peers approved of their behavior, then that behavior has already received reinforcement. When children seek to retaliate against adults or to make them angry, punishment only serves to communicate that they were successful in making adults angry, reinforcing whatever they had done to retaliate.

4. Punishment may be damaging to children's self-image and self-esteem. When children believe that people deserve to be punished for doing something bad, they may well believe that people who are punished are bad. Consequently, they may begin to feel that they themselves are bad when they are punished. When they are punished frequently or for long periods, as with restrictions over several weeks or more, then feeling that they are 'bad' may begin to dominate their self-image. Subsequently

their behavior begins to deteriorate and often this results in more punishment. Some children 'earn' one restriction after another, seeming never to be off restriction.

5. Attempts at consistency with discipline can lead to reinforcement. It is not possible to be "consistent with discipline," especially for many serious behaviors such as theft, sexual behaviors, smoking, and other substance abuse. Adults can only be consistent with discipline for behaviors about which they know. When children engage in such behaviors with the goal of not getting caught, each time they succeed in not getting caught, their success at avoiding punishment reinforces their behavior. The occasional punishment when they do get caught may be especially ineffective.

6. Over-reliance on punishment may have undesirable side effects.

- Children who are focused too heavily on avoiding punishment quickly learn ways to avoid punishment other than behaving appropriately, such as lying and sneaking, or blaming others.
- Punishment interferes with relationships with authority figures. It does not enhance relationships.
- Punishment does not teach empathy – it is not an empathetic response. Empathy is necessary for shame and guilt. Moreover, punishment tends to relieve guilt.
- Punishment does not teach responsibility for behavior, only for serving the punishment.
- Punishment can contribute to emotional problems, as when angry children believe they are being punished for being angry and begin to think that it is wrong for them to feel angry. Then, when

they find themselves feeling angry, they may feel they deserve to be punished for getting angry and behave in ways that get them the punishment they feel they deserve.

- Punishment can contribute to impulsive behavior, as when there are no adults to provide 'consequences' and children have not learned to think about other consequences. Such children are especially vulnerable to their impulses and peer pressure (Stein, 2004).

Clearly, punishment – no matter what adults may call it or how consistent they may be with their punishments – is not a behaviorally sound child and youth care strategy. Others have come to the same conclusion (Fox, 2004; Gannon, 2000; Garfat, 2006; Maier, 1979; Phelan, 2009).

Moral Development

Henig (2010) reports on a longitudinal study of the development of children's brains begun by the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health in 1991 using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (M.R.I). Scientists were surprised to find that subjects' brains were still changing into their twenties, with the most telling changes in the prefrontal cortex, the region most responsible for moral judgment, understanding rules of social conduct, associating cause and effect, and anticipating consequences. The prefrontal cortex is still immature in most adolescents; for most, it does not mature until about the age of 25. The American Bar Association Juvenile Justice Center (2004) cites similar findings from brain imaging research to argue that teenagers should not be held as responsible as adults for their behavior because of the limitations of their as yet not-fully-developed brain.

According to Henig (2010), development of regions of the brain depends one how much they are used. One might wonder therefore whether there is a connection between the increased reliance on consistency with discipline and relatively late moral development. Is it possible that the pre-frontal cortex is slow to develop because not enough adults are teaching and expecting children and adolescents to use it? Is it possible that maturation of the prefrontal cortex does not occur until young adults are finally faced with the responsibility of having to figure things out for themselves, once they are free from adults trying to control their every behavior by arranging consequences?

A Relational Approach

A relational approach – establishing relationships with children, then using those relationships to teach, to empower children to understand their world, make decisions, and evaluate consequences–is so much more effective than contemporary behavioral strategies that emphasize consistency with discipline (Maier, 1979). Many of the children who come to the attention of child and youth care workers are those who have not done well with the consistent consequences of contemporary behavioral approaches, even after being diagnosed and medicated. How many children feel (too often accurately) that no one likes them, neither adults nor their peers, and do not understand why? They think it's because of their race, their looks, their clothing, or perhaps where they live. They have no clue that people's responses may be about their behavior and that it is within their power to change their behavior. Once someone helped them understand, how many children have been heard to say, "I never thought about that," or more sadly, "No one ever talked to me like this before"? How many others thought it?

When Consequences May Be Necessary

Sometimes, just talking with children and waiting for natural consequences to be effective may be insufficient. At such times, it may be necessary for adults to impose other consequences. Thoughtful adults often devise consequences that do not involve punishing children (Popkin, 1990). Strategies adults use with small children can also be effective with teenagers. For example, most adults do not punish small children for playing with knives. Rather, they keep knives and other dangerous objects out of reach of children until they are responsible enough to handle them, or they provide close supervision when dangerous things are within reach. In the same way, adults may restrict older children, even teenagers, from activities or privileges they are not yet responsible enough to handle. For example, teenagers who are not responsible enough to come home on time on Saturday evenings might remain at home on Saturday evening for a week or two. It is not necessary to ground them in the afternoons when they have been coming home on time or take away their telephone time or having friends to the house. That's punishment, designed to make them suffer. Keeping them home on Saturday evenings is not designed to punish them but rather to prevent the problem of their coming home late until they are more responsible. When using this approach, it is important to let them try again in a week or two, to see if they can demonstrate greater responsibility around getting home on time. Otherwise, it continues to feel like punishment.

Conclusion

Avoiding punishment may sometimes be a good reason to behave well. It is seldom the best reason. Teaching children other reasons to behave well empowers them to understand their world and make better decisions

about their behavior. People who have strong relationships with children are in the best position to help children learn such social competencies. Once children learn to perceive and understand the real world consequences of their behavior, such consequences reinforce more appropriate behavior. When children do not perceive reinforcement for certain behaviors, those behaviors are likely to reduce. It is rarely, if ever, necessary to impose additional conseuences. When further consequences may be necessary, then thoughtful and creative adults frequently devise consequences that are designed to eliminate a problem and help children develop responsibility rather than to punish them. On the other hand, telling children in advance what the 'consequences will be' (meaning what consequences adults will impose), tells children that adults do not expect them to behave (otherwise, why tell them about the consequence?). Moreover, it serves to distract them from more important consequences. Inappropriate behavior is suppressed only when there are adults around to impose consequences. When there are no adults present, children who have not learned about other consequences remain especially vulnerable to impulsive behavior and peer pressure. If development of the brain depends on the use or exercise it receives, then is it possible that development of the prefrontal cortex is promoted through teaching children social competencies and expecting children to use or exercise their brains to make decisions about their behavior. This may prove more help than merely trying to influence children's behavior through rewards and "consequences?" Might children's moral development keep pace with the rest of their development if we taught them rather more than controlling them through consequences?

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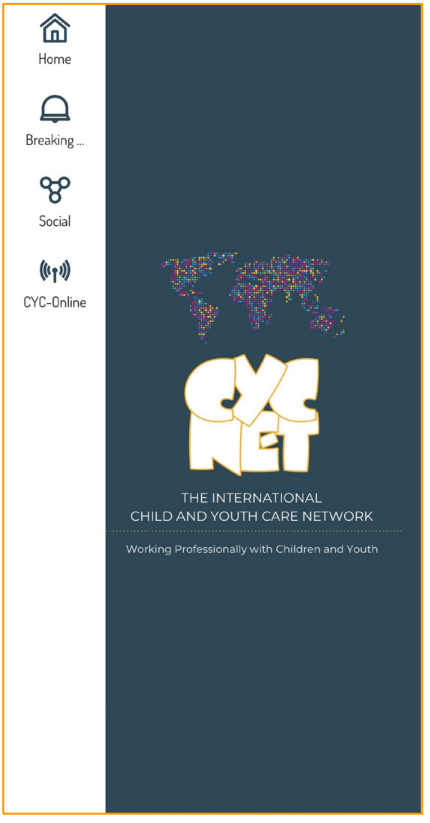
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This article was originally published in *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, Vol 24, 1 and 2, pp 168-173



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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

From Te Waipounamu – New Zealand's South Island

Kia Ora Kotou Katoa and Warm Greetings everyone! In the same week that the US exceeded half a million deaths from the Covid-19 virus during the past year, New Zealand paused to remember the deadly earthquake that struck our South Island, devastating the city of Christchurch in February 2011. We had opportunity to drive South from Lake Waikaremoana via Hawkes Bay and the Manawatu to Wellington, then across Cook's Strait on the InterIslander Ferry to Blenheim.

Our overnight stay in Blenheim endured 32C heat before driving to Kaikoura, the world famous centre for Whale Watching, but seriously disrupted during the February 2011 Earthquake. Wind and storms prevented whale watching on this trip, but an



A Cold Snap with Snow on the Mountains behind Kaikoura Whale Watching Centre!

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

March 2021
ISSN 1605-7406
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overnight temperature drop from 32C to 11C helped explain snow on the mountains behind Kaikoura during the middle of Summer!

The reason for our visit was to engage with the entire staff group at Halswell Residential College, one of New Zealand last remaining residential schools operated by the Ministry of Education for young people with multiple developmental challenges, particularly young people on the autism spectrum - young people who could not be supported with good results in local schools. Not all young people in our world can be given life chances and opportunities through normalisation. In too many schools, normalisation means marginally trained adult carers with limited expertise in special education and social pedagogy or life space care trying to keep a young person occupied.



Te Mapua Whare at Halswell Residential College

Halswell Residential College is seeking through the Purposeful Use of Daily Life Events (DLE) Training (Garfat, 2020) to establish a shared language and focus for their Intensive Wrap-Around Service that works to support young people and their families. It was pleasing to have a South Island Ngai Tahu tribal representative participating in this training as this largest South Island iwi looks to take back the care and supervision of their own children and young people.

Our South Island visit coincided with the celebration of New Zealand's National Day - Waitangi Day. While most Treaty celebrations take place in the North Island, it was pleasing to see how what is stereotyped as New Zealand's most English City offered for its National Day offerings.

A particularly popular opportunity was provided by local Maori youths who first gave instruction on moving their carved ceremonial waka before paddling up and down the Avon River. From start to finish, the waka navigated along the river to the sounds of Maori chants.



Ōnuku Marae, Akaroa site where South Island Maori signed the Treaty of Waitangi



Christchurch Celebrations for the signing of New Zealand's Treaty of Waitangi



Paddling a Treaty of Waitangi Waka on the Christchurch Avon River



Ceremonial poupou erected in the aftermath of the 2011 Christchurch Earthquake

Christchurch has worked to rebuild their city devastated by the 2011 earthquake, with some areas that once offered housing now green belts running along the Avon River. New buildings have emerged on refurbished land. Scars and remnants of former times are still visible around corners.

Ten years on, the scars of the Christchurch Earthquake are still visible. At the heart of the old city, Christchurch Cathedral is still largely in ruins. There is a commitment to restoration, nevertheless, with the circular stained glass window at one end now mostly restored. But there is still so much to do. The costs of restoring many old buildings are now beyond the

capacity of some owners to manage. Halswell had old institution buildings destroyed through earthquake damage.

One evening, at the end of the training, we went to Riccarton's "*Hello Vietnam!*" restaurant, a place themed around the Robyn Williams' movie. Seated where I was, it was impossible to miss the Bea Saigon and Hanoi Beer boxes delivered earlier in the day. It reminded me of the US Selective Service draft national lottery in 1968 when I drew number 219 in the first draw. Whew!



Scars of the 2011 Christchurch Earthquake are visible here and there around the city



Hanoi and Saigon Beer reminders of SE Asia war at the Hello Vietnam Restaurant

ISSN 1605-7406

Information

Publishers

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

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Only advertising related to the Child and Youth Care profession, programs, courses, books, conferences etc. will be accepted. Rates and specifications are listed over the page, or email advertising@cyc-net.org

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

March 2021
ISSN 1605-7406
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Writing for CYC-Online

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- We prefer APA formatting for referencing
- We are willing to work with first-time authors to help them get published
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Working Professionally with Children and Youth
e-journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net)

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