

CYC-Online

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A Journal for Those who Live or Work
with Children and Young People

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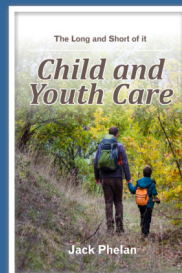
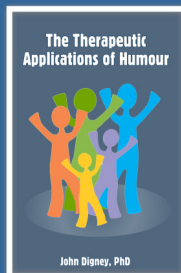
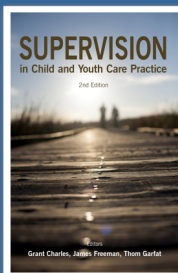
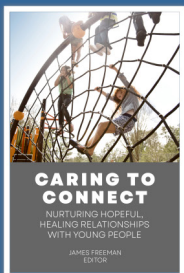
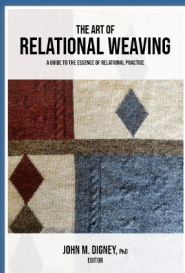
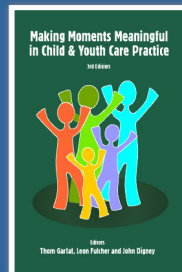
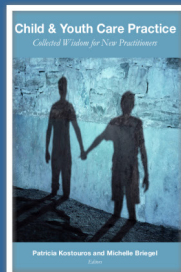
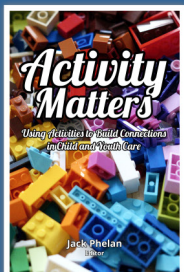
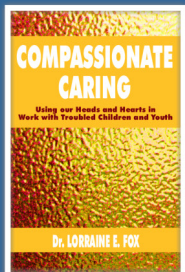
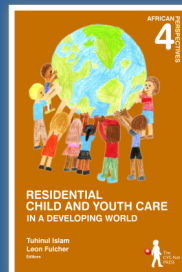
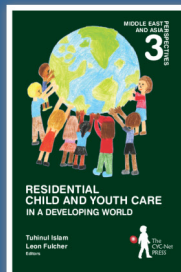
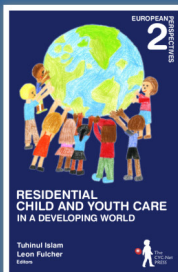
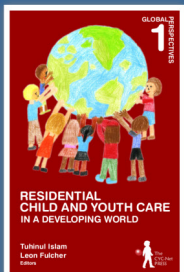
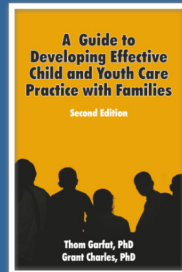
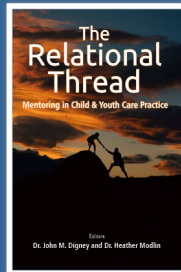
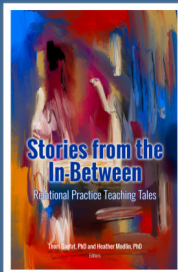
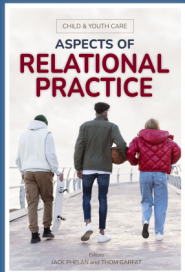


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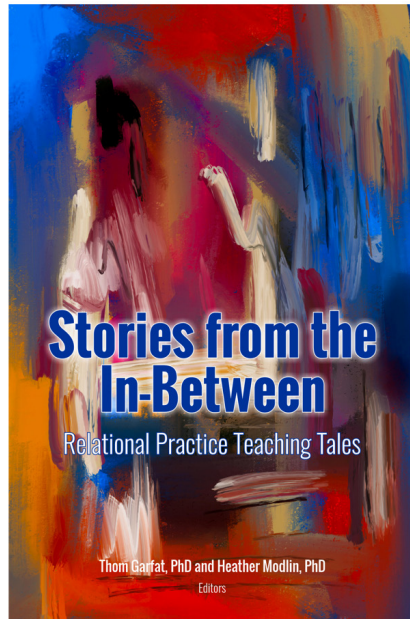
Editorial Comment

Stories

Heather Modlin

I just finished co-editing a book with Thom Garfat entitled *Stories from the In-Between: Relational Practice Teaching Tales*. Being involved in this process got me thinking about the prevalence and power of stories in our field and, more specifically, in shaping our growth and development.

In my career, which has spanned almost four decades, I have attended hundreds of conferences and training sessions, and have learned directly from the child and youth care greats – Mark Krueger, Lorraine Fox, Henry Maier, Jack Phelan, Gerry Fewster, Thom Garfat, Leon Fulcher, Larry



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Brendtro, Grant Charles, and many more. I have listened to experts on trauma, like Bruce Perry and Karen Purvis. I have spent countless hours talking to colleagues - international, local and within my own organization - about child and youth care practice. And here's the thing - I remember hardly anything from any of those keynotes, workshop sessions or conversations, except the stories.

Neuroscience research has found that when we listen to descriptions of experiences with a sensory component our brains respond as if we were experiencing these events firsthand. The more vividly an experience is described, the more likely it is to be remembered. And, when we hear a story about something that resonates with us, that we can anchor to pre-existing schemas in our brain, the impact is even stronger. We are more likely to relate to and remember a story that we can put ourselves in. Given this, it is not a surprise that stories are so prevalent within the child and youth care field.

Child and youth care is a unique and unusual occupation. Most people in the "outside world" have no idea what we do or why we do it. How powerful it is to hear a story that we can relate to! Or to tell a story and know that the audience understands. And what interesting, provocative and emotionally-laden stories we have to tell - like the time two young people stole our vehicle and drove across town, only stopping after they crashed into the corner store; or the time a young person built a "bomb" in the bathroom, and then it blew up in his face and singed off his eyebrows; or the time the mom showed up at the group home at 4:00AM, demanding that we release her child from this "hellhole" immediately or she would have us arrested for kidnapping; or the time our 16 year old "tough guy" cried for an hour, in our arms, because he would never have a family; or the time Johnny said "thank you for caring for me even though I was a little shit when I moved in."



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A good story (and so many stories from the child and youth care field are good ones) can activate our senses, generate a connection with the storyteller, trigger an emotional response, and stick with us long after it has been told. A good story can also teach, entertain, provided much-needed stress release, and help us to feel less alone.

We tell stories to debrief after a stressful shift, to elicit empathy when we are overwhelmed, to honour resilience and achievement, and to relay the sheer absurdity (and beauty) of the things we see and do. Stories bring experiences to life in ways that rote facts cannot.

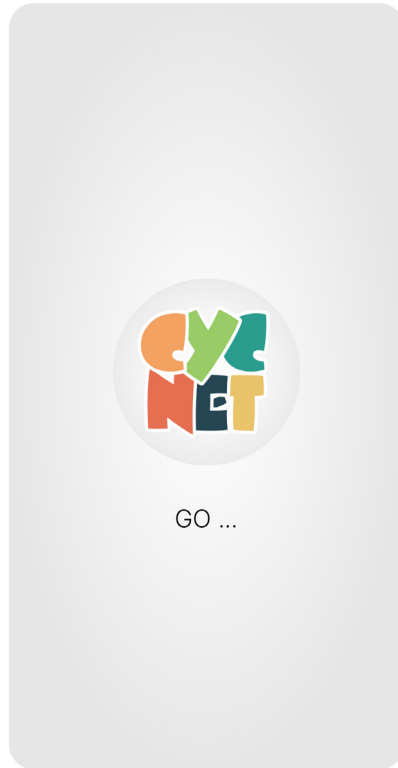
HEATHER MODLIN has worked in the field of Child and Youth Care for over 35 years. She is presently CEO of Amal Youth and Family Centre in Newfoundland and Labrador. Heather has published numerous journal articles, book chapters, and co-edited books. She has served on national and international boards and is currently Chair of the Board of Governors of CYC-Net and a board member of FICE Canada. Heather has a PhD in Child and Youth Care from the University of Victoria. In 2017, Heather received the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award for Community and Social Development in NL and in 2024 she was the recipient of the Unity Award.



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Sleep, Eat, Play, Learn, Be You, Community (Part 3)

Kiaras Gharabaghi

In parts 1 and 2 of this three-part series, I have discussed the concepts of sleep, eat, play and learn as possible ways of understanding quality and developing quality standards for residential care settings. This month, I will explore the remaining two concepts, Be You and Community, to complete this series of articles.

Be You

The concept of Be You is about two distinct things: it is about identity(ies), and it is about autonomy, or the agency necessary to exist within and to operationalize one's identity(ies). Identity is a concept that has increasingly been taken up in residential care services, albeit in quite limited (and limiting) ways. In many settings and organizations, identity is taken up as an element of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategies that aim to acknowledge the diversity of young people and their families that become involved in the setting or organization. To this end, residential care settings have for a long time included programming elements such as 'culture night' or 'global food nights', which, somewhat absurdly, have featured efforts to serve nachos, jerk chicken, dumplings, and sweet and sour chicken balls to reflect a stereotypical perception of global food cultures. These efforts come from a good place, but they are almost certainly more harmful than



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meaningful, although probably mostly irrelevant. In general, these kinds of material representations of global culture or diverse identities reflect the hegemonic role of colonial power in the shaping and standardization of differences.

There have been other efforts too; some residential settings feature posters on the walls that depict minority or oppressed identities, including gay couples, racialized peoples, Indigenous people or wisdoms, and more (although interestingly, rarely images of disability). Many settings in North America have activities related to Black History Month, recognized throughout the month of February (the shorted month of the year – just saying). And in some cases, residential settings have even incorporated various cultural or unique group practices, such as smudging (in the Indigenous context in many parts of Turtle Island/North America), drumming (often representing West African practices), and global holiday customs, such as Hannukah, Christmas, Diwali, PRIDE parades, and more.

It is interesting that we think about recognizing diversity in these ways. What all these ways have in common is their focus on aesthetics, on representation of culture and difference through the normative forms of representation generally. In other words, we *designate* difference and what it looks like and give it space in our setting. We *exhibit* difference. We make difference exceptional and give it an exceptional place to be viewed and experienced.

Be You is an entirely different concept, and one that aims to avoid the designation of difference or its representation through aesthetics means. Be You is about identity(ies) and its/their strengths and possibilities. The goal is far more than simply representation. The goal is to further the development of self-reflective and critical engagements with heritage, race, gender, sexuality, ability/disability, neurodiversity, and other ways of engaging with oneself and the social world around us such that new forms



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of agency emerge that are steeped in something other than the containment-orientation of normative behaviours and ways of being. Be You is about emerging and developing across knowledge, spirituality, and relational practices that a young person develops and experiments with as they discover their social, political, and spiritual (his)story.

With that comes a celebration of autonomy. By autonomy I do not mean independence (an impossible concept), but instead the agency to avoid being made to fit into a social context and instead an emphasis on the agency to relate across social contexts based on difference rather than conformity and sameness. Ultimately, Be You is about a young person right and obligation to operationalize their identity(ies) to add something new, something different, something transformative to the life-space where their lives unfold.



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Quality Standard

Residential service providers seek out community resources/mentorship that can guide and promote the young person's exploration of identity(ies) and the strengths and powers associated with such identities. Young people are encouraged to and supported in describing their journey of 'Be You', the questions still being explored, and the needs that might be associated with such exploration (such as becoming involved in community activities, learning materials, mentorship by peers or leaders from related identity communities, etc.) and all other elements of planning for the care of the young person are connected to and explicitly considered and measured in relation to the evolution of Being You.

Community

The concept of Community is one of the more complicated concepts in relation to residential care and treatment. For the most part, virtually all residential care providers see themselves as being community-based, community-engaged, or at the very least, as ensuring that their children and youth continue to be community-engaged. In practice, however, this is not always the case and there is very little thinking informing what this actually means. For many residential service providers, it is their location in a residential neighbourhood that makes them feel like they are in community. For campus-based residential service providers, it is programming that involves taking the residents into the community, such as going to a movie or participating in a community-based event. But for the most part, this is not what the concept of Community is meant to convey. Going to a movie with a group of residents is not really about community; it is extending the geography of the residence to a place in the community while maintaining



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the norms and regulations, or the ethos, of the residence. This is about institutionalizing, however temporarily, a community space.

The concept of Community as a quality standard in residential care is about maintaining the fundamental existential context of a child or youth as one born into community. Not necessarily a geographic community; possibly a community of culture, race, gender, spirituality, ability/disability, economics, politics, interests, of differences. Geographically, such community can manifest in physical, virtual, transnational, neighbourly, or in any number of other ways. The point is that the concept of Community is to be understood as the social location of the young person, and the concept of the residence, or of residential care, is to be understood as a temporary adjunct to the child or youth's community rather than the other way around. Children and youth are always community-engaged and their lives are always community-based. Their placement in a residential program is an extension of their base in community, or sometimes a vacation from their place in community, but we cannot construct residential care as the base and community as the adjunct. In practice, we do this most of the time, which is why we need a quality standard for Community.

Quality Standard

For every child or youth, service providers develop not only a social history of the child or youth, but also a community ecology for the child or youth, which is updated on an ongoing basis and informed by the child or youth or and their families, such that knowing and working with the child in a residential setting as well as with the families associated with the child or youth is understood as working in and with community *all the time*. In order to be able to sustain this frame for the concept of Community, every service provider develops and can document their relationships to diverse



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communities (physical and otherwise) independent of specific children and youth in their care. All residential care providers must be community actors and see themselves as existing as one component of multiple intersecting and overlapping communities rather than as an institutional entity that exists in relation to community but outside of it.

And there you have it. Over the past three months, I have provided six quality standards that are quite different from the usual way in which we think about quality and standards related to quality in residential care contexts. Next month, I will synthesize all six standards into an overall framework for thinking about quality in residential care.

Until then, let's wish for greater quality in humanity at large. This continues to be a brutal world!

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A Night with Lisa

Heather Modlin

The stories we create about young people and families can influence what we notice, how we interpret what we see, and how we subsequently engage and intervene (in every situation). Often, we can get fixated on behaviours and forget that there is a whole child inside. Relational Child and Youth Care practice requires us to step outside of the story, look beyond behaviour, and engage with the person.

* * *

Several years ago, while I was working as the Director of an organization providing residential care to young people, I was called on a Sunday evening to work an overtime shift with Lisa, from 6:00pm to 8:00am the next morning. Me being called to work meant that no one else in the organization was available to do this shift.

Lisa was one of those young people who frightened many Child and Youth Care workers, particularly those who were new to the field. She was 15 years old, tall and strong, with a propensity for dramatics and very well-developed pushing, hitting and running skills.

Lisa usually had two staff working with her, but because no one else was available to work, I was on my own for the evening. When I arrived at the



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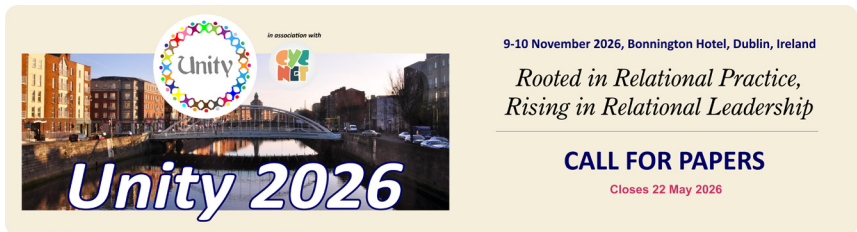
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house to start my shift, the two staff who had been working all day were waiting by the door with their coats on (even though I had arrived 15 minutes early). They rushed out the door, calling 'good luck' over their shoulders. Although it was a chilly evening in early October, Lisa was outside sitting on the porch swing. She had a hoodie pulled over her head, with a long bang falling sideways across her face leaving one eye visible. That eye was staring straight at me. Lisa had a stick in her hand, and she was holding it straight up in the air like a sword. My 'Hi Lisa!' was met with a glare.

'Here we go,' I thought.

Developmentally, Lisa's functioning was much younger than her chronological age, with her cognitive capacity equal to that of a 7-year-old, and the emotional capacity of a toddler. Lisa enjoyed playing games (she had a wonderful sense of humour) and was particularly fond of being chased (even if that chase landed her and whoever was following her in the middle of the road, in front of oncoming traffic). She could also lash out verbally and physically if she felt threatened.

I knew that if I went outside and asked her to come into the house this would meet with an immediate refusal. That is what she was counting on. She was also expecting me to be nervously hovering and watching over her. I needed to find an alternative approach.



The banner features a background image of a city street with a bridge over a canal. On the left, there is a circular logo with the word 'Unity' inside, surrounded by colorful dots. To its right is the CYC NET logo. The text 'in association with' is written between the two logos. Below the image, the text 'Unity 2026' is written in a large, stylized font. On the right side of the banner, the dates '9-10 November 2026, Bonnington Hotel, Dublin, Ireland' are listed. Below this, the theme 'Rooted in Relational Practice, Rising in Relational Leadership' is written in italics. At the bottom right, the text 'CALL FOR PAPERS' is written in bold, with 'Closes 22 May 2026' written below it in a smaller font.

9-10 November 2026, Bonnington Hotel, Dublin, Ireland

*Rooted in Relational Practice,
Rising in Relational Leadership*

CALL FOR PAPERS
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I assumed that she was feeling anxious about me being there, particularly on my own, and did not trust that I would be able to safely manage whatever happened throughout the evening.

I had a clear view of Lisa from the kitchen window, so I decided to stay inside and discretely watch her while I figured out a plan. I noticed a stack of art supplies on the table – it looked like someone had been preparing to do Halloween crafts. This gave me an idea. I opened all the supplies and started making Halloween decorations and accessories. I made ghosts, pumpkins, witches, hats, masks and crowns. With every new creation, I went outside and excitedly showed it off. The first few times, I got no reaction – Lisa just stared at me with her one eye. While it was a good sign that she was still there, I needed to spice it up a bit if I was going to get her engaged. I became louder and more dramatic. I floated like a ghost, cackled like a witch, and flew on the broom. I performed a puppet show with the pumpkins. With each round of ‘show and tell’ I invited Lisa to join me. Eventually, she started telling me I was ‘burnt’ and ‘stupid.’ I was making progress! Now it was time to shift gears.

I told Lisa I was leaving the rest of the craft supplies for her to use, and I was in the mood for some Halloween cookies and hot chocolate. It was baking time. I left the kitchen door open so the smell of cookies would waft out. I didn’t even get them in the oven before I noticed Lisa standing in the doorway. I nonchalantly (and without mentioning the stick she was still holding) said “Ah, perfect timing! I can’t find the hot chocolate.” With that, Lisa came inside, showed me where the hot chocolate was, and helped me finish making the cookies.

Once all the baking supplies had been put away, we spent the rest of the evening eating cookies, drinking hot chocolate, and singing along to Justin Bieber videos.



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When bedtime came, Lisa announced that she was going to sleep in the chair in the staff bedroom (where I would also be sleeping). This was another test. It was also, perhaps, an attempt to extend the evening (which a power struggle would do quite nicely). This was a home in which the staff could sleep, but only after Lisa was in bed.

I told Lisa I was pretty sure she was supposed to sleep in her bed, and it was probably more comfortable than the chair. She said “Nope, I’m sleeping in the chair. That’s where I always sleep.” I replied, “Well, you are much more familiar with the bedtime expectations than I am. If you are allowed to sleep in the chair, you can sleep in the chair. I’m going to go ahead and get ready for bed because I have a long day of meetings tomorrow.”

We both brushed our teeth and put on our pyjamas. Lisa curled up in the chair, covering herself up with a blanket she had dragged off her bed. I turned off the light, said good night, and went to bed. Within 5 minutes Lisa said “You’re too noisy” (I had been deliberately – and loudly – tossing and turning), “I’m going to bed.”

We both slept soundly throughout the night.

In the morning, before I left, I thanked Lisa for a great night. She asked me when I would be back.

* * *

Find us on



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Jack Phelan talks about Child and Youth Care workers as ‘experience arrangers,’ helping young people to have felt, bodily experiences that are different from their previous experiences. Thom Garfat talks about the importance of helping young people to have a different experiencing of themselves in relationship with others. Figuring out young people’s stories about themselves and the world (which are often very different than our stories about them), and responding in ways that disrupt those stories, can result in unexpected moments of encounter and, when repeated over time, promote long-term change.

Reflective Questions

- The common story about Lisa, within the organization, was that she was volatile, dangerous, and very challenging to work with. If the author had adopted this narrative and used it to guide her interactions throughout the shift, how might the evening have been different?
- The way in which some of the evening’s activities and interactions were managed required confidence, creativity and risk-taking on part of the practitioner. What were some of the risks inherent in her approach, and why were these important in determining the outcome of the evening? When taking risks in Child and Youth Care practice, context is important. What were some of the contextual factors that mitigated the risk?
- The ways in which we engage with young people signal our assumptions and expectations of them. Ideally, we want to send messages that we know they are capable of great things! Or at least of making good decisions. What messages were conveyed to the young person throughout the evening, and what were some of



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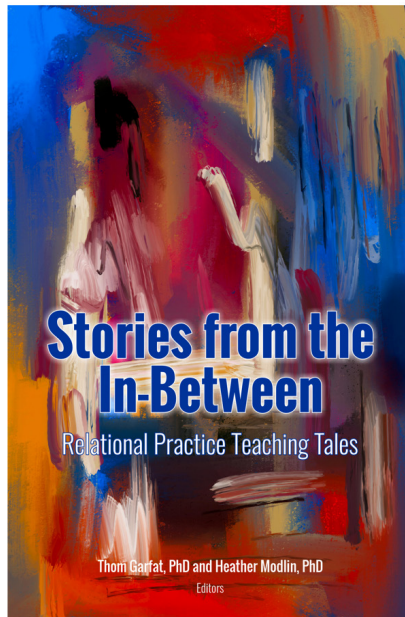
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the key moments in which those messages could have been much different?

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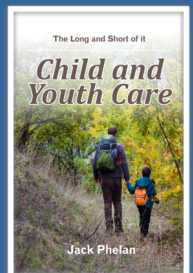
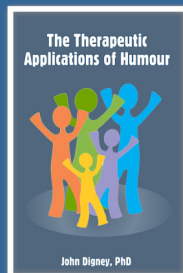
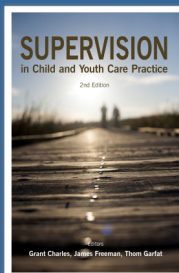
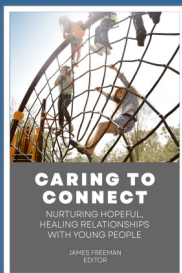
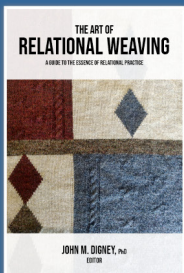
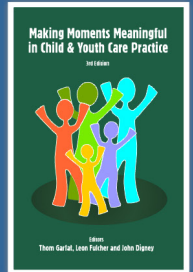
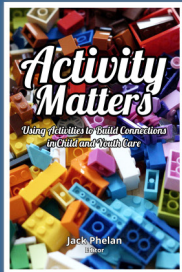
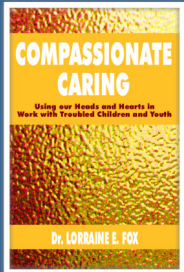
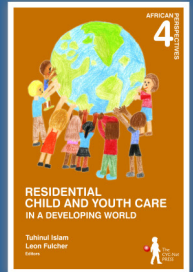
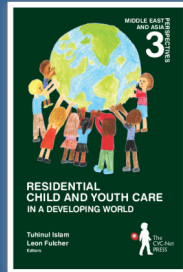
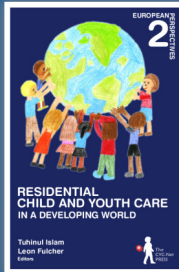
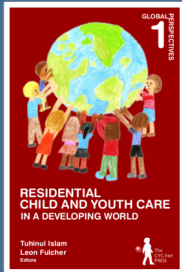
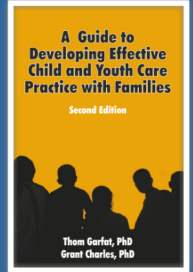
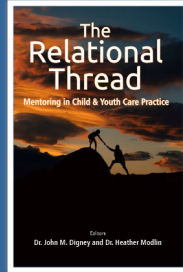
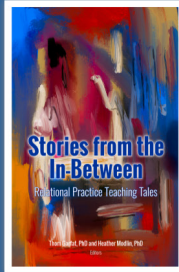
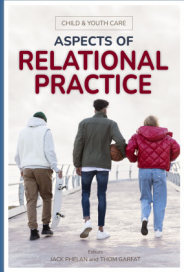
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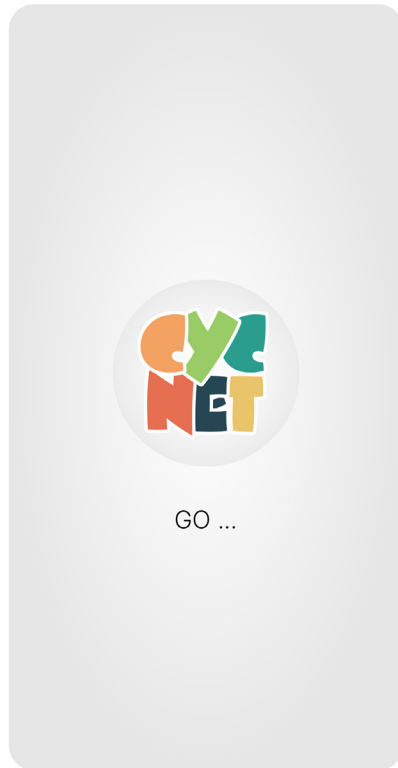
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The Importance of Personal Safety for New Youth Care Employees

Caroline Moore

Introduction

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

This research focuses on exploring if interactions within the first year of development are guided by a need to ensure safety for oneself, or if the



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interactions are focused on the YCWs or youth care supervisor's role. With a better understanding of personal safety, the hope for this research was that it would promote learning, to enhance the YCW's and youth care supervisor's first year of development.

Literature Review

Self-awareness in Youth Care

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

Youth Care Worker Stages of Development

Phelan (2015) proposes three levels a YCW experiences in their development, with the first level focusing on developing safety and trust. He goes on to say that until safety and trust is fully developed, the YCW cannot focus on facilitating change in others, as their own self interest



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

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

Supervisor Stages of Development

When YCWs are promoted into a supervisory role the levels of development begin again (Phelan, 2016). A supervisor's level of development can also be categorized in Kegan's model of adult development. A supervisor in the socialized stage measures their own



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

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The Role of Supervision for the New Youth Care Worker

Garfat (2007) identifies that the role of the supervisor is to evaluate each situation and interaction to determine if the supervisee requires support, education, or training to enhance their development, and therefore enhance the quality of service offered to the youth. Although both parties are responsible to engage in the supervision relationship, there is a responsibility on the part of the supervisor to create the conditions of safety to enable the supervisee to engage in a self reflection process (Delano & Shah, 2009). The supervisor must be aware of a YCWs stage of development in order to 'meet them where they're at', just as a YCW needs to be aware of the youth's capacity in order to 'meet them where they're at' (Fulcher & Garfat 2012). For YCWs at the beginning stages of their development, the supervisor needs to focus on issues of personal safety and build up trust in the relationship (Phelan, 2015). Once the trust is established, the supervisor can help contain feelings of anxiety in YCWs, which could possibly inhibit them from creating therapeutic relationships with the youth (Steckley, 2010). With good emotional containment, YCWs will be better able to make themselves available to youth emotionally to offer support (Steckley, 2011).

Research Methodology

Qualitative research is focused on the meaning people attach to things, as well as understanding how people view situations (Taylor, Bogdan, DeVault, 2015). I chose a qualitative method of collecting data from both youth care workers and youth care supervisors within my organization, which is comprised of five long term community-based group homes and one emergency stabilization centre, all for youth between the ages of 12-18. This was done with a mixed methods approach by asking for participation in



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both online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. I also chose random sampling, as it attempts to diminish researcher bias by not limiting the data to a specific group (Shenton, 2004). Although random sampling helps to eliminate researcher bias, a disadvantage is little to no control over who chose to participate (Shenton, 2004). This was considered in data analysis. I chose to use a thematic analysis of the data. Thematic analysis requires the researcher to remain in touch with the raw data throughout the process, which helps to analyse the data in different ways and make links between the data and interpretations (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

Findings, Analysis and Discussion

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

- The most important part of their role during the first year;
- The biggest concern during the first year;
- What is needed in order to be effective during the first year.

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



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Most Important Part of their Role During the First Year

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

Biggest Concern During the First Year

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



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ahead of the youth's needs. This was illustrated by participants who responded that they felt once they knew they were accepted by their peers, they were more willing to introduce new concepts into their practice.

Fewster (2013) argues, we will respond to another based on the truth of our own experiences. Phelan (2015) argues the YCW may not be able to fully experience the present moment, due to their perspectives being tied to the past. Evidence such as this suggests that as the more experienced YCW creates relationships with both the youth and their colleagues, they gather more positive experiences in how their actions are perceived by others. This was identified by responses from participants who said the easiest part of their role was the part they were most familiar with or had the most experience with. Since the new YCW does not yet have these positive experiences within the organization, they are forced to draw from their own personal experiences. Modlin (2013) identifies that adults in the socialized stage will measure their own level of success based on others reactions. Many participants talked about not wanting to speak up during their first year as their main concern was being liked by their co-workers. They identified once they 'got over' a need to be liked, they were able to focus on creating relationships with youth. The new YCW will not be able to focus on facilitating change with the youth through relationship until they are no longer making decisions based on their own needs. Participants identified they were not able to fast track the ability to feel safe in their role as they needed to experience it in order to diminish anxiety. Garfat (2001) argues a YCW develops through the context of their relationships with others, therefore development often can't advance by learning alone. Participants were able to identify that this change comes about through a focus on self. One talked about getting a mentor in order to feel safe in their vulnerability with someone else. Another talked about actively working to diminish their own anxieties and insecurities.



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What is Needed to be Effective in the First Year

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

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



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Conclusions

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



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The Importance of Personal Safety During the First Year

Within this research, participants identified relationships as one of the most important aspects of their role during the first year. It stands to reason then, the focus during the first year will be on creating genuine, authentic relationships with both youth and co-workers. However, this research appeared to identify participants focused more on maintaining their own emotional safety, than on being authentic in relationship. Participants identified a concern of how others would perceive their actions and decisions. This concern may result in the new youth care employee acting in a way, or making decisions, based on their own need of maintaining their own emotional safety, instead of meeting the needs of the youth.

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

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

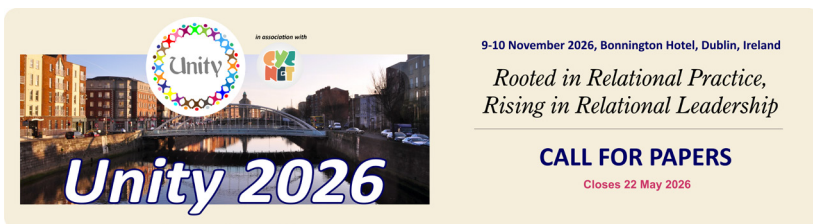


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Phelan (2016) argues that, when a YCW is promoted to a supervisory role, the stages of development begin all over again. This appeared evident when participants spoke about their role during the first year as a supervisor. The same theme of emotional safety emerged as the biggest concern for participants in this role also. Helsing & Howell (2014) argue that it is not until a supervisor is operating from a self-authored stage that they can understand where self ends and the other begins. This research may indicate the importance of the supervisor also receiving support in their own supervision in order to enhance their own development. If the supervisor does not develop to the self-authored stage, they may continue to take ownership of others behavior and measure their own success based on the success of others. From this socialized stage, the supervisor may not be effective in enhancing the YCWs development. This may illustrate the importance of the supervisor working from a self-authored stage, in order to be effective in their role.

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



The banner features a background image of a city street with a bridge over a canal. In the top left, there is a circular logo with the word "Unity" and a ring of colorful dots. To its right, it says "in association with CYC NET". In the top right, the text reads "9-10 November 2026, Bonnington Hotel, Dublin, Ireland". Below this, the theme is stated as "Rooted in Relational Practice, Rising in Relational Leadership". The central text "Unity 2026" is large and stylized. At the bottom right, it says "CALL FOR PAPERS" and "Closes 22 May 2026".



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The Only Magic We Have Left

Joanne Leblanc

The morning at work began the way many winter mornings do in a schoolyard. The sky was bright, the snow was packed down, and the students arrived full of movement before the day had even really begun. We welcomed them off their transportation, offered breakfast, and watched them spill out across the yard looking for somewhere to put all that energy.

As my primary students rushed toward me with hugs, questions, and cold little hands, I found myself moving through the familiar winter script that has become part of working in a school.

“No, the play structure is still closed.
The swings too. We cannot use them until spring.
I know. I wish there were snow hills too.
Yes, it is cold, but we do not go in for another fifteen minutes.”

The children responded in the way children often do. They adapted. They created games from what resources were left to them. Winter tag. Snow forts. Running patterns into the yard. Making something out of not enough.



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By second recess, I looked over and saw that my students had found a small patch of joy. A tiny stretch of ice in the schoolyard. Slippery, crowded, imperfect, and absolutely full of life. They huddled over it together, giggling, sliding, wobbling, falling, and getting back up again. For a moment, it felt like they had found a little piece of magic in an otherwise restricted winter landscape.

And, almost immediately, I felt the other truth alongside it.

I was probably going to have to stop it.

That is one of the tensions that lives quietly inside Child and Youth Care work, especially in institutional spaces. We are often standing at the intersection of joy and policy, between what children need in the moment and adult responsibility. We learn to hold both the child's experience and the system's limits at the same time. We know that fun matters. We know that risk, movement, and play matter. We also know that safety expectations are real, and that part of our role is to carry manage these risks.

As I approached the children on the ice, I heard laughter shift into crying. I saw one fall become several. It was clear that the moment had changed. It was time to intervene.

I could not help but laugh a little at the familiar pattern that followed. The same students who had run to me in tears about scraped knees now insisted they were completely fine. They promised they were not even hurt. They swore it would never happen again. They would be extra careful. It was obvious how much this little patch of ice meant to them. It was one of the few places in the yard that still felt fun, open, alive. Being the adult responsible for shutting it down felt, in that moment, like being the person asked to put out the last light.

As I insisted the group moved away, disappointed, already beginning to negotiate what game might come next.



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All but one.

My last primary student remained standing on the ice. Arms crossed. Lip out. Face tight with anger. Small tears gathering in his eyes. Then he shouted, with full heartbreak and full conviction, "You just can't close this ice. It's the only magic we have left. I'll never leave."

In that moment, I not only saw, but felt the connection in how me and this child had seen the winter snow from our windows today. I realized I now had a choice. I could move straight into limit setting. I could remind him that the rules were the rules, that everyone had to follow them, that it was only fair. And none of that would have been untrue.

But there was another possibility too.

I could respond to the meaning of the moment for this young person, not just the behaviour.

As I started walking toward him, I could see his body tense. He looked ready for a battle. Ready to defend something important. Ready, maybe, to be misunderstood. Instead, I walked right past him, then turned and held out my hand.

"I really need your help with something," I said. "Will you walk inside with me?"

He looked surprised, but he took my hand.

We walked through the school together, hand in hand. As we walked, I told him how much I loved his passion for fun and play and ice. I asked him to tell me more about the magic winter brings him. He began to talk. Really talk.

He told me about sliding on ice, tobogganing, climbing snow hills, and the joy of moving fast in winter. He told me how much fun it was. How exciting. How he thought other people loved it too.



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The more he spoke, the more it became clear that this was never just about a patch of ice. It was about freedom. Delight. Movement. Possibility. It was about the emotional life of play.

Before we got to where we were going, I told him the truth.

I agreed with him.

I told him how much joy it gave me to watch him have fun. I told him I admired his passion. I told him I understood why ice, slippery play structures, and damp swings could feel magical. Then I also told him that the rules were not mine to change. That every school had safety rules like these. That even when joy was real, I was still responsible for safety.

I explained to him that I care deeply about the children at our school. And that part of caring is protecting them, even when they do not like it, even when I do not like it.

Then we walked out the back exit to the big yellow gravel bin.

I handed him a cup and filled one with gravel for myself and another for him. As we carried them back toward the yard, I told him we were going to work together to make the schoolyard both safer and still fun for everyone.

At first, it seemed that he did not believe me. His body carried that heavy slump children get when disappointment has already settled in. He trudged toward the ice patch holding his cup of gravel like it was proof that the magic was over.

Then I said, "Okay. You're the official fun tester."

He looked up at me, confused.

"I'm going to sprinkle a little gravel on the ice," I told him, "And I need you to make sure all our snow forts can still be reached in a fun way!"

Something shifted. Not all at once, but enough.

I spread just enough gravel to make the surface safer for standing and walking without taking away the experience entirely. My newly appointed Official Fun Tester stepped onto the ice with deep suspicion. I encouraged



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him to try his favourite ice dance. To pretend he was skating. To see what still felt possible.

This moment has stayed with me because it reminded me of something essential in Child and Youth Care.

Children do not only react to limits. They react to how those limits are conveyed. They react to whether they feel dismissed or understood. They react to whether the adult enters the moment as an enforcer only, or as someone willing to join them in making sense of what has been lost and what might still be possible.

Too often, when children protest, adults move quickly to the surface. We respond to the refusal, the attitude, the tears, the shouting. But relational practice asks something deeper of us. It asks us to wonder what the behaviour means. What is being defended. What is being grieved. What is being communicated beneath the words.

This student was not simply refusing a direction. He was protecting magic.

And once I understood that I could respond differently.

I did not need to pretend the rule was not real. I did not need to give the ice patch back. I did not need to abandon safety to be relational. But I could honour what mattered to him. I could invite him into the problem solving. I could preserve dignity. I could make room for participation instead of defeat.

That is one of the quiet gifts of relational CYC practice. It reminds us that empowerment is not the absence of limits. It is the presence of voice, meaning, and shared process inside those limits.

What mattered that morning was not only that the children stayed safer on the ice. What mattered was that one child moved from powerlessness to participation. He was no longer the child being dragged away from the last



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bit of fun in the yard. He became the child helping to protect the fun. Helping to reshape the moment. Helping to carry the responsibility.

That is a very different experience of care.

In school settings, it can be easy to become flattened by routine. Winter rules. Recess transitions. Supervision expectations. The thousand small moments that can start to feel repetitive or procedural. But children are never experiencing those moments as just routine. They are living them fully. The closed structure is not just a closed structure. The patch of ice is not just ice. The gravel bin is not just gravel. These moments carry emotion, imagination, disappointment, conflict, and possibility.

Our work is to meet them there.

Sometimes that means setting the limit.

Sometimes it means grieving the loss with them.

Sometimes it means handing them a cup and inviting them back into the story.

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

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How to help young minds feel safe in an uncertain world

Sam Goldstein

Increasingly around the globe, children live with the threat of mass violence. The current conflict in Iran has once again filled headlines with images of missile strikes, political retaliation, and warnings of wider regional war. Words like *annihilate* and *destroy* are used to describe the goals of nations and leaders. Even when fighting is far from home, it rarely feels distant. Bunkers aren't common places where many children spend time, but technology has changed the way children are exposed to war.

Many adults delay these conversations. Some believe children are better off not hearing about violence. Research suggests otherwise. Children are more aware of media exposure and adult emotion than we assume. After the September 11 attacks, children who watched more news coverage, especially those far from the attacks, reported higher levels of post-traumatic stress symptoms (Pfefferbaum et al., 2001).

How Development Affects Understanding

Young children think in concrete, immediate terms. Their primary concern is personal safety. If they hear that a city has been bombed, they



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may assume their own neighborhood is next. Because they struggle with abstract political motives and distant geography, they interpret events as local and personal (Slone & Shoshani, 2008). They are more likely to ask, “Are we safe?” than “Why are they fighting?”

The child may interpret things literally. Therefore, words like *wipe out* and *destroy* could have absolute meanings to them. If there is no reassurance provided to them, your child may think in their mind that the world will cease to exist. Children at this stage are primarily dependent on trusted adults for emotional safety and security. Research has proven that parental calmness and availability are the two strongest protective factors for children dealing with collective trauma (Masten & Narayan, 2012) during this stressful time in history.

Children exposed to ongoing political conflict often show strong emotional responses such as fear and anger, along with increased curiosity about causes and consequences (Slone & Shoshani, 2008). Questions become more complex: Why do people hate each other? Why can't leaders solve these problems? These reflect growing moral reasoning.

Teens experience war differently than other age groups. While they are able to think abstractly about history, economics, religion, and politics, many also pay attention to global events through the international news they follow and have developed strong opinions about what happens in the world around them. Teens experience intense emotional and identity development during adolescence. Repeated exposure to graphic news has been linked to increased levels of anxiety and depression in teens (Comer et al., 2008). There is a wide range of possible outcomes that exist for teens based on how much family support, friendships, and meaning in their life positively affect their resilience (Masten & Narayan, 2012).



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The Impact of Media and Adult Response

Regardless of age, children look to adults to decide how afraid they should feel. If adults react with panic or hopelessness, children's distress increases. If adults acknowledge concern while modeling coping, children feel more secure.

Research indicates that children whose parents respond calmly to news of terrorist attacks and limit their child's exposure to graphic material will demonstrate fewer symptoms of trauma (Pfefferbaum et al., 2001). Training adults in managing media and using coping strategies to assist children in coping with media exposure related to terrorism has demonstrated a reduction in children's distress caused by exposure to terrorism-related media (Comer et al., 2008). Due to the immature nature of a child's cognitive ability to assess probability, children will often perceive that there is immediate danger everywhere if they do not have a parenting adult to place that danger into perspective.

Five Goals and Practical Strategies

The first goal in discussing war and peace is understanding. Begin by asking what the child has heard and what they think is happening. This often reveals misconceptions or exaggerated fears.

The second goal is developmental fit. Tailor explanations to the child's age and cognitive level. Young children need reassurance about safety. School-aged children need help separating fact from fiction. Teens benefit from open dialogue and respectful debate.

The third goal involves supporting children to express their feelings through words. Allowing space for children to articulate their fear, confusion, or anger aids in regulating their feelings. Naming feelings allows children to better manage their emotions.



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The fourth goal aims to limit the amount of time a child is exposed to disturbing images in the media. To the extent possible, watch and/or read the news with children and discuss the content. The media often replay dramatic events many times, so children may feel that these events are happening more frequently than they really are.

The fifth goal is founded on the idea of sharing examples of activities that support peace, such as diplomatic efforts, humanitarian aid, and acts of solidarity. Children can also participate in acts of service appropriate to their age at school and at home. Small acts of kindness provide children with a sense of having power.

Children contemplate war, regardless of whether they mention it or not. They think about it, wonder what might happen, and hope for an end. They have basic needs, including safety, love, and reassurance. These needs will continue to exist, but their understanding of these needs will change as they mature. As children grow older, so does their reliance on stable adults. In a world where negative information spreads rapidly and instantaneously, calm conversation is one of the most substantial protective resources we can provide to our children.

Key points

- Children absorb global conflict through media and emotion.
- Development shapes how kids understand war and safety.
- Calm, honest adults build resilience during uncertainty.

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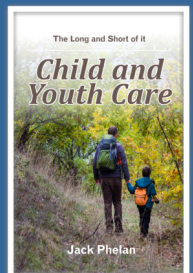
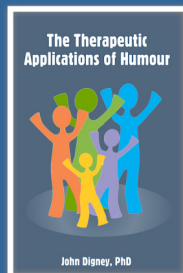
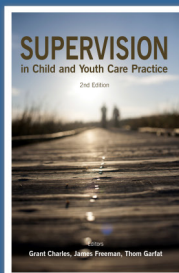
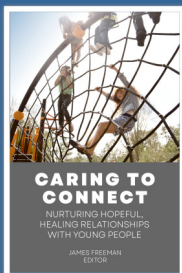
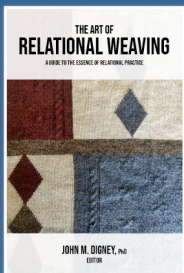
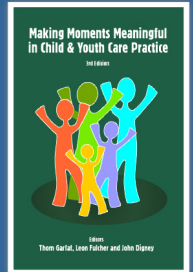
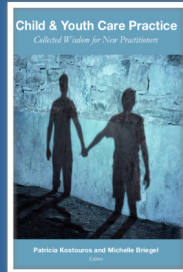
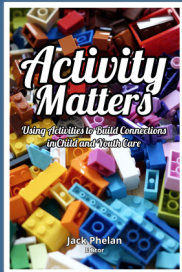
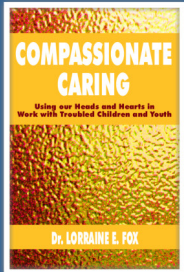
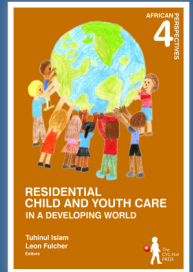
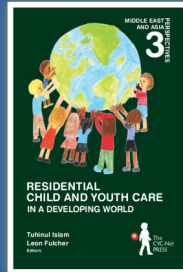
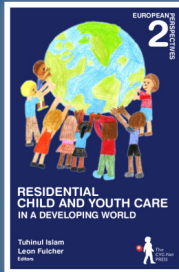
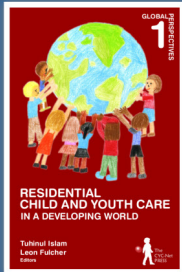
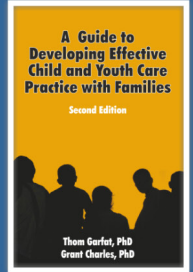
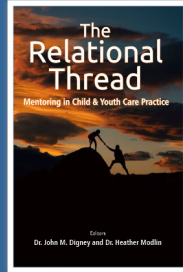
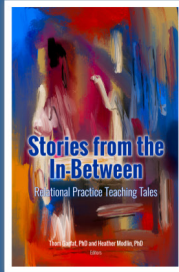
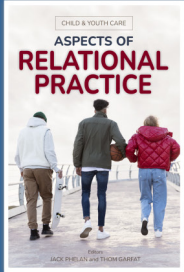
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Are We Prepared?

Hans Skott-Myhre

I have been worrying lately, although worry is really not a strong enough word to convey my level of concern about what we are doing or not doing about preparing young people for the future. It seems clear to me that the world is shifting and changing extremely rapidly and that the changes are anything but trivial. The shifts are at all levels that include biological transfigurations of the human body, massive reconfigurations of our neurology and modes of consciousness, dramatic changes to the material environment in which we live, and astonishing tectonic realignments of the political realm.

All these shifts are having and will have a direct and unprecedented impact on the world young people will inherit at all levels, including the most intimate aspects of their subjectivity and identities. The assaults on the world as we have known it are coming at all levels at a velocity that is hard to comprehend. The amount of information flooding us in every moment of every day is overwhelming. There couldn't be a greater and more imminent crisis for anything even tangentially connected to our lived experience as sentient beings. In the face of this, I must ask, are we prepared or more importantly are we preparing young people to sustain a full and rich life in the face of an increasingly dystopian world?

I think the short answer is that we are most certainly neither prepared or preparing. As the generations of adults that span the end of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century, we are clearly out of our depth and



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treading water, hoping that things will get back to normal very soon. I would suggest that normal is gone and won't be back. The more we wait for the clock to reverse itself so that the world becomes comprehensible, the more time we waste letting other forces create a world that is inhospitable to everything we value and everyone we love. We are running out of time and yet I see no urgency in the field of CYC to do much of anything about the world the young people we serve will inherit.

Those of us working in the field of Child and Youth Care are in a unique position to shift the cultural narrative from one of cynicism and despair to a vibrant and forceful exploration of alternative ways of living. We have day-to-day contact with the next generation across the world. The young people in our care are some of the most disenfranchised and marginalized human beings on the planet. Their investment in the current system of global capitalist rule is tenuous at best and utterly broken in the extreme. It is Marx who tells us that revolution is initiated by those who have nothing to lose. Most certainly, when we look at the economic and social prospects for most of the young people in our care, the view is increasingly bleak.

Most of the young people we serve have daunting intersectional coordinates. They are specifically the kinds of young people who are the most likely to be the subjects of multiple forms of systemic oppression. CYC workers are positioned deep within the social and political geography of those young people who are becoming disposable bodies. No amount of psychological or relational remediation can alter this fact. Our kids are at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and they are falling further behind all the time. The fact that this is not an urgent and universal conversation in our field is both astonishing and irresponsible.

We could certainly excuse our silence by pointing out that such concerns are beyond the scope of the kinds of work we are hired to do. We could argue that the dominant system is so large and comprehensive, there



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is really no way our small efforts could make an impact. We could maintain that young people in our care don't care about "politics," they are too busy trying to survive. Using this kind of logic, we have dedicated our work to making sure that if they are in our care, they are safe, cared for, and connected to meaningful relationships with adults they can count on.

I should note that there is nothing wrong with building safe and trusting relationships between marginalized young people and adults. And it is both important and admirable that CYC workers make every effort to make their programs responsive to the emotional and psychological needs of the young people in their care. However, as Jack Phelan has pointed out numerous times, making sure that young people do well in our programs and build strong relationships with workers in those programs, only prepares them for a life of doing well with an institutional context. If we don't consider their lived experience in the world they will enter after leaving our programs, we have abdicated an essential aspect of fundamental care. Regrettably doing well within the institutional parameters of residential care is no guarantee of success once a young person leaves that admittedly rather particular social construction of care.

In addition, the ways that we describe our work with young people also more often than not leaves out the social dynamics of the world that is shaping their future. We tend to focus on each young person as if they could be separated from the world they inhabited before they came to us and to which they will return when they leave. Don't get me wrong, in recent years we have included a trauma-based orientation that takes a young person's social context into account. We recognize that bad things have happened to them before they came to us and that those significant life events can impact on the growth and development of young people. However, even in the instance in which we acknowledge the world outside our programs as important in shaping young people's lives orientations, our



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view is historical. We tend to understand young people through the lens of what has happened to them. We think in terms of remediation and repair. Not to say that we are not interested in taking a young person's strengths and assets into account as resources for building possible futures. We can do a good job of that. But I would argue that the focus on the young person as the site of trauma and reservoir of resources is myopic and fails to consider the necessity for young people to understand the social coordinates of the world they will need to negotiate when they leave our care.



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It is [Paulo Friere](#) who tells us that when working with disenfranchised and marginalized people, the development of social agency is crucial. If life is to change for those bodies often considered disposable, the capacity to act on their own behalf in meaningful ways is crucial. Of course, all people act day in and day out. We all go through our days doing this and that. Sometimes our actions are overtly political and intended to change our circumstances. But for those actions to really have an effect, they need to be truly responsive to the materially lived conditions of our lives.

We see this in our work all the time. Young people and adults, sometimes entire communities engaging in acts of resistance that are intended to push back against a world that denies them the ability to really live. Unfortunately, oftentimes these acts of resistance, while filled with energy and creativity, have little or no impact on the actions of the dominant system of control and discipline. Acts of resistance can be dramatic and filled with passion and still fall on deaf ears or worse bring down even more radical methodologies of oppressive tactics.

To be effective in actually changing the world, so that it is a life affirming system of real care, requires clear eyed analysis and well thought strategy. And our actions need to be collectively generated out of all our relations. To do that kind of work, we need an up-and-coming generation who has access to the information necessary to fight for a new world in which they matter.

Friere recognized this in his own work. As a result, he proposed that one of the key elements in building the agency necessary to bring about change was to assist those living under conditions of oppression to begin to understand the conditions of their own oppression. He argued that an essential aspect of collaborative care was the introduction of cogent and accurate information about what was happening to the communities suffering under current sociopolitical conditions. It was essential that there



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be what he called a pedagogy of the oppressed that would give them the information necessary to produce effective tactics for taking charge if their lives.

Now some of us might argue that such a pedagogy should be aimed at the adults in the community who can take action to remediate the harms being done to their community. That this is not the job of young people who should be allowed their childhood free from such cares. I would argue that this kind of thinking is rooted in a nostalgia for a childhood already past. Young people are already immersed in a virtual field saturated with capitalist ideology from the moment they can hold and manipulate some kind of screen. And that age is getting younger and younger every day. The yearning for the childhood of the mid twentieth century was never realistic for most of the world's children and is certainly not a reality for any child living in the world of the 21st century. If we want to affirm a different set of social coordinates that valorizes living things and a viable planet, we must engage young people in an alternate pedagogy anywhere we have them in our care.

For us in CYC that means in the places where we work as well as our own families and communities. However, this requires a reflexive pedagogy in which we are educating ourselves at the same time we working to educate young people in our care. We must do our homework and dive deeply into an analysis of how the current system works and what might be done to produce an alternative. Because most workers today are what I would call the hinge generation (they have a foot in both the world of the pre-virtual and a foot in the contemporary world) they will need to learn as much as they can from the young people in their work about the world as it emerging now. In other words, workers need to produce a collaboratively constructed model of the world as it is and how it might become something else.



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Of course, some might argue this is indoctrination and has no place in our programs which should be ideologically neutral. I would argue that there are no ideologically neutral spaces in a world saturated with screens flooding our consciousness with the messaging of virtual capital. For the young people we serve, the messaging of global capital is a death sentence. There is nothing in the realm of neoliberal capitalist discourse that valorizes or affirms their lived experience in any way. As those responsible for their care, we have an obligation to do what we can to prepare them for a world that has little or interest in their survival.

If we take on this task, we are following in the footsteps of a number of community-based groups that saw themselves as defending their communities against occupation by a system hostile to them and their children. There have been quite a lot of these over the past several hundred years, but in this instance, I am thinking of the American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party. Both movements saw themselves as self-defense organizations, but I would argue for our purposes they model very proactive agendas for reenvisioning a different world for young people.

In the case of the American Indian Movement there was a powerful reassertion of Indigenization that reaffirmed and valorized deep connections to language and ceremony that affirmed connection and care to the earth and all things on the earth. There was a powerful rejection of the genocidal and ongoing project of colonization and global capitalism. Often the more militant aspects of the movement have been highlighted but I would argue that what has been sustained over time has been the cultural shift that offers a different way of living.

The Black Panthers have also been portrayed as primarily an armed and militant movement. And without a doubt there was that aspect to their activities as well. But what caught the attention of the FBI as the most dangerous element of the Black Panther program was the Children's



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Breakfast program. This free breakfast for children in communities where the Panthers were centered offered free food for sure, but it also included an educational element that focused on the revolutionary re-education of impoverished children of color. This combination was what the U.S. government felt was so dangerously subversive it needed to be shut down with all due haste.

I would suggest that both movements have a great deal to offer us in the our work with young people. It wouldn't hurt for us to see ourselves as self-defense organizations working against the ongoing assaults on young people by a hostile system of exploitation and domination. I would propose that we take this task seriously and start to engage in offering cultural and political alternatives to the young people in our care.

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Many years ago, a visionary leader in our field by the name of Jim Nelson brought community leaders into his program in Minneapolis in an effort to connect to the communities he served. The leaders he engaged were controversial because they included by gang leaders and Indigenous elders. The FBI considered such inclusion profoundly dangerous and eventually infiltrated the agency and caused enough conflict that the project failed and Jim lost his job. It is significant that the FBI used tactics against the agency that they had developed to disrupt the Panthers and the American Indian Movement.

Perhaps it is time to revitalize the work we do in such a way that we also seriously engage community and offer alternative modes of life to our young people. The elders in both movements are still out there. The Panthers and the American Indian Movement are still active and were deeply engaged in the community-based responses to the incursions by ICE across the U.S. They are still working to defend their communities 50 years later. Perhaps they might have something to offer us? Maybe we should invite them in.

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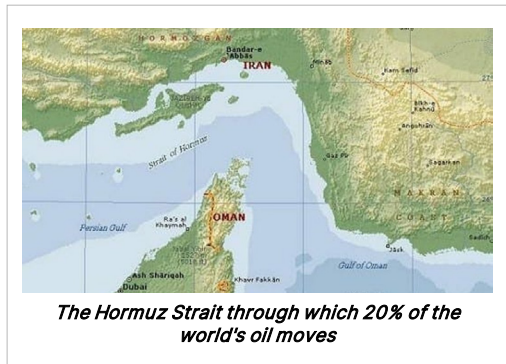
Postcard from Leon Fulcher

From Auckland, New Zealand

Kia Ora Tatau Katoa and Warm Greetings to Child and Youth Care Workers and Supervisors wherever you live in our world! Over the past month, world dramas have unfolded that may well influence the child and youth care field in challenging and largely unexpected ways. It may be worth reviewing some of these potential challenges that may impact children, young people and families in the months ahead.

Since closure of the Hormuz Strait at the end of February, the price of petrol/gasoline and diesel has had an immediate impact on every child and youth care worker who drives a vehicle to and from work, or helps drive a diesel-powered residential centre van or bus. Child and youth care

managers across the Western world now query budget escalations and be grappling with how budgetary shortfalls are to be managed.



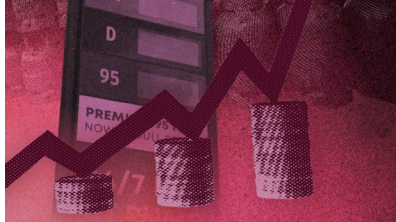
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Another challenge surrounds the purchase of food and fresh produce from supermarkets or greengrocers because of rising delivery charges to sustain market shelves. This will be impacting family meals for lower income families who were already struggling. It is also likely that meals provided for residential centres will have begun to change, perhaps with fewer meat and fresh fish dishes, with greater use of frozen foods and tinned items so as to manage budgets. And remember: some children and families were struggling with food availability before the fuel crisis!

Family foster care also faces economic challenges faced by other care services. Availability of public transport may help limit the direct impact of social outings, school trips and birth family visits with children or young people in short-term foster care. But foster families are also faced with



Almost immediately oil, petrol and gas supplies reduced



Prices for fuel and related costs have soared in 2 months



The rapid expansion of electricity powered vehicles follows fuel price hikes

challenges around the cost of food, clothing and associated school expenses.

A challenge for all child and youth care workers at this time is to explore what 'economies' might be found in the delivery of care services. Experience has shown that planned use of activities commonly refers to 'doing something away from the centre'. But now, care workers must explore alternative options around the purposeful use of activities. What options might be explored?

Food preparation offers considerable potential and it's worth remembering that *the way to a young person's heart is through their stomach!* Activities that involve one or two young people might include the planning and preparation of special evening meals or the baking and decoration of a cake. Cooking and baking can be fun shared activities while also providing opportunities for learning basic living skills associated with sharing a flat or group home.

When visiting residential schools, it is interesting to learn how often there are vegetable gardens around. Are they maintained by gardeners employed for that purpose? Might one find care workers engaged in gardening activities with young people. whether such activities involve



Service stations have become car parks waiting for fuel



Many have turned away from empty fuel stations

young people in soil preparation, planting, watering and the harvesting of produce. Ironically, while visiting a residential school last year, it was hard of overlook the waist-high marijuana plant that was growing near the gate to place. The activity was legal in that country!

Care workers and supervisors are encouraged to write short accounts of their practices around the purposeful use of gardening activities with children or young people in care or residential schools. Self-sufficiency around planning for and preparing vegetables, berries and fruits, contributes towards lasting relationships. Learning to eat food grown in a back garden is good!



Fuel costs have had an immediate impact on family spending



There would seem to be no short-term answers to inflation

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