

# Child & Youth Care

**A JOURNAL FOR THOSE WHO WORK WITH  
TROUBLED CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT RISK**

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**ENCOURAGING STRENGTHS — LEARNING FROM SPORTS  
JANUSZ KORCZAK THE FERVENT DIAGNOSTICIAN  
PERSONAL VALUES IN CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK**

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# Dark days for child and youth care – but is there a silver lining?



**On the eve of the NACCW's Biennial Conference in Durban in early July, the Association's Director Merle Allsopp reflects on the health of child care in South Africa at the moment.**

Things on the ground in child and youth care are bad. We are looking at a multi-problem situation, and most people are struggling or worried or angry, depending upon where in the system they find themselves.

**Survival course**

Certainly we expect rough seas at a time of transition and redistribution, and all organisations realise that they must steer a survival course right now. But there are other problems which compound our situation. At macro level, just as new policies are being developed across the board in South Africa, the government has adopted an economic growth policy which reduces staff and tightens the screws on spending.

At state department levels, there is low morale as staff members "take the package" and posts are frozen — while the workload stays just as high. The system is caught in a gridlock, like a traffic jam, created by incapacity and indecision. Many state departments are having to learn new ideas — like inter-sectoral co-operation, which ultimately will work to the benefit of all of us, but which will take time learn.

*But some things cannot and must not wait: the IMC's investigation, requested by Cabinet and pointing up gross human rights violations, was completed almost a year ago — but still without the response we would expect."*

**Institutions**

Residential institutions are being affected in different ways.

In state institutions, for example, there is widespread dissatisfaction at the new PAS which affects their staff directly. In almost all provinces there has been a coming together of child and youth care staff who refuse to accept their categorisation as "social auxiliary workers". Also, union action in state institutions targets the state's own coffers when demands are made over working conditions. However, private institutions are not in the same boat. The state has not been keeping pace in its support of these organisations as it has with its own, and private organisations are going downhill. Staff (not to mention all other resources, including food) is being reduced, those child care workers who remain are making exceptional sacrifices — and union action in private children's homes makes demands on seriously crippled, sometimes terminal resources.

**Optimism**

In spite of these circumstances, there are many causes for optimism. When was this work ever easy? Didn't we always make do with less than adequate resources — and little enough support and understanding from government departments? But the big difference now is that we have a sound policy down on paper — and accepted by Cabinet as policy. I have hopes for the IMC Policy Document. This is a blueprint for success. It gives us something to work towards, and we never had that before.

It is expecting a lot to want immediate delivery on the IMC policy, but already departments like Correctional Services and Justice are coming to terms with the new thinking. The pilot studies have been positive, and the concrete progress with Youth Justice and Secure Care are very encouraging. These are close relations of child and youth care, in which we are all involved.

**But what to do?**

While there is some change in the pattern of state institutions, even in those there is a long way to go.

Private institutions, like virtually all NGOs in South Africa, are in great difficulties, and the state is not making this any easier. It's not even clear what the state wants or what it intends to do. One wonders whether the current approach is meant to starve private institutions out of existence.

Something needs to be done about the subsidy — not merely the figures, but the whole basis on which it is paid. *It's the same old bad subsidy system from the bad old days — and doesn't honestly reflect either the new policy or the willingness of people in the field to contribute to the new paradigm! We need, together, to speak out on this.* Individual child and youth care workers ask: what of the immediate future? I can't see any guarantees. I remember when I came into the work it was only the crazy ones (like me!) who stuck around — and what for? We worked for peanuts, we worked with large groups of children, we worked with no support — yet somehow we lived out the metaphor of hope in a hopeless situation, which in turn gave the children hope. I think we're still at such a position now. Today, in ironical self-deception, the state will find yet more children in need of care, and you and I will be asked to help with them. Those of us who are committed to this work will do so.

At all levels, we need to keep on learning and training so that we can continue to offer quality practice. And we need to go on meeting together to find support in each other, so that we may speak out together. Much is being asked of child care workers right now, and we have a lot to offer. We also have a lot to say, and we must say it now.

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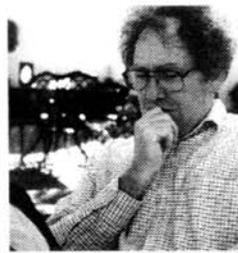
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## People



### Brian Gannon

Brian started this journal and has edited and produced each issue since 1983. He manages the NACCW's Publications Unit in Cape Town, and does some teaching and consultancy. Although his formal training is in Psychology in which he has his master's degree, Brian has been involved throughout his working life in our field, and is a registered child and youth care worker. He values the fact that he started "at the very bottom of the career ladder" as a part-time assistant child care worker. "Those were the days!" he laughs. "The salary was £5 a month (mine was stolen for my first three months — my principal called this 'an occupational hazard') and my first job was sole responsibility for a house with 48 children!" At 23, "as a hardened child care worker", Brian (with colleague Derek James, now in charge of SOS Botswana) began work establishing St Nicolas Home in Johannesburg where facilities were so poor that a "coloured" child in need of care would be sent to Ottery in the Cape. While working at this, Brian taught Latin and History at nearby St Barnabas College while living in the operating theatre of the old Nokuphila hospital in Western Township in which he planned to start the children's home. He became the first Head of St Nicolas until the Group Areas

Board declined in 1967 to renew his permit to live there.

### NACCW founded

Soon after his appointment as Principal of St Johns in Cape Town he realised the need for more support, training and networking in the field, and he started the first Association of Child Care Workers in the Western Cape in the late 1960's. He then had the honour to be present at the founding of similar associations in the Transvaal, Natal-East Griqualand (as that Region used to be called) and the Eastern Cape, and at the formation of the nationally united NACCW in 1975.

### Reading about kids

Brian does not consider *Child & Youth Care* to be more than a "sort of Reader's Digest" for child and youth care workers — a monthly dose of reading about kids and those who work with them. He is heartened by those, especially in far off places, who express appreciation for the journal's regular visit month by month. Brian has set up the NACCW's web site on the Internet, and operates an international network of child and youth care workers called CYC-net. When asked what he considers the "big thing" in child care right now, he replies — "Without a doubt, it is my great admiration for all those who continue to work with kids in institutions and other NGOs today, with so little reward and acknowledgement from society or the state." "No policy change is going to stop children and youth from getting into difficulties. More come into care daily. Thank God that child care workers, in spite of the difficulties and the declining funds, stay at their posts and are there for the kids. No one else is." ■

**Kees Waaldijk** recalls one of our century's greatest workers with troubled children — and his insightful and thorough attitude to how we understand them

# Janusz Korczak: the fervent diagnostician

We hear so much about Korczak's love and warmth and respect for children that we might overlook how fervent a diagnostician he was. Again and again we read in his books about the orphanage and the summer camps, how important it is to understand the background of the child's behaviour.

The ongoing message seems to be: don't condemn or correct a child's behaviour before you have seriously tried to understand and to "feel" its roots in the character, the mood, the life history, the inner world of the child.

Perhaps what you see as misbehaviour is practised by the child to attain a certain goal, or it arises from hidden old pain, or is a reaction to something in the situation which you didn't notice.

It is obvious that since the days of Korczak we have seen a lot of progress in the field of diagnostics regarding child development and problems.

Kraepelin's famous classification of psychiatric illnesses is much refined in the modern DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statis-

tical Manual of Mental Disorders). Binet's tests for measuring intelligence, started in 1904, gave rise to a multitude of psychodiagnostic tests. And behaviour therapy stimulated the development of precise analysis and measurement of children's behaviour.

## A diagnostic attitude

Nevertheless there is a lot we can learn from Korczak as a diagnostician.

In the first place Korczak's "diagnostic" attitude is not diagnostic in the modern sense, not a way of knowing children in terms of special procedures, measurements, tests, quantifications (such as IQ) and classifications. It is above all an open and thorough attention to the thousand events and nuances of everyday life. The many remarks, spread over Korczak's books, about how children eat, play, sleep, wake up and so on, are convincing reminders to us not to overlook the ordinary everyday occurrences, and not to jump prematurely to conclusions and classifications.

In this perspective the residential worker, the worker in the life situation of the child, has excellent diagnostic opportunities compared with those of the social worker who depends on relatively short visits and conversations; and compared with those of the psychologist who uses psychological tests in an artificial situation.

In the second place Korczak draws our attention in many illustrative examples to the inner world of children, to what in German is called "Erlebniswelt". Which adult will ever understand the dizzy euphoria of a child seeing the first snow of the season? And who will understand the sadness of a child worrying about difficult situations it left be-

hind at home. It may be obvious that for Korczak diagnosis is closely linked with empathy and with the quality of communication. Quite often we blockade our feelings for what is going on inside the child by the hastiness of our communication — or by our eagerness to stop or to change a certain behaviour. Korczak's preference for empathic diagnosis doesn't imply that he undervalued or neglected more objective, science oriented methods. On the contrary, he spent a lot of time in measuring the growth of weight and height of the children and in following their reading capacity as accurately as possible (Ida Merzan).

We see an ironic coincidence in the fact that in the same decades in which Sigmund Freud explored for the first time the unconscious, Janusz Korczak was making the very little-known consciousness of the child, the (for us) hidden inner world, an object of description and study.

## Interaction

In the third place Korczak's diagnostic attention is focused in a very modern way on what we now call interactional processes. Perhaps the child with its strange behaviour is reacting to another child, or to the worker's way of asking a question, or to an unnoticed humiliation of a few moments ago. It is in this context that Korczak makes a surprisingly modern remark. Nowadays in many countries the video camera became an important instrument for analysis and diagnosis in the study of the child. In the Netherlands for instance "Video Home Training" became a method of helping problem families by clarifying the family's interactions using video recordings of daily life situations. Knowing this I was sur-



prised to find in Korczak's ghetto diary the idea that one day every teacher and residential worker will use his own camera to see and to reflect on the thousand subtle interactions between children, which escape his attention in the normal routine of things. "Then they will understand, for instance, why Jozef doesn't like to sit next to Winston."

#### Across cultures

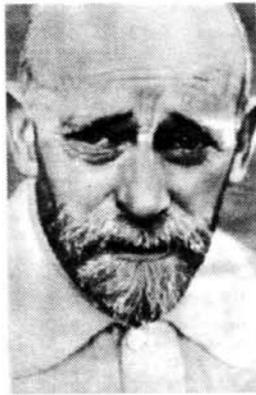
In the fourth place it is inspiring to hear from Korczak how difficult it is to understand (to "diagnose") people who are living in or rooted in a culture which is very different from our own pattern of life. Famous is his description of the situation of the child in *The right of the child to be respected*: "We are living as a people of dwarfs among giants, weak, not understood." In *When I am a child again* he describes very convincingly how little teachers generally understand what is thought and felt by their pupils. Two worlds, two cultures. But there is another, very actual illustration of Korczak's feeling for the very different life-worlds, (sub)cultures of people. In *Children of the street* he wrote a very intense dialogue between a street child and a well meaning (social) pedagogue. Summarised: "You will never understand us. You are from a totally different world. We have our own honour".

Especially nowadays, in societies which are very mixed from a cultural and ethnic point of view, and with residential settings with a mixed population and a mixed staff, it is important to take serious Korczak's pleading for diagnostic modesty, especially when the other doesn't belong to our own adult, or western, or urban, or middle-class, or intellectual "culture". Nicely put by Korczak in one of his later letters to Jozef Arnon in Israel: "So many children arrived, so many books to decipher."

We have looked at some inspiring and actual elements in Korczak's "diagnostic" approach to children. They are all related to his fundamental plea for respect towards children. Especially in residential settings where so frequently new children arrive from very different backgrounds and with severe behaviour problems it is no luxury to be warned again and again:

"Don't interfere, don't correct, don't conclude too early. Try to understand. It is their factual daily life, it is their inner world, it is their reaction to their — often unfamiliar — situations, it is their cultural background and history, which counts." ■

**Kees Waaldijk**, a senior teacher at *Hoo-geschool de Horst*, a training college for child care workers in Holland, visited South Africa in February and spoke at the Western Cape's Graduation Ceremony.



## Janusz Korczak

Korczak (pronounced Kor-chark) is widely regarded as one of the "heroes" of the child and youth care profession. A medical doctor, writer, educator and broadcaster, the abiding passion of his life was the care and upbringing of children who were orphaned.

Such was his commitment that, when the Warsaw ghetto was being systematically cleared by the Nazis, and though he could have avoided this, he voluntarily accompanied the 200 children of his orphanage to the death camp at Treblinka. There on the 5th August 1942, he died together with them.

It is recalled that as the dispirited masses "were herded into the freight cars, all the children were lined up four in a row. Korczak at the head, eyes forward, holding a child with each hand, led the procession." As he had taught them to live, so he helped them to die — with courage and with dignity.



He was born Henryk Goldszmit on 22 July 1878 in Warsaw, Poland. His father was a lawyer. When Henryk was 21 he won a literary prize under the pseudonym Janusz Korczak, and he kept this name

for the rest of his life. Two years later he wrote his novel *Children of the Street*, and travelled to Zurich on the trail of the famous educator Pestalozzi.

From age 20 to 25 he studied medicine, and following his interest in poor children, worked in a children's clinic. However he soon won a name

for himself as a medical consultant to the children of the wealthier classes — which financed his work amongst the poor.

He furthered his medical studies in Berlin, Paris and London, specialising in Paediatrics, and was tipped to become an outstanding academic, but his interests lay elsewhere. In 1912 he became principal of the Dom Sierot, an orphanage which he had helped design in Warsaw. His studies moved towards Education, and his first major book *How you shall Love a Child* was published in 1914. This work was interrupted while he served as an army doctor in World War I, but in 1919 he resumed work at the orphanage.

He worked towards the establishment of a second institution, Our House (Nasz Dom), of which he became principal.

With his interests in writing, he created important opportunities for children in the *Little Magazine*, a weekly supplement, written and edited for children by children, to the Jewish newspaper *Nasz Przegląd*. At the same time he became a popular broadcaster on children's issues, until the authorities realised he was Jewish.

In 1940 the Nazis forced Dom Sierot to move into the Warsaw ghetto, and Korczak chose to live there with the children. It was not to be for long.

*Larry Brendtro takes up the story:* Korczak knew that he would have to teach his children something most of us never have to teach: how to die. He found one of the writings of Rabindranath Tagore about a Hindu boy who was dying, and they made a play out of that and acted out the parts.

When the time came, the children were dressed in their best, the orphanage's green banner was brought out, and they marched the two miles through the streets to the chlorinated box cars in which they were taken to Treblinka.

If you have the chance to go to Poland and to Treblinka you will find no buildings left there — only grass and pine and birch trees, and a memorial in the form of a ring of rocks. On each rock is the name of a city or a country from which Jews were brought, one million of them, to their end in that place.

Only one person has his individual name on one of those rocks. In the centre, on the largest rock, is the name of someone in our profession: it reads "Janusz Korczak and the children." ■

**THE GEORGIE PORGIE BACKLASH:  
Punishing 6-year-old schoolchildren for  
sexual harassment is absurd. Yes, but ...**

# “Kissed the Girls and Made Them Cry”



When I first heard about the “principals from hell” I couldn’t believe it. I’m talking about the ones in North Carolina and New York who penalised, respectively, a 6-year-old boy and a 7-year-old boy for kissing a girl. The principals’ actions were the latest examples of political correctness gone haywire.

Yet as a victim of grade-school harassment myself, I don’t want to ridicule principals who are trying to do the right thing. In a society where sexual harassment is so pervasive, educators ought to do more to teach

boys how to behave. Of course, there’s an important difference between sexual harassment and age appropriate pranks, such as a 6-year-old yanking a girl’s pants down and darting off. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or persistent.

The stress is on the word *unwelcome*. During third-grade school breaks, I loved playing “horses,” a game that consisted of me, the filly, being chased by a group of

stallions, many of whose names I still remember fondly. I neighed, whinnied, and galloped around with glee as the boys corralled me into a corner. Yes, they surrounded me, but we were playing. We were having fun. When I was in fifth grade, things changed. Not only had my breasts begun to develop, but boys — two in particular — had begun to express their “affection” in more menacing ways. Their snapping my bra, a routine event, was bearable. But the worst offender, a boy named Jack, used to come up and slug me hard — in the breasts, the neck, or the stomach — every chance he got. One time I thought he bruised my windpipe. Break-time became a nightmare.

When I complained to my teacher, he told me, “It’s Jack’s way of showing you that he likes you.” When the teacher changed the seating chart, he placed me and Jack next to each other. I suppose he wanted us to learn to get along. Instead, it made me feel frustrated and powerless.

By the sixth grade, I’d had enough. Another boy, David (one of my fifth-grade harassers), escalated his campaign against me and the other girls, especially my friend Dixie. He used to punch us in the breasts — Dixie’s were large — and then run away laughing while we fumed in pain. Complaints to our teacher, another man, produced no results. Nothing changed, even after Dixie’s mother came to school to speak to the principal (yes, also a man). So one day, when David stole my book bag and hid it in the boys’ bathroom, I vowed to be helpless no longer. As soon as he came out of the bathroom, I kicked him in the shin as hard as I could.

David cried and promptly ratted on me. Even today, my teacher’s response still makes me feel a sting of injustice: He ordered me to apologise to David in front of the class. At first I was incredulous and refused. But the teacher’s power and my youth made me capitulate.

**Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or persistent. The stress is on the word ‘unwelcome’.**

That moment marked the first time my will was entirely broken.

In ninth grade, I was far from the spirited filly I was in the third. That year a teacher at my school took me into an audiovisual room in the library one day and closed the door. The room was dark. He pulled me close, pressing his body against mine, and told me how much he liked me. I was lucky: I squirmed free and managed not to be alone with him again. Until I was well into adulthood, I never told anyone about that day in the audiovisual room. Recently one of my sisters heard that the teacher had been forced to retire because of something he had done to a female student. I can’t help wondering how many girls might have been spared if I had believed I had a right to complain.

Yes, suspending first-graders is absurd, but what about menacing third-graders? Abusive fifth-graders? Many boys could use a few lessons in how to treat girls. Heaven help us otherwise — especially if they become educators.

**Denise Couture**, a freelance writer from New York City, writing in *Parents* magazine..

Michele Moytiuk, Social Worker at the Ottawa-Carleton Young Offenders' Unit, outlines the setting up and progress of a facility for young offenders

## Secure detention and short-term custody youth centres: a social service perspective

Nearly a decade ago, the Young Offenders Act generated a major change in Canadian corrections — it resulted in many 16- and 17-year-old offenders being placed in secure detention or custody separate and apart from the adult offender population. Although the Young Offenders Act is federal legislation, it is administered provincially. Ontario is one of two provinces (the other is Nova Scotia) that has a split jurisdiction within this administration. The Ministry of Community and Social Services is responsible for youths between the ages of 12 and 15 (phase 1), and the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services deals with 16- and 17-year-old offenders (phase 2).

This article presents an overview of the establishment of a secure detention and short-term custody unit within an adult correctional facility to shed some light on the care, supervision and treatment of "phase 2"

young offenders. The article focusses on the procedures and services in the Ottawa-Carleton Young Offenders' Unit.

### How was the young offenders' unit set up?

As of April 1 1985, "phase 2" young offenders in custodial settings were required by law to be housed separately from those 18 and older. Until that time, adult correctional facilities held both male and female offenders older than 16.

The Ottawa-Carleton Young Offenders' Unit was set up (on the second floor) within the existing structure of the maximum-security Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre.

The unit was built during a two-week period. It was first set up as a 24-bed unit divided into two dormitories (one for 20 males and one for four females), but disruptive behaviour among the young offenders, particularly at night, necessitated a more secure separation.

Adult female inmates were, therefore, moved to the dormitories and the male young offenders took over the former adult female 12-cell area, with each cell double bunked. Although the move was incident-driven, the young offenders gained some benefits including more privacy and access to a large day room.

However, their energetic and impulsive ways soon caused further problems. Food fights often erupted during meals, and chairs and tables were tossed around. As a result, large metal "dinner" tables were bolted to the floor. After cell furnishings were destroyed, metal bunk beds, toilets, desks and chairs were also secured.

The young offenders' exercise yard consisted of a caged-in area on the roof of the building. Visits took place behind a plexiglass window using telephone communication.

### Staffing the unit

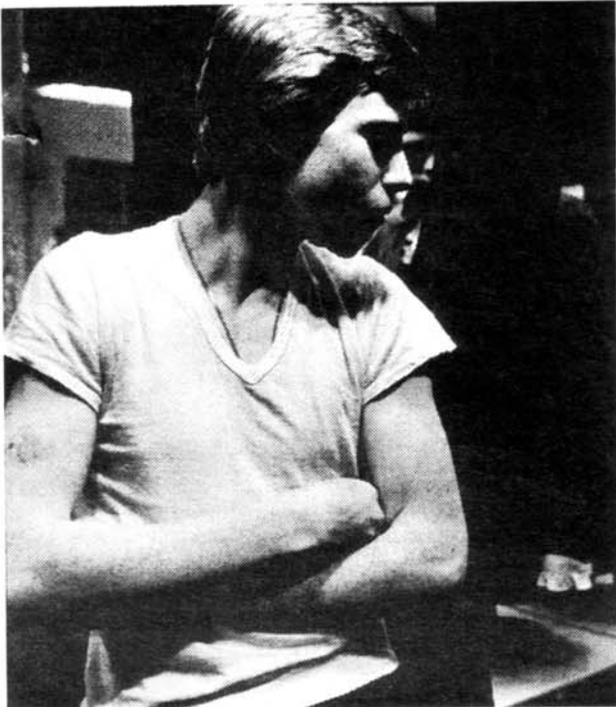
In April 1985, correctional officers on the adult side of the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre with the necessary training to work with adolescents assumed the duties of youth officers. Several operational managers were also assigned to the unit. A records clerk/secretary was hired to handle the paperwork, and a social worker was recruited to provide social work services.

Health care, psychological and chaplaincy services were originally provided through resources already at the detention centre. A psychologist, a recreational officer, a chaplain and two teachers were later added to the unit.

In adult correctional facilities, there is often a clear separation between security and programming staff. This is not the case in young offenders' units. All staff play an integral role in the care, supervision and treatment of each young offender.

### Accommodating young offenders

Over the years, the Ottawa-Carleton Young Offenders' Unit has been transformed into a secure and structured setting. It is now a very well-known and well-used facility for young offenders in Ontario's Eastern Region. Although the unit has a 24-bed capacity, the number of young offenders "in residence" often exceeds that number. There is a high turnover, with an average length of stay being approximately one month. Most of the unit's young offenders are awaiting a bail, trial, sentencing, transfer or review hearing. Upon sentencing, residents receiving a long-term sentence (three months to three years) are transferred to a secure-custody setting. In the Eastern Region, the long-term secure-custody facility is the Brookside Youth Centre in Cobourg. Unlike the adult system, where



**Without the necessary care, support, training and counselling, it would be unrealistic to expect troubled youths to acquire the maturity, insight and skills required to become productive members of society.**

offenders are assessed and classified according to security and programming needs, and then placed in a minimum-, medium- or maximum-security centre, young offenders are routinely transferred from the Ottawa-Carleton Young Offenders' Unit to the Brookside Youth Centre shortly after they receive a long-term sentence.

Another feature of the unit that differs from adult corrections is the internal security classification system. Upon admission to the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre, adult female offenders are placed in the female offender unit, while adult male offenders are placed in minimum-security dormitories (if they are non-violent), maximum-security cells (if they are violent and problematic) or protective custody (if they are sexual offenders, informants or simply unable to cope with general population inmates).

In the young offenders' unit, all offenders (regardless of gender or admission status) are housed together. They eat together, participate in programs together and spend idle time in the same day room. Female sleeping quarters, however, are far removed from the male quarters. Each unit has a high ratio of specialized staff to residents. Staff develop supervision and intervention strategies to deal with "offender blending" problems as they arise.

An internal classification system (each offender is assessed by security and clinical staff) is also used to prevent victimisation in the unit. Young offenders likely to prey on others share accommodations with similar offenders, to minimize the chances of housing potential victims with "predators."

A reward system also encourages the young offenders to perform 16 prosocial behaviours each day. Youth officers tally the offenders' weekly point totals and, depending on their total, the offenders are placed in one of three "levels." Young offenders at the highest level receive the most privileges (such as contact visits with parents or late day-room time). On the other hand, misconduct punishments can result in level downgrading, cell confinement (for a specified time period, not to exceed three days) or extra clean-up duty.

#### **Offender-management procedures**

Upon admission to the unit, the offender undergoes an intake needs assessment and a psychological evaluation. Each young offender's criminal history (such as circumstances of present and past offences), attitudes, family background, peer associations, education, employment, substance abuse, emotional and physical health, and unit adjustment (such as problems with peers and staff) is evaluated systematically.

Once program needs are identified, offenders are referred to appropriate service providers (such as the school program for academic upgrading). A "plan of care" is developed for each young offender, detailing the duration and intensity of their required services. This co-ordinates services and ensures that staff are not working at cross purposes.

Offender case reviews are held regularly to discuss escorted passes (for recreational or community outings) and to discuss passes for regular home visits. This process usually considers:

- outstanding charges (if any);
- prior record of escapes (if any);
- type of offence(s);
- family support (ability to control and supervise);
- the results of a meeting with parents (before release);
- feedback from the supervising probation officer; and overall unit behaviour.

#### **Service provision**

Within the unit, a multi-disciplinary team (consisting of a social worker, a psychologist, a chaplain, two teachers, a recreational officer, a unit manager, two operational managers and 12 youth officers) provides services to the young offenders.

The unit social worker prepares youth court reports for sentence reviews and transfer hearings. Other duties include chairing weekly case review meetings and completing discharge summaries — to another secure custody facility, open custody or the community (probation). Aside from this administrative role, the

social worker also provides individual and group counselling, covering such areas as anger management, social and interpersonal skills, family counselling, job preparation, and discharge planning. Clinical services are also provided by a chaplain who delivers spiritual, substance abuse and family counselling, and by a psychologist who specializes in the areas of sexual abuse, psychotic disorders, suicidal ideation and depression. Academic upgrading is offered through correspondence courses (with the assistance of two teachers) and leisure activities are co-ordinated by a recreational officer.

#### **What is the outlook?**

Adolescence is a confusing time of growth and change. Without the necessary care, support, training and counselling, it would be unrealistic to expect troubled youths to acquire the maturity, insight and skills required to become productive members of society.

After a decade of experience with 16- and 17-year-old young offenders, the Young Offenders' Unit has shown that, given the help to meet their needs, many young offenders can resume a normal and prosocial life.

That is the advantage of dealing with young offenders in a unit apart from their adult counterparts. The ratio of staff to offenders is often significantly higher than in adult institutions (adolescents are viewed as more responsive to treatment than adults), and the multidisciplinary team approach and philosophy make the environment much more favourable to rehabilitation. Security and program staff work together toward each young offender's goals.

We have a social and moral obligation to make a concerted effort to provide young offenders with the opportunities and support systems to change their lives. Young offender facilities are one important step along this path.

*Acknowledgements to Young Offenders and Corrections Forum*



### **Child Care Worker**

Johannesburg Child Welfare Society is looking for a live-in Child Care Worker for its home for teenagers in Norwood.

The ideal applicant will have training and experience in child care or related work and be a strong and motivated person. Own car essential.

**Please fax CV to Evelyn Zwahlen on (011) 331-1303 or phone on (011) 331-0171.**

There are some excellent programmes for street children in this city — but there is a dark side. David Orr reports on justice and social issues in Kenya

## The plight of Nairobi Street Children

Joseph Mwangi and his teenage friends are terrified of being arrested by the police. Their crime: being homeless on the streets of the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. Mostly they are picked up in ones and twos, but occasionally, there is a full-scale swoop. When news of a swoop starts to circulate, Joseph and his group go into hiding. They know what awaits them if they are caught and charged with vagrancy.

So far, Joseph has spent only one period in detention, but he says it was the worst experience of his life. Last year, he was sent to the capital's notorious Industrial Area Remand Prison pending investigation of his case. By the time he was released two-and-a-half months later, he had suffered serious mental and physical abuse.

It is not rare for juveniles to be sent to adult remand prisons in Kenya. During their time in detention, Joseph says he and the three other boys with him — all in their early teens — were regularly beaten by the other inmates. The cells were so overcrowded, they had to sleep on a latrine floor covered in human waste.

"In the remand prison, the adults steal rations from the younger ones," Joseph says, seated under a tree in Uhuru Park in central Nairobi. "Adults rape the younger ones, and if you refuse, you're beaten." Joseph belongs to a group of more than 30 street kids known as the Cathedral Children. Each lunchtime, they gather in the park in front of All Saints' Cathedral, where the Anglican pastors give them their only solid meal of the day.

There are more than 10,000 street children in Nairobi alone. Most of them seem to come from poor, single-parent families. However, it is not just economic factors that push them onto the streets.

The Cathedral Children, who mostly belong to the majority Kikuyu community, became homeless in 1992 after clashes in central Kenya between their people and warriors from President Daniel arap Moi's Kalenjin tribe.



**Says Elizabeth Oyugi of the African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN): "The children don't stand a chance; they're condemned from the start."**

Last September, soon after Joseph was released from prison, he witnessed his best friend, Kajunia, being shot dead by a police reservist in Uhuru Park.

"The *afande* just fired his gun straight at Kajunia," says Mwangi, using the Swahili term of respect for a policeman. "He fell down in the water with his hands still raised in surrender. Then the *afande* spat on him and walked away. I was also beaten

but I managed to escape. The *afande* is still around. He still comes after us and tries to beat us."

### Human rights report

Joseph's testimony will feature in a forthcoming report on Kenya's street children by the New York-based human rights organization Human Rights Watch.

"The police seem to think that all street children are thieves," says Elizabeth Oyugi of the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN). "The children don't stand a chance; they're condemned from the start. Most of them complain of having been beaten by the police." ANPPCAN estimates that as many as 120 street children appear before Nairobi's Juvenile Court each week. For boys, the charge is usually vagrancy; for girls, loitering with intent. Children who plead "not guilty" are remanded into custody.

"In court they're treated like criminals," says Mrs. Oyugi. "The justice system is extremely intimidating. Children of 16 or even younger are being sent to the Industrial Area Remand Prison, which is for adults. The conditions there are appalling, mainly because of overcrowding and inadequate rations."

According to recent estimates, as many as five people a day are dying of disease in the Industrial Area Remand Prison. When questioned about conditions in Kenyan prisons, the former Home Affairs Minister, Francis Lotodo, replies: "A prison is not a hotel."

It is only through the reports of former inmates like Joseph Mwangi that it is possible to get information on Kenya's prison conditions.

Human rights organisations, journalists, and lawyers have been refused free access to the prisons. ■

# The World of Child Care and Youth Care



NICE THINKING

"Casting out fear"  
ought to be the  
motto over every  
school door.

— A.S. NEILL  
*The Problem Child* (1926)

## Letters

### The National Strategy on Child Abuse and Neglect: Further Comment

As a member of the National Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect and a co-drafter of the document produced by that Committee, I wish to respond to Alan Jackson's comments on the proposed National Strategy on Child Abuse and Neglect. I suspect that my old friend and colleague has misunderstood the thrust of the strategy. One of the main criticisms we have received is that the document is not user-friendly, and as a drafter I share in the responsibility for any lack of clarity. Also, Alan seems to be commenting on the first draft of the document. Later drafts incorporate the priority recommendations submitted by the Cape Town Child Welfare Society and the suggestions of many other stakeholders who commented on the first version. Organisations which have not received the final document should approach the national body to which they are affiliated, or alternatively the national Department of Welfare. I would like to answer some of the specific criticisms.

#### Unworkable

*"The recommendations in this document are unworkable and unaffordable."* The NSCAN (previously termed the National Child Protection Strategy or NCP — we had to change it because it was becoming confused with the National Crime Prevention Strategy) is a blueprint, de-

signed to be implemented by the turn of the century, for pulling together the components of our highly fragmented child protection system. The idea is not to set up a vast new bureaucracy but to put in place effective mechanisms at the national, provincial and local levels, linked in with the relevant NPA structures and processes, to pull together the work of the resources which are already in place. These mechanisms would also address some of the urgent tasks involved in laying the foundations for effective child protection, e.g. basic research, clarification of policy and procedures relating to reporting, norms and standards, human resource issues, and legal reform.

These tasks are essential if we are to ensure that the work already being done is effective, and that children cease to be pulled to pieces between, for example, the welfare system, the police and the courts. At present all of us are expending scarce resources on work which is then undermined or destroyed because some part of the system is not working properly, or is moving in a different direction. Apart from the waste of resources which occurs in this process, children are being subjected to all manner of secondary abuse as a result. It is this state of affairs which is unaffordable. The pulling-together process will certainly

cost money, but it is money we cannot afford not to spend if we are serious about child protection. We have laws which criminalise people who do not report child abuse. We therefore have an absolute obligation to have in place a system on which children can rely to protect them rather than compound their problems.

#### Rural, semi-rural areas

*"Many of the recommendations in the document are not remotely workable or achievable in the rural or semi-rural areas."* There is no single set of recommendations in the document which is intended to cover the specifics of practice in every corner of the country. It is repeatedly stated that provincial and local planning processes which are sensitive to the needs of the broad range of South African contexts must take place simultaneously with those to be carried out at national level. It also emphasised that the appropriate balance between development/prevention on the one hand and formal protective interventions on the other, and the associated allocation of resources, will differ from area to area. The development of intervention protocols to determine the roles and functions of the different practitioners who must deal with reported cases — e.g. police, social workers, prosecutors, health care workers — is emphasised as a priority, and it is made very clear that these must be locally appropriate and be realistically designed in relation to the local resource network. There is a call throughout the document for special attention to the needs of groups who have previously been marginalised, including rural children.

#### Community involvement

*"Community involvement in child protection ... has been addressed, but inadequately."* Much attention was in fact paid to community involvement even in the first draft, and this dimension has been considerably expanded in subsequent drafts. We must however address the fact that — as Alan himself points out from the experience of the Cape Town Child Welfare Society — the more aware and concerned the community, the greater the number of cases referred to welfare organisations, the police etc. Our planning has to take this into account or we end up with angry and disillusioned communities, burgeoning vigilante action, and ever-increasing numbers of children who are damaged by the "system".

#### Fighting chance

As child protection organisations we are faced daily with the consequences of the lack of a co-ordinated strategy on child abuse and neglect. The NSCAN recommendations are not new — they amount to a collation of proposals which have for years been coming from child protection workers of many disciplines and from their organisations throughout the country. In Alan's own words "There is no doubt that there is a need for a comprehensive system, and that this issue needs greater funding than has been the case in the past". If we all stand together in the call for such a system we will have a fighting chance of achieving our objective.

#### Jackie Loffell

*Johannesburg Child Welfare Society.*

## Corporal Punishment: A Cultural View

There is a belief that corporal punishment is part of the African culture. My consultation with a number of grandparents in rural KwaZulu-Natal has proved the contrary, in that inflicting pain was not Ubuntu. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has defined Ubuntu as:

"Africans have a thing called Ubuntu; it is about the essence of being human, it is part of the gift that Africa will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, willing to go that extra mile for the sake of others. We believe a person is a person through another person, that humanity is caught up, bound up extricably in yours. When I dehumanise you, I inexorably dehumanise myself. The solitary human being is a contradiction in terms and, therefore, you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own community, in belonging".

### Breakdown of values

In pre-colonial and traditional societies South African children were raised in this spirit. The impact of colonialisation, urbanisation and apartheid have left their mark and the large number of homeless, abandoned or neglected children bears witness to the fact that Ubuntu is no longer strong enough to protect them. Data collection in previous analyses on the situation of children in South Africa have highlighted the legacy of discrimination, breakdown of family life and traditional values, lack of education, disempowerment of women, high levels of violence, and an increase in the crime rate which have led to the situation in which South African children currently find themselves.

I wish to point out that traditionally, there was hardly any reason to punish a child because children and youth were grouped according to their ages and sexes. All these groupings had leaders. Conformity to societal norms and behaviour was therefore a given. Bear in mind that this was encouraged by the fact that each child belonged to the whole village. Self and mutual respect and care was reflected in the relationship between an adult and a child.

### Traditional methods

If and when a child/youth misbehaved, he/she was reprimanded by firstly, the group he/she belonged to and then by the leader of the group. There would be a discussion with and advice given to the child. If a youth had committed a serious misconduct, e.g. theft or murder, that matter was dealt with beyond that of a minor misconduct. The parents (i.e. father, if it was a boy and mother if it was a girl) would hold a discussion with the person concerned during the small hours of the morning. The person would be made aware that he/she had brought shame to the family and the village as a whole. He/she would be sent away from home and the family would disown him/her. Nobody would know what happened to him/her. The person would seek protection with relatives or extended families in other villages. Ties would be completely severed between him/her and the biological family.

It is unfortunate that, according to the elders, corporal punishment started immediately after the settlement of the Europeans in South Africa. They used the whip that was meant for the ploughing cattle, to make the Africans subservient and be slaves. Incidentally, traditionally, even the cattle were not beaten but the whip would be cracked.

Corporal punishment was transferred into the African families by their forefathers in order to regain their manhood that had been stripped by the then experience of European colonialism and physical beatings in the farms.

This practice has been going on for so long since colonialism that it is seen and believed to be part of an African culture.

**Sbongile Manyathi**  
Durban



Boys' Towns Cape Homes

Relief Worker: Full time post

Applications are invited for the above post.

**Requirements:** To be an energetic, committed and responsible person. You must be prepared to work flexi-time and live in at least 2 weekends per month. Be able to communicate and guide at least 6-8 boys. Have a valid driver's licence. Skill, trade or hobby would be an added advantage.

Kindly forward CV and the names of 3 contactable references to: The Principal, Boys Town, PO Box 2411, Clareinch 7740 or tel. (021) 615041. Closing date: 15 July 1997.

## Tennyson House

(a Shelter for female street children)

invites application for a new position as

## Social Worker

The ideal applicant will—

- Have experience in the field of social work
- Be Zulu speaking
- Is committed to working in a team
- Possess a driver's licence
- Embrace the values of the organisation

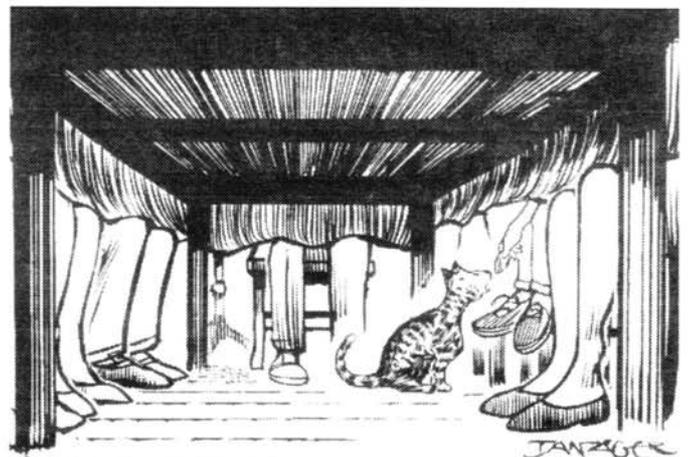
**The Shelter cares for girls from 10 – 16 years old on Christian principles**

Interested persons to fax applications/CVs to (031) 233404 or post to: P O Box 74574, Rochdale Park 4034. email address: yfc@dbn.lia.net

**a project of Youth for Christ**

**Employment Wanted.** Completed BQCC Module 1. To do Module 3. 4½ years Sunday school teacher and feeding scheme. At present working with vagrants. Certificate in child care (Department of Manpower.) Works well in a team. No children. Single. Sober habits. Telephone Edgar Albert Herbert. Tel (021) 762 1914

**Lady seeks position** as Child & Youth Care Worker. Completed the BQCC and First Aid Nursing. Has ten years experience of working in a Children's Home. Please phone (031) 303-5006 after 5pm.



The second in a two-part series in which **Gisela Konopka**, one of the best known writers and practitioners in the fields of social work, child development and child care work, reflects on the essence of adolescence and ways in which adolescents learn to cope with difficulties.

# Learning to Cope with Stresses and Strains

## How do human beings in general cope with stresses and strains?

All human beings have to deal with the stresses and strains of life. The answers to life's pain spontaneously range from withdrawal to violent attack on one's self or others. "Coping" means "dealing with". It is more than a reflex, it includes thinking and doing.

When we talk about a person being able to cope with life's events, we are not using the term in a neutral sense. We are giving it a value-connected meaning. We do mean the capacity to withstand, to resist, to live through adversity without damage to one's own personality or to the personalities of others.

It is important that we are clearly talking about a value judgment. We can cope with stress by denying it and then finally breaking under it, or by blaming others for it and making them miserable, or by demanding incessant support, or by fleeing into drugs or alcohol. We see those ways of coping as negative.

We wish for people to have the capacity to accept stress and strain as an inevitable part of life, to be able to acknowledge it, and then to work their way through it.

We do not expect this of the infant though. The infant responds to pain and frustration simply by expressing the hurt, by screaming. Increasingly, children will learn to handle pain in various new ways, usually with the protective help of adults. This development of new ways, and the acknowledgement of what one can do about the stresses and strains, and accepting them as inevitable, is the real business of life, and the development of philosophy.

These adjustments never end. Only in old age is an added ingredient, perhaps reassurance, added to the coping process,

namely the knowledge that "it will not be so long anymore."

## Coping in adolescence

The coping process is most significant in adolescence. Because of the confrontation with many life stresses for the first time (a friend of mine said of youth: "They don't have anything in the bank" which means they have not yet experienced how to live through severe stress) and because of their intense life energy, adolescents often react to personal or institutional strain with extreme behaviour.

There are adolescents who throw off the frustration of unhappy love experience by totally denying it, by pretending that it never really happened. Teachers know the "shrug of the shoulder kid" who seems to be untouched by anything. There are adolescents who respond to frustration with physical violence. Despair about life's frustrating events leads to running away, drugs, and suicide. The second leading cause of death in adolescence in Minnesota was suicide.

Drugs and alcohol are frequently taken because of a sense of rejection at home or by a close friend. A 17-year-old said: "I sniffed paint, glue, mainly paint ... I figure a lot of that happened when I was fighting with my parents." Another said, "I take drugs when I get depressed or when I get upset or when I feel I can't handle a problem, or when I really got a bad problem on my mind."

When there has been no experience in dealing with serious life events, the doors seem closed and one cannot cope: "My boyfriend, he didn't give me as much attention as I needed so I cut my wrists..." And, "I am being pushed around from institution to foster home several times. What have you got to live for? No

place to go — no place to stay where you are at? Nothing to want to get up in the morning for. I always feel lonely." Loneliness is the curse of humans at any time in life. In adolescence, the need to have peers who can confirm your own value, and at least one adult whom you can trust, is very great. Loneliness presents a desperate strain then. During our survey of needs of adolescent girls, we often heard them quote a verse: "Loneliness is a silent jail, Without cellmates, parole, or bail."

## Four ways of positive coping

What are some of the positive ways of coping in adolescence? It rarely is a well thought out philosophy, but we can speak of four means: communication with contemporaries; talking with adults who understand, often of "the grandparent generation;" religion; and creative expressions of emotions, as in songs, poetry, and painting. We should remember those positives in our work with young people.

1. *Communication with contemporaries* meant talking out one's problems, but also holding each other, crying together, dancing, and sexual relationships. All of these represented some form of coping with problems.

2. *The wish to find a willing ear in an adult* and also to hear what the adult has to say, (if he or she is not judgmental) is very great. Again and again, adolescents expressed a need to be listened to. Among the girls we interviewed, mothers were still the ones that they thought of most often as confidants and from whom they wanted help; if they could not get it from this source, the strain increased. Grandparents, or people of that age group, were often sought out because

they seemed to be more patient and less judgmental. Adolescents seemed to understand well that one needs to talk about problems in order to deal with them. In fact, *not communicating* feelings to others was regarded by them as behaviour harmful to one's health. In general, young people did not consider going to professionals for help partly because of their own over-confidence and partly because they distrusted professionals. As one youth put it: "It's hard to let everything out." Adolescents often worried that doctors or nurses might not keep their problems confidential and might tell their parents.

The young person has a very specific problem in coping with serious problems for two reasons:

- a) They feel that there are many expectations laid upon them and that they will let people down if they do not live up to them.
- b) In spite of those expectations, they are treated as dependent children, and frequently cannot get services by themselves. The wish, for instance, to get medical care without having to go with their parents was expressed very frequently. For instance, the girl who has to cope with a pregnancy out of wedlock deals with an extraordinarily severe life problem. Yet even today she faces not only the problem of how to deal with her own body and the future of her child, but with the hostility of the human environment. (I know there are exceptions, but this is still the rule.) As I mentioned earlier, a consistent philosophy of coping is rare. Occasionally, older adolescents have done a great deal of reading and thinking, but those are mostly very intellectual youngsters.

**3. Religion** as either a traditional way of dealing with stresses and strains or as a new emotional experience, is on the increase among adolescents. The re-

vival of fundamentalist religion and the popularity of various new sects among American youth, for example, express a need to deal with a life that is not always happy or satisfying. This renewal also represents an acceptance of authority, but from other sources than the ones with which they grew up.

A society which does not prepare children and young people early for thinking through, and making decisions, but considers obedience a higher value, is vulnerable to dangerous authoritarianism being embraced by their young.

**4. The creative response** seems to involve far more youth than we have ever assumed. Young people often keep this hidden. This may be due partly to the fact that art is considered so intellectual that they cannot believe they can produce anything worthwhile, and partly because of impossibly high expectations laid upon them. For example, I found excellent poetry written by girls in delinquency institutions, but they hesitated sharing them because the grammar and spelling were not perfect. Yet, whether they shared this writing with others or not, for the young people themselves it was a very positive means of coping with frustration and loneliness.

When adolescents deal with institutional frustrations (as, for instance, school or correctional institutions), another form of coping is to cheat — a method well known among adults. It is a way of circumventing the source of strain to prevent any further hurt and this is done by "playing the games" that adults expect of them. For instance, in institutions where constant group involvement or confrontation was the expected form of treatment, adolescents played the game of "involvement", "confrontation" or whatever was demanded — and did so superbly.



If individual "baring of the soul" was expected, they also know how to do this.

Adolescents are good actors, and they can cope with hurt by pretending to live up to almost any expectations. They know what they are doing.

In one institution, a young man asked me cynically: "Well, what do you want me to be or to do, so you can have success?" Part of their response is based on the philosophy of retaliation which makes it possible to live through frustration:

**"If teachers would treat us nicely and like adults, we would treat teachers the same way — with respect, etc ... A famous saying, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' That's our philosophy for these questions, about teachers treating us and students treating teachers."**

Many behaviour modification devices are handled that way by adolescents. The required result is obtained — while the powerful educator or therapist is present? Inside, the stress mounts and breaks out at some time:

**I no longer use my mind,  
Nor think of anything.  
For I am just a puppet,  
and my master pulls the strings.  
There's just one thing about it  
I fear he doesn't know:  
Strings are easily broken  
and then he'll have to go.**

#### **Helping adolescents with coping**

Those who work with adolescents are expected not only to understand, but to use their understanding to prevent illness or to enhance health. To prevent serious damage to the individual adolescent, and achieve the human interaction necessary for positive quality of life in our society, we must draw conclusions on how to help young people deal with stress and strain. We have to accept each specific stage of adolescence with its strength and its problems.



**A society which does not prepare children and young people early for thinking through, and making decisions, but considers obedience a higher value, is vulnerable to dangerous authoritarianism being embraced by their young.**

The vigorous life force, the wide mood swings, the sense of omnipotence as well as despair, have to be taken as reality to which one must say "yes". We do not want people to become immune to stress. We want people to be sensitive to whatever life brings, but to be able to cope with it. We therefore do not want to give them drugs to dull their senses. We do not want to develop people who expect life to be "a rose garden" and therefore, are unable to accept imperfection. We should create for adolescents an environment that allows them to be *participating* members of society so that they actively learn the reality of life. There are many tasks that they can fulfil. This will give them a sense of worth and accomplishment and strengthen them to work through stress. We must accept their mistakes and let them know that mistakes are human:

**You are now on your way, so of course all the mistakes are ahead — all the wonderful mistakes that you must and will make. No matter what the mistakes are that you must make, do not be afraid of having made them or making more of them.**

We adults should also admit mistakes in daily life as well as in clinical encounters with youth. The notion of maturity as a kind of perfection does not help adolescents to learn to cope with life. They must know that coping is a never-ending struggle, and that all of us at any time may fail to do it well. We must let young people know reality not only with its joys but also with its problems. The fiction of a "life of happiness" raises expectations that sap the strength of people.

**Telling lies to the young is wrong. Proving to them that lies are true is wrong ... Tell them the difficulties can't be counted, and let them see not only what will be, but see with clarity these present times. Say obstacles exist they must encounter, sorrow happens, hardship happens.**

**The hell with it. Who never knew the price of happiness, will not be happy.**

We have to consciously talk philosophy with young people from their earliest ages.

It was a five-year-old with whom I had to discuss death as part of life when my own husband died. It would not have helped this child to develop the capacity to work through other problems in his life if I had put him off with generalities. We had to talk about what it meant to be dead, and also what it meant to keep people alive in memory, and how one gains strength by thinking of other people. Someone else may have discussed this in somewhat different terms.

The major point I am making is that I had to work with this child on his level to talk through his own pain, and mine, as well as to learn about strength in human beings.

In adolescence one truly needs to develop a philosophy of life. It should become the basis of thinking, action, and feelings. The sentimental search for a comforting religion that makes no demands arises partially out of experience with an adult world that does not share its problems.

Some of us were still very young and comparatively close to adolescence when the unspeakable terror of the Nazi concentration camps came upon us. We could live through those experiences because we had arrived at a meaning in life. This was the basic help that made coping possible. An additional help for some came through their sense of inner creativity. I remember vividly the poetry I quoted in solitary confinement, poetry I had read and poetry I myself created, though there was no way of writing it down. Art and imagination are superb gifts for human beings, and we should develop them increasingly in young people.

#### **Pain as part of life ...**

And, finally, adults themselves will have to accept pain as an important part of life without glorifying it or purposely inflicting it.

Yet we cannot let young people grow up thinking that one must avoid it. John Steinbeck wrote beautifully in one of his letters:

**... we have learned no technique nor ingredient to take the place of anguish. If in some future mutation we are able to remove pain from our species, we will also have removed genius and set ourselves closer to the mushroom than to God.**

I underline that I do not preach death, pain, and stress as ideals but I see them as necessary ingredients in life; ingredients which cannot be seen only

as a catastrophe but rather, as an opportunity to grow. We will help young people cope if we form a truly supportive but not sentimental society.

A 17-year-old writes it better than I can say it:

**I am growing world.  
I am reaching and touching and stretching and testing  
And finding new things, new wonderful Things.  
New frightening things.  
I'm just growing, world, just now.  
I'm not tall, I'm not strong, I'm not Right.  
I'm just trying to be.  
I'm a person, I'm me!  
Let me test, let me try, let me reach  
Let me fly!**

**Push me out of my nest (but not too fast).  
There is much I don't know.  
There are things that I want — don't hide me from the sight of the world.  
Give me room, give me time. There are things I'm not frightened To try.**

**Let me tumble and spring, let me go. Let me be. Wait and see ...**

**I am growing, world.  
Water me with wisdom of Your tears.**

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# Island of Isolation



Palm Island off Queensland, Australia, home to descendants of Aborigine women sent there for bearing whites' children.



School is out on Palm Island, and the laughter and screams of children, as they fling themselves off the town pier into the water 20 feet below, ring in the rain-forested hills above the town.

For the Aboriginal children, life, though filled with poverty, is relatively uncomplicated. They are sheltered from the racism their parents and grandparents confronted and the ongoing controversy regarding their isolated way of life.

Palm Island, the largest in a group of coral-reef islands off the north east coast of Australia, was established in 1918 as an Aboriginal penal colony. Today, it is the largest Aboriginal community in Queensland state.

## Forcibly moved

Many Aboriginal residents, such as Agnes Morgan, remember the harsh regime that marred their childhoods. "We were segregated from the whites, and we were not allowed in the areas where the whites had their houses," she says. "If children talked back, they had their heads shaved and were put in sackcloth and made to sweep the streets.

That only changed in the late sixties."

Her contemporary, Annie Walsh, says children were separated from their parents and housed in dormitories. "We had to have permission for them to visit us on the weekends," she says.

Most of the islanders today are the descendants of women who, because of their half-caste children, were forcibly moved to the island in the 1930's. As happened all over Australia, the women and their children were plucked from their families regardless of tribal and geographic roots and forced to live in isolated areas with other Aborigines with whom they shared neither language, customs, nor religion.

Consequently, Ms. Morgan says, her Aboriginal religion was lost when her grandmother was young. "I am the fifth generation where both the religion and the language has been lost," she says.

The resulting cultural heritage is a medley of tribal, linguistic, and customary traditions. Because several tribes were forced to live together, they had to create a common language—a form-of pidgin Eng-

lish — that now creates an obstacle for the children in their education.

Palm Island made national headlines last year after a controversial visit by Member of Parliament Pauline Hanson, who publicly decried the islanders' lifestyle. She implied that the people should move off the island because its isolation was causing serious social problems, such as high crime and joblessness.

She also attacked the cleanliness of the island. "Why is there so much rubbish lying about on the streets? Start cleaning up the environment, then do something with the tourist trade," she was quoted as saying.

## Denial

Prime Minister John Howard has attracted criticism for allowing "the Hanson factor" to flourish. He recently added to his political problems when he remarked that Australia did not have a "racist and bigoted past." This denial of what has been described by academics as Australia's "near genocide" of Aborigines outraged liberal thinkers and damaged Mr Howard's political reputation at home and abroad.

Geoff Warner, the chief executive officer of the Palm Island Council and the first Aboriginal manager of an Aboriginal community in Queensland, is critical of the state government.

"Our council has a budget of \$1.8 million (Australia) with which we have to build and maintain housing, roads, the water system, and provide youth and community services," he says. "The sewerage and water system is over-taxed; it is only sufficient for a third of our population. There are only 356 houses on the island, and with a population of 3000, there are often up to 20 people living in one house.

"When the council was handed the authority in 1984 there was \$300,000 owed in back rent, and 60 percent of in the houses were in disrepair. We were well behind the eight ball before we started, and ... the council is only coming to terms with these problems now."

Mr. Warner says the islanders do not have the resources to

deal with the root cause of the problems. "The resources we have are nothing more than Band Aids," he says. Unemployment stands at a staggering 40 percent, and a significant number are dependent on welfare. Compounding these problems, Warner says, is the widespread abuse of alcohol. The problem is particularly acute, he says, because alcohol was suddenly permitted in the community in 1981 after being banned for 60 years.

## Some solutions

Despite these obstacles, many people are working to overcome the social problems of the island. For example, workers at the Kootana Women's Centre help victims of domestic abuse. The centre, which contains an office, a kitchen, a sitting room, and a bedroom, is a quiet haven where women and their children can seek refuge.

Selena Solomon, a field worker at the centre, says the facilities, though useful, are insufficient. The centre needs more space so women can stay for more than one night. She says domestic violence is not the only problem that needs to be addressed. Last year, there were 50 cases of breaking and entering, mostly by youths.

"We really need a youth centre that operates 24 hours, and where the kids could go when their parents are not home, she says. "Life is much wilder now, and the kids are getting into trouble.

She also agrees there is a problem of rubbish on the island. "We complain about the same things Pauline Hanson complained about," Ms. Solomon says. "The island used to be so clean. The community needs to be more aware of the problem; they need to be taught more about environmental issues."

Delina Foster, a council member, says the island's problems have a more fundamental cause. "I think the thing that is missing is God. There used to be three churches on the island; now there is only one, with a very small congregation," she says.

**Eileen McBride**, in the *Monitor*.  
Photos by Melanie Freeman

**Don Trent Jacobs writes in *Reclaiming Children and Youth* from a sports psychology viewpoint about developing a child's positive potential**

## **Empowering discipline: Mining the Gold**

The "fix what is wrong" model is a misleading goal for most educational and treatment programs serving troubled youth. The development of a child's positive potential is a more valuable purpose.

Professionals should help children in specialized education and treatment programs to express their full positive mental, physical, and creative potentiality. To do this, a "strength-based" approach is necessary, rather than one that attempts to correct deficits (as do most traditional models). Such an approach has been proven, refined, and proven again in athletic coaching and sport psychology.

Sports have long been a vehicle for cultivating the highest qualities in human beings. Good coaches teach athletes to exemplify courage, cooperation, caring, commitment, and control. Their time-tested strategies for helping athletes acquire these qualities also can be used to help delinquent adolescents acquire them.

To understand how a coach teaches his athletes these five basic performance techniques, one needs to listen to a good football coach deliver a half-time motivation speech. For example,

"These guys have you all scared silly! You're afraid to run with the ball. You're afraid to tackle. Your quarterback is afraid to throw the ball. You are all afraid to lose, and you are tighter than tight. Loosen up! what are you really afraid of? Do you think you are going to get hurt — or do you think your girlfriends and Dads will think less of you if you blow it? Do you want to keep being afraid, or do you want to play your best?"

You know it's OK to lose, as long as you gave it your best. They may beat you, but they can't eat you 'cause cannibalism is against the law. Now go out there and do what you know how to do. Use your speed and teamwork against these guys, and watch how your game improves!"

A review of sport psychology literature reveals the following five basic teaching objectives aimed at developing optimal performance in athletes.

### **1. Confronting fears that stifle potential.**

"Courage is like a muscle. We strengthen it with use." (Ruth Gordon)

In the half-time speech described above, the coach accomplished four therapeutic goals that address the debilitating effects of fear for self-worth. First, the coach helped the players recognize and address the fear.

Second, he encouraged the players to connect thoughts and beliefs to the emotion. He taught them to investigate the source of their fear.

Third, he used effective language techniques to give specific directives that could help the players move beyond their fears.

Finally, the existence of the game itself offered an immediate opportunity for the players to show they could indeed move past the belief that their self-worth depended on their performance.

### **2. Acknowledging self-worth and uniqueness now.**

"I'm not OK, you're not OK, and that's OK." (Virgina Satir)  
The team's value is not contingent upon the outcome of the game. They already had skills in speed and teamwork. The

coach reminds them of this: "Now go out there and do what you [already] know how to do!"

It is important to give praise for "minor success" and avoid "comparisonitis." We distinguish between punitive guilt and preventive guilt and teach students how to accept constructive criticism without compromising self-esteem. The age-old idea of "good sportsmanship" has shown that caring for others is a major pathway to acknowledging one's own self-worth. When someone says or does something to help, encourage or congratulate an opponent, this act has a way of giving a sense of self-importance to the person offering the kindness.

### **3. Viewing mistakes as opportunities.**

"Mistakes are the universities of learning." (Anonymous)  
Mistakes are what athletic training is all about. The physical and mental aspects of learning optimal performance naturally involve peaks and valleys.

The main job of a coach is to offer feedback to show the athlete how to turn the valleys into peaks. A good coach does not punish, nor does he or she equate a specific performance with a child's self-worth. Rather, the coach focuses the student on how to do it right the next time. This parallels the restitution model in juvenile justice.

Perhaps most significantly, a good coach gives ample opportunities for a student to learn from mistakes. In a treatment setting, this will require creativity on the part of the staff. It also will require that the staff is careful not to set up a youth for failure, since a troubled youth's defence of ego is likely to be more inflated than that of the typical athlete.

#### 4. Assuming responsibility for one's thoughts and actions.

"God gave us faces, but we make our own expressions." (Anonymous)  
In the sports model, the athlete learns personal responsibility when he shows a willingness to improve. It is only when such willingness to change emerges that a person can be motivated to accept responsibility for his or her actions.

Good coaches and sport psychologists encourage "willingness" by showing that change is not a matter of not doing something wrong, but a matter of doing something else that is right. They give just the right amount of recognition and praise for positive changes. They explain the advantages and disadvantages of specific behaviour as it relates to the natural consequences of that behaviour so the individual learns to understand why certain actions have certain consequences.

#### 5. Achieving internal discipline.

"Great works are performed, not by strength but by perseverance." (Samuel Johnson)

Finally, neither an athlete nor a troubled youth will achieve a goal without internal discipline. The good coach defines discipline not as "control gained by enforcing obedience" but as "training that strengthens, corrects, or perfects." He knows that his athletes will excel only if they keep trying when things are difficult. This was validated by Dr. Robert McCall's 13-year research project with 7,000 underachievers at the University of Pittsburgh (McCall, 1994). This study concluded that "the inability to persist in the face of challenge" was the single most common reason for students failing to climb toward their positive potential.

#### Putting sports psychology into action

Once a child shows a willingness to change, staff can use the sports psychology model to develop sufficient internal discipline to achieve his or her goals. In this model, objectives are re-evaluated constantly in order to continually challenge the student enough to demonstrate drive and persistence. Students are taught to be sufficiently self-assertive so they are not taken advantage of. Aggressiveness is not punished, but is channelled toward positive goals. Determination is developed by rewarding every sign of extra effort. The value of sustained effort in reaching full potential is reinforced constantly. To promote personal responsibility, coaches show the student how his or her specific efforts contributed to positive outcomes. They also show how and why constructive criticism is useful, while at the same time teaching the student to disregard invalid criticism. When the student makes a mistake, the



effective coach asks, "What can be done to do it right next time?" Then, as the student demonstrates increasing persistence, he offers increasing opportunities for leadership of the team or group. An example of this technique with a choral group for troubled youth follows:

Recently a youth joined our singing group. He showed up to practice more consistently and worked harder than anyone else, so he was given the responsibility of setting the tempo and determining where to put the pauses in several songs. The following week, the group was being very disruptive, when suddenly this boy turned to the group and gave a brilliant motivational speech about how performing at our forthcoming openhouse would prove to everyone that they were not really "bad" boys. His leadership role fully blossomed, and it made a difference in the lives of each member of the group. Contrary to some current notions that question the need for improving self-esteem in conduct-disordered youth (Samenow, 1994), the good coach understands that self-esteem is necessary for optimal performance. He familiarizes himself with situations where students experience a lack of confidence and is quick to give reassurances during those times. He gives recognition when individuals do show confidence. And although he creates opportunities for mistakes, he avoids placing individuals in situations where a high probability of failure exists. Coaches anticipate those situations that are likely to cause stress and offer reassurance before they occur. This encourages emotional control when the student's clear thinking deteriorates under stress and his actions become unpredictable. In practice, he increases pressures that create such stress by using controlled opportunities for growth.

Such manufactured stress often includes intentional criticism. However, the coach is sensitive, as the counsellor should be, to avoid criticism in the presence of others until the student develops further. Sport psychology teaches the importance of assuring individuals that they are part of the team and that individual failure provides clues for the team's improvement. This approach ultimately builds the kind of mental toughness necessary for the athlete to continue even when being ridiculed by opponents.

The "coachability" of the student requires rapport between the athlete and the coach. This requires showing sincere concern for the student and respect for his unique qualities. It also calls for setting an optimal role model, although the wise coach knows excessive "admiration" can lead to lack of independent thinking. Role modelling in sports usually refers to good sportsmanship. The related quality for troubled youth is conscientiousness, or a sense of moral goodness and responsibility for one's intentions and conduct.

Good sportsmanship also is taught by not being ambiguous with expectations. The coach is consistent and patient when defining "good" behaviour. For example, he or she does not say, "only when the referee is not looking." And, of course, in sports as in life, the most highly regarded value relates to *not hurting others*. Good coaches reinforce the importance of commitment and loyalty to the team and respect for the other teams. They teach how team requirements contribute to personal success, and vice versa. Good coaches set specific limits for the student based on the student's ability.

The athlete also must learn to trust others. The ability to trust occurs when increasing opportunities to be trusted are given. Trusting also comes with the de-

**Perhaps most significantly, a good coach gives ample opportunities for a student to learn from mistakes. In a treatment setting, this will require creativity on the part of the staff. It also will require that the staff is careful not to set up a youth for failure, since a troubled youth's defence of ego is likely to be more acute than that of the typical athlete.**

velopment of honest and caring relationships with others. A team cannot function optimally if its members do not trust one another. Nor can an individual excel on such a team. Of course, optimal performance also relates to proper physical exercise, nutrition, outdoor recreation, and relaxation. These are equally important for troubled youth in order to prevent the negative release of stress through substance abuse, stress-produced illness or injury, overexertion, high-risk

behaviour, overeating, sexual acting out, or cruelty (Millman, 1992). Surprisingly, proper fitness, nutrition, and stress management usually are not a priority in treatment programs for troubled youth, even though a proper aerobic exercise program often can reduce the amount of medication that is prescribed. In a six-week program at our facility, we reduced the medication completely without repercussion in three of the four youth who participated.

In the last summer Olympics, every gold-medal athlete used visualization techniques as part of his or her training. Efforts to change attitudes and skills in troubled youth also may benefit from the use of psycho-drama, hypnosis, and other therapeutic strategies that address unconscious processes. Einstein said that imagination is more important than knowledge. Although cognitive restructuring of beliefs is an essential part of psycho-education, optimal change can only occur when both the left and right brain hemispheres are brought into play.

Finally, the effective coach incorporates some form of spirituality into his athlete's life. Most people have watched their favourite teams form a group before the big game to say a prayer. Spirituality gives athletes a sense that there really is something bigger than the game or their performance offers a perspective that is somehow empowering. Some coaches and therapists are intro-

ducing children to nature for adventure and recreation. There is something about a mountain or a river that brings harmony into the chaos of modern civilization.

#### **Mining Gold**

In *Song of the Bird*, Anthony Demello tells the story of an eagle's egg that hatches in the nest of a backyard hen. When the eagle grew up, it noticed a magnificent bird soaring about and asked the chickens what it was. "That's an eagle, the king of birds," said one chicken. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could soar like that?" the eagle exclaimed. "Don't give it another thought," was the answer; so the eagle lived and died thinking he was a backyard chicken.

Troubled youth are judged, assessed, labelled, and treated with attitudes, facilities, and terminology that all point more to their problems than to their potential. We cannot mine gold if we do not know it exists. Perhaps the comparisons with the sports model will offer a proven and practical way to shift this focus.

**Don Jacobs, Ph.D.** worked as a health and sport psychologist prior to assuming his current position as Director of the Idaho Youth Ranch in Rupert, Idaho. He is the author of eight books on physical fitness, sport, communication, and health psychology.

## The Strength-Building Pioneers

An extract from Brendtro, L. and Ness, A. (1995) *Fixing Flaws or Building Strengths. Reclaiming Children and Youth*, Vol.2 Issue 2

*What we want to achieve in our work with young people is to find and strengthen the positive elements, no matter how deeply they are hidden. We enthusiastically believe in the existence of those elements, even in the seemingly worst of our adolescents.*

— **Karl Wilker (1921)**

Early experts on youth problems expressed an optimism that contrasts sharply with the writings of their day. These professionals developed interventions based on strength-building, rather than flaw-fixing; and they achieved what, by today's standards, appear to be remarkable results.

- **Jane Addams** saw delinquency as a *spirit of adventure* displayed by youth condemned to dreary existences on dead-end city streets.
- **Anton Makarenko** taught hopeless youth *perspectives of joy* and gave delinquents opportunities for productive work to give their lives a sense of purpose.
- **Maria Montessori** developed *inner discipline* in slum children at a time when others defined discipline as obedience training.
- **Kurt Hahn** plunged youth into enterprises in which they would likely fail in order to develop resilience by *overcoming adversity*. He also tapped the idealism of youth in community service activities designed to nurture the *civic spirit*.
- **August Aichhorn** skillfully forged *trusting relationships* with youth who viewed all adults in authority with hostility and suspicion.
- **Sylvia Ashton-warner** transformed unruly, unmotivated Maori students using *competence and creativity* as antidotes to aggression.
- **Janusz Korczak** developed youth courts with peer self-governance so that delinquents could rebuild their lives on principles of truth and justice.
- **Karl Wilker** taught *responsibility* to youth in Berlin's youth prison and then gave them hacksaws to saw off the bars. His book *Der Lindenhof* was banned by Hitler; and Wilker escaped to South Africa where he taught black youth.
- In South Africa, **Alan Paton**, best known as the author of *Cry the Beloved Country*, replicated Wilker's achievement. Paton transformed a wretched prison for black youth into a laboratory for *positive moral development* and gained worldwide recognition as a correctional reformer.



**Zeni Thumbadoo**, Deputy Director of the NACCW, runs a workshop to celebrate Child and Youth Care Workers' Day 1997 in the KwaZulu Natal Region

# Personal Values in Child and Youth Care Work

## What are values?

I want to start this session by asking you all to think of someone who made a positive impact on your life. Can you take a moment to do this? Has everybody thought of someone? Think back in time and remember the scene and the interaction with that person. What value or quality did that person have that made a difference to you? Can you please share them with me? If everyone in the world had those qualities or values would the world be a different place? The cluster of values we have spoken about so far are love, warmth, patience, hope, fun, freedom, peace, tolerance, responsibility, support, etc. I'd like you to take a few minutes to think about the values that are the most important to you in your life. Can you write them down — and would anybody like to share them?

## Meaning

Values are the brushstrokes which give a meaning to our lives. They colour our human reality with new ways of understanding, creating in us the passion to carry out our plans. When we consider values, we can look at them in two categories. There are values which are innate — the core, universal and eternal values like love, peace, justice and freedom. Then there are values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility which are acquired throughout our lives as a result of our education, upbringing, culture and other external influences. The interplay and balance between these values are a dynamic process that influence the rhythm of our lives and create in us the possibility for enthusiasm and spontaneity.

So, let's talk about child and youth care work. Most of you are involved in the management and care of our country's



most troubled children and youth. Also, you are involved with them at a time when public attitudes are influenced by the crime wave and people's concern for their own safety vs. the needs of the young people we care for and the concept of restorative justice. It's a very difficult climate in which to be clear of our role as child and youth care professionals, and to remain true to our responsibility and commitment to our troubled young people.

## Reflecting on our work

Child and youth care involves working with young people who are at risk or who are already emotionally and behaviourally troubled, such as those who are orphaned, abandoned, deprived, abused, homeless, those with learning difficulties or who are disabled, and youth who are in conflict with the law.

- Our work is primarily focussed on the the growth and development of children and youth. (Families and communities are the *contexts* of care, development and treatment of children and youth.)
- Our work is concerned with the totality of the young person's functioning. It is a holistic perspective, as child and youth care workers specialise in being child-focussed generalists, never working alone and needing to work closely with a variety of other professionals.
- Our work uses a model of so-

*cial competence* rather than one of pathology.

- Our work is based on *direct, day to day* developmental work with children and youth in their living environment — what we call *life-space* work.
- Our work involves the deliberate use of *attachment* through the development of close therapeutic relationships. In the case of awaiting-trial youth or those in short-term care, we build rapport and relationships in-the-situation and in-the-moment. This requires a high level of personal and professional awareness and maturity on the part of the worker, since child care is expected to empower and bring about growth and development, healing and wholeness.

## Much more than custodial care

The 'care' in child care is not just custodial care — feeding children, keeping them clean, and putting them to bed. It is the demanding process of facilitating learning and improved functioning. We ensure that when young people, alone or in groups, are eating, dressing, going to school, doing their homework, going to bed, playing or socialising, they are emotionally, physically and socially safe and they are enabled to achieve appropriate goals and objectives. In this process of caring, the care worker has to manage both the individual and the group, observing the behaviour and reactions of the youngsters in their environment, taking proactive steps to ensure safety, enabling each child — emotionally, physically, intellectually, socially and spiritually — to tackle and complete the goal of the moment or the goal of the day. This may involve drawing out existing strengths or teaching new skills, on-the-



spot counselling, providing emotional support, facilitating conflict resolution and problem solving. This is complex work, requiring a skilled, trained and self-aware professional who is able to use him/herself as an effective and quality tool in the process. *And this is where values fit into our work.*

#### The magic

When you, the child and youth care worker, are aware of the role of values in your work, then something magical happens! Ideas, creativity and knowledge flow richly through the experiences you shape and share in, and which in turn foster helpful and appropriate change in the young people themselves. You become aware that it is not only what you do that is critical to young people, but also who you are — your value-based behaviour, your inspiration, your enthusiasm, your modelling of values — your honest attempt to be your best.

Values in this work help you to create an environment where young people can express themselves and feel loved and accepted because of who they are, not because of what they do, say or have. In such an environment, respect and tolerance are reflected in the practice of dialogue rather than debate, cooperation rather than competition, responsibility rather than dependency, and young peoples' attitudes begin to change. Hope, together with a sense of self worth, begins to emerge.

#### Our own dreams ...

A child and youth care worker with strong values is an empowered person, capable of communicating and of confronting challenges positively — a person who can help to build a better world in the life of a troubled youngster. The success of a value-based approach is determined by the self-

knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence of the worker. As the quotation says, "we cannot take another person past where we are in our own lives, because we do not possess the map for the journey." So we cannot be effective catalysts for change in the lives of young people unless we model what we wish to teach them. We cannot pass on prosocial and positive values to young people unless we reflect them in our own speech and actions. Without this kind of personal integrity in our helping or healing relationships with youth, our efforts to motivate, encourage, and support will ring hollow. Caregivers need to ask: "Through the example which I set, what is the invitation I am extending to the young person? Will it bring him/her towards me and what I have to offer, towards hope and a belief that change is possible? What is reflected in my own life, in my own values, attitudes and beliefs that will help me inspire, heal and give support to this young person?"

What we discover in the answers to these questions can set us upon a journey of professional development and personal renewal that will quite literally never end.

You can't prepare young people to build the world of their dreams tomorrow if you don't believe in your own dreams now; you can't prepare them for life if you don't believe in it yourself; you cannot show the way if you are yourself standing at the crossroads, hesitant, tired and disheartened. ■

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### Releasing a Migrant 'Yen' (Wild Goose)

At Nine Rivers, in the tenth year, in winter, — heavy snow;  
The river-water covered with ice and the forests broken with their load.  
The birds of the air, hungry and cold, went flying east and west;  
And with them flew a migrant 'yen', loudly clamouring for food.

Among the snow it pecked for grass; and rested on the surface of the ice: It tried with its wings to scale the sky; but its tired flight was slow. The boys of the river spread a net and caught the bird as it flew; They took it in their hands to the city-market and sold it there alive.

I that was once a man of the North am now an exile here:  
Bird and man, in their different kind, are each strangers in the south.  
And because the sight of an exiled bird wounded an exile's heart I paid your ransom and set you free, and you flew away to the clouds.

— Chinese poem  
Translated by Arthur Waley

### The Dunce

He says no with his head  
but he says yes with his heart  
he says yes to what he loves  
he says no to the teacher  
he stands  
he is questioned and all the problems are posed  
sudden laughter seizes him  
and he erases all  
the words and figures  
names and dates  
sentences and snares  
and despite the teacher's threats to the jeers of infant prodigies with chalk of every colour on the blackboard of misfortune  
he draws the face of happiness.

— Jacques Prévert  
Translated by Lawrence Ferlinghetti