

**child
youth & care**

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A Journal for those who work with troubled children and youth at risk

Stop Institutional Abuse NOW!



There are times when we reprint articles from NACCW or other archives and do so with joy. We look at words of wisdom written at an earlier date and find that they still have relevance – they have made a perennial point. The article that we reprint in this edition written by Jacqui Michael 9 years ago, does not fall into this category. It is with regret that we reprint it, because it is still so relevant today. “Institutional Abuse” is the subject on which she spoke so clearly almost a decade ago. And yet sadly the issue is as relevant today as it was then. Despite the development of Minimum Standards, despite the enormous resources spent on the transformation of the child and youth care system, and despite the inclusion of quality assurance processes into legislation, the number of children who are abused within facilities in our country remains alarming.

Many of the minor abuses go unnoticed within an organisational climate that accepts that “this is the way we do things here”. I have witnessed children sitting weeping in corridors, desperately needing someone to notice that their pain is too great to hold whilst staff officiously ‘manage’ the unit. And every now and then a child is hurt or even killed. And

then how do we react?

We also reprint from a daily newspaper an opinion in relation to the “Noupoort” crisis. It is included here not because of its fancy professional statement, but because of its common sense approach to the issue. It asks from a lay person’s point of view why it is that the facility still exists. Government action after the previous investigations following the death of Logan Klingenberg (the 16 year old who died after allegedly being exhausted and chained to his cell gate) halted the admission of children. But the question is asked, “why was it not closed?” Why was a facility raising grave concerns about the safety of its personnel given temporary registration status?

We ask why it is that so little cognisance is being taken of the circumstances in so many facilities set up for the care and protection of children? Why is it that action taken in relation to those who routinely abuse children within institutions is so puny?

We accept that transforming organisations is hard work and that transforming residential facilities for challenging young people takes concerted skilled effort over a period of time. But it is hard not to come to the conclu-

sion that it is simply too much trouble for provincial and national departments to place children’s rights high enough on the agenda to take the steps to ensure that places of safety, care and treatment are what they should be. We have the necessary instruments to ensure that we hold individual programmes accountable.

Do we have to wait for the next death before we take measures to ensure that “Institutional Abuse” is ended?

Many people reading this edition are part of organisations who are consciously or unconsciously abusing children. Each one of us has the power to do something towards ensuring that it stops. Whether you are a social worker, superintendent, child care worker, an official from the department or a volunteer, our hope is that in reading these articles you will speak up and in doing so help our nation to protect the rights of vulnerable children.

Merle Allsopp

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Dates to Remember

JUNE

- 16 SA Youth Day
20 Africa Refugee Day
24-30 Drug Awareness Week
26 International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

NACCW

The National Association of Child Care Workers is an independent, non-profit organisation in South Africa which provides the professional training and infrastructure to promote healthy child and youth development and to improve standards of care and treatment for troubled children and youth at risk in family, community and residential group care settings.

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Cover picture: Children of McGregor

A brief analysis — the Government has a Constitutional obligation towards Children in Care

The first of a two part article by André Viviers

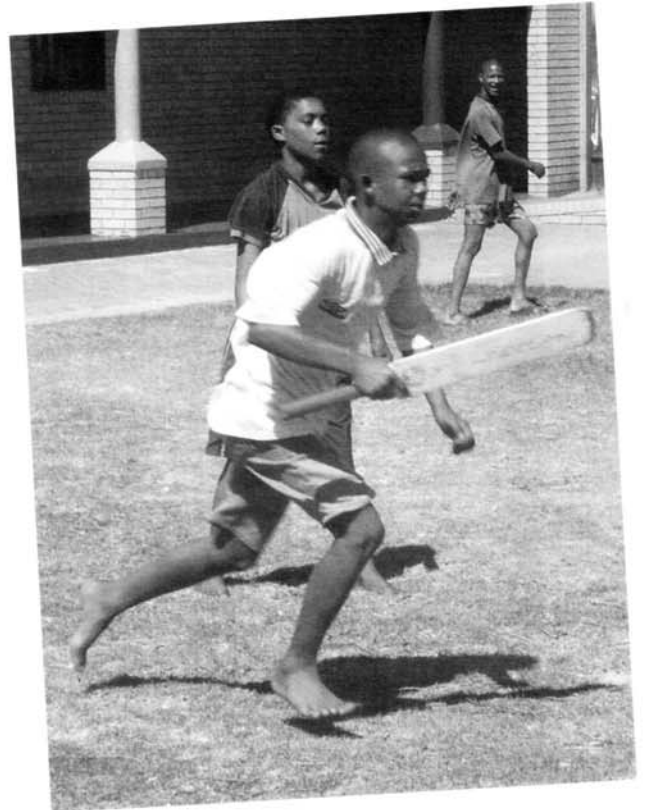
This article provides a brief analysis of current policies, human rights instruments and legislation that have direct bearing on children in residential care programmes. It indicates what obligation the government has towards children in residential care who are essentially wards of the state and provides a framework for advocacy and lobbying in the child and youth care arena.

The South African Constitution

- The South African Constitution provides both directly and indirectly for the provision of alternative care to children (which include placement of children in children's homes, places of safety, secure care, schools of industry as well as shelters).
- Section 28(1)(b) states that every child has the right "to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment." Hence, it creates a right for children to be placed in residential care when required and be cared for by the State as duty-bearer of the constitution.
- Section 28(c) further stipulates what the right of a child in any form of care, whether parental care or alternative care is, in that a child has the right to "basic

nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services".

- Section 28(g) requires that children be detained apart from persons over the age of 18 years.
- Section 28(d) creates the environment within which the referral of children to alternative care operates in safeguarding their right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation, which also refers to the quality of care to be provided in residential care facilities.
- Section 28(2) creates the over-arching safeguarding of rights of children that requires government to take the best interest of the child as paramount in all matters affecting the child. Hence, the



placement of a child in residential care should serve that child's best interest.

International Treaties ratified by South Africa

South Africa has ratified two significant international treaties pertaining to the rights of children, which became part of international law and needs to be applied within the country in terms of 39(1) of the South African Constitution. These are the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the OAU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child. They both provide for alternative care, which includes residential

care, of children as safeguarded in section 28(1)(b) of the constitution.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides inter alia for:

- consideration of the best interest of the child in all actions concerning the child by public and private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities and legislative bodies (article 3);
- that children shall only be separated from their parents by competent authorities when it serves the best interest of the child, for example in cases that involve abuse or neglect by parents (article 9) ;
- that the state shall take all measures to protect a child from physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment, exploitation and sexual abuse (article 19);
- that the state shall provide alternative care for a child, when needed, for his or her protection (article 20);
- children have the right to social security (article 26)
- children have the right to a standard of living that is adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (article 27);
- that state parties shall assist financially for the care of children, particularly in alternative care (article 27);
- measures shall be taken by the state to ensure the physical and psychological recovery and social

integration of children who have been victims of sexual violence (article 39);

These rights as captured in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets a rights-based outline for the provision of appropriate alternative care for children, where needed, and highlights the obligation of the State in the protection of children.

The OAU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child

The OAU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child has similar provisions to that of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and provides inter alia for:

- all actions concerning a child by any person or authority shall have the best interest of the child as primary consideration (article 3);
- the survival, protection and development of children;
- that children shall only be

separated from their parents by judicial authorities when it serves the best interest of the child in accordance with the appropriate law (article 19) ;

- that the state shall take all measures to protect a child from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment and sexual abuse. (article 16);
- that the state shall provide alternative family care for a child, when needed, for his or her protection, such as foster care or placement in suitable institutions for the care of children (article 25);

Both these treaties apply to children in need of alternative care and need to be adhered to by the government of South Africa. The articles that are highlighted above provide a basic rights-based guide towards the need for residential care. □



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Transformation of a Children's Home into a Family Preservation Centre

*A 2001 Conference presentation by the team of James House, Hout Bay Cape Town —
Kathy Scott (Principal at the time), Patricia Anderson, Nomha Mnyantsi*

In 1997 James House made a conscious decision to move more into the local community in order to reach the families of the children in our care. Thus began a journey that will continue for some time. We took many wrong turns but have learnt from our mistakes and continued with this journey. Journey with us as we try to give you some idea of the process in which we engaged.

How?

The first challenge was the HOW of the journey. As a team we read the proposed transformation policies in the child and youth care system and were convinced that the **family preservation** process was the HOW that we were looking for. A visit to Inanda in KwaZulu-Natal convinced us that this was the right vehicle for us. We had to examine our beliefs around child and youth care and agreed with Thom Garfat in his article "The Development of Family Work in Residential Programmes". We examined beliefs around the following issues:

- These are not our children
- The residential facility is not home.
- Families are not the enemy.
- The more we divide the work, the more we divide the family.
- The residential centre is a support to the family. These made up the body of our vehicle and held it

together. We now needed petrol for the car. This we found in the training around **family preservation** and Developmental Assessment from a Strengths-Based Approach.



All the staff attended the Family Preservation training facilitated by the INANDA staff. We used this training to build the engine of our vehicle. We made many mistakes and one of the first was that we left out a critical part – the gears – volunteers. We decided that we could work without the volunteers. Ever tried to drive without gears? Another mistake was that we tried to drive the car along the wrong roads. The car broke down on these

roads and we had to restart the car. The car was only meant for the roads of Hout Bay at this stage. We then discovered that we were trying to drive a vehicle without the parts being welded together and it therefore all fell apart! We had to find a way of welding the different parts of the programme together. The programme was initially run as a separate programme instead of integrating all that we did at James House into the vehicle of Family Preservation. Thus began a process of restructuring. The programme became holistic and integrated. James House took on a new form, the mission statement changed as did working hours and job descriptions. The vehicle was now welded together and the wheels were on. But who was to drive the vehicle? We struggled to allow anyone else to take over the steering wheel but realised that the families and community needed to drive this vehicle. We

needed to sit in the back seat and support the drivers – not an easy task!

We also realised that we needed to enrich the petrol and ensure that the gears worked smoothly. This meant that we added training such as HIV/AIDS, parenting skills, basic counselling skills, child abuse and art.

Our vehicle was now ready but we realised that we were not the only vehicle on the road and that we needed to share the road with others. Sometimes we needed to give way to others and at other times we travelled in convoy or even in the same car.

Thus began a process of informing other role players of our new approach and ways of working together emerged. Formalising written agreements between the local Department and ourselves as well as between Child Welfare and ourselves started. Not easy! The local services are easier to negotiate with and positive partnerships have been formed.

We did not forget that we required money to run this vehicle. This was often a cause for concern and required creativity. We had tended to rely on the State subsidy but realised that this was not the way forward. Our funding base extended and we have learnt to turn to the community for assistance. The churches, service groups and volunteers are the sources that assist the most. There have been times when we thought the petrol would run out and we would have to walk. However, we have managed to avoid this with the help of the community and the Department. We realised that we needed to advertise this vehicle so that others could ride in it or learn how to build their own vehicle. We have thus been involved in training other organisations and helping them to build their vehicles. The parts of the vehicles are the same but the vehicles are built in different ways and so look very different from area to area.



We could tell you more about our vehicle and how we drive it on the journey. However, we would like to offer you the opportunity to ask us about the vehicle so that you can build your own vehicle.

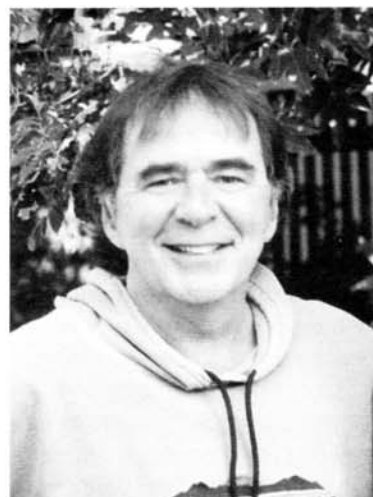
Lessons Learnt

- Start with yourself – you need to examine your beliefs – we need to believe in the transformation process and ourselves.
- We see ourselves as change agents.
- We need to be prepared to learn new things and unlearn the old. The learning never stops. We often have had to stop one way and go another route. We needed to accept trial and error learning.
- We needed to create a sense of belonging and networking is critical.
- This is a risky business – you need to be courageous. There are times when we did not know where the road was leading and from where the funds were coming.
- It is important to share what you are doing with others on the road. This results in sharing and helps others along the way. You can learn from others who have gone before you.
- This was not a straightforward route – the way was complex and there were humps and potholes in the road. We needed to develop the ability to deal with complexity and uncertainty.
- We needed to look for potential, the strengths in families and be able to have a vision.
- Teamwork is essential and the need to work holistically. You need each other and the strengths of each person.
- Mistakes are okay and we made many mistakes. The belief in what you do will help you to continue.
- The crises that occur are okay and should push you into working at how you can change things so that you avoid a crisis the next time.
- Keep looking for strengths.
- Build a car from the existing models rather than trying to design your own model.
- Rather change your existing programme than trying to find funds for a new one.
- Support one another and look out for the team. Listen to the team and tell the team when you are struggling. □

All behaviour serves a purpose

Thom Garfat

It has become axiomatic in our field to say that 'all behaviour serves a purpose'. Where this saying came from originally is probably long lost to our collective memory. The best guess is that it probably came from some writings in systems theory. But what does it mean?



Imagine a young person who runs away from a group care facility. And ask yourself, 'why did she run away'? Did she run away to be with her friends? Did she run away because others in the program were threatening her? Did she run away to make staff chase after her? Did she run away to be with her boyfriend? Lets look at those reasons, and what purpose might be served by the behaviour of running away.

The first question we might have is 'what need is being met by the behaviour?' Look at the following list:

"To be with her friends". We all have a need to belong. This is especially true of young people who are developing their sense of identify. Maybe when she runs away to be with her friends, she finds a place where she feels she belongs, is cared for, is wanted.

"Others in the program were threatening her". We all have a need to feel safe – psychologically, emotionally, physically. If a person is feeling threatened, she may run away because when she is away, she feels more safe, more secure.

"To make staff chase after her."

We all have a need to feel some sense of control in our lives. Maybe by making us behave in a certain way (chasing her), she gains some sense of control. She is, in essence, taking charge over some aspect of her life, determining the outcome.

"To be with her boyfriend". Some people say we all have a need to feel loved, or to feel cared for by someone. Maybe when she runs to her boyfriend, she finds a place where she feels loved, and can give love.

Notice, if you will, that there is a purpose to the behaviour. It meets a need. Now, I am not saying that these are the only reasons why young people run away. But for some youth, these might be the reasons. For another youth the reasons might be different. It depends on what unmet needs the youth may be experiencing. Our job is to discover the reason for the behaviour and one way to discover that reason is to ask 'What need might be met by this behaviour?' Another way to wonder about the purpose of the behaviour, is to look at what happens as a result of the behaviour. And in doing so, we have to look at what we

do in response to it. For example, if she runs away, what is our response, both when she does the behaviour, and when the behaviour is over. So, for example, what do we do when she returns? Do we spend time with her, explaining why it was wrong, giving her a lecture, telling her we were worried, drawing her closer to us by making her stay in the program with us? In these cases, look at what happened – she ran away and we spent more time with her, we became engaged with her. We might wonder if this was, after all, the purpose of her behaviour – to get us connected with her. Imagine the following: A young man is told by his father to be home at ten o'clock. He comes home late. His father talks to him about why it is important to be home on time. The next night he comes home late again. His father gives him a 'real talking to'. The next night he comes home late again. He and his father have a fight. This continues no matter what the father does. In the end, we have to wonder why the youth continues to be late, even though the father does everything he can. And we wonder whether the purpose of the behaviour isn't simply to en-

Practice

gage the father, to spend time with him.

Needs change with time and circumstances, of course. As a young person grows, more complex needs emerge and as a family changes needs may become more intense or more subtle. Competing needs also arise at times, for example when a young person experiences the need for belonging which she may meet through being with her peers, yet still experiences the need for safety which might be threatened by some aspect of her friend's behaviour.

It isn't simple to determine which need is being met by any particular behaviour. Often the hardest work of the child and youth care worker is to build a hypothesis about the purpose of a particular behaviour, and then to test out the hypothesis through investigating other aspects of a young person's life and through intervening to meet the need we suspect is currently unmet. And as always, we have to consider the context within which a behaviour takes place. All behaviour does serve a purpose, and that purpose is usually to meet an unmet need. When we understand the purpose of a behaviour, we find ways to respond to it in a manner which meets the expressed need. And when we find ways to meet the unmet need, the original behaviour of concern often becomes unnecessary and disappears. Thus, meeting the unmet need is an alternative to simply trying to control or directly change a behaviour. It is an approach based on care, not control. □

This article is taken from the May 2002 edition of CYC-online <http://www.cyc-net.org>

Making Relationships Work

Alfred Harris shares some of his thoughts

As child and youth care workers we all are aware of the importance of relationships in our work. But we sometimes find it hard or difficult to build positive relationships with some of the young people. It always seems that the problem lies with the young person! As professional workers we need to establish whether the problem is not with our approach. A look at how we approach each situation will help us to see whether we contribute towards making relationships fail. The following are my suggestions.

1. Child care workers should stop preaching and start teaching. As professional child and youth care workers we should be teaching young people about relationships that will be helpful for them. When young people come to us their understanding of relationships often is "I take as much as I can get". Often young people don't understand relationships because they have not been exposed to positive relationships.
2. Child care workers should accept young people for who they are and for who they can become. Before a diamond becomes a precious stone it comes from the earth and is dirty. Some of the young people come to us screaming and kicking. They swear at us, making it almost impossible to work with them. It is important to forget the screaming, kicking and swearing young person and see the great potential in the young person.
3. Child care workers sometimes give up on young people without endeavouring to understand them. When young people come into care it is our responsibility to understand them and not for them to fit into our understanding. Every young person is unique. As a child care worker we must want to understand. We only get to know someone when we spend time with them.

We can make a relationship work and contribute towards a better life for the young person. By our interactions we change their world view that this is a cruel and harsh place to one of hope. □

NACCW Western Cape is hosting a mini conference at Durbanville Children's Home from **16-17 July 2002**

Time: 8.30am – 1.30pm

Theme: *Bridging the Gap in Transforming Communities*

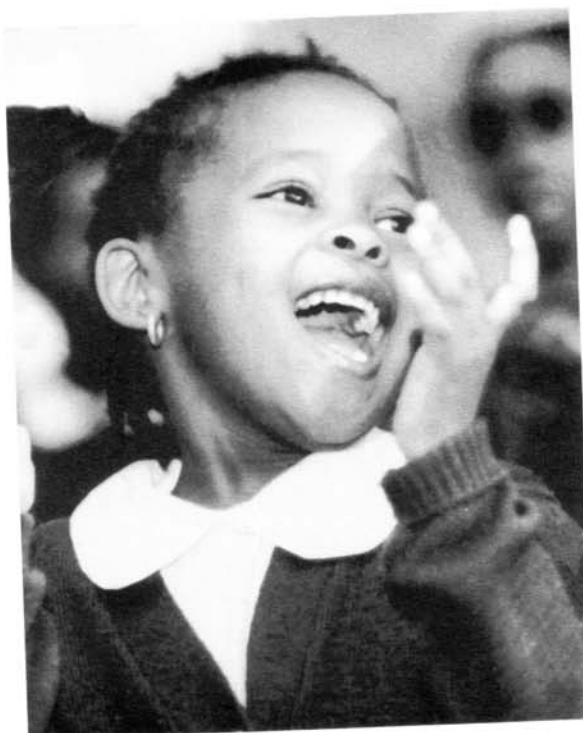
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Institutional Abuse and the Rights of Children and Youth

A paper by Jacqui Michael at the 9th Biennial Conference and First All Africa Child Care Conference of the NACCW in 1993. Sadly, these issues are as relevant now as it was then.

"The effects on children being abused within a context in which they had every right to expect safety can be devastating." (Giles)

There is no ethical defence of practice which removes children from a familiar but violent context and places them in an unfamiliar and violent one. Children and youth are removed from unsafe and troubled environments and supposedly placed in institutions so that they can be adequately cared for. Very often their environments have been impoverished, deprived, disrupted, abusive, and violent before they came into care. As child and youth care practitioners, our task is to create a therapeutic milieu which does not repeat any of the factors for which children and youth were removed. Young people in care tend to feel insecure and commonly experience relationship difficulties. They deal with many issues around separation, loss and bonding, and are vulnerable because of the experiences they have had and the fact that they are living in institutions



away from their families. It is imperative that the 'care' they receive is consistent, competent, and responsive to 'their' needs. The environment created by the staff must be such that all the developmental needs of these young people can be met. It is not enough to place a child in an environment which may not be violent but is 'still inconsistent', 'incompetent', and 'not able to respond' to his needs in a way that promotes his development.

Definition

There have been numerous attempts made to define institutional abuse. Giles in his chapter on 'Violence in group care' quotes the categories suggested by Rabb and Rindfleisch. These are:

- non-accidental injury
- sexual abuse
- failure to provide care
- failure to supervise
- emotional maltreatment
- questionable moral behaviours (by staff)
- harmful restraint and
- setting young people up to fail or be humiliated.

Institutional abuse can refer to abuse by individual staff members, abusive practices within the institution and or in society in regard to institutional care.

For the purpose of this paper, the needs and rights of children and youth and how the violation of these constitutes abusive practice, will be presented in tabular form on the following pages.

PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS	ABUSIVE	NON-ABUSIVE
Provision of: food/drink	Insufficient provision; Deprivation of; Cooked served and presented without care and consideration; Lack of regular meal routine.	Ensure meal times are pleasant and avoid conflict; Know children's needs; Monitor basic care; Ensure equal and appropriate distribution.
Warmth, Shelter, Fresh Air, Personal Hygiene, Sleep and Rest, Recreation/exercise	Insufficient provision and deprivation of these needs.	Ensure equal and appropriate distribution of resources. Assess needs. Apply standard of care.
Personal Space	Not giving any personal space or belongings; Removing personal belongings as a punishment; Intrusion in child's privacy.	Appropriate allocation depending on available space and resources eg. own bed, own locker/cupboard, private time etc.
Provision of: Clothes	Inappropriate clothing; Unfashionable clothing; Clothes that humiliate eg. fit, style, etc. Clothes that draw attention to them; dirty unpresentable clothes.	Own clothes, if possible; Fitting clothes; Appropriate to occasion; Clean/tidy; Presentable; Fashionable.
Sexual Needs	To deny child's sexuality; To ignore child's sexual development; To label child's sexual behaviour.	To understand child's feelings and confusions re: sexual development; To provide safe, nonjudgmental environment for child to question and discuss sexual issues e.g. development, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual behaviour, etc.
SAFETY NEEDS	ABUSIVE	NON-ABUSIVE
Protection from: Physical Abuse	Any form of physical harm, i.e. pinching, hitting, pushing, punching, etc; Corporal punishment; Harmful restraint; Deprivation of medical/dental care; Allowing children to hurt each other; Allowing children to carry out discipline procedures which should be implemented by staff.	Definite philosophy about acceptable discipline; Procedures for children and staff to report abuse; Procedures for preventing recurrence; Accountability! Teaching children to resolve conflicts and problem solve constructively.

Institutional Abuse

Discrimination

Any form of discrimination based on race, age, sex, sexual orientation, colour, culture, social circumstances, sickness or handicaps.

Ensure admission and treatment criteria are based on available resources, NOT discrimination;
Constant evaluation of philosophy.

BELONGING AND LOVE	ABUSIVE	NON-ABUSIVE
Family involvement	To discipline by – preventing family contacts/access unnecessarily; Ignoring existence of child's family; Being judgmental of child's family; Not doing permanency planning; Child care workers trying to replace family; Not involving families in decision making.	To involve families from the beginning whenever possible; To understand the importance of families; To empower and in involve families; To accept the family as being a part of the child.

Staff

Incompetent care and lack of commitment;
Uncaring behaviour and environment;
Constant complaints and resentment re job;
Resistance to training;
Inadequate supervision;
Haphazard, unplanned intervention.

Receive training and supervision; Self-development; Self-awareness;
Providing youth with better opportunities; Being informed about developmental needs and appropriate intervention;
Must be trustworthy.

ESTEEM/SELF	ABUSIVE	NON-ABUSIVE
Build self-esteem	Humiliation; Lack of encouragement; Lack of individual knowledge of the child – strengths as well as weaknesses; Lack of acknowledgement.	Understand where the child is at; Encourage and praise; Find out child's strengths and weaknesses. Be person-focussed, not problem-focussed.

Developing

Disempowering children;
Not creating growth opportunities;
Not allowing children to master tasks and situations;
Not allowing independence;
Making decisions 'for' not 'with';
'Gloating' if they make mistakes.

Being aware of own's own needs. Not keeping children dependent; Allowing them to resolve their own situations with support; Creating situations where they can develop and master life tasks.

Summary

In summarising this paper there are some important points to mention:

- It is essential to have clear procedures to guide Child and Youth Care workers when abuse is detected so that they know what to do.
- It is vital that children and youth have procedures through which they can report any type of abuse. It is also important that there are channels for children and youth to discuss their rights, needs and preferences.
- Every institution should have clearly defined rights for staff and residents.
- If abuse is suspected or reported, corrective and decisive action must be taken immediately. To ignore the incident exacerbates the abuse. The issue(s) must always be addressed.
- Training must be aimed at educating staff about the incidence and causes of institutional abuse.
- Management must be responsible for staff matters and must have clear procedures for dealing with staff who abuse children. If management allows abusive practices to continue, they are just as guilty of the abuse and violation of the children in their care.
- Every child should have a permanency plan and clear admission and discharge criteria and procedures must be followed. This will ensure that children do not get "lost" in the system.
- Specified standards should be legislated in terms of institutions and they should be inspected regularly to ensure that these standards are being maintained.

Finally, I would like to stress the fact that we are all accountable for everything we do with, and to the children and youth in our care. In caring for children and youth we are challenged to examine our own behaviour as scrupulously and rigorously as we examine that of these children's parents.

Are we prepared to do this? The message we give children and youth is ... "This is a caring place. We will protect you and help you grow. Try us." If we violate that promise and trust, we have failed.

I would like to end with a quote from George Thomas:

"Children coming into care need to grow and develop. Institutions must meet this need for each individual. Failure to do so, represents in the most fundamental sense, an abuse of children's developmental progress and constitutes Institutional Child Abuse."

Let us not be guilty of this!

The NACCW shares the story of Transformation with new SOS trainees and trainers at the SOS Hermann Gmeiner Adult Training Centre in Gauteng

The SOS Children's Villages organisation is dedicated to building a profession for people who are committed to the long term care of orphans and children in need of care. To this end the organisation is willing to invest resources into the training and development of child and youth care workers to ensure high standards of training and recognition by governments, educational facilities and other children's organisations.

It is against this background that the NACCW was invited to present BQCC 2000 to new SOS child and youth care workers.

The purpose of the training was to:

- introduce the new recruits to the wider profession of child-care workers
- familiarise SOS trainers and trainees with the transformation process of the child and youth care system
- provide them with a kick-start toward their own self-directed professional development
- explore possible future partnerships with other organisations offering professional training.

As evidence of the willingness to share its resources, the Centre also offered to host child care workers from the Mohau Children's Centre in Pretoria, so that they could be included in the training. In the capable hands of Sabitha Samjee, SOS Villages and NACCW became involved in creating connections, establishing rapport, and building trust.

Feedback from participants at the end of the training included:

- I feel humbled
- I feel encouraged
- I feel appreciated
- I feel strong
- My self esteem was boosted
- I'm grateful to the facilitator
- Each child is an individual and is different.

Learnt the lesson of a farmer who kept watering a tree hoping that the tree would one day bear fruit. Child care workers sometimes want to see the fruits of their labour too soon.

Reflections on a Wilderness Training Camp

KwaZulu-Natal students learn about teamwork and self-awareness in the wild.

Introduction

From 30 April to 2 May, a group of 38 third year students and four lecturers from the Department of Child and Youth Development at Durban Institute of Technology (the new institution created by the merge of Technikon Natal and ML Sultan) attended a camp at the L'Abri Wilderness Training School. "L'Abri Wilderness Training School implements the concept of experiential learning using the wilderness as the learning centre – a place where personal discovery is accelerated. L'Abri is a camp situated an hour outside of Pietermaritzburg in the mountains. The camp runs courses on personal development, leadership, team building and cultural interface experiences." (www.youthkzn.co.za)

The Journey to L'Abri

The bus set off with music pulsating loudly. As we neared L'Abri, it became overcast and started raining. The bus started slipping on the dirt roads which had turned to mud and we were asked to get off. Once we realised that this was not someone's warped idea of a joke, we left our worldly goods behind and walked the last couple of kilometres to the camp in the cold rain through the mud and mist. Some of the group started singing which kept everyone's spirits up during our trek. At last, we arrived at L'Abri

where we were welcomed with a seemingly never-ending supply of hot tea and coffee. Our luggage was collected from the bus by bakkie and we changed out of our wet, muddy clothing.

The First Day

The rain continued so indoor activities were organised. We divided into four teams. Each team was required to place a small jar as far as possible over a particular line without any team member touching the ground on that side of the line. Different strategies were adopted by different teams in an effort to beat the others. Some group members started accusing other teams of cheating and the atmosphere became quite tense with heated emotions and raised voices. The Child and Youth Development lecturers had been told by the L'Abri team leader to step out of our usual roles and become full participants in the experience so the L'Abri facilitators were left to manage any difficulties. Fortunately, they were well able to handle the conflict in a firm, respectful and effective manner. They also reminded us that there had been no mention of being in competition with other teams ...

"Competition crushes creativity. When we focus on beating others at all costs, we experience frustration, there are accusations of cheating and the result is conflict."

That evening, the continuous rain caused the electricity to fail so we cooked over fires by the light of a few paraffin lanterns. Each team was given a chicken, some potatoes, an onion, rice, a butternut, some herbs and spices and a potjie in which to cook. We could create whatever meal we wanted from the ingredients given. Again, the approaches of the different teams were quite different with some groups adding one ingredient at a time and others putting everything in the pot together. After enjoying the fruits of our culinary efforts, we cleaned up and went to bed, exhausted from our first day in the wilderness.

Day Two

At breakfast, it became clear that the procedure for each meal would be the same – as a team, use the ingredients to cook whatever you want over the fire. We discovered that eggs and bread hold the potential for a variety of recipes! The weather was better so we were able to engage in a range of challenging outdoor activities involving trust and cooperation. In one of the teams, a participant dropped out due to impatience with the slow progress. Afterwards, she acknowledged this and listened to feedback about how her behavior had affected other group members. Such experiences held the potential for greatly-enhanced



self-awareness and future self-development.

Before lunch, we hiked through the bush, down to a waterfall. Parts of the hike were very steep and due to the previous day's rain, rather slippery. Some group members were not able to enjoy the picnic at the waterfall because they were busy thinking about the fact that we still had to hike back up the cliff to camp!

Day 3

Our final day ... We spent the whole morning at the foofie slide (zipwire). Almost every person had a turn with the others shouting encouragement and applauding. It was quite something to step off the platform holding a rope and zooming along at 60 km/hour to be brought to a halt by two people holding a special harness at the bottom. Not for the fainthearted! Interestingly enough, the first people to volunteer were those who had expressed fear and anxiety about many of the previous activities. A few of them said, "I knew that if I didn't go first, I wouldn't go at all."

After lunch, we packed up. We returned to Durban, weary and aching, but satisfied with what we had achieved.

Evaluation

Our experiences provided many

opportunities for learning about ourselves and others. There were participants who were able to demonstrate strengths which had been hidden in the academic environment. Some of the students commented:

"I also enjoyed getting to know the lecturers and seeing them differently, and them getting to know us. I realised that the lecturers know how to have fun." (Saloshnee Murugan)

The type of challenges required us to trust and support each other. At times, as one struggled to maintain one's balance on a precarious plank, it was wonderful to see all the hands outstretched to help. "For me, teamwork was important. We were doing practically what we learned in class. People showed trust and respect to each other. We managed to work together effectively, more than before in class. We weren't always aware of this learning until afterwards when we reflected on activities. The way the facilitators worked together reinforced this" (Lihle Sibiya, student).

"The experience brought us together and we were able to forget about problems and conflict with each other" (Saloshnee Murugan).

"There was a spirit of togetherness not seen at campus. I have also been seeing this since our return while the students are at practical placements" (Fathima Dewan).

People were able to face their fears and achieve success in unfamiliar activities through the encouragement of others.

"There were excellent challenges to push yourself. The sense of accomplishment was immeasurable. It was wonderful to see the students doing this – the expressions on their faces were priceless!" (Feroza Shariff, lecturer).

"We learned about ourselves. I learned that I can do anything I put my mind to and that I can be strong for others, encouraging, motivating and helping them not to give up" (Saloshnee Murugan). "I was vulnerable in front of students and I did not have to worry about being judged" (Fathima Dewan).

The natural environment at L'Abri provides real opportunities for growth and development through experience and reflection. "When I think of L'Abri, one word comes to mind ... calm. It gives you a feeling of serenity and makes you want to know about yourself and look within" (Feroza Shariff).

"I learned so much about myself. L'Abri provides a lovely climate for self-discovery" (Melissa Gregory, student).

Such experiences add an important dimension to the learning process for child and youth care students. We envisage wilderness training becoming a regular aspect of the curriculum in our teaching programme and trust that the true value of this camp will shine through in the students' work with children and youth at risk. □

23 February 2002, Mimosa Complex Kimberley

NACCW

Northern Cape Graduation



Northern Cape Graduates

We are proud as a region to be counted amongst those who managed to travel a rich and encouraging journey, culminating in the graduation ceremony of 17 BQCC students. Pastor Cheryl Davies of the Christian Community Fellowship opened the proceedings. She said, "In the past children seemingly always had care within the context of the family – often a large extended family. Children were rarely out of reach of familiar, loving arms and authoritative, life-shaping discipline. We need to recreate the special nurturing a parent can best provide in the protection and peace of the family circle. We must ensure that a 'being there' quality is built into our work with children."

A moment of silence was observed in remembrance of the late Christine Chwelete who passed away a month before graduation. The keynote was delivered by Ms Florina Mouton (Probation Services Coordinator). Mvuyo Manyungwana read a congratulatory from Merle Allsopp. A group of 160 dancers entertained the guests with cultural songs and dances.

Alfred Rens

Ms Florina Mouton encouraged us with the following words:

We see the first graduates to complete the BQCC 2000 course in the Northern Cape. It is also the first time that roleplayers from other disciplines i.e. SAPS as well as community members enrolled for this course. A few encouraging developments in the field are:

- The S A Council for Social Service Professions acceptance of an application by the NACCW to establish a Professional

Board for Child and Youth Care Workers.

- The Probation Services Amendment Bill opens the door for child and youth care workers to be appointed as assistant probation officers, to use their knowledge, skills, and expertise in rendering developmental and diversion programmes to young people and families. Youth development is both a national and provincial priority which allow child and youth care professionals exciting opportunities to develop programmes and best practice models in collaboration with other roleplayers.

The Provincial Department would like to acknowledge the good work being done by trainers in order to develop the child and youth care profession and build expertise in the province. Let us get involved and strengthen the hands of child and youth care workers in the community. Congratulations to the graduates and good luck in your endeavours. You are making a difference in the lives of our young people and their families in the Northern Cape Province.

Motivational Thoughts

Dorothy-Ann Howitson is a member of the Association for Persons with Physical Disabilities (APD). This 54 year old organisation empowers people with disabilities to be self-sufficient and provides care and facilities if required.

Services are rendered throughout the Northern Cape. Dorothy-Ann encouraged care workers in the Northern Cape.



Persons with disabilities can live a life of meaning and play a vital part in the economic and social structures of the land. According to the United Nations, there are half-billion men, women and children with disabilities in the world. Eighty-five percent of these persons live in developing countries, and are therefore doubly disadvantaged by poverty and disability. Counting family members who are also directly affected, a fifth of the world's population lives with disability.

Our challenges are physical, emotional and spiritual. The very idea of having to cope with a body that is in total contradiction to the perfection which is constantly imprinted on our minds by the media, makes us at times rebel. Yes, even at God.

We must accept that disability must have meaning. The human being battles with the concept of the human ability to overcome adversity. Personally, I will not go one step of the way without God.

Thoughts for daily living:

- Personal values are at the core of how we live.
- Treat others as you want to be treated.
- Feelings are neither right nor wrong – its what you do with them that matters.
- If you're going through difficult times, hold steady – it will change. If you're experiencing smooth sailing and easy times now, brace yourself - it will change. The only thing you can be certain of is change.
- Be careful of the choices you make now.
- Human worth does not depend on beauty, intelligence, or accomplishments.
- Those who are happiest are not necessarily those for whom life has been easiest.

More pointers for child and youth care workers:

- The better you can understand your clients and yourself, the better you can serve both.
- People are the essence.
- Anything that you can dream, by the very nature that you can dream it, makes it possible.
- The purpose of life is to help others. If you can't help, would you at least not hurt them.
- You can bring magic to the people you encounter.
- Show your clients that you are approachable.
- Smile, it needs no translation.

A child/ adult should not be a prisoner of one disability or another all his life when s/he has so many abilities that can be exploited for her/his betterment and that of humanity.

We congratulate Alfred Rens and Mvuyo Manyungwana on their promotion at Molehe Mampe Secure Care Centre. They now head the Child and Youth Care department at their facility.

A dangerous experiment

The employee accused of seriously assaulting two patients at the Noupoort Christian Centre in the Northern Cape has been expelled from the facility.

Noupoort Christian Centre in the Northern Cape is no stranger to controversy. It was only a year ago that 16 year old Logan Klingenberg was found dead in a cell at the notorious Midlandia disciplinary block.

Now fresh controversy has come in the form of an alleged assault on two residents of the drug rehabilitation centre, who were chained to a truck overnight in the freezing Karoo and repeatedly drenched with cold water. That neither died is remarkable. Social Development Minister Zola Skweyiya has announced a high-level investigation into the events at Noupoort.

Why does this all sound so familiar? When Logan Klingenberg died last May, the Government commissioned just such an investigation, which made some very specific findings. The management of the centre was described as sub-standard; medical assessments were found to be inadequate; the only

treatment consisted of "dog therapy, religious intervention and physical labour"; and the disciplinary programme was termed "inappropriate, inhumane and unacceptable".

It is not clear how much has changed, except that quite obviously there has been little improvement in the disciplinary programme, protests to the contrary notwithstanding. The assault in question allegedly took place at the Midlandia barracks, which were supposed to have been closed with immediate effect. These barracks are now ostensibly run as the 'mechanical workshop'.

Noupoort finds favour largely because of the desperate need for affordable drug rehabilitation centres, but this is not a licence to turn a blind eye. The authorities must force Noupoort to clean up its act – or close it down. □

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Kom ons praat oor Werk

Julle werk sodat julle kan tred hou met die aarde en die siel van die aarde.

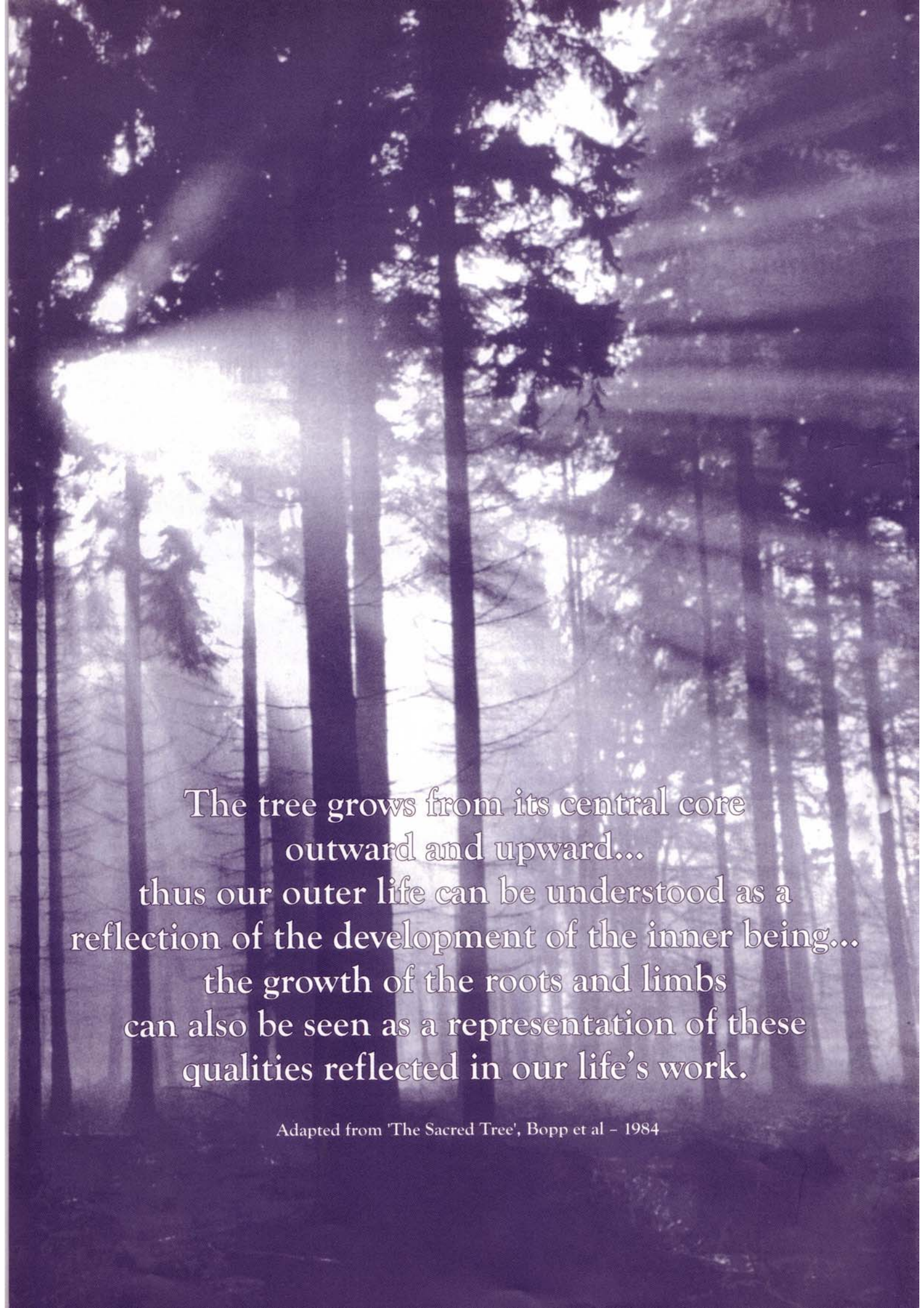
*Wanneer jy werk is jy 'n fluit deur wie se hart die fluistering van die ure in musiek verander.
Wie van julle sou 'n riet wou wees, stom en stil, terwyl al die ander in harmonie saamsing?*

*Deur te arbei bewys julle werklik dat julle die lewe liefhet, en om die lewe deur arbeid lief te hê,
is om kennis te dra van die lewe se diepste geheim.*

*Ek sê dat die lewe inderdaad duisternis is tensy daar 'n drang is,
en alle drange is blind tensy daar kennis is,
en alle kennis is nutteloos tensy daar werk is, en alle werk is betekeloos tensy daar liefde is.*

*Werk is liefde sigbaar gemaak. En as jy nie met liefde kan werk nie,
maar slegs met afkeer, is dit beter dat
jy jou werk verlaat en by die tempelhek gaan sit en aalmoese ontvang van diegene wat met vreugde arbei.
Want as jy brood onverskillig bak, bak jy 'n bitter brood wat net die helfte van 'n mens se honger stil.*

An extract from "Die Profeet" by Kahlil Gibran (English translation available)



The tree grows from its central core
outward and upward...
thus our outer life can be understood as a
reflection of the development of the inner being...
the growth of the roots and limbs
can also be seen as a representation of these
qualities reflected in our life's work.

Adapted from 'The Sacred Tree', Bopp et al - 1984