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TROUBLED CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT RISK

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Child & Youth Care

BEING, ACTING AND REFLECTING IN PRACTICE
NEW SERIES ON ALTERNATIVES TO PUNISHMENT
AFRICA: NEWS FROM KENYA AND SIERRA LEONE

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Editorial

Interconnectedness rediscovered

In 1981 our colleague Jerry Beker from the University of Minnesota spoke at the NACCW's Third Biennial Conference in Johannesburg, and referred to the phenomenon of *interconnectedness* and its relevance in child and youth care care work.

What struck me at the time was his observation that "what is new is not the fact of interconnectedness, but our recognition that it exists and must be harnessed in the service of our work."

To underline what Beker said — interconnectedness is not something new which we might like to try; it is something that we *already are* and we should be conscious of how we are doing in our interconnectedness.

Energy

We learned from systems theory that communication is energy. *Aware* interconnectedness is a source of energy (as against *un-aware* interconnectedness which is essentially passive). The synapses (or connections) in our networks need to tingle with sensitivity so that we know ourselves to be linked — not just to the grapevine of news and rumour but also to the high voltage of creativity and anxiety and the jolts of change. When you lose your energy — your hope and your passion for this work and your courage to stay alive — we all lose energy. When you make small gains and are heartened by some positive response or progress, we are all encouraged — we all feel the better for it. In child and youth care work right now we need to be

aware of our interconnectedness, of the extent to which we can encourage or discourage our colleagues during this time of confusion and doubt.

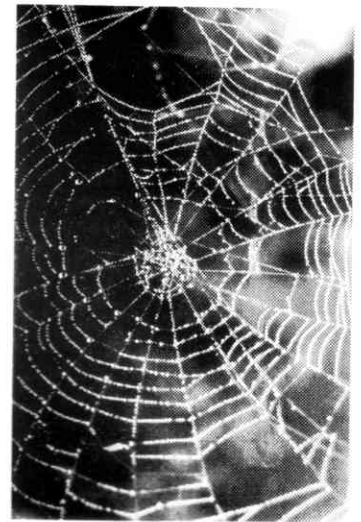
Real fears

This is not to deny that many people working in child and youth care have reason to lose heart at this time. Many private organisations simply cannot see two or three months ahead financially and fear losing all that has been built up over the years. Many in state institutions are paralysed by not knowing what lies ahead for them in terms of post reductions and the closure of institutions.

It is a small step from there to imagine how such contagious anxiety is transmitted to the vulnerable children and youth we work with — and with whom we also share a deep and compelling interconnectedness. If we can draw energy from anywhere today, we know it will be to the benefit of the children as much as to ourselves.

New networks

It is encouraging therefore to see new possibilities for networking emerging. Readers will have noticed increasing material in the journal recently from African sources, part of a new outreach to our colleagues who work with similar problems in often similar circumstances in our continent (see page 4 and 5 of this issue). This development has been assisted by the Royal Netherlands Embassy. But closer to home, as from June



the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk (IMC) has also introduced a site on the Internet where you and I can get up to date news, engage in discussions, download documentation and ask questions (see details on page 16). This reflects a reassuring awareness on the part of a state body that at times of anxiety, the role-players in the transformation we are all working towards are helped by good information, good accessibility and sensible use of the technology which is available. Remember also the continuing availability of the NACCW's e-mail network CYC-Net (see below), not to mention the NACCW itself which offers, at a personal level, a long-standing interconnectedness for all who work in this demanding field.

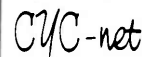
Internet: Our web sites are now located at the following addresses:

NACCW

<http://www.pretext.co.za/naccw>

CYC-Net

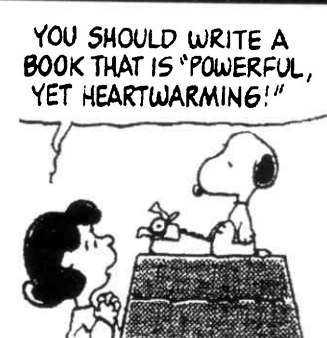
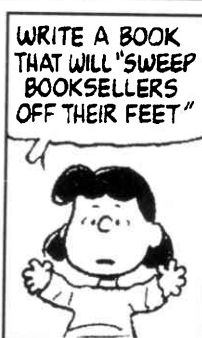
<http://www.pretext.co.za/cyc-net>



Are you connected? Send e-mail to cyc-net@iafrica.com and you will be connected to a network of child and youth care colleagues world wide.

Peanuts

By Charles M. Schulz



Child & Youth Care

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

Volume 16 Number 4 May 1998

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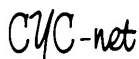
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Fédération Internationale des Communautés Éducatives
International Federation of Educative Communities (UNESCO)



Association Internationale des Educateurs de Jeunes Inadaptés
International Association of Workers with Troubled Children



International Child and Youth Care Electronic Network
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The National Association of Child Care Workers is an independent, non-profit organisation 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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The views expressed in *Child & Youth Care* are in all cases those of the writers concerned and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Association of Child Care Workers.

The Child & Youth Care Scene

The NACCW is ... people — people who have an interest in the aims and objects of the Association.



These aims are **firstly about children**: to promote the optimum care and development of children and youth at risk, to uphold their rights, and to support any efforts to eradicate their hardships or suffering.

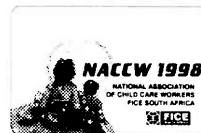
The aims are **secondly about good practice**: to work towards professional standards — both for child and youth care organisations and for child and youth care workers themselves. These aims are reached through **information** sharing (for example, through meetings, through the journal and other networking), through **training** (which is one of the NACCW's strongest activities) and through **advocacy** and action on behalf of children, youth and families.

Anyone who has an interest in these aims can **participate** by being a member of the NACCW and thus having a **vote** in its affairs. During the second half of 1998, all of our Regions will have the opportunity to elect new office bearers and members of **Regional Executives**. To prepare for this —



(a) If you are an individual or corporate member, have you renewed your

subscription so that it is current at the time of the meeting? Only current members may vote, and will need their current **Membership Card** to be allowed to vote.



(b) If you are qualified to register as a child and youth care professional, **register now**. This will make you eligible to be elected to office in the NACCW.

Remember that your membership of the NACCW affords you free automatic membership of **FICE** (the International Federation of Educative Communities) which is the **United Nations** child and youth care NGO based in Europe.

The regional membership structures of the NACCW are **central to the organisation**. The Chairperson of your Region is automatically a member of the National Executive Committee of NACCW. All members should be taking the coming elections **very seriously** — already considering who are the best people to be nominated and elected to represent you and the needs of children in your Region.



Let's take the time to think about this, and to use our vote in the interests of our profession and of the troubled children and youth in our country.

(If you are not already a member, the R90 annual subscription is a good deal: voting rights, your personal copy of this journal each month, and a 25% discount on all course and conference fees.)