

True Power was our heritage  
But Society wove us a cage.  
Now, piercing confusion,  
Rejecting illusion,  
Humanity's coming of age.

*Harvey Jackins*



**Present Time**

No. 166 (Vol. 44 No. 1)

**January 2012**

In this first *Present Time* of 2012 are six excellent articles by Tim Jackins along with inspiring contributions, on a wide variety of topics, from Co-Counselors in Japan, Nigeria, India, Israel, Sweden, Australia, the Netherlands, England, and the United States.

How are you applying RC where you live? Please send us your experiences for the April *Present Time*! Here are the deadlines: Tuesday, February 21, for articles and poems; Monday, February 27, for changes to the lists in the back pages.

Lisa Kauffman, editor

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## ●●●●●●●●●● 東北のコウカウンセラーより ●●●●●●●●●●

27人の参加者のもと、今年も2011年9月2日～4日東北エリア<sup>1</sup>のWSが開催できた。今年もまた、東北のコウカウンセラー達がつながり合う素晴らしいWSになった。また、2001年に東北のWSがスタートした時から、東北の地を人々を愛しているアライも参加している。

東北には、様々な抑圧とたたかってきた歴史がある。それは、人と人が、ただただつながって、助け合い、分かち合ってきたという歴史でもある。(プレゼントタイム2006年10月号P78で安積遊歩が書いた文章「東北でRCコミュニティを作ること」や、2011年6月号P59～62でエマ・パーカーが書いた文章「東北の人たちへの理解と支援」を読んでほしい。)

3.11の大震災、そして、東京電力福島第一原子力発電所の事故の爪痕は深く、東北は今なお混乱の真ただ中にある。今回の東北WSへの参加者の中には、避難先からかけつけた人もいる。

3.11の直後、電話が通じるとすぐ、東北エリアの照会者(ARP)のひろびい(佐藤洋)やリーダー達がとにかく連絡をとりあった。私自身、電話越しに、相手の存在をこれほど感じたことはなかった。日本中、そして世界中のコウカウンセラー達に、セッションや支援をありがとうと言いたい。

東北WSの二日目の朝、「3.11の後、私達が考え感じてきたこと、RCをどう使ってきたか」についてシェアする時間をもった。それを全てのコウカウンセラーにシェアしたいと思う。

きょうこ  
山田恭子  
東北エリアのオルタ  
宮城県仙台市

障がいをもっているため、とにかくサポートが必要だった。そのことに必死で、町の様子もみないまま、避難するしかなかった。障がいを持つ私は、いつもサポートを受けなければ生きていけない状況だけど、あの時は誰もがサポートを受けなければ生きられない状況だった。みんな、ありがとう。私達は、生きています。

みきこ  
遠藤美貴子  
福島県田村市

地震がおきた時は、子供たちを自宅において1人で近くの店に買い物に行っていた。揺れている間、そして信号の止まった道を運転して帰る間、とても心配した。子供たちも自分もお向かいの家の人に声をかけてもらって、心強かったしありがたかった。近くの人たちともっとつながっていききたいと思う。

地震直後から電気が止まり、今までどれだけ電気に頼っていたかに気づいて情けなくなった。水とガスは使えた。1日1日をどうするか、自分と子供たちのことでいっぱいになった。ラジオの情報が頼りだった。新聞が届いた時、一面の写真を見て、とても驚いた。

家の電話が使えなくなり、携帯電話もつながらなったり、充電できなくなったのでかけるのを控えたりした。コウ・カウンセリングのセッションが必要だと気づいていたけれど、みんなもきっと大変だから、かけるのはよそうと思ってしまった。ガソリンが手に入りにくくなり、RCのクラスに参加するために車を使って移動することも悪いことのように感じてしまった。

でも、聞きあう関係はとても大切にしたいと再確認した。RCのなかでもみんなともっとつながっていききたいと思う。もっと考えられるようになりたい。1つ1つ自分ができることを見つけていきたい。

まきこ  
久留主牧子  
青森県十和田市

余震や原発事故が続いている一方で生活は日常を取り戻して何もなかったように流れているので、混乱しやすい。無力感・恐怖・被害者パターンにすぐにはまってしまふことを自覚した上でのコウ・カウンセリングのセッションが有効だった。

緊急連絡網やメンバーの家などへの避難が恐怖からのコントラディクトになった。3/11以降よかったことをいっぱい話すセッションを持つことで無力感から出やすくなった。

しんこちゃん  
佐藤慎子  
宮城県大和町

つづく

<sup>1</sup> エリアとは、特定の地域のRCコミュニティのこと

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

地震以来ずっと自宅ですごす。2日ほどは静か。1日あまり停電。3日目食料・灯油を買いにでかける。その夜は近所の人にところにいてテレビを見てすごす。以降、人の不安や選択を聞き続け、仕事と日々の生活におわれる感。しかし、この感情をこえていくのに、東北のみならず、他エリアの人たちの力をもらった。

ふうちゃん  
山野和子  
山形県山形市

大きな地震が来ることは、以前から予想されていたので、覚悟をしていましたが、思った以上に揺れが大きく長かったので、目の前の建物が崩れ落ち、みんな死んでしまうのではないかと恐怖を感じました。

一番ショックだったのは、電気が止まり電話もテレビも使えず、ラジオから聞き取った断片的な情報で、海岸の地域で多くの死者が出ているということ。大津波がきたということは想像もできなかった。近くにRCerがいないので、セッションもできずに、混乱や心配を抱えたまま、数日間、地震後の対処をしなければならなかったことが本当に大変でした。

よかったことは、住んでいる地域でも職場のある地域でもみんながお互いに声をかけ合いながら、協力し知恵を出し合っ

て行動できたこと。  
RCでは、日本と日本以外のRCerで緊急のセッション名簿を送ってくれて、毎日のようにワンウエイで話をきいてもらえたことです。

また、RCコミュニティで連絡網を作り、何かあったらすぐ情報を知らせるというシステムがあったお陰で、仕事をして瞬時に情報が入らなくても知らせてもらえるという安心感がありました。これはとてもいいアイデアだと思います。今回の地震で、RCerとそれ以外の友人関係などからいろいろな助けがあり、つながりの大切さを感じました。

電気が復旧し、テレビで被害の情報が毎日詳細に伝わるようになるにつれ、被災地でも被害に差があることがわかり、もっと大変なところに支援に行くべきか、自分の回りの人たちの話を聞くことを優先すべきか、今でも迷ったり混乱したりすることは続いています。まず自分を大事にする、自分のことを一番にするということも忘れがちで、パターンで行動して疲れ切ってしまうという状態になることも少なくありません。

被災地やその周辺に住み続けている限り、放射線への不安と恐怖を抱きながら生活しなければなりません。「取り戻せない」、「止められない」、「どうしようもない」といった無力感に陥ることなく賢く考えて前に進めるように、これからもアテンションとセッションを私たちに送り続けて欲しいということがみんなにお願いしたいことです。

よっちゃん  
五十嵐淑子  
宮城県仙台市

最初、避難生活を楽しもうとした。いつもの生活よりも、人と話せたので楽しかった。水が戻っても嬉しかった。

物資がたくさん届けられて、必要な分以上に物資を持ち帰る人を見て、「何で物がなくて耐えられない？」と腹がたった。

木村さん  
木村美和子  
宮城県東松島市

RCのつながりがなかったら、仕事も生活も難しかった。今まで作ったつながりに助けられた。つながることに本気になった。RC以外の人とのつながりも。

きょうこ  
山田恭子  
宮城県仙台市

あの2週間は夢の記憶みたいで、話すのが難しい。放射能については、家族との戦いでもあった。情報を見せても考えようとしないう、過剰反応だと言われる。お母さんは「死ぬときは何をしても死ぬんだ」といつもの無力感や諦めのパターンにとらわれていた。

私も、普段よく回る傷やパターンをより強く感じ混乱した。家族の私とは違う考えや選択にも迷った。パターンにとらわれそうにもなったが、セッションを使いながら考えた。「お母さんが自分と家族の未来を賢く考えられるように、どのように彼女の本質をサポートしたらいいのか」「親達を置いてでも私だけ避難する必要があるのか」「何が本当に正しいことなのかかわからない中で、どう考え判断していけばいいのか」

R—  
宮城県

電気が止まって心細かった。その上、水も出ない人がいるっていうのは、大変なことだったなあ。自分の家に避難してきていいと言ったのは、正解だった。みんなが集まって、心強かった。通常は働きすぎないようにしているけど、あの2週間は働きまくった。

ひろびい  
佐藤洋  
山形県山形市

ずっと不安だった。情報入ってこないから。一人じゃなかったけど、不安だった。周りの人がいろいろと忙しかったので。

ともくん  
佐藤智樹  
宮城県大和町

遠くに住む人も、心が被災している。深い悲しみに、3日間ぐらいコウ・カウンセリングのセッションもできなかった。周りの人に言われたことにも混乱を感じた。だれとつながればいいんだろうと考えた。東北にゆかりがある人が、東京でつながるきっかけになった。

かおり  
川野かおり  
埼玉県吉川市 アライ

私は現在は東京在住だが、東北に12年間住み、大好きな友だちが東北にたくさんいる。

大震災、とりわけ福島原発事故を目の当たりにして、1ヶ月間くらいパニック状態だった。正確な情報を取り入れるために、テレビ、ラジオ、インターネット、電話をフル回転させた。東北にすぐにでも駆けつけたかったが、自分が何をすべきか、よくよくセッションを使って考えた。その結果、私は今の私の仕事をきちんとやる、今ここで選択している人生をよりよく生きることだと考えた。そのことが、東北の人たちのサポートになるし、社会をよりよくするためになる。

原発事故は境界線がなく、汚染に関しては東京に住む自分たちも当事者だ。日本が原子力利用から脱退し、より安心安全な社会を選択するよう働きかけていく。

しまだけい  
島田恵  
東京都青梅市 アライ



ENGLAND • SANDRA CARTER

English translation of the preceding article:

# From the Co-Counsellors of Tohoku, Japan

This year, like every year, we held our Tohoku Area<sup>1</sup> workshop. Twenty-seven people attended, on 2 to 4 September, 2011. And, like every year, it was a great workshop at which the Tohoku Co-Counsellors connected with each other. Ever since the Tohoku workshops began in 2001, they have also been attended by allies, who love this land and its people.

Tohoku has a history of fighting various oppressions. This is also a history of people who simply built connections and helped and shared with each other. (Please see the article on page 79 of the October 2006 *Present Time*, "Building RC in Tohoku, Japan," by Yuho Asaka; and the article on pages 62 to 65 of the July 2011 *Present Time*, "Understanding and Supporting the People of Tohoku," by Emma Parker.)

The scars of the major earthquake of March 11, 2011, and the accident at TEPCO's (Tokyo Electric Power Corporation's) Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear power plant are deep, and Tohoku is in the midst of great turmoil. Some of the participants came to this year's workshop from the places to which they had evacuated.

Immediately after March 11, as soon as the phones started working again, the Area Reference Person for the Tohoku Area, Hiropy (Hiroshi Sato), and the other leaders got in contact with each other. As for me, I have never been so aware of the existence of a person on the other end of the phone. I want to thank the Co-Counsellors throughout Japan, and the world, for the sessions and support they gave us.

On the morning of the second day of the Tohoku Area Workshop, I held a group for us to share "what we have

been thinking and feeling since March 11, and how we have been using RC." I would like to share people's responses with you all.

*Kyoko Yamada*  
Alternate Area Reference Person  
for the Tohoku Area  
Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

Because I have a disability, the main consideration was that I needed support. I had to concentrate all my efforts on that, so although I wanted to see what condition my town was in, my only option was to evacuate. With a disability, I always need support in order to survive, but at that time everyone needed support. Thank you, everyone. We are alive.

*Mikiko Endo*  
Murata City, Fukushima  
Prefecture, Japan

At the time of the earthquake, I had left my children at home while I went to a nearby shop. While the ground was shaking, and then while I was driving home along roads where all the traffic signals had stopped, I was very worried. My neighbours came to check that my children and I were okay. That encouraged me, and I felt grateful to them. I want to build stronger connections with my neighbours from now on.

Immediately after the earthquake the electricity was cut off. I realised how much I had been dependent on electricity and felt ashamed. We still had access to water and gas. I became preoccupied with how my children and I were going to get through each day. I relied on the radio for information. When the first newspaper after the earthquake

arrived, I was shocked by the photo on the front page.

I could not use my land line and could not get through to anyone on my mobile phone. Moreover, I could not charge my mobile phone, so I avoided using it as much as possible. I realised that I needed Co-Counselling sessions but thought that others must have a lot to deal with already and that calling them would be too much. Because petrol was hard to get a hold of, I also felt bad about using my car to get to RC classes.

However, this experience reconfirmed for me that I want to prioritise Co-Counselling relationships. I also want to connect more deeply with people in RC. I want to become able to think more. I want to discover all the things that I can do, one by one.

*Makiko Kurusu*  
Towada City, Aomori Prefecture, Japan

Although aftershocks and the nuclear accident are ongoing, "normal life" is resuming as though nothing happened, so it is confusing.

Co-Counselling sessions based on my realisation that I am pulled by feelings of powerlessness, fear, and victimisation have been effective.

Our emergency contact network, and evacuation to a Co-Counsellor's house, were contradictions to the fear that I felt.

Telling, in my sessions, all the good things that have happened since March 11 has made it easier to pull myself out of feelings of powerlessness.

*Shinko Sato*  
Taiwa Town, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

<sup>1</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

I stayed at home for a long while after the earthquake. The first two days or so were quiet. There was a power cut for more than a day. On the third day I went out to buy food and kerosene. I spent that evening with neighbours, watching television. From then on I kept listening to people's worries, and the choices they were making, and felt overwhelmed by work and day-to-day life. However, I was supported by Co-Counsellors, from Tohoku and also other areas, to gradually overcome that feeling.

*Kazuko Yamano*  
Yamagata City, Yamagata  
Prefecture, Japan

I expected that a major earthquake might happen sometime, so I was mentally prepared. However, because the shaking was stronger and lasted longer than I expected, I was afraid that buildings would crumble and fall in front of my eyes and that we would all be killed.

The biggest shock for me was hearing on the radio (we could not use phones or televisions, because the electricity had stopped) that many bodies had been found in the coastal areas. I could not have imagined that such a large tsunami would come. Because there are no Co-Counsellors nearby, I could not have any sessions. It was a tough few days dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake while still carrying all the confusion and anxiety.

What was good was that the people in the neighbourhoods where I live and work checked up on each other and collaborated on and shared ideas about what to do.

Within RC, we were sent lists of RCers in Japan and abroad who were available for emergency sessions, and I received one-way time almost every day.

Our RC Community also set up a contact network for letting us know immediately if anything happened. I felt reassured that if I did not get some information while at work, I would be told about it. That was really good. Through the experience of the earthquake I felt the importance of connections, as I was helped in various ways by RCers and other friends.

After the power resumed, the details of the damage were reported on television on a daily basis, and I understood that even within the areas affected by the disaster there were differences in the levels of damage. I was and still am confused about whether I should go and support more severely affected areas or prioritise listening to the people around me. I tend to forget to look after<sup>2</sup> myself. There were more than a few occasions when I acted on patterns and exhausted myself.

As long as we go on living in or near the areas affected by the disaster, we have to go about<sup>3</sup> our lives against a background of anxiety and fear about radiation levels. We need to be able to think intelligently and go forward without being pulled into feelings of powerlessness that say, "We can never get the old situation back," "We can't stop what's happening," or "Nothing can be done." I want to ask you to keep supporting us with attention and sessions.

*Yoshiko Igarashi*  
Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

At first I decided to enjoy life as an evacuee. It was fun, because I could talk with people more than I could in everyday life. Even the resumption of the water supply made me happy.

Many emergency supplies were delivered, and I saw some people

taking more than they needed. I felt angry and wondered why they could not bear to be without material things.

*Miwako Kimura*  
Higashi Matsushima City,  
Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

Without my RC connections, my work and the rest of my life would have been hard. The connections that I had already built helped me. I became truly serious about connection, including with people outside of RC.

*Kyoko Yamada*  
Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

Those two weeks feel like the memory of a dream; it's hard to talk about them.

The radiation issue was a battle in my family. Even when I showed my family members information, they refused to think and told me that I was over-reacting. My mother was caught up in patterns of powerlessness and giving up. She said, "When it's time to die, you'll die, whatever you do."

I found that my usual distresses felt even stronger, and that was confusing. I also did not know what to do, because my family's thoughts and choices were different from mine. I felt as though I might be overcome by my patterns, but I used my Co-Counselling sessions to think, "How should I support my mother's inherent nature so that she can think intelligently about her future and that of our family?" "Do I need to evacuate, even if it means leaving my parents behind?" "How should I think and make decisions, given that I still do not know what is really correct?"

*R—*  
Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

*continued . . .*

<sup>2</sup> Look after means take care of.

<sup>3</sup> Go about means proceed with.

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

I felt lonely, because the electricity was cut off. Some people did not even have a water supply. That must have been a tough situation. I think that I made the right decision in telling people they could evacuate to my house. We were all together, so I was heartened. I usually try not to overwork, but for those two weeks I worked flat out.<sup>4</sup>

*Hiroshi Sato*  
Yamagata City, Yamagata  
Prefecture, Japan

I felt anxious for a long time, because we did not get information. I was not alone, but I was anxious because the people around me were busy with various things.

*Tomoki Sato*  
Taiwa Town, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

Even those of us who live far away are disaster victims in our hearts. My grief was so deep that for three days I could not even have a Co-Counseling session. I was confused by the things that people said to me. I wondered whom I should connect with. The disaster provided an opportunity for those of us in Tokyo (Japan) who had links to Tohoku to connect with each other.

*Kaori Kawano*  
Yoshikawa City, Saitama  
Prefecture, Japan (ally)

I am currently living in Tokyo, but I lived for twelve years in Tohoku and have many friends there whom I love dearly.

After the earthquake and tsunami, and above all the accident at the nuclear reactor in Fukushima, I was in a state of

panic for about a month. I made full use of the television, radio, Internet, and phone in order to get a hold of accurate information. I wanted to rush to Tohoku straight away,<sup>5</sup> but I counselled at length in order to think about what I should do. I concluded that I should carry out my current job to the best of my ability and live even better the life that I have chosen here—that that would both support the people of Tohoku and make society better.

The nuclear accident knows no boundaries. In terms of the contamination, we in Tokyo are also directly affected. I will continue to work for Japan to opt out of the use of nuclear power and choose a safer and more secure society.

*Kei Shimada*  
Ome City, Tokyo, Japan (ally)

*Translated by Emma Parker*

<sup>4</sup> Flat out means as hard as I could.

<sup>5</sup> Straight away means immediately.

## 3.11の災害にとりくむサポートグループ

3月の震災が起きてしばらくは、自分が何とどう向き合っているのか、茫然としていました。東京を離れていったRCerも多くなりましたが、私はその選択をせず、留まり、仕事を続け、生活することにしました。まずはちゃんと安心して感じる場が必要だと、ディスチャージができるサポートグループをレギュラーセッションの相手と持つことを決めました。

「震災のことや原発のことでとりくめる場が他にない」と、しばらくセッションを持っていなかった人やコミュニティから離れていた人や基礎クラスを中断していた人も、参加するようになってきました。

このサポートグループを始めて半年経ちました。3月11日の当日のことも何回も何回もとりにくんでいますが、その他にもセッションするテーマは山のように出てきます。普段の生活の中で如何に感じないようにしているのかもよくわかります。「原発は必要ではない」という話をみんなと話すことに大きな恐怖を抱えていたことも認識します。

今日は自分のことを大事にできない日本人のパターンにとりくみました。誰かのために生きることの美徳を小さい頃から教えられ、自分を大事にすることが分からないひとりぼっちの小さな自分が出てきました。人とつながり人間らしい生活を自分のものにしていくにはたくさんの恐怖にとりくむ必要があります。今後も、このサポートグループを大事にみんなととりくんでいきたいと思っています。



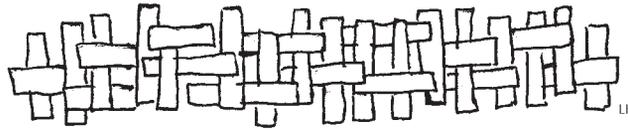
橋本 純子  
神奈川県川崎市

夏の終わり、ワイド・ワールドのある集まりで震災と原発事故の話になりました。ある人の怒りと絶望感はとても深いことだけは伝わってきましたが、それだけに私も含めてその場にいる人たちはそれを理解しきれず、受けとめかねていました。その場にいる誰もが真摯な人たちであり、自分のなかに渦巻いているさまざまな思いを誰かと共有したいという願いを持っているのに、それを阻む黒々とした壁が互いの間に聳え立っているようでした。

9月から、じゅんこがリーダーシップをとっているサポートグループに参加し始めました。原発事故についてはあらゆるレベルで途方もない混乱と困惑があり、それらを前にして自分も立ちすくむしかないような状態です。でも、RCのサポートグループ

では、自分にどんな混乱があってもとりあえず混乱したままの自分であることがOKです。同時に、自分自身を大切にすることはどうのことだろうか？ そもそも大事にしたい私自身って何？ といったことに取り組むこともできるのです。それがどんなに貴重で有り難いことか。

3・11以降、セッションをしていなければ自分自身をどのように支えられたかわからないくらいですが、サポートグループには個人同士のセッションとはまた違ったよさがあるように思います。ディスチャージすることの必要性和可能性をわかっている人たちが、ひとときではあれ、小さな場をつくる決断をする。ささやかに見えるその決断がもつ力の意味と大きさを感じています。



林 千章  
千葉県市川市  
この記事の英訳：エマ・パーカー

English translation of the preceding article:

## A Support Group on the Disasters of March 11

After the disaster in March,<sup>1</sup> I was stunned for a while and did not know what I should work on, or how to work on it. Many RCers left Tokyo (Japan). I did not make that choice; I stayed and carried on with my work and my life. I realised that I needed a place in which it was safe to feel, so I decided to set up a support group, starting with my regular Co-Counsellors.

People who had not managed to have Co-Counselling sessions for a while, or had become separated from the RC Community, or had left fundamentals classes came to the group saying there was no other place for them to work on the earthquake and the nuclear accident.

Half a year has now passed since I started the group. We have worked over and over again on what happened on the day of March 11, and a mountain of other topics has also come up. It is clear how much we are trying not to feel any of this in our everyday lives. We are also noticing how afraid we are of saying to everyone, "We don't need nuclear power plants."

Today I worked on my pattern, as a Japanese person, of not being able to value myself. Since I was small, I was taught the virtue of living for someone else. The little me, who was lonely and did not know how to value herself, has come out in my sessions. In order to make connections with people and get a truly human life for myself, I need to work on a lot of fear. I want to go on prioritising this support group and working on our feelings together.

Junko Hashimoto  
Kawasaki City, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan  
Translated by Emma Parker

*In late summer when the topic of the earthquake and nuclear disaster came up at a wide-world gathering, I could tell<sup>2</sup> that a particular woman was angry and despairing, but neither I nor the other people there could fully understand or make room for her feelings. Even though everyone was sincere, even though we all wanted to share the feelings that were swirling inside of us, it was as though a dark wall was towering between us and blocking that.*

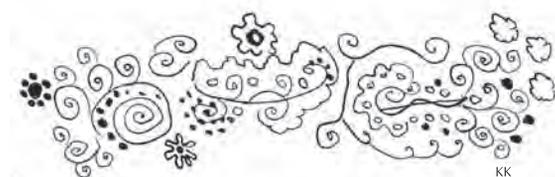
*I started participating in the support group, led by Junko, in September. There is enormous confusion and bafflement, on all levels, surrounding the nuclear accident, and I often stand transfixed before this. However, in an RC support group it is okay for me to be my confused self, whatever confusion I am feeling. At the same time, I can work on what it would mean to value myself or, more fundamentally, on who the "me" is that I want to value. I cannot say how precious it is to be able to do this and how grateful I am for the opportunity.*

*I don't know how I would have been able to support myself since March 11 without Co-Counselling sessions, and there are added benefits from the support group that I can't get from my individual sessions. People who understand the necessity and possibility of discharge have decided to create this space, even if only for a certain time. This decision may appear small, but I can tell how powerful, meaningful, and large it is.*

Chiaki Hayashi  
Ichikawa City, Chiba Prefecture, Japan  
Translated by Emma Parker

<sup>2</sup> Tell means notice, perceive.

<sup>1</sup> The earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011, and the subsequent nuclear disaster



## Spirituality in RC

From a talk by Tim Jackins at the Brandywine Regional Workshop in Pennsylvania, USA, November 2010

In RC we do not have a position on religion or spirituality. We do have a position on what people are like. And we work on freeing our minds from the effects of distress so that we get to do our own thinking about religion, spirituality, and many other things.

Religion and spirituality can be understood as attempts by human beings to make sense of the world. It's clear they have been useful in that way. We also know that



OLD CITY, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL • MARYA AXNER

people have distress recordings about religion and that it's distress that leads to fights, arguments, and looking down at each other's opinions. We think we can talk about these things, discharge on them, see what distresses our thoughts are connected to, and watch how our minds develop as we discharge.

Your religion and spirituality are your business. We're not telling you what your thinking should be. We have complete faith that if you get your distresses out of the way, you'll make your own good decisions about these things. And nobody here has to agree with anybody else's decisions.

In RC we have draft policies on many topics. A group of people who are interested in some piece of reality, or a struggle that humans face, will sit down and write a policy about it. After having lots of counseling sessions with each other, they will write down their best thinking about that topic. The result is a draft policy, which means that it is our best thinking so far and that it will likely change as our thinking develops. Draft policies are meant to encourage everybody to think further about a topic. Nobody is required to accept or support a draft policy. Even if everybody agrees with it, it still has no coercive power.

We try to have as little compulsion and forcing of people as we can. We do interrupt some patterns. We have the no-socializing policy. You know the compulsion to look for a place to act out your frozen longings, and how your Co-Counselor can look really good. We do interrupt that. We interrupt it until we can counsel on the distresses enough to understand the policy. There are places where we are forceful, but they are about preserving the Community and keeping it a safe place to do our work. They are not policies for the outside world.

In RC, no matter where people start out, they tend toward parallel (though not identical) thinking, rather than conflict. People end up loving other human beings more and more fully and being willing to support them. The Community tends to head toward agreement. But each of us gets there on our own, because our own mind takes us in that direction.

## Rejecting “I Can’t”

I grew up in the 1960s and ’70s in an environment that did not value or encourage physical activity for girls. Although women often did work that required physical strength, for women to want to be physically strong was “unfeminine.”

Many things made the exercise we were required to do at school unpleasant. Some teachers shouted, bullied, or belittled those of us who didn’t excel at sports. The outdoor unheated swimming pool was sometimes so cold it was painful. Girls had to wear short skirts and big navy-blue knickers. Our legs were so cold in winter that we would stand shivering. Every time we moved, we had to be careful in case our knickers showed, because of the sexist comments from the boys that would result. I was teased and bullied because of my weight. My thighs rubbed together painfully if I ran any distance in a skirt. A male relative made derogatory comments about how I looked and moved. Girls had to follow commonly accepted “rules” for moving and physical posture (for example, not sitting with their knees apart). I couldn’t relax and enjoy moving or using my body, as my mind was always on guard in order to not break those “rules.”

In addition, my family was mostly physically inactive (although my mother did lots of physical work around the house and garden). My father strongly disliked any kind of sports and avoided exercise his whole life.

Despite all this, I remember times when I enjoyed using my body. For a few weeks, when I was ten, we learned traditional English country dancing at school. For a while I played on the school netball team.

Running, in particular, was something I didn’t like and didn’t think I was any good at. I couldn’t run very fast or

very far. On the enforced school cross-country runs, I was usually last.

When I changed schools at thirteen, the physical education teacher clearly disapproved of me because of my body size and wouldn’t let me even try for a place on the netball team. After that I lost any enjoyment of organised sports and strongly believed that I was no good at them—and, in particular, that I couldn’t run.

I have done physical work much of my life, and I took Latin and ballroom dance classes on and off for many years (when I could afford to), but that didn’t change the recording of being “no good at sports.”

In my early forties, I got to know someone who was a keen runner and had been since childhood. In my mind, there were two sorts of people—the ones who were “sporty” and the ones who weren’t—and I was clearly in the second category. The distinction seemed so strong that it was like the difference between aliens and humans!

A couple of times I watched, from outside the room, one of the fitness classes my friend was taking. I couldn’t imagine myself participating, or being able to do what they were doing, and

I certainly couldn’t imagine enjoying it. The longer I have Co-Counselled though, the more strongly my mind has rejected the idea that I “can’t” do something.

Without saying anything to anyone, I decided to go to the park near my home and find out if I could run. I ran for just over a minute and then felt like I was going to die. I thought it was more “proof” that I couldn’t run.

With a lot of encouragement from my friend, and some information about how to start running, I began to train by running and walking for a minute in turn. I hated it but could see that the strength of feeling I had about running was likely due to distress so I persevered. I had to discharge some deep distresses to continue. The feeling that “I can’t do this” sometimes came up so strongly that I had to stop and cry hard for a few minutes before I could continue running.

Running felt like a never-ending ordeal, but it became clear to me that by keeping on deciding to run I was getting a chance to discharge on early abuse that had been difficult to access before.

*continued . . .*



CAPE ENRAGE, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA • © BRIAN TOWNSEND

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

As a young person I used counting as a way to get through difficult things. When I ran, I found myself counting the seconds, the minutes, the trees and the lampposts. Eventually, after lots of discharge and lots of running, I started getting glimpses, every now and then, that running could be enjoyable. I



ANSEL ADAMS WILDERNESS, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISA VOSS

started taking part\* in fitness classes and sometimes even liking them.

It took a long time before the recording that said “I can’t run” became intermittent. (It is now mostly gone.) For a long time I was running regularly and the recording was still playing constantly. Logically, it was clearly a recording—after all, I was running while it played! I had to keep deciding to run, deciding not to believe it, and discharging.

Last year I ran a half marathon for the first time. I don’t particularly enjoy road

\* Taking part means participating.

running (I prefer running off-road), but at some point I will probably run a full marathon, just to help me discharge that “I can’t” a little bit more.

Earlier this year, at nearly fifty, I qualified as a fitness instructor, and I now teach a variety of classes. (There is another discharge story there that I will write at some point.) A few years ago I would never have imagined doing that. I am enjoying my fitness and physical strength in a way that I never have before.

*Karen Corbel*

Jersey Channel Islands, British Isles  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of women

## Challenging Disappointment

Sometimes in a Co-Counseling session I get disappointed in my counselor and it pretty much<sup>1</sup> ruins my session. The disappointment is, of course, from the past, but I have chosen to attach it to my counselor.

In one session I tried to work on it directly and see what I could do to no longer run it<sup>2</sup> in the present. This is what I came up with<sup>3</sup>: “Any distress that first recorded a sense of disappointment happened a long time ago. Now I can always face reality and come up with a meaningful response, without ignoring a thing and without false expectations. Therefore, I cannot possibly be disappointed ever again, and I have to conclude that disappointment is just a silly idea from the past. Reality is quite hopeful.” The Dutch translation of that is, “Enige kwetsing waarbij voor het eerst een gevoel van teleurstelling opgenomen werd vond lang geleden plaats. Nu kan ik altijd de werkelijkheid onder ogen zien en altijd zinvol reageren, zonder ook maar iets te negeren en zonder valse verwachtingen. Daarom kan ik onmogelijk ooit nog teleurgesteld worden, en moet ik wel tot de slotsom komen dat teleurstelling een beetje een raar idee is uit het verleden. De werkelijkheid is behoorlijk hoopvol.”

It gets my attention in a better place. First it made me smile, then it made me laugh and shiver, now it makes me cry in new places. Maybe it’s a useful perspective for someone else out there, too.



*Bas Hurkmans*  
Westerpark, the Netherlands  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members

<sup>1</sup> Pretty much means mostly.

<sup>2</sup> Run it means act it out.

<sup>3</sup> Came up with means thought of.

## Stopping Sugar, Discharging Fear

I have a story that's about using RC to overcome an addiction and also the other way around—about overcoming an addiction helping with my RC! Let me explain:

A couple of years ago I recognised that I had a sugar addiction. I'd had it for a long time, but because of RC and discharging and reclaiming clearer thinking, it was easier to see it, to notice how I craved sweet stuff when I was feeling bad and how I ate it without being present. So I took the "decide-act-discharge" approach to giving it up. I decided in a Co-Counseling session (and re-decided again in several more sessions) to give up eating sugar for six months.

It was a big challenge. I had to discharge lots about the practicalities of figuring out where to set the limits. What would I eat and would I not eat? For example, during the first six months I did this, I ended up eating a lot of dried fruit, which is essentially sugar anyway, so the next time I did it I cut that out, too.

I also had to discharge a lot about explaining myself to other people. At work if somebody had a birthday and brought a cake, I found it surprisingly difficult to

turn it down.\* Sexism interfered—people assumed I was "watching my weight," even though I'm quite thin. When I said, "No, I'm doing it for emotional reasons and to overcome my sugar addiction," they tended to have some feelings about that. (Understandably! It seems that many people have a sugar addiction.) They tried to take a session from me by arguing about it.

Here is what I mean about the second part, about overcoming an addiction helping with my RC: Before I stopped eating sugar, the forms of discharge available to me were crying, laughing, and yawning. I never shook at all. A few weeks after giving up sugar, I started shaking and teeth chattering in sessions. To this day, I still have good access to fear discharge. My teeth chatter readily in everyday situations, if I let them. It was the sugar addiction that was holding the fear in place, and giving it up opened up a world of discharge.

*Emily Mitchell*

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members

\* Turn it down means refuse it.

## Outwitting a Sugar Addiction

Sugar in my mother's house was a source of fun and togetherness as well as a reward and a solace. My mother baked cakes, beautifully decorated with frosting roses, and fudge, bread pudding, pies, and so forth. She taught me to make these treats as one of our most enjoyable activities. It was when I felt close to her. She also struggled all her life with her weight and nutrition-related health.

As a young adult, I typically didn't eat a lot of these kinds of foods, but I definitely used them as a reward and a distraction from loneliness, boredom, or upset. A few years after learning RC, I decided to tackle sugar and how I had used it as a substitute for feeling my feelings. I also read a lot about the negative health effects of sugar.

I had a few Co-Counseling sessions then came up with<sup>1</sup> some ideas that seemed fun to me. I wanted to play

<sup>1</sup> Came up with means thought of.



WYTSKE VISSER

around with the realization that sugary food was a kind of "dubious friend" always available in nearly every store or kitchen, certainly every restaurant, and even at my workplace. Such enormous social and cultural reinforcement of a sugar addiction required a strong contradiction. But setting rigid goals of self-denial seemed punitive and not an effective way to challenge the pull to eat sugary foods in the face of such easy availability.

I started cutting out of magazines pictures of the kinds of foods my mom had made that I "loved." They were easy to find in any women's magazine. I mounted them on brightly colored paper and brought them to sessions in which I would hold up the mouth-watering pictures and say, "I will never

*continued . . .*

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

eat this again!" I cried, told family stories of these foods, cried, laughed hard, and cried again. Longing for my mother's love and attention quickly arose as the main focus, though I continued to initiate the sessions with the food pictures. I set a goal of not eating sugary foods in restaurants or gatherings and limiting them to when I could pay full attention to eating them, with a friend or my husband also paying attention. This was a way I could imagine a limit that still allowed the occasional pleasure of the treats of my childhood—and their connection to love, the real need.

I cut smaller pictures of my favorite sweets and mounted them on 3x5 cards,<sup>2</sup> which I carried in my purse. Sometimes I would pull them out when I was with certain friends whom I knew would be supportive. I would laugh about these "family pictures," initiating fun conversations about family foods and resulting food addictions. With

family or co-workers with whom this idea wasn't necessarily welcome, I sometimes excused myself to go to the bathroom, where I could give myself a little session using the food pictures as a reminder these "family pictures" were pictures of sad substitutes for love and connection. I also had to have sessions about my relationship to fruit, which my mother had eaten only as "diet food." I needed to discharge to reclaim fruit as an appealing treat. I have also discharged about the concept of "treats," the need for special food to celebrate or reward ourselves.

I kept thinking and discharging about how to make this process fun and silly, emphasizing connection rather than "denial" or withdrawal of fun food. I would sometimes put donuts or cookies in my shopping cart and take them for a ride around the grocery store before putting them back. This sense of humor, as well as laughing of course, about my goals enabled me to have more power over the process. I figured that sugar

and I could "have a relationship," even if it was platonic. I wouldn't engage intimately, but we could kid around.

Sometimes when confronted with a serving plate of something restimulating, I would try to imagine that I had just eaten so much of it that I didn't want any more. Yuck!

I saw an ad for a pastry company on the side of a bus with a picture of a woman hugging a huge muffin, and I wrote to the company and asked for a copy of the picture, which they happily sent to me for free.

Occasionally over the years I have gotten off track<sup>3</sup> and found myself eating sugar unconsciously, usually at social events. (A while back on a vacation with friends I ate part of an ice cream cone and felt sick to my stomach.) I return to my plan by having a session, sometimes including taking out the old food pictures, my "family pictures." Overall I have reduced my intake of sugar from what it was in childhood by about ninety percent. Sugar is often hidden in processed foods, such as salad dressing, and also in restaurant main dishes. I would like to be totally sugar-free.

Now when I see sugary food in shops or on serving plates, with frosting or other decorations, I don't see it as food. It looks like a plate of drugs—pretty, brightly-colored capsules and tablets, numbing and toxic, a profound distortion of the brightly-colored whole, healthy foods to which we have a natural attraction.

I feel proud that I have used discharge, humor, and self-compassion to get as free as I am.

*Marsha Saxton*  
Berkeley, California, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders on  
disability, chronic illness, and health

### Short Talks by Tim Jackins, on CD

Rational Island Publishers has been producing a series of CDs of talks given by Tim Jackins at recent RC workshops. They are intended primarily for RC teachers but can be ordered by anyone. A new CD is produced each quarter. The series is called *RC Teacher Updates*.

For a complete list of all the CDs produced up until now, see page 105 of this *Present Time*.

Anyone can order any of the CDs for \$10 (U.S.) each, plus shipping and handling.

The entire 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 four-CD sets are also available to anyone, for \$25 per set, while supplies last.

If you are a certified RC teacher, the upcoming four CDs per year are available on a subscription basis, one calendar year at a time (but mailed out quarterly as they are released), for \$25 a year.

*For ordering information,  
see page 109.*

<sup>2</sup> Three-inch-wide, five-inch-long cards

<sup>3</sup> Gotten off track means deviated from my plan.

## Co-Counseling and Couples

A talk by Tim Jackins at the Northern California, USA,  
Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop, May 2011

The pamphlet *Co-Counseling for Married Couples*<sup>1</sup> was one of the first RC pamphlets. It was written out of necessity. As people learned RC and things started to change for them, they wanted RC for everyone they cared most about, but often they went home and did exactly the wrong thing.

The Co-Counseling relationship is different from any other relationship. It's one of the few relationships that is actually defined. We clearly define an RC relationship. All our other relationships we struggle to figure out.

Adding RC to an existing relationship can be very useful, but it does need to be well thought about. If both people are in RC and difficulties come up in their non-RC relationship, often one or both of them abandons the non-RC relationship and tries to become a counselor. "Clearly you're upset, dear. This is something you need to work on, and I will be counselor." (*Laughter*)

You have a relationship, you care about each other, and you are familiar with each other's material,<sup>2</sup> but sometimes the attempt at counseling isn't done by mutual agreement. (*Laughter*) It's done because one person can't figure out how to stay in the non-RC relationship and make something good happen. He or she hopes that by turning to the RC relationship, something useful will. Sometimes it does, but it's not reliable because often not enough thinking is going on.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes the best choice is to stay in the non-RC relationship and fight, while trying not to assume that the other person is more irrational than you are at that moment. (*Laughter*)

You both have to stay in the non-RC relationship and figure out what to do. It's possible to agree to suspend that relationship for the moment and do a mini-session, it's possible to use RC tools, but this has to be done by agreement, not by manipulation. (*Laughter*) One of you can't secretly turn counselor and give a lecture or some directions to the other.

Sometimes one of you will be able to step away from the material and be counselor. But again, this has to be by agreement. You both have to agree about what you are going to do. It has to be done together, not by only one of you. You can't simply leave the non-RC relationship.

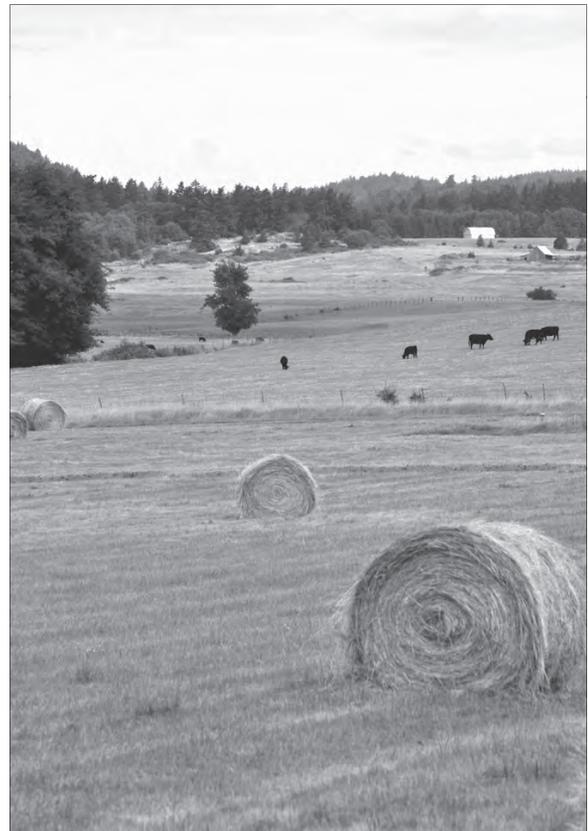
You can also make agreements about what you're going to do the next time you get into one of these snags. You can talk when you are both thinking and agree on what you will do when you are both not thinking. Sometimes particular things happen repeatedly—one of you gets lost and the other gets scared and doesn't know what to do. You can decide what action should be taken at those times, what to do when you can't figure anything out.

Sometimes you will have enough slack to become Co-Counselors for each other. At such times, as is talked about in the pamphlet, it is important to be permissive, supportive counselors. Sometimes it works better for both people to get a phone session with someone else.

<sup>1</sup> A pamphlet, by Harvey Jackins, which is also one of the chapters in the book *The Human Situation*, by Harvey Jackins

<sup>2</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>3</sup> Going on means happening.



SAN JUAN ISLANDS, WASHINGTON, USA • ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

## Working on a Math Difficulty

On working on your math difficulty, I would ask you to consider getting someone who is dependable, and who can stay that way for a while, and do nothing more than add  $2 + 2$  and give the answer. Have your counselor, or whoever, just keep asking you, as if it were a new question, "How much is  $2 + 2$ ?" When you answer correctly, "4," have the person cheer and celebrate and be pleased with you, over and over again. You will feel foolish, but you will discharge a lot of embarrassment; it is the kind of contradiction you need.

It's parallel to getting over stammering or similar difficulties. The contradiction is to not do anything you can possibly do wrong, and to be celebrated for getting the answer right, over and over and over. Don't go on to more difficult things to prove how much you've gained. Just keep being cheered, and let the discharge work the thing out.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1993

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\* Contradiction to distress



© MONNIE PAASHUIS

## The 2013 Pre-World Conferences and World Conference

*Here are the dates for the Pre-World and World Conferences, coming up in 2013:*

January 18 to 21  
Western North America Pre-World Conference

February 7 to 10  
South Asia Pre-World Conference

February 28 to March 3  
Australia/New Zealand Pre-World Conference

March 21 to 24  
Latin America Pre-World Conference

April 4 to 7  
Central/Southern North America  
Pre-World Conference

May 2 to 5  
Africa Pre-World Conference

May 31 to June 3  
Eastern/Southern/Central Europe and  
Middle East Pre-World Conference

June 6 to 9  
Western/Northern Europe  
Pre-World Conference

June 20 to 23  
Eastern North America and Caribbean  
Pre-World Conference

July 11 to 14  
East Asia Pre-World Conference

August 7 to 11  
World Conference

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Please take a look at the lists in the back of this *Present Time* and let us know if you find any inaccuracies. You can send corrections to <publications@rc.org> or to Rational Island Publishers, 719 2nd Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA.

Thanks very much!

*Rational Island Publishers*

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## Increasing the Impact of Local Intensives

Since the RC Community began here, we have occasionally organized one-way intensive counseling for Community members and leaders when they required more support than regular Co-Counseling sessions could provide. This has usually been useful, but I have wanted to see if we could improve how we organize and conduct intensives. Last autumn I was battling some particularly intense restimulations in my life and finally decided to use that as an opportunity to try my ideas about intensives and at the same time hopefully make decisive progress on my own re-emergence.

One of my goals was to organize the intensive so that the counselors would feel part of a united effort that would strengthen the Community. (Otherwise intensives can be a drain on the resources of a Community.) I also wanted to improve the level of counseling offered to the client so that the intensive would be maximally efficient.

The intensive was a smashing<sup>1</sup> success on all counts. This is what we did and learned:

### ***Inviting People to Participate***

I decided to do the pre-intensive organizing myself and ask another counselor to take over the organizing once the intensive started. My goal was to schedule twenty hours of one-way time, in the daytime, over a week. I invited about thirty Co-Counselors in the Region<sup>2</sup> to participate. I asked many counselors whom I knew well and had ongoing counseling relationships with, and several I didn't know well but who were leaders or people I wanted to encourage in their leadership. The counselors felt personally invited and "chosen," especially the ones I didn't have strong connections with.

As could be expected, some of the people invited couldn't take time off from work during the day, but a surprising number were able to participate, and after a few weeks I had eighteen hours of counseling scheduled. Most of the sessions were to be in person, and five by phone.

### ***Finding a Leader and Organizer***

I asked Eva Amundsdotter, my close friend and one of our most experienced RC leaders, if she would lead the intensive, and though her life was busy indeed, she said

yes. Ingela Thenor, my regular Co-Counselor, offered to be Eva's assistant and the organizer once the intensive started. They were an ideal team, who cared deeply about me and knew my struggles and goals intimately.

### ***Support for the Counselors***

In preparation, I wrote a short description of my situation, what I was battling, and directions that had worked up to that point. This was sent to all the counselors.

We scheduled a number of phone conferences in which the counselors could share experiences and think together. All the counselors met (in two groups, because our phone conference system couldn't handle the entire group) on the Sunday before the intensive began. The goal was for everyone to feel united as a group, share a little bit of discharge time, and think together about the client.

During the intensive week, there was a meeting each evening of the counselors who had given time<sup>3</sup> that day and the ones giving time the next day. Those who had given time shared their experiences and thoughts, Eva and Ingela added their thinking, and I provided a short written report from my perspective as client. The counselors for the next day set directions for themselves for the following day's work.

At the end of the week all the counselors again got together, to celebrate and share their impressions.

### ***My Experience as Client***

I had a wonderful week. The counselors were happy and excited to be with me and support me. They often brought directions for me to try, and as the week progressed, they got sharper and sharper in their understanding of my work and how to support it. I was able to be very focused and work effectively, with lots of discharge. My fear that I wouldn't be able to use the time well turned out to be unfounded; in fact, I worked better and better the longer I kept at it.<sup>4</sup> As if by magic, by the last session I came to a clear "finishing" point. The old frozen needs<sup>5</sup> had been discharged to the point where I was free to choose completely differently. I had

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Smashing means great.

<sup>2</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

<sup>3</sup> Given time means given the client sessions.

<sup>4</sup> Kept at it means persisted with it.

<sup>5</sup> Frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels a person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

an unusual session toward the end of the week in which I felt like I was separating the longings I had been working on from my mind with the precision of a filet knife. After that it was like the old longings just “fell away.”

Outside of the sessions I made sure to do active things to bring my attention out. I listened to music, went to the movies, worked out,<sup>6</sup> and so on.

Weeks after the intensive I am still noticing the effects. I feel much closer to other people and more optimistic and relaxed about my life.

### ***The Counselors' Experiences***

The counselors were enthusiastic about being a part of the intensive. They liked supporting me, and my relationships with many leaders in the Region are now stronger because they have seen me struggle and been there to help. This kind of relationship building is a benefit of organizing an intensive locally versus going to Seattle<sup>7</sup> for a week.

The leaders liked being part of a committed group applying RC to make a real, important difference. It seemed to contradict loneliness, isolation, and discouragement. I think they were inspired to pursue their own re-emergence with more vigor and were reminded of what we can do with RC if we put our minds to it. Someone said, “I think this will change our entire Community!”

Here are some more comments from the counselors:

“It was an excellent training in being a better counselor.”

“All the organizing and information-sharing helped me to have more free attention as counselor.”

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<sup>6</sup> Worked out means deliberately exercised.

<sup>7</sup> At Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, in Seattle, Washington, USA, Co-Counseling leaders can receive, for a fee, twenty hours of one-way Re-evaluation Counseling over a week.

“Being a part of the team contradicted some isolation for me.”

“Feelings of hopelessness and isolation have been replaced by happiness in being part of a Region that is so thoughtful and loving.”

“We counselors also did this for each other, and for our Community. It was important for my feeling of connectedness.”

“I’d like to take part<sup>8</sup> in more intensives like this.”

“Uniting to make a difference.”

### ***Lessons and Suggestions***

For another time, here are some thoughts for improvements:

I would probably have someone else do the ahead-of-time organizing. It was almost inevitable that feelings of rejection would come up when people canceled or replied that they didn’t want to participate.

The number of phone meetings was demanding. It would probably work as well for the counselors who have given time to send short written reports and for the evening meeting to be only for the next day’s counselors.

People had several ideas for ways to organize intensive counseling that would be less time consuming. For example, five to six people could give each other time in a concentrated period.

*Søren Holm  
Regional Reference Person for Finland  
and parts of Stockholm, Sweden  
Vaxholm, Sweden*

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<sup>8</sup> Take part means participate.



AUSTRALIA • DIANE SHISK

## A Life-Changing Workshop

Dear Russ<sup>1</sup> and all who attended the Educational Change Workshop,<sup>2</sup>

I want to let you know what a life-changing workshop that was for me. Afterward I was able to practice the idea that “having feelings needn’t stop me from doing anything.” What you said, Russ, about “stopping waiting” made sense to me. I can think and act outside of the distress, so I should just get on and do that. It has established some clarity for me about keeping my focus on my goals and not letting my feelings dissuade me from every day reaching for a better life and a better world. It has cut through some discouragement and powerlessness.

I also took on<sup>3</sup> the idea that I needed to go back to that uninformed, under resourced, hurting, and hence unthinking little girl<sup>4</sup> and help her make new decisions. I spent a lot of time just being with “my little girl self,” while she sat, not knowing what to do. I kept saying to her, “Take as long as you want. This is important.” I let her know that she didn’t need to decide what she had once decided, under pressure and hurting, in an attempt to make sense of humans and life. I never noticed her making a new decision, but now when I go back and think of her, she is playing and laughing. She loves and completely trusts me. I have a much clearer picture of when that little girl is going for<sup>5</sup> a session and when I am being myself, now, in the present.

<sup>1</sup> Russ Vernon-Jones, the Regional Reference Person for Western Massachusetts, USA

<sup>2</sup> The Educational Change Workshop took place in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, USA, July 29 to August 2, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Took on means adopted.

<sup>4</sup> The author is referring to her younger self.

<sup>5</sup> Going for means trying to have.



I stopped smiling all the time. I think someone called it frozen cheerfulness. I had never heard that term before, but I immediately connected it to what I had been doing. Because I stopped smiling, I was able to feel more and different things, and listen better. I had smiled to reassure people, to let them know that everything was all right and that I liked them. When I stopped, I realized that everything *was* all right and that I was connected to people. I could stop trying to make it so, because it already was. The smiling was also saying to people, “Don’t show me hard things, or too many of them.” It was a way of protecting myself. I have stopped reassuring people, including my Co-Counselors, and have started interrupting them when they reassure me. I don’t need it. All is well, and we are in this together.

The big shift was that I no longer cared if people liked me. I saw liking as the natural state of affairs, or a decision—not something won through smiling or reassurance or helping or kindness. What mattered was whether or not people could be with me in the project of my own liberation and the liberation of all people from oppression.

I had some new thoughts about my work as an artist and as the head of an “elite” actor training school. It no longer made sense to me to gather in some young adults with the promise of “success,” in capitalism’s terms; of fame as the

way to fill a frozen need<sup>6</sup> for love and approval—to groom them to make them successful commodities in the industry. That was just setting them up for<sup>7</sup> further disappointment. It was heading them not out of their early hurts but into restimulation of them. What mattered was that people, all people, got to reclaim their inherent creative natures; that young adults got to discharge and think about what it means to live in a capitalist society and claim the idea that the common good is the only rational organizing principle for a society; that those who wanted to make a living from art got to discharge and think about setting themselves up as a small business within the system; that they, and I, got to discharge and think about there being limited resource in the world and how that resource should be managed. Some thinking of John Fehringier’s<sup>8</sup> helped me to see this. He suggested that people who identify as artists work on their hurts related to their creativity separately from their hurts related to making money. I realized I’d been lost in an unthinking position: wanting to be supported as an artist but unable to make sense of the fact that all artists deserve support and that there is limited resource.

I have plans to change how the university where I work thinks about the training of artists, and who it trains. I am devising a curriculum and an entry system that will spread

*continued . . .*

<sup>6</sup> Frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels a person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

<sup>7</sup> Setting them up for means predisposing them to.

<sup>8</sup> John Fehringier is the International Liberation Reference Person for Visual Artists.

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

the resources previously offered to twelve students a year amongst more and different students. My aim is to create a course and a system that will have value for working-class, country, and Indigenous young adults, as well as middle-class and owning-class ones. When I have put out my thinking to colleagues, I have gotten to hear their great thinking and their hopes for social change

and a more equitable distribution of resource.

There is some seeking of privilege, status, and “success” that I can let go of now.

I no longer see Co-Counseling as clearing up my material<sup>9</sup> so that I am

<sup>9</sup> Material means distress.

a better person. I see it as allowing me to stay focused on my goals for my own liberation and the liberation of all people from oppression. I wake with hope and energy about what each day will bring, and allow me to do.

*Anne Thompson*

Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

## Holding a Direction

Each one I've ever known wears despair  
Somewhere about him, wrestling with it daily,  
And some do private combat only, feeling  
That decency forbids exposing others.  
While some will hide it from the world at large  
But stab and beat those closest to them with it  
As if it were a clay pot they could break  
From off their heads upon their loved ones' strength.

Some dramatize despair instead of living  
The noises that they tried to call for help with  
Have now enfolded and engulfed the human,  
Insistent hopelessness, embraced and championed  
Enforced, destructively, on all who near them.

Some few have raised this to a theory,  
Constructed new philosophies of funk.  
Their literature has futile, hopeless endings  
With little sprigs of “we must still be brave,”  
“Though all is futile, we can still be kind”  
Which sometimes brings them literary prizes  
And followings among the insecure.

Yet all of this despair is vicious nonsense,  
The grey discouragement which winds our ankles,  
Yammers within our heads and sags our spirits  
Is only ghostly shapes of childhood terrors  
Only scratchy recordings of those bad times  
When as dependent children we confronted  
A world our store of knowledge could not cope with  
When parents turned into despairing robots  
And still looked like our parents, leaving us  
To face a universe gone mad about us.

These frozen memories re-echo in us  
And are exchanged in daily conversation  
But not to any purpose nor to good.  
Traveling another route we came upon them  
And viewed them from their point of origin  
And saw without mistake their empty nature  
And after much discussion and much discharge  
And putting all our clear spaces together  
We have a rule that works unailing for us.

“Always be positive, be optimistic,  
Always speak good, always encourage, praise  
Always lead our and others' free attention  
To what is reassuring and inspiring.”

To do this is to stand against confusion—  
Dark, pseudo-thoughts and feelings will assail us  
From out our own distresses and from others',  
And if we stand insistent on the up-beat  
Those burdened with despairs will come converging  
From miles around and pound despair upon us  
Apparently to force compliance with it  
But really hoping we will stand against it  
And force chinks in their gloom and loan them courage.

Ourselves need weep and yawn and storm and shudder  
But, as we hold our bearing, all around us  
Reality will lift and show its nature  
More positive than the stand we took on courage  
More reassuring than we dreamed or hoped for.

*Harvey Jackins*

*From Zest Is Best*

## Co-Counselors Targeting Us in Session

*A talk by Tim Jackins at the Northern California, USA,  
Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop, May 2011*

*Question:* Sometimes when I'm counselor, my client attacks me. He checks in to see if I am okay with being targeted, and I am way too restimulated to say no. I have no idea how to interrupt this. It feels like sexism, like racism. How do I work on it? Well, how do I get my Co-Counselor to work on it?

*Tim:* You can work on what is restimulated, of course, but your agreeing to be someone's Co-Counselor is not an agreement to be targeted by his or her distress. You don't have to do that. Anytime people target other people, they are asking for help with some distress that they don't know how to work on, so you are probably going to have to take the lead to find a good way to counsel and discharge on it. When an irritated noise comes out, you are going to have to catch it and ask, "What's going on<sup>1</sup>? Why do you think that's the thing to do? Why did you do that? What's going on in your mind right now?" You can go in after them<sup>2</sup> where they get lost.

Most of us are good counselors as long as we and our client clearly love each other. As soon as the client's tone changes, we can get scared. We pull back and wait for the session to be over instead of figuring out, "Okay, there is something to do here. We know each other, we have been good to each other, we've tried to help each other, and here's a snag. What do I do about it?"

<sup>1</sup> Going on means happening.

<sup>2</sup> Go in after them means pursue them.

It's all right that you call this person on<sup>3</sup> where he gets lost, and it's all right that you think that racism and sexism are going on. They might be. You can also say before the session starts, "Would you try working on this?" and not wait to see if the difficulties happen again.

<sup>3</sup> Call the person on means bring the person's attention to.



ZIZ VALLEY OLIVES, MOROCCO • MICHAEL HAND

It would be nice if each of us always had a perspective on our material<sup>4</sup> that would lead us in a good direction, but our distresses can confuse us more than that. It's all right that somebody else tries to think about us and takes initiative and tries directions in places where we can't easily think well. We can appreciate any effort that comes to us in this way. Unfortunately, we can't always expect our clients to be immediately cooperative when we do this for them. The distress can be heavy, and they can get defensive about it. But there will be ways to ask the right questions to get them going in a good direction.

You don't have to accept it when someone aims his or her material at you. Being targeted is not part of our agreement as Co-Counselors. Maybe you need to call in outside help. When distresses get snagged or things seem to be getting stuck, it's often useful to add a third person to sessions.

If you have counseled a lot with someone, you can "wear out" your sessions in the sense that less and less happens in them. That's another time when it often helps to bring in a third person and do a three-way session. With the other person's attention, you can get a different glimpse of your Co-Counselor. Sometimes you need a relationship session as well.

It's all right to challenge the places where things get difficult. You don't have to treat your Co-Counselors as if they're the best they can possibly be or think that things couldn't be better. Good luck. (*Laughter*)

<sup>4</sup> Material means distress.

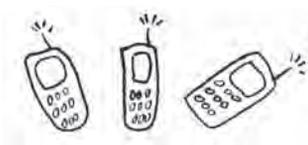
# What Is My Relationship to Capitalism?

From the newsletter of the Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, RC Community

What is my relationship to capitalism? I have been asking myself this question in my Co-Counseling sessions. I suspect that everyone on our planet at this time has a personal and perhaps unexamined relationship to capitalism. I cannot avoid this relationship, so I decided to look directly at my thoughts and feelings.

For example, no matter what my life experience has been, the moment someone finds out I am a Jew, he or she has unexamined assumptions about my relationship to capitalism. Perhaps this happens whenever people from different class or national or other identities meet.

I've noticed that answering this question in sessions has exposed early chronic hurts in a fresh way, leaving me with more relaxed attention for the present situation.



Louisa Flander  
Kew, Victoria, Australia

On the one hand, I think and feel that capitalism has nothing to do with me. I would never have chosen to be in a society that is bound by capitalism in any way.

In reality, every pore of me is influenced by capitalism: my mind, my body and health, my capacity to be close with other people and be pleased with myself, how I spend my time, and so on. I benefit every minute of every day and night from my enormous privilege in this system, and my mind is deeply preoccupied with getting all I can, which hugely undermines my ability to think clearly, be close with other people, overcome chronic isolation, and have my life exactly how I want it. (This is good to notice!)

In writing this, I realise how magnificently I have fought, and still do, against capitalism—clawing and playing my way back to cooperative caring and community. And it's good to notice that we are doing this together in the Area\* leaders' class.

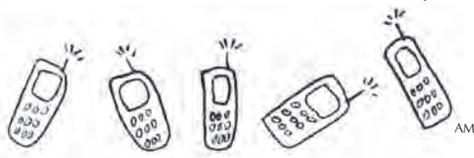
Vicky Grosser  
Geelong, Victoria, Australia

\* An Area is a local RC Community.

*In our ongoing class we have been discharging on the question, "What is my relationship to capitalism?" I have found it to be a fruitful source of discharge, and I am beginning to think it is transforming my perception of myself and the way I view the world. I always had a secret belief that capitalism would keep me safe. It was completely unexamined, and I don't think I admitted it was my belief until I was asked to discharge on this question.*

*During one of the first classes on the question, I had a glimpse of a world without capitalism and felt a great wave of relief. In that moment I realised that for all my talking over many years about ending capitalism, I had never really imagined what it would be like not to have a capitalist world. It was very, very freeing.*

Victoria Kemp  
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia



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## Being Couseled by Our Children

A discussion from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of parents



Dear parents,

My son is six. He understands clearly that Co-Counseling sessions help me to be a better, nicer, more fun mom, especially when I am restimulated. When I'm upset, he has started suggesting that I get sessions. He also sometimes wants to give me sessions. I have let him do that a few times, and he does a good job; I can cry a lot. I try to limit anything I say to something that would not be confusing to him. The last couple of times when I've tried to wrap the session up,<sup>1</sup> he has wanted me to continue. (One of the sweet things he does is bring over a few of his stuffed toys to pay attention to me, with him. There is a small crew that seems to be the designated team.)

I've told him that I don't think he should have to give me sessions, that children should not have to give their parents sessions, but I've also not wanted to deny him an opportunity to be in charge and powerful.

Today we've been having a rough time again, and I asked him what he thought we should do. He suggested I have a session and that he give it to me. Are there guidelines for this? Thoughts and experiences from other parents?

"Our children are always counseling us—and we are often not aware of it, which is young people's oppression. They are brilliant, and I think it is the right thing to follow their lead, show them that we trust their minds, and let them have our whole hearts. This is a project we get to do together, with them."

Many thanks,  
S—  
USA



Dear S—,

I am so glad you asked this. I have the same question! I have some thoughts to share (not answers). I will start with a few anecdotes of how my son, who just turned two, counsels me and how I respond.

He has a hard time getting to sleep some nights. My husband or I lie with him in bed, and he tosses, turns, plays, talks, sings, for upwards of an hour. (This is a great improvement for a previously very scared boy who used to take four to five hours to get to sleep. Thank you family work<sup>2</sup>!)

One night recently, I was spent from parenting, exhausted, and desperate for my non-parenting time. Lying in bed with my son as he ran laps around the mattress, I felt that he would never get to sleep. I knew I didn't have the attention to counsel him, and I felt trapped. At some point he climbed up onto me, crouched on my chest, put his nose up to my nose, and said in a loving voice (in his amazing way, as someone who is just learning language), "Hi Cutie!" I laughed. He seemed delighted that I laughed, and he did it again. As much as I tried

not to laugh and to remain "serious" about falling asleep, I couldn't help but smile. He said it over and over again, until he seemed reassured that my discharge was escalating. Then he listened while I giggled uncontrollably. I laughed harder, and then he said, "Cry!" and sure enough I cried and laughed and cried some more, while he sat there looking loving, delighted, proud of himself, and increasingly relaxed. Any time my discharge started to abate, he got in my face and chirped, "Hi Cutie!" again. I didn't say anything while I was discharging (I didn't want to verbalize any distresses about the sleep struggles) other than to occasionally pause and say, "This is helping. Thank you," and check that his face still seemed in charge, relaxed, and pleased—and it did. That was my meter. My session lasted about eight minutes, and afterward I was much more relaxed and connected to him and less urgent about him falling asleep. I wondered if I should then look for a chance to give him a session, but

*continued . . .*

<sup>2</sup> Family work is the application of Re-evaluation Counseling to the particular situations of young people and families with young children. It entails young people and adults (both parents and allies) interacting in ways that allow young people to show and be themselves and to not be dominated by the adults.

<sup>1</sup> Wrap the session up means end the session.

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

he seemed much more relaxed after I had discharged. He sang happily, lying close to me, for about five minutes and then fell soundly asleep.

Another short anecdote: My husband recently hit his head on a cabinet. He squatted on the floor, saying “Oww!” and then tried to move on without discharging. My son ran to him, smiled in his face, and said “Dada cry!” My husband laughed and thanked him. I said, “Go ahead, Daddy, follow his lead. He’s right. You should cry.” My husband laughed and cried for a few minutes, and my son seemed very pleased.

I think there is a difference between (1) our children being our only or primary counselors and filling in for support we’re not getting elsewhere and (2) their having the space to be powerful and be leaders, with us acknowledging their intelligence in our relationships. When my son is doing the former, he looks like he is trying to entertain or perform for us to increase our attention—kind of like caretaking. When he is doing the latter, he is in charge, relaxed, and seemingly tickled by<sup>3</sup> having the chance to give us a hand<sup>4</sup> with getting our feelings out. Afterward I always communicate to him that his love is powerful and his thinking makes a huge difference. I think that’s a good contradiction to young people’s oppression, which sets us up to think of children only as clients.

I need to do more discharging on this, because I was set up to counsel my own parents in ways that were too much for me to handle and in which I was powerless. If I had been permitted to listen to them in ways that were effective and in which my thinking was valued, it would have made a huge difference in my life. I would like to discharge enough to really be able to tell the difference between the two.



A—  
USA

I think it is important to let our children counsel us. We always need to stay thinking and be responsible clients, but we also need to not hold ourselves back from them. Our children are always counseling us—and we are often not aware of it, which is young people’s oppression. They are brilliant, and I think it is the right thing to follow their lead, show them that we trust their minds, and let them have our whole hearts. This is a project we get to do together, with them.

*Jenny Szama*  
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>3</sup> Tickled by means delighted with.

<sup>4</sup> A hand means some help.

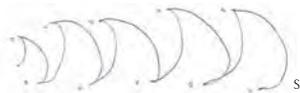
This is a tough one for me, because when I was young (and not growing up with the resource of RC), I was repeatedly set up to counsel my mother while she cliented at me with neither awareness nor permission, thus planting the seeds of many of my distress patterns.

That’s not to say, however, that I think it’s automatically incorrect for young people to counsel their parents.

I think the most important thing to be aware of is that our children look to us to hold out a picture of reality for them—benign reality. My mom cliented at me from a place of pretty<sup>5</sup> intense victim feelings. That was confusing for me, and I’ve had to fight my way back to a clearer picture of reality.

As a parent, I’d say that when clienting with one’s son or daughter, doing it with attention off distress is probably a good way to go. (It’s generally a good direction to take no matter who is counseling us.) I think that holding up benign reality as a contradiction<sup>6</sup> that brings discharge for us is a fantastic way of leading the way for our children.

And who doesn’t adore the look on a loved one’s face after he or she emerges from some good discharge, refreshed and reconnected to the reality of our inherent goodness?



*Jim Pyke*  
Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

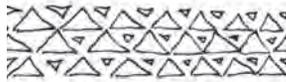
When I was young, I often noticed that my parents needed sessions. I noticed their chronic distresses, their oppression, and particularly where they didn’t have attention for me or my brothers and felt as though I should somehow fix all that. As an adult in RC, I have realized that I didn’t actually counsel them: they weren’t equipped to be effective clients, nor was I equipped to be their counselor. If I had counseled them, things would have improved in ways that they unfortunately did not.

Our children have a different opportunity: to effectively assist us—by their choice, using their best thinking, with us as thoughtful, aware clients—and then see the whole situation move forward as a result. That is unlike anything I experienced as a young person.

<sup>5</sup> Pretty means quite.

<sup>6</sup> Contradiction to distress

I sometimes tell my daughter something like this: "You're right, I (or Dad or your teacher) have a difficulty in that area. I'm going to do everything I can to address that, including having (or giving the person) sessions about it. If you want, you can try out some of your own ideas about how to help me (or them) with it, but it's mostly my (or their) job."



AEB

*Becky Schuster*  
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

My husband and nine-year-old daughter and I were on vacation recently, and at one point my husband got very restimulated. My daughter knew exactly what to do. She said, "Mommy, give Daddy a session. I will go for a walk." She got out of the car and went and took pictures of the landscape, while I gave my husband a session. When she came back, everyone had better attention. It is great to have RC tools as a family, and she is clear on how to use them!



C—  
USA

*I was one of those children who "had to counsel her parent," and after hundreds of sessions on the effects of that, I think the examples on this list are not the same thing at all. In my case,*

*a) No one in the house understood the value of discharge or the difference between "things we say just to get them out of our way" and "things we say because we really mean them,"*

*b) I was not asked for permission; if I had been given other options, I would have preferred to go play with someone who was feeling zestful,*

*c) I was told things that were confusing to me, and I hated holding those distorted pictures in my mind,*

*d) My parents did not have enough other counselors with whom to discharge regularly in between occasional, spontaneous mini-sessions given by me,*

*e) I also did not have my own turns, which, of course, was the biggest distortion of all.*

*So my thought on reading these e-mails is, "Great work, team! Our future is bright!"*



*Jennifer Kreger*  
Fort Bragg, California, USA

I watch young people who grow up in RC do such great things with their lives and friends. Those who have come into our Community through the high school class or the young adult classes we've taught use RC boldly.

In our young adult class, we did a lot of work on oppressor patterns. We discharged hard on early times when we turned the ways we had been hurt onto someone else and hurt that person. We also played a lot of games, especially "If you really knew me . . ." in which we shared something a best friend would know about us.

At a holiday gathering with my extended family, we began to play that game and my daughter-in-law took what she had learned in class and asked everyone in the family to share "If you really knew the first time I did something hurtful to someone else, you would know about this incident . . ." I thought, "Oh, my God. What is going to come out? Does she know what she is opening up here?" But she was bold, confident, and relaxed, with awesome attention, and since most of our early oppressor behavior had been acted out in that family on each other, we were all laughing and crying and apologizing for stuff that had been sitting on us for decades. She was thoughtful but not careful about taking it on,<sup>7</sup> and it moved the family so far forward.

What I keep noticing is that young people (including young adults) are way less careful, in a good way, about integrating RC into regular daily life. Our children want to use the information. They want to be powerful. They want to love us fully, along with their friends and grown-up allies. We get to be thoughtful about how we client, but we also get to model the discharge process. We get to not only learn to be awesome counselors to young people but also smart clients with them.



E—  
USA

<sup>7</sup> Taking it on means confronting it and doing something about it.

# Bring Your Body to Sessions

Marsha Saxton  
International Liberation Reference  
Person for People with Disabilities

Do you bring your body into your Co-Counseling sessions? Take this free quiz to find out!

1. At the first sign of a head cold, do you get a mini-session? Do you appreciate your immune system and plan for extra rest and discharge?  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes
2. When you do get sick, maybe with something more serious, instead of taking the medicine and waiting to get over it, do you get lots of discharge, ask for encouragement to take great care of yourself, and plan for your recovery?  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes
3. If you have occasional physical distress that is fairly predictable (for example, a pollen allergy in the spring, menstrual cramps, a headache when you visit your family), do you counsel on it before it happens again, not just when you are in discomfort? (Or do you even counsel on it when you *are* in discomfort?)  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes
4. If you have pain, for whatever reason, do you take over-the-counter pain medication and wonder if it's not the best thing but not really know what else to do?  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes



BATTENKILL RIVER, VERMONT, USA • STEVE BANBURY

5. If you get a sports injury, for example, a sprained ankle or a wrenched shoulder, do you know what can be helpful about addressing that in your sessions?  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes
6. If you struggle with getting enough exercise, or eating right, do you ask for help from your Co-Counselors? Do you have a mini-session at night when tempted to go for the ice cream? Do you set some reasonable goals and ask your Co-Counselor to check back with you next week?  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes
7. If you struggle with a food or other kind of addiction, do you discharge about it? Do you ask yourself what you would have to feel if you didn't eat or use the food or substance, and then discharge the feelings?  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes
8. Do you counsel on how your parents and other family treated their own bodies and health?  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes
9. Have you ever scanned your past for "early body memories"—like memories of childhood illnesses, or of scary events in which you or a family member got injured, or of being left alone in the crib or tickled in ways that were scary—physical experiences that likely left distress recordings? There could also be good memories of being held close or carried; or of exciting physical fun, like swinging, riding on a roller coaster, or jumping into the water. Any physical incident can have a big impact on you!  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes
10. Have you and your regular Co-Counselor each taken turns on how the internalized oppression from your class background, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and so on, has *targeted your body*? Examples: working-class oppression forces people to submit to overwork and disregard their health; women's bodies are objectified.  
 yes  no  maybe/sometimes

11. Do you worry about getting older, wonder about the effects on your health, but feel unsure of how to counsel about this?

yes  no  maybe/sometimes

12. When you discharge on chronic material<sup>1</sup> by going to early memories, do you remember that your body was involved in early distressing experiences, that whatever happened to you was happening to *your body*, and that this may have had a big impact on your health, your sleep, your choices about food; on exercise, physical closeness, physical comfort, your experience of pain, and so forth?

yes  no  maybe/sometimes

13. If you have a serious medical condition, have you organized a few of your Co-Counselors to think and discharge together about supporting you to get the best care, discharge strategically and effectively, and plan to fully recover as soon as possible?

yes  no  maybe/sometimes

14. If you are not confident that your Co-Counselor can think well enough about your health struggle, do you offer to counsel that person on his or her distress about bodies and health?

yes  no  maybe/sometimes

Okay, good job! Now add up your yes's, no's, and maybe's. How did you do on the quiz? You decide: could you bring your body to your sessions more often? Discharging regularly on physical distress can help with your health, your sleep, your attention. It can improve your functioning, your longevity, and your overall well-being. It can speed your clarity about internalized oppression. It can enhance your re-emergence. We can't re-emerge without bringing our bodies with us!

**Hint! Many of the questions above are also suggestions for your sessions.**

If you need more information about counseling on physical distress, get a hold of a copy of the RC journal *Well-Being*.<sup>2</sup> It is full of useful information and inspiring success stories. Bring the journal to your sessions, and read it together with your Co-Counselors. And bring your body to your sessions!

El Cerrito, California, USA

<sup>1</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>2</sup> *Well-Being* is the RC journal for exchange of information and ideas about health.

*New CD available . . .*

## The Liberation of the Middle Class

A talk by Seán Ruth, the International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People

Seán Ruth, the International Liberation Reference Person for the Middle Class, presents clear, candid information about middle-class oppression and liberation. He emphasizes that the middle class has been systematically separated from the working class, not through fault of its own but because of a damaging oppression. With kindness and humor, he maps out a perspective on middle-class people that offers hope for directly challenging the effects of the oppression and moving toward the necessary transformation of society.

This is a useful talk for anyone, of any class background, interested in understanding the ways that classism divides us from each other.

*For ordering information, see page 109.*



GLUDRUN ONKELS

Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.

*Simone Weil*

## Listen? Do?

I have been thinking lately about the following: Often in Co-Counseling sessions, the client comes up with<sup>1</sup> a problem she or he would like to discharge on and solve, and the counselor offers a direction or way of working that aims at getting rid of the distress in a forceful way. The idea is to go for it,<sup>2</sup> to be decisive, to really challenge the distress, to really push the client toward a big step forward.

I have started to wonder whether that aim, that forcefulness, isn't sometimes more a version of a pattern of taking over,<sup>3</sup> of wanting to fix the distress yesterday because it feels unbearable to witness, and (because we live in an impatient

society, and internalized "mental health" oppression orders us to "fix" each other) wanting to rescue our client, or even heal her or him.

I wonder whether it might sometimes be wise to slow down a little; to be reticent, sparing, slow, in offering such forceful directions or ways of working.

I think of someone having a wart and someone else trying to help her or him get rid of it by slamming it off with a hammer. That would do more damage than good. Distress, I think, must be melted off. Imagine helping someone get rid of a wart by touching it, ever so gently, so that the person the wart is attached to will think, "Oh yes, that wart. I was wanting to get rid of that. Why don't I get my melting fluid (discharge and re-evaluation) and dissolve it some more?"

One of Harvey Jackins' images was that of a person with a heap of rotten cabbage leaves on his or her head. He said, "You wouldn't confuse the person with the rotten cabbage leaves, now would you? You'd easily be able to tell them apart."

If you wanted to help the person get rid of the rotten muck on her or his head, would you take a piece of wood and hit it off? It isn't even attached to the person! You could give a gentle shove, and the person would notice the mucky wetness on her or his head and shake it off herself or himself.

I am interested to hear other people's thoughts on this.

*Gitka Hamburger*

Amsterdam, the Netherlands  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members

<sup>1</sup> Comes up with means thinks of.

<sup>2</sup> Go for it means pursue it energetically.

<sup>3</sup> Taking over means assuming control.

## Thoughts on Both Sides of the Question

How much of being a counselor should be simply listening and supporting the client's thinking?

This is a good question. I'll share thoughts on both sides of it.



TOGO • MARION OUPHOUET

I have seen patterns creep into counseling such that the counselor listens for a short time and then says, "Okay, repeat this direction." In the situations I am talking about, there is not much connection with the client, not much understanding, just a quick thought that is the opposite of the distress. It makes counseling into a formula. Missing are the thought and caring necessary for the client to be able to tell<sup>1</sup> that another intelligence is actually thinking about her or him.

I have to remind myself, "Never think you are smarter than the client." Usually if I do, I am not fully appreciating what the client has faced in her or his life and how much intelligence she or he has tried to bring to bear on the issue.

Sometimes new Co-Counselors, worried about the counselor role, want to know what to "do" as counselor. It is sometimes hard to convince them just how powerful listening is.

As opposed to merely thinking about "techniques," a good question for the counselor is, "How available are you in a session? How much of you—how much attention, how much awareness—do you bring to the session?"

<sup>1</sup> Tell means be aware.

New people may not realize how much work it takes to bring "all of you" as a counselor to the session. And then there is the question of how much attention you have for the material<sup>2</sup> the client is working on. The more that one has worked on all aspects of oppression, and the common distresses that people encounter, the more of oneself one can bring.

How much caring can you show? How much can you show that you like the client, and how many ways do you have of showing that?

Some of my best counseling is done with my mouth shut. One person appreciated my leadership of a workshop by saying, "It is interesting watching you counsel people. You don't say much. A person could think that you aren't doing anything, but the clients aren't fooled. They can tell that your mind is busy, that they have your full attention, that there is a lot of resource and caring there for them to use. You have such great respect for the mind of the client."

So that is one side of the issue. On the other side, I value another person's thinking about me, particularly when she or he has taken the time to get to know and think about me. And it is so special when someone can jump in and do something strong and forceful against the patterns I struggle with.

Some counseling is too much "at arm's length"; counselors are too afraid or limited by their culture to get very involved, to get very close, or to take many risks in helping the client fight off the distress. They listen and watch clients' distresses tie them in knots without jumping in and helping the clients fight.

One of my best sessions ever was a complete surprise. A person counseling me in front of a workshop talked about me to the group for most of the session. He talked about my early life, and about my current struggle. I discharged hard all the way through it. I hardly talked at all. He was clearer about me than I was! And he gave me a challenging direction at the end. It was such a contradiction to the chronic feeling that I am alone, that no one knows or sees me. Sometimes counselors talk about my patterns and I feel criticized. I did not feel the least bit criticized. He respected that I had fought my way, with all of my humanness, through a huge mountain of oppression, and he described that fight clearly. He understood my struggle. It was one of the greatest expressions of love I have ever experienced.

<sup>2</sup> Material means distress.



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • AMANDA MARTINEZ

Another example of "bold counseling" was before I was in RC. A woman I was beginning a relationship with was trying to tell me about an upset she had with me. I could not understand what the problem was. Finally she became so angry that she just burst out in very direct language that made it clear that I had treated her badly.

Wow! It was true! I am so glad she got angry enough that I could understand her.

Of course it was true. That was the way I was conditioned, and my goals regarding women were to a great extent influenced by that conditioning. I immediately vowed to give up those goals and to imagine in any situation involving women what a different relationship would be like.

That transformed my life. I may have reached the same conclusion after a hundred or so sessions of someone listening to me think about women, but I am deeply grateful that this woman did not keep her mouth shut. It saved me years of painful fumbling around with relationships that were on some level hurtful and non-productive.

Especially where oppression is involved, I think some direct action and clear information to counter the distresses are sometimes needed. I don't think we want to limit our responses.

In a few cases I have been quite forceful as a counselor. Some men I have been close to have had distresses that were leading them in bad directions that I knew would have bad

*continued . . .*



KK

... continued

effects on their lives. In one case, I convinced a person to let me make important decisions for him for a period of months. In another case, I argued with and yelled at a person for half an hour to get him to come to a support group. I then stole one of his valuable personal items to make sure that he came. I wondered how the two other guys in the group would react to my doing such a thing. It was embarrassing. I wish I could have been more elegant, but he came to the group and had a good session, and the other two guys cried and worked on their early distresses that had caused them to easily give up on men. I had known the person for years and knew that no one else saw him as clearly as I did. I knew that if he did not come to the group, he was unlikely to get help elsewhere, so the stakes were high, and time was short. I had to act and not abandon him to his distresses.

It would not be good counseling if I acted like that with every client. I do it rarely. But I do think we have to be ready

to risk something for our client and not, as I like to say, counsel "at arm's length."

There is an anti-alcohol advertisement on U.S. television that says, "Friends do not let friends drive drunk." It is to help people overcome the cultural pattern of not "interfering" with another person's free choice. Well, if it is a pattern, it is not a free choice.

Clearly the most powerful tool in a counseling session is the brilliant mind of the client. However, when that client is stuck in a particularly destructive pattern, or sometimes even as an expression of love, some thoughtful action may be helpful.

How does one become thoughtful? That takes some work.



Dan Nickerson  
Freeport, Maine, USA  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members

## Trusting the Counselor's Mind

I loved what you wrote, Dan.<sup>1</sup> It reminds me of our one-point program.<sup>2</sup> I have some thinking, too.

As a client, when the counselor pushes me to places where huge terror shuts me down,<sup>3</sup> I sometimes get lost and try every direction to get away from that feeling. It seems easier to think that the counselor gets it totally wrong, or at least a big part of it.

A while ago I decided to take the risk and discharge the terror, where I feel like no one can ever be trusted. When I do that, I keep saying things like, "I do not trust you. I think this is not right. I have no control. This is so terrifying." That way the counselor knows where I struggle

and can tell me that right now I am safe, and things like that. It has been working well.

Several times an experienced client has avoided me for a long time after I did some bold counseling. (By that I mean counseling in which I took risks and fought with all I had for the client's liberation.) I've noticed that often the client had not made a decision, for real, to work together with me to find the spot where the terror could be discharged. It is that place where the dirt and ugliness of distress need to come out. Many of us want to go only so far, and to be able to keep control. (For me that might be connected to an old decision to never fully trust anyone ever again.)

I also notice that some people have given up so much on the mind of someone else that they argue with every direction they get. They keep telling the counselor that they know better. Recently a client told me, as an excuse for not having taken the

direction I came up with,<sup>4</sup> that my tone had been too caring.

I have learned that when criticism of me as the counselor comes from a client who shows some superiority or oppressor distress, it always shuts me down. I go quiet and stay nice and friendly, being a bit bored. A session like that does not bring the client much further. It also leaves me unhappy with it. I wonder what work the client should do first to get past the pattern of being too frightened to cooperate with the counselor's mind, and then be able to move on.

For myself, I think it might help if I worked some more on trusting my own thinking, and taking it seriously.

Wyske Visser  
Ljouwert, Fryslan, the Netherlands  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members

<sup>1</sup> See previous article.

<sup>2</sup> The one-point program of the RC Community is to use RC to seek recovery of one's occluded intelligence and humanness and to assist others to do the same.

<sup>3</sup> Shuts me down means overwhelms me to where I am unable to think or discharge.

<sup>4</sup> Came up with means thought of.



## Contradicting Chronic Distress



The tools of RC have been invaluable to me as I've begun to navigate our society's construct of adulthood. Transitioning out of being a full-time college student, while still finishing up my senior thesis project, has restimulated the early distress of my life in a deep way. This is my first experience of fully battling a chronic distress pattern, and I've had to adjust to the idea that having a session does not reliably result in feeling better.

Over the last few months, explaining (and being proud of) my decision to take time off from full-time employment has often felt daunting, especially in the face of recordings<sup>1</sup> about work and productivity. I've felt pulled to minimize myself because I was "struggling." Some of the most unexpected contradictions<sup>2</sup> provided by my Co-Counselors have related to noticing my importance and value. The feelings that continue to come up are difficult, at times excruciating. Nonetheless I get to take ownership of the fact that this is a great opportunity to move forward in my life, no matter how bad it feels.

Below are some examples of effective contradictions relating to my work on early, heavy distress:

"I am doing good work. I am brave."

"This could be a very important time in my life."

"It is possible that I could be exactly where I need to be."

"Taking care of myself is leadership."

"I get to act from a place where I know people love me and want to be connected with me."

"I am creating the life I want."

Sometimes when the bad feelings creep in and I begin to feel stuck, I find it essential to keep the most resonant "reality statements" in mind. They provide great opportunities for discharge, even when I can't get a session right away. Being persistent and intentional with this has been immensely helpful in keeping my attention balanced.<sup>3</sup> Here are some of those statements:

"I have no reason to ever feel bad about myself. Ever."

<sup>1</sup> Distress recordings

<sup>2</sup> Contradictions to the distress

<sup>3</sup> Keeping my attention balanced means keeping enough of my attention off of distress and on good reality.

"At any given moment, I have always done my best (given my distress and the distress of those around me)."

"Any feeling not rooted in love is a form of distress, and can be fully discharged."

"It is not my fault that I have accumulated some distress. I do not get to feel bad about myself because of it. (In fact, it would be easier for us to move past our distress if we didn't feel bad about ourselves for having it.)"

"Though I may feel terrible, I am still perfectly fine (and always have been, always will be)."

"I don't have to feel urgent about anything, ever. I am enough."

"There is nothing wrong with my brain."

During the course of writing this, an interesting thought has come up, another pull to minimize my thinking. A voice says, "This all seems rather straightforward and clear, almost elementary, so what is the point of sharing it?" Quite fascinating the way our hurts can repackage themselves and resurface in our minds. The reality is that my ability to synthesize my thoughts in this way represents a remarkable shift. From being unable to see how these directions could ever apply to me, I now believe them, at least enough to be able to write them down. The whole world needs to hear about this.

Marianne Sierocinski  
Davie, Florida, USA

### Discharging, But No Progress

When someone is discharging a lot and not making any progress, the remedy is to get them to contradict a different set of distresses and often to go against the fears instead of the griefs.



Harvey Jackins  
From a letter written in 1993

## Contradicting “Mental Health” Oppression (and “Cool” Patterns) with a Teen

I am a white, mixed-heritage Jewish woman in her early forties who has spent a couple of years in an RC family class for teens and a bunch of years in a family class for older boys who are on the brink of being teenagers. During a recent trip to southern California (USA) to visit my brother and his three children, one of whom is a new teen, I wanted to try out some of the things I had learned and experienced in those classes.

During the trip I had the opportunity to hang out<sup>1</sup> with my brother’s thirteen-year-old son, N—, and N—’s good friend J—, who is fourteen. I had never met J— before, but I did know that his mom had died due to a drug overdose.

First I built up a bit of trust and safety with N— and J— by quietly being with them while they did whatever they wanted to do. They took me down to the spot in their housing complex where they had posted a flier advertising their services as skateboard instructors. They were clearly pleased with that idea.

After we got back to N—’s house, both N— and J— slipped into N—’s room and shut the door. I knocked and asked if I could come in. They said yes, so I plopped myself in a beanbag chair and stayed there paying attention to them while they hung out and played guitar.

After a while I decided to break down a bit of shyness and awkwardness by acting like the most uncool<sup>2</sup> nerd<sup>3</sup> ever. I hiked my pants up under my armpits and talked in an exaggerated nasal voice, which got J— and N— cracking up.<sup>4</sup> It was a contradiction to the heavy cool patterns that sit on many young people in southern California. J— then decided to do his own nerd character, which got N— and me laughing hard.

At that point our entire family (three generations’ worth) went out for pizza.

<sup>1</sup> Hang out means spend relaxed, unstructured time.

<sup>2</sup> Uncool means unfashionable, not self-assured or sophisticated.

<sup>3</sup> A nerd is someone who excels academically but is socially and physically awkward.

<sup>4</sup> Cracking up means laughing very hard.

J— came with us, too. When we got to the restaurant, the young people (J—, N—, and N—’s six-year-old brother, T—) decided they wanted their own table. They asked if I wanted to join them, and I said yes. It seemed like a great opportunity to keep building a connection with them.

At the young people’s table I stayed quiet for most of the time and listened to the teens talk to each other. I also watched J— brilliantly figure out ways to make my two nephews laugh. The teens talked about things like surfing and school. (Both of them love to surf, and both struggle in school.) Once in a while I would ask a question to let them know I was listening carefully.

Eventually J— shared that a teacher at his school had given him a “mental health” label that reflected his difficulty in sitting still and paying attention in class. He also let us know that other adults had assigned “mental health” labels and diagnoses to him, such as OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) and ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder).

I wanted to quickly find a way to contradict the “mental health” oppression that had come J—’s way without coming off as<sup>5</sup> urgent or heavy-handed. So I said, “J—, I have a new label for you.” Curious, he asked, “What is it?” I said, “It’s KASP; it stands for Kind and Smart Person.” I made up<sup>6</sup> a few more benign labels for him, like PWLTS—Person Who Likes to Surf. He loved it and got in on the game by making up a few more labels like mine. He was clearly pleased to have some labels that were truly about him and not his patterns.

Then I decided to be direct. I said, “J—, everyone is scared. Some people show it on the outside in an obvious way, and some people don’t. All those behaviors you are describing just sound like fear.” J— said, “Oh, that makes sense, because they started happening after my mom died.” Then we went on

<sup>5</sup> Coming off as means appearing.

<sup>6</sup> Made up means invented.

horsing around<sup>7</sup> and having fun during our meal together.

After we all got back to my brother’s house, I brought the whole family (including J—) back together by organizing a game of charades. It was the kind of charades in which individuals or pairs could act out anything they wanted to and have the rest of the gang decide what it was. People got each other laughing pretty<sup>8</sup> hard. J— carefully acted out the details of going on a (romantic) date with a female. I’m pretty sure he did that because some safety was set up during the time I had spent with him and my nephew. He was showing something that teenage boys might ordinarily only talk about with each other, if with anyone at all—something that might feel too embarrassing or private to spell out for people in public.

When charades was over (about an hour and a half later!) and it was time for J— to go back home, I walked up to him and said, “Don’t forget about your new label.” He looked happy and said the label back to me. Recently I sent my nephew N— a card in the mail and enclosed a three-by-five card for J—, reminding him of his new label: KASP, or Kind and Smart Person.

Something about my interaction with J— has stuck with me for a while now. I’ve spent time discharging on what happened that day. It was good to get to think on my feet<sup>9</sup> and contradict how, because of confusions within the “mental health” system, young people’s distresses get so quickly labeled. I didn’t have that much time with J—, but I decided to use those hours to set up safety by paying attention, showing myself (by acting uncool), giving a little information, organizing some play, and letting him know that he was totally great exactly the way he was.

E—  
USA

<sup>7</sup> Horsing around means joking and laughing, behaving in a rowdy way.

<sup>8</sup> Pretty means quite.

<sup>9</sup> On my feet means without planning ahead.

## Attacks

*A talk by Tim Jackins at the New York, USA,  
Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop, June 2011*

One of the things that got put into the *Guidelines*<sup>1</sup> in the 1980s was a policy on attacks.<sup>2</sup> In any group, people hang their distresses on each other. They blame each other for shortcomings: "I thought you would remember me." They get upset at each other: "You should have known," "My distress is because of your distress." It's like hunting for the first sin: "Somebody started this, and I think it was you."

This happened early on in our Communities. People were sure that the Area Reference Person was misusing the Outreach Funds. That was a big one. The big ones have been about money, sex, and politics. Surprise! What else would they be about? Whatever works to upset and distract people in society is what comes into our Communities and gets acted out.

This scares all of us and stops us from counseling on the things we need to counsel on. We get caught up in the restimulations. They pollute our relationships. They confuse us into dramatizing how scared we feel about what's going on.<sup>3</sup> They disrupt the functioning of the Community and slow down our work.

It happened in enough places that we figured out that we needed to do something more than just respond when it happened. The policy we came up with<sup>4</sup> was essentially that we don't get to attack anybody in RC. It's fine that we are upset with somebody, but we don't get to rally support for our upset. No matter what the person did, we don't get to do that. We have to stop. As soon as someone intervenes and lets us know that what we are doing in this manner is wrong, even though we feel like it is justified, we don't get to continue doing it, period.

Everybody in the Community needs to be protected from someone aiming upsets at him or her. It's an

important principle. How many organizations have you been in that have been destroyed because they didn't have a policy like this? Attacks occur in every organization. There is no way to avoid it. Look at our political system and the people being picked off<sup>5</sup> by the distresses being aimed at them. Does it have to do with their politics? No.

We have set out a policy: We don't get to attack anybody. We don't get to organize support for our upset and try to get others upset, too. We can ask for help with our upset, but we only get counseling assistance if we stop the attack. If we continue to attack, we get nothing. We don't get to attack anyone and still be part of the Community. It's hard, in a way, but it's correct that people are protected from attacks. This doesn't mean that we have to hide our upsets—we get to work on them—but we don't get to dramatize them, we don't get to try to drum up<sup>6</sup> support for them.



DEBBY GLICKMAN

People make mistakes in RC. Hopefully they will continue to. Hopefully they will continue to try things that they have to stretch for, and make corrections as they go. It's fine that they make mistakes. It's fine that we all make mistakes. It's not fine that we get stuck in them. We can get stuck in them and defend them instead of getting counseling on them. We get stuck in them when somebody sets a tone of attack instead of support. And we get stuck in them if nobody points them out and helps us with them.

Limitations are a part of all the work we do, because we still carry distresses and we can't think past them perfectly all the time.

It's useful to have people who will try to think about us—about how we do well, where we struggle, and where we have big troubles. If we don't have people

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Community*

<sup>2</sup> See page 35.

<sup>3</sup> Going on means happening.

<sup>4</sup> Came up with means thought of.

<sup>5</sup> Picked off means incapacitated.

<sup>6</sup> Drum up means enlist.

... continued

like that, certain distresses stay in place. They stay in place, they fester, and people who are restimulated by them quietly (or not so quietly) fester.

Probably any structure we set up and persist with for very long has corners that gather dust. Some pieces of distress don't get questioned, because we're not always good at that yet. We're not good at bringing to light the places where things are wobbly. We often feel little hope about getting a difficulty out in the open and talking about it cleanly, without restimulation.

The last edition of the *Guidelines* included what to do if you think there is a problem in RC, or with me, or with some other reference person. Maybe you're right. If you're right about a difficulty I have, it would be best if I knew about it. How are you going to help me know about it, with enough support that I have a chance to work on whatever has left me limited in that place? How are you going to do that? That's the essence of supporting leadership: not acting out our restimulated distresses but figuring out where someone has limitations and how he or she can get help. If we see it, then there's a chance that we can be part of correcting it.

We're scared to have anyone talk to us about our difficulties, because most of the time when people have done that, they've talked about their difficulties with our difficulties. (*Laughter*) Sometimes it's just been about their difficulties—we didn't contribute. So we are all wary. In general, few people have been able to think about us, especially in the places where we've had trouble; they've just been upset with us. So we have a lot of work to do to be able to listen to somebody and thoughtfully point out his or her difficulties. None of us is eager to do that, and yet it's clearly necessary. It's necessary or we'll get stuck.

### SELF-ESTIMATION

In RC we have a mechanism that certain reference people are supposed to use regularly. It's a wonderful process. It's called self-estimation. I do it. I have to—every four years. Area Reference Persons are supposed to do it as well. It doesn't happen as often as would be useful, because we are scared.

Essentially, I get to talk about myself and my functioning as International Reference Person. That's the scope of what I talk about. I talk about how I do this job. I give my fullest, most objective picture of what I've done, how it's gone well, and where I struggle with it. I try to lay that out as fully as I can. Then a number of people are called on to talk to me about how I've done the job. They are asked to talk directly

to me about it—not applaud me, not be overflowing happy with me and the wonderful things I have done, not be upset with me about the things I didn't do or did badly. They are expected to talk to me about my functioning in the job, not their restimulations, and try to help me get an outside perspective, a picture of how it looks from out there.

We're still working at using self-estimation. People find it easier to either be blindly supportive or have critical feelings. Neither of these can be part of the process or it doesn't work well. It has to involve somebody thinking about someone.

We all need somebody thinking about us—someone who tries to understand our struggles and difficulties and talks to us directly about them, without being upset, critical, or threatening (as people were in the past); someone who thoughtfully gives us a picture that helps us have a better chance at facing material<sup>7</sup> that is outside our vision, that we can't quite get a glimpse of. We need to be able to do this with each other. It takes a fair amount of work, to gain the confidence to trust our thinking and say it out loud, and it takes a relationship with someone who will dare to try to listen to us and then counsel on it later.

Part of what we require of the people who talk in a self-estimation is that they also have to be part of the solution. They can't just sit back and point out what they think is a difficulty. They have to say, "It looks like you struggle with this, and I want to offer my assistance in helping you take on<sup>8</sup> whatever you need to in order to make it move." They have to be committed to helping fix it, they have to be committed to the person's liberation, or they don't get to talk about it. This is not something to do distantly. It involves, as does everything in Co-Counseling, a personal relationship. Our theory is very general, and the practice of it is very personal. Our talking directly, and trying to wend our way through both our and the other person's set of distresses, involves a personal commitment to each other to try to make things work better.

Let's do a mini-session, three minutes each way, on daring to say something to a person you know who struggles in an area, and doesn't seem to be aware of it.

(See the following page for the policy on handling attacks from the 2009 Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.)

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<sup>7</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>8</sup> Take on means undertake.

## From the 2009 Guidelines for the RC Communities, page 54

(in reference to the article "Attacks," by Tim Jackins, on the previous two pages)

### O.1. HANDLING ATTACKS

Attacks<sup>1</sup> on Co-Counselors or on the RC Community will not be tolerated. All Co-Counselors are expected to quickly interrupt both attacks and gossip.<sup>2</sup> In preparation, Co-Counselors need to counsel on whatever obstructs their ability to do so.

People who participate in an attack must first stop the attack and apologize for having participated in it. Only after they have done this should counseling resource be offered to them.

#### REASON

Attacks are not attempts at correcting mistakes. They are dramatizations of distress and are not acceptable behaviors within the RC Community. An attack is not an effective way to resolve disagreements or difficulties. When the upset is with an individual, it is effective to counsel and discharge on feelings about the situation in a way that doesn't spread the upset. After discharging, one can strive to arrive at one's best thinking and then speak directly to the individual involved in order to resolve the situation. When the upset is with the RC Community, it is effective to counsel and discharge on feelings about the situation in a way that doesn't spread the upset. Then one can arrive at one's best thinking and speak directly to one's Reference Person.

Attacks are dramatizations of distress patterns. An underlying motivation may be to attract attention and ask for counseling help with the distress. However, attacks are never an effective way to handle difficulties and are not acceptable behavior.

Attacks are harmful to the RC Community and to the Co-Counselor targeted by the attack. They restimulate and confuse people. They disrupt the functioning of the RC Community and the targeted Co-Counselor. Any attack should be quickly interrupted so as to end the disruption of the RC Community. Any underlying issues cannot be addressed in an atmosphere of attack. Once the attack has stopped, the process described below (Guideline O.2.) can be used to address any situation.

Co-Counselors are required to be accountable for their actions and to take responsibility for any confusion their actions may have caused. This helps everyone involved to resolve the situation. Accountability includes acknowledging that a mistake has been made and apologizing for having participated in the attack.

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<sup>1</sup> An attack may be either an organized attempt to disrupt the functioning of the Community or a smearing of an individual. It is an attack to try to get others to support one's upset with a Co-Counselor or the Community. It is *not* an attack to think that an error has been made, to be upset with someone, or to question someone about his or her thinking. It is a mistake to criticize a Co-Counselor and try to force him or her to be one's counselor about issues or upsets, but that is not what is meant by an attack.

<sup>2</sup> Gossip is casual or unconstrained reports or conversation about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as true.

**See also: O.2 Handling of Disagreements, Criticism, and Upset, on page 55 of the 2009 Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.**



KK

## Reclaiming Reality in Lagos, Nigeria

Bafana Matsebula<sup>1</sup> led a three-day-long teachers' and leaders' workshop in Lagos State, Nigeria, November 11 to 13, 2011. He was assisted by Urbain Bamana.<sup>2</sup> There were twenty-six participants.

The focus of the workshop was "benign reality," which includes that kind, gentle, harmless nature of humans that inevitably gets interfered with by the distressed elements in our environments. When this happens, we forget our inherent positive attributes—our power, intelligence, goodness, kindness, zest, and loving connection.

How do we reclaim the reality? How do we reclaim our true natures? In Bafana's words, "Something happened. We need to re-evaluate whatever happened that made us forget; we need to reclaim our intelligence and other powerful attributes. Any apparent limitations are imposed; they are not natural."

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<sup>1</sup> Bafana Matsebula is the Regional Reference Person for Southernmost Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Urbain Bamana is an RC leader in Accra, Ghana.



LAGOS, NIGERIA, WORKSHOP • URBAIN BAMANA

We naturally want to connect with other people. However, at times our expectations are not met. People hurt us, and we may feel unwanted. We may become afraid to show people we love them because we fear being hurt. Thus we are not always able to show our positive natures. In RC, we don't say that people are evil; we say that they are hurting and as a result pass on the hurt to other people. Our different experiences have allowed some of us to more easily show our inherent goodness; others of us have more difficulty, but it is not our fault. In Re-evaluation Counseling we try to create an environment that enables us to heal from what has happened in our lives that has hidden our wonderful attributes.

Co-Counseling is about accepting all that is inherently true about our clients—accepting that they are good, even when they are unable to show it, even though they may have done something bad. Bafana invited the participants to affirm their commitment to this, and there was a significant raising of hands.

What happened when we were young is the foundation of what "happens today," which is often a restimulation. As we discharge, we become aware of our full intelligence. We listen attentively to our clients and contradict their distresses (remind them of their inherent benign natures). We encourage them to figure things out for themselves.

Bafana also talked about institutionalized oppression, internalized oppression, support groups, and goal setting. We live in a society that defines how different people are to be treated. For example, people are treated in certain ways because they belong to a particular tribe, religion, group, and so on. If they don't do what is expected, they are stigmatized.

The workshop included Co-Counseling sessions, demonstrations, question-and-answer sessions, and Community reports. We shared our experiences of leadership in Swaziland; Ghana; and Lagos State, Nigeria (eleven Communities).

*Onii Nwangwu-Stevenson  
Area Reference Person  
for North Central Lagos, Nigeria  
Surulere, Lagos, Nigeria*

## Jews and Gentiles Discharging on the Holocaust

**M**y Area<sup>1</sup>—Newton and Environs, in Newton, Massachusetts, USA—has done consistent work over many years on Jewish liberation. When we became an Area, one of the first support groups we organized was on Jewish liberation. We are heading into our fourteenth annual Area Seder.<sup>2</sup> Gentiles in our Area have organized the Seders, attended workshops on ending anti-Jewish oppression, and held their own periodic gather-ins on being allies to Jews.

One of my regular Co-Counselors is a Holocaust survivor. Last year at our Seder we were honored to have three Holocaust survivors—my Co-Counselor and two guests.

When I was thinking about themes for an ongoing RC class, I decided to do a seven-meeting sequence on “Discharging on the Holocaust, for Jews and Gentiles.” Why? The Holocaust was an event that profoundly affected us all. I had heard many times from my Jewish Co-Counselors that we all needed to work on it. I wanted to become a better counselor in the area—intelligent and effective and not scared and intimidated into the anti-Jewish oppression of passivity and collaboration. And I knew that un-discharged feelings about the Holocaust were playing a huge role in the Middle East.

My assistant, Johanna Ehrmann, and I ended up with eleven people in the class: eight Jews and three Gentiles.

Of the eight Jews, three were women, five were men, and some were children of Holocaust survivors. The Gentiles were a man who was married for over twenty years to a Holocaust survivor, another experienced male RCer with close relationships to the other class members, and me.

Here is my report on the seven classes. I wrote up each class as it happened, so it is also the story of my evolution as a counselor, client, and ally.

### FIRST CLASS

In the first class, I started by reminding all of us that this was a Re-evaluation Counseling class—that the fundamental ideas and practices applied, that we would assume that people were inherently intelligent, loving, and zestful. I said that we knew how to use the discharge process to recover from distress patterns, that recovery from the effects of the Holocaust was possible, and that the recovery had two important components: discharge and contradiction.<sup>3</sup> I said that for the Holocaust in particular, a balance of

attention<sup>4</sup> was important. I suggested that we see ourselves as a *team* and each make a commitment to becoming an excellent counselor for every person in the group and that this would also help us become excellent counselors for ourselves. We made a decision to listen to and respect each person and to remember that people may work on the material<sup>5</sup> in many different ways. We each shared what we hoped for from the class; our religious, ethnic, and class backgrounds; and our relationships to the Holocaust.

By the time I took my turn, I was shaking. I had read, watched movies and videos, worked on my memories of seeing Holocaust documentaries, studied the history of anti-Jewish oppression, and tried to read specifically about the Holocaust in Slovakia, where my mother’s parents had been born. However, sitting for two hours in a room with Jews, talking and discharging about the Holocaust, had me listening for a dreaded knock on the door!

*continued . . .*

<sup>3</sup> Contradiction to the distress

<sup>4</sup> A balance of attention means enough attention off the distress and on good reality.

<sup>5</sup> Material means distress.



RAMI BEN-MOSHE

<sup>1</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

<sup>2</sup> A Seder is a Jewish ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover, which starts on the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan in the Jewish calendar (in spring in the Northern Hemisphere) and is celebrated for seven or eight days. The Seder involves a retelling of the story of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. Other Seder customs include drinking four cups of wine; eating matzo (unleavened bread); partaking in symbolic foods placed on the Seder plate; and reclining, in celebration of freedom.

... continued

Before the next class I did lots of Co-Counseling sessions. I read *All Quiet on the Western Front*, generally regarded as the best war novel ever written—a powerful account of the bloody horrors of trench warfare during World War I from the point of view of a twenty-year-old German soldier. I did the math and realized that the German men who were “cannon fodder” in World War I were in their forties during World War II. I watched a video on the liberation of Auschwitz.<sup>6</sup> I read Tim’s<sup>7</sup> article “Overcoming Early Defeats and Discouragement.”<sup>8</sup> I did more sessions!

### SECOND CLASS

In the second class we each shared a “new and good” related to being in the class. People were having good sessions, making connections, and feeling encouraged. We noticed that we were developing “Holocaust slack”—people were “coincidentally” talking to us about the Holocaust experiences of relatives, and so on.

<sup>6</sup> Auschwitz was a World War II Nazi concentration camp.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Jackins’

<sup>8</sup> See pages 3 to 6 of *Present Time* No. 162 (January 2011).

We reviewed Tim’s article. These parts seemed especially relevant to discharging on the Holocaust:

1) We may have gone as far as we can go without discharging the early underlying material.

2) The recorded “feeling of defeat” prevents us from thinking that it’s possible, and desirable, to work on and recover from our distress.

3) We can look at “unbearable” distress and challenge it.

4) We each made a decision early on that was the best we could make, taking everything into account. Now we get to make a new decision. “Distresses confuse us, but they don’t take away our ability to decide.”

5) We are doing this together. “Hearing someone else challenge this distress makes our sessions go better. Seeing other people dare to fight for themselves gives us immense power.”

6) We have to dare to do this because we are human. “The whole universe can be behind you.” Someone in our class

said, “Every human being on the planet is behind me!”

7) “You’re going back to finish the struggle.” “You can change the effect of what happened. I imagine it as going back and making it the way it should’ve been.” The feeling that this is “history” and we are not able to do anything about it is just a *feeling* that is hindering good counseling.

I said that we had to ask each other, “What does the Holocaust remind you of?” We often think of it as an “original” distress event, but each of us has earlier experiences of being overwhelmed, threatened, alone, tormented, and so on, that information about the Holocaust has attached to.

I did a long demonstration with a woman whose grandfather had died of starvation when he refused to eat non-kosher food, thus exposing his unprotected son (her father) to being repeatedly raped by a Nazi guard in exchange for food. I pulled someone up to be her grandfather, and we “went back” and she yelled at him, telling him what to do to live and save his son. She cried and cried.

After that we did short three-ways. Then everyone had a minute-and-a-half turn. I learned

1) that I should concentrate on the people in the class, not the historical Holocaust—that I need to pay attention, love, and keep thinking

2) that we should maximize people’s discharge time with the whole group, that turns with the whole group seem to be a powerful contradiction for everyone

3) that we need to keep listening for things that could be on the “Holocaust chain,” such as “Holocaust effects” on other family members. Two people mentioned growing up with continual fighting among members of their families. Another person and his sister



ANGELA HYLAND

had been left alone with a sadistic babysitter.

### THIRD CLASS

At the beginning of the third class some people reported a lifting of spirits. People who had not previously had regular Co-Counselors had set up regular Co-Counseling relationships and were doing extra sessions.

We were finding that when the Holocaust becomes part of a chain of distress experiences, it “flavors” it. We cannot change history, but we can recover from the effects of any distress.

We took turns answering the question, “How did the Holocaust affect you or your family in any way?” Here are some of the answers:

- Being the only Jew in my high school and experiencing great isolation
- Constant fighting between my parents (who were Holocaust survivors) and having a small family
- My father telling me never to trust anyone, which he had learned from his own father
- (Gentile man) Hiding behind the suffering of Holocaust victims rather than acknowledging my own early sexual abuse
- (Gentile man) It changed my rosy picture of the world; it has never been the same.

These were some of the demonstrations:

1) For the Jewish man whose father had told him to never trust anyone, the specific message was “never trust a Polack.”<sup>9</sup> I asked him to say it in the same tone of voice in which he had heard it, while one of the Gentile men stood up to be a Pole. The Jewish man discharged heavy fear.

2) The Gentile man who had been married to a survivor uncovered and acknowledged his own sexual abuse and discharged on his “personal Holocaust.”

3) The Jewish man who was the only Jew in his high school wanted to work on anti-Jewish oppression directly, because for him it had been “ambiguous.” Someone threw a brick through his family’s window. Was it because the family was Jewish or was it just a random prank? Were the other boys just bullies when they harassed him? They didn’t say anything anti-Jewish, but he was the only person in the whole school with curly hair.

We were evolving a direction that seemed to work for both Jews and Gentiles: For my own long-range flourishing and that of my people, and to honor all Jews who came before me, I promise to cherish every moment, to be fully alive in this lifetime, to face everything there is to be faced, and to recover completely from the effects of the Holocaust.

### FOURTH CLASS

In the fourth class everyone answered the question, “Where do you find the safety and security of knowing that the Holocaust is over and this is the time to discharge and recover from its effects?”

I reviewed what we know about working on fear: be light, be close, scorn it. I also suggested using Harvey’s<sup>10</sup> “role exchange”: “I’m going to Holocaust you!”

A Jewish man wanted to try the direction “I’m going to Holocaust you.” I had to keep helping him emphasize “you, Barbara,” so that he didn’t slip into doing it to himself. As he got the hang of it,<sup>11</sup> he proceeded to haul up more and more: Nazi experiments, vermin, and so on.

In a three-way session following the demonstrations, Johanna gave me the direction “I’m going to Holocaust you,” and up came material from everything I had ever read about the Holocaust.

We started to feel that we were strong, not intimidated.

Between classes I did a session with my Co-Counselor who is a Holocaust survivor. I noticed that I could really listen, and rather than following his decision to “move on, because there are things you just can’t recover from,” I said gently, “No, let’s go back. Your heart was broken that day when they marched your family through the town and the neighbors came out to jeer.” I could feel that I was also interested in what was happening for the peasants who were jeering and for the Jewish mayor.

### FIFTH CLASS

In the fifth class we looked at the effect of the Holocaust on Jewish men and Jewish women. Women had to choose between their children, had to keep them safe in impossible conditions, were made to feel “not very female,” felt abandoned by allies, and needed to organize to prevent dangerous situations. Jewish men often had two ends of a pattern: a rigid pacifism from not being allowed to be angry and, on the other hand, being ready to attack back.

We reviewed the Jewish men’s and the Jewish women’s commitments to each other. Jewish man: “I put myself in your hands.” Jewish woman: “I promise to remember that you are the perfect man for me.”

Between classes I benefited from being an ally who was “Holocausted” in a session. I was challenged to feel what it would have been like to choose between my son and my daughter (“I’m going to Holocaust you, Barbara, and make you choose between A— and N—”). Part of what happened in the

*continued . . .*

<sup>9</sup> Polack is derogatory slang for a person of Polish descent.

<sup>10</sup> Harvey Jackins’

<sup>11</sup> Got the hang of it means figured out how to do it.

... continued

Holocaust was an attempt to destroy what many Jewish men and women valued most—their ability to care for their children.

### SIXTH CLASS

In the sixth class we heard a report from a Holocaust workshop that Julian Weissglass<sup>12</sup> had led in Israel. We used the sentences in Julian's report as "up/downs":

"Raise your hand if you overprotect your children, you still feel they are not protected enough, you are afraid of being killed, you have a snack in your handbag," and so on.

When asked, "Do you feel that what Jews do to the Palestinians is similar to what Nazis did to the Jews?" the Jews did not raise their hands.

When asked, "Do you feel that what Arabs want to do to Jews is similar to what Nazis wanted to do to Jews?" just about all the Jews raised their hands.

Between classes I consulted with my Regional<sup>13</sup> Reference Person about how to work on issues related to Israel, in part because of my surprise at the Jews' agreeing with the statement "what Arabs want to do to Jews is similar to what Nazis wanted to do to Jews."

<sup>12</sup> Julian Weissglass is the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change.

<sup>13</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

I discharged with her on how, as a Gentile, not only the Holocaust was my responsibility but also the aftermath in which in return for getting Israel as a homeland (having a homeland is the right of every people) Israelis had to play a middle-agent oppressor role with regard to Arabs. (A "middle agent" is someone who is forced to do the work of the oppressor.)

She said that we needed to address the installation of oppressor, middle-agent, and racism patterns, even though I might feel that I was risking losing my Jewish team and being expelled from the Jewish "family" I had entered.

I think I understood for the first time the depth not only of the Holocaust but of the additional "cancer" the Gentile world (especially the United States)



SUE EDWARDS

had forced on the Jewish people by setting up Israel to be the "cat's paw of imperialism."

I prepared for the class by discharging on the directions my Regional Reference Person had given me and by taking responsibility for the moral damage we Gentiles had done to the Jewish people.

### SEVENTH CLASS

In the seventh class it was my turn to be in a demonstration. With a lot of fear and trembling I talked, as client, to one of the Jewish women and took responsibility for my people having set up the choice between safety and integrity. Later I was the counselor for one of the Jewish women, and she said, "You don't want to hear what I have to say (about Arabs)." "Yes I do," I said, and I realized I had evolved to actually meaning that. I can see that I have to really listen to all of it—for the sake of the Jewish people, the Arab people (my in-laws), and myself. And I can.

We ended with everyone discharging together and appreciating the class.

I feel more engaged with reality than ever before. I feel that I am part of a team. If we can take this on,<sup>14</sup> we can take on anything.

*Barbara Deck*  
Newton, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>14</sup> Take this on means undertake this.

## Advice to "Feeling Run Down and Abandoned"

I'm sorry that you are feeling so run down\* and abandoned. I don't think it is just feelings. You are finding people, at least many of them, distant when you're playing any other role than the one of endlessly helping them.

A few of us with a similar background are beginning to learn how to *exchange* assistance on a dependable basis. I am glad you are considering a drastic re-evaluation of your lifestyle and your relations with others. You don't need to settle for despair and bitterness.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1980

\* Run down means depleted.

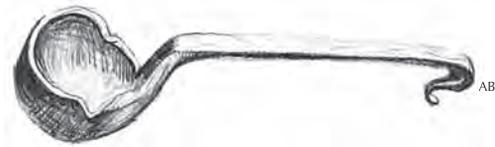
## An Inspiring United to End Racism Workshop

Excerpted from the newsletter of the Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, RC Community

My life changed for the better the day I began an RC fundamentals class. Now, many years later, the same quantum leap has occurred as a result of my attending the recent United to End Racism workshop under Anne Barton's<sup>1</sup> leadership.

I realised that the patterns of racism keep so much in place. They block us from seeing the humanity and essential goodness of every person. Liking ourselves is the first step to eliminating patterns of white racism. Liking ourselves, liking each other—those are the first steps to getting ourselves back.

*Luise Zanthyr*  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia



Over the weekend I reflected on the way that many white middle-class people are told they can think. I have often just assumed that I can think and have gone out there doing things without enough discharge.

Anne shared how much discharge she had done, over many years, prior to the wide-world things she is doing now.

I have started to say to myself, "Well Lees,<sup>2</sup> maybe you can't think the best just yet," and, "How about you ring X—?" or, "How about you don't do anything just yet?"

A small but good step.

*Lisa Rasmussen*  
Northcote, Victoria, Australia



This workshop turned out to be a peaceful workshop for me, which is not an experience I associate with ending racism.

Anne is in no rush, which was a major contradiction<sup>3</sup> for a "busy" white person. A direction she invited us to take

<sup>1</sup> Anne Barton is an RC leader in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa

<sup>3</sup> Contradiction to distress.

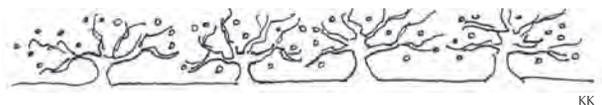
was hopeful. I understood it as, "Any time I feel less than delighted with myself or anyone else, it is an invitation to discharge early."<sup>4</sup> Knowing we had all agreed to take this direction invited bold clienting and counselling. I think it was the foundation of my sense of peace and unity.

*Vicky Grosser*  
Geelong, Victoria, Australia



For the full duration of the workshop I embraced the contract of being delighted in myself and others. Any feelings I experienced to the contrary I decided were from the past and could be discharged. Holding the direction meant that I remained closer to all those around me. That was a great foundation for seeing my goodness, and the goodness of others.

*Bartley McGowan*  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

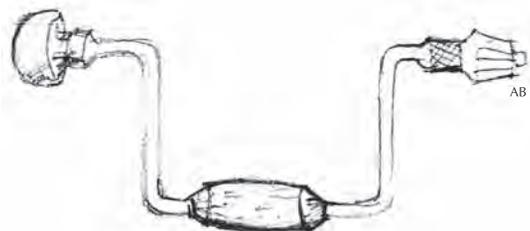


I can see how I was frightened as a little one when I stood up for what I believed. As Anne says, I lost those battles. That left me unable to stand up for what I think, so when I see racism now, I find it hard to keep thinking and to say what I think. I collude with racism to "go with the flow" and defer to the majority.

*Victoria Kemp*  
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia

*continued . . .*

<sup>4</sup> Discharge early means discharge on early distress.



... continued

A couple of weeks ago one of my Japanese Co-Counsellors told me, "I feel like you don't like me." She pushed me to notice how my awkwardness, covered up by briskness, comes across<sup>4</sup> as unfriendliness and how this is part of my racism. Because of Anne's direction to remember that anything other than delight in ourselves and each other is old and can be discharged, I spent much of my session time at the workshop noticing that I was with someone I liked, telling that person, and feeling awkward.

Although I knew it was important, I kept feeling that I should be "doing something concrete" instead. It was hard for me to shift my focus from goals to connections. Simply delighting in people, and being delighted in, felt almost too easy. I noticed that I believe that the work to end racism should be really hard and something I choose to do at the expense of having fun. My picture of it is shoving against an enormous rock that will take years to move a few millimetres.

It was a big contradiction for me to see how much Anne enjoys leading United to End Racism events. There is no urgency, no task apart from our being with each other. She has relaxed confidence in our ability to end racism *and* have fun lives.

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<sup>4</sup> Comes across means appears.

I was able to find and work on my oppressor material<sup>5</sup> in a new way. I had tried the "earliest memory of acting oppressively" direction a few times but was never able to remember anything substantial. This time it clicked<sup>6</sup> that I don't have to look for blood.<sup>7</sup> I have acted out my oppressor material whenever I've used systems and structures to get what I want without getting my hands dirty, to justify doing so, and to even allow myself to feel like the victim. But letting myself feel guilty and afraid of getting closer as a result would just be buying into<sup>8</sup> yet another way that racism has separated us.

I understood that the only way to claim my white English identity is boldly and visibly, and I have to be clear and confident about what I've figured out so far and how powerful I am. Anything less is choosing to stay in the victim role, and I can't possibly discharge oppressor material from that position.

Emma Parker  
Tokyo, Japan

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<sup>5</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>6</sup> It clicked means I understood.

<sup>7</sup> In this context, look for blood means look for something painful and wrong.

<sup>8</sup> Buying into means agreeing to.



NEW ZEALAND • LANCE CABLK

## A Class for Young Women in Nairobi, Kenya

I recently introduced Re-evaluation Counseling to a group of girls in a primary (elementary) school. The girls, who were in grades six to eight, gathered in a class for an afternoon. I told them that they were inherently good, and they embraced the theory.

We did "news and goods." Each of us got to celebrate something good we had done or that had happened to us. We also got to discharge embarrassment, by laughing and laughing.

One of the things that came out during the meeting was the oppression of young people—how they are reminded constantly that they are too young to have any troubles. We got a bit of work done on that, and some of the girls practiced in front of the others how they would stand up for themselves and express themselves.

We ended with a commitment to meet regularly and continue Co-Counseling.

Janet Kabue  
Nairobi, Kenya

## RC Liberation Policies

Over the years people have talked to me privately or in workshops about the drafting of liberation policies in RC. It seems to me a few things need to be said.

Liberation policies and RC Community policies (the *Guidelines*) are not the same in that liberation policies are not binding on members of the Community. Everyone is encouraged to discharge on the liberation policies, and think and act from that basis, but no one is required to agree with them. We remain committed to a one-point program: “through RC to seek recovery of one’s occluded intelligence and humanness and to assist others to do the same.”

A liberation policy belongs to a particular liberation constituency and is also the liberation policy of that group for the whole RC Community. It is a Re-evaluation Counseling policy. It is based on RC theory and practice as they relate to that liberation “movement.” It is not a political statement, even if it includes ideas that seem political in another context. A liberation policy is our best fresh thinking about the current situation and struggles of a constituency. It guides the thinking and practices of that group and also helps the entire Community to understand that group’s liberation struggles.

RC liberation policies are always draft policies. They are subject to changes and revisions and updating to reflect contemporary struggles.

Any policy of liberation has to have input from many people—certainly the people of the oppressed group; their experiences and perspectives need to be voiced and understood. At the same time, minds from the outside are invaluable. While they may have oppressor distresses (which need to be discharged), they also are able to function *outside* the oppression.

Harvey<sup>1</sup> often played the role of a “voice from the outside.”

Many of the early liberation policies were written by Harvey. He had the most wide-world and RC leadership experience, was our soundest overall thinker, and had counseled the most people.

When Harvey wrote the RC Jewish liberation policy, he had thought extensively about the issues. He wrote a *draft* statement and distributed it widely for discussion among the Jews and some Gentiles in the Community, after which some changes were made. That policy, with other changes over the years, remains our draft policy on Jewish liberation—for Jews and for the entire Community.

One of the major criteria by which one judges a policy is the practice that comes out of it. From the RC Jewish liberation policy has come the building of an RC Community in Israel among Jews and some Palestinians and the bringing of Co-Counseling to Mizrahi

Jews.<sup>2</sup> RCers have brought the policy to social change organizations, where it has played a pivotal role in shaping the policies and programs of those organizations.

I personally think the Jewish liberation policy is a brilliant policy. I base my Jewish leadership on it, inside and outside of RC. I use it as a base from which to think afresh and to listen to and learn from many people. I need to continue to learn from Palestinians and Israelis and discharge any distresses that stand in my way of forming relationships with them and being an ally in their struggles. I have found the Jewish liberation policy invaluable to me in that challenge, and many others.

*Diane Balser*  
*International Liberation*  
*Reference Person for Women*  
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of Jews

<sup>1</sup> Harvey Jackins

<sup>2</sup> Mizrahi Jews are descendants of Jews from the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. They often identify as people targeted by racism.



MARYA AXNER

## The Impact of the Re-evaluation Foundation

Recently Ellie Putnam, an RC leader and the vice-president of the Re-evaluation Foundation, led a gather-in in Seattle, Washington, USA, about the Re-evaluation Foundation.

Five of us who had been involved in projects supported by the Foundation talked about some of those projects, and their significance to us. We were from constituencies targeted by colonialism, racism, genocide, and militarism. Funding from the Foundation had supported our growth as RC leaders and helped to expand the activities of our groups and the numbers in our constituencies.

The presenters equaled the number of people who came to hear us. I thought about how much the entire RC Community had missed by not being able to listen to us. On the car ride home I said to Ellie, "We need to broadcast this. I wonder if the RC Community knows the huge difference the Foundation has made in people's lives via the work it supports financially. Those of us who presented are of constituencies targeted by racism, but the Foundation's support is for all groups." After that I decided to write this report.

Ellie reminded people that the Foundation is separate from the organization of RC, that it approves grants to promote leadership in RC and the growth of RC among populations with less access to resource, and that it accepts tax-deductible contributions from both RCers and non-RCers.

Because of how meaningful our individual projects had been to us, we who presented were eager to hear about each other's.

Yuko Hibino, an RC leader in Seattle, Washington, USA, shared how after the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear plant disaster in Japan, the Foundation funded several free workshops<sup>1</sup> that she assisted with and how bringing outside Co-Counseling resources to the Japanese Communities made a huge difference. One of the things she noticed was the level of fear at the beginning of the workshops and how with discharge people became able to think despite the fear. She also told about attending, with a United to End Racism delegation funded by the Foundation, the 2007 U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on these workshops in Japan, see *Present Time* No. 163, page 3; and *Present Time* No. 164, pages 47 to 50, 51 to 53, and 54 to 57.

Social Forum in Atlanta, Georgia, USA,<sup>2</sup> and how social activists there got a chance to hear RC ideas. She recalled how she grew in her ability to boldly show how much RC meant to her.

Jan Yoshiwara, the International Liberation Reference Person for People of Japanese Heritage, talked about the Tule Lake project,<sup>3</sup> which integrated Co-Counselors into the pilgrimage of four hundred Japanese-heritage people that was held in commemoration of the Japanese American internment during World War II. She spoke of the immense impact the Co-Counselors' participation had not only on the Co-Counselors but on the Tule Lake organization. In five minutes, at the beginning of the pilgrimage, she had taught four hundred people how to exchange listening and then had them do a two-minute-each mini-session. She could tell<sup>4</sup> that that made a difference for the rest of the weekend. The Co-Counselors were also able to lead, or support others to lead, the intergenerational groups at the pilgrimage and incorporate RC ideas into them.

Teresa Enrico, the International Liberation Reference Person for Pacific Islanders and Filipinos/as, recounted how the Foundation had enabled her to attend and lead some of the Japanese workshops described by Yuko and to travel to the Philippines and hold workshops there for her constituency. She reminded us of how the Foundation had also supported about fifty RCers from around the world to go to Durban, South Africa, in 2001, and make an impact on the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance.<sup>5</sup>

Anita Rocha, the leader of the RC Chicano/a support group in Seattle, talked about the grant she had received from the Foundation that allowed her group to rent space in a building housing a Chicano/a organization and how that had helped the group to feel a connection to the Chicano/a community.

I reported on a Foundation-funded project supporting the development of RC in the West

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<sup>2</sup> See *Present Time* No. 147, page 83; and *Present Time* No. 149, pages 25 to 33 and 35 to 36.

<sup>3</sup> See *Present Time* No. 157, page 2.

<sup>4</sup> Tell means notice, perceive.

<sup>5</sup> See *Present Time* No. 126, pages 31 to 37 and 38 to 44; *Present Time* No. 127, pages 7 to 8, 9 to 10, and 11 to 30; and *Present Time* No. 130, page 72.

African Francophone countries of Togo and Benin. In 2010, and again in 2011, Ellie Putnam and I spent two weeks visiting the RC Communities there and leading a weekend workshop for each country.<sup>6</sup> During my report, I kept in sight a photo of the leaders in Togo and Benin. I wanted everyone to see what I saw—the excitement in their faces, their eagerness for the ideas of Co-Counseling, their commitment to RC, and their appreciation for our coming to their country and supporting the growth of their RC Communities. Because of the Foundation’s help, we can say, “We have not forgotten you.”

What the five of us conveyed was the impact of the humanness of this work that is supported by the Foundation. Individual lives have been changed for the better.

Although we do not solicit other RCers for funds, individual RCers can decide to contribute to the Foundation. There are also ways to support the work of the Foundation by sharing what we do in RC with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Ellie told how she had included in her annual December holiday letter descriptions of some of the activities the Foundation supports and encouraged members of her family to contribute and how some of them had. Some Communities have raised funds with garage sales, RC introductory talks, and talent nights that include talks about RC.

We did a mini-session on “why RC matters to us,” to connect that with fundraising. Ellie also encouraged us to discharge on any restimulations we had about money; on asking for money (again and again!); on distresses related to greed; on how much we actually “need”; on talking to people close to us, or to strangers, about RC; and on setting up ongoing three-way sessions, or larger groups, in which to discharge about fundraising.

I loved that the five of us got a chance to share how we have expanded how far we look out into the world community. We have learned much more than we could say that night. We feel a kinship with the people of the world, as we broaden our reach for people.

*Marion Ouphouet*  
Seattle, Washington, USA



DIANE SHISK

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<sup>6</sup> See *Present Time* No. 165, pages 19 to 27.

## **A New Edition of** ***A New Kind of Communicator***

The fifth edition of *A New Kind of Communicator* (a collection of key articles on teaching, for RC teachers) was printed eighteen years ago. Since then, Re-evaluation Counseling has continued to grow and develop. RC ideas have spread, and we are better at communicating them. RC Communities continue to multiply and develop worldwide.

The sixth edition of *A New Kind of Communicator* includes four of Harvey’s\* articles from previous editions as well as fourteen new articles describing what we have learned since those earlier editions were published.

I am confident that you will find this new edition both enjoyable and helpful.

*Tim Jackins*

\$5.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling.

To order, see page 109.

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\* Harvey Jackins’



VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA • AMANDA MARTINEZ

## People Stuck in a Critical Attitude

With the two that you feel are stuck in a critical attitude, I would grab the opportunity to see how nice you can be to them, and about them, first for the discharge it will bring you, and second for the prestige it will bring to you from other people who see you moving so courageously against situations that would bother them.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1993

Why are we here?

If not to raise the bar  
Stand up for  
The causes that  
Make a difference.

Why are we here?

If not to be the change  
Set the range  
For destiny  
Waits for no one.

Why are we here?

If not to start anew  
Refresh the view  
For hope  
Surpasses despair.

If not to plant  
New seeds, chart new seas  
Dream new visions  
And walk new vistas.

Why are we here?

If not to speak new truths  
Seek new wisdom, provide new solutions  
To the questions that  
Have plagued us for all too long.

Why?

If we are to be then why not breathe free  
Watching the dawn of possibilities  
Reaching the heights where rainbows adorn our feet  
When we envision the futures that can be.

Why are we here?

If not to be the freshness of the new morning  
To be the flower of new opportunities  
To be the beauty of all wonder  
And to be the laughter after the storm.

Why are we here?

*Dr. Rodney D. Coates*  
Oxford, Ohio, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of colleagues

## Keeping in Contact with Young People

For several years the RC Community has been assisting young RCers to keep using RC as they move away from home—for example, to college. Jenny Sazama and Megan Lynes are the two people overseeing this project.

We collect the names of young people who would like an RC ally to be a resource for them as they head off on their own. The ally is to stay in touch with them by phone—taking all the initiative, if necessary, for several months; listening to them; Co-Counseling with them (by phone or in person); helping them

figure out how to be in contact with the local RC Community (if there is one); helping them figure out which new acquaintances might make good Co-Counselors; and more. We also have a list of people who want to be allies, and we would welcome more.

Young people and allies are put in contact with each other. Sometimes they already have a relationship, and sometimes they build one afresh. More than thirty pairs have been set up. Some pairs are quickly and wonderfully useful, and some take time—but all are useful.

I would like your help with this project. We want to continue to build both the list of young people and the list of allies, and I ask your assistance in finding people to add to both lists. How about you? Or are there others in your Community whom you could talk with so that they could consider being a part of this?

Send information to Megan Lynes, at <meganlynes@gmail.com> or Zero Brattle Drive, Apt. 4, Arlington, Massachusetts 02474, USA. If you e-mail, please put “Allies to Shifting Young People” in the subject line.



Thank you,  
Tim Jackins

## Happy, Active, and Grateful

Thank you for sending me the July 2011 issue of *Present Time*. This is to express my deep sense of gratitude to all those who introduced me to RC—Krishnamurty,<sup>1</sup> Subbaraman,<sup>2</sup> Diane Balser,<sup>3</sup> Niti Dandekar,<sup>4</sup> and Harvey Jackins. I am extremely lucky and happy to have been in RC for all these thirty years. At eighty years of age, I am very alert, actively singing with children and all other age groups. Presently I am supervising two students of Bachelor of Social Work. I am much sought after to inspire any audience. When I am working with children, I become twenty years younger. Through a shelter for battered women and their children, I have learned new strategies to address the global issue of domestic violence. I will go on and on, even single-handedly, since I believe “the individual is the central, rarest, most precious capital resource of our society.” (Peter F. Drucker)

S. Saraswathidevi  
Auroville, Tamilnadu, India

<sup>1</sup> Goteti Krishnamurty, an RC leader who led the first RC workshops and classes in India

<sup>2</sup> G.R. Subbaraman, an RC leader in Dindigul, India, and the Translation Coordinator for Tamil and Telugu, who played a key role in starting and developing RC in India

<sup>3</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

<sup>4</sup> Niti Dandekar is the Regional Reference Person for India.



LYNDALL KATZ

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇ **Challenging Sexism in My RC Class** ◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

Having an ongoing connection with other women who are doing women’s liberation work has been key for me in being able to recognize and think about sexism. I am lucky to be in women’s liberation classes led by Diane Balser.<sup>1</sup> Among many things, they give me leverage to face and discharge my early victimization (and move away from using sexism as a pretext to not face the early battles) and to more often find my voice in the face of sexism.

Last year I taught a class on sexism as part of my ongoing eliminating-white-racism class for white people. There are fourteen of us in the class—six men and eight women. When we split into separate men’s and women’s groups for discharge, the men agreed that they would return at a specific time.

They were late coming back. After waiting a bit, my assistant went to ask them to return. One of the men said something sexist (trying to be funny), conveying that they wanted more time. They did not come back when she asked them to. While not in the room with us, they were dominating. I took some time with the women and shook. I knew what my thinking was, and, though my patterns wished for something else, I knew what I was going to do.

When the men returned, I asked them to go back into their group and discharge on what had gotten in their way of following my lead as a female (and a Jewish female) and what had prevented them from seeing that keeping us

<sup>1</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.



WYTSKE VISSER

women waiting, particularly in a class on sexism, was off.<sup>2</sup> At that point the leader of the men backed<sup>3</sup> me a hundred percent, without any defensiveness. That was powerful. He and I have a long-term close relationship and over the years have worked on the sexism in it.

In the closing circle I had everyone appreciate something about the evening. The first three men said, “Being with the men.” I shook some and again jumped in and trusted my thinking. I decided to start the circle again and had everyone appreciate something about the evening and also something about my leadership.

I think the fact that this class has the overarching focus of eliminating white racism helped me to point my mind toward a big picture of both closeness and oppression. Our being all white people helped me to focus on how sexism runs<sup>4</sup> between white men and women in RC. I have noticed that being able to discharge about the sexism within my own constituencies (in this case, white people) has helped me to think about the different ways that sexism shows up<sup>5</sup>—in particular, the intersection of sexism and racism, and sexism and anti-Jewish oppression.

*Jennie Evans*  
Medford, Massachusetts, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of women

- <sup>2</sup> Off means not correct.
- <sup>3</sup> Backed means supported.
- <sup>4</sup> Runs means operates.
- <sup>5</sup> Shows up means shows itself.



TC

## Being “Comfortable”

I would like to do battle against the feeling in the middle-class-dominated Communities that people must be “comfortable,” that you must not say things that make them uncomfortable, because I don’t think we make much progress without someone being uncomfortable. Otherwise, they just polish up their chronic patterns and stay inside them.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1993

## Discharging on Identity

Dear Catholic heritage RCers,

Harvey Jackins pioneered the majority of early RC liberation efforts, including counseling techniques and a format for draft liberation policy statements. A legacy of his efforts is the three-step approach to identities, "Claim it, clean it up, throw it away," invented many years ago by "Jeanne D'Arc."<sup>1</sup> The intent of the three steps is to encourage discharge, shift rigidities, and promote thinking unique to an individual's personal re-emergence.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Nor is there a rigid formula or sequence. We think about individuals. What promotes discharge for one person ("I'm Catholic," "I'm Irish Catholic," "I'm a Gay Catholic," "I'm proud to be Catholic") may not work for another or reflect accurate thinking about him or her. We search for the precise contradiction<sup>2</sup> for this person, at this time, understanding the unique features of his or her experience.

For example, "I'm not a Catholic, I'm a human being," can lift tremendous internalized oppression off of individuals who have been targeted by colonization, attempted genocide, male domination, Gay oppression, or the terror used to impose beliefs on young people.

The counselor needs to understand the depth of the oppression and the contradictions necessary to face it. What works? Where does the client sob, shake, rage, stand against the early hurts (and history of oppression) to fight fully for herself or himself?

Each of us will need to claim our indignation at and power to stand against the full extent of oppression directed at *anyone* with a particular heritage, whether it be chosen, inherited, or imposed by means of violence or coercion.

As we do identity work, we also must understand what was done "in the name of religion." We cannot and will not be proud as a movement if we deny, forget, or dismiss the oppression carried out by an identity, a community, a religion.

As counselors we can keep track of what best supports discharge. Some individuals may discharge for months or years on throwing an identity away and then turn to a relaxed interest in what discharging on claiming the identity might mean for them. Others may *never*

claim the identity but take steady steps toward their re-emergence by discharging on throwing it permanently away.

We can use any of the three steps, in the sequence that makes the most sense and for as long or as short a time as needed, with a flexibility that promotes our full humanity and the freeing of all humans from oppression.

Ultimately, we are all human.

Feel free to share your thoughts and experiences related to discharging on a Catholic identity.

Joanne Bray  
International Liberation  
Reference Person for Catholics  
Greenwich, Connecticut, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of Catholics

### NEW TEACHER PACKET OUT SOON!

A new Teacher Packet will be mailed out soon to all RC teachers. It can also be ordered by anyone. The packet will include

***Black Re-emergence No. 11***—the most recent RC journal about black liberation

***Sustaining All Life No. 1***—the first issue of the RC journal about care of the environment

***Ruah Hadashah No. 11***—the most recent RC journal about Jewish liberation

***The RC Teacher No. 30***—the most recent RC journal on teaching RC

A new edition of ***The New Kind of Communicator***—a collection of key articles on teaching RC

***Moving Toward Liberation***—a DVD of talks by thirty of the International Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons

*The price is \$30 (U.S.), plus shipping and handling. (The DVD Moving Toward Liberation is half-price if purchased as part of the Teacher Packet.)*

For ordering information, see page 109.

<sup>1</sup>"Jeanne D'Arc" is the International Liberation Reference Person for Lesbians and Gay Men.

<sup>2</sup>Contradiction to distress

## A “Sprawling and Confusing Topic”

The Money Liberation Workshop, led by Mark Markovits<sup>1</sup> in Anchorage, Alaska, USA, in February 2011, offered a host of productive directions and perspectives with which to launch ongoing Area<sup>2</sup> discharge groups focused on our relationship with money.

Using money (rather than class) as the focal point gave all of us, regardless of class background or level of understanding about classism and the economic system, an easy way to begin working on this sprawling and confusing topic. Discharging on the origins of greed and on reclaiming power in regard to financial literacy, and focusing on early memories, were straightforward approaches to a daunting but central area.

If we don't get clear about money, we will never fully reclaim our power—since money permeates human relationships, activities, and institutions. It became obvious to everyone the way that different oppressions converge with and support disempowerment and confusion about money and the economic system. Great stuff! We're all enthusiastic about continuing this work.

*Libby Roderick*  
Anchorage, Alaska, USA

<sup>1</sup> Mike Markovits is the President of the Re-evaluation Foundation and the Information Coordinator for Managers, Administrators, and Executives.

<sup>2</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.



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Now Available!

### *The RC Teacher* No. 30

*A sample of the articles:*

**TEACHING:** “I’ve Learned to Teach the Students, Not the Topic” • What Should You Teach in a Fundamentals Class? • Teaching RC in a Prison • Friends and Relatives in Fundamentals Classes • RC Fits in with Their Lives, Not Mine

**COMMUNITY BUILDING:** Moving Forward at Our Own Slow Pace • Thinking About African American Men • Organizing Workshops with Oppressed Groups in Mind • Finally a Strong Base of People

**LIBERATION:** Asking, “How Had I Acted Out Racism?” • Taking the Plunge to Teach About Racism • Discharging Oppressor Distresses (when only one person in the class is targeted by that oppression) • Teaching RC to Raised-Poor People

**POLICY:** The *Guidelines* Exist to Make Sure You Do Think

**LEADERSHIP:** The Challenge of Developing and Sustaining Leadership • The Value of Leading from Behind • What Is the Best Process for Correcting Leadership? • All About Alternate Area Reference Persons

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## Fresh Thinking About Shabbat and Passover

We celebrate Shabbat<sup>1</sup> at RC workshops to welcome allies and put Jewish liberation up front. We want everyone to make central the ending of anti-Jewish oppression. Jews celebrating Shabbat together with their allies contradicts Jewish isolation, invisibility, and assimilation.

The following are some things to remember when celebrating Shabbat at RC workshops:

- We Jews need to continue our work on the RC Jewish Commitment (crafted by Harvey Jackins at the launching of RC Unity Seders): “For the long-range survival of my people, I . . . will treat every person I meet as if he or she were eager to be my warm, close, dependable friend and ally, under all conditions. This will mean that \_\_\_\_.” We assume that everyone wants to be our ally, and we welcome everyone to Shabbat with that understanding.

- Fresh thinking is key. We can always think afresh about how best to present Shabbat at any given workshop (and thereby avoid making it a non-thinking set exercise). On each occasion we need to ask ourselves what we are trying to accomplish. For example, at the last RC World Conference, Diane Balsler<sup>2</sup> invited Arab RCers to share about Arab liberation as a central part of the conference Shabbat celebration. At a recent workshop at which a Jewish liberation workshop and a separate allies-to-Jews workshop took place side by side, the allies and the Jews each conducted their own separate Shabbat. We Jews could be united as Jews, celebrate a Shabbat

that was *for us*, and not have to focus on teaching others. Our allies could build their own unity and independent voice, an important part of allies-to-Jews work.

### JEWISH LIBERATION, ARAB LIBERATION, AND PASSOVER

A great thing about Passover<sup>3</sup> is that we Jews get to practice focusing unashamedly on our own liberation (we generally fight for everyone else’s liberation while ignoring our own) *while at the same time* fighting for the liberation of all peoples.

I like having all of us at my Seder<sup>4</sup> table say how, in the last year, we have gone from *Mitzrayim* (the narrow places) to liberation, and how we have taken on<sup>5</sup> our own re-emergence and fought for ourselves. For example, this past year I made a fierce decision to face the early battles that left me struggling to breathe (and with asthma). I have been fighting for a life in which I can always breathe fully.

<sup>3</sup> Passover is a Jewish holiday and festival that commemorates the story of the Exodus, in which the ancient Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. Passover begins on the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan in the Jewish calendar (in spring in the Northern Hemisphere) and is celebrated for seven or eight days.

<sup>4</sup> A Seder is a ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover. It involves a retelling of the story of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. Other Seder customs include eating matzo (unleavened bread); partaking in symbolic foods placed on the Seder Plate; and reclining, in celebration of freedom.

<sup>5</sup> Taken on means taken responsibility for.

In the traditional Seder we dip our fingers into the grape juice as we recite the ten plagues.<sup>6</sup> This is to acknowledge that our gladness about our liberation from Egypt is tempered by the fact that many Egyptian people died in connection with that event. I think something additional is called for this year. The Passover story is about our liberation from Egypt, and this past year we’ve witnessed the Egyptian people fighting for liberation. Several readings at my Seder will be about Jews taking a lead in celebrating and backing<sup>7</sup> the Egyptian people’s liberation movement, and all the people’s liberation movements in the Middle East.

At the end of the Seder when we say, “Next year in Jerusalem,” I like to think what that means to me personally and symbolically (given that I may not be physically moving to Jerusalem in the next year). In my Co-Counseling sessions I’ve been focusing more on sexism. I want to face why it has been so hard for me, as a Jewish female, to make ending sexism central to my liberation. At my Seder this year, when I say, “Next year in Jerusalem,” I will remember that being in my homeland as a Jew also means being there as a Jewish

*continued . . .*

<sup>6</sup> God unleashed the ten plagues on the Egyptians because of the suffering they had inflicted on the Jews.

<sup>7</sup> Backing means supporting.



ALAN SPRUNG

<sup>1</sup> Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath. It goes from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday.

<sup>2</sup> Diane Balsler is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and is Jewish.

## LIBERATION

... continued

female. I'm not yet "home" in my liberation as a female, and I will work on that in the coming year.

I invite you to answer the following questions and to share your answers on the e-mail discussion list:

- During the week before Passover there is the ritual to get rid of *Humatz*—bread from our homes—in preparation for Passover. What are you "throwing out" as you prepare to celebrate Passover? A suggestion:

it could be oppressor patterns or internalized oppression.

- What would you like to celebrate at Passover? What have you taken on<sup>8</sup> in your life, your liberation work, your sessions? Where have you gone from a narrow place toward greater liberation and re-emergence?

- What have you figured out about making Arab liberation central while

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<sup>8</sup> In this context, taken on means decided to work on.

also fighting for your liberation as a Jew?

- How did you make Arab liberation a central issue at your Passover Seder?

- What does "next year in Jerusalem" mean to you for the coming year?

*Cherie Brown*

*International Liberation*

*Reference Person for Jews*

Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Jews

## A Unifying, Liberating Experience

*Here are some reports on an RC Seder<sup>1</sup> held in the Kent, England, RC Community in April 2011:*

After discharging on the idea of an Area<sup>2</sup> Seder, I was challenged to give up my feeling that a Seder would be my burden to carry as the lone person who had organised Seders before. I was challenged to sit back and allow the Gentiles to organize it, and with little prior knowledge they did a great job.

The Seder was held at my home, and together we Jews and Gentiles enjoyed discharging on what it meant for us to be visible and supporting each other to celebrate this Jewish tradition. It helped me get closer to my white Gentile allies and feel more powerful and visible as a black woman of Jewish heritage.

*Isha McKenzie-Mavinga*  
Maidstone, Kent, England

I found out about my Jewish heritage when my dad was dying, so I had no knowledge of Jewish customs. I went to the Seder apprehensively, not wanting to be involved in any "ceremonies" and feeling guilty for not knowing enough. The reality was delightful and moving. I found the emphasis on

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<sup>1</sup> A Seder is a Jewish ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover, which starts on the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan in the Jewish calendar (in spring in the Northern Hemisphere) and is celebrated for seven or eight days. The Seder involves a retelling of the story of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. Other Seder customs include eating matzo (unleavened bread); partaking in symbolic foods placed on the Seder plate; and reclining, in celebration of freedom.

<sup>2</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

liberation for all supportive. People brought food, and we took time to go through the various activities. It brought us together, and I connected with people in a deeper way.

*Susan Harris*  
Hayes, Kent, England

In preparing and sharing the symbols of the Seder plate, we discharged powerfully on the liberation issues we were facing that year and deepened our connections with each other.

*Fiona Rakine Wright*  
Hastings, East Sussex, England

For me the Seder was a re-emergent, liberating experience. Once I decided to take on<sup>3</sup> the challenge of doing something I knew little about, discharging helped me think about what to do.

The Seder was unifying. We could acknowledge our differences yet use what the Seder symbolises to discharge the distress patterns that keep us separate. As a Gentile I tend to feel scared and do nothing; Jews then have to take the lead. (I think my distress patterns in this regard are experienced by Jews as anti-Jewish oppression.) By deciding to organise and lead the Seder, I had to face fears of being humiliated and making mistakes. I had to contradict my chronic pattern of staying isolated from people and not asking for help. (I was in contact and discharged with many Gentiles during the process.) I challenged my anti-Jewish oppressor distress by

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<sup>3</sup> Take on means undertake.

holding out wanting to have an RC Seder instead of being comfortable, not feeling, and doing nothing.

*Agatha Coffey*  
St. Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex, England

to reflect on new beginnings for myself and the progress I have made in my own re-emergence.

*Christine Murrells*  
Gillingham, Kent, England

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My serious misgivings gave way to admiration for the way this alien-to-me religious ritual was adapted for RC use. It was true to itself, yet stimulating and appropriate for me. It enhanced my sense of inclusiveness.

*Stuart Stephenson*  
Gravesend, Kent, England

As a Gentile I felt excited to learn what a Seder involved, as I hadn't been to one before. Sessions on the challenge for our Area brought huge discharge. The closeness the Seder inspired was uplifting and reinforced how the discharge process works for our liberation.

*Margaret Barrett*  
Langton Green, Kent, England

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An enlightening and uplifting experience. I not only learnt a lot about another culture's celebration but had the chance



**I**t's important to learn how to be respectful. This will go on for our whole lives. When we come into contact with people "different" from ourselves, the responsible position is to discharge oppressor material.\* We need to get into a habit of being responsible for this. We mustn't blame people for our discomfort. Our aim is to love the people who restimulate us.

*Anne Barton*  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia  
Reprinted from the newsletter of the Melbourne,  
Victoria, Australia, RC Community

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\* Material means distress.

## Moving Toward Liberation

A collection of live and enthusiastic three-minute talks by thirty of the International Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons about their work in RC

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BOB ROMERO



## Relatives of “Mental Health” System Survivors

I organized and attended the first RC Relatives of “Mental Health” System Survivors’ Workshop. It was led by Janet Foner, the International Liberation Reference Person for “Mental Health” Liberation. We met at Janet’s house in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, USA.

You need to know a little bit about my history to know how significant the workshop was for me.

My mother has been heavily targeted for many years by the “mental health” system. When she gets scared, she loses track of<sup>1</sup> reality, thinks people are out to get her,<sup>2</sup> and does things that scare people. For example, she set fire to three of her homes. Because she is confused in a way that endangers people or property, she has been targeted by both the “mental health” and the criminal justice systems. For the past twenty-seven years, she has been continuously drugged and has been intermittently incarcerated in mental hospitals.

My mom’s distress has sometimes caused her to do things that have put my life at risk. For example, when she has thought that someone was chasing us on the highway, she has swerved in and out of traffic to get away.

I and other members of my family have believed some of her fears. For example, when at one point she thought that my father was trying to hurt my brothers and me, my grandparents started picking us up at school to protect us from him. I grew afraid of many things that weren’t actually happening; they were recorded as real.

Witnessing my mother’s mistreatment by the “mental health” system has made me afraid of feeling my own feelings. She was locked up under awful conditions, drugged, and treated disrespectfully, all because she had lost track of reality and needed a big session. I’ve been afraid that would also happen to me, if I lost it.<sup>3</sup>

It has been hard for me to take up space. My mother, preoccupied with her material,<sup>4</sup> has constantly sought



IPSWICH, MASSACHUSETTS, USA • TIM JACKINS

attention from people. She did that with me beginning in my early childhood. I never had a mother who was there for me. Instead her patterns made it my job to take care of her.

Society offers few resources for the care and “treatment” of “mentally ill” people. Relatives are manipulated into being unpaid auxiliary “mental health” workers. They are often left to make sure that the “patient” takes his or her drugs, gets to appointments,

looks “normal,” and so on. It is assumed that taking care of the “mentally ill” person is their job, because they are relatives. Relatives (including young people) who refuse to take on<sup>5</sup> that job are criticized and called selfish and uncaring.

It has been hard for me to know what I need—never mind try<sup>6</sup> to get my needs met, live life for myself, or get what I want (what is that?).

The above are just some of the reasons I’ve needed an RC “relatives’ liberation” movement.

Organizing the workshop brought up a lot of my material. A turning point came when Janet reminded me that the workshop was not about my getting myself in better shape<sup>7</sup> to save my mom. It was for *me*—to discharge so that I could live life on my own terms. It was about relaxing and getting myself into the center of the picture. (As I was encouraging other people to attend the workshop, they appreciated being reminded that that was true for them as well.)

Janet covered the whole gamut of our issues:

- How “mental health” oppression came down on<sup>8</sup> our family member
- How it came down on us as relatives
- The role of psychiatric drugs as applied to relatives

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Loses track of means gets out of contact with.

<sup>2</sup> Out to get her means trying to harm her.

<sup>3</sup> Lost it means acted out acute restimulation and confusion.

<sup>4</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>5</sup> Take on means assume.

<sup>6</sup> Never mind try means not even considering trying.

<sup>7</sup> Shape means condition.

<sup>8</sup> Came down on means was acted out at.

## LIBERATION

... continued

- How to get and stay present when from a family that is preoccupied with distress
- How, as relatives, we are pushed into the middle-agent role—how the society coerces us into both taking care of and oppressing our family member
- How the world needs our leadership—how people are looking for leadership on these issues, both inside and outside of RC

The workshop changed my life. I had been reluctant to admit to myself, and my Co-Counselors, my many fears. They had seemed too “crazy.” For example, I can be terrified of walking out my door in the morning

because I feel like someone is out there waiting to assassinate me. Before the workshop, it felt too scary to talk about that, so the fear stayed in place. I’m now more able to tell my Co-Counselors what I’m afraid of, and starting to discharge the fear has made a huge difference. The world feels like a safer place.

I appreciate Janet’s caring and leadership, and I look forward to more workshops and connections with my fellow relatives. I know it can be tough to write about this topic, but I would love to hear from you.

“Henry Church”

East Coast, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of “mental health” liberation



TEL DOR, ISRAEL • MARYA AXNER

### CORRECTION:

In the October 2011 *Present Time*, the article “Energy Use, Racism, and Closeness,” on pages 59 to 60, was attributed to Linda Stout. In fact, the author is Kate Stout, of Prairie Farm, Wisconsin, USA. Our apologies.

## Take It Easy on Yourself

(a song)

*Take it easy on yourself  
You deserve the very best  
You’ve done a lot and done it well  
It’s time you took a little rest*

Some folks act like it’s a shame  
To admit what you’ve done good  
Well, I think you’re not to blame  
For only doing all you could

*Refrain (Take it easy on yourself . . .)*

Not everything you did was fun  
There were times got kind of rough  
I’m proud of you for what you did  
Let’s say till now you’ve done enough

*Refrain*

Yes I know that you’re not through  
There’s still lots and lots to do  
Let’s put it all aside for now  
I promise it will wait for you

*Refrain*

Now take a break from running fast  
Find a soft spot to lie down  
Watch the sun and stars go past  
Let this good earth just roll around

*Refrain*

© Russell Hayes  
Lexington, Kentucky, USA



## Facing the Violence Directed at African Heritage People



At a recent workshop, the leader asked three African heritage women to speak to the group about their experiences of racism. The last woman who spoke was my regular Co-Counselor, whom I have known for many years and love dearly. She spoke of her fear of being killed, and of people killing her father, brother, husband, and son. That brought up tremendous feelings in me.

The group had a mini-session after the demonstration, and I found myself reviewing a chain of memories involving the violence directed at African heritage people.

I am of mixed heritage: Puerto Rican and Cuban on my father's side and Irish on my mother's. I was raised in Brooklyn (New York, USA) in a diverse neighborhood in terms of class and race. The memory that came to me first was of the Rodney King verdict.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rodney King is an African heritage U.S. man who was physically beaten by Los Angeles (California, USA) police on March 3, 1991. The police repeatedly struck King with their batons, while other officers stood by watching, not taking any action to stop the beating. A bystander videotaped much of the incident, and a portion of the videotape was aired by news agencies around the world, causing public outrage about police brutality and the social inequalities in Los Angeles. Four Los Angeles police officers were later tried in a state court for the beating. Three were acquitted, and the jury failed to reach a verdict for the fourth. The announcement of the acquittals sparked the 1992 Los Angeles riots. A later federal trial for civil rights violations ended with two of the officers being found guilty and sent to prison, and the other two acquitted.

I was in high school when the police who brutally beat Rodney King, an African heritage man, were declared innocent. My school was transitioning from a mostly white student body to a mostly black and Latino one. When we heard of the verdict, we were so enraged and saddened that we wanted to walk out of the school in protest. Our teachers got word of<sup>2</sup> that and told us we would all be suspended if we left the school. I remember feeling defeated and hopeless. Although so many of us wanted to walk out, none of us did.

In my mini it occurred to me that every time I've felt righteous indignation about the horrors of racism, the oppressive society has squelched it. I suddenly became aware of how quiet the room was. I believe that others in the room may have had similar experiences of not being allowed to fully feel the terror and sadness of witnessing violence directed, over and over again, at African heritage people.

I then thought about Hurricane Katrina<sup>3</sup> and the images of people of African heritage buried in water. One morning shortly after the hurricane, I

<sup>2</sup> Got word of means heard about.

<sup>3</sup> Hurricane Katrina was a massive hurricane, in August 2005, that caused severe destruction along the U.S. coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The largest number of deaths were among African heritage people in New Orleans, Louisiana, due to flooding when the levee system failed.

was at brunch with my family and we were discussing the news. My mother choked up<sup>4</sup> as she talked about an elderly woman who was trapped in her house for three days, up to her neck in water. I glanced at the table behind us and saw a white woman who was listening to our conversation quietly crying.

It reminded me that to reclaim our humanness, we have to really feel the horror of racism. Everyone has to feel it. It is essential to everyone's re-emergence. Since the oppressive society tries its best for us not to feel it, we have to fight to feel it, and we must help each other in that struggle.

*Leila Ortiz*  
Brooklyn, New York, USA

<sup>4</sup> Choked up means was on the verge of tears.



CAPE ANN, MASSACHUSETTS, USA • STEVE BANBURY

## Modern Sports

We all mildly hoped that the Seattle Sonics\* would win, but modern sports are just a cheap way of keeping us excited so we don't do anything about all the things that are wrong.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1996

\* The Seattle Sonics are the professional basketball team of Seattle, Washington, USA.

## Catholic Men and Sex

Not many men have written on the Catholic or the men's RC e-mail discussion list about the wonderful workshop that Mary Hodgson<sup>1</sup> led, with support from Joanne Bray,<sup>2</sup> for Catholic men—on sex, closeness, and early sexual memories.<sup>3</sup> Thirty-two RC men's leaders attended. It was a profound workshop for us. I think that not much has been said about it because the subject is packed with shame and embarrassment.

Mary talked about the many hours of discharge needed to begin to get a handle on sexual distress, and how few hours we actually work on it. For Catholic men, the hurts related to sex have been huge and can appear overwhelming.

About two months before the workshop I began working on sex in most of my Co-Counseling sessions and have continued to do so. I've also been listening to Harvey's<sup>4</sup> talk, recorded at the University of Maine (USA) in the 1970s, on love, affection, and sex.<sup>5</sup> I recommend it highly. What I'm most impressed by is how relaxed Harvey is when talking about sex and closeness. He talks about how we are all so embarrassed and lonely that it undermines what should be something quite natural and human and lovely. I laugh and laugh along with his audience. I wish I had heard that talk as a young man.

<sup>1</sup> Mary Hodgson is an RC leader in Seattle, Washington, USA, and a staff counselor at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources.

<sup>2</sup> Joanne Bray is the International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics.

<sup>3</sup> The workshop was held in Connecticut, USA, in February 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey Jackins'

<sup>5</sup> *Affection, Love, and Sex, at the University of Maine* (CD #1001), which can be ordered from Rational Island Publishers

In my sessions I've started with my earliest sexual memory and then scanned through my early years of being raised by Irish Catholics in New England (USA). I remember going to what was called a "mission," when I was twelve. A visiting priest came to the parish, and for three days, right after school, all of us young adolescent girls and boys were subjected to his fire-and-brimstone<sup>6</sup> sermons. He was very dramatic, and installed profound fears of purgatory, hell, and sin—all of which he linked to sexual activities. I left those sermons committed to never having sex of any sort, not wanting to jeopardize my very soul and risk eternal damnation.

In my work on sex, I'm mostly trying to discharge fear. We were terrorized, with no time or place to discharge. In fact, just the thought of my body and skin is terrifying. Because we were taught that the body was bad and potentially sinful, when my mind sees skin, it thinks "bad."

Even my thoughts are suspect. The Church taught us that God knew "even our very thoughts" and that "impure thoughts" were as sinful as actually doing anything sexual. This was linked to the fear of suffering for eternity in hell, or for some unknown length of time in purgatory.

All this led me, and many Catholic men of my generation and earlier generations, to be completely uptight<sup>7</sup> about sex. Some of us became very, very careful and inhibited. Others of us rebelled and went in the promiscuous direction.

I have found it useful to work diligently in this area for an extended period of time. The benefits are apparent. I'm beginning to feel more relaxed about my body, and other bodies, and more accepting of who I am, and the feelings that I have.

*Phil Rose*  
Fenner, New York, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of men

<sup>6</sup> Fire-and-brimstone means dramatic and terrifying warning of the punishment of hell.

<sup>7</sup> Uptight means tense and nervous.



BLOWN GLASS • DIANE SHISK

Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality.

*Abraham Lincoln*

## All Catholic Men Are Good

When Joanne Bray<sup>1</sup> suggested that we bring together RC Catholic men's leaders to work on things like sex, violence, isolation, and shame,<sup>2</sup> it was a dream come true. Almost every Catholic man I talked to about it was interested. Where else could a group of Catholic men come together to discharge on sex, early sexual memories, and closeness?

### GROWING UP A CATHOLIC MALE

I grew up in a white middle-class male-dominated Catholic family in which I learned how to be a "good" Catholic man. This meant, "Do what you're told, not what others do (unless you do it in private and keep it a secret); keep your struggles to yourself (or be ridiculed for being a wimp); follow the rules (or at least don't get caught breaking them); put others' needs before your own (yours don't count); learn to defend yourself (or be humiliated); don't talk back (or be beaten); work hard for others and never complain (except behind their backs); and respect your mom (while colluding with sexism and all the awful things that come with male domination)."

### MY CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Mary Hodgson,<sup>3</sup> the leader of the workshop, suggested that we look at our unfinished conversations with the Catholic Church or with God, which she identified as a major source of heartbreak for many Catholic men. I am one of them.

I had not realized until I started discharging several years ago on going back to church what an impression my Catholic community had made on me. Church was the

only place where I had any warm physical contact with my stepbrothers or stepfather. The remainder of the time I did my best to avoid being the target of their violence. During the Mass when we gave each other the sign of peace, they actually looked like human beings. That tiny glimpse into their male humanness meant a lot to me.

Besides being a sanctuary from abuse, my Catholic community was the one place where there was a shared sense of history and purpose, where people talked openly about love, where we sang beautiful songs, and where there was an acknowledgment of the deep connections we had with one another. I treasured those things.

Church also restimulated feelings of victimhood and isolation. I would see everyone around me sitting silently in his or her pew, as oppression went unchallenged. Unlike in some Catholic parishes and homes, I did not hear anyone speaking out against the racism, sexism, anti-Jewish oppression, colonization, attempted genocide, and mistreatment of young people that in my mind tainted the entire community. I did not know how to interpret the silence, but I did know that when I was old enough I would leave. Until then, I would keep my thoughts and feelings to myself and spend as much time as possible alone, to avoid being hurt.

### FEELING THAT I AM BAD

Of course, being alone with big feelings leads to all sorts of acting out, which I did a lot of, mostly in school. That often got me into trouble, but even belt whippings on my bare backside did not stop me from doing those things.

Despite all the time that I've spent discharging on my goodness, I still

struggle with recorded feelings that I am bad. A part of me feels that I deserved the humiliating punishments I got back then, even though I know now that that doesn't make sense for anyone.

This is why I was touched by Mary's absolute confidence that all of us Catholic men are good, regardless of what we've done. She called out the full range of patterns that Catholic men carry—for example, sex addictions and pulls toward violence—and, in her matter-of-fact tone, asked us to consider that those patterns do not define who we are and that we are not doomed to an eternity in hell. I was not aware until she said that how deeply I had internalized that terrifying fate. I immediately burst out sobbing. Thank you, Mary, for seeing our goodness; for being such a stalwart, outspoken ally to Catholic men; and for calling us to end oppressive behaviors that we do not want to act out.

This workshop was important for me. And it could not have happened without the solid relationships that Joanne has established over the years with many of the RC Catholic men's leaders. Joanne's and Mary's all-out dedication to Catholic men's liberation is making it possible for me to believe that, just maybe, there is hope that I can stop acting out the repetitive, stupid patterns imposed on me (and other men) by hurt and oppression; discharge the associated bad feelings; and step more fully into the joys of being a human male, helping to transform society—which includes our beloved wide-world Catholic community.

*Tibor Besskó*

Eugene, Oregon, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of men

<sup>1</sup> Joanne Bray is the International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics.

<sup>2</sup> See previous article.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Hodgson is an RC leader in Seattle, Washington, USA, and a staff counselor at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources.

## Addressing Divisions, Finding Each Other

We men still have a hard time taking on<sup>1</sup> our liberation with full seriousness. We still think that we can endure our misuse and deprivation and that perhaps we don't really deserve to be treated like human beings. It is hard for us to make our liberation a priority, to organize ourselves and get fully behind our leaders.

A great deal of the Catholic men's workshop<sup>2</sup> had to do with our finding each other—not so easy, given the wide range of experiences of being Catholic. A white group met first thing each morning to discharge on racism. A support group for men targeted by racism truly achieved “workshop-within-a-workshop” status and included just about every man targeted by racism. For many of those men, Catholic heritage was steeped in colonialism and delivered within a church, led by European white men, that was disrespectful and genocidal toward Indigenous peoples. While the heritages of many of the white men included distant histories of colonial oppression, being connected to Catholicism meant quite different things across the racial and historical divisions. The sort of mistrust, separation, and misunderstanding common when men try to unite for the sake of a larger movement was a factor as well. But for just about all of us, there was this fact: As children we learned to “speak Catholic,” to experience the world through the lens of Catholic culture, traditions, teachings, rituals, and people. For many, Catholicism had been a home and a refuge, a place where love was openly touted, where saints were venerated, where sins were confessed and forgiven, and where people were brought together into communities of compassion.

Being Catholic is for some an “unfinished conversation.” The workshop offered opportunities to pay attention to the unsaid, unaddressed issues from a Catholic childhood that might still be coloring how we experience ourselves, and other people. Whether it was racism passed along by parish priests and school teachers, or the young people's oppression built into almost every institutional and religious practice, fighting to free our minds from hurt and oppression was helped by the contradiction<sup>3</sup> of being in a place where so many understood the experience; no translation needed.

*Michael Reichert*  
Wilmington, Delaware, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of men

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<sup>1</sup> Taking on means undertaking.

<sup>2</sup> See previous two articles.

<sup>3</sup> Contradiction to distress.

## A Powerful Event, with Lasting Effects

The recent Women and Physical Power and Health Workshop, led by Diane Shisk<sup>1</sup> and Diane Balser,<sup>2</sup> in New York, USA, was a powerful event with lasting effects for me. I went with a team of women from my Region.<sup>3</sup> We did well together. Also, I spent a lot of time with other women targeted by racism. It was a huge blow to sexism and racism to have so many of us there taking on<sup>4</sup>

activity, strength, and health. It made a big difference to me that Esther Jackson<sup>5</sup> and Teresa Enrico<sup>6</sup> have stuck with this work and are on Diane Shisk's physical power leadership team.

Diane and Diane were dynamic partners and together created the conditions for us to move mountains. Thank you Diane Shisk for spearheading this work for all these years and for persisting in having us contradict

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<sup>1</sup> Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person.

<sup>2</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

<sup>3</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

<sup>4</sup> Taking on means confronting and doing something about.

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<sup>5</sup> Esther Jackson is an African heritage RC leader in Albany, New York, USA.

<sup>6</sup> Teresa Enrico is the International Liberation Reference Person for Filipino/a Heritage People.

powerlessness with physical activity. Thank you for creating space for each woman to fight for herself. At this workshop I noticed that I was trained to be a caretaker and not a fighter. I loved that you insisted that our health as females depends on physical activity and good nutrition. It was also helpful to hear that I am not alone in being preoccupied with my body and weight and that sexism is the number-one reason that our health as women suffers.

Thank you Diane Balser for insisting that we cannot take on any element of internalized female oppression in isolation, that we need brigades/teams of women with us in order to remove the claws of internalized oppression. I like that you encouraged us to look at the traditional roles women have been pushed into that have used and abused women's bodies: having children, child rearing, and sexual exploitation.

I came back from the workshop noticing that my constant physical exhaustion is partly due to women's oppression and male domination. Simply, I do a lot—as a mother, a female worker, an activist—and therefore I'm exhausted all the time. I re-made the decision to put myself—my body and my health—first, before the needs of my daughter and husband, social activism, and so on. I have had to make this decision many times before, and I now realize that I can remember it and its importance only when I am at a women's workshop. I have done some physical activity every day since I've been back!

At the workshop I got to look at the shame installed on me as a Muslim girl growing up in Iran. To get Muslim girls to agree to be physically covered up in public, they are made to feel tremendous shame about their bodies, and moving their bodies. At the workshop I was able to access a lot of shame and shyness by running and playing football. Up to this day, Muslim girls are constantly reminded that they must not do much physical activity, so as to make sure their hymens remain intact to only be torn during sex with their husbands. During a wrestling session I got to discharge how mad I am at what was done to me, and other little girls, to make us feel bad about our bodies.

In addition, I got to notice how, as the agent of internalized sexism, I am installing passivity on my daughter who is two years old and much more physically active than I ever was at her age. Since I have been home, I've tried to interrupt any ways that I encourage her to not take physical risks, to "be careful," and to not be too active. I have a powerful pull to inactivity, and now I notice it and try my best to go against it.

I am excited to be part of the gang that is bringing this work back to the women in my Region.

*Azi Khalili*

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of women

## **The Correct Attitude Toward Younger People**

The attitude of older people toward the younger people should be to reach out to them, appreciate them, loan them confidence, encourage them, look up to their leadership, and be interested in anything they have to say. Don't be in a hurry to argue with them or correct them. Unless they get a chance to say it all the way out, they don't get a chance to change their minds, and changing one's mind is an important part of the process of becoming more intelligent.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1993



NEW ZEALAND • ELLIE PUTNAM

## “I Am on Fire!”

I don't write too often to the lists,<sup>1</sup> but I am on fire! I will have to tell a story, since I believe where I am is the result of a series of things.

First, I retired in November 2009. I was fortunate to have had a well-paying government job that allowed me to have a positive impact on tens of thousands of college students in New York State (USA) and beyond. Most of them were defined as “educationally and economically disadvantaged”—another way of defining students targeted by racism who would not “normally” have access to higher education. I would fight for what was right, and that may or may not have included me personally. One could argue that any fight was a fight for me, but that was not always true. In retirement I have not had to face the oppression that happened daily in my work environment. What attention that has freed up to live my life differently!

Second has been my RC activities, particularly since I retired. I have had two Intensives.<sup>2</sup> I attended

<sup>1</sup> RC e-mail discussion lists

<sup>2</sup> An Intensive is twenty hours of one-way Re-evaluation Counseling, for a fee, at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, in Seattle, Washington, USA.

a Women Eliminating Racism Workshop, Tim Jackins' East Coast USA Leaders' Workshop, and a Women and Physical Power and Health Workshop, in addition to my annual Black Liberation and Community Development Workshop and Colleagues' Workshop and Area<sup>3</sup> and Regional<sup>4</sup> workshops. I have also participated in the Large Women's Health Project. At the Eliminating Racism Workshop, Barbara Love<sup>5</sup> told us people targeted by racism that we had to call people on<sup>6</sup> any actions that seemed incorrect—whether they really were racist or not, since they most likely would feel like racism to us. In the past couple of days I'm finding that calling something racist happens more easily.

Third, I decided to launch consulting and coaching businesses, even though I felt a powerful pull to continue with my new-found life as a retiree, doing exactly what I thought I

<sup>3</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

<sup>4</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for African Heritage People and was the leader of the Eliminating Racism Workshop.

<sup>6</sup> Call people on means interrupt, point out.

wanted to do, when I wanted to do it, and not making any commitments to a schedule, even if it was one of my own making. As I made the necessary commitments, it became obvious to me that I was using food to manage my anxieties and fears. Noticing that was important, because it is so often difficult for me to have any idea that I even have feelings, never mind<sup>7</sup> anxieties or fears. It has felt like there was no safety to feel anything, or in any way acknowledge that I had feelings.

I have discovered that food works in two ways for me. First, it puts a lid on whatever I may (usually unawaresly) be feeling. Second, it allows me to feel some of the feelings without feeling completely overwhelmed. These two things seem contradictory, but they have been how I have managed to survive almost all my life, beginning as a pre-adolescent when “weight” and food became key issues for me.

At the Women and Physical Power and Health Workshop, Diane Shisk<sup>8</sup> gave a talk about the Large Women's Health Project and how RC has historically put attention to areas where there has not been much movement. She expressed her frustration that the Communities have not yet been able to do the work needed for the liberation of large women to move much. Diane Balser<sup>9</sup> then talked about how it is not moving because we have not dealt with the pervasiveness of sexism. No matter what the

<sup>7</sup> Never mind means never even considering.

<sup>8</sup> Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person and was one of the leaders, with Diane Balser, of the Women and Physical Power and Health Workshop.

<sup>9</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and was one of the leaders, with Diane Shisk, of the Women and Physical Power and Health Workshop.



AMANDA MARTINEZ

beautification industry does, from make-up to hair dye to sex-change operations, the reality and depth of sexism have not changed—and, of course, women are not the only ones affected by that.

Wow! Talk about<sup>10</sup> personal politics. I thought, “How can I trust my white female allies to be there for me when they cannot be there for themselves?” If they allow themselves to be treated like dirt,

<sup>10</sup> Talk about means definitely.

## Directions for People with Cancer

The common element that seems to show up in the distresses of people with cancer (aside from carcinogens in the environment, cosmic ray interactions, viruses, and so on) is some self-hate or self-destruction type of pattern. Of course this always comes from the outside—sometimes from a model and sometimes from the despair of the person during a past experience.

A determination to live forever, a statement of physical immortality, a determination that death will be defeated—all these are in a good direction. The particular individual directions will, of course, show up as the patterns expose themselves in order to resist the pro-life direction.

Taking power, being in charge, being unwilling to settle for anything less than everything—all these seem to go in the right direction.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1980

if they don't engage in a vigorous, deadly, intense fight, how can I trust them in any way to be my allies? This has been a stumbling block for me in my re-emergence and a barrier to my acting on my thinking, particularly when I have been attacked for expressing any expectation of just a little something more than what is happening at the moment.

I have always dealt with sexism out in the world with a fair amount of vigor, but I haven't dealt with it much in my personal life. Since

leaving home I have lived alone and never married. I suspect to some extent I haven't had much attention left over to take on<sup>11</sup> that fight. All the oppressions have piled up to add more defeats to the early one in which I just gave up. Getting out from under—what a job. But I am on fire!

*Jackie Kane*

Albany, New York, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of women

<sup>11</sup> Take on means undertake.



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## Important Advances in Women's Liberation

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## Don't Let Oppression Keep Us Quiet

Recently I took part<sup>1</sup> in two international conference calls and started to understand a bit about some subtle ways oppression works to keep us quiet.

On the first call, I was the only Australian, together with people from the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. I felt stupid. I felt like I had nothing to say, and like I didn't have the correct language to say anything. It sounded to me like everyone else was more accomplished.

On the second call, there were people from several countries, including a few from Australia. I started to notice that the people from outside the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom talked in a way that sounded less sophisticated, less grand, less accomplished, and more personal. From counselling during and after the call, I realised that I was not the only one who felt like she didn't have the right "lingo" (language), or who wanted to hang up, or who felt like she had nothing to say.

Suddenly I was able to see more clearly than ever before that this is all about the oppressive society. I was reminded of the words of Carolyn Ellis, an academic who was raised working-class in a small town in the United States. She talked about realising that the way she learned to talk, converse, think, and experience the world was more about people and relationships and things going on<sup>2</sup> than about analysis and theory. For years she struggled against this as a sociologist and worked to talk and write the "lingo," but now she explicitly and intentionally uses what she learned growing up about valuing and noticing people and relationships, and has built on this and offers it as her contribution.

I am grateful that I had a chance to be included in these conference calls, because now I can tell<sup>3</sup> that it makes sense for us Australians (and other non-USers) to speak up. It may be tricky, because in relation to people from the United States or the United Kingdom, we may feel that we are not good enough, don't do it right, or need to be more like "them" before we say anything. Or we might try to hide our feelings of powerlessness and insignificance and only notice our disdain and contempt for "them." Both sides of the pattern lead to the same result: our silence. I wonder if this makes it hard for people from the United States and the United Kingdom to notice us or to remember that we have anything of value to say.

After the second conference call, I had a picture of us Australians leading everyone. I saw that we have something valuable to offer and that others can learn by following us—just for who we are. I, for one, have to decide to act against the feelings and speak out.

*Karen Rosauer*

St. Kilda East, Victoria, Australia  
Reprinted from the newsletter of the Melbourne,  
Victoria, Australia, RC Community

<sup>1</sup> Took part means participated.

<sup>2</sup> Going on means happening.

<sup>3</sup> Tell means see, notice.

## /// Fighting Three Intersecting Oppressions ///

I was recently reminded of the intersection of sexism, racism, and the oppression of young people and how it can play a part within one's own family.

I was out at a restaurant with my mother, father, and older brother (I am black and female and the youngest child in my family) to celebrate Mother's Day. While waiting for our meals, we all tried to speak and connect to each other as much as possible. In these situations, my father asks a variety of random questions, mostly directed to my brother or mother (not to me) and assumes that only they know the answers. When they don't know, I will say the correct answer or offer my thinking about the topic. Then he often ignores that or asks my brother, "Is that right?" When he finds out that I am right, I never get an "Oh, you were right!" from him or any other kind of appreciation for my thinking. Rarely does he take me seriously or engage with me like a regular human being.

Sometimes I get so angry and frustrated that I want to run away from the situation or have a tantrum in front of everyone. My father and brother do not understand that I have a valid concern about what they are doing to me. They even consider me to be too "pushy," sensitive, or mean. They often ask me, "What have you got to be angry about?" while they continue to express their anger about various things, usually about how they have been targeted by racism.

They constantly run\* their sexism at me, with the attitude that black women have no right to be angry and that even if they did, they're supposed to "bottle it up" and be quiet about it. As black men, they have been hurt by men's oppression and racism into thinking that this is the "normal" way to treat a young black woman. (Look at where they learned this—our society is *still* filled with the invalidation, ignoring, and dehumanization of black women; it just may be in a quieter, more elusive form.)

It's sad how we black women are targeted with messages that we and our thinking, feelings, and ideas are not important, are even stupid. I am often ignored and treated as if I'm invisible by white people and, as described, within my family as well. My family has teased me about my physical looks, my argumentativeness, my fighting against the oppression, and for demanding respect.

There is little safe space for me to show myself. However, I am slowly finding ways to contradict the oppression—by being loud and visible, standing up for myself whenever it's logical and safe to do so, and putting my thinking forward and in the center. I have to constantly remind myself that I am right and that it's just fine to demand respect, love, and fairness.

*Tatiana Elena Williams-Rodriguez*  
Abington, Massachusetts, USA

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\* Run means act out.

### ***Ruah Hadashah* No. 11**

This *Ruah Hadashah* is full of items to help Jews, and allies to Jews, meet the challenges of the next period. Each article can be used to guide us toward powerful counseling and powerful action. The articles are packed with new thoughts about how to discharge the hurts of anti-Jewish oppression that keep Jews from loving themselves, loving each other, and reaching out to every potential ally.

Discharging on anti-Jewish oppression goes hand in hand with the goal of eliminating white racism, another central theme of this *Ruah Hadashah*. Each topic relates to the others, reflecting a hopeful cohesiveness and strength.

*Marya Axner, Editor*  
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

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Ordering information on page 109

## Increasingly Relaxed Around All Men

I identify as a heterosexual man. The more I move toward men who identify as Gay, discharging along the way, the clearer it becomes that Gay liberation is for me and every other man.

Gay oppression is vicious. Every boy gets a taste of it. It is one of the tools used to shut down boys' discharge and to separate every boy from every other boy. (This seems similar to one of the effects of racism, which is to separate white people from one another as well as from people targeted by racism.)

There is a significant part of myself that I walled off very early

in order to avoid being targeted by Gay oppression. I want all of me back! Getting closer to Gay men and discharging the early hurts related to homophobia and Gay oppression are helping me liberate aspects of myself. For example, it used to feel desperately important that I be right, that I always appear to know what I am talking about—always confident, never unsure or confused. As that relaxes, it seems much more interesting to connect with the people around me than to keep myself tightly protected, and it is getting easier to think with people instead of engaging in "thought competition."

The self-reinforcing cycle of moving toward Gay men, discharging, moving a little closer, discharging, results in my being increasingly relaxed around all men. It feels like I am engaging in a reunion, coming back to the easy, natural connections I had with other boys before the effects of Gay and other oppressions forced us apart.

Can life really be this good?

*Johnny Lee Lenhart*  
Brattleboro, Vermont, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of men

## Ending Gay Oppression Central to Men's Liberation

From one Johnny to another: great post.\* I've had a similar experience working on my patterns of Gay oppression. Not only do I now have Gay men in close, but I've recovered big pieces of who I am. I was rigidly hiding a huge part of myself because of my terror related to homophobia and being targeted with Gay oppression. Just the relaxation I have gained in my body could add years to my life. Ending Gay oppression and discharging homophobia have been and will remain core pieces of my men's liberation work.



*Johnny Kline*  
Brooklyn, New York, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of men

\* See previous article.



ISRAEL • RANDI FREUNDLICH

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You can order back issues as regular literature items (see pages 103 and 109).

## Capitalism

*A talk by Tim Jackins, at the Brandywine Regional Workshop in Pennsylvania, USA, November 2010*

Many of us are not simply opposed to capitalism continuing forever. Rather, we are against the exploitation of anyone by anybody, by any system. The system we have exploits people, so we're opposed to it. If we were in feudalism, we would be opposed to that. The drive to exploit others is based in distress recordings, which we are working to remove. The world hasn't yet had a system that works well, that thinks about everybody and is in everybody's interest. There have been attempts at such a system, and they haven't worked. They haven't worked because the patterns of taking advantage of other people persist and there hasn't been a way of getting rid of those patterns. So sooner or later the patterns become embedded in the new system—and there you are with a new form of oppression.

The way of getting rid of oppressive patterns was to have a revolution and get rid of the people who most fully acted them out. It turns out,<sup>1</sup> of course, that everybody else has those patterns, too. They just haven't been in a position to act them out. No matter what group gets in the position to run things, enough of them have the oppressive material<sup>2</sup> that the exploitative society continues.

It may take years before that material re-establishes itself, and just the momentum of change helps for a while—things do get better—but then things get frozen in the distress material again. Over and over this has happened, and as long as people can't think because of distress, it's going to happen. As long as distresses are in there and we can't discharge them so that we can think better tomorrow than we do today, we get trapped.

What we are trying to do is get enough of us thinking well enough, and overcoming our timidities, that



SUE EDWARDS

some of us can play a role in helping people figure out the next attempt at a non-exploitative society. Will the next attempt get us to the place where it is really non-exploitative, and people think well enough that it keeps moving forward? I hope so, but who knows?

The more of us there are who can think well about it, and the more we can lead people toward the idea of a non-exploitative, non-distressed society, the nearer to being accomplished it will be. We want to get ourselves out of our timidities so that

we will share our thoughts and show people it's possible to think—not think for them, but show them it's possible to think and show them good ideas. Part of leadership is showing people the best ideas around. Leadership works, in part, because people recognize good ideas even before they have them. We can see that we wouldn't have thought of an idea ourselves but will recognize it, and follow it.

You have lots of good ideas, and by and large<sup>3</sup> you keep them secret. You still don't tell anybody your best thinking. You're going to have to start changing that, for your own good and for everybody else's. It's not that you have the right answer. You could be wrong part of the time. But people need to see others thinking and trying things, so that they dare to try, too.

What will a non-distressed system look like? What do we want? We want a system in which it's not acceptable to exploit or take advantage of anybody, for any reason, period. The economic system is a starting point, but we want this freedom from distress in every other set of relationships as well. If we begin with changing the economic system, we can probably then build a thousand different structures on it and each of them will be a good step forward. I don't imagine there is only one possibility. I think there will be lots of different possibilities. We want them to not

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> It turns out means it is shown to be true.

<sup>2</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>3</sup> By and large means mostly.

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

be rigid. We want new possibilities to arise. We don't want a structure that we have to adhere to until the next revolution.

In RC, I bring you ideas—and if they are good ideas, you adopt them. My job is to collect good ideas, bring them around and show them to everybody, and then see which ones we can make work. Then we refine them, I collect the refined versions, I bring them around again, and the ideas get more and more refined. Communities change not because I tell them to but because people have thought well enough, and communicated good ideas well enough, that things work in practice.

Ideally, in a future society, a new idea will occur—for example, in West Africa. It works. It is communicated elsewhere. Others try it and it works. Things just

develop. No longer will anyone's frozen, distressed, personal economic interest be able to keep things set the way they are. It will be in all of our interests to see things continue to develop all the time. It's clear that minds can continually think and develop ideas, all the time. Societies are what have stopped this from happening.

In a society in which nobody is exploited, what will our relationships be like? What will it be like to have complete freedom to figure out our own relationships? How well will we communicate our thinking to each other under those conditions? As that happens, develops, and improves, I can't imagine that we won't accelerate in our functioning intelligence, our understanding, and our being able to make things happen. We'll see.

## "I Have Been Waiting for This Moment"

The present time is exciting, because Israeli citizens are rising up to speak about and initiate change. For years I have been waiting for this moment. Grey despair has colored my attempts to not get discouraged, to continue my activism. I have stubbornly stuck to hope, in spite of everything, while asking all the time, "Where is everyone?" And then this summer multitudes of people started to demonstrate and unite.

Isn't this the concrete expression of RC theory that one oppression is tied to other oppressions, and that to bring about social justice and have society flourish we must listen to everyone's voices and end all oppression?

The RC Tikun Olam<sup>1</sup> class I lead with Rami<sup>2</sup> has become revitalized and has doubled in numbers. Co-Counselors have been active and inspired by the protests. The apathetic, discouraged silence has been transformed into action and into discharge on what gets in the way. Pride in being an Israeli has raised its head.

On the tenth of September I led a round table discussion as part of the "1,000 Tables" event that took place all over the country. I thought

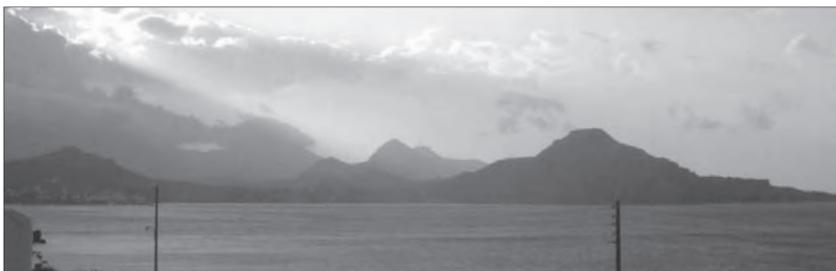
<sup>1</sup> Tikun Olam is a Hebrew phrase meaning "repair the world." It has come to connote social action, community service, social justice, and often, a liberal social agenda.

<sup>2</sup> Rami Ben-Moshe is an RC leader in Kfar-Sava, Israel.

it would be an opportunity to listen to people's opinions and feel the pulse of our society. I made sure that I had allies and went out to the plaza of the Tel Aviv Museum, where hundreds of round tables and chairs were set up. My friend Rachel came to document the event and to send on-line reports to the event's headquarters. In the crowd I recognized friends and invited them to the table. I also invited other people who were looking for a place. We ended the evening with a closing circle, and people didn't want to leave. I want to share with you the summary I wrote:

### *What went well:*

1. People connected immediately. Some knew each other from before, and we invited others as they arrived.
2. The listening and the respect for the participants were maintained in spite of the disturbances all around.
3. I set a rule: no one speaks twice before everyone speaks once.



RAMI BEN-MOSHE

Things that came up in the discussion:

Most of the speakers were older. There was anger and even a tone of violence. On the other hand, some women spoke of mutual responsibility; of creative, spiritual ways of solving complex problems. They cited the need for change in the personal sphere before going out to make changes in the wider social sphere. There was great appreciation for the leaders of the protest—the wonderful young people who have done what their parents' generation did not. People expressed a wish that the struggle not end prematurely, and an understanding that it would be a long process. They said that sitting

in a circle, speaking and listening, created solidarity, caring, and something reminiscent of a family. The participants left the event in high spirits.

Feedback about the way the evening was run:

"It is a brilliant idea and should be institutionalized. It is necessary to create the time and space for such discussions in city squares and plazas and not just leave it to the goodwill of people."

Later in the evening the mayor came to listen and was expelled, accompanied by police officers. A Minister was standing on the sidelines, appearing confused and not comfortable enough to join in. We need to beware of the alienation and hatred of elected officials and not continue the old violent discourse.

Amira Ityel  
Tel Aviv, Israel

Translated by Naomi Raz

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change



## Sustaining All Life

### The RC journal about the care of the environment

The first issue of *Sustaining All Life*, our journal about caring for the environment, is now available. Please consider getting a copy (or many). We have many things to do in this field and much discouragement and isolation to overcome. This journal will help us do that.

Tim Jackins

A small sample of the articles:

- Relaxed Leading*, Jan Venderbos
- Me, Sparrows, and Saving the Planet* (poem),  
Micheline Mason
- Questioning Patterns that Lead to Overuse*,  
Marcie Rendon
- Discharging Entitlement Patterns*, Susan Kammerzell
- Making a Decision About Global Warming*,  
Madeleine Para
- A Household Conservation Project*, Glen Hauer
- Some Angles on Discharging on the Environment*,  
Shashi Raman
- On Class Societies, Racism, and Ending All Oppressions*,  
Wytiske Visser
- Sexism and Care of the Environment*, Beth Cruise
- A Young Person Talks About the Environment*,  
Mari Piggot

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## Listening and Solidarity in Israel

“It’s the first time in years that I am proud to be an Israeli.” That was said tonight in a listening circle I led as part the protests that are going on<sup>1</sup> in Israel.

“From a tent<sup>2</sup> to a circle” (in Hebrew it rhymes: *Mi-ma-a-hal Le-ma-a-gal*) was the name of tonight’s event. A thousand round tables and mats were set up in many places in Israel. About ten thousand people attended. On a lawn in the center of a township near my village, about two hundred of us gathered for two and a half hours, in circles of ten to fifteen people.

People introduced themselves and said what had brought them there. I could hear their excitement and hope after many years of feeling they had no influence on what happened in their lives or the way the country was being led—economically, socially, and politically. After years of people feeling helpless and powerless, a different spirit is in the air.

In circles across Israel, people were asked to “name two changes you want to see in Israeli society and the influence they will have on your life.” In each circle, a person typed the main ideas shared and sent them, via laptop computer, every five minutes to a center in Tel Aviv (Israel), which processed the information immediately. Then it was projected on a screen at each gathering place. It was amazing to watch the flow of information from different places. There was much solidarity around what we needed as people and as a society.

In our circle, I heard wishes for building a community, changing the way we communicate with each other, changing the language of interaction, being tolerant, being more compassionate, being able to do more listening, ending racism, and changing the capitalistic system. I could hear

the longing for a society in which we could live and not just survive. People were happy for the opportunity to share thinking and wishes with people different from themselves in terms of religious and class background, age, and gender.

In the circle I led, someone expressed that if there were changes toward social justice, and people learned to listen better and be more tolerant, there would be no Occupation.<sup>3</sup>

The last question was “What are you willing to do for this to happen?” People took it seriously and looked into personal actions, as individuals and as a group. The majority in the circle wanted to continue to talk and be heard. We decided to act as if we were the beginning of a new community and to keep meeting and making the circles function and grow.

I asked people to close with one word about the night. *Hope* was said more than I had ever heard in any closing circle.

For me it was as if the horizon got clearer and brighter . . . and closer. I am proud to share in this process we are going through as a society. It’s about time<sup>4</sup> that the news coming from our country is not only about occupation and wars. I am proud to be part of a group of people who are fighting for social justice and who have the courage to notice what they need to do inside, as individuals, so that changing the society will be possible.

Excerpted from page 29 of *Ruah Hadashah* No. 11

### LATER

About five thousand of us walked in silence on Saturday night through the streets of Tel Aviv, holding candles and torches to show our respect for and identification with the people who were killed in a terrorist attack in the south and to support the continuous protest for social justice. It was the first time that “Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies” was called out loud.

By midnight we were sitting on the grass by the sea—thousands of us in listening circles, sharing our thinking about and visions for how the protest needed to keep on going and each of our roles in it. It was amazing and inspiring to be part of so many people listening and thinking together, quietly and with discipline. People are trying to maintain their solidarity in the face of inequalities and across different class backgrounds.

<sup>3</sup> Occupation by Israel of the territories seized during the Six Day War of 1967, from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria

<sup>4</sup> About time means long overdue.

<sup>1</sup> Going on means happening.

<sup>2</sup> “Tent” refers to the tent protests that started on July 14, 2011, when Daphne Leef set up a tent near Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, protesting the cost of housing. In the following days tents were pitched across Israel in protest against the government’s priorities.



QUIN JACKINS

For a few weeks now I have been going to the southern parts of Tel Aviv to listen to and support the people who are staying in tents and protesting all week. There are over three thousand tents now, all over Israel. Even though there are tensions between the different groups, the cooperation between them and their leaders is something to learn from. People seem determined to not let divisions stand between them and distract them from their goal.

The tents protest I have been going to was started by a group of Mizrahi<sup>5</sup> feminist women and people of the southern neighborhoods who suffer from financial distress and problems related to violence, drugs, and alcohol. I am a part of a group of “mental health” workers who fight for human rights. We sit and listen to the people who are leading the protest and offer help with whatever they need—food, legal consultation, creating listening circles on different subjects.

Last week one of the women protesters was attacked sexually during the night by a refugee, which caused a wave of racism and fear. People walked around with

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<sup>5</sup> Mizrahi Jews are descendants of Jews from the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. They often identify as people targeted by racism.

intense feelings. We started a circle of talk on what sexual harassment means and how it is perceived by women and by men. The circle included women and men of different backgrounds and ages.

Even though it was a hard subject to talk about, there was lots of respect in the circle and people got to be listened to. Men said harsh things about the way women dress (Tel Aviv in the middle of the summer is hot and humid, and people walk around with few clothes on) and asked if telling a woman she was pretty was harassment. Women got to share what it meant to be harassed sexually and about their experiences with sexism as a whole. The men really listened.

I started a conversation with one of the women activists about her leadership in the world. After a few sentences she stopped and said, “Now I want to talk about my mother,” and then talked for a long time about her sick mother.

As activists, we need to remember that we are human beings, with relationships and struggles.

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for leaders of women

*Varda Ginossar-Zakay*  
Givat Elah, Israel

## Offering Attention to Activists

Here in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, activists launched an Occupy Boston effort, assembling tents in a public square across from a federal reserve bank on the edge of the city’s financial district. Right after the occupation started, Jennifer Wexler, the Regional Reference Person for Boston, contacted me, Joanie Parker, the International Liberation Reference Person for Union Activists and a member of the Boston RC Region,<sup>1</sup> to think together with her about how we could offer resource and attention to the activists at Occupy Boston.

We decided to invite a diverse group of thirty experienced RCers in the Boston Region to participate in an informal listening project.<sup>2</sup> Below is the letter we wrote to invite them. We were also trying to think about how racism was operating in the predominantly white Occupy Boston group and what we could do to contradict and change that.

People enthusiastically responded to our invitation and have been going to the site in pairs or small groups to listen to people, appreciate their initiative and leadership, and ask questions to draw out thinking

*continued . . .*

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<sup>1</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

<sup>2</sup> In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.



TOGO • MARION OUPHOUET



LISA VOSS

... continued

and perspective and drain feelings. To track and reference the project, we have asked them to write to an e-mail list about when and with whom they have gone to the site and about their experiences there. We have also kept in close phone contact with them.

At this point we've had enough good communication with Occupy Boston that we are looking at the possibility of offering some workshops there on ending racism, sexism, and classism. In a phone conference call tonight, a small, diverse subgroup will be thinking together about what we might offer. We are also using our relationships with city officials to try to shift their perspective.

Joanie Parker  
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

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Dear Boston Region Area Reference Persons,  
International Liberation Reference Persons, and invited RCers,

We have been thinking about how to provide attention to those who are engaging in the exciting and cutting-edge action of Occupy Boston—one of the various actions taking place<sup>3</sup> in cities around the United States inspired by the recent organizing around the world. (Some are calling it “We are the 99%.” Others are calling it “Autumn America.”)

We are inviting you to be part of an informal listening experiment. We suggest that any or all of you find another one or more of you and go in pairs, or more, to the Occupy Boston site to listen to any of those who are part of Occupy Boston. (They have put out a call for support and help, so they are open to resource from the outside.) Before you start listening, have a mini-session with your RC partner, and be sure to do that afterward as well.

It may be useful to have some questions in mind to start with. Here are a few that we came up with<sup>4</sup>:

1. What pleases you about the leadership you are taking here?
2. What next steps are you hoping for from being involved here?
3. How would you like a world without capitalism to be?
4. What do you think is needed to keep things moving forward here?

You can let us know the day and time you'll be going to see if others want to meet up with you. After you have listened to people, we encourage you to write briefly to the group about your experience.

Thanks for considering being a part of this movement! Call, e-mail, or text either one of us if you want to be in communication.

With excitement and enthusiasm!

Joanie and Jen

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<sup>3</sup> Taking place means happening.

<sup>4</sup> Came up with means thought of.

## Shabbat Morning at Occupy Boston

This weekend I attended wonderful Shabbat<sup>1</sup> morning services at Occupy Boston,<sup>2</sup> including an inspiring D'var Torah<sup>3</sup> by Marya Axner.<sup>4</sup>

I was thrilled to be at a service that was so true to the traditional liturgy and so true to the revolutionary ideals of Occupy Boston. There was something profound about realizing there was no conflict between the two.

We had a good-sized crowd. Most of the leaders were young adults, and most of us “congregants” were in our thirties to seventies. The attendees all seemed glad and grateful to be led by these young adults who were sure that Judaism and this kind of social change went together.

By the end of the two and a half hours, I needed to discharge. In a session right afterward, the main direction I worked with was “I am so white and so middle-class and so middle-aged and so heterosexual.” I kept saying it over and over again, and discharging hard. I was able to get a much clearer shot at<sup>5</sup> these identities than usual.

The organizers decided to do “hoshanot” (a Sukkot<sup>6</sup> ritual that involves parading around in a circle, begging God for assistance) through the entire Occupy Boston camp. They first told us we would circle in place, but then they got bold and said we would go through the encampment. I could feel the surprise, the thrill, the wave of terror, at that moment. It was a good decision. It let others know we were there and let them learn a bit more about Judaism (people asked us what we were doing). Hoshanot has sometimes felt like one of those bizarre rituals that have accumulated over the centuries, but this time it made perfect sense. We were beseeching God for help: help to end greed, to wipe out corruption (in ourselves and others), to save us and our planet.

<sup>1</sup> Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath. It lasts from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday.

<sup>2</sup> Occupy Boston is one of many Occupy demonstrations taking place around the world in protest against economic injustice.

<sup>3</sup> A D'var Torah is a talk on a topic related to a section of the Torah. (The Torah is the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures.)

<sup>4</sup> Marya Axner is an RC leader in Somerville, Massachusetts, USA, and the editor of *Ruah Hadashah*, the RC journal about Jewish liberation.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, get a much clearer shot at means discharge much more effectively on.

<sup>6</sup> Sukkot is an eight-day harvest holiday during the Hebrew month of Tishrei (late September to late October). It is a time of rejoicing and giving thanks for the produce of the year.

We were led by a young adult woman who was wearing cut-off pants that showed her unshaven legs. Today in the United States, women in their twenties and thirties are pressured to have no hair and many of them shave their armpits and legs daily—an example of how sexism takes up time and resource and confuses women about themselves. I was glad to be led by a young adult Jewish woman who was taking a stand against this.

Marya's D'var Torah at the end of services challenged us to notice how wonderful we were and that our security was with each other. She had us do three mini-sessions: one on how precious we were, one on where we were vulnerable, and a final one on what we would contribute. It was exactly what people needed: to be reminded of their own significance and to figure out next steps.

B'shalom,<sup>7</sup>

Rebecca Mautner  
Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>7</sup> B'shalom means with peace, in Hebrew.



HERESA D'AMATO

Society is a very mysterious animal with many faces and hidden potentialities, and . . . it's extremely short-sighted to believe that the face that society happens to be presenting to you at a given moment is its only true face. None of us know all the potentialities that slumber in the spirit of the population, or all the ways in which that population can surprise us when there is the right interplay of events, both visible and invisible.

Vaclav Havel

## Eating Lunch with Occupy Göteborg

Yesterday some friends and I talked about eating lunch together and came up with<sup>1</sup> the idea to do it where activists are occupying an indoor square in Göteborg (Sweden).

First only we were there and I had to laugh out my embarrassment at being the first one to sit on the ground. People gathered, many asking questions about what we wanted. I told them my thoughts, asked back, and listened. I made a sign with a question on it that I got from Julian Weissglass<sup>2</sup>: “Do you think it is possible to have a society based on cooperation instead of maximising profit?”

I had feelings that what I did was too little, that the good thing would be to organise advanced listening projects,<sup>3</sup> preferably every day. I decided to not feel bad and to instead be pleased with what I did. I answered the organisers’ questions about law and public meetings. I conveyed a contact to people at my workplace who could help with a sound system.

Biking back to my office, I discovered I felt glad when I met people on the street. The smiles and attention from the people gathering at the occupation are still with me.

Warm hugs, dear comrades!

*Erik Mägi*

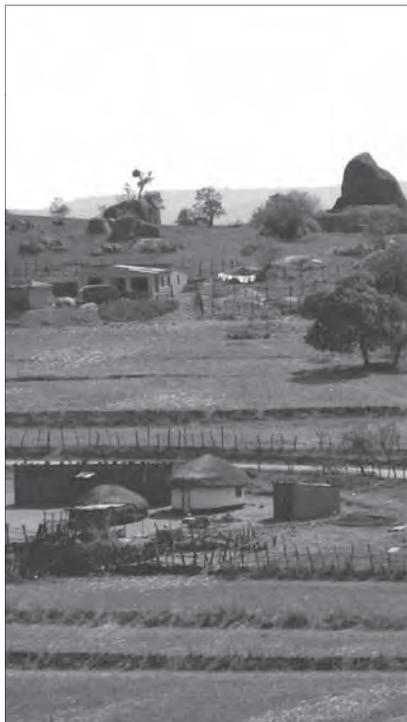
Göteborg, Sweden

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members

<sup>1</sup> Came up with means thought of.

<sup>2</sup> Julian Weissglass is the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change.

<sup>3</sup> In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.



SWAZILAND • TIM JACKINS

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on page 109

## “Listening as a Tool for Social Change”

The Occupy protest at City Hall in downtown Los Angeles (California, USA) started on October 1. About a week later I went with three friends to see what the situation was. Beforehand I'd had several Co-Counseling sessions on being visible as an Arab. At the protest I wore a t-shirt that said, “We will not be silent,” in Arabic and English and carried a sign that said, “Economic Democracy Now!” It felt powerful to do this as a working-class Arab American who was born in this city and has lived here most of his life.

I didn't return for a second visit until near the end of October, when I went by myself with a sign that said, “What do you think about the Occupy movement? I want to listen.” At a people's library at the site I left some RC literature, including *Working for a Living*,<sup>1</sup> *Present Time*, *Ruah Hadashah*,<sup>2</sup> and *How to Give Children an Emotional Head Start*. Then I looked around for a place to sit with my sign.

I felt uncomfortable at first being in a public place holding the sign, but after a while people began coming up to me to introduce themselves, shake my hand, and tell me briefly that they supported the movement. Two protesters sat down with me, and after I had listened to them for some time they began to ask for my opinion. I would share a thought, often an idea from RC, and then go back to listening. They seemed interested in what I said and wanted to hear more. When we parted, they were appreciative of the conversation. One said, “I knew that someone who wanted to listen would be a good person to listen to.”

<sup>1</sup> The RC journal about working-class liberation

<sup>2</sup> The RC journal about Jewish liberation

I had some good sessions on feelings of inadequacy and by November decided that I would participate in the protest in some way at least once a week, preferably with others. I contacted a number of Co-Counselors, and several agreed to work on the project with me. We planned to go together the next time, but rainy weather and illnesses combined to prevent them from going, so I went on my own and did my second one-person listening project.

I spent an hour standing with my sign and listening to whomever came along. People responded positively to the idea of listening. I sometimes turned the sign over, because there were more people than I could handle alone. I started to think about who I wanted to stay in contact with for future listening projects. I asked one person, J—, for contact information, and it was enthusiastically given. J— and I have since exchanged e-mails, and I have begun to see how it is possible to go out and find non-RCers to join us in this work.

At a “People's Collective University” tent at the site, I found information about registering to teach a class. I was given four questions to answer about my proposed class. Below are the questions and my responses (so far, I am not calling what I am doing RC).



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • EDWARD ELBERS

1) **Title of your class:** “Listening as a Tool for Social Change”

2) **Description of your class, including a clear objective.** (*How does this class further the movement, and what do you hope people will take away from it?*)

My proposal is to teach listening skills, such as taking turns listening with respect and allowing the release of emotional tensions, with the goal of supporting people's best thinking to emerge so that it can guide them in their personal and political lives. People will have opportunities to practice these skills together. Hopefully they will take with them connections with each other and tools for future listening projects in the Occupy community.

A number of political demonstrations in other countries, like Spain and Israel, have included listening circles as a form of organization. The Occupy movement could benefit from developing these, and other forms, as a way to improve relationships between people, provide emotional support, and facilitate communication, clarification of thinking, the reaching of consensus, and people's voices being heard by others.

Many revolutionaries in history have recognized the need to not only change institutions but also help people change (heal) attitudes and behavior that they have absorbed from oppressive societies. Revolutions that have not addressed this need for internal change have tended to repeat the mistakes of past societies (such as sexism, racism, and classism) and have often formed new oppressive societies. We have an opportunity now to learn from this history and correct these problems.

*continued . . .*

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

### 3) A detailed outline of your class

A class might include introductions of each person, a presentation of theory, each person having a chance to ask questions or respond to what he or she has heard, listening in pairs (taking turns listening and being listened to), a closing circle, and discussion of next steps.

Theory topics could include

- Human nature (inherently good, intelligent, powerful, caring, and cooperative, with a great capacity to enjoy life and other people); no human enemies (the system is the problem, both institutionalized in our society and installed in our minds from an early age)
- Human irrationality (not part of human nature but the result of painful experiences, such as oppression, from which people have not had an opportunity to heal and that have led to confusion, destructive behavior, and repetitive mistake-making)

- The recovery process (establishing a safe relationship in which people get the attention they need to let their painful emotions out through talk, laughter, tears, shaking, yawning, after which they can more relaxedly re-evaluate their experiences and thoughts and reclaim their inherent nature)
- How to be effective as a listener; how to be effective as a person being listened to
- Working on oppression and liberation issues: classism, racism, imperialism, sexism, men's oppression, anti-Jewish oppression, anti-Gay oppression, ageism, young people's oppression, disabled people's oppression, powerlessness, divisiveness, addictions, and so on; working on both the oppressor role (the tendency to feel and act oppressively) and internalized oppression (the tendency to mistreat oneself and members of one's own oppressed group)
- Forms of organization: support groups, listening pairs, public listening, and so on.

### 4) A brief biography, including some background information about yourself, how you gained the knowledge you would like to share, and some of your thoughts on this movement.

I was born in Los Angeles and am the grandson of Lebanese and Italian immigrants. I was raised working-class, did well in school, and studied sociology at the University of California in San Diego. I decided not to enter a professional career but return to my working-class neighborhood and use counseling and community organizing tools informally at a grassroots level. I have worked as a machine operator in the aerospace industry, a nursing assistant, and a dishwasher. Over the years I have attended a variety of classes and workshops related to peer counseling and have led small groups in my home. I am excited by the possibilities opening up for progressive social change, particularly in the form of the Occupy movement, and hope to learn from others' experiences and skills and share my own.

*Victor Nicassio*

Los Angeles, California, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change

## People Are Open to RC

I've been sharing RC with our Occupy Riverside and general activist community in Riverside (California, USA). So many people are open and excited to hear about it. It seems to make perfect sense, again and again. I am finding myself not keeping up with the response. This is a huge contradiction to my fears about bringing RC to my non-RC communities.



*Debbie Leance*  
Corona, California, USA

MARYA AXNER

## About Winning an Election

I think that all you need to do to win the election is to look confident, look relaxed, and act nice, like you always do. I don't think any right-wing\* attacks are going to make much of a dent, and if they do, fine, you get a rest for a while. It isn't so much whether you win the election or not, although that would be nice. It's how you handle it, and it's a great experience to be able to handle it.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1993

\* Right-wing means politically reactionary.



## A One-Person Listening Project at Occupy Wall Street



I decided to do a one-person listening project<sup>1</sup> at the site of Occupy Wall Street<sup>2</sup> in New York City (New York, USA). I didn't have a sign or a box of donuts, I just stood there and looked as relaxed as a white owning-class man could. I was curious to see what would happen.

I didn't have to wait more than fifteen minutes. A demonstrator came up to me and asked what I thought of it all. I said, "All these people make me feel hopeful about the future. What does it mean to you?" And then I listened, for an hour. He was a white man in his late forties. He said that he used to work for an automobile company as an analyst before he lost his job and came to Occupy Wall Street. It was not easy for me to follow his idea for a new kind of bank and economic model. I gently tried to express curiosity about his life and feelings, but he was determined to talk about his economic theories. I listened as well as I could, but after an hour I said I needed to move on. He seemed a little less tense after I listened to him. He didn't ask a single question about me.

I moved to the opposite corner of Zuccotti Park and was approached by another demonstrator, a white man in his thirties, who asked me to watch his backpack while he went to the bathroom. When he returned, I listened to him for thirty minutes. He had taken time off from work to be there because he was so upset about the unfairness of the economic system. He was willing to talk about his early life and feelings and asked me a few questions about my stake in Occupy Wall Street. We shook hands and exchanged first names. It was a good conversation that felt more like a Co-Counseling session.

I then moved to another corner and waited. I saw a well-dressed woman standing near me who looked like a tourist. She seemed to want to engage but not know how, so I asked her if she would take my photograph. That's all it took; she started talking. She was visiting New York City for a conference and had decided to see the demonstration. (Occupy Wall Street has become a popular tourist destination.) She spoke for about forty-five minutes about her hopes and dreams.

<sup>1</sup> In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.

<sup>2</sup> Occupy Wall Street is an ongoing protest against economic injustice.

We were interrupted by a man who had a question about the food table. He appeared to be homeless. I asked if he was hungry. He said yes, so the tourist and I agreed to buy him a hamburger and a cup of coffee. She and I went to a nearby restaurant, and as we cooperated in this little act of humanity, we bonded.

We came back with the man's meal and received many thanks. Then I listened to her some more. She had a lot of questions about me. We ended our time by hugging and exchanging names and addresses. We've been in touch<sup>3</sup> since.

I learned a few things. First, it was a mistake to try a listening project on my own. I needed mini-sessions between listening to people. It's much better to do it with a team of Co-Counselors. I also learned that there may be advantages to waiting to see who approaches instead of approaching others.

I felt good about making a decision, having a plan, and implementing it. I left the park feeling satisfied that I had made four human connections, stayed counselor for four hours, and listened well. Afterward I had some powerful Co-Counseling sessions.

*Johnny Kador*  
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, USA  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members

<sup>3</sup> In touch means in communication.



AARON GALLOWAY

## Naturalizing RC in the Occupy Movement

Re-evaluation Counseling provides a set of tools that can help any social change movement. They may constitute a model for social change that could be decisive in helping our species deal with the current economic and environmental crises caused by the oppressive society.

Here is how it can work: Co-Counseling sessions and support groups provide uninterrupted listening with encouragement to discharge—probably the most decisive contribution of RC. Topic groups allow individuals to share information in the most democratic fashion imaginable. The Wygelian leaders' group<sup>1</sup> format encourages people to carry out loosely coordinated actions, empowered by sessions specifically on those actions. Harvey<sup>2</sup> frequently used the example of starting a support group during a lunch break at work to illustrate how easy it is to start these activities out in the world.

When our local version of the Occupy movement began here in Tucson (Arizona, USA), I set out to use<sup>3</sup> as many of the tools of RC as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> A Wygelian leaders' group is a group of leaders and potential leaders of a particular constituency in which each person takes a turn doing the following: (1) reporting on what he or she has been doing in the last period, with regard to the constituency, (2) saying what he or she thinks is the current situation facing the constituency, from his or her viewpoint, (3) sharing what he or she proposes to do as a leader in the next period, and (4) discharging on what is getting in the way of his or her leadership. The group does not make any group plans but rather serves to encourage individual initiative. It meets only when the members feel a need for meeting.

<sup>2</sup> Harvey Jackins

<sup>3</sup> Set out to use means embarked on using.

Our Occupy movement began with two planning meetings, a week apart, before the actual occupation. I attended the first meeting, of about a hundred people, just to learn about the movement. The participants were mostly younger people, new to social change. The second meeting, a week later, swelled to two hundred and fifty and used the format developed by assemblies around the world.

In this directly democratic format, all decisions, and the rules for participation and decision making, are made by everyone in the group—in our case, all two hundred and fifty! In Tucson we agreed on a modified form of consensus, as used in other assemblies (what these decision-making meetings are called). Everyone gets the chance to speak using a system of "stacks" or lines of people waiting for a turn. Anyone can "block" or stop a decision by standing and crossing his or her arms. After wide discussion, and after all blocks are heard and addressed, a super-majority—typically ninety percent, but in our case we chose seventy-five percent—can make a decision, even if a block remains. To counter oppression, women and people targeted by racism are moved to the front of the stack if men or white people are over-represented in the line.

To handle all the tasks required for a large encampment dedicated to social change, the assembly sets up "working groups": "direct action," to plan marches and demonstrations; peace-keeping, to keep the actions and the encampment secure and non-

violent; food; sanitation; outreach; public relations; entertainment; and so on. The working groups report back to the assembly every day.

Whatever else the Occupy movement accomplishes, it has reminded us of an old and relatively underutilized model of prolonged, direct democracy—one that prefigures the directly-democratic, self-managing society that many of us are hoping to create, even as we work to reform the old one.

It reminds me of the Paris Commune in the nineteenth century, which Harvey loved to describe. When the owning class capitulated to the Germans during a war, the working people of Paris (France) took over all the functions of society. It turned out<sup>4</sup> they did not need the owning class and its upper-middle-class functionaries (now often called the "coordinator" class).

In this era when the owning class and its "coordinators" in the labor movement have weakened the use of the strike (at least in the United States), and elections and lobbying have turned into fundraising extravaganzas among the rich, the Occupy movement has shown that one woman can pitch a tent in a public place, as happened in Israel, and use the Internet to call for support.

As always in social change, the conditions must be right for a specific tactic, but given the models of heroic uprisings in the Arab world, Israel, Europe, and elsewhere, and the increasing use of social networking via the Internet, the times just now are right!

Inspired by Cheryl Banks<sup>5</sup> posting to this list, at the second Tucson meeting I hung a simple sign around my neck

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<sup>4</sup> It turned out means as it happened.

<sup>5</sup> Cheryl Banks is an RC leader in Seattle, Washington, USA.



VENTNOR, ISLE OF WIGHT, ENGLAND • JULIA CAMERON

and conducted a one-person listening project.<sup>6</sup> My sign said, "Feeling stressed? I'd like to listen." A few people spoke to me during the assembly. I then joined the "yoga/meditation" working group, since I practice both those disciplines and it made sense given the other choices. Those who gathered as that working group agreed that "peer listening" fit with their mission of providing support for those in the Occupation.

During the week before the Occupation, I held a "peer listening training" in a room at our local Quaker meeting house. I announced it on the social networking site of our working group, and seven people showed up.<sup>7</sup> After a standard RC introductory lecture, a demonstration, sessions, and a debriefing, two of the people who came agreed to join me in providing peer listening at the Occupation.

On the first morning of the Occupation, at a park across from our county office buildings, I showed up with a handful of my signs and distributed them to the other, now trained, "peer listeners." We set up a schedule to cover the times of the daily assemblies, since we assumed that was when restimulations might run high. In fact, most people were pretty<sup>8</sup> focused on the assembly while it was in session, and more came up to us during free times.

One person who was facilitating the large assembly, and who knew RC but was not active in our Community, asked for a mini-session to think about a difficult issue before she took to the stage. She asked for advice several days later, and we now plan to do regular Co-Counseling sessions. (I have identified a number of people at the Occupation



AMANDA MARTINEZ

who have either done RC in the past or have heard good things about it. I plan to lead a fundamentals class for them oriented around social change. There is a definite resource out there of people who have gone to an RC lecture or class and think well of us.)

One of the "peer listeners" I trained told me about a young woman who saw her sign and said, "I just need someone to talk to." She said she was afraid to go home because her husband did not agree with the goals of the Occupation and would make fun of her. She cried as she told her story, and thanked her listener at the end.

For the second on-site training, I walked through the Occupation, went up to each group of people, and said, "Peer listening training at the mediation tent in five minutes." It was not too hard, except for the usual embarrassment and terror. I trained three more listeners, one of whom has really gotten active and wears his sign regularly. Another was a young combat veteran.

People now want to get trained and wear our signs. (There is almost always at least one person wearing one. They are quite popular!) We have also been approached to deal with major incidents of conflict between individuals, and I am coordinating these

requests with a new "conflict resolution" working group.

So, at least in Tucson, the idea of uninterrupted listening, and discharge, is spreading and has become somewhat institutionalized. I think that going through the existing structure of the working groups, and going fairly slowly, has made sense.

It has helped to learn the flow of the days. It seems to work to show up in mid-afternoon, between assemblies and away from the time set aside for marching.

Our Occupation is mostly white, and racism is recognized as a problem. Because men have taken many of the visible leadership roles, sexism is also recognized as a problem, at least by the women.

Yesterday I used the same recruiting approach described above to recruit for and lead my first class on "eliminating racism and sexism." I went ahead with little preparation. About twelve of the fifty people in the encampment came for an hour-long class. I began by praising them for their work. For introductions, I asked for their name and a personal success story in contradicting racism or sexism. Then I talked about the role of the various oppressions in holding up classism and added that eliminating classism is insufficient as long as any other oppression exists. I explained the difference between external and internalized oppression and emphasized the need for oppressor groups to lead the elimination of the external oppression. We identified the oppressed groups we were part of, did mini-sessions on how oppression had affected us, and reported back to the larger group. I discussed the need for support groups in which members of oppressed groups could deal with internalized oppression, then turned our attention to the elimination of external oppression. Then we broke up into sessions again. At that point a

*continued . . .*

<sup>6</sup> In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.

<sup>7</sup> Showed up means came.

<sup>8</sup> Pretty means quite.

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

general call to clean up the camp put an end to our class. I brought people into a circle and had them each give a highlight.

It is not an easy crowd. They do not sit quietly and nod. They are activists and ask questions. The people in the class challenged each slip I made in wording. Being wracked with guilt because I am usually more prepared, and being cursed with patterns from early abuse, I assumed, as always, that "they all hate me and are actively planning an attack." No, they liked the class and were grateful that we were starting to talk about these subjects. Most of them reported specific and impressive



LYNNE SHIVERS

insights they'd had during the class, and decisions about next steps. I was widely thanked.

It was a great step for me to lead the class, since I had not previously led anything out in the world on racism or sexism. Here are a few of the things I learned: (1) It is better to do something on an important subject underprepared than to go passive (a good general rule in interrupting oppression). (2) The sessions were, as almost always, the most important thing. (3) What we have to offer is crucial, even if it is only naming important problems and organizing sessions and support groups.

In addition to offering naturalized RC, I am supporting the Occupation in more traditional ways. My non-profit organization has become the fiscal sponsor, providing a bank account and tax-deductible status for contributions. I have tracked down liability insurance, since, if the city allows us official use of

the park, we will need that coverage. I have used my prior relationships with elected officials, and local non-profits in the Latino/a, labor, and homeless communities, to help build and protect the Occupation.

My next steps are to continue teaching and organizing "peer listening" until it becomes part of the culture of the Occupation (our stated goal is to turn everyone who comes for listening into a listener) and to collaborate with others on eliminating the oppressions within the Occupation. I have been involved in too many successful social change efforts that ended because of internal restimulations. My hope is to have support groups meeting on the major oppressions (separate ones for victims and for perpetrators) and perpetrators taking responsibility for and working to end the external oppression within our ranks.

*Jim Driscoll*  
Tucson, Arizona, USA

## Tackle the Underlying Causes of Greed

I wonder how speaking of capitalism in intensely negative or enemy language affects owning-class people, and groups who have been falsely identified as the chief capitalists, for example, Jews and Chinese people in some parts of the world.

Last night I was with a local non-RC group, talking about economic changes that need to happen for humans and the earth to survive well. One thread of the conversation was about how the term "greed" often gets equated with "evil" and is used to blame wealthy (owning-class) people, alienating them from people of other class backgrounds and making it more difficult for them to join in actions for change. Someone suggested that it would be more useful to describe accumulating resources beyond meeting real needs as a nearly universal addiction that is constantly fed by our economic-governance-social systems. Wealthy people appear to be, but are not actually, in charge of these systems. No one is really in charge.

As we stand up for social justice, we are best served by avoiding blame and instead tackling the underlying causes of greed: frozen needs,\* our disconnection from other people and life, our tendencies to numb our feelings with consumption and accumulation, our fears of scarcity, our distrust of other people and despair about the possibilities of cooperation, our fears about giving, and so on. Doing this will reduce our own greed, and clear our thinking, so that we will be more effective in interrupting all patterns related to greed and classism.

*Susal Stebbins Collins*  
East Dummerston, Vermont, USA

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\* Frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels a person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

# Surviving in This Irrational System

*A talk by Tim Jackins, at the Young Adult Leaders' Workshop  
in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, March 2011*

How do you survive in this irrational system? Perhaps the first thing is to recognize that our society is irrational. It is also collapsing. No long-term security in it is possible, no matter who is trying to sell that possibility to you. In capitalism there can be no security. We are led to believe that if we have enough material goods, we can be secure. That doesn't work, and no one ever feels they have enough. The only thing approaching real security is having people who are committed to thinking about us and who will help us figure things out.

## WE MUST DISCHARGE THE DISTRESSES

We need to work on all our distresses about money and capitalism. Every one of us has a lot of distresses about these things. We need to work on them for our own good, and we need to do it before things collapse. We don't want to have these distresses in our heads while we're trying to figure out a new system.

Every revolution so far has tried to get rid of the old oppressive distress patterns by killing the people who acted them out the most. You kill the king, you kill the royal family, thinking that will change everything. It does cause change, but it ignores the fact that everybody is infected with the same distress patterns. So the old distresses surface after a while in a slightly different form.

The whole society is infected with these distresses, including those of us on the bottom. And we are told that the only way out is to get to the top. It's difficult to figure out how to live in this oppressive society without discharging these distresses.

## RELY FULLY ON EACH OTHER

A lot of you are hunting for positions in society, for jobs, in which you will not have an oppressive role but will still make lots of money. Capitalism has sold you this as a possibility. Every so often<sup>1</sup> a U.S. president comes up with<sup>2</sup> a gentler, kinder capitalism and puts out the illusion that we can be fair and gentle and kind and still support the vast accumulation of wealth in a few hands. However, we cannot have an economic system that allows a very small number of people to have a gigantic amount of material resource and not starve somebody. It has to change.

<sup>1</sup> Every so often means occasionally.

<sup>2</sup> Comes up with means thinks of.

How do we survive until then? What can we do that does not pull us into oppressive roles and doesn't have us pretending that this society will work forever? If it cannot continue long-range, what can we do that will allow us to survive without misleading other people? How can we build relationships (not just within RC) in which we rely fully on each other, relationships in which we would do anything that someone needed? Who in your life could you commit yourself to that fully? I have done it with my siblings. They only have to ask; they don't have to say why. I trust their judgment. If I have something they need, they get it. In relationships like this you have safety, you are not on your own. Who could you trust that much?

We have to face the distresses that stand in the way of such relationships, if we want to have security and build a better society—a society in which we are not each working just for ourselves. In capitalism, if you want things better for yourself, you do it just for yourself. (*Laughter*) We want a society in which making it better for ourselves makes it better for everybody. If it should be better for me, it should be better for everyone.

So whom are you going to have these relationships with? And how long are you going to wait to figure it out? Until it all collapses? I think we'd better have a mini-session: six minutes each way on what will scare you about committing everything in your life to somebody else.

## KEEP TRYING TO CHANGE THE INSTITUTIONS

The only intelligent choices are the ones that allow you to stay human and continue to use your mind more and more fully. There are lots of positions in which you can do that, but no positions in which you are encouraged to do that. You have to decide to do it. You have to decide in spite of the positions you are in.

*continued . . .*



DEBBY GLICKMAN

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

Many people want to do things that help other people, and there are positions in which it looks like you can do that. When you get in these positions, it often doesn't look like that anymore. For example, teaching young children. What a wonderful thing to do. You get to help these young minds be themselves. But that's not what the system is trying to do. The system is trying to train people enough that they can be used profitably and discourage them enough that they don't challenge the system. If you are a teacher, you are pressured to do that constantly. You can do good things in spite of it, but you can't change it until we change society. You can do good things, but many of them you have to do in spite of the institution.

You may have to do things without announcing them—often there is nothing else you can do—but to keep thinking is to keep trying to change the oppressive institutions we are in. It's actually fun, because we don't have to believe the institutions are the best possible. They are simply part of the conditions that exist now. What's the best thing you can do under these conditions? You can subvert the oppressions of the institutions—the racism, sexism, anti-Jewish oppression, ageism—by doing what you want to do anyway.

### **HOW CAN YOU OFFER YOUR MIND?**

So what are you going to do with your life? (*Laughter*) You want to do something that interests you, that appeals to your mind. It's important that you do things that you want to do, that you don't do them simply for money or because it's good for someone else. If you are going to spend your life on it, it has to be something that's good in your mind.

What's good in your mind may be different from what's good in any other mind. You don't have to be like anybody else at all, but you do have to figure out how to operate in this oppressive system.

You should be paid for your work. So what's your work worth? Well, does your work need to be done? Not everything does. (I don't think this applies to anyone here, but I don't recommend selling insurance. Insurance is an entirely capitalist structure. It promises to protect people from capitalism by having them pay into capitalism.)

What do you have to offer? You have your mind. You have your ability to think about reality in ways that help other people's minds. You may have lots of skills as well, but an important part of what you have is your ability to think about other people. You know what being thought

about has made possible for you. So how can you offer that? In what job or undertaking or position can you offer your mind and reach other minds and help move all of us out of our distresses and closer to reality? We have things to learn about how to work with larger and larger groups of people. We have things to learn about how this system works so that we can guide its collapse and limit the destructiveness of that. But there are probably ten million things you can do well right now that would benefit lots of people and move us all forward.

### **WE WILL HAVE GOOD LIVES**

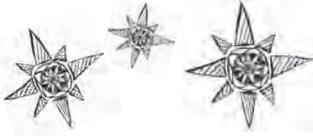
So we have to pick what we like. Then we have to recognize that we are still in this system. As we build new forms of relationships, we have to provide for our own safety. We don't want to pretend that the system cares at all about our individual existence.

There are lots of good possibilities. It should actually be fun, if we are not worried about security in the capitalistic sense. It's unlikely that any of us will be billionaires. It's very likely, given what we know and our relationships, that we will have good lives, especially because we understand what is meaningful. We have a clear vision of what a good life can be, and we are not likely to be distracted too much by capitalistic urges.

With the access to intelligence we are regaining, it's unlikely that any of us is going to fail to have a good life. This doesn't mean it will be easy or that we won't be scared, but every Co-Counseling session increases very strongly our odds of having a good life. There is no guarantee about each of our successes, but, in a big sense, it is more and more likely all the time. So don't worry about it.

### **Complete Index to *Present Time* Available On-Line**

On the RC web site is an index covering every issue of *Present Time*. You can search the index by author, title, or topic (from a list of pre-determined topics). To find the index, go to the web site at <<http://www.rc.org/>>, click on "Present Time" under Publications on the home page, then click on "Search PT Index."



## Using Mini-Sessions During an Election Campaign



*For the past thirteen years I have been employed full-time by a labor union, and for the past six my job has been as an elected union official. Elections are hard for me. They restimulate most of the ways I can feel bad about myself. Many of the things I need to do to campaign successfully I have to do by sheer force of will. I dread the election season and in the past have gotten through those two and a half months with an attitude of grim endurance.*

*This year it became clear that I would again have at least one opponent and that it would be a tough fight. I decided the election season would go much better if I could have at least one mini-session specifically on election issues every day, which I did. What a difference that made! In the end I did not win the election, but below is the e-mail I sent to the mini-session team the week afterward.*



To my dear campaign mini-team,

While this is not a message about a campaign victory, it is certainly about victories on the path against distress.

As you all know, I reached out to set up the campaign mini-sessions because a lot of things about campaigning are hard for me—some of them very hard. It seemed logical to grab those things while they were up in my face and move some of them—to increase the chances of winning and, win or lose, make the campaign more tolerable and come out the other side with fewer distresses in the way of future goals.

The bits of contact and discharge allowed me to get through most days with a measure of enthusiasm, rather than forcibly shutting down and

pushing through with clenched teeth and a knot in the pit of my stomach. Since I was actively working on the distresses instead of pushing them out of the way, I also had countless insights about what's important, how better to move forward, and patterns of mine that undermine my goals. For example, I had to face how difficult it is for me to fight for myself.

Knowing I was going to have at least a few minutes every day with someone who liked me, was pleased with me, was rooting for me,<sup>1</sup> was not going to judge me, and had a commitment to using that five minutes to make things go better for me was huge. It was a significant contradiction to knowing I was going to have campaign conversations with at least some people who were critical, disappointed, or misinformed and that a lot was on the line<sup>2</sup> in those conversations. And it made *many* more of those calls possible.

Getting to pay attention to whatever each of you was pushing on that day kept my focus on how we are all working to build lives for ourselves, and the people in our world, that are not limited by our distresses and challenges and that we know how to help each other with that.

I saw how much the *real* fight was against distress (mine and other people's), not to win a particular election. Also, as so often happens when one discharges on a specific goal, distresses that I wasn't aware were connected got shaken up, too. I became an even better business manager over the past two months. I became better organized, more of my goals came into

focus, decisions that had stopped me in my tracks<sup>3</sup> became easier. I could jump into certain kinds of difficult conversations rather than thinking about them for a long time first.

Perhaps one of the most important things we accomplished with our discharging together is that I have been able to look at the results of the election without feeling any self-blame. I can see that a perfect storm of circumstances led to the defeat and that I put everything I had available into overcoming that perfect storm. I have no sense of self-blame for the outcome—disappointment, heartbreak even, but not self-blame—and that puts me in a better spot for moving forward than I would otherwise have been.

I was able to put up a much better fight than I could have without the discharge and connection. I know which nights I could not stand<sup>4</sup> the thought of calls and I'd have a session and then make them. And I know which days I couldn't think of how to use my election team and I'd have a session and a clear plan would emerge.

There is so much more I could say, but all of us are in this for the long haul<sup>5</sup> so I will get to say those things, and many more, in the days and years ahead. I will close for now by saying again what a joy it is to be connected to each of you.

*Cynthia Phinney*

Livermore Falls, Maine, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change

<sup>1</sup> Rooting for me means actively supporting me.

<sup>2</sup> Was on the line means that would make a big difference.

<sup>3</sup> Stopped me in my tracks means completely stopped me.

<sup>4</sup> In this context, stand means tolerate.

<sup>5</sup> For the long haul means over time, far into the future.



ARNSIDE KNOTT, ENGLAND • SANDRA CARTER

## Discharge Central to Care of the Environment

The following is a key next step for Co-Counsellors working on care of the environment:

*In the wide world, spreading the understanding that discharge is an important missing part of effectively changing people's attitudes and behaviours.*

The environmental movement, government, and environmental businesses already know a lot about ways to change people's behaviours. These include regulation, pricing, public education, feedback to consumers about the environmental impact of their decisions, and so on. Re-evaluation Counselling has the additional valuable insight that discharge helps people to re-evaluate, recover their thinking, and reduce the effect of patterns on their behaviour.

Many people in the wide-world environmental movement are frustrated with individuals, politicians, and businesses acting on short-term, narrow self interest rather than on behalf of the common good. Discharge is a missing part of the solution.

Discharge will also improve the effectiveness of environmental movements (as will the ways of organising that we use in RC, for example, taking turns and paying attention to relationships and the effects of oppression on relationships). Co-Counsellors can be models of how discharge leads to organising powerfully, without discouragement or urgency.

*Roewen Wishart*  
Lakemba, New South Wales, Australia  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list  
for leaders in the care of the environment

## Beginning to Be a Leader

You can reach people around you, as you start thinking of being a leader, and you don't have to wave an RC banner to do it. Just attach them to you, not as people you take care of, but as people you exchange communication with.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1993

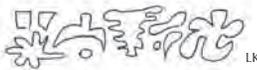
# Appreciating RC Literature

I appreciate very much that you sent me the October 2011 PRESENT TIME. I was excited when I received it today. Thank you!



*María Lorena Cuéllar Barandiarán*  
San Salvador, El Salvador

*PRESENT TIME just keeps getting better and better. It truly pulls our whole worldwide Community together. It makes a big difference in my Area.\**



*Betsy Najjar*  
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

\* An Area is a local RC Community.



Reading RC literature is important for world change and for building strong RC Communities.

*Julian Weissglass*  
*International Commonality Reference*  
*Person for Wide World Change*  
Santa Barbara, California, USA  
Excerpted from *The RC Teacher* No. 29



BRIAN LAVENDEL



Those of us who have been in RC for several decades, and have Co-Counseled and perhaps taught classes and led support groups or workshops, have a valuable foundation of information and perspectives. Part of it we've gained from reading the thinking of other RCers—especially that of my father, Harvey Jackins. We have used what we've read in the RC literature to develop our own thinking and perspectives. That we've gained so much from this reading does not often show clearly. We rarely refer to the literature, but it has been vital to us. It would be useful to any RCer. Those of you who never got to see and listen to my father would find it particularly useful to read what he wrote. . . . Please consider delving into some part of the printed RC literature. Find out how useful it can be. Many of us need sessions first—to discharge the distresses that have been put on us about reading and learning.

*Tim Jackins*  
Excerpted from the October 2008 *Present Time*  
and *The RC Teacher* No. 28



TIM JACKINS

The special importance of publications is that they are written and published and in the process are thought about repetitively. They are edited, re-edited, and re-edited so that much of the distress that would be accompanying the communication in spoken language is "weeded out" and eliminated, and the communication, as a result, tends to be more correct and more understandable.

*Harvey Jackins*  
Reprinted from *The List*, page 105

## The RC Web Site

There is a web site for Re-evaluation Counseling at <<http://www.rc.org/>>. At this site you will have easy access to a large amount of information about Re-evaluation Counseling, including:

- RC theory (basic theory, including an introduction to RC, *The Art of Listening*, and the RC postulates)
- A newly available introductory talk (in audio) by Harvey Jackins (1986)
- RC practice (how to start RC, what to do in a session, counseling techniques, how to lead support groups)
- Policies, forms, and the *2009 Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*
- Articles by RC leaders and Community members (quotes and selected articles from *Present Time* and other RC journals)
- Translations of articles into many languages
- Resources for workshop organizers
- Rational Island Publishers (contact information and literature ordering)
- Ordering RC publications on the web: <[www.rationalisland.com](http://www.rationalisland.com)>
- An on-line fundamentals of Co-Counseling class
- Outlines for teaching fundamentals classes, in English and Spanish
- An ever-growing collection of back issues of *Present Time* (currently 1974-1993)
- An index to all issues of *Present Time*
- "Exploring Our Literature"—short descriptions and excerpts of articles from the many RC journals
- "Today's Thought"—a short daily thought from a Re-evaluation Counseling perspective
- International Reference Person Perspectives

## How to Contact Us On-Line

- The International RC Community: [ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org)
- United to End Racism: [uer@rc.org](mailto:uer@rc.org)
- Rational Island Publishers (orders, and billing questions): [litsales@rc.org](mailto:litsales@rc.org) (or order on our web site at [www.rationalisland.com](http://www.rationalisland.com))
- Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources (Intensives and office matters only): [rcoffice@rc.org](mailto:rcoffice@rc.org)
- Automatic response e-mail about RC: [info@rc.org](mailto:info@rc.org)
- For sending photos: [photos@rc.org](mailto:photos@rc.org)
- Reference Person for the Internet, Tim Jackins: [ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org)

## On-Line Fundamentals Class

An on-line fundamentals of Co-Counseling class is available for people who are interested in learning more about RC.

Active participation in the class is reserved for those who do not have fundamentals classes in their geographical region. Learning Re-evaluation Counseling via e-mail is much more difficult than learning it in a regular class and requires a higher level of commitment to the learning process and to regular Co-Counseling sessions.

If you are already participating in a regular RC class, or are an RC teacher, you may still have access to the articles used in the on-line class by enrolling in the class as an inactive member. Please note, however, that all of the materials used are already published and available in printed issues of *Present Time* and other Rational Island Publishers publications. The on-line class organizes these materials, making them more easily accessible.

Please see the RC web site at <<http://www.rc.org/class/fundamentals/>> for more information about how to sign up for either active or inactive membership in the on-line fundamentals class.

## United to End Racism

United to End Racism (UER), an ongoing program of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, is on the web at <<http://www.rc.org/uer>>. The e-mail address for UER is <[uer@rc.org](mailto:uer@rc.org)>.

United to End Racism is working with other groups involved in eliminating racism, and sharing with them the theory and practice of Re-evaluation Counseling.

## Electronic Mailing Lists

The RC Community maintains a number of electronic mailing lists for particular categories of RCers. These lists are for active members of the RC Community, and most of them are for active leaders only. (If English is your first language, part of being an active member of the Community is subscribing to *Present Time*.) If you would like to subscribe to a list, first e-mail the person in charge of the list, then forward that person's approval, your request, your contact information (phone number, mailing address, city, state, postal code, country), and whether or not you have a subscription to *Present Time*, directly to the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>. Read the information below for the various lists and whom you need to contact for approval to subscribe to them.

### **RC Community Members:** <community@mail.rc.org>.

Contact any Area, Regional, or Liberation Reference Person.

### **RC Community Members Involved in Eliminating**

**Racism:** <uer@mail.rc.org>. Contact any Area, Regional, or Liberation Reference Person. (This list is for trading information on the theory and practice of using RC in the fight to eliminate racism, both inside and outside of the RC Community.)

### **Regional Reference Persons:** <rrp@mail.rc.org>.

Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

### **Area Reference Persons:** <arp@mail.rc.org>.

Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

### **International Liberation and Commonality Reference**

**Persons:** <ilrp@mail.rc.org>. Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

### **RC Teachers:** <teachers@mail.rc.org>. Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

### **Editors of RC or non-RC publications:**

<editors@mail.rc.org>. Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

### **Translators of RC Literature:**

<translators@mail.rc.org>. Contact Truus Jansen, Rational Island Publishers Translation Coordinator, at <ircc@rc.org>.

### **Activists for the Liberation of "People Targeted for Destruction by Society Because of the Patterns Imposed Upon Them":**

<access@mail.rc.org>. Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

### **Leaders of African-Heritage People:**

<black@mail.rc.org>. Contact Barbara Love, International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage, at <bjlove413@gmail.com>.

### **Leaders of Artists:** <artists@mail.rc.org>.

Contact John Fehringer, International Liberation Reference Person for Visual Artists, at <rc@fehinger.com>.

### **Leaders of Asians:** <asian@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Francie Chew, International Liberation Reference Person for People of Chinese Heritage, at <fchew@tufts.edu>.

### **Leaders in the Care of the Environment:**

<environment@mail.rc.org>. Contact Wytske Visser, International Commonality Reference Person for the Care of the Environment, at <wytskevisser.coe@gmail.com>.

### **Leaders of Catholics:** <catholic@mail.rc.org>.

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### **Leaders of College and University Faculty:**

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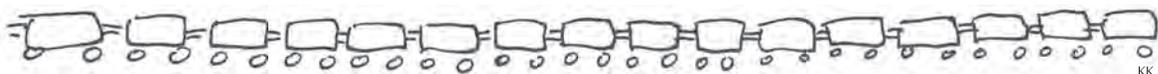
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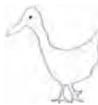
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# Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process whereby people of all ages and of all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

Re-evaluation Counseling theory provides a model of what a human being can be like in the area of his/her interaction with other human beings and his/her environment. The theory assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness, but that these qualities have become blocked and obscured in adults as the result of accumulated distress experiences (fear, hurt, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, etc.) which begin early in our lives.

Any young person would recover from such distress spontaneously by use of the natural process of emotional discharge (crying, trembling, raging, laughing, etc.). However, this natural process is usually interfered with by well-meaning people ("Don't cry," "Be a big boy," etc.) who erroneously equate the emotional discharge (the healing of the hurt) with the hurt itself.

When adequate emotional discharge can take place, the person is freed from the rigid pattern of behavior and feeling left by the hurt. The basic loving, cooperative, intelligent, and zestful nature is then free to operate. Such a person will tend to be more effective in looking out for his or her own interests and the interests of others, and will be more capable of acting successfully against injustice.

In recovering and using the natural discharge process, two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out, and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.

For more information, you can go to the web site: <http://www.rc.org/>.



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