

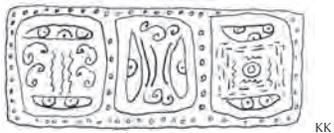


**We want a society in which making it better for ourselves
makes it better for everybody. — *Tim Jackins***

Welcome to this April 2012 *Present Time*, full of articles on a wide range of topics—from sleep to interpreting to disability to mistakes! For the July issue, we'll need articles and poems by Monday, May 21, and changes to the back-pages lists by Tuesday, May 29.

Lisa Kauffman, editor

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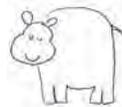
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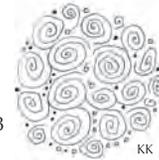
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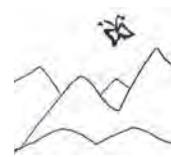
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Sleep



From talks by Tim Jackins¹
at the England Leaders' Workshop and West Coast
North America Reference Persons' Workshop, 2012

Sleep is something that everybody talks about but doesn't remember to counsel on. Every morning at a workshop you hear forty people ask, "How did you sleep? How was your night?" Then people describe their usual behavior during the night. A few people get driven by desperation to work on sleep, things get bad enough that they have to, but most of us just go on—we make small complaints each morning and don't do anything about it.

EARLY HURTS

I suspect there are a great many distresses that have gotten in the way of our resting and sleeping. I myself hate to wake a baby. I hate it. I will find reasons not to do it. I will keep people from doing it, but not because I think waking up a baby is always bad or avoidable. My reaction clues me in to what happened to me.

As children, sleep was not under our control. We didn't get to sleep the way we wanted to, the way our bodies were trying to. We were on somebody else's schedule. And we usually haven't had a chance to experiment and find out what we really needed.

In our families we got awakened by whatever schedule happened to determine things—usually work. Then we went to school. My grandson is in kindergarten now. The bus picks him up at 7:15 every morning, no matter what. We also have distresses about going to bed at night—we feel that we are going to miss something, we've been told to go to bed for other people's reasons.

We're still confused about it. We still feel like we don't want to get up, like we don't want to go to bed, or like we can't get rested enough. We may think that if we only had another hour's sleep, or another week's vacation, something big would resolve. It would help, but it wouldn't take care of it. There is some set of distresses, widely spread among us, that keeps us from recovering fully at night.

Maybe we could feel rested. Maybe we could figure out how to take care of ourselves in this area, too, so that we could enjoy sleep, get enough of it, and be able to wake up without somebody or something forcing us awake. Perhaps we could relax, know when we were tired enough, and then go to sleep at that point. It would be a big change in most of our lives.

Let's have a six-minute-each-way mini-session. Talk about your memories of sleep as a child and all the little tendrils of thought that reach out from that.

THE FUNCTION OF SLEEP AND DREAMS

It looks like sleep is a time for our minds to catch up on the information we've taken in while awake. We try

to cut out all new input: get the temperature set at a comfortable level, cut down the nerve impulses with smooth sheets or fuzzy blankets, muffle everything—have no sound, or else sound that we can get used to (if the sound is repetitive enough, we know that we don't have to pay attention to it). Then apparently our minds start going over information. They reconsider all the information that came in during the day, make sense of it as best they can, and file it away.

It's important to get sleep. If we don't get the chance to sleep, we fall behind. There were some interesting studies in which people were paid increasing amounts of money to stay awake, and at some point there was not enough money—they just had to go to sleep. You've had times approaching that. You're sitting there and your mind goes—you start talking the dream out loud, you say things that don't fit. You've probably done this in sessions—hopefully as client. (*Laughter*) It's vital for our minds to have sleep. Apparently, if we get enough sleep, our minds get through the day's new information and turn to the next thing to try to understand, which is our distress incidents.

That's apparently where all our dreams come from. Our minds start to look at the distress—and not just at one distress recording. We can see how our distresses are organized, how they string together, not just by counseling on them but by looking at our dreams. Many different things show up in the same dream. We get Aunt Martha, an old tricycle,

continued . . .



SWAZILAND • TIM JACKINS

¹ Tim Jackins is the International Reference Person for the RC Communities.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

and Mickey Mouse,² and there is no apparent connection. They're not from the same events, but they are hooked together somehow.

As we dream, more and more of our mind gets involved in trying to make sense of the distresses. Our eyes start moving as if they were watching the dream. You may have slept near someone who got quite involved in his or her dreams. Children often do that and start moving all over the place. One child I knew would raise both feet up and slam them down. He would do it repeatedly, not just on one night. I got to know when he was struggling with certain distresses, fighting the same fights.

We all have dreams. We have dreams every night. We dream every time we get enough space to. This seems to be very important, especially if we're not discharging. It seems to be heading in the direction of the discharge process. Some of us also discharge in our sleep. We cry and shake. We do what we can, given the suppression of discharge.

Not only do we dream every night, but we may have certain dreams repeatedly. There are dreams we had as children that we still remember. Our dreams always have meaning, and they are always connected to our distresses. They are good flags for where we need to counsel and discharge. It's always useful to tell our dreams.

There are three or four different dreams that I can remember having repeatedly. In one of them I feel like I am awake but I can hardly move. There is an urgency to do something, and I can barely move. It's a wonderful dream. (*Laughter*) I used to think it was from a general anesthesia incident. Then I remembered a time when I was four years old in the

hospital having my appendix out. That went fine. Afterward they said, "If you can't sleep, ring the bell and the nurse will come help." So I rang the bell. The nurse came and gave me a shot. I never rang the bell again. I suspect that the dream is based on that shot. So let's do one more mini-session. What are the dreams you can't forget?

COUNSELING ON SLEEP AND DREAMS

I think most of what we describe as "sleepy" is being pulled under by the groggy feeling of restimulation. It's like the feeling you have when you get awakened prematurely.

Often after a heavy discharge session, a short nap makes the world a lot brighter. I think the nap gives our minds the chance to focus on the information that became available because we discharged.

The tone of our dreams changes as we work through the distresses that are connected to them. The best example I have is from back in the early 1970s. I had started an RC Community in 1970 in the San Francisco Bay (California, USA) area. I had six classes going a week and so had enough people for the first workshop there. There were only two people leading workshops at that point: my father³ and Mary McCabe.⁴ I had arranged for Mary to come down. Then my father had a heart attack a week and a half before the workshop and it made no sense for Mary to come down; she had to be in Seattle. So I had to lead the workshop. I had been teaching RC for three years as one of the first teachers outside Seattle. The dreams I had were of struggle, turmoil, fighting. I counseled on them and counseled

on them. In the dream the night before the workshop, I was fighting with twenty people and winning. The tone shifted that little bit right before the workshop because I had gotten enough discharge.

Some of us need to go after⁵ the terror that makes it feel too dangerous to sleep. Some people who have had severe trouble sleeping have gotten their best Co-Counselors to sleep with them throughout a night, one on each side. That's useful, because the moment when someone wakes up in the middle of the distress is often when he or she can discharge well on it, but without anyone there it can feel too alone. Sometimes a phone session is enough, but if it's a heavy distress, people need somebody to hang on to, they need to feel somebody alive and close to them—someone who knows and cares about them.

Some people can work on sleep and then relax and actually rest. Resting with someone standing guard can also be useful: "I will take complete responsibility for everything that happens in the world around you; you don't have to keep watch. It's my responsibility. I take it for the rest of this hour." The idea is that maybe, finally, there is a place safe enough that we don't have to stay watchful.

Of course we have to look at where the tension comes from. How long has it been that way? Where did it start? What was going on⁶ when it started? Where has it gotten us into the most trouble?

In the meantime, we can get a mini-session before bed and have somebody tuck us in—even by phone. In some families the parents come and tuck the children in bed and say some little bit of reassurance ("I'll see you in the morning").

² Mickey Mouse is a cartoon character.

³ Harvey Jackins, the founder and first International Reference Person of the RC Communities

⁴ Mary McCabe was an important person in the early development of RC.

⁵ Go after means pursue.

⁶ Going on means happening.

Overcoming Allergies

As a young child growing up in Malaysia, I suffered from allergies. Everyone told me they would go away when I came to the United States (when I was twenty). And that was true; for many years I was allergy-free. However, in the last ten years the allergies have come back. This past summer they were at their worst. No matter what I did or what I took, there was no relief. My sinuses were killing me,* and the eye itch made me feel like digging my eyes out. Finally, in desperation, I decided to counsel on the allergies, since I had heard that discharge could help. I have to say I was a little skeptical.

My Co-Counselor and I tried to figure out how to work on them. She is a pharmacist and started by sharing what she knew about allergies: that they are the reaction when one's body thinks it is under attack. As someone who had survived her mother's attempt to abort her, that totally made sense. I took the direction, "It's only pollen, not poison," and shook through the mini-session we had, then took a few more minutes to discharge during our RC class. That all happened on a Monday, which is when I teach the class. The symptoms went away immediately with just those few minutes of discharge. They had been so debilitating all summer that I was both thrilled and shocked that just that little bit of attention and discharge would stop them.

Through the work week I had barely any symptoms. Then came the weekend and the allergies returned with a vengeance. I was miserable. I had a session and worked on them. The image that kept coming to my mind was of a skeletal baby lying on its side in a little alcove or cave that we shared, while it was raining poison outside. I took the direction, "It's only poison, and I survived," and could really feel the terror as I shook. My mother had told me she tried to abort me by drinking some substance that was meant to "wash" me out. My sense is that she tried twice. She had had seven children and two miscarriages and felt that she'd had enough.

Then came Monday again, and during my time in class I once again worked on the allergies. My nose was completely

stuffed up and I could barely breathe. I cried and shook as I discharged on not being able to breathe. Waves of terror swept over me. My fingers began to curl and cramp up. I just let myself feel and discharge the terror, as I kept saying, "I cannot breathe." I allowed my mind to go where it needed to go and talked about all the images and feelings it was offering up. Finally I heard myself say, "It's only poison, and I survived." I repeated that and discharged more terror.

I am amazed at how intelligent our minds are if we can trust them and give them space to show their intelligence, if we can let them bring up what they need to work on and the direction they need to go. So often our fears and embarrassments make us edit our thoughts instead of trusting their lead.

I had a couple more sessions along the same lines, and this fall, while everyone else was suffering from allergies, I was completely allergy-free. Thanks to the power of discharge!

Cheng Imm Tan
Boston, Massachusetts, USA



COSTA RICA • THERESA D'AMATO

* Killing me means bothering me a great deal.

.....

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*



ALASKA, USA • DIANE SHISK

A Most Special Relationship

I used to think friendship was the most special relationship. When I asked myself, “Why is it so special?” I realized that we get to show ourselves more, be ourselves more, in a friendship than in any other relationship. All the relationships in the world are conditional. Unfortunately, even friendship is. But it is the least conditional. Probably the oppressive society’s effect on other relationships is greater than on friendship.

I was wondering why, among my many friends, one friend is so special to me. Then I understood that I have another special relationship with this friend: an RC relationship, a Co-Counseling relationship.

In recent years I have figured out that one of the most special relationships in the world is a Co-Counseling relationship. It’s the only relationship that lets us be ourselves, show ourselves, accept ourselves completely; love, care for, support, get close to each other without any conditions.

It doesn’t matter whether we are black or white, tall or short, thin or fat, young or old; speak Kannada or English; are literate or illiterate, teacher or student, president or a citizen, Indian or American. What matters is that we are humans. This is possible only in RC.

I used to believe that we know all about ourselves. I have experienced something interesting in RC: I get to know myself better in my sessions; I can think better when I am with my Co-Counselor. My Co-Counselors have helped me figure out that life is worth living. My life is better because of them, and I know their lives are better because of me.

No other relationship can replace a Co-Counseling relationship. A Co-Counseling relationship acts as a wonderful contradiction to all our material¹ about other relationships. Probably our struggles in other relationships are to have unconditional love, caring, closeness, support, understanding, acceptance, and space for discharge. A Co-Counseling relationship reminds us of the reality about relationships. We are on a journey to get complete clarity about relationships. I am glad my Co-Counselors are with me in my journey and that we are no more alone in this world.

There are some Co-Counselors whom I don’t meet often, but the kind of connection we have is amazing. Irrespective of how often we meet and do sessions, we are still the same for each other. We have an excellent bond. We discharge on missing each other and are aware that we are there for each other, wherever we are.

Most of the connections I have made in RC are the special connections that are forever and ever.

I admire and celebrate the Co-Counseling relationship. Cheers to all my Co-Counselors. Thanks to Harvey² for discovering such a wonderful human relationship; thanks for the gift you have presented to us.

S.J. Shashikala
Bangalore, India

It Helps to Plan

You will have much better sessions if you come to them with an idea in mind of what you want to work on. This allows even the most skilled counselor to fill his or her proper role as helper rather than having to try to plan for the client.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Human Situation*,
page 192

¹ Material means distress.

² Harvey Jackins

Since the March 2011 Disasters in Japan

Over the last couple of months I've been thinking back over the various ways we all (in Japan and overseas) responded to the disasters of March 2011.¹ It's only now that I can start to understand what we did, what worked, and what didn't. I've decided to write my thoughts down, because it seems important for us to figure out what we know before disasters happen. Afterward there isn't enough space or attention, as I discovered. I'm sure that we in RC have a lot of collective experience counselling people in such situations, but I wasn't aware of it so I didn't have any understanding to fall back on. Such an understanding would have given me, and all of us, some additional perspective.

Our Community here in Japan received much amazing, generous, and effective support, for which I will always be grateful. Many people gave us one-way attention, over an extended period. At the same time I could see that many people wanted to support us but sometimes ended up hanging back because they "didn't know what to do" or doing things that weren't as useful as they intended. I didn't have enough attention or energy to figure out how to explain that at the time, so this is my attempt now.

I still can't explain why the events of March 2011 had such a big impact even on those of us who were not materially affected in any significant way. What I can say from my experience is that major events like these affect everything in our lives, even things that seem completely unrelated. In

¹ The earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011, and the subsequent accidents at several nuclear power plants

the few months leading up to the disasters, my life and re-emergence were going well: I was attempting various big and scary things, showing myself more openly, and generally feeling hopeful. After the disasters, everything suddenly felt overwhelming. And it's taken me nearly a year to start to regain my hopefulness and energy.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DISASTERS

In the first hours and days after the disasters it was hard to tell² that there was any space to discharge. Our immediate focus was on practical issues, and a lot of urgency was running.³ Also, it was hard to feel fear fully when we weren't sure whether or not the danger was over: we didn't dare to "fall apart."

² Tell means perceive, notice.

³ Running means being felt and acted out.



MARTI HAYMAKER

Everyone was terrified, so there was little contradiction.⁴ We had to be careful not to restimulate our counsellors by showing our fear.

Co-Counsellors from outside Japan calling me, persistently, was really helpful. I probably wouldn't have contacted them, because I somehow couldn't tell that anything big had happened or that they would care. I think that was part of the shock and disbelief. I remember emailing Diane Shisk,⁵ apologetically, a couple of days after the disasters to ask for the English original of Tim Jackins' letter to the Japanese RC Community ("I know you're busy working on *Present Time*, but . . .") and being surprised that she thought the disasters in Japan were more of a priority.

A lot of overseas Co-Counsellors (as well as other friends and acquaintances) e-mailed me in the first days and weeks. I appreciated being reminded that I mattered to them. However, then the onus was on me to work out how to respond. Many people were looking for reassurance ("Are you okay? Please tell me you are.") or wanted me to explain what was going on.⁶ Given my caretaking material,⁷ I felt pressured to reply (in a generally positive tone) rather than spending my time getting information about the situation, trying to rest, or connecting with the people around me.

Although time differences can make it hard, phone calls would

continued . . .

⁴ Contradiction to the distress

⁵ Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person for the RC Communities.

⁶ Going on means happening.

⁷ Material means distress.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

have been more useful than e-mails. Or, failing that, people could have sent e-mails or left voice messages saying they were thinking about me and were happy to listen if I wanted to talk but that there was no need to reply otherwise. I think the key point is that people needed to discharge their own feelings.

About a week after the disasters another Japanese Co-Counsellor and I went to the United States for a workshop we had been planning to attend long beforehand. Getting myself there took all my energy, and once I arrived I wanted to collapse and stop having to figure everything out alone. But some people felt awkward around us, and we tended to get left alone to counsel with each other, which was hard. People tried to avoid mentioning what had happened. We started to make jokes ("don't mention the E word, the T word, or the N word") in order to discharge on that. I understand why people felt awkward, but it's better to reach out even so. The hardest part is isolation. (I also want to emphasise that the workshop participants were extremely smart and thoughtful about supporting us.)

It's important for us to tell the story of what happened, lots of times, but that isn't necessarily possible straight away.⁸ For me the first stage was numbness. I felt guilty that I couldn't feel sad,

⁸ Straight away means immediately.



LANCE CABLK

especially when Co-Counsellors who didn't even live in Japan could cry about what had happened. (Grief took the longest for me to feel. Fear was a lot easier to access.) If I got the impression that there was something a counsellor thought I ought to feel or work on, I immediately stopped trusting him or her. My safest counsellors were the ones who had discharged their own urgency or curiosity and were prepared to sit with me while I felt nothing and just show me they were there and cared. Sessions in which the counsellor got me to put everything down and collapse were also helpful, as I was on constant alert the rest of the time. Jokes in really bad taste, about earthquakes and nuclear disasters, helped me start working on the fear, as did understatements (like "Apparently, Diane's quite worried about us.").

THE NEXT FEW WEEKS

As the initial shock began to wear off, I spent days begging my counsellors to tell me that the disasters hadn't really happened. That allowed me to begin to get my mind around the enormity of the events. On the other hand, because the numbness and exhaustion tended to pull me into powerlessness, it helped when my counsellors pushed me to see what was happening, especially when I had to make decisions about it.

I understood why it matters that we learn how to fight for ourselves and rely on each other before a

disaster happens. It would have been easier if we weren't suddenly trying to figure these things out, on top of everything else.

There were times when I discharged more intensely than I ever had in my life, when I needed to keep stopping and getting sessions simply in order to walk from A to B. And there were times when the last thing I felt up to⁹ was discharging or feeling anymore, so attention-out sessions were necessary, too. It helped me when counsellors understood that and didn't think I was wasting their time talking only about good things.

It was crucial for me to figure out for myself what support I needed, because doing so showed me that I could still think well. I needed lots of patient and flexible attention—I could never predict in advance when things would suddenly get confusing—but not someone to fix things or save me. A couple of times I was in situations in which I had to think hard about other people, and doing that also helped me a lot. Being reminded, over and over, that I could think was probably the most important contradiction, because everything felt confusing and overwhelming.

Many people asked me for advice as to what they could do to help. I appreciated their wish to support us, but I think they were often confused by feelings of helplessness or guilt. I had to work on similar stuff to figure out how to support survivors in Tohoku. Because I was busy trying to do that, as well as make my own choices, I did not have a lot of attention for people's questions and often felt angry (but didn't dare show it, as I felt I needed to be grateful). Things tended to go better when people first worked on their feelings of "wanting to help"

⁹ Up to means able to do.

and then figured out what might be useful (sometimes then checking that with me).

LONGER-TERM

For me the hardest period started two or three months after the disasters. I felt much more alone than I did in the immediate aftermath. It was also harder to ask for help, because I was exhausted and felt that I'd already taken too much.

In the first few weeks we had some space to acknowledge that the situation was hard, but soon there was enormous pressure to get back to "normal." There was a big economic imperative to get everyone back to work to "help rebuild the economy." Soldiering on in the face of adversity is highly valued in Japanese culture. It also looked to me like all the undischarged distresses from having to rebuild after World War II were being played out¹⁰ again.

In the Co-Counseling Community it was hard to keep discharging and staying connected. Many people came to workshops held a few weeks after the disasters, even those who hadn't been active in the Community, as everyone's feelings were easily accessible. But as the organizer of a follow-up workshop in early June, by far my biggest challenge was to persuade people to come at all.

Having to keep on with our lives, and feel, seemed like too much. Discharging often felt like the last thing I wanted to do. I hadn't expected that and found it disorienting and scary. I was too ashamed to admit it to most people. Even now I feel that I should be writing about how well we all counselled and figured

everything out, but the truth is that it took all the perspective I could summon not to cancel my ongoing RC class. I spent a long time trying to think of excuses not to go to a workshop that I would normally have looked forward to. In fact, I spent several months struggling to stay in the Community at all. And I don't think I was the only one.

In the weeks and months after the nuclear accident, many of the Co-Counselors in the Tokyo area (where I live) moved away, came back, and sometimes moved away again. About half of the people I counselled with face-to-face before March left Tokyo in the subsequent months. Some are now back here, but others are considering leaving. We thought hard about everything: Should I go out to class? Are the trains running? Is it going to rain? Which way is the wind blowing? It was hard logistically to maintain regular Co-Counseling sessions, let alone classes or support groups, under those circumstances. At the same time, all our old hopelessness ("it will never end") and powerlessness ("this is far too big; I have no idea where to start") were continually restimulated by the nuclear crisis. Then there was a lot of pressure, from the non-RC world, not to leave and criticism of those who did. In response, some people who did decide to leave became quite defensive about it. Whatever we chose we felt bad about it in some way, so our choices ended up dividing us just when we needed to be most connected.

For those of us brought up¹¹ to trust authority (mostly middle- and owning-class people), it was a big shift to realize that almost nothing of what we were being told about the nuclear situation

was true. But I think that all of us, whatever our backgrounds, were disappointed and angry about what was happening, and a lot of those feelings got aimed at the Community and each other's actions.

Many of us feel that "nothing really happened to me." Because we can all think of people who suffered more, we feel that we have no right to find anything hard. I feel like I shouldn't be writing this because I don't live in Tohoku. People who are in Tohoku but outside the worst-affected prefectures feel guilty for that reason. People just outside the tsunami zone feel guilty because their houses are still standing. People in evacuation shelters have told me they feel guilty because they still have a job, or their family survived or they survived. It seems to be rather like war veterans' material: the only people who suffered "enough" are the ones who died. All this guilt and ranking of suffering have made it hard to counsel with each other. We are careful of what we show to whom.

However, I think the main thing that's making it hard to keep Co-Counseling is that noticing how we feel, and thinking about what's going on and how best to act given the situation, means attempting to go in the exact opposite direction from the rest of society. Everyone is being pushed hard to numb out, forget (except for a kind of sentimentalised memory), and carry on as "normal." And because these messages are all-pervasive, it's hard to even notice them. What's going on is a kind of nationwide "mental health" oppression: we're being told that nothing is happening anymore, so that if we can't cope something must be wrong with us. When two months after the disasters I cancelled meeting

continued . . .

¹⁰ Played out means acted out.

¹¹ Brought up means raised.



NOBIRU, JAPAN • EMMA PARKER

... continued

a friend because I hadn't been sleeping much, her reaction was "Are you okay? What happened?" and then "Have you been to the doctor?" So on top of everything we're feeling, we have to either act like we're fine or counsel the people around us.

It's hard to explain how exhausted we all were. For several months there were frequent aftershocks, so we could never switch off¹² completely, even while sleeping. For weeks we couldn't tell whether the ground was really moving or it was our imaginations. I was never quite well—I caught every cold that came near me. And there were so many things we "ought to" be doing that it was impossible to live normally. For a couple of months I was living on four to five hours' sleep a night, because that looked like the only way I could meet the demands of work, the RC Community, and getting up to Tohoku to volunteer. Also, when everyone has a load of undischarged terror, there's less slack in general. My work situation has gotten a lot harder and busier; people feel more urgent, but of course they don't connect this to the events of March 2011.

I only managed to rest when I left Japan, in June for work and again in November for a workshop. It felt odd, and new, to have fun

with friends for a couple of hours and not feel guilty. One day at the workshop I slept through the break, dinner, class, and the support group, which I would never normally do.

I continued to get e-mails from people outside Japan with whom I hadn't Co-Counselled for a long time. It was good to hear from them, but I couldn't always tell how much they were thinking about me and how much they wanted to feel useful or be involved. Some people disappeared. One person told me when I saw him months later that he'd somehow managed to "blank me out," and I suspect he wasn't the only one. These were understandable reactions, but I didn't always have a lot of attention for figuring out how to make the relationships more rational. What I really needed from the outside (and received in many cases) was support to figure out how to keep my Co-Counseling relationships here going.

I don't think many people outside Japan understood how overwhelming the situation was, and of course they felt urgent, too, so there were lots of requests to do things, obtain or relay information, and so on, that could feel impossible. We also sometimes felt as though we had to explain and justify our actions, on top of everything we had to cope with already. It was tricky, because staying in contact and thinking together were important, but so were rest and getting enough discharge and time to think for ourselves. Because so much needed doing, it could feel like we were never doing enough. It helped me when Co-Counselors were over-the-top¹³ pleased with every little thing I managed to do.

Counseling on the nuclear accident has required working not only on the situation here, or issues related to nuclear power, but also on the existence of huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons. I've found it hard to keep my mind on it long enough to counsel on it. The best methods I've come up with¹⁴ so far have been telling jokes, inventing games that break as many taboos as possible, and throwing "radioactive balls" at my counsellors. Because all the conflicting advice and "information" gets confusing, the most useful direction for me has been complete confidence that I can think about it all.

We also need counsellors to keep reminding us to work on what happened, and is happening. It can feel like "How much longer do I have to counsel on this stuff?! I want to get on with my life." My ongoing class members say they are glad that I still "make them" work on it (even a few minutes a month), because otherwise they wouldn't do so anymore. We're no longer scared all the time, and that seems like "enough." Diane Shisk told a client at a recent workshop that she didn't want her remembering March 2011 at all the next time there was a big earthquake, and I think we were all taken aback¹⁵ by the idea that that was even possible.

Once again, thank you to everyone who has supported us, in whatever way, over the last year.

I am looking forward to hearing other people's experiences with and thoughts on counseling after this or other disasters.

Emma Parker
Tokyo, Japan

¹² Switch off means relax.

¹³ Over-the-top means greatly, exceedingly.

¹⁴ Come up with means thought of.

¹⁵ Taken aback means surprised.

Making Use of Commitments

About two years ago, I decided that I was unhappy with how my distresses were affecting my interactions with others. Even after years of Co-Counseling, I was often stuck inside a pattern; my responses were often the thoughtless rehearsals of a chronic recording.¹ I knew myself to be sweet and lovable, thoughtful and kind, but I also knew that, as often as not, my interactions with others were anything but.² I had reached a point where that was simply no longer acceptable to me.

My goal was to come up with³ a series of commitments that I could use in sessions, as a primer for discharge, and also as guidelines for determining if my behavior was consistent with my choice to have more “human” human interactions.

I wanted the commitments to provide perspective on the person I was deciding to be, challenge the confusions laid in as a result of distress recordings, and lead me to the most elegant interactions I was capable of.

A function, in algebra or computer programming, is a set of pre-determined modifiers (operators) that convert an input into an output. In other words, a value (in this case, a patterned or rigid response to a situation) enters the function, is modified by the modifiers (in this case, the commitments) and comes out as a “new and improved” value (in this case, a more flexible response—one that is in line with how I am choosing to interact with others).

A function is normally defined as f (name of function) followed by a new line for each modifier/operator, usually enclosed in $\{ \}$.

It goes like this:

f (I am with people)

{For the long-term survival of my people, I firmly decide to treat each person I encounter as if he or she were eager and able to be my warm, close, dependable friend and ally under all conditions.} (*This is similar to the RC Jewish commitment.*)

{I decide to approach each person I encounter thoughtfully, with care and compassion.}

{My survival is assured. My success is guaranteed. All of the battles I will ever need to fight have already been fought and won. I stand before you victorious and deeply committed to our mutual success. I cast my lot with you.}

{I choose to hold out and model the attitudes of Hope, Confidence, and Enthusiasm.}

The first commitment has to do with⁴ a perspective I am choosing to adopt about the attitude others have toward me. As a working-class Jew, with a rich heritage of deep, close relationships but also a history of having been set up and targeted, part of my struggle was a recording that people around me would be oppressive or, at best, not care (and even if they did, would be powerless to offer assistance) if something bad was happening.

I had to have many, many sessions about that. For a long time my counselor had to assure me that he or she knew and agreed that the commitment did not mean that people were in fact my allies but only that I was going to treat them as if they were. I also had to discharge about what it meant and did not mean to treat someone as if this were true (“What am I committing to here?”). It turned out that⁵ I did not have to give someone money or invite him or her over to dinner but rather that I needed to be more forgiving, generous, welcoming, and patient.

In parallel, I needed to discharge a bunch on who “my people” were. I had always assumed that, because it was a Jewish commitment, it meant in some vague way “the Jewish people.” However, after a few sessions I realized that it was much more personal, that my people included my friends and family; my Co-Counselors and co-workers—both Jews and non-Jews.

Over time all of these “concerns” gave way to discharge, and I was able to have big sessions noticing that I have people in my life who are indeed eager and able to be my warm, close, dependable friends and allies.

The second commitment is externally focused. It requires paying attention to others—noticing how they are doing,

continued . . .



BETH SHORTER

¹ Chronic distress recording

² Anything but means anything but that.

³ Come up with means think of.

⁴ Has to do with means relates to.

⁵ It turned out that means as it happened.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

what they need, what I could do to make things go well for everyone in the moment. (I think of it as the commitment against self-absorption.)

I got good traction from these commitments but was still susceptible to getting into trouble. I still felt desperate. I was still worried. So I created the next commitment—about my survival and success being assured. As I discharged on it, I got less urgent about outcomes; less worried about needing to be in charge or in control; more relaxed about how things were going. However, in “tight corners” I got a bit cavalier: “My success is guaranteed, so this is not my problem. I’m outa here,”⁶ which was not exactly what I was going for.⁷ The goal was to be more connected with people, not less, so I added the last part, “committed to our mutual success. I cast my lot with you,” to ensure that I did not give up or walk away from a situation because I was no longer desperately fighting for my life, that I remained fully engaged.

I worked on these directions. And I discharged. And things moved. But I could still be grumpy

or feel put upon⁸ or irritated. So I added the last commitment: Hope, Confidence, Enthusiasm. In my sessions I pick one of the three attitudes and try to model it for my counselor. Lots of feelings come up. Lots. I generally use them as a guide for the rest of the session. I work on the early struggles and what got hard about being hopeful or enthusiastic.

Since developing these commitments, every time I have found myself having feelings about other folks, or being convinced that they have feelings about me, or noticing things not going well during an interaction, I trace it back to my failure to apply one or more of these commitments. And I set up a session in which I review the commitment, remind myself of what it means, and review the situation to determine where the struggle got the better of me.⁹

Developing one or more commitments that are perfectly tailored to oneself (or adopting some of the ones previously created) does seem useful.

Ian Granick

Brooklyn, New York, USA

⁶ I’m outa here means I’m out of here, I’m leaving the situation.

⁷ Going for means intending.

⁸ Put upon means taken advantage of.

⁹ Got the better of me means prevailed.

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
West Coast North America
Pre-World Conference

February 7 to 10
South Asia Pre-World Conference

February 28 to March 3
Latin America Pre-World Conference

March 15 to 18
East Asia Pre-World Conference

March 21 to 24
Australia/New Zealand
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/Central Europe and
Middle East Pre-World Conference

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

June 20 to 23
East Coast North America/Caribbean
Pre-World Conference

August 7 to 11
World Conference

Two Distinct Roles

The client is in complete charge of the session from the client's point of view and in terms of the client's functions. The counselor is in complete charge of the session from the counselor's point of view and in terms of the counselor's functions. Any idea that one should be subordinate to the other misses the fact that there are two distinct roles which have to be carried out here.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Longer View*, page 40

*I wrote a lullaby for my son (now eight months).
It's to the tune of the Irish lullaby Tura Lura Lura:*

Our day now has ended
with all its adventures and fun
it's time to put on pajamas
as the moon replaces the sun

It's time to give your body rest
and close your weary eyes
you're as safe as safe can be
beneath the starry skies

Remember that you're brilliant
as you climb up into bed
and remember that I love you
as good dreams fill your head

Sarah Margles

Toronto, Ontario, Canada



AMANDA MARTINEZ

Grieving Environmental Losses

I came home from work the other day to find that a tree crew hired by my new neighbor was using my yard as a staging area and had destroyed much of my little kitchen garden—lovingly tended for months in a tiny urban space. I handled the situation as well as I could and was glad to have a Co-Counseling session soon after.

In the session, it became clear that my grief had three strands: the current loss of beloved life and the promise of life to come; the indifference and lack of awareness the men showed toward that loss; and what lay behind in the experience of a little girl whose loves, interests, and needs were sometimes invisible, trampled, and ungrieved.

It occurs to me that our grief about many environmental losses (and other losses) probably has the same three strands—the loss itself, the apparent indifference of others toward it, and our own childhood experiences of loss in the context of unawareness and inattention from the people around us.

It's useful to me to notice that what's hard in the present is not only the loss I experience but the reaction (or lack of reaction) of others, and that taking the time to grieve in the company of a loving counselor is a contradiction to early hurts as well.

Pamela Haines

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list
for leaders in the care of the environment



KK

All We Have to Do

Being present, being myself, and recognizing the sweet humanness of all of us is enough. That's all we have to do. And there's plenty of support to make use of when that gets difficult.

Emma Hughes

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

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



BENIN • MARION OUPHOUET

A Timer as an Ally

In my time in RC over the past three and a half years, I have been building a “relationship” with timers. They have been “friendly” enough to hold the space for my Co-Counselors and me during our sessions and mini-sessions.

More recently I have been using them to hold space in many things that I do, so I don't have to keep track of everything at once. As my “buddies” they have been a contradiction to my isolation. I'm not doing things on my own.

They are “with me” when I have a form to fill out or any task to do, like building my web site. A lot of times, when I'm faced with what feels like an overwhelming number of tasks, I simply say, “Okay, how much time can I allocate to this task?” set the timer, and know that “she or he” will alert me when I asked “her or him” to. This serves as a great wedge against the pattern that says, “I don't have enough time for all the things I want to do.”

The mathematical logic is there, too: Four tasks, one hour of time? I can allocate ten minutes to each, leaving slop time.*

What an “ally” the timer has been. I look forward to “deepening our connection” and seeing if any other uses emerge.

Benjamin Altman

Queens, New York, USA

* Slop time means time between scheduled activities.

• • • • • Going Back to the Church • • • • •

During the thirty-five years I have been active in RC, I have noticed that many people in the RC Community have undischarged feelings about organized religion. I want to share with my beloved Co-Counselors why I went back to the church, and encourage us all to think and discharge about any feelings we have about organized religion in general and Christianity in particular.

My father's father was a minister, and my father followed in his footsteps. My mother has been an active church member her whole life. I was born into a church community,

taken to church from when I was a few weeks old, and raised saying grace before meals, singing hymns and other songs about God and Jesus, and hearing Bible stories. I learned to read music by watching the notes in the hymn book when my mother sang the alto part and following her lead. My mother, siblings, and I sat in the front row while my father preached.

I went regularly to Sunday school and church camp, was part of a church youth group, memorized the names of the books of the Bible, and learned a lot of theology. It was good to

feel part of a community, embraced by the other people in the congregation. It was good to see my father and mother leading. It was good to hear that God and Jesus loved me, and that everyone was a child of God.

As I grew older, I also learned that the church could be part of the great social movements happening around us. My parents and some of the other members of our church supported the Black Panthers¹ in their providing free breakfast to children and organizing

¹ The Black Panthers were an African American revolutionary organization active in the United States from 1966 to 1982.

the black community. My father marched with Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers as they organized a union and fought for basic rights for the people who picked our fruits and vegetables. My parents took our family to marches protesting the Vietnam War, and sometimes my father spoke at the microphone, stating that he was a minister and that if Jesus were here today, he too would oppose this unjust war.

The social upheavals all around us in the late 1960s were also splitting churches apart. My father's efforts to involve our congregation in social causes were opposed by many members, who fired him in 1968. Those who had voted to keep him as their minister left. My family and I were no longer welcome at that church. Many of my father's colleagues were similarly fired. My father became very depressed for a while. I became angry at all organized religions, seeing them as hypocritical and irrelevant to the larger world, and decided never to go back to the church. For the next thirty-eight years I rarely attended any church service.

In 2006, my elderly father wanted to attend a Christmas Eve service at a local church. An old friend of ours was singing in the choir. My sister and I took our dad to the service. That evening was life-changing for me. I cried through a lot of it—the familiar hymns and carols, and the eloquent sermon. The sermon's theme was how deeply all people are connected and that the Christmas story is about "love running wild through the streets." Almost five years later I still cry when I remember that sermon and the hymns. The message seemed congruent with RC theory.

I went home wondering if it was time for me to re-evaluate my

relationship to the church. I had a lot of Co-Counseling sessions and went back to this church a few times, sitting alone in the far back and leaving right after the service. One day the minister called and asked if she could meet with me, and I told her about my history with the church. She welcomed me to have whatever relationship with the church that I chose, including rejecting it if that helped in my healing process. Her understanding gave me the space to keep coming.

I had many sessions about Christianity, my family's history, and what I believed. After a lot of discharge and re-evaluating, almost five years ago I became a member of this church. I've been active in many projects it is part of.

Why did I go back to the church? I already had lots of friends, long-term committed relationships in the RC Community, and my wonderful family. I already had a career that was meaningful to me. I already was an artist and a musician. I was busy. But I felt that there was a spiritual component missing from my life. Additionally, our family's having been rejected by our congregation was painful for me, and I realized that rather than trying to ignore it, I wanted to heal that wound. For the first few months I cried during every service, which was fine with everyone—there were boxes of tissues in the pews.

My two most regular weekly Co-Counselors are a rabbi and another Preacher's Kid,² who is active in the same denomination I am now part of. My "news and goods" in sessions are often about my church and my relationships there. I sometimes counsel on my feelings about God. The other Preacher's Kid and I sometimes use the twenty-third Psalm from the

Bible in sessions, as it brings a lot of discharge ("The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want . . ."). It is great to have the safety to counsel on this part of my life.

I have noticed that in my RC Community people are comfortable with some expressions of religion (for example, Buddhism and Judaism) but not with others (like Catholicism and Protestantism). I encourage everyone reading this to spend time in sessions reviewing early memories of organized religion and theological messages, and to discharge enough that we can all be good counselors for each other on this topic. Another goal would be for us to be able to reach for and connect with any other human being, including those who may be involved in organized religion or whose spiritual beliefs differ from our own.

Nancy Lemon
Berkeley, California, USA



LYNDALL KATZ

² Preacher's Kid means child of a preacher.

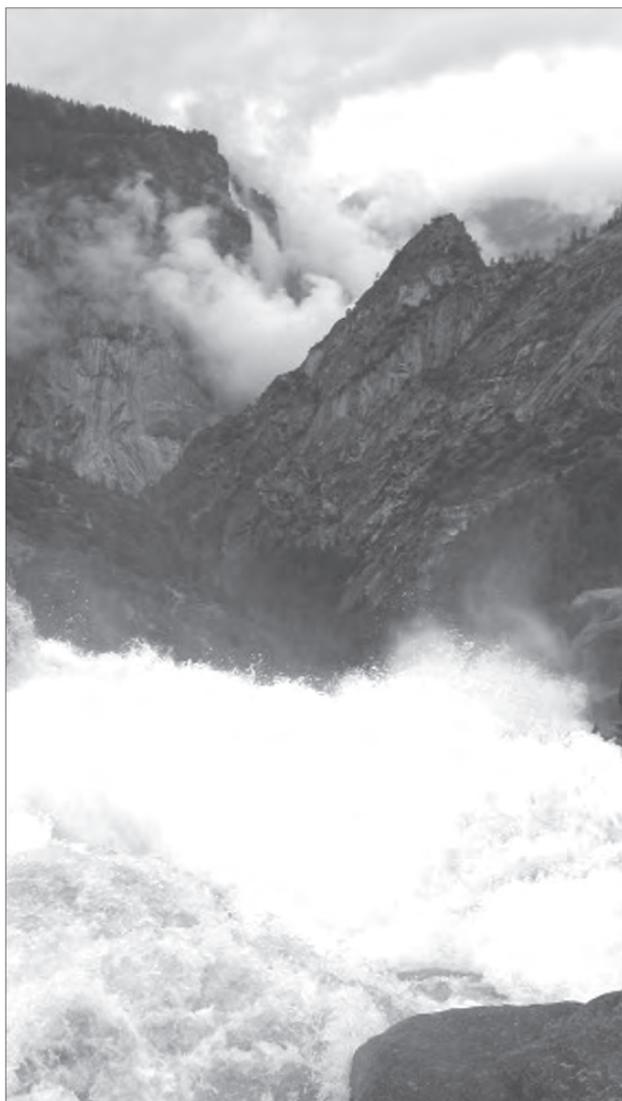
“Today’s Thought”

Dear RC users of electronic media,

The RC web site includes a page on which each day there is a different RC thought about the world—usually from Harvey Jackins or me. Many people have requested assistance in making this page the home page of their Internet browser. If you do that, “Today’s Thought” about reality will be the first thing that appears on your screen when you log on to the Internet.

There are many different types of web browsers. We have written out below, for the three most common types, how to make “Today’s Thought” the home page. Try these instructions and see if having an RC thought as your starting point helps you to hold perspective.

With love and appreciation,
Tim Jackins



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, MARIPOSA, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISA VOSS

For Safari

- 1) Open Safari.
- 2) Open <<http://www.rc.org/thoughts/index.html>>.
- 3) Choose PREFERENCES from the Safari menu and click GENERAL.
- 4) At the “Home Page” setting, click SET TO CURRENT PAGE.

For Mozilla Firefox

- 1) Open Mozilla Firefox.
- 2) Open <<http://www.rc.org/thoughts/index.html>>.
- 3) Choose PREFERENCES from the Firefox menu and click GENERAL.
- 4) At the “Home Page” setting, click SET TO CURRENT PAGE.

For Internet Explorer

- 1) Open Internet Explorer.
- 2) Open <<http://www.rc.org/thoughts/index.html>>.
- 3) Click TOOLS on the Menu bar, then choose INTERNET OPTIONS. Internet Options dialog box appears.
- 4) Click the GENERAL tab.
- 5) Click the USE CURRENT button in the “Home Page” section.
- 6) Click OK in the Internet Options dialog box.

Refusing the Victim Position

All people need to not be enticed into the “sweetness” of the victim position but rather keep reaching for discharging the oppressor material.¹

The point is to be able to discharge it so we become more free, so we don’t have it running our lives and adding to our list of distresses and reasons to feel bad, and so we get to reclaim our integrity for our and others’ benefit.

As we know, we’ve done the best we could with the resources we’ve had. But we can let go of oppressor patterns, even though it can be uncomfortable. Each person’s willingness to be uncomfortable acts to reinforce the safety of being uncomfortable. That’s why we do it together. And the knowledge of our own goodness buffers us against the discomfort.

¹ Material means distress.

I’ve noticed how powerful it is to be able to move in the world and refuse to take the position of victim in the present, to resist the temptation to client outside of sessions. Time and time again, I am seeing the win-win effects of my attention being on the benign reality. It’s great for me, and it also provides a contradiction² for others, young and old, to bounce off of.³ I’m loving noticing it, and loving myself in the process.

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

² Contradiction to distress

³ Bounce off of means make use of.

KK

Remaking a Decision

In making and remaking this decision to take and keep my attention away from my old distresses, I came to realize that the commitment which I had “failed” to keep (had kept only partially) had nevertheless served to improve my functioning considerably. That is, I had moved in a definite, important way toward my goals even if I had not achieved them all yet, or maintained them perfectly.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Reclaiming of Power*,
page 194



An Arboretum

The rehearsal of my personal historical record of hurts and regrets, once starved for recognition and perception and closure, has stopped. The corners are rounded off and smooth; each memory crystallized into its luminous balloon, heliumed to rise into the lovely chamber of my mind. Quieted, heard, re-evaluated.

Useful, necessary, they demanded attention over and over, were drenched repeatedly until magically they were squeezed quite dry, became so light they floated up and up until I discovered that all along I contained within me this lovely arboretum—glass ceiled, light filled.

And now when a resolved memory approaches, I send it up through the trap door to join the others. Not lost, because on my wrist I wear a bracelet of charms that have helped me along this far—precious, acknowledged, dear. And no longer clamoring for attention, to be heard.

Ruth Hynds
Rohnert Park, California, USA





JAPAN • YUKO HIBINO

The “Unchangeable” Can Be Changed

Part of the joy of working intensely in Re-evaluation Counseling has been to prove over and over again that the supposedly unchangeable can be changed. It just takes an intelligence, outside the one that has been trapped, that is confident, powerful, and still thinking well.

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1995

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.

• What RC Is •

RC is not a “good” thing to do, so that I become a “good” person or I accumulate points to gain admission to heaven. It is not another job or a product or a penance. It is an effective way of building the relationships and practices that can allow me to get more and more of my own thinking.

Stephen Costello
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia
Reprinted from the newsletter
of the Melbourne, Victoria,
Australia, RC Community



WYTSKE VISSER



Planning How We Grow



KK

From a talk by Tim Jackins at the European Regional Reference Persons' Workshop, September 2011

We want more people in our Communities. My father¹ would say teach more fundamentals classes. Attracting new people can depend on how old a Community is. For many new Communities it is not a problem. People are enthusiastic. Most people have been brought into Co-Counseling by people in fundamentals classes. Fundamentals students are enthusiastic, and they haven't run through all their friends yet. (*Laughter*) But if your Community has been around very long, people have run into difficulties with their own distresses and they don't so quickly go out and tell everybody about RC.

BEING MORE DELIBERATE ABOUT GROWTH

We have almost always relied on spontaneous recruitment. In many ways we have not been able to think about, plan, and work toward the growth of our Communities. We try things, but not often in a thought-out way—so we sort of lurch forward.

We all have a lot of distresses to work on in this area. Like with any area in which we all have distresses, we can try to figure out some kind of structure so that sessions on growth are done systematically. Our Communities don't often grow unless somebody decides they are going to grow. Their mere existence is attractive, but not attractive enough. Some group of people has to decide that a Community is going to grow.

I suspect we need a group of people to take on² the growth of a Community as their job, to meet every so often and take group time³ on the topic—enough time to get some clarity about it and then be able to help other people counsel on it as well. They don't have to do the job of building the Community; they can do the job of counseling on growth and figuring out how it could happen.

I'd like to experiment with actually planning how to grow our Communities, planning who we want

to have in them—down to the individual. Not just what constituencies we want, because Co-Counseling involves a very personal set of relationships. The ideas are universal, you can talk about them to anyone, but to put them into practice, you have to form a personal relationship.

I don't want you to build an RC Community. I want you to build *your* RC Community. I want it to be yours, with the people you already have relationships with as part of it. We can move much more decidedly and consciously in building Communities. We haven't really thought about doing that yet. We've tried to construct Communities out of driftwood; we've put something together with whatever has washed up.

What if you don't just ask what groups you want to teach RC to? What if you also ask which individuals in your life you'd like to have in Co-Counseling and what would have to happen to make that possible?

I don't want you to build an RC Community. I want you to build your RC Community. I want it to be yours, with the people you already have relationships with as part of it.

Doing this is a little like using nano technology. Nano technology is down to the billionth of a meter. When you build things without nano technology, you pour a mixture of metals into a die and the object that results has characteristics from the different metals. In nano technology, you lay down one layer of atoms at a time. You choose what you want to go where; you can even place atoms. It turns out⁴ that the characteristics

continued . . .

⁴ It turns out means the result is.



SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST, CLOVIS, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISA VOSS

¹ Harvey Jackins

² Take on means undertake.

³ Take group time means take turns having the attention of the group.

... continued

of the materials you build that carefully are different from the ones you pour. When you are working at that level, you get to determine the characteristics. I am proposing that we actually think fully about whom we want—not just for the Community but who in our broad lives we want to have RC tools.

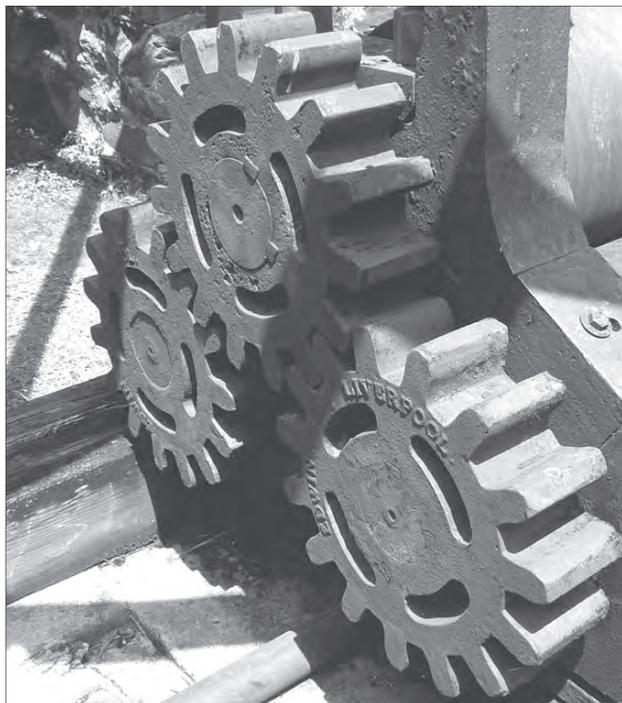
I'm curious whether having four people in an Area continually thinking about growth would change something. I'd like to see what ideas they'd come up with.⁵ We are surrounded by people—people we like, people we care about, people who are curious. They are hunting for ways to make their lives go better, but we are all embedded in a society that tries to keep anything from moving forward, and so far that's interrupted human curiosity to the point where spreading RC is a struggle for us.

I would like you to experiment with planning your Communities. Maybe just choose an Area,⁶ or a soon-to-be Area, in your Region⁷ and get the people in it planning for who they want to have in their Community—allowing for all possible members and for planning on particular members. If we think we can solve these other problems—end capitalism, stop oppression—we should see if we can think about

⁵ Come up with means think of.

⁶ An Area is a local RC Community.

⁷ A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).



TIM JACKINS

this one. I think we can. I think it will lead to people being committed to the Community in a different way, and I think it will help us with our struggles with relationships. We can experiment and find out.

PEOPLE WHO WANDER AWAY

We have some long-term RCers who came in with us but are sort of treading water. They're using Co-Counseling, life is better when they do, but they're not really going anywhere. They're just keeping themselves afloat. We haven't solved that problem well.

You have solved it for you. How did you do it? Why are you here and not treading water? For a lot of people it was because of their relationship with my father. He had a strong enough perspective, and enough determination, to make it possible for them to hang on to some picture of possibility. I think for most people it's about realizing something about themselves in reflection off someone else. It's either what that person does, the relationship between them, or both. We don't understand this well enough to do it consistently. Lots of wonderful people walk away, and we are startled and hurt.

I think two things are involved. One is the nature of the relationships these people have in RC. The other is that they've stopped moving forward. Their discouragement, the recordings of old defeats, close the door for them. I don't think it's a particular distress that does that; I think it's more the collection of defeats they've gone through. They can't remember that they can still move forward.

I try to get you to try things you haven't tried for yourself. When we're together in a group like this, people who have known me long enough will dare to try things they wouldn't try on their own. If I can show how I try for similar things, then they can remember the possibility of it for all of us.

I think this sense of possibility is lacking for the people who wander away. It either never really gets there—they never really take heart⁸—or it fades because they or their counselor can't go back and work in these places consistently.

ACTIVELY CHALLENGING PEOPLE

There is an element of challenge in the job we have to do. We have to actively challenge people in the places where they got defeated. For any of us to try hard in those places means feeling the defeats that

⁸ Take heart means become encouraged.

stopped us. We have to somehow provide people with the possibility that the effect of the old defeats will be overcome and that we will stay with them through those battles. I think the feeling of it being impossible, and their feeling alone in it, are the two things that pull them under.

How do we sound confident and forceful enough to contradict their feelings? How do we dare try that openly for them? We can talk about it, but we usually can't show how much we want it. We can't show that it matters to us. When we try and it doesn't work, we shrug. We have a struggle with showing our caring, and openly trying hard, that we need to keep going after.⁹ Part of it is remembering just how defeated we all feel. That former happy, successful fundamentals student was defeated thousands of times and stands against it but cannot turn and face it. To be able to move against this material¹⁰ means to turn and face it. We need to dare people to take on heavier struggles than they would choose on their own.

That's for the established people. They know the theory, they have Co-Counselors, they have sessions—they just have no hope. They're doing what it feels like they can do, and we have to provide the resource and perspective to push them across the border into what they feel they cannot do. I think doing that will change the tone of this group and solidify our Communities. And it will make the Communities much more interesting to new people—especially young people, because the people treading water can look scary to young people. They smile and are friendly, but the young people see the lack of hope, and that's what they try to stay away from. The feeling of defeat has not quite been sealed on the young people yet, and they try to avoid looking at it.

⁹ Going after means pursuing.

¹⁰ Material means distress.

INTERRUPTING OUR URGENCIES

As far as new people are concerned, they are going to learn RC in their own way and speed. I notice that with the people I care about, I feel urgent about their learning it. I want them to learn all of RC and do all the things that are possible: be in class, go to workshops, and have half a dozen Co-Counselors. And it doesn't work. It doesn't work to be urgent. It restimulates them, and they, in the restimulation, often cannot figure out what the problem is—there is just something wrong.

When I can interrupt my urgencies and allow them to learn in what feels like a painfully slow fashion, they learn Co-Counseling, they learn it well, and they keep expanding their use of it. They don't leap into leadership, but they get to it eventually.

I don't know of a way to make it go faster. I can't propose something else that works. I can feel that there should be something, but there may not be, and this is working.

I suspect that we need to interrupt our urgencies so that more flexibility is possible for people—not because their distresses make it hard for them to challenge their limitations, but more because we don't always know how to help them through those limitations. It makes sense to push on the limitations we can help with and allow flexibility for and have sessions on the ones we can't help with yet.

We know everyone can be a leader, we know everyone can have all of everything we know, but we can get kind of urgent about it. We can feel afraid that people will go away before they get it all.

A Chance for What We've Dreamed Of

We have a chance to recover and participate in the kind of relationships that we have always dreamed of having with each other, in which no human being ever exploits another human being for economic benefit or patterned gratification.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Benign Reality*, page 127



BRIAN LAVENDEL



Lantegietan Itzultzea



Itzultzaile izatea (ahozko itzulpenak egitea) interesgarria, atsegina, kitzikagarria, erronkatsua, garrantzitsua dugu eta edozein egoeratan baliabide bilakatzen da. Zu itzultzaile izateko erabakiaz jende andana onuradun izango da. Jendearen bizitza aldatzen lagundu ahalko duzu ideia eta pentsakizun iraultzaileak igorri, gureak esaterako, EB-n.

Edonor izan al daiteke itzultzaile? Horixe baietz. Behar duzun gauza bakarra bigarren hizkuntza bat ikasi eta menperatzea duzu. Behin urrats sakon eta aberasgarri hau hartu duzularik aintzat hartu beharreko jarraibide batzuk dituzu EB lantegietan itzulpena egiterakoan.

ZEHATZA IZATEKO GAI IZATEA

Lehenik eta behin, itzuli behar zenuke bakarrik gai zaren erakuslea komunikatzen ari den gauza bera komunikatzeko, beronen arreta ala pentsamendua oztopatzeke. Erakusleak erakusletzak berak eskatzen dituen lanez gain beste batzuk hartu beharra izateak ez du eta zentzurik. Berorrek ez luke zu zertan ari zaren kezkatu beharrik izango. Guk, itzultzaileok, erakuslearen pentsatze eta komunikatze prozesuak babestu behar genituzke, berau buruan sortzen dabilena zehatz-mehatz komunikatzearen bidez edo horren hurbilketarik ahalik eta estuen eskaintzearen bidez. Eta erakusleak arnasaldi laburra hartzeko aukera eduki behar luke, eta hurrengo informazio zatia prest eduki, zu berauk esan berri duena itzultzen ari zaren bitartean.

ZURE BURUA TREBATU

Beraz, itzultzaile izango bazara, zure burua trebatu beharra daukazu. Une eta leku pila duzu horretarako:

- *EB barruan*—laguntza taldeetan, eskoletan, bileretan, saioetan; gune¹ ala lurralde² lantegietan, “plaza”erako ariketetan(panelak), huntza taldeetan,³ otorduetan;

- *EB-tik at*—nahi zenukeenean: ispiluaren aurrean, zure lagunekin, sendikoen artean, zineman filmeko protagonista esaten ari dena zure kolokorako itzuliz (hau sarritan egin dut, trebatze oso baliagarria duzu), elizan, mezetan, (maiz egin izan dut, txikitan elizara joaten behartua izan nintzen eta aspertu orduko nire bururako itzultzen aritzen nintzen); ibilgailuan zoazela irratian esaten dena itzuliz; txakurrari edo katuari itzuliz, hainbat hizkuntzatan (hau olgagarria da, etxeko animaliak akatsak bost axola zaizkienetako entzule finak baitira, beti arretatsu).

¹ Gunea EB erkidego lokala duzu.

² Lurraldea Nazioarteko Elkar-entzuketaren bidezko Berbaluaketaren Erkidegoaren azpiegituraketa duzu.

³ Erakusleentzako huntza taldea komuneko gai baten inguruko erakusleentzako eta balizko erakusleentzako taldea duzu. Bertan pertsona bakoitzak txanda bana hartzen du honako atazak burutzeko: (1)Komuneko gai horren inguruan azken aldion zertan aritu den kontatzea, (2) bere ikuspegitik gai horretan zein den aurre egin beharreko egungo egoera esatea, (3), hurrengo sasoiaren erakusle bezala zer egiteko asmoa duen partekatzea eta (4) erakusle bezala bidean dukeen zailtasunei buruz asaskatzea.

Gauza hauek egiterakoan hezkuntza sistemak zuzen zuzen estuasunei aurre egin beharko diezu. Trebatzen ari zaren bitartean kontu hauez asaskatzen baldin baduzu itzultzaile eraginkor bihurtuko zara eta erakusleek aukeratuko zaituzte itzulpenak egiteko. Eta badakizu zenbat ikas dezakezun haien ondoan egonik.

BESTELAKO KONTUAK ALBORATU

Itzulpena egitea eta zure hizkuntza (kultura, norizana edo identitatea, lekua) aldarrikatzea bi auzi ezberdin ditugu; ez daukate aldi berean gertatu beharrik. Itzultzaile lanean lantegian aurre aldean kokaturik, erakuslearengandik hurbil eta bere “klona” izaten saiatu behar duzu, bere pentsamendua ahalik eta erarik zehatzenean igortzeko. Hauxe duzu erakuslearen gogamendua zure arreta osoa iltzatzeko unea, eta ez jende askoren aurrean egoteak burura ekar diezazukeen beste behar batzuetan. Zerorren hizkuntza, kultura, jaurentzia edo herentzia kulturala, norizana eta abar aldarrikatzeko bestelako uneak eta lekuak badituzu. Honetarako ezagutzen dudak tokirik egokiena nire saioak ditut, nire jaurentsiaren edo norizanaren ezaugarriaren bat partekatzen duten pertsonekin osatu laguntza taldeetan edo lantegietan. Presta ezazu zure burua itzulpen osoa egiteko bestelako gaiek zu lekoratu gabe.

AKATSAK ZUZENDU

Guk itzultzaileok akatsak egin ohi ditugu eta egingo. Hau ez da arazo beraiek antzeman eta berehala zuzentzen baldin baditugu. Hogeit minutuko itzulpen txanda batean akats bat, bi ala hiru egitea arrunta da eta ongi dago, erakuslearen pentsakizuna oztopatzen ez bagabiltza edota bere bersubermaketa muga ez bagara gainditzen ari. (Itzulpen taldeak eskola bakoitzaren ondoren hauxe egiaztatu behar luke lantegiko erakuslearekin berarekin.)

Akatsak egiten etengabe ari baldin bagara eta lantegiko erakuslearen lana zein pentsatzeko eta komunikatzeko prozedura tratatzen ala mugatzen ari baldin bagara, gerarazi eta zuzendu beharra dago hau. Erakusle ematen ari den informazioak pertsona bakoitza



TOGO • ELLIE PUTNAM

zuzen erdietsi beharra dauka, zalantzarik ala nahasmenik gabe. Behin eta berriz hanka sartzen ari baldin bazara itzulpen txandari amaiera eman eta lantegiaren aurrean minutuko asaskaketa izan dezakezu edota geroxeago saio laburretan eta saioetan, edo laguntza taldeetan ala itzultzaileentzako antolaturiko otorduetan asaska dezakezu.

Hau eguneroko kontua dugu: hanka sartzea egiten dugunean zuzendu egiten dugu. Itzulterakoan etengabe akatsak egiten ari baldin bagara geratu beharko genuke eta saio laburra eduki. Hau gauza arruntzat hartu behar genuke. Kontu hau auzi handia dela sentitzea edo zuzenketa bat eginez gero norbait minduta senti litekeenez ez genukeela halakorik egin behar pentsatzea, edo itzultzaileak kosta ala kosta bere lana burutu arte ala ongi egin arte jarraitu behar lukeela iriztea estuasuna dugu.

Erakuslea, itzultzailea eta entzuleria nahastuta uzten dituen itzulpen nahastaila edukitzea baino hobea da itzulpenik ez izatea.

ITZULPEN TALDEKO ERAKUSLEA

Akatsak zuzentzeko pertsona egokia nor dugu? Itzulpen taldeko erakuslea zuzenketa noiz egin edo itzultzailea noiz aldatu erabakitzen pertsona egokia liteke. Itzulpen taldeko erakuslea nor den aukeratzeko hizkuntza zapalketa eta askapena ulertzen duen pertsona aukeratu ohi dugu eta alor hauetan arrakastatsuki lanean aritu dena.

Itzulpen taldeko burua ohartzen baldin bada itzultzailea erakuslea esaten ari ez den informazioa ekoizten ari dela, datorren pausaldian informazio zuzena eskain dezake lantegian, erakusleak esan duenaren bera. Bide batez egiazta dezake itzultzailea orainaldian eta ohartu ba ote dabilen. Ezezkoan, itzulpen taldeko buruak itzultzaileari lantegiaren aurrean bi minutuko saio laburra eskain diezaiokie eta gero egiaztatu itzulpenarekin jarrai lezakeen ala ez. Ezezkoan, itzultzaile aldaketa proposa dezake. Bat ere arazorik gabe. Dena den, hau erakuslearen arabera burutuko da. Erakusle batzuk ezin ditzaizkete pausaldiok har beren pentsaera

moztua izateke. Eta hau ekidin beharreko zerbait dugu.

Itzulpen taldeko buruak ez baldin badu itzultzen ari den hizkuntza ulertzen, itzulpena jasotzen ari den taldeko kideekin egiazta dezake kontu hau nola doan. Hau, oro har, otorduetan egin ohi dugu.

Itzulpen taldeko erakuslearen lana egiten ihardun dut azken urteetan eta erraz ikasi dut ohartzen noiz lantegiko erakuslea eta itzultzailea "bi gogamenen arteko dantza" armoniatu, orekatu, olioztatu eta erraz batean dabilzan eta noiz diruditen gurpilean kateaturiko makila. Azken kasu honetan itzultzailearen txandaren denbora murriztu egin izan dut, edo bere txanda amaierazi, berari arreta eman eta beste itzultzaile batekin segi.

ELEANITZA DEN GIROAN ERAKUSLE IZAN

Lantegietako erakusleek ere beren burua trebatu behar lukete itzulpen giroan erakusle lanak egiteko. Egoera eleanitzak gure bizimoduan ohiko bihurtuko dira- herrialde batzuetan jada honela gertatzen ari da- eta gure lantegietan hizkuntza anitzak izatea gero eta arruntagoa izango da, gure erkidegoak eta eblarien kopurua hazten doazen neurrian. Gure lurraldean lantegien ehuneko laurogei eta hamabosta itzulpenaz burutzen dira (eta gure Herria oso txikia da).

Zuen erkidegoan beste hizkuntza ezberdin bateko hiztunik ez baldin baduzu (hauxe ez da ohikoena egun; jendeari galdetzen diozunean "Zein zen zure lehenengo ala bigarren hizkuntza?" edo "Ze nolako harremana izan duzu beste hizkuntza batzuekin?" ia denek

izan dituzte hizkuntza bat baino gehiago euren bizitzan) edonori eska diezaiokezu zuk esanikoa errepika dezala, ala errepika dezala zuk esandako era zure ondoren. Gero zure burua beha ezazu; lan egiteko meazulo handia aurkituko duzu, hor zenik ere ez zenuena pentsatuko.

PROPOSAMEN ERANTZULEA

Uste dut denontzako proposamen arduratsua dela. Munduaren errealitatea ez da hizkuntza bakar batean gertatzen ari, eta inor zapaldu nahi ez baldin badugu hau aintzat hartu beharra daukagu.

Hauek lantegietan ongi dabilzan jarraibideetako batzuk dituzu. Jendea gero eta barnebiduago sentitzen ari da eta konfiantza gehiago erakusten. Zeure pentsakizunak ere lagungarri izan litezke.

Eskerrik asko,

*Xabi Odriozola
Hizkuntzetarako eta
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BETH SHORTER

English translation of the preceding article:

Interpreting at Workshops

Being an interpreter (doing oral translations) is interesting, funny, exciting, challenging, important, and a resource in any situation. An enormous number of people will benefit from your deciding to be an interpreter. You may help change people's lives by transmitting revolutionary ideas and thoughts, such as ours in RC.

Can anyone be an interpreter? Definitely. The only thing you need is to learn and command a second language. Once you have taken this profoundly enriching step, you need to take into account some guidelines when it is time to interpret at an RC workshop.

BE ABLE TO BE ACCURATE

First of all, you should interpret only when you are able to communicate the same things that the leader is communicating, without interfering with her or his thinking or attention. It makes no sense for the leader to have to deal with more issues than those that the job of leading already requires. She or he should not have to worry about what you are doing. We interpreters should protect the leader's process of thinking and communicating by doing an accurate job of transmitting exactly what she or he is creating in her or his mind, or at least the closest possible approximation of that. And the leader should be able to take a short breath, and have ready the next piece of information, while you are interpreting what she or he has just said.

TRAINING YOURSELF

So, you need to train yourself in order to be an interpreter. There are a lot of places and moments in which to do that:

- Within RC—in support groups, classes, meetings, sessions; at Area¹ or Regional² workshops in panels, in Wygelian groups,³ during mealtimes;
- Outside of RC—in every moment you wish: in front of the mirror; with your friends; between relatives; at the movies, interpreting in silence for yourself what the movie star is saying (I have done this a lot; it is very good training); at church (I did this often; I was forced to go to church when I was a child, and when I got bored I interpreted to myself for

hours); listening to the radio in your car; interpreting for your dog or cat, in different languages (this is fun, because pets are the kind of audience that does not care about mistakes and always keeps on giving attention).

Doing this you will face your distress from the oppressive educational system. If you discharge all this while you are doing the training, you will become an effective interpreter and leaders will pick you to interpret. And you know how much you can learn by being close to them.

KEEP OTHER MATTERS FROM INTERFERING

Interpreting and reclaiming your language (culture, identity, space) are not the same thing and do not need to happen at the same time. As an interpreter, you interpret up-front at a workshop, standing close to the leader and trying to be a "clone" of her or him in terms of transmitting her or his thinking in the most accurate way you can. This is a time for you to put your full mind in the leader's, not on other needs you may feel while you are in front of a lot of people's attention. There are other spaces and times in which to reclaim your language, culture, heritage, identity. The best place I know of is in sessions, and in support groups and workshops for people who share identities or backgrounds. Prepare yourself to be ready to interpret everything without other matters interfering.

CORRECTING MISTAKES

We interpreters do and will make mistakes. This is not a problem if we are aware of them and correct them fast. Making one, two, or three mistakes in a twenty-minute interpreting turn is normal and okay, as long as we are not interrupting the workshop leader's thinking or reaching further than her or his boundary of restimulation. (The interpreting-team leader should check with the workshop leader about this at the end of every class.)

If we are making ongoing mistakes, and the workshop leader's job and process of thinking and communicating are being obstructed or limited, this must be stopped and corrected. The information the leader is giving must reach

¹ An Area is a local RC Community.

² A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas.

³ 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.



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everyone correctly, without doubts or confusions getting in the way. If you are making ongoing mistakes, you can end your turn of interpreting and have a minute to discharge in front of the workshop and after that in mini-sessions and sessions, and in support groups or meal tables for interpreters.

This is a normal daily issue in life: we make a mistake, we correct it. If we cannot go on without continuously making mistakes in our interpreting, we should stop there and have a mini-session. We should see this as a normal thing. Feeling that it is a big deal; or that someone could feel hurt if we correct her or him so “do not do it”; or that as an interpreter we should go on trying and trying, no matter what, until we get it right or finish our turn, is distress.

It is better to have no interpreting than to have a mess that confuses and restimulates the leader, the interpreter, and the listeners.

THE INTERPRETING-TEAM LEADER

Who is the right person to correct the mistakes? The leader of the interpreting team can be the right person to decide when to make a correction or change the interpreter. For the team-leader job, we usually choose a person who understands language oppression and liberation and has been working successfully on them.

If the leader of the interpreting team notices that the interpreter is saying different things than the leader, she or he can repeat correctly, in the next pause, what the leader has just said. She or he can also check to see if the interpreter is in the present and aware. If not, the team leader can give the interpreter a couple of minutes of discharge time in front of the group and then check whether she or he is ready to carry on interpreting. If not, there can be a change of interpreter. No problem at all. However, this depends on the leader. Some leaders cannot have these pauses without their thinking being interrupted, and this is something to avoid.

If the team leader does not understand the interpreting language, she or he can check with the people who are receiving the interpreting to see how things are going for them. This is usually done at meal tables.

I have been doing the interpreting-team-leader job for the last several years and have found it easy to notice when the leader-interpreter couple is in a harmonious, balanced, lubricated, and fluent “waltz of two minds” or is like a branch stuck in a wheel. In the latter case, I have reduced the time or ended the turn of the interpreter, given her or him attention, and gone on with another one.

LEADING IN A MULTI-LINGUAL ENVIRONMENT

Workshop leaders, too, should train themselves to be ready to lead in an interpreting environment. Multilingual environments are going to be the normal situation in our lives (they already are in a lot of countries), and having different languages in our workshops is going to be more and more usual as we grow up as Communities and RCers grow in numbers. In my Region, ninety-five percent of the workshops run with interpreting (and my country is a very little one).

If you are a leader without anyone in your Community who speaks another language (which is unusual nowadays; when you ask, “Which was your first language, or second?” or, “What contact have you had with other languages?” almost everyone has had more than one language in her or his life), you can ask someone to repeat anything colloquial you have said, or just repeat after you exactly what you have said. Then you can watch yourself—you will find a big vein of stuff to work on that you didn’t even think was there.

A RESPONSIBLE PROPOSAL

I think this is a responsible proposal for all of us. The world reality is not happening in one language, and we must take this into account if we do not want to oppress anyone.

These are some of the guidelines that are working well for workshops. People are feeling more and more included and confident, and this is a good thing. Your thinking could help here, too.

Thank you,

Xabi Odriozola
International Commonality Reference
Person for Languages and Interpreting
Donostia, Basque Country
Translated from Basque
to English by the author

“ If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up* people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea. ”

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

* Drum up means recruit.

Interpreting Is Useful to All

Tim Jackins, at the England Leaders' Workshop in January 2012

English is your first language, and English is my first language. Because RC started in the United States, it started in English. Almost all of the written resources of RC have come out first in English. And only a few of them have been translated into other languages, because all of our translation is done by volunteers. It is a lot of work to translate well, so it only happens slowly. Those of us who speak English as our first language are often unaware of how much resource we have easy access to, and we are trying to think about that more fully.

One effort is that we are trying to include oral interpreting, both up-front interpreting and whisper interpreting, at any workshop at which it is useful. With up-front interpreting, someone interprets whatever the leader says—and the leader must communicate a little differently from how he or she would otherwise; it forces him or her to be aware of the communication. It is useful; and it's work, for both the interpreter and the leader.

We in RC have a lot of unusual ideas and a particular vocabulary for communicating them that works quite well in our Communities but not so well outside of RC. An RC vocabulary has to be developed for each language. In any language into which RC has been translated for a

long time, a list of key RC words has been developed, and the people who translate or interpret into that language use those words. There's agreement about it, and every couple of years they change a word because they find a better way of taking some concept into that language.

At workshops I've led that have included people with a variety of first languages, we've often had up-front interpreting. The interpreter does twenty minutes of interpreting, and that's all he or she does for the day because it's that much work. Afterward he or she gets a minute of attention from the group, and then there is a minute of silence so that people for whom English is not their first language get a chance to not have to think in English and interpret everything. It's a strain to have to do that all the time. The more fluent one is, the easier it is, but it's still work.

Often we don't interpret the entire workshop, but it is useful to do some interpreting to keep us aware of language and the distresses attached to it. How much is done depends on how much is needed for actual understanding. If everyone can understand my English, then we can do some interpreting simply for language awareness. If people have difficulty with my English, then more interpreting is needed.

I don't want you to feel bad about English, but because of the particular history of our countries, it has been a colonizing language. It's not just a different language; it comes with all sorts of assumptions built into it, all sorts of tones and ways of looking at things that are our countries' ways of looking at things. It has all kinds of distresses frozen in it. But if it's any reassurance to you, at the United Nations gathering against racism in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, Fidel Castro¹ said that everyone should thank the English, since they gave us an international language with which to organize against capitalism.

We're going to do some interpreting here to give you a flavor of it. It can slow us down more than we like. We're driven, pushed (that, too, is probably capitalist)—to keep on schedule, be efficient, get as much done as we can. And we do have limited time.

The interpreting can be useful for native English speakers. We've noticed this with the *RC Teacher Updates*.² They're CDs of me giving short talks. If you listen through one of the talks and then keep listening, I do the talk again. It's another version of the same recording, but it's slowed down—I think fifteen percent. (It's possible now to slow it down and not change the tone.) A significant number of people who speak English as their first language prefer to listen to the second version, because it lets them think it through more.

There's a lot to learn about leading workshops with interpreting, and we need to try it even here in England.



HELEN PARKIN

¹ Fidel Castro is the former president of Cuba.

² A series of CDs of talks given by Tim Jackins at recent RC workshops. For more information, see page 105.

Traduction en français, par Régis Courtin, de l'article précédent:

French translation, by Régis Courtin, of the previous article:

L'interprétation est utile à tous

Tim Jackins, à l'atelier de Leaders d'Angleterre en Janvier 2012

L'anglais est votre langue maternelle, et l'anglais est ma langue maternelle. Du fait que la Co-écoute a démarré aux États-Unis, elle a démarré en anglais. Presque toutes les ressources publiées l'ont été à l'origine en anglais. Et seules quelques unes d'entre elles ont été traduites dans d'autres langues, parce que tout notre travail de traduction est fait par des volontaires. C'est un lourd travail de traduire correctement, et donc il ne se fait que lentement. Souvent, nous dont l'anglais est la langue maternelle, nous ne nous rendons pas compte de la quantité de ressources auxquelles nous avons facilement accès, et nous nous efforçons d'avoir une réflexion plus approfondie à ce sujet.

Un des efforts accomplis est que nous essayons d'inclure l'interprétation orale, à la fois devant le groupe et aussi à voix basse, dans tout atelier pour lequel c'est utile. Pour l'interprétation devant le groupe, quelqu'un interprète tout ce que dit le leader—et le leader doit alors communiquer d'une manière un peu différente de celle qu'il ou elle utilise habituellement; cela l'oblige à être conscient-e de la communication. C'est utile; et ça marche, à la fois pour l'interprète et pour le leader.

Nous, dans la Co-écoute, avons beaucoup d'idées inhabituelles et un vocabulaire particulier pour les communiquer, un vocabulaire qui fonctionne bien dans nos Communautés mais pas si bien que ça en dehors de la Co-écoute. Il est nécessaire de développer un vocabulaire de Co-écoute dans chaque langue. Pour chaque langue dans laquelle la Co-écoute est traduite depuis longtemps, une liste de mots-clé a été développée, et les gens qui font des traductions ou des interprétations dans cette langue utilisent cette liste. Ils se sont mis d'accord sur cette liste, et tous les deux ans, ils vont changer

un mot parce qu'ils ont trouvé une meilleure manière de transcrire un certain concept dans cette langue.

Dans les ateliers que je dirige et auxquels participent des gens de différentes langues maternelles, nous avons souvent utilisé l'interprétation devant le groupe. L'interprète fait vingt minutes d'interprétation, et c'est tout ce qu'il ou elle fait pour la journée parce que ça exige beaucoup de travail. Après ça, il ou elle reçoit une minute d'attention de la part du groupe, et puis il y a une minute de silence pour que les gens dont l'anglais n'est pas la langue maternelle puissent s'arrêter de penser en anglais et n'aient pas à interpréter tout ce qui se dit. C'est un effort d'avoir à faire ça tout le temps. Plus on parle [l'anglais] couramment, plus c'est facile, mais c'est quand même du travail.

Souvent, nous ne faisons pas une interprétation intégrale de l'atelier, mais il est utile de le faire en partie parce que ça nous aide à prendre conscience de la langue et des détresses qui s'y rattachent. La quantité d'interprétation qui est faite dépend de ce qui est nécessaire pour assurer une réelle compréhension. Si tout le monde comprend mon anglais, alors nous pouvons faire une certaine quantité d'interprétation simplement pour rester conscients de la langue. Si des gens ont des difficultés avec mon anglais, alors davantage d'interprétation est nécessaire.

Je ne veux pas que vous vous sentiez mal à propos de l'anglais, mais à cause de l'histoire propre à nos pays, l'anglais a servi de langue colonisatrice. Elle n'est pas simplement une langue différente d'une autre; elle est chargée de tout un tas d'idées qu'elle véhicule, tout un tas de colorations et de façons particulières de voir les choses qui sont propres à nos pays. Tout un tas

de détresses s'y retrouvent figées. Mais si ça peut vous rassurer, au rassemblement des Nations Unies contre le racisme à Durban en Afrique du Sud, en 2001, Fidel Castro¹ a déclaré que tout le monde devrait remercier les Anglais parce qu'ils nous ont donné une langue internationale avec laquelle nous pouvons nous organiser dans la lutte contre le capitalisme.

Nous allons faire un peu d'interprétation ici pour vous donner un aperçu de ce que c'est. On aura peut-être un rythme un peu plus lent que celui qu'on aimerait avoir. Nous sommes hyper-motivés, poussés (ça aussi, c'est probablement capitaliste) à respecter l'horaire, à être efficaces, à accomplir le plus que nous pouvons. Et nous avons effectivement un temps limité.

L'interprétation peut être utile pour les anglophones de naissance. On a remarqué ça à propos des *RC Teachers Updates*.² Ce sont des CD contenant de courtes présentations que j'ai faites. Si vous écoutez un de ces CD jusqu'au bout et que vous continuez à écouter, je refais les mêmes présentations. Ce sont des versions différentes des mêmes enregistrements, mais à vitesse plus lente—15% plus lente je crois. (On peut aussi les écouter à vitesse normale sans changer la tonalité.) Une proportion non négligeable de personnes dont la langue maternelle est l'anglais préfèrent écouter la version à vitesse réduite parce que ça leur permet de réfléchir davantage.

Il y a beaucoup à apprendre à propos des ateliers avec interprétation, et nous devons essayer cette façon de faire même ici en Angleterre.

¹ Fidel Castro est l'ex-Président de Cuba.

² Une collection de CD d'enregistrements de présentations faites par Tim Jackins à des ateliers récents. Pour plus d'information, voir page 105.

The Baobab Project

It is wonderful, for many reasons, to live in western Massachusetts, USA. But one of the best things about living here is that this is the home of the “Baobab Project”—a coordinated effort led by Barbara Love,¹ Maya Rege-Colt,² and Eunice Torres³ to make our RC Community supportive, attractive, and engaging to People of the Global Majority. The baobab is a short tree, native to Africa, with an enormously thick trunk and large edible fruit. Strong and nourishing—that’s what we want our RC Community to be for People of the Global Majority.

One of the main activities of the Baobab Project is a class, led by Barbara and assisted by Maya and Eunice, just for People of the Global Majority. There is also an ongoing support group for People of the Global Majority. Every so often Barbara, Eunice, and Maya host gather-ins for the whole RC Community to put attention on the project. I recently attended such a gather-in. Here’s how it was advertised by the organizer, Keri Dejong:

“We get to reconnect, take a look at the progress that has been made, discharge, and renew our commitment to each other, to ending racism, and to expanding the membership of our Community to include more people targeted by racism.

“We will have an opportunity to hear about the exciting progress and growth of the Baobab Project. We will get to think about opportunities for allies to lend their support to

¹ Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for African Heritage People.

² Maya Rege-Colt is an RC leader in Amherst, Massachusetts, USA.

³ Eunice Torres is an RC leader in Belchertown, Massachusetts, USA.

the project’s continued success. We will get to discharge about having people targeted by racism in our lives. We will get to discharge about racism.

“As we prioritize ending racism, all of our lives go better!”

“We get to build a Community that works well for all of us, together, deeply connected, and do it with joy!”

Well, you won’t be surprised to learn that the gather-in was all that and more. Barbara shined all her warmth and love and intelligence and power on all of us throughout the event.

We heard reports from Maya, Eunice, and Barbara about the class they were teaching. We got to ask questions. We got to hear how we could help get more People of the Global Majority involved and help with logistics. We had a chance to mill⁴ around and listen to each other’s thoughts and feelings about the project. Barbara counseled several people—men and women, white people and People of the Global Majority, Jews and Gentiles. She didn’t have an agenda for anyone’s session. It was interesting to notice that counseling in the context of the Baobab Project changed how people worked on things, even things not obviously related to racism.

A personal highlight for me was bringing my assistant teacher to the event. She was raised in the South⁵ and was afraid to come because she had been to anti-racism events in the wide world in which she’d

⁴ Mill means wander.

⁵ The South consists of the states that seceded from the United States in 1860 and 1861, leading to the U.S. Civil War.

been scapegoated and blamed for the way her racism showed. It was new for her to go to an event about racism in which she was treated well and blame was not part of the program. I pledged to stay close to her and hold her hand. It was nice for me to have someone to stay so close to, and I was proud to introduce her to Barbara as a fellow Southerner.

Sometimes it feels like if I can’t get a friend to an introduction, then the window is lost and I just have to wait until next year. Barbara, Maya, and Eunice encourage us to think flexibly about bringing people into the project. They are willing to try lots of things to get more People of the Global Majority involved in RC, and they want us to do the same.

I am crying a little as I write this because it is so meaningful to be a part of this fabulous project (RC) and the Baobab Project in particular. Thank you, Barbara, Maya, and Eunice!

Glenn Johnson
Greenfield, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

From the Saga of King Olaf

I don’t know if you ever heard the lines from the old saga of King Olaf that said, “Such a challenge would bewilder any man but Thorberg Skafting, any man but he.” Such a challenge would bewilder any woman but J—, any woman but she.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1973

Supporting and Learning from Children with Special Needs

We in the Netherlands have a play group in which we play with children with special needs and with their brothers and sisters and our group of adult allies. It provides us with the support and tools to make family workshops more accessible to children with special needs.

We are the parents and allies of children who in the non-RC world are labelled as autistic, but we know them as children who teach us to go for¹ ourselves. We have had some good experiences in bringing this group of children to family workshops. These are some ideas about it and things that have worked well:

- Being an ally of a child with special needs is for ourselves. It teaches us about oppression in a clear way. It teaches us about unconditional love. It teaches us about terror and ways to show and discharge it. It takes us in an easy and fast way to all our material.²

- We organize a team of four allies for a family workshop. Two of them stay with the child and two of them can do sessions, or support groups, or nothing. We have found out that having four allies is important; that way nobody is left alone with the child or during sessions. Being alone with a child with special needs accumulates isolation. Isolation and hard work are often connected to our lives as parents and to our work as allies.

- We also think it is useful to enlarge the group of allies during a workshop so that more people get a chance to be with the child.

- The work of inclusion will not be done fast. It needs time, but working on it gives us a perspective that an inclusive RC, and world, are possible, and that is an important contradiction³ for all of us.

- Mistakes can be made. If people try new things then things can go wrong, but not trying is worse. Most people are so scared to make mistakes in connecting with our children that they don't even try. Discharging about this makes a big difference.

- It helps when the Community and the leader of the workshop do sessions about being different, and if at least one mini-session at the workshop is spent on this.

- It helps when we all can admit that we haven't discharged enough and that we don't know—because, believe me, we don't!

- When our children become teenagers, we need to work on their transition to becoming Co-Counselors. Our teen-age son often looks like he isn't listening, but we can discharge on this, decide to be client nevertheless, and use what he shows or says. We find that his are the most pure and direct directions and contradictions we can get.

- Many of us cannot think to use our children with special needs as our counselors in sessions, but using their attention is a strong contradiction to “mental health” oppression.

- Our children can show a lot of terror and deep fear. As counselors we are often anxious to give attention to this, but our children need a good balance between attention on the fear and attention out of it. Our urgency and anxiousness need discharging so that we can be connected. There must be enough safety and connection for our children to discharge the deep fears.

Jan Venderbos

Wergera, Fryslân, the Netherlands
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of family work

¹ Go for means energetically pursue.

² Material means distress.

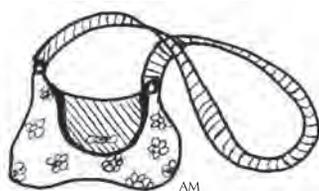
³ Contradiction to distress

Welcoming New People to a Workshop

New York City (New York, USA) Region¹ 4 has been putting attention for several years on the RC Community goal about growth.² A Regional class, led by our Regional Reference Person, Sharon Peters, has met several times a year to discharge on the efforts some of us are making to teach RC to those closest to us. We have discharged together about the people we most want to bring into RC, working on all kinds of discouragement and old defeats, and some of us have gone on to teach these people. As a result, every Area³ has started fundamentals classes for people's friends and loved ones. We have called these "new goal classes." Many of the new people are from groups that are underrepresented in our Communities.

At the end of our annual five-day Regional open workshop two years ago, our Regional Reference Person set the goal of having ten more people at the next open workshop. She decided to make the first full day a day in which we could welcome new RCers to the collected resource of an RC workshop. Months of thinking and planning followed, including finding a site that would be easily accessible to the city, crafting a schedule that would allow for a full range of workshop experiences between 10 am and 7 pm, and assigning Co-Counseling sessions in advance.

Nineteen people participated in the day, joining sixty-two Co-Counselors who were there for the longer workshop. Below are some thoughts from workshop participants about how it went.



Kathy McCullagh
Brooklyn, New York, USA

¹ A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

² A goal of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities adopted by the 2005 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities and reaffirmed by the 2009 World Conference: That the RC Community and its members put increased attention and effort into reaching a large and diverse population with the ideas and practices of RC, and into assisting them in becoming members of the RC Community.

That in order to intelligently pursue this goal, Co-Counselors have ongoing sessions on the distresses that interfere with their thoughts and actions in this area and that classes, Areas, and Regions organize gather-ins, support groups, workshops, and other events to assist Co-Counselors in this effort.

That as part of this goal, Co-Counselors target the distresses that hold them back from making a thoughtful and sustained effort to reach those with whom they already have caring and committed relationships.

³ An Area is a local RC Community.

My Co-Counselor's long-time partner came for the day. My Co-Counselor had been discharging and working for years toward introducing him to RC. He is raised poorer than most people I've known in my thirty-five years in Co-Counseling. I was lucky to have him in my support group for the day. It was encouraging and inspiring to not only have a person of his background around but to know that my Co-Counselor had made significant progress on an important goal. Another person who had been in a fundamentals class I taught twenty-five years ago also came for the day. He had stopped participating in RC events several years ago but had continued to use RC ideas in his healthcare practice. It was wonderful to be able to offer him a fresh look at our Community. After farewells he and I made plans to have a session back at home.



Randy Karr
Brooklyn, New York, USA

I am teaching a new fundamentals class. With an eye toward our Regional open workshop I included the RC theory and experience that might allow the new Co-Counselors to attend the workshop for a day. My Area Reference Person taught one of the classes in order to take a look at the class members and help me determine if they were ready to take on⁴ a large RC workshop. Two of the students subsequently attended the workshop (a third wanted to but had scheduling conflicts). I don't think that would have been possible without our Region having set up the workshop to be accessible both geographically and financially and having tailored the day (schedule, class topics, support groups, and sessions) to welcome and support those new to RC.

My students had a good day connecting to their new RC Community, discharging, and getting a larger picture of what RC could mean for them in their lives. One of them told me at the end of the day that "this is what I've been looking for my whole life." Our good thinking, discharging, planning, and cooperative work allowed us to bring two wonderful new Co-Counselors into a workshop after a relatively short series of classes, accelerating their understanding of RC theory and practice, and of course their re-emergence. It also allowed me, a new

⁴ Take on means undertake.

Co-Counseling teacher, to see that I am “on track” in my teaching. I look forward to hearing their workshop reports in our class next week.



Bam Bamman
New York, New York, USA

I had been preparing for the workshop as the organizer and also as a new fundamentals teacher in our Region. My husband has been around Co-Counseling for many years and in the last few years has been trying to figure out his own relationship to it. Last March he joined my fundamentals class and committed to coming. The class I led before the workshop focused on what workshops offer us and why we have them. My husband told me he was not coming, but I got to not give up on reaching for him. Even though he didn't come, he knew that he could, even at the last minute. I got to want him, with the possibility of rejection, over and over. I had to face my urgency and just want him openly. The work we got to do on Saturday at the workshop, welcoming many dear Co-Counselors' loved ones, gave me renewed hope for the sustained efforts ahead in my getting my husband to have RC tools for himself.



Melissa Scott
Brooklyn, New York, USA

It was historical and revolutionary to have such a powerful workshop be accessible to people who did not have the money or time to go away for a workshop. It was also wonderful to get to work together as a group to prepare for Saturday. I think working on class has helped this all quite a bit.



Danett Bean
Brooklyn, New York, USA

We had a conference call six months prior to the workshop in which our Regional Reference Person, the Area Reference Persons, the workshop organizer, and the leaders targeted by racism came up with⁵ the idea of having a workshop that would be accessible to everyone, including people targeted by racism, single parents, and people who had been around the Communities but had not been able to be part of a regular class.

⁵ Came up with means thought of.

That idea was supported by the fact that “new goal” classes had started in each of the three Areas. I was leading a class of six people, which I had built around two young adult single mothers targeted by racism and two additional women targeted by racism. Knowing we would have a workshop in six months that everyone would be able to attend helped me know what to teach in the class. As it turned out,⁶ everyone was able to come to the workshop. We did some work discharging and thinking together about childcare and transportation for the day. The transportation coordinator was personally in touch with each person who was coming so that there would be a minimum of last-minute surprises. Not one person traveled on his or her own. I know it will make a big difference that everyone in the class was able to attend regardless of financial considerations and work oppressions.

In thinking about the workshop, I was able to set up a one-time class for someone close to me who had been around Co-Counseling for many years and in a fundamentals class twenty-two years ago. I also invited to the class two other people in my Area who were interested in reaching out to people close to them. In the class I talked about the difference between psychotherapy and Co-Counseling and addressed that we were a revolutionary movement interested in moving forward together as a diverse group of people, keeping in mind racism and other oppressions as we did that. We followed the format of a class, using all the components of opening circle, mini-sessions, theory, and group discharge, and I explained why we did each component. I think the class helped the person know what to expect of the one day at the workshop and to get the most out of it. I had been trying to figure out something about that person for a long time, and the one-day component of the open workshop was what helped me figure it out.

The workshop participants were a racially diverse group of all class backgrounds, with an age span of seventy-five years. Committees had contact with their members prior to the workshop. Many people had to assume responsibility to make the workshop work. The shared work helped everyone's sessions go better and helped us better understand each other. I am leaving the workshop with a clearer understanding of what my Area has to do to move forward and more hopeful about what is possible.

Millie Waldman
New York, New York, USA

continued . . .

⁶ As it turned out means as it happened.

... continued

For many years now I have been interested in having, or should I say desperate to have, my longtime boyfriend be in an RC class. He and I have talked about it for a long time and always he has declined. Of course this has brought up a great deal of discouragement for me, but with the consistent help of my regular Co-Counselors, and the support of my Area Reference Person, I realized that I would have to teach him one to one.

My Area Reference Person held several classes to discharge on the growth goal, and that helped me get started on the project. At some point my boyfriend agreed to have me teach him. He and I had a number of classes and covered *The Human Side of Human Beings*, the *Fundamentals Manual*, and basic theory about oppression. When I talked to him about coming to the workshop for the day on Saturday, he wasn't really interested. My Area Reference Person led a gathering for a few of us who were teaching loved ones who might be coming to the workshop, and after that, and another class with me, he said that he wanted to come. Sharon provided us with the day's schedule, and I had to go over it in depth with him, explaining what would happen in a class, a support group, sessions, and so on. The week before the workshop he had to remind me that we hadn't done a class and could we please have one!

The day at the workshop was a great success. I felt he had been well thought about. He was in a support group for white working-class people and found tremendous safety there. The same was true in the pre-set Co-Counseling session. Sharon's classes were clear and covered theory for new and experienced Co-Counselors alike. The experienced counselors were extremely welcoming and friendly, thoughtful and considerate. It was all I could have hoped for as his first workshop experience.

Another part of this story is that I taught some Co-Counseling classes for my son's girlfriend, at my son's request. My son is a young man raised in RC, and he doesn't usually talk to folks about RC but had talked to her. He asked me if I would teach a few classes for her. The three of us met several times and covered basic theory. She loved it and took to the discharge process easily. She also participated in the gathering my Area Reference Person did and expressed interest in the workshop. She came for the day on Saturday and had a tremendous experience; she was able to easily participate. She loved meeting and discharging with others in a topic group for young adults and is looking forward to joining a larger Co-Counseling class and participating in future workshops.

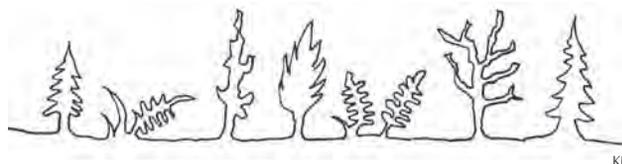


Regina Gori
Brooklyn, New York, USA

Easier to Be a Leader Than Not

I am not surprised you are finding yourself relaxed with being a leader. A good deal of powerlessness is not being in charge, not feeling that we have the right to initiative. Part of it is patterned with me, but I am much more comfortable when I am sure that I can have input into a situation.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1976



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. We especially encourage upcoming leaders, like assistant teachers and support group leaders, to order Teacher Packets (which come out about once a year). The current 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

The price is \$20 (U.S.), plus shipping and handling.

For ordering information, see page 109.

Disability Assistance at Workshops

Marsha Saxton
International Liberation Reference
Person for Disabled Persons

Many people with the need for disability and health-related assistance attend RC weekend workshops. This may include people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices, such as crutches or walkers; people who have visual or hearing impairments; or people with recent or chronic illnesses or injuries. The RC Community has responded with different approaches, including “accessibility committees” made up of several people who either provide or support the assistance on-site at the workshop. This article will explore some of these approaches and offer ideas for how to make assistance work well for all involved. It is directed at both people offering help and people receiving help—which, of course, is all of us. Several beloveds contributed to this article. Many thanks to them for their experience, great ideas, and helpful editing.

Needs for assistance vary greatly among individual people. The population of “people with disabilities” is diverse. Disabled people can have a variety of different ways of moving, communicating, learning, and handling basic needs. A wide range of health-related issues may result in fatigue, chemical sensitivities, allergies, or the need for respirators or other devices, treatments, or interventions. Having my own disabilities and being familiar with the disabled population because of my work, I find disabled people to be wonderfully creative about living fully, with unique ideas to offer about being human. We want to know and include these people, and, of course, they may include you—now or at some point.

Here are some common examples of assistance needed at workshops:

- bringing people’s belongings into the site and setting up sleeping areas
- getting people’s meals
- helping people move around the workshop
- marking paths of travel in the main room with masking tape or signs
- setting up and monitoring assistive listening devices
- typing into a laptop computer to enable people to read in text on a big screen what is being said in the group
- reserving chairs for visually- or hearing-impaired people or those who need particular kinds of seating
- helping people identify Co-Counselors when session choices are made in the group.

More extensive and intimate assistance may include helping an individual get out of bed, take a shower, or get dressed.

Two people with similar looking or similarly labeled disabilities may require different approaches—because everyone is different, plus we are thinking about people’s choices and re-emergence as well as their access and assistance needs.



JAPAN • DIANE SHISK

The experience of disability is different in different cultures. My comments here apply mostly to people in Western societies. I would be delighted to hear ideas from people in countries around the world about including people with disabilities in RC workshops.

A common confusion resulting from disability oppression is that people must learn a lot of technical or factual information in order to help or accommodate people with disabilities. Having “lots of technical information” is viewed as “the answer,” as well as something overwhelmingly complex and daunting. (Many people react to extensive guide books and checklists about access by being overwhelmed and not reading or following them.)

Articles about disability awareness and lists showing the range of needs can get us started. However, “how to accommodate these categories of disability” guides aren’t sufficient to keep us thinking and acting flexibly and accurately about the individuals involved, the particular workshop sites, and the resources of the particular leaders, workshops, and associated Communities. As mentioned, people with disabilities have unique, individual needs and abilities and won’t ever fit into a “type.” Part of meeting disability needs is technical, but mostly we need to be able to think flexibly, pay attention to the specific needs, and communicate well with everyone involved. We need to draw on our inherent human ability to thoughtfully and enjoyably help each other. I believe that the key components of effective helping are good communication,

continued . . .

... continued

encouraging people with disabilities to be proactive about their help, and persistent discharge about confusions. Here are several things to hold in mind in order to make this go well:

1. *The Goal of Accommodation at Workshops*

The goal of providing disability assistance at workshops is to help people with needs for assistance to participate as fully as possible, so that they will benefit from the workshop and everyone else will benefit from their participation. Providing accommodation is not doing a favor for the disabled people. It is allowing everyone to benefit from everyone's full participation. Also, accommodating disabled people is a contradiction to distress for everyone, because anyone could become disabled at any point. Including everyone contradicts all of our distresses about being left out.

2. *The "Problem" of Disability*

Through the distorting lens of disability oppression, the needs of disabled people are viewed as a "problem" that must be solved with effort, increased costs, restructured buildings, and time taken away from the people who are required to provide help. Sometimes the disabled people themselves are regarded as "the problem." This is the oppression! The "problem" is actually the confusion that stems from centuries-old wrong assumptions about disability and needs. Clearer models of disability point out that an environment full of architectural barriers and oppressive attitudes is what limits the participation of disabled people.

3. *Feelings About Disability*

Disabled people, and disability, can be restimulating to people unfamiliar with them. Disability



CHANDELIER • AMANDA MARTINEZ

oppression is widespread; we've all gotten thoroughly confused by it. It is built on all of our early experiences of having small young bodies and being forced to conform to an irrational adult world. We were also given wrong information about who disabled people are and the "burden" or trouble they cause. Stereotypes of disabled people being heroic or courageous are equally alienating.

Feelings about disability may make some people uncomfortable about helping a disabled person. Disabled people have been nervously told by someone assigned to help them, "I've never met a disabled person before!" That's a funny¹ way to say, "Nice to meet you," but it is quite common.

4. *Workshop Feelings*

In RC we like to think that we are kind, loving, thoughtful, generous, and flexible, but sometimes being at a workshop restimulates old feelings. Each of us is being challenged to interact with many, many people, as both counselor and client, and to have many "jobs." We want to be helpful and to do our jobs well, and this is what usually happens with disability assistance. However, people assigned to disability assistance jobs can also get distracted, be in a hurry, or feel resentful, confused, or embarrassed about the helping role and forget to do it well. This is a big concern of many disabled people I've spoken with.

¹ Funny means strange.

5. *Help*

Helping others or directing others to help us, in the way that they or we want to be helped, can be a challenge. Everyone needs help, and we've all been hurt in the area. Few of us are able to freely ask for the help that we need and deserve.

Our main model of helping others is mothers helping children. Other models include nurse and patient, social worker and client, teacher and student. All of these involve a power dynamic between the helper and the person being helped. (Newer models of disability assistance give control to the person with the disability.)

Sometimes "over-helpfulness" can become annoying, or oppressive, or even comically interfering. Some helpers try to rush to meet every need and to protect the person needing assistance from ever feeling bad—a kind of "caregiving" that isn't empowering. In RC we want the person needing assistance to be in charge of his or her help.

6. *Needs*

Everyone has needs. Our ordinary needs are typically accommodated in ways we don't recognize anymore, because we've gotten so used to them, they are just "there." Examples include the facilities themselves, the chairs provided by the facilities so that we don't have to bring our own, the lights in the buildings, the food served, the beds, the plumbing—all the myriad resources we've come to expect will be available. "Special needs" are usually regarded as such because of the widespread exclusion of people with disabilities. The expense of including disabled people is distorted: if we hadn't excluded them from buildings and programs from the beginning, the "extra costs" wouldn't exist.

Correcting the exclusion only appears “expensive” because of past mistakes. Keeping disabled people out (of the Community, employment, schools, and so on) is what is truly expensive.

Our isolation recordings usually make all of us ask for too little. Or sometimes we have “frozen needs”—old recordings of needs (for attention, closeness, safety, food) that were unmet earlier in our lives and that we want others to now meet. As we know from basic RC theory, frozen needs cannot be met; they must be discharged. Although it is rare in my experience, sometimes people ask for assistance as a way to avoid feeling alone, or helpless, or upset. Sometimes requests for assistance are requests for a session.

In providing assistance, how do we know the difference between real and frozen needs? Since most people with disabilities typically ask for too little help, I usually assume they are asking for help for good reasons. We have to think clearly about the person asking. It may sometimes make sense to say no and encourage discharge and re-evaluation of the request. This may seem scary or mean. We have to keep thinking and be willing to boldly be counselor.

Some people may be new to physical limitations and unsure of their needs at a workshop. It takes a while for newly disabled people to learn how to identify and describe their needs, travel with a disability, and direct people to help them.

In RC we are confronted with meeting real and sometimes intimate needs in a relationship that usually doesn’t include this because of the nature of Co-Counseling and the no-

socializing policy.² We are crossing a boundary in the Co-Counseling relationship, and it’s not surprising we get confused.

7. The Site and Pace

Workshop sites are often very different environments from home. Because in RC we are trying to keep costs down, the sites may be old summer camps or retreat centers designed for “roughing it.”³ They may not be consistent with the architectural building codes for wheelchair users or may be too dusty, moldy, or smelly for people with allergies or chemical sensitivities. There may be inadequate lighting for people with visual impairments or noise levels inappropriate for people with hearing impairments. People needing assistance may not have seen the site before and thus may be unable to determine their needs until they get there. The organizer may be unfamiliar with disability access and unable to describe the site well. Disabled people who manage independently or with minimal assistance at home may need more help than usual at the site because it’s not set up for their needs.

² The no-socializing policy of the RC Communities states that Co-Counselors should not set up any relationships, other than Co-Counseling, with other Co-Counselors or with people whom they first meet in a Co-Counseling context.

³ “Roughing it” means living without many comforts.



NATHANIEL LIPPERT

If sites are not wheelchair accessible—with level entrances, bathrooms with wide-enough stall doors, and other important features—that should be stated on the flier. Disabled people shouldn’t have to call to inquire. Putting access information on the flier is required in the RC *Guidelines*.⁴

People should not be carried up stairs; this is unsafe for both the disabled people and the people lifting. Rented portable ramps may work for events in people’s homes. Some RCers have built ramps into their homes to enable people with disabilities to attend RC classes. We need to work toward finding wheelchair accessible workshop sites.

Some sites are dusty, moldy, or newly painted, or have new rugs, and thus contain allergens that can trigger reactions. Sometimes it’s hard to tell⁵ whether a site will cause such reactions, and people with allergies may or may not require on-site assistance. Good communication with people requesting allergen-free sites will help clarify their needs and whether they are workable. (This issue is discussed in-depth in the article “Environmental Illness” in the RC journal *Well-Being* No. 6.)

The workshop format and pace may affect disability assistance. Classes, meetings, playtimes, and meals may take place in different locations, every hour or two throughout the day until late at night. This may leave limited and unpredictable time to focus on physical needs. Planning well helps, but sometimes decisions must be made on the spot.⁶

continued . . .

⁴ The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*, which are the policies for the Communities

⁵ In this context, tell means know.

⁶ On the spot means at the moment.

... continued

8. Language

The words we use to describe helping and needs are fraught with disability oppression, and the language of disability has changed over time. Preferred terms also vary among cultures, countries, and languages.

Now, in English, in the United States, the word “handicapped” is outdated and “cripple” is considered insulting and oppressive. And the phrase “special needs” is not typically favored by experienced U.S. Co-Counselors with disabilities. The word “special” implies that the needs are unusual or burdensome enough to require employing a charming euphemism, and calling some needs “special” confuses people into thinking that disabled people’s needs are excessive.

Using the word “carer” to describe the person helping is disfavored by people in Britain; it implies that disabled people are “cared for,” as if in hospital.

I am choosing to use the phrase “disability assistance.” I hope that will work for most people, but it’s likely that someone won’t like it. Workshop organizers should check with the disabled people in their Community about the terms to use on fliers that will make them welcoming and inclusive as well as informative. This may seem like a minor detail, but I have found that language does affect whether people are enthusiastic or reluctant to connect.

9. Cost

The need for assistance may affect workshop or Community finances. For example, who will pay if a person with a disability wants to bring his or her own personal assistant to a workshop? Developing a uniform policy for the RC Communities hasn’t been possible yet, because needs and finances vary so much across the Communities. In London, England, for example, workshop budgets sometimes assume the cost

of paid assistance. This may or may not work for other Communities.

10. Models of RC Workshop Assistance

There are many different ways to go about⁷ disability assistance. I’d like to offer a few models developed by various individuals and Communities. Keep in mind that things can change over time; that disabled individuals may want to change the way they receive assistance. We get to keep thinking flexibly.

A common approach is for the workshop organizer to set up a team of people to be on an accessibility committee. This will be their workshop job. Hopefully people requesting assistance will have communicated with the organizer and identified their needs. The organizer and his or her team assess the needs and estimate the number of people required to provide the assistance. This usually works pretty⁸ well, but there are also often problems. These include too few people helping, and poor communication between the disabled people and the people helping such that the needs are not well met and people in the helping role get overwhelmed.

Here are some additional models of helping:

At one workshop, a quadriplegic man who was experienced in training his own personal assistants requested that nearly everyone at the thirty-person workshop join his team and provide him with the assistance he needed from morning until night. Someone else at the workshop was willing to help him train people, so he wasn’t the only one teaching. At the beginning of the workshop it was announced that people would



NEW ZEALAND • LANCE CABLK

⁷ Go about means proceed with, carry out.

⁸ Pretty means quite.

have the option of signing up, and they were encouraged, though not required, to do so. It ended up being a positive experience for the whole workshop. Everyone got to know the man and learned a little bit about disability and personal assistance. The workshop allowed for discharge time about the arrangement, and it was also relevant to the topic of the workshop. When I mentioned this to some disabled people, some thought it was wonderful and others thought it was a horrible idea. This model won't work at very many workshops, but it was a lovely and useful learning experience for me, for him, and for many others. And it illustrated how we can "think outside the box" of usual ways of including disabled people and move everyone forward.

Another approach is for the disabled person to bring an assistant of his or her own choosing who may or may not be an RCer and thus may or may not participate in the workshop. Some disabled people bring their regular paid personal assistant, who occupies himself or herself during the workshop proceedings and is then available to provide assistance. How to pay for the assistant's lodging and food needs to be decided in consultation with RC Community leaders. Again, there is as yet no Community financial policy about this, because the disability needs, as well as what is considered right and fair, vary so much across the RC Communities. Each Community must develop its own flexible thinking about its specific situation.

Should people announce their disability-related needs during the opening circle? Some announcements are essential, others are more about urgency for attention and could wait. It gets restimulating for everyone

to hear a scattered list of needs in the opening circle. The group won't really hear or remember the requests. It may be better to use paper signs or have advocates remind others individually of a particular ongoing need, such as to keep isles clear, reserve seats, or speak loudly and clearly. (One can employ fun and inviting ways, that bring laughter, to do this.) The leader can invite those with requests to write them down in advance for the announcer, and the access team leader can help the workshop leader decide which requests are important to announce the first night. Yes, this is tricky. Decisions are being made for disabled people, and this may seem, and be, patronizing. We have to learn to think, all of us together, about what is going to actually work, as well as what seems fair and respectful.

How do we think about all these factors and models? The job of an access committee is not an ordinary workshop job. It's more interesting and requires more thoughtfulness. As mentioned, many RC articles and pamphlets offer ideas. I caution against using solely a "cook book" approach, with lists of how things should work for categories of disability.

THE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE

The keys to making disability assistance go well are (a) clear, relaxed, timely communication and planning about needs—between the person needing assistance, the organizer, and the assistants,

(b) good thinking about who does the assistance, with encouragement for disabled people to be in charge of it, and (c) discharge!

Communicate and Plan in Advance

Organizers or their delegates (such as accessibility committee members who have been asked to contact people about assistance) should get in communication well before the workshop to plan appropriately. (This may mean chasing after some people—sorry!) Sufficient advance planning can be crucial for some people and situations. For example, many people need assistance upon arriving at the workshop (for unloading, getting oriented to the site, finding and settling in rooms, and so on) or even before the first evening, and the access committee may not get together until Saturday morning or later. It can make the workshop unwelcoming, or even unworkable, at the outset if a disabled person must scramble to pull together assistance on his or

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SANDRA CARTER

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her own when everyone is arriving in the hubbub.

The transportation coordinator must be made aware of any assistance needed by travelers with mobility or visual impairments. This means that the organizer, the transportation coordinator, and the access team should be in communication well before the workshop.

Organizers need to assess the time involved in accessibility jobs. The job of “announcements” or “leading singing” may take about three minutes per class or a total of fifteen minutes over the weekend. Being in a helping role may take some hours.

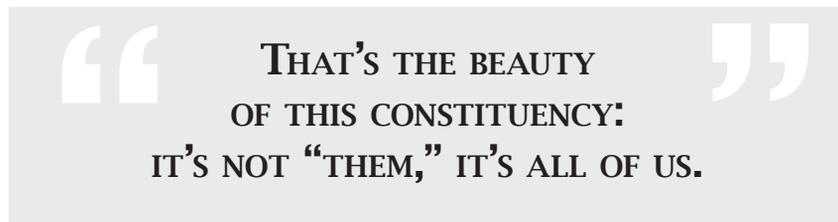
Organizers also need to be familiar with the site, so that they can describe it fully to people with assistance needs.

Fliers and Community announcements can emphasize the importance of communicating early, and teachers can remind their classes.

Consider Who Should Do This Job

Deciding who will be on or in charge of the access team raises crucial questions. Should it be someone who has done it before and gotten to be “expert”? Should it be rotated to give more people experience? Should we be concerned about taking advantage of some people’s well-developed but patterned care-giving skills? Could it be someone with a disability? We get to think strategically and thoughtfully about people’s re-emergence, along with seeing the job as crucial to the individuals involved and the smooth running of the workshop.

One experienced access team leader told me she was given the



job at the last minute, as she arrived, along with another big job at the workshop, making it impossible to do the access team job remotely well.

Don’t assume that because someone has a disability, he or she shouldn’t be the accessibility leader or a team member. He or she may have valuable experience to offer. Various helping tasks can be shared among the team members, based on individual resources.

We can consider assigning or requesting that each disabled person choose an ally to regularly check in with him or her throughout the workshop to assess how the helping and access are going. This encourages the disabled person to reflect on the process and maybe enlist the ally to advocate if need be.

Discharge About This

Given the goals of RC, and the fact that we do have limited financial resource, we must rigorously apply our theory to the challenge of disability assistance. We need to keep discharging, and thinking flexibly! I keep being surprised that RCers are forgetting to discharge, and to check their thinking with others, as the first steps in problem solving.

Everyone involved, but especially the assistants and the disabled person, need to discharge about the process. Feelings like “this is too much trouble” are red flags for the need to discharge. If people stay stuck in such feelings, they can forget

(a) that appropriately including people with disabilities is the right thing to do and (b) that it could be they, or their favorite counselor, or the workshop leader who needs assistance. That’s the beauty of this constituency: it’s not “them,” it’s all of us.

People who are new to providing assistance need to discharge on their confusions about and awkwardness with disability. Accessibility committees should build in some time for group discharge as well as encouraging the members to use some session time on discharging about assisting. They can also suggest meal-time topic tables to get ideas and input. Helping is everybody’s re-emergence issue!

People have complained to access committee members that someone is not getting enough help or that the committee should be doing a better job, without having checked first with the disabled person. I recommend that such complaints be interrupted with a firm, loving “Wait a minute! Let’s discharge.” Let’s encourage disabled people to speak up on their own behalf. Stop and think who the correct person to intervene might be. Think “empower” not just “fix.”

SUGGESTIONS FOR PEOPLE NEEDING ASSISTANCE

Plan in Advance

To people who are needing assistance: Your needs are important, and we want you to have a good workshop and be fully included, respected, and thought about. If

you have substantial needs for assistance, please register early and plan on communicating clearly with the organizer. Sometimes people with disabilities forget to do this. The assumption that “I should be able to sign up at the last minute, just like anyone else” is just not workable for our resources in RC right now. Please don’t turn up⁹ at the workshop expecting the assistance to be organized on-site. If you’re unclear about what you need, start working on it early enough to get help with your thinking. People who are experienced with disability know this, but sometimes newly disabled people, or those with temporary health or disability-related conditions, may not realize the importance of early and clear communication about their needs. If you need personal assistance and have someone you prefer to help you, recruit that person to the workshop. Get help planning how your needs will be met, and discharge about it.

Be Pushy and Patient Both

The efficacy of “accessibility committees” varies greatly. One man laughingly told me that he experienced the committee as a great flock of birds swooping in upon him that he had to fight off. Others have said that the committee members couldn’t be found the entire weekend or that they lost the list of needs and had to start from scratch.¹⁰ We’re working on these extremes. Mostly people find the help useful.

Some workshops will be set up to include enough time, and enough people who can offer relaxed assistance. Other workshops, for various reasons, will not. Some leaders keep a fast pace and a tight agenda. This may not seem

⁹ Turn up means appear.

¹⁰ From scratch means from the very beginning, with nothing.

fair to you, and it may not be. Pitfalls for people with disabilities include feeling victimized, feeling so discouraged they give up,¹¹ or making too many requests for the level of free attention in the Community. Of course, you are aware that RC isn’t the only organization or institution in the world that is not fully accessible. And remember that people with disabilities are not the only constituency that isn’t yet fully included in RC. Don’t give up on expecting people to move forward on accessibility. We can be both patient and lovingly insistent!

If you have asked the workshop organizer for reasonable assistance and feel that your needs have been misunderstood or your accommodation denied, you are encouraged to contact your Area Reference Person and then, if need be, your Regional Reference Person or, finally, Tim Jackins, the International Reference Person.

Admittedly, there are some disabling conditions that RC

¹¹ Give up means quit trying.



PENELOPE BELL

workshops cannot accommodate yet, given the current structure and finances of RC and the timing of weekend workshops. We are not satisfied with this situation and are not settling for it long-range.

TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH NEW OR TEMPORARY DISABILITIES

You who have new or temporary disabilities, try to take a perspective that an RC event is an opportunity to get help and to discharge about getting help. Don’t be “tough”; it is a waste of your time and effort to hide your needs and struggle alone.

If you have a temporary mobility limitation, such as a broken leg, borrow or rent a wheelchair, or suggest that the workshop obtain one for you to use at least part of the time, maybe alternating with crutches or a cane. Wheelchairs enable people to move more easily and quickly, not straining their arms. Wheels are a great invention. Young people are delighted to play in an empty wheelchair, which is a great contradiction to adults’ “seriousness” about wheelchairs. Any negative association with wheelchairs is pure oppression. Don’t miss the opportunity to raise your own awareness and push through feelings about associating yourself with people with disabilities. Join us! If there are stairs at the site and you can climb stairs a short distance, get help carrying the chair up and down. As mentioned above, I do not recommend asking, or allowing yourself, to be lifted upstairs while seated in a wheelchair, because of safety issues for you and the lifters. Of course, there is a meaningful debate, inside and outside RC, about holding to such standards in countries around the world.

If you need to lie down often, ask to have a place in the meeting room for mats or cushions. If you need to rest often or can’t keep up with

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TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

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the pace, first take feelings about this to several sessions. Maybe you can rest or do self-care activities at meal times and someone can bring you your meal. Or maybe there's enough flexibility in the afternoon schedule for you to rest. If this isn't enough, talk to the organizer to see if it really makes sense for you to come to the workshop. Asking the workshop to slow down for you isn't workable, given our Community's goals and limited opportunities to be together.

DISCHARGE!

If you have a disability, your workshop may be about assistance as well as the designated topic. This may, understandably, feel frustrating or infuriating because you signed up for a workshop on the topic, not on "help related to disability." The key is to keep discharging about it and keep asking for what you need.

Eventually you and the people in your Community will be able to accommodate you better and better. On the other hand, you may feel wonderfully included in ways that you are not used to at home or in the wide world. Great! But discharge about this, too!

Some disabled people experienced with assistance may feel that they don't need to discharge any more about this. I don't believe it. I have never met an experienced disabled person (and I have met hundreds) who couldn't still use tons of discharge on what it is like to be helped. Having a few mini-sessions before and at the workshop on what it is like to once again be assisted, and what it reminds you of, is a good idea.

What if your Community doesn't seem to recognize your needs for

assistance as you understand them, or they tell you, "We don't have the resources," when you think they do? Yes, this is difficult. It may feel like oppression, and it may be oppression. I remind disabled Co-Counselors that here in RC we can discharge about it, and tackle the barriers with support. Taking on¹² the RC Community about access may feel as infuriating as it does in the wide world. But rather than feeling victimized by it, you can reach for and discharge about becoming a resource person for your and other people's needs for assistance. You are a leader here, in a powerful worldwide movement of inclusion of people with disabilities, and are offering a model of clarity about people's needs and getting help.

El Cerrito, California, USA

¹² Taking on means taking responsibility for.



RANDI FREUNDLICH

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NEW LITERATURE AVAILABLE!

The RC Teacher No. 30

A sample of the articles:

- "I've Learned to Teach the Students, Not the Topic"
- What Should You Teach in a Fundamentals Class?
- Moving Forward at Our Own Slow Pace
- Thinking About African American Men
- Taking the Plunge to Teach About Racism
- The *Guidelines* Exist to Make Sure You Think
- The Challenge of Developing and Sustaining Leadership
- The Value of Leading from Behind

\$4.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

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

\$4.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

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

* Harvey Jackins'

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:

- Making a Decision About Global Warming*,
Madelíne Para
- Me, Sparrows, and Saving the Planet* (poem),
Micheline Mason
- Questioning Patterns that Lead to Overuse*,
Marcie Rendon
- Discharging Entitlement Patterns*,
Susan Kammerzell

\$4.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

Ordering information on page 109

Appreciating RC Literature

I always look forward to PRESENT TIME. First of all I seek out thoughts on the cover, Harvey's* thoughts, and Tim's talks, and glance at the titles of the articles and the small drawings, particularly in the last pages.

For the past few years the simple drawings in the last pages have been my drawing teachers. As a science student I used to feel that drawing animals and plants was tough and complicated. My teacher passed that on to me. But the drawings in PRESENT TIME have shown me how simple it is to draw. I have learnt to draw plants and animals in a simple way.

In the January 2012 PRESENT TIME, I enjoyed, as usual, all the drawings, especially the orchid on page 111 and the fishes on page 69. Lots of appreciation for all the drawings. They are thoughtful, creative, and yet simple. I wish they were my drawing teacher in school.

Shashikala (Shashi)
Bangalore, India

* Harvey Jackins'



I love PRESENT TIME and wouldn't want to miss an issue.



Lisa Yarger
Munich, Germany

You are up to 166 superb issues. Thank you so much. I look forward to No. 167.

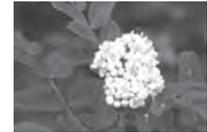


Gene Galazan
Prescott, Arizona, USA

The last RC TEACHER has been invaluable to me. The articles on Community building enabled me to communicate clearly to people what it means to back* leadership. RC is re-establishing itself in Brisbane (Queensland, Australia), and for our leader (and our Area) to thrive, everyone needs to know what's expected of someone who wishes to be a member of the RC Community.

Roslyn Cassidy
Perth, Western Australia, Australia

* Back means support.



I am pleased to get PRESENT TIME of January 2012. PRESENT TIME is an excellent tool that keeps RCers together. It is a medium for sharing our experiences, views, and analyses of the human situation and society and ways of attaining zest. I eagerly wait for each issue.



Subbu (G.R. Subbaraman)
Dindigul, India

Thanks for this publication. It's greatly appreciated and makes a huge difference in my everyday life.



Benjamin Altman
Flushing, New York, USA

Thanks for the latest marvelous edition of PRESENT TIME, which I am reading a bit of every night.



John Braxton
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

The PRESENT TIME January 2012 edition is just marvelous. Excellent thinking on so many significant topics.



Joanne Bray
Greenwich, Connecticut, USA



COSTA RICA • THERESA D'AMATO

*The next ten articles are from a discussion,
on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of women, about street harassment.*

How Do You Handle “Catcalling”?¹

I am a young adult Co-Counselor from Japan, and also Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA (I spend about a third of the year in Philadelphia, for work). I would like to ask what others have figured out about “catcalling.”¹

I grew up in Japan where catcalling is not common. People do not talk to strangers on the streets. When I moved to the States,² I was nineteen and for the first time exposed to men whistling at me, calling me sexy, commenting on my body, and so on. Such behavior seems to be sexist and racist.

I have tried different things. When I am on a bicycle and have certain safety, I sometimes yell back, “Shut up!” or give them the finger (a gesture indicating a strong insult). Most of the time I ignore them. This is partially because a lot of them catcall when I have already passed them, so for them to hear a response would mean my looking back or stopping biking. Also, yelling at them can be dangerous.

What is troublesome is the act of ignoring, of not doing anything. It is restimulating to let them be sexist to me and to not do anything. I then bike for ten blocks thinking what I could have told them and try to prepare for the next time, but I cannot find the words that I want—words that aren’t insulting but are strong enough that I am stopping the sexism, or giving a good contradiction,³ and not being the victim.

When I am walking, I don’t want to be seen as mean, as not even smiling back to people on the street. What can I do when most of the men seem to be filled with sexist and racist intention? The one out of ten who seems to make contact respectfully for human connection I ignore, because I can’t figure out quickly enough a good response for this precious, rare, non-sexist guy. Then I feel terrible for not sharing a world or a way of being in which people just smile at each other.

I would love to hear what others have figured out, and any ideas.

Hinako Arao
Tokyo, Japan
and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

¹ “Catcalling” is sexual harassment of women in public places.

² United States

³ Contradiction to the distress

It Asserts Male Power Over Women

Thank you, Hinako,¹ for being gutsy² enough to raise this struggle to awareness. It is an important one. I want to strongly encourage other women to write in.

The term catcalling is based on the assumption that cats are female and that women are female animals. It is a form of sexual harassment directed at women, particularly younger women. The effect of it is to create a non-human environment in which men feel it is okay to be sexist and to sexually objectify young women (and

sometimes older women). Other assumed threats are also involved. Ultimately, it asserts male power over women.

As an older woman I tend to forget what it was like. I can vaguely remember that when it stopped, I felt like I was no longer “sexually attractive.” I remember missing the attention.

Once in a while I would stand up to it. Sometimes I would go over to the man and stare back; then smile, reach out and shake his hand, and say to him, “I am a wonderful, brilliant female human, who are you?”

Once a couple of young adult men, with dyed blond and purple hair, stared at me and laughed while I was on a train. I went over to them and said, “Your hair is purple, and you are staring at me? What is that about?” Everyone laughed.

Just some immediate thoughts. I would love to hear from others as well.

Diane Balseer
International Liberation
Reference Person for Women
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

¹ See previous article.

² Gutsy means brave.

Being an Ally to Men

When I have encountered catcalling, both in India and in the United States, it has been helpful when I can say a word or two, perhaps “How are you doing?” “Are you all right?” “Done with work?” in a tone of support, being a friend. Typically the person stops. Often it seems like he wanted to be acknowledged, noticed, respected. It has been helpful, as I have gotten older, to work on giving up victimization and isolation and on being an ally to men, being welcoming.

Sasikala Raman
Wilmington, Delaware, USA, via India

A Chance to Work Through Victimization

I used to get targeted quite a bit, so I had many chances to practice responses. I would try to calculate as best I could who the person was. Some men were hurt enough that this was important. No response was sometimes wise.

Being targeted by sexism means to me that we congratulate ourselves whatever we figure out. Even “just” noticing that it is wrong is a victory. If we don’t notice this, we can unawarely agree with recordings¹ that say that being targeted and not coming up with² the perfect response are our fault.

¹ Distress recordings

² Coming up with means thinking of.

I did, oddly, enjoy trying to think about it. Sometimes I would try unexpected responses, like walking up to the harasser and saying, “Nice shirt.” I’ve reasoned with, yelled at, made fun of, ignored, threatened, looked into the eyes of, called the police on, found contradictions³ for (from a counselor’s perspective), and knocked down men who have targeted me.

I’ve tried to hold a perspective that the guys were offering me a chance to work through victimization. I would try anything that let me have a different view than being a helpless target.

A number of male allies have stepped in, too. My brother (white working-class guy) wouldn’t tolerate sexual harassment on any construction job he was on. He used many methods, including physically fighting with harassers, and firing them from the job when he had the power to do so. It was a big contradiction for me that a man would side with us women.

K Webster
New York, New York, USA

³ Contradictions to distress



LYNDALL KATZ

Live Every Moment Well

Life is filled with meaning. The only challenge before us in possessing this great boon of being alive, intelligent, and aware is to live every moment well.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 54

“Looking Good,” at My Expense

I honestly don't remember being subjected, as a young woman, to catcalling. I think that where I lived, Native American women were so regarded as less-than that I probably wasn't seen as female by the white male population. I don't recall Native men doing this at all to Native women. I think that in Native communities, things are just way more subtle.

Later in life, in urban settings, it happened to me more often, and I always just ignored it. I never felt threatened by it, I just thought it was weird.

Eight years ago, when I was fifty, I was dressed nicely to perform on stage and was walking with a male friend, when a group of men on the street started whistling and making comments at me. I said something like, “God, they're weird,” and my friend said, “Don't you like it when men appreciate you?” I said, “They're not appreciating me, they are just being rude and sexist.” My friend said, “Well, it makes me feel good that they think the woman I am walking with is sexy.” *That* comment upset me more than the

men's whistling and comments, because here was a friend of mine who was objectifying me, making himself look or feel good at my expense, and I said so to him. What men who were complete strangers to him thought was more important to him than my feelings or my right to walk the street without being harassed. He could not understand why I was upset. Needless to say, we weren't friends much longer.

Marcie Rendon
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Reminding Them that I Am a Human Being

Here in Greece, I would go each morning to the local coffee shop, traditionally a place where men gather, to buy milk. When I would go in, no one would speak, but I would be ogled (looked at from head to toe, obviously to check me out as a woman). I knew that that happened out of long habit and because the men were together and in “their” place.

I learned to make eye contact with the first man I could and without hesitation say, “Good morning! How are you today?” That put me in control and also reminded them that I was a human being and their neighbor. After that, most of the men would greet me themselves. It was satisfying. A lot of them still go out of their way to greet me when they see me in the neighborhood.

What comes to mind is that we need to do some brainstorming on something like a “take back the night” project. But, of course, it would be about taking back our right to live in peace, with complete dignity, at all times.

Margie Doyle Papadopoulou
Kantza, Greece



WYTSKE VISSER

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Recorded at a gather-in of two hundred and fifty RCers in San Jose, California, USA, in September 2011

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A Level of Desperation Most of Us Haven't Faced

Wow, I'm glad we're having this conversation. Thanks Hinako, and everyone who's contributed so far. I'd like to add something as a young adult woman targeted by racism who lives in New York City (New York, USA).

Catcalling is a daily experience of mine, as both target and witness. It is intense here and is part of a larger phenomenon of acceptable, casual public sexism. I group it with the hypersexual and pornographic images of women used to sell almost everything.

What's felt most scary is when I see men looking "checked out"¹ and despairing and, because of male domination and sexism, feeling totally entitled to do things to women like catcalling, intense sexual gazing, groping, intimidation, and invasion of space.

Here in New York City, which is the largest city in the United States and the "belly of the beast" or center of capitalism, many men, in part because of the sheer numbers

¹ "Checked out" means not present.

of people and the normalcy and frequency with which younger women dress provocatively, seem to treat being in public spaces like watching live pornography. I say this because of how they watch, and at times even grope, women. New York City has a massive public transportation system, with crowded trains, and recently I've begun hearing on the public address system, "Unwanted sexual contact is not acceptable and should be reported."

I'm present enough to notice all these forms of public sexism but pretty² terrified about them. I mostly ignore men or cross the street. I've fantasized about making a loud noise or "acting crazy" just to snap the man out of³ the disconnect he is acting out, but there is a real threat of retaliation. Women have been attacked physically based on their response to catcalling. I don't think it always makes sense to say something.

² Pretty means quite.

³ Snap the man out of means awaken the man from.

I strongly believe that we have to discharge about the pornography industry and how, because of the convergence of multiple oppressions (racism, classism, men's oppression) and capitalism, many men are extremely hurt and will act it out. There is a level of loneliness and desperation that most of us haven't faced. And the porn industry has numbed us women as well, and helped to inform how we dress. I now think consciously about how to dress and what type of attention I expect to attract, and really try to be "present" if I wear particular clothes.

I'd like to add that how catcalling looks depends on race. As an African heritage woman, I've noticed that the men in my group take cues for how they catcall based on how I and other black women present ourselves. I also find that women who have larger features (breasts, hips, butts) get the brunt of the unwanted attention; there is almost an expectation that such treatment will be part of their particular identity as black women. Because of my features, hair length, and height, younger men can't quite sexualize me. However, many older black men compliment me with an entitled tone of "I am your elder, wiser, and therefore have the right to tell you about yourself." Because it is a more disarming form of sexism, it is confusing.

Again, I'm glad we're having this discussion; it's helped cut the isolation I feel and given me some great directions and perspectives.

Anonymous
New York, New York, USA



SAN JUAN ISLANDS, WASHINGTON, USA • ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

Provocative Dress, Male Domination

In less than a month, men and women will be hanging out* on the street corners of my town so that they can capture digital souvenirs of the exhibitionism of sex tourism.

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, now in its seventieth year, takes place in the sacred He Sapa (Black Hills) of South Dakota, USA. Within a span of seven decades it has gone from having a motorcycle-races character to having a beach-like atmosphere. The unclad human state is what you would expect to see in the tropics or on ocean coastlines. Seeing it on the high plains of North America is what allows the Sturgis Rally promoters to exploit the disrobed female form and attract tourism.

It is exhibitionism to dress provocatively in situations in which you know you will be sexually objectified. Needing such superficial approval is internalized sexism. The need to exhibit sexuality is not about sensuality; it is about power and male domination.

* Hanging out means spending relaxed, unstructured time.

As U.S. culture continues to normalize provocative female dress, I think we need to discuss the question, "What is appropriate female attire?" Should the environmental climate dictate proper dress? What about the social climate? Should people dress scantily in a society in which one in three women is sexually violated?

I feel embarrassed that I didn't know I was being duped by sex tourism and the U.S. market. Dressing provocatively made me appear "special"; sometimes it helped me feel special. What kind of example was I to my daughter? She decided in kindergarten that she would not wear dresses to school because of "Friday Flip Up Day," in which boys flipped girls' dresses and skirts up on the playground. I fully supported her decision.

Nancy Kile
Sturgis, South Dakota, USA



NICOLE LEIFER

Opportunities to Contradict Distress

I started modeling, in print, fashion shows, and commercials, at the age of twelve and retired at age twenty-two. During those ten years catcalling was part of the package. It was part of being in the "male gaze." I didn't enjoy being stared and whistled at, and sometimes followed, but I didn't really know life without it.

Now I'm in my mid-thirties and recently married. As a married woman I'm a bit more sheltered from that type of provocation, probably because men fear that they'll provoke the tall grizzly of a husband walking next to me. (It's part of sexism, of course, to think that my male partner will protect me.) On the rare occasion that I dress provocatively, I draw the same kind of attention and remember. It's liberating to not have to bump up against it every day. I'm in the process of letting my gray hair grow out (my hair is over fifty percent gray). People are worried about my looking older and not getting attention from men anymore. Thanks to hours of discharge, I'm actually looking forward to it.

I experienced catcalling the most when I lived for two years in Spain, working as a fashion model. I had to walk around the city in mini-skirts and high heels on my way to and from castings (job interviews for models). Spaniards aren't more sexist; it's just that, as the lyrics to a popular U.S. song go, "Nobody walks in L.A." Growing up in the suburbs of Los Angeles (California, USA), I'd almost always drive everywhere. I noticed the catcalling in Spain because I had only my feet and public transportation.

Mostly I learned to look down and walk fast. Or I tried looking mad. Having grown up in a small, relatively safe middle-class suburb, toughening up on the streets and not smiling at everyone were a

continued . . .

LIBERATION

...continued

good challenge. Many of my Spanish friends would say they could tell! I was a USer from miles away because of the smile I was always wearing. Europeans don't smile as much, certainly not at strangers. After I understood that, not smiling was a refreshing contradiction to the patterns that were forced on me of looking happy all the time. I learned that I didn't have to smile if I didn't want to. Having grown up passing as white, not being told anything about being an Arab American, I didn't know that was okay. Looking tough or mad isn't exactly the humanity we're going for,² but middle-class niceness and assimilation patterns aren't either.

In my late twenties, I was enjoying an afternoon sprawled out on the grass at a park in Los Angeles. A man kept hounding me—whistling and clicking in excess. It was to the point where I felt scared for my safety. I got up to walk to my car, so mad that sexism was going to mess with my day again, and then turned around, got closer to the man, and yelled, "Do you have a sister? Do you have a daughter? How would you like them to be bothered like this?" He just laughed and blew me off.³ I was enraged and felt stupid on top of it.

These kinds of attempts are helpful if we discharge on them. I've noticed that it's hard for me to keep my attention on such seemingly minute details of my day: "I'm not going to give that guy the time of day,⁴ let alone any of my discharge time." But they are opportunities to work on early recordings of powerlessness. And it's for our liberation. Who wouldn't want to be able to keep thinking and have a creative response in these kinds of situations? I sure would!

Also in my late twenties, when I was teaching elementary school, a fifth-grade boy threw a firecracker in my room after school while I was working with the door open. It wasn't catcalling, but it felt similar. The student, the school principal, and I had a meeting. The principal badgered the boy with threats and guilt and said that the meeting was over. I asked if I could say something, and we sat back down. I told the student that as a boy he had no idea what it felt like to be a girl or a woman in this society, that oftentimes it was frightening and dangerous for us females to walk down the street by ourselves, that his action had reinforced the feeling of insecurity and had scared me. I challenged him to think about that and figure out how not to be part of the problem. The principal ended up telling him that he needed to protect us (women and girls), reframing my words through a patriarchal lens and suggesting that women were weaker and needed protecting. Still, I liked my attempt at calmly breaking down the daily experience of sexism and explaining it in lay terms (not using feminist lingo). I also liked asking a male person, a young person at that, to think about sexism in his community and try to do something to end it.

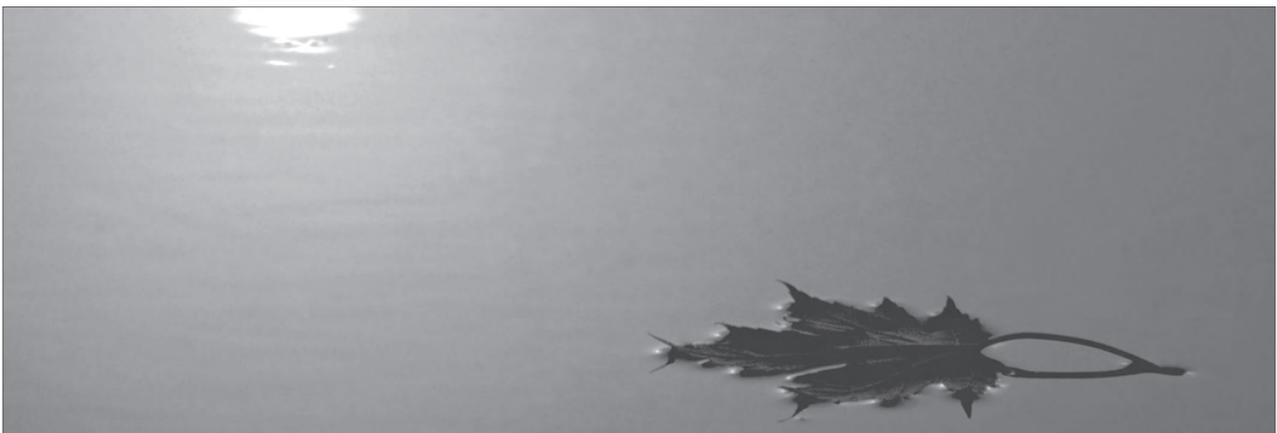
Stephanie Abraham
Covina, California, USA

¹ Tell means perceive.

² Going for means aspiring to.

³ Blew me off means dismissed me.

⁴ The time of day means any of my attention.



"REACHING FOR THE LIGHT" • © BRIAN TOWNSEND

From a Woman Carpenter

I've been a construction worker (a carpenter on large commercial construction sites) for twenty-one years. I was raised middle-class, with the (oppressive) idea that working-class men were more sexist than middle-class men.

I decided to do a working-class job largely because of RC. I wanted to do physical work and liked the idea of doing something women weren't "supposed" to do. In my early years, claiming construction sites as my own was a huge contradiction.* To go from their being a place where I tensed up because of fears of catcalls to a place where I felt at home and looked for my friends was an empowering transition.

The first thing all my middle- and owning-class friends would say was "Oh, it must be awful for you as a woman!" My actual experience was that my own classism (how I felt I was better or smarter than everyone else) was in my way much more than any of the sexism of the guys I worked with. It ruined my day, and sometimes theirs, far more often than anything they did. I had tons of Co-Counseling sessions, for years, on all the ways I was taught to feel better than others. I needed many more of those sessions than I needed sessions on the guys' sexism (though I did need those, too).

I came to reply to friends that no, it wasn't awful for me as a woman and that, in fact, the sexism I faced in college was more confusing to me than what I faced on a construction site. When I was in class and a professor dismissed something I said but gave high praise to something a guy said, it was easier to think that it was me, that my answer wasn't good enough, whereas (the one time) when I walked on

a construction site and a guy said, "I don't believe in women in construction," I had no doubt that it was just some distress on his part. It didn't make me question myself. I answered, "Well, I don't believe in Santa Claus, but there's work to be done, so let's do it." He laughed, and we went on to become good friends. In fact, he entrusted me with more skilled work (I was a second-year apprentice, still learning my craft) than did the other guys. They were nicer to my face, but they wouldn't let me do the more challenging work.

I decided early on that I was going to interpret any catcalling or whistling or other oppressive behavior by a guy on a site as an attempt to say hello. I decided that I'd handle it in the moment as I felt I needed to (ranging from ignoring to confronting to humor) but then offer the guy a real way to have contact—basically initiate a conversation with him, either then or later. Out of the hundreds, possibly thousands, of men I've worked with in the last twenty-one years, that has worked with every guy, every single time.

I don't want to excuse the bad behavior of the guys, but I want to keep discharging on how the highly visible sexism of catcalling is not worse than the more hidden sexism of not promoting or hiring women. I also think that those of us who are white and were raised middle- or owning-class could benefit from working on where we notice the sexism of working-class men or men targeted by racism more than we notice the sexism of the men we were raised with.

Lastly, my advice for what to do if a guy catcalls you is to ask him what time it is.

Woman Carpenter
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

* Contradiction to distress



NOHEJI BEACH, AOMORI, JAPAN • EMMA PARKER

Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose
the good we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt.

—William Shakespeare

Liberation for Women Musicians

Our women musicians' support group is unstoppable. We have discharge, and we have each other—and that is a powerful combination. From the beginning, I've stressed the importance of everyone showing up¹ every time (we meet monthly) in order to contradict the isolation from our internalized oppression. I've reminded us that we don't have to do it alone.

¹ Showing up means attending.

As we get closer, while fighting for ourselves and each other, our gang is like a safety net. We discharge patterns that keep us separated and discouragement from early defeats. We look at what we'd go after² if we could discharge all of our material.³ We look at where we gave up, where we need help, where we have made a difference, and the possibility that we

² Go after means pursue.

³ Material means distress.

can be bigger than we ever imagined. We notice that we are all completely good and creative and still "in the game,"⁴ and that we matter to each other and to the world.

Children are our beacons. They remind us of how it was before the distress patterns began to limit our thinking. Jealousy, comparison, competition, and criticism are the direct effects of capitalism, racism, sexism, ageism, and classism.

To move forward with musicians' liberation, we must commit to being allies to all musicians everywhere and continue to discharge the feelings that hold us back from being a hundred percent supportive.

Music is our connection to being fully human. How perfect that we get to show the world what an amazingly powerful tool it can be.

Dina Blade
Seattle, Washington, USA

⁴ "In the game" means fully engaged.



ELLIE PUTNAM

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AB

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KK

The following five reports were given at a gather-in, in San Jose, California, USA, in September 2011, at which the International Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons talked about their work.

Elders

I'm Dottie Curry, and I am the International Liberation Reference Person for Elders—the constituency that if you are lucky you will all enter into. My challenge is that every constituency will be in my constituency. I have to learn a lot. I have to think about how it is for GLBTQ¹ old people, Jewish old people, white old people, old people targeted by racism, and it keeps me on my toes.²

I have to think about that, but my common goal is to get people of every age to live their lives fully, to take care of themselves so that they can live their lives fully and their old age will be productive and happy and exciting. Sometimes things happen and we do get sick, but old age is not synonymous with disability. I want you to live your lives as well as you can until you die, if dying is necessary. (We might figure something out by then, so keep going.)

The other thing I focus on is the relationship between elders and younger people. In many places I do elders and allies gatherings. I do this so that the younger people can not only learn to be allies to us elders but also get started taking care of themselves, so that when they become elders they can live effective lives.

My health is not that great. Some conditions I have had since childhood, and if it weren't for RC, I would not be here. I go to my doctor appointments, and do my medical care, and do my Co-Counseling sessions, and I have this great group of people around the world who support me and it doesn't get any better than that. I had a birthday last month, I am seventy-five, and I got so many birthday messages that I had to erase them off my cell phone four times. I had too many e-mails and Facebook³ messages to respond to. I know you love me. Thanks very much! [Dottie died, of congestive heart failure, on March 10, 2012.]

Austin, Texas, USA

¹ Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer

² Keeps me on my toes means keeps me awake and alert.

³ Facebook is a social networking site on the Internet.

Young People

My name is Mari Piggott, and I have recently become the International Liberation Reference Person for Young People.

Why should everyone care about young people's liberation? Everyone has been a young person and experienced young people's oppression. Being around young people gives older people a fast track to discharging that hurt. Our isolation and hopelessness—those really chronic distresses—first came into us as young people. Ending young people's oppression means that we get to discharge those early hurts.

Young people's oppression is unacknowledged in our societies. Sometimes it's even thought of as good policy, like in schools. We young people are rarely given the opportunity and support to make real decisions in our lives. Society gives us opposing and confusing messages about drugs and alcohol and sex that make it hard to think about those things. There is a saying I have heard, "You don't make your real friends until college," that implies that we young people can't have real, important, close, lifelong relationships. That is so not true. We get to have close relationships, and we get to back* each other to have big lives.

I would like young people's liberation to move in the direction of young people staying connected to each other, being able to back each other, being central in the RC Communities, and taking leadership and figuring out the support they need to do that. All of you adults have young people in your lives whom you care about. It will make a big difference if you discharge your feelings about being a young person. It will make your life go way better, and you will be able to be important in the young people's lives.

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

* Back means support.

Allies to Young People

My name is Jenny Sazama, and I am the International Liberation Reference Person for Allies to Young People. I love my job. I love the people who have decided to be allies to young people. They know how to love. They know how to play. They know how to live life. We always have fun at the workshops I lead because of the decisions people have made in their lives to be allies.

I think of my job as having three parts to it. (1) One part is to think about every adult, inside and outside of Co-Counseling, who has made a decision to have a caring relationship with a young person—as a neighbor, a grandparent, a teacher, a worker—and help that person think about talking to other adults who have made a similar decision. A lot of times we do our work as allies on our own. Young people’s oppression keeps young people feeling small, and it keeps those of us who are connected to young people feeling like our work is small. Our work is not small. We need to talk about it, be proud of it, talk to each other, discharge with each other. (2) Another part is to move the Communities toward Goal 2, making the Communities accessible to young people.¹ This means that we’ve got some work to do. A lot of people around the world are

teaching young people’s classes; a lot of people who have been raised in RC are coming into our Communities. We need to do the work to get ready for them to be here. We need to have our Communities be welcoming of them. (3) The next thing that I consider part of my job is to help us adults understand young people’s liberation. Young people’s liberation is possible, and we adults don’t know this. We all were liberation fighters when we were little. Every one of us fought in our families. We fought for things to be different. We fought with our parents, we fought in our schools, we tried to speak up. Every one of us fought in every way that we could, and we got it squashed out of us. We need to have the bigger picture that young people’s liberation is actually possible.

Young people’s oppression is horrible. It is an incredibly harsh oppression that needs to end. We adults need to know, and we need to be able to back² young people to know, that it’s possible for it to end. I remember a quote Harvey³ repeated to me: “There they go, and I must follow them, for I am their leader.” That’s the trick with young people’s liberation—to know that young people are leaders. We need to figure out how to follow their minds, to know who they are, to really be peers with them.

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

¹ Goal 2 of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, as adopted by the 2001 World Conference of the RC Communities and reaffirmed by subsequent World Conferences: That the Re-evaluation Counseling Community put new and increased efforts into making Re-evaluation Counseling and the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities accessible to young people

² Back means support.

³ Harvey Jackins



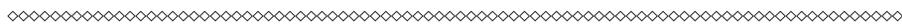
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 - “Discharging Rage and Terror,” by Laurenti Wright
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 - “Relationships Key in Community Building,” by Bafana Matsebula
 - “Dealing with What May Be Racism,” by Rachel Noble

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Young Adults



My name is Anna van Heeswijk, and I am the International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults. We young adults are part of every constituency, except young people and older people, so the specifics of our lives vary greatly depending on the groups we are part of. What we have in common is that we face young adult oppression.

So what is young adult oppression, and what is its purpose?

When we become young adults, the harshness of young people's oppression is lifted and we're given control of our lives and recognized power for the first time. Although we still carry undischarged hurts from young people's oppression, which can make us doubt our power and ability, we have not yet been co-opted into fitting into adult society and conforming to and accepting things as they are. Things are still new for us. We're making new decisions, trying new things, and figuring out what we want for our lives and for the world. And we still remember the importance of relationships and not doing things on our own. That makes us a potentially dangerous force in an oppressive society.

Young adult oppression exists to make sure that we don't use our power to change the world. So how does it do this? The system comes down on us hard and fast, systematically restimulating our early fears for survival by constantly telling us that there aren't enough jobs, that not everyone makes it,¹ that there is no safety net, and that our future depends on conforming to what is expected of us and not speaking out. This sets us up² to be in competition with one another and leaves us vulnerable to playing out³ our oppressive roles and using any privilege we have to try and get ahead. It isolates us and makes us believe that we can't counsel one another and that we must learn how to function on our own in order to survive as "proper" adults. And it systematically divides us from one another along the lines of oppression. This is what we face as young adults, and what we have to discharge in order to unite and be the revolutionary leaders that the oppressive society fears us to be.

We need the tools of RC, and this means that we need to be central to the growth and flourishing of the RC Communities. At the moment the RC Communities are dominated by older adults. As young adults we get to challenge our internalized oppression that can make us feel less capable or smart and make us rely on older adults to take the lead. We get to be in the center. We get to take the lead. Older adults get to remember our brilliance and support us to do this, which does not mean that they give up on their own leadership or on having big lives. We need to see that it is possible to have big lives and to not give up on our dreams no matter what age we are, that it is not only in these particular years that we get to go for⁴ everything, that's it's for our whole lives and for all of us to do together. Young adult liberation means ending all oppression and not settling for anything less than having the world exactly as we want it to be.

London, England

¹ Makes it means succeeds.
² Sets us up means predisposes us.
³ Playing out means acting out.
⁴ Go for means enthusiastically pursue.



KK

Family Work

I'm Chuck Esser, and I am the International Commonality Reference Person for Family Work.

The problem is not that we get hurt when we are little, it's that the society stops us from being able to discharge. Family work is about figuring out how to take the discharge process back and how to have access to discharge from the very beginning.

Being involved with young people is a fast track to re-emergence. Everything gets challenged. The things that we don't know or understand about our past all of a sudden flash before us. We have to deal with them right there. We're upset. We hate somebody. We want somebody. We want to leave the room. It would be great if whole RC classes came together to family workshops and then went back and discharged on them afterward.

Family work is built on relationships. The primary relationship every young person has is with his or her parents (if he or she has parents). We want every parent to take these revolutionary ideas

of what's possible with people and be able to be a counselor for his or her children, but we parents are just like everyone else. We have not had much of a chance to work on our early distresses, and we need backing¹ to figure out how to do that in this society.

We're creating something completely new. There are things to be learned from every culture about how to think about young people, how to think about parents, how to think about us as a Community, but some of the basic things we understand go counter to every culture.

If you do this work, you get to regain your ability to play, to enjoy life, to have connection beyond all the restrictions society places on having relationships with people much younger or older than you are. There is a good reason why so many of the leaders of the RC Community are family workers. Abilities regained in family work allow people to build community well.

¹ Backing means support.

We have done a couple of workshops for adoptive parents. Strong African-heritage family work is happening now in several parts of the world. The first family workshop in Africa happened last year. We have some interesting ideas about how family work can go forward in African communities that have been in the middle of wars. Chicano/a family work is spreading, and Lorenzo² has had a big role in that. In just a few months we'll have our first Asian family workshop. We are trying to put some emphasis on these different groups so that we as a Community can learn how to take family work into the various constituencies we are part of.

I hope you all join us in this effort to re-understand what we're about as human beings, and to put it into practice.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

² Lorenzo Garcia, the International Liberation Reference Person for Chicanos/as

Our apologies . . .

We miscredited some artwork in recent *Present Times* and would like to give credit to the actual artists.

— *Rational Island Publishers*

Drawings by Nicole Leifer

miscredited in the October 2011 and January 2012 issues of *Present Time*

Photograph by Pat Fischer

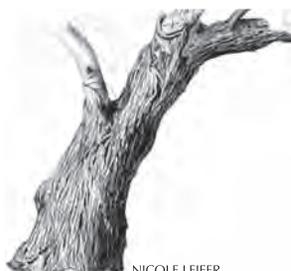
miscredited in the January 2012 *Present Time*



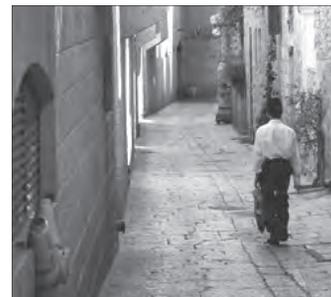
NICOLE LEIFER



NICOLE LEIFER



NICOLE LEIFER



OLD CITY, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL • PAT FISCHER

The Confusion of Racism for a White Baby

I have recently identified the early roots of my high-achiever pattern and discovered that it is linked to the hurts of witnessing racism as a white baby.

Since finishing my PhD I have been working in a research group at a university. I often feel bad about my work and not smart enough for the job. Last week a friend told me that he loves working with and being surrounded by people who know more than he does because somebody can always answer his questions. I felt my mind struggling with that, because it's so opposite to my pattern of feeling bad if I don't know something.

Tim¹ has talked about confusion being a part of our early hurts and how we can decide to believe that we know enough now. We worked on this idea in my Area² leaders' class and my counselor asked me, "What is the source of your confusion, first thought?" The phrase "white baby in a black town" popped into my head, and heavy discharge flowed.

I spent the first two years of my life living in a small, predominantly Aboriginal town in the north of Western Australia where my dad was doing community work. The devastating effects of racism and genocide were obvious and profoundly confusing for me. In many baby photos I'm frowning seriously at the camera as if I am trying to figure something out. My mum tells me that this is how I mostly looked at people. In a session this week I laughed and teeth-chattered uncontrollably when my counselor got me to try to play with her while she responded, "What are you trying to do here? Do I look like I want to play with you? There's important work to be done in this town!"

It seems that I made an early decision to try to figure out what was happening around me and that this developed into a frozen need³ to understand things. I always feel like I don't understand things, no matter how well I actually do. It's no wonder I always achieved so much at school. I was driven to understand everything and terrified if I could not. Racism cannot be comprehended by a baby, because it simply is not rational.

In Tim's article "You Are a Perfect Example of Us," in the October 2011 *Present Time*, Tim explains that

¹ Tim Jackins

² An Area is a local RC Community.

³ 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.

fighting for ourselves is actually fighting for everybody, because our rational interests are all aligned, and that white people in particular struggle to understand this. This point is crucial for me because my patterns tell me that I need to work hard and fight for everybody else but don't deserve to fight for myself or my family, since we were the privileged ones.

Now I know what I have to do in my sessions. I have to go back to that little white baby in that town and tell her two things: I need to tell her that she's right, that the things going on⁴ around her don't make sense, but that she doesn't have to figure anything out on her own and it's not her responsibility to fix things. I also need to tell her that she is a perfect example of a baby in that town and that fighting for herself is just as important as fighting for any other baby.

What I've figured out this week has already had an impact on my life and how I feel about my work. It's such a relief to realize that it's okay if I don't understand everything. It's so much easier to trust my ability and have confidence that I'm doing a good job.

Emily Mitchell
Rosebery, New South Wales, Australia

⁴ Going on means happening.

Things Are Looking Up for Humanity

There are certainly disastrous things happening currently, and they seem very large. . . . Actually things are looking up for all humanity at the present time, and the extreme results of breakdown in this oppressive society are bad but are not percentage-wise nearly as bad as what's been going on* all the time.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1995

* Going on means happening.

Relaxedly Handling Anti-Jewish Oppression

Too often we Jews, because of how we've been conditioned, equate any kind of anti-Jewish oppression with the worst of Nazi fascism and therefore overreact.

Several years ago I was taking a train between two Canadian cities. Next to me was an older white man, who introduced himself as a World War II veteran. Across from me was a young man dressed in black and camouflage who, when I asked, announced proudly that he was a Nazi. The veteran next to me spluttered in outrage at the young man something like, "You should be ashamed of yourself. I risked my life to fight the likes of you!" But in a relaxed and delighted tone I said, "That's so interesting. I'm Jewish. Can you tell me more about you and what it means to you to be a Nazi?" This opened the door to a fascinating conversation for the rest of the two-hour trip.

I listened sympathetically as the man told me about his hard life that had led him to conclude that others (black people, immigrants, and Jews) were robbing him and his family of good jobs. I also shared a little about my own experiences, without judging or blaming him, and we talked about more root causes of his family's difficulties and options for solidarity. At the end of the trip he said I was the first Jew he had ever met and that it was an interesting talk.

Diana Ralph

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Jews

* The likes of you means people like you.

* * * * * Asian Women Move Forward * * * * *

The Asian Women's Workshop, last December in Washington, USA, was great. For years many of us Asian women have tried to put attention on visibility, both in our actions and in our Co-Counseling sessions, to contradict pressures to hide and keep a low profile. But during the workshop, Diane¹ noticed a tendency toward

concealment, a downplaying and minimizing of difficulties, sometimes to the point of not bringing them up at all for discharge.

Who would show their business² to someone outside of family? Even within family is often a stretch. Many of us learned we were on our own in fundamental ways. And of course there

are big pressures to conform, to look "normal," as much as possible. None of this is hard to understand, especially in the United States in the context of racism toward Asians.

It was Diane's sharpness as an ally, her ability to notice and think outside our internalized oppression, that brought the issue of concealment to light. During the weekend I was part of several sessions in which secret difficulties came to light, finally available to discharge. Thank you, Diane!

¹ Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women, and the leader of the workshop

² In this context, business means personal issues.



ALAN SPRUNG

Carolyn Kameya
San Jose, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

*The following eight articles are from a discussion,
on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of men, about men and fighting.*

Questions About Boxing

A man who used to be in my life was a boxer when younger. Some feelings have come up about this, and I have some questions that I would like us to think and discharge about:

What are the distresses that push a man toward the activity of boxing? (I will not describe it as a sport.) What are the messages from those distresses? Is this activity typical only of working-class men? Do you know a boxer who was not raised poor or working-class? Have you ever seen a boxing fight? Did you feel like you wanted one person to win by hitting the other? Have you felt the pull to hit, too? Have you ever discharged on these feelings?

This man proudly told me about Cassius Marcellus Clay/Mohammed Ali. He used words like, "... enjoying his artistic way of destroying the enemy... a really well designed machine to destroy... he's got a lot of balls* to fight against everyone. ..."

I noticed that he (a white man) was proud of a black man (Mohammed Ali) hitting white men. This is something I have

discharged about. In my family (poor, working-class) we were taught that oppressed people had the right to rebel against their oppressors and should always support the oppressed person. I have always liked this idea and supported it. However, if I do not discharge on it, I can easily find myself supporting oppressive policies.

I am amazed that I can still feel attracted to boxing in spite of all my years of discharging deeply about human irrationality and violence.

My father liked boxing. He engaged us (his sons) in watching it with him on television. It was one of the few times he looked sparkly and proud of someone, so I linked the idea of being loved, recognized, and valued by Dad with having to like violence. I have seriously discharged on this, but there are still no men in my RC Region who practice competitive sports. There is some job I still need to do. What do you think about all this?

Xabi Odriozola
Donostia, Euskal Herria (Basque Country)

* Balls means courage.



HENRY COE STATE PARK, MORGAN HILL, CALIFORNIA, USA • © LISA VOSS

Fighting on the Basketball Court

I was raised poor/working-class in Brooklyn, New York, USA, and was surrounded by violence inside and outside my home. I was in a gang during most of my teen years, and we often had fights, either with other male groups or with each other. I was often in these fights; I usually felt terrified.

In my late teens I decided to get off the streets. I eventually went to college (the first in my family) and ultimately graduated from one of the country's leading law schools. During my studies I did not get into any fights. However, in my mid-twenties to early thirties, I did—perhaps as often as monthly. I was walking around with a chip on my shoulder.¹ If someone bumped into me, I made it clear I was prepared to fight, and we often did. Luckily for me (and the other people involved), no one was ever seriously hurt. In my early thirties I decided it no longer made sense for me to fight, because I was likely to get hurt at some point or hurt someone else—neither of which I wanted. Since making that decision and starting Co-Counseling (about twelve years ago), I have gotten into fewer fights, but still a few of them.

I play basketball on a playground in New York City. It's a physical game. For the most part the contact is thoughtful but hard. Since being in RC I have had

five fist fights on the basketball court. I get restimulated when I think someone is trying to hurt me and feel I must stop it by first hurting him—a literal recording. No one has gotten seriously hurt. The fights usually involve a couple of punches being thrown before the other guys break it up.

This summer I punched a guy I perceived as trying to hurt me (I think he actually was). It all happened in slow motion. I saw my hand leaving my body and heading toward his face and thought, "I can't believe I'm going to hit him," but I did. As soon as I connected, people came in to break us up. I immediately felt embarrassed and apologized to the man and to the other players. I walked off the court in shame and said I could no longer play. What was interesting was that all the players, including the man I had hit (who was now sporting² a shiner³), wanted me to come back and play. They didn't think it was a big deal.⁴ One guy said, "I would have done the same thing if he was doing that to me." I did go back and play.

To be honest, it was not so much shame that I felt that night but a sense of power for having stood up for myself and pride in having hit someone who was trying to hurt me. I had many great

sessions after the incident—on how bad I felt (here I am, an RC teacher, beating people up) but also on getting to stand up against those who had tried to do me harm (in my early life). For days after the incident I could tell⁵ that more of me was present, that whatever I got to show in that fight was something I had kept buried deep inside me and didn't let out. What a relief it was to let it leak out just a little.

I can tell it makes no sense to get into fights on the basketball court, but I would like to figure out how to show the feelings in an RC setting. I am often asked to be the counselor in physical counseling sessions⁶ (I have a fair amount of attention, because I got to do a lot of wonderful roughhousing⁷ with my brother growing up), but it's hard to show what I need to when I'm client.

Interestingly, I have become close friends with two of the people I've fought with on the court. There is a way that we showed something to each other, and feel appreciative that we could show it.

Adley Gartenstein
New York, New York, USA

⁵ In this context, tell means perceive.

⁶ Physical counseling sessions are sessions in which the client pushes against physical resistance from the counselor as a way to access discharge.

⁷ Roughhousing is physical play.

¹ With a chip on my shoulder means easily angered.

² Sporting means wearing (on his face).

³ A shiner is a black (bruised) eye.

⁴ A big deal is an important event or issue.



LAURIE RHODES

Working Together to End Racism

A pamphlet introducing RC from the perspective of ending racism

\$2.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

Ordering information on page 109

A Decision to Look at *All* of Reality

I grew up lower-middle-class and the “hope” of raised-poor parents. I was shielded from violence. Due to my early hurts, I didn’t mix it up¹ much with other boys and learned to avoid physical fights. Boxing seemed horrifying to me.

Until recently I’ve also avoided scary or violent movies. I’ve felt that RC theory backs² me in this. When counseling men who compulsively watch horror movies, I’ve given them directions to give them up³ (probably a correct direction for these men).

I am making a new decision to look at *all* of reality (or at least more of it), not just the easy or positive parts, so I decided to watch some movies I had missed out on: *Jaws*, *Alien*, the *Die Hard* movies, *Terminator*, and others. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed most of them. I have let myself discharge spontaneously if it happens (often laughter) and have worked on the feelings in Co-Counseling sessions when called for.⁴

Now, at sixty, I’m considering taking boxing lessons. I want to learn how to throw and take a punch, hit and get hit. (Yes, I will protect my piano-playing hands.) I’m trying to build up my courage.

Ed Rejuney
Kensington, Maryland, USA

¹ Mix it up means engage.

² Backs means supports.

³ Give them up means quit watching them.

⁴ Called for means necessary.

My History of Fighting

I grew up in suburban Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in a white Jewish working-class family. One of the ways my dad and I bonded was by watching professional wrestling together. (Professional wrestling is considered entertainment more than sport; larger-than-life characters pretend to beat each other up.) Wrestling was the main way he played with me, and I loved it.

Having said that, I’ve always seen myself as much too scared to really fight. When I was thirteen, an older teenage guy thought I said something to him that I didn’t and got angry and started hitting me. I was shocked and scared and responded only by peeing¹ in my pants. When I was nineteen, I was mugged while driving a taxi. Humiliation is central to my early hurts. These images of myself stay with me.

Twenty-six years ago, about the same time I started RC, I began learning karate. I have practised on and off since then. A couple of years ago I got my second-degree black belt. To some that sounds impressive; others would want to find out if I can really fight. In my own mind, I’m still the guy who is ready to pee in his pants if violence finds him. This keeps me from getting involved in situations that might involve

conflict. (I think Harvey² once said that we all should learn a martial art. Does anyone else remember that?)

I’ve learned something from karate that I think is also true about boxing: it’s fun to spar. I was lucky to have a teacher who was excellent at sparring. He modeled physical control. People rarely made hard contact and even more rarely got hurt. Sparring is like a game of physical chess. It’s exciting to see what you can teach your body to do, and to watch other people and anticipate their thoughts and movements.

It’s clear to me that fighting for “sport” is only about distress—not that this stops me from watching boxing on

continued . . .

² Harvey Jackins



KIERAN REICHERT

¹ Peeing means urinating.

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television once in a while. For me it is like watching a horror movie or going on a roller-coaster ride—I feel a lot of fear but usually don't discharge much. Sometimes I imagine having big enough muscles that being punched hard wouldn't hurt or stop me. I'm trying to find a contradiction to the early humiliation, but I don't usually remember to discharge.

"Ultimate Fighting" is becoming more and more popular in this part of the world. It involves two men fighting (full contact) in a cage with few rules. I think they can't gouge eyes or bite, but everything else is okay. It is on television during prime time, as early as 6:00 or 7:00 PM, when young people can have easy access to it. The first time I encountered it, I watched one guy punch another, over and over again, in the groin. The guy getting punched was holding the guy doing the punching and wouldn't let go, so the punching didn't stop. I watched for about ten punches and then changed the channel. The image that stays in my mind is absurd and

frightening. Apparently violence is becoming acceptable in this culture in more and more extreme ways.

I can think of three or four times at RC workshops when I have come close to a physical fight. Years ago a guy brought boxing gloves and protective head gear to a workshop so that we could all try out hitting each other in a mild way. One guy hit me enough times that I got angry and tried to hit him back, hard. A couple of other times, in basketball games with our typically loose "RC rules," I came close to fighting with several men. The fear that came up was intense. Stopping myself and trying to discharge was not easy.



Phil Rees
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

"I Have More to Discharge"

I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. Pittsburgh is a blue-collar city (lots of working-class influence). My brother and two stepbrothers grew up watching all kinds of contact sports, including boxing. One stepbrother actually makes his living teaching muay tai kick boxing, after retiring from being the undefeated amateur middle-heavy-weight muay tai world champion. He fought over thirty title fights, many of which ended brutally—for example, with him knocking his opponents unconscious or breaking their legs.

Even as I am typing this, my fear level is rising. Growing up with this brutal sport in my life was terrifying. I was scared of my stepbrother, afraid of getting beat up, afraid of him beating other people up—just plain afraid.

It wasn't just my stepbrother. Many boys around me were into¹ fighting. My best friend often got into fights. One night when we were fourteen, I was standing next to him when another boy called him a name and

kicked him in the face, knocking out his two front teeth and breaking his jaw. While he lay unconscious on the cement, I held his head in my hands, shaking and wishing the ambulance would hurry up.

Another time I watched him and another boy beat each other until both of them were covered with blood. I wanted to yell at them to stop—I was afraid one of them was going to get killed—but I didn't, because I was even more afraid that one of the other boys would attack me. Right afterward I helped my friend clean up his pummeled face. I really needed to cry, but I tried to hide it.

I remember when the movie Rocky came out. The story is based in Philadelphia (the other big city in Pennsylvania). It's about a working-class man who gets a chance to box against the reigning world champion. There is an unforgettable scene in which his face is so badly

¹ Were into means liked.



TOGO • MARION OUPHOUET

battered that he can no longer see out of his eyes. He tells his trainer to cut his eyelids to release the blood so that he can finish the fight. I know now why I can't forget that scene: I have more to discharge.

The boxing memory I most need to discharge on is of the 1982 light-weight title fight between Ray Mancini and Duk Koo Kim. I was thirteen years old. Up until then I had only seen heavy-weight and middle-weight boxers fight; I was unprepared for the speed and intensity with which these guys went

at it.² It was horrifying to watch. In the end Duk Koo Kim was knocked down, and as he tried to get back on his feet Mancini was declared the winner. Minutes after the fight Duk Koo Kim went into a coma. Four days later he died. I remember crying night after night remembering the image of that passionate young South Korean man staggering to his feet, and how, with his last conscious breath, he was still trying to fight.

² Went at it means engaged in it.

Apparently the world boxing federation changed the rules after Duk Koo Kim's death. They reduced the number of rounds from fifteen to twelve, added another rope to the rink, and required that boxers have more stringent physical examinations before fighting.

I'm glad we are engaging in this conversation (thanks, Xabi, for bringing it up). Remembering that I need to discharge on these memories is a good thing. I'm going to call someone to discharge.

Tibor Besskó
Eugene, Oregon, USA

Expecting and Preparing for Violence

Two years ago I was on the top of a mountain with two male friends. I was sixty years old. One friend was in his thirties, and the other was in his early twenties. It was springtime, and we were doing an organized count of hawks migrating north past the mountaintop.

We were in a state-run park, and a group of older teens from a private upper-class school were working on the trails. They came to the top of the mountain for their lunch break. One of the male teens had a baseball bat and started asking for people's apples. He then tossed them in the air and hit them off the top of the mountain. The apples were smashing, and pieces were going everywhere. The other guys in his group got excited and found other things to hit with the bat. It was destructive and interrupted the atmosphere of respect for nature that my friends and I were trying to create.

My friends were getting angry at the behavior of the teens and saying sarcastic things under their breath.¹ My younger friend lost patience and began to mock the teens' laughter after each hit with the bat. He did it in an aggressive way and got louder and louder until he got their attention.

The guy with the bat stopped, looked at my friend, and said, "Do you have a problem?" My friend replied, "Do *you* have a problem?" and insulted the guy. All the

hairs on my neck went up. I suddenly had a flood of memories. "Oh yes," I thought, "This is what it's like being with men." I had not been in situations like that in a long time. It had been many years, even decades, since I had come close to a fight.

A fight looked like a possibility. It was interesting to watch my response. Because of all the discharging on violence I'd done, I was relaxed—alert but relaxed. I was not afraid. I was calculating our chances of winning the fight. I decided that even though there were twice as many teenage boys, we could win. We were older and therefore more intimidating. Also, my twenty-year-old friend was big and athletic (and clearly looking for a fight), and my other friend was a former hockey player and big sports fan. He was competitive and aggressive, and I guessed that if he was a hockey player, he knew how to fight. And I decided that I could win because I was not afraid.

As it turned out,² the younger group backed down.³ I relaxed. Then for nearly an hour my friends and I talked about fights we had been in. Phew!⁴ There was lots of discharge—mostly laughter.

I had a bunch of Co-Counseling sessions on the experience. Part of what came up was surprise that I

continued . . .

¹ Under their breath means quietly, without being heard.

² Turned out means happened.

³ Backed down means retreated.

⁴ Phew is an expression of relief.

LIBERATION

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no longer get into these situations. Part of it was about class: how much arrogance the teens had. They would not easily be submissive or quiet when upset. And physical competition is a big part of upper-class U.S. male upbringing.

I was surprised to realize how ready I was to fight, and how much of the time I am living on alert, prepared to fight. When I am in a city or crowded place, I am especially aware of it. I believe I could beat up, intimidate, or discourage anyone who tried to physically attack or threaten me—and this is a big part of my feeling safe in any situation. I have wondered if this will change as I get older and possibly more disabled. What will I do then? When I wrestle younger people in RC and, as frequently happens, they comment on how strong I am, I not only feel complimented, I feel relieved, safer.

There was a Vietnam War veteran in our small village, a sweet guy who was heavily medicated and in and out of the “mental health” system. He spent most of his days on the street. One day he threatened a young woman with a knife and was sent off for a while. When he came back, I spent a good amount of time thinking about how to kill him if I had to. That seemed sick, but it also seemed smart to be prepared.

I realize that expecting and preparing for violence is a huge part of my life. Mostly I’m dealing with the oppressive “violence” that falls on me and my friends as working-class people: the threat of being fired from our jobs, of not being able to pay bills, of losing a house—I call this violence. This “fight” that we face every day is the same as the one on the mountaintop, or the one

that I faced when I was beaten up by my friends when I was young.

It keeps me on edge⁵ and, I suppose, running constantly on fear.⁶ However, like in the situation on the mountaintop, it does not seem like fear or seem unusual. It is just the way it is. Life is a battle, and you had better be prepared for it. Harvey⁷ once gave me a direction: “If you ever get a chance to do nothing, take it.” I sometimes remember to do that. Most of the time, no—the fight is too present.

Like many USers, I have spent a lot of time watching and enjoying violent revenge movies. I must have discharged something because I don’t enjoy them much anymore. However, most of my leadership feels like revenge in some way—a chance to fight back. Writing is like that for me, too.

I have not even begun to talk about the daily violence and threat of violence in my life when I was young, particularly around other males—mostly people whom I called my friends. Diane Balser⁸ has asked us men to work on how we were dominated by men, as a way for us to work on male domination of women. We’ve needed encouragement to do that.

Dan Nickerson
Freeport, Maine, USA

⁵ On edge means tense, ready for anything.

⁶ Running constantly on fear means constantly affected by and operating on top of fear.

⁷ Harvey Jackins

⁸ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.



TOGO • MISSIGBE HOKAMETO

Invite Men's Anger Out into the Open

Throughout elementary school I fought in a friendly fashion with a couple of friends. I had my last angry fight in eighth grade.

After I got into Co-Counseling, I noticed how physically afraid I was in some situations. I took martial arts classes and discharged a bunch; something moved a bit. I'm now trying to get stronger and more fit, partly to be able to welcome more physical sessions* from my clients.

Even we mild-mannered men have aggressive anger pent up inside—anger that we are usually too scared or well-controlled to let show. Counselors need to discharge so that they can invite men's anger out into the open. Clients will know when there's real attention for them to work on rage and violence. With more attention and discharge, we'll find that little (if any) acting out of violence recordings need occur.

Russ Vernon-Jones
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA

* Physical sessions are RC sessions in which a client pushes against physical resistance from the counselor as a way to gain access to discharge.

Many Boxing Incidents

My twenty-one-year-old son is considering learning to box. When I asked him why, he replied that it was good fitness training. Later he again raised the subject. I again asked him why he was keen,¹ and this time he said that he wanted to learn how to defend himself. (Twenty months ago he was attacked in a car park after work and his attacker slit his throat.) He has not yet started lessons. I'll continue to discharge on supporting his decisions. He and I are both working class.

I have many boxing incidents of my own to discharge on. As a young person I was regularly in fights at the many new schools I attended. I usually lost them, mostly due to lack of skill. I also learned that it often made sense to let the local lads win. As I grew older, I did win a couple of these bouts.

I was never the one looking for a fight. I've never enjoyed expressing my anger that way. I guess because of my early distress, it seems easier to be beaten rather than do the beating. Plus it feels scary to possibly lose control.

One incident still has me confused. After school one evening my best friend and I were bullied by a gang of youths for walking down "their" street. My friend knew a younger brother of one of these thugs and was allowed to sit down and watch while they punched me. They all left me to walk home alone. I didn't trust my friend after that, and we stopped being friends. Quite a while later he came to

my home and apologized (for not helping) and we became friendly again, but never best friends. My restimulation is mainly about not feeling cared for, a chronic distress. I can discharge about this when I'm able and helped to notice that I am cared about. A useful contradiction² is proudly claiming, "I can't help noticing how much I care about people."

Later, as a young adult, my work as a construction rigger had me travelling around in rural areas where we (a crew of six to nine men) often visited local boxing tents. These tents operated like a circus. The ringmaster³ would invite audience members to challenge the "champ."⁴ Quite often people gambled money on the outcome.

One of my workmates had been an amateur boxing champion. He was extremely fast and powerful, despite being thin. We often won quite a bit of money. He would attract large odds because of his looks and then knock down his lumbering opponents quite easily, much to the dismay of the tent manager. Sometimes we had to get our money and leave in a hurry.

Thanks to all of you for your stories. I welcome more.

Ian Paterson
Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia

² Contradiction to the distress

³ The ringmaster means the person moderating the event.

⁴ The "champ" means the champion.

¹ Keen means interested.

Peer Relationships with Young People

RC young people's liberation has been one of the most hopeful and direct routes I have taken to contradicting and discharging early chronic material.¹ I fell in love with it on first exposure (at the time, at age twenty-three, I was not far from being a young person myself).

Early on I formed close relationships with a number of young people and had a fair amount of attention for them. Those relationships were important and made a big difference to me, but they had a significant flaw in that I began with the perspective that I was an ally for the young people. I believed that I was most useful as a one-way counselor. My counseling of and thinking about the young people was useful in a way, but it was limited in that it didn't accurately reflect who they were, what they were capable of, or what an effective Co-Counseling relationship is. It was inside of young people's oppression and, opposite to my intention, was actually disempowering.

My childhood left me believing that my job was to think about everyone but myself and that taking attention from others was wrong and even harmful to them. The way I related to young people fit right in with that distress. Trying to be a one-way counselor meant that I wasn't in the relationships with my full self, and it left me feeling spent and alone. It just didn't work.

As a middle-class Jewish woman raised in a society influenced by the "mental health" system, I was good at looking like I was in much better shape² than I was. I spent many years leading and counseling people on top of my distress and only recently

¹ Material means distress.

² Shape means condition.

figured out, with much help from my Co-Counseling Community, how to really make space to work on the underlying distresses. It has been a hard battle, but one that has dramatically improved all my relationships and my whole life!

When I started understanding and changing the way I related to young people, my relationships with them changed in really cool³ ways. Given the oppression young people are faced with, one-way time occasionally made sense, but allowing the young people I was close with to think about and counsel me turned out to be⁴ incredibly useful to us both. It's been a contradiction to the content of young people's oppression to acknowledge that young people's minds are fully capable and make a huge difference in general and to me personally. The relationships I have allowed to become peer have become some of the most important relationships in my life. The ones I haven't have not been sustainable.

The first young person I figured this out with was a young man who was a senior in high school when we started Co-Counseling. Our relationship

³ Cool means great, wonderful.

⁴ Turned out to be means resulted in being.



LANCE CABLK

began as my others had, with me trying to be a one-way counselor, but he thought about me too well and I had discharged too much to let it stay that way.

Being seen, and counseled well, by him made a huge difference to me. He is now among my strongest counselors. That I let him think about me and showed myself as much as I could, including my struggles, helped create the safety for him to do the same. Since he left for college, and then graduated, we have both had to battle heavy chronic material to stay in contact, but our relationship continues to be a significant one to us both. Now he is moving back to his home city, where I live (yippee!).

Since Co-Counseling with him, I have formed other peer relationships with young people. I have learned to show more, including my distresses (which they have seen anyway, but it is more useful to us all when I can be open about them). I have noticed that the more I engage with my full self, the more the young people in my life do the same.

It has also seemed important for me to talk with them, outside of Co-Counseling sessions, about things I want and hope for and mistakes I have made, including in relation to dating, sex, drugs, work. This became clear to me at a workshop some years ago when I was hanging out⁵ with a few young women I was close to. They got ahold of a text message I had sent to someone I was dating and were teasing me (not unkindly) about it. They asked me questions, and though I was really embarrassed, I could tell⁶ it was important that I

⁵ Hanging out means spending relaxed, unstructured time.

⁶ Tell means perceive, see.

answer honestly (I laughed and shook a ton⁷ while I did). I have discharged for years on early sexual memories, so I could be thoughtful about how I talked, but I also tried not to be too careful. After I talked about myself, they began talking about aspects of their lives they had not spoken about with Co-Counselors before. It was a beautiful moment. I had close relationships with each of their parents, and understood that it was important to help them be as open as possible with their parents as well.

It is reassuring to young people when adults show all. This is especially true of young people raised in RC, who often feel like they are not supposed to have distresses and struggles and should hide them if they do.

⁷ A ton means a great deal, a lot.

I have learned when counseling with young people to client with perspective. This has been useful to me (and at times hard). Young people are smart and capable counselors, but they need information about RC theory and practice. When I counsel without perspective, as if my feelings are in the present and true, it is confusing to them (and to me) and does not help them have a true understanding of Co-Counseling. When I can work early⁸ and not believe my distress, it makes a big difference to us both. This is, of course, true in all my sessions and is something I am just really learning how to do. The more I do it, the better my relationships and my life go.

Another important part of being an effective ally to young people is

⁸ Work early means discharge on early distress.

having a strong group of allies to be close to and discharge with. We were all so isolated when we were hurt as young people that we can't effectively battle the oppression now if we try to act alone (believe me, I have tried!). Being close to other adults who are doing young people's liberation work has made a huge difference and has been a lot of fun! We can discharge our oppressor material together and can help each other remember (when our distress makes us forget) what is true about ourselves and about our relationships with the young people in our lives.

Yay for young people's liberation, and how it leads to the liberation of us all!

Shira Sameroff
Brooklyn, New York, USA



Art Is the Expression of Love



I recently went to an artists' leaders' workshop, in Austin, Texas, USA, led by John Fehringer, the International Liberation Reference Person for Visual Artists.

Creativity is a quintessential attribute of human beings. Identifying as an artist has been a way for those of us claiming the identity to protect and preserve that part of our humanness in the face of capitalism. This makes the identity precious and important to us (though it's an identity like any other, and all humans can claim it).

John encouraged each of us to counsel on having things ideal for ourselves as artists, to think about how that would look (not meaning the life of a mega-rich person, which our society presents to us as an ideal, but in real-life terms for each of us personally), and to head there. That kept our path and direction re-emergent and open ahead of us, while distress fell away. (The pattern in the non-RC world is to be negative and notice where things are hard. It makes sense to separate that pattern from our art process and our lives.)

He said that working early¹ is still most beneficial but that it doesn't mean just going back to the original hurt. The

¹ Working early means discharging early distress.

counselor in us can go back to be with the young person,² and change the perspective of that young one in some way. A change in perspective back then can move us a mile in the present.

John also talked about how art and money have nothing to do with each other. Because of capitalism and wanting to make money, we can get confused and be pulled away from what we originally wanted to do, which was to make art. We need to work on money separately from working on art. It's okay to make money from making art, but it's not the same thinking that's needed for both. Making money from art is running a business (which calls for its own relevant discharge, different from working on where we want to go as artists). John suggested remembering our earliest hopes and dreams as a way to find the seed of what we wanted to make.

Each time I have heard it, John's thinking has pointed me toward reclaiming all that I am as a human being. As he said, "What else is art but the expression of love of yourself and of humanity?"

Susan Pomeroy
Tucson, Arizona, USA

² The young person refers to our young self.

United States Identity

The following are excerpts from the newsletter made up of writing by and letters to the Information Coordinator for People Thinking About United States Identity.

Here's the letter I wrote to folks from Ireland, England, Canada, Australia, and the United States who were coming to the Middle-Class Leaders' Conference in the fall of 2010:

Like any other identity group, each of our national identities includes aspects of humanness that our people have held onto, that are valued and supported by our culture, and distress patterns accumulated throughout our history. As with any other identity, we can claim our nationality with pride, clean it up, celebrate the human bits, discharge the distresses, and then throw it out.

It is challenging to build human connection across national and continental boundaries and to have a clear enough picture of what's happening to act effectively to support that connection.

National identity is manipulated into supporting the class system. Any rigid feelings we carry about our national identity make us vulnerable to this manipulation and separate us from potential allies, both within our own country and across borders.

Have some Co-Counseling sessions before the conference on claiming pride in your national identity. What do you love about your country and its people? Also, what assumptions do you carry about the other nations that will be represented at this conference?

Folks from Canada, Australia, Ireland, and England: assume that we USers want you and are waiting eagerly for your leadership. Your people and your thinking are central to middle-class liberation, and you belong right in the center of the conference.

USers: we get to think about how we can help make space for folks from other countries so that they can focus on the conference, and we can learn from them.

The United States, as a nation, takes up a lot of resources in the world, and we as USers often do also. Part of this comes from a certain confidence and support for individual initiative that is part of our heritage. It is one of our strengths, but it can also get in our way when other strengths are needed. This weekend we'll need to focus on building community, building

alliances, that will make possible the things we can't do on our own. The kind of transformation we are working for will require global networks of people sharing ideas and backing² each other. However, as Seán³ reminds us, trying to be good allies in a one-way sense can get in the way of our making real human connections. We get to relax, let go of any urgency about what needs to happen this weekend, make friends, and enjoy being together.

*Nancy Wygant
Information Coordinator for People
Thinking About United States Identity
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA*



KK

Many of us middle-class USers feel urgent about what needs to happen and feel that doing things is good. Doing is important, but it doesn't have to be the first thing, the most important thing.

Doing can be contrasted with being, noticing what is going on,⁴ taking time to be and feel, connecting with others, connecting with our world, making and being friends, enjoying being together, being (and feeling that we are) part of others and a community—and then doing things together.

*Maura Fallon
Hong Kong*



KK

I'm an African heritage, middle-class, Protestant, Southern,⁵ young adult female USer. I was planning to lead middle-class folks, but after some discharge I realized I needed to look hard at USers in general if I was going to have success in working on middle-class distress. The recent protests⁶ have seemed to provide enough space for me to finally write, after putting it off⁷ for years. I'm looking forward to connecting with others doing this work.

*Leigh Crenshaw
Washington, D.C., USA*

² Backing means supporting.

³ Seán Ruth, the International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People

⁴ Going on means happening.

⁵ Southern means of the states in the United States that seceded from the union in 1860 and 1861, leading to the U.S. Civil War.

⁶ The recent protests in the United States and around the world against repressive governments and domination by wealthy elites.

⁷ Putting it off means postponing it.

¹ Made up of means consisting of.

I was born in 1951 and grew up in a white, middle-class, politically liberal, Quaker U.S. family. My earliest memory related to national borders is of going with my family to a movie. Before the main feature, we watched a short newsreel in which a woman was shot to death when she was a passenger in a car that her husband was driving (perhaps accidentally?) past soldiers at a border crossing. No one explained anything to me about what had happened or why, so I drew my own conclusions: that national borders were potentially unsafe and not necessarily good things. In contrast, while visiting in northern Vermont (USA), my family went for fun to the U.S.-Canadian border and made a game of stepping back and forth across the boundary.

Perhaps due to my parents' liberal politics, I never developed a strong sense of patriotism. At school we were required to repeat daily a pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag. It seemed silly to me, even at a young age, because many of the words were beyond my vocabulary; it didn't make sense to me for children to make promises they couldn't understand. I sensed even then that if patriotism had to rely on such devious means to instill itself in the next generation, its truth was questionable.

I was in sixth grade during the Cuban Missile Crisis.⁸ For a few days I left for school each morning unsure if I would return home in the afternoon. At school we practiced air raid drills, crawling under our desks for protection from atomic bombs. It was clear to me that the adults did not have things under control. As a sixth grader I went along with the charade of hiding from nuclear weapons, but as a middle-school student I refused to participate and received permission to abstain. While during air raid drills the rest of my schoolmates descended into a fallout shelter, I went alone outside onto the playground and imagined bombs destroying all life on Earth.

Meanwhile, my middle-school social studies teacher claimed that if a communist told him at noon that the sun was shining, he wouldn't believe him. My teacher's anti-communist bigotry so clearly obscured his sense of logic that it was easy to reject his views as nonsensical.

In spite of how obviously ridiculous the nationalism was, it infiltrated my mind and the minds of my peers. Although

⁸ The Cuban Missile Crisis was a confrontation among the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the United States in October 1962. After the United States had deployed over a hundred nuclear missiles capable of striking the Soviet Union, and made several attempts to overthrow the Cuban regime, in August 1962 the Cuban and Soviet governments secretly began building bases in Cuba for nuclear missiles capable of striking the United States. A U.S. Air Force plane captured photographic proof of the bases, leading to a crisis that is generally regarded as the moment in which the Cold War came the closest to turning into a nuclear conflict. Secret communications resulted in an agreement that ended the confrontation on October 28, 1962.

my middle-school classmates and I were not divided by cliques and had developed a strong sense of community that successfully crossed gender, race, and class lines, when a new girl from the Soviet Union joined our class, we ostracized her and made her life hell, simply because she was Soviet.

Over the years I have grown to appreciate certain of the founding principles of the United States. A couple of times I have had the privilege of refusing to allow police to search my car or enter my home without a search warrant. I value that right and am aware that not everyone in the world has it. I am also aware that due to race, class, criminal record, or immigration status, not everyone in the United States effectively has that right, which makes it even more important for me, as a white male middle-class person, to insist on it being upheld.

As an English as a Second Language teacher in a public elementary school, I learned about a U.S. policy that prohibits public school personnel from inquiring whether or not students or their parents are in the United States legally, since such an inquiry could have a chilling effect on children of illegal immigrants attending school. I love that in this case of contradictory rules, the principle of a child's right to an education trumps the laws that prohibit illegal entry into the country.

Many of my students' families have shared with me their struggles concerning their illegal immigration status. I have often felt apologetic for my government's policies that make life so difficult for people I care about.

Being from the United States carries with it a confusing mixture of pride and guilt. People from other countries around the world admire, fear, emulate, and hate us. As USers, we have an opportunity to use our political and economic resources to make the world a better place, both inside and outside of our borders.

Steve Crofter

Brattleboro, Vermont, USA

continued . . .



DIANE SHISK

LIBERATION

... continued

Three of us have been meeting, about once every two months, to discharge about being USers. It took months of trying to think about this for me to remember two other people in our Community who had been interested in it, and months more to remember a second time after forgetting about it, but it didn't take long at all, once I asked, for them to agree to meet.

Our little group is all European American, and middle- and owning-class, with families that have been in the United States for generations.

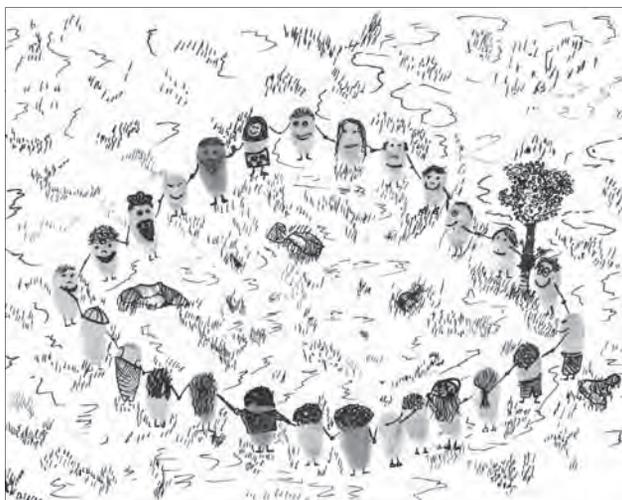
The first time we met, we started off with a short go-around on what we were proud of about the United States. Then we took longer turns on what we were proud of about the particular part of the country we were from. That turned out to be⁹ particularly useful for one of us, who finds it hard to claim the nation as a whole but loves his native state and feels proud of his family's history there.

The second time we met was on Indigenous People's Day (otherwise known as Columbus Day).¹⁰ I suggested that we discharge on the history of our European American ancestors' interactions with Native people. The main thing I learned from that evening was how hard it is for us to focus on that issue.

Yesterday I suggested that we look at our reactions to the news. Given how much we're raised with the idea

⁹ Turned out to be means resulted in being.

¹⁰ Columbus Day is a holiday, celebrated in the United States and several other countries in the Americas, commemorating the arrival in the Americas of the Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus on October 12, 1492. Indigenous People's Day is a counter-celebration with the purpose of promoting Native American culture and commemorating the history of Native American peoples.



ROB VENDERBOS

that the United States is a model of democracy and freedom for the rest of the world, we focused on what we could learn from Tunisia, Egypt, and other countries in a part of the world that we are not used to following as our leader.

Nancy Wygant
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



KK

I'm a USer living in New Zealand with my Kiwi¹¹ partner and five-year-old child. My "overbearing" pattern, wherever it pops up, is soundly restimulating to many folks here, who value humility and thoughtfulness, not bluster or presumption. False or naive confidence is greatly discouraged among Kiwis. Perhaps this highlights a "strength" of the USers: a certain discipline of hopefulness and a willingness to accept a "fake-it-until-you-make-it" attitude.

There is a great swath of slack here in New Zealand for accepting "things as they are" (including people's patterns) and moving forward without a fuss. USers generally dramatize distresses more often.

Our goodness as USers is intact. I have cried with pride about my sisters and brothers in Wisconsin (as well as those in North Africa) for standing up for what's right.¹²

Lance Cablk
Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand

¹¹ Kiwi means born in New Zealand.

¹² The author is referring to the recent people's protests in the state of Wisconsin (USA) and several North African countries.

A Good Definition of Oppression

... a good definition of oppression is not just "the systematic mistreatment of one group by another" but, more correctly, "the systematic mistreatment of one group of people often, but not always, with another serving as the agent of the oppression, with the mistreatment being organized and supported by the society."

Harvey Jackins
From *The Longer View*, page 117

From a Russian Immigrant

My parents and I moved from Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Russia, to the United States in 1989, when I was six. I want to share some of my story, to give a picture of my successes and struggles in the United States and in RC.

I love my home culture. I love its warmth, its sense of community, its aestheticism, its playfulness and subtle irony, its frankness, and its rich history. I love Russian literature and music, and I love travelling around Russia.

I love that I'm an immigrant. I love having more than one culture to draw on. I like finding it easy to cross national boundaries and not take them seriously as the limits of my world. I like that I've learned to be perceptive and see a lot about a person very quickly. I love most how easy it is to think outside the box.¹ I always know that there are alternative possibilities to what I see around me, and I have a vivid picture of what some of them are. I take less for granted. Whatever I do, I can often come up with² a fresh perspective. I know that immigrants can think well, and that they're an enormous resource in every country.

I would like us immigrants to be more visible in RC. I want us to show how hard our oppression can be for us, how varied the struggles we come with can be, and some ways immigrant oppression can intersect with other oppressions.

IMMIGRATION

I'm happy my family left. The oppression we fled was brutal. My family is Jewish, and some of them opposed the Soviet regime. Two of my relatives were buried alive by Nazis. One died in a Gulag.³ Several

were persecuted in other ways. My father got in trouble with the secret police for his anti-communist activities in college and barely avoided being expelled. My mother was not allowed to go to graduate school. Most books had to be read and passed on in secret. Anti-Jewish oppression was everywhere and supported by the government. My family lived in fear, with little information and limited prospects.

We fled as political refugees, along with many of our friends and colleagues. Everyone waited in Rome for a few months for approval to enter the United States, Canada, Israel, Australia, wherever they had someone to go to. We followed some friends to Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. My parents found an apartment, jobs, and a school for me. My father worked as a computer programmer, and my mother started as a cleaning lady at a bed and breakfast and then went to graduate school. Like many of our friends, they started on welfare⁴ and moved on to high-paying jobs, with a divorce along the way.

The immigrant oppression at school was intense. My dad had taught me English before we immigrated, and within a few months I had picked up the rest of what I needed and lost my Russian accent, but I was awkward and "nerdy."⁵ I looked and moved differently. I didn't know how to get along with the rest of the class. I didn't know their music or jokes or games. I was way ahead of them in math.

I was safe and comfortable with my teachers and usually one or two of my classmates. The rest of my classmates thought I was strange, called me names, made fun of me, refused to play with me, picked me last for teams in gym class, and so on. Most of them had no curiosity about where I came from or what it was like. If they asked me a question, it was why I combed my hair funny⁶ or why I stood so close.

I rarely felt like I was in physical danger, but I was almost always made to feel unwelcome and out of place. That went on for many years and has never quite stopped. Many USers have a calm, unshakeable confidence that the way they do things is the way that makes sense and that anyone else is "weird" and not worth thinking about. In that environment, the only way to be close and connected was by trying to be completely different from what I was.

I fought to fit in the best I could. I memorized the most popular songs. Sometimes I liked them, but that was not what mattered. I studied what people wore and tried to dress like that. One year I brought ten to twenty dollars' worth of candy to school almost every day and gave it out to people in my class, especially the ones who were the meanest or the most popular. I hid my intellectual achievements as much as possible. I tried desperately to erase my past and refused to speak Russian in public or at home. My grandmother cried when she started hearing my

continued . . .

⁴ Welfare is financial or other aid provided by the government to people in need.

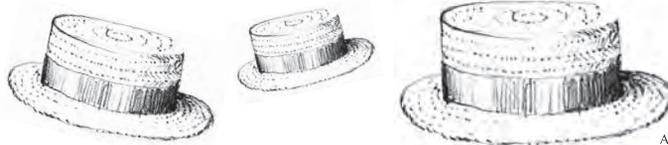
⁵ "Nerdy" means focused on studying and awkward socially.

⁶ In this context, funny means strangely.

¹ Outside the box means outside of what is conventional, usual.

² Come up with means think of.

³ A Gulag is one of the Soviet forced labor camps, often used to punish and suppress political dissidents.



AB

LIBERATION

... continued

thick U.S. accent. For years my mother spoke to me in Russian, and I answered in English. She insisted that I read something in Russian every month and eventually started taking me to visit family in Ukraine. I'm lucky she persisted. I still make some grammatical mistakes, especially when I write, but among my parents' friends' children, I'm the only one I know who speaks Russian with almost total fluency and reads the classics in Russian. That was a hard-won battle, and for a long time I fought against it every step of the way.

My parents loved me and tried to support me, but they were both overwhelmed and didn't have much help. My mom was depressed and struggling to learn English and find a life for herself. My father was heavily distressed after an abusive childhood and oppressive young adulthood in the Soviet Union. After the divorce, he turned me against my mom, and for a few years I often refused to talk to her. He had suicidal tantrums a few times a week, raging and crying and blaming me and my mom and the whole world for hours, while I tried to comfort him. None of this was of interest to anyone at school. I didn't find anyone who I thought would care or understand. I went from world to world with a mix of desperation and numbness. I had my emotionally violent world with my dad on Wednesdays and weekends, my restrained world with my mom on the other school nights, and on weekdays my U.S. public school, completely different from either of my homes. When my mom moved to New York, I spent every other weekend and school vacations in one city and the rest of the time in the other. It was like being bounced around in a pinball machine. It was terribly confusing and lonely.

My dad committed suicide when I was sixteen, and I knew right away that it was one of the best things that had ever happened to me. People told me they were sorry and that they knew how I felt. I doubted it. What I felt was

relief and contempt. I was too numb to feel sad or angry—until ten years later, a year into RC.

I developed wonderful relationships and connections as I grew up. My relationship with my mother got better and better. I had great friends in high school and college, and a few before that. I became good at thinking creatively and being independent. I learned French, German, Italian, and Spanish and traveled all over the world. I had a great college education and decided to go into ethics. I'm now in graduate school in Berkeley, California, USA. I love teaching and watching my students grow. I get to think and write about what's most important to me and be close to people I love. I have a fantastic life. But I still struggle with the oppression.

INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

I have internalized the message that my perspective is strange and unimportant. I hear it when I speak. I almost always speak faster and more quietly than I would like, and I garble my words. My fast, quiet mumbling shows how little I trust that what I say is important or worth hearing.

I have exciting intellectual projects, but (when I make time for them) I have a lot of difficulty caring about them. They don't seem important, and I feel tired of trying so hard. I don't expect other people to care, so I rarely ask for help with the things I think about most.

I've been hiding and suppressing myself for so long that it's often hard to feel or remember things. Before I started RC, I had no immediate emotional reactions to anything that happened, no matter how big. Sometimes my mood would change a few hours later, sometimes not at all. My dad's death is one example.

Some big parts of my history are still a blur. I have almost no memories of some of my closest friends from school. I forget my achievements. When I was

twelve, I was invited to compete in the New York City Mathematics Olympiad at the high school level. I found the trophy in the back of my closet a few years later. That is how I know I went. I have no memories of going, what it was like, how my team won, or where it happened.

I often feel mistrustful and hopeless about being deeply connected to people. I have a strong sense that everything is safer and calmer when I don't have to deal with anyone. That's sometimes the biggest obstacle to keeping the deep connections I already have.

I get hopeless about having room to feel what I feel. I distract myself. I had a huge addiction to TV and movies through most of school, especially when I was alone. Now I don't have a TV or ever want to own one, I don't have internet at home, and if I stay with someone, I try not to find out the password for his or her wireless internet. The pull to watch people interact on film, with full control over what I see, with no pressure to react or adapt or entertain in any way, with my judgment going unquestioned, is too strong. I rarely give in⁷ to it, but when I do, it usually lasts a day or two.

The internalized oppression has a flip side in which I'm stuck fighting against it in a rigid way. I have a recurring need to perform and be the center of attention, to control my social environment, to get what I want without compromising. I feel like people owe me. I often want to know and control where I am. I'm obsessed with maps. I can't stand bossy people. When people dress creatively, I show up in the plainest clothes I have. I can be stingy with my attention. Immigration (together with divorce, joint custody, and suicide) showed me that you can always leave when things get tough, and I leave easily. I hold stubbornly to patterns of "Let's do this my way" and "I don't need you."

⁷ Give in means succumb.

Because I assimilate and put in lots of energy, my Co-Counselors rarely see these patterns. Most of them fall on the people closest to me. It's hard on them. I have lots of love and clear thinking, but I also get confused and resentful. I try to protect the people I love from myself, and sometimes that's what really hurts them. I struggle every day to manage these criss-crossing distresses.

STARTING TO CO-COUNSEL

An hour into my first introductory Co-Counseling class, I knew that I wanted to make room in my life for RC. It helped having a fantastic leader who was also an immigrant. She modeled close, deep, unpretentious connection and contradicted the U.S. patterns I expected to see. What I remember most is her saying that she did RC not to feel comfortable but to stand up and say no to injustice.

Re-evaluation Counseling appealed to me before I heard its theory about people's goodness. A lot of what got me committed was not the basic theory but the "basic, basic" theory—people listening to each other with mutual respect and safety in sessions of equal time. I had spent most of my young life giving one-way attention and not knowing if or when I would have a turn. I did that with my dad but also with other adults and with most people my age, whom I was constantly trying to please, understand, and copy. It was a huge contradiction to my distress just to show what I felt and be listened to. It still is. I almost never have "bad" sessions, and part of me doesn't quite know what that would mean.

For the first few months I never said a word as counselor and barely even laughed as client. I told my life story, and talked about how things were going in my life and what being the client was like. A few months later I started laughing much more. A few months after that I cried for the first time in ten years. Now I cry often and well. I yawn in sessions more than anyone

I know, discharging my accumulated numbness.

My best friend Ilya had gotten me into RC, and we used it to figure out our relationship. Two Russian immigrants trying to have things their way can use some sessions! We're in a much better place now with each other, and our families. We got both our mothers and a close family friend into RC. We counsel with each other often, and the five of us have monthly phone sessions together. We call them "mega sessions." They go for two and a half hours, in Russian, and connect us across California, New York, Texas, and Illinois (USA). They've been great for all of us.

I spent half of 2011 in Cambridge, where I grew up. I had an academic pretext, but mostly I went to counsel on my early life there. I found wonderful Co-Counselors. Having them and my partner with me, in a place of such early isolation, let me work on things I'd only dimly hoped to work on eventually. I went from walking around in a daze to having big sessions on every aspect of my early years in the United States. I got back memories from every year and almost every street corner. It helped to follow my RC teacher's suggestion to gently think to myself, "I've been on this street before." That put my present mind on my earlier life in a warm, aware way. I finally started missing my dad, being angry at him for dying, wondering what to do without him, and wishing him well. I claimed my identity as an immigrant and started thinking seriously about what that meant for me. I spent a lot of workshop time having intense sessions on immigration and immigrant oppression, using moments of unaware immigrant oppression at the workshops as pretexts.

Since I started RC two years ago, I've had enough closeness and attention to do years' worth of healing and thinking. I'm amazed at how much better I see and understand myself. I've gotten closer to people and better

at supporting them. I'm starting to overcome my shyness and become a more active ally to people in oppressed groups, inside and outside RC. I'm in a stable, loving, long-term relationship for the first time in twelve years. I can tell⁸ that the improvements in my life are just beginning. And I can see that, though it can be hard for us immigrants to find our way in RC, the basic structure of RC is a powerful contradiction to immigrant oppression.

There are still challenges, and some ways allies can help:

"TRANSLATING" RC

The immigrant feeling of having to translate ideas to fit one's own experience extends to RC. When other people want to give up,⁹ they can often have sessions on refusing to give up. I can't. It sounds too much like my pattern of constantly trying and pretending, no matter what I feel, and just shuts me down more. I can sometimes give up in sessions, but it's hard to find my way between the feelings of desperation and exhaustion. The best way I've found (again from Susana Witte, my immigrant RC teacher) is to take the direction that I did have to shut off my feelings, that I did it to survive, but that I don't agree with the circumstances that forced me to do it.

continued . . .

⁸ Tell means notice, see.

⁹ Give up means quit trying.



AMANDA MARTINEZ

LIBERATION

... continued

I often have to think on my own about my counselors' running the patterns of their country at me. When a counselor tells me that I can decide right now to be completely trusting, it can be a brilliant direction—but more often I have to struggle to remember that I can decide to be trusting at my own pace, and expect my allies to earn my trust. My U.S. counselors often want instant gratification. I have to "translate out" that need in what they say.

Most oppressions work differently with me, and it takes creative thinking to apply RC theory to myself. For example, I'm white and committed to ending racism, but I don't work on it in the same way most of my white Co-Counselors do. It took me a long time to figure out how to work on it at all. On the one hand, I have much less guilt in the way. I have no memories, from before age six, of people targeted by racism, and I can't trace my patterns back to a history of institutionalized race-based slavery or segregation. I find it easy to look directly at racism, and to be an ally to people targeted by racism, without sinking into feeling bad about myself. The attention on being pleased with oneself as a white person has often seemed strange and unnecessary to me and at first alienated me from working on eliminating racism.

On the other hand, immigrant oppression left me very confused about racism. When I immigrated and started school, most of my experiences with people targeted by racism had me in the oppressed role. I was assimilating to them and being rejected and attacked by them. To me, they were the oppressors, and for a long time I had little information to the contrary. I could not see where their anger and rejection came from. My successes in RC related to racism were in finding out more and in deciding I wanted to find out more. The big victory was deciding that even though this country's racism was not my fault, I wanted it to be my problem. I decided it mostly by having

sessions about immigrant oppression. Since then I've been excited about working on racism and have been doing it consistently, though I still often have to "translate" at workshops and in support groups.

The topic that's hardest for me to translate is class. I've been on welfare and food stamps, more or less middle-class, and very well off.¹⁰ And before all that, I spent my early years in the Soviet Union, where the class system and relations between classes are different from anything I see in RC. I often feel like I have no idea what class I am. "Mixed class" doesn't cover me, since I'm not a mix of the classes capitalist societies have. When I see a list of patterns common to a particular class (or a list of white patterns), I recognize many of them as specifically U.S. I'm still mostly at a loss as to how to counsel in this area. When it comes up, I counsel on being an immigrant.

Sexism is not as hard to understand. If I have to translate, it's in the other direction. As a man, I carry sexist patterns. When there's not much awareness about immigrant oppression, my attempts to contradict my internalized immigrant oppression can look like sexism. I have to explain why I'm fighting to be listened to and to have some things done my way. I struggle to balance being an ally to women with standing up for myself as an immigrant. I try to err on the ally side. With all the cluelessness on the oppressor side of sexism, I think that's a good strategy, but it doesn't always work for me as an immigrant. When I'm pushed too much as client by a female counselor, I have a hard time resisting and asking to be listened to. I have often chosen taking care of my counselor over having the session I want.

Young people's oppression is easy to see. It looks so much like immigrant oppression! I feel like a young person when I'm avoiding

experienced counselors who I think will force something on me. Like many young people, I can tell which leaders will really listen and which will try to "give me a hand"¹¹ by making decisions for me and forcing me into the less smart, less experienced role. I think young people and young adults coming into RC are sometimes like immigrants from another generation, fighting to find a voice in the face of experienced counselors' superiority patterns and to translate what they find into something they can understand.

I would love to recruit more allies to help translate, and to help make translation unnecessary. I have wonderfully aware counselors and great sessions with strong allies. Non-immigrant leaders have amazed me with their successes in noticing and contradicting immigrant oppression. I see new steps in policy, like having immigrants go first in the RC speaking order. There's a lot that makes me hopeful, but other times are not so encouraging. It's hard to find a workshop, support group, gather-in, or any systematic RC literature on immigrants or immigrant oppression. I have not heard anyone say what patterns USers might have. When U.S. patterns are acted out, there is not much awareness about them and they often go unchecked. I hear casual anti-intellectual comments. At a recent workshop I went to, there was frequent talk of "our common history," references to and jokes about U.S. popular culture from before my time, and a wide range of U.S. games, none of which I knew how to play. More than one song I'd never heard was prefaced by "you guys all know this song." I didn't manage to keep much attention on the topic of the workshop. My Co-Counselors were understanding in my sessions, but few of them encouraged me to be angry and no one visibly stood up for me.

It has often felt like immigrant oppression is something I work on

¹⁰ Well off means affluent, wealthy.

¹¹ "Give me a hand" means help me.

“on the side,” as part of my own quirky set of distresses. In my experience, there is often a general sense in RC that immigrant oppression is a fringe oppression—not a central one like the others. It’s hard to get people to see U.S. superiority patterns as a major force of oppression in the world. Work on capitalism is the closest thing I can find, and that takes a lot of translating. As someone with experience in a communist country, I have trouble listening to the way many U.S. RCers talk about ending capitalism. People rarely notice this, or ask me what coming from a post-capitalist society has been like. These are some of my ongoing challenges in RC.

ALLIES TO IMMIGRANTS

Here is what I would like from my allies:

- Please trust my mind. Trust me especially when I am client. Many immigrants have figured out a lot. Watching an immigrant client is a great way to learn how to counsel that particular person!
- Be interested in my experience, and in how it’s different from yours.
- Encourage me to let my mind go¹² when I am client. Immigration and assimilation force people to be alert, plan ahead, and be attentive to what people around them want. It often helps me if I can relax and let my mind wander.
- Know that many immigrants are instinctively taking care of you and that some of this is based in distress.
- Know that when you think about race and class, you are thinking about race, class, and country.
- Think about colonialism. Some groups living outside their home culture are dominated; others dominate. Dominant groups oppress both newcomers and people who

never left their home country. Understanding and healing from immigrant oppression go hand in hand with understanding and healing from the damage of colonialism and imperialism.

- Have sessions about how you may see your way as the best or only way; about us immigrants, inside or outside RC, seeming “strange”; about keeping your distance from us, wanting us to go home, and expecting that we assimilate, be quiet, be grateful, and so on. (For example, how do you feel about my story? You might notice that I haven’t said anything praising the country I moved to. How do you feel about that? Do you think I should have?)
- If you are a non-Native USer, have sessions about your own history of immigration. You yourself carry internalized immigrant oppression, much like mine. How does it affect your relationship to Native people and to newer immigrants? Try this: “The irony, of course, is that there are no non-immigrants, except for Native people. I wonder if the patterns of independence and believing in U.S. superiority are based directly on immigrant distress.” (See “Immigrant and Proud,” *Present Time* No. 38, page 62.)
- Be aware of immigrant oppression in RC classes and workshops. We immigrants may not have the typical



BETH SHORTER

patterns, especially within a race or class. Songs, games, and cultural references can be unfamiliar and alienating to us. Talk of “our common history” sometimes needs to be interrupted.

- I would like RC leaders to organize and support someone to write a pamphlet about immigrants and immigrant oppression. Please help us immigrants to be visible, connected, and informed.

Here are some things I never want to see or hear again:

- Counseling directions being forced on me. When I’m forced into something in a session, it feels like immigrant and young people’s oppression. I go numb very fast, and stop trusting my counselor.
- Being asked to “fake it until you feel it.” I have been faking feelings to please people for twenty years. Doing it in sessions is not helpful!
- Enthusiasm about knowing one word in my language or one fact about my culture. It leaves out the complexity of my experience, pressures me to reassure you, and lowers my expectations.

Although we immigrants are an extremely diverse constituency, some of our stories and some of what we want from allies will tend to be the same. Most of us would like to be more welcomed, and to have more room to show who we are and to make mistakes as we figure out the shape our lives will take. I think all of us would like people to see our oppression, and the ways we become rigid, and to come after¹³ us through the patterns. All immigrants and allies want to be close, trusting, playful, excited, and interested in each other.

Eugene Chilenko
Berkeley, California, USA

¹² Let my mind go means let my mind be free.

¹³ Come after means pursue.

The articles on the following seven pages are from a discussion about mistakes, on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change.

Mistakes

“A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.” —George Bernard Shaw

I sure have made my share.

Julian Weissglass
Santa Barbara, California, USA

What We Can Win by Apologizing

Why making a mistake is such a big deal has been puzzling me for a long time. Just now I had some fresh thinking.

In the Netherlands we get harsh criticism when we make a mistake, so we put a lot of energy into doing everything right and correct. Being occupied in World War II made it all the more tight, I think. Apologizing is mostly seen as a weakness, as giving up on one's pride. Taking responsibility is not often done openly. My best thinking is that apologizing is the first step toward healing a broken connection (including with myself) and is about reclaiming my integrity.

I have more difficulty with making mistakes when I am in the oppressor role. When I am the oppressed, I can deal with it more easily because part of the blame is not mine.

If I want to free myself from handed-down fears, there is no other way than to do something and risk doing it wrong. In deciding to go for it¹ when I can sense a situation should change, I have to give up feeling small and insignificant. Often I cannot figure out how to give my best thinking without the chance of making a mistake.

¹ Go for it means act without restraint.

I speak up more. Doing so can bring up lots of old terror, but it can also be fun and energizing. I do trust my good intentions and know that I will apologize if afterward I can tell² that something I did was off³ or wrong. In this slow process of taking a stand, I enjoy the big gift of feeling more hopeful, confident, grounded in life, and (sometimes much) better about myself.

One example: I write columns for the paper of my neighborhood. In this part of town there are about seven thousand people, from fifty-seven countries. Last November I was shocked by a law that allowed the foreign police to take a young man away from his family, who had come to our country as refugees long ago. I wrote a column about it and spoke up against the law and racism. My

² Tell means notice, perceive.

³ Off means inappropriate.

goal was to help people talk and think about it. It felt like a huge risk to send the column in. I was not sure if my mind had thought things through enough. I sent it in anyway and felt terrified. After a week I received a letter from the editor; it said she was moved by my writing. After the printing I got appreciations from some more people. I still worry a bit that I may have hurt someone's feelings by missing a crucial detail.

After I decided to speak up more, I often said things in a way that was restimulating to others, and myself too. I made mistakes and corrected some, apologized here and there. What I've noticed recently is

- I am suggesting things a bit more elegantly.
- I get less urgent and restimulated if what I suggest is rejected. (New ideas



“FLIGHT OF THE BRANTS,” SAN JUAN ISLANDS, WASHINGTON, USA • ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

have to sink in before people can think about or agree with them. That is never personal, it is just human.)

- I notice and interrupt unaware actions in a more natural way.
- I am more relaxed and flexible with disagreements. I more often agree to disagree, and stay connected.

It feels as if I have pushed a door to where there's a small opening. The old

recordings⁴ keep pulling me backwards, saying this is too good to be true, but an ongoing curiosity leads me to take another peek now and then and wonder what it would be like if I dared to walk through that door—like being powerful could be a choice.

By deciding, and doing several big sessions, I developed an understanding

⁴ Distress recordings

of what we can win by apologizing for real. Apologizing is not the escape from feeling bad, not getting forgiveness for the mistake I made, but the start of trying to act differently for the growth of my integrity. That is healing and breaks down all that interferes with my natural strength.

Wytske Visser
Ljouwert, Fryslân, the Netherlands

Making Mistakes Should Include Discharging

As I watch my young son, I see him happy to try things, over and over again, without needing to be competent. I don't think competence, or excellence for that matter, is quite his goal. He primarily seems interested in using his mind and body (all connected) to think, notice, and learn about everything he can. He seems to enjoy reaching understanding, mastery, competence, excellence, or whatever else happens once he's able to do something the way he intends, but I don't think that's his primary motivation. He seems most motivated by a desire to think and be in contact with other thinking minds.

Trying things, learning, thinking, connecting with other people, don't come as easily for most of us adults. We're tangled by distresses. They hamper and distort our initiatives in all different directions—lack of initiative, timidity, defensiveness, greed, domination, feeling bad or stupid, feeling superior or inferior, urgency, desperation,

discouragement, humiliation, isolation, desire for approval, and the list goes on.

I think it's right to try new things all the time, and make mistakes, but we've all been so hurt that we focus on whether our efforts are successful or not. We're stuck judging things as successes or failures, feeling bad and defensive. We have little room to really use our minds, think creatively, try things, discharge, and learn from what we tried, whether it worked out the way we intended or not. And then have new thoughts and try new things based on those.

I think we have to be honest about how much our efforts are motivated and limited by distress. Making mistakes should include discharging on the distresses involved. Otherwise we're likely to make the same mistakes over and over again.

Ayana Morse
Oakland, California, USA

An Interesting Mistake

"What an interesting mistake!"

<<Τι ενδιαφέρον λάθος!>> (New Greek)

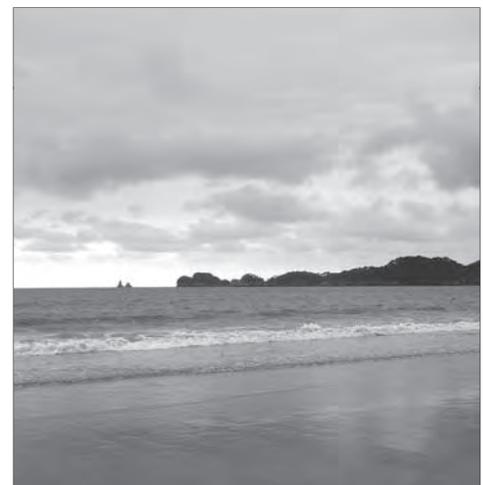
„To je zajímavá chyba!“ (Czech)

<<Какая интересная ошибка!>> (Russian)

I heard this first from Patty Wipfler*; I think she is the author.

Milena Ruzkova
Xanthi, Thrace, Greece

* Patty Wipfler is the former International Liberation Reference Person for Parents.



NOBIRU BEACH, MATSUSHIMA, JAPAN • EMMA PARKER

My Experience as a Working-Class Person

I appreciate this discussion about mistakes. I, too, have made my share. My experience has been as a working-class person. This has meant that I have sometimes made mistakes without realizing that's what happened until afterward. Some have been due to unawareness and internalized oppression, and within the context of oppression and misinformation. My favorite mistakes are the things I have tried to do before I was ready to do them, or do them to my satisfaction. It looks to me like class society sets us all up¹ for different variations. None of us are exempt.

I remember Harvey² once saying something like, "Anything worth doing will likely increase the odds of making mistakes."

¹ Sets us all up means predisposes us all.

² Harvey Jackins

Schools mostly graded me average. I wanted to succeed. I wanted to be popular, be special, and was too shy, too awkward, and too resistant to try anything for fear of being ridiculed about my mistakes. More than anything I did not want to stand out. School was boring and scary and offered what felt like mostly un-useful information. That, combined with my own already established habits of isolation, left me vulnerable to ridicule and oppression.

I went to college at my working-class parents' insistence. They wanted a better life for me. Education was supposed to be a way out. I dropped out to work to support my young family and did not return until sixteen years later.

Early on I did not understand how school was mostly a training ground

for me—to socialize my acceptance of oppression, to not challenge things or think critically. It was a while before I began to understand that there were folks who were "book smart" and folks who were "street smart." I decided it was okay to be both. These days I believe that schools and education are at the apex of our battle for social justice.

Harvey once said that it was necessary for us to build a cadre of working-class intellectuals. I began to be more intentional about learning things—learning about the world and learning more about RC. When I make mistakes, I try to remember to "celebrate" them—and to think about what happened and sometimes to apologize, but not always.

My opinion is that we get to do something no other set of humans has ever done. We get to help tip the scales in the direction of human liberation, to set the record right, to help clarify for all humans that the main culprit is our individual and collective distresses. We get to pursue a path and work toward freeing our minds, to organize, as we are seeking useful and liberating knowledge—if we choose. I so choose.

Lorenzo Garcia
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA



BILLBOARD AT THE HIGH LINE, NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK, USA • MARTIN URBEL



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You can order back issues as regular literature items (see pages 103 and 109).



Inspired by My Relatives

It was great to read Lorenzo's contribution.¹ It encouraged me to add to the discussion about learning and its pitfalls for the working class.

Although I was smashed by the oppression of schools, one good thing had already happened by the time I had to sit still at a desk in a classroom. I had lived on a farm in West Virginia (USA) and seen uneducated people succeeding at many things. My stepgrandfather was illiterate, and when I learned to read I would read to him, usually from comic books. At the same time, I saw him mine coal (dig it from the ground in a coal mine and deliver it in his coal truck). He kept the figures for the coal delivery on little pieces of paper and bags. He would run his finger down the line of large numbers and come to an instant total, without using the math taught in schools. Everyone knew this and admired him greatly.

¹ See previous article.

I still have the pull to second-guess² my thinking. Yesterday, on the spur of the moment,³ I evaded the second-guessing and made a sign to wear at a polling place for local elections. Over a hundred people were there voting. I wore my sign, "I Support Occupy Wall Street."⁴ It gave me a chance to talk to a lot of people about the subject.

I like to think that my stepgrandfather, and all my relatives who mastered their lives, helped me even when their mistakes scared us forever. (I am speaking of loss of life and the loss of limbs.) They made it clear what is at stake for all of us.

I choose too, Lorenzo.

Dreama Frisk
Arlington, Virginia, USA

² Second-guess means question.

³ On the spur of the moment means suddenly and spontaneously.

⁴ Occupy Wall Street is a movement, in New York City, New York, USA, in opposition to economic injustice.

"Put Down the Hammer, and Pick Up the Lesson"

In the Jewish home in which I was raised, in Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe), my parents had both survived the Holocaust but had lost all of their families, except for my mother's sister who had left Poland to go study in Palestine. My parents did not have the opportunity to discharge their hurts, and as a result did not have much attention for my two sisters and me, so I became the "parent" for my sisters at about age seven and experienced great disappointment and anger from one sister for all the "mistakes" I was making. No matter how hard I tried to be close to her, I couldn't "get it right."

I spent much of my life apologizing for my mistakes. Even my existence felt like a mistake. My mother had survived Auschwitz/Birkenau¹ and

¹ Auschwitz/Birkenau was a World War II Nazi concentration camp.

always told me that she was "not supposed to be here" given her experiences in the death camps, and I internalized that neither was I.

When I became a parent—with good intentions, but without much preparation for the job and with the model of parenting I grew up with—I made many mistakes. Like Patty Wipfler² says, "I'm a good parent, and I have a few regrets."

When I first learned about listening to children, about twenty-two years ago, I was given the opportunity to work in a Jewish pre-school with three-year-olds, and that became a laboratory for me. When the children were not blamed or shamed, many "mistakes" they made were turned into positive learning experiences. I watched them be willing to take

² Patty Wipfler is the former International Liberation Reference Person for Parents.

on³ challenges and when they didn't succeed to keep trying.

Today I still have to discharge on not coming down hard on myself and feeling bad about mistakes I have made. A wonderful direction I received recently was "put down the hammer, and pick up the lesson." It has been confusing at times to discern when my actions warrant an apology and when I need to stand up for myself rather than look inside myself for what's wrong in me.

Uriela Ben-Yaacov
Palo Alto, California, USA

³ Take on means undertake.



LAURIE RHODES

Staying Close as We Sort Out Mistakes

On one of his CDs,¹ Tim models something terrific as he talks about correcting others. As he gives examples of errors we all make, one can hear in his voice a tone of warmth, humor, and exaggerated disbelief: “Wow, you did that? That’s a real beaut”² (a really big-scale whopper of a mistake³). He adds, “Do tell me more,” keeping his tone of amazement. To me he sounds rather like a loving and relaxed parent coming upon a young person in the middle of a real mess. Contrary to most of our tension-filled early experiences with mistakes, what we hear on the CD is that the person is still loved and seen as a human being, while the situation is being handled—perhaps amidst tears and lingering confusions, but not in isolation. In Tim’s voice there is no shaming. There is no condemnation.

If we stick in close, we can get to the bottom of what happened. We can reach for the why, the confusion, the needed information, and, most important, the discharge.

I’ve listened to Tim’s voice many times to try and absorb the attitude that is so disarmingly non-judgmental. One can hear that the person is not going to be pushed away to be alone with a distress that he or she did not wish to have, or blamed or recriminated for having it. It is reassuring to hear how someone can be seen and then supported to take responsibility to clear out the errors. It implies for me that we are to stick in close as we unravel the story underneath, so that the client can see it, understand the root cause, and take it on⁴ as his or her work. It is, perhaps, the

piece of RC theory and practice that I value the most. I often think it is the hardest. We reach for each other. When one of us is acting stupid, we search under the rubble for the human being, whether the distress is internalized oppression or oppressor material.⁵

From experience I know that when someone persists in moving in our direction to help us sort out mistakes, sometimes standing against our distresses even before we recognize them as such, we are hugely relieved. After all, if we could have avoided making the mistake, we would have done so.

Relaxed, aware kindness is not the same as liberal distress or permissiveness. We stick with each other until stuff has surfaced and is worked on, but without the tensions. (I say this because my own people—Catholic heritage RCers—can have huge buckets of tension surrounding integrity and moral superiority. It can masquerade as “correctness” but is, in fact, undischarged fear. They need lots of sessions to sort out integrity from harsh enforcement.)

My own favorite way of working on mistakes is in support groups. All that is needed is one brave soul to step forward and tell his or her latest and most stupid mistake. Embarrassment, timidity, and humiliation roll off, and the stories keep coming. Official “turns” are often temporarily swept aside as people elbow (push) their way in with laughter and their own story of a mistake that tops (is bigger than) the last one. We recognize our errors as common. The hiding stops. Self-blame is interrupted. We seize the chance to get out of our patterns. We become safer and safer and get to the earliest incidents that set up the confusion. We recognize many of our errors as being oppressor material, but we learn to not blame ourselves while we do the work. We love our people, and we get braver and braver while we work to get everyone out of his or her distress. No matter how confusing, ancient, entrenched, or defended our attitudes and behaviors might have been in our minds and people, we want out. We get each other back.

I understand that not all mistakes can be worked on in this way (in groups), but I think the model that Tim offers on the CD is an important one.

Joanne Bray
International Liberation Reference
Person for Catholics
Greenwich, Connecticut, USA



ANNIE HOEKSTRA

¹ One of the CDs in the series *RC Teacher Updates*—a series of CDs of talks given by Tim Jackins at recent RC workshops. See page 105 of this *Present Time* for more information.

² Beaut means beauty.

³ Whopper of a mistake means enormous mistake.

⁴ Take it on means take responsibility for doing something about it.

⁵ Material means distress.

Two Kinds of Mistakes

A thought that came to me is that there are two different kinds of mistakes. There are mistakes of commission, things we do that we shouldn't have, and mistakes of omission, things we don't do when the right thing would have been to act. My hunch is that those of us in the middle class tend to gravitate more toward mistakes of omission, and that we don't even realize that we're making them. It's been useful to me, in all my carefulness and caution, to notice that those mistakes are just as real, and that it's harder to learn from them.

Pamela Haines
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

A Mistake in the Oppressor Role

I'm Irish Catholic, from the United States. At the Irish Liberation Workshop last April I was part of a work team, and my team leader was southern Irish. I thought one thing we were doing wasn't aligned with RC workshop procedures, so I "took initiative" and changed the practice. My work team leader didn't say anything.

Later in the workshop my support group leader said that I would get feedback that I shouldn't have done that (even though I was "right about the practice"). After discharging (trying to keep in mind that I was good, and so were the others who had suggested the practice), I realized that I had

squished* my work team leader and done something that did not support that leader, the workshop organizer, or the workshop leader. I apologized to the three of them.

As Irish people they had possibly been squished and overruled by others in oppressor groups for most of their lives. My proactive, problem-solving behavior was very much in a USer pattern (oppressor role). It is important for me, as a USer, to follow the lead of others, particularly non-USers.

Maura Fallon
Hong Kong

*Squished means overpowered.



The Handling of Childhood Mistakes

The discussion on mistakes brings to mind something Harvey¹ said or wrote, which I remember readily as it has been helpful to me. It goes something like, "Mistakes are only a problem if you hide them, perpetuate them, or defend them."

I think one of the influences on how we handle mistakes is how they were handled in our childhood experiences.

I remember coming home from school as a child of six or seven, with two friends on a small country road, and finding a purse. (In 1950s Ireland, young children walked home from school unaccompanied.) It contained a small amount of money, from an adult's point of view, but it was riches to me. I divided it out, keeping the single note for myself. I had no thought at all for whom it may have belonged to. I was just absorbed by the sweetness of the windfall.²

That evening a woman came to our farm on her bicycle, asking about the money, and my mother called me in and asked if I had it. She explained in an even voice that it belonged to the woman and that she needed it back. I went to fetch it, took in³ the situation, and gave it back without a sense of loss or humiliation. I remember going back out to play with an understanding of the larger picture. My mother's wisdom and lack of blame were a gift to me for the future.

Sheila Fairon
Portrush, County Antrim, Northern Ireland

¹ Harvey Jackins

² Windfall means sudden, unexpected piece of good fortune.

³ Took in means mentally absorbed.



MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA • CYNTHIA JOHNSTON

The following is a story about mistakes that Harvey was moved by. He had it made into a scroll that is sold by Rational Island Publishers.*

Sidney Stock
Bellevue, Washington, USA

* Harvey Jackins



Cellist



KK

My great wish was to hear Pablo Casals. One day my desire was almost fulfilled and I met him. But ironically, it was I who had to play. It was in the home of the Von Mendelssohns, a house filled with El Grecos, Rembrandts, and Stradivaris. Francesco von Mendelssohn, the son of the banker, who was a talented cellist, telephoned and asked if he could call for me; they had a guest in the house who would like to hear me play.

“Mr. Casals,” I was introduced to a little bald man with a pipe. He said that he was pleased to meet young musicians such as Serkin and me. Rudolf Serkin, who stood stiffly next to me, seemed, like myself, to be fighting his diffidence. Rudi had played before my arrival, and Casals now wanted to hear us together. Beethoven’s D-Major Sonata was on the piano. “Why don’t you play it?” asked Casals. Both nervous and barely knowing each other, we gave a poor performance that terminated somewhere in the middle.

“Brave! Bravo! Wonderful!” Casals applauded. Francesco brought the Schumann Cello Concerto, which Casals wanted to hear. I never played worse. Casals asked for Bach. Exasperated, I obliged with a performance matching the Beethoven and Schumann.

“Splendid! *Magnifique!*” said Casals, embracing me.

Bewildered, I left the house. I knew how badly I had played, but why did he, the master, have to praise and embrace me? This apparent insincerity pained me more than anything else.

The greater was my shame and delight when, a few years later, I met Casals in Paris. We had dinner together and played duets for two cellos, and I played for him until late at night. Spurred by his great warmth, and happy, I confessed what I had thought of his praising me in Berlin. He reacted with sudden anger. He rushed to the cello. “Listen!” He played a phrase from the Beethoven sonata. “Didn’t you play this fingering? Ah, you did! It was novel to me . . . it was good . . . and here, didn’t you attack that passage with up-bow, like this?” he demonstrated. He went through Schumann and Bach, always emphasizing all he liked that I had done. “And for the rest,” he said passionately, “leave it to the ignorant and stupid who judge by counting only the faults. I can be grateful, and so must you be, for even one note, one wonderful phrase.” I left with the feeling of having been with a great artist and a friend.

*From “Cellist,” by Gregor Piatigorsky
Published by Doubleday and Co., New York
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Direct Action as Well as Individual Re-emergence

I think our emerging intelligences must find ways to challenge and halt the baleful, continuing effects of social oppression by direct social action as well as individual re-emergence. . . . A two-pronged attack—direct, intelligent struggle for social change on the one hand and persistent, effective Co-Counseling on the other—will make the total struggle effective and our own freedom a continuing attainment, not postponed to some distant realization of social liberation.

*Harvey Jackins
From “Human Liberation”
in *The Human Situation**

How Do We Promote “Mental Health” Liberation?

Recently I have been noticing the ways that “mental health” is being publicised. An update on Facebook,¹ talking about Mental Health Awareness Week, commented that “one in three people suffer from mental diseases sometime in their lives.” A new popular comic about working in the “mental health” system seems to promote the idea that people with “mental illness” are good and that we should look after² them, that they are ordinary people—family, friends, and so on—and that “it could be you.”

It’s hard to think about whether this encouragement to look after and think

¹ Facebook is a social networking site on the Internet.

² Look after means take care of.

well about people who experience these “issues” should be supported, and, if so, how we then put out the RC perspective on “mental health.”

In RC we know that there is no such thing as “mental illness.” We also know that however well we fit into society, we all have feelings and get confused sometimes. We also know that some people, particularly people in oppressed groups, are targeted more than others with “mental health” oppression, including being put on drugs and into institutions.

We want people to know that they are just fine. We want them to think well about each other and to not be alone. The publicity I’ve been seeing is good at encouraging some of these things, and discouraging the use

of words like “crazy,” “weirdo,” or “nutters,” but it also tries to show that “mental illness” exists by backing it up with scientific research, which then leads to assumptions that we should take drugs to “cure” it.

What kinds of statements should we use in our activism to promote what we know about “mental health” liberation and to discourage the use of drugs? What has worked for you when talking to people about these things? Maybe a statement like “three out of three people feel like shit³ sometimes” is the right way to go?

Liam Geary Baulch

London, England

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

³ Feel like shit means feel awful.



ISRAEL • RANDI FREUNDLICH

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act.

Howard Zinn

First Listen with Respect

Hi Liam,

Great observation and questions.¹

It is important for us to discharge the fears that keep us from speaking out against the system—the drugs, the labeling, the pseudo science, and so on.

It is also important that we communicate respect for the people in the system, many of whom are identifying themselves or their friends or relatives as “mentally ill”—a term they hope will help them avoid being blamed for their struggles. (If only that’s all it required!)

This situation reminds me of something Harvey² said—something like “Any meaningful definition of telling the truth has to include the effect on others of what you say.” In our interactions with people in the system, and affected by the system, we may need to communicate respect for them by using the vocabulary that is important to them. If we invalidate people by being too attached to a “correct” description of what’s going on,³ then we haven’t communicated what we wanted to—we have communicated criticism instead.

¹ See previous article.

² Harvey Jackins

³ Going on means happening.

What matters most probably isn’t what we say or the language that we use but that we really listen to people about these topics. To do that we probably need to discharge. A lot. If we have listened enough that someone actually wants to hear what we have to say, we can try to communicate some of what we know, for example,

- No one should be mistreated because he or she isn’t acting “normal,” whether he or she accepts the label “mentally ill” or not.
- The current system labels and drugs people too much.
- All people need more attention than they are getting.
- Everyone needs to heal emotional hurts—people need to laugh, cry, shake, and talk to do that.
- Drugs interfere with the emotional release process.

We might get interrupted while we are sharing our thoughts. Then we get to listen again!

I’m writing this like I’m some kind of expert, but really I rarely do this, even though I know it is the right thing to do. Anyone have any success stories about actually listening to people about these issues?

One thing I have done successfully is teach people the fundamentals of RC. Ultimately we’ve got to teach everyone RC—the only form of “therapy” with a future, and the only theory that includes all the information people need about the causes of and solutions to human irrationality and “mental health” oppression.

Glenn Johnson
Greenfield, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of
“mental health” liberation



YONI KALLAI

The Power of Listening, and Singing

Dear World Changers,

I originally wrote the following letter in 2007, as part of a response to the organizer of a progressive women's political gathering. She had asked me to lead some singing. I was honored, but I wanted to clarify what would guide my choice of what to sing. This morning I rewrote the letter to address RainyCamp, an upcoming gathering of folk musicians near Seattle, Washington, USA, at which I will be leading a workshop titled "Occupy RainyCamp—Songs of the 99%." I have a list of songs I'm taking and will also invite each participant to bring a song to share. Then I thought I'd send the letter to you, too! If you want a list of the songs we come up with,¹ just ask me.

What would our lives and our world look like if every woman on the planet had every single other woman backing² her? If every man had every other man backing him? And what would we have to face to get there?

I'm particularly interested in listening as a tool for social and political change. A huge part of what glues the irrational

¹ Come up with means think of.

² Backing means supporting.

parts of our world together is that much of the time we act on painful emotion instead of our best thinking. It's hard to think when feelings are running high. Listening to one another, one-on-one, without giving advice or arguing, can help loosen the grip of emotions and leave us with the slack to think again. And to think for ourselves, not do what somebody else says is the right thing.

Another part of world change is claiming our voices and helping our sisters and brothers to claim theirs. The most cohesive, effective movements of the past—for civil rights, for unions; in the United States and around the planet—have been singing movements. It's still true. Singing links us.

And it matters what we sing—songs that lift us up, remind us of what it is

to be human; not songs that blame others or try to tear people down, not songs of desperation, but "the facts," in a calm and lucid way; a reminder of our humanity, goodness, intelligence, caring.

So most of what I hope we will sing today will be songs to celebrate us working people and the work that we do and have done; and to celebrate community, among generations and genders and races and classes.

"Love is not the answer. Love is the assignment." —Martin Luther King, Jr.

And so is hope.

Flip Breskin

Bellingham, Washington, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change



THERESA D'AMATO

Replacement Not Reform

Reform of an oppressive society cannot bring liberation from oppression. Replacement is necessary. Since the sole reason for the oppressive society is oppression and exploitation, oppression and exploitation are bound to be re-introduced, in some other form, after the reform, as long as the oppressive society exists.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Upward Trend*, page 303



FIVE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO *PRESENT TIME*

Rational Island Publishers is offering a five-year subscription to *Present Time*, at the request of many people who would like to not have to re-subscribe every one or two years. The cost is \$84 in the United States, outside of Washington State; \$91.50 in Washington State; and \$124 (U.S.) outside the United States. (A couple of dollars have been added to partially cover the anticipated increase in costs over the next five years.) To order a *Present Time* subscription, see page 110 of this issue.

Intervening on Behalf of a Young Person

My Co-Counselors here in Santa Cruz (California, USA) encouraged me to describe this recent success of using RC with a mother and her son:

I was about to leave our community swim center, when I heard some loud screaming: “NO, NO, I don’t want to go in. NO, let go of me, Mommy!”

I was still in the foyer, separated by a glass door and window from the swimming area where the screaming was coming from. I decided to simply sit down and watch the situation before doing anything to help out.

After a few minutes, when I saw the mother forcibly dragging her screaming son toward the pool (where the swim teacher was patiently waiting), I decided to intervene, as thoughtfully as possible.

I walked up to the mother, gently put my arm around her back, and calmly said, “It’s really hard when our children have tantrums when we want them to do something. Is there any way I can give you support right now?” Lightening her grip on her son, who seemed to be about seven years old, she said they had just moved here that week from Colorado (USA) and that her son had been really upset about moving but that she thought it was important that he learn how to swim.

I commiserated with her about how hard it is for young people to leave their friends behind when their families have to move. I also said, in a relaxed tone of voice, that it was possible that forcing him to have a lesson right then could turn him off to wanting to learn how to swim.

While I was talking to the mother, the son was no longer screaming; he was listening to our conversation. The mom told me that she didn’t like to force her son to do anything.

The young man who was the swim instructor came over to us and told the mom he could postpone the lesson until a day when the boy was feeling like he wanted one.

I shared with the mom some of my experiences with tantrums when I was a preschool teacher and when my children were young. I told her how I had learned to let the tantrums play themselves out¹ while staying close and not letting the children hurt themselves, and how I’d realized that “you can’t argue with a tantrum.”

¹ Play themselves out means run their course.

She seemed to agree and also seemed relieved that she was no longer fighting with her son. We talked about how stressful it is for any family to move to a new city. I gave her my name and asked for hers and her son’s, which was Chris. Then I smiled at Chris and said, “Hey Chris, gimme² five!” Laughing, he slapped my palm really hard.

So I added, “How about ten?” and laughing and smiling at me, he slapped both of my hands, really hard. It looked like he got to feel his power and discharge some anger at the same time. I think I gave the mom a hug at that point.

About ten minutes later in the parking lot, the mom walked over to me and said, “Thank you for intervening. I needed some help.”

Phyllis Greenleaf
Santa Cruz, California, USA

² Gimme means give me.



MARION OUPHOUET

Taking to the Streets

The conditioning to be passive and accept oppression is so deep that people in general will not take to the streets* or do anything else as long as they can find any other alternative (but the time when they can no longer find such an alternative is inevitably coming up).

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1995

* Take to the streets means go out into the streets and protest.

Each of Us Can Decide and Act

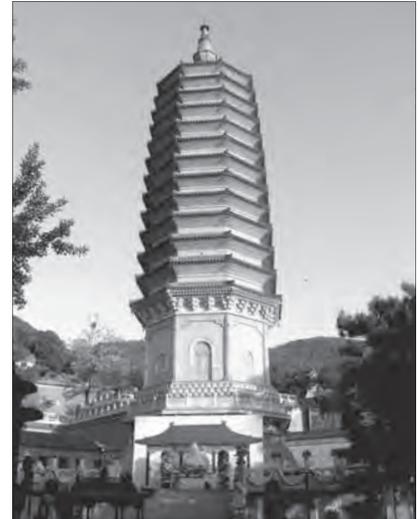
I've been thinking about the current economic system, capitalism; its collapse; what it means to be human; what it means to be a USer; and many other things. But what I've noticed the most is the potential for many of us, people manipulated into being "sleeping" and passive USers, to act.

Those of us who have the tools of RC can decide, act, and discharge. I myself was able to act in an important way, even though it seemed small and simple. I belong to a union that represents middle-class workers, including nurses and therapists at my workplace. Although the union as a whole had been active, the group at our workplace had not met. One day it occurred to me that this was the case. I initiated a connection with the person at our worksite who knew the most about the union and our contracts, and we invited the union members to come together to talk. So far we have met four times. We have mostly exchanged information and supported each other. On several occasions, when the discussion has turned toward despair and upset, I have provided a perspective.

Each of us can decide and act within the situation in which we find ourselves.



Marian Fredal
Madison, Wisconsin, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members



CHINA • DIANE SHISK

Demonstrations Profound

I think the demonstrations all over the world for social change are profound and that we can play an important role in helping people think better about actions and policy.

Julian Weissglass
International Commonality Reference
Person for Wide World Change
Santa Barbara, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of wide world change

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 Middle-Class People, 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.

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 *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*, 2009 edition
- 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>
- 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
- United to End Racism: uer@rc.org
- Rational Island Publishers (orders, and billing questions): litsales@rc.org (or order on our web site at www.rationalisland.com)
- Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources (Intensives and office matters only): rcoffice@rc.org
- Automatic response e-mail about RC: info@rc.org
- For sending photos: photos@rc.org
- Reference Person for the Internet, Tim Jackins: 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>.

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 African-Heritage People, at <bjlove413@gmail.com>.

Leaders of Artists: <artists@mail.rc.org>.

Contact John Fehringer, International Liberation Reference Person for Visual Artists, at <rc@fehninger.com>.

Leaders of Asians: <asian@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Francie Chew, International Liberation Reference Person for Chinese-Heritage People, 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>.

Contact Joanne Bray, International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics, at <jmbray@aol.com>.

Leaders of College and University Faculty:

<colleagues@mail.rc.org>. Contact Pam Roby, International Liberation Reference Person for College and University Faculty, at <roby@ucsc.edu>.

Leaders on Disability, Chronic Illness, and Health:

<health-disability@mail.rc.org>. Contact Jaye Alper at <jayealper@comcast.net>.

Leaders of Educational Change:

<education@mail.rc.org>. Contact Marilyn Robb, International Commonality Reference Person for Educational Change, at <joyfulplace@yahoo.com>.

continued . . .

RC ON THE INTERNET

... continued

Leaders of **Elders:** <elders@mail.rc.org>.

Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

Leaders of **Family Work:** <family-work@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Chuck Esser, International Commonality Reference Person for Family Work, at <ckesser@verizon.net>.

Leaders of **Irish-Heritage People:** <irish@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Sheila Fairon at <fairon@fastmail.fm>.

Leaders of **Jews:** <jewish@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Cherie Brown, International Liberation Reference Person for Jews, at <ncciinc@aol.com>.

Leaders of **Latinos/as and Chicanos/as:**

<latino@mail.rc.org>. Contact Lorenzo Garcia, International Liberation Reference Person for Chicanos/as, at <lgrc@aol.com>.

Leaders of **Men:** <men@mail.rc.org>.

Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

Leaders of **“Mental Health” Liberation:**

<mental-health@mail.rc.org>. Contact Janet Foner, International Liberation Reference Person for “Mental Health” Liberation, at <jbfoner@verizon.net>.

Leaders of **Middle-Class People:**

<middle-class@mail.rc.org>. Contact Seán Ruth, International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People, at <seangruth@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Native Americans:** <natives@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Marcie Rendon, International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans, at <mrendon703@aol.com>.

Leaders of **Owning-Class People:**

<owning-class@mail.rc.org>. Contact Jo Saunders, International Liberation Reference Person for Owning-Class People, at <jo.saunders@btinternet.com>.

Leaders of **Parents:** <parents@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Marya Axner, International Liberation Reference Person for Parents, at <maryaaxner@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Raised-Poor People:**

<raised-poor@mail.rc.org>. Contact Gwen Brown, International Liberation Reference Person for Raised-Poor People, at <gbbrown@udel.edu>.

Leaders of **Trade Unionists:** <unions@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Joanie Parker, International Liberation Reference Person for Trade Unionists, at <jep7ok@aol.com>.

Leaders of **Wide World Change:** <wwc@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Julian Weissglass, International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change, at <weissglass@education.ucsb.edu>.

Leaders of **Women:** <women@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Diane Balsler, International Liberation Reference Person for Women, at <dibalsler@comcast.net>.

Leaders of **Working-Class People:**

<working-class@mail.rc.org>. Contact Dan Nickerson, International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People, at <dnickerson122@comcast.net>.

Leaders of **Young Adults:** <young-adults@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Anna van Heeswijk, International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults, at <annavanheeswijk@hotmail.com>.

Leaders of **Young People:** <young@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Mari Piggott, International Liberation Reference Person for Young People, at <marikathleenp@yahoo.ca>.



MONNIE PAASHUIS

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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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