

Present Time

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Our fears and hurt patterns may long for stasis,
but our real human nature likes to swim in strong currents,
harness moving forces, likes to feel challenged by fresh complexities.

Harvey Jackins

This *Present Time* starts out with two important articles on ending the class society and on next steps we can take as an RC Community toward that goal. Many other excellent articles follow.

For the October issue, we'll need your articles and poems by August 18, and any changes to the back-pages lists by August 25.



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To End the Class Society Is in Everyone's Interest

From talks by Tim Jackins at the West Coast North America Reference Persons' Workshop and the Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop in Coventry, England, January 2014

Early in the existence of our species, nobody was in good enough shape¹ to keep the discharge process functioning, so we lost a great deal of its benefit. We functionally lost the ability, early in our childhoods, to use discharge to keep our minds operating. That ability is there and functions whenever the conditions are right. It was there back then, but the conditions weren't right, yet somehow we survived. Perhaps evolution had given us enough of the right physical characteristics, or maybe we had enough mental ability in spite of our vulnerability to distress patterns. We did survive, though barely sometimes. Our total population shrunk to something like five thousand on occasion. We were adaptable and able, but sometimes just barely enough to get through.

THE ORGANIZATION OF CLASS SOCIETIES

At some point, we started forming societies. We started to organize. There is a general tendency in the universe for things to organize. There are physical laws we know well, like gravity, and some we don't understand well, like those involving dark matter and dark energy. Anytime there are forces acting, things tend to organize. Molecules organize. Solar systems organize. The tendency to organize goes on without thought, it's not intelligent, and it happens at all levels. And once a complex entity like us occurred, it showed up with us—and we organized societies based on the forces that were operating at the time.

Some of those forces were distress patterns, and they were made use of in organizing—in particular, the patterns that made people feel like they never had enough resource to be secure and so were always in danger, and then made them thoughtlessly do things to try to salve and muffle those feelings. In our history we have done



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many horrible and destructive things to each other, and to other life forms and the environment, out of the drive to not feel endangered all the time.

In all societies, the organizing tendency has taken advantage of the distresses that cause people to feel like their existence is threatened and they need more resource to protect it. The threat was real for our species for most of its existence. There was a doubt about whether we could survive collectively because of lack of resource. That's not a real question any longer, but humans have continued to feel that way.

People who accumulated resource and took power could make use of their own patterns and the patterns of others to exploit people's minds and their ability to produce things. We learned how to organize by manipulating distress patterns. Societies were exploitive. They were

oppressive. We took advantage of each other. We also took advantage of other organisms. We hunted. We learned how to do animal husbandry. We learned how to do agriculture.

We kept developing our ability to handle the world and producing things that helped to ensure our survival. We became good enough at organizing and producing that we created a surplus beyond what we needed to survive. Then there was a reason to steal by exploitation. If you steal from people who have no excess, the people die and there is nobody left to exploit. But when people can produce more than they need, a society can be organized

so that others can steal the excess while keeping the exploited people alive so as to create an ongoing stream of produce. It has happened in different ways depending on the development of production. There was slavery, there was feudalism, and we are in capitalism. These are all different ways of organizing. One shifted into another as people understood how to produce things more effectively. New forces were created that got organized in new ways.

We have all benefited tremendously from these advances. Everybody in this room, everybody alive today, has actually benefited tremendously from oppressive societies. Their increasing organization and productive capacity have made it possible for our species to grow enormously in understanding and skill. However, the advances have come at a tremendous cost to our species. We have destroyed many

continued . . .

¹ "Shape" means condition.

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people. We have installed heavy distress patterns on each other.

In some ways we can say that it was necessary to exploit each other in order to gain slack for learning, development, and understanding of the world. Someone had to have the slack to think. Exploitation let that happen. On the other hand, if we had been able to think more clearly we might have organized differently. We might have organized thoughtfully, using the slack and resource to develop our capacities without pushing people to the edge of existence. However, because of distress we were not able to. It could be argued that all of the exploitation was necessary to get us here, that it was a sad but necessary destructive process.

At some point we acquired enough slack to start thinking about what was happening—not trying to guide it, but trying to understand it. After understanding it, we wondered if we could make something happen. Maybe we could have an effect on society, maybe make it less harsh.



LYNDALL KATZ

Some of us got the idea that maybe even bigger changes could happen. Some of us got the idea that changes were going to happen no matter what, that there were driving forces that would keep things changing and reorganizing whether or not anyone thought about them, and that maybe we could guide change; not just be swept along by it. That perhaps it wasn't necessary to wait for a new accumulation of power to reorganize things; that it was possible to think about how to do it.

A NEW SITUATION

At this point it is clear that exploitation is no longer necessary. There are a couple of reasons for this. One is that we understand how to produce things well enough that everyone could have a good life, a life in which he or she had slack to think, without anybody being exploited. We've reached that point in understanding things. We don't need exploitation anymore.

The other is that now there aren't just blind forces pushing for things to be organized. We have developed to where we can think much more clearly. We can organize thoughtfully and awarely. We can be aware of the consequences of our actions and make intelligent organizing decisions. It's not just blind forces pushing in some direction. We have choices now that did not exist before.

We are clearly at the point of being able to change the way humans organize. We can see what doesn't work. We can see what is too expensive in terms of humans and other entities and the environment. It is lucky that we are at the point where we can think about this, since we are now destroying everything. It will be an interesting race. It will be interesting to see what wins—thought, or the momentous buildup

of patterns that has destroyed so much.

A BATTLE AGAINST THE UNTHINKING STRUCTURE

We are at the point where we get to make the change. So how do we do it? How do we end the destructive class society—end capitalism and all exploitive societies—not only for the benefit of individuals but also in the interest of all living things?

“Why are you against capitalism?” We are not just against capitalism. We are against all exploitive societies. Capitalism happens to be the one we are embedded in, so yes, that is the one we talk about. But we are opposed to any society that exploits anybody. It's a much bigger principle than being anti-capitalist.

We don't want to be pulled into a reactive debate—this group of people against that group of people. The struggle is against the patterns embedded in our minds. Arguing about which group should benefit is always restimulating and confusing. Anytime we set people up against each other, it clouds the whole issue. That's part of why things stay confused. It's not about a particular person or group. It's not about the actions some people took in the midst of the distresses they carried. It's about ending the distresses—not allowing them to have any sway, any influence, on what we do.

As a society develops, there is a conscious manipulation of distress. People are more and more conditioned to not think about the way the society operates. It's only as it starts to break down that people get pushed to look at it. And it breaks down first where it is most exploitive. People in the working class witness the failure of the society when there are not enough jobs for them.

But capitalism is not just hard on the working class. This isn't a battle between people in the various classes. It's a battle against the unthinking distressed structure and what that structure makes happen.

ANOTHER COMPELLING REASON FOR CHANGE

We are in a unique situation. Only recently has an exploitive society threatened the existence of our entire species, as well as other species. This does not change or modify anything about class; it simply adds another compelling reason for change. This irrational society, and any other irrational society someone tries to replace it with, can't work any longer. Tremendous forces are operating, and causing enormous damage, and we can't control them in the context of an irrational society.

Thus we now have a second, even more compelling, reason for changing this society. Not only can this society not sustain itself without being very destructive to many, many people, it can't keep from damaging every living thing—at least every complex living thing. It is clearly in the interest of us all to end this particular society's reach and power.

All sorts of phony conflicts are created, for example, "It's either jobs or the environment." This confuses us if we do not understand class. We have to understand class to end the destruction of the environment. This is a strong, ever more obvious truth about present-day reality. It is in the interest of every living thing to end the class society.

SOCIETY'S EFFECT ON US

So how do we do that? How do we, this nice little mild-mannered group of people (*laughing*) foment world change, foment ongoing, continuous world revolution? It isn't enough for things to change in the way they have

in the past. Things shift thoughtlessly unless we are thinking about them and acting on them. We have to be able to think well enough that change is guided by intelligence, that blind forces don't move things, which they push to do.

How do we do this? I think we have to look at the effects on us of living in a class society. Living in this society has had gigantic effects on us that we don't always keep track of. Our whole lives have been lived under a certain set of conditions. The

way that we look at everything is conditioned by a set of distresses caused by those conditions. An example is how we relate to each other. Why is it so hard for us to depend on someone else? Part of the reason is our early hurts. But after those happened, all the distresses of racism and sexism and classism came in and took root in that already-made-frail ground.

Our picture of how we can dare to trust in someone else has been heavily influenced by sexism, by racism, by class. Would you trust your life to someone? Uhhh—no. Our picture of life in a capitalist society is that we must independently see to² our own survival, generate what will sustain us without counting on anyone else.³ It's a capitalist ideal. We have our own retirement fund. We bury our own little acorns here and there, hoping

² "See to" means assure.

³ "Counting on anyone else" means assuming anyone else will help us, be on our side.



BRIAN LAVENDEL

they will get us through a long winter. The perspective is, how do I sustain this organism, how do I survive? It isn't, how do I sustain the wonderful existence of all these organisms that are interconnected in so many ways?

In reality, the only way we are going to exist well is if everything can be sustained. If we want things to be better, we need to make things better for all of us. That's what will carry us on, keep us thinking, keep us moving through our distresses, keep us moving closer and closer to each other. And the better connections we make, the more we will get to think together and the more creative we'll be in figuring out new and bigger things to do together, things that are also more interesting and fun.

OUR CLASS BACKGROUNDS

So on to class. You were born into a particular class. You may have been middle class. You may have been

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owning class. You may have been working class. If you were born in the United States, odds are that you have a mix of class backgrounds. There has been some shifting between classes in this country, because of the historic period and conditions in which the United States developed. So those of us from the United States likely have a mixed-class background, with distresses from each of the classes. The mixing could have occurred a generation ago, or three generations ago, but nobody discharged along the way, so the distresses got passed down. The hurts may not have happened to you—maybe they hadn't happened for two centuries—but you got them because they were acted out at you by your folks, and you had no escape.

So what are you? Are you working class? Are you middle class? Are you owning class? Each class has its own set of distresses that have been systematically put on it, and everybody gets to work on his or her set. It's all right whatever class you were born into. It's all right to be in any class you happen to be in.

Jo Saunders has been the International Liberation Reference Person for Owning-Class People for a long time. She has done wonderful work. She has great perspective. She and my father⁴ decided that the direction for the owning class was to give up what they inherited. That was the main direction. It's a nice direction. But I proposed to Jo that the owning class have a second direction: that as long as they have inherited wealth, they use it—thoughtfully and rationally against the patterns of the societal structure. We want some people in the owning class who are thinking.

So my question is, what can you do in the position you're in? Knowing what we know, can you stop being

pushed by the distresses that have come with that position? Can you free yourself from the patterned behavior and look at what's possible in the position you are in? What could you do there that maybe somebody in a different position couldn't do?

THE ONLY CLASS WITH A FUTURE

The working class is the only class that has a future. It's fine if you are in a dying class. (*laughter*) That the working class is the only class with a future simply means that we no longer need a class that exploits other people. This doesn't have to happen anymore. It's not useful for it to happen. We



also don't need a class—the middle class—that mediates and manages the exploitation. We don't need an owning class or a middle class anymore. However, we will always need things produced, we will always need a way to live, hopefully more and more intelligently and with less and less destructive impact. There will always be a need to be productive, so the working class is the class that has a future.

There are great benefits to having grown up working class, or having working-class ancestors. There's an understanding that is partly in response to the oppression. If you have been involved in production,

you have an understanding of reality that you don't get if you are involved in managing production or seeing that other people are exploited. You have more contact with reality, and you get a certain kind of contact with other people.

Historically, the working class benefited greatly from having to be tightly organized in industrial work. Nobody had had that advantage before. Working-class people had to learn to work together. They got the experience of a close interaction making big things happen that single individuals couldn't have made happen. They got to know how much power there is in being organized

and working and thinking together. There are benefits to doing things together in production, and because the working class has had the best chance at those benefits, they know the most about them. It's not a matter of different intelligence; it's a matter of opportunity.

We don't get things for nothing. Work has to be done to produce enough for our survival. There will always be the need to work. It is fun to work. It is interesting to work. You get to interact with the world in an interesting way and see things really happen. I like manual labor. I like noticing how my body works. I like the soreness. I like the exertion. I like

⁴ Harvey Jackins

to see that what I did made a physical difference in the world that's there at the end of the day. I think we like to interact with the universe in that way. We enjoy being alive and interacting with the universe.

Work is not the problem. Whether or not we are paid enough for our work is often an important issue, but the main problem is the distresses, attitudes, and interactions that become a part of the society once the exploitation is there. Part of what we produce is stolen from us, is put somewhere else and used by others, and as a result, hurtful attitudes and interactions develop between different groups.



THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA, CHINA • DIANE SHISK

BEGINNING WITH PRIDE

So what class are you? Dare you be proud of the class you are in? There is a lot of work to do on being proud of our people, our family—where they come from and the struggles they had, no matter what class they were in.

We also need to look at how classes put each of us in a position to oppress other people. Even if we have always been a victim in the economy, we have patterns with the other flavors of oppression. We have middle-class tendencies, we have owning-class tendencies, of trying to exploit someone else—and we have acted

them out. If we haven't had the chance to act them out economically, we have acted them out at home or in some other place. We all have all of these distresses, and we have acted oppressively because of them.

It is relatively easy to work on being small and victimized, but it is a bad perspective to get stuck in. We don't move and change things from that position. It's understandable that we get stuck there. It's understandable that it's scary to step out and look at the oppressive side of our distresses. It's scary to say, "I have been hard on people in this way. There are times when I did that." It's okay that you did. It's sad, but you shouldn't be attacked

for it. You shouldn't be belittled for it. Everybody tries to resist the pull of the distress as long as he or she can. We are in the midst of an oppressive society, and until we can do enough discharging, we are vulnerable to being pushed in oppressive directions. So we need to talk about and discharge both sides of the distresses.

For a lot of us, one way to begin working on class is by being proud of our own class. That means talking about our ancestors, talking about the struggles they went through. We can cry about the struggles they had, because we carry that material.⁵

⁵ "Material" means distress.

There is confusion about the term "selling out."⁶ A lot of us have shifted out of the working class into the middle class, and we often feel like we should have somehow stayed in solidarity. Your folks wanted you to get an education. They often understood that there was a price to it, that something would be lost, but they wanted you to have a bigger chance than they did, and they weren't incorrect. They didn't understand it to the extent we do, but they understood that there were costs to it, and it seemed to them that it was worth it. It might have been worth it. It might not have been a mistake to take that path and try for things, even though society suppressed you badly and took away options because you did it. It might still have made sense.

We seldom get to make a move in an oppressive society that doesn't cost us something. That's why it all has to change. In an oppressive society, there is no avenue forward that isn't corrupted. We look at society and the opportunities, we figure out what moves us forward, and we try those things. You may have shifted to the middle class and feel bad about it because you feel that you abandoned somebody. The pressures on the newly middle class are to abandon, to deny where you came from, to deny the strengths and power of the working class, or to give them up rather than take them with you and use them from a new position.

I don't want you confused in that area. Wherever you are, wherever you came from, is okay. You get to be proud of what you have managed to do. It has worked out just fine. You are here, and now we get to actually think about it together. We get to figure things out together, and we each get to decide what to do next.

⁶ "Selling out" means betraying one's cause or associates, especially for personal gain.

A New Initiative on Ending Classism

Increasingly on the RC e-mail discussion lists, people are recognizing that capitalism, our current version of the oppressive class society, is a limiting factor in social change. Co-Counselors are also leading an increasing number of classes and workshops on “ending classism” and discharging the hurts we have internalized from our experience in the current capitalist class societies.

I am proposing a new initiative for the RC Communities for what we often call “ending classism.” At its center is the support of working-class liberation in the Communities.

I propose that the RC Community begin an initiative to reach the working class with the insights and practice of RC and that this be the central focus of our “ending classism” work. (For the purpose of this discussion, I define “the working class” as “those people engaged in the direct production of goods or services.”)

Why would this be a strategic move for the Communities?

For one thing, to prioritize putting our resources behind the liberation of the working class would force us to discharge our classism, no matter what subsector of the class society we have been cast into.

Secondly, we working-class people have many strengths—individually, collectively, and strategically—that place us in a particularly powerful position in society—a fact that the oppressive society works hard to suppress. The working class lives in more direct contact with the realities of the economic system than does the middle or the owning class. I like to say, from what I have experienced as a factory worker, that “when capitalism hiccups, we feel it.” When the stock market falls, we experience the layoffs that put us out of work, or if we remain employed our wages and benefits are reduced. The oppression is quick and severe.

We, the working class, see clearly the dysfunction of the current society. We see the quality of our work suffer as production is increasingly organized around profit rather than functionality. We see irrational decisions

being made in the name of profit. We see the conditions of our lives deteriorate as wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a very few. Compared to the middle and the owning classes, we are in more direct contact with the economic and environmental damage of unregulated growth and consumption. As a result of all this, it is harder to convince us to support policies that are unworkable or that fail to add value to society.

In addition, the way we are in connection with each other through our work is a strategic benefit. It makes it easier for us to think and act collectively and quickly.

These strengths, inherent in the system and in the nature of our oppression (one of the “internal contradictions of capitalism”), give the working

class a power that other sectors of the class society do not possess.

In order for us as a Community to end oppression, all of which has class oppression (classism) at its root, it only makes sense that we would prioritize communicating the insights and practice of RC to the working class.

How can we implement this initiative? It is difficult for me to ask people to work harder—we are all working hard. There are things we can do, however, that will not necessarily make more work.

We can first just notice that the working class exists. We, as Community members, teachers, and leaders, can notice which people in our Community are living working-class lives. We can offer them special support to improve their use and teaching of RC. We can make sure that they are invited to workshops and classes and are recognized as central to any movement against oppression. We can give them additional time to speak if they need it to overcome their fear, shame, or humiliation. We can alter when necessary the familiar structures and practices of our Communities to accommodate the living conditions of working-class people. (Recently added wording in the 2013 *Guidelines*¹ supports this flexibility.

We are at the point where, if we don't support the leadership of the working class on all issues, we greatly blunt our effectiveness in all areas.

¹ The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*—the policies for the RC Communities

See section A.4.) We can move working-class people toward leadership as quickly as possible. We can notice and appreciate the ways that they are already leading in their lives, though it may not conform to models of leadership that the oppressive society recognizes or values.

The economic, social, and environmental fabric of the planet is deteriorating so rapidly that we need to act as efficiently and quickly as possible. I have been asked by a group of working-class and other RC leaders to propose this initiative and organize and lead it. Given the fullness of many Regional² calendars, it is unlikely that I could lead weekend workshops on this initiative before a year from now. Therefore, we propose that I visit RC Communities to lead daylong workshops for working-class people, evening meetings for working-class leaders, and gather-ins for the general Community. I will work with local Communities to solve any financial limitations.

I also propose that the work on discharging class oppression, “ending classism,” and “ending capitalism”

² A Region is a subdivision of the International RC Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

be coordinated and done in an organized manner and in consultation with all levels of RC working-class leadership, including me. Where there are no RC working-class “leaders,” I propose that whatever working-class people there are in the Community be gathered and consulted on how to proceed with the work on class.

I believe that we are at the point where, if we don’t support the leadership of the working class on all issues, we greatly blunt our effectiveness in all areas.

I am ready to take on³ this work in a new way. I have the full support of Tim and Diane⁴ and a core of other RC working-class leaders and leaders on class.

I am eager to help you get the strengths of the working class behind all of the good work you are doing.

Dan Nickerson
International Liberation Reference
Person for Working-Class People
Freeport, Maine, USA

³ “Take on” means undertake.

⁴ Tim Jackins and Diane Shisk



MOUNT FUJI, JAPAN • EDWARD ELBERS

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What I've Figured Out about Enjoying My Life

As a young adult, I've been thinking a lot about building my life to be the way I want it and about going for¹ my dreams—about how to enjoy life, which I think is a revolutionary thing to do. In fact, I've always thought about the future—where I want to live and with whom, what I want to do, how I want society to look. But I didn't realize I'd already figured out some things until I had an enlightening conversation with a good friend, who is also my roommate.

She is going through a rough time in her life and looking for inspiration. She asked me, "How do you endure life; how do you have strength for it?" It took me a few minutes until I could answer, because at first I didn't think I did anything special. I thought, "I just live, and I happen to be lucky enough to enjoy it as well." But then I realized that I'd actually done a lot to build my life so that I liked it (and therefore "had strength for it"). Here are the things I told her I'd figured out (and a few more I've thought of since):

I live with two really good friends. (This is probably the most important thing.) We love each other deeply, show ourselves fully, and laugh a lot together. We see each other as partners for life, no less than how we would think of a romantic partner.

I have a lot of close relationships and make time to be with friends. I go after² people I like and care about, even if they don't come after me as much.

I think about and choose things I want to do, and I make the time to do them—both big things, like a job or a school program, and short-term ones, like hobbies, hiking, gardening, and art.

I take on³ small challenges all the time. I think of something I want to do, and go after it and do it, even if it scares me. I set it up so I will succeed: I do a lot of Co-Counseling sessions about it, build support for myself, and then do it with a friend. This means that I always have something to look forward to and am constantly moving forward in what I can do, and how I can be, in the world.

I don't allow myself to feel bad about myself in the present (except sometimes in a Co-Counseling session). I made a firm decision a while ago not to believe any recordings⁴ of feeling bad about myself. I remind myself that they are not connected to the present and that I've always done the best I could. I have become my ally instead of the bully I used to be. (It doesn't always work, but it's much better than it was in the beginning. I often don't even need to remind myself consciously now; my mind knows to do it already.)

I do a lot of Co-Counseling sessions. After the last RC young adult leaders' conference, I understood that Co-Counseling is a real part of my life, not something I do in order to feel better in my "real" life—that my Co-Counseling relationships are real in every way. That enabled me to get closer to my Co-Counselors, bring them more into my life and my mind, and show them more of

myself and my life. It also made me want more for them, which made me more powerful and connected as counselor.

When I am client, I try to be strategic about my sessions, choose what I want to work on, and go early.⁵ In my life I notice areas in which I am restimulated or don't have my flexible thinking and try to remember to work on them in sessions. I also notice things that are a contradiction⁶ for me and use them.

Another important thing is that I am honest with my counselors. I try to have integrity and be open and real about things I have thought or have done. This brings me closer to my counselors and leads to a lot of discharge as well. At the end of my sessions I tell about something I have liked or enjoyed in my life recently. Since doing that, I've noticed and appreciated many more things. "Small" nice things that could have gone unattended get attention and become more noticeable and important.

I also lead in Re-evaluation Counseling. This keeps my mind fresh, keeps me thinking about re-emergence, and reminds me more often of the benign reality.

I would love to hear what other people (you guys and gals!) have figured out as well.

Timna Raz
Jerusalem, Israel
Reprinted from the
RC e-mail discussion list
for leaders of young adults

¹ "Going for" means pursuing.

² "Go after" means pursue.

³ "Take on" means undertake.

⁴ Distress recordings

⁵ "Go early" means discharge early distress.

⁶ Contradiction to distress

A Perspective on RC

We humans are perfectly fitted to this world. Think of the strongest image you can of a perfect fit. In my native Danish, we say “like the yolk in an egg” or “like a hand in a glove.” This earth is in every way our place, for each one of us. This planet and these people around us are a complete home to us. Evolutionarily this has to be so, or we wouldn’t exist. (In the earth we find remains of other species that were wonderful in their own right but that didn’t fit the world well enough.)

We come into the world with a deep knowledge of all this. We expect to live in this perfect fit, but unfortunately that is not what happens. We are only slowly realizing how enormous the difference is between what we expect and need and what we actually get. How truly miserable our early years are.

I think the difference between what we expect and what we meet leaves us feeling like strangers in the world, like we don’t fit in, and like the world is not really suited to us. Only in our deepest, sweetest dreams do we hope and long for the kind of connection with the world that is our birthright.

This lonely confusion of our early years persists for most of us. I think the feeling of estrangement, of not fitting in, is a root cause of much of the misery we see in the world, especially the exploitation and degradation of the environment. If we were in touch with, if we lived with, our perfect fit to this earth, we would treat it very differently.

In a sense, each one of us carries the accumulated undischarged distresses of all of our ancestors. When they had hurtful experiences and could not discharge, the distresses stuck and got passed on. In my mind’s eye, I see a long, long string of time stretching behind me with the garbage of distress attached along it. As I move through my life, I drag that chain with me. It slows me down, and hinders and confuses me.

When I think about this, each Co-Counseling session becomes much more important. I am not just working to feel better and free my own mind so that I can live a better life. Each piece of distress I scrape and peel off my mind loosens forever a small part of my family’s burden—and I mean family in the broadest sense. That distress may have roots thousands of years old, and I am the one to end it, here and now. My ancestors did not want to pass it on, they just didn’t have the resources to stop it. But now I do, and when I end it, all the people I am in touch with, and who come after me, will never be exposed to that distress again. It is like I am cutting the threads to the past so that they will never again weigh me, or anyone I am in contact with, down.

But it goes beyond that. When we free ourselves of distress we are, step by step, reclaiming our place in the world, as individuals and also as a species. We are rebuilding our understanding of how perfectly at home we are here. We are reclaiming our birthright and stepping into a perfect connection with everything around us.

When I can remember this perspective on RC, I remember how incredibly important our work is, and I am braver and more determined in my sessions.

Søren Holm
Stockholm, Sweden



KENYA • TIM JACKINS

Remind Each Other That All Is Well

It is important in our relationships with each other that we intensely remind each other of reality, that we make commitments to act as if we were already sure that things are all right, that all is well, all is really well. It is true, of course; but it takes a little persistence to enunciate that confidently while the grey, gluggy pseudo reality is still dripping down our faces and before we can clearly see the bright colors of reality through it. It takes a little persistence, and it takes agreements among us to act as if we always remember that all is well. That the Universe is benign. That we are admirably fitted for our role of benevolent custodians of the Universe. That within every hostile pattern is a friendly ally begging and yearning to be released by the right word. That there is no situation ever in which we don’t have allies available to us.

Harvey Jackins
From page 145 of
“The Uncovering of Reality,”
in *The Benign Reality*

The following five articles are from a discussion, on the e-mail discussion list for RC teachers, about discharging fear.



Discharging Heavy Early Fear



I am looking for some stories of success in discharging heavy early fear. In twenty-three years of Co-Counseling, I have only had a few sessions in which I've experienced more than a few moments of spontaneous shaking or teeth chattering.

Like many RCers, I have repeatedly tried to discharge fear by shaking on purpose. This seems to have some good effect. It has sometimes allowed me to get back to sleep in the middle of the night. However, it has not been enough to make much difference in my early terror—which still wakes me up at 4:00 in the morning, among its other effects.

I know of at least two longtime Co-Counselors who have run into problems related to early terror. I don't think either person has been able to fully discharge it. One of them is experiencing insomnia; another needs to work less in order to improve her health. Both have functioned well on top of the terror but only as long as they've kept extremely busy.

It would be useful to hear about others' successes in discharging early terror.

Michael Levy
Santa Cruz, California, USA



Fear and Yawning



I have been doing RC for twenty years, and I, too, have had difficulty discharging fear. I will share what has worked for me.

I am an Ashkenazi Jew,¹ and my childhood in the United States was one of poverty and extreme violence. It was clear I had a lot of fear, and my counselors all agreed that shaking was what I needed to do. They would encourage me to shake on purpose, and I often spent most of my sessions "fake" shaking.



SEÁN RUTH

I wasn't convinced that the "fake" shaking was encouraging real discharge. After my sessions I would feel more on edge² and scared, not less. My counselors thought that perhaps that was a good thing, that my fear was coming more to the surface and that I would discharge it more easily in later sessions as a result. That did not happen. I continued to feel more stressed out after sessions and less able to think. We tried getting me in close, having me stand across the room, and so on, but with the same results.

After several years I decided to try another approach. I instructed my counselors to insist that I yawn, not shake. That helped tremendously. I felt more connected with my counselors and friends. I could think more relaxedly and flexibly after my sessions. I got sick less often and felt less tired. My body began to heal from old physical hurts, and my chronic pain shifted.

I still talk about scary early events, but slowly and with lots of yawning. Now I sometimes cry as well. I have been able to look at hard things and feel loved at the same time—a perfect mixture for real discharge and re-evaluation. I still rarely shake outright.³

¹ An Ashkenazi Jew is a Jew of Central and Eastern European descent.

² "On edge" means anxious, nervous.

³ "Shake outright" means simply shake.

It's interesting that I do shiver, and my teeth chatter, at the end of every yawn. As counselors we might be expecting fear discharge to look a certain way, when actually there is more variety.

Even though yawning has worked well, my counselors still have to insist that I do it. It feels to me like an absolute waste of time. I was more comfortable "acting out" the terror as client. Perhaps that was a dramatization of my fear, stirring it up in a not-useful way. I also suspect that I couldn't tell⁴ I was safe, which may be why others often have a hard time shaking.

Jennileen Joseph
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

⁴ "Tell" means perceive, notice.

I Need to Know Someone Is Really There

I have been trying to work on disconnection. It seems to have been installed before I learned language, before I even knew I could be separate from another person, before there were any barriers between me and another person.

In working on it, I need no words—just real attention, physical closeness, and my and another's mind seeming

almost merged. Then I cry and sometimes shake, or my teeth chatter. I need to know someone is really there and can "hold" me with their mind. It usually starts with noticing that my counselor has a mind, has focused it on me, and can tell¹ that I have a mind, too. Then I am less

¹ "Tell" means notice.

on guard and the terror can show spontaneously.

Tim² has invited Co-Counselors to be cheek-to-cheek, as a way to interrupt separation. I'm moving toward doing that with several Co-Counselors.

Erin Mansell
London, England

² Tim Jackins

Fear and Physical Counseling

I am wondering if physical counseling¹ would help here. Fear can feel so scary and often be internally still, silent, and passive—even if the outer picture is busy and frantic. Fully fighting for oneself can be powerful. When we've done physical counseling at women's workshops in our Region,² I have seen people work deeply on terror.

The one time I experienced spontaneous shaking in a counseling environment was at a family workshop during

¹ "Physical counseling" is counseling in which a counselor, who has been trained to do it, provides aware and thoughtful physical resistance for a client to push and fight against.

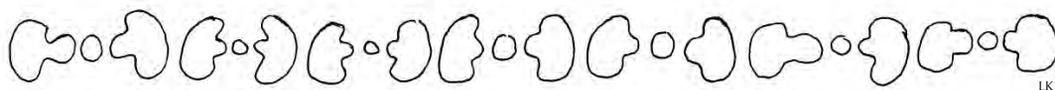
² A Region is a subdivision of the International RC Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

the wrestling portion.³ I was kneeling at the outer edge of the group, getting ready to leap in. An experienced counselor with lots of attention veered in my direction and looked right at me. That's all it took.⁴

Jeanie Lindquist
Ashby, Massachusetts, USA

³ At RC family workshops, young people and adults (both parents and allies) interact in ways that allow the young people to show and be themselves and not be dominated by the adults. Physical counseling, or "wrestling," is usually a part of these workshops.

⁴ "That's all it took" means that's all that was needed.



How I've Dealt with Early Terror

Early terror is a big part of my chronic material.¹ Work is tied to the terror. I work a lot, although I prefer not to. I try to do things perfectly and completely, which is why work pulls at me.

These are some things that have worked in Co-Counseling sessions:

- * Being held tightly—even squeezed

- * Getting physically closer to my counselor

- * Being told by my regular counselor, “Anytime you work on fear and terror, it’s a good thing,” but not being urgent about it

- * Stopping my own temptation to counsel myself (the terror is linked to isolation)

- * Deciding not to worry. For maybe a year in almost all my sessions I took that direction. The results were remarkable; something moved. It’s easier now to stop myself outside of sessions when I start going down the worry path.

It doesn’t work for me to have someone lie on top of me, although I can see why it does for some people. The sense of being overpowered is too oppressive and shuts me down.² I also don’t necessarily find it easier to discharge terror at workshops. I find it more useful to do it with my regular Co-Counselors. I have one Co-Counselor I’ve been meeting with for fifteen years and another for eight. A couple of others I do regular phone time with. They all seem to have a good handle on³ how to counsel me generally, including on this material. At workshops I sometimes don’t get long

¹ “Material” means distress.

² “Shuts me down” means makes me go numb.

³ “A good handle on” means a good grasp of, a good understanding of.

enough sessions and I often counsel with people who aren’t really tracking me like my regulars.⁴ Of course, some workshops give me better leeway on this material than others: workshops on war, genocide, and colonization—things linked to my early terror. Not too surprising.

I do find Intensives⁵ useful for getting down to the early terror.

Recently, I’ll wake up at 4:00 AM (almost on the dot⁶) and simply be unable to go back to sleep. I’ll usually be obsessing about something work related. I have people in a different time zone I could call at that hour, but usually I’m just trying to wind down instead of winding up (by waking up more to get time⁷). Usually I work on it in a session the next day. It’s become clear that where my mind goes at 4:00 AM is not that important. It’s just my mind doing its “crazy,” obsessive anxiety thing. Sometimes I’m thinking about something ridiculous, like how to shop for groceries. I’ve come to realize this, after discharging a bunch on the insomnia. Now it’s easier for

⁴ “Regulars” means regular counselors.

⁵ An Intensive is twenty hours of one-way Re-evaluation Counseling, for a fee, at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, in Seattle, Washington, USA.

⁶ “On the dot” means exactly.

⁷ “Get time” means get counseling attention.

me to tell⁸ that whatever I’m obsessing about, no matter what it is, is not important.

I’ve decided and re-decided to go to sleep by 11:00 PM. (My pull is to stay up later and later to get work completed and tie up other loose ends.) This usually takes some strategic thinking earlier in the day, like what it would take⁹ to truly stop doing other things and be ready for bed by 10:30 PM.

During the daytime I have sessions on my anxiety about not getting enough sleep. That way, even when I can’t figure out how to go back to sleep again, it’s not as big a deal. (“Oh well.”¹⁰ I guess I’ll just be tired later.)

I see the work on early terror as a long-term project. I’m just trying to keep making headway,¹¹ and being gentle with myself about the process.

Thanks, Michael, for getting so many of us thinking about this.

Anonymous
San Francisco, California, USA

⁸ “Tell” means notice, see.

⁹ “Take” means require.

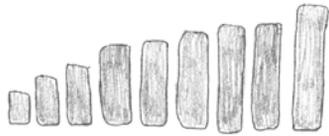
¹⁰ “Oh well” is an expression that indicates acceptance of an undesirable situation.

¹¹ “Headway” means progress.

If

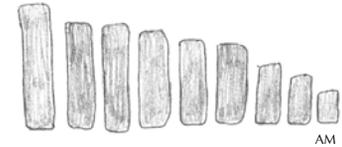
If I sit very
still, perhaps she will rest on
me . . . the dragonfly.

Sojourner Truth
Seattle, Washington, USA



Scorning Fear

Harvey Jackins, at the 1981 World Conference
of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities



By “scorning fear” we mean not respecting fear, treating fear with contempt, with amused derision.

About two years ago, we faced the fact that some of our most experienced Co-Counselors tended to be going ’round and ’round¹ on some not-very-important grief, and not progressing rapidly. We recognized that people, in a way, did not know how to discharge fear or, more correctly, were not receiving enough encouragement and support against their fear to leap the boundary between tears and shaking. We used the slogan “Scorning Fear” to highlight the proposed solution.

I have great good news for us, in case you didn’t already know it. Most of our experienced counselors are now shaking freely and enjoying it at least as much as they used to enjoy their crying. Patterned distortions crept in, as usual, however, and I found in many places fear being “scorned” by the counselor sitting back and saying, “Scorn your fear, client,” and then complaining that the technique didn’t really work. (*laughter from group*) The reality of the matter is that the client has been scorning the fear all along, just as much as she or he could figure out a way to do it, and the real improvement necessary is for the counselor to scorn the client’s fear. If we don’t keep that clear, we will get into distortions, such as the counselor reproaching the client for having fear, or something like that. Workable practice consists of the counselor taking an unafraid attitude toward the client’s fear.

L—: Will you give us a demonstration of this sometime in the workshop?

Harvey: How about² right now? What are you scared of, L—?

L—: Standing up and asking this question. (*laughter from group*) I’m scared right now of talking to you.

Harvey: That’s an interesting fear.

L—: Yes (*laughter*).

Harvey: You will probably meet your death from it, but keep on. I can see the headlines now: “Innocent Conference

Attendee Has Heart Attack on Floor of Conference.” (*much laughter from L— and group*) “Careless treatment by leader charged.” (*more laughter*)

L—: I’m glad I raised this question (*laughter, shuddering*).

Harvey: What are you afraid will happen?

L—: I’m afraid that I will say something really stupid.

Harvey: I think you can count on that. (*much laughter from group and L—*) (*To audience*) Light, pleasant sarcasm is not the only way to contradict the fear. Once the shakes get going, you’d better get your arms around him and let him feel that there’s some unafraid support there, and do many other things, but humor is not a bad way to get started. (*To client*) That’s a very interesting fear you have there. What else might happen?

L—: I might be massively rejected by this entire group for asking questions.

Harvey: Care³ to look around and see the expressions on their faces about your interruption of their valuable time?

L—: They seem delighted (*laughter*).

Harvey: I don’t get that impression. (*much laughter from group and client*) Okay to put a check on it⁴?

L—: Yes.

Harvey: Fear is scorned by the counselor. Incidentally—as in most counseling—tone of voice, facial expression, and the communication of relaxed confidence is very important.

To get started, we’re going to have to be a little daring. When the client says, “I’m afraid of death,” we can say in a relaxed way, “That’s interesting. Do you think you’ll ever die?” and if the client says mumble, mumble, we can happily say, “Well, you probably will,” and the tension will get contradicted and the client will begin discharging. You may choke on it a little the first time (*demonstrates to group laughter*), but if you try, somebody’s going to discharge a

continued . . .

¹ Around and around

² “How about” means why not.

³ “Care” means would you like.

⁴ “Put a check on it” means stop there.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

little, some small slack will come in, and we'll be able to begin modeling for each other.

The basic fact here is that in order to get restimulated by our client's fear, we have to identify our fear with the client's fear. This takes a lot of work. You think it's automatic, but that isn't so. It takes a lot of effort. Anybody here⁵ who has a fear of death? (*laughter*) Okay. Whose death? Yours?

Q—: Yes.

Harvey: (*To audience*) Now, I'd actually have to go through a lot of work to think, "Oh, me too. I'm afraid of death. We are both afraid of death. We are in the same boat. Tell frightened me about it." (*laughter*) That takes a lot of work. You want to remain rational. When she says, "My death," you say, "Your death doesn't frighten me." (*much laughter from group*)

Q—: I got confused because you're joking about the fear, and I can't see how that will bring trembling.

Harvey: Did you tremble when we joked about it?

⁵ "Anybody here" means is there anybody here.



HOLLY JORGENSON

Q—: A little bit.

Harvey: I don't want to take the time for another demonstration, but I assure you that my lighthearted approach will bring discharge, though not necessarily instant approval, from you.

It takes persistence. You know how music tapes usually have a "leader"⁶ on them? Trembling and tears often have a "leader" of laughter that comes first, because all of us have been made embarrassed about our discharge. So always be happy to help your clients get started laughing, even when it is other discharge that they are after.⁷ Be happy if they laugh, because the other discharges will follow right behind.

From pages 94 to 97 of "Recent Discoveries: The Key Concepts and Insights of Re-evaluation Counseling to Date—Part IV," in *The Reclaiming of Power*

⁶ Harvey is referring to the reel-to-reel audiotapes of earlier years. The "leader" was the piece of non-magnetic blank tape that preceded the audio recording.

⁷ "After" means wanting.



KARL LAM

More on Scorning Fear

Very advanced counseling comes very close to simple beginning counseling. How will you scorn fear? You will pay enough attention to see what the fear is, you will think of all possible ways to contradict it, and then you will contradict it. There's nothing more scornful of fear than a contradiction.

(*To someone there*) "You have a fear?" "Of being completely alone?" (*in a serious tone of voice*) "That will undoubtedly happen someday. Congratulations! Solitude is wonderful. Enjoy it well." Now, if I say, in an anxious tone of voice, "Oh, you will never be completely alone," the words might seem to be a contradiction, but I'm just reinforcing his fear.

If someone tells me, "I'm afraid of dying," and I say cheerfully, "Oh, you probably will," they may say, "Hmph!"* but they're probably already laughing.

Contradict the distress. If you're trying to help someone discharge on early sexual memories, and the incest victim, covered with shame and guilt, is saying, "My father wouldn't do anything like that," you, as counselor, can approvingly say, "Oh, you were probably so attractive he couldn't resist!"

Harvey Jackins

From pages 135 to 136 of "What Is Our Present Position? What Do We Know? What Are We Doing and About to Do?" in *The Reclaiming of Power*

* "Hmph" is an expression of indignation.

Health and Well-Being for All!

Almost all health issues have their origins in hurts that happened early in our lives. Then the distresses keep accumulating. By the time we are adults, we begin to experience physical problems that are the result of our not having discharged the distresses that got tucked away.

It took a long time for them to accumulate, so it can take a long time to discharge them. There are no miracles and no quick “fixes,” no matter how much we long for this.

In my twenties, I was involved in a serious accident. Out of necessity I started working on health issues. Almost dying, broken bones, surgeries, and anesthesia were holding me back from having a big life. It took several years of Co-Counseling to begin to build a big life for myself outside the pain and distress. There was a lot to figure out about how distresses prevent us from healing fully. (It

wouldn't take that long now, because I know so much more.)

Co-Counselors are more and more often getting together to support a long-term Community member who urgently needs to work on health issues. Many of those needing support are elders. Why wait until it is urgent? The time to start working is now, before you have a major issue.

I'm encouraging everyone, of every age, to set up health and healing support groups. I have been in such a support group for eleven years. We have evolved into a strong team, and our lives have gotten bigger as a result. We've worked on many topics: being ill as a young person, watching others be ill, anesthesia, surgeries, relationships with doctors and other medical professionals, addictions, aging, sex, money, discouragement, oppression and reproduction, and more. (If a group of Co-Counselors is supporting someone in a health crisis,

to do it well they need to meet as a group without that person, to discharge their own distress related to their own bodies.)

To quote Marsha Saxton,* “Take your body to session.” I'll add, “Take it *regularly* to session (at least once a month) and work on all your feelings about your body, even if it doesn't seem important.

It is never too early. If you are in your twenties, thirties, or forties, the time is right. It is never too late. If you are in your fifties, sixties, or seventies, or older, the time is right. I'm available to help you get started.

Happy discharging!

Pam Geyer
International Liberation
Reference Person for Elders
Bellaire, Texas, USA

* Marsha Saxton is the International Liberation Reference Person for People with Disabilities.

Finally Grown Up

As a little girl, saying my prayers and going to church and Sunday school, I loved Jesus, “meek and mild,” who loved me. Every night, kneeling by my bed as Nanny listened, I would say, “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon this little child. Pity my simplicity, suffer me to come to thee. I'm sorry for all the naughty things I've done today. Please make me a good girl tomorrow. For Christ's sake, Amen,” and then I would leap into bed.

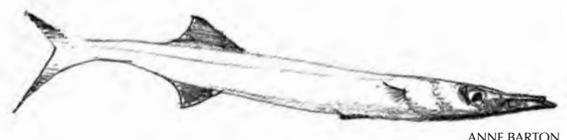
For me this was about *my good father*, the one who loved me, called Jesus. He was important to me, and I now understand why. Fathers didn't come into the nursery in those days, so I simply didn't have a relationship with my actual father. The fact that Jesus was above the bright blue sky was a little confusing, but then, so were most things they tried to teach me.

At last, a real, live lover came along in the form of a husband, and my frozen need* got transferred to him.

It wasn't until he died and I was able to grieve fully for him that I suddenly found that I was no longer grieving for him but for my father. Having my early need for my father partially filled by Jesus and then my husband, I hadn't fully grown up.

I now realise that I am a fully grown-up, independent human being, free to form close relationships all over the place. Freedom at last! I think this is what Jesus meant by leaving us. He meant to set us free—not from our sins but from our frozen needs, which prevent us from growing up and taking charge of our lives. He had attracted followers, and needed to go in order for them to grow up.

Jean Turner
Darlington, County Durham, England



* 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 the person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

Quitting Sugar and Unhooking the Pull of Addiction

I recently made some progress in understanding how addiction works for me and in interrupting the mechanism that opens the door to my addictive pulls.

For as long as I can remember, I have had addictive pulls. I consider addiction, or an addictive pull, to be a way that I am pulled to use a behavior or a substance or a set of thoughts to avoid feeling a set of feelings or simply to “feel good” or “not feel bad” for a while.

I have discharged for many years, in many ways, trying to “unhook” my mind from these pulls. I have discharged on early isolation, loneliness, devastation, desperation, heartbreak, discouragement, distrust, hopelessness, and abandonment. The best result I have been able to achieve is to be able to decide (for a limited time) to not do the thing I am pulled to do. I have made great progress in my ability to be in charge of my diet, my television-watching habits, my Internet habits, my going to bed on time. Still, there have remained those moments when, faced with a particular set of feelings, I lose control of my decision-making ability and give in¹ to my addictive pulls.

In some ways, addictions saved my life. When I felt my worst, I would watch TV for hours, numbing my mind so that I wouldn't feel the harsh feelings that I knew would have killed me otherwise. While I haven't really heard people say this in RC, I think that sometimes feelings kill people. They can feel so unbearable that any escape from them, including death, seems better than continuing to feel them. For groups that are

systematically denied access to vital resources of society, addictions can be an alternate choice. They can enable people to stay alive and cope.

In society and somewhat in Co-Counseling, it seems that we try to interrupt our addictions primarily to lessen the harm they do to our lives. We can get more help with or attention for them, if (1) they are detrimental to our bodies or (2) they diminish our lives in other important ways, for example, interfere with our relationships, take time away from things we need to do to move our lives forward, or use resources that we need for other things. Less help is available if they cause no substantial damage or visible impediment to our functioning.

I have discharged some in groups of people working on addictions, and because the ways that I succumb to addiction aren't as extreme as others, there's been a misunderstanding that my addictions aren't as serious, that

the way that I experience the pull of addiction isn't as bad or as strong, that I don't struggle like the other people do.

I think that my addictions have the full force and pull that other people's do and that the pattern is just as entrenched. But I have a socially accepted addiction. It doesn't play out² as regularly as some people's do, but when it does, I am completely at its mercy. Sometimes I utterly lose control of my decision-making ability. It's not easier for me in that moment to take charge of my mind against the pull of addiction than it is for someone with a more active addiction.

EXPERIMENTING WITH MY ADDICTION

In the fall of 2012, eight months before my forty-eighth birthday, it occurred to me that in the two years leading up to my fiftieth birthday I wanted to decisively move all aspects of my health forward. I wanted to start my second half-century more in charge of my physical well-being, in better physical health, and in less physical pain. I decided that when I turned forty-eight, I would make a firm decision to not eat dessert-type things: cookies, candy, cake, pie, and so on. I also decided that during the eight months before then I would learn as much as I could about the way addiction worked for me, try to understand why I couldn't keep my resolve in the face of opportunity.

The next few months gave me lots of chances to experiment with my upcoming decision to stop eating sweets. At first, the resolve of my decision gave me the slack to not eat any at all. For a number of weeks, I



MICHIGAN, USA • LANCE CABLK

¹ “Give in” means succumb.

² “Doesn't play out” means isn't acted out.

truly felt uninterested. Then the U.S. November and December holiday period came up, and I was faced with many opportunities to eat or not to eat sweets.

I tried to be flexible. Rather than taking a firm stand against eating sugary things, I tried to hold on to my ability to decide what I wanted at each moment and to stick to it. I had periods of disinterest, times when I succeeded at being in complete charge of my mind, moments of not being able to stick to a decision I'd made, and times when I ate a lot of sweet things multiple days in a row. At the New Year holiday, I went to a party and decided that I wouldn't eat anything sweet, that I would just eat healthy food. I utterly failed. I ate everything. I didn't beat myself up, I just noticed that I couldn't do what I'd decided to do and pondered what it was that made that happen. I wanted to understand what set up my succumbing to addictive behavior.

Another thing I did in that period was make a list of all of my favorite sweet things, to make sure to eat them before my forty-eighth birthday. I wanted to savor those things I had enjoyed, reflect on the happy times I'd had with them, and discharge and say goodbye to them. At one point this led to an addictive binge of eating super-sweet food a few times a week. Again, I maintained an attitude of kindness toward myself, giving myself great permission to try and fail.

During this whole time of "experimenting" with my addiction, I used many Co-Counseling sessions to put attention on the feelings I had about it all. I cried a lot about how good life was when I could eat sweet things and how bleak it would be without them.

If I let myself believe something that isn't true, then a different logic is in control and I can't talk myself out of it, even if I know that at other times I have made a completely different decision.

I made a date with a girlfriend to make her recipe of chocolate peanut-butter balls (CPBBs)—one of my favorite sweet things. We made a lot of them, and over the next few days I had a concentrated engagement with them.

On the first day, I thought I would be able to decide to eat just two that whole day. Later in the day I "decided" to eat two more and that those were going to be the last. Later I changed my mind again and ate two more. I could not, *could not*, stop eating those amazingly good treats. I decided many times that day not to eat any more but had absolutely no control over it. I watched myself play with this and fail, over and over. I was absolutely sure that the last two I ate would be the last ones. But I couldn't find the spot in my mind that would allow me to stay in charge, even though I felt "in charge" each time I made the decision.

It's been important that I haven't judged myself harshly for my failures. I was treated horribly for many years in my family and somehow emerged from that with some compassion for myself. In dealing with my sugar addiction, I feel myself as a gentle, understanding, and persistent counselor. This really helps me keep my decision to completely stop eating sweets without being swamped by discouragement.

The next morning I discharged on how bleak my life had felt in the moments right before I ate some of those CPBBs. I loved them. They were so, so wonderful and saved me when everything felt so, so terrible. I cried hard and couldn't figure out

how to manage the predicament. As a temporary measure, I made a rigid decision for that day that I wouldn't eat any at all. I would keep the door to my addictive pulls closed and not even try to pretend that I could control it. The discharge helped me stick to that decision, and I lost interest for that day.

The next day I had to make another decision. What was I going to do with those CPBBs? I had a lot of them in my freezer. I wanted to be able to enjoy them, share them, say goodbye to their creamy goodness. But now that had a certain element of misery attached to it. It wasn't that simple. I actually wanted to be able to think about what to do about those treats. I wanted my mind to be in charge. But I had questions: Should I try eating them again? If I started again, how was I going to stop? At what point did I lose control? What happened in my mind that I would slip out of my rational perspective into one in which the only logical solution was to eat as many of them as I could?

A REALIZATION

This felt like a true emotional crisis. I couldn't answer any of those questions or move forward. But exploring the emotional and behavioral state I was in gave me time to notice and re-evaluate my perspective. I realized that there is a moment right before I eat sweets addictively in which doing so seems like the necessary and logical thing to do. And right before that moment, there is a sequence of thoughts and feelings that cause my perspective to shift away from the decision I previously made.

continued . . .

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The wonderful feeling of relief that comes from eating sweet things only comes when I let myself believe a feeling from my childhood that everything is horrible, there is no help, no one is coming, I am on my own, it's going to be like this forever, and there is nothing good. It's a heavy, awful feeling and perspective that can cover my mind like a wet blanket. When I allow it to creep in, then I can hold sweet food in my mind as the thing that will save me. It becomes elevated to the only thing that will help. In that moment, it would be illogical to deny myself whatever I want. My feelings lock me in a horribly bleak existence that I can't see my way out of except through that little bit of sweet sunshine that will change it all. And it does change it all. It is so, so seductive. But I can only get this rush of relief if I let the devastation seem real. Then a sugary treat is a real answer to those feelings. The instant I taste one, those feelings disappear. And it is wonderful.

This was a huge realization! I now had a way to interrupt the addictive pull. I needed to figure out how to refuse to let those sugary treats be the answer to that problem (of early misery). So I tried. Sometimes I would push myself to face the awfulness: "No one is coming, Sooja. You grew up, and you have to find your way out of that awfulness. There is no shortcut." Or I would not let myself believe

the awfulness: "It's just not that way anymore. Don't even go down that path." Or I would let myself feel how awful it felt while not believing the lie that something (besides healing) was going to make it all better.

AN UPSETTING RE-EVALUATION

From there things started to move quickly, and for the first time in my life I could see the possibility of choosing not to eat sugar (not just deciding but choosing not to, because that's what I wanted). This made me intensely sad. I can still discharge about it quite easily. Sometimes when things are so, so bad, having something as simple as a cookie is like finding a ray of sunshine in a dark and dreary world. I feel grateful to have found a way to have some relief from those times. Even if it was a poor substitute for what I really needed, it was all I had, and it was good. To turn away from the possibility of ever having that good thing, the thing that provided what felt like some of the best times of my life, was heartbreaking.

I got to a point where I couldn't tell³ that it ever made sense to put those CPBBs in my body. That caused great conflict in me. I had two dozen of those delicious things in my freezer, and I couldn't foresee any moment when it would make sense to eat them. I was seriously not OK with that possible reality. All of this re-evaluating was

coming too fast, and I wasn't happy about my relationship to sugar being interfered with so thoroughly. I felt that my rational mind had taken over and I was unhappily at its mercy. *I love sugar! I love it.* It's a personal and private enjoyment

of mine when there are few things that I completely and thoroughly enjoy. It is reliable and easy to get. It always makes me at least a little happier. I was upset about this shift to where it just didn't make sense to me anymore to ever eat sugar. Even though my rational mind was taking charge, I wasn't ready to let go.

I call the combination of "thinking," feeling, and behavior that leads me toward acting on an addictive pull a *mechanism*. It seems to set up the conditions for me to lose my ability to stay in charge of my mind and my decision-making processes. If I let myself believe something that isn't true, then a different logic is in control and I can't talk myself out of it, even if I know that at other times I have made a completely different decision.

MORE WORK TO DO

After these last shifts in my perspective, I decided to "quit" sugar for a two-year period. I have been quite successful in the nine months since then. I no longer spend time in the grocery store looking at all the things I want to eat but "can't." I can be offered sweet food, be pleased that someone wants to share with me, and feel fine about refusing it. I can have a small taste of something a friend has made, for the sheer pleasure of telling her how good it is, without feeling pulled to consume a whole bite or more. I can be around people enjoying dessert and not have one feeling that I am missing out. And there are times when I want something sweet and have to battle a bit in my mind to not succumb. Those times are infrequent and have less of a pull than ever before.

However, the firm decision to not eat sugar has not provided the right conditions for me to continue to learn about and discharge what sets up my addiction. It was super-helpful to have the long period of time before I quit in which I had many opportunities to



STAN EICHNER

³ "Tell" means see.

decide when I was and wasn't going to eat sugar. That provided me with more discharge and re-evaluation, and insights into my addiction, than anything before it or since.

I have more work to do. My re-emergence has been slowed and interrupted by my decision to quit, and I will have to figure out a way to finish the work, even if it means being more lenient about whether or not I eat sugar. I do not want any place in

my mind to be vulnerable to the pull of my distresses.

A MANIFESTO

I wrote a manifesto about my decision to quit sugar. I wanted to have a document that laid out my best understanding of the forces at play⁴ in my relationship to sugar. It has helped me be able to keep in mind that my relationship to sugar is not a

small, personal problem but part of a larger system that we are all locked in. It also reminds me to build active contradictions⁵ into my life that both support my efforts and regularly bring me joy. [This manifesto will appear soon on the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members. —Ed.]

Sooja Kelsey
Seattle, Washington, USA

⁴ "At play" means in operation.

⁵ Contradictions to distress

Contradicting Powerlessness Patterns

Tone of voice is a powerful tool against distress, much better than words. Words are quite ineffective against distress, because every distress pattern has been argued with already, interminably.

You get discharge with tone of voice; it's a contradiction.¹ I've been practicing (*said in a deep voice*) sounding powerful. Sounding confident. Sounding final. The note of finality: "This is the way it is." In Sweden we suggested that they talk like a drunk Viking. That got them out a little from their well-mannered conditioning. In the United States, what people universally understand is to sound like a cow pie.² When a cow pie drops, it's final. It doesn't bounce.

The military has sought to approximate this. They train officers to have the voice of command: "Now hear this." Final. I find myself using voices usually associated with oppressors, because they're the only thing we have. I think the final voice of power might actually sound low and strong.

Another tool: A little while ago we came up with³ a commitment, "From now on, I will see to it⁴ that everything I am in contact with works well, and I will not limit or draw back on my contacts." There will be other tools.

We have complete power available to us as we discharge the powerlessness patterns. Apparently, that's all that's in the way—an accumulation of powerlessness patterns. Our power is still intact underneath.

Harvey Jackins
From the July 1986 Peace and
Disarmament Activists' Workshop

¹ Contradiction to the distress
² A "cow pie" is cow excrement.
³ "Came up with" means created.
⁴ "See to it" means make sure.



NANCY LEMON

C

ompetition

From a talk by Tim Jackins at the Central European Workshop, in the Basque Country, March 2014

In capitalist society, competition is always connected to oppression. We are told that we have to fight for ourselves against other people, that there is not enough resource for everyone. We are all trained to fight for ourselves, and a lot of our games become part of that training.



RANDI FREUNDLICH

The point of play is not to win. The point of play is to play, and the most interesting way to play is to encourage everyone to play harder. One of our most interesting challenges is to challenge each other. But the confusion and distress make it into trying to beat¹ each other. It's interesting to look at games and figure out how we can play our hardest and encourage the other people to play their hardest. It's a little like competition, but it's different. It's about a larger goal.

In family work² we “fight” with children, and lose. This can be hard for adults at first, because it seems like now that they are big, they can finally win—and then they don't get to win. The distress shows itself right there. Who was not a smaller child? Who did not get beaten in games, or beaten up?³

Capitalism forces us to compete against each other. That's what drives the whole system. As a result, working-class people are exploited, and owning-class people try to drive each other out of business. Capitalists “love” to destroy each other. There is no thought about people at all. That's what we call competition. It infects everything we try to do, because we live in it.

So we get to rethink things. How can we challenge each other—not try to beat each other, not even try to do better than each other, but try to encourage each other and find out how well we can do? There are ways to do this, but because we live with and are used to living with capitalist ideas, it's not simple.

¹ “Beat” means prevail over.

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

³ “Beaten up” means violently overcome.



MOUNT VERNON, WASHINGTON, USA • SHIRA ROSEN

The following eleven articles are from a discussion on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of parents.

Teens, Drugs, Oppression, and Setting Limits

Our seventeen-year-old son has been struggling for a few years with using drugs—mostly marijuana (pot) but some other substances, too.

Our family lives in a gentrifying but still mostly working-class neighborhood in a medium-sized city in the United States. My husband and I are both RC teachers, have been Co-Counseling for years, went to playdays¹ before our son was born, and did playdays and special time² with him. We listen to him well, but in the last couple of years he hasn't talked to us much.

I think he started using drugs when he became disenchanted with school. He tried a couple of different high schools and now goes to a community college instead. The schools were not great, but they weren't terrible and one had a learning-through-internship program that we thought was working for him.

After we found out³ he was selling drugs, we enrolled him in a non-RC

drug recovery program. He goes there for counseling once a week, and we drug-test him and impose consequences if the tests show that he has used drugs. My husband and I go to a non-RC Al-Anon (twelve-step-type) parent group as part of the program. We also have a lot of Co-Counseling sessions. It has been helpful to work on my own teen years, my own past drug use, and my hopes for the best and fears of the worst. I've also worked on my brother and his addiction.

I keep trying different ways to stay connected with my son. I read some of the same books he reads and try to talk to him about them—usually I get a word or two in response. Recently I've cooked extra food and had his friends over.⁴ Also, my husband works from home, and I rarely go away on weekends, so at least one of us is around a lot.

Now things seem worse. Our son has refused to go to the counseling and ran away when we tried to ground him (keep him at home) as a consequence for smoking pot again. We are thinking about residential drug treatment but would have to send him there against his will. A good thing is that since we have imposed consequences, he has been talking a lot about why he smokes pot and about other things, too, such as environmental degradation and how messed up our society is with so much greed. He discharges some when he talks.

I'd like to hear your thinking about and experience with the following:

- What is the difference between setting limits and oppressing, in the context of teenagers and drug use?
- You can set a limit and the teen may discharge against it. But what if the limit is "don't do drugs," especially "don't do drugs in the house," and the teen goes ahead anyway? Unlike with younger young people, you can't physically enforce limits.
- Have any of you sent your child to residential drug treatment? If so, what was your thinking about doing that, and about sending your child away against his or her will?
- What were some of the things you counseled on that helped you think about your teen?
- How did you figure out what distresses were underneath the drug use?
- What counseling directions seemed useful for your sessions?
- What directions seemed useful to your teen?
- How have you figured out to stay close while setting a limit on drugs or to have conversations with your teen about limits?
- How are you thinking about limits in the context of teen drug use?

Thanks,
"Jane Roe"

¹ A playday is a several-hour RC workshop that includes time for children to do whatever safe activities they want to do, with the encouragement and appreciation of the adults present, and to discharge if they wish. It also includes discharge time for the adults.

² Special time is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do.

³ "Found out" means discovered.

⁴ "Had his friends over" means had his friends come over to our house to eat.



MATT WEATHERFORD

Some Thoughts about Teens and Drugs

Thanks, “Jane,” for writing about this important topic. Many parents struggle with the issues you have brought up. It sounds like you and your husband have figured out a lot and are continuing to do so. Nice job.

We can learn a lot from each other. And, like you, when we write about the struggles of our young people, we should write anonymously.

I’ll say something about setting limits:

As parents we try to let our young people make decisions, as far as they are able to think about something. We want them to be in charge of their lives as much as possible. However, when they cannot think about something, we need to assess if they can learn from their mistakes and how much permanent damage could result from any mistakes they might make. Then we need to think about what kind of a limit will help them discharge, bring them closer to us, and/or protect them from permanent damage.

That your son is talking more, now that you are setting some limits, is a good thing. You are also making it difficult for him to take and sell drugs, and that is a good thing too. Our children wave red flags when they need help, and we need to notice when they are doing that. It is caring about your son, not oppression, to stay close to him and not allow him to hurt himself by using or selling drugs.

As with all the difficulties our children run into,¹ we have to counsel a lot, and it sounds like you are doing that. I would keep it up,² so that you can keep figuring out how to set up conditions that will allow him to show you what is hard and where he is scared, discouraged, and angry. We all have to find how to open the little locks that have prevented us from having access to the bigger, earlier hurts our children are

¹ “Run into” means encounter.

² “Keep it up” means continue to do that.

struggling with. Certainly, I would ask him questions about school, since that is one place where you know things got hard and he was not able to tell you about it.

Here are a few more thoughts. I don’t know you, or what is workable with your son, so take from this what is useful:

Physical closeness, wrestling, physical play, and other kinds of play are all good for teens. Perhaps he says he is not interested or pulls away, but I wouldn’t give up on that track. I’d look for light or zany (surprising, unexpected, perhaps embarrassing) ways to be close to him or get him to laugh. You can do things that make it possible for him to laugh at you.

Ask him if he wants to do some two-way mini-sessions with you. He may say no, but you will have introduced the idea that he can be in charge of his feelings. If he refuses, see if he’ll listen to you for a few minutes. Then work on your early struggles and perhaps how they play out³ in your life today. (Of course, don’t counsel on any distresses you have about him.)

That he is angry about greed and environmental degradation is a hopeful thing. Tell him that there are a *lot* of people who are angry about them and that they could use his input and activism. You could introduce him to people who are organizing on these issues. Do tell him that people in RC are also angry about them and would like to hear his thoughts. His voice as a young person is important.

I do not know your son’s history in RC, but two-way Co-Counseling for young people can and should happen alongside of family work⁴ as young people grow. An

³ “Play out” means are manifested.

⁴ “Family work” is the application of Re-evaluation Counseling to the particular situations of young people, and families with young children. It entails young people and adults (both parents and allies) interacting in ways that allow the young people to show and be themselves and not be dominated by the adults.

increasing number of Communities have set up transition classes for people in their pre-teen or teen years. The young people learn how to take charge of the counseling process and make it their own. They support each other in battling young people's oppression. And they form relationships that go on forever. If a young leader is not available to teach one of these classes, perhaps you could find an adult to do it.

Whether or not such a class is possible right now in your Community, tell your son that a lot of young people who grew up in RC are struggling with drugs and alcohol and are figuring things out. He is not alone in this. A lot of young people feel that their parents haven't been able to help them in this area, and you may be one of those parents. Nevertheless, you are trying to listen and are working on your distresses so that eventually you can be helpful.

You could also try to get close to your son's friends. I like that you are making extra food and having them come over. If you can hang out⁵ and build relationships with them, as

⁵ "Hang out" means spend relaxed, unstructured time.



INDIA • MAURA FALLON

individuals or as a group, you can try asking them questions about their lives and building some trust. Eventually you can (non-judgmentally) ask them about drugs and get their thinking about them.

It's good that you are at home and around him. The more of that, the better.

Marya Axner
International Liberation
Reference Person for Parents
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

"Almost No Room to Be Themselves"

My son is now in his late twenties. He began his life in RC. He was an "exemplary" RC child, a sensitive boy who could discharge easily and be open, close, and connected. He also avoided conflict at all costs.¹

After he was born, I listened to him cry and did well until he tried to discharge terror. Then I couldn't listen anymore and would have to stop the sessions. This may be why he was pulled to terrifying things as a teenager: drugs, alcohol, graffiti, arrests, and finally an accident. That my husband and I come from a long line of alcoholics, all on the male side of our families, has also been a factor in how well we've been able to think about our son.

When he was thirteen, he had a girlfriend who ended up leaving town and going far away. He was very upset, and I remember telling him that he could probably use a session. His response, perhaps revealing the crux of the matter, was (in a rare raised voice), "Mom, that is the problem; I discharge too easily." I didn't realize at the time, but do now, that men's oppression and homophobia were bearing down hard on him. I hadn't discharged enough to give him perspective and sessions.

Shortly after that, he began to drink and smoke pot. I took a no-tolerance stand but didn't have much free attention. I was feeling ashamed that my raised-in-RC boy was not doing as well as the other RC young people. It was hard to talk about him in RC.

He went away to college and was thrown out the first semester because he got drunk, graffitied up the campus, and was arrested. He was let back into school the following semester after completing drug counseling. He took courses over the summer to catch up on lost credits. At one point, he was out with friends drinking and fell off a building, breaking his neck and back. He had to have emergency surgery to take bone fragments out of his brain.

continued . . .

¹ "At all costs" means regardless of what that required.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

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The surgeon was not hopeful about the prognosis. However, my sensitive, seemingly passive son began the fight of his life. I had never seen anyone fight so hard. He seemed to have decided that he wanted to live. We stayed with him throughout his recovery and went up against his scariest distresses in his sessions. There he was, in the neuro²-critical-care and brain-rescue unit, having physical sessions.³ He healed fast. He refused anything that would impede the recovery process. We kept rejecting the anti-psychotic medications. He stayed a day and a half in neuro critical care, three days in the brain-rescue unit, and five days in rehabilitation. Then we brought him home. He wore a neck and back brace for three months.

At a follow-up appointment, the brain surgeon greeted him with, "I didn't think you were going to make it."⁴ My son burst into tears. The surgeon said that drinking and taking drugs would make him more susceptible to seizures and that he would be at great risk if he continued. My son then had many sessions in which he blamed me for having taken too rigid a stance on drinking and smoking pot. It was hard, but I was able to listen to him.

Miraculously—he has come through to the other side and is now doing well.

The main message I want to get across is that no young person, thinking fully in the way we know people are capable of, freely acts in non-survival ways. We can't underestimate the pressure and harshness our boys are up against. There is almost no room for them to be themselves and show how harsh it is for them in the world.

Anonymous

² "Neuro" means neurological.

³ "Physical sessions" are sessions in which a counselor provides aware and thoughtful physical resistance for a client to push and fight against.

⁴ "Make it" means survive.

Continuing to Discharge

I have two sons, ages thirty-eight and thirty-four. Both of them use substances that I gave up long ago. I have clocked dozens of hours of discharge on my rage, despair, hopelessness, and confusion.

My younger son began smoking pot (marijuana) with his older brother in his early teens. He has been arrested four times for marijuana-related offenses. The worst was when he sold some marijuana to an undercover cop (a policeman disguised as an ordinary citizen) and was charged with a felony. Although he avoided jail—we helped him find a good attorney—it has affected and limited his life options. For several years I was furious with him, set limits that were not effective, and begged him to wake up and understand how risky his behavior was.

Before either of my sons was born, and when they were young, I smoked pot often. I travelled far from my home to find a place to have a "natural birth" for my oldest son. I never thought that smoking pot during the birth was equivalent to being drugged. Certainly the competent midwives who attended me thought that

it was a grand idea to be "stoned"* during labor and delivery, that it would make it all flow more smoothly. I have a photo of me holding my younger son on my lap while he looks at me with fascination as I smoke a pipe full of marijuana.

I finally gave up marijuana when I was thirty-two years old.

At one point, feeling desperate not to lose my connection with my sons, I realized that my disappointment in them was not helping our relationships. Many sessions on how males are targeted by the drug and alcohol industries, on how good my sons are, and on my own substance use as a child who came into adulthood in the late 1960s helped.

I decided to work toward being delighted with my sons and detaching from their decisions about using alcohol and drugs. I said that I was not giving up on them but that I was done with being "the heavy" (the person who judged them and was trying to get them to do what I wanted). I apologized for my

* "Stoned" means intoxicated.

own ineffectiveness and mistakes as a parent. I said that I understood that my strong emotions about the issue made me an “unsafe” person and that I was going to work on being relaxed about their decisions. I told them that my own abandonment by adults as a young person left me baffled in the area. Most important, I told them that I considered it my job to stay close to them and that I would never give up, no matter how confusing it got. (These conversations did not all happen at once. They evolved over months of sessions and communications.)

My sons still use alcohol and some marijuana. I have moved into being able to joke with them about it. They are both very good fathers. They were supportive of me when I fought, against the doctor’s wishes, to have surgery with only local anesthesia. Recently, my younger son has begun to open up to me and use my



CUSCO, PERU • DIANE SHISK

counseling skills to help him in places where he is stuck. I have refrained from “analyzing” his stuck places and have tried to treat him with the respect I give to any beloved Co-Counselor.

I continue to discharge as my heart breaks over and over and over. It breaks for my inadequacies as a parent (my own parents were rigid, and I was permissive). It breaks for the harshness boys and men have to experience in the world. It breaks for the male privilege and domination my sons exhibit, even though I tried so hard as a feminist to raise them to be fair. It breaks for how angry I am at them for doing “stupid” things, like smoke and drink. It breaks for how boys of the global majority (my sons are part Native American) are especially targeted by the criminal justice system. On and on. There’s no end to what I can discharge about.

Anonymous

You always have the ability to look at a distress. You don’t always have the chance to discharge on it. That takes more than looking at it. It takes perspective. It takes making up your mind.* And it takes the present being different enough from when the hurt happened.

Tim Jackins

From a talk at the October 2013
Eliminating Racism Workshop

* “Making up your mind” means deciding.

All subscriptions to *Present Time* begin with the next issue published. We can’t send back issues as part of a new subscription, because we rely on bulk mailings to save money and it costs more to send a single copy.

You can order back issues as regular literature items (see pages 103 and 111).

“Our Strange and Surprising Agreement”

Our child also struggled with drugs and alcohol. In getting her through it, we figured out three things:

1. Every limit needed to be designed to bring us closer together.
2. She needed to see us moving toward her, including getting more flexible in places where we tended to be rigid.
3. We needed to continually communicate that we knew she was smart and were confident about her ability to work things out.

(Some of what I write here is based on what she told me recently about what the struggles were like for her.)

When she was about fifteen, she wanted to fit in and be like other young people. It looked to her like drugs and alcohol were part of that picture. She was also having chronic health problems, including intense daily headaches. We were reluctant to get her pain medication, knowing that it would make discharge more difficult. However, she wasn't having a lot of big sessions and the ones she was having weren't doing much for the headaches. We spent a year struggling back and forth about all this. Finally we got some pain medication but did not make it readily available to her; she had to negotiate with us over every pill.

We were concerned about her. But because we didn't know what to do with this teen who seemed to be rejecting many of our family values, we weren't nearly as connected to her as we would have liked to be. We kept trying to set limits, but because of the lack of connection they often seemed harsh and arbitrary to her.

During her first year of high school, things finally came to a head.¹ Her teacher told me that another student had confessed that he had shared his antidepressants with her and was worried about what she was doing with them. One morning, about a week later, I found both alcohol and marijuana in her backpack. I took them out but did not speak to her about them. I figured

¹ “Came to a head” means got to a place where something had to be done.

that it was better to wait and have it out with her² after school. By the time she got home, she was furious at me for having invaded her privacy and taken her stuff. She had a huge session, and afterward we talked.

By that time, we had figured out that any limits we set needed to bring us closer to her and that she needed to see us stretching in her direction if we wanted her to move in ours. So the agreements we made at that point were unusual—to say the least:

1. We all agreed that pain medication and alcohol or other drugs could be a dangerous combination. She agreed not to use any alcohol, or drugs not prescribed by her doctor, until she was no longer using any pain medication. In return, we agreed to keep her marijuana and alcohol for her until she could make her own decisions about how to use them. We also agreed to let her make more of her own decisions about the pain medication. She expressed an interest in trying drinking at home, with company, so she could be safe and receive good attention. We agreed that once she wasn't using pain medication, we would start drinking small amounts of wine with her at dinner. (I ended up drinking about a fourth of a glass and she about half a glass.) This was a little strange for me. I had not used any alcohol in twenty-five years (since starting RC). But the plan worked much better than I expected. It let me model thinking about alcohol: no wine before a session or a class, no wine if I was upset, no wine if I had work to do that needed my whole brain. It also gave her a chance to think out loud about how different amounts of alcohol felt and what made sense to her. She found that she didn't like how she felt if she drank very much.

2. We agreed that she would spend ten minutes with one of her parents each evening getting one-way attention. She was not happy about this, but the other agreements made sense to her so she cooperated. At first I sat with her every night, looking over the pop³ music on her iPod.⁴ That was

² “Have it out with her” means confront her about it.

³ “Pop” means popular.

⁴ An iPod is a portable electronic device used for storing and playing digital music, movies, and other audio and video items.



BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, USA • AMANDA MARTINEZ

excruciating for me. However, she soon started using the time to think about her life. We stuck rigidly to the plan for a few months, after which she started coming to us for sessions when she was struggling.

3. We agreed that she would try to bring her friends home more often, the idea being that we would feel safer about her being out with them if we knew and liked them.

Later, as she struggled with the headaches and the feelings that came with them, we decided that a small dose of antidepressants might be less harmful than the pain medication. Up until that point, we had been vehemently against antidepressants. But it turned out that⁵ our agreeing to them was a huge contradiction⁶ for her. In the end, she tried a low dose (ten percent of the usual dose) for less than a week. Each morning I listened to her about what it felt like. After the fifth day she decided that she hated the way she felt when she took them and stopped. But our agreeing to them seemed to be a turning point in our relationship, and in her relationship to RC.

She had one episode of drinking heavily about a year later, when a close family friend was dying, and then had

huge sessions about being so out of control and how much she hated it. When she was nineteen, she decided to try marijuana again and then called home for sessions on how awful it was.

She is away at college now and does drink, but not more than one or two drinks at a time. When she was facing some big feelings this winter, she stopped drinking for a few months because she felt that it wasn't going to be a good combination. I'm pretty⁷ sure she is careful not to drink within twenty-four hours of her Co-Counseling class or a Co-Counseling session.

Our daughter is twenty now and generally doing incredibly well. She's been able to have big sessions with us about drug and alcohol use as long as we remember the three points listed at the beginning of this posting. I wish she didn't drink at all, but given where she was a few years ago, we're pleased with the results of our strange and surprising agreement.

Good luck with figuring all this out. Know that we are behind you—cheering you on and knowing that you can do it.

Anonymous

⁵ "It turned out that" means as it happened.

⁶ Contradiction to distress

⁷ In this context, "pretty" means quite.

What I've Learned about Young People and Drugs

I used to work for an organisation in which adults lived in collectives with young people who were getting off drugs. Although most of the following ideas come from that experience, I find them to be consistent with RC theory (they are not to be taken as recommendations for any specific situation):

- *Most of us need confident help in order to break patterns of addiction.* They are tough patterns to break. We seldom manage to do it on our own. Someone from the outside who sets necessary limits can be a great help.

- *Don't expect reassurance anytime soon.* If you decide to set limits or consequences for an addicted person, don't expect him or her to discharge and re-evaluate fast enough that you get reassurance quickly. Just remember that you are doing the right thing.

- *In everyday situations, it can be hard to both set the limit and be the counselor. Your trying to do this can also be confusing for the young person.* If you set a limit, the young person will need to talk and complain about it, as part of his or her processing and re-evaluating. Another adult being the understanding listener, neither trying to uphold the limit nor undermining it, can be of good help in the process. If you try to do both things yourself, the limit might get blurry or the understanding listening part might become conditional. This can make the contradiction¹ of someone standing up against the pattern weaker.

continued . . .

¹ Contradiction to the distress

... continued

- *Young people in troubled situations often confide more in adults who uphold (considerate) rules and less in adults who compromise rules and limits for the sake of being a “buddy.”* Many adults, including parents, who work with young people find themselves in situations in which upholding a correct rule or setting a necessary limit seems “oppressive” or “mean.” It can feel like giving in² to the patterned demands of the young person would result in the status of being “cool” or a good friend. However, when things get hard for a young person in treatment, he or she is more likely to confide in the consistent and “stern” adult than the “friendly” one.

- *Some addictions are closely connected to certain identities, roles, and activities.* Some young people are not able to get off drugs as long as they stay in the same community and with the same friends and activities. This is because the addiction pattern gets restimulated too easily and often. They need to get away from the restimulation in order to break the pattern and cultivate new roles and activities. To be able to stay away from the drugs, they need to form a new identity for themselves. When they have found enough strength and support in their new identity, then they are ready to be exposed to their old life. Other young people are able to make the transition away from drugs without having to change their environment. If that’s possible, it’s probably better—since they learn to deal with the restimulations along the way.

- *You may have to stand³ being hated by the person you want to help.* Forcing a young person to enter a programme he or she doesn’t want to join can be a bold act of caring. I have seen parents and staff be “hated” for it. Later I have seen the same young person thank the parent or staff for having saved his or her life.

- *Relapse is often part of the healing process.* The road to success in helping a person get off drugs is lined with frustrations and disappointments. It will often feel like everything you have accomplished has been futile and the whole attempt has been a failure. Expect failures and disappointments.

- *Drug addictions are often too big a challenge for a family to handle on their own.* Both the parents and the young person can benefit from having more people involved—for example, relatives, friends, treatment-center staff, sports coaches, counselors.

Fredrik Eklöf
Oxie, Sweden

² “Giving in” means succumbing.

³ In this context, “stand” means tolerate, endure.

“Every Issue I Have with Him Is My Issue”

I have a fifteen-year-old (white, Jewish, heterosexual) son. He has been raised in RC with regular special time.¹ He is not interested in consciously listening or being listened to, though he takes a session just about every chance he gets. When I set limits or look like I am counseling him, he gets pissed² and shuts down.³

He comes at me with oppressive remarks almost every time he talks. I have not been able to figure out

how to interrupt this pattern, though I think it is good that it comes out of his mouth rather than staying bottled up inside.

I am female, and my son and I live with my female partner in a working-class neighborhood. He wants people to think that he is wealthy and “normal,” and he won’t bring any friends from outside the neighborhood to our home.

He is rude to me in public and often argues with me. Because of the social pressure to control one’s children (we live in the Southern United States, where children say “sir” and “ma’am”), I feel pressure to shut him up⁴ and make him be polite. I talked to him

¹ “Special time” is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do.

² “Pissed” means angry.

³ “Shuts down” means becomes numb and inaccessible.

⁴ “Shut him up” means make him be quiet.

about this recently and he said, “Well, good. Now I know what embarrasses you in public, and you know what embarrasses me in public, and we can work together.”

When I get scared, lecture, and give advice, he shuts me out. When I am in relaxed listening mode and don’t give advice, he will talk about drugs, sex, and other things that are disturbing and sometimes shocking. If I ask him too many questions, he usually says, “You’re my mom; I’m not supposed to tell you those things.” When I get silly, he gets mad: “Why do you have to be the way you are? Stop it! Act like a mom!”

In my Co-Counseling sessions I work on what it was like as a teen to want material things and to be normal, assimilate, and be popular. I have counseled a lot on my son’s and my relationship and have come to realize that I don’t need to do anything to change him, that every

issue I have with him is my issue. When I come from that perspective, he is more loving and affectionate. One of my teachers says, “The biggest gift that you can give someone is to let them be themselves in your presence.”

I was raised poor and remember longing for things. Now I am middle class and can afford to buy things for my son. I have a pattern of wanting to give him everything he wants. Setting limits is not my specialty. When I set a limit, he can usually talk me into changing my mind. I get confused about the difference between being an oppressor and setting limits with love and between what is a rational limit and what is being “controlling.”

Thank you “Jane” for bringing up this difficult topic. It is so important that we are talking about this. We have each other and are not alone!

Anonymous

An RC Class on Alcohol

I led an RC class on the following guideline: “RC teachers are expected not to engage in or defend the use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, or other mind-altering drugs, including psychiatric drugs.”¹ In every meeting we read the guideline and had mini-sessions on what came up for us just from reading it. Then we discussed theory, had more discharge time, did demonstrations, and sometimes used a support-group format.

Over the course of a year, we had sessions on (1) our own use of alcohol, (2) family members’ use of alcohol, (3) societal expectations regarding alcohol use or non-use, (4) feelings about being told what to do



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • LYNDALL KATZ

or not to do, (5) frozen needs² to love or be loved that kept us “liberal” with people we loved who were engaged in drinking alcohol, (6) religious and religious-community expectations and teachings that encouraged drinking alcohol.

We covered a lot of ground.³ People had big sessions related to those few words from the *Guidelines*. We learned just how much discharge is required in order to “think” about alcohol use. I think the same applies to any other drug, to setting limits, and so on.

Marcie Rendon
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

¹ See Guideline G.2. of the 2013 *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities* (the policies for the RC Communities).

² 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 the person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

³ “Covered a lot of ground” means dealt with a lot of things.



CATHEDRAL CAVE, LITTLE LANGDALE, ENGLAND • SANDRA CARTER

Younger People as Allies?

I am the father of a nine-year-old girl. I've shared with her some of these stories about young people and drugs. I want her to know that many people are working to make things go well—in particular in their families and with their children.

Drug issues are showing up¹ with older young people in her family and at school. At this point in her life, she is confident that what doesn't make sense to her now (drugs, alcohol, and so on) will continue to not make sense to her as she gets older. I'm not sure how to store that attitude for future reference. However, I wonder if I could help her think of herself as an ally to the older young people in her life. It could be a powerful contradiction² for her and for them.

Anonymous

¹ "Showing up" means appearing.

² Contradiction to distress

My Experience, and Some Useful Questions

I am a white, raised-poor, majority-culture married female USer and RC teacher. My son has smoked pot for a number of years. It took a while before I found out and then a while before I could admit it to my Co-Counselors. It was heartbreaking. When I asked for help at an RC family workshop, I was told that he could no longer participate.

The following are some questions that have helped me think about teen drug use and oppression:

1. *What do drugs have to offer that we can't?* We parents are under so much pressure to have our children conform, compete, and "succeed" in this profit-driven society. Even if we don't succumb to this, they are exposed to harsh patterns out in the world. Also, with so much talk of economic problems, young people are under pressure to "figure out what they're going to do with their life" instead of enjoying their youth and being themselves. Due to all this, they may start using drugs to fit in or cope.

2. *How can RC Communities follow the no-drug policy and still support us parents—not reinforce the oppression that says we are "on our own" to figure out "our" problem?* We parents need a way to be honest about teen drug use without feeling like we'll be seen as failures or stigmatized.

3. *How is teen drug use related to men's oppression and sexism?* Incidences of rape have increased at U.S. colleges. How does this relate to male dominance patterns in our schools? Maybe boys use drugs to prevent being targeted themselves or to avoid noticing how girls are targeted and they are forced to collude. As with "mental health" oppression, men's

oppression says that to show feelings is to show weakness, invite criticism, and be targeted. Could taking drugs be a way to try to avoid this oppression?

4. *How is teen drug use similar to other addictions? How is it different?*

5. *How can we use the experience and thinking of parents whose teens have used drugs to head off¹ drug use for future RC teens?* Start with a support group? Our RC experience has shown that once we discharge and put our thinking together, we can move on any issue.

6. *How can the RC teens and young adults who don't use drugs be a resource?* I have gotten some good ideas from people I've asked. Maybe we could organize panels so that RCers get a better picture of how hugely oppressive things are for teens nowadays.

For my part,² I tried listening, reasoning, drug testing, bribing, monitoring activities—all with limited success. I discharged lots on the heartbreak of my son's pot smoking and on classism, my teen years, and more. One useful direction was to try to be as proud of my son as I'd be if he were going to Harvard,³ teaching poor children, winning the Nobel Peace Prize—whatever "standard" my mind could think of.

It hurt to have him be so surly and disconnected from his father and me. I think it helped him when I showed my feelings while I explained why I thought pot was harmful (I did research first).

¹ "Head off" means prevent.

² "For my part" means regarding myself.

³ Harvard is a prestigious university in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

I also got some helpful advice:

- From an RC young adult leader: "Don't be mad at him."

- From a male RCer and former drug user: "You should be more worried about him bombing⁴ down hills on a longboard⁵ without a helmet."

- From an older, non-user sibling: "Be glad it's only pot and not harder stuff."⁶

I started to see how in being so freaked out⁷ about his smoking pot, I wasn't seeing the big picture. There was no line between my rational concern

and my upset. I bought a book that talked about how a person can legally keep from getting busted.⁸ That to me was a real threat. The legal system can suck people, especially poor people and people of color, into a never-ending loop. I was not willing to test arrest, except as a last resort—even though some people's downward spiral has been interrupted by it.

Eventually there was a summer job my son wanted that required a drug test. He had to stay clean⁹ for four months. His behavior was so much happier and loving (he was back to his true self).

He no longer lives at home, and I'm sure he smokes pot and drinks alcohol.

But he is also in a good relationship, going to a trade school, and engaging in physical activities. He has new interests and is making friends who function well.

My husband and I worked hard over the years to support our son in trying different things. We stayed close, but we were also honest about our concerns. We are still struggling to figure all this out. I have huge feelings about the limited life my son could have if drugs continue to be a part of it. I am lucky to have Co-Counselors who know that I am a good mom and my son is a great guy.

To all of the parents with teens using drugs: I thank you for your courage and the deep love you have shown. I would be honored to be a part of anything in RC that helps move this issue forward.

"Alice"

⁴ "Bombing" means going extremely rapidly.

⁵ A longboard is a long skateboard.

⁶ "Harder stuff" means stronger, more addictive drugs.

⁷ "Freaked out" means hugely upset.

⁸ "Busted" means arrested.

⁹ "Clean" means without any drugs in his body.

We Can Figure This Out Together

Thanks to all the brave parents who have posted about their struggles with teens and drugs, alcohol, and limit-setting. It's lovely that we can talk about the real-life challenges we face with our teenagers.

Our society does not support parents or children. Capitalism is not working. As parents we have done our best in fighting for our children. We deserve no blame, only support and understanding.

REMEMBERING YOUR CHILDREN WANT YOU

Your children want you, and they always will, so you must not give up on having them close to you. Your children don't want your patterns, but they want you. And you don't have to wait until you get rid of all your patterns to reach for them, although at times you might have to pause to discharge, regroup, and try a different way of doing things. (Sometimes your teenager's *patterns* don't want you, but underneath them your teenager wants you forever.)

Your children depend on you to remember that they want you. It confuses them when you forget. They

expect you to know it is just their distress that keeps them from coming close to you.

Even if you don't know what to do, you get to continue figuring out how to get close. I spoke to one dad who was trying to figure out how to get his teenage daughter out of bed when she didn't want to get up or do anything. One day he was ready to leave for work, but instead he changed out of his suit into some jeans. He said, "I don't care what you do today, but you're not staying in bed." Then he dragged her out of bed. When she headed back to bed, he dragged her out of the house in twenty-degree (Fahrenheit) weather and locked the door. (He had coats for them.) He drove them both to a pond. He said, "I think it will help if we go for a walk. Just trust me on this." They silently walked and then went back home. She took a shower, did her schoolwork, and went to school just in time to give a presentation at the end of the day. The dad didn't feel like he knew what he was doing, but he was trying something with his daughter and it worked. (He was not feeling angry while he did it.)

continued . . .

COUNSELING PRACTICE

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You may have to try lots of different things. They may look messy, or silly and embarrassing, or they may look like a fight. It may take a long time of hanging out¹ and not saying much. What works will be different for each teen and may be different each time you try. Your teenager will notice every bit of what you are trying, and, even if you see no results right away, that will help in the long run.²

Remember that we parents are the people our teenagers can show their worst distresses to. They go to school every day and the oppression hits them hard. It's like they walk in poop³ all day and when they come home they scrape their shoes on us. They often feel really bad about themselves, and they show us just how bad they feel by trying to make us feel bad. And they know how to do that. Our job is to discharge through whatever we need to in order to not have their distresses confuse us.

Allies can be helpful. If your teen is close to another RC adult, that person can play an important role in listening to and supporting your teen, and supporting your relationship with him or her.

PARENTS' LIBERATION AND DISCHARGE

Tim Jackins has been directing all of us in the RC Community to work on our early defeats and discouragement so that we can be hopeful, flexible, and in love with life—not just hold directions of hopefulness. This is about parents' liberation. We get to be liberated human beings. Our children want that for us. It is also a big part of our being able to be there for our children. We are partners with our young people in re-emerging from distress. If they see us struggling through our heavy distresses, they will take note of it and gain hope for themselves.

I would recommend a Co-Counseling session every day when you are in the middle of a difficult spot with your child. We need to discharge to take care of ourselves and get through our chronics.⁴ We need to discharge to be able to come up with⁵ new thoughts about our teenagers and so we can be relaxed and light and playful when they are gloomy or distant. We need to discharge to be able to deal with the oppressive

¹ "Hanging out" means spending relaxed, unstructured time together.

² "In the long run" means eventually.

³ "Poop" means excrement.

⁴ Chronic distress patterns

⁵ "Come up with" means think.

things that are coming at us and at them. And we need to do this work to demonstrate to them that it can be done.

DISCHARGING ON POLICY

Some of us when we found Co-Counseling embraced it fully. We were relieved to find a rational path. We followed all the policies and let them guide us in our lives. That was a smart thing to do. However, many of us didn't discharge on the policies enough to make them completely our own. Drugs, alcohol, sex, money, class, racism, relationships, Gay oppression, and so on—we all have much to look at in these areas. No one listened to us as we tried to figure them out when we were teens. We feel ashamed and humiliated that we couldn't figure them out.

Our children sense all the places where we are not clear; they know where we haven't discharged. And they often can't use us in these areas and feel like they must go off on their own⁶ to figure things out. Because we hold up RC policy as what is "right," and they know that we're not being entirely honest with them about what we don't understand, they sometimes reject RC, or are at least confused about it. They also see our desperation in wanting them to do RC and to live rational lives.

They are holding out⁷ for the real thing—for having us fully and getting the help they need. They want us to discharge about policy and on our desperation. Once we've worked on our distresses about policy, we can start conversations about it with our teens, and listen to them and offer help.

BEING THERE, AND SHARING OUR STRUGGLES

Sometimes our young people don't want to have "sessions" in any way that looks like an RC session. That doesn't mean that they don't want us, or don't want to be listened to, or don't want to discharge. They want us but without any techniques or familiar counseling shortcuts. They may be sick of⁸ the young people's oppression that is everywhere in their lives and want to be completely in charge when they tell us things. We need to be there with them—sometimes just listening and not saying a thing, sometimes having a normal conversation, and sometimes getting into a fight with them.

⁶ "On their own" means by themselves.

⁷ "Holding out" means waiting.

⁸ "Sick of" means tired of.

At times it's helpful to show our young ones our struggles. We have trained ourselves not to be clients with them unless they invite us to. That is correct, but we get confused that it means that we must not show ourselves to them. In our wish to protect them, we sometimes hide whole parts of our lives and our histories. As our children grow up, they want to know who we are and what happened to us. We don't need to talk endlessly about ourselves, but we do need to tell them, perhaps in bite-sized chunks, what happened, so they get a picture of where they came from and why we have our struggles. What happened in our families? What was it like when we were teenagers? What hard things did we face? How did oppression affect our life choices? How do our struggles affect our parenting? Our Indigenous brothers and sisters can lead us here. They are models in the art of storytelling, in it being

a way of sharing the history of one's life, and family, and people.

In summary I will say, take heart,⁹ parents. Your children love you and want you. You get to want them. Do not blame yourselves for your difficulties, the difficulties of your children, or the society that is falling apart around us. We can figure this out together.

With all my love,

Marya Axner
International Liberation
Reference Person for Parents
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

⁹ "Take heart" means be encouraged.



MATT WEATHERFORD

The Most Powerful Tool We Have

Anxiously prodding for discharge has never been helpful. To pay loving, respectful attention is still the most powerful single tool we have.

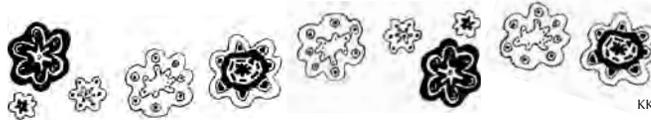
Up until fairly recently, there was a phenomenon that when I would visit Communities, the one uncrackable client that no one could get to discharge would be saved and dragged out and thrust at me for a demonstration, often with a few preliminary speeches that "we've tried everything," "I did this, I did this, I did this," and "nothing works," and he's standing there with nothing working.

Almost always this is solved by respectful, warm listening for about three or four minutes and interested questions (What do you do for a living? How's your job?)—actually showing some interest.

As soon as the safety and interest is felt, the person starts heavy discharge. We simply need to be very human, expect discharge when it's ready, and basically be interested in the person and listen. It does almost everything.

Harvey Jackins
From page 310 of "From the Men's
Workshop," in *The Rest of Our Lives*

Important RC Literature!



For ordering
information,
see page 110.

Part II, Fundamentals Teaching Guide—Liberation

Part I, Fundamentals Teaching Guide (published in 2007) is an outline of how an RC fundamentals class might be taught. It includes thoughts about organizing a class and doing an introductory talk about RC. There are also outlines for classes on twenty-seven topics (newly updated to include a class on care of the environment).

Part II, Fundamentals Teaching Guide—Liberation consists of outlines for teaching basic liberation theory. The outlines were written by our liberation leaders and will be excellent resources for teaching liberation theory to members of both oppressed and oppressor groups. Included in the *Liberation Guide* are the following chapters:

- Liberation Overview
- African-Heritage Liberation
- Artists' Liberation
- Catholic Liberation
- Chinese-Heritage Liberation
- Chicano/a Liberation
- College and University Faculty Liberation
- Liberation of People with Disabilities
- Educational Change
- Elders' Liberation
- Care of the Environment
- Family Work
- Frisian Liberation
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer, Transgender Liberation
- Japanese-Heritage Liberation
- Jewish Liberation
- Korean Liberation
- Language Liberation
- Lawyers' Liberation
- Men's Liberation
- "Mental Health" Liberation
- "Mental Health" Workers' Liberation
- Middle-Class Liberation
- Musicians' Liberation
- National and Regional Liberation
- Native/Indigenous Liberation
- Owning-Class Liberation
- Pacific Islander and Pilipino/a-Heritage Liberation
- Parents' Liberation
- Protestant Liberation
- Puerto Rican Liberation
- Raised-Poor Liberation
- Southern U.S. Liberation
- Trade Union Activists' Liberation
- Eliminating White Racism
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electronically on the RC website at <www.rc.org>.

Hindu Identity and Liberation

I'd love to hear from South Asian-heritage folks about Hindu identity and liberation. Hindu ideology pervades the entire sub-continent. The dominance of Hinduism plus the impact of caste oppression make Hindu liberation key to South Asian liberation. I think we all need to work on this, whatever our religious identity.

Being Hindu is something I've distanced myself from because the religion has been used to dominate non-Hindus and oppress women. At the South Asian workshop,¹ Azadeh Kahlili encouraged us to go for² discomfort. I think proudly claiming Hindu identity would lead to mass discomfort! I hardly ever counsel on it! I need to notice that Hindus are good. I have

¹ The South Asian Liberation Workshop for North America, led by Azi Khalili, the International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People, near Boston, Massachusetts, USA, February 28 to March 2, 2014

² "Go for" means pursue.

strong resistance to doing this, which means that there are many early experiences to discharge.

I remember asking my parents questions about Hinduism, but they were raised by secular parents and never knew the answers. I found myself wishing I had a guru to answer questions for me. My struggles in the United States—Christians calling me a "heathen" and telling me that I was going to go to hell—didn't help me keep reaching to understand my religion.

How do you think about this work? What do you love about Hindus? What do you need to discharge to fully embrace the goodness of Hindu people? What do you think is key to Hindu liberation work, and what impact would Hindu liberation have?

I'd love to hear your thinking.

Amisha Patel
Chicago, Illinois, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of South, Central, and West Asian Heritage People

"Real Man Talk"

I ran a poetry workshop called "Speaking as a Man," in a men's prison in the North of England. The theme was male identity and sexism. An ex-soldier wrote a poem that showed the harshness of internalised male oppression and underneath it he scrawled angrily, many times, "Real Man Talk." The men and I decided to make this the title of their booklet. Then they challenged me to write a poem and this is what came out:



STEVE BANBURY

Wait. Real man talk comes slowly. After dark corners have been checked. After safety locks have been proved. Again. And again. After you no longer will it to come. It will come. Stay still. Real man talk startles easily. Recedes fast into itself. Watch. For a minuscule facial tick. For a bead of sweat. For a sideways glance that lands. And bounces off. Approve. With words. With eyes. With an unspoken Yes. Real man talk always has its reasons

Leah Thorn
Folkestone, Kent, England

* "Ran" means conducted.

A Women's Workshop in Melbourne, Australia

A women's workshop, led by Louisa Flander,¹ was held near Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, in May 2013. The following are comments from some of the participants:

I realized that working on one's patterns in relation to the big picture of male domination is more effective than working on them one by one, at random. The sense of liberation is more visible, and the effects are more widespread. —*Rie Shiraishi*

I learned that the world is ours—we can't wait for men. We have to back² each other. Capitalism and sexism teach us to compete with other women—for example, via the beauty industry, marriage, and the sex industries. Owing-class men make huge profits off of this. —*Debra Icely*

Our mothers were girls going about³ their own lives when motherhood and the associated oppression came upon them. Mothers deserve no blame for the conditions that gave rise to our patterns. —*Joani J.*

I led a mums⁴ support group. It was clear how well we had all done as mothers. And our mothers also did their best, which was bloody good⁵ considering what came at them when they were young. —*Yehudit Koadlow*

This workshop gave me an opportunity to notice the women I would like to have in my life and to fight against internalised oppression and claim my relationships with them. —*Kelsey Dalton*

I enjoyed each woman having three minutes to share a skill with the whole workshop. It was a wonderful way of seeing each woman shine. —*Susan Moss*

My goal is to stop judging women (which is what came at me) and instead put my mind on all the ways I appreciate them and want to be close to them. I also looked at what it was like to live on Wurundjeri land.⁶ I discharged on being in someone's home uninvited and what it would be like in my white Protestant suburb if someone did that to me. I've decided to meet the original peoples from my area and build relationships with them as a contradiction to my racism. —*Cynthia Johnston*

I was reminded that I don't want to be comforted in sessions or about my life choices but rather supported, as I was this weekend, to clear my innocent self of unasked-for patterns. Our world, our minds, our bodies, our mothers, our lives are all significant and worthwhile. We can claim them as our own, from this moment on. —*Rachel Steinmann*

Louisa gave us a picture of the many ways we are separated from each other because of sexism and male domination. I realised how I have been colluding with the oppressive society in the way I have thought about myself and other women. —*Anne Barton*

I now better understand how we collude with and prop up the system that hurts all of us. We women, separated by our internalised oppression, and racism and classism, often collude with the

oppression to get some "benefits." We leave each other, blame each other, and settle for truncated lives. We need to link arms, face our oppressor patterns and opportunism, give up settling, and risk discomfort—for a life of no limits. —*Christine Marnane*

I can choose and go after⁷ women, even and especially if I am restimulated by them. I am clear now that all restimulation is from old hurts. Discharge discharge discharge discharge! I am not as hurt as I like to think I am. Yay! Phew!⁸ Celebrate! —*Natalie Krasnostein*

These are no small matters: sexism, women's liberation, and male domination. But we gathered and had a crack at them,⁹ a hopeful thing. How odd that some of us still don't get together as women to "unpack" the hurts from the big issues that affect us every day, such as marriage, reproduction, and standards of beauty. I can see more clearly that any feelings about my mum are intertwined with the hurts of sexism, and that there is no path that dodges sexism and male domination. I can see that the most hopeful way forward is to discharge on what it takes to get closer to all women and that every woman can give me a hand¹⁰ to feel less isolated and live the big life I want—even if she doesn't look like it to me! —*Alex Hilvert*

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

¹ Louisa Flander is the Area Reference Person for the Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, RC Community.

² "Back" means support.

³ "Going about" means engaged in.

⁴ "Mums" means mothers'.

⁵ "Bloody good" means very good.

⁶ Wurundjeri land is the land in and around Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. The traditional owners of this land are the Indigenous Wurundjeri people.

⁷ "Go after" means pursue, reach out to.

⁸ "Phew" is an exclamation that expresses relief.

⁹ "Crack at them" means chance to work on them.

¹⁰ "A hand" means some help.

Changing the Narrative

The harshest way that internalized racism confuses me is by attacking my intelligence; it causes me to struggle to trust my own mind. One of the many advantages of attending an African-heritage workshop is that, in the absence of racism, I experience two things:

- I remember that I have a good mind that can think well and has wonderful thoughts and great ideas.
- It feels natural for me to be leading.

So, I was grateful for the opportunity to attend a recent quad-Regional¹ African-heritage workshop led by Fela Barclift² in New York City, New York (USA). One of my highlights was a talk Fela gave on forgiveness. She held out that instead of passing judgment on other people of African heritage, we could decide to forgive them for doing anything they needed to do in order to survive. That concept resonated with me, and I discharged about it during the workshop.

On Sunday morning, I attended a caucus group that watched the first hour of the movie *12 Years a Slave*.³ And after two days of discharge, closeness, and connections with other Co-Counselors, and wonderful talks on the ways internalized oppression plays out⁴ for African-heritage people, I found myself feeling angry at the Black characters in the movie. Interestingly, my anger stemmed from hearing them speaking eloquent Standard English.

It occurred to me that I had been associating great intelligence with some level of assimilation into white culture. Subsequently, I realized that I had been passing judgment on and challenging the integrity of African-heritage people who find value in things, including but not limited to the English language, historically available only to people of European heritage. I felt angry because I was restimulated by the visual of people who looked like me unapologetically thinking broadly and taking up space when I too seldom give myself permission to do the same.

Noticing all this led me to a re-evaluation: Distress recordings from internalized racism would have me

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

² Fela Barclift is the Area Reference Person for the Brooklyn Bedford-Stuyvesant Area in New York City, New York, USA.

³ *12 Years a Slave* is a 2013 historical drama film adapted from the 1853 memoir *Twelve Years as a Slave*, by Solomon Northup.

⁴ "Plays out" means manifests itself.



SHIRA ROSEN

believe that African-heritage folks who openly exhibit how knowledgeable and eclectic they are must not be in touch with their roots. To contradict that, I decided that I needed to change the narrative in my head about what African-heritage people are allowed to know. I can start by forgiving myself for having these struggles. And I can stop limiting my own possibilities. Then I can determine that it is good for my people to have exposure to a plethora of experiences, and reaffirm the reality that we are all entitled to have the biggest lives possible.

Nneka Inniss
New York City, New York, USA

No Comfort at All

Our lives as males are incredibly awful. Just incredibly awful. There's no comfort in our lives at all, and we're not allowed to complain about it. We don't even talk to each other. "I hear you broke your leg in two* on the job yesterday." "Yeah, a little bit of a bump, all right." We're trained to not even tell each other.

Harvey Jackins
From the July 1986 Peace and
Disarmament Activists' Workshop

* "In two" means into two pieces.

Irish-Heritage Users A Beginning Perspective and an Invitation

A warm hello to you! My job as Information Coordinator for Irish-Heritage Users is to collect and share counseling directions and insights as we Irish-heritage Users claim this identity.

The first newsletter for our group will come out soon. I will circulate it to those who have contributed to it. If you'd like to contribute, please write to me. What have you learned in your Co-Counseling sessions as you've claimed being U.S. Irish? What have you learned about us from counseling others in our group? How is this work changing your thinking, your life?

For many of us, claiming being Irish is having a profound effect on our discharge and re-emergence. We are cleaning up confusions about ourselves and our people related to immigration, colonization, religion, and genocide. We are successfully stopping addictions (the tracks of oppression on us) and helping others to do the same. With the help of trusted Co-Counselors, we are also facing the oppressor end of our identity and stopping behaviors that target our loved ones and others.

WHO WE ARE

We are Users with any connection to Irish identity. We may have one great-grandparent or many relatives who were Irish-born. We may have lots of information about the connection or almost none.

Over forty million of us Users claim Irish heritage. We are as diverse a group as the United States itself and represent many identities along with Irish (each of which we get to claim). Having more than one cultural heritage does not make us

less Irish or make claiming our Irish identity less important! (A man with seventy-five percent Polish heritage came to an Irish-heritage topic group recently, feeling like he had no right to be there. He had one part-Irish grandmother who had played an important role in his early life. Once he understood that it was okay for him to claim being Irish, he was able to have session after session about his love for her and all he had learned from her warmth, humor, and rock-solid strength in the face of adversity.)



KATIE KAUFFMAN

We are good, smart, creative, resilient, powerful, loving people of courage and integrity. We have played central roles in many U.S. liberation movements. We have made huge contributions to life in the United States.

We have also reenacted the hurts our people experienced in over a thousand years of colonization and attempted genocide in Ireland. Upon arrival in the United States, our ancestors participated in the occupation of this land, in the genocide of Native peoples, in slavery and wars of conquest. They participated, and so have we, in the oppression of many groups.

INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION, AND OPPRESSOR PATTERNS

Many of us carry the internalized oppression of our Irish ancestors, stemming from the loss of land, language, culture, and religion. The RC pamphlet *Irish Liberation Policy* brilliantly describes this internalized oppression.

When I shared the “mental-health” history of my family at a Catholics and “Mental Health” Workshop several years ago, an RCer from Ireland said, “Rita, that’s an Irish story. We all have stories like that in our families. You might want to claim being Irish.” Doing so has changed my counseling and my life. It has lifted the weight of the oppression off my shoulders. The idea that “there is something awful about and wrong with me and my family” has changed to “we survived brutal oppression.”

On top of Irish internalized oppression, we Irish-heritage Users also carry white U.S. patterns of greed and feeling superior. Claiming our heritage means discharging these patterns too.

USEFUL COUNSELING DIRECTIONS

The following counseling directions have been useful to me. What has worked for you? Please write!

Claim the person(s) in your family who first came to the United States.

Do you know a name? An approximate date? A region of Ireland they came from? A place they settled here? Whatever information you have is enough—a starting point for sessions and information gathering. What was going on¹ in Ireland when they came to the United States?

¹ “Going on” means happening.

What was going on here? What were their lives like before and after immigration? You can find out a lot—without knowing specifics about your own family—from books, films, and Internet resources.

As I learned about my family's story and the historical forces and events that impacted us, the sources of the patterns we carry became clear.

Get close to Irish-heritage people, inside and outside of RC.

My friendship with a distant cousin from Ireland has pushed me to face and discharge the U.S. distresses I carry and to understand how the strengths and struggles of an Irish-born person differ from mine.

As several of us in our Region² have persistently claimed being Irish, many feelings ("this is not important"; "you don't matter and neither does this

² A Region is a subdivision of the International RC Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

identity") have come up for discharge. I love the closeness we have forged.

Work on oppressor patterns.

- How have you benefited from the genocide of Native peoples?
- What is it like living on Native land today?
- What is your earliest memory of oppressing someone?

Learn Irish.

It is a great challenge for me to face the shame, humiliation, and discouragement I feel when I try to speak a word or phrase in Irish. Reclaiming any bits of the language is both hard and good. The *Irish Liberation Policy* will be available soon in Irish. What a triumph over language oppression!

APPRECIATION, AND AN INVITATION TO CONNECT

Although our experience as U.S. Irish-heritage people differs from that

of Irish-born people, we share with them many strengths and struggles. To explore these and connect with other Irish-heritage people, join the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Irish-heritage people. You can do this by contacting Sheila Fairon³ at <fairon@fastmail.fm>.

My deepest thanks to the Irish RCers in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, and elsewhere who launched and have built the RC Irish liberation project and who have been so welcoming and helpful to those of us from the diaspora.

I look forward to contact with you, and to reading your thoughts.

Le grá mór (Love),

Rita Davern

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ritadavern@yahoo.com

³ Sheila Fairon is the Regional Reference Person for Northern Ireland.

Discharging Colonial Oppressor Distresses

Before a middle-class workshop here in Bristol (England), I led a couple of gatherings on discharging anti-Irish oppressor material.¹ I decided to do it from the point of view of seeing that material as part of colonial oppression. I assumed that all the people who live in Britain, even if they are also in oppressed roles, have probably taken on² English colonial material.

I talked a bit about the intertwining of Irish and English history. By the time the Normans invaded England in 1066, England had already integrated Viking invaders and Anglo Saxons (various Germanic tribes). Roughly a century later, the Norman rulers of England invaded Ireland. To be a successful colonial power, England had to secure its own back door. That was the beginning of centuries of successive invasions of Ireland, based on the greed of the owning class and its drive to increase its political power. (Many poor people

in England wouldn't even have known the invasions were happening. And perhaps those who did colluded with the rulers out of internalised oppression—having been so recently conquered themselves.) The histories of England and Ireland are mixed up together. There can be no English liberation without Irish liberation. Being indifferent to Irish oppression is not an option.

Because the group I was leading was a mixed group of people from different backgrounds, before working on our relationship to Ireland we each worked on our relationship to England. One woman couldn't stand³ the idea of being English. She was honest about it and discharged hard. That material had forced her out of the country. I think oppressor material often does that, and when it does, it can become invisible (to us, at least).

continued . . .

¹ "Material" means distress.

² "Taken on" means adopted.

³ "Stand" means tolerate.

LIBERATION

... continued

I talked about how English (in the guise of British) colonialism has given us a sense of entitlement. Most people who live in England, including working-class people, feel entitled to the country's infrastructure: the roads, railways, public buildings, public services, and so on. However, this infrastructure represents wealth that is the legacy of colonial rule—wealth that our owning class took from other countries and from slavery. I suggested that we were all in the oppressor role and that

1) we were perfectly willing and eager to be allies to oppressed groups, such as Irish people, as long as *they didn't blame or attack us*;

2) we were perfectly willing and eager to be allies to oppressed groups, such as Irish people, as long as *they fit in and behaved well*.

This is the horrible nonsense I find in my own mind, but it did seem to apply to others as well.

We worked on what Irish people might blame us for, and what that would be like, and got to feelings of blaming ourselves for what had gone wrong in our early lives. Then we worked on ways in which we might feel Irish people were not behaving well and what sort of "bad behaviour" in particular might restimulate us.

I think this approach has three strengths:

1) It is suitable for groups in which some people have oppressed identities (Welsh, Jewish, targeted by racism, and so on) that could distract them from discharging the oppressor material, especially when they are side by side with members of the groups that have oppressed them.

2) The wider focus on colonialism makes it clear that oppressor material is everywhere, is everywhere similar, and has to do with⁴ capitalism, not just particular identities. It becomes clear that oppressor groups are themselves tools of an inhuman, unintelligent system.

3) It shows how we must discharge the way *any* oppressor material is rooted in our early experiences. Particular recordings⁵ have attached to particular groups of people, and these do need to be discharged, but I don't think they are as chronic and deeply rooted as our blame, fear of blame, anger, guilt, and defensiveness.

Caroline New
Bristol, England

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

⁴ "Has to do with" means is about.

⁵ Distress recordings



LINCOLN WOODS STATE PARK, LINCOLN, RHODE ISLAND, USA • MARJORIE SMITH

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and don't tell us in advance of your address change, it causes a surprising waste of resources. The post office does not forward bulk mail; instead it destroys the undelivered journals. Then we usually receive a notice from the post office saying that you have moved, and we are charged postage due for the notice. This need not happen if you will kindly let us know of your address change with as much advance notice as possible.

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White Ashkenazi Jews Eliminating Racism



This March we had the second North America White Ashkenazi Jews Eliminating Racism Workshop. (Cherie Brown¹ led the first one about ten years ago.) A hundred and thirty-one people came, from the southwest and southeast of Canada and from every geographical region of the mainland United States. Having so many Jews, from so many areas, gave us a view from many different perspectives of our strengths, our struggles, and the racism that had landed on us. We were two-thirds women and a third men, with a lovely representation of young adults, all class backgrounds, and GLBTQ² folks.

My main goal on Friday evening was to set a tone of slowing down and connecting with each other. I saw this as key to our being able to discharge the hurts of racism. I also kept pointing us toward the incredible resource we had gathered in terms of numbers, attention, years of experience, commitment, and leadership.

I reminded us of how precious, blameless, and good we all were and that we deserved to be pleased with ourselves and each other simply because we existed—that we needed no more justification than that. I encouraged us to be kind, gentle, patient, and caring. I said that we didn't need to accomplish anything that weekend except to increasingly bring ourselves to each other. It was a challenge for me to keep modeling that and reaching for people, and myself. It brought up big terror, but somehow by staying connected I was able to face the terror rather than disappearing or operating on top of it.

I was able to keep thinking, and showing my thinking, as I trembled through each class. I kept trying to make visible the process of my mind—where it flourished as well as where I was struggling. It looked like that had a big impact on how fully people could use my mind and each other's minds.

I started Saturday morning with a demonstration with the person who had launched the RC work of white Ashkenazi Jews discharging on their identity. She had started it with the opening line, "My beloved Ashkenazim." I invited her to start us again in that same way, which got people discharging well on what they loved about being white Ashkenazi Jews.

Then we moved to looking at how racism, our history as a people, and our early experiences of defeat were connected. The early childhood defeats, shaped by several thousand years of anti-Jewish oppression, were the seedbed of our racism and were also immersed in racism. Doing the early work³ can free our minds not only from the discouragement and powerlessness caused by our individual and our people's defeats but also from the racism in our early experiences. I landed on what I thought was a key contradiction to our distresses: that we are worth this battle and deserve every person's backing⁴ to fight it.

We moved from there to looking at the intersection of white racism and internalized anti-Jewish oppression. This included how anti-Jewish oppression has operated to keep oppressive societies in place and how our history of repeated abandonment,

betrayal, scapegoating, expulsion, violence, and threats of annihilation left us with mistrust, isolation (particularly from our natural allies, other oppressed people), terror, panic, urgency, and a compulsive need to know and succeed, and set us up for⁵ the oppressor conditioning, including racism. I also reminded us that there never was, and never will be, anything wrong with us.

We worked on the "quasi-racism" amongst us white Ashkenazi Jews with regard to skin color and Semitic looks (big nose, curly hair, darker complexion), and on the racism in how we separate ourselves from and deny the existence of Mizrahi Jews (Jews of Arab heritage) and other Jews of color. We gained a better understanding of how this racism makes us see ourselves and our way of being Jewish as the norm.⁶

We also worked on our relationships with Gentiles targeted by racism, starting with the reality that we, as a people and as individuals, are wanted—by each other and by people targeted by racism. I decided to up the ante (offer a bigger challenge or contradiction) by offering something I had read in one of Tim's⁷ articles: in my own words, that young people are thrilled with other humans, thrilled that they exist, thrilled that they are theirs, and thrilled to be with them. We get to reclaim that. I asked the question, "How has racism dimmed this thrill for you?"

Dvora Slavin

Seattle, Washington, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Jews

¹ Cherie Brown is the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews.

² Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

³ "Doing the early work" means discharging the early hurts.

⁴ "Backing" means support.

⁵ "Set us up for" means made us vulnerable to.

⁶ "The norm" means what is normal.

⁷ Tim Jackins'



הכול השתנה

Everything Shifted

בגלל הסדנה "יהודים אשכנזים בצפון אמריקה ממגרים את הגזענות" החלטתי לכתוב קודם בעברית (לא השפה הראשונה שלי) ואחר כך לתרגם לאנגלית.

Because of the eliminating-racism workshop for North American Askenazi Jews, I decided to write the below first in Hebrew (not my first language) and afterward translate it into English.

¹ביןאממגרים את הגזענות" שהנהיגה דבורה סל הסדנה "יהודים אשכנזים בצפון אמריקה הייתה מצויתבמרץ 2014.

הם באו. היו כל כך הרבה יהודים אשכנזים מכל כך הרבה מקומות בארה"ב וקנדה, אני גרה בכפר קטן. וערים קטנות, ולא רק מהערים הכי גדולות עם הרבה יהודיםמעירות אי פעם בסדנאות גדולות לשחרור יהודים. שהרגשתי מהרגשתי יותר בבית ו

במוצאי בכיתה שדבורה עשתה איתי ההדגמה רציתי לכתוב עליו היה שהכיאבל הדבר: "למדת את זהמתי ובעלי צבעמה למדת על יהודים "שבת. דבורה שאלה:

עם ישראליים ואז -, היו לי מורים תימנים של ריקודיעשרה- בתכשהייתי צעירהסיפרתי ש ההתימניהישראלית האישהתימנית. דברתי על -יהודיתלמדתי על ההיסטוריה והתרבות ה עם המשפחהליל הסדר על, שלי כשהייתי בת 19 וגרתי בארץשהייתה האמא המאמצת שנה למדתי על יהודים אותה. במשך על חייהעל כל הדברים שלמדתי שלה, והמורחבת בהרבה מקומות בעולם. שגרים

תה מקוצ'ין בהודו. דברתי יאמא שלו הי, שלי באוניברסיטה בארה"ב היה על חבר שסיפרתי ודברתי ופתאום ראיתי: למדתי הרבה דברים על יהודים לא אשכנזים אבל בראש שלי, -עדיין היו במרכז והיהודים "האחרים" היו בצד. "אנחנו" (היהודים האשכנזים השתנה. הכול "אחרים". בכיתי וכעסתי. ברגע הזה - והיהודים הלא אשכנזים ², "הנורמה"

יתה במרכז. יבה ארה"ב לא השראיתי את מפת העולם שעם הראשונה זה הזכיר לי את הפ זו בעיה של גזענות, אבל עכשיו ראיתי את ם המיקום של ארה"ב במרכז העולכבר ידעתי ש העולם השתנתהי שלמפה" של"ראש שלי והתוך ההבעיה ב

דבורה. ן הזה. תודה רבההיה לי מזל להיות בסדנה הזאת ולקבל את הסש

מרגו היטלמן

איטקה, ניו יורק, ארה"ב

¹ דבורה סלאבין היא רכזת מחוז בארצות הברית

² ה"נורמה" פירושו מה שנורמאלי



The North American White Ashkenazi Jews³ Eliminating Racism Workshop, led by Dvora Slavin⁴ in March 2014, was excellent.

There were so many Ashkenazi Jews from so many places in the United States and Canada. And they were from towns and small cities, not just the largest cities with many Jews. I live in a small town, and I felt more at home than I ever have at a large Jewish workshop.

But the thing I most want to write about is the demonstration that Dvora did with me in class Saturday evening. She asked, "What did you learn about Jews of color, and when did you learn it?"

I talked about how when I was a teenager I had Yemenite teachers of Israeli folk dance and as a result learned about Yemenite Jewish history and culture. I talked about the Yemenite Israeli woman who was my adopted mother when I lived in Israel at age nineteen and about going to Passover Seders⁵ with her extended family and learning about her life. During that year I learned about Jews living in many places in the world.

I talked about a boyfriend in college whose mother was from the Jewish community in Cochin, India. I talked and talked, and then, suddenly, I saw something. I had learned many things about non-Ashkenazi Jews, but in my mind Ashkenazi Jews were still in the center and the "other" Jews were on the side. We (Ashkenazi Jews) were the "norm,"⁶ and non-Ashkenazi Jews were the "others." I cried and raged. In that moment, everything shifted.

It reminded me of the first time I saw a map of the world where the United States was not in the center. I had already known that putting it in the center was a problem of racism, but in that moment I saw the problem in my own mind. And my "map" of the world shifted.

I am grateful for having been at the workshop and for having that session. Many thanks, Dvora.

Margo Hittleman

Ithaca, New York, USA

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

³ Ashkenazi Jews are Jews of Central and Eastern European descent, most of whom identify as white.

⁴ Dvora Slavin is the Regional Reference Person for South King County, Washington, and Hawaii, USA.

⁵ Passover is an eight-day Jewish festival, celebrated in early spring, that commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. A Seder is a ritual held in the home as part of the Passover celebration.

⁶ "The norm" means what was normal.



WARM SPRINGS RESERVATION, OREGON, USA • LANCE CABLK



Pulling Each Other Along



I attended the White Ashkenazi Jews¹ Eliminating Racism Workshop,² along with a hundred and thirty other white Ashkenazi Jews.

Before the workshop, Dvora³ consulted with many leaders of the global majority (Jews and non-Jews), and they all gave her the same advice: have people work on their relationships with each other. So that's what we did. We worked on how our experiences as white Ashkenazi Jews affect our ability to connect with each other, and with Jews and non-Jews of the global majority.

The many demonstrations helped remind us of the rainbow of Jewish lives. A couple of them were with women from mixed African-heritage/white Jewish families. Listening to these women, I realized how much I still don't understand about actually living with racism in one's face, affecting where one can live, work, play, and so on.

I found it useful to counsel with Jews of owning-class heritage. Working on owning-class material⁴ frees me up to build relationships of all kinds. I counseled consistently on "better than/worse than" recordings.⁵ These recordings affect my relationships with everyone. I could work on how they were intertwined with early experiences of watching adults deal with racism.

I was born in rural Kentucky (in the Southern United States). Dvora's loving welcome to Southern Jews contradicted a big division among U.S. white people that comes from how Northerners dramatize feeling less racist and "better than" Southerners.

I joined a topic table for white Southern Ashkenazi Jews. We were asked to say something good about being a Jew from the U.S. South. At first I couldn't think of anything; my mind was full

of how hard it was. My family had faced heavy anti-Jewish oppression.

Eventually I remembered something good—that the raised-poor and working-class white Protestants in our town helped my Jewish father recover from "mental health" oppression. My dad, who fled the Nazis as a boy, spent eighteen months in a psychiatric hospital as a young adult. His job in Kentucky was his first full-time job away from the supports that had helped him transition back to ordinary life. He was appreciated in Kentucky for his warmth and spunk, and our neighbors' love helped him build a sturdy foundation for himself at a crucial time.

I was glad to be at the workshop with a hundred and thirty other white Ashkenazi Jews committed to ending racism. I knew that we were just a small sample of our much larger communities. Dvora reminded us how we are all standing on each other's shoulders, and pulling each other along at the same time.

L'shalom (In peace),

Anonymous

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

¹ Ashkenazi Jews are Jews of Central and Eastern European descent, who generally identify as white.

² Held in Maryland, USA, February 28 to March 2, 2014

³ Dvora Slavin, the leader of the workshop and the Regional Reference Person for South King County, Washington, and Hawaii, USA

⁴ "Material" means distress.

⁵ Distress recordings



KAISLI SYRJÄNEN



More about the White Ashkenazi Jews Eliminating Racism Workshop



The White Ashkenazi Jews Eliminating Racism Workshop offered a huge contradiction to isolation and urgency. Dvora¹ set a tone from the very beginning that we were going to “put our feet up” and get to notice and have each other, and that we were not there to accomplish anything. (Wow!) Before I got to the workshop I couldn’t imagine how she might contradict the terror that motivates our desperate attempts to do something, anything, to prove that we are worthy of being on the planet. I had lots of sessions imagining a hundred and thirty terrified white Jews, all in one room, clamoring to prove that we were okay. Within five minutes of starting the workshop, Dvora had indeed offered a contradiction to that material.² I could feel people relaxing almost immediately.

She had us work on the ways that racism affects our lives. I got to be in a demonstration in which I shook and cried and screamed about the racism I witness and sometimes perpetuate in my current life. I said something like, “I don’t have any idea how to think about this.” Dvora reminded me that I didn’t have to figure it out by myself, and I discharged hard on where I can’t even tell³ that people are there or I don’t know how to connect with them. I was soon working on how I was consistently left alone in my crib as a baby. I had a huge “get me out of here, come get me” session and could see so clearly how the work on racism leads us back to our biggest early hurts.

Joan Ostrove
Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA

¹ Dvora Slavin, the leader of the workshop and the Regional Reference Person for South King County, Washington, and Hawaii, USA

² “Material” means distress.

³ “Tell” means perceive.



STAN EICHNER

I understood at this workshop, more than ever before, that there is nothing stopping me in the present from fighting for my humanity, which means taking on⁴ racism as key and, as Dvora said, “coming home.”

For many years, I have seen and been part of white Ashkenazi Jewish projects that have fought racism but have not taken on anti-Jewish oppression. I can do it fully as a human, fully as a Jew. There is no contradiction. This workshop culminated in my gut understanding that I can feel past compromises, feel past destruction, feel oppressor distresses, and be fully human right now.

Diane Balser
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

⁴ “Taking on” means facing and doing something about.

As a child growing up in Texas (USA), I did not “look Jewish” and was often asked if I really was. I had blond hair and blue eyes. (I was the only one in my family who had blue eyes.) Due to the heavy anti-Jewish oppression in Texas, the Jews there were very separated from each other—by denomination of Jew (Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox), by economic class, and by level of assimilation. My family was Reform, and it appeared to me that only one kind of Jew was okay—the kind just like us: solidly middle class, very assimilated, with practically no traces of the old country (no one in my family spoke Yiddish; the ones who had come over from Europe were several generations back).

continued . . .

LIBERATION

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The message I got was to not associate with those Jews on either side of us—some were “too ethnic,” and some were too ostentatious with their wealth. The message was to hide, to not act or look Jewish, to try to fit in. A big message from my dad was “don’t make waves.”

At the workshop, Dvora said that the racism “comes in on the tails of the internalized oppression.” I understood that in my head but not from my own experience. Then she asked who had been targeted for having a Jewish look and did a demonstration with a woman who had gotten the message over and over that she was not pretty, that she needed to “fix” things about herself to be acceptable. At one point, the client was yelling, “I am your ideal (of beauty)! I am your ideal!”

As someone who was told that I was pretty and it was good that I didn’t look Jewish, I finally understood the real cost, the heartbreak, of how that had kept me apart from my Jewish sisters and brothers and how I had inadvertently acted out the internalized oppression at other Jews.

Randi Freundlich
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

Dvora had us look around the room filled with a hundred and thirty-four faces and encouraged us to notice and believe that any face our eyes landed on was of someone who both wanted us and we wanted back. Getting to know, deep down, the truth that we are each wanted and that we really get to have each other is a major contradiction to our isolation. That isolation is one of the things that has set us up to take on⁵ racist patterns.

Marci Stern
Pennsauken, New Jersey, USA

The workshop moved all of our Jewish liberation work forward. Dvora’s years of both leading eliminating racism workshops and counseling Jews and non-Jews in their Intensives⁶ in Seattle, plus her being deeply rooted in her own Jewish soul as a proud Jew from Brooklyn,

⁵ “Set us up to take on” means predisposed us to adopt.

⁶ An Intensive is twenty hours of one-way Re-evaluation Counseling, for a fee, at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, in Seattle, Washington, USA.

New York (USA), were all in full display as she lovingly and with great humor, compassion, and wisdom led us to the center of the work on racism and, equally important, to the center of the work on getting ourselves.

She modeled beautifully for all of us what it can look like to lead while being fully and unabashedly oneself as a beloved white Ashkenazi Jew. The love and generosity she showed to each and every Jew at the workshop enabled us to be kinder, more loving, and more present with each other.

KolKvod (from strength to strength), Dvora. *Mazel tov* (congratulations)⁷ on leading an excellent workshop.

Cherie Brown
International Liberation
Reference Person for Jews
Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

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

⁷ *Kol kvod* and *mazel tov* are both Hebrew phrases.



KENYA • TIM JACKINS

Young People and RC

This is the first of a series of articles I am writing about how to move Goal 2 forward in RC. Goal 2 of the RC Communities¹ is “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.”

In this first article, I will focus on the basics of young people’s oppression and some first steps for allies to young people. In the next, I will focus on what is currently happening and what has worked well in RC young people’s work. The third article will focus on the specific areas in which I’d like us to make progress.

THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE

Let’s start with the truth about young people. We are born completely good and hugely intelligent. Because we haven’t had much time to accumulate distress, we have flexible thinking. We are smart and able to think well about many things, particularly connection, closeness, creativity, and playfulness. We have a good picture of the world and how it should be because we haven’t had too much confusion and discouragement piled on us. Sometimes people confuse intelligence with the accumulation of knowledge and think that, because we haven’t experienced as much as adults, we are less intelligent. This is not true. It is a confusion that comes from young people’s oppression. Young people can be powerful leaders.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S OPPRESSION

Young people’s clear thinking about connection and how the world should be is dangerous to the oppressive society. So young people are oppressed. They are made to feel insignificant and powerless so that they don’t challenge the oppressive society.

Everyone either is or has been a young person. Thus everyone has experienced young people’s oppression. And all adults have had to take on² the oppressor role. I think most adults need many sessions about the heartbreak of having to take on the oppressor role after having been a young person.

Young people’s oppression is virtually unacknowledged and unchallenged in our societies.

¹ A goal adopted by the 2001 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities and reaffirmed by subsequent World Conferences

² “Take on” means assume.



HIRVIHAARA, FINLAND • KAISLI SYRJÄNEN

It is sometimes even seen as good practice or necessary. It is important to talk about young people’s oppression and liberation, in RC and in the world. If we don’t, it will continue to go unchallenged and we young people will continue to feel like there is something wrong with us rather than seeing the big oppression that is aimed at us.

The main messages of young people’s oppression are that we young people are not fully human, that we are stupid and don’t know enough to think well, and that we are small and insignificant. The oppression comes at us in school and from the media, our parents, and other adults around us. It comes in when we’re very young. Most of our earliest hurts (discouragement, powerlessness, isolation, and so on) are a direct result of young people’s oppression. This oppression also sets us up³ to collude with other oppressions, either as the agent or the target.

Younger young people are often treated like they are objects or animals instead of intelligent humans. They are belittled, humiliated, disrespected, and given no power in their lives. This sets them up to be exploited and abused. As young people get older, the oppression looks slightly different. We *older young people* are often called lazy, difficult, and irrational. We are given slightly more power in our lives but consistently told that we make bad choices. Adults often have less attention for us. It can also be hard for us to be close with other young people, because of internalized oppression.

continued . . .

³ “Sets us up” means predisposes us.

LIBERATION

... continued

School is the main institution of young people's oppression. It has also been used as a tool of colonization, racism, and genocide. Although many of the adults who work in schools are committed to young people, schools are not set up well for young people (or for anyone, including parents and teachers). All of us who attended school need many sessions about our years there.

Schools don't operate in a way that fits how anyone would naturally learn. They are set up to give young people the message that they aren't smart and to make them obedient to an oppressive society. They are also a place where young people are separated from each other—by age, and by racism, sexism, classism, and other oppressions.

We young people are barely ever given the opportunity to make *decisions about our lives* or to have a voice in the world. It is clear to us that the adults who are making decisions for us, though usually well meaning, are often not thinking clearly about us (or themselves or others). We young people need chances to practice making decisions about our lives. Just like all people, we need the chance to make mistakes and learn from them. We do need perspectives held out for us, so our distresses don't control us. We sometimes need guidance and information from someone who has more experience with something than we do. However, adults need to be very careful not to automatically make decisions for us or assume that they know best.

Young people's oppression gives us confusing and mixed messages about *sex, drugs, and alcohol*. We, and adults, have lots of distress in these areas, which can either push us toward these things or repel us from them. Adults often client at us, and can rarely listen to us, about these things. They need to have sessions about what sex, drugs, and alcohol were like for them when they were young people.

Many RCers have struggled to gain slack for young people in these areas. Having someone who can listen

to us and not get scared, give advice, get fascinated, or go away is hugely beneficial in our figuring these things out. Also, we all—adults and young people—need to counsel on where it is hard for us to take stands on drugs and alcohol, so that we can relaxedly hold out a clear perspective for all people.

INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

As young people we internalize the messages of young people's oppression and believe them about ourselves and each other. We can't tell⁴ that we're fully intelligent, powerful, and significant in the world. We feel like there is something wrong with us. Stuff about coolness, being liked, and competition comes up. We older young people often treat younger young people in the oppressive ways that adults treated us. All of us young people are given the message that we can't be important in each other's lives and really support each other.



FRIESLAND, THE NETHERLANDS • WYTSKE VISSER

Allies can play an important role in contradicting internalized young people's oppression. They can remind us of our goodness, likability, brilliance, and power. They can remember that any "problem" we have with each other is because of the oppression and not to do with⁵ us. They can also remember and remind us how important our relationships with each other are and counsel us to move toward each other. (We may need to be mad at an adult so that we can take the blame off of ourselves and other young people.) An important step for allies is to counsel on their years as a young person—on how they wanted to be liked or cool, on how they felt stupid, on where things got hard with other young people, and so on.

COUNSELING YOUNG PEOPLE

It is great to counsel us young people and provide contradiction⁶ and safety so that we can discharge. This contradiction and safety will come from building

⁴ "Tell" means notice.

⁵ "To do with" means about.

⁶ Contradiction to our distresses

strong relationships with us—often by listening and playing, hanging out,⁷ and laughing with us. It is important that adults discharge any urgency they have about our discharging, and our leading in RC. It needs to be clear that they genuinely want us.

We young people need places where we are respected, followed, and listened to. However, adults, seeing that we are smart, can (often unconsciously) use us as counselors without our permission. With young people, particularly younger young people, counseling often needs to be one-way or uneven and the young person needs to be able to determine how things are set up. This contradicts young people's oppression and the way that adults constantly impose their agendas and schedules on young people. Also, because young people rarely have the power or freedom to decide when they listen to adults, young people are often put in the role of counselor without their permission. Still, if you are an adult, we can be some of your best counselors.



ANSEL ADAMS WILDERNESS, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISA VOSS

If we decide to counsel with you, use our attention to work on real struggles you have and trust our intelligence and abilities. Be thoughtful about what it doesn't make sense to client on with young people, especially younger young people, but don't be so careful that we never actually see some of the places where you struggle. If you ask us whether or not we want to counsel you on a topic, we may not be able to tell you if it would be hard on us, so also use your judgment.

BEING AN ALLY

If you are an adult, being an ally to young people is one of the best things you can do for yourself! It is a fast track to your re-emergence, because it reminds you of exactly what you need to work on from when you were a young person. Tim Jackins and many other RC leaders have reminded us that it is important to work on our early hurts. These hurts have everything to do with⁸ young people's oppression. Most of us felt defeated and powerless because the adults around us couldn't think due to their oppressor material,⁹ which

came from how they were oppressed. Discharging these early hurts, making the connection with young people's oppression, and being allies to young people are crucial to all of our re-emergence and will make our relationships with both young people and adults much better.

Also, ending young people's oppression is crucial to the liberation of every group. Without young people's oppression, we would not be as vulnerable to accepting any other oppression. Being an ally to young people challenges a major foundation of the oppressive society.

MORE TIPS FOR ALLIES

Here are some more tips for allies: Have sessions on your young years! Have sessions on what your life was like when you were the age of the young person you are being an ally to. Listen and trust young people's minds. Challenge yourself to go outside of your comfort zone and follow a young person's

thinking. Build relationships with young people and learn about their lives—what they're passionate about, what they think about the world, what they are trying to figure out.

Another tip is to go for¹⁰ having a big, fun, world-changing, and connected life. It can be hard on young people when it looks like adults have given up on having a big life for themselves, when it seems like they are only able to have fun around young people or that they do it "for" the young people. It's important to play and think big with other adults as well as young people. Have sessions on early discouragement so that you can have the big and fun life you want. Fight for the things you want to change in the world and lead others to do the same. Get close to and play with other adults. Contrary to what you were told as a young person, you get to have a great life. It will be good for us and for you!

Mari Piggott
International Liberation Reference
Person for Young People
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

⁷ "Hanging out" means spending relaxed, unstructured time.

⁸ "Have everything to do with" means are very much about.

⁹ "Material" means distress.

¹⁰ "Go for" means pursue.

The Next Stage of Middle-Class Liberation

RC middle-class liberation work has until now dealt mainly with middle-class internalised oppression. We as middle-class people have focused largely on connecting to our inherent goodness and showing ourselves. This has been important work and needs to continue.

However, with this firm base, we can now move on to the next stage: addressing much more directly the ending of class oppression. This is a significant change of direction, but it's one that we have been moving toward for some time. It will accelerate the spread of our work to larger numbers of people.

EIGHT MIDDLE-CLASS ROLES

Broadly stated, the role of the middle class is to manage and maintain the efficient operation of the class system and to separate itself and see its interests as different from the rest of the working class. As middle-class people, we have been conditioned to play certain roles, for example:

1. To manage, coordinate, and make decisions about the work of working people in order to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of workplaces

2. As human-relations managers, (some) trade union leaders, social workers, religious leaders, lawyers, “mental health” professionals, members of the police and intelligence services, **to manage, minimize, or suppress discontent and dissent**

3. As parents, teachers, doctors, counsellors, therapists, psychologists, trainers, **to develop and maintain compliant and productive citizens**

4. As scientists, engineers, accountants, lawyers, stockbrokers, politicians, **to help make money for the owning class by developing new and better products, instruments, processes, systems, rules, and controls**

5. As self-employed people or small-business owners, **to be preoccupied with making money or climbing into the owning class and (as with all these roles) to have a vested interest in the continuation of the class system**

6. **To be distracted and harmless:** as consumers, to be preoccupied with leisure, fun, health, fitness, looking good, and other distractions that render us harmless and nonthreatening to the class system; as producers (beauty and health professionals, media professionals, artists, entertainers, and so on) to be preoccupied with providing distractions to other middle-class, and also working-class,

people—especially retired people, young people, and anyone with time to spare

If we are unhappy with these roles, there are “alternative” roles we can play, which are not a major threat to the class system and that can be accommodated by it:

1. To be social reformers and ease the harshness of the class system by means of charity, fundraising, single-issue reforms, mainstream political involvement, and so on—generally as spare-time activities but occasionally as full-time occupations

2. To adopt alternative lifestyles and “drop out”—a non-conforming, individualist option that the system may even facilitate (in many cases, the greater the non-conformity, the less likely it is that large numbers of people will be influenced)

We can also play radical, transformational, and revolutionary roles. Because the system actively discourages and suppresses these, they are not included in the lists above.

WHAT “HELPS” US PLAY THESE ROLES

We are susceptible to playing the expected roles

- if we don't feel good about ourselves, if our self-esteem depends on the approval of others;

- if we depend on appearances, conformity, assimilating, or having a lot of money or on success as defined by the values of the class system;



ANSEL ADAMS WILDERNESS, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISAVOSS

- if we are confused about the system and how it works;
- if we are scared about losing our privileges or our jobs;
- if we are isolated and have minimal connection with working-class people or people of the global majority;
- if we are preoccupied with comfort and security;
- if we feel superior and entitled to privilege.

It doesn't matter how we were raised or what our other identities are, all middle-class people are expected to play these roles. (This includes owning-class people who become downwardly mobile and raised-poor and working-class people who become upwardly mobile.) We are not bad people for taking them on.¹ The class system expends enormous resources to get us to agree to them and subjects us to its propaganda from the time we are born.

A LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME

Depending on how we were raised, we will have particular feelings about our connection to the middle class. These need to be worked on and discharged. However, the feelings are not the key issue. The key issue is the roles we play. Our challenge is to be completely honest with ourselves about them. Then we can discharge and think about other options. We need to reconsider these roles if we are to successfully take on² the increasing unworkability of capitalism, the degradation of the environment, and climate change.

Some of us have assumed that as capitalism collapses, RCers will step forward and provide clear perspectives and leadership. This is not yet happening. Too few of us have decided to do it, and collectively we have not yet organized enough or developed the necessary leaders. I believe that we can decide to do it and become a huge resource. However, it will take decision to make this happen. I have found it useful to assume we have about twenty years to do the necessary organizing and development of leaders.

FOUR IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The following four questions can help us focus on a commitment to end class oppression. They will be useful

¹ In this context, "taking them on" means assuming them.

² In this context, "take on" means confront and do something about.



"STADECKER'S COVE" (PAINTING) • © SAMANTHA SANDERSON

to the extent that we are completely honest with ourselves and do not defend, rationalize, or justify the choices we have made.

1. What roles does the class system expect someone with your identity (occupational or other) to play?
2. How have you agreed to these roles? How have you set up your life to play them? How have you benefited from playing them?
3. How have you set up your life to end class oppression?
4. What do you need to change to be able to act with complete integrity?

We can bring these questions repeatedly to Co-Counselling sessions. Greater honesty and clarity will emerge as we discharge.

TWO KEY GROUPS

Given the increasing unworkability of capitalism, the growth of the middle class in poor and developing countries, and the slow response to climate change and environmental degradation, I think that two groups of middle-class people have to be central in leading our work: young people/young adults and people of the global majority. Without their leadership, and the leadership of working-class people, it's unlikely that we will stay on track.³

If you are a young adult, the following questions can help to clarify what the system expects of you, and the effects of that:

- What messages do you get about the kind of life you should aim for in this system?

continued . . .

³ In this context, "stay on track" means stay on the path to ending class oppression.

LIBERATION

... continued

- What price have you paid for either going after⁴ or resisting that kind of life?

The class system offers no good roles for young adults. A challenge is for you to find alternative, liberating, leadership roles that go against middle-class conditioning and for all of us to support you in leading all middle-class people.

CONCLUSION

If we as middle-class people are to effectively care for the environment and end class oppression, then organizing and developing leadership need to be central to our work. We need to

- significantly increase the number of middle-class support groups and workshops;

⁴ “Going after” means pursuing.

Surviving the Rigid Society

The increasingly rational human cannot only survive amid the rigidities of today’s society but can do so zestfully and victoriously. She or he can operate in the rigid society much as a hummingbird can fly flexible figure eights and double loops around a clumsily flying crow or vulture.

Harvey Jackins

From page 83 of “The Flexible Human in the Rigid Society,” in *The Human Situation*

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

- learn more about and get better at organising, both inside and outside of RC;

- learn more about and effectively back⁵ the leadership of working-class people.

We have to resist the pull to accept other people’s formulas and instead reclaim our ability to think through the challenges and come up with⁶ fresh, flexible, responses and strategies.

Seán Ruth

International Liberation Reference

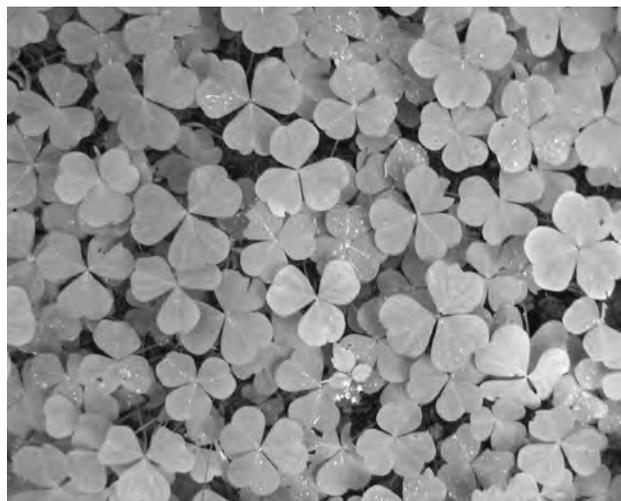
Person for Middle-Class People

Stillorgan, County Dublin, Ireland

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of middle-class people

⁵ “Back” means support.

⁶ “Come up with” means think of, create.



DIANE SHISK

Appreciation for the New *Guidelines*

I just received the new *Guidelines** in the mail today. They’re gorgeous! They’re beautiful from cover to cover, and the photos really enhance the readability—they somehow make them seem more concretely the work of a particular community in the world. I don’t quite know why that is. But I started reading them immediately.

Ted Mayer

Hua Hin, Prajuap, Khiri Khan, Thailand

* The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*—the policies for the RC Communities

Overcoming Middle-Class Distress

I attended the Middle-Class Liberation Workshop, led by Seán Ruth, the International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People, this April in Greensboro, North Carolina, USA.

Seán began with a historical perspective on our RC work on middle-class oppression. He talked about the fact that we are good. I could take that in more than I usually can, partly because he presented it carefully, with lots of repetition, and because we had lots of mini-sessions.

Seán reminded us that we were systematically hurt into the patterns we carry. Not only did we not choose them, but it's middle-class (and middle-agent) oppression to be judged for our patterns and encouraged to think "it's my fault." I noticed that I wasn't the only one who was terrified of doing the wrong thing, which helped me see that fear as coming from the oppression. I could see the bind we're in: If we show our patterns, we'll get criticized, so we'd better learn all the rules first, "stay within the lines," and only show "acceptable" behavior. That's hard on human beings!

It became easier to act while knowing that my limitations were showing at the same time. I called a "No-Blame Addictions" topic table, since I've struggled for years with caffeine. We feel like it's our fault when we don't overcome addictions and like we have to keep secret our struggle with them. It took courage to show where we are most harsh with ourselves and most worried about others' criticism.

Another workshop theme was discharging on capitalism and working with others to make our lives bigger and more rational, connected, and visible. Seán shared the following commitment:

Bearing in mind the failure of capitalism to meet the human needs of large and increasing numbers of people and also its degrading and destructive impact on our natural environment, I now decide

1. *to have regular sessions on capitalism and its possibly imminent collapse,*
2. *to reclaim completely my ability to think about capitalism and its unworkability and about possible workable alternatives, and*
3. *to join with others to take concrete steps for changing the world, including making whatever changes are necessary in my own lifestyle for me to have a big, visible, connected, and rational life.*

I have wanted so much to trust that someone else is watching out for me and the planet that I have closed my eyes to the destructiveness of capitalism. This commitment has helped me to look straight at that. I am grieving a frozen need² for a feeling of safety. I like the challenge of letting myself think and taking my thinking seriously. I have more patience with myself. I'm not automatically accepting the persistent "thought" that "I can't think about that."

I reported on the workshop to our Area³ leaders and got an enthusiastic response. One person said that it's heartening to be called to face this material⁴ as a group.



Holly Jorgenson
Madison, Wisconsin, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

¹ "Turns out to be" means is revealed to be.

² 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 the person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

³ An Area is a local RC Community.

⁴ "Material" means distress.

A Workshop for Women in Their Forties

At the Women in Their Forties Workshop, which I co-led with Diane Balser¹ in early 2014, we talked about how much we had done and what substantial women we had become. We know a lot of things, have tried a lot of things, have made a lot of mistakes, and have lost a lot of relationships. We have become more forgiving. We've gone back to old friends we got discouraged with. We are more okay with people just as they are. We know how to run things and build things and work hard. We know something about resting and have learned a lot about health. We know how to help our families function. We know how to care for aging parents. We walk down the street in our neighborhoods and know many people, and have for a long time.

We do not feel as hopeful about the world as we did when we were younger, but some of our earlier hopefulness was an odd kind of hopefulness that can come from an assumption that the younger generation will do better. We actually have more reason to be hopeful about our lives now than ever before. We have a clearer picture of ourselves and what we can do, and can't do yet. We have a clearer picture of the oppressive system and how much work it actually takes to change things. We are less likely to pretend that we don't have struggles.

We were young girls at the beginning and middle of the second wave of the women's movement.² Our generation

¹ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

² The "second wave of the women's movement" began in the early 1960s in the United States and spread throughout the Western world. In the United States, it lasted through the early 1980s. Later it became a worldwide movement that was strong in Europe and parts of Asia. First-wave feminism had focused mainly on suffrage and overturning legal obstacles to gender equality. Second-wave feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues, including sexuality, the family, the workplace, reproductive rights, and violence against women.

got to grow up with the gains from that movement and with a particular sense of ourselves as women. We celebrated Diane's seventieth birthday at the workshop. People told story after story about how Diane and the women's movement had "raised" them. I am forever thankful to Diane, and all the other women who came before me, who fought so that the women's movement could exist. Thank you, Diane and older women. Thank you, Mom, for fighting sexism and fighting for yourself.

We still need to discharge about all the things we tried that did not work the way we hoped, or that took much more effort than we understood they would. We are discharging the discouragement. We are unstoppable. The world should watch out!

Jenny Sazama

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

Online Dating and Sexism

At the Women in Their Forties Workshop, led by Jenny Sazama and Diane Balser¹ near Boston, Massachusetts, USA, earlier this year, a group of us met to discharge on sexism and online dating.² We were led by Andrea Jacobs.³

Dating sites are about the objectification of women (and men). They treat close human relationships as commodities that we need to go shopping for. Relationships are not commodities, and it is horrible to treat them (and people) as if they were.

As single women in our forties, we have noticed pressure to join online dating sites. Andrea reminded us again and again that the oppression and the industry are the problem, not us. It is possible to use online dating sites intelligently, but we should keep in mind how sexist the industry is.

I had my turn on the ageism I see online. I am forty-one, and men in their fifties are interested in me. A thirty-three-year-old single friend goes on dates with forty-two- and forty-three-year-old men.

I loved applying our Co-Counseling and women's liberation thinking to this large industry. The women in the group are going to stay in touch and have more sessions on this topic.



Kristin Larson

Boulder, Colorado, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

¹ Jenny Sazama is the International Liberation Reference Person for Allies to Young People. Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

² "Online dating" is connecting with people on a dating website. Users usually create a profile with photos of and information about themselves and then look through the profiles of other users and send messages to those they are interested in dating.

³ Andrea Jacobs is a Co-Counselor in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA.

A Powerful Weekend for Women in Their Thirties

I was the organizer for a Women in Their Thirties Workshop, led by Diane Balser and Ellie Brown,¹ at the end of April, outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. It was an incredible weekend. The participants were of a range of identities and from many different parts of the United States and Canada.

I left the workshop feeling like I was part of a sisterhood—a huge victory over the internalized sexism that so often convinces us otherwise. Every minute of the workshop—every talk, every mini-session, every interaction—felt completely relevant to my life. I had traveled from California (USA) with a gang of women from my Area,² and on the way home we were so alert, clear headed, and excited to share all of our thoughts and new ideas from the weekend.

I'm shaking while writing this, because the act of writing is a fight against the internalized oppression that tells me that my thoughts are insignificant and that I don't know the "right" way to give a report. But I'm going to push through, because it's important for other women to know what we accomplished and covered over this short but powerful weekend.

SEEING OUR STRUGGLES AS SEXISM

Women of my generation were raised in a complex and confusing time. We benefited so much from the gains made by older women, including our very own Diane Balser, in the second

wave of the women's movement,³ but we were also raised in the backlash to that movement and with the totally wrong message that "sexism is over."

The expectations on my generation of women have been that not only can we do anything but we have to be everything. I grew up in the 1980s and remember seeing so many images on TV and in movies of female athletes, astronauts, and businesswomen but also of women as mothers, wives, and caretakers. I saw my own mother trying to do it all: look great, exercise (jogging



TOGO • MARION OUPHOUET

and aerobics became popular during the '80s), caretake my father and me, and have a job outside the home that she was good at.

We have much work to do to know that our struggles are not personal but always in the context of sexism. Ellie pointed out that if we're feeling bad about any of this, we're seen as "mentally ill." She spoke about the increase in

³ The "second wave of the women's movement" began in the early 1960s in the United States and spread throughout the Western world. In the United States, it lasted through the early 1980s. Later it became a worldwide movement that was strong in Europe and parts of Asia. First-wave feminism had focused mainly on suffrage and overturning legal obstacles to gender equality. Second-wave feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues, including sexuality, the family, the workplace, reproductive rights, and violence against women.

"mental illness" diagnoses whenever there's a spike in the expectations put on women—such as in the Victorian Era and in the 1950s and '60s in the United States. Currently half of U.S. women have at some point been diagnosed with "mental illness" and a quarter are on psychiatric drugs.

Having, at the start of the weekend, this historical framework for and clear perspective on how our generation has been hit with sexism opened up many opportunities for discharge. It also helped us feel a huge sense of relief.

We could stop blaming ourselves for our struggles and see them as coming from sexism.

For the rest of the weekend, we worked openly on hard and relevant topics, such as whether or not to raise a child, the institution of marriage, women's work (paid and unpaid), the sex industry, reproduction and technology, and dating. I went to a topic group on pornography that Diane led on Sunday morning. We each took one minute on our experience with pornography and shook, cried, and laughed. Diane spoke about how this really is our issue as females. We have framed pornography as a men's issue, because of their addictions to it, but we need to claim it as our own.

A BREAKTHROUGH AS ORGANIZER

I've organized many workshops, but this was definitely the largest one so far. As a female targeted by racism (I am Chicana and Pilipina) and raised working class and Catholic, I struggle with how to make organizing re-emergent for me. In some way I do the work at my expense. I went into the workshop overworked, stressed, and pretty⁴ disconnected. I

continued . . .

⁴ "Pretty" means quite.

¹ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women. Ellie Brown is a former International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults.

² An Area is a local RC Community.

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was scared to walk into the main room when I arrived. But then something happened that I didn't expect. Because of my job as organizer, I found that I was excited to meet women whom I had communicated with for months. I understood my significance in a completely different way and assumed my importance as I introduced myself to people. Throughout the weekend, I made it a point to have contact with just about everyone at the workshop. At the end, one woman gave me a

huge hug and cried and thanked me for getting her to the workshop. (I had offered a lot of my thinking to help her get there.) I had also figured out to ask another woman of the global majority to be the on-site organizer. It was a huge thing for me to not have to work, work, work all weekend and to get to enjoy the workshop for myself.

A DYNAMITE WORKSHOP

Now, a week and a half after the workshop, I am still going over my sessions and Diane's and Ellie's talks.

Diane's expertise on women's liberation history and her commitment to putting women's issues first, combined with Ellie's profound understanding of how sexism and male domination have hit our generation, was dynamite!⁵

Cristina Mitra

San Francisco, California, USA

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

⁵ "Dynamite" means terrific, wonderful.



AMANDA MARTINEZ

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.

Desmond Tutu

Relief, and a Sense of Being in Charge

I recently attended the workshop for women in their thirties. It was a great workshop, one of the best I have ever been to. It felt like it was *my* workshop. All the topics and talks were exactly what I wanted, and I loved being with all the women there. During the introductions, many of us said that what we liked about being in our thirties was that we had more confidence in our minds. It really showed.

I loved watching Ellie Brown and Diane Balsler¹ lead together. I loved how fierce they both were about ending sexism and male domination. I loved how big their minds were. They were real with each other, respected each other, and worked well with each other—with their different backgrounds, experiences, and decisions they had made in their lives as women.

I went into the workshop with the hope of discharging some more on deciding whether or not to become a

mother and raise a child. At another Women in Our Thirties Workshop two years ago, Diane said something like, "Everybody is asking you if you are going to have a child, but nobody is asking you if you are going to be an astronaut." This time she said that the question of how we are going to change the world has to come along with the question of whether or not we are going to raise a child. She also talked about how wanting to have a child is a feeling. The question is if it actually makes sense, and if so, on what basis. She also encouraged us to really look at the sexism and male domination in the institution of child raising.

Two years ago at this workshop, I led a support group for women of the global majority on discharging on whether or not to become a mother and raise a child. This time I led the group for both white women and women of the global majority. It was interesting to see how extremely personal the topic was for many of us. It was hard to imagine getting help with it from our sisters and not easy to openly talk about how we were feeling about the decision. It gave me a picture of how sexism

¹ Ellie Brown is a former International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults. Diane Balsler is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

and internalized sexism leave us alone to figure out big things on our own.

The lives of many women of the global majority have never been about themselves. The women of the global majority in the support group felt a lot of humiliation about just wanting to have a child, about their minds, and about not having the resource that white women seem to have. Having room to figure out what they thought about all this, without anybody else's agenda coming in, seemed really important.

Many of the white women also felt humiliation about wanting, and isolation seemed to be the key. It was hard for some of them to imagine getting out of their isolation without having a child.

I loved all the women in the group and appreciated them for their honesty. I think all of us—younger women, older women, with all the decisions we have made already or not made yet—have a lot of work to do on this subject.

Ellie said over and over again that our struggles are not personal. They are because of sexism. The women in our generation have been told that sexism does not exist anymore, that it's our personal fault if we struggle, and that something is wrong with us if we feel bad. The society says that we can do everything, be anything, and that it's our personal fault if we cannot figure it out. It says that we are free to choose whatever we want. However, the choices we have are still not workable, and "something is wrong with us" if we cannot make them work.

Working Class, and the Best of Everything

On your question of how to organize the support group so it will not be divisive, I would call it "working class determined to have the best of everything." That's a healthy attitude for working-class people anyway. I certainly think all of us should play in string quartets and have the very best clothes, shoes, food, and so on. It's not my goal at all for the working class to stay poor—it's just not to get well-off* at anyone else's expense.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1985

* "Well-off" means prosperous.

It was a relief to have someone name this thing that I have never been able to fully wrap my mind around. Growing up in Japan, I did not quite get the message that I could be anything. (In Japan, there is much less pretence that sexism no longer exists.) However, I have lived in the United States for the last sixteen years, and it's been confusing.

Diane led a topic group on pornography. She gave me a big hand² with fighting against the sex industry in Japan. I am furious, horrified, and heartbroken about how much it has gotten to my beloved country and people. Yet, because of racism and U.S. imperialism, it's been hard for me to show that to U.S. women. I appreciate Diane for not leaving me with my discouragement and reaching out and fighting with me.

More and more, I can see how much of my early feeling of defeat has something to do with sexism and male domination. I came home from the workshop feeling hopeful and with the sense that I am in charge and that I may be someone to take seriously.

Thank you Ellie and Diane, and everybody else who were there!

Yuko Hibino
Seattle, Washington, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

² "A big hand" means a lot of help.



WHIDBEY ISLAND, WASHINGTON, USA • ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

Language Liberation and the World Conference

Before and during the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, a native Basque speaker, Xabi Odriozola, and a native English speaker, Shirley Thatcher, worked together as allies to make the conference as inclusive as possible in terms of language. Below are some excerpts from a longer document they wrote about their experience.

PROGRESS IN THE RC COMMUNITY

Xabi: Beginning several months before the World Conference, a large group of people were in contact with each other about language and interpreting at the conference. I had the chance, and the good luck, to be the coordinator of all these minds.

For me, the conference was like a mirror, reflecting the work that our Communities have done since the previous conference. Our RC project is working well, because each of us is working hard at it every day—in our own locations, in our own minds, and in our daily acts and behavior. Every minute we offer to this project is useful work, whether we are thinking, feeling, arranging, discharging, organizing, supporting, driving, writing, speaking, leading, teaching, getting frustrated and discharging the frustration, or taking up¹ the fight to make real the dream, the deep wish, to be our full selves again.

This dream is coming true every day, thanks to the big web of RCers that is breathing and living in each of us every instant of our lives. I notice how eager people are to help push forward what they see as a good, human project or idea, no matter what their distresses or other limitations are in the middle of this oppressive society.

More and more people are understanding that moving the big stone of language oppression out of our way is an important next step for us as a Community.

¹ "Taking up" means embarking on.



MATT WEATHERFORD

We do need real, equal, and good communication among us.

Native speakers of dominant languages (mainly English, in our case) are increasingly understanding that we are not all English speakers and that every one of us is as necessary and important as anyone else. Our re-emergence depends on all of our minds, not only on those that communicate their thinking in English. Native English speakers are noticing that they need to make an effort to end language oppression, without waiting for non-dominant-language native speakers to do the work. A strong, deep wave of awareness of language oppression is slowly sweeping forward.

Those of us on the oppressed edge who are targeted by language oppression are discharging on how it is affecting us both within and outside of the RC project. We are organizing ourselves and our local Communities in ways that were not possible before. We are influencing and guiding what we think is a more inclusive, equal, and efficient structure for our International RC activities.

Some of us are moving a big piece of the rock of internalized language oppression that was in our way of thinking about ourselves as fully decisive, crucial people for the RC project. This is making a space for different thinking to come into our Communities, and I think we all are noticing the change. We are a ship riding a wave of awareness—slowly, broadly, and strongly.

CONNECTION TO OUR LANDS AND PEOPLES

I've observed in different countries how important it is for people to feel connected to their land and their people and therefore their culture and language. If they are connected, they can hold on to unity and solidarity with each other and with the environment. It is more difficult to separate and oppress them.

It is not surprising that one of the first tactics of capitalism and imperialism is to rob Native people of

their land—usually by genocide, the repression of the people’s culture and language, and the imposition of the colonizer’s culture or language. Then the people can more easily be manipulated into accepting the role of oppressed or oppressor, depending on the colonizer’s interests.

At the World Conference I decided to lead some topic tables on language liberation for native English speakers. I wanted to see if they had suffered disconnection in the way I expected and if I could help them discharge and think about it. As it turned out,² they did feel disconnected from their backgrounds. It was a big issue for them, even though they did not realise it at first. When I asked them to remember one word of the language their ancestors had spoken, or a detail about their ancient land, big sessions started to happen. Deep feelings of loss came up and disconnection started to melt. They saw how linked the following triad had been: disconnection from themselves (and mother earth and the environment), language oppression, and imperialism. Listening to native English speakers discharge deeply on this was moving and hopeful for me.

INTERPRETING AT THE CONFERENCE

Seventy people were involved in the interpreting at the conference:

- There were twenty-two interpreters (both up-front and whispering).
- There were twenty-two direct support people for those who interpreted during the meetings of the whole conference. Their main job was to offer support to the interpreters while they were interpreting—by giving them attention, repeating and re-wording phrases, and offering different meanings for words.
- There were nine additional support people (*green arm-banders*) for the interpreters. Their main job was to offer the interpreters one-way attention anytime it was needed.
- There were nine support persons (*yellow arm-banders*) for people receiving interpreting. Their main job was to offer one-way attention, anytime it was needed, to those receiving interpreting.
- Eight people formed the main interpreting coordination team. They met every time it was

needed (almost every day) to make decisions, change proposals, check on interpreters and the interpreting system, and lead mealtime topic tables for interpreters and for people receiving interpreting. They worked hard to make the conference inclusive and stayed close to people who were having a difficult time with languages or interpreting. The leader of the main interpreting coordination team led some mealtime tables about language oppression and language liberation.

OUR EXPERIENCE, AND WORKING TOGETHER

Xabi: Shirley, what was your experience like, and what did you learn from it?

Shirley: As a native English speaker, it was wonderful to help everyone at the conference be part of expanding the thinking of our Communities. I felt more connected to the RC project overall. Something was made visible to me: how much work non-native English speakers have already done to make RC events inclusive for those who do not speak English as a first language. It is a lot of work, and they can’t do it on their own. Native English speakers, like me, can play a large and helpful role in making sure that every person can be fully present at an RC event. We are all needed.

My work with you has been one of the most significant things I have done in RC. I have been able to step into your world and look at things from your point of view. I have had to look at what it means to identify as English and at my connection to England. A big part of that is addressing how capitalism constantly interferes with my relationships with others. Doing this work with you, an Indigenous man with a different perspective, has helped me face how hurtful the effects of capitalism have been. If I can continue this work, I think I will be able to tackle any of the challenges I face in my life. It is like I was doing a jigsaw puzzle with missing pieces and I am finding the bits of me that I lost.

I never before realised that as a native English speaker, who spoke little of another language, I could dominate non-native English speakers just by my presence in a room. The decision to slow down, pause often, and think about how and what I am trying to communicate is making a big difference. I also used

continued . . .

² “Turned out” means happened.

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to take my communication with other native English speakers for granted, and my lack of awareness there meant that I was missing something important. I believe that I can have more honest, equal relationships in every situation I find myself in, whether at an RC event or just walking down the street.

What has it been like for you, Xabi, to collaborate with a native English speaker like me?

Xabi: Mostly I feel proud of you. You are not the same Shirley I met before you did this job. You decided to take yourself seriously in order to be able to do it with me. That decision from your side has been the best thing for me.

Working with you, a native English speaker, has been an ongoing process of thinking about you—where you are far away or lost from yourself and from me, and what I can do to reach you, which is the same as trying to reach my true self. I am learning a lot about myself by having to think about you. If I want to reach you, I need to know you deeply. To manage the depth of our relationship well, I need to be an expert on my own self's deep knowing. It is like a final test. If I pass this exam, then I will be ready to better influence the whole Community toward what I glimpse as our next development in group awareness.

Shirley: Do you have more thoughts about how we can all work together?

Xabi: Speakers of dominant languages (mainly English) who are monolingual speakers, or trying to learn a second language (or their first or lost language), need to learn how to speak to non-native English speakers. They need to learn how to speak slowly, clearly, easily, and when necessary. The main goal at first is not to learn a second language but to acknowledge, understand, and discharge the deep material³ that language oppression has laid on their minds.

I will be satisfied if I can help you understand that what we non-native English speakers have already begun (in thinking about how to make RC events as inclusive as possible for those who do not speak English as a first language) is a huge job, which we should not have to do on our own. But even more important, that this huge work happens in every single relationship or contact we have with a native English speaker. I

would love it if you and other native English speakers understood this and applied it to every contact you have with a non-native English speaker.

I think it is time to sail, or surf, together. We are going to continue being here and doing this work more and more effectively. I can cry imagining how far we are going to travel on this journey, or wave, together. I cannot see any limit to it. More and more people want to be on this ship and on this wave.

I myself need to keep discharging on the directions that have brought me to this point: (1) I am here forever. (2) I do not have any limits. (3) There is nobody or nothing more important than me. (4) Happiness is an inherent, unavoidable part of me.

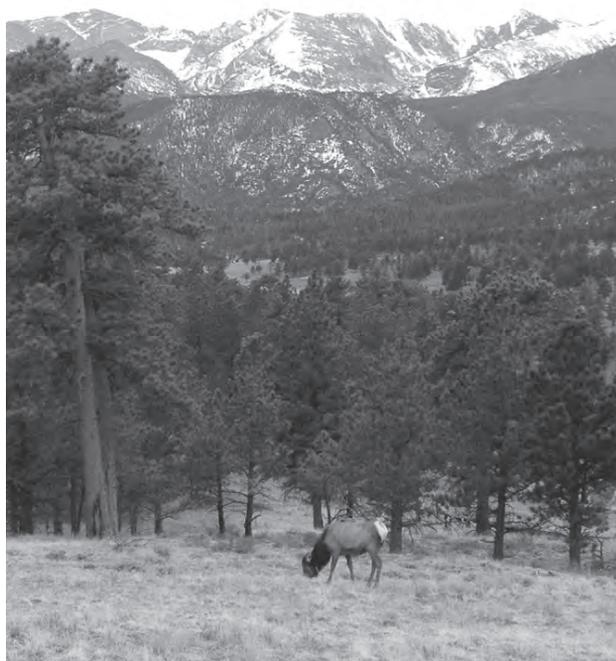
The hundreds of people from different parts of the world who have been involved in this work have made good, interesting, logical contributions to this important wave. *Eskerrik asko bihotzez* (thank you from my heart).

Xabi Odriozola

*International Commonality Reference
Person for Languages and Interpreting
Donostia, Basque Country*

Shirley Thatcher

*Regional Reference Person for
Cornwall and Southwest England
Bristol, England*



ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, COLORADO, USA • NIKHIL TRIVEDI

³ "Material" means distress.



HELEN PARKIN

The First Young Adult Workshop in Ghana

I had the privilege of leading a maiden¹ young adult workshop in Accra, Ghana, on the twenty-sixth of April, 2014. It included twenty-eight people in all: me, as the leader; Yvonne Ammah and Vickenzie Ofei, as my support-team leaders; and twenty-five energetic young adults.

In the first Co-Counseling session, the participants did not know what to talk about or were not feeling comfortable to speak about issues with people they had met at the workshop for the first time. Eventually they did flow with their Co-Counselors, and another session left them all relaxed and yearning for more time. A game also made all of us relax and laugh.

My team and I asked the participants, What challenges are you facing being a young adult? What is good about being a young adult? What is difficult about being a young adult among adults or in a cultural society like yours?

The energetic young adults also asked questions of me and the team. They were tough questions to answer, but we did justice to them all.²

I can't wait to see the young adults in Ghana teaching RC to their peers.

Urbain Bamana
Area Reference Person
for Accra, Ghana
Accra, Ghana

¹ "A maiden" means the first.

² "Did justice to them all" means answered them all well.



"I Learnt a Lot"



I live in Ghana, in West Africa. I am twenty-one years of age and a student. I want to tell you about my experience at the Re-evaluation Counselling Young Adult Workshop that took place on the twenty-sixth of April, 2014, in Ghana.

It wasn't what I expected at all. Quite the contrary—it was better than I expected! I'm not the type of person who communicates a lot with people and likes to be surrounded by them, so when I heard of the workshop I didn't like the idea—especially when I heard it was a counselling thing. I thought it was going to be boring and nothing to talk about. But boy,* I was wrong. It was extraordinary.

When I first walked into the workshop, I felt insecure and paranoid. My nerves were shaking. After I introduced myself,

I felt like running out of the room and going home. But after hearing what Re-evaluation Counselling (RC) was, I really and sincerely wanted to be there.

I learnt a lot that day—like how the brain is a clean and empty space but we end up making it a dirty and piled-up place because we do not like to share our problems with anybody. I learnt that a problem shared is a problem half solved. Even if you share your problem and it is still not solved, at least a burden will be lifted off your shoulders. I also learnt that I am not the only one with problems. And I learnt how to listen. I learnt that when counselling you don't have to interrupt the person, give advice, tell the person your opinion, or tell your own story. I learnt that I should listen with respect, always sound and act pleased with the person, encourage him or her to keep talking, and honor confidentiality.

I was told that the RC program is for people who want to improve their thinking and have goals they want to accomplish in life. I have started wanting to achieve the goals I placed aside because I thought I had a "problem." I have improved my thinking and am ready to help other people improve theirs.

For the first time, I feel secure in a room full of people. I am not thinking about what they think of me or wondering if they are insulting me or if they like me. Now I move freely and feel less distress each and every day. I am taking one day at a time, fixing my mistakes, and actually thinking that my mistakes are just chances I have taken in life. In other words, I have laid down my regrets and feel less stress every day. I am happy, thanks to this workshop program.

Carol Winnietaylor Naa Morkor Hanson
Accra, Ghana

* "Boy" is an interjection that expresses intense feeling.



Teaching RC to Typhoon Survivors



I have had a most rewarding experience in Dulag, Leyte, Philippines. Three weeks after the November 2013 Typhoon Yolanda, I came here to help the survivors. I have friends, both U.S. and Filipino, who live here and are involved in their communities. I let people know that I was a teacher of “trauma counseling” and was willing to teach anyone and wouldn’t charge anything.

The first group I worked with consisted of seventy-five children, with five adults helping. (I’d had no idea so many would come, with only ten hours’ notice.) The children described the wind, rain, water surge, and sounds during the typhoon. I played games with them and had them physically move around, being the typhoon. They laughed and cried and automatically gave each other attention as they shared their experiences of the six hours of the raging typhoon.

In a second gathering there were more adults and ninety children under twelve. I gave out crayons and paper, and the children drew pictures and wrote of their experiences during the typhoon. Ten children, one at a time, shared their experiences, with many tears and dramatic physical movements showing the fear and hardships they had endured. Then all the children shared their experiences with each other in small groups. Their teachers are continuing the trauma lessons at school and encouraging the children to express their feelings.

Thirty youth, ages twelve to twenty-five, came to an RC “trauma training.” We played basketball and tag. After two hours of playing hard and laughing, the young people were physically spent. They talked about how much fun it was to not be thinking about the typhoon.

A group of fifteen college students came to an intense RC fundamentals

class. It was amazing to watch them enthusiastically embrace *The Human Side of Human Beings*,¹ gladly share their experiences, and really get² the importance of discharging. After that, the dean of the college invited me to come to the school and address the teachers and students on the theory of RC, and of course I accepted. The high school teachers also want an RC introduction this week, and the midwifery college has asked me to talk with its students.

Fifty adults, mostly women, came to another gathering. I briefly described to them how RC was done and the importance of discharge. Four of them had learned some RC beforehand, so I divided the group into five smaller groups, which they and I led and in which people took turns sharing their experiences.

¹ A book by Harvey Jackins describing the basic theory of Re-evaluation Counseling

² “Get” means understand.

A second gathering of adults brought even more people. This time I kept everyone together in one group, with an interpreter. I shared the theory of RC and the importance of ongoing sessions and asked them to make a commitment, to themselves and their family, to continue to do sessions and tell their story of the trauma, over and over.

Fifteen adults came for more theory and sessions. One of them asked me to teach RC to the teachers at her college. I went the next week, and the group eagerly absorbed the theory.

I have met with many of these people several times. It is rewarding to hear how they can now sleep, eat, or be present and laugh without feeling guilty.

Perrilee Pizzini
Bothell, Washington, USA

A Key Process

The process that we call Re-evaluation Counseling plays a crucial role in future progress. It isn’t the only important upward process in the universe, obviously. There are thousands of equally basic, equally important upward processes that have to go on.* Re-evaluation Counseling will play a crucial role, however, simply because it is the untangling process, the until-now-suppressed and hidden healing process, for the problem of human irrationality.

Irrationality has, until now, plagued all humans. Human intelligence, from the time of its emergence, has been burdened and buried beneath the weight of distress patterns, inevitably resulting from the conditions of life in an unmastered world. Once begun, such distress patterns were transmitted inevitably from generation to generation, by restimulated rehearsal and then, once social structures were involved, by systematic procedures.

The process of Re-evaluation Counseling plays this key role of releasing all other human potentials.

Harvey Jackins
From pages 8 to 9 of
“The State of the Cosmos,”
in *The Upward Trend*

* “Go on” means happen.

Shabbat

*Tim Jackins, at the Central European Workshop,
in the Basque Country, March 2014*

Tonight we are going to celebrate Shabbat.* It is a Jewish tradition that happens every week. It starts at sundown on Friday. There are many wonderful things about it, and about being Jewish.

We often celebrate Shabbat at RC workshops—not because Jewish culture is wonderful (which it is) but to remind ourselves that anti-Jewish oppression exists. It has been around for many centuries and has been used by oppressive forces over and over again to confuse everyone. We have all lived in societies that have used it in this way. Most of us Gentiles have little real information about being Jewish. We carry misinformation about Jews, and we carry distresses that leave us with anti-Jewish patterns.

We all have oppressor patterns—patterns connected with racism, sexism, nationalism, and the oppression of young people and many other groups. Mostly we'd rather not think about them. It's hard to work on patterns in which we play the oppressor role. It's easier to talk about how we've been hurt—our counselor will likely be sympathetic. If we talk about having tendencies to oppress other people, which

* Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath. It begins on Friday at sundown and continues through sundown on Saturday.

we all have, our counselors might get restimulated and not be so sympathetic. This makes it hard to face these distresses.

Anti-Jewish oppression blames Jews for the problems of society. Anti-Jewish patterns may be quiet—until there is a crisis; then the targeting happens again. Societies need someone to blame to cover up the fact that they don't work well, and Jews have been targeted in this way for a long, long time.

We carry these patterns, too. Not because we chose them but because we have lived in countries where they are present. We forget. We forget that anti-Jewish oppression happens, and we forget to discharge our anti-Jewish patterns. When there isn't an obvious problem, we forget. Jews don't forget. However, they may go quiet, hoping to stay quiet enough that they will not be targeted again. That doesn't work—it is just another pattern, even though an understandable one.

Having Shabbat at workshops helps us remember. It gives us more information about what it means to be a Jew. We get to see one of the wonderful, rich Jewish ceremonies, and understand something about how we have benefited from that tradition.



HOLLY JORGENSEN

RC Translators—Share What You Are Doing!

Re-evaluation Counseling translation projects are going on* all over the world. In some language regions, a team of translators are in touch with each other and have Co-Counseling sessions with each other throughout the important and challenging work of producing an RC translation—whether it is a book, a pamphlet, or an article from *Present Time*. In others, only the Translation Coordinator is involved in working on and completing a translation. What I know from having been the Rational Island Publishers Translation Coordinator for many years is that every translation makes a huge difference to the Co-Counselors who get to read and absorb the RC literature in their first language.

I have heard Translation Coordinators and translators talk about wanting to share more about what works for them and what helps to break the isolation. I have also been thinking that a lot of their intense and time-consuming work is invisible to the larger RC Community. In the back of *Present Time* we can see the impressive list of translations, but most of

us, especially English-speaking Community members, have no idea of the amount of work, dedication, and thinking that goes into them.

Maybe you who are translators could share with everyone what is happening in your language region, what your successes have been, and what has been challenging—no matter how much you have translated, lately or in the past. This would make a difference to all of you and bring us together as a worldwide community of RC translators. It would also be important for the rest of the RC Community.

I am deeply grateful to all of you for all of the work you have done.



With love,

Truus Jansen
Rational Island Publishers
Translation Coordinator
Seattle, Washington, USA

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for translators of RC literature

* “Going on” means happening.

Translations in Greece

Hi! I am Margie Doyle Papadopoulou from Greece (originally from the United States). I assist Vivi Katou, the RC Translation Coordinator for Greek. My job is to see¹ that the translations faithfully represent the original English while she makes sure that we stay true to the Greek language. (We only work in Greek and English.) All Greek translations pass through our hands and get our best attention.

I appreciate that Truus² has encouraged us translators to write. She has also told me that anything I

write will be important and doesn't have to be exciting. So here is a brief report on translations in Greece.



Vivi and I have the main responsibility to see that translations are done and done well. Because we are both involved in life and find it hard to give a lot of time to this, the work goes slowly unless there is a deadline. Then we live up to our commitment and pressure ourselves to get things done on time.

We started translating Patty Wipfler's pamphlets³ over two

¹ “See” means assure.

² Truus Jansen, the Rational Island Publishers Translation Coordinator

³ Patty Wipfler, a former International Liberation Reference Person for Parents, has written a number of non-RC pamphlets that communicate RC theory and practice as related to parenting. (These have been compiled into a larger RC pamphlet entitled *Listening Effectively to Children*.)

BASQUE COUNTRY • JUAN MANUEL FEITO

decades ago, and they are almost finished. This is a thrill. Patty's fifth pamphlet is at the printer, and the last is almost completely corrected. When we first started it felt like an impossible task. At the time, our best translators had decided to leave RC, and we were feeling inadequate. However, our perseverance has won!

It will still take a while to get the last pamphlet out, but it will get done. Then we need to revise both the *Fundamentals Manual* and the *Postulates*, which are both out of date. We may also do a group translation of the new *Guidelines*.⁴

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

I thank Truus and all of you other translators for the inspiration and encouragement we get from knowing that we are not alone, that you are there and doing your best as well.

Margie Doyle Papadopoulou
Athens, Greece
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for translators of RC literature

Discharging on Sliding Scales

I was starting to organise a workshop in our Area¹ and decided to read the RC Workshop Organising Manual (created by the Boston, Massachusetts, USA, RC Community).² I became interested in one sentence under the section on sliding scales for workshop fees. It read, "To work as intended, sliding scales usually require that people discharge on an ongoing basis about money, integrity, and economic inequality."

That sentence, or direction as I experienced it, reminded me that I always do better with money issues and decisions when I discharge with other people. So at a recent workshop, I proposed a table to discharge on the direction, keeping in mind the links to class oppression and racism.

There were seven of us at the table. I said a little about how discharging with the direction could move us away from acting on our own,³ which capitalism and racism condition us to do. Then we each had a short turn.

As I listened to other people at the table, I realized that few of us reach out and discharge before we decide what we pay for workshops. This reminded me how our feelings, including feelings of isolation, humiliation, and fear, often get connected to money. Money distress can be like early sexual distress: attached to many of our struggles and often making us secretive. So it has an impact on our relationships and ability to act powerfully as well as on paying for workshops.

I hope you will join me at mealtime at a future workshop for another slice of money-connected re-emergence.



Vicky Grosser

Geelong, Victoria, Australia

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

One Person Close to You

There's a poem about Sir Galahad, "knight without blemish," that says, "His strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure." Isn't that nice?

I'd like to borrow the sense of that for closeness. Your strength is multiplied tenfold¹ if you know that you have at least one person close to you, who cares for you, who will care for you—a relationship such that if you collapse on that person's doorstep, he or she will haul you in and tell the cops² that he or she never saw you, and put you to bed and feed you chicken soup, and listen to you groan, and do whatever else is necessary to get you going again.

If you have at least one person that close to you, the world is much more manageable. I'm finding that it's quite helpful to have about a thousand of them. If one has a thousand lovers of all varieties around the world, it props one up. One puts one's feet on the floor with a little more confidence every morning when one gets out of bed.

Harvey Jackins

From page 8 of "The Rest of Our Lives," in *The Rest of Our Lives*

¹ An Area is a local RC Community.

² You can find this manual on the RC website www.rc.org by clicking on "Community" and then on "Workshops."

³ "On our own" means alone.

¹ "Tenfold" means ten times.

² "Cops" means police.

Hearing Assistive Devices

Since September 2004, Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources (RCCR) has been renting out hearing assistive devices for use at RC workshops and other RC events. They work only in the United States and Canada. (Other countries use different radio frequencies.)

We've received good reports from people who have used the devices. No matter where they are sitting in the audience, people are able to clearly hear the speakers in the front of the room.

The leader/speaker wears a microphone and transmitter, and the people with impaired hearing wear headsets attached to pocket-sized receivers.

Can Also Be Used for Interpreting

For workshops with participants who speak a language other than the workshop leader, a Hearing Helper set can be used for interpreting. The interpreter wears a microphone and transmitter. The listener wears a headset and receiver. The interpreter may sit anywhere in the room, often to the side or in the back. This allows him or her to speak with full voice and the listeners to hear the interpretation clearly.

Organizers of events may rent hearing helpers for \$60 (U.S.). A standard set includes a microphone and transmitter and receivers with headsets to serve four to eight people. For an additional fee and depending on availability, additional receivers with headsets may be added to accommodate more people.

Due to increased demand, we encourage organizers who wish to rent this equipment to notify us at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources a minimum of three weeks before the event (earlier requests are given priority). The equipment must be returned to RCCR the day after your event so that it will be available to others.

For more information and to check availability, e-mail us at <rcoffice@rc.org> (put Hearing Helper in the subject line). Please include the title of the event, the event dates, the organizer's name and e-mail address, and how many people with low hearing you need to accommodate.

Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources



SLOVENIA • KAIJLI SYRJÄNEN

Teaching with More Awareness

At a workshop on class oppression, I discharged on learning hurts. Now when I teach RC fundamentals, I say one thing at a time. One sentence. No more. Then I listen to the responses, comments, and questions. It gives me a lot of information about what I need to say next. I also ask questions, such as, "Who in your daily life can listen to you effectively?" "What happens for you when you hear a baby crying?" "Have you noticed that people use your attention to get their thoughts straight?" Then I learn from the answers. The questions are not for discharge, although it is fine when discharge happens. They are questions that I need to ask in order to teach each person.



ANNE BARTON

Stephen Costello
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia

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

Commitment and Enthusiasm in Togo

In February 2014 I led a workshop in Togo. On the first day we had a women's group in which we discussed the oppression of women, particularly women on the African continent. We talked about the variety of oppressive institutions—from the upbringing of a girl child, initiation rituals, and the distribution of tasks between the girl child and her brothers to marriage ceremonies and married life. The participants had sessions in which they discharged their own distresses that had come from those institutions and discussed how to move forward.

Then we had a men's group in which the men explored the impact of men's oppression on their lives. Through demonstrations, sessions, and questions and answers, I communicated how oppression works and the importance of being aware, constantly working on it, and spreading information about it to many others.

The last group of the day was the youth group. I spoke to them about the way society targets the youth, why they are so vulnerable, and the different methods used to oppress the youth in the name of developing them. On the one hand,¹ it is instilled in their minds that they are the future leaders, and they are given opportunities, but on the other hand² they are sold drugs, alcohol, sex, and addiction to pornography. In sessions the youth were able to examine how they are targeted and strategies they could use to work on the oppression.

Days two and three of the workshop began with basic information about RC theory and practice. Then we explored the many ways that human beings oppress

each other and the impact it has on our lives and future generations. We looked at the history of the colonization of Africa and some of the institutions left in place by the colonizer—institutions in which the oppressed have continued to oppress one another.

I was impressed by the participants' level of knowledge. I was also impressed by the commitment, keenness, and enthusiasm of the leadership team. I felt re-fueled by their energy. They have a coordinating office where trainings take place and people can borrow RC literature. They have led a lot, are quite informed, and have great plans to move forward and expand.

Wanjiku Kironyo
Regional Reference Person
for Northern Africa
Nairobi, Kenya



SONORAN DESERT MUSEUM, TUCSON, ARIZONA, USA • ERICA SHROYER

¹ "On the one hand" means one thing that happens is.

² "On the other hand" means another thing that happens is.

Loneliness and Leading

A demonstration by Harvey Jackins
at the July 1986 Peace and Disarmament Activists' Workshop

Harvey invites a man to be in a demonstration related to being a disarmament leader.

Harvey: What small change in yourself would you give your eyeteeth¹ to accomplish?

Man: My first thought is to be able to express my feelings.

Harvey: I'll give you a phrase, and you can say it over and over. No matter how awkwardly you do it, just keep saying it: "I love every

one of you, and I'll tell you why." (*Man repeats the phrase several times, laughing and mentioning implications.*)

Man: I love every one of you, and I'll tell you why: Because I'm tired of the unnatural separation that keeps us apart. And I'm tired of being isolated.

Harvey: How tired?

Man: How tired of being isolated? Tired enough that I want to stop being a leader.

Harvey: Keep going.

Man: Tired enough to feel like just quitting. Tired of being competent. Tired of feeling like I can do it. Tired of feeling like nobody else can. Tired of feeling like I can't count on anybody.

Harvey: Try a phrase: (*said softly*) "Love me."

Man: Love me.

Harvey: Stay with it. Plead with them. "Don't leave me out here in the dark alone. Don't leave me dark and cold and lonely any longer." (*Man sobs.*) No duty calls you away from this. You've waited all your life. (*Man sobs.*) No duty calls. "Don't leave me out here in the dark and cold, alone, any longer—please."

Man: (*shouts*) How dare you leave me out here! (*sobs*) How dare you leave me out here alone!

Harvey: I apologize on behalf of all of us. We won't, any longer.

Man: It's not really this group I'm talking to. (*Harvey asks him who he is talking to.*) I feel like it's all the people I work with, all the people I'm leading. (*sobs*) Many of whom are in RC and ought to know better.

Harvey: All of whom are all alone in their own separate "cold and darks." I'm going to put a notice on the board someday that there will be a topic group meeting of the "lonely, cold, and darks." (*Man laughs.*) Can we put a check there?² Well done.

¹ "Give your eyeteeth" means give anything.



KENYA • TIM JACKINS

² "Put a check there" means stop there.

Learn about, Be Explicit about, Capitalism

I had working-class and raised-poor parents. My raised-poor mom pushed me hard to be middle class. My dad was proud to be a working-class guy. I married a raised-poor man who got the G.I. Bill (government education funds for veterans of war) to pay for college. He then worked as an engineer with a large corporation. We lived a middle-class life after the first few years of marriage.

I was a social worker in a hospital in the early years of our life together and was shocked to see the hardships of poor and working-class people, whose experience had been hidden from me at the schools I attended. I was angry at how they were treated by most social service agencies. I often went home and cried about it and about my inability to find the resources they needed. Family, friends, and people at church responded more to my discomfort than to the injustice. I found that equally shocking and frustrating.

Dan Nickerson¹ recently asked those of us on the RC working-class e-mail discussion list to say what we thought about capitalism. Could it be controlled or reformed, or did it need to go the way of slavery and feudalism?

LEARNING ABOUT CAPITALISM

I was slow to understand the nature of capitalism. For many years I thought that if we could just make democracy work well enough, we could control or regulate capitalism so that it would be okay. For years I heard from a few RC leaders about “a classless society” and “the contradictions of capitalism,” but that tiny trickle of hints was not enough. I finally began reading more. Each year, for ten years, I read several books about economics and the history of capitalism. I wanted to understand this economic system. When did it start? What happened to people during its early years and as it became more dominant?

Millions of people have been brought into the middle class and had materially better lives in part due to capitalism. Capitalism may have also encouraged inventiveness and creativity. However, over the three to four hundred years during which it has dominated our economy, it has utterly ruined and made miserable millions of lives. It has also destroyed much of the beauty and health of the world’s plant and animal resources. Capitalism now threatens the health of almost every creature on land and in the seas. Experts say that in the 1980s or even earlier, we surpassed the capacity of the earth to sustain the “economic growth” that capitalism has demanded in order to remain somewhat stable.

¹ Dan Nickerson is the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People.

Can democracy modify or control or regulate modern-day capitalism enough to restore the balance that has been destroyed? I don’t think so. Enormous wealth and power have accumulated in the hands of very few people. As a result, U.S. democracy may be beyond repair without revolutionary change. I suspect this is also true worldwide.

NEEDING MORE HELP

I have spent most of my life (I am now almost seventy-seven) poorly informed about the nature of capitalism. I have been Co-Counseling for over forty-four years and have attended a great number of RC workshops. I’ve led on environmental issues and women’s issues in the wider world. But not enough information was presented for me to really understand this economic system that dominates the world today.

I’ve been in a feminist book club for forty-five years. No one in it but me says anything about capitalism. No one in my church, which has some activists within its ranks, says anything about capitalism. No one in my precinct Democratic Party² says anything about capitalism. (I did finally find a mostly African-heritage-led environmental group in which one speaker said something about how capitalism had greatly damaged the environment in our state.) For me, and for many good people wanting to work for justice, there is only the slightest trickle of clues about what the problem is.

We Co-Counselors live in a world that seldom provides sound information about capitalism. We also encounter the misinformation, fear, and persistent societal patterns that defend capitalism as the only way to go. And we are busy—Co-Counseling, attending workshops, making a living, raising families, and doing things to improve the world. We need more help to understand the specific history and problems associated with capitalism.

OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES

Now that I understand more, my struggle is to persistently express the truth about capitalism in the face of almost universal disapproval and lack of understanding. I am writing a book in which I give a detailed analysis of capitalism. I include information about alternatives to this economic system, which abound all around us but get no attention.

continued . . .

² A precinct Democratic Party is the most local organization of the Democratic Party, the more progressive of the two main political parties in the United States.

TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

I think that because RC is so dominated by middle-class people, two common patterns get in our way.

1) Those of us in the middle class “feel” stuck about getting working-class people into RC classes. But we are not really stuck. We all have lots of contact with working-class people and have the skills to build relationships with them.

2) We wonder, “Can I handle all the distresses that working-class people might bring to my RC classes?” This is a middle-class fear, from the conditions created by capitalism. (We also often feel like we must “fix” people rather than empower them.)

To think clearly about our economic situation, we need far more than a drip and trickle of hints and phrases about it. More of us can start reading and learning for ourselves. We can formulate a vision of a cooperative society and

articulate it clearly and often. There are many cooperative endeavors that point in the direction of a classless society—non-profits, advocacy groups, worker-owned businesses, land conservancies and trusts, fisher-people cooperatives, religious organizations, food-producing operations, and more—and talking about these would work well at any RC event and on most occasions.

We also need to develop in our Communities a strong core of working-class leaders. With counseling support, they will make the trickle of hints and phrases into a major stream for justice, and together we’ll be able to build the new world we all yearn for.

Anne Mackie

Cary, North Carolina, USA

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

A Letter to Prospective Co-Counselors

The following is a letter I wrote to three friends who live in the same house together in my neighborhood. I wrote it on a paper card that I had made and drawn pictures on. On the back of the card I wrote some reasons why I liked each of these people. (I think they would all be great Co-Counselors.) I liked applying my mind to inviting them in a warm and accessible way to a Co-Counseling class that I am going to assistant-teach.

Dear _____,

There’s this thing I want to tell you about. It’s called Co-Counseling. It’s a kind of counseling that people are doing in ninety-five countries around the world and that started in Seattle over fifty years ago.

How it works: People go to each other’s houses to “trade counseling time.” The primary technique is listening (there are others, too). If we were Co-Counselors, I would counsel you for perhaps a half hour and then you would counsel me for the same amount of time.

One of my favorite things about Co-Counseling is that we connect the dots between the way people are individually hurt and the systematic oppression within society (racism, sexism, young people’s oppression, and so on). Whether you’re targeted by a particular oppression or conditioned to target others, it is possible to heal from it and have your life go the way you want it to.

People learn the basic skills of Co-Counseling by attending a sixteen-week fundamentals class. Fundamentals classes happen about once a year here in Bellingham, and we’re pulling together people for a class now.

This is an invitation to learn more. I’d love to take an hour to tell you about Co-Counseling—over a meal, on a walk, or at one of our houses. If you’re not interested, then this is simply an invitation to catch up.* If you’ve got the time, let me know when!

Jacob Rosenblum

Bellingham, Washington, USA

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

* “Catch up” means find out what’s been happening in each other’s lives.

A Passover Seder in Japan

Our allies-to-Jews support group here in Japan is actively engaged in learning about Jews and Jewish culture and working to support the Jewish member of our local RC Community. As the leader of the group, this April I helped organize the first-ever Passover Seder¹ for allies to Jews in Fukuoka, Japan. I'd been inspired after reading an article by Cherie Brown² and Harvey

Jackins that advocated Seders as a celebration of liberation. Cherie sent us a Unity Seder Haggadah,³ and Leah Matsui⁴ led our Seder in Japanese.

We were two U.S. residents of Japan, one of whom is Jewish, and four Japanese people. I welcomed everyone to the Seder and emphasized that the Passover holiday is a celebration of Jews enslaved in ancient Egypt who were led to freedom. I said that we could celebrate our own efforts to be free of the patterns that enslave us. Then Leah led the Seder.

After the ceremony, the allies had sessions about their experience and Leah had a session separate from us. We ended with appreciations for Leah.

I had a great time. I'm grateful for the open mindedness and support of the allies and for Leah's generosity in sharing the Seder with us.

Randy Matsui
Kumamoto, Kumamoto
Prefecture, Japan

¹ Passover is an eight-day Jewish festival, celebrated in early spring, that commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. A Seder is a service held in the home as part of the Passover celebration. It includes special ceremonial foods and ends with a dinner. Co-Counselors often hold RC Seders as a way to contradict the isolation of anti-Jewish oppression.

² Cherie Brown is the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews.

³ A Haggadah is a book that contains instructions for the Seder, blessings, and the Passover story. (*Haggadah* means "the telling" in Hebrew.)

⁴ Leah Matsui is a Co-Counselor in Kumamoto, Kumamoto Prefecture, Japan.

Visible as a Leader

If we're going to lead, we have to be visible, and whether we plan it or not, we're going to lead.

I love the old Chaplin* film *Modern Times*. This was a film about the depth of unemployment. Charlie's looking for work, going from door to door, and the only people around are the unemployed trying to sell apples to each other. Finally, discouraged, he just stands around—the good, timid little man.

A truck comes by with a long load with a stick sticking out the end of it with a red flag on it. It hits a bump in the street, and the flag and the stick drop off. Charlie, meaning to be helpful, runs out, grabs the stick, and runs after the truck, waving. He runs and he runs, and finally he slows down to a walk and walks along. All you see is Charlie walking along, but you hear a noise growing. (*laughter*) The noise gets louder and louder, and finally the camera leaves Charlie, and there are thousands of people following him. (*laughter*)

Harvey Jackins
From page 50 of *Logical*
Thinking About a Future Society

* Charlie Chaplin, an English actor, filmmaker, and composer who rose to fame in the era of silent films



ISRAEL • LYNDALL KATZ

The First Manzini Workshop

In December 2013, the Manzini RC group (in Swaziland) successfully held its first workshop. It focused mainly on the ongoing support and growth of those already Co-Counselling.

Thirty-six Co-Counsellors attended, including Co-Counsellors and RC teachers from Manzini as well as RC teachers from other locations and Bafana Matsebula, our Regional¹ Reference Person. A three-year-old child was also with us and helped us remember what we were like at his age.

Ms. Ntombenkulu Mhlanga welcomed the group and conducted the introductions. It was great catching up with each other² and feeling connected again. Over the course of the weekend she led us in addressing many aspects of RC, including the fundamentals

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

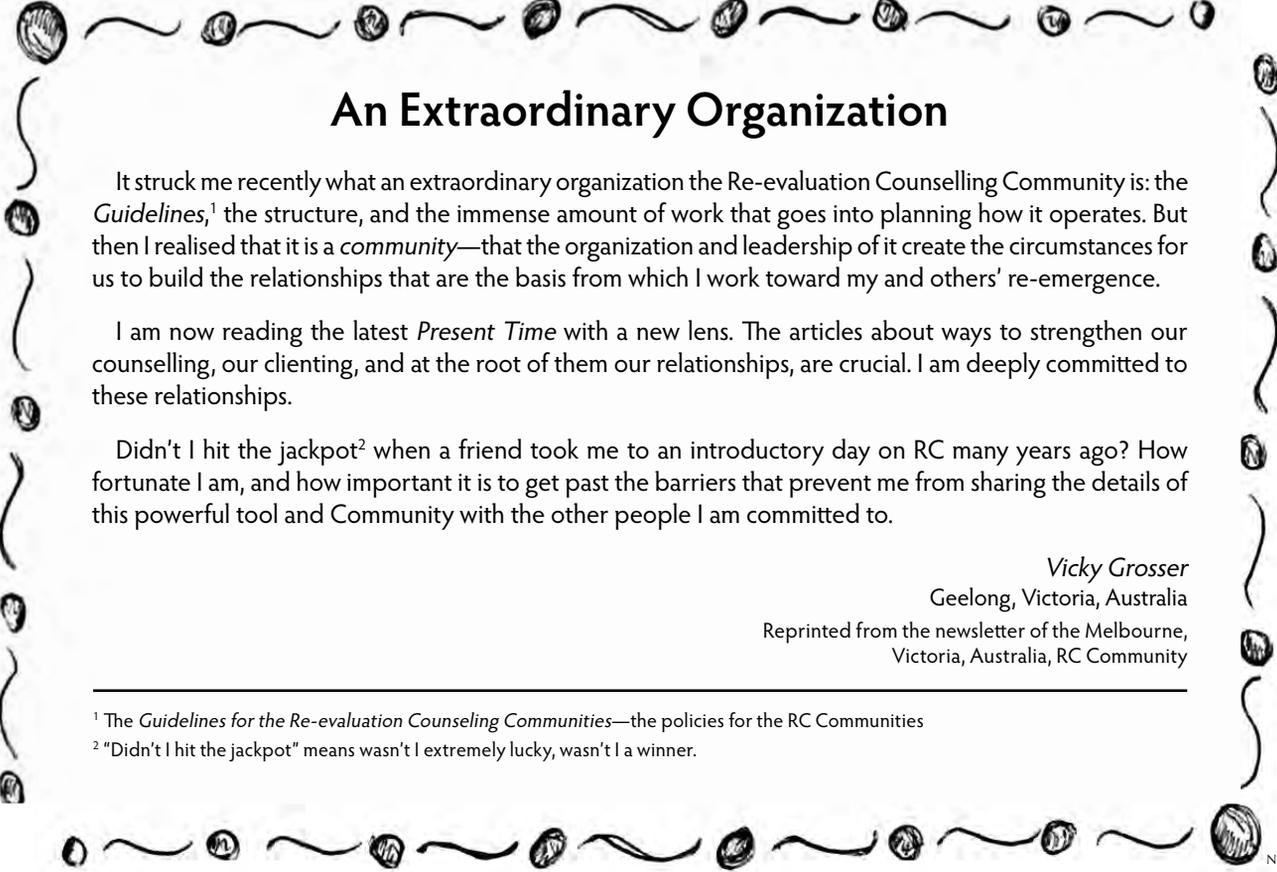
² "Catching up with each other" means learning what had been happening in each other's lives.

of Co-Counselling, the growth of the RC Community, leadership, and the importance of the *Guidelines*.³ We also had songs, traditional dances, and games, and three-way sessions, support groups, and topic groups (for youth, young adults, and adults). Our Regional Reference Person reminded us to fight hard and have many sessions to maintain a picture of the benign reality.

We ended with the formal selection of the Manzini Area Reference Person, Ms. Ntombenkulu Mhlanga, and Alternate Area Reference Person, Mr. Boy Mabuya. Then we shared hugs and highlights of the workshop. Parting ways with such a well-connected "family" was hard for almost everyone.

Compiled by
Boy Mabuya and Thembi Mhlanga
Manzini, Swaziland

³The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*—the policies for the RC Communities



An Extraordinary Organization

It struck me recently what an extraordinary organization the Re-evaluation Counseling Community is: the *Guidelines*,¹ the structure, and the immense amount of work that goes into planning how it operates. But then I realised that it is a *community*—that the organization and leadership of it create the circumstances for us to build the relationships that are the basis from which I work toward my and others' re-emergence.

I am now reading the latest *Present Time* with a new lens. The articles about ways to strengthen our counselling, our clienting, and at the root of them our relationships, are crucial. I am deeply committed to these relationships.

Didn't I hit the jackpot² when a friend took me to an introductory day on RC many years ago? How fortunate I am, and how important it is to get past the barriers that prevent me from sharing the details of this powerful tool and Community with the other people I am committed to.

Vicky Grosser
Geelong, Victoria, Australia
Reprinted from the newsletter of the Melbourne,
Victoria, Australia, RC Community

¹ The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*—the policies for the RC Communities

² "Didn't I hit the jackpot" means wasn't I extremely lucky, wasn't I a winner.

It's Time to Play a Big Role

I am so pleased with the new emphasis in the RC Community on care of the environment. It is hopeful to see RCers putting their minds to work on the interesting question of how to enlist other humans in the great challenge of moving modern human societies into sustainable practices.

I've made some big changes in my life in the last year as a result of my decision to put solving climate change in the center of my life. Last summer I stopped a teaching job and joined the staff of Citizens Climate Lobby as their first program director. Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) focuses on training and supporting volunteers to become advocates for national climate change legislation by building relationships with their members of Congress, local editors, and community leaders. I had already been volunteering many hours a week for CCL. I had organized a chapter in my town and then organized chapters across my state. My new job is to "ensure the success of every chapter" in our organization. Not a small job in an organization that is growing rapidly. We've added thirty chapters in the last four months. I love my job and have drawn on RC theory and practice repeatedly as I've supported our volunteer leaders.

APPLYING RC

Much of what I teach and model for our group leaders is based on what I learned about leadership from Harvey Jackins, for example, that it's helpful to bring a proposal to the group and solicit feedback, that all organizing is based on one-to-one relationships, and that people do better when they are appreciated for their work and encouraged to try lots of things.

One of the first things I proposed when I came on staff was that we hold a series of local conferences for our volunteers. The executive director and I held ten conferences in five months. At each one I led a session on listening skills in which people did several mini-sessions and had the chance to work on the feelings that had gotten in their way as they'd organized on the climate.



TIM JACKINS

One conference had many more men than women, and I decided to talk about the work I had done with men in RC and the things I'd learned about men as a result. An unusual number of the men cried during the mini-session that followed. It was great to be a visible ally to men.

I am beginning to gather people in the organization to think about how to build relationships with people of the global majority, since most of our volunteers are white.

I am grateful that I have wonderful Co-Counselors who keep me discharging. This helps me to stay hopeful and open with people, to face my own fears as I get more and more visible, and to keep some bit of balance in my life against the pull to work too much.

FOCUSING ON RELATIONSHIPS

The thing that attracted me to CCL in the first place was its focus on creating change by building relationships and working to reach the minds and hearts of politicians who don't recognize the problem of climate change. This is more effective than blaming them and fits so well with our perspective in RC that people are inherently good and cooperative. It is also much more heartening to assume that politicians are people who can be reached through listening, and information based on their values, versus people who are stupid, selfish, and bad.

I found it refreshing to switch away from organizing events, like protests and marches, because when an event is done, it's over. With a focus on relationships, my activities are based on many small human contacts that build over time. There's a place for both kinds of organizing, but I think that in the end it's human connection through relationships that's going to pull us through the challenges we face.

In this period of intense polarization in the U.S. Congress, you would think that a perspective like ours would get nowhere in the face of people's discouragement about our political system. But in fact many people get excited when offered the chance to work from a more hopeful, human perspective, and our organization has been doubling in size every year for the last four years.

I think that people in Congress like us because we don't come into their offices and yell at them. The primary rule of our organization is that we can meet with an elected

continued . . .

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

official only if we can do it with respect, appreciation, and gratitude for his or her public service. Some prominent conservatives have met with our members repeatedly. In fact, one of the surprises of my work is that it has often been easier to work with conservatives than liberals. As I've discharged more and more of my discouragement, fear, and internalized oppression, it's become easier and easier to enter a room and find myself liking the aides and officials there. Taking on¹ this challenge has changed me in many good ways.

Because the majority of our volunteers come from a liberal background, we work on how to appreciate and speak to the values held by conservatives and provide ongoing support to help people persist in their efforts. I spend much of my time in conference calls with group leaders and with the regional coordinators who support them. We model and practice with each other the things we need to do in our lobby meetings: listen, appreciate, engage, and keep coming back.

SEEING CHANGES

I've seen things change in the three and a half years I've been involved with CCL. I've seen our legislative proposal move from total obscurity to increasing prominence in discussions of what to do about climate change. I've seen the U.S. media take up the issue of climate change again. (The largest newspaper in my state has been printing frequent editorials on the subject, in part because of the encouragement and information I've given the editor.) I've seen the new Pope become an advocate for sustainability. I've seen individual volunteers become less angry and frustrated and more hopeful and effective.

¹ "Taking on" means undertaking.

I've also seen other things change. I've seen the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere go above four hundred parts per million. I've seen or read about a lot of extreme weather. I've seen the cost of climate change in money, lives, and lost species go up every year.

SHARING WHAT WE KNOW

We Co-Counselors have a lot to offer. We've learned a lot over the years about listening, helping people change, leadership, organizing, and the power of a rational perspective. We've learned a lot about racism and how it intersects with everything else. I like hearing about the listening projects² and the environmental-justice work RCers are doing, and about how

² In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or the environment. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.

United to End Racism³ is helping environmental and climate-change organizations become more diverse. All of that matters and is important. And I think that in addition, we have many skills that are needed inside these organizations. We are good at relationships and perspective, and that's what organizing is all about. Citizens Climate Lobby is a good fit for people who are good at listening and supporting people to make changes, but all organizations can use people with these skills.

This is a good time to decide to play a big role, the biggest role we can imagine, in ensuring that this beautiful web of life on earth persists for many more generations.

Madeleine Para
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

³ United to End Racism is a project of the Re-evaluation Counseling Community in which teams of Co-Counselors go to wide-world events and bring the tools of RC and what RCers have learned about ending racism to other organizations working for social change.

Tips for Peace Activists

What does the peace movement need more of? In my opinion it is boldness—confidence, fierce sneering at difficulties, and the announcement that it is ridiculous that this should go on, that we're not going to tolerate it anymore. (*grows*) How many of you will give me a personal pledge that your public pronouncements and comments to other people will be in a tone of righteous indignation?

Let's also get efficient. Make every second count, every moment count. This business¹ of endless things we gotta² do, we gotta do, we gotta do—this is a patterned thing. You only have a certain number of moments each day, and the very most you can do with any particular moment is to live that one well. That's the most you can do. You wouldn't want to do any less, and it will be quite sufficient—I give you my personal guarantee.

Harvey Jackins
From the July 1986 Peace and
Disarmament Activists' Workshop

¹ In this context, "business" means way of functioning.

² "We gotta" means we've got to, we have to.

The U.S. Climate Movement, and People of the Global Majority

The following are some of the initiatives I have taken as a climate activist:

SUPPORT GROUPS

I have been setting up support groups for climate activists who are people of the global majority (PGM). A young adult Asian-heritage woman who attended my first wide world support group for climate activists now leads that group. We decided to focus it specifically on PGM climate leaders. She is taking an RC fundamentals class, and she and I meet for a Co-Counseling session before each support group meeting.

We set up another support group for PGM climate leaders who are available during the day. She leads that group, too. A PGM climate leader to whom I have been teaching RC is hosting it.

THE MARCH FOR CLIMATE ACTION

At the end of February I flew to Los Angeles (California, USA) to help train the fifty members of the Great March for Climate Action. These dedicated climate activists, who have been joined by many others along the way, are walking across the United States, from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., to call for action on the climate.

The march is ninety-six percent white—all too typical of the U.S. climate movement. I included two eliminating-white-racism classes in my training sessions, taught the use of RC topic-group discussions and Wygelian leaders' groups,¹ and set up a panel on eliminating white racism. The panel consisted of two PGM climate leaders from Los Angeles and two PGM marchers. They briefed the other marchers by answering a version of our standard RC questions for constituency panels: What is great about working in the climate movement? What is hard about it? What can white climate activists do to be better allies?

I set up an eliminating-white-racism support group that has continued to meet several times on the march. Other more general support groups are meeting, too. I also set up three environmental-justice briefings. I hope to educate these fifty dedicated climate activists, and myself, on environmental justice and the importance of

¹ A Wygelian leaders' group is a group of leaders and potential leaders of a particular constituency in which each person takes a turn doing the following: (1) reporting on what he or she has been doing in the last period, with regard to the constituency, (2) saying what he or she thinks is the current situation facing the constituency, from his or her viewpoint, (3) sharing what he or she proposes to do as a leader in the next period, and (4) discharging on what is getting in the way of his or her leadership. The group does not make any group plans but rather serves to encourage individual initiative. It meets only when the members feel a need for meeting.

supporting PGM in the movement. I expect they will pass on what they learn to the largely white climate groups that typically come out to meet them as they arrive in new communities across the country.

TOPIC GROUPS

A year ago I held two small, mostly white topic groups for climate activists in Washington, D.C. One took on² an eight-week study of our Washington, D.C., sustainability plan and decided to bring more local climate groups together in an ongoing structure. As a first step toward building a multiracial structure, we got three local, mostly white environmental groups to work with a mostly African-heritage organization.

As Harvey³ always told us, when I get over my embarrassment and other patterns and try using RC tools outside of RC, they usually work.

Jim Driscoll

Washington, D.C., USA

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

² "Took on" means undertook.

³ Harvey Jackins



BRIAN LAVENDEL

Confidently Introducing RC Organizational Forms

Harvey Jackins, at the July 1986 Peace and Disarmament Activists' Workshop

Question from M—: I have been trying to introduce RC organizational forms into my work and have come up against people's patterns of being unorganized. Even the idea of sharing in twos rubs people the wrong way.* They feel like it's contrived. How can I get them past that point?

Harvey: Change your attitude. You're too timid about it. Just say, "We're going to do something that I've found works very well." Don't say it this way: "I've got something that . . . uhhh . . ." (*Harvey imitates M—'s halting, timid manner.*) That's an invitation to attack you, and in any organization there will be plenty of patterns looking for something to attack, in hopes of getting a session. "Today we're going to do it this way!" Let's hear it.

M—: Today, we're going to do it this way.

Harvey: Almost right. (*Harvey continues to repeat it in a confident, no-doubt-about-it way.*) Try it. (*M— tries several times.*)

Harvey: The problem isn't with the organizational forms; it's with our tone of voice and our posture and our faces.

We should also get over the idea that RC is some special, peculiar thing. These forms are universally useful. Take them everywhere. Use them everywhere. This is what will build your world community around you. This is what will build a peace movement in which you will just walk down the street and say, "Where are those missiles? All right! Bring them out! We're dismantling them." (*laughter from group*)

Just use them. People are ready for it. Everybody has been waiting for something like this.

* "Rubs people the wrong way" means annoys people.

Wide World Leadership

I attended the Veterans' and Allies' Workshop led by Julian Weissglass and Jim Driscoll¹ this February in Phoenix (Arizona, USA). Highlights for me (aside from all the wonderful people and the beautiful location!) were seeing how Julian and Jim continue to become better and better allies for each other, how the organizers were able to make the workshop a safe space for people to work on heavy material,² and Julian's little list of things to know about wide world leadership. What I remember is that he said this:

- First, you need to *decide* to lead—and decide to *stay* leading. Make up your mind³ to stick with your project for at least five years, or even better for ten or twenty.

¹ Julian Weissglass is the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change; Jim Driscoll is the Information Coordinator for Veterans.

² "Material" means distress.

³ "Make up your mind" means decide.

- Second, allocate resources wisely (prioritize your time).
- Third, build alliances with people *different* from you.
- Fourth, remember always that all people are *good*, and have distress!
- And last, *don't seek perfection*.

(I have emphasized that last point because for me it is the hardest to remember.)

Julian added, "Don't wait until you feel comfortable to lead." I've heard that before, but now I'm really taking it to heart.⁴



George Partlow
Douglas, Alaska, and
Yuma, Arizona, USA

⁴ "Taking it to heart" means internalizing it and seeing it as significant.



Economic Oppression and the Environment



At my workshops, I have not done a lot of direct work on the environment, though in talking about the “internal contradictions” of capitalism I talk about the exploitation of the environment and the genocide of Indigenous people. I make the point that if a profit is to be made, it doesn’t matter if you are a mineral, plant, animal, or human, you are to be exploited to the maximum. And if you stand in the way of profit, you are to be destroyed.

Many national conflicts that are presented to the world as “ethnic” or “religious” are really driven by a desire to control natural resources. For example, wars in parts of Africa described by the media as ethnic genocidal conflicts have their origins in environmental crises. They are also fueled by divisions and patterns imposed by earlier European colonization. My own country, the United States, exploits other countries’ resources under the name of “economic development” and by means of war.

Iraq is one of the areas of the world in which agriculture has flourished for thousands of years. Built into the U.S. plan for the post-invasion “recovery” of Iraq was a plan for corporations based in the United States to dominate the region’s agriculture. This would drive indigenous seed stocks and agricultural practice out of existence.

I have assisted labor people when they were faced with opposition or lack of cooperation from environmentalists. I have talked about classism in the environmental movement. I have explained how, in at least one progressive coalition in my state, the environmentalists (owning-class dominated and funded) had massive amounts of money but were reluctant to share it with the coalition of labor, women’s groups, Gay groups, and so on. Organized labor, on the other hand, despite disputes with some of the other groups over policy, provided most of the money, meeting spaces, workers,

training, and organization to move the coalition goals forward.

Due to classism, most of the money from environmental groups in our region goes to the preservation of beauty in selected areas. It does little to address the underlying exploitation of people and resources that is the major environmental problem. In fact, it sometimes makes this exploitation worse.

The current push in RC on care of the environment has made me face the classism that previously distanced me from the environmental movement. I am going to lead a couple of evenings in my Community on this topic.

Dan Nickerson
International Liberation Reference
Person for Working-Class People
Freeport, Maine, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for International
Liberation and Commonality
Reference Persons

Finding the Key Issue

How can we determine, at each stage of struggle, what is the key issue before us at that stage—the issue which, grasped and raised and acted upon, will mobilize people for it and will bring all other issues forward in its train if it is moved on?

This is crucial. In order not to demobilize and confuse your following, you must be able to grasp one issue, and focus the people’s attention on it, but it must be the issue that will bring all the other issues with it.

The key issue before the people in 1939 to ’41 was to mobilize all the support possible to the defeat of German fascism and its allies. Lots of mistakes were made by the progressive forces—taking wrong positions on other crucial issues, and so on—but it was correct that to defeat German

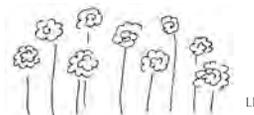
fascism was in the interest of all peoples at that point. We had many strange alliances. We erred in allowing some of our allies to determine our program but not in focusing on that issue.

In 1919, people everywhere in the world intuitively rose to the defense of the infant Workers’ Republic.* That was the key issue at that time. People knew with intuitive understanding that this was an experiment that should succeed.

Harvey Jackins
From pages 55 to 56 of *Logical*
Thinking About a Future Society

* The “Workers’ Republic” was the socialist Russian state formed after the 1917 Russian Revolution.

A Listening Project and a Four-Week Class on Climate Change



Last Sunday I led my second large listening project¹ on climate change in Watsonville, California, USA, at an Earth Day and Day of the Child Festival. I did it with friends, and we did not identify ourselves with RC. (Some of us are getting ready to do an RC listening project sometime this year, but we want to be sure we have thought through what we'll need in order to handle the potential interest in RC.)

Watsonville is a city of about fifty-five thousand people in an agricultural area along the coast of central California. A majority of the residents are immigrants, or descendants of immigrants, from Mexico.

Most of the people we talked to at the listening project ended up thanking us for being there. People working for the city of Watsonville were especially appreciative. More extreme weather events have happened in the last year, and people were eager to talk about them. Still, many people we spoke with either weren't at all aware of the concept of climate change or couldn't put anything about it into words. That reinforced for me how important it is to simply find ways to bring climate change into the conversation. Having an information booth at a festival is a great way to reach the general population.

A middle-aged white woman, who was well informed, said after a few minutes, "You know, sometimes I think that all the little things we're doing (to fight climate change) just

won't make any difference. I've never said that out loud to anyone. I'm really an optimist, but I'm starting to think that they just won't make a difference." It struck me how significant it is to listen to someone. I'm hopeful that by sharing her thoughts she won't continue to harbor the same feeling of hopelessness.

Some people at first appeared to not know much but later turned out² to know a great deal. I encouraged them to share their perspective with their friends, family, neighbors, and so on.

I recorded the names, e-mails, and phone numbers of people interested in receiving more information and made a few notes to myself so that I could remember names and faces.

I am planning an experiment. I'm going to invite some people—people who work for the city of Watsonville, people attending a Climate Action Plan public workshop for our city next week, all the people who signed up for our e-mail list, and some friends—to a four-week class this summer. I'm envisioning it as a naturalized RC class, led by me, with assistance from a friend who is in RC. I'm going to ask if it can be an official part of the city's Climate Action Plan so that we can get free use of a centrally located room.

I see it as a way to get people started using listening tools. I'll encourage them to choose someone in their life to keep exchanging time³ with. I'm also envisioning it as a stepping stone to an RC class. I hope that people will get "hooked" with the process and then be interested

in hearing about an organization that offers more and requires more of a commitment. People who seem especially sharp⁴ will be invited to an RC class.

Here is draft of a flier for the class. You are welcome to use it, or adapt it for your use. I'd love feedback.

THINKING OUR WAY FORWARD

Climate change is one of the most critical issues facing humanity. We need to engage people everywhere in thinking about how to preserve life on Earth.

Are you interested in talking with others concerned about climate change? Not sure how to start the conversation with your friends? Feeling worried or hopeless? Feeling angry about the disproportionate impact of climate change and environmental destruction on low-income communities and people of color? Inspired and energized but unsure what to do?

Come to our four-meeting series in July! We'll teach the art of listening as we give each person the opportunity to speak freely—without debate, argument, judgment, or discussion. This type of listening helps people clarify their thoughts, gain confidence in expressing their ideas, and move toward action in the world.

Exact time and place to be arranged. Sign here to receive more information!

Nancy Faulstich
Watsonville, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders in the care of the environment

¹ In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.

² "Turned out" means were revealed.

³ "Exchanging time" means taking turns listening.

⁴ In this context, "seem especially sharp" means seem to have a lot of free attention.



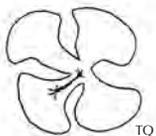
Follow the Lead of Young People

When we adults were young, we were fascinated with everything around us—the textures, plants, water, bugs, animals, wind, rain. We tried to share this with the adults around us, and often we were either ignored or met with “how cute.”

In school we were made to study aspects of the environment. Our personal experience was not asked for, and our sense of wonder was not appreciated. The environment became a subject that had to be learned, and it was either hard or easy depending on who we were, and who the teacher was.

I think young people need us to listen, join them in their wonder, answer their questions, and assist them in discharging any distresses that come up as they care for living things and interact with the environment.

Young people often lead where we adults are afraid to go. I remember how a ten-year-old RCer, on hearing about nuclear weapons, started a petition at her school to make her city a nuclear-free zone. Then she led her (reluctant) mother to a city council meeting and presented the petition. Young people can often ask questions and initiate actions that make us rethink our hopeless and powerless feelings.



Chuck Esser
International Commonality
Reference Person for Family Work
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
 Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
 list for RC Community members

Give Them Next Steps

RC disarmament work gained momentum after the 1979 RC World Conference. Large numbers of Co-Counselors got into the work, and large numbers of peace workers joined RC. Something fine has happened as a result of this.

What might be a next step? Leadership should always provide a series of reasonable next expectations so that people’s enthusiasm can build, build, build, and build. For example, after a demonstration, the people who turned out* need to have a reasonable, exciting expectation placed on them of something they can do next, which will lead to something even more crucial. It needs to be a task that appears to them as fun—not to be done out of guilt or fear but because it’s going to be fun to be with these nice people, sing along with them, and so on.

Harvey Jackins
 From the July 1986 Peace and
 Disarmament Activists’ Workshop

* “Turned out” means participated.

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; \$92 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 111 of this issue.

← - - - - We Are in a Critical Phase - - - - →

Great gains have been made in women's liberation, in terms of reproductive and legal rights. However, capitalism cannibalizes every liberation movement and turns it from a struggle for freedom for all and for ending the oppressive society into a petty battle for individual freedom of choice among not very human choices. It's like how in the supermarket we can choose between different brands of cereal or toothpaste, all within the framework of profit. We Western women are told that we are free. Any struggle we have is seen as a personal issue, flaw, or failure, and success is all up to us* and our personal ambition.

* "Up to us" means our responsibility.

The degrading images of women in the media open the door to the brutal sexism in war. Soldiers have access to lots of pornography and then when stationed abroad have easy access to prostitutes. Systematic mass rape is also part of the terror of war, and the trafficking of women (and some men) is expanding.

Degrading images of women can lead to a general conclusion that women are inferior and to blame for crises. For example, women are often blamed for the current economic crisis because many of them work in the public sector (education, health care) and men have to work in the private sector to generate tax money to finance the women's salaries. Mothers and

female teachers are often blamed for boys' hardships, revealing the lack of understanding that all human beings, including men, suffer from male dominance.

We are in a critical phase. Ending sexism and male domination is crucial to creating societies based on mutual caring, and fair and just sharing of all resources. As we said in my younger days, "No woman struggle without class struggle, and no class struggle without woman struggle." I'm happy that I understood long ago that men are not the enemy, that we need each other in this project.

Susanne Langer

Copenhagen, Denmark

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



SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA • DIANE SHISK

Profit, the Environment, and Technology

The present society has been so extremely destructive of the environment simply because profit is its only motive and the fastest profit is given the highest priority. The destruction of the environment is always approved of in the name of profit.

It isn't technology that destroys the environment. Technology could just as well support and improve the ecology. When we are free from this, almost certainly the last, oppressive society, our technology and knowledge will surely be used toward that purpose.

Harvey Jackins

Excerpted from pages 118 and 119 of "Is Damaging the Environment 'Oppression?'" in *The Longer View*

Using RC in My Work as a Performance Artist

I've worked as a solo performance artist for twenty-four years. I use personal stories to talk about liberation issues. A lot of my performances have to do with¹ shedding light on identity issues, especially internalized oppression.

I also do a lot of teaching and workshop facilitating in which I try to draw out people's stories on various topics. I use basic RC principles to create a safe place for this to happen. The workshops contain some RC theoretical concepts, but people tell their stories in an artistic context, in a theatrical performance. I base the workshops on the idea that telling one's story can be an act of liberation, of self-empowerment and validation.

In April and May of 2013, I facilitated an eight-week workshop for Cambodian, Thai, Laotian, and African American teenagers in Long Beach, California (USA). The young people explored the impact of air pollution on their lives, on the lives of their families, and on their communities. Long Beach, because it has a large port, has some of the worst air pollution in the country, and the places most negatively affected are low-income communities of color.

I worked with ten young people, ages ten to early twenties. When you take on² something big, like the environment, it can be overwhelming. It can restimulate powerlessness, hopelessness, and despair. So I played around with activities to get them thinking powerfully and laughing about it. The workshop led to a weekend of live performances. It was empowering for the young people to have their stories listened to with respect, to be honored for them, and to be encouraged to speak out. They got to show themselves and to use their bodies and voices powerfully and expressively (some of the basic goals we have for these workshops).

Every project is satisfying in its own way. Helping people get a bigger picture of themselves or giving them an experience they've never had before is incredibly fulfilling.

One of the first things I do is teach people how to do a mini-session. They learn to appreciate it. Occasionally

¹ "Have to do with" means are about.

² "Take on" means begin to take responsibility for.

discharge will happen spontaneously in the course of someone exploring a story. Then I present some theory about discharge being a natural healing process. I've learned a lot about the value of appreciation. I use tons and tons of appreciations. I explain that because we're not used to giving appreciations, or receiving them, it's significant to appreciate each other and ourselves. I also occasionally use speaking order.³ I try to make sure that the dynamics of any oppression are not dominating the way conversations happen.

I've learned from many mistakes. Here's one:

Oftentimes in leading a workshop I'll be working with someone, exploring a story, and it's like I am counseling the person. I've learned that it may not be helpful to push them farther than they're ready to go. I've had experiences in which not the person I was working with but the people watching got restimulated. They felt that I was being manipulative and opening people up beyond socially accepted norms. Now I am a little more conservative and do more explaining afterward about the process of discharge.

I've also tried to inappropriately impose an RC structure on a pre-existing group, like tried to make the group into an RC support group, and that has blown up.⁴ The response has been, "What the hell⁵ are you doing?" I have learned not to be overzealous and am more considerate when entering into pre-existing groups and organizations.

Most of my mistakes have come from trying to push things too fast and too far. Things that work in the context of the RC Community don't always work in the wide world because there aren't the same agreed-upon ideas and assumptions. That's something I've learned the hard way.

Dan Kwong

Los Angeles, California, USA

From an interview by

Keith Osajima in July 2013



KATIE KAUFFMAN

³ "Use speaking order" means have people speak first who are from groups that are more silenced in society, for example, people of color, young people, and poor people.

⁴ "Blown up" means led to a big upset.

⁵ "The hell" is a phrase that adds amplification.

Important RC Resources!

For ordering
information,
see page 110.

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 pages 105 and 106 of this *Present Time*.

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

The entire 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 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, and mailed out quarterly, for \$25 a year. You can order up to three years at a time.

Web special: The 12-CD set for 2006, 2007, and 2008 and the 12-CD set for 2009, 2010, and 2011 are each available for \$40 per set—if you order them on the Rational Island Publishers website at <www.rationalisland.com>.

Moving Toward Liberation (DVD)

Twenty-nine (!)
International Liberation Reference Persons
and Commonality Reference Persons
report on their work.

\$15.00 (U.S.),
plus postage and handling

Working Together to End Racism

A pamphlet introducing RC from
the perspective of ending racism

\$2.00 (U.S.), plus postage
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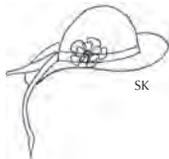
BURMA • MAURA FALLON

Appreciating Present Time

Good news! I got PRESENT TIME, April 2014. I always enjoy reading PRESENT TIME and eagerly wait every three months to have it and read it. I enjoy reading all the news about our RC process around the world.

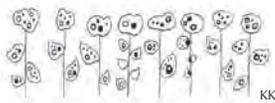
In the April issue, I love the article "Another Look at Relationships" by Tim.¹ I read it two times, laughing about "expecting more from our relationships." Every word he says makes sense to me. I can think about my leadership in and out of RC and the relationships I have in my life. I also love the way he approaches the topic of Co-Counseling relationships. It's helpful for me to remember the importance of building relationships and "fighting against undischarged distresses about relationships."

I am grateful to be part of our International RC Community.



Lorena Cuéllar Barandiarán
San Salvador, El Salvador

The April PRESENT TIME is the best ever, with a wide range of areas to think and discharge about. A wonderful service to humanity!



Claudia Allen
Thompson, Connecticut, USA

I've read PRESENT TIME from cover to cover for about forty years and still find it a great spur for my own re-emergence and a help and support for my teaching.



Jean Turner
Darlington, County Durham, England

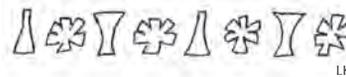
I have been reading the January issue, and it is wonderful. Thanks in particular for including the pieces by Harvey² "What Will We Be Like?" and "Attention Away from Distress." The latter is priceless! I spent a whole session repeating his directions and laughing and shaking. I don't believe that anyone but Harvey could have thought of starting a demonstration by asking the universe big enough. What a genius! I will have more sessions on it.

Julian Weissglass
Santa Barbara, California, USA

¹ Tim Jackins

² Harvey Jackins

Congratulations on the latest PRESENT TIME. I always love getting it and leafing through it the minute I get it. I appreciate everyone's hard work to make it happen—and so regularly!



JeeYeun Lee
Chicago, Illinois, USA

PRESENT TIME is the one publication I can turn to for a rational view of the world—a view that includes the vast joy and potential of being human along with a realistic appreciation for the struggles we face, both individually and as a species.



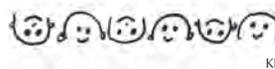
Doug Lipman
Marshfield, Massachusetts, USA

It's always great to come home to a PRESENT TIME in the mailbox, with perspectives on what is happening and what people are working on around the world, new thoughts and ideas on how to tackle difficult topics and patterns, brilliant pictures of benign reality everywhere.



Kendra Killian
Portland, Oregon, USA

PRESENT TIME has been a wonderful resource for thirty of my ninety-one years.



Gabrielle Falk
Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

Thank you for the incredible quality of PRESENT TIME. I read it cover to cover (well, cover to the start of Community listings). I'm enjoying this quarter's a great deal and have been using the first four articles as amazing fodder for sessions.



Jay Edgar
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

The January issue of PRESENT TIME is a winner! Each issue seems to be better than the last. Tim's article on taking the direction that we might have to be happy is especially useful.

George Partlow
Douglas, Alaska, and
Yuma, Arizona, USA

The RC Website

There is a website for Re-evaluation Counseling at <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*, *The Human Side of Human Beings*, and the RC postulates)
- Introductory talks (in audio) by Harvey Jackins (1986) and Tim Jackins (2008)
- RC practice (how to start RC, what to do in a session, counseling techniques, how to lead support groups)
- The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*, 2013 edition, and forms
- Articles by RC leaders and Community members (from *Present Time* and other RC journals)
- Translations of articles into many languages
- Language liberation information
- Resources for workshop organizers
- Contact information for ordering literature from Rational Island Publishers
- An online fundamentals of Co-Counseling class
- Outlines for teaching fundamentals classes, in English and Spanish, and articles about teaching RC
- An ever-growing collection of back issues of *Present Time* (currently 1974 to 1998)
- "Today's Thought"—a short daily thought from a Re-evaluation Counseling perspective
- International Reference Person Perspectives
- And more

How to Contact Us Online

- 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 website 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

Online Fundamentals Class

An online 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.

Please see the RC website at <www.rc.org/page/onlineclass> for more information about how to sign up for membership in the online 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 <www.rc.org/publication/uer/contents>. 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.



"VAL D'ARPETTE" • KATHY TAYLOR

BOOKS

RATIONAL ISLAND PUBLISHERS

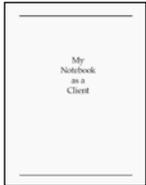
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(ORDER FORM ON PAGE 110)

BOOKS • BOOKS • BOOKS • BOOKS • BOOKS

<p>THE HUMAN SIDE OF HUMAN BEINGS The Theory of Re-evaluation Counseling</p>	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>An introduction to a completely new theory of human behavior.</p>	<p>Paper: \$4 (ISBN 1-885357-07-9) Hardcover: \$6 (ISBN 1-885357-53-2)</p>
<p>AN UNBOUNDED FUTURE</p> 	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>The ideas and developments in counseling, 1995-1999.</p>	<p>Paper: \$13 (ISBN 978-1-584-29-150-3)</p>
<p>THE KIND, FRIENDLY UNIVERSE</p>	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>Counseling theory, 1992-1995.</p>	<p>Paper: \$13 (ISBN 0-885357-10-9) Hardcover: \$16 (ISBN 0-885357-09-5)</p>
<p>A BETTER WORLD</p>	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>Advances in counseling theory and practice, 1989-1992.</p>	<p>Paper: \$13 (ISBN 0-913937-64-9) Hardcover: \$16 (ISBN 0-913937-63-0)</p>
<p>START OVER EVERY MORNING</p>	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>Advances in counseling theory and practice, 1987-1989.</p>	<p>Paper: \$13 (ISBN 0-913937-35-5) Hardcover: \$16 (ISBN 0-913937-36-3)</p>
<p>THE LONGER VIEW</p>	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>Advances in counseling theory and practice, 1985-1987.</p>	<p>Paper: \$13 (ISBN 0-913937-18-5) Hardcover: \$16 (ISBN 0-913937-17-7)</p>
<p>THE REST OF OUR LIVES</p>	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>Advances in counseling theory and practice, 1983-1985.</p>	<p>Paper: \$13 (ISBN 0-913937-06-1) Hardcover: \$16 (ISBN 0-913937-05-3)</p>
<p>THE RECLAIMING OF POWER</p>	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>Theoretical and organizational advances from 1981 to 1983.</p>	<p>Paper: \$13 (ISBN 0-911214-87-9)</p>
<p>THE BENIGN REALITY</p>	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>Important breakthroughs in human perception of the Universe and the empowerment of the individual against oppression, discouragement, and powerlessness.</p>	<p>Paper: \$16 (ISBN 978-1-58429-163-3)</p>
<p>THE UPWARD TREND</p>	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>Collected writings on Re-evaluation Counseling, 1973-1977.</p>	<p>Paper: \$10 (ISBN 0-911214-63-1) Hardcover: \$13 (ISBN 0-91121463-1)</p>
<p>THE HUMAN SITUATION</p> 	<p><i>By Harvey Jackins</i></p>	<p>A collection of writings on Re-evaluation Counseling. Revised edition, containing updated chapters: <i>The Postulates</i>, <i>Multiplied Awareness</i>, and <i>Allow Ourselves Time to Grow</i>.</p>	<p>Paper: \$7 (ISBN 0-913937-47-9) Hardcover: \$9 (ISBN 1-58429-106-0)</p>

"QUOTES"		<i>By Harvey Jackins</i>	Memorable, pungent, pithy comments.	Paper: \$6 (ISBN 0-913937-75-4)
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THE LIST		<i>By Harvey Jackins</i>	Revised Edition. "Everything I know about Re-evaluation Counseling (and the world) until now."	Hardcover only: \$50 (ISBN 1-885357-48-6) (no quantity discount)
FUNDAMENTALS OF CO-COUNSELING MANUAL		<i>By Harvey Jackins</i>	For beginning classes in Re-evaluation Counseling.	Paper: \$8 (ISBN 1-58429-073-0)
A NEW KIND OF COMMUNICATOR		<i>By Harvey Jackins and others</i>	Sixth revision. A Re-evaluation Counseling teacher's manual.	Paper: \$5 (ISBN 978-1-58429-160-2)
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LITERATURE IN OTHER LANGUAGES

The important job of translating RC literature is done by volunteers. Truus Jansen is the Rational Island Publishers Translation Coordinator. If you are interested in volunteering your translation skills, contact Truus, c/o Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, 719 2nd Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA. Tel. +1-206-284-0311, e-mail: <ircc@rc.org>.

The Translation Coordinators for each language are listed on the RC website at <www.rc.org> and on page 99 of this *Present Time*.

LITERATURE IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

(If none is noted, Harvey Jackins is the author.)

ACHOLI/LUO

Cako Kit Me Leyo Lok
(An Introduction to Co-Counseling)
by Dan Nickerson

Paper: \$1 ISBN 1-58429-062-5

Kit Me Cako Le-he Ki Lok
(How to Begin "Re-evaluation Counseling")

Paper: \$1 ISBN 1-58429-063-3

AFRIKAANS

*Hoe om "Her-evaluering
Berading" te begin* (How to Begin
"Re-evaluation Counseling")

Paper: \$1 ISBN 1-58429-094-3

AMHARIC

The Human Side of Human Beings
Paper: \$4 ISBN 1-885357-43-5

العربية (ARABIC)

Shuruk No. 1
(contains Fundamentals Manual,
The Human Side of Human Beings,
The Art of Listening, and How to Give
Children an Emotional Head Start)

Paper: \$3 ISBN 0-913937-83-5

How to Give Children an Emotional
Head Start by Marjon Riekerk

Paper: \$2 ISBN 0-913937-67-3

The Postulates of Re-evaluation Counseling

Paper: \$2 ISBN 0-913937-21-5

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Paper: \$2 ISBN 1-58429-102-8

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Nire koadernoak entzule naizenerako
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Nola eman umeei emozio-egoera hobe
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Start) by Marjon Riekerk

Paper: \$2 ISBN 1-58429-129-X

Zelan hasi Berrebaluaketa Prozesuan
(How to Begin "Re-evaluation Counseling")

Paper: \$1 ISBN 978-1-58429-153-4

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Paper: \$2 ISBN 0-885357-42-7

怎样开始做相互咨询
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of Re-Evaluation Counseling To Date)

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by Joan Karp

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男性的解放(节选本)
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by John Irwin, Harvey Jackins,
and Charlie Kreiner

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An Introduction to Co-Counseling
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Paper: \$1 ISBN 1-885357-41-9

FILIPINO

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Ng Kalusugang Emosyonal*
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Paper: \$1 ISBN 1-885357-73-7

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Paper: \$6 ISBN 0-913937-68-1

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continued . . .

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... continued

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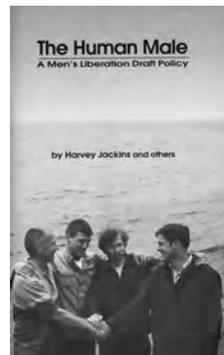
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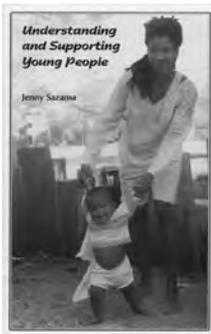
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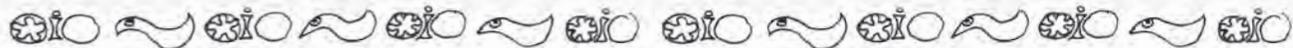
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Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process whereby people of all ages and of all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

Re-evaluation Counseling theory provides a model of what a human being can be like in the area of his/her interaction with other human beings and his/her environment. The theory assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness, but that these qualities have become blocked and obscured in adults as the result of accumulated distress experiences (fear, hurt, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, etc.) which begin early in our lives.

Any young person would recover from such distress spontaneously by use of the natural process of emotional discharge (crying, trembling, raging, laughing, etc.). However, this natural process is usually interfered with by well-meaning people ("Don't cry," "Be a big boy," etc.) who erroneously equate the emotional discharge (the healing of the hurt) with the hurt itself.

When adequate emotional discharge can take place, the person is freed from the rigid pattern of behavior and feeling left by the hurt. The basic loving, cooperative, intelligent, and zestful nature is then free to operate. Such a person will tend to be more effective in looking out for his or her own interests and the interests of others, and will be more capable of acting successfully against injustice.

In recovering and using the natural discharge process, two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out, and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.

For more information, you can go to the web site: <http://www.rc.org/>.



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