The Search For Healing

Ray Reid

"From the psychological point of view, I have come to the conclusion that there are two major questions all of us are fundamentally seeking to find an answer to, as we live our lives. Our basic hope is that we can find fulfilling answers to these two questions. The first is: Who am I? or What is my true identity? The second is: How do I find love in my life?"
(from "The Need for Personal Hope")

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Ray Reid

Book 1

Published in Australia by:
Jean Reid 2022
www.search4healing.com

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Typesetting, layout and design by:
AustraliaNess Designs
vambrose5401@gmail.com

First edition printed in Australia by:
South West Printing
Unit 3/50 Topham Rd
SMEATON GRANGE NSW 2567 Australia
https://www.southwestprinting.com.au

Cover image: Autumn scene in Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA taken in Oct 2011 by Jean Reid

The Search For Healing
ISBN: 978-0-6454838-0-2 hardback
Cataloguing in Publication information for this title is available from the National Library of Australia. www.nla.gov.au

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These articles by Ray Reid are the product of many years of research, study and clinical practice. Many of Ray's clients and colleagues have contributed to his knowledge through decades of counselling, supervision, teaching and discussions. They will know who they are, and I thank each and every one of them.

Special thanks are due to Ann O'Brien, a long-time colleague of Ray: without her initiative in sourcing and compiling Ray's many articles and other writings, this book would not have been possible. Thanks also to Amber Ritchie for converting the earlier typewritten works into a digital format.

Many thanks are due to my loving family members for their support and their various contributions to the process of preparing Ray's writings for publication. I am particularly grateful to Lara who contributed her considerable editing skills and her knowledge of Ray's work to arrange the many articles and writings into a logical and coherent sequence.

Sincere thanks are due to Rev Dr Gerard Kelly, editor of the theological journal "*The Australasian Catholic Record*" for kind permission to reprint the articles authored by Ray, and also to the Churchill Trust for permission to include Ray's Fellowship report.

And finally, a special debt of thanks to Sean Donovan, a family friend who supported the idea of this book, coached me in the publication process, and introduced me to Vanessa Ambrose who has converted the collection of articles into book form, including the design, layout and art direction.

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INTRODUCTION

Ray and I met at Sydney University's International House in 1973, and over a long Saturday breakfast we discussed his proposed thesis topic ("The Hopeful Person") as part of a Master of Social Work degree. He was a reserved and thoughtful person, with many interests such as cricket and football, trains and submarines, art galleries, movies and musicals, detective stories and comedians (who "expressed the truth in life"). Ray loved popular music especially Rock'n'Roll and Country and Western genres; he was particularly fond of Linda Ronstadt and Judith Durham, and he owned all the albums of Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra. He was an avid reader across a wide range of topics including philosophy, theology and spirituality.

After leaving school, Ray had joined the Passionist Order, living in monasteries for five years before discerning that religious life was not for him. So he enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Work degree at Sydney University, majoring in psychology, and graduated with First Class Honours in 1971. His first social work job was with the Department of Social Security, and he took leave without pay from there to enrol in the Master's Degree program. For his extensive clinical "practicum" as part of this degree, Ray chose to specialise in marriage counselling, with supervision by staff at the Marriage

Guidance Council of Australia. In later years he researched love and marriage topics extensively and saw the value of a comprehensive pre-marriage education course for young couples.

We were married in 1974 and Ray was appointed to a new social work position with the Department of Social Security later that year. He subsequently worked for about sixteen months for the NSW Health Commission.

In mid-1978 Ray was recruited to the Archdiocese of Sydney's Catholic Family Services as Deputy Director, based at Parramatta. When the new Diocese of Parramatta was formed in 1986, Ray was appointed as the inaugural Director of Centacare Catholic Social Services at Parramatta. He oversaw the expansion of services to Blacktown and later to other branches. Ray wrote many successful submissions for government grants to fund counselling services, including marriage and relationship counselling, Indigenous services, pre-marriage education, problem gambling counselling, family support and pregnancy counselling.

Ray cared deeply about his clients and staff. Despite his considerable administrative duties, Ray always insisted on continuing to work part-time as a counsellor and was actively involved in staff training and clinical supervision. He was a registered psychologist (MAPS) and in later years did some lecturing in Social Work at the Australian Catholic University (ACU). During his years working at Centacare Parramatta, he wrote prodigiously on a variety of subjects for staff training, conference presentations and occasional lectures, and had four articles published in *The Australasian Catholic Record*.

Over many years of counselling, Ray observed the psychological damage sustained by people who disclosed a history of sexual abuse, perpetrated by trusted adults including family members or

acquaintances, youth leaders, sports coaches or clergy or religious leaders. He explored this issue deeply through the lenses of psychology, sociology, theology, philosophy and spirituality, and pondered the insidious destructive effects of sexual abuse. In 1996 he was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to investigate ways to deal with the effects on people in the church community when a pastor was accused or convicted of sexual abuse. His extensive Fellowship report was presented as a manual "Pain - Hope - Healing", written for church leadership teams. It was the fruit of more than a decade of reflection and research, and although it was written in 1996, this work is more relevant than ever.

Ray dedicated much of his life to counselling those in the community who experienced psychological or emotional pain or distress. Assisting people affected by sexual abuse became a focus of Ray's work, directly in counselling those who had been abused and indirectly by providing training and supervision for others working in this field. He was a special person noted for his patience and persistence, his amazing memory for detail, his precision in the spoken and written word, and his great care and concern for his family and all those he worked with. Ray continued counselling clients until shortly before his death in 2012.

Publication of this volume, containing a collection of articles and resources written by Ray during his long career, will serve as a record of his considerable contribution to Catholic Welfare services in Australia and will hopefully bring his work to a wider audience.

Jean Reid
July 2021

1

HOPE, FORGIVENESS AND PERSONAL TRUTH

Introduces Ray's thoughts about the philosophy and psychology of hope and describes the essential dimensions of the experience of hope, which underpin his counselling strategies. Explores receiving and giving love, finding the truth about oneself, healing wounds from the past and challenging false beliefs.

1.1 The Hopeful Person[1]

What follows is basically a summary of the theoretical part of my thesis for my 1976 Master's degree. The thesis was simply entitled "The Hopeful Person" and it is a theory about the psychology of hope. It presents a picture of the hopeful person under the assumption that to be truly hopeful is to be living as fully as possible at a particular time.

Philosophical Assumptions

My assumptions have been taken mainly from the existentialist tradition of thought:-

(i) 'The human person is a project'.

The word "pro-ject" literally means a "throwing forward" and to say that s/he is a being which must be, until death, moving forward into a future. We are always in the process of *becoming.* At no time do we hold our total being in our hands.

Another way to look at this is to see that we at any one time are made up of "past – present – possibilities".

Your past is what it is. It is what you have done, what you have chosen, what has happened to you. It is fixed and unalterable. It is built into your being.

Your present is what you are experiencing at this very minute, your thoughts, your feelings, your memories, your dreams. The present is also the moment of decision, the moment of choice, conscious or unconscious, of what you will become in the next moment of time.

[1] Thesis summary written by Ray in 1983 and revised in 2009.

Your possibilities are what you are capable of becoming in the future, either in the next second, the next month, the next year, until death closes off the known possibilities. Your being then is constituted by past, present and future. You are what you were, what you are, what you might become.

Hope is clearly related to the possible. And thus some thoughts on possibility are necessary.

Personal possibility refers to what this particular person with his/her unique history in this time and in this place might become if he/she has the opportunity.

Thus personal possibilities are very concrete. They do not exist in an abstract, ideal world, they exist in time and space. They refer to actual possibilities for this person.

One way to think of this is to ask if that man who came to Gaul, saw it and conquered it, Julius Caesar, had the personal possibility of discovering a way to split the atom. The answer is no. Given that he lived some years before Christ, he would have had no access to the knowledge and the history of science which he would have needed to work out a way to split the atom. If Julius Caesar had lived this century who knows?

Now a personal possibility cannot be actualized i.e., made into a present reality, brought into being, unless there is opportunity to do so. Mr. Malcolm Turnbull clearly has a personal possibility of becoming Prime Minister of Australia.[2] It is certain that he will have no opportunity to actualize that possibility today.

[2] Malcolm Turnbull was Leader of the Opposition in the Australian Parliament in 2007-2008 and became Prime Minister from 2015-2018.

I have a technical name for opportunities. I call them *world possibilities*. A world possibility exists when the world outside of a specific person is arranged in such a way that it will allow the actualization of a specific possibility.

I want to make a couple of further distinctions:-

- *active actualization* - this occurs when an individual person chooses to actualize a specific personal possibility.

- *passive actualization* - this occurs when the individual person makes no specific decision or choice to actualize a specific personal possibility and allows herself to be carried along by the flow of events.

The distinction is mainly conceptual – in reality all actualizations are a mixture of both. One way of viewing the journey towards the fullness of life is to say that is the progressive altering of the balance of active and passive actualizations in favour of the active i.e., gaining more control over life.

The second set of distinctions is:-

- *experienced possibilities:* these possibilities, personal or world, are the possibilities of which the person is aware, and hence can be brought into the process of active actualization, can have a part in choice.

- *non-experienced possibilities:* these possibilities, personal or world, are possibilities of which the person is unaware and hence can have no part in the process of active actualization, can have no part in choice, in personal decision.

(ii) The human person as a task to be completed.
This rather unusual expression "the person as task" is meant to point to the fact that what the person becomes is not something which unfolds without reference to the world and the needs, demands or "calls" of that world. The fullness of life does not come in the single-minded pursuit of the actualization of personal possibilities but rather in terms of a meaningful response to the world of other persons and things within which the individual lives.

It is the meaningful response which is important. Values are what bring meaning. For me, values are not created by the person, they are discovered by her. Thus, in a real sense, they are "objective", they exist independently of the person's decision. They cannot be created, only embraced.

Values give direction to life. They are guides to decision-making. In any situation, a person is faced with a number of alternatives. What to do? You can actualize all the possibilities. Values guide the choice, by ruling out certain options, and pointing the way to others.

It is important to choose and commit yourself freely to a set of values. The values should be embraced not because other people have said that they are good but the person herself, from within, has seen their goodness and attraction and "rightness." The values then truly become her own. In Victor Frankl's words the commitment "emerges out of the depth and centre of man's personality and is thus rooted in total existence."Such a person in my view has discovered *personal meaning*.

Having discovered personal meaning, a person often will find that she is "called" to do certain things. This is because she has by his/her embrace of certain values committed herself in advance to the actualization of certain possibilities whenever the opportunity occurs. Hence, some situations have a "demand" quality about

them. Having made fundamental choices, often the more specific and less fundamental choices, are easier because the general vision is clear.

(iii) The human person is not totally free.
All the existentialists have emphasized the fact that the human person in her essential being is free. However, I do not understand this freedom to be absolute or total. Such freedom as we possess exists within a situation of lack of freedom. Thus a person is said to be free on any specific occasion in as much as she is able to actualize a possibility in such a way that she is not totally dependent on a set of prior conditions in her/himself or in the world. In as much as a person is dependent on a set or prior conditions the person is not free.

Some of these prior conditions are:-

(i) the physical universe e.g. gravity
(ii) cultural and social and economic systems which define how reality will be perceived and what social actions will be permitted
(iii) the bodily existence of the person
(iv) genetic endowments
(v) unconscious factors in the personality
(vi) personal history of socialization.

These conditions limit world possibilities and they limit experienced personal possibilities. They also define the limits of personal possibilities and hence the personal impossibilities.

Some Psychological Processes

i) Wishing
I take a definition of the wish from Rollo May (*Love & Will*, Collins, London, 1972, p 211):

> "The human wish is not merely a push from the past, nor merely a call from primitive needs demanding satisfaction. It also has in it some selectivity. It is a forming of the future, a moulding by a symbolic process which includes both memory and fantasy, of what we hope the future will be. The wish is the beginning of orienting ourselves to the future, an admission that we want the future to be such and such; it is the capacity to reach down deep into ourselves and pre-occupy ourselves with a longing to change the future."

Thus, in this sense, "I want" or "I wish" does not refer to the result of a conscious decision process. This wanting or wishing is prior to that process.

The wish arises deep within the person; it is a call for the person to see if she has first a personal possibility to actualize the wish, and then to see if a world possibility for actualization exists.

The person may or may not decide to actualize the possibility for a variety of reasons.

These kinds of wishes can clearly exist out of the person's awareness. The wishes may be repressed or distorted because the person has learned that such wishes are "unacceptable".
It is important to note that wishes are directional. They orient us towards a type of future. However, they do not usually have concrete content. They direct us to search for certain types of possibilities.

The wish is creative: it is the beginning in imagination of having a say in one's own destiny. Without wishes, a person forms no idea of a future, is handed over to passive actualizations, is a piece of driftwood on the sea of life, is without hope.

(ii) Willing
For me willing is essentially the decision to actualize a personal possibility. This decision is conscious. It is free in the sense defined above, i.e. not totally dependent on a prior set of conditions.

Rollo May provisionally defines will as "the capacity to organize one's self so that movement in a certain direction or toward a certain goal may take place". (*Love & Will*, p 218.)

The will then gives concrete shape to the wish, and can take into account world possibilities which the wish need not pay attention to.

Note that the will can be "willful", "full of itself". It can attempt to force the person to be what he or she is not capable of being. A person can seek to impose her will on a situation when the situation will not allow that imposition. The result is frustration, and eventual despair. The will can be just as blind to world possibilities as the wish.

(iii) Imagining
Imagination is defined by William Lynch in *Images of Hope: Imagination as Healer of the Hopeless*," Helican, Baltimore, 1955 as "the sum total of all the forces and difficulties in man that are brought to bear upon our concrete world to form proper images of it" (p 243).

Thus imagination refers to a person's ability to form models of the world inside of herself. These models are not just constructed in visual imagination, but are constructed in auditory and feeling and taste and smell imagination as well. All sensory experience can be represented in imagination.

The imagination constructs a model of the present, of the past, and of the future.

It is, of course, the modelling of the future which is crucial for hope.

In imagination we can look forward in time and test out possibilities and see how they feel.

Description of the Hopeful Person
The hopeful person is one who: –

(i) believes in the possibility of change in her life
She is able to search the world for opportunities to bring about change because she believes such possibilities exist.

(ii) acknowledges that some things in life are not able to be changed
The person takes the unchangeable into account in planning action for the future, Hence she does not run into brick walls and experience a lot of frustration. Her vision of possibilities and impossibilities is clear.

(iii) believes in her power to determine her future to some extent
She has an internal experience of freedom. She does not feel that she is at the mercy of forces over which she has no control. She has room to move and believes that what she decides to do can make a positive difference to her situation – She is no fatalist.

(iv) can see a way out of her present situation
This is to say that she is able to visualize a set of circumstances which are different to her/his present ones. She can see possibilities for action. A person without hope typically can see only more of the same. She/He feels totally trapped within her present situation.

(v) faces the future with positive feeling
It is, of course, impossible to totally predict the future. There is always a large “unknown”. A person who has lots of painful experiences in the past may find it very difficult to imagine a future

which will bring good things to her. The hopeful person trusts in the process of life and can look forward even to an unknown future with a degree of positive expectation.

(vi) is aware of her wishes
To be unaware of wishes is to be unaware of the calls arising from within to orient ourselves in certain types of directions. “Wishful thinking” can be avoidance behaviour or it can be playing with possibilities for action, or simply a temporary escape. To be aware of the deepest wishes of our being, however, is to be able to begin the search for fulfillment.

(vii) is positive about present situation
It is very difficult to imagine a positive future from a totally negative perception of the present. Note that this perception of the present is not just one of feeling or of mood. A person may, at a particular time, feel down or unhappy and this feeling may fill his consciousness but at the same time her judgement about her situation from a different more embracing perspective may be quite positive.

(viii) has a genuine sense of personal well-being
The hopeful person values herself positively. She likes herself, has a clear sense of her own unique identity. The person who lacks hope often feels that she does not deserve the good things in life, that she is not really worthwhile.

(ix) has zest in living
This refers to a capacity to enjoy life’s experiences as they come to hand. It does not refer to an endless and perhaps mindless quest for pleasure. It includes a very definite “playfulness” in the living of life, a capacity to be serious without being overwhelmed by seriousness and gravity.

(x) feels at some ease in the present
The hopeful person is basically coping well with life at the moment. This does not mean that there are no problematic features of her life. But basically the situation is in hand. People invaded by hopelessness feel the world is too much for them. They have little feeling of personal competence. Their worlds are filled with people, things and tasks that look like giants.

(xi) wants changes in her/his life
The desired changes arise not so much out of a sense of great dissatisfaction but rather out of a perception of the possibilities for personal growth which are present. Normally, the desired changes are not great. The person is satisfied with steady growth. The changes desired are not solely in external circumstances.

(xii) has personal meaning in life
This is discussed above in the section on the person as task.

(xiii) has the capacity to wait
A person hoping for a possibility to become actual may have to wait for some time whilst things arrange themselves so that the possibility can be realized. This wanting is not passive. It is a decisive act, a definite decision to give the future a chance to emerge whilst at the same time a definite decision to work for the desired actualization. People without hope “want it now”.

(xiv) is tolerant of ambiguity
The waiting situation is an ambiguous one. The person cannot be sure if the desired future will emerge. Some signs say it will, some signs say it won’t. The person without hope often cannot stand the ambiguity and will attempt to force the reality into a mould by sheer will power. This is doomed to failure.

(xv) has the capacity to risk
The movement into the future is an act of faith, a step into darkness. There is no way a total view of the future can be obtained. There is no ultimate certainty. People without hope tend to search for that ultimate certainty and attempt not to move until certainty is there.

(xvi) has the ability to contemplate failure
Failure is a constant in human living. The hopeful person accepts the inevitability of some failures but is not deterred from action by the prospect of failure. She knows she can survive failure. For the person without hope failure represents a total loss from which no recovery is possible.

(xvii) is resolute
The person is determined in her efforts to bring about what she wants. She will persevere in her attempts to overcome obstacles. Memories of past successes help the effort to persevere.

(xviii) is flexible
The ability to change plans in the face of changed circumstances is vital. To be fixed in a projection of the future and to hold to it no matter what may mean that opportunities to achieve the same goals in different ways are lost or the realization that the goal is no longer appropriate will never arrive. Flexibility in a person means that she can accommodate the unexpected and can respond creatively to it.

(xix) acknowledges that she has some problems
No life is without its problems. No human being is perfect. The acknowledgement that a person has these difficulties, great or small, is the acknowledgement of a truth. The denial of these problems is an attempt to avoid the truth, and hence results in the non-experience of certain possibilities for action. You cannot solve problems if you don’t acknowledge you have them.

(xx) acknowledges her/his needs of other people
Being hopeful is best achieved with a person who recognizes and accepts that she/he has a need for other people to support her/him as she/he goes on living her/his life. Being able to ask for help when we need it is very important as it reflects a truth. Unfortunately, there are many aspects of our culture which foster an exaggerated independence and which frown on asking others for help, especially for emotional support.

(xxi) has relationships with other people
It is difficult to sustain a hopeful outlook on life from outside the context of significant caring relationships. This does not mean that people must be in constant contact with others but that she must perceive herself as being supported and cared for within those relationships.

That is my basic psychology/philosophy of the hopeful person. It is just another way to view people from within a positive framework. It also represents my attempt to describe what I think are the essential dimensions of the experience of hope.

1.2 The need for personal hope[1]

Introduction
Fr. John has asked me to speak about the need each of us has for hope in our lives from the perspective of a social worker / psychologist / counsellor. My academic and professional interest in the subject of hope goes back a long way and my personal interest goes even further.

Immediately after leaving school, I spent five years with the Passionist Congregation. The name I took was Jude. St. Jude is the patron saint of desperate cases and often has been referred to colloquially as *the hope of the hopeless*. My thesis for my Master's degree in social work (graduated in 1976) was on *The Hopeful Person*. I chose that topic because it seemed to me that a philosophy of hope should underpin and ground the work that I would do as a counsellor.

What I will do in this talk is give you a very brief outline of my understanding of hope as an essential part of human living. It is the understanding that I bring with me and use directly or indirectly in my counselling work with individuals, couples and families.

However, the principles I will talk about are applicable to all human lives, yours and mine. We can all think about ourselves and our lives in the framework which I will articulate.

Fundamental Assumptions about the Human Person
From the psychological point of view, I have come to the conclusion that there are two major questions all of us are fundamentally seeking to find an answer to as we live our lives. Our basic hope is that we can find fulfilling answers to these two questions.

[1] Presented at The Catholic Adult Education Centre, Lidcombe in Feb 2008.

The first is: **Who am I**? or **What is my true identity?**
The second is: **How do I find love in my life?**

My thought is that all the personal problems which we experience in living have an intrinsic connection with the ongoing quest to find at ever deeper levels answers to these two fundamental questions.

I will say a little about each of the two questions, hoping to illustrate that the answers to the questions are intrinsically connected, two sides of the same coin.

Who am I? What is my true identity?
What is the full truth about who I am at this moment? What kind of person can I become so that I experience myself as truly flourishing?

Note that this wanting to experience myself as truly flourishing is not a selfish desire. In each living being there is an inner dynamism which drives the being to develop in a way which results in the maximum possible development. Kittens have an inner dynamism pushing them to do what is required for them to develop into fully grown cats.

Unlike cats we, at a very early age, are aware of our inner urges towards flourishing. We wish and hope to be happy. We find ourselves doing things which we believe will makes us happy, satisfied, fulfilled (even if only temporarily).

We are aware that we can wish and hope to have certain things, and that we can, within limits, choose what to wish for, and work towards the fulfillment of those wishes or hopes. We cannot, in any truthful or realistic sense, wish for everything. For example we cannot sensibly wish to live without food or sleep for a number of years.

This inner dynamism pushing us towards a fully fulfilled state of being is God-given. Hence the hope for personal flourishing is **not** fundamentally **selfish**. God wants us to flourish, to fully develop as a person in accordance with the potentials we share with all other human persons, and in accordance with our own individualised potentials. God desires our happiness and eternal well-being, our full flourishing. So should we.

To talk of *full* flourishing in the context of the eternal is to say that full flourishing is not available to us in this life and that, in this life, all we can do on our life's journey is to try to live in ways which bring us ever closer to that fullness of personal flourishing. The experience of flourishing includes a feeling of inner peace even in the midst of pain and suffering.

Thus we can say that as human persons we have a natural *hope* to flourish. As humans we have the capacity to imagine a future for ourselves and to make choices which are aimed at making that future a reality. Not only do we have freedom, the capacity to make personal choices, we must exercise that freedom. There is no way to flourish (or even to keep living) if we take an entirely passive stance in life, choosing to make no choices at all.

However, we can make choices which do not promote our flourishing, which essentially frustrate our inner and natural desire to ever progress towards flourishing. Such choices are *mistakes* and they damage our hope.

There are a number of sources of such mistakes:

- **Mistaken beliefs about our individual personal potentials.** Each one of us comes into existence as a human person with a *finite* set of individual potentials. The popular saying that *you can be anything you want to be* is simply untrue. I would be

reasonably confident that no one in this room has the potential to write plays equal in quality to those written by Shakespeare, or to write music equal in quality to that written by Mozart.

There are natural limitations in each of us, given to us in our genes and given to us in our early experiences of life. We are shaped by the cultures into which we are born; as an Australian of Anglo-Saxon origin I am never fully going to experience the world and my life in the way in which an Eskimo or New Guinea highlander can.

Thus to hope to become the kind of person we do not have the potential to become, and to attempt to become that kind of person, is to move on a path of ever-increasing frustration. Much of counselling is aimed at assisting people to become more aware of the truth of their personal potentials. As they do this, they can adjust their hopes for their personal futures so that such hopes are more realistic, and their experience of personal frustration less.

Much of counselling involves people realizing the sources of their mistaken beliefs about their true potentials.

Some of these are the result of powerful others' expectations e.g. parents who want academic success for a child who is not academically inclined.

Some of these false beliefs about personal potentials resulting in false hopes are the result of taking in some prevailing cultural beliefs. It seems to me that there is a belief implicit in our culture that happiness and fulfillment in marriage is not really possible if you live in a small house. If so, this is a restricting belief unnecessarily limiting hope for a good and loving marriage.

- The second source of mistake in making choices which promote personal flourishing and hence frustrate hope **is to have a too detailed and concrete vision, a too specified hope, of what future is aimed at.**

  For example, let us take a person of considerable academic ability who has the potential to become a professor in her chosen discipline. Let us say her aim is to become a professor at a prestigious overseas university, say Oxford, and that she has the requisite competence. But for her, by her own decision and in her own experience, anything less than an appointment to a professorship at Oxford would mean that her life was a failure. Any event which lessened her chances of ever being so appointed would be experienced as frustrating.

  Her hope is too concrete, too specific. The opportunity to become a professor at Oxford may never come her way. If you like, the world external to her may not ever become structured in such a way as to present an opportunity for her to find personal flourishing as she has defined it for herself. She does not ever have the chance to fulfill that true personal potential.

  Our search for the fulfillment of personal hope has to take into account the obvious truth that we cannot control everything that happens in the world external to us. We need to be able to correctly assess and evaluate the possibilities which are open to us including the possibility of creating other possibilities.

  Our understanding of our personal hopes needs to be general and flexible so that we can move towards our personal flourishing within the actual opportunities open to us. The academic in our example would be better to have a hope, a goal, of making the best possible contribution to the development of knowledge in her field within the possibilities which are and will

be open to her as she moves through her academic life.

If you like, part of counselling is assisting people to make correct assessments of the true possibilities open to them. Within such true assessment, they have a better chance of moving toward the fulfillment of their hopes.

- **The third source of mistake is what within a theological framework is called sin**. Every sin is a choice to do something which of its very nature does not promote the flourishing of the acting person.

  If you are truly able to look at the results of our specific sins we can see that not only have we brought actual or potential harm to another person or persons, we can see we have damaged ourselves as well. And the damage we do to ourselves if we do not repent and seek forgiveness makes us more likely to do further damage to ourselves and others.

How do I find love in my life?
This is not a selfish question, even if it appears to be on at first glance. Deep within each of us is the need to experience being fully loved as the persons we are. This need is God-given. The hope for the experience of total acceptance by, and of receiving unconditional love from, another person arises out of our very being as human persons.

St. Augustine said: *You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.* This normal English translation does not fully capture the sense of the Latin's ***ad Te***. You have made us toward Yourself. Here is a clear reference to the inner dynamism pushing us toward the experience of being in our depths restful and at peace in a loving embrace with God.

However, the fulfillment of the hope to find love on a permanent eternal basis requires that we also actually love others, that we become persons who are willing and able to truly love others, become persons who are willing and able to put the true needs of other persons before our immediate and self-centered needs, when the situation requires that the other person's needs must take precedence over ours.

Simply put, **we find the true love we inwardly and outwardly hope for by truly loving**.
Such loving increase our chances of receiving true love from other human persons, and finding peace and joy in the experience of mutual love in which both have an experience of flourishing, and of moving toward richer and deeper flourishing. Of course, our loving of others does not guarantee that they will return that love. But even if they do not return love, our loving of them brings with it a deepening of our movement towards personal flourishing and a peace at a deep level, even if there is frustration and the pain of rejection present also.

The essence of love is reciprocity. God is Love. The inner life of the Trinity is one in which each of the three Divine Persons participates in a total and mutual exchange of personal being. Each is totally given and received by the other two without losing any personal identity in the process.

In theological terms, our deepest hope is to be able to be caught up into that mutual exchange of love, to participate in the loving which flows through the Divine Persons and through each human person in heaven. We long to experience the beginnings of participation in this loving embrace in this life.
People who come to counselling typically are not experiencing a participation in the flow of love to the extent to which such participation is possible for them in their life. They have experiences

of emotional deprivation and of frustration.

A fundamental aim of counselling is to assist them to return to the pathway which, if followed will lead to the fulfillment of their hope to participate in meaningful exchanges of love.

Need to Experience Love Before Being Able to Love
God's love for us is primary chronologically and ontologically.

Psychology and neuroscience are teaching us more and more about the neurobiological and psychological development of the human person. It is clear that the experience of being loved unconditionally is vital in the infant's development and in the formation of neurological pathways in the infant's brain. These pathways are essential components in acts of loving.

Put simply, an infant or young child who does not experience sufficiently being loved is going to find it difficult to become a loving person. The required neurological infrastructure is deficient. On the psychological level, the experience of being insufficiently loved is the experience of rejection.

The experience of being rejected in one's personal being is hurtful in the extreme. The experience is one of being vulnerable, of opening up to another person and then of being ignored, criticized, punished etc. The rejected person will be very reluctant to become that vulnerable again. The rejected person will close off from others. Such a move, of course, results in the frustration of the inner hope and desire for the experience of being loved.

The lack of experiences of being loved, or radical insufficiencies in such experiences, makes it difficult to impossible for the person to truly love others. They might appear to be loving but a true analysis of what is happening shows that their loving is fundamentally selfish.

They are manipulating the others to fulfill their own selfish needs. Their deeper hope for mutual loving is frustrated.

Many of those who appear in counselling rooms are fundamentally frustrated in their search to be loved and to love. They have lost the conscious hope that their deepest needs will be met.

The Role of the Counsellor
Whilst it is painful to live in the belief that no true love will come, for persons who have known significant human rejection, there is a sense of safety in living in such a way. To remain invulnerable, they believe, is never to risk feeling again the pain of rejection, possibly the greatest pain a human can experience if the rejection is believed to be total and inevitable. But this closed off state means that the person cannot grow, cannot flourish, is fundamentally frustrated and lives without hope.

With persons who are unable to find love in their life, the counsellor can help create a context in which clients begin to dare to again feel the hope that they can find ways to experiences of loving by conveying the following:

- I truly value you as a human person.
- I am willing to walk beside you in your journey to find the fulfillment of your deepest personal hopes.
- I will place myself at your disposal so that you can profit from my general expertise and knowledge by taking what I say into account and evaluating its usefulness for you.
- I will not impose myself or my thinking on you.
- I will take seriously what you tell me. I may have to challenge

some aspects so that you can come to see things more completely or more accurately. But I will always respect your inner experience.

- For the time we are together I will do my best for you.

- I am willing to learn from you and value whatever you might be able to bring to me which will assist me in my journey through life.

If the counsellor can embody these attitudes and implicitly express them within the counselling conversations, there is a good chance that the client's hope for participation in loving encounters will be reawakened and the anxiety about experiencing such a hope lessened.

Such attitudes may not ever be explicitly expressed by the counsellor. To do so may be very counter-productive as the client may not be able to embrace their truth. The clients have to feel the truth, experiencing it in the counselling encounters.

True personal reciprocity is vital to the effectiveness of counselling. An American researcher Scott Miller has evaluated many studies of psychotherapy and counselling. He maintains that 40% of the contribution to a successful outcome for the client can be attributed to the quality of the relationship between counsellor and client. Only 15% is attributable to the techniques and theoretical approaches of the counsellor. (For interest, the other 45% contribution to the successful outcome is due to factors external to the therapeutic encounter.)

The counsellor, in being receptive to what is communicated from the depths of the client's being (not necessarily in words), affirms the essential goodness and lovability of the client. Such affirmation

assists the clients to *experience* their own goodness as they see the counsellor truly receiving and appreciating what they are offering of themselves. This experience of being truly received awakens their natural hope for love and acceptance. They find themselves having an experience of their hope being partially fulfilled. They have immediate evidence that allowing themselves to feel such hope is not an exercise in futility.

Exploring the Client's Experience of Life

Within the established context of a caring therapeutic encounter, the following aspects of the clients' lives can be explored so that they can move toward the fulfillment of their hope for personal flourishing. Clients can reflect on:

- Experiences in which they may have blocked their receiving of genuine personal gifts of love (no doubt to the frustration of the giver) by not recognising them as such, or minimizing them. Clients can learn to recognise genuine acts of loving and respond in kind to the mutual joy and progression towards flourishing of themselves and of those they lovingly encounter.

- Experiences in which they have not taken opportunities to express love towards another or to engage in loving action. Such missed opportunities flow from fear of rejection or simply not having perceived that the opportunity was there. They can resolve to take future opportunities to express love.

- Experiences of self-rejection in which very negative evaluations of themselves dominate their self-perceptions. They can learn to evaluate themselves positively.

- Experiences of denial of aspects of their personal being. "The truth will make you free" (John 8:32). As clients live more truthfully in terms of their actual strengths and weaknesses they

experience greater inner peace and live more lovingly.

As clients explore these experiences, they imagine a different kind of future, and begin to change their actions in their world in ways which they actually experience as bringing them a sense of peace and fulfillment, they are encouraged to continue on the journey to personal flourishing by being loving and by allowing themselves to be loved. They can experience progress in the fulfillment of their fundamental and natural personal hopes.

Some Other Aspects of Hope
I will, before concluding, just mention a few other essential aspects of the experience of hope:

- **Capacity to wait**
  Our hopes cannot all be fulfilled at any one moment or indeed fully in this life. We need to develop the capacity to wait in, to borrow a phrase from the liturgy, in joyful hope.

  We cannot be like infants in a tantrum whose essential message is “I want it and I want it now”. It is in the nature of things that many realities take time to develop and that the final result depends on things being in place beforehand. You cannot be in Melbourne from a starting point in Sydney without a period of travelling.

- **Tolerance of ambiguity**
  We cannot have absolute certainty that what is happening now is indeed a step towards the fulfillment of a hope. It may appear to be but on closer examination turn out not to be. We see the bus coming in the distance at the precise time our bus is due. It probably is our bus but until it gets closer we cannot be certain.

  Being able to continue to live and act in a context of uncertainty

and ambiguity is part of the process of successful living in hope.

- **Being willing to accept mistakes and failure**
  We are not all-knowing. We will make mistakes, miscalculate, be overcome by human weakness. We have to expect these. The fact that they occur does not mean that our hopes are forever dashed. We may need encouragement from those who love us. Such encouragement may assist us to remain resolute.

Conclusion
Such is a very brief outline of my understanding of hope within the context of counselling and life in general. I have not made any specific reference to Pope Benedict’s encyclical[2] but upon reading it, I thought that my thinking was in line with what he says and I was extremely encouraged by that thought.

Thank you for listening to me. I hope I have said things which increase your understanding of hope from within a psychological framework and thus enable you to read and understand Pope Benedict’s encyclical with an additional perspective.

[2] In late 2007, Pope Benedict XVI published an encyclical titled *Spe salvi* (*Saved in Hope*), dedicated to the theme of Christian Hope.

1.3 Notes on Forgiving

The following notes are based on the points given in the Postscript of ***The Art of Forgiving: when you need to forgive and don't know how*** by Lewis B. Smedes (New York, Ballantine Books, 1997).

[The numbered points **in bold** are direct quotes from the book. Additional comments in normal text are Ray's.]

1. **The most creative power given to the human spirit is the power to heal the wounds of a past it cannot change.**
   This emphasises that the past is what it is. It cannot be changed, redefined into something other than it was. We might understand it better but that is not a change in the reality of the past. If we were wounded by the action of someone in the past, we cannot truthfully say we were not wounded.

   However, we can do things to heal our own wounds. They do not have to remain forever open.

2. **We do our forgiving alone inside our hearts and minds; what happens to the people we forgive depends on them.**

3. **Forgiving is essential: talking about it is optional.**
   We cannot expect that change will occur in the person we forgive simply because we have forgiven them. In fact there are times when expressing forgiveness directly to one who has wounded us can make things worse. For example, the person I forgive, not having really acknowledged that I was hurt by his action, may say angrily "I don't need your forgiveness because I haven't done anything wrong".

   At times, our actions may convey our forgiveness far more fully than what we say.

4. **The first person to benefit from forgiving is the one who does it.**

5. **Forgiving is the only way to be fair to ourselves.**

6. **When we forgive, we set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner we set free is us.**
   These statements are not advocating selfishness, even though it sounds it. We need to free ourselves from the internal tyranny of anger, feeling victimised, wanting revenge, hating the one who wounded us. These emotions, whilst understandable as initial emotional responses to deep wounding, can eat away at us and consume us even to the point of self destruction.

   A person whose emotional life is dominated by such emotions cannot really live life to the fullest, cannot flourish, cannot really love other people. We need to let those emotions go if we are to live lovingly, peacefully, and flourish as the individual persons we are, and can more fully become.

7. **Forgiving happens in three stages: we rediscover the humanity of the person who wronged us, we surrender our right to get even, and we wish that person well.**
   To forgive involves seeing the person who hurt us as a human person like ourselves, prone to do wrong harmful things, with a capacity for good which was totally pushed aside in the action which hurt us. Within a Christian framework, we come to see the one who wounded us as loved by God, and as one for whom Christ died.

   We decide that we will not do anything motivated by a desire for revenge, for punishment, for retribution. This does not mean that we put aside a desire for truthful justice and should not seek compensation in appropriate circumstances.

We hope that the person can come to a full realisation of the wrong which he/she has done and decide to take whatever steps are necessary to avoid inflicting similar harm on any other person. We pray for them, entrusting them to the loving mercy of God.

8. **We forgive people only for what they do, never for what they are.**
   The thought here seems to be that forgiveness fundamentally is connected with specific actions. We forgive only in relation to the actions which have hurt us.

   There is a very real sense in which we make ourselves into the kinds of persons we are by doing certain types of actions. A person who does a kind action becomes a kinder person as a result of that action. A person who acts unjustly becomes more of an unjust person as a result.

   The person who wounded us may have become a wounding kind of person by performing lots of wounding actions to other people before they met us. We cannot forgive those actions: such forgiving has to be done by those actually wounded.

9. **We forgive people only for wounding and wronging us: we do not forgive them for things we do not blame them for.**

10. **We cannot forgive a wrong unless we first blame the person who wronged us.**

11. **We don't excuse the person we forgive: we blame the person we forgive.**
    The word "blame" means "hold responsible for", in the sense that the person is judged to have deliberately and knowingly performed the action which harmed us. If the action which harmed us was not done deliberately, did not result from a

free decision of the agent, we *understand* and *excuse* the person. This does not mean that there was no wound. But we do not *forgive* because we do not judge the person as being responsible for the hurtful action, although it remains true that the person is the originator of the action which resulted in the hurt.

12. **Forgiving is a journey: the deeper the wound, the longer the journey.**
    This is an important point. Often we have been urged to "forgive and forget". This, in the case of deep psychological wounds, is not possible. I think that the decision to forgive is, as the writer says, a decision to begin a journey. The journey is one of not allowing the memory of the inflicted hurt to determine my attitude towards the person who has hurt me. Inevitably the memory of the hurtful actions will recur many times, evoked by many different events. The commitment to the forgiving journey is the commitment to re-affirm the initial commitment to forgive on each occasion of being reminded of, and re-experiencing the pain of the wounds.

13. **Forgiving does not require us to reunite with the person who broke our trust.**

14. **Forgiving someone who breaks a trust does not mean that we give him his job back.**

15. **Forgivers are not doormats: to forgive a person is not a signal that we are willing to put up with what he does.**
    There is no obligation to expose ourselves to further possible, even inevitable, wounding by the person who wounded us. I think forgiving involves not forgetting. We have to remember the occasion of pain and what preceded it so that we can head off any similar possible occurrences.

If the person who wounded us has not changed, then it would be grossly imprudent to resume a relationship with that person as if nothing had happened.

16. **We do not forgive because we are supposed to: we forgive when we are ready to be healed.**
This is a reference to the fact that forgiving serious wounding comes from the depths of the person and involves a definite psychological orienting away from the desire for revenge, returning the hurt and wishing general harm to the wounder. As noted above, these thoughts and feelings are almost inevitable in situations of deep hurt. They do not disappear simply because a person says “I forgive”. There can be an implicit self-righteousness in such “easy” forgiveness – “I am a good Christian. Look how readily I forgive!”.

    In forgiving, I have to face myself in the sense that I have to come to terms with the fact that those vengeful thoughts and desires are truly *mine*. They arose in *me* and in no one else. I may not want them, may in no way have consented to them, but I have to admit they arose in me.

    In forgiving, I have to come to an accurate assessment of the extent of damage done. I may have been unconsciously avoiding facing the full truth because such facing may involve further and, perhaps, more intense experiences of pain.

    However, there is no value in wallowing in the experience of hurt and enjoying the imaginative plotting of revenge or evoking mental pictures of the wounder suffering intense pain.

17. **Waiting for someone to repent before we forgive is to surrender our future to the person who wronged us.**
This is a point which needs to be stressed. In my work with victims of sexual abuse, I have often needed to point out that, if

they believe that they can never be healed of their pain until the perpetrator of their abuse admits to the abuse and apologises for it, they are still living in the power of the perpetrator. We need to determine our own futures if we are to live fully.

18. **Forgiving is not a way to avoid pain, but to heal pain.**
This is reminder that forgiving is not an easy solution to pain. A superficial understanding of Christian forgiveness leads some to assume that expressing forgiveness means that the pain will disappear. After all, we have done the right thing, we should be rewarded by good, pleasant feelings.

    The journey to the fullness of forgiving involves, as discussed above, an entry into the experience of pain and an acknowledgement that such pain will be re-experienced many times before the journey is completed.

19. **Forgiving is best done when it is done intolerantly.**
This means that the forgiver should not excuse the wounder from any true responsibility for the action which delivered the wound. The morally evil action must be named for what it is. Whatever can be done to prevent such evil happening again must be done. Minimising the extent of the evil action and the destruction it brought increases the possibility of the action recurring.

20. **When we forgive we walk in stride with the forgiving God.**
Where would we be if God did not forgive us? True forgiving is a very God-like action, bringing us closer to God, deepening our relationship with God.

1.4 Living in Personal Truth[1]

Introduction
I come to my reflections on the topic of *Living in Personal Truth* as a philosophising psychotherapist. My day job involves assisting people as individuals (and as members of families) to find ways to live in the *concrete* circumstances of their lives. Their current ways of actual living are problematic, are resulting in dissatisfaction and in a sense of being unfulfilled.

In short those with whom I work as a therapist are in pain. They are looking for ways to live, actions to take, which will result in that pain being replaced by feelings of contentment, personal flourishing, inner peace and even joy. Such actions have to be taken within the concrete circumstances of their lives. Hence there will be an individualized, even unique, dimension to their personal searches to take actions which will truly bring them the contentment, flourishing, peace and joy they seek.

I began my studies in psychology and social work with a background of some undergraduate study in philosophy, mainly scholastic philosophy. However, I also had an introduction to English analytic philosophy and took a personal interest in existential phenomenological philosophy. I have maintained my interest in philosophical thinking over the years and am near the completion of a course work Masters here at the Catholic Institute.

I realized, from the beginning, that if I was to really be able to assist people in emotional pain, I would need to have an understanding, an intellectual vision, of what the general characteristics of human flourishing are, and of what kinds of actions truly result in flourishing.

[1] Talk given at the Catholic Institute of Sydney in 2005 or 2006; occasion not recorded.

I thought that, if I had such an understanding underpinning my therapeutic practice, I would be better able to assist my clients to assess if what they were currently doing, or were thinking of doing, actually results or would result in furthering their flourishing as human persons.

Therapy is fundamentally action which is informed by understanding. As a psychotherapist at work with a particular client, it is only *my* understanding I can rely on in the actual concrete process of therapy.

This presentation is my attempt at articulating in very broad outlines my current understanding and vision of the structure of human flourishing. I am not going to discuss the content of human flourishing in any detail but will restrict my discussion to what I see are the fundamental structures within which concrete human flourishing occurs.

I shall try to give due acknowledgement to the influences on my thinking but shall not be discussing any particular philosophers in detail.

The discussion afterwards hopefully will increase my understanding so that I am better able to assist my clients.

Pre suppositions
You will have noticed that in what I have said so far that there are at least three philosophical presuppositions:

- Human flourishing is a natural good.

- Human flourishing is to be found in personal action. To flourish we have to live. Hence *Living* in the title of this presentation. To live is to take action.

- *In Personal Truth* in the title points to the fact that some actions do not lead to personal flourishing. It is simply not true that every action we can take actually does further our personal flourishing. To act in ways which do not in fact promote flourishing is to act under an illusion and results in frustration. Contentment, inner peace, harmony and joy are the experiential fruits of acting in ways which are consistent with flourishing.

Flourishing - a Natural Good

My thinking here has its origins in Aristotle and, following him, Aquinas. All living beings have an inner dynamism which drives them towards what Aristotle and Aquinas call *perfection*. I want to avoid that word for two reasons.

The first is that, to the modem mind at least, it can connote fullness, completion. Anything less than perfect is precisely that – less than perfect. From there it is not a large step to *not perfect = not good at all.* This, of course, is not the understanding of Aristotle and Aquinas, who can quite freely talk of the perfections of clearly less than fully perfect beings. However, you do not have to speak with many psychotherapy clients to see how equating less than complete perfection and no good at all can easily be done.

The second reason for avoiding using *perfection* is that it does not connote movement or progress. Interestingly enough, modern Thomists such as Norris Clarke see all beings as fundamentally active and thus human persons are no exception. To be human is to be in constant movement away from the current state of concrete being and thus towards another state of concrete being.

Heidegger sums this up in his term *being-towards-death.* That sounds a little gruesome but it captures the truths:

- that only death brings an end to the process of becoming or

development,

- that at death no one has attained total perfection as the ancients thought of perfection,

- that concrete human life is a process of continual becoming.

A softer term than *being-towards-death* is *project.* The life of a human person is a project in the sense of continual movement in time towards anticipated states of flourishing. The aim of personal living is to maximise personal flourishing in the time available to us within the circumstances within which we find ourselves.

This is the true good towards which our natural dynamisms push us. Flourishing is not an end-state but is a concrete and current reality. The questions are:

- To what extent are we flourishing now?

- Is there a gap between the level of flourishing potentially available to us in our current circumstances and our actual concrete flourishing?

- Are we as good as we could be?

Such goodness is a quality of the total human person and not just what might be narrowly conceived as *moral* goodness

My assumption is that the better our flourishing the more contented, fulfilled, peaceful and joyful we will be.

Personal Action

Personal action must be distinguished from *activity* or *behaviour*, the latter being a term much used in psychology. *Activity or behaviour*

simply refers to movement by, or physical change in, a person (or an animal, plant, organism or even inanimate objects whose particles are in motion).

Personal action is activity or behaviour which results from free choice. A personal action might not have been carried out by the person in the circumstances in which it was carried out, but it was. The concrete action chosen (or attempted) does not have to result from deliberation or consideration of theoretical or actual (in the circumstances) alternatives. It is sufficient that the person whose action it is has an implicit, if not explicit, awareness that at least one other course of action is concretely possible in the person's current circumstances.

It is not possible in the waking state to do nothing, to not perform any action at all. Hence some action, other than the chosen concrete action, must be an actual possibility for the person if there is question of personal action at all. If the person is not aware, implicitly or explicitly, of at least one other concrete possibility then there is no question of personal action. The person has no choice, no freedom to do other than the single perceived possibility.

Hence, in such cases, we have *personal activity* or *behaviour* but no *personal action*. It is clear from this analysis that all personal action is activity or behaviour, but not all the activity or behaviour of a person is personal action.

The exercise of choice is not directly observable by others. Observers can only observe activity or the behavioral aspects of the action. Observers may *infer* that the observed activity or behaviour is an action but they cannot categorically say that it is.

If the personal actor provides information about the internal processes which preceded and/or accompanied the activity, a

judgement that personal action had occurred is possible. Such a judgment is not necessarily correct. The acting person may be self-deceived in giving the account of internal processing.

It is implicit in what I have said that thinking is not only part of personal action but can be, on occasion, the totality of personal action. For example, I may consider a possible course of action, decide to carry it out at the first possible opportunity, but never find the opportunity arising. My thinking and choosing is still a personal action.

The analysis clearly is based on a general assumption that the capacity to choose actions is a fundamental given in the human person. I will not try to provide support for this assumption here. I shall make some remarks shortly on the constraints within which the capacity to choose (human freedom) is necessarily exercised.

Human Action and Personal Flourishing

I said earlier that some personal actions do not lead to human flourishing. This is most obvious when the actual concrete action (of a type which normally promotes flourishing) has unforeseen consequences in the particular circumstances which harm the acting person in some way.

For example, I unknowingly eat contaminated food and become ill. I am not going to discuss such actions here, except to simply note that the possibility of such unforeseen harmful consequences alerts us to the need to give appropriate attention to the concrete circumstances of a proposed action before taking any action.

Rather I want to emphasise the aspect of personal action which promotes or retards the personal flourishing of the acting person simply because the chosen action is of the type that it is. Each action type either promotes or retards the flourishing of the

individual person and the flourishing of other persons in the community. There are no concrete actions which are flourishing-neutral in either dimension.

The introduction of the term the *acting person* is your clue that this part of my thinking draws on the thought of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II) whose major philosophical work is entitled exactly that, *The Acting Person*.

As I understand him, Wojtyla says that every personal action has an effect within the person in terms of movement towards or away from that person's actual flourishing as a human person.

Each action contributes to making the person the kind of person he or she is and is becoming at this present moment. Each action is a step in a definite direction in personal living. It affirms and consolidates the previous direction or it takes the person on a new pathway.

We are constantly and inevitably involved in the process of being and becoming who we are. If we want to know and understand another person, to know who a person is (and indeed who we ourselves are) we have to know what choices they (and we) have made and thus are likely to continue to make.

The really important point about this building of personal being is that certain types of choices of their very nature promote or retard personal flourishing. In, as Wojtyla would say, self-determining action the acting person does not have a choice about the effects on himself or herself which follow from certain actions. Certain types of actions are good for us and certain other types of actions are bad for us and we cannot do anything to change this. Past personal actions, past personal choices, have contributed in a fundamental way to each individual's current level of flourishing and goodness.

Of course, events outside of personal control have also affected the level of total flourishing e.g. being seriously injured in an accident. Some in the analytic tradition have speculated on the effects of, by sheer chance, not being involved in an event which would have altered the individual's progress to flourishing in major ways e.g. missing the train which crashes. There is a considerable literature on what is called moral luck.

Hence my position is not that of a post-modernist. I think that there are universal and unavoidable truths and that some of these are *moral* truths which are founded in the nature of the human person. I begin from a general natural law position. The moral laws are simply statements about what kinds of actions increase or oppose the natural flourishing of all human persons as individual persons.

There may be some momentary pleasure or satisfaction in taking action which retards or reduces total flourishing but no lasting contentment, inner peace or joy because of the essential frustration of the inner dynamism towards natural flourishing. There is a fundamental truth in the old saying that "virtue is its own reward" and I would be happy to say it if it did not sound so moralistic in our culture.

I would prefer to say "If you want to find contentment, inner peace or joy, to truly flourish as an individual human person, live morally." Discovering all the specific action types which promote flourishing is no easy task (and not any part of my task here) but it is a task of *discovery* not of *creation*.

Hence, living in personal truth is an ongoing search to discover and enact the kinds of actions which of their very nature result in the person finding an ever increasing measure of contentment, inner peace or joy. These are the natural consequences of a flourishing life.

Individuality

Although the general truths about the types of actions which promote or retard individual flourishing need to be discovered and not created, this does not mean that there is no room for creativity in living.

Creativity is necessary in the assessment of what concrete action in the specific circumstances will actually exemplify the general flourishing-promoting action type. “I know I am to act kindly here, and I want to, but what specific action will actually be kind in these circumstances?” The answer may not be obvious at a first glance.

It is possible that the seemingly same action by two different people could have different results, one producing kindness, the other not. Any such difference would be related to individual aspects of the personhood of the two different acting persons and how those actions are received by the recipient of the kindness.

At this point I want to say something about the individuality of each human person. We all are alike in that we have the same general structure of being, a human nature. However, the specific concrete form which that nature has is, in my view, uniquely individualized from the first moment of personal existence. (I am not going to address the question of when precisely that moment might be.)

This unique personhood has its foundations in the unique interpenetration of the spiritual - psychological - biological (hence material) dimensions of each human person. At the first moment of personal existence a unique *finite* (and theoretically specifiable) range of possibilities for the flourishing of each individual person exists. The concrete flourishing of each individual person can only occur within the finite range of open possibilities for that person.

Initial Limitations on the Concrete Forms of Personal Flourishing

Being-in-the-World

The fundamental concept in existential phenomenology is that the human person is *being-in-the-world*. A full examination of this concept would take us too far afield. The point that needs to be stressed is that the concept of *being-in-the-world* denies the Cartesian divide between the individual person and all that is not that person. The human person is constituted in an essential relationship to all that is not that person. A human person not concretely existing in a world is not conceivable. Any such conception of the human person is an abstraction from reality.

To articulate (in as much as this is possible) *who* a particular human person is, we not only have to know how the world in which the person has his or her being is structured in terms of its physical and cultural operations, we also have to know how that person has structured his or her understanding of those operations, and makes use of those understandings. *The lived* or *experienced* world of any particular person is part of who he or she is.

Thus all human living has a fundamental relational aspect to it. Existential Thomists are of the view that that all existent beings are fundamentally in relationship with other existents in that they hold their existence only within a system of relationships. There are no totally independent, self-sufficient beings in the created world.

Humans are a special case of this relationality because they are aware of it, and can choose to act in accordance with it, and hence increase the flourishing of all beings in total, and of human persons in particular. Human persons can also choose to act in ways which retard or frustrate that general, and particular, human flourishing. Because the relationship with the world is fundamental to the

determination of the existence, and hence the flourishing of the concrete individual human person, choices which retard or frustrate general and particular human flourishing also retard or frustrate the flourishing of the person so choosing.

"Thrownness"

As Heidegger says we are thrown into existence, into an existing world. It is a very concrete world indeed. We have to start with a number of concrete givens which, of themselves, are going to throw limits around the concrete forms of flourishing open to us as unique individuals.

We begin with a specific and limited combination of genes. It is highly unlikely that any of us in this room have the potential to rival the musical genius of Mozart. If this is so, to have a personal aim to be another Mozart is to be doomed to frustration. In the quest for personal flourishing, for personal truth, we have to gain as accurately as we can an appreciation of our given individual capacities for developing certain skills. Our individual flourishing will be impeded if we attempt to develop those potential skills beyond our given natural limits. It is not true to say that we can be anything we want to be.

Secondly, we are necessarily thrown into specific historical circumstances which limit the concrete ways in which we can flourish. At the most abstract theoretical level, it may very well be true that each of us could have ruled the Roman Empire at say the time of Julius Caesar. None of us has that concrete possibility as we are not living some two thousand years ago.

The concrete historical circumstances place other limits in relation to personal flourishing. Psychologists are gaining increasing insight into the importance of infant attachment experiences in the development of brain functioning upon which intellectual processing

in the human person depends. Not being able to think clearly in a variety of circumstances is a very large impediment to individual human flourishing. Such impediments are in addition to impediments to the capacity to form effective human relationships which result from inadequate attachment experiences.

Thirdly, we are all born into specific cultural communities and before we are capable of making any independent assessment or discoveries we are being taught and we absorb (necessarily uncritically) a whole range of ideas about how to do things, and what it is necessary to be, and to do, if we want to be happy and successful in living. A general theory and specific details of the essential aspects of personal human flourishing are necessarily imposed on us in the early stages of life.

The Form of Concrete Flourishing

From what has been said, it is clear that individual human flourishing has to occur in contexts which are simply given to the particular individual. The acting person, at the moment of choosing a particular action in particular concrete circumstances, cannot at that moment alter those circumstances. The existentialists refer to this phenomenon as the *facticity* of human existence.

The following are some of the consequences of this facticity for individual flourishing:

- The form that a particular individual's overall flourishing will take cannot be concretely specified in advance. Certain possibilities can, perhaps, be identified as non-flourishing possibilities. However, because the circumstances in which the individual person will have to act cannot be specified before they occur, the concrete actions which will promote individual flourishing are not specifiable in advance. There are many pathways to actual flourishing.

- As noted above, we begin the journey towards flourishing being exposed to and uncritically absorbing ideas, and carrying out practices, which are expressions of our parents' and our general culture's ideas about what kinds of actions will promote our individual flourishing.

  These ideas may be wrong particularly and generally. In the particular case, the parents' ideas about what kinds of actions of the child will result in the child's flourishing may not be in accordance with the child's actual potentials. The child may have no ability to successfully pursue a certain form of occupation - say a career in medicine. However, the parents may pressure their child towards such a career and the child may attempt to follow the laid down direction.

  The general assumptions in the culture about what kinds of actions will promote individual (and community) flourishing may be wrong. I would argue (not here!) that our current culture has placed far too great a stress on individualism and competitiveness, at the expense of community and co-operation, as a pathway to individual and general human flourishing.

  Because there is given in each of us a need to be in a personal relationship, and a need for experiencing acceptance from at least some other persons, there is a tendency in all of us to not question (at a stage of development where such questioning is an intellectual possibility) the ideas and practices we absorbed in childhood and, maybe, continue to absorb in adulthood.

  Heidegger refers to this phenomenon as the dominance of the impersonal *they*. Foucault refers to the power of the dominant discourse. (Of course, Foucault, and others in the narrative tradition in psychology, may have considerable difficulty with the view that there are universal truths about the forms of action

which do or do not promote personal flourishing.)

However, in my view, a person whose personal actions are based on the unexamined assumptions of the absorbed culture runs the serious risk of making concrete choices which in truth, in reality, retard or oppose personal flourishing. This is the truth contained in the ancient saying that the unexamined life is not worth living.

Living in personal truth requires not only a search for our true personal potentials but a search for knowledge of the kinds of actions which truly do promote personal flourishing.

- Some of the facticity in a given situation is the consequence of prior choices made by the acting person. There is a real sense in which part of the current facticity for an individual person has been created by that person, for good or ill.

  For example, a decision to pursue an academic career in English Literature, successfully implemented so that person is now a Professor, has the consequence that person cannot be at this moment a Professor of Ancient History. Had the person chosen a career in Ancient History, becoming a Professor of Ancient History was at the time a possibility which may have been actualized by that person if the appropriate circumstances obtained.

  Negatively, a series of concrete decisions to drink alcoholic drinks, resulting in alcoholism and permanent liver damage is going to place very severe limitations on the kinds of concrete flourishing available to a person from now on.

  Certain forms of conscious commitment also limit the range of actions which promote flourishing at particular moment in a

particular life. For example, to make a promise is to exclude in advance actions incompatible with that promise even though, in other circumstances and contexts, those actions may promote flourishing.

However, breaking a promise without justifiable reason always retards or opposes individual and community flourishing. It increases the untrustworthiness of the individual actor, thereby increasing the level of untrustworthiness in the general community. Communities can only flourish to the extent that individuals within them are trustworthy. Because individual flourishing cannot concretely occur in separation from the community's flourishing, acting untrustworthily frustrates the individual's personal flourishing.

- In any concrete situation certain specific possible actions may be theoretically available to a person but if the person has no awareness of them, they cannot be enacted by that person at that time. Objective opportunities for greater flourishing may pass by unnoticed.

- Though there is not time to discuss it here, the foregoing analysis suggests that the flourishing of individual persons may necessarily involve decisions which are commitments to pursue concrete forms of life within a more general framework of flourishing life forms. Taking life as it comes, and responding well in each situation as it arises might result in too fragmented a life. Such fragmentation may well limit the level of personal flourishing which is achievable.

Conclusion

In summary, living in personal truth and thus flourishing as a human person is:

- to attempt to discover and live within the range of uniquely given personal potentialities

- to search for an ever deeper understanding of what actions truly promote flourishing

- to continually increase the ability to assess the range of flourishing-promoting actions concretely available in particular circumstances

- to only act in ways which of their very nature promote individual and community flourishing

- to thus experience contentment, inner peace, harmony and joy.

What I have said about living in personal truth is, of course, only a broad framework and I am aware that much more needs to be said to amplify and justify many of the points made. Nevertheless, the frame work has provided me with a philosophical basis from which to examine detailed psychological and sociological theories of human functioning, and more particularly theories of individual and relationship psychotherapy.

Thank you for listening to me.

1.5 GIVING OF SELF AND FINDING OF SELF

Introduction

The Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes (Joy and Hope)* states "Man … cannot find himself except through a sincere gift of himself".[1] My aim in this essay is to examine, within a philosophical context, what features of a human action have to be present before that action could be identified as a *gift of self* and what features of human experience have to be present before the experience could be identified as a *finding of self*.

The term *gift of self* is not one which is commonly used in everyday life. I think most people would understand the taking of marriage vows as the couple giving themselves to each other, and would understand the taking of vows in religious profession as the person giving herself to God. The wedding and religious profession ceremonies could ritualistically include the speaking of the words "I give myself to you".

The term *finding oneself* is used, perhaps more commonly in everyday life than *gift of self*. We say things like "Since he has started that job, he seems to have really found himself. He seems really at home with himself". The reference to his *finding himself* is

[1] The full paragraph is "Indeed the Lord Jesus when He prayed to the Father "that all may be one….as we are one" (Jn. 17:21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason. For He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons and the union of God's sons in charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth that God willed for its own sake, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself". *Gaudium et Spes in The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966) The English language translations of Vatican II documents use non-inclusive terms like man to translate concepts which are, in the original, more clearly seen to be inclusive. In this essay I shall use the term the human person as the inclusive term which points to the commonalities shared by all human persons, regardless of their gender. Person will mean human person unless otherwise specified.

to some kind of happy, settled and peaceful experience and way of being. The use is clearly metaphoric. We immediately see the oddity of a literal understanding if the reply to a proselytising religious person's question "Are you looking to find yourself, brother?" is "I don't have to look, I'm right here". So the question is "What are the identifying features of the experience of the reality called *finding of self?".*

The quotation from *Gaudium et Spes* clearly is not restricting its reference to *gift of self* to the contexts of vowing and sexual lovemaking, and thus is being used in a broader and more technical way than in everyday usage. The reference to *finding oneself* is metaphoric and/or technical.

Personal Self

I start from the assumption that only persons can give themselves and find themselves. Persons not only have subjective or internal experiences, they also have experiences of being the subject of those experiences. Karol Wojtyla says "Man's experience of anything outside himself is always associated with the experience of himself, and he never experiences anything external without at the same time having the experience of himself".[2] For Wojtyla, to fully understand what a person is, we have to take account of the structures which make what he calls lived experience possible.[3]

[2] Karol Wojtyla, The Acting Person, trans. Andrezej Potocki, (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing

[3] See Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 165, where he discusses the limitations of Aquinas' solely objectivist or cosmological views of the human person. "The concrete man – not an abstract subject but which is at the same time a created being, and therefore an object, and who manifests his complexity in action – is Wojtyla's point of departure. He begins, thus, from a place beyond the controversy between subjectivism and objectivism". Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla, the thought of the man who became John Paul II*, trans. Paolo Guietti and

The person's lived experience contains the following foundational certitudes.[4] The first is the certitude of one's own existence. Edith Stein places primordial but "unreflected" certitude of one's own existence as the starting point of all knowledge.[5]

The second certitude is that there are existents which are separate from ourselves. John Macmurray, in making the experience of I *do*, of personal action, absolutely foundational in human experience, points to the certitude of the existence of what he calls at the most general level the *Other*. The awareness of the Other primarily arises in tactile experience which is "the experience of something, not myself, which prevents me from doing what I am doing".[6]

The third certitude is that some of the existents in the Other are the same kind of existents, personal existents, as I am. W. Norris Clark says that we, as knowing subjects, have one experience which is central, not only to authentic philosophising, but also and, more fundamentally, to human living. This experience is "of knowing other human beings as equally real with ourselves (sharing the same

Francesca Murphy (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1997), 120.

[4] *Foundational certainties* are positions that I hold because I am completely convinced of them. Wittgenstein says such "stand fast for me and many others" (OC 116). "At the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded." (OC 253). Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, eds. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972). The custom in referring to Wittgenstein is to refer to his numbered "remarks" or section references rather than to give page references.

[5] See Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, trans. Kurt F. Reinhart, (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002), 36. *Unreflected certitude* refers to the knowledge that I am an existent without there being at the most primordial limit of knowledge any specification of what kind of existent I am.

nature or powers of action, in particular the powers of speech) and able to engage in meaningful dialogue with each other."[7] Macmurray says that an infant's first awarenesses are of personal others, continued interaction with whom leads to sense of being a separate individual being.[8]

All four philosophers, Wojtyla, Stein, Macmurray and Norris Clarke would see each person as being a unique individual who can say *I* in self-reference, even if each is at all times necessarily in relationship with other unique individual persons. I think that the word *self* has come into our everyday language as a way of indicating that the total existent referred to has the capacity (or potentially has in the case of the embryo) of being the individual subject of experiences and of being aware of being such a subject.

The awareness includes awareness that the experiences as such are totally individual and incommunicable, and that they partially constitute the ontological truth of the unique existent. Simply these are *my* experiences and not *yours* and *yours* are not *mine*. From the third person perspective to be a *self* is to be a *person*, to be an *I* is to be a self-aware existent, an existent who can say "I".[9] A *self* is simply an alternative way to refer to the *totality* of the individual and unique human existent or person. I am going to use the term *personal self* as equivalent to *person*.

[6] John Macmurray, *The Self as Agent*, (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 108.

[7] W. Norris Clarke, S.J. *Explorations in Metaphysics*: Being-God-Person (Notre Dame Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 33. Note that at this point there is no articulation of any understanding of what we, the persons engaging in the dialogue, might actually be, other than to say we have the capacities to do what we are doing, thinking and communicating. Norris Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being-God-Person*, 38.

[8] See John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 91.

It is clear that *self-giving* or *self-gifting* does not refer to handing oneself completely over to another person, selling oneself into slavery, as it were, and abdicating all personal responsibility for one's actions. Even sacrificing one's life for another is only derivatively a gift *to* the other. It is primarily a gift *for* the other.

I think that the expressions *giving of self* and *finding of self refer* to experiences which the person has. They are conscious experiences whose contents are aspects of the total being that the person is. They are experiences of who I am and of my being in action in certain specifiable ways. Thus, the goal of the present enquiry is to identify what are the identifying structural aspects of the experiences of giving of self and finding of self.

It is important to keep in mind that actual experiences of giving of self and finding of self have their ontological truth. They are real and have specific contents which in their totality are unique to the experiencing person but which have features formally the same

[9] There are analogous uses of the word *self*, particularly in philosophical discourse. For example, Norris Clarke, refers to the *self-revelation* and the *self-communication* of individual beings in their activities. Activity *reveals*, makes manifest, both presence of an individual being and reveals what kind of being it is, regardless of whether the being in question is personal, animate or inanimate. *Norris Clarke, Explorations in Metaphysics: Being-God-Person*, 8. Talk of the *self-revelation* and *self-communication* of all existents seems very anthropomorphic, assigning selves to less than human animals and objects. However, for Norris Clarke, human experience is the primary analogate. We humans are the receivers of the so-called *self*-revelations and *self*-communications of less than human animals and objects. Our expression of what is revealed or communicated to us is analogous to our expression of experiences of the self-revelation and self-communication of other persons. I think his analogous use of *self* in relation to the animate and inanimate simply refers to the fact the object in question is what it individually and uniquely is, just as we experience ourselves as being who we individually and uniquely are. Norris Clarke, S.J. *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being-God-Person, 35.*

as other persons' experiences, and hence communication of and about those experiences is possible. I shall say more about the communication *of* experiences when discussing empathy.

It is clear that the experiences of giving of self and finding of self have to be *first person experiences*. The actual or potential contents of such experiences may be expressible in third person language but the experiences as such can only have any reality as experiences of actual individual persons.

Instantiations of Giving of Self and Finding of Self

The aim is to articulate what to me seem to be the fundamental structural processes of *giving of self* and *finding of self*, processes whose specific content is unique to the person who is giving of self and finding of self. In Stein's terminology we are discussing the *ideal essences* of giving of self and finding of self, the empty structural forms which are filled with specific content in particular processes. Having knowledge of the empty or pure structural form enables us to grasp the intelligibility or meaning in an object, event or process so that we can recognise what it is.[10]

A. Giving of self

A1 Giving of self only occurs in the context of personal relationships. Giving of self can only be a giving to another person.[11]

Giving of self is *personal* and is an *action*. We need to have a fuller examination of the structure of personal action.

[10] See Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*: *An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being, 158 for a general discussion of essence and form***.**

[11] We do say things like "She gave herself to the quest of a cure for cancer". The context has an implied reference to other persons who would benefit from the

Above I indicated that fundamental to being a personal self is the capacity to say "I", to be able to make a self-reference. However, the ability to make a self-reference also includes the ability to know *that* one is making such a reference and to know at least something of the content of the reference. Each person can say "I know *that* I am and something of *who* I am".

Wojtyla who, as we have seen, starts his philosophising from the lived experience of persons, says that a person does not have self-*knowledge* until she has an awareness of her awarenesses. *Self-knowledge* then involves an objectification of the implicit awareness of the personal self implicitly given in the first awareness experience.[12] There is some internal distance between the person's awareness of the experience and the experience itself,

There are three types of initial awarenesses which the person can objectify and thus to some extent describe and communicate:[13]

results of the research. Macmurray would say that the researcher is evidencing an indirect relationship with the potential beneficiaries who are probably not personally known to the researcher. Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 43. That the context is important in understanding *giving oneself* to can be seen "He gave himself to the quest to find out why Elvis Presley did not sing 'All Shook Up' at his Austin, Texas, concert on 15 May 1975". There is no relationship reference in this use of *gave himself to* (and it is hard to see how anyone would benefit if the quest was successful) and hence to *give oneself* to does not connote in itself any personal relationship.

[12] Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 37.

[13] The qualification to *some extent* is needed because the full content of personal experience is so rich that attempts to describe must inevitably focus on certain aspects and leave others in the background, perhaps only implicitly recognised by the experiencer. It is also possible to incorrectly describe an experience. The most common misidentification occurs with emotional experience. Some anger might be more accurately described as unresolved grief of which anger is a component.

- An awareness that the personal self is being impacted by some process originating in something external to the person e.g. being hit by a tennis ball.

- An awareness that the process is happening within the confines of the personal self, e.g. becoming aware of hunger pains.

- An awareness that the person is actively doing something, is the originator of processes, of activities. This implies an implicit awareness that the person has the capacity to act.[14]

Wojtyla says within the knowledge of the capacity to act comes the knowledge that the person in acting exercises efficient causality in two different dimensions. The first is that the person is attempting to concretize some external value, to actualize some external good, to make something happen.

The second is that the person is also the free efficient cause of a change in herself. She is freely making herself into a certain type of person, or confirming herself to be a certain type of person. She is *determining herself*.[15] She is become more of a "someone" in an ethical sense.[16] This *someone*, of course, has been ontologically present (and thus is a *suppositum*) from the first moment of personal existence but the full reality of the current living person has been determined not only by her biological and psychological developmental events but also by her past choices.[17] All persons

[14] Wojtyla clearly accepts Aquinas' distinction between actus humanus (human action) and actus hominis (human activity).

[15] "Self-determination reveals that what takes place in an act of will is not just an active directing of the subject towards a value. Something more takes place as well: when I am directed by an act of will towards a particular value I myself determine not only this directing but through it I simultaneously determine myself as well." Wojtyla, Person and Community, 191.

can be and are self- determining. However, Wojtyla says that not only do human persons have the capacity to freely determine themselves, they have to do so. He calls this aspect of the human person self- possession. Persons cannot choose not to have self-possession. All they can do is to recognise that they have to act from within its reality. They have to make choices for themselves. They cannot but be in charge of their lives. They have to possess themselves.[19]

The experience of self-possession also reveals to the person the natural tendency towards flourishing, the completion of her development as a human person.[20] She is aware that she is not yet all that it is possible for her to be. The experience of self-possession

[16] Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, 192.

[17] Wojtyla says "The human being as a person is constituted metaphysically as a being by being the *suppositum* and so from the very beginning the human being is someone who exists and acts, although *actus humanus* appears only at a certain stage of human development ... The individual's whole development in turn tends clearly towards the emergence of the person and personal subjectivity in the human *suppositum*. In this way somehow on the basis of this *suppositum*, the human self gradually both discloses itself and constitutes itself- and it discloses itself also by constituting itself … The *suppositum humanum* must somehow manifest itself as a human self: metaphysical subjectivity must manifest itself as personal subjectivity." Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, 225.

[18] Wojtyla, The Acting Person, 107. I note that the expression giving of self implies some kind of self-possession. The old adage nemo dat quad non habet (you cannot give what you do not have) expresses a logical necessity.

[19] There are echoes here of the Sartrean "man is condemned to be free". However, for Wojtyla freely acting from personal self-possession in accordance with objective truths about the human person brings a sense of fulfillment, of happiness.

[20] Wojtyla refers to the finality proper to the person as *autoteleology*. Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, 321.

also reveals that there is a moral dimension to personal existence, to the movement towards personal fulfillment. There is awareness that not all potential actions will enhance the person, make her good, bring her closer to the fulfillment of her personal existence. She can act in ways which frustrate this development. She also becomes aware that she should not act in such ways. She sees she has the power and the moral necessity to act in ways which promote her fulfillment. She becomes aware of the fundamental principle of conscience "Do good and avoid evil" and sees that she becomes good (and flourishes) in acting in accordance with the truths revealed to her conscience and becomes bad if she does not act in accordance with such truths.[21] She is revealed to herself as an unavoidably moral person. All personal actions have a moral dimension and personal existence is a moral existence.[22]

Finally, for Wojtyla, the person is self-governing. As I interpret him, he means that there is distinction between the process of willing an action and the process of carrying it out. The person cannot carry out an action which is in contradiction to the prior determination or confirmation of who the person wishes to become. It is as if the person says to herself "I've decided to become x by doing y, so I'll tell myself to do y and start to do it".[23]

[21] "In fulfilling an action, I fulfil myself in it if the action is "good" which means in accord with my conscience (assuming, of course, that this is a good conscience, a true conscience). By acting in this way, I myself *become* good and *am* good as a human being. The moral value reaches to the very depths of my ontic structure as a *suppositum humanum*. The opposite would be an action not in accord with my conscience, a morally evil action. I then *become* evil and *am* evil." (italics in original). Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, 235.

[22] "For Wojtyla, happiness or self-realisation, has a decisively moral character". Adrian J, Reimers, *An Analysis of the Concepts of Self-Fulfillment and Self-Realisation in the Thought of Karol Wojtyla, Pope John Paul II*, (Lewiston N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 138.

The above reflections give some indication of why it can be said that the totality of the personal self is involved in every personal action. It is this person and no other who takes this particular concrete historical action. Personal action does not, however, necessarily involve giving of self as not every action is a gift of self although a particular action in fact can be an expression of a gift of self or incarnate or inform a prior pledge to give oneself.

To communicate is to act.[24] The personal reality beneath whatever might emerge in communication is deep and rich in content. It is important to realise that the communication is not just *about* the personal experience, linguistic communication, but is also communication *of* the personal experience. There is an experience of the person which is beyond words at first, and there may be aspects which remain beyond words.

A2 Giving of self requires that the gift is received.
The act of gifting cannot be completed without the intended receiver actually receiving the gift. If a gift is not received, then there is an offer of a gift but no actual gift.

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[23] Wojtyla says that "In phenomenological experience, I appear as someone who possesses myself and who is simultaneously possessed by myself. I also appear as someone who governs myself and who is simultaneously governed by myself. Both one and the other are revealed by self-determination: they are implied by self-determination also enrich its content. Through self-possession and self-governance, the personal structure of self-determination comes to light in its whole proper function." Wojtyla*, Person and Community*, 193.

[24] There is a considerable literature on the notions of *speech acts* and *communicative action*. See John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Jurgen Habermas, ed. Maeve Cooke, *On the Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998); J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

A3 The process of giving of self is not initiated with an explicit or implicit requirement that the receiver respond in specific ways, or indeed at all.
The above does not exclude the possibilities of the giver hoping for specific responses and offering the gift of self in ways which might make it easier for the person to respond in hoped-for ways. The emptying of self implies a certain detachment from the outcome of the process of attempting to give oneself.[25] Of course, in the ideal situation an appropriate response will be made by the receiver.

A4 The potential receiver of the gift of self is *perceived* to be and actually *is* willing to receive the person, accepting in advance without full knowledge the gifting person with her past, in her present and with her potential futures.
Gabriel Marcel speaks of disponibilité (or "availability"), presence and fidelity as necessary if knowledge of another person as person is to be gained.[26] Martin Buber points to the necessity of an intentionality which goes beyond the mere affirmation of who the person is right now. He refers to *confirmation* of the other person which is the recognition not only of who the person is now but also of the "future" person this person has been *created* (Buber's word) to become.[27]

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[25] There are serious debates about whether or not such detachment is a human possibility. Jacques Derrida is one who believes human giving of self in the absolute sense is impossible. Johnstone provides a critique of Derrida. Brian V. Johnstone, "The Gift: Derrida, Marion and Moral Theology", (2004) 42 Studia Moralia, 411-432, at 422. As I understand Johnstone, his view is that God has willed that, by mutual giving of selves, we come to the flourishing that God wills us to have. We are made to give and receive from others and thus can reasonably and rightly expect that in general we will be given to.

[26] See Otto Friedrich Bollnow, "Marcel's Concept of Availability" in The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, eds. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Lewis Edwin Hahn, (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1984), 183.

This means that the receiving person is to be ready to assist the other to resist the actualizations of possibilities which are not in accord with the movement towards the full flourishing of the giver.

A5 Giving of self is temporally preceded by a personal decision to disclose appropriately and consciously to the other person contents of personal experience which the person does not disclose other than in relationships of great trust.
These experiences will include internally conflicting and shame-filled experiences, doubts, fears, deeper intensities of emotions etc.

A6 Giving of self includes an associated decision not to restrict opportunities for the other person to become aware of non-consciously revealed or communicated aspects of the personal self and to be willing to receive feedback about those non-consciously revealed aspects.
Giving of self is temporally preceded by an acknowledgement and a willing acceptance by the giver that the receiver will not only continue to take in information about the giver of which the giver is not consciously aware, but will, as result of receiving the gift, be potentially able to take in additional unconsciously transmitted information that would not have been available had the gift of self not been made.

Included in the decision not to restrict opportunities is the acknowledgement that it is impossible to prevent some perception by others of who and what we are.[28] Giving of self includes the willingness to receive feedback from the other to whom the giving of self is directed.

[27] Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, ed. Maurice Friedman, trans. Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965), 182.

A7 Completed giving of self implies a permanency of commitment of each to the other, a commitment that the knowledge gained in the process of mutual giving of self will never be used for any harmful purpose.
Such a commitment is in the context of committing to always take the perceived true good of the other person into account in making choices for the immediate or remote future, and to give absolute priority to the flourishing of the other when circumstances make this necessary. In short, this is a commitment never to deliberately harm the other and wherever possible to promote the flourishing of the other.

The actual ways in which this commitment is expressed will depend on the specific circumstances obtaining, on the specification of what is the true good involved and on the specification of what kind of circumstances make the giving of absolute priority to the other absolutely necessary.[29]

A8 A completed process in which both participants give and receive the other's gift of self results in an experience of personal unity with each other.
There is an experience which might be described metaphorically as

[28] This seems the inevitable consequence of being any kind of existent. Norris Clarke says that the activity of a being necessarily manifests its substantial being. The scholastic adage is *agere sequitur esse* (to act follows upon, or naturally flows out of, to be). Norris Clarke says "Real being is conceived as a dynamic inner act of presence, which has a natural aptitude and tendency to flow over into activity proportionate to and expressive of its nature" He further is of the view that to be fully is to be *substance-in relation*." Norris Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being-God-Person*, 8. To be active is to be knowable. W. Norris Clarke, S.J., *Person and Being*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), 14.

[29] Exploration of these issues is another essay in itself. Here I just want to record what I see as the fundamental principles.

an experience of one's personal being "flowing" towards the other (a dimension of self-emptying) as well as an experience of the receiving into oneself the "flow" of the personal being of the other.[30] There is an experience of unity which has a deeply spiritual and emotional quality.

In an actual situation, not all of the above structural processes will be only partially instantiated. According to circumstances, some will only be minimally instantiated. However, I want to suggest that unless each of the eight structural processes are at least minimally instantiated there is not a giving of self process occurring.

I do not think that it is necessary that the participants be able to articulate their experiences of the processes but I think that they are aware of whether or not they are involved in the process of giving of self. Articulation of awareness presupposes awareness and may promote a fuller grasp of what is contained in the awareness but there is real and effective awareness which is prior to articulation and which can be beyond full articulation.[31]

[30] The following analogy, perhaps, points to some aspects of the "two-in-one" aspect of self-giving and of loving. Imagine two persons as two patches of fog, (each patch being differently structured) rolling in from opposite ends of a valley. The patches "merge" to form "one fog" in the centre of the valley. However, whilst the two patches interact with each other, unite and are somewhat altered in that interaction, the individual components of the original patches retain their own fundamental structures.

[31] Neuroscience suggests that such awareness is related to activity in the *right* hemisphere of the brain. Janov says right hemisphere activity enables the person to be "empathic, able to sense what others are feeling, able to sense when someone is sincere". Arthur Janov, *The Biology of Love*, (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), 118. Others point to the right hemisphere's role in the "holistic grasping of complex structures, patterns, configurations, and structures." Paul Watzlawick, *The Language of Change: Elements of Therapeutic Communication* (New York: Basic Books,1978), 22. The left hemisphere is primarily associated with verbal, analytical, problem-solving processes. The right

Clearly there can be degrees of instantiation in the processes of giving of self. A developing intimate relationship between two people will involve ever more complete instantiations of mutual giving and receiving of self. There is an increasing empathy involved in the giving and receiving of self. Empathy is more than intellectual understanding, a comprehension of linguistic communications. For Stein, empathy fundamentally is the experience of being directly aware of another's experience as the other's experience. I do not infer that another person is feeling pain. I become directly aware of it. I find myself in its presence.[32] Empathy can occur apart from the processes of giving of self but it seems to underpin those processes, being fundamental to the assessment of trust and the appreciations of other's emotions.[33]

The fact that empathy is fundamentally a direct experience of the other's experience as the other's experience (and thus different to

hemisphere in the infant develops ahead of the left hemisphere. Left hemisphere processes are the types of processes which academic philosophers and scientists predominantly use in their professional pursuits, and it seems to me that this is why processes such as "intuition" and the "grasping of totalities" have sometimes received scant or negative attention in academic circles.

[32] Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Stein, (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 1989), 6.

[33] This is not the place to pursue the topic but I am very intrigued by the very recent research in neuroscience which is strongly suggesting that the same neurons (called *mirror* neurons) fire when we are, for example, experiencing an emotion and when we are observing an expression of that emotion in another. There seems to be a neurological substratum to emotional empathy. For example, those with Asperger's Syndrome may have difficulty understanding what those around them think and feel, difficulty in naturally empathising. Evidence suggests the deficiency is a neurological deficiency which may be in the operation of the mirror neurons.

an intellectual understanding of it) is why I previously distinguished between communication *of* an experience and communication *about* an experience. Stein also discusses the "catching" of emotions from others without having any idea of the origin of the emotion.[34]

In any relationship where the participants continue to have contact with each other, there will be many occasions in which the commitment to promote the flourishing of the other (included in the process of giving of self) is the motivation to engage in specific actions. In such cases the commitment may be said to inform the action and change the structure of the action. The correct description of the actual action will point to its qualitative difference from the same physical action performed when not informed by the specific informing commitment.

B. Finding of Self

My fundamental assumption in this section is that every person has a unique personal identity, is who he or she is, and thus possesses a unique ontological truth.[35] This truth, if it could set down in propositional form, would comprise the complete set of propositions which pointed to the total reality of the person in every aspect. Only God is in full possession of such knowledge about any specific person. Individuals can in this life only attain to partial knowledge

[34] Stein deals at length with the phenomenon of mass contagion, such as seems to happen when riots erupt. At one point she says, "It's enough for us to know that there is such a thing as an influencing of a sentient individual by the behaviour of another that doesn't require any mental functioning." Edith Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, trans Mary Catharine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki, (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 2000), 184.

[35] Norris Clarke defines *ontological truth* as "the innate intelligibility of beings – actually known by God, apt to be known by human minds". W. Norris Clarke, S.J., *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 319.

and partial awareness of their own and others' individual ontological truths.

Norris Clarke makes the general metaphysical point that each existent is active towards the completion of itself, says each existent is not only active but is active towards the completion of itself, having first "made" its essence an existent in the real world.[36] There is an inbuilt dynamism driving the individual existent towards its completion, its perfection, its flourishing. Thus, the existent changes over time without losing its essential identity. These changes are not just accidental changes in the sense that the identity of the being undergoes no change at all whilst there are changes, as it were, on the surface. The whole being changes but not in a way which destroys its fundamental and unique identity.[37]

In my view, following Aquinas, an essential aspect of a person's inner drive towards perfection or flourishing is the innate movement towards discovering, and acting from within, the person's unique

[36] Norris Clarke quotes from Gilson's *History of Philosophy and Education* as follows: "Not: to be, then to act, but: to be is to act. And the very first thing which "to be" does, is to make its own essence, that is "to be a being". This is done at once completely and definitely…But the next thing which "to be" does is to begin bringing its own individual essence somewhat nearer its own completion". W. Norris Clarke, S.J., *Person and Being*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), 8. All beings (except God), in a theistic context, are seen to have received existence from God. There is triadic structure in all existents. "We should describe every created being as possessing its own existence *from another, in itself* and oriented *towards others*" (italics in original). Norris Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being-God-Person*, 119.

[37] Norris Clarke says "The Thomistic substance remains self-identical only by constantly being at work, so to speak, actively expressing itself through its own actions and actively assimilating and transmuting into itself – i.e. imposing its own characteristic unity on – whatever else the surrounding world of agents presents to it in the vast interacting system which is the real world.". Norris Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being-God-Person*, 17.

individual ontological truth. The experience of acting in accordance with personal ontological truth contains experiences of joy and peacefulness, an experience of freedom and liberation from illusion. "The truth will set you free" (Jn 8: 32).

From this perspective, *finding oneself* is the discovery and embracing of one's personal ontological truth. In this life, it is an ongoing process never fully completed. Each partial fully embraced discovery or revealing brings a sense of inner freedom, peace and joy. To be acting out of knowledge and awareness of one's ontological truth is to live in personal truth, to experience flourishing.

Whilst the specific contents of each person's ontological truth and experience of it are unique, there are structural commonalities knowledge of which can guide us in the process of uncovering or revealing of the ontological truths about ourselves. The following are the structures and processes involved in the journey towards living in full personal truth, fully finding oneself:

B1 The possible forms of an individual person's flourishing falls within a definite finite range of possibilities which are available at the first moment of personal existence but are subject to further limitation as life progresses.
The content of the final form of an individual's flourishing is not determined in advance as it includes the result of personal choices made within the concrete historical circumstances of the person's life. However, the form must fall within a finite range of possibilities for that person and the person does not have any say about the extent of the range.

The extent of the range is first limited by the limits of what Stein would call the *ideal essence of the human being* which I understand to be a finite set of possibilities, any of which could theoretically be found to be actualized in any human person. In the real world they

will never all be found in the one person. Some of the theoretical possibilities may in fact never be actualized in the whole history of the human race.[38]

In line with Stein's thinking, we can call the set of all the possibilities which could theoretically be actualized in the life of a particular individual person the *ideal essence of that unique individual person*. At the beginning of a particular person's life certain possibilities contained within the ideal essence of the human being are excluded from the set specific to the individual because of:

- the child's genetic code
- the concreteness of the historical and cultural circumstances in which the child is conceived and lives
- the early infancy experiences which as we have noted can affect physical and psychical development
- the socialisation of the child within a specific culture and educational system.

There is some force in Heidegger's saying that we are thrown into existence.[39] Not only are each person's theoretical possibilities limited by genetics and the time and place of being conceived and born, but also the actions of other persons and the impact of

[38] Stein is very clear that any human knowledge of ideal essences is not quasi-divine knowledge. Our knowledge of essences is very much conditioned by our existence in time and the limitations that brings. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, 118, 103. The use of the English word ideal is somewhat misleading as the usage (in reference to persons) here does not necessarily connote goodness or perfection in the moral sense. Ideal refers to the realm of ideas or forms. In such a realm the forms are empty, being filled, taking specific content, in the world of actual existents.

[39] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 174.

external events limit further the person's possibilities without the person being in any way able to prevent such limitation.

In my view, these possibilities are precise and specific. Theoretically, the actuality that I am sitting in this chair at this precise moment excludes the possibility that I am sitting in the chair in the next room at this precise moment, although not two minutes ago either possibility could have been actualized. Though this is a trivial example, it shows that the living of life is a journey through sets of changing possibilities. Some previously available possibilities are excluded forever by particular actualizations, and some are made more likely, if not guaranteed, by past and present actualizations.[40]

There is a creative freedom in the movement towards flourishing but the person cannot totally determine the content of possible flourishing.[41] Following Wojtyla we can say that not all possible choices made by a person actually contribute to her progress towards flourishing. Some retard that progress; some reverse it. Some choices confirm and increase her moral goodness; some choices make or increase her moral badness. A person's present ontological truth is partly the result of her self-determinations made in the context of choosing certain actions.

Thus, the complete ontological truth of a person, at any particular moment, has these aspects:

[40] Having both legs amputated ends the dream of running under ten seconds for the hundred metres. Being awarded a PhD increases the chances of an academic appointment.

[41] This view is clearly not a post-modern view where the self, the forms of flourishing are said to be determined entirely by personal choice. For a discussion of the post-modern self, see Brian V. Johnstone, "The Self as Receiver and Giver: A Critique of the Modern and Postmodern Self", *Australian EJournal of Theology*, Pentecost 2006, http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_7/Johnstone accessed 15 September 2006.

- partial actualizations of her genetic potentials
- partial actualizations of the possibilities which remained open after her initial socialisation and education
- actualizations which have occurred as the result of the impact of external events
- actualizations which have occurred as a direct consequence of her choosing particular actions
- future possibilities still open
- theoretical possibilities no longer open because of impact of external events or a result of past choices.[42]

To find oneself at a particular moment is to grow towards greater knowledge and awareness of the complete ontological truth as it is at that moment. There is no complete finding of oneself, no complete knowledge of one's ontological truth in this life.[43]

B2 Personal existence is a received and receiving existence.
In a Christian framework, all human persons are both ultimately created by God and held in existence by God. All human existence is received existence. This is fundamental to Christian belief.

[42] I think Stein would say the complete ontological truth includes what she calls the *individual nature* of the person. An *individual nature* is a nature which has the characteristics which are essential to making *this* particular being what it is, as distinct from any other being, and being known as this particular being and no other and is an instantiation of a *universal nature* which is present in each individual person but can be present in vastly different ways. See Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, 81, 226.

[43] Perhaps, the particular judgement after death is the moment of taking possession of one's full ontological truth for the first time. As noted earlier, Stein stresses that our knowledge of essences is very much conditioned by our existence in time and by the limitations that it brings. She talks of the stages of self- knowledge in which an individual person comes to deeper understanding of who he or she is. *Stein, Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, 103, 430.

However, once in existence persons begin to receive from other humans.

In the womb there is the reception from the mother of what is needed to begin the development of the person, both physical and psychical.[44] After birth, the need for the reception of ongoing physical care is obvious.

Psychologists and neurologists are increasingly discovering the role of so-called attachment experiences for the child in not only developing the capacity for relationships in later childhood and adult life but also for the actual development of the physical brain.[45] In other language we might say that without receiving love, the child cannot develop. The received love in infancy and early childhood must be mediated first through loving touch.[46]

[44] I use the term *psychical* to refer to the interrelated intellectual and emotional development of the person which is intricately interwoven with physical development as such.

[45] See Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (New York: Guildford Press, 1999), 2. The book attempts to build a foundation for neurobiology of interpersonal experience based on the following principles: (a) the human mind emerges from patterns in the flow of energy and information within the brain and between brains, (b) the mind is created within the interaction of internal neurophysiological processes and interpersonal experiences and (c) the structure and functioning of the developing brain are determined by how experiences, especially within interpersonal relationships, shape the genetically programmed maturation of the nervous system.

[46] This was Macmurray's observation, well before psychological science found clear evidence to support his position. Macmurray begins his analysis by stating that the infant is born totally helpless, needing total care if it is to survive. This care must be personal care, not only because it must be provided by other persons who, as it were, can think for the child, interpret its cries, feed it and so on, but also because the child needs personal physical contact. The child needs

My view is that the need to receive love is a constant though human existence. It is never outgrown, being a fundamental structure in the human person. The need to receive love is grounded in the need for acceptance and affirmation, not to mention Buber's confirmation. A human life without the necessary minimum of these is a very impoverished life indeed. To deny that one needs love is to deny a universal fundamental ontological truth and to attempt to live without love is to doom oneself to essential frustration. The need to receive love might well be the need to have replenished what Stein in her earlier works called *life-power*.[47]

Macmurray emphatically says that "personal existence is *constituted* by the relation of persons" (italics in original).[48] He says:

> "We need one another to be ourselves. This complete and unlimited dependence of each of us on the others is the central

to literally be in touch with the mother and to be in conscious perceptual relation with her. The infant needs to be born into an ongoing loving personal relationship if normal development is to occur. Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 49.

[47] MacIntyre notes that in the Stein's earlier works "Life- power is at this point the name of an otherwise unknown cause, variation in which produces variations in its effects". Alasdair MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue 1913-1932* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006). Later, Stein seems to place what she earlier called *life-power* within the soul. She says "The living soul of natural man has the power to form those material elements which are at its disposal for the building up of its body into a unity, and to maintain and animate this unity in its own structure for a certain length of time. Beyond this the soul has its own inner being and the capacity to receive into itself new life from extraneous sources and thereby to experience an increase, a strengthening and a heightening of its own life." Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, 519.

[48] Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 12. In his introduction to Persons in Relation, Frank G. Kirkpatrick says "Macmurray's postmodernism was an attempt to re-establish our knowledge of other persons in the immediacy of the lived experience of personal relationships that make it whole". Macmurray, Persons in Relation, xi.

> and crucial fact of personal existence. Individual independence is an illusion: and the independent individual, the isolated self is a non-entity. In ourselves we are nothing and when we turn our eyes inward we find a vacuum."[49]

Macmurray says the whole purpose of *Persons in Relation* is to show "that there can be no man until there are at least two in communication".[50] His whole argument indicates that Macmurray is referring to loving and caring communication, not just instrumental communication aimed at getting the job done.

B3 Personal existence requires the giving of love if flourishing is to occur.

Macmurray's position that personal existence is fundamentally co-existence in which persons give and receive love (of varying kinds) to me implies that the mutual loving, where each loves and is loved, must occur if a person is to flourish. A person can only flourish within the context of personal relationships with others.

"Each…. acts and therefore thinks and feels for the other, and not for himself."[51] Each is the recipient of the other's care. There is a personal unity established which is characterised by each regarding the other as an equal, each respecting the fundamental freedom of the other and thus neither obligating or feeling obligated to act a part, thus being free to be totally self-revealing to the other. In this personal union there is no fusion of selves, no loss of personal

[49] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 211. In another place Macmurray says "The unit of personal existence is not the individual but two persons in relation … we are persons not by individual right, but in virtue of our relation to one another… The personal is constituted by personal relatedness. The unit of the personal is not the "I' but the 'You' and I'". Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 61.

[50] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 12.

[51] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 158.

identity, of individual personhood but "Each realises himself in and through the other".[52]

I take from this that there is no individual personal flourishing without the person being in a loving relationship, without the person actually loving specific people (God not excluded). There is no finding of oneself without being in a loving relationship. Within the drive to live in ontological truth, is the drive to enter into loving relationships which lead to the flourishing of those involved. Such loving aims at attempting to receive the full ontological truth of the other and attempting to bring the fullness of one's own ontological truth to the service of the other.

In summary, finding of self cannot be achieved apart from the processes of giving and receiving of self which are fundamental to personal relationships. Finding of self is an active and creative process in which the progressively actualizing person becomes aware of the limits on her personal possibilities, of her currently actualizable possibilities, of her current actualities, of what actions will promote her flourishing. Those actions include loving, giving of self and receiving others' gifts of self.[53]

The Necessity for Giving of Self in this Imperfect World

The outline of *giving of self and finding of self* so far, whilst stressing that instantiations are only partial instantiations, has not fully shown

[52] Macmurray goes on to say that the union of the two must not be exclusive to the two but must be potentially open to all other persons. If this is not the case, then the negative aspect of excluding others erodes the positivity in the personal union and ultimately destroys it. Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 158.

[53] Johnstone concludes his article by saying "To be a self is to be one who receives gifts from others and gives gifts to others. The basic moral choice is to be that kind of self." Johnstone, *The Self as Receiver and Giver: A Critique of the Modern and Postmodern Self*, 14.

why they are only partial instantiations. It would be possible to conclude from what has been said so far that the incompleteness of the instantiations is purely related to the fact that persons must grow and develop in time.

If the inner drive is towards flourishing by living in, and acting from, full ontological truth through participation in loving relationships, what prevents this drive from naturally prevailing so that we all are joyfully flourishing together right now? Why do we all, at times, choose actions which do not in fact promote our flourishing? Why is our experience of living not completely peaceful and joyful?

John Rist's way of referring to the lack of peace and joy, which to greater or lesser extent is to say that we experience ourselves as divided, as it were, experiencing ourselves at various times, in various contexts as a number of different, even incompatible, temporary selves somehow loosely associated with each other so that there is some kind of unity.[54] Rist, if he used the language of this essay, I imagine would say that the journey to finding oneself is one of attempting to overcome the effects of previous choices not in accord with the ideal essence of the individual person, of attempting to refrain from using the value system within which such choices were made, and of attempting to unify those aspects of the "different selves", which are in accord with ideal essence and to act solely from within that unified self. For Rist, accepting responsibility for one's personal history is part of the process of personal unification.[55]

Macmurray's analysis of the interaction between "mother" (or primary caretaker) and child provides some explanation of how such internal division begins. Macmurray says that in normal

[54] John M. Rist, *Real Ethics: Reconsidering the Foundations of Morality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 99.

[55] Rist*, Real Ethics: Reconsidering the Foundations of Morality,* 107.

circumstances, the helplessly dependent child has the experience of having all their basic needs met even if not immediately. The child has an implicit trust that the communicated need will be attended to and so, Macmurray says, the child's expectation is grounded in imagination and some anticipatory enjoyment associated with the satisfaction of the need is experienced.[56]

However, a time has to come if the child is to grow towards appropriate independence when the mother must deliberately refuse to meet the child's expressed need as a way of truly loving the child. Macmurray says that such refusals psychologically threaten the child whose certainty that their expectations would be met is overturned. The child feels a threat to continued existence and becomes concerned with defence against the perceived threat. There is the beginning of despair from which the mother can rescue him by the revelation of her continued love.[57] It is through the repeated experience of the mother's seeming withdrawal and return that the child begins to discover and realise that they are an individual.[58]

Macmurray says that this initiates in the child a phase of self-assertion, self-consciousness and self-development, containing an element of illusion of self-sufficiency and independence of others.[59]

[56] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 88.

[57] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 90. Macmurray would not want to claim that all these experiences are known as such by the child which of course is incapable of articulating any experiences. They can just have them. However, the experiences of infants clearly do differ and Macmurray's characterisation of infant experiences seems quite plausible.

[58] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 91.

[59] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 95.

A clash of wills develops.[60] Strong ambivalent feelings are set up in the child who needs the mother's love and approval but now has an awareness that the mother may not (will not) change her mind and thus is revealed as someone who can thwart the child, perhaps even abandon the child.[61]

Even the best mothers are human and will act, at times, out of self-interest and act in ways which are not in the child's best interests. The child's feeling that the mother is oppositional is not totally an illusion.[62] Ambivalence towards the mother would seem now to be a continuing aspect of the child's experience. If the mother manages to continue to communicate love whilst appropriately opposing the fulfillment of the child's desires for harmful things or experiences, minimum harm will occur.[63] However, the child has had the first experiences of withdrawal of love and approval, and is aware that these are permanent possibilities. Ambivalence and a degree of wariness, potential mistrust has entered their experience.

If the mother's way of restraining the child is by the excessive use of force, then Macmurray says two types of responses in the child can

[60] The child becomes demanding, throws tantrums, will seemingly not be pacified until they get what they want. The mother opposes and the child in the midst of the anger begins to have a burgeoning sense of themself as an agent, a doer whose doing is being thwarted by a more powerful opposing agent. The experience is very painful for the child and they wish to escape. Any parent who has been through the "terrible twos" will instantly know what Macmurray is referring to.

[61] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 99.

[62] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 101.

[63] The child's ongoing need to participate in a mutually loving relationship continues to be met, even if the relationship is not perfect. Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 102.

be predicted. The first is that the child outwardly conforms, becomes submissive but their behaviour is predominantly motivated by self-defence. The child cannot participate as much as they need to participate in a loving relationship with their mother and thus some of their essential needs are frustrated. The second response is to become openly oppositional, rebellious and aggressive, seeking security through the exercise of power.[64]

Macmurray sees these two seemingly opposite responses as misguided attempts to gain the love and care that the child needs. The submissive child seeks to place an obligation on the parent to care for the child. "How could you not care for me since I am so good?". The rebellious child seeks to make the parent afraid not to care for the child. In both cases there is deception which eats at the heart of mutuality, even if such mutuality appears to be present.[65]

The first response leads to the practice of concealing experiences from others which can lead to the concealing of experiences from oneself, the Freudian repression. It can also lead to the taking on (introjection) of the values of the powerful figures in the child's life, then being the values which guide personal choices. Choices grounded in such values might not be in accord with the true flourishing, including moral flourishing, of the developing person. If the values introjected from different people are inconsistent with each other, we can see the basis for the development of Rist's divided selves as the person acts from whatever appears to be the prevailing values in the specific context at hand.

The second rebellious response leads to a denial of the need for freely given love because the behaviour which, whilst it may result in the child receiving what they physically need or simply want, is not

[64] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 103.

[65] Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 105.

going to receive an unambivalent or unconditional love. To the extent that the mother feels forced to do what the child wants, her actions will be ambivalent.

The child can cope with such ambivalence by denying the need for love. This is a denial of a fundamental ontological reality. Living in the illusion of not needing love will mean that the developing person will not receive the love necessary for flourishing. Further, rebelliousness can lead to the rejection of values which are in accord with the true flourishing of the person and so she may not take actions which promote her flourishing.

Macmurray has described two extreme types of responses of children to inadequate parenting. I suggest that we all fall somewhere on the continuum between those two extremes because all parenting is imperfect and, because of our own limitations, we all to some extent misinterpret good parenting.

Thus, the ontological constitution of a person at any time contains a tendency to mistrust others and hide the content of some thoughts and feelings from them, especially thoughts and feelings of which she thinks the other will, or even might, disapprove. Such thoughts and feelings may even pass from her own awareness and knowledge, although they are in fact making a contribution to the actual choices she is making, choices which may not be actually promoting her flourishing. Her journey towards finding herself has many hidden obstacles to overcome.

It is here that we can see the importance of the process involved in giving of self as a necessary component in finding oneself. The receiver's response of personally and truly accepting (and thus not rejecting) the gift of the other's communicated and revealed partial ontological truth intensifies the trust which must be present if the process of giving of self is even to begin. Within the safety of

the evidenced trust, the giving person has the security to explore aspects of her experience of herself in order to:

- evaluate and take responsibility for past choices
- make changes in her explicitly consciously held values
- express thoughts and feelings which previously evoked feelings of shame
- allow background and previously unconscious thoughts and feelings to come to the foreground of consciousness
- become aware of her present limitations and the possibilities still open to her as she moves towards flourishing
- act in ways which do promote her flourishing, which includes the continuing readiness to give of self appropriately and continuing readiness to act in ways which truly contribute to the flourishing of others, or at least do not hinder it directly.

The safety of the giving relationship enables the giving person to be able to really accept feedback from the receiver about the receiver's experience of what the giver has unconsciously revealed within the process of giving of self. Such feedback can lead in an increase in the known ontological truth of a person.

A complete process of giving of self involves the giving of each of the participants, each is simultaneously giver and receiver so that all the processes described above are occurring in each. Each is finding themselves in loving relationship with the other and wills the other's finding of self and flourishing, knowing that acting to promote the other's flourishing will have as its inevitable consequence progress in the flourishing of both. We cannot find ourselves alone.

To act so that the direct aim of the action is self-flourishing and not the promotion of the flourishing of the other is not part of loving action and does not promote the agent's flourishing. I think that this is the point of the use of the word sincere in the original quotation

from Gaudium et Spes. An insincere self-interested gift of self might appear to be a gift of self but it is no gift at all.

Conclusion

In this essay I have tried both to examine the basic structural processes involved in the experience of the actions of giving of self and finding of self and to situate those structural processes within a philosophical and ontological anthropology drawn from the thought of Wojtyla, Stein, Macmurray and Norris Clarke. That anthropology shows that the forms that flourishing can take for a specific individual are multiple but finite and change as a result of external events and personal choices.

I have tried to steer a middle course between a postmodern view that the person herself can decide entirely what will constitute her flourishing and a view that there is only one form, or very few forms, that the actual flourishing of an individual unique person can take.

I have tried to show that giving of self is necessary to the process of finding of self, that it is a continuing process and that it involves personal relationships at the deepest level. It is clearly humanly impossible to give oneself in any deeply personal way to a large number of people. There simply is not the time available. It is possible to relate to other people in a way which implies openness to giving of self with that person should appropriate circumstances arise. To me this is the essence of living lovingly and to live lovingly is to find yourself and to rejoice in the finding of others.

(University assignment 2006, abridged).

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2

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Presents a vision of marriage and introduces the concept of loving presence to sustain the relationship over time. Explores marital intimacy and how spouses can grow in love. Discusses sexual communication in lovemaking, and includes background notes on sexuality for presenters of pre-marriage education courses.

2.1 Loving Presence

All experiences of human loving are oriented to, and to a certain extent realise, a communion of persons. In the fullness of loving, the persons have an experience of deep personal union. All loving, if it is to be true loving, must be open to the possibility of personal union and be oriented to it.[1]

In loving communion, two people are aware of, and embrace each other as persons, at a deep level of their personal being.[2] I am going to refer to the experience of two people who are in direct personal contact with each other as “loving presence”.

Direct personal contact includes at least one of the following: seeing each other, speaking to each other and touching each other. At the moment of loving presence each has to be somehow aware of the other, and aware that there is mutual awareness. This intensity of this experience will vary at different times, depending on the circumstances in which the experience occurs.

Loving presence cannot be continuously sustained in the normal circumstances of life. People have to move apart in the physical sense; each cannot be in direct sensory contact with the other every moment of their lives.[3] Physical separation does not destroy the loving communion. Rather, the memory of the loving presence becomes a context, sometimes in the foreground, sometimes in the background, for other experiences in life. There is also a looking forward to the next occasion of loving presence.

[1] Wojtyla says that “love is by its very nature not unilateral but bilateral, something ‘between’ persons, something shared”. Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts (London: Collins, 1981), 85.

[2] Hence, lovers may say “I love you from the bottom of my heart”.

[3] I assume that, even in the limiting case of conjoined twins, there are times when one is asleep and one is awake.

Those who have experienced loving would probably not have difficulty with the above general description of loving. The philosophical task is to provide an analysis of what is happening and the conditions of its possibility of happening. Not so easy!

Mutual Awareness

There can be no loving presence without each of the persons being aware of each other as persons.

There is a strong argument to suggest that the loving presence is, perhaps, best established and confirmed through touch, a meeting of skins. Macmurray, after observing that philosophical theories of sense perception tend to be primarily theories of vision, suggests that tactile perception is more fundamental than visual perception.[4]

In the normal course of human development, in utero and in early infancy, it would seem that touch is the primary way that love is communicated to the child. We first become aware of loving though our skins, and this experience remains a fundamental way in which we recognise that another person loves us, a primary way that we can communicate our loving to another. We would certainly doubt the love of someone who recoiled from the very thought of touching us.[5]

[4] Macmurray supports this suggestion by observing it is tactile perception which enables us to distinguish between imagining and actually perceiving, and by observing, in general, that we come aware of the other as other than ourselves because it is resistant to our touch. John Macmurray, *The Self as Agent*, (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 104, 108.

[5] There is plenty of evidence to indicate that infants to thrive, and even to survive, need to be touched gently and in a loving way. Infants can only respond as infants but the basis for co-presence is being established. Macmurray provides a comprehensive account of how the primary caregiver – infant relationship is the context for the infant's development of a sense of being a separate personal being living in communication with other personal beings. This awareness is developing

The fundamental point is that loving touch places us in the unmediated presence of each other. We are each there in our touching. Buber says "Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You."[6] We are not experiencing each other primarily as objects. In our individual self-presences, we are simply loving without having an explicit or concentrated awareness of our individual selves.

Nevertheless, in our loving, once we have acquired language, we do communicate our self-understanding, as well as our internal experiences, to each other.[7] To do this we, to a certain extent, objectify our first-person experiences. We will almost inevitably have a sense that the language used to endeavour to convey the experience to the other does not, and cannot, do full justice to the totality of our experience.[8] The most we can hope for is that the

before the infant begins to acquire language, and is, perhaps, a necessary condition for the acquisition of language. John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 60.

[6] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1971), 62.

[7] The use of spatial language ("interior" life, thoughts, of the person) in talking about personal experience and personal subjectivity seems almost unavoidable. It must be remembered that the interior life in not in a person as something is in a container, or hidden behind a wall. The interior life is the life of the whole person (spirit-body) in its subjective aspect.

[8] We, once we have learned to speak, do not have experiences which are in no way related to our linguistic knowledge. We can use a via negativa, "not like x, not like y not like…" to exclude certain descriptions of experience. We can use metaphors and analogies to point imprecisely to aspects of our experience. However, my claim is still simply that there are elements of personal experience which cannot, in principle, be directly communicated. Something of the uniquely personal character of the experience is lost in its confinement in a linguistic expression.

content of our linguistic communication will be such that we can recognise that we have sufficient mutual understanding to be able to continue the communication. The content of these mutual communications is embraced, welcomed, not just intellectually acknowledged, in the loving.

Action as Free

I have used the word “loving” in this essay rather than the word “love” quite deliberately to emphasise that what is being examined is an action of persons. Loving is a concrete reality. Love is an abstraction.

Loving could only be an action of a person if it is free. Phenomenologically, the experience of freedom is “I am going to do this and I could do otherwise”.

The freedom of the human person is not absolute. It is “situated”. The following are some of the constraints which situate and limit the actual exercise of my freedom:

- my body. My body, as body, is, at any moment, a specific physical system with certain concrete actualities and potentials which, in a whole range of ways, limit the actions I can take, much as I might wish to take them.

- my cognitive functioning. The possibilities for action which present themselves to me can only be drawn from the way I am aware of, and conceptualise, the world. I am enculturated. My particular language has given me access to the world but only, as it were through, a specific window. If I understood the world, including myself, more fully, more possibilities for action would be revealed. I would, in a sense, be freer.

- my emotions which may blind me to certain possibilities for

action.

- my unconscious psychic functioning which ensures that certain possibilities do not occur to me.

- the organisation of the social and the physical world which are not actualised at a particular point in time in such a way as to allow me to actualise the action I have chosen.

- the effects on me as a person, within my very personhood, of the free actions I have previously taken.[9] Not only is the extent of my virtue (which sensitises me to the goodness or otherwise of possibilities) built up or reduced through, and as result of, my actions, but the range of possibilities which will occur to me in the future is directly affected.[10]

Loving as Situated Free Action

The reality of situated freedom in loving has a number of important dimensions. First, in loving we freely embrace each other knowing that we have already exercised our own freedoms and will necessarily do so in the future. We each have a past and a future. We embrace each other, what we are at this moment and we will become, both in the aspects of our personhood about which we had, or will have, no choice, (the “thrown” aspects), and the aspects

[9] This aspect of human freedom is crucial in Wojtyla’s philosophy of the human person. He says “Human actions once performed do not vanish without trace: they leave their moral value which constitutes an objective reality intrinsically cohesive with the person, and thus a reality profoundly subjective. Being a person, man is a “somebody” and being somebody, he may be either good or bad.” (Italics in original). Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 151.

[10] Simply, I am more likely to see future possibilities in the light of the feedback, positive or negative, from my action.

which have resulted, or will result from, from our free choices.[11] [12] We embrace each other under both types of aspect, as those aspects are revealed in linguistic communication and in the immediacy of loving presence. We also embrace what we directly observe about each other, over and above deliberate self-disclosure.

In this mutual embrace, we, by receiving and welcoming the other's whole person into our personal subjective space, each confirm the other's value as the human persons we actually have become, and confirm the unique value we have for each other.[13] It is not just that I am being loved which is important. It is that I am being loved by you as the unique person you are. It is not just that I am loving *someone*. It is that I am loving the unique *you*.

[11] Heidegger emphasises the given (non-free) aspects of personal existence by describing us as being "thrown" into existence. We have no choice about the fact of, the when, and the where of the beginning of our lives and most of the circumstances in which our lives are lived. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarie & Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 264.

[12] Not all their past and future choices will be to our liking. To embrace the person is to embrace the past of the person (a kind of forgiving, even when the past choices were not in any away related to the embracer), and to declare in advance a readiness to forgive.

[13] The receiving includes the willingness to empathise with the other's experience as that experience is communicated directly through words, or indirectly through feelings, or simply in the direct experience of co-presence. We allow ourselves to be directly impacted by the other's experience. Empathy results in similar feelings arising in both persons but each's feeling is experienced distinctly as their own.

However, the confirmation is more than mere acceptance of the reality of each other.[14] It is also the pledge to exercise our freedoms in such a way as will promote the true good of each other. This includes the permanent commitment to be with each other in our individual struggles to exercise freedom in a way which moves towards our fulfilment as human persons. A time-limited commitment, a temporary fidelity, may be on the road to loving but has some distance to travel.

This mutual commitment truly establishes a "we", an authentic subjective community.[15] We have chosen to make each other an essential partner in that journey towards individual fulfilment and to say to each other, "your being in my life I have made essential to my life project. I freely choose that I cannot come to the fulfilment of my life without a fundamental reference to you". To use Marcel's term, we make ourselves "available" to each other and find joy in that availability and the co- presence which results.[16]

This availability does not come at the expense of the true self-fulfilment of either. If I make myself available to you to assist you to do something which works against your true fulfilment, then my

[14] Pembroke discusses Buber's concept of "confirmation" in some detail. Neil Pembroke, The Art of Listening: Dialogue, Shame and Pastoral Care, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark / Hansell Press, 2002), 44. The concept of confirmation give a more personal touch to the traditional but somewhat impersonal definition of love as "willing the good of the other."

[15] Wojtyla, Person and Community: Selected Essays, 245.

[16] The English "availability" is the translation of the French "disponibilité". All, including Marcel himself, do not think that there is a word in English which can convey Marcel's full meaning. Marcel's meaning seems to embrace openness to the other, active readiness to respond, forthrightness and spiritual availability. Gabriel Marcel, Creative Fidelity, trans. Robert Rostal, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), translator's note, 57.

availability is wrongly exercised. If you require me to do something which acts against my true fulfilment (even if it does not act against yours) then I must refuse. Availability may require self-sacrifice but never self-negation.[17]

Why You?

Fundamental to the explanation of why these two people have joined in loving presence is that they have found each other attractive. This attraction is impossible to understand apart from the bodily presence of each to the other for the attraction is to the whole (body-spirit) person and is mediated by the bodily senses.[18]

The experienced attraction has its foundations not only in the actuality of the attractive person but also in the psychic makeup of the person attracted which pushes the person towards loving presence with this specific other person. The fundamental experience is "it would be good and enjoyable for me to be with this person".[19]

There are two aspects to this experience. First the other is experienced as valuable, a good for the person.[20] Implicit in the experience of "valuable-for-me" is an awareness of "valuable in his/herself independent of me". Secondly, the other's attractiveness is

[17] To "self-sacrifice" is to change or delay aspects of my life project so that it can accommodate and merge with yours. To "self-negate" is to abandon the having of any individual life except as determined by you.

[18] All of the senses, sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste are actually or potentially involved, particularly in attraction which has an explicitly sexual character. At the same time, the inner life, the subjectivity attracts.

[19] Wojtyla analyses attraction as involving cognition, willing and emotions. Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 74.

[20] The nature of values is a topic in itself. In the language of person perspectives, I

experienced emotionally. The mutual experience of the emotions aroused in attraction facilitates the development of loving presence.[21]

The other's attractiveness has a certain "appeal" which may be consciously or unconsciously invitational on the part of the other. The invitation ("be with me") is for me to step out of my pre-occupation with myself and join with the other.[22] Loving presence has an aspect of continually appealing to each other in both senses of appeal, attraction and call.

Conclusion

Clearly this discussion is really nothing more than an outline of what might constitute an ideal of the fundamentals of human loving.[23] However to sum up, the ideal is that of two incommunicable self-

wonder if a value is a third person perspective good, experienced from within a first-person perspective. A value would then have both objective and subjective dimensions, opening the way to questions like "Is the good experienced as valuable by the person truly as good as experienced?" and "Would all persons with total self-presence and uncontaminated experience necessarily apprehend X as valuable?" If so, then X would be a good for all persons.

[21] Many philosophers and spiritual writers have talked as if emotions were necessarily the enemy of truth (and hence of loving co-presence which must be grounded in the truth of who those loving actually and concretely are) because emotions, in their view, necessarily distort apprehension. Nussbaum has argued at great length and with great plausibility that emotions contain "appraisals or value judgements, which ascribe to things outside the person's own control great importance for that person's own flourishing". Martha C. Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001),4. Her point is that emotions alert us to what we actually find valuable or not valuable and can help us to expand our vision and knowledge if we are truly attentive to them. The emotions in loving co-presence potentially enable the persons to discover more about themselves and each other. Nevertheless, uncontrolled emotion can result in barriers to the perception of the true actuality of ourselves and others.

present persons:

- freely being present to each other, in a way which can be partially described but also transcends language.
- embracing each other in their respective totalities, including their pasts and their futures, with all the limitations each's situated freedom implies.
- being available for each other, and finding joy in that availability, so that they may together and singly move towards their respective fulfilments.
- finding each other attractive and emotionally engaging as incarnate persons.
- forming a communion of persons which is metaphysically real, not just a co- incidence of content in two individual psychological processes.

The ideal, as I said, is never completely concretised in the actual loving of persons which is beset by all kinds of illusions, projections,

[22] Luijpen, *Existential Phenomenology*, 311. Some loving does historically begin with one person responding to the other's appeal for assistance. "Somebody, anybody, help me". However, John Paul II says that even the occasions of merciful love (where inequality and a unilateral relationship would seem to be functionally sufficient) cannot be counted as truly loving unless the giver is also receiving from the other. John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia, (Sydney: St. Paul's Publications,1980), 74.

[23] For instance, I have made no attempt to address explicit sexual loving and sexual desire, nor the complementarity or otherwise of males and females in loving across the sexes, nor the various types of loving, marriage, parental, friendship, etc.

misunderstandings, hurts, and retreats into self-preoccupation to name just a few of the difficulties. Nevertheless having an ideal gives us something to aim for and to measure our progress against.

(University assignment 2006, abridged).

2.2 The Johari Window

The Johari Window is one way of looking at the development of relationships.[1] See diagram below.

The Johari Window

	Known to Self	**Unknown to Self**
Known to Others	Known to self and others	Blind to self Seen by others
Unknown to Others	*Secret area* Hidden from others	Both self and others totally unaware

The concepts are basically very simple:

- "known to self and others" - public knowledge about a person
- "secret area" - the private thoughts of a person, revealed to no one else.
- "blind to self' - "things about the person which others are aware of but of which the person is totally unaware.
- "self and others unaware" - no one is aware something is true of the person. (When it is later known by someone, it is clear that it must have been true before anyone realised it).

[1] J.Luft, H.Ingham, "*The Johari Window*" a graphical model of interpersonal awareness proceedings of the Weston Training Laboratory in Group Development. Los Angeles: University of California, 1955.

An Example of the Johari Window at the Beginning of Marriage

	Known to self	**Unknown to self**
Known to Spouse	Known to self and spouse	Blind to self Seen by spouse
Unknown to Spouse	*Secret area* Hidden from Spouse	Both self and spouse totally unaware

The points to be made about the diagram are:

- note the secret area is still relatively large.
- The "both totally unaware area" is also relatively large. (It takes a lifetime for us to know ourselves relatively completely).

After the marriage has developed over many years:

	Known to Self	**Unknown to Self**
Known to Spouse	Known to self and spouse	Blind to self Seen by spouse
Unknown to Spouse	*Secret area* Hidden from spouse	Both self and spouse totally unaware

Note the differences between the beginning and the developed marriage.

At the beginning of the marriage “known to self and spouse” is relatively small and “both self and spouse, totally unaware” is relatively large.

In the developed stage, there is a much greater shared knowledge. The secret area is much reduced.

The “totally unaware” area is also much reduced but not eliminated.

For the change to have occurred the following must have occurred:

- the mutual trust of the spouses must have grown so that the whatever fears led the “self’ initially to keep the information secret were overcome.

- the mutual trust of the spouses must have grown so that whatever fears led the spouse to refrain from communicating the information initially known to the spouse, and not to the “self’, (or preventing the “self’ from truly receiving the information) were overcome.

- Information must have moved from the “both self and spouse unaware” area as one or both were able to receive it.

2.3 Self-revelation and the role of acceptance in overcoming shame and living in truthful loving[1]

Introduction
What I am going to focus on is the psychological aspects of self-revelation or self-disclosure.

What I hope to do is unpack the experience of attempting to be truly self-revealing in intimate relationships such as marriage, and to look at some ways in which married couples assist each other to come to a fuller self-understanding and self-acceptance.

Handout
As we move through this presentation you will inevitably be thinking about yourself and your relationship with your spouse.

I am going to give you the discussion questions now so that, having had a quick read though them, you can keep the questions in the back of your mind as we go through.

Questions
1. How do you show your appreciation and valuing of the really good aspects of your spouse? In what ways do you like to have appreciation and valuing shown to you.?

2. Can you remember a time when you revealed to your spouse something of which you were ashamed? What was your spouse’s response?

3. Has your spouse ever pointed out that you were exaggerating a strength or were minimising a weakness? What was your response?

[1] Talk for Marriage Sunday, 2008

4. Has your spouse ever drawn your attention to something which you really dislike in yourself? How did you respond.

5. Have you or your spouse ever realized that you had been both avoiding seeing something which was seriously and negatively impacting upon your relationship? How did you both handle the realisation?

The Truth of Each Person
Each one of us is exactly what we are, God's vision embraces our total truth.

The understanding, the perception, that each of us has of our own unique personal being has the following components:

- Joyful Truth
- Shameful Truth
- Distorted Truth
- Resisted Truth
- Denied Truth.

The complete truth about us is the combination of each of the five kinds of truth. We cannot be fully aware of ourselves as we are.

Other people may be aware of aspects of us that we are not. They may see what we cannot see at all. They may have a less distorted view of us than we have. Hence, they can assist us to move toward the fullness of living in truth. The more fully we live in truth, the freer we are from shame, the happier and more joyous we are.

In referring to parts of a person, I am referring to thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories, all aspects of our personal experience of ourselves.

Self-understanding and Self-perception

Joyful Truth

Parts of me which I freely, calmly and even joyously affirm are true. And it is absolutely true that I do have these parts.

Shameful Truth

Parts of me that I admit are true but I am somewhat ashamed of them. I wish they were not true but I do not pretend to myself that they are other than what they are.

Distorted Truth

Parts of me that I have some awareness of but that awareness is distorted. I exaggerate the aspects that I am pleased about and I minimise the aspects of which I am ashamed. I am not really aware that I am doing this exaggerating or minimising but I have a feeling that something is not quite right.

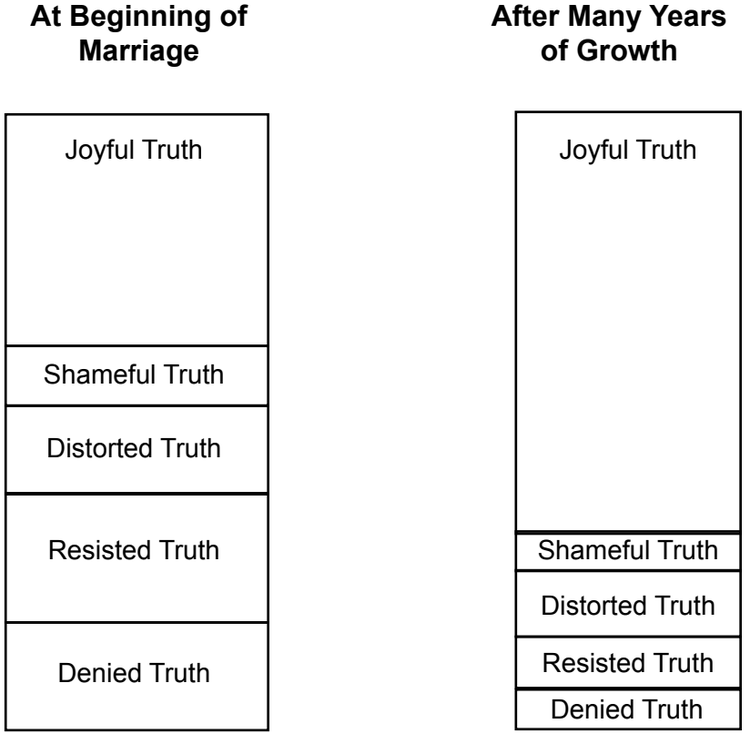
Resisted Truth

Parts of me that I am so ashamed of that I try to pretend to myself that they do not exist. I may simply refuse to look at this aspect of my behaviour. I try to "forget", I do not try to change these parts of me. To do that I would really have to admit their truth.

Denied Truth

Parts of me that I am not at all aware of. My unconscious mind, knowing how ashamed I would be if I became aware of these parts makes sure I never see that I have them.

Growth in Self-understanding and Self-perception over time



Each of the couple is at a different point of growth at the time of the marriage.

However, it is likely that the level of growth of the individuals will be more similar than dissimilar.

How do they assist each other to grow so that each lives more and

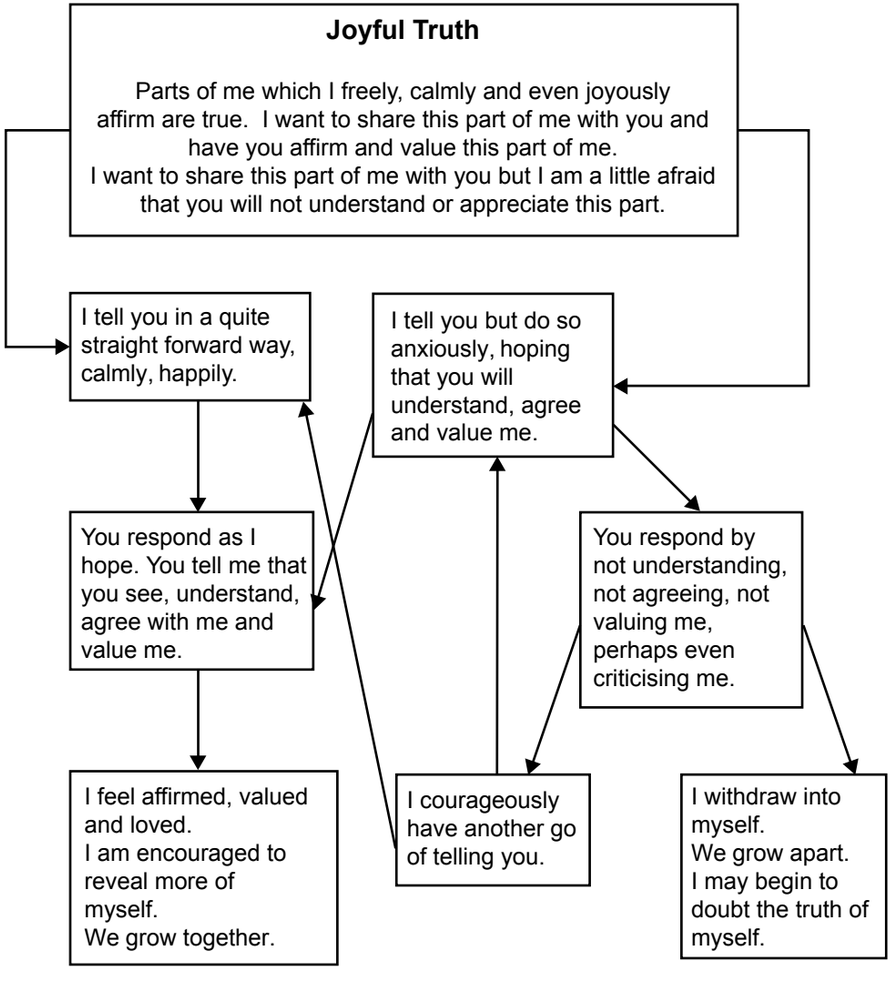
more in joyful truth?

Let us look at the possible patterns of communication between a couple. We have to remember that when we communicate we not only communicate about something - “This is what happened today” - we also reveal aspects of the truth of ourselves.

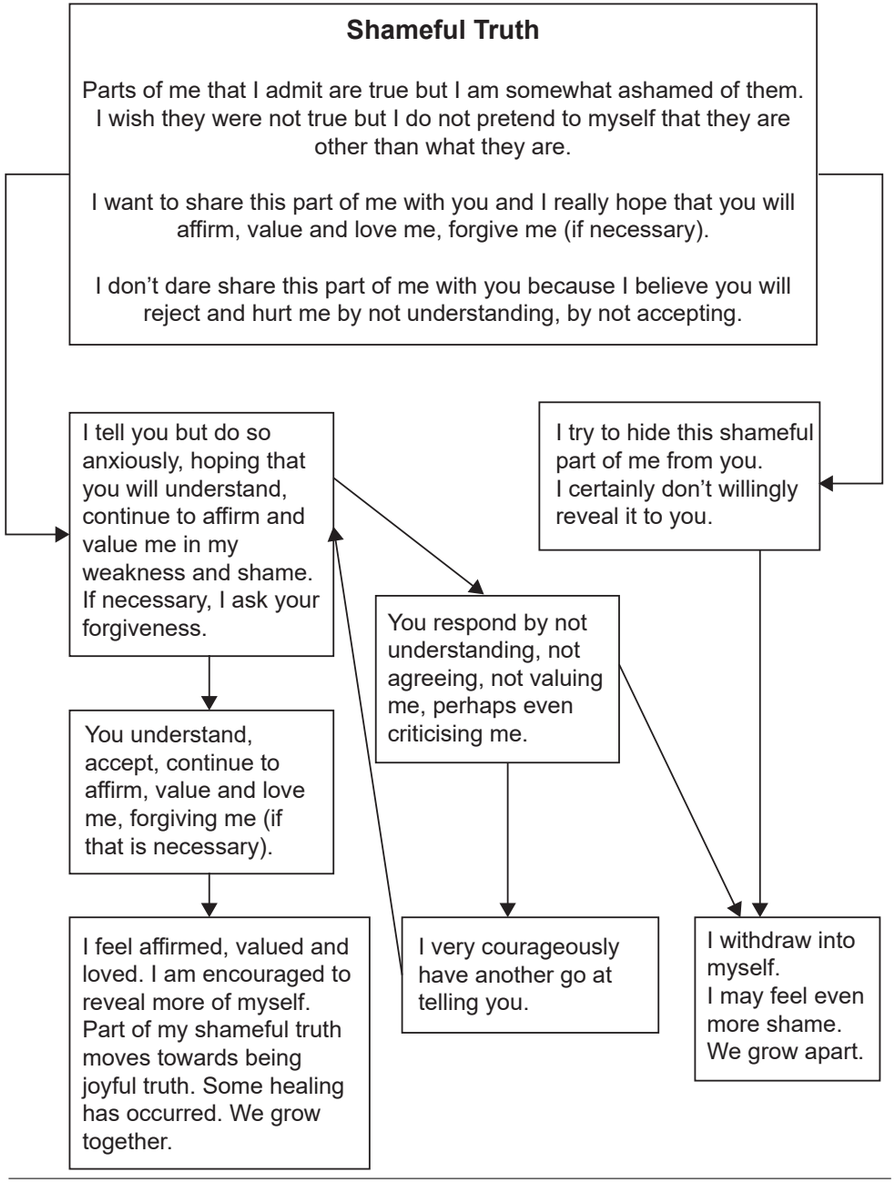
All five aspects of the truth of who I am in my full personal truth are present when I speak. They may not all be on show. I may not be fully aware that some parts are on show.

You may not be aware of all the parts of me that are on show, but all of me is present when I communicate. We will look at a number of patterns using the diagrams over the following five pages.

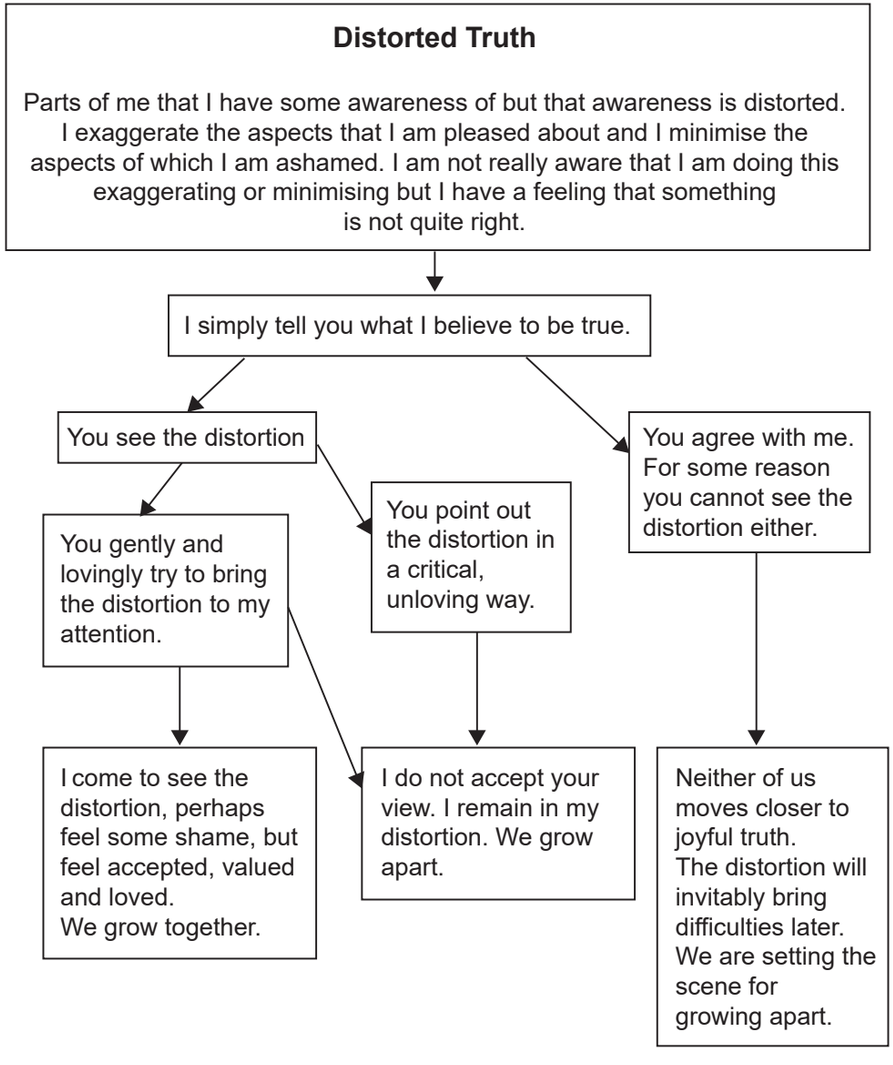
Communication from Joyful Truth



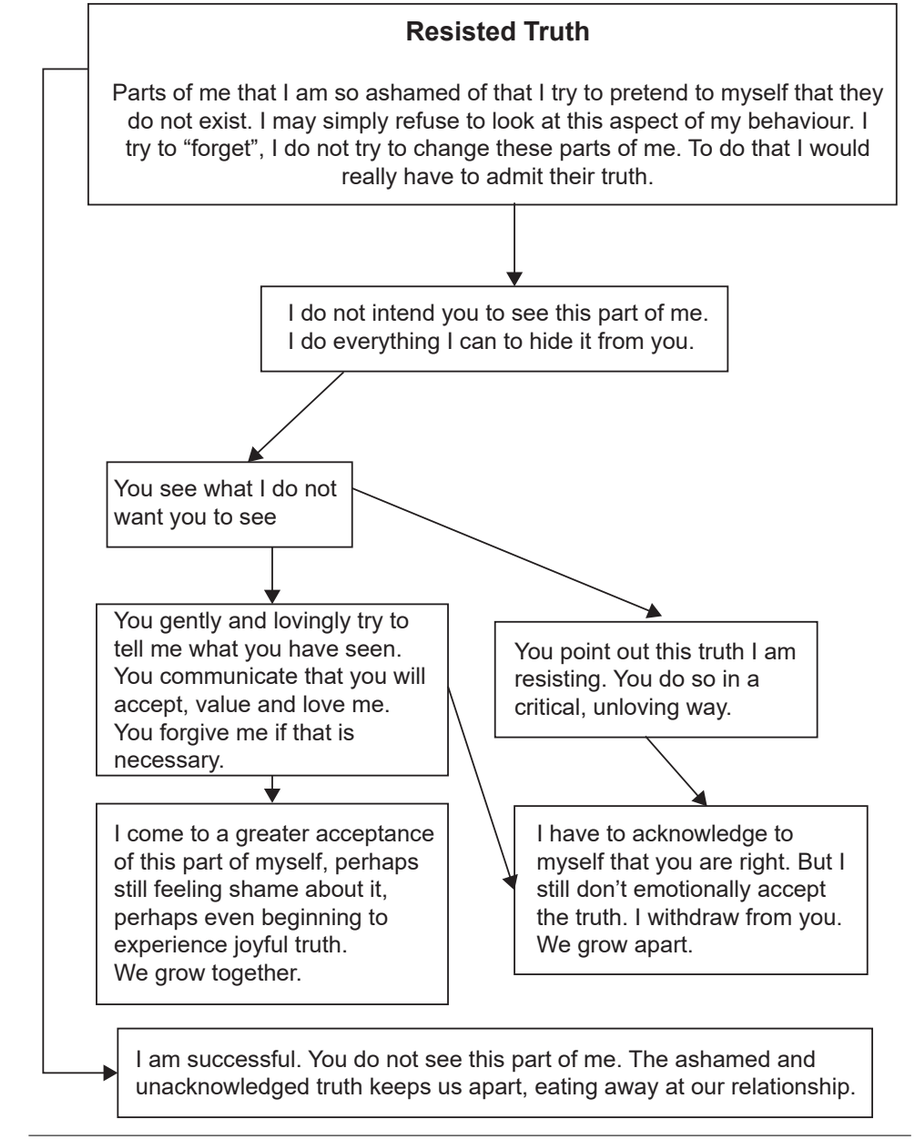
Communication from Shameful Truth



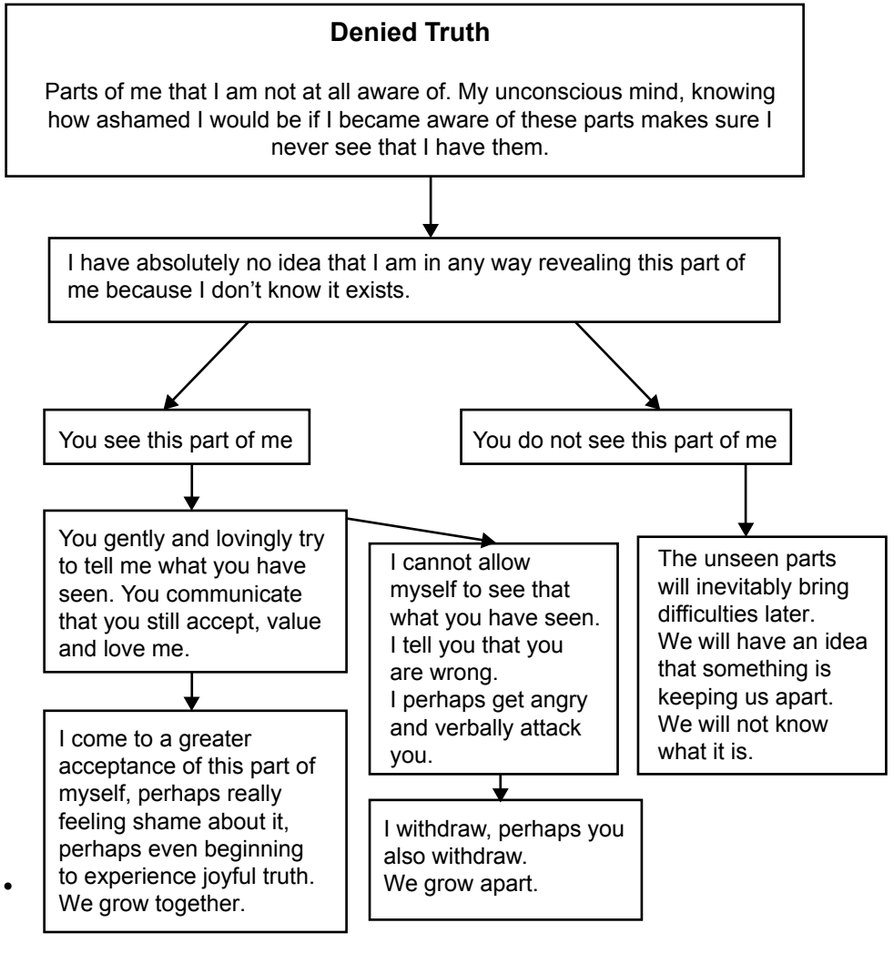
Communication from Distorted Truth



Communication from Resisted Truth



Communication from Denied Truth



2.4 Sexual Communication[1]

Introduction
Thank you for inviting me here tonight. And I hope what I have to say adds something to your reflections on sexuality and marriage from a Catholic point of view.

I was thinking as I was preparing this talk, what if I were giving this talk 30 years ago?

First thing I would have only been 12. So I would have had little to no knowledge. But I must say, at that age, I was beginning to notice girls. One in particular. But just say I was my current age.

Second thing 30 years ago for this talk the audience might have been divided into "Boys" and "Girls". Somebody might have thought it wrong or dangerous or something to have a mixed sex audience listening to a talk on sexual communication.

So, perhaps, there would have been one talk for the "boys" and another for the "girls". And if the speaker could only come once, a big curtain down the middle of the room with girls on one side and boys on the other so you could not make eyes at each other during what was a very serious occasion. And certainly not do any planning. Things have changed.

Definition of Sexual Communication
I want to make clear that the kind of sexual communication that I am talking about is that which occurs within marriage, between spouses.

[1] Talk given at Merrylands Parish 17.11.87

Now because all of us are sexual persons and because all human communication is fundamentally personal, there is a sense in which all human communication has a sexual aspect. Because it comes from a sexual person.

I am not going to be talking about sexual communication in that broad sense. I am going to be talking about sexual communication as it occurs in physical love-making.

Nakedness

In 1979 and 1980, Pope John Paul gave a series of talks in which he reflected on human sexuality and marriage as God intends them to be.

As part of those reflections he went back to the creation stories in the Book of Genesis. You will recall that in the story Adam & Eve "both were naked, and were not ashamed".

John Paul says that this "nakedness" belongs to the essential vision that God has of human marriage. Sin entered the world and the couple recognized their nakedness, covered themselves with fig leaves and hid their shame.

The Redemption by Christ means that God has again made it possible for us who are married to move towards that "nakedness" which he intended married couples to enjoy from the beginning.

So we had better have a look at this "nakedness". Because it is to this nakedness that we are called in marriage, and it is to this nakedness that our hearts are drawn in moments of sexual union. We have this recognition that we seek something, strive for something. And that something is in "nakedness".

Now it is quite clear that the "nakedness" we are talking about is

not simply physical nakedness. If it were it would just be a matter of whipping off your clothes and there you'd have it. No problems. So the nakedness of the original couple is more than just a physical revelation of their bodies to each other. Although it includes that.

The "nakedness" self-revelation, I like to think of it as a total transparency, a total openness of being, a total gift of the self.

Nothing is concealed, nothing is held back - each of the couple is totally available for the other and is totally open to receive the gift of the other person's being.

Hence in this naked union - the "one body'' to which Scripture refers - each of the couple gives their personal selves to the other. In love they give and receive each other totally.

Now it is important to note that even in the original couple, before the entry of sin, this total openness is not automatic. It does not just happen.

It is chosen, it is willed. Otherwise it is not a gift. The self in sexual intercourse is given; and received. There is nothing automatic about the reception either. One person is received because the other wishes to receive.

Couples should enjoy each other in bed (and other places as well!). Let us see what, in general, goes into the enjoyment:

1. Physical pleasure: each of the lovers will find physical pleasure in being touched, kissed, caressed and aroused by the body of the other. Each of the lovers will find pleasure in touching, kissing, caressing and arousing the other. The giving and receiving of bodily pleasure is part, an indispensable part, of the total gift. In sexual intercourse, you are an aroused and arousing

person. Your gift of your self must include your arousing/aroused self.

2. Total affirmation: each person feels totally accepted, totally valued; they say to each other: “You are O.K.” And it is the biggest O.K. in the world. It leaves no room for the slightest doubt.

3. Acceptance of the “interior”: the inner thoughts and feelings are revealed and accepted and loved. There is no sense of shame about what is thought and felt. There is no judgement. Just loving acceptance.

4. Experience of love: there is a sense of being caught up in the mystery of love. Love pervades the whole experience, there is some recognition of “this is really living”, “this is what it is really all about”. To be me fully I must love and be loved.

5. An awareness of love: there is some kind of “background” awareness of the nature of the Love which created them both.

It is a vision of sexual communication in the fullest sense. It is a vision of the mutual gift of self which embraces all aspects of being human, the spiritual, the physical, the intellectual, the emotional. Thus the sexual communication we are speaking of here is the communication of a full sexual self in a full sexual way. The intimacy of the sexual union is a full personal intimacy.

Barriers

Now all that I have just said of God’s original vision for marriage is an ideal. It is, in this life, only possible to approach it not attain it.

For even though marriage is redeemed by Christ, we still have to make that redemption a reality in our own lives - and that takes a life

time and more.

We are still afflicted by sin and its effects. The principal effects in relation to marriage and full sexual communication are the barriers which get in the road of the open gift of the self.

I think that most of the barriers which we put up and which prevent us from making a full gift of ourselves can be summed up in two types of fear, the fear of rejection and the fear of what some psychologists call “engulfment”.

Rejection

1. **The fear of being rejected**
   This is a fear that we all recognize because all of us have at some stage experienced being rejected.

   We offered the gift of ourselves, or part of ourselves to someone else and that offer was rejected, not wanted.

   We know that rejection hurts. And we fear that hurt.

   Now if you are going to attempt to make that vision of total sexual communication a reality in your life you are going to have to take the risk of rejeciton.

   If love is freely given, then it can just as freely not be given; just as freely be withdrawn.
   If we are really honest with ourselves, then we know that the self which we are bringing as a gift to the other person is never a perfect gift in two ways:

   (i) the person we are is not perfect - it is inadequate, has its share of faults and failings.

(ii) we are not capable of giving totally - there is an awareness that we will inevitably hold something back.

And so, in truth, we know there is always some possibility of rejection. We cannot compel "love". So our offer can be shy, hesitant and tentative.

So often, in reality, this fear is groundless. But if you don't know it's groundless, you think it's a real, even likely, possibility.

The essence of the fear is "If I tell her/him what I really think or feel s/he won't love me anymore. They'll think I'm bad / crazy / stupid / insensitive / oversensitive / selfish / a wimp etc". I'll list now some of the types of thoughts/feelings which people have which show this kind of fear of rejection:

- "I'm angry at you because I don't think you care about my needs when we make love."

- "It would be really nice to come into the bedroom sometimes and find you naked just waiting for me."

- "I really like it when you do that!"

- "I really am too tired tonight. Let's just have a cuddle".

- "I don't feel very loving if you don't help with the children after tea."

- "I think early mornings are a great time for making love."

Now each of those people holding in and not revealing those thoughts or feelings may find themselves holding back at some level in the physical love-making. And they hold back

because they believe that their spouse will find their thought or feeling unacceptable and be rejecting or critical or simply, non-understanding.
And, unfortunately, those people might be right. They may be able to predict precisely what their spouse's response will be.

Thus growth in love will mean the overcoming of this kind of fear of rejection by the gradual development of deeper and deeper levels of trust.

2. The fear of rejecting
It may seem strange but we can also be afraid of rejecting the other person, of hurting the other person.

Like the story of the "Invisible Man", who was frightened that if he allowed other people to come close to him, he would hurt them. He did not believe in his capacity to sustain a relationship for very long so he was frightened to begin because he thought he would soon reach a point where he would push the other person away.
To protect people from his rejecting them, he rejected them first.

Some of the sorts of thoughts which people can have which express this fear are:

- "I know I'll eventually prove a disappointing lover, and run away from him/her."

- "I'm just no good at deep relationships."

- "I'm frightened that s/he can't/won't satisfy me and I'll go look elsewhere".

- "There's so much anger in me you'd best not get too close and I'm frightened that thinking like that will make me withdraw from

you."

That fear of rejecting is very subtle, usually less obvious than the fear of rejection by the other. But it needs to be overcome, again by trust in the self and in the partner.

Engulfment
The second set of fears are engulfment fears. "Engulfment" means "being swallowed up".

Now that full and true love experience of sexual and personal union we spoke of earlier leaves each of the persons with a sense of fulfilment, even of completion. But the experience leaves each person more aware of their own distinct personal being.

In truly loving, the feeling of being yourself is enhanced, strengthened. You feel more you. Even though you have given yourself "away" as a gift to the other person.

1. **The fear of being engulfed**

   It is our awareness that "something is missing" that pushes us towards union in marriage and sexual loving. We realize that we are not fully ourselves.

   And we have a need to be fully ourselves. And we have a realization that to be fully ourselves we have to give ourselves away in love.

   But what if our lover does not return our "self"; what if s/he keeps it. Then we have "lost" ourselves. Our identity has been taken over by another. The fear of that happening can be very strong.

   Some psychologists say that "being engulfed" results, at times,

in very severe mental illness. Some of the sorts of thoughts/ feelings which express such a fear are:

- "I feel that I don't really exist, except as his wife and the mother of his children."
- "My thoughts, feelings, wishes, desires don't seem to count. I'm treated as a nothing."
- "I always have to agree."
- "I keep saying that I feel angry, and they keep telling me it's just my nerves"
- "I'm a person, too."

Each of those people is saying that they experience themselves in some way as being "engulfed" "taken over" by another person.

Each has lost some sense of personal identity.

Each has lost some sense of personal power.
We are right to fear such losses.

In sexual intercourse, a person may feel engulfed when they feel they are just being used for sexual pleasure.

The overcoming of this fear means that we trust the other not to exert power over us, not to use us, not to treat us as a mere extension of themselves, a mere appendage to their lives.

We have to trust them to allow us our separateness and our differentness.

2. The fear of engulfing

This is the other side of the coin. If we "engulf" another person at least two things happen:

- we carry an extra burden. We are now doing the living for two people - not just one.

- we are restricted from establishing our own unique identity.

If we allow ourselves to engulf another person, then we allow that person to become totally and emotionally dependent upon us. We will feel totally responsible for how they think and feel. If they feel bad, it will be our fault. And, sometimes, they will waste no time in telling us. They can, quite unjustly, hold us responsible for all their bad feelings, bad experiences.

Some of the thoughts and feelings which touch on the fear or reality of engulfment are:

- "I wish he'd take an interest in the bills."

- "Why do I have to decide everything?"

- "I wish she'd tell me what she likes and take some responsibility for what pleases her."

- "I don't like her saying "whatever you like."

- "I sometimes think I've got four children, the three little ones and him."

Now if "engulfing" or "being engulfed" is so bad why does it happen? What is its attraction?

I think that the answer lies in the needs we have for power, and lack of power or responsibility.

We all have a need to experience our own power, to feel a source of power in the world, to feel that we can make a difference. And the need is good and human.

However, we often think (wrongly) that we can only have power when we have it over someone else.

So in a marriage, in the very midst of the struggle to love and give of themselves a couple can experience tendencies within themselves to gain power over the other.

It is as if we say "I can only feel my strength when I am more powerful than you, when you are as I want you to be".

However, the other side of the coin is present: the desire to be engulfed. Because if we are engulfed, we no longer have to take responsibility for our own lives and actions.

We become childish - and that has a psychological convenience. "You can't blame me; you can't expect me to do that". So there are attractions in being engulfed, in being and in claiming to be powerless.

2.5 Sexuality and Loving Presence[1]

Essential Messages
The number of couples, attending our courses, where one is a not a Catholic is very hjgh.

The section on sexuality is aimed at enhancing the participants' awareness of the following:

- sexual love-making as, perhaps, the deepest expression of loving presence available to them as married couples.
- sexual love-making as being continuous with the activities of their everyday lives together in loving presence.
- sexual love-making as having many emotional dimensions, any one of which may predominate on a particular occasion,
- most couples have some difficulty in their love-making at some time in their marriage.
- it is necessary, but perhaps not easy, for married couples to be able to speak to each other about their experiences with each other in love-making

Values and Meanings in Lovemaking
The experience of each of the couple in lovemaking is multi-dimensional. The aspect of the experience which is predominant can vary from occasion to occasion. There is no law to say which aspect should be in the forefront of conscious experience of any person or any occasion.

The possible meanings include:

[1] background notes for pre-marriage educators, written for the course rather than for counselling an individual couple. It includes questions for discussion.

Giving and receiving each other in love.
This is the experience in which each of the couple:

- feels that the other is somehow "flowing" in love towards them. offering themselves in love,
- has a sense that each making themselves as emotionally open and vulnerable to the other as they can possibly be at that moment.
- feels they are truly and fully embracing each other on every level of their being.

This is the "two in one flesh" experience, loving presence as intimate as it can be.

Physical pleasure
This refers not simply to the intensity of physical pleasure experienced by each as an individual but also an emotional pleasure in the fact that the spouse is being able to have such a pleasurable experience. There is a delight in each other's physical enjoyment.

The physical pleasure will normally include the experience of orgasm. However, on occasions, a person may not climax and yet find the lovemaking experience quite emotionally satisfying.

Affirmation and acceptance
The total accepting embrace by one is an affirmation of the goodness of the other. "If s/he allows me to get so close, and does not push me away even when I show my vulnerability, then s/he must have a fundamental belief in my worth. If s/he is vulnerable to me, then I must be trustworthy."

Deep down all of us have some insecurities. The affirmation in lovemaking can reassure us of our essential worth in spite of our weaknesses and insecurities.

Thanksgiving for each other
This can be in the most general sense of being totally glad of having found each other and in a more particular sense of being thoroughly thankful that the other is willing to give themself totally in marriage.

This experience requires a fundamental humility. It requires that each person acknowledges that the love of the other is truly a **gift**, that love cannot be compelled, that there is nothing about me which provides an absolute guarantee that the other will, and indeed must, love me.

Reconciliation and forgiveness
Unfortunately human weakness means that couples will inevitably, from time to time, inadvertently or deliberately, hurt each other. The loving presence will be disrupted to a greater or lesser extent. They will feel they have to a greater or lesser extent moved apart.

Given that they have made some progress in resolving the conflict or the hurt, the experience of lovemaking can complete the forgiveness and the reconciliation process, or can provide a firmer foundation to complete the process.

Comfort and consolation
There are occasions, in life, when one or both of a couple are feeling down, sad, distressed about something which has impacted on their lives from outside the married relationship.

On such occasions, quiet and gentle lovemaking may provide consolation and comfort to the distressed ones. The lovemaking conveys “I am with you in this moment of sadness or distress”.

Healing of past hurts
All of us come to marriage bearing some emotional wounds from the past, from our upbringing, our previous relationships and general life

experiences.

The loving intimacy of sexual intercourse, with its affirmations and acceptances, can do much to negate the destructive effects of those past hurtful experiences which have left us with emotional hurts.

Creation of a child
There are occasions, in some marriages, when a couple is deliberately making love in the hope that a child will be conceived. One advantage of natural family planning methods is that there are indicators of the time of a woman’s maximum likelihood to conceive.

A Typical Way in which Tensions Arise in a Couple’s Sexual Relationship

In a good sexual relationship:
1. Each has an ongoing sense of loving presence with the other as evidenced by:
- recognised signs of affection and love
- the 5:1 ratio of affirming to critical messages exchanged by the couple.

2. The signs of affection which are recognised as a prelude to explicit sexual foreplay are accepted by each as an intensification of the loving presence which is known to be always there.

3. Sexual foreplay flows naturally from the intensification of affectionate signs.

4. Loving sexual intercourse occurs.

5. The couple return after a period of close emotional contact to the ongoing background sense of loving presence and the cycle

begins again.

In a relationship which is running into problems

1. One or both has lost the sense of ongoing loving presence because:
   - signs of general love and affection are either absent or not recognised as such
   - the 5:1 ratio of affirming to critical messages exchanged by the couple is not being kept.

2. The signs of affection which are recognised as a prelude to explicit sexual foreplay are felt to be puzzling, manipulative or insincere as they do not flow from a sense of ongoing loving presence.

3. Consent to engage in sexual foreplay by the one who experiences that the approach of the other is not really an expression of love, is mixed with feelings of resentment, hurt, anger. Such feelings can depress sexual arousal.

4. The feelings of resentment etc. are carried over into the act of intercourse, resulting in decreased sexual enjoyment.

5. After intercourse, the feelings of resentment are carried over into ongoing life so that the sense of loving presence is even further disturbed and the next prelude to sexual foreplay is even less welcome.

6. The cycle goes around and around until the explicit sexual relationship is non existent.

Non existent explicit sexual relationship

1. Each experiences the other as very hostile or cold so that any sense of loving presence is absolutely minimal because:

   - signs of general affection are so minimal that they might well not be there
   - there are far too many critical remarks and little to no affirming remarks.

2. If there are signs of affection which are recognised as a prelude to explicit sexual foreplay, they are rejected out of hand.

3. There is no foreplay.

4. There is no intercourse.

5. The cold and hostile relationship continues.

Such a couple may need professional help to assist them to gain sufficient sense of loving presence to be able to address the communication and relationship problems in their marriage.

At all events, they are going to have to recover some sense of love if the sexual relationship is going to return to be satisfying.

Couple Discussion Questions

Each couple is given a sheet with these questions and are asked to discuss with each other totally privately. The questions are based on the kinds of ways in which sexual tensions arise. We want couples to have some knowledge about sexual problems and we want them to have some practice in discussing sexual matters in general and their own sexual relationship in particular.
The questions are:

1. **Should couples make love when one is angry?**
   The question is aimed at having them think how one or both being angry might affect the lovemaking.
   If the anger is at someone else, there may be no problem.

If the anger has arisen between them, there is a danger that one could use the anger to be physically hurtful in the act of sexual intercourse. The anger might be expressed by being emotionally withdrawn and unresponsive.

Could making love lessen the anger and pave the way for a successful resolution of the conflict?

2. **Are men and women generally different in the way they link general affection and explicit sexual behaviour? How do I link affectionate and sexual feelings?**
   There is some evidence to support the view that men find lovemaking makes it easier for them to be generally affectionate towards their partners; and women find that they can be more sexually responsive if they are generally feeling loving towards their partners.

   A Mexican Standoff can arise as follows:
   Man: I find it difficult to act lovingly towards her if we are not having regular sexual intercourse. That's why I keep approaching her.

   Woman: I cannot respond sexually to him if he is not generally loving towards me. He is always wanting me to make love. I cannot respond. First he has to show me that he loves me.

3. **If a person begins to be sexually aroused does it mean that the person is wanting to make love?**
   Not necessarily.

   The movements towards making love, making an overture, engaging in foreplay are the result of decisions which the person has made. They are not automatic. The decision may be of the "go with the flow" type but they are decisions none the less

Sexual arousal in not something which a person can decide to have and directly bring about by simply deciding. A person can decide to do things which will inevitably lead to sexual arousal e.g. have a fantasy, kiss in a sexual way.

However, sexual feelings, sexual arousal, can appear spontaneously, completely out of the conscious control of the person. The body of the person simply responds to the presence of sexual stimuli without, if you like, consulting the mind or the will of the person. The person just finds him/herself to be sexually stimulated. The person then has to decide "What am I going to do in response to this feeling of arousal?"

There can be an experience of internal conflict. The feelings push the person towards increased arousal. The feelings, if you like, are already setting out on the way to orgasm. The person, however, may know that, for whatever reason, this is not the time or the place, for going on to lovemaking, e.g. the partner is sick. The feelings are going to have to be denied their orgasm. The person decides not to do things which will increase the feelings of arousal.

A person who decides not to continue the experience of arousal **does not want** to make love at that time.

So we cannot interpret the signs of our partner's arousal as absolutely meaning that our partner wants to make love at that time.

4. **In marriage, each person has the right to decline the partner's invitation, or overture, to full love making on a particular occasion. When you are married, how will you decline such an invitation without leaving your partner feeling hurt and rejected?**

Clearly, the answer to this question has to be worked out by each couple for themselves.

Important aspects of the answer will include:

- each's acceptance that the other's occasional decline of the invitation to make love is their right. No one in marriage has an absolute right to sexual lovemaking on every occasion they desire it.

- each knowing that making an overture to lovemaking does involve making oneself vulnerable to a certain extent. Sexual lovemaking is a very intimate experience of loving presence. If the invitation is declined, the person can feel at some level (sometimes very deeply) that "my partner does not want to be with me". The declined invitation can be experienced as personal rejection.

- the way in which the invitation is declined must be such to ensure that the other does not feel personally rejected, and the ongoing sense of loving presence is not disrupted.

5. **Can a person make love when s/he does not feel like doing so?**
   The answer depends on what is meant by "not feel". If "not feel" means "has decided not to make love", the **answer is "No".** Making love is the carrying out of a decision to be with the other person in a most intimate physical, psychological and spiritual way. It is impossible to *at the same moment* to carry out decisions (i) to move towards that intensification of loving presence and (ii) not to move towards it.

6. **How important is it that each partner experience orgasm on each occasion of lovemaking?**
   Answers here are going to depend on what is accepted as the criterion for a satisfying experience of sexual lovemaking.

   If the only criterion is orgasm, then orgasm becomes all important.

   If the criterion is "each partner, assesses on each occasion whether or nor the experience has been satisfying" then orgasm may not be so important on every occasion of lovemaking. The other emotional aspects of lovemaking may be more important on that occasion.

   However, if the experience of orgasm is important on a particular occasion and a person is having difficulty is reaching the degree of arousal required, then there has to be communication within the lovemaking about this so that each can assist the other to have a satisfying experience.

   If a person always has difficulty in reaching orgasm, then this is probably an indication of one of:
   - there are deep and hidden conflicts in the relationship
   - there is an undiagnosed physical problem or illness.
   - there are deep psychological conflicts about sexuality.

7. **At what stage of your marriage are planning to have children? How many children do you plan to have? What method have decided to use to avoid falling pregnant until you judge the time is right?**
   This question is simply to introduce the topic of family planning.

3

WORKING WITH GROUPS OF ADULTS

Introduces strategies for presenting information to adult learners, which is always a two-way communication. Discusses effective use of group processes to facilitate learning and explores ways to work with groups of Indigenous people.

3.1 Some Aspects of Presenting

1. Fundamental Point – Two Way Communication at All Times

Two Way Communication When Only the Presenter is Talking
All presenting is a two-way conversation, even if, at a particular time, you are the only one talking.

As each member of the audience listens to you, each person is trying to find meaning in what you are saying. Each is trying to make sense of what they are perceiving. Each member is responding in an individual way.

At least the following processes are in motion in each of the audience:

- What meaning does the speaker intend me to take from the communication sent to me?

- How do I evaluate what I understand the communication to mean?

  Examples:
  I agree/disagree with all or some of it.
  I am not clear on the intended meaning. To me it is ambiguous.
  This is new information. I'll have to think about it.

- My understanding of what the communication means and my evaluation of it suggests the following thoughts, evokes the following feelings in me…..

Examples:

That reminds me of the time when ……
If that is true, then the *following* must also be true.
I wonder if the presenter is really trying to suggest *this* without coming out and saying it.
I am irritated / angry about that.
I'm bored.
That's funny.
I feel good about that.
That **was** interesting. I want to hear more.

- How will I respond to the communication?
  Examples:

  (some of these may well not be in the forefront of consciousness).
  Will I:
  make a comment?
  make a mental note?
  write something down?
  ask a question?
  comment to my neighbour? (nudge them with my foot?)
  smile, laugh?
  nod?

I assume that all four of those process, and more, were going on as you listened to me then.

- you tried to make sense of what I was saying
- you had an opinion about it
- you had a response to it
- you made some decisions about what you would do in response to it.

Anyone like to comment?

Anyone think: if all that is going on, how will anything I say get through? They are too busy thinking their own thoughts, feeling their own feelings?

It's true that people can drift off into their own internal world. But they can also pay attention to you whilst all that is going on in them. Particularly if they are finding what you are saying interesting.

A side track comment about process.
When I gave you lists of examples a few minutes ago, there is a good chance that I

- drew your intellectual attention to the various examples.
- brought to your consciousness your awareness of the processes that were going on in you at the time.
- suggested processes which could be going on even if they are not.

Now the list of examples of what could be evoked in you finished like this:
I'm bored.
That's funny.
I feel good about that.
That **was** interesting. I want to hear more.

You can see that the list finishes on an upbeat. It is a positive example. And it suggests that I am saying interesting things and that you do want to hear more?

I did not want you to hear "I'm bored" as the last in the list. I did not want to take the chance that the last suggested or evoked feeling would be boredom.

Implications for Presenters in Their Presentations
Be aware of non verbal feedback
You must be aware of the feedback you are getting. If you are the one talking the feedback will not be in words:

> nods, smiles, writing things down, spontaneous applause, puzzled looks, frowns, rolling of eyes, shifting in the seat, laughter, eager shifts forward in the seats,……

All the nice things you notice, and the good vibes you feel, tell you that you are going down OK.

The not-so-nice things you notice, the bad vibes, are an indication that things are not going so well (at least for some). You are going to have to do something different to get the good vibes going.

Anticipate non verbal feedback
Whenever I am preparing a presentation like this one, I try to imagine what is going to be the most likely response to everything I say and do.

I say to myself "if I do this, the most likely response is going to be…". Or I say to myself "the response I am trying to get here is…."

So when I decided to put "spontaneous applause" in the list of possible non verbal responses, I thought that there was a good possibility that you would be a little amused at the thought that any group in a pre-marriage course would break into spontaneous applause at any time.

I did not think you would break into spontaneous applause at that time but you don't always get the anticipated response.

Allow time for internal processing in the audience
Given that there is a lot going on in your audience, you need to allow time for those processes to occur. Thus:

- you may have to speak more slowly than you do in normal conversation. I am going to read a quotation from *Reaching Out: Interpersonal effectiveness and self-actualisation* by David W. Johnson (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1972- the old ones are the best) 43.

  First I am going to read it as I have heard some people read papers at academic conferences. The context of such conferences is usually (except for keynote speakers) that the time allowed for presentation is short and the speakers want to convey as much information as possible in the time allowed.

  Read it reasonably quickly. Make little eye contact with audience. Give very little emphasis to anything in particular.

  > Little happens in a relationship until the individuals trust each other. Because of this, forming a climate of trust is one of the more important tasks. In fact, the first crisis most relationships face involves the ability of the two individuals to trust themselves and each other. Trust is absolutely essential for a relationship to grow and develop. In order to facilitate the development of a relationship, you must learn to create a climate of trust which reduces your own and the other person's fear of betrayal and rejection and builds the hopes of acceptance and support.

Not good? Thankfully, the audience can usually get to read the paper later.

Now I will read it as well as I can.

Little / happens in a relationship / until the individuals / *trust* each other.

Because of this / *forming a climate of trust* / is one of the more important tasks.
In fact, the first *crisis* most relationships face / involves the ability of the two individuals / to *trust* themselves and each other.

Trust is absolutely *essential* for a relationship to grow and develop.

In order to facilitate the development of a relationship / you must learn to *create* a climate of trust / which *reduces* your own and the other person's *fear* of betrayal and rejection / and builds the *hopes* of acceptance and support.

Notes

- the words in italics are the ones I chose to emphasise. In my reading these words may have been marked by a subtle change of voice tone. Perhaps by a hand gesture.
- "/" indicates a shorter pause.
- The breaking up of what was one original paragraph into separate one sentence paragraphs enables me to know that I should pause for a slightly longer period at the end of each sentence.

Not every idea was emphasised. Those that were emphasised were marked in some way, indicating to you which parts of what I was saying that I wanted to pay particular attention to.
The pauses, shorter and longer, give you a little time to process what I was saying. My guess is that you would prefer the second style of presentation and understood more from it.

We will now do a little exercise. (Allow 20 minutes in total for this.)

Exercise: Practising Your Presentation
I want you to take the "script" you brought to the workshop and, taking just two or three paragraphs of it,

- identify which audience responses you would predict as occurring while you were delivering the presentation
- identify which audience responses you were attempting to elicit
- identify which words you would highlight in a live presentation
- identify where you would put shorter and longer pauses.

When you have done this, I will ask you to share what you have identified with the members of your group.
Then we will ask for some game volunteers to present their paragraphs to us.

2. Knowing Your Audience and Speaking Within Their Frame of Reference

In a previous session, we looked at some of the assumptions which it is reasonable to make about those who attend your courses. These assumptions were mainly about their attitudes to attending the course, their general life experience, their approach to religious practice, and so on.

The meaning which each person takes out of what you communicate is going to be very largely influenced by their internal frames of reference.

The more what you communicate fits easily into the audience's frame of reference, the easier it will be for them to understand what you are attempting to communicate.

In general, every issue you raise in a course:

- has already been an issue for the couple and, to some extent, has been dealt with satisfactorily, or
- is currently an issue for the couple, or
- has not yet been an issue but will be or could be an issue for the couple in the future.

There is a reasonable possibility that any group of course attendees will have people who fall into each category.

Your language needs to take account of this.

For example, just say you are talking about the timing of having children and you say “It is important to have some agreement about when to try to have your first child”.

And there is a couple there who already have children. Or there is a couple and the woman is already pregnant.

There is a risk, which may not be great, that these couples will tune out, having heard the word “first” and decided that what follows is not relevant for them. Even worse, they could feel alienated or offended that their particular situation is being ignored or discounted.

The risk could be avoided by not using the expression “first child” and simply saying “a child”.

The general point is simply that we should ask ourselves constantly. “If I say this, how might it be taken by this particular audience?” What is the frame of reference into which I am attempting to communicate?

If there is a great risk of being misunderstood, or unintentionally giving offence, then we have to find another way to say what we are trying to say.

General Background Factors
One of the major ways we all learn and retain information about life is through examples and stories.

In giving examples and stories from our own or other’s experience, some principles need to be followed. Here’s a story.

> *One day Renzai was out begging and came to the house of a well off man. He said “Another bowl more than usual, please!” An old woman came to the door and said “What a vulgar, greedy creature!” Renzai said “I don’t see the slightest sign of food - where is the vulgarity and greediness?” The old woman shut the door in his face.*

What’s the story about? Is it a moral tale? If so what is the moral?

Collect answers. See how many disparate answers there are. See how the answers reveal the frame of reference which gives the meaning to the interpretation.

Anybody see it as a morality tale to illustrate how to deal with cheeky, ungrateful beggars?

Anybody see it as a “how not to do to it” segment from the Beggar’s Manual?

What is the point of telling the story here in the context of a presentation having to do with marriage preparation?

- To illustrate how if you are suddenly confronted with a communication from an unexpected and unexplained frame of reference you will probably have an experience of confusion.

  You will give a meaning to the communication which comes

mainly, if not entirely, from your own frame of reference.

So if that is what I wanted to illustrate, it is probably not a bad story.

Incidentally, a commentary on the story says it is about how the old Chinese woman fails the test of being a true Buddhist. But I don't understand what the essence of her failure was. That she did not give any food at all? That she did not give the extra food? That she was disrespectful to the beggar?

Perhaps a Buddhist would know. So if you want to use a story to illustrate a precise point, or to start off a particular line of thinking, the story has to be placed within the general background experience of the audience.

Likewise with metaphors and similes. For instance, if I were going to use metaphors in presentations to people in Newcastle I draw most of them from:

- the experience of the changes due to the loss of the steel works
- coal mining
- earthquakes
- the premiership winning experience of the Newcastle Knights.
- stories about Andrew Johns.

I would not be drawing them from:

- the dislocation of thousands of Chinese people because of the damming of the Yangtze River
- whaling
- tidal waves
- the premiership winning experience of the Brisbane Lions
- stories about Ron Barassi.

3. Awareness of Preferred Processing Channels

Some of you may have heard of Neuro-Linguistic Programming

(NLP). This is an approach to individual psychology, communication and counselling which came into the marketplace of ideas some 25 years ago. If you believed all the hype at the time, you would have expected that by now all other theories and approach would be lying dead in the wake of NLP. That's another story.

However, I have found some of NLP's basic ideas useful in counselling and in presentations.

Representational Systems

The theory says that we humans use three basic sensory input channels to receive information about the world:

- seeing
- hearing
- body sensations from contact with material objects.

It seems that smell and taste are not sufficiently used by humans to gain information about the world as to warrant consideration in this context. (Although smell and taste may quite powerful in evoking emotional experiences and memories.)

There are specialised sensory receptors receiving specific types of input:

- eyes
- ears
- skin
- nose
- taste buds.

The NLP theory says that we take in the information through specific channels, process it in specific channels, and store it in specific systems, called representational systems.

When we are verbally communicating we use words which refer to those sensory experiences and representational channels. Thus:

- "I see the sunset"
- "I hear the birds"
- "I feel the breeze on my cheek".

So far nothing much exceptional but the theory goes on to say that each of us has a preferred representational system.

We pay more attention to information coming in via one channel in preference to the others.

We pay more attention to information processed and stored in one representational system than to the information in the other systems.

And, most importantly for the present purpose, we use words which refer to our preferred system and we pay more attention to words which refer to that system.

Thus, if someone wants to communicate quickly with us, they have a better chance of doing so if they present information which is primarily directed at our preferred representational system.

Do you see what I mean?
Do you hear what I am saying?
Do you grasp my meaning?

Now I have just said the same thing three times. So that all of you whose preferred representational system is "seeing" are addressed. Likewise those who are "hearing" people and those who are "feeling" people.

Implications of NLP Theory
The major implication is that we should use modes of communication which overall address each of the three possible preferred representational systems:

- audio visual material
- overheads, power point presentations etc.
- handouts (feeling as well as seeing)
- handwritten exercises (feeling the pen, the paper etc.)
- exercises involving movement
- speaking
- hand gestures while speaking
- the partners touching each other
- use of language which refers to each of the three possible preferred representational systems.

This latter is what I want to concentrate on at this point.

Exercise
Each person to add five new words or expressions to each of seeing, hearing, feeling.

Each person to examine the text of five paragraphs of their script to identify which representational system words they used.

Each person to re-write one of the sentences of their script in "seeing", "hearing" and "feeling" language.
After this share in small groups.

4. Other Points on the Use of Examples

Earlier I touched on the necessity of using examples which easily fit into the general frame of reference of the audience.

Here I want to say some things about how to construct an example.

Example of What?
Before giving an example, or telling a story, as an illustration you need to be clear on what specific points you are trying to illustrate.

You do not want your audience to be so lost in the detail of the story that the point you are trying to illustrate becomes lost or vague.

You want your audience to remember the point of the story in the context of remembering the story.

At the same time you do not want the illustrated point to hit them like a sledgehammer. In such a case you might do better to simply make the point.

Brevity
The story should be short. Perhaps, no longer than a minute in length. Certainly, very rarely longer than two minutes. (I remember reading that the American comedian, Bob Hope, instructed his writers to provide him with a laugh-getting line for every 20 seconds of his act.)

You need to cut out detail which makes no contribution to the over-all points you are trying to make.

Here's a story which I read somewhere. It was told to illustrate the point that sometimes couples are not aware of what they are really fighting about.

> A couple lived on the North Shore of Sydney, somewhere near Chatswood. The husband, John, came home from work one Friday afternoon after a particularly gruelling week and told his wife, Mary, that he had a call from their mutual friend, Bob, who had flown in from Adelaide that morning to attend a conference about advertising on regional television.

> John said that he had invited Bob for dinner on Saturday evening, as he knew that John and Mary had no special plans for that night.
>
> Mary was most upset and there was a big argument which made Bob's visit somewhat tense, although everybody was civil enough.
>
> The argument was such that John and Mary consulted an experienced relationship counsellor about it. They did not know why they fighting. Bob was their special friend. Mary agreed that she would have done exactly the same as John if she had taken the call from Bob. She would have invited Bob for dinner on the Saturday night.
>
> So they both agreed on having Bob over for dinner. What were they fighting about? The counsellor helped them to see that they were really fighting over who had the power to make decisions without reference to the other.

There is a lot of unnecessary detail if the aim is to solely illustrate the point that couples can be unaware of what they are really fighting about.

Perhaps this is better?

> John and Mary lived in Sydney. John came home from work one afternoon and told his wife, Mary, that he had a call from their mutual friend, Bob who had flown in from interstate.
>
> John said that he had invited Bob for dinner on Saturday evening. Mary was most upset and there was a big argument which lasted long after Bob's visit.
> John and Mary consulted a relationship counsellor. They did

not know why they fighting. Bob was their special friend. Mary agreed that, if she had taken the call from Bob, she would have invited Bob for dinner on the Saturday night.

The counsellor helped them to see that they were really fighting over who had the power to make decisions without reference to the other.

When giving examples and stories from our own experience, it is very tempting to include unnecessary detail as the detail can have considerable significance for us, but do not add to the illustration of the point we are trying to make.

Personal Experience Examples
If you are giving an example or story from your own experience, you should never give an example of situations which are still problematic for you. You must be able to tell of a resolution which is satisfactory to you. It does not have to be a perfect solution but it must be one which you can live with without resentment.

There are two reasons for this strict prohibition:

- it is very difficult to give such an example without appearing to criticise your partner.

- the audience is not there to listen to your troubles.

No personal problematic couple experience story should be told without your spouse's prior knowledge.

5. Some Other Points on Presentation

The power of three
I am not sure what it is about story telling but the general experience

seems to be that three is the number of events which can be told before a story or example needs a climax or punch line.
You don't hear many jokes which begin:

There are **eight** men in a pub having a few quiet beers. An Englishman, a Scotsman, a Frenchman, an Italian, a Pole, a Russian, a Belgian and an Irishman. The Englishman says…….

It's not the **five** little pigs. The wolf does not have to destroy four houses before meeting his fate.

Goldilocks does not have to try **seven** bowls of porridge before finding the one which tastes just right. There are just **three** bears.

Peter denies Jesus **three** times. Jesus asks Peter "do you love me?" only **three** times. Thus:

- If you are giving short examples, three is probably the optimum number to give. (Note this does not apply when collecting examples from the audience.)

- If you want to emphasise something, do not do it more than three times. (There may be an exception when you are wishing to exaggerate.)

Structure stories into no more than three broad sections

The couple story just told. Are the events
He tells of the invitation.
They have a fight.
They see a counsellor?

Know more than you say
Everything you say must in some ways be a summary of what you

know. You must be able to say more if you have to.

This is not only so that you can answer questions and join in an actual dialogue.

It is also because your presentation is going to appear very thin and superficial, if what you are saying is at the limit of what you can say. Your presentation will lack authority and credibility. You might be able to fake it with very young children but never with adults.

Rehearse
It is fine to have written material to which you can refer, even constantly.

However, it is normally not good to read your material, unless you are quoting something where the exactness of the quotation is important.

Rehearsal makes you familiar with what you are going to say. You could go as far as memorising everything but it is probably not necessary.

Rehearsal might include gestures and actions. “As I say this, I am going to look to the heavens…. walk to the front…….lower my voice.”

Be clear on the important “teaching” points
The manual you use will give the outcome sought in each segment.

You need to organise your material so that the major points are in the foreground and the other points, which may have value in themselves, are placed in the context of shedding further light on the major points.

Not everything can be emphasised. Otherwise nothing is emphasised. You cannot be like the car service people who specialise in all makes of car!

Speak to “one” person
There is a story told of a very famous entertainer (it might have been Barry Humphries) who attended a concert by an up and coming singer.

After the concert, the young artist asked the star for an opinion about the performance. The senior said it was fine but “I did not think you were singing to me”.

Swallowing any thoughts about the star’s ego, the young artist said “But I didn’t even know you were in the audience”.

The star said “That’s not the point. Every person in the audience has to think that you are singing to them personally. If I did not think you were singing to me, probably nobody else thought you were singing to them.”

When we are speaking we are only being heard by individuals, not by a group. The group, as group, hears nothing.

One of the ways to try to follow the star’s advice is to look at specific people in the audience, not always the same people, and speak to the person you are looking at.

Exercise
Look at the text of one of your example stories.
- What point or points is the story meant to illustrate?
- How clearly is each point illustrated? Is the illustration so obvious that nothing is added to the teaching point which could be straight-out stated?

- Is the story too long? If so, what would you change?
- Have you used “the power of three”?
- How will you actually tell the story?

3.2 Basic Course Processes Based on Adult Learning Principles[1]

Facilitation of Learning
Adult learning theory assumes that adults relate what is being presented to them to what they already know and have already experienced.

The education of adults is not based on the assumption that they are like pristine white boards on which nothing is written.

Hence it is entirely inappropriate, when educating adults, to have an educational style which, implicitly or explicitly, assumes that they have no knowledge or experience which is in any way related to the topic.

So even if I was going to give a presentation on say “Leiber and Stoller Ballads in the Elvis Presley Catalogue” – a topic I assume that few, if any of you, have any knowledge about – I would do well to assume you had heard of Elvis Presley, have an idea of what a ballad is, and might even recognise one of the Leiber and Stoller ballads if I played one. (Don’t.)

These assumptions might not be true but I would be advised to begin my presentation on the assumption that they are. Otherwise you might feel patronised.

Thus the aim in adult education is to present information in a way which engages the “learner” in, as it were, setting up an internal dialogue involving an interaction between the “new” and the “old”. The aim is that the learners will integrate, in their individual ways, the new and the old into an individual synthesis.

[1]This material was produced for training of pre-marriage educators.

Thus it is probably better for us to approach the task with a mindset of “we are attempting to facilitate their learning” rather than “we are going to teach them”.

Participation
Adults also learn best when there is some opportunity for them to actively participate in the learning process.

Ways to promote this active participation include:

- opportunities to ask questions
- opportunities to offer comments
- opportunities to discuss in small groups, which allows many points of views and experiences to be shared.
- participation in exercises, individual, couple, small group, large group.

The provision of opportunities for the activities of participants is the reason why your presentations (the ones where you are basically talking to the audience) are to be relatively short.

It’s not just that the risk of our boring them is minimised. It is also that the activities provide different ways to engage the participants in that process of integrating the material which we talked of above.

(The phrase “we talked of above” is interesting in its dialogical assumptions, particular if no one else specifically spoke at the time.)

All are learners
Adult education processes also assume that all engaged in the process will learn.

Hence, we have to be open to learning from the prior knowledge and experience of the participants in our courses. They will, at times,

have points of view, insights, personal experiences which are new to us and which challenge us to integrate them into our knowledge and experience bank.
There are some implications of our willingness to learn from them:

- We cannot assume an unwarranted superiority in skills and knowledge in relation to the particpants. There will be some things that they will be able to teach us.

  On the other hand we must be confident that what we have to offer is potentially of some value to them. We do have some expertise, some experience which we are willing to offer as a service to them.

- We should not adopt a leadership style which implicitly assumes that we know all of the answers.

  We might reasonably be seen to assume that we know some of the questions. And even to have our own provisional answers.

  But our aim is to facilitate the establishment of a pathway which will lead them to finding their own answers to the questions we raise. We raise them because life raises them.

Educators as Models
We, children and adults, all learn by observation as well as by listening or reading.

Much of our course is about aspects of human communication. Our audience is going to observe us communicating, on both conscious and unconscious levels.

They will compare their experience of us, as communicators, with the content of what we are suggesting as good ways to

communicate.

To the extent that there is inconsistency, between how we are experienced as communicating and what we are saying about communicating, the credibility of our message will be diminished.

The participants are going to see us modelling communication and relationships, whether we like it or not.

The modelling can be very powerful when the presenters are a married couple. The marriage, in a way, is on show.

If the truth is that the married couple fundamentally live in accordance with the principles they are putting forward for consideration, then the participants will “see” and “feel” this truth. The message is enhanced.

If the truth is that the couple do not fundamentally live in accordance with the principles they are putting forward for consideration, then the participants will “see” and “feel” the untruth.

The underlying conflicts and difficulties will not be contained. They will be evidenced in tones of voice, small signs of disrespect, tense body language etc. The message about marriage will not be enhanced.

Participants like to hear stories from our own experience. Some cautions are necessary.

- the stories should have a positive outcome. The stories may, in fact, be of difficulties. But if the difficulties are still current, in the sense that there is not a resolution which both accept without resentment, then the story should not be told.

- The story can be, explicitly or implicitly, critical of the teller but not of the spouse.

- No story should be told without the spouse’s permission.

3.3 Using Group Processes[1]

1. Instrumental and Cohesive Processes (or Dynamics)
The general theory of group processes indicates that there are two fundamental types of processes occurring in groups. There are:

- Processes aimed at achieving particular outcomes. Sometimes called “instrumental processes”.

  What is the group trying to produce? (Win a sporting competition? Produce a report? Devise a policy? Make a series of recommendations?)

  What specific tasks need to be completed so that the desired outcome is achieved?

- Processes which integrate the actions of individuals into the collective action of the group. Sometimes called “cohesive processes”.

  How is mutual trust and respect set up and maintained in the group? How are differences and conflicts managed? How is the participation of all encouraged, ensured? Do members feel that they really “belong”? Confidentiality?

These two types of processes are present in any group and intersect. The relative importance of each process depends on the reason for the existence of the group.

For example, elite sporting teams now seem to have a clear emphasis on “bonding” (a cohesive process).

[1] This material was produced for training of pre-marriage educators.

However, a superbly “bonded” team in an elite competition which never actually wins a game (an instrumental process) is not going to be highly regarded or judged successful.

Cohesive processes in this situation are not an end in themselves but a means to achieving instrumental goals.

Is it possible to have a group with absolutely no instrumental goals at all? “We just meet to enjoy being with each other.” “We just hang.”

Even in this type of group, some instrumental tasks will emerge. Decisions about time and place of meeting? Setting up the meeting place? Expectations of material contributions “bring a plate”?

The groups of participants in pre-marriage courses
There are three types of group processes operating during the course:

- the processes of each couple relationship
- the processes within small groups
- the processes in the total participant group - when the all the participants and the facilitators are involved in the one presentation or discussion.

Now let us have a look at what we are trying to achieve in our pre-marriage courses in terms of instrumental and cohesive goals. Surely we would say that we are fundamentally trying

- to strengthen the cohesive bonds in each couple so that they are better equipped, as a couple, to carry out the instrumental tasks of daily married life.

- to direct some reflections on ways which increase the chances of successfully carrying out the instrumental tasks. (Some ways of doing things are better than others.)

The primary group of attention is the couple. Everything that happens in the course is directed towards enhancing the couple relationship.

The question now is: What do we have to do to facilitate the functioning of the total participant group and the smaller groups so that each attending couple's relationship is potentially enhanced?

The total group of participants
I am assuming that the total group of participants numbers between 10 and 15 couples (between 20 and 30 individuals).

At any rate the number of people attending is more than 8 which is the largest number that can be placed in a single small group.

The following are the types of activities which the total group of participants will be involved in:

- listening to the presenters
- watching and listening to audio-visual material
- listening to feedback from small groups
- asking questions
- making comments
- offering suggestions during brain storming
- whole group exercises (may not be a part of particular courses).

Directing the process through the educators
The total group of participants is only going to exist for the duration of the course.

And during the course it is not going to be functioning as a group for any great length of time.
If you do not count responding to the presenters or presentations as a strictly group activity, then there may be no time when the totality of participants functions as a group.

If this is the case, then it seems preferable that most communications be between the educators and the participants. The educators can address either the group collectively or individuals (in response to specific questions or comments).

Participants would not be encouraged to address each other except "through the chair".

In instrumental and cohesive terms, the educators hold the processes together.

2. Dialoguing with the Participants
In this section we are going to cover some aspects of your explicit interactions with participants in the total group.

Inviting feedback
You want to provide opportunities for participants to ask you to clarify something you have said, to expand on something you have said or to comment on what you have said.

It would be good to do this in a way which **invites** questions, requests for expansion or comments.

There are some ways which are not really invitational in a context where people do not know each other very well, where they may be embarrassed by speaking out.

- Short questions, particularly if said quickly. People get the

message that you are not really wanting a reply.

There are languages in which you can actually form a question in such a way that the hearer knows what kind of reply is expected. In English we do it by voice tone, inflection or body language.

"Any questions or comments?"

"All that's clear?"

"You're O.K. with that?"

My thought is that unless these questions are somehow qualified by a non verbal message that a reply will be welcomed, hearers will not reply by saying anything. The speaker will then move on.

- "If there are no questions or comments, we will move to the next segment". Any person replying is going to feel that they are interrupting (disrupting?) you.

Better ways are:

- "Is there something which I have not made clear?" This form of expression assigns any failure in the communication to the speaker. People who need to ask questions do not have to feel somehow inadequate.

- "I'd be interested in any comments you may have."

- "Would anyone like me to say a bit more about this topic?"

If there is little to no time for further discussion (as distinct from clarification) it is best simply to say so.

Responding to opposition or difference
There are two types of opposition which can found among participants:

- intellectual, a difference of opinion or viewpoint
  e.g. a participant may not believe that experiences in our families of origin affect our expectations of relationships

- emotional or attitudinal.
  e.g. a participant is really resentful about "being forced to attend the course". (Not uncommon.)

Sharing
I wonder if any of those among you who have delivered courses have any stories they would like to tell us:

- of situations where you were faced with participants who were in some way opposing them

- how you handled the situation.

In each of the two types of situation it seems important to me to:

- control any irritated, angry, aggressive response you feel welling up in you.

- show respect for the speaker

- allow the speaker sufficient time to make the point

- check out that you have understood the speaker's point

- agree with whatever you can truthfully (in yourself) agree with

- accept and acknowledge any feelings you experience the

speaker as expressing. (This does not mean that you necessarily agree that the situation or event which evoked the feeling is/was as the speaker believes it to be).

- agree to disagree fairly quickly, if the speaker wants to keep arguing the point! (You can offer to have further conversation in the break or after the course.) It is not good form to attempt to "win" the argument or to show the speaker up in some way. You are not going to model good conflict resolution skills in this way!

Brainstorming
Responses to brain storming exercises should written down on the board or overhead.

- Accept all suggestions (except obscene ones), even ones which seem off the point or a little "smart".

- Group the responses and make some comments about each of the groupings.

  To do this you have to have in your mind a fair idea of the categories into which you will sort the responses. You do not want to have to think on your feet too much.

Responding to small group feedback
There are a number of reasons for having small discussion groups:

- they give everyone a chance to participate in discussions of topics

- they give everyone an opportunity to make a point to the big total group (including the educators) relatively anonymously. Only those in the small group know who raised the point.

- they provide an opportunity for participants to hear a variety of experiences and opinions. The feedback from small groups is a way of bringing further information to all participants and of sharing the collective wisdom of the participants.

  Educators should:

- accept the feedback as given

- acknowledge the "wisdom" of group giving the feedback

- ask if any members of the group itself or the total group want to add something

- highlight the points which the educators feel need further emphasis

- add comments as appropriate.

Note that this way of dialoguing with the large group requires that educators really have thought through the major aspects the topic under discussion.

3. Small Groups
From what has been said before, it is clear that educators should not become too involved in the small group processes. The small groups are to give some anonymity to participants.

Educators can move around and "call in" on the group discussions:
- to clarify any uncertainties about the set task and make a suggestion or two to spark the discussion along

- to ensure that there is a recorder for the group

- to ascertain if anyone is willing to report on the group's behalf.

  If no one is willing to report back, a facilitator can offer to read to the total participant group what the small group has recorded.

When "calling in" on a group, the educator is advised to avoid appearing to stand over group members. Thus it is best to "join" the group by positioning yourself so that the members' eyes and yours are on the same level.

Exercise
We would like two volunteers whose job it will be to process the feedback from a small group discussion which we are going to ask you all to participate in.

The discussion topic is:

- the concerns I would have if I were asked to present a pre-marriage course within a month.

4. Couple Work
The privacy of these discussions means educators will have no direct knowledge of what is happening in these discussions unless the couple invites you to discuss something with them.

You may observe body language etc. but you have no legitimacy in engaging any couple in conversation about their relationship unless you are invited to do so.

If you are invited you should avoid being cast into a counselling role, confining your comments to ones about marriage and relationships in general.

If there are obvious difficulties between a couple, you may suggest counselling.

3.4 Working with Indigenous People

My understanding of today's topic is that we are to look at ways of working with people living in current Indigenous communities in Australia, or whose ancestors were Indigenous people and who still retain some identification with their traditional communities.

My approach to the topic is a fundamentally pragmatic and hopefully realistic one. The basic question for me is: what has to happen so that the Indigenous communities and individual Indigenous people in those communities can have the best chance to flourish as communities and individuals in the Australia of the 21st century?

What are the necessary steps which have to be taken so that the possibility of Indigenous community and individual flourishing becomes a reality? What are the blocks which have to be removed so that the possibility of flourishing becomes real? Where are those blocks located?

- In the thinking and actions of non-Indigenous people (and in the structures and processes of the society they have constructed)?

- In the thinking and actions of Indigenous people which come both from their traditional understandings and from their experiences after the arrival of those from overseas? Have they constructed ways of thinking and cultural practices which have made it more difficult for Indigenous people to live in an integrated society, one which has a basic unity whilst valuing and profiting from cultural differences?

- In the thinking and actions of both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples?

Lecture to Social Work students at Australian Catholic University (ACU) in 2011.

Social Work with Indigenous People

My basic thought is that social work with people from Indigenous communities should **essentially** be no different to work with people from other communities in the following aspects:

- The social worker should, as a person, assume absolute equality with the Indigenous client(s). The social worker's communication with the client(s) must embody and implicitly express this equality.

  This does not mean denial of differences in knowledge, life experience, skills etc. The client will have greater knowledge, experience and skills in some areas and the social worker will have greater knowledge, experience and skills in other areas. This will be the case whenever two human persons meet and communicate.

- From this position of fundamental human equality, the social worker attempts to form a working alliance with the Indigenous client, the aim of the alliance being an improvement in the client's current life situation so that the client can continue on the journey towards maximum flourishing.

  The Indigenous client has to perceive that the social worker is genuinely interested in him/her as an individual person who belongs to (and indentifies with) a particular Indigenous community.

- The social worker makes no assumptions about the Indigenous client as a person. All persons, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, have their own individual experiences of their lives. Such experiences may have much in common with individual experiences of those in the cultural group or may not have much in common.

I think Johnson and Munch do well to highlight the dangers of formally learning about cultures and simply making assumptions about clients from a particular cultural background based on that formal knowledge.[1] We can only really learn something about cultures by actually having conversations with people from those cultures and being really open to participating in their experience.

I do not think that formal knowledge about cultures is useless. I think such formal knowledge gives some guidance about what should be enquired about, and some knowledge of the type of answer which might be expected.

However, the formal knowledge does not predict what a particular person might say about his/her experience. It is the knowledge gained from the client which is vital and of overarching importance in work with that client.

Another caution in relation to formal knowledge about Indigenous Australians is that that there are very many different communities who may have very different cultural practices. Such communities can even be suspicious of each other and not approve cross-community contact.

A colleague of mine who worked in Kalgoorlie in Western Australia told me that her agency could not run a programme simply for the Indigenous people resident in the area. The reason was that there were five different local Indigenous communities and they did not associate with each other.

[1] Yvonne M. Johnson and Shari Munch, "Fundamental Contradictions in Cultural Competence", 2009 54, (3) *Social Work*, 223-224.

Morgana Thomas in her Social Work 2009 Honours Thesis at this University quotes one of her non-Indigenous social work interviewees who said in discussing the appointment of an Indigenous person to a particular job:

> "I asked about the job and he said 'oh yes they put in an Aboriginal person to do that role, however it didn't work out' and I asked 'what happened? Why?' and he said 'well this person was from this clan and could not work with those other Aboriginal people because he was identified as being of another land or something'."[2]

- The social worker should not assume that just because a particular cultural group has a norm it should be allowed to enforce that norm. I quote from Johnson and Munch:

> "We find it inconceivable that the social work profession could justify the protection of group rights when the consequence is the denial of an individual's inherent worth, for example, institutional racism found in U.S. courts, murder of women on the basis of adultery in India, female genital mutilation in parts of Africa. In accordance with social work's principles and values, it appears that the professional cannot ethically adhere to cultural relativism, which might justify privileging group rights at the expense of the individual's worth."[3]

In the Australian context, the assessment of an Indigenous child being at risk of significant harm if the child remains in its current

[2] Morgana Thomas, *Negotiating Ethnicity: the role of ethnicity in the work of non-Aboriginal social workers and Aboriginal clients*, unpublished thesis for Bachelor of Social Work (Honours), ACU, 2009. My draft copy not paginated.

[3] Johnson and Munch, op.cit., 227.

situation will arise. The criteria to be satisfied in order to justify the judgement that the child is at risk of significant harm are universal. There are no additional clauses relating to Indigenous children.

If the child is judged to be at risk of significant harm then clearly steps have to be taken to reduce that risk to the minimum. If it is judged that removal of the child into alternative care is necessary, then the best practice would be to place the child in the care of a relative or in the care of a member of the same Indigenous community.

However, there are possibly circumstances where this is not possible or practicable. Then placing the child in the care of a non-Indigenous person or family would be the only viable option.[4]

The Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics 4.2.3(2) (a) allows such action. It states:

"Social workers will recognise that in some cases their ability to promote self-determination is limited because clients may be involuntary clients or because clients' actions pose a serious threat to others".

- The social worker needs to take account of the organisational context within which the client is being seen.

  There are, for example, significant differences in seeing a client in a justice setting (gaol, parole, probation where the social

[4] For discussion of the issues involved in child welfare practice with Indigenous communities see Linda Briskman, *Social Work with Indigenous Communities,* (Federation Press, Sydney, 2007) Chapter 12.

worker is acting in the name of a formally powerful institution) and in seeing a voluntary client in a community setting (community health centre, church agency, community educational programme).

In the justice setting, the clients may find it very difficult to believe that the social worker has any actual interest in them as actual individual persons (assuming that the social worker does have an interest and is not just performing a role almost totally impersonally). Establishing rapport and a working alliance may take some time.

However, it should not be assumed that establishing rapport and a working alliance with an Indigenous voluntary client will be easy. The experience of being treated disrespectfully by professionals and others is very common in Indigenous communities. The stories handed down about how their ancestors were treated years ago also can form part of the framework within which non-Indigenous clients initially see social workers and other professionals.

The Indigenous client (like any other client) has to come to a personal positive assessment of the social worker. I have a counselling supervisee who works part-time in our outreach at Emerton (in the Mt. Druitt district). She has been there about 24 months. The Indigenous men who come to the Shed (a meeting place as well as a place where some group activities are held) assessed her over the first 12 months and decided that she is genuine. Many more began having chats with her (as well as formal interviews) than were talking with her when she began. Word got around that she is OK.

- The social worker needs to be aware of the historical (social and political) circumstances within which clients live and which

influence their perceptions and understandings. We need to do this both to understand and work with specific clients and to work towards changes in the external environment which will make it easier for clients to flourish.

- As far as possible the social worker should allow the client or client group to exercise power in their lives as individuals and communities. Of course, this is a fundamental principle of social work practice.

  In working within and with Indigenous communities, social workers would be well-advised to work towards assisting the communities to develop their own strategies to deal with problems which they themselves recognise. The social worker acts more as a facilitator than as a director. One of Morgana Thomas' interviewees said:

  > "A huge number of children are born with foetal alcohol syndrome, a huge number of Aboriginal children fail to thrive, and that's got to do with self-respect and looking after your children, having pride in yourself, having a sense of pride in yourself, having a sense that I can control this. That's not going to happen by bringing in the army, that's going to happen with a more community development approach."[7]

  Members of the Indigenous community can be involved in attempting to address personal problems. Linda Briskman discusses an extended family care programme developed in the 1990s in the Mallee area of Victoria because of the number of Koorie children who needed out-of-home care.

  Briskman says that the extended family care programme was

[7] Morgana Thomas, op.cit.

based on the following principles which recognise that the extended family system is an integral part of Aboriginal culture:

- Koorie communities should have control of Koori children
- Resources should be provided for this to occur
- Koorie culture, identity and tradition must be acknowledged and retained; and
- Koorie communities must be consulted about Koorie children.

Briskman says that the programme was meant to reinforce, acknowledge and support what was already happening in the community. Extended families were doing all they could to stop children being placed in care outside their communities. They often bore great personal and financial costs to do this.

The NGO which initially received the funding for the project transferred the responsibility for Koorie children to the local Indigenous community organisation which distributed financial payments to Koorie carers. The NGO also transferred another Government payment to the Aboriginal organisation so it could employ a worker to support the carers and assist with any problems.

The program worked well and, after a time, the local Indigenous organisation received its own funding and the programme spread to other locations. Briskman's evaluation is as follows:

> "There are a range of lessons that can be learned from the success of this endeavour including a preparedness to take risks, partnering with supportive organisations or people, meaningful consultation and support for Indigenous traditions and equal partnerships. It was not particularly emancipatory but rather more adaptive; yet at its heart was a belief in

a transformative project for social work to move it from its normative ways of acting within defined organisational structures".[8]

The Ethnicity of the Social Worker

- The literature seems to assume that most of the social workers working with Australian Indigenous people will have white skins. There is some reference to Indigenous social workers but I did not come across any explicit reference to social workers who are African, Asian or Central / South American.

  For those of us who are white (and perhaps for others) the authors who discuss whiteness draw attention to the following possibilities:

We might unconsciously assume that we are superior to the Indigenous people.

The literature generally discusses this in terms of colonisation. The point is that the Europeans came and took over the land, dispossessing the traditional custodians of the land and then tried to change the Indigenous people into Europeans.

This process might have been subjectively justified as "wanting to improve the lot of those primitive people". The fact is that it resulted in a lot of injustice towards the Indigenous people and denied them many human rights, and took no account of the strengths which were in the Indigenous cultures e.g the importance of communal life and reverence for the land.

It is possible that as social workers we still approach Indigenous people from a position of superiority. This is not likely to express

[8] Briskman, op.cit. pp 125- 127.

itself in terms of "we are better than you" but, perhaps, more in terms of "we want to rescue you because you are absolutely incapable of doing it yourselves. You need us to show you the way".

Now there is some truth in saying that Indigenous people working towards greater justice for themselves will need assistance. This is because of their lack of political power. They will need to have some friends in the corridors of power. A certain amount of advocacy will be necessary.

Social workers need to have a fundamental attitude of "We are working *with* you to achieve goals which you desire and which are realistically possible in the current and foreseeable contexts".

- We might be acting out of an unconscious or conscious sense of guilt.

  The guilt referred to here, in the first instance, is a *collective* sense of guilt. The non-Indigenous worker is, by definition, a member of a group or society which has put in place societal structures and processes which have severely compromised the rights of Indigenous peoples and impeded their development as communities and as individuals. Many informal processes have embodied attitudes which mean that many in the non-Indigenous society look down on Indigenous people as second rate persons.

  Whilst a sense of guilt or shame about being part of a group whose actions have harmed Indigenous peoples may motivate a person to work with them to achieve social justice, there is another possible consequence which is not useful.

  That consequence is a *guilt paralysis*. The social worker is too afraid to work as required in certain circumstances because of a fear of being racist, of offending Indigenous people, of acting

oppressively etc. A way out of a sense of guilt is to:

• Acknowledge to oneself and others (including Indigenous people) the facts of history.

• Only take personal responsibility for actions which are truly one's own.

I may have many thoughts and feelings about what my ancestors have done collectively and individually but the fact remains that I did not do those things. I cannot take personal responsibility for their actions.

Again I quote one of Morgana Thomas' interviewees:

> "The lesson I learned very early, and Aboriginal people taught me this lesson, is that I do not need to carry the burden of shame and guilt for all the dreadful things that happened to Aboriginal people. I do have to acknowledge and give credit to what actually happened and the pain that that generated and continues to generate… I found very early that that actually liberated me to learn how to find ways that I relate to people, right?" (sic).[9]

Some Indigenous people may vent their anger at the effects of history and current processes on them and direct that anger towards the non-Indigenous social worker. This is not easy to bear but if it happens we need to remind ourselves that the attack is not personal and not respond from the emotional state such an attack arouses in us. A calm understanding and empathic response is most likely to trigger the beginning of a working alliance.

[9] Morgana Thomas, op.cit.

• We might have a sense of being privileged because of our own personal circumstances.

The literature about *whiteness* talks a lot about white people in Australian society being *privileged*.

I think the conditions generally enjoyed by white people are the inevitable by-products of social development within the parameters of a Western European culture. We perhaps take these advantages for granted and do not see how they have come about through historical processes. These processes were structured in ways that made it difficult for Indigenous communities to participate in them. The result is that Indigenous people are *disadvantaged* in comparison to non-Indigenous people in many significant ways.

The aim surely is to find ways which result in Indigenous people enjoying the benefits of living in modern Australian society whilst preserving those aspects of their culture which are absolutely fundamental to them.

On the other hand, the non-Indigenous peoples may find that the Indigenous cultures have something to offer them in the less material and more spiritual aspects of life.

The subjective response to an actually granted privilege is that of thankfulness, because the granting of a privilege is essentially offering a gift which is fundamentally unmerited.

We might catch ourselves as social workers saying to ourselves we deserve the benefits which we enjoy and that, if other groups are not participating in such benefits it is because they did not put the work in to deserve them. If we are thinking such thoughts we had better do a more accurate analysis of the historical

processes involved in the de facto exclusion of certain groups from participating fully in the benefits which we enjoy.

Some Aspects of Indigenous Worldviews
Sue Green and Eileen Baldry list some of the perspectives which Indigenous commentators[10] suggest are held in common:

- **Collective self-determination, interdependence, reciprocity and obligation**

Indigenous people understand and experience self-determination largely but not exclusively, within a collective framework. The obligations and reciprocity of relationships among humans is fundamental to the Indigenous world view as is the relationship between humans and nature.

Perhaps, a formulation of the basic principle might be: “Before you act assess what effect your action will have on those you live with. Will they be better off if you do what you are thinking of doing? Is there some other action which would benefit them more? Will you be neglecting any obligations if you act as you are thinking of acting?”

This world view is clearly different to that of Western culture where the stress in self-determination is on the individual. The basic principle might be formulated as “You may do what you want as long as no one is seriously harmed by your action”.

The emphasis on the collective seems to have predated the coming of the white man. The emphasis may have become more solidified as Indigenous peoples were oppressed by the invaders and now have to fight for their rights not only as individuals but as cultural groups.

[10] Sue Green and Eileen Baldry, “Building Indigenous Australian Social Work”, in Australian Social Work, Vol 61, no 4, December 2008, pp 389-402.

- **Land**

For Indigenous peoples land is not a commodity, something which they possess as an object. They are identified with the “country” from which they come as a family, as a clan group, as a nation. They belong to that country. It does not belong to them as we understand “belong”. There is a spiritual connection with the land.

- **Family**

We tend to think of extended family and kinship networks as structures within which we are situated but that we have some choice about how important those persons in our extended families will be in our lives. The Indigenous approach places each person in a much closer relationship with extended family and kin. The relationships are bound up with feelings about being from the same country, having important mutual obligations and being connected spiritually.

You can see how devastating the effect of separating children from their parents and extended family and community was and is.

4

COUNSELLING

Explores personal change in detail and shows why changes in behaviour and attitude are essential to successful outcomes in all counselling or therapy situations. Discusses approaches to marriage counselling and the selection and training of marriage counsellors. Provides extensive material on working with families.

4.1 The Nature of Personal Change

Introduction
All counselling/therapy is about change. A counselling situation arises because somebody wants something to be different in somebody's life.

The change can be in themselves
- I want to feel less depressed
- I want to be more confident in myself

The change can be in their relationships
- I want to get on better with my husband/my wife/my child.

The change can be in somebody else
- I want him to give up drugs
- I want her to be less disruptive in class
- I want the principal to give me a better deal.

I have never heard anyone who defined counselling as necessary/ advisable in any particular situation say "That was really effective counselling/therapy: NOTHING HAS CHANGED." Certainly no theorist I have ever read has defined the goal of counselling as NO CHANGE.

Change in what? how?
The essential questions are:

(i) what has to change?
(ii) how is the change to be brought about?
(iii) how we will know that there has really been a change? (Is there such a thing as "apparent change"?).

Staff training session, Centacare Parramatta, 02 July 1997

I will give you my simple answers to these questions:

- The client's action has to change.
- The client will be doing something different to what he/she is currently doing.
- A full description of what the client is doing after is discernibly different to what the client was doing before.

In many cases, this is easy to discern:

- a husband and wife are enjoying lovemaking whereas before they rarely touched each other.
- a smoker has quit.

In some cases, this difference might be less obvious:

- I feel more comfortable in talking to my boss.

(In this case, the description of the before and after situations might require a detailed "unfolding" in order to detect the actual changes in what the client is doing.)

But I would want to maintain that the difference is/must be a difference in action which is observable (in principle).

This means that I would have difficulty in simply accepting statements of desired change in the following more general terms:

(i) Increased self-esteem
(ii) Reduced conflict
(iii) More comfortable in relating
(iv) Overcome my self-doubt.

I would want a more specific description of the desired outcome in

observable terms.

(i) I will apply for a job
(ii) We will talk more openly about our feelings
(iii) I will be asking this woman for dates
(iv) I will complete my thesis.

ALL THIS is simply because life is to be lived in a world external to ourselves.

We affect events in that external world and are affected by them The existentialists would say the human person is "being-in-the-world". We cannot even be thought of in isolation from the world in which we live, move and have our being.

The pre-conditions/processes which are involved in change action

What has to happen before a changed action occurs? This is the same question as "how is the change to be brought about?"
My answer to this is: THERE MUST BE A CHANGE IN THE PERSON'S EXPERIENCE.

"Experience" here is used as a summary of all the internal psychological/psychophysical processes which occur "in" a person at an one time.

"Experience" is not being used only to refer to the past. Although past experience, or, at the least, the memory of it is part of present experience.

"Current awareness" might be another term. "Experience" in the sense meant here is strictly changing from moment to moment.

The term is used a little more loosely to refer to a relatively

consistent set of psychological components over a specified period of time.

The Components of Personal Experience
This is an outline of how I understand the components of personal experience.

In no way does this pretend to be a tight theoretical treatment of theories of mind/personality etc.

They are just the concepts I use to attempt to understand the experience of another person, as a prelude to understanding what it might take to alter that experience so that action in the desired changed direction occurs.

1. **Sensory experience**
   To be alive is to be in sensory contact with an external world.
   So let us take a person at a specific moment in time.
   That person is spoken to:

   At this point, assuming that all the person's sensory receptors and neurological processes are intact: information will be available to the person in each of the five sensory channels:

   (i) Visual information
   If the eyes are open, the person will see something. It may or may not include the sight of the speaker.

   (ii) Auditory inormation
   The person hears the words spoken, along with any other noise around.

   (iii) Kinesthetic information
   Although the speaker is not touching the person, the person

is in physical contact with something and that contact produces sensations, eg, feel the contact between feet and floor.

iv) Olfactory information
Odours are present. May or may not be connected with the speaker. Might be perfume/aftershave

(v) Taste
May not be directly stimulated in this situation. Yet always a taste in the mouth.

Thus the person is in this field of sensory information.

The TASK is to make sense of the information presented and to respond, to determine the meaning of it and to decide upon an action.

There are a lot of internal processes at the ready to assist in the task of assigning meaning to the experience.

2. **Thinking**
   There are thought structures and processes ready to assist in determining a meaning for this sensory experience. These include:
   (i) Generalised beliefs about reality
   - other people exist - somebody is speaking
   - people speaking in a loud voice are angry; people speaking in a soft voice are caring - is this voice loud or soft.

   (ii) Generalised rules of behaviour
   - if someone speaks to me, it is polite to reply.
   - if someone speaks to me, it is polite to turn and look at them.

(iii) Beliefs about current situation

- if my boss speaks to me, I best reply right away.
- if my four year old is calling me, for the umpteenth time, it is probably OK to ignore him this time.

(iv) Values

the standards by which something is judged good/bad; desirable/undesirable (- may not be called into play in this situation).

Could be:

- it is bad that someone has broken my concentration just when I am in the final stages of this countdown to launch this rocket-ship.
- it is good that someone wants me now, because I was bored out of my mind.

(v) Concepts - Words

Thinking, as used here, is in language (words which, in principle, can be found in the dictionary). Every word has a meaning to the person (which may or may not coincide with a dictionary meaning). Words assist in the assignation of meaning.

Words also de-limit. Once you have defined something as X, you have also said it is not not-X. You've put a boundary around it. The person may internally describe the voice as "commanding", "inviting", "enticing." "asking", "pleading" etc. The response will be influenced by the description self-given by the hearer.

3. Feelings - Emotions

At the point of hearing the voice, the person is in some emotional state - it may be one of calm.

However, the potential is there to experience another emotion evoked by the sound of the voice. eg joy, frustration, irritation, amusement, etc. Feelings in my view have the following characteristics:

(i) They involve the physiological functioning of the person
There is always a bodily component to feelings. eg. changes in heart rate, muscle tension, blood pressure, gut motility, secretion of chemicals into the bloodstream.

(ii) They are linked to some "object".
To me it makes no sense to assume that feelings can exist solely in "inner space" as it were.
"I love" - and there is no potential/imagined/actual recipient of such love.
"I feel angry" but I am not angry at anyone or about anything.

A feeling is always a response to something, it is always connected with something. It has intentionality - to use a term from 19th (and 20th) Century psychology.

(iii) They are labelled/named.
The process is like this:
- we become aware of a physiological process
- we call it something
may be general - hurt, good
may be more specific - anger, sadness, pleasure, joy.

This latter claim raises the interesting question: could the labelling be wrong? Is it possible that I am really angry, when I say that I am feeling depressed?

Is it possible that I am really happy, when I say that I am feeling anxious?

So the potential to experience a variety of emotions exists in the person at the point of hearing the voice.
Other processes may well call forth those emotions.

4. Imagination

There are imaginative processes lying at the ready as well. These are the processes which result in the internal representation of something.

They may or may not be the result of memory. There are imaginative processes which correspond to each of the five senses we have identified previously.

(i) Visual
Seeing in the mind's eye, constructed or memory.

(ii) Auditory
"Hearing" past conversations or noises, constructing noises or internal conversations "self-talk".

(iii) Kinesthetic
Feeling responses to constructed images or remembered images.

(iv) Olfactory
Imagining smell.

(v) Taste
Imagining taste.
In the situation we are talking of - the voice being heard - the imagination may be called into play immediately.

eg Hearing the voice may result in the immediate formation of a visual mental image of the speaker. This may result in immediate

recall and "re-hearing "of a previous conversation, like the hearer was supposed to have done something and had not. This may result in a feeling of fear.

(Now whether or not we place such a feeling in the imagination or emotion is probably irrelevant for our purposes. It is probably equally at home in either. But if it is there, it is there.)
There is a sense in which the sensory experience will also result in internal images.

The externally generated ones might merge, so that the final "image" is a composite one.
All that we need to note here is that these imaginative processes are there, potentially or actually.

5. Memory

Memory is the capacity to recall past events.
May be very **specific** - the first flight in an areoplane.
Maybe **more general** - experiences of being alone in a crowd. (Obviously "more general" relies on a number of specifics).
May involve **sensory** memories of each of the five senses.
May be **full** - I remember everything about it, that first joyous flight experience.
May be **partial** - I recall parts of it, like seeing the ground drop away, feeling the plane turn, hearing the undercarriage come up, but I don't remember what food they gave us. Memories will immediately feed into imagination.

6. Wishing

Life, as we live it, as we experience it, is a movement into a future. Though only the NOW is reai the NOW immediately passes into a future.

Humans are capable of imagining the future. Rollo May in

"*Love & Will*" (Collins, London, 1972, p 211) gives the following description of the human wish:

> "The human wish is not merely a push from the past, not merely a call from primitive needs demanding satisfaction"

It also has within it some selectivity. It is a forming of the future, a moulding by a symbolic process which includes both memory and fantasy of what we hope the future will be.

The wish is the beginning of orienting ourselves to the future, an admission that we want the future to be such and such. It is the capacity to reach deep down into ourselves and preoccupy ourselves with a longing to change the future. The wish, in this sense, is not a conscious plan.

It is not the result of consciously formulating goals and strategies. The wish is prior to that process. The wish arises from deep within. In a sense wishes are discovered, not created.
Wishes are directional - they point to types of futures.
They are, in original form, general. They point to types of futures, not to specific ones.

eg. a wish to be loved will not point to being loved by a specific person in a specific way, in a specific time and place.

If the wish is more specific, then it has combined with other psychological events to create a plan. The writer, William Lynch, in his book "*Images of Hope*" claims that the inability to wish is one of the central facts in mental illness.

To have no wishes is to have no life.
The wish is creative, it is the beginning of having a say in the shaping of one's own destiny. Without wishing, a person is

handed over to passivity, a piece of driftwood in the sea of life with all the consequent negative feelings which can be summed up as "hopelessness".

The importance of hope for change in counselling can hardly be stressed enough. In the situation we are considering (someone is spoken to) the following wishes may come into play:-

- "I wish to be acknowledged"
- "I want to be alone"
- "I want no trouble".

These may be connected to prior wishes:-
- "I want to be in an important relationship"
- "I want to be myself: not answerable to anyone"
- "I want to be safe".

According to Rollo May (*Love & Will*, p 300), wish is summarized as "The imaginative playing with the possibility of some act or state occuring". It is a necessary precondition to willing; and it is to the will which we now turn.

7. Willing

People do things. For instance, I walk from here to here.
Willing is the process of putting ourselves into action, of pointing ourselves in a certain direction, of moving towards a particular goal.

When I do something - as distinct from having something happen to me - I am the one who does it - at some level, I have willed the action. This "action" may be internal - as when I deliberately decide to think of this rather than that, to look at this rather than something else.

The action may be external - observable. Perhaps, the simplest definition of will is that given by Irvin Yalom in "*Existential Psychotherapy*" (p 291) is that of "responsible mover", that which moves a person to act in response to an event and to bear some ethical responsibility for that action.

All action has an ethical dimension. All willing has an ethical dimension. In as much as a person is forced, compelled, totally driven to do something, there is no real action. Only what I choose to call behaviour. For behaviour, we are not responsible in the ethical sense. Willing, then, is connected with freedom. Willing can be limited by a lack of knowledge or a lack of imagination.

I cannot deliberately move to bring about a state of affairs which I cannot imagine. If I do not believe, I cannot imagine that I can lose weight, quit smoking, I cannot will to lose weight, quit smoking. I might wish these things, but cannot will them.

Willing, then, can only operate in the realm of the "known", of beliefs and imaginings and wishes of posible futures. This is one reason why will power is not enough.

The Two Realms of Will

Now the picture I have drawn of "willing" is of a process which is quite conscious.

Introspectively, I could, in principle, tell you of what was going on in my mind when I was in the throes of decision and of choice, and tell you why I think I decided to do such and such. I experience choice as I make it.

The psychotherapist, Leslie Farber, in his book "*The Ways of the Will*", says that this is only one aspect of willing. He calls this the

second realm of will.

His first realm of will is quite an interesting concept. He says this first realm of will is not a matter of immediate experience - it must be inferred after the event - it is unconscious. It refers to an orientation of being, a pointing of the self in a general direction.

Because it is not a conscious thing, I am not sure if "decision" is the right kind of word to use in this context, but I have no doubt that people do have processes in their unconscious which do orient them in one direction rather than another.

For instance, there is a moment in time when an addict knows that he/she is really going to attempt to overcome the addiction. I think this is a discovery, rather than a conscious decision. The addict is aware that he/she has changed.

Likewise, the decision to marry is one of recognition in many cases that one's being is now oriented towards a particular person. Sometimes consciously people try to fight off awarenesses like that.

Similarly, the decision to terminate a relationship is also one of recognition that one is no longer walking in partnership with the other person. People fight off this awareness too.

Religious conversions may also have some dimension of recognition of a changed orientation.

Farber, I think, would say that the second realm of will is necessary to fully implement the incarnation of the directional will. You have to do things consciously to give effect in the external world to that directional "will". You can oppose it, of course, but at the cost of some division in your being.

When one is acting in total accord with the directional will -the first realm -this is experienced as freedom. Not just the freedom to choose between alternatives, but a freedom to be yourself.

It is a foretaste of what some theologians have said about the Beatific Vision. A person in the presence of God cannot help being drawn out in love, yet experiences a total freedom in that love.

Hence I believe that this area of "willing" is closely connected with the truth being perceived, acknowledged and dwelt in.

At any event, I do not believe people change in fundamental ways without a change in this deeper level. Much therapy is aimed at creating conditions for this change, but cannot bring it directly about.

Ultimately, we are in the realm of mystery, but, I believe, of reality.

8. Unconscious

Any processes and the content of such processes of which the person is, at this moment, unaware can be said to be unconscious at that moment. However, there is a distinction usually made:

(i) preconscious

- a process, a thought, a feeling which can be brought into consciousness easily, like writing from the hard disk to RAM or the screen on a computer.

(ii) truly unconscious

- processes and the content of such processes which cannot be brought into consciousness at any given time. The person cannot be aware of them at any given time, although the person may become aware of them at a later date.

There are those that say that 90% of mental life is unconscious. Now the concept of the "unconscious" which is being used here is not simply like a vault of memories, or a prison of processes from which some disguised messages (symptoms) are sent to the outside world. Quoting from "*The Answer Within*" by Stephen R Lankton and Carol H. Lankton (p 8):

> "The unconscious is thought to be a complex set of associations. The degree of "out-of-awareness" between these patterns varies due to many factors: unique personal history, intensity of learning, subtlety of experience, and social sanctions placed upon knowing and experiencing.
>
> What remains in a person's repertoire of experiences are automatized, unconscious patterns which regulate, calculate, modulate, and otherwise guide the routine conduct of even the most disturbed human being."
>
> "It may be considered that everything done in, by, to, or for the body at an unconscious level is either maintaining health, prohibiting it, or promoting it. In any case, it affects the person's experience in the world.
>
> And it is therefore a communicational event. The mere observation of the general manner in which people conduct themselves as total beings in the world may be said to result in an intuitive judgement about their lives in many ways." "Langton and Langton, (p 9)".

A communicational event

- may be expressed verbally -but only implicitly or INDIRECTLY if it is not "truly conscious". Not necessarily pathological.
- non-verbally. "Body language".

Has to be a communicational event in some way. How else would we know about it? I find it useful to imagine that beneath each of the structures outlined above, there is a corresponding unconscious structure with unconscious processes.

Except in the case of the second realm of will -I think conscious decision-making must be conscious - a tautology? Whatever unconscious processes influence the decision it is still a conscious decision.

Hence **UNCONSCIOUS**

Sensory Experience
- the lady in the car who felt suddenly sad. She had noticed (without noticing) a car similar to that driven by a friend who had recently died.

Thinking
- a belief that women really are instruments of the devil (in spite of all consciously articulated beliefs).

Feelings
- anger at a parent, not felt, may even be overcompensated.

Imagination
- a replay of a fearful situation when triggered by an external stimulus.
- eg movement towards a sexually abused person.

Memory
- any learning from the past, not necessarily negative.
Erickson used to speak of how our memories retained the knowledge of how to walk and how we learned to walk, piece of behaviour by piece of behaviour.

- usually thought of as unpleasant, repressed memories.

Wishing
- not only the unconscious impulses from what Freud called the Id.
- but also desires, wants, needs pushing us forward to shape our lives.

Willing
- the first realm of will. Which is where is where we come in.

9. Defences

I think of these processes (defences), which aim at preventing something unconscious emerging into the conscious because the processes or their contents are somehow threatening to the person's conscious experience, are residing on the border between the conscious and the unconscious.

The fact that some unconscious processes cannot be made conscious is not necessarily an indicator of a defence in operation.

Much of life has to be lived unconsciously. Otherwise we would be paralyzed. We have to be on automatic pilot to take care of the routine, to leave our conscious awareness free to attend to what is important.

Much training is aimed at building up unconscious responses eg ballet, football -the need to flow into action.

10. Meaning

Thus when the person receives some sensory input, all of the above processes potentially come into play, and probably do.

Whilst the processes are continuous, we can think of them

producing a result which I call the Meaning of an experience.
In our situation, the person is spoken to. The person, after the processes have "concluded", recognises the meaning (the result) as "such and such".

The person then responds, acts in terms of that meaning. This does not mean that the person has a full awareness of the meaning of the experience. Remember the unconscious. And the unconscious communicates. Nevertheless we act upon whatever the meaning of a situation is for us.

11. Action

This is simply what the person does. It is multi-dimensional:
- what is consciously intended, communicated.
- what is unconsciously "intended", "communicated"

These can be quite different. "Why are your eyes not smiling when your mouth is?"
- can be in a variety of ways: speech, movement, silence, stillness etc.

- can be described in different ways:
  concrete - He walked quickly.
  more abstract - He moved.
  inferred - The man was drawn forward to look at it.

Action brings consequenses. There is some kind of communication to the "world" and the "world" responds.
In our example, the person spoken to does something in response to being spoken to.

The speaker will respond to that response and so it goes on.

12. Relationship of this to theories of counselling

I find it useful to ask which aspect of personal experience does a

particular theory of counselling address.
- Psychoanalysis has an emphasis on bringing the **unconscious into the conscious**, with an emphasis on **thinking**: on gaining insight into one's own behaviour, understanding symptoms.

- Existential therapy has an emphasis on taking responsibility for one's actions, of fully **accepting freedom**. Hence **willing** is an important aspect of their approach.

- Gestalt therapy has more of an emphasis on **feeling**, becoming aware of the feelings of the moment, get in touch with what the body is experiencing.

- Rational emotive therapy has an emphasis on **thinking**, perhaps only on conscious thinking.

- Problem-solving approaches, an emphasis on **action**.

Theories may vary in terms of their emphasis on memory, explicit use of imagination etc. (guided imagery).

13. Other Aspects

Can be "divisions" within the person. "Parts" -one part has this response, another quite a different response. Overall response may be a combination, not an integration.

Individuals are parts of systems of communication and interaction.

There are ways to describe these systems and interactions, but they are all systems of shared meanings (fully or potentially).
You cannot change a system of human communication or interaction without a change in the individual personal

experiences of those within the system.

14. Consequences

When one person does something and another person is aware of it, then the other will respond in some way, based on the meaning taken from the awareness.

This response may be what the first person

- predicts
- does not predict
- wants
- does not want

At all events, the first person is now faced with taking a meaning from the second person's response and so the cycle goes on.

4.2 Approaches to marriage counselling[1]

Many couples in the course of their marriage find themselves in conflicts which they are unable to resolve or find that they have grown apart and no longer experience emotional intimacy at satisfying levels, or indeed at any level. Either of these situations results in each spouse feeling frustrated and deeply unhappy.

The fundamental aim of marriage counselling in CatholicCare Parramatta is to assist couples to regain mutually satisfying, and ever increasing, levels of emotional / intellectual / spiritual / physical intimacy. The basic assumption is that if both spouses truly wish to regain intimacy at every level they can achieve it. The journey may be difficult and very challenging at times, particularly as each spouse has to accept their own weaknesses and vulnerabilities as well as their spouse's weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

Only when it is clear that one spouse has decided that she/he does not wish ever to pursue such intimacy with her/his spouse, will the counsellor assist them to move towards a workable separation. It is very important that separated spouses relate as well as they can to each other, particularly when there are children who are inevitably emotionally affected by the breakup of their parent's marriage.

The Basic Reason Why People Seek Counselling For Marital Issues.

All marital difficulties have a basic underlying source. What a couple initially experienced as a satisfying emotional/intellectual/spiritual/ physical intimacy has eroded to a dissatisfying experiential level and the relationship is experienced as painful and frustrating.

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[1] Extract from article *"Marriage Counselling in CatholicCare Parramatta"* (circa 2010)

This pain and frustration, this loss of intimacy on a number of levels, will normally show itself as one of the following:

- Open conflict, involving attempts to assert power over each other with much anger and frustration being expressed.
- Inability to clarify misunderstandings, to really understand what each is saying.
- Emotional and/or physical withdrawal from each other.

They have reduced their self-giving and their self-revelation to mutually unsatisfying levels.

The Fundamental Aim of Marriage Counselling
The fundamental aim of marriage counselling is to assist the couple to regain their previously experienced highest level of emotional/intellectual/spiritual/physical intimacy and to assist them to learn ways to continue to increase in loving intimacy until death.

This continual growth in intimacy, and hence interpersonal fulfilment and happiness, was what they hoped for on their wedding day and what they each, in taking their marriage vows, pledged themselves to work toward.

Relating Counsellor Actions to the Goal of Restored and Increasing Self-Giving and Self-Revelation.

There are many types of counsellor actions which are aimed at assisting couples to restore and increase their mutual self-giving and self-revelation.

Descriptions of such action types do not always make explicit reference to the underlying goal of increasing loving intimacy. It is vital that counsellors, using various counselling techniques and strategies, keep this underlying goal in mind and place their actions

in the context of moving towards that goal.

Clearly, counsellors must have an articulated understanding of what are the essential components of true intimacy and of how such intimacy is expressed verbally and non-verbally. An understanding of the fundamentals of being forgiving is vital to the understanding of true intimacy.

Ways of Bringing the Existing Intimacy to the Forefront of Consciousness.
Unless at least one spouse has firmly decided that he/she does not want to work at continuing the relationship and hence has totally withdrawn from self-giving and self-revelation, there is a bond of love uniting the couple. This bond may be experientially hidden beneath a multitude of painful and frustrating conscious experiences. If the bond exists it can be accessed.

Some ways of accessing the bond are:

- Being on the lookout for non-verbal signs that an aspect of felt intimacy is being expressed (e.g. a loving look, a smile, a soft compassionate tone of voice) and drawing immediate attention to it. This will probably bring the experience of intimacy to the forefront of consciousness.

- Having each recall their feelings when they made their wedding vows, presumably a moment of great joy and togetherness, to which they each had looked forward. In making their vows each truly experienced that the other was truly lovingly self-giving and was willing to be truly self-revealing, so that each could be truly and fully loved. If the couple do this, they are asked to share their feelings (not necessarily in the presence of the counsellor) and quietly remain in the experience of the memory for at least five minutes.

- Having the couple participate in the exercise “Recalling an Experience of Loving Presence” (see below). The exercise aims at each of the couple recalling in some detail an experience of feeling loved and feeling loving.

EXERCISE: Recalling an Experience of Loving Presence[2]

I am going to prompt you to recall personally and individually an experience of deep loving that you experienced at some time with your spouse. You are asked to remember a time with your spouse when you felt very loving and loved.

This is an exercise in which you will be silent as you recall the experience. Immediately after the exercise there will be some time to share with your spouse the specific memory you recalled.

I would like each couple to sit a little closer to each other. You can touch in some way if you like.

Now just make sure you are as physically comfortable as you can be .... relaxing ... putting aside the stresses of today ..... just relaxing .... being aware of your spouse right there beside you .... feeling love .... . You might like to close your eyes ..... now ..... or a little later ....

Now let your memory wander . .. .. to times when you felt really close with your spouse .... very special times .... when you knew you were loved .... and you were loving ....

I want you now to choose one of those very special times .... any one will do .... it does not have to be the most special ... .just one where you were loved .... and loving.

[2] Exercise used in Pre-marriage course, adapted by substituting "spouse" for "partner" (2010)

Now remember in more detail where you were ..... see again in your imagination where you were ..... remember some of the surroundings .... the colours ... the particular shapes of things ..... how your spouse looked ..... how your spouse looked at you ..... remember what particularly pleased you about how your spouse was looking at you ..... a look of love.

Now remember the sounds ..... soft sounds ..... loud sounds .... gentle sounds .... harsher sounds..... natural sounds ..... manufactured sounds ..... the sound of your spouse’s voice .... the sound of your own voice ..... the words you said to each other ..... words of love ..... words of acceptance ..... words of understanding ..... words of forgiveness ... words of loving ..... .

Remember the scents ..... the natural scents ..... other scents ..... particular aromas ... maybe from food ..... perfume ..... aftershave ..

Remember how you felt .... feeling warmth .... excitement ... joy .... peacefulness .... acceptance .... loved .... loving ..... alive .... safe .... love.

Just stay with the memory for a little... let it flow through you .... rest in it ..... really remember. .. what you saw ... what you heard .... what you smelled ..... what you felt. ...

A moment when you felt there was just you and your spouse ... there together. ...

I’ll give you a minute or two just to be in the memory .... when you are ready to tum your attention back to being here .... just gently look around ..... move a little in your seat. .... and be ready for the next stage of the our reflections.

Couple Sharing Time
I'll give you five minutes or so to share with your spouse a memory you recalled.

Some Words to Point to Aspects of the Experience of Loving Presence
It is highly likely that the experience which you recalled contained many of the following experiences:

- joy
- peacefulness
- stillness
- delight in loving
- delight in being loved
- a sense of flowing out to the other person and being embraced
- a sense of embracing the giving of the other person
- deep respect for the other person
- feeling deeply respected by the other person
- great trust
- vulnerability
- feeling safe in the vulnerability
- holding and respecting the other person's vulnerability.
- an awareness of being caught up in something mysterious and wonderful
- wanting the experience to never end
- an awareness of God somehow being present within the experience.

4.3 Introduction to marriage counselling training – Outline of course philosophy[1]

Introduction
This is the beginning of a journey. Journeys begin with excitement, anticipation and hope. Journeys into the unknown begin also with a little anxiety and apprehension. And this, for all of us, is a journey into the unknown. For you, because you have never experienced yourselves as trainee marriage counsellors before, for us because we have never experienced ourselves as trainers of marriage counsellors before. And, of course, we don't know each other yet. We are travellers assembling at the beginning of a long and exciting journey.

Love
All of you are here for two reasons: -

(i) You felt within you the call to help other people in emotional pain, particularly pain arising within their marriage relationships.
(ii) We chose you for the beginning of the Course.

We had many criteria by which to evaluate the applicants but they can all be summed up as "capacity to love."

Marriage counselling is essentially about loving. People come to marriage counsellors because something has blocked the flow of love between them and their partners. The most fundamental need of the human person is, in my view, the need to give and receive love. To have that love flow blocked in a relationship which promised so much is a great frustration and a source of great pain. As marriage counsellors you are to help people remove the blocks

[1] Talk at first meeting of trainees in Centacare's Marriage Counsellors Training Course, 21 Feb 1983.

which prevent the full flowing of love. This is impossible if you cannot love. You cannot swim in the river of a couple's love helping them to clear the water of the debris of a hurting relationship unless you are familiar with love in your own life, within yourself.

Commitment
The essence of loving is commitment, a willingness, a decision to put myself into a relationship with another person. If I commit myself to another person I take him, in some way, into my life. I allow that person to touch me inside, I allow myself to be affected by what happens in their life. I am prepared to be with them for the time given to us.

At the same time, I do not lose my sense of myself in a commitment. "I am me and you are you. I am sad with you but it is my sadness I feel not yours. I am excited with you but it is my excitement I experience not yours." If, within a loving commitment, I lose my sense of myself then I lose my ability to be for you, for I will be preoccupied in trying to recover myself or else will allow you to determine who I am.

We judged that each of you has a strong sense of personal identity such that in the emotional chaos of marriage counselling you would be able to maintain that sense of identity whilst allowing yourself to be touched by that chaos and whilst working to restore harmony.

Commitment is also important, for me, as a trainer. You were chosen, of course, by all three of the panel. My assent to your selection is my commitment to you, to each one of you as an individual person. I will do my part, to the limit of my ability and capacity, as a trainer within this training process.

Growth and Openness
It is our firm belief that to be a successful counsellor, a person

must never cease to grow as a total person. If a counsellor wraps a tight security blanket round herself and says "That's it. I've grown enough. I've found out enough about myself and my responses to life. Now I'm resting safe", then from that moment the counsellor's effectiveness begins to trail off.

For new people bring new challenges. They touch on parts of us which we prefer to be left out of reach. They call forth parts of our being which we have tried to hide away out of earshot.
If we choose to remain the same, safe and secure, we have no choice but to defend, to close off. We will not be available for the other. We will withdraw our commitment; we will not love.

Thus we have to be open to our experience, to take the risk of coming in contact with parts of ourselves which we, at first glance, wish we did not have. The journey of self-discovery is never over. It is not aways depressing. In fact, the awareness of the truth of our being is always joyful and freeing. It is the effort to hide from ourselves which is depressing.

Growth and openness do not come easily sometimes. It is our hope that we can provide a climate of trust which will facilitate your growth and your openness to yourselves and to each other. We will try our best to be open with you.

Thought
I have always believed that loving was an intelligent activity. If it is an activity of the whole person, then it must involve the intellect.

Thus, in the Course, we will pay considerable attention to the thoughtful part of loving. We want to help you to think in new ways about people and about yourselves. We hope to teach concepts and ideas which will help you to see what is going on in a particular marriage relationship and then to intervene effectively. Marriage

counselling is as much an activity of the mind as of the heart.

Conclusion
So we begin our journey together. Probably not all of us will finish it. For many reasons, some of you may come to see that yours is to be a different path from that of marriage counselling. This is a journey of discovery and, if some of you discover that you and marriage counselling do not mix, then all will still be well.

You cannot really fail this Course: you can only fail yourself by not following where the Spirit leads you. You can only fail by refusing to grow as a person, by giving up the endeavour to come to terms with your own being and with what you can give others.

The basic aim of the Course, especially in Unit I, is simply to help you live more effectively in whatever way you are ultimately led.

4.4 Working with a person in a couple relationship when the other person does not/will not change[1]

Assumptions

1. All ongoing relationships are patterned. They can be described as cycles of predictable behaviour. A1 → B1 → A2 → B2 → A3 → B3 → A4 →B4…where A is one partner and B is the other, and where the numbers place the responses in sequence. A familiar pattern is the **Chase-Withdraw** pattern.

2. Attempts to change the pattern are counteracted by forces to maintain the status quo. There is always a pressure towards maintenance of actual equilibrium.

   This pressure can be exerted by either partner. “I want to remain the same…I want the other be different” is almost certainly going to mean no change in the relationship.

3. What a person does flows from the meaning the person ascribes to the information which the person receives through sensory channels. (See 4.1 in this volume).

   Patterns are partly built up through the learned and hence almost unconscious assignation of meaning to certain sensory inputs.

   “When he does this I know that he is going to …” and this may be entirely accurate in relation to the response. It may be right or wrong in relation to the processes which lead to the accurately predicted response.

[1] Training session for Marriage Counsellors, 01 May 1998.

In Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) theory the process of assigning meaning to a particular sensory input is known as the process of “complex equivalence”. It is a necessary part of all relationship functioning. A particular complex equivalence is useful or not depending on context.

4. Descriptions of human action can be arranged in hierarchies of abstraction. Thus:
   Eating tim tams
   Eating biscuits
   Eating food

   A change from eating tim tams to eating orange creams is not a change in eating biscuits.

   A change from silently refusing to talk about a problem to talking about anything other than the problem is not a change in the action of avoiding dealing with the problem.

   Hence when we are talking about change we need to know what kind of change at what level of description we are talking about.

Paths Possible for the Client Whose Partner Will Not Change

1. Remain the same. The partner will remain the same. No change anywhere.

2. Do something different which is more satisfying to the client but which the partner sees as just another example of the “old” pattern and thus does not change own behaviour.

3. Do something different which the partner recognises as not belonging in the old pattern.

   If this change is not acceptable to the partner, the prediction is

that the partner will initially attempt to manipulate/force the client to abandon the new action and return to the old.

If this attempt fails, then the partner is forced to find a new way of responding. There is no certainty about what response will be chosen. The response may or may not be acceptable to the client.

If this change is acceptable to the partner then the partner will respond differently. Again there is no certainty about what response will be chosen. The response may or may not be acceptable to the client.

4. Come to a different assignation of meaning for the partner’s actions. This will alter the actions of the client. The partner will assign a different meaning to this changed action or will not. See above for possible types of response.

Strategies for the Counsellor

1. Find out the relevant interactional patterns. What does each do or say? Questions like “what do you say or do? What response do you get?
   These are the best if they are behaviourally specific.

   “I tell him that I need help with the kids” does not inform you as to what specifically is said, when it is said or how it is said. The point is to find out what is the sensory information the partner is receiving.

   “He ignores me” does not tell you if he replies but the reply is off the point, or if he makes no obvious responses, or if he gets up and walks out of the room. Again the point is to find out what sensory information the client is receiving.

2. Gain information about the client's internal processes in the interaction. Questions like:
   What goes through your mind before you say……?
   What do you think is going on in him when he……?

   Answers to questions like these may give you some information about the complete set of sensory messages which are received by the partner. You may be able to guess at some of the non-verbal messages which are out of the awareness of the partner but which are paramount in the assignation of meaning by the partner.

3. From the general information you have gained about the partner, and from the specific information about the partner's responses in the relevant interaction, form some hypotheses about the partner's internal processes and assignations of meaning.

4. Explore conceptually changes in action which the client might undertake. Use your hypotheses about the partner's internal states and assignations of meaning to guess at the partner's response.

   Suggest the likelihood of this response to the client. What is the client's response to the partner's hypothesised response?

5. Assist the client to decide on an experimental change of action. The aim is simply to find out what response is obtained from the partner as basis for further action. A number of specific possible client actions may be examined before the choice of the experimental one is made.

6. If appropriate, have the client rehearse the changed action in the interview. This gives you a chance to suggest modifications based on your observations of the actual words chosen, body

   language, tone of voice etc.

7. As part of the above, discussion of your and the client's hypotheses about the internal processes and meaning assignations of the partner may lead to different understanding by the client of the partner and hence to changed action.

8. Receive in the next session feedback from the client. Alter hypotheses in the light of the new information and begin the above process again.

9. After a period of experiment the client will be in a better position to make predictions about the future of the relationship and to make decisions based on those predictions.

4.5 Working with families – thinking about families

Note: this is Lecture 1 of a series of four lectures delivered at the Australian Catholic University in 2010. The assigned text for the course was Alan Carr, *Family Therapy: Concepts, Process and Practice*, 2nd ed, Wiley, 2006, and the lecture contains references to this book.

My General Approach
To work with a family is to do something, to engage in a series of actions. Therapy, counselling, case work in the real world is a practitioner *taking actions*, (including talking) whose primary purpose is to facilitate positive change in clients.

My emphasis is on clients changing what they do, changing their actions in ways that bring them more fulfillment in their living. Unless they change what they do, there is no change. Change in doing results in other changes or results from other changes. More about this shortly.

Individualising the Client
To have a high probability of taking facilitating actions requires useful thinking "about" the client and the client's situation which is, at base, *individualised*. In the fullness of the reality of our individual lives each of us is unique.

I have been influenced in my thinking and in my practice by a statement of Milton Erickson, an American therapist and hypnotherapist, out of whose work much of the short term, solution-focused emphasis in work with clients emerged. His approach was also influential in the development of strategic therapies and short term therapies.

Erickson said that he created a theory for each individual client.

By this he meant that he used theoretical concepts to assist him to understand the individual client and to arrive at hypotheses about what was going on in the individual client's internal and external world and about the relationships between those internal and external events.

The hypotheses would give rise to ideas about what Erickson could do to facilitate change in the client. He was famous for devising very unusual but effective strategies.

I use the metaphor of lamps with different coloured lights to explain the relationship of theory to understanding the actual reality of a family's functioning, a realty which includes how they each experience themselves and the context of their lives.

Different coloured lights highlight different aspects of objects and make other aspects more difficult or impossible to see. Different theories place certain aspects of individual, family and societal functioning in the foreground and make it difficult, if not impossible to see other aspects of individual, family and societal functioning. The more perspectives you are capable of having, the more you are likely to see.

Note that all theories which relate to humans have much in common. This is not surprising as what the theories are about, what the lights shine on, are the same reality.

In the competitive world of academia and publishing, writers have to emphasise the newness or difference in what they are saying in order to be published. Hence commonalities tend to be glossed over or new words are invented to refer to phenomena which are well known in other theoretical languages.

Remember that in particular cases you only need to see what you

actually need to see to get the job done. On the other hand there is the saying that *if a hammer is the only tool you have, the world seems to be full of nails.*

Individualising the Worker
The facilitating actions which you will take as workers will be *yours* and nobody else's. You will be the one physically with the client. (Even if two or more workers are present, those others cannot take *your* action.) What you say or do will have its immediate origin in your thinking and feeling in the moment. Such thought and feeling is of course influenced by your training, professional experience and your personal history.

All this is to say that we all have to develop a personal style of working which incarnates professional thinking but which is given expression in a way which can be truly seen as our own. The client is in working alliance with a real person not just a functionary, not just an instantiation of a particular theoretical approach. Each working alliance has a unique reality. Workers are simply not substitutable in their work with particular clients. A change of worker means the forging of a new working alliance.

Research by Scott Miller and his colleagues suggests that 30% of a successful outcome in counselling flows directly from the *relationship between worker and client.* I tend to agree. (Just for your interest Miller says that only 15% of the outcome is attributable to *specific therapeutic techniques*. 40% is due to factors not directly in control of the worker - personal resources in clients, client readiness to change, events in the client's life, assistance offered by someone else etc. The final 15% is the *placebo effect* - client expectation, hope).

Implications
What I hope you will begin to (or continue to do if you have already

begun to do so) is to think about yourself in relation to the material presented. To ask yourself,

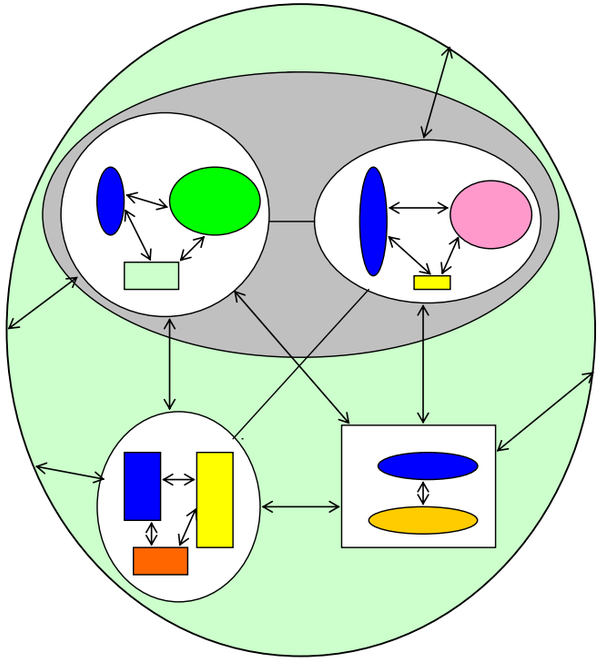
Not only:
- What does this concept or conceptual framework mean and imply?
- What is the essence of this skill or technique, and what are indicators for its usefulness in a particular situation?

But also:
- Is this a framework or a way of looking at situations which I personally find congenial?
- Can I see myself using it profitably?
- How would I actually put the knowledge or skill into work so that what I say or do is an expression of me and not just a role playing act which a competent actor could do?

You are not going to emerge from the four sessions as a competent worker with families unless you happen to be so already. What I hope you emerge with is:
- a lot of ideas about how to understand families and their individual members
- an identification of an approach which you find personally congenial as a starting point. (It is useful to be knowledgeable about and feel confident with at least one framework)
- a beginning of the journey to developing your own personal style of working with families.

Systems Theory in General
A system consists of an aggregate of a set of *interdependent* parts or components. This means that events in one part of the system will affect the other parts to a greater or lesser extent e.g. thermostat and room temperature.

Systems and Subsystems



- The parts are interrelated in *dynamic* ways.
- You can make statements about the system as a whole which are not true of any individual component in the system.
- You can conceptually separate systems into subsystems. Where you make the separation will partly depend on the purpose of your analysis.
- You can talk about the relationship between subsystems.
- What happens in a system happens in relatively consistent or patterned ways.
- The system seeks equilibrium, a constant state.
- Human systems have instrumental goals and integrative goals.

Features of systems

- The parts are interrelated in *dynamic* ways.

  The house next door to mine is related to mine by being next to it. But the two houses do not form a system. There is no dynamic relationship between them as such. If the houses were terrace houses, what then?

  The members of a family are related in dynamic ways. They relate to each other and what each does will result in some response in the others.

- You can make statements about the system as a whole which are not true of any individual component in the system.

  Hence you can say that a production process is very efficient in producing a certain product. You cannot say of any single component of a process that it produces the product.

  You can say of a family that it is a close-knit family. You can not say that any individual in that family is close-knit. “Close-knit” is a systemic property, not a property of an individual.

- You can conceptually separate systems in to subsystems. Where you make the separation will partly depend on the purpose of your analysis.
  For example, in a work place you might consider the managers and the workers to be two subsystems of a branch of a company. The branch might be a subsystem of a multinational company. The multinational company might well be described as part of the global system of companies producing a certain range of products.

  So in families you can have intergenerational subsystems. Is it

possible to think of an individual person in systemic terms? For example, could we think of out thoughts and our emotions as being in a systemic relationship?

- You can talk about the relationship between subsystems.

- What happens in a system happens in relatively consistent or patterned ways.

  When a type X event occurs a type Y event will occur. An intruder is detected by an alarm system. The alarm system is connected to a screen in a security firm. People from the firm investigate etc.

  In families, when the kids do something of which the parent disapproves, you can expect an expression of disapproval but not predict, with absolute accuracy, what form that disapproval will take.

- The system seeks equilibrium, a constant state. The room temperature is to be 25^{o}C.

  In human systems there are forces which tend to pull the system back to what is its equilibrium, its regular steady state. One reason why human change can be so difficult. Change in systemic terms means the establishment of a new equilibrium or steady state.

- Circular causality is a feature of systems. Circular causality is of the type that A leads to B, B leads to C, C leads to A.

  Bill is frustrated that Fred will not do his homework. (event type A) Bill yells at Fred (event type B). Fred gets angry, goes to visit a mate (event type C). Bill gets even more frustrated and angry

(event type A).

- Sequences (circular or linear) can be punctuated differently. When does a sequence begin? When you think it does.

- Human systems have instrumental goals and integrative goals.

  Instrumental goals = what can be achieved by the performance of tasks eg. “products”. The university’s goal is to “produce” graduates who can make a contribution to society.

  Integrative goals = what needs to be done in the internal organisation of the system to enable the instrumental goals to be achieved.

  You can appreciate how systems thinking is a way of *thinking*. Events in the world are related systemically but there is some choice for us about how we conceptualise those events, depending on our particular interests.

General Features of Family Systems

See Carr, pp 60-68. The text in bold is quoted from Carr, followed by Ray’s interpretation and observations.

Boundaries

1. **The family is a system with *boundaries* and is organised into subsystems. The basic subsystems are:**

- The *couple* sub-system. The relationship between the adult couple which is meant to be one of personal intimacy.

  How do the couple relate to each other as partners?

- The *parental subsystem*
  How do the couple act, individually and together as parents? Usually there is a degree of complementarity and overlap in how the father and mother play their parental roles. There may of course be conflict

- The *children subsystem*.
  The relationship between the siblings. How do they relate to each other?

You can of course have other subsystems:

- Along gender lines
- Along interest lines, eg sport, music
- Along age lines e.g the bigger kids and the smaller kids.
- Along biological parent lines, his kids, her kids, their kids.
- Any dyad will form a subsystem.

2. **The boundary around the family sets it apart from the wider social system of which it is a part.**
   Wider social systems include:

- Families of origin
- Schools
- Transport systems
- Workplaces
- Children's peer groups
- Local health care systems including general practitioners
- Neighbours
- Church groups
- Supporting clubs
- Child protection agencies
- Social security agencies
- Entertainment facilities.

These systems impact on individual family members and on the family as a whole. The impact may facilitate individual and family movement towards flourishing lives or may not do so.

3. **The boundary around the family subsystem must be *semipermeable* to ensure adaptation and survival.**
   If the boundary is too rigid, too impermeable, the family remains the same and stuck in its ways when the world outside the family is changing.

   For example, migrants who attempt to replicate exactly their former way of life in a new land can find it isolates them. I have heard of such migrants returning to their homeland for holidays and being amazed that life there is very different to the life there when they left and which they were trying to preserve in their new homeland.

   On the other hand too much permeability leads to chaos. If the family is changing daily in response to external events, there is no predictability about anything. No one is sure how another will behave. Everything has to be continually negotiated. A total nightmare.

Patterns

4. **The behaviour of each family member, and each family subsystem is determined by the pattern of interaction which connects all family members.**
   Those in a family are not just structurally or statically connected. This is the father. This is the mother and here are the children. Descriptions at this level are a necessary start but they do not tell you very much,

   The family members are *dynamically connected*. This is how father and mother relate to each other generally and this is

how they relate in situations of a particular type. The dynamic connections among those in the family, among those within particular subsystems and between particular subsystems are our real interest.

5. **Patterns of family interaction are rule governed and *recursive*. These rules may be inferred by observing repeated episodes of family interaction.**
   The patterns are necessary to avoid chaos. The patterns can be understood in terms of sets of mutual expectations. These expectations can be mutually beneficial or they may in fact be harmful for individual members or all of the members of the family.

   Individual actions must be seen as occurring within the context of regularities or set patterns of expectations. Thus if an expectation is met, the system goes on in one way. If an expectation is not met, then the system may have rules about what is to happen next or it may not.

   If you do not do your homework, you cannot watch TV. We have found that our teenager has experimented with drugs, what do we do?

   We need to be careful in our use of the word rule. There are two broad types of rule:

   - Rules which have been decided upon by someone and articulated. This is how we do things in this family. We always make our beds before we leave the house.

   - Rules which describe patterns of behaviour occur but have not been consciously decided upon by anyone but into which family members have, as it were, fallen. Family members

may be aware of the patterns or they may not.

Early in my parents' marriage my mother is said to have claimed that somehow she knew when my father did not want a cup of tea. If she asked him if he wanted one, she said she was never surprised at his reply. She intuitively knew what he wanted.
He later said he knew from how she asked him if she was really wanting to put the kettle on (she did not drink tea) and he would answer according to his reading of how she asked the question.

He was aware of a pattern. She was not.

Family members following rules are either consciously doing so or behaving *as if* they are following rules. They cannot tell you about the second type of rule following. You have to *observe* it directly or *infer* it from descriptions of sequences of behaviour. *What happened (happens) next*? is a handy question to keep in your kitbag.

6. **Circular causality should be used when describing or explaining family interaction.**
   Remember circular causality is of this pattern
   A > B > C > D > E > A > B > C > D > E > A ……
   Carr says the concept of circular causality was introduced not only because it accurately describes many patterns of behaviours in families but also as way of being able to avoid placing blame on any person for their behaviour which was seen as a predictable and understandable response in the sequence of behaviours.

   However, this way of thinking may not take into account the fact that within the sequence of behaviours people can choose not to follow the sequence, and thus have responsibility for what they do. If the possibility of responsible choice is not taken into

account, then sequences of behaviour which lead to physical violence are, in a sense, legitimated and the perpetrators cannot be assigned responsibility for their violent actions.

It might in fact be better to use circular *correlations* as distinct from circular *causality* as a descriptive / explanatory concept.

When thinking about family interactions in circular terms, it is necessary to remember that different members of the family may punctuate the sequence differently. They may assign different starting points to the episode and may assign different end points to the episode.

Stability and Change

7. **Within family systems there are processes which both prevent and promote change. These are morphostasis (or homeostasis) and morphogenesis.**

   More simply there are processes which are aimed at keeping the patterns of interaction as they are. The patterns retain the same shape. As noted above, this is necessary to provide predictability and to avoid chaos. Staying the same shape is morphostasis.

   There are processes which promote change in the face of changing life circumstances which require adaptation. Changing shape is morphosgenesis. We shall look at predictable change events in a little while.

   Incidentally, I think that one of the central facts about clients in therapy or counselling is their ambivalence about change. They both want to change and want to remain as they are (without the pain or discomfort).

8. **Within a family system one member – the identified patient – may develop problematic behaviour when the family lacks the resources for morphogenesis. The symptom of the patient serves the positive function of maintaining homeostasis.**
   We need to be careful about the language here. It is odd to refer to symptoms which are painful for the person having them and for others in the family as serving a *positive* function. What I think Carr is saying is that the symptom prevents the system from degenerating into chaos or self-destruction. The symptom is *positive* in the sense that it enables the system to keep functioning. It can hardly be called positive from the point of view of ideal personal or family well being.

   Carr's example (drawn from Jay Haley *Problem-Solving Therapy,* 2nd ed, John Wiley & Sons, 1991). helps us to se this. A teenager's problematic behaviour might well be a way of preventing the parents' relationship difficulties from emerging into the light of day.

   I once saw a couple who had been focused entirely on their son's drug taking for a number of years. To assist them I took the step of not allowing any conversation about him in the counselling session. They had to focus on their relationship.

9. **Negative feedback, or deviation reducing feedback, maintains homeostasis and subserves morphostasis.**
   The unusual word *subserves* means *promotes*. The structure of negative feedback is as follows:

   The normal cycle of events is A → B → C → D → A. A member instead of doing C does X. A member of the family or a number of members make it clear that the expected C did not occur and act to attempt to make C happen. The attempts to replace X with

C are negative feedback.

So IF the identified patient's symptoms are serving a positive function: Improvement in that person instead of being met by others with relief and being happy about the change may be met by attempts to eradicate the improvement. Those attempts are *negative feedback* in systemic terms. It is easier to see the negativity here.

However, if the feedback in a well functioning family is aimed at preventing dysfunction from occurring, then the *negative feedback* would actually be promoting the well-being of all including the deviator.

Change

10. **Positive feedback, or deviation amplifying feedback, subserves morphogenesis. If too much deviation-amplifying feedback occurs in the absence of deviation reducing feedback, then a runaway or snow ball effect occurs.**
    The structure of positive feedback is as follows. The normal cycle of events is A → B → C → D → A. A member instead of doing C does X. The members of the family allow X to occur and there is no attempt to make C happen instead of X. Thus instead of D happening Y happens and then this results in A1. The pattern may then over time become A → B → X → Y → A1.

    If A was part of a larger pattern A → L → M → N → A, Then the larger pattern might move over time to A1 → L1 → M1 → N1 → A1.

    This would be the snow ball effect.

    Let's say we have a family which rushes through meals so that all can go off and do their individual things. There is very little

conversation at meal times which is the only time the family is all present in the one room.

Say it somehow happens that on one occasion they get talking and find it enjoyable, not noticing that their favourite TV show has already started.

Later they reflect on the fact of the conversation and say we must do more of this. They do so. In the process they come to understand and appreciate each other better. They begin to relate to each other differently outside of meal times.

The small unintended, even accidental change, in the long run produces large changes. That is the snow ball effect.

Small changes are less likely to be resisted (in the jargon of systems theory less likely to be subject to negative feedback). The changes are more likely to become part of the system.

This is why some theories caution therapists (or change agents in general) to seek only small changes in family functioning. Too much change too soon may result in too much resistance.

Of course, it is useful for us to have some idea of which small changes are likely to produce large changes in the long run, and make suggestions for experimentation.

11. **Individuals and factions within systems may show symmetrical behaviour patterns and complementary behaviour patterns.**

    What I am going to say now draws mainly from Jay Haley's *Problem-Solving Therapy* approach.

See Jay Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 2nd ed, John Wiley & Sons, 1991

Types of relationship patterns:

- **Symmetrical** – in these relationships the members behave in quite similar ways to each other. The power and status of the members are basically equal.

  Friends exchange advice. Colleagues consult each other. Partners share tasks and chores. There is no real hierarchy in the relationship when examined over time. There may be occasions where there is an action which is not symmetrical. Whilst I am looking after you because you are sick, our actions are not symmetrical but the fundamental symmetry may well be undisturbed. You would do the same for me.

  However, when symmetrical relationships go wrong they tend to become competitive. Too much conflict within a symmetrical relationship can lead to what Carr calls fragmentation of the system, even breakup of the system.

- **Complementary** – In these relationships the members exchange different types of behaviour which “fit” together. Teacher - Student. Therapist - Client. There is usually a kind of hierarchy. One role is “superior” to the other, has more power, more control in the relationship.

  When problems develop it is because the person in the “subordinate” role either wants to move towards more symmetry or wants to move towards a different kind of complementarity.

  Meta – Complementary Relationships. In these relationships one person allows or forces another person to define the relationship in a particular complementary way.

An example of **forcing** the other to redefine the relationship: a six year old child knows that his mother is going to take him to visit his aunt whom he does not like.

Initial definition of the relationship is a complementary one. Mother has charge of the child. Child is the subordinate.

Child declares he has a headache and manages to vomit. Mother cancels the visit to the aunt and looks after the sick child.

Apparent definition of the relationship: Mother has charge of sick child and is looking after him.

But the child is now in the more powerful position because the child is controlling the mother’s behaviour within the basic parent - child relationship. There is real sense in saying that the child is now running the relationship and the mother is the subordinate junior player.

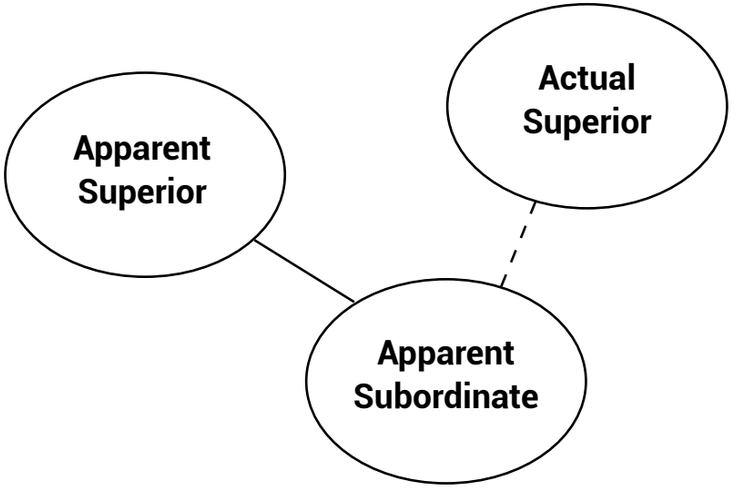
A neighbour popping in for a visit might think she is looking at a normal mother - child interaction.

An example of **allowing** the other to redefine the relationship: Counselling client is very talkative, counsellor who is supposed to be in the “superior” role of controlling the processes of counselling, finds it difficult to impossible to interrupt the flow.

Client in fact is taking charge of the session. Counsellor thinks “ I will allow the client to behave like this for the time being”. This silent move means that the counsellor has redefined the de facto situation (in which the client is exercising the power and controlling the interactions) as the normal counselling one where the counsellor is the one responsible managing the actual processes of the counselling.

An observer might think that the client is controlling the session. In both examples, the apparently controlled person is in fact controlling the relationship

Meta - Complementary Relationship



- **Pseudo-Symmetrical Relationship** occurs when one person forces or allows another into a symmetrical relationship when in fact the complementary relationship is retained.

  Example: Boss says to subordinate “I’ll let you decide on this one”. But the subordinate is still accountable to the boss. So what if the boss disagrees with the subordinate’s decision?

  The problem with allowed or forced symmetry is that the allower or the forcer can at any time redefine the relationship as complementary, perhaps to the considerable disadvantage of the

other person.

12. **Positive and negative feedback is new information and is news of difference.**
    Thus in the example of the family changing their mealtime behaviour, the news of difference come with at least one person drawing the family’s attention to the fact that they seemed to enjoy the accidental conversation. This may change others’ thinking about mealtimes. They can be more than opportunities to consume food.

    Thinking about situations differently can lead to becoming aware of aspects of that situation which were not apparent before. The new awareness can lead to changed action. We can achieve our goals better if we do it this way. The change in perspectives, change in frameworks can lead to *news of difference*, the difference which makes a difference.

13. **Within systems, a distinction may be made between first-order change and second-order change.**
    Let us say that in a certain situation there are twenty known ways to achieve a certain specified result. Currently method 15 is in use. A change to method 9 would be a first order change.

    Changing from eating Tim Tams to eating Milk Arrowroot biscuits is not a change in *biscuit eating* behaviour. Such a change is a *first order* change. Biscuits are still being eaten. The biscuit eater does not really have the option of not eating biscuits open.

    Changing from eating biscuits to not eating biscuits is a *second order* change. New patterns of behaviour not operative before are now available. The actual operating system now allows for eating and not eating behaviours. More possible behavious are open to the person.

As Carr points out successful progression through the life cycle necessitates second order change. New patterns of behaviour are necessary if the transitions are to occur successfully.

Complexity

14. **Within systems theory a distinction may be made between first order and second order cybernetics.**
    Carr points out that family therapy theorists and practitioners tend to emphasise either of the two approaches.

    Those who adopt a so-called first order approach try to remain outside of the family system, adopting the position of observer and intervener.

    One of my fantasy analogies for the process of counselling or therapy is of the client being in a cave with a very small torch, trying to find the way out.

    A first order approach would be for someone outside the cave to give instruction to the person about looking for the exit via a mobile phone. (Let us assume technology allow this). There is communication between the two people but only one is in the cave.

    A second order approach would be for someone, experienced in caving, to magically appear with a much larger torch in the cave, joining with person in a mutual search for the exit.

    In the first order approach the counsellor maintains a more powerful expert position, observes and assesses, tends to give directives etc. The supreme example is in those therapeutic practices where there is a counsellor in the room with a supervisor who observes the counselling through a one way screen and phones in directives to the counsellor.

In the second order approach the counsellor joins the family system and thus a new system including the counsellor is formed and the counsellor takes less of an expert role, observes, assesses makes suggestions etc. from within that system.

My own position is that psychologically the counsellor has to both join with the family and yet be able to take a perspective on what is happening from outside the system. Participant - Observer stance. Not fully possible. That is why we have supervision.

15. **Within social systems, recursive patterns, present in one part of the system replicate isomorphically in other parts of the system**
    “You are just like your father”.

    Client may replicate in their own relationships the patterns of their parents’ relationships. This may be good or bad.

    Parallel process in professional supervision: The supervisee may resist the suggestion of the supervisor just as the client is resisting the suggestions of the counsellor.

    The co-operation between staff in different agencies serving the one client family may model co-operation to the family and the family members become more cooperative in general.

16. **Only probalistic statements may be made about the impact of interventions on social systems**
    Give up the quest for absolute certainty. You cannot be absolutely sure of what will happen as a result of your intervention. Even if there is very strong research evidence that a particular intervention works 95% of the time, the family you are dealing with may be in the other 5%. *Equipotentiality*. The

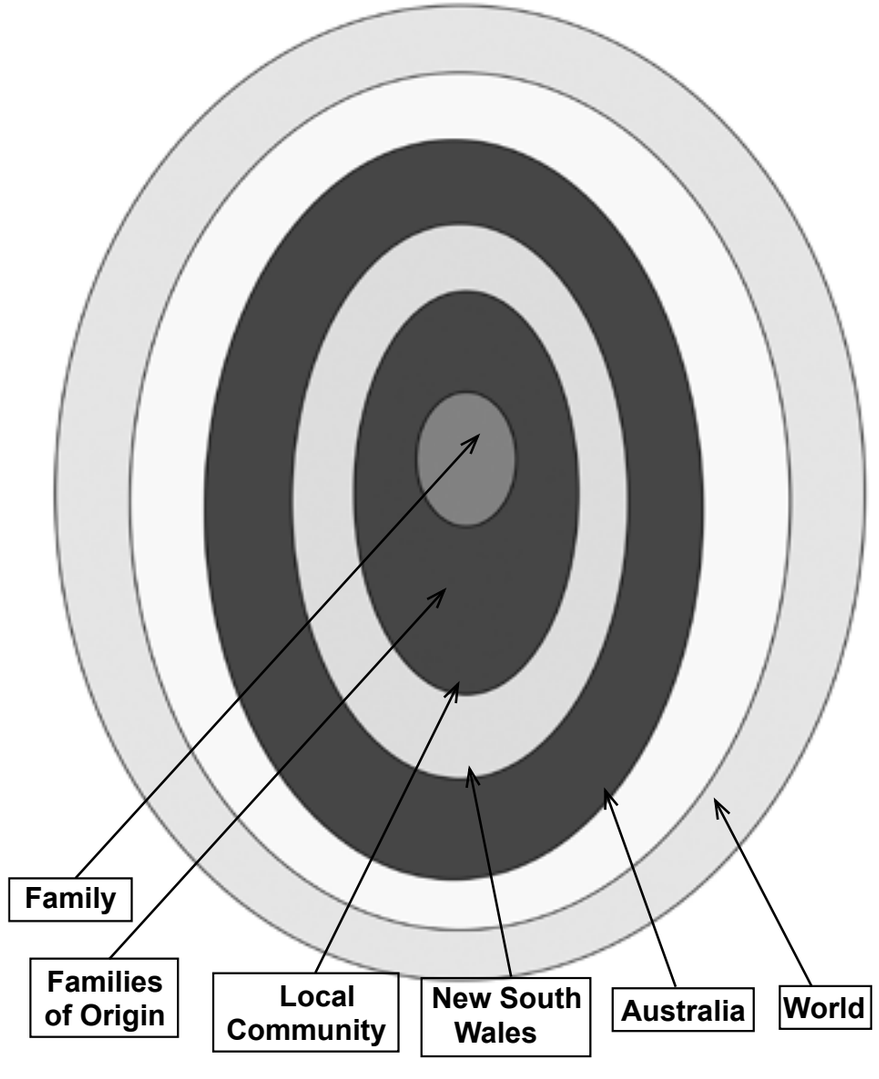
same intervention type may get widely different results with different families. Also there are many ways to get the same result. *Equifinality*. No need to be disparaging of those who do not adopt the approach to helping families that you do. Results, not methods of getting there are what matters.

These observations are both liberating and scary.

Liberating because they give the freedom to experiment and adapt to what is actually happening.

Scary because you cannot have certainty you would like especially when you are a beginner.

Systems Impacting on Families

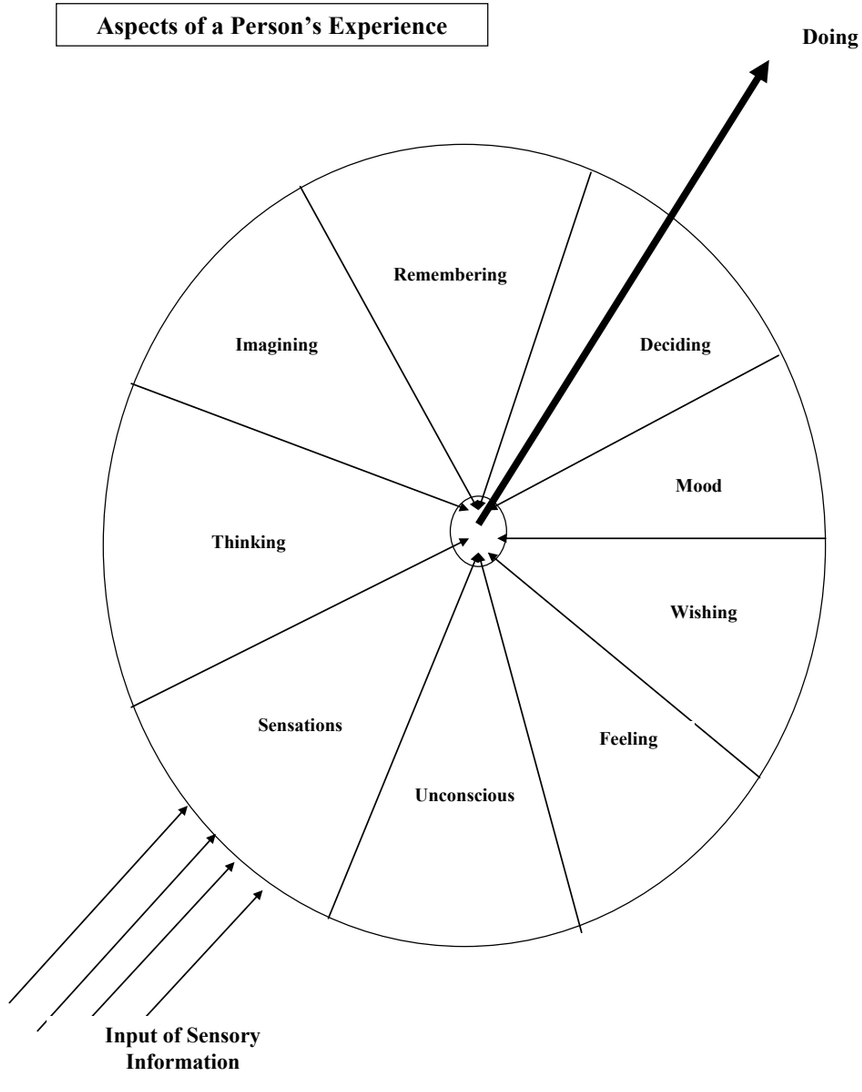


Each of the systems named have subsystems within them which interact with each other.

Each of the systems have some impact on the functioning of the family and of the individuals within it.

Note that the impact on the family may initially come through the impact on a family member E.G. loss of employment of father or mother resulting in financial stress for all within the family. “We can’t afford to pay for the excursion because daddy’s factory closed down”.

In working with families we have to take account of the impact of the broader systems including the culture which they promote.



Individual Experience

At any one waking moment the following are aspects of a person's experience:

1. **Thinking**
   Single words or concepts pointing to something eg cat.
   Sentences - joining concepts together eg. The cat is on the mat.
   Reasoning - putting a number of thoughts together using logic eg. The cat is on the mat. The mat is inside the house. The cat is inside the house.
   Interpreting - making sense of a particular thought by placing it in a familiar framework.
   Eg. The bell rang. It must be time to go.
   The bell rang. It must be full time.
   The bell rang. It shouldn't be ringing at this time. Something must be wrong
   Evaluating – judging something in relation to a predetermined standard.
   Planning - thinking about goals and the means to achieving them

2. **Imagining**
   Forming images (including "sound" images).
   Can be constructed – imagining the future.
   Can be remembered – forming an image of a past event (which may or may not be accurate**.)**

3. **Remembering**
   Recalling a past event or thought or feeling. Recall may present the past event as past so that the present experience is detached from it, almost as if the person remembering was not personally involved in the recalled event. Recall may bring the past into the present so that the remembering person is reliving

the experience.

4. **Feeling**
   Experiencing emotion. Emotions are always related to something other than themselves e.g. There is never just anger. There is only anger about…..anger over……anger in response to…..
   It may be that the person is not able to specify what the emotion is related to. Emotions have a bodily component. Bodily processes are part of emotional experience.

5. **Mood**
   A mood is a temporary (but can be long lasting) tendency to experience the events of life within a particular emotional frame. The origin of moods seems to be correlated with certain biochemical events. This is why medication can be effective in changing moods.

   A person within a particular mood is likely to interpret events in accord with the mood. Thus a depressed person may well experience an event which normally occasions excitement with little excitement, perhaps remarking that it's not worth getting excited about because it won't last.

6. **Wishing**
   A wish is a desire for the future to occur in a certain way which the person will in some way find fulfilling.
   Some wishes are natural, given in general form in simply being human. The wish for food when hungry is clear. I would say the wish to receive love is natural.

   Some wishes are learned. A man may wish to own a big house because he has learned that he can only regard himself as successful if he does so. He may never have reflected on the origin or ultimate value of this wish in him.

Some wishes are the result of a conscious commitment to a person or to a goal. Such wishes tend to specify more general wishes (and thus exclude some ways of fulfilling a wish which in other circumstances would be acceptable.)

7. **Sensation**
   Events in the physical being of the person which the person may become aware of and experience in consciousness. Pain is the most obvious example. Heart rate, breathing rate, feeling hot, feeling cold are other examples.

   There are other bodily events of which a person cannot be aware of when all is functioning normally. The processes of nutrition are an example.

8. **Deciding**
   A personal decision is the event which moves the person to action.

   The decision can be result of deliberation, the weighing of the pros and cons of various alternatives.

   The decision may follow a recognition that the circumstances about which a prior decision has already been made have arrived. A person, having already decided to see a certain performer, decides to purchase a ticket at the first opportunity and the box office is now open.

   The decision may be to allow a certain impulse or urge to flow into exterior action and not obstruct or fight it.

   Decision in the sense meant here does not necessarily mean that the person has full freedom in the decision. (The question of the degree of freedom present is a topic for another day).

9. **Unconscious Activity**
   The person is not consciously aware of certain events which are occurring within what might be said to be their personal physical-psychological-spiritual being.

10. **Doing**
    The person does something. The person is aware of the doing. Doing in aimed at effecting some change in the world (or perhaps trying to stop or inhibit some change) and it includes:

    - Speaking. (Speaking can be broken down in a multitude of ways).
    - Not Speaking
    - Voluntary body movement
    - Involuntary movement.

    Observers may notice physical signs of such processes or infer the content of such processes from physical signs.

The Totality of Conscious Experience
My view is that a person's ongoing experience contains all of the above aspects at any waking moment. Those which can be called to consciousness are always present even if not in the foreground of consciousness at any a particular moment. Hence they are available for calling into consciousness at any time.

All we are working with is the ongoing experience of the client.

Stages of Family Life
See Carr, p 6, Table 1.1.

The table gives the predictable stages of progression across time of family life. The transition from stage to stage involves the successful completion of certain tasks. Difficulty in completing a task may well

be the reason the family has come to professional attention.

A Broad Classification of Family Needs
See Allie C. Kilpatrick and Thomas P. Holland, *Working with Families: an Integrative Model by Level of Need* Pearson, 2006.

Kilpatrick and Holland give a broad classification of family needs:

- Level 1 needs – basic survival
- Level 2 needs – problems in the structure and organisation of the family
- Level 3 needs – appropriate internal boundaries among members
- Level 4 needs – personal flourishing needs in the family context

For each level of need, the authors provide assessment questions and intervention strategies and techniques.

4.6 Working with Families – approaches which focus on belief systems and behaviour patterns

Note: this is Lecture 2 of a series of four lectures delivered at the Australian Catholic University in 2010. The assigned text for the course was Alan Carr, *Family Therapy: Concepts, Process and Practice*, 2nd ed, Wiley, 2006 and the lecture contains references to this book.

Three Broad Theoretical Approaches to Family Work
Carr places theoretical approaches to family work in one of three categories. These are approaches which have as their predominant focus:
1. family belief systems.
2. family behaviour patterns.
3. family contexts.

Predominant is used because each family clearly has belief systems, behaviour patterns and lives within extended family and broader social contexts. Any full understanding of what is happening within a family would necessarily take belief systems, behaviour patterns and contexts into account.

Returning to the metaphor of theory being lamps, we can say that Carr distinguishes three broad types of lamp, each of which highlights certain aspects of family functioning and has suggestions as to how workers might respond to what they find and work for and with family members to attain more flourishing and fulfilling lives as individuals and as a family.

I remind you again of my fundamental approach: we work with families not so that we can understand them, make great assessments and outline appropriate goals and strategies. We work that they can be assisted to change what they do. We have to be

able to act in ways that facilitate that change.

Understanding what is happening in a family and what possible facilitating actions are available to workers is a major emphasis in this four lecture series. My hope is that you finish with a better idea of how you can use your current practice skills and a better idea of what skills you need to gain and develop so that you can work effectively with families. The development of skills comes only with practice.

Carr's three categories can be combined with the four levels of need described by Kilpatrick in the Lecture 1. A reminder of them:

Level One Needs – Basic Survival
Level Two Needs – Problems in the Structure and Organisation of the Family
Level Three Needs – Appropriate Internal Boundaries Among Members
Level Four Needs – Personal Flourishing Needs in the Family Context.

Certain theoretical approaches have more to offer in terms of suggesting possibly effective worker actions than do other approaches for a particular level of need.

The needs, of course, are in a hierarchy. You may observe needs at a higher level but lower level needs may have to be addressed before addressing the higher level needs. Rescuers helping a family evacuate their home in the face of rising flood waters may be aware of ingrained family conflict but that is not the time to hold a family therapy session!

Solution Focused Approaches
See Carr pp 132-135, 146-147 (glossary) and Jay Haley, *Problem-Solving Therapy*, 2nd ed, John Wiley & Sons, 1991.

You will notice that:

- My discussion about various theories is always grounded in the broad systems approach which I outlined in Lecture 1.

- Many of the practices / processes across theoretical approaches have aspects in common. Where this is the case I shall, once I have discussed a practice/process with a degree of detail simply make reference to it in later discussion.

The word *solution* makes no sense if there is no reference to *problem, issue, difficulty, puzzle* etc. There is something to be solved, resolved, eliminated…

The term *solution-focused* to describe an approach to working with families is clearly used in a narrow technical sense. I have this perhaps naïve belief that the families, couples, individuals that social workers, counsellors and therapists were working with were always looking for solutions.

I wonder what clients make of the idea that, in the history of working with families, giving descriptive prominence to looking for solutions to problems is fairly recent. The approaches have gained currency in the past thirty years or so.

In the professional literature *solution-focused* is used to distinguish the approach from approaches which have more open ended goals like personal growth, personal integration. Solution-focused approaches are time-limited and are aimed at achieving specific goals which, as far as possible, are specified and delineated in

advance.

To me a core insight in solution-focused approaches is: **in order to solve a family systems or individual personal problem, it is not always necessary to understand how the problem came about.**

If a person or a family can change their actions so that more personal flourishing results and the action pattern is maintained and enhanced, then there is no need to investigate the historical origins of the problem.

However, in certain instances it may be necessary to have understanding of the historical or other origins of the problematic behaviour because origins may still be influencing how the present is being experienced and possible futures are literally unimaginable because of the influence of those origins. A person sexually abused as a child may not be able to believe that sexual intercourse could be pleasurable and an expression of genuine love.

It is, however, necessary to have a good idea of what is happening in the current situation to maintain the problem. Patterns of action which maintain the problem need to change.

Essential Features of the Solution Focused Approach.

1. **Assessment Begins with the Clients Describing the Problem Situation.**
   I hope you are not surprised by that. However, there are situations where this might not be the *actual* starting point. I am thinking of the situation where the client has been referred by another professional who has given the worker a very detailed report on the client. In such a situation there may be a temptation to assume that that the referring worker, the new worker and the client all understand the client's situation in the same way. They may not. It needs to be checked out.

Of course, if more than one member of the family is a client, it is highly likely that each sees the situation somewhat differently. I say to many couples in counselling that my experience is that it is like each brings in a video recording of their relationship. I can see that it is a film of one relationship but the filming of it is from very different perspectives, and different aspects are highlighted or put in close up.

Hearing the story, the description from client or clients provides you with information about how they frame and understand the situation. You also gain information about the emotions which are present. You may be told about them or they may simply show themselves in the telling of the story.

Differences in client accounts give you some leads about interaction patterns. I remember a cartoon of a marriage counselling session where the man was saying "Now that I've told you my side, I tell you hers". I am remembering a client where not only was that his essential stance but he, in effect, added, "Here's what you the counsellor need to say to her".

A word of caution. When solution – focused approaches first made their way into the literature a great deal of prominence was given to *solution-talk* as opposed to *problem talk*.

The essential idea was that more time should be spent attempting to move towards a solution than discussing the problem and/or its origins.

However, some found that clients were not as open to solution talk as the theory suggested they would (should?) be. I think the problem lay in the fact that clients believed that their worker in beginning to talk about solutions had not really understood the problem, and especially not heard or understood the pain which

was part of the problematic situation. Clients felt that they were not being empathized with as persons, or their problems were not being sufficiently understood. Solution-focused theorists in my view give a greater place to problem talk than the earlier writings.

2. Assessment of the Person's Stance towards the Helping Process

The terms used to characterise the stance of the person being interviewed towards the helping process are:

- **Visitor** – the person is present, is not engaged in the process which hopefully will lead to change, and essentially sees no need to be involved. "I don't have a problem. She does. Fix her and we'll all be better off ".

- It is important in family work to keep visitors linked to the process. The major way of attempting to do this is to thank them for their attendance with the others and invite them to make a contribution if they think what they say would assist. There is no direct attempt to involve them. Certainly no direct challenge to their stance.

- **Complainant** - the person acknowledges that they have a problem but is willing to engage in the therapy/ counselling/ helping process aimed at resolving the problem. They may not have any belief that the process could in fact be helpful. They may have a recognition that engagement will result in a change in themselves which they fear (say because they believe they become more generally vulnerable). Their complaining may bring them temporary relief but no lasting change.

  Complainants are asked simply to notice things within the counselling / therapy and between sessions and make comments. They are not challenged to change themselves.

- **Customer** – the person is fully engaged in the process.
  An individual family member may be in one of these three positions in general, or in relation to a specific issue. For example, a man might admit that he needs to work on his communication with his wife, complain about his relationship with his teenage daughter, and simply not be willing to discuss the fact that he works excessively long hours which are not in fact required by his employer.

  An individual may change position during the course of your work with them according to the issue under discussion at the time.

  Different individuals may be in different positions at the same time on the same issue.

  Visitors and complainants who remain linked to the helping process will inevitably be caught up in the change process because as others change the visitors and complainants have new and different situations to deal with in family life. They may oppose the changes but their opposing will be in stark relief. If they go with the changes, they may well move to the customer position.

3. Assessment of How the Person Understands the Role of the Worker

My almost standard opening for clients is "Can you tell me why you are here and what you hope I can do for you?".

The second question "what you hope I can do for you?" is aimed at eliciting the client's expectation of what I will do, the approach that I will take in attempting to assist them. Examples of replies:

- Give me advice; tell me where I am going wrong and how to correct it.

- Help me to understand myself/my partner/my child better.
- Listen to me and support me.
- Help me deal with my emotions.
- Tell me I'm not mad
- Teach me some skills
- Help us communicate better.
- Help us resolve our conflict
- Tell us which one is right and which one is wrong.
- Give us information about who might be able to help us.
- Advocate for me with certain authorities.

Thus the replies indicate if the client wants me to use my expertise and position to:

- Provide emotional support
- Ask questions will help the client explore and understand the current situation
- Make some suggestions about what might work
- Approve of what they are doing.
- Assess and give an expert opinion
- Pronounce judgement, assign blame
- Teach skills
- Take total responsibility for the outcome, tell them what to do, enabling them to avoid any responsibility.
- Intervene in other social systems.

If I do not think that how they want me to act is appropriate I will say so.

I might be willing to pronounce judgement and compassionately blame when such an action fits a particular cultural style e.g. a culture where people might in the past have brought their troubles to an elder who would say "The way you are doing that is wrong. You have to stop" and the person would take notice and stop.

I might take total responsibility for a specific outcome if it is necessary to ensure the safety of any person.

Note that in solution-focused theory it is often said that the clients are the experts not the worker. The clients are the experts on their lives. They know more about themselves than we will ever know. They have to implement the changes and the solutions. They can better judge if something is working or not working.

The worker / therapist / counsellor has specific expertise to place at the service of the clients. My way of summing this up is to say *I run the counselling. The clients run their lives.*

Have I ever solved a client's problem? Never. Have I assisted clients to find answers to their questions, solutions to their problems? Many times.

4. **Identification of the Patterns of Interactions Within the Family**
   Some of these patterns will be totally non-problematic in themselves and in fact contribute to the good functioning of the family system. A simple example is the fact that there is always sufficient food, or the children are never exposed to any unreasonable fear of being harmed by anyone outside the family.

   It is important to attempt to utilise what is working well in the family.

   Some of the patterns will play a large part in the maintenance of the problem. For example, as a child grows into teenage years the parents may seek to maintain protective patterns which are appropriate for younger children but not for teenagers. This will predictably lead to conflict, perhaps entrenched conflict, disrupting many other patterns of relationship in the family.

5. Articulation of Possible Solution States

The aim is to create a vision of how the family and the lives of the individuals in it would be different if the problem no longer existed, or was resolved or remained within normal reasonable limits.
This latter caution is put in because, say, a goal of *never again having any family conflict* would not be a reasonable goal.

The vision and articulation of the goal (*end state* in systemic terms) needs to be as concrete as possible.

The miracle question: *Supposing one night there was a miracle while you were asleep and the problem was solved. How would you know? What would be different? How would X know without you saying a word about it?*

I think the answer should not only include references to the absence of the problem behaviour but also a description of what would be happening instead of the problem behaviour. My question is *If I were invisible in your house when the problem is solved what would I see and hear you all doing and saying?. What would my senses pick up?* Senses cannot pick up absences.

I have to warn you that some people are so enmeshed in their problematic situation that they can give no positive answer to the miracle question. They can only say X will not be happening. If they can't answer don't push it. You have to work with them towards a formulation of a goal and it may take some time to do it.
Note that some really positive outcomes are hard to fully describe in words. Outcomes such as feeling happier, being not so depressed, being less anxious can not always be articulated fully. This is where the scaling question comes in hardy.

On a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 is the worst possible state you can imagine and 10 is where you have fully resolved the problem, where would you place yourself now?

You can still ask what would you and others be doing that was observable by others if the rating was 10.

One advantage of scaling is that it can be used even if there is no clear articulation of the desired end state. Scaling is particularly useful in referring to intermediate points on the journey to resolution where precise and subtle differences would be almost impossible to articulate.

If you are now at 3 what do you think you need to do (individually or as family) to truthfully score yourself (or yourselves) at 4 or 5.

Scaling also allows progress to be celebrated.

6. Generation of Hope

It is important to communicate a realistic hope for a future which is different to the past and the present in significant ways, even if the possible concrete form that future might take cannot be specified.

A couple of ways hope can be generated are:

- Inform the client that others in similar difficult situations have managed to find solutions which have suited them. Perhaps, even give some examples. But do so in a way which cannot be interpreted as saying "if you do this, you'll be O.K". Remember those basic ideas from systems theory.

- Same action types might produce different results in different families. *Equipotentiality*

- Different action types may produce similar results in different families. *Equifinality*

- Assisting the clients to identify the resources which they have within themselves and available within the surrounding systems which can be used to address the problem.

This can be done by:

- Asking them to tell about some problem in the past which they had successfully resolved and how they did it. They may well be able to name the resources on which they drew at the time. Those resources (particularly individual personal ones) may very well be brought to bear on the current problem. Some people might need assistance in giving a name to the personal resources they used.

- Indicate by your whole way of relating to them that you believe that they have the fundamental strengths and capabilities to resolve their difficulties.

This does not mean that they have all the resources, all the requisite knowledge and skills, at the moment. If they do, how come they are not using them?

Your belief is that they have the potential to build on already acquired and evidenced knowledge and skills and have the potential to put those newly acquired knowledge and skills to good use.

Your job is to assist them to develop their current skills and knowledge, making use of your knowledge and skills to assist them to assess what is most appropriate for their situation.

7. **Identification of Exceptions to the Problematic Patterns**
   It is useful to obtain information about when the expected problematic behaviour does not occur or occurs less intensely. Exceptions indicate:
   - The family already has a non-problematic pattern of interaction in its action repertoire which it occasionally uses instead of the problematic pattern.

   In a sense the family does not have to learn any thing new. It just has to learn how to identify that it is involved in the particular interactional cycle and consciously (for the moment anyway) move into the non-problematic interactions. The more times this happens the closer the problematic interaction comes to being the exception rather than the rule, a reversal of the previous state.

   - There is nothing inevitable about the interactional cycle. This realisation ends hopelessness, brings the beginning of hope.

   - The family collectively and individually has the fundamental resources within themselves to solve their problems.

8. **Identification of Ineffective or Failed Attempts to Address the Problem.**
   Knowing in some detail about what the family has tried without success either gives you some idea of what to avoid in the search for a pathway to a solution or gives you an idea of where in the cycle of interaction the family took a wrong turn.
9. **Suggested Intermediate Tasks (Homework)**
   The path to the desired end state will not be traveled in a moment. There is necessarily a number of intermediate steps which include amplifying exceptions and introducing new tasks.

   The content of the intermediate tasks should be determined

within the session by (clients) and worker. Many of the suggestions will come from the worker (or perhaps from material supplied by the worker). After all, if the clients had knowledge of the content of the suggestions themselves and thought the suggestions had promise, they would have tried them out already.

Carr (p 291) indicates that patients forget about 50% of the information given them by doctors and about 40% of patients do not cooperate with doctors' advice.

Carr gives the following tips which he says makes it more likely clients will complete homework tasks:

1. Design simple tasks to fulfill specific functions or goals.
2. Offer invitations to carry out tasks in simple language, inviting clients to do specific things.
3. Describe tasks briefly and break complex tasks into parts.
4. Check that the clients have understood the task
5. Give a rationale for the task
6. Emphasise the importance of the task
7. Write down complex tasks.
8. Mention any potential negative side effects of the task
9. State that the outcome of the task will be discussed at the next meeting and convey an expectation of cooperation and success.
10. Always review tasks.

10. Receiving and Evaluating with Clients Their Feedback About the Performance of Intermediate Tasks.

The evaluation may lead to a one of the following decisions:

- more of the same
- modification of task as a result of acquiring new information
- additional tasks to be attempted.

If all goes according to the general strategy the clients will achieve their goal, will find their solution.
If all does not go well, it may be that:

- there is a mismatch of the pure solution focused approach and the style of problem solving which is natural to the clients.

- there are issues which are so entrenched in a subsystem or in an individual that individual therapy or counselling is necessary for that person so that they can gain the information and personal freedom necessary to take their part in the changing family patterns of interaction.

- there are unrecognized medical problems which inhibit a member or members of a family in attempting to change their behaviour.

- The worker has not established rapport or a therapeutic alliance with the client(s).

- The worker is insufficiently flexible, wedded to the solution focused model, is incompetent.

Narrative Approaches

See Carr pp 135-138, 147-148 (glossary) and Michael White & David Epston, *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*, W. W. Norton, 1990.
The originator of the narrative approach is Michael White, an Australian social worker.
The word *narrative* is used because the way in which we describe who we are is usually done in narrative form. If I ask you to tell me about yourself, you will be very unusual if you say "Well, I did a personality test the other day and my profile came up as …".

You are far more likely to give me details of your current and past life in story form. “I was born in…..I’m studying social work….I’m hoping to work with children when I graduate”.

Clients tell us their problems in general narrative style, using frames of reference which they have learned over the course of their lives. These frames of reference may be such that they do not have the capacity to do justice to the internal experiences of people. Such experiences are thus distorted and the expression and understanding of them will be correspondingly limited.

To me the narrative approach to family life is based on the fundamental idea that *each of us experiences the world and tries to make sense of our world in our own individual way and tell our life stories in our own individual way.*

This individualised way of attempting to give meaning to our experience is of course very much influenced by what others around us in our family, in our community and our culture tell us explicitly or implicitly.

The narrative approach thus falls within a broad social constructionist approach. We act on the meanings we assign to events. The broad aim of a narrative approach is to assist family members construct meanings for the events in their family life which enable them to live in a more flourishing way as a family and as individuals.

There are two words in what I have just said which are very important in understanding the philosophical base of the narrative approach. Those words are *assign* – in “meanings we assign” and *construct* – in “members construct meanings”.

These words are important because they point to the postmodern or

relativistic position on truth which underpins the narrative approach. If there is no objective truth, we cannot discover or embrace meanings. If we can only construct meanings and not in any sense find them, if one meaning ultimately is as good as another, then there is no way to argue against those who wish to inflict harm on others as an expression of the meaning they find in life. They can only be constrained by power.

Needless to say I am not in total agreement with the postmodern social constructionist approach. I think truth is objective but we can get a hold on it only through limited perspectives – the lamp analogy. Some perspectives or combination of perspectives do the particular jobs better than others.

I would say that narrative approaches help clients gain more fruitful perspectives from within which they can see truths of their interactions and of themselves and change their actions accordingly. You can see how this understanding of the narrative approach differs from the approach summarised by Carr on p136:

> The narrative approach rests on the assumption that narratives are not representations of reflections of identities, lives and problems. Rather narratives constitute identities lives and problems. According to this social constructionist position, the processes of re-authoring changes lives, problems and identities because personal narratives are constitutive of identity.

With that difference in foundational understanding in mind, let us see what the narrative approach has to offer.
The process of getting started with clients is much the same as in the solution focused approach. Finding how the clients understand and express their problem, their expectations of the process etc.

1. **Identification of the Dominant and Oppressive Aspects of the Narratives**
   Whilst the worker is hearing the accounts, the narratives of what happens in the family, the working is doing so in terms of attempting to identify the aspects of the framework from within which the story is being told which are possibly making it impossible for the family to find a way to the resolution of the problem.

   The narratives are embedded in the frameworks. Narratives have to be embedded in frameworks – there is no other way. However, clients usually have no idea that other frameworks are not only possible but are potentially useful. Their frameworks dominate their thinking and hence their feeling and the perception of the possibilities which are actually open to them, if only they could see them.

   These dominating frameworks have been “imposed” by others in the course of socialisation and now are in effect self-imposed.

   Thus the listening of the worker is a listening not so much for the evidence of the problematic sequences but for how those in the family experience those problems as a consequence of the meanings they give the problematic behaviours. The change in behaviours will flow from the change in understood meanings.

   For example, if the parents come to understand that their teenage son’s not keeping his room really tidy is not an act of defiance or disobedience but a part of his trying to establish an identity for himself which is to an extent independent of them, then the parents may very well experience the untidy room very differently. They could even come to congratulate themselves on having successfully parented him to this necessary stage of growth.

2. **Rejection of the Definition of a Person as the Problem**
   The narrative approach opposes any view that a person as such can be a problem. There is a rejection of diagnostic labels as total descriptions of persons as the use of such labels in that way tends to deny the personal internal experience of the person and the person tends to be treated as an object.

   He is a depressive, a borderline personality, a schizophrenic, a manic-depressive (old language) ….. The person tends to be treated as an object of a certain type who then is treated in standard ways which give little to no attention to how they experience their life in detail.

   Narrative workers say the problem is the problem, not the person.

   Note there is also objection to looking at the family system of interaction entirely in abstraction from the personal meaning experiences of those in the system. The functioning of the system can be described entirely in abstraction from the personal experiences of those in the family.

   He does this… she does that….their daughter does this ….He does this….A sequence of behaviours can be described without any reference to personal experience of meaning.

   Narrative workers in terms of the cave analogy I used in the Lecture 1 are in the cave working with clients. They are not outside the cave giving directions, or inside the cave doing things to the clients. They would not say they are *treating* clients.

3. **Externalising the Problem**
   Externalising is a way to assist clients not to identify themselves or anyone else as the problem. Thus depression is referred to as

if it were something entirely separate from the person. Thus the client can be asked something like “When does the depression attack your thinking the most?” rather than “When are you at your most depressed?”.

“Are there times when you can successfully fight off the anxiety and times when you lose the battle against it”. Rather than “When are you most anxious, least anxious?”.

Externalising in some way is a convenient fiction. The experience of the sufferers is not that of people in the past who believed that they were actually being attacked by external demons.

It is more like the powerful experiences (which the person is seeking not to have) do not have their origin in a willed or controlled decision of the person, even though they originate at the moment from within the person. They happen to the person. They have no choice about their appearance in consciousness at the moment of appearance.

Placing the experience at some distance from the will or decision of the person has the advantage of enabling the person and others to see that the experience is not inevitable for all time and that measures can be taken by the person and others to combat the problem experience so that it loses its power and maybe drops out altogether.

Remembering times when they were not subject to the unwanted experience is also a way of separating the experience from the essential self.

Externalising is a way to encourage hope.

4. Emphasis on Unique Outcomes

Unique outcomes is simply the term which narrative workers use to refer to exceptions. The emphasis is on the fact they were expected to occur but did not. Other theorists might want to give more emphasis to the fact the regular outcomes did not occur.

There can then be questioning about what happened in the lead up to the unique outcome and as a consequence of the unique outcome. Again the emphasis is on the experience of the persons involved rather than on the simple observable facts.

The questions are meant to pave the way for the clients to come to a different understanding of themselves and what is happening (or has happened). This will lead to a different narrative and then thus a different way to think about the future possibilities, expanding their self-understandings and horizons for action.

‘Workers find ways, in the jargon, to *thicken the plots’*. Carr (p 148) defines this as:

> Linking unique outcomes to other events in the past and extending the story into the future to form an alternative and preferred self narrative in which the self is viewed as more powerful than the problem.

In more simple language, this seems to mean that the worker finds ways to strengthen and to have others strengthen the new understandings of the clients so that those understandings become the new frames of reference for the clients within which they interpret their future experiences.

The strengthening from others may simply be in terms of better

and more appropriate responses which would seem to occur *naturally.* Strengthening from workers may be in verbal or written form eg letters, certificates of attainment etc.

5. **Solving The Problem**
   In the end the narrative approach is still about solving the problem which the clients brought to the worker's attention. The essential difference to the solution focused approach is the greater emphasis on the personal experience of meaning by individual family members in the narrative approach.

   Clearly where human persons are involved there will always be external actions and internal meanings involved. The two approaches we have examined are examples of systems' equifinality. There are multiple ways to achieve the same result.

   Some Ideas from Mental Research Institute (MRI) Brief Therapy
   These people are the intellectual descendants of Gregory Bateson who was very influential in introducing many systems ideas into the understanding of family and individual functioning. See Carr pp 76-85, 100 (glossary).

   I am just going to give you some ideas from this school of therapy which you can incorporate into your general understanding of family processes. There is clearly not time to discuss every school in detail.

1. **Ineffective Attempts to Resolve Problems Eventually Come to Maintain the Problem.**
   How many of us have been brought up on the maxim *If at first you don't succeed try, try again?*
   How many of us have been told when we are not succeeding that we are not trying hard enough?

The MRI people would say there may be some merit in the maxim and the suggestion but that that there is another possibility – that we are simply on the wrong track. If this is the case, the harder we try in the same way, the further we are from success, the more criticism we attract.

Their maxim would be: *if after a few tries, you don't succeed begin to think about trying something different and try it.*
If they were going to offer criticism it would be that we were not trying out different ways of doing things.

Thus workers using the MRI approach are looking at which ineffective attempts to solve a problem are actually maintaining it. Carr suggests (p 82) four typical categories of problem perpetuating solution attempts:

- Trying to force spontaneous responses e.g. you will respect me and not just behave as if you do. I want genuine respect. The more say a school teacher says this to a pupil, the less likely is real spontaneous respect.

- Using solutions that do not entail risk when some risk is unavoidable e.g. I avoid saying that I am angry with you because I am frightened that you will have nothing further to do with me. I keep my anger bottled up and the relationship begins to erode, even to the point where what I feared would happen does happen.

- Trying to resolve conflict though oppositional arguing. The more oppositional arguing the greater the emotional distance between the arguers, the less likely a successful resolution.
- Confirming an accuser's suspicions by defending oneself. "You are more distant from me". "No. I'm not". "Yes. You are". "No. I'm not"…….. (Better to enquire "What am I doing or not

doing which leads you to feel that?)
The MRI approach also attempts to identify or create small exceptions to the pattern and build on those exceptions

2. **Reframing**
Reframing is based on the idea that there are multiple valid descriptions of the same objective event. Some perspectives are more useful than others for certain purposes.

The previous example of parents coming to see an untidy room differently is an example of a reframe.

3. **Hasten slowly**
Clients may be cautioned not to change too quickly but to change in a step by step fashion. There are two aspects to this:

- Too quick a change may be superficial in that not all the changes which need to be put in place to actually consolidate the change will actually be in place. The problem may quickly recur.

- Having clients list the possible negative consequences of change can be useful so that they can have a better idea of what is involved and why change is to be gradual.

- The restraint urged by the worker may paradoxically spur the clients on to faster and permanent change.
Carr gives (p 85) a list of MRI approaches to dealing with the four typical categories of problem perpetuating solution attempts. He cautions that his brief description may not convey the thoughtfulness and care that goes into the interventions which can be complex and at times paradoxical.

Using the MRI approach in full is clearly not for neophytes. So I will leave it there.

Some Ideas from Jay Haley's Strategic Approach
Again I do not intend to discuss strategic approaches in full as they should not, in my view be used, by inexperienced workers. However, I think there are some useful ides which can in incorporated in less complex approaches.

I draw mainly from Jay Haley's approach. Haley studied and wrote books on my hero Milton Erickson.

See Jay Haley, *Problem-Solving Therapy*, 2nd ed, John Wiley & Sons, 1991

1. **Communication / Relationship Processes**
However, for Haley the central aspect of the relationships is that of control. Not only who does and says what. Not only what the rules are. But also who sets the rules.

For Haley every communication has the following aspects:

- Content – what is said or nonverbally communicated.

- An implied definition of the relational context – the role relationship which the communicator assumes in the act of communicating Eg parent, partner, teacher, traffic warden, salesperson.…….
Every implied definition brings with it expectations of the role in which the other person is expected to respond.

Parent - Child
Salesperson - Customer
Partner - Partner
Doctor - Patient
Teacher - Pupil
Colleague - Colleague

Traffic Warden - Vehicle Driver
Referee - Player
Another way of referring to the distinction is : every communication has

- a report dimension – This is what I am communicating.
- A command dimension – This is the role I am taking and you are to accept it and respond accordingly.

For Haley, the question is:
- Who sets the rules and thus defines the structure of the relationship? Conflicts are not only about content – *"I disagree with you about that".*

They can also be about how the relationship should be defined and who has the power to define it? – *"What right have you got to tell me what to do?"*

The struggle for control of the relationship *is a central concept for Haley.*

If the parties to the relationship agree on the definition of the relationship, the family system will function relatively smoothly

You can never entirely eliminate the struggle for control.

A parent - young child relationship may be working quite well overall but there will be times when the child wishes to deny the parent's being able to give direction on a specific occasion e.g. " I want to stay up and watch television" ...."I am attempting to take charge on this occasion".

Or the parent may wish the child to become more self-reliant on a particular matter. "You can do that. You don't need my help."

Remember the types of relationships discussed in Lecture 1.

- **Symmetrical** – in these relationships the members behave in quite similar ways to each other. The power and status of the members are basically equal.

  When symmetrical relationships go wrong they tend to become competitive.

- **Complementary** – In these relationships the members exchange different types of behaviour which "fit" together. One role is "superior" to the other, has more power, more control in the relationship.

  When problems develop it is because the person in the "subordinate" role either wants to move towards more symmetry or wants to move towards a different kind of complementarity.

- **Meta – Complementary Relationships –** in these relationships one person allows or forces another person to define the relationship in a particular complementary way.
  Problems may develop when one of the interactors wants to change the relationship. The person really in charge wants that position to be explicitly acknowledged. The child who is in charge by getting sick says "Now I'll tell you what I want and you'll do what I say".

- **Pseudo- Symmetrical Relationship** occurs when one person forces or allows another into a symmetrical relationship when in fact the complementary relationship is retained.

  The problem with allowed or forced symmetry is that the allower or the forcer can at any time redefine the relationship as complementary, perhaps to the considerable disadvantage of the

other person. Problems may well develop if the real subordinate begins to object.

Looking at the relationships within a family within these four categories in combination with general ideas of what normally works in families in different cultures can give us some idea of how to proceed.

Problems arise:

- when someone wishes to change the basic form of the relationship or to negotiate changes whilst still retaining the basic structure of the relationship.

- When a change in the pattern of relationships is required (a natural consequence of movement thought the life cycle) and the family as a whole is stuck in its patterns and cannot adapt to the changed situation.

2. **Problems as Metaphors**
   Another interesting idea from Haley is that obvious problems might in fact be metaphorical communications about another problem about which communication has not seen the light of day.

   For example, a mother's concern about a teenage son's interest in a girl at school might be a covert (and thus metaphorical) expression of her concern about her husband's relationship with a work colleague.

3. **Other Ideas of Interest but Not for Trying Out**

   - **Ordeal therapy** – getting a client to agree to go though an agreed ordeal when ever an urge or symptom appears eg

scrubbing floors; running round house, to attic and cellar for cigarette.

   - **Prescribing the Symptom** – make yourself as anxious as you can before public speaking.

   - **Pretending to have the symptom** – see if others can predict when you are for real and when you are having them on. (If a husband thinks a housewife is lazy, because she never manages to complete her tasks, she can be instructed to deliberately leave something undone and he can be instructed to guess what task it was of the many uncompleted tasks he observes).

Minuchin – Structural Family Therapy
See Carr pp 90-93, 101-102 (glossary) and Salvador Minuchin, *Families & family therapy*, Harvard University Press, 1974.

Family as a Systemic Structure
The members of a family are connected in systemic ways. People interact with each other in ways which are somewhat predictable.

Minuchin says that the **family structure** is the conceptualization of all the repetitive sequences of actions or behaviours in which the family members are involved.

The fact that the actions are repetitive means that there are other possible actions, in the situations which regularly arise, which the family members never take. They may not even be aware of the possible alternates to what they regularly do.

The structure is built up of expectations which are fulfilled and reinforce the expectations so that they become more rigid and the

regularities in action more and more predictable.

The expectations and patterns may be quite idiosyncratic to the individuals concerned.

Family members may notice, even unconsciously, that when Dad comes home and is a bad mood, he heads straight for the fridge and gets himself a beer. This is the signal to keep out of his way for a time (until they get another signal that it is now “safe” to approach him).

The patterned regularities then become constraints. The family may be caught in them.

The aim of Minuchin’s structural family therapy is to change the structure of the family. To get them all to act differently, to change the patterns of interaction between the family subsystems and within each of the family subsystems.

Family Sub-Systems
The basic subsystems are:

- The couple sub-system. The relationship between the adult couple which is meant to be one of personal intimacy.

  How do the couple relate to each other as partners?

- The parental subsystem
  How do the couple act, individually and together as parents? Usually there is a degree of complementarity and overlap in how the father and mother play their parental roles. There may of course be conflict

- The children subsystem. The relationship between the siblings. How do they relate to each other?

You can of course have other subsystems:

- Along gender lines
- Along interest lines, eg sport, music
- Along age lines e.g the bigger kids and the smaller kids.
- Along biological parent lines, his kids, her kids, their kids.
- Any dyad will form a subsystem

The two basic subsystems are related hierarchically. There is to be greater power and authority in the parental subsystem in its relationship to the children subsystem. The parents are meant to be in charge. They are meant to have the power which is to be used for the good of the family as a whole, and for all members individually.

Minuchin’s original work stressed the power and authority of the parents and much of the therapy seems to have been aimed at assisting the parents to regain lost necessary power and authority. There was much discussion with the parents about change and such discussions did not involve the children, particularly the older ones, participating to any great extent.

His more recent work (he is 84) seems to give a greater prominence to children participating appropriately in the discussions about change in the family system. The change is not simply forced upon them.

The Family Relating to Other Systems
The major systems which the family has to relate to are the family-of-origin systems of both parents. (In step families there will also be the relationship to the family-of-origin of the previous partner, parents, new partner, grandparents). Minuchin stresses the developmental task of establishing a new family system distinct from the family of origin systems.

However, the family as a whole, and as individuals, are also in systemic relationships outside the family eg neighbours, church communities, schools, work places.

The ways in which family members play their roles in these wider systems can impact on the family functioning.

Sources of Stress on Families

- An external stress impacts on an individual family member.
- An external stress impacts on the whole family.

- Transitional points in family development. Children grow up. Go to school, high school, university, college, overseas. Parents retire.

  At all these points the family structure has to change. New rules or regularities need to be negotiated. Not necessarily problematic but a certain amount of conflict is probably inevitable.
- Special circumstances such as disability or sickness in a member.

Boundaries

Boundary: Carr (p101) defines a *boundary as the conceptual social border around a family subsystem that regulates the flow of information and energy in or out of the system. Boundaries mark proximity and hierarchy.*

In assessing the functioning of the family system as a whole and of family subsystems the structural family worker is looking for what occurs within each system and how the subsystems interact with each other.
The quest is to identify the patterns or regularities of behaviours which actually occur.

The patterns may be considered as rules because the members of the system behave as if they were following explicitly formulated rules and sometimes they are.

No TV before homework may be an explicitly stated rule. A child watching TV is (i) following the rule (ii) breaking the rule or (iii) in a situation where the rule does not apply eg on holiday.
Look at the way the family acts.

You will start with a general structure as a framework, the three subsystems discussed above: couple, parental and children. Gather information about what happens (what is said and done) within and between those subsystems. Thus determine the regularities or rules. (You may find other subsystems operating as discussed above)

When you have done this you will find, see that the rules are not only about who does what within a subsystem but who does what in that subsystem's relationship with another subsystem.

The concept of boundary relates to the types on interactions which occur between subsystems.

There are three types of boundary:

- **Normal**
  No doubt you have met the term normal in your study of statistics where it refers to something like "within the average range". The usage here has something of that in it. What is normal will have some reference to what has been found in studies of family functioning about what kinds of actions and patterns of relationships work best to achieve certain outcomes. Some practices of child raising are better than others and determined to be so as result of scientific observation.
  Here the use of normal is also normative, making reference

to how something should or ought to be. This, of course, can take you into areas of great controversy. Who is to say what is normative? There are cultural influences etc.

However, a family therapist will have some general idea of what types of subsystem functioning promotes the goals which the family members have. If you don't have some kind of normative idea then from what understanding will you frame for questions and interventions.

- **Enmeshed**
  The interactions within an enmeshed system will be characterised by:

  1. Intense emotional involvement with each other (Over-involvement? How determine what is over-involvement?).
  2. High frequency of interactions among the members.
  3. High interdependence among members.
  4. Less involvement with other subsystems within family, or outside of the family.

  Thus the boundaries of the subsystem are said to be **rigid** in relation *to those not in it*. Those not in the subsystem find it hard to break into it.

- However, *within* the system the boundaries are said to be diffuse. They "live in each other's pockets". Members of such subsystems in broad terms gain support at the expense of independence and autonomy.

  Whether or not a particular subsystem can be described as enmeshed partially depends on normative considerations. A high degree of enmeshment between a breast feeding mother and a newborn child seems highly desirable. The same extent of enmeshment 12 months later might well be problematic.

Hence what is normal at one stage of a family's development may be enmeshed or disengaged at another stage.

- **Disengaged**
  The interactions within a disengaged system will be characterised by:

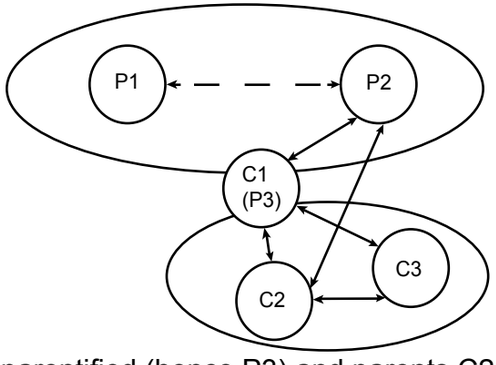
  1. Emotional distance from each other (Too great a distance? How determine what is too great?).
  2. Low frequency of interactions among the members (or of some desirable types of interaction).
  3. Little interdependence among members.
  4. More involvement with other subsystems within family, or outside of the family than within the subsystem

  The boundaries of disengaged subsystems are said to be diffuse in that the rules which govern how the subsystem as whole will function are not clear, not consistent.

  The boundaries within the subsystem are rigid. The members are isolated from each other. The rules prescribe that members keep distant from each other.
  Members of disengaged subsystems have greater independence and autonomy but lack emotional and other support. Rules may prevent even asking for support..

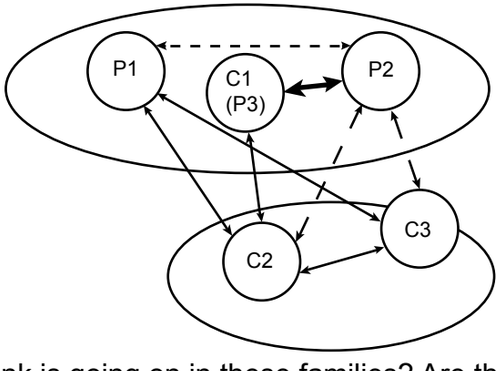
Parental Child
This concept refers to a member of the child subsystem (usually an older sibling) who personally has been taken up into the parental subsystem either to:

- Play a parental type role in relation to other siblings.



Here Child 1 is parentified (hence P3) and parents C2 and C3. P1 is not involved in parenting at all.

- Provide emotional support to a parent (such emotional support not coming from the other parent for whatever reason, including absence).



What do you think is going on in these families? Are these examples of what Carr (p102) refers to as *triangulation?*

Triangulation
He defines triangulation as a pattern of organisation in which the triangulated individual (usually a child) is required to take sides with one of two other members (usually the parents).

Cognitive Behavioural Approach
See Carr pp 93-96, 102-105 (glossary).

I am assuming that in your courses in psychology you were introduced to the concepts which underpin the cognitive behavioural approach. The fundamental concept to me is that if we change how we think about a particular situation we will be able to assess the possibilities for our ways of acting.

The approach includes:
- Identification and examination of thinking patterns
- Attempting to identify and control the emotional responses which cloud the ability to think clearly and make appropriate action responses in particular situations.
- Teaching of communication and parenting skills.
- Relaxation exercises

The CBT approach can be very structured and even (unfortunately) manualised, prescribing the strict order and timing of interventions.

My caution is that the approach if applied rigidly does not take into account the necessity to individualise the client family and the persons within the family.

Chapters 9 and 12 have some good suggestions about using CBT principles in families where the need is to provide appropriate limits to child behaviour. I still have our elder daughter's star chart which was used to (in the jargon of the behaviorists) to extinguish her tantrums when she was four years old.

Milan Systemic Therapy
See Carr pp 124-128, 142-144 (glossary).

I do not want to go into a detailed discussion of this mode of therapy

which I think has much in common with all modes which emphasise systemic family functioning.

However, I draw your attention to the following:

The Use of Circular Questions
The aim of circular questioning as I understand it is to introduce new perspectives into the thinking of the individual persons in the family with the aim of introducing changes into their systemic interactions.

Examples which direct family members to think about others' perspectives are:
- Mary, what do you think John was thinking when he spoke to Kate in that way?
- Kate, if you were complimenting Peter on doing a good job and Mary overheard you, what do you think she would say to John about it?
- John, did you notice the look on Peter's face when you were answering my last question?
- Peter, what do you think would happen

The persons spoken of can be asked to comment. There are two main categories of responses:

- I am understood – possibly a new piece of information
- I am not understood – may not be news about may give additional information about where the misunderstanding lies.

Neutrality
This is defined by Carr (p143) *as an interviewing position of impartiality, characterised by an openness to the validity of each system member's viewpoint and openness to multiple possible hypotheses to account for available information.*
Workers are encouraged to take up an attitude of curiosity.

Carr (p143) notes "neutrality as an interviewing position does not entail an ethically neutral position with respect to interfamilial abuses of power". My impression was that this rider was not clearly present in the original understandings of those who were attracted to the Milan approach.

Positive Connotation
Carr (p144) defines this as: **The practice of ascribing positive intentions to each family member concerning their role in a problem- maintaining interaction.**

We might say that this is to put a positive spin on what ever a person says or does. This worker intervention needs to be handled with care and ethical awareness.

Nevertheless, looking for the true good in a person's intentions is a good thing to do, so that their good intentions can be utilised in their efforts to achieve effective changes in personal action.

EXERCISE
In groups of 7 or 8

Construct the outline of a family which is experiencing difficulties such that they come to the attention of a social work agency.

The family is to have four members, a male parent, a female parent and two children one in early teens, the other 10 years old.

Your final description of the family will include answers to the following questions:

1. What is the problem which is the reason for the family's coming to attention?
2. Who referred to the agency, and why the referral was made?

3. What are the personal histories of each of the parents, including their past and current relationships with their families of origin?
4. How the parents currently relate to and communicate with each other, including any openly expressed tensions or conflicts and any which are not on the surface?
5. What are the parents' personal strengths and weaknesses?
6. What are the children's distinct personal attributes and interests?
7. What are the indicators that each of the children is or is not at an age appropriate point of personal development?
8. What is each parent's parenting style?
9. How do these four people communicate?
10. Which emotions are most often expressed in the family?
11. What attempts have been made by the family to solve the identified problem?
12. Are there any other professionals involved with family?
13. How does the family connect with the wider community?
14. How has the family come to your agency's attention?
15. What are the positions of the family members in relation to attendance for interviews?

For this exercise it may also be helpful to refer to Carr's list of behavioural pattern types where the patterns are dysfunctional for the family members (p 254, Table 8.1).

4.7 Working with Families – approaches which focus on context

Note: this is Lecture 3 of a series of four lectures delivered at the Australian Catholic University in 2010. The assigned text for the course was Alan Carr, *Family Therapy: Concepts, Process and Practice*, 2nd ed, Wiley, 2006 and the lecture contains references to this book.

Last week we looked at theories about working with families which in Carr's terminology used approaches which focus on belief systems and behaviour patterns. Today we will briefly touch on three more approaches to working with families. Using Carr's terminology they are:

1. **Transgenerational** eg Murray Bowen
2. **Attachment** - **Based** eg Susan Johnson
3. **Experiential** eg Virginia Satir

As before, my aim is just to introduce you to some concepts used in these approaches, concepts which I have found useful. You can pursue the various approaches in more depth at your leisure if they appeal to you, and you believe the concepts and techniques used in the various approaches will assist you to gain understanding of what is happening in your client families.

From such an understanding you will be in a better position to assist family members to change what they are doing in such a way that the changes bring about more fulfilling lives for each as individuals and for the family as a whole.

1. Transgenerational Family Work

Carr gives a very brief outline on transgenerational family work and Murray Bowen's approach on pages 154-163 (see also the glossary

on p 185-186), refers to Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*, Jason Aronson Inc, 1978.

The Individual in Bowen's Approach – Differentiation of the Self
A broad generalisation about the approaches we have so far considered might be that the unit of attention or the unit of primary interest is the family system. Individual members in the family will benefit if the family system (and it sub-systems) operate effectively. Bowen's thinking seems to start with thinking about individual functioning and how the family system's functioning impacts on that individual functioning. It is like he is looking at each member of the family as an *individual* first and foremost. In contrast, it would seem that the early structural theorists and practitioners like Minuchin looked at the *family* first and foremost.

Using the language of systems theory we might say that the instrumental goal of a family is to produce appropriately differentiated members. Such a family will achieve its cohesive goals in doing so. Members will be appropriately and beneficially linked.

There is a paradox in the Bowen view. The way to achieve cohesion is by promoting age appropriate differentiation.

The ideal individual - **The Differentiated Person** - for Bowen is one who responds appropriately in whatever situations arise. A differentiated person can think clearly about what is happening. They can evaluate well before acting. They do not simply automatically react.

Their emotional responses and the strength of those responses are appropriate to the circumstances. They can feel strongly but do not get overwhelmed by those emotions. They do not allow those emotions alone to determine what they do.

We might say of a fairly well differentiated person that she or he "is her or his own person". (Just like all of us!).

At the other pole of the continuum is the **Undifferentiated Person**. Such a person does not evidence a high ability to think clearly about difficult situations in which they find themselves. They are very likely to give a response which is largely driven by their emotions. They have high reactivity to situations. It is difficult for them to keep their emotions in check and this masks their ability to evaluate their situation taking into account the unique features of that situation.

Further, as adults, they give little evidence in their thinking of having arrived at conclusions which they have worked out for themselves. They are still repeating what they learned from parents, teachers etc. without having personally evaluated and "taken ownership" of some of those ideas, modified others and rejected others.

They may swallow everything you say (or at least appear to do so in your presence). They may just automatically oppose you as a matter of course.

Fusion
In undifferentiated people, the functioning of their intellects and their emotions are fused. If you think of the intellect and the emotions as different subsystems of individual personal functioning then instead of these two systems operating in complementary ways but retaining their individuality as systems, they *interpenetrate* each other in ways which are not helpful to the person who has to respond to a situation. Perhaps we could say the subsystems of intellect and emotions are enmeshed. Bowen's term is ***fused***.

Furthermore the functioning of the individual is *fused* to the functioning of others. There is too great a dependence on others for sources of thought, and for emotional support and especially

approval. This approval may be needed to be experienced by actually being given by the approver now. It may be a need to gain the approval of an *internalized* or *introjected* other.

Notice that automatic rebellion or defiance is not a sign of independence or freedom from fusion. If a person's responses are automatically oppositional then those responses are being determined by the opposed person (either as real or introjected).

It may be that the family system of the adult child is too fused with a family of origin system and the adult child has not achieved a mature degree of differentiation, taking into account cultural variations in what is judged to be appropriate.

There are clear problems when you have a clash in cultural views about what is the appropriate degree of differentiation.

Triangulation
This is a fundamental concept in Bowen's thinking. The process is conceptualized as follows. There is a two-person system which is functioning well or at *least adequately.*
Some anxiety-provoking event occurs. The anxiety may be initially for one or both members of the dyad. The processes in the dyad are not able to effectively process the anxiety.

A third person is drawn into the dyad. The involvement of this third person diverts both attention and energy from the dyad, perhaps pushes the anxiety-provoking event or process to one side resulting in a certain stabilization in the processes of the dyad.

The third person does not have to be a child. Could be a parent of one of the adults, a friend, a therapist (?!).

But the third person can be caught there. Particularly a problem

if the third person is a child. Then again, the third person might in some way assist the dyad to face their anxieties and do what is necessary to lessen them.

Emotional Cut-Off
This term is pretty obvious. You cannot be cutoff unless you were once attached. Being cut off means that a normal transitional developmental stage in an individual's progression towards differentiation has not been successfully negotiated.
The person has dealt with it by severing or minimizing contact with the relevant others. However, the unresolved issues remain exactly that. Unresolved.

They are of course present in the new relationships and families and are very likely to be passed on to the next generation.

The Genogram
Those who use Bowen's approach often use genograms to represent the multigenerational context of the family in question.

See Carr (p 225) for an overview of the basic symbols used by Bowen and those who follow him.

Note that using symbols to indicate relationships is just the first step in constructing a genogram.

Most times I have seen genograms drawn in practice supervision sessions, they have been entirely structural diagrams which do not include details of interactions, nor details of the effects of those interactions among family members.

It is important to note what the relationships as *lived* and *experienced* are, as it is how the relationships are lived out which determines the degree of differentiation in individuals.

See Carr (p 226) for a list of the kind of information to include in genograms.

2. Attachment – Based Family Work
See Carr pp 167-173, 188-190 (glossary).

Attachment based theories of family work have their origins in the work of John Bowlby. I am making the assumption that you are familiar with his work during studies of developmental psychology. As I understand attachment theory, it is based on the premise that if a child is to psychologically develop successfully, the child beginning in infancy must have experiences of feeling safe and being protected from perceived and real threats to the child's physical and emotional well-being.

These experiences occur nor only in the being rescued from danger (including the dangers of feeling hungry, of feeling alone) but also in the receipt of love through touch and cuddling in the normal course of infant, toddler, preschool, adolescent and adult life. The feeling knowledge that we are loved is the foundation of psychological security and well-being.

You will notice I have used a really non-scientific word *love* and have avoided the more scientific (objective?) word *attachment*. This is because I have not had clients ever say to me things like:

- My partner is no longer providing opportunities for me to have the attachment experiences I require.
- My parents were significantly lacking in providing me with childhood attachment experiences.
- Attachment experiences make the world go round.
- I feel no one who really knew me would want to have attachment experiences with me.

Attachment is about being loved and being loving.
I believe there is increasing research on the neurological aspects of the interpersonal relationships, on loving and being loved.
This research presumably will give a neurological foundation to the experiential – existential framework within which we tend to experience relationships.

Carr (pp 167-168) quotes research that suggests that the ways of interpersonal relating learned in childhood carry over into adulthood and significantly affect the types and quality of the relationships we enter into as adults.

- **Secure Attachments**
  Secure persons (in my terms those who know they are loved) relate and respond to their parents and their partners with a faith that the significant others are forming a secure base from which to act and explore the world.

  The relationships are characterised by adaptability, flexibility and the promoting of appropriate autonomy. Trust (in self and others) is relatively easy. Calculated risks are easier to take as failure is not so devastating.

- **Anxious attachments**
  Children are clingy when they return to their parent's presence after a temporary separation. Presumably this is because they do not receive the emotional response from their parents which they need and seek.

  They may display anxiety through tantrums and other "bad" behaviour at the prospect of even temporary separation from parents and families.

  Adult partners may be together but not feel fulfilled. There may

be doubt about the ability to maintain the partner's love and interest.

The relationships within the family may be (in the language of Bowen) *fused* together by anxiety. Minuchin and the structuralists would say the family is *enmeshed*. There is not appropriate separation of family subsystems.

- **Avoidant attachments**
  Attachment theory assumes that the need for attachment is hard wired into us We need and seek attachments, especially as children.

  Children who have not received the appropriate loving response from their parents when they need to experience love will learn not to seek out such responses. The actual or implicit rejection is too much to bear. Better to avoid rejection. Better still deny the need to yourself and others. Feel pain but do not identify its origin and nature.

  Adults with this attachment will avoid deep intimacy. It is too threatening, raises too much possibility of rejection. Family relationships will be of the *disengaged or emotionally cut off types.*

- **Disorganised attachments**
  Children may be alternately clingy or avoidant, depending on which pole of their internal ambivalence is predominant at the particular moment.

  Adults may likewise fluctuate in their responses to their partners who can find the seemingly unpredictable swings bewildering, frustrating and infuriating.

Working with Members of Such Families
My general strategy with families where there are problems which appear to have their origin in the parents' attachment styles, their inability to give and receive love is to have a two-fold strategy:

1. Work with **partners** to assist them to identify their need for love, to identify the ways in which they are giving and receiving that love.

   Assist them to identify where the flow of love is being blocked and frustrated. This frustration may be emerging in conflicts about other issues which involve far more emotion than the issues themselves would normally arouse.

   Assist them to identify ways in which they can better meet each other's need for love in concrete ways.

   If family of origin experiences are really traumatic, and block one or both of them from really being able to emotionally trust the other, a referral to a specialist therapist is indicated so that those emotional blocks can be reduced.

2. Work to assist the **parents** to develop appropriate parenting skills. Such work will involve the teaching of specific skills and may also result in traumatic childhood feelings surfacing. "I did not receive such love".

If you are interested in attachment based approaches, Susan Johnson's work on emotionally focused couple work is a good starting point. My first strategy has much in common with her approach.

3. Experiential Approaches
See Carr pp 173-180, 190-192 (glossary**)**
Carr says that experiential approaches "highlight the role of experiential impediments to personal growth in predisposing people to develop problems and problem-maintaining behaviour patterns."

The approaches have much in common with Bowen's in that the goal is the flourishing of each individual member of the family within the context of family life.

The fundamental assumption is that "problems occur when children or other family members are subjected to rigid, punitive rules, roles and routines which force them to deny and distort their experiences". (Carr, p 174).

Personal experience is conformed to the dictates of the absorbed (introjected) rules. This may lead to the psychological denial of certain experiences or their being internally labeled as something other than they are. "I am depressed" rather than "I am angry". I am angry" rather than "I am deeply hurting because I feel I am being rejected".

Work with the family will have goals of allowing the truthfulness of these experiences to emerge into individual consciousnesses and of giving appropriate expression to that truthfulness. Other family members will receive and accept the expression of such truthful experiences with respect and attempted, if not complete, understanding.

Carr (p192) sees personal growth as involving:
- *Increased self awareness* - an increase in "the realistic and undistorted appreciation of one's strengths, talents and potentials on the one hand, and one's vulnerabilities, shortcomings and needs, on the other".

- *Increased self-esteem* – an increase in "the positive evaluation of the self and this may include the evaluation of the self in significant relationships, work situations, leisure situations and self as an existential or spiritual being".

- *Increased self responsibility* – a decrease in "denying or disowning personal experiences or characteristics which may be negatively evaluated by the self or others, but accepting these and being accountable for them".

These are all components of self-actualisation which Carr (p191) defines as realising one's full potential; integrating disowned aspects of the self; resolving unfinished business (from childhood or later): being fully aware of moment-to moment experiences; taking full responsibility for one's actions; valuing the self and others highly; and communicating in a congruent, authentic clear direct way.

A family in which all members are personally growing will not have major relationship difficulties.

Virginia Satir describes four personal styles which are not useful for effective communication especially in family conflict situations (see Carr p 190-191):

- **Blaming**
- **Placating**
- **Computing ("let's be reasonable")**
- **Distracting**

To Satir's four styles I added (in 1981!) in an audiotape which could be used by marriage celebrants preparing couples for marriage:

- **Silent Fighting**
  A non-adaptive communicational style used to totally avoid any discussion of the conflictual issue at hand by simply refusing to communicate at all until it is clear that the conflictual issue will not be raised.

- **Sympathy Seeking**
  A non-adaptive communicational style used to avoid dealing with conflict by pleading that it would be too distressing to deal with it at present because of some seemingly temporary (actually conveniently permanent) incapacity.

Beginning to Work with a Specific Family

My belief is that I am always working in a family context, even when there is only one client in the room and the issues appear to be totally individual ones. The work with the individual client has to take into account the client's relationships with family members, including a partner (co-habiting or not).

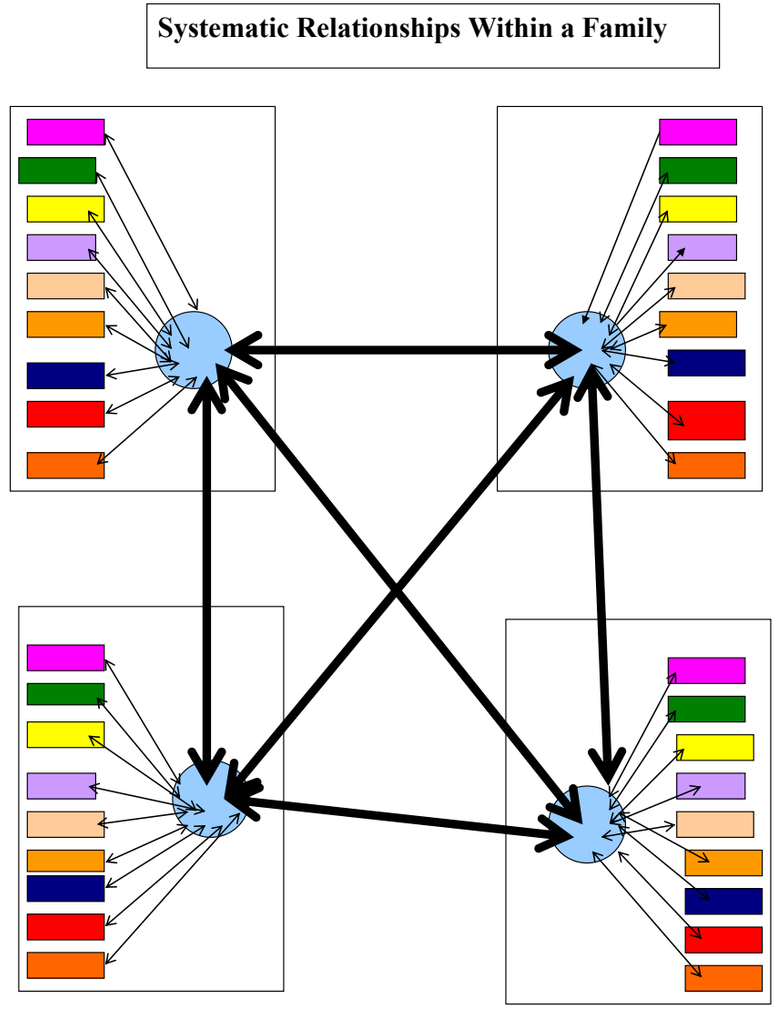
Those family members may be in daily interaction or in regular contact with the client, thus both affecting and being affected by the client's actions and experiences.

The client and significant family members might be estranged from each other.

The client may still have issues in the pathway to truly being a differentiated person.

Hence the conceptual map that I attempt to construct for myself is based on the schema of a personal relationship system which I discussed in Lecture 1. Remember the personal experience diagram and the system diagram. I have to hypothesize about the experiences of significant others and about interactional patterns

even when they do not attend the sessions.
Refer to '*Aspects of a Person's Experience', diagram on page 242 and the 'Systematic Relationships within a Family'* diagram below.



For me these conceptual frameworks underpin how I attempt to order the information which I gain in the course of interviewing and the working hypotheses I use and modify as the work proceeds.

Who Attends?
The major logical possibilities are:
- An individual (adult or child)
- A couple
- A couple and all children
- A couple and some children
- A parent and one child
- A parent and all children
- A parent and two or more children
- Two or more children
- Any of the above together with one or more significant family members (e.g from family of origin).
- Any of the above and one or more referring professionals.

If you define *working with families* as I define it then the case where all family members attend is the exception rather than the rule.

In what follows I am going to assume that at least two members of the client family initially present for interview.

Such clients are:

- **Self referred** – They have recognised a difficulty and have sought assistance

- **Informally referred** – They have been in contact with another professional (including clergy) who has suggested to them that seeking assistance with their particular difficulty might be helpful.

- **Formally referred** by another professional who has made

contact personally with you or your agency either by phone or in written form. In such cases, you will be given an outline of how that professional sees the family situation, of what that professional has already worked on with the family and any expectation of ongoing collaboration or feedback.

Clearly you have to begin work with whichever clients actually turn up. If there has been a formal referral, the referrer may well have made a specific suggestion to the clients (and thus to you) as to who in the family should come for the specific interview.

If this is the case, you might consider making a phone call or writing to the prospective client suggesting that from the information given to you, it would be good for the work with the family if certain members were able to come to the sessions (at least at the beginning).

If there has been a formal referral, you need not only the account of the information supplied to you but also of the particular perspectives and frameworks which that referrer has used to gather and order the information and hypothesize about it. You need to be open to the possibility that other frameworks might shed greater light on what is happening and what needs to be done. Perhaps, the limitations of the referrer's framework is the reason the referral has been made.

The Very Beginning of the Process – Meeting the Clients Underlying Philosophy
You will notice that I have used the word *clients* and not *the family*. This is because you can only meet a *person*. You cannot *meet* a family, a system. You can observe a system: you can enter a system and become a part of it. However, you can only in the truest sense meet or personally relate to another person.

All usages of *meeting* or *relating* to a family depend on the fundamental relationship with individual persons within that family. To hear someone say “I have an excellent relationship with that family but I have no personal connection or relationship with any individual member of it” would strike us as extremely odd.
I am emphasising this because I believe that each client person in family work has to be met and related to as an individual person, regardless of their age or position in the family.

Each person has to believe that you are working for them, that you want his/her individual life within the family context to be more fulfilling, less painful. A family member may not agree with what s/he thinks you think about the ways to achieve this and s/he may not initially agree with what others in the family think are the ways to achieve what is required. However, each person in the family must have some belief and perception that you have his or her best interests at heart.

“Social” Stage
It seems to me best that the initial contact with each attending person be done in a normal social way, using the same approach that you might use in meeting the clients in a normal social setting. Each is greeted personally, perhaps with a handshake and some basic personal information asked for and commented on. For example:

<u>To adult:</u>
Worker: “What do you do for a living?”
Client: “I drive a bus”.
Worker: “Locally?”
Client : “No. Been trying to get closer to home. No luck yet. Still at Tempe depot”
Worker: “Both a long drive to and from work as well as at work!”.
Client “Yeah”.

So a little chit chat. Joins with client by establishing rapport about the frustration of long distance from work. But gains information about possible stress impacting on family life. Also information about probable level of education. Suggests metaphors which might be used in working with client Eg. “taking the wrong turn”, “signaling an intention to change” (lane), “putting on the brakes”, “right on schedule”,

<u>To child:</u>
Worker : “Melinda, how old are you?”
Melinda : “I’m nine”
Worker: “When will you be ten?”
Melinda: “In August”.
Worker: “Same month as my daughter, except she’ll be twenty-five. You’re wearing some sort of uniform. What is it?”
Melinda : “I am going to gymnastics after this”.
Worker: “What’s your favorite apparatus?”
Melinda: “Bars”.
Worker: “You must be clever to be able to swing between the two bars”.

Here the worker establishes rapport by being interested in something Melinda does, positions herself as a sort of “grandparent” figure (the reference to a much older daughter – which implies she had a nine going-on-ten year old daughter at one stage), shows some knowledge of and interest in gymnastics and compliments Melinda on being clever.
If the agency has a demographic form to complete then gaining the information to complete it provides an opportunity to have these apparently social (but actually rapport building and indirect information gaining) conversations.

It can be instructive to note where the family members physically position themselves (if there is any choice available). If the parents

do not sit side by side but have a child or children between them, there is an immediate suggestion of a parental child or triangulation; or lack of appropriate boundaries between parental and children subsystems; using the children to prevent open conflict in the session or ….
Note these are hypotheses to be tested not conclusions to be drawn.

Eliciting Understanding of Why the Clients Have Come
Each person is invited to give his/her understanding of why those present are in the room with the worker at this time. The adults are invited to speak first, then the children. (It can be instructive to note, within the adult group and the children group, who speaks first.)

At this stage the non-speakers are to listen respectfully and not interrupt. (Workers need to have ways to gently but firmly enforce this rule. There is to be no open discussion at this stage).

It can be explained that it is quite normal for members of a family to have different views on things, even problems. These different views can be quite useful in helping to find a solution.

This round of questioning will normally result in at least one problem being identified as the reason the session is occurring.

More than one problem may be brought forward. If this happens, you can list them and enquire which of the problems is the one which, in the family members' view, is to be addressed first.

Within a systemic framework, all the problems listed would be linked in some way. However, it may be useful to start where the family thinks is the best place to start. The worker might think it would be better to address something else first but if the latter is really important, then it will inevitably arise in the course of ongoing

discussion.
This initial process will result in the articulation of what the problem to be addressed first is and all present are to be clear about what it is so that the helping process has clear direction.

From each account of the *problems* the worker will gain not only the speaker's view of the problem but also some initial ideas about the speaker's:

- Attitude to and responses to those seen to be involved in, or to cause, the problem.
- Degree of taking responsibility for being involved in causing, maintaining and/or attempting to solve the problem.
- Thought patterns and thinking styles.
- Degree of expressed emotionality
- Personal stress.

The worker will have some clues as to who is a customer, who is a complainant, who is a visitor (and, perhaps, who is a conscript).

Clearly, the adults (parents and any adult children) will probably say more than younger children but not necessarily more than adolescents.

Elicitation of Family Member's Expectations of the Process
In Lecture 2 the following possible expectations were listed:

- Provide emotional support
- Ask questions that will help the clients explore and understand the current situation (and develop strategies to solve the identified problems)
- Make some suggestions about what might work.
- Approve of what they are doing.
- Assess and give an expert opinion

- Pronounce judgement, assign blame
- Teach skills
- Take total responsibility for the outcome, tell them what to do, enabling them to avoid any responsibility.
- Intervene in other social systems.

Workers should make clear to clients what they are not willing to do and give clients a general description about the process they are entering e.g. a solution-focused worker might say:

> "What I normally do is what I have done so far. Ask each person's opinion about the problems as each individually sees things. We identify what we are going to work together on. I ask you questions about what happens when the problem is occurring. I ask you about how you would know when the problem was no longer occurring. Together we try to figure out a way to get to where you want to go and which steps it would be good to try first. You try those steps out and see what happens. If all goes well, then we move to what seems to be a good second step and so on. If step one does not go well, we try to figure out what went wrong. Something different might be needed or the first step was not really given a proper trial".

Understanding the Problem Patterns.

- Ask questions about what seems to happen in lead up to the problem situation. When is it most likely to occur? When it is least likely to occur?

- Are there exceptions or unique outcomes? What is different in those situations? What strengths in the family systems (and in individual members) are at work in the exceptional case or when there is a unique outcome?

- How has the family tried to address and solve the problem?

  What are their views about why such attempts were unsuccessful? (The worker might even be led to hypothesize that the attempts to solve the problem have in fact made it worse).

- What underlying beliefs are operative in the problem patterns? In occurrences of exceptions and unique outcomes?

- What emotions are experienced by family members during problematic occurrences? During occurrences of exceptions and unique outcomes?

Carr in Chapters 7 and 8 gives many examples of the formulation of questions to elicit information of the above types.

Construction of Genogram

I am not sure that constructing a genogram on a whiteboard or butcher's paper is always necessary. (It is probably useful to have one in your head or in your notes).

Constructing one in the presence of the clients is useful when it is judged that family members need to see how their situation is being impacted by relationships with others outside the family, and how historical experiences may be impacting on, and influencing, current experiences.

The construction of the genogram can lead to the highlighting of strengths as well as vulnerabilities.

Elicitation of What the Goal-State Might Concretely Be.

Possible use of miracle question. *Supposing one night there was a miracle while you were asleep and the problem was solved. How would you know? What would be different? How would X know without you saying a word about it?*

The aim is to arrive at a description which is observable through the

senses. An abstract description is not sufficient. Nor is a reference to an absence without any reference to what actually is hoped to happen in a totally concrete observable way. Remember that scaling can be useful. (see Lecture 2).

As noted in Lecture 2 not all clients can imagine being free of the problem or even reducing it to manageable proportions. In such cases, concrete goal setting needs to be delayed.

The formulation of the goal needs to be understood by all family members. There does not have to be absolute agreement on the concrete details of the goal stated. It may be that there are real differences in what each member thinks is a proper instantiation of the goal state. If this is the case it might be useful for the worker to allow the differences and say that perhaps the resolution of them will be easier as the goal-state is approached.

First Assessment
The information gained so far should be enough to provide some indication of what the first steps in the process to a successful outcome are.

The information will be placed by the worker within some conceptual framework which allows hypotheses to be formed about what is happening and what types of changes could possibly be put in process to begin the movement towards the desired end state which is somewhat concretely specified.

To me the process is like climbing an unknown mountain. You know you want to reach the top. You know what equipment you have at hand to help you on the journey. As you survey the mountain from ground level, you see possible pathways up the mountainside.

You start on the climb. You meet obstacles you foresaw from ground

level and deal with them as you come across them. You meet unanticipated obstacles and have to get over them or around them using your general mountain climbing know how and your creativity. Occasionally, it is easier than you anticipated and progress is faster than you believed it could be. If you keep going, you will reach the top.

The first assessment is at ground level. You need to modify that assessment in the light of experiences within the helping journey and, perhaps, make interventions which you did not anticipate making. Be flexible in the aftermath of experience.

Determining the Approach to the Process
How the worker proceeds will be a function of :

- The worker's assessment of the family and individual functioning in relation to the problem (This, of course will be always within the theoretical frameworks which the worker uses.)

- The personal style of the worker, including the practice model(s) the worker is competent in and comfortable with.

- The role of the agency in the community.

- The family's acceptance of suggestions made by the worker (both ideas and practice actions).

- The family's expectations about how the process will be conducted.

The aim is to use interventions which progressively move the family members towards the desired goal state – a state in which they all, as individuals and as family members, experience greater flourishing in their lives.

Contracting for a Period
It is not typical that family issues can be resolved in one session. Clients need to be aware that it is most likely that a number of sessions will be needed.

Sometimes it is good to obtain agreement for attendance at a specified number of sessions with a review at the end. (Some agencies have policies limiting the number of available sessions. Some clients have not sufficient resources to finance a great number of sessions. Both these factors can motivate clients towards faster work.)

Other times it may not be good to suggest a limited number of sessions as it may give false hope about how rapidly progress will occur.

4.8 Working with Families – Some Worker Action Types

Note: this is Lecture 4 of a series of four lectures delivered at the Australian Catholic University in 2010. The assigned text for the course was Alan Carr, *Family Therapy: Concepts, Process and Practice*, 2nd ed, Wiley, 2006 and the lecture contains references to this book.

My aim in this lecture is simply to draw your attention to some of the actions which workers can take in their efforts to assist families as individuals and as families. Carr in Chapter 9 refers to these action types as *interventions* and discusses them as part of what he calls the *treatment* stage of the work with the family.

The word *treatment* is clearly drawn from medical model language and seems appropriate in a book which is essentially about family *therapy*. Treatment is the generic word in the medical model which is used to refer to what the practitioner does. Practitioners treat patients. Social work in its early days used to refer to the actions of social workers as treatment actions. This led to some interesting concepts like *treating the social environment*. (Obviously a metaphoric or analogous use of the verb *treat*).

The word *intervention* fits more appropriately in approaches which have their origin in *systemic* theories. The practitioner *intervenes* in an already operating system and acts to facilitate changes within the system's dynamics.

What I want to draw your attention to is that the words *treat* and *intervene* do not of themselves immediately suggest that the client actively *collaborates* in the worker-client interaction and has the major influence on the successfulness or otherwise of the therapeutic or helping process.

There is clearly a difference between *working-on* and *working*-with. Except in situations where the safety of a person (adult or child) is at immediate risk, I believe workers should adopt a collaborative approach to working with families, an approach which joins with them in their journey towards greater flourishing.

Hence my preference for the name of worker action types which assume that clients have choice about what they do in response to worker actions. Workers with professional expertise and authoritative knowledge place that expertise and authoritative knowledge at the service of the client. This does not preclude attempting to be persuasive or influential but precludes the attempted use of professional power or authority to impose on clients or demand certain responses from them, including being critical of them or attempting to shame them. I try to keep my principle of *I run the counselling; you run your life* in the back of my mind at all times.

Another Fundamental Principle
All work is more likely to successful if, as far as possible, it is done within the framework of the clients' total view of the world, their families and themselves. This is a restatement of a fundamental social work practice principle: *Start where the client is.* Using a metaphor from competitive team sports: *Working with clients is always an away game.* There are no worker home games. Forcing clients to play the game on your territory is usually very difficult if not doomed to failure.

Home Visiting
Interviewing clients in their own homes is not a worker action type. (Travelling to the home is!). However, the fact that the work is being done with the clients in their own home changes to some extent how such work can be conducted.

There are two major reasons for home visiting:

- Formal assessment in relation to some health or disability problem. Some examples : assessment of an aged person's capacity to remain living at home (with or without support); assessment of physical dangers to a child (stairs which a toddler could fall down).

- Assessment of family functioning in a more natural setting than a worker's room. There is a great difference between witnessing family interaction in their homes (even if they are attempting to "put on a show") and hearing about it in the worker's room (even if all are present and do to some extent reveal the family dynamics in action).

These assessments may or may not be followed by ongoing work in the family home. Agency policy or other considerations may suggest that ongoing sessions should be conducted on agency premises.

Balance Between Being a Worker and a Guest During Home Visiting
This is a balance which many workers (dare I say those who are predominantly trained in counselling or therapy) find difficult and many are quite uncomfortable about the prospect of acting as a counsellor, or a therapist in a home setting.

The basic reason for the difficulty in striking the correct balance is the existence of social norms for guest behaviours in every culture. In general, these norms require that the guest takes a sub-ordinate position to the host. When we visit socially, we do not take the major leading role lead in the social interactions of the visit. E.g. we do not send the family's children out of the room or request that they turn the TV off or down.

However, if we are home visiting in our professional role, we have to be basically in charge of what happens during that visit so that its goal can be attained. The worker may have to ask that the children be sent out of the room, ask that the TV be turned down or off, ask that the chairs be moved so that the desired physical distance between those participating in the session is obtained.

In my early career, I estimate that half of my interviews were conducted in home settings. These are some of the principles which I attempted to use to strike the correct balance between being a worker and a guest.

- Assume the fundamental ability to have the major control over what happened during the visit.

- Acknowledge that the control over what happens during the visit will be less than the control it would be possible to exercise in the worker's room.

  E.g Neighbours dropping in to borrow something, fights among children breaking out, interruptions to check on the progress of cooking, infants waking "before time",

- Accept hospitality within normal limits e.g. a coffee and a piece of cake (if it is not the fifth for the day! Then point to your waist line and graciously decline). Accepting normal hospitality affirms the common humanity between worker and client without affecting the necessary hierarchy of roles in the worker-client interaction.

- Make positive comments on displayed photos, furniture, ornaments, wall hangings, children's toys, content of bookcases etc.

- Weave the content of interactions into the content and process

of the session. E.g. comment on how politely the client told the neighbour that he could not borrow the chain saw, how well the client resolved the children's fight, asking was the cooking going well, the gentleness with which the waking infant was attended to.

- Conduct the session as you would in your room as far as essential processes are concerned.

Observation of the physical characteristics of a home and direct observation of natural interactions among family members will normally give you much more complete information than you will gain in an office situation.

Principles for Choosing Worker Action Types
(see Carr pp 274-276)

- Have a clear idea of the how the action type selected *theoretically* could contribute to the overall goal the clients and you are working towards. There is no guarantee the action will so contribute but you should be able to give a rationale for the action in terms of the goal.

- The contribution may be facilitating a very preliminary step in the movement toward the goal but there must be a reasonable link between action and goal in most cases. An exception would be where the action is aimed at obtaining further information for the purpose of greater understanding of the situation.

- Select actions which are compatible with client family's readiness to change.

  Not all family members may have the same degree of readiness to change. Hence there has to be some assessment of the

capacity of those in the family who are ready to change to positively influence towards more fulfilling behaviour the less ready to change. Remember in systemic terms a change in the regular pattern of behaviour can result in strong efforts to pull the non-conforming parts of the system back to the previous pattern. A change in the regular pattern of behaviour can result in a new pattern being formed.

However, if ambivalence or negativity towards change is very strong it will need to be addressed openly.

- Select actions (as far as possible) which would be perceived by family members as compatible with their rules, roles, existing patterns, belief systems and culture.

Play the game on the client's home ground. Have I mentioned how Milton Ericksom assisted a mental health patient who thought he was Jesus Christ? Erickson mentioned to the patient that he believed the patient had some experience in carpentry and that there were some benches in the hospital that needed fixing. The patient went to work on them, the first step in being freed from the delusion. The long term patient recovered sufficiently to eventually leave hospital and find work.

Another Erickson story. There was a patient who only spoke in what is known as a word salad. Erickson took the trouble to work out the grammar of this word salad sufficiently as to be able to converse with the patient in the word salad language. They had many conversations until the patient said "Doctor, why don't we drop this nonsense and talk properly. They did so from then on but they always ended the conversation with a little word salad conversation (for old times sake).

- There should be no attempt to influence change in what

fundamentally does not need to change. In many instances what the family members are trying to achieve in their family life is totally commendable. What is going wrong are some of the efforts to achieve their goals.

In such cases the formulation of the goals should be kept in the family's language. The task is for them to find actions which will move them towards those goals.

For example, a father may wish the absolute best for his child and wish the child to have as good an education as possible compatible with the child's actual ability. However, when the child slackens off in effort, the father may be quite punitive in attitude and action, resulting in the child becoming resentful and the child's performance declining further. A more encouraging stand by the father will probably achieve different outcomes.

- Be alert to any tendency to be influenced in a counter-transference way or by an emotional response to one member of the family so that the chosen action will not be sufficiently addressed to the issue at hand.

An example is having a tendency to rescue a crying client from tears of distress. The tears might well be an avoidance strategy, a distracting from the real issue strategy.

- Do not choose an action solely because it will demonstrate that you are up with the latest techniques. It has to be appropriate for the client.

- Do not choose an action solely because you know how to do it.

- Do not choose an action which you are not competent to do.

Behaviour Focused Worker- Action Types

1. **Actions Addressing the Here and Now Processes**
   These are actions which might truly be described as interventions. The worker perhaps invites those present to have a discussion about the issue at hand, or actually observes the issue be played out in the room.
   The worker would interrupt the process and do one or more of the following:

   - comment on what the worker has observed in the process, including patterns and individual responses within the process.
   - ask for feedback on worker's comments.
   - suggest an hypothesis which might make the process more understandable.
   - suggest other ways the process could possibly be, including some specific suggestions for individual members.
   - invite discussion about the suggestions
   - invite the family to discuss the issue at hand again incorporating the discussed suggestions.
   - feedback on the second discussion.

Other alternatives are:

- to act as a coach for one member (usually this would be in couple work), suggesting ways to say things and then inviting a real time practice, and obtaining feedback.

- Role playing a particular family member in a real time family interaction (with or without the actual family member being present).

Such worker actions open up the possibility of changes in the family processes and within individual family members beginning to be

initiated right there and then.

2. **Actions Suggesting Extra-Session Activity**
   Such activities are colloquially referred to as *giving homework*.

   They include:

- **Suggesting experiments**. Try this and see how it works. Report back next time.
  Remember Carr's ideas (p 291, mentioned in Lecture 2) about how to suggest tasks so that they have the best chance of actually being carried out.

- Observe and record instances of **problem occurrence**, including what happened before and after the occurrence. **Rate the severity**. Feedback next session. (see Carr p280).

- **Encouraging total restraint.**
  In lecture 2 I mentioned the MRI (Mental Research Institute)'s idea that sometimes trying to solve a problem makes it worse. If there is evidence that this is the case, then encouraging the person to refrain from trying to solve the problem until a new approach can be found makes sense.

  I had a client once whose daughter I never saw was a young gymnast who had lost the ability to perform a particularly intricate move. The client was most concerned about this and was trying as best he knew to help her to recover the move. I hypothesized that his attempts to help her were being perceived as critical of her and she was becoming more and more distressed and more incapable of the move.

  I suggested he not attempt to help her and even that for two months he should not even watch her at practice or in competition. He did this. She recovered the move.

- **Encouraging a pause in the problem solving process.**
  The major reason for encouraging a pause is to solidify gains already made by becoming truly comfortable with the changes made. I have used the idea of remaining in a hut on a mountain climb, having a rest to gather strength, looking back on the distance already traveled and planning for the next steps as a metaphor for a pause in the problem solving process.

- **Practicing Symptoms**
  Carr uses the examples of a child with an involuntary tic and a client given to anxious ruminating. The suggestion to deliberately do something which is assumed to be currently occurring non-voluntarily is a suggestion which alters the experience of the person. It suggests the possibility of actually gaining control of seemingly involuntary movement or emotion.

- **Setting Challenges**
  Carr's examples are of persons with diagnosed psychiatric disorders eg agoraphobia, panic attacks, more specific phobias. He suggests that the person might (with family members) begin what behavioural psychologists call systematic desensitization. Support the person who very slowly is exposed to the feared situations.

  As physical activities have been shown to assist in lessening the experience of depression, the worker might challenge the client to progressively become more involved in physical activity.

Skills Training
I am not going to discuss skills training in any detail. Carr (pp 282-286) gives a good listing of the types of skills that are components of good listening and good communication.

He also gives a good listing of general problem solving strategies.

Similar lists are easy to find in self-help books on relationships, on family life etc.

I just want to say: Do not be afraid to recommend such reading or DVD material to clients, nor even to use such material in sessions.

I have come across practitioners working with families who seem to believe that unless the insights originate from within the clients themselves, the clients will never come to embrace them or own them. My question to such practitioners is : if you had not been educated at university, been to many lectures and seminars, read many books and articles, how much of what you know about working with families would you have been able to discover by yourself?

Teaching family relationship skills (directly or indirectly) is part of assisting families and the individuals in them.

Changing Behavioural Consequences

1. **Reward Systems**
   Carr (p 287) gives specific and general guidelines for establishing a reward system. Reward systems are mainly used with children, though they have been used in psychiatric hospitals (token economies) and in gaols (good behaviour points lessening custodial sentences) The systems are based on operant conditioning principles which I am sure you have studied in psychology.

   The basic principle is that if a behaviour is followed by an enjoyed or pleasurable consequence, the likelihood of the behaviour being repeated is increased. If the behaviour is followed by unpleasant or unwanted consequences, (or by the expected and wanted consequence not occurring), then the likihood of the behaviour occurring again is decreased.

Carr's tips on ensuring that the rewards are meaningful and valuable to the child, and that rewards can be earned within a timeframe which in fact encourages the child to continue the wanted behaviour are worth noting.

His point that everyone in the system (eg a non-custodial parent) should agree to the implementation of the reward system is well taken.

2. Behavioural Control Skills

Carr (p 288) gives some specific and general guidelines for establishing a behavioural control programme. Again he is mainly concerned with child behaviour which is characterised by a lack of self-control. eg tantrums

He has some important points to make about the context for implementation of such programmes:

- A generally supportive climate in the family is to be fostered. This is because the child must still feel loved and valued throughout the implementation of the programme, learning not that he/she is not acceptable but that certain behaviours are not acceptable.

- In the midst of the inevitable stress of living with an at times out-of-control child, the parents must set aside time to foster heir own relationship, not just their parental relationship, and support each other.

  Single parents have to be encouraged to find ways to gain support from their family and social networks. In the absence of these the worker might have to provide support.

- The parent(s) must set aside time for supportive play with

the child .This enables the child to experience ongoing love and support in a warm atmosphere. On page 306 Carr gives some guidelines for supportive play.

- Parents must learn to control their frustration and exasperation in the face of their seeming inability to teach the child self-control. The parents may say they have tried everything and nothing will work. They can be resistant to trying something new. Carr suggests empathizing with their frustration, saying the general techniques being suggested have been shown to be effective, that the child will probably initially respond by testing the plan to the limit (thus seemingly getting worse) and including the parent in the designing of the specific plan.

Dealing with Ambivalence

My assumption is that for every client (every person?) ambivalence is a constant. The old proverb says that you cannot have your cake and eat it too. Every choice of action at that moment means other choices are renounced. One possible future is chosen and other possible futures are renounced. Something is lost as a result of every choice.

Carr (pp 291-292) draws attention to the fact that clients are ambivalent about change when they fear that change will be costly to them in some way and that the resultant state will, in total, be worse than now.

For example, certain cherished beliefs might be examined and found inadequate. The emotional attachment to such beliefs would need to be renounced. A change in a behavior which was essentially performing a defensive function in preventing an issue from surfacing could result in that issue coming to consciousness and even public. (Remember Bowen's concept of triangulation.)

Carr suggests that when ambivalence is really strong that it be addressed directly. Clients can be asked to list the possible costs to them. Carr strongly cautions against the worker making any remarks which could be interpreted as critical of the ambivalent client. The way to go is to empathise with the client and then explore what is giving rise to it. In this way a greater intellectual appreciation of the likelihood of the feared possibilities coming to fruition is gained. Consequently the fear, the anxiety about change is reduced.

If strong ambivalence is not addressed the likelihood of the efforts to change being successful is significantly lowered, perhaps to the point of complete failure.

Highlighting Strengths
The importance of identifying strengths in each individual and in the family as a whole was discussed in Lecture 2 in the section on the generation of hope, and in Lecture 3 in the section on genograms.

The individual and family resources which the family has at their disposal must be brought to the conscious awareness of the family members in the assessment and goal setting phase.
Carr points out that in the process of the work with the family, drawing attention to the exercise of those strengths and resources when they have been used (or could be used) is a vital part of the process of problem-solving.

Reframing
Just a reminder that reframing is providing a conceptual framework which is different to the one which is being used by the family. The different framework allows the perception of real possibilities which cannot be known or appreciated within the framework being used. Remember the untidy room of the adolescent.

Another example. Some friends of mine were driving in Ireland from

a country town to Dublin airport. They saw a very small sign with an arrow pointing the way to an airport. They assumed from the size of the sign and the fact that it did not say Dublin Airport that it was a sign to a smaller airport. Only when they were lost and had to ask directions did they come to realize that the sign was pointing the way to Dublin Airport. Presumably the Irish know about small signs and that if there is only one airport in the vicinity you do not have to name it explicitly. Within a different frame of reference the small sign is quite informative.

Reframing is an excellent tool. You can only become proficient by practicing it. You have to be able to look at things from different perspectives. Sometimes I ask myself “how would this look from a perspective whose assumptions are opposed to the ones which underpin the perspective I am taking?” Sometimes, I come to see things I did not see before.

My metaphor of theories as lamps or torches highlighting and hiding different aspects of reality helps me to identify differences in theoretical frameworks and perspectives and to look at clients in different ways.

Presenting Multiple Perspectives
To me this seems a variant of reframing. The difference is that there is more than one worker involved.

The possibilities are:
- Two workers working directly with the clients.
- A worker and a reflecting team observing.
- A worker and a supervisor, directly observing or being involved in later discussions with the worker(s).

The essential point is that two or more points of view enunciated by different professionals are presented to the clients.

Apart from the content of enunciated views, the fact that different professionals can see what is happening in the family in different ways is a message to the family members that there is not one absolute point of view which is valid.

This point might need to be made in action to families who are stuck in “right-wrong” conflicts or in “either-or” conflicts. They do not operate under “partly right, partly wrong” or “some of this and some of that” frameworks.

The following are ways in which the multiple perspectives can be presented:

- Two workers in the room state different positions from different perspectives.
- A reflecting team sends in split messages (some of us think X , others think Y).
- The family observes a reflecting team discussion.
- A worker quotes a supervisor as having a different point of view to the worker.

Addressing Family of Origin Issues

The assessment of the problem and the construction of a proper genogram will bring issues which have their origin in family of origin historical experiences and /or current relationships with members of families of origin.

The impact on current family relationships is what fundamentally needs to be addressed.

Sometimes ideas from the family of origin about how individuals and families are supposed to behave have been accepted uncritically by parents and those ideas need to be examined in the course of work with family.

Sometimes the emotional legacies from life in the family of origin have not been resolved and individual work with the adult child is indicated.

Sometimes issues like enmeshment with family of origin, or being cut off from family of origin have to be addressed and clients need to take action in their lives to differentiate themselves from families of origin or re-establish appropriate relationships with them.

5

DEALING WITH SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Reflects on the occurrence of sexual abuse by clergy and religious, and explores the challenges in providing pastoral care to people affected by such abuse. Provides a summary of Ray's 1996 Churchill Fellowship report on ways to assist faith communities (congregations) to heal after allegations of sexual abuse by a pastor. Discusses aspects of adult victim consent in sexual exploitation within pastoral relationships. Highlights possible impacts of sexual abuse of a young girl on her experiences of lovemaking years later

5.1 Some Thoughts on Sexual Abuse by Clergy and Religious

[1]**Introduction**
This paper is being written in response to the survey which the Australian Catholic Bishops have commissioned to gather views about the causation and context of sexual abuse by priests and religious.

My background includes the following experiences:

- Twenty-five years of Social Work practice, eighteen of which have been spent within Centacare.

- Counselling of survivors of sexual abuse, including that perpetrated by priests and religious, over the past twenty years.

- A Churchill Fellowship study tour of the USA and Canada in 1996 mainly looking at ways of assisting faith communities when sexual abuse by a church leader is revealed, but also including discussions with therapists at the following treatment centres for priests and religious: Southdown in Canada, St. Luke's in Maryland and Jemez Springs in New Mexico.

- Membership of the NSW Bishops Professional Standards Resource Group.

- Five years (1962-1966) as a monk within the Passionist Congregation.

I have not been extensively involved in the assessment or treatment of priests or religious who have sexually abused others. Hence my

[1] Written by Ray 04 Feb 1997, when he was the Director of Centacare Parramatta.

comments are mainly drawn from my now somewhat extensive reading and reflection about sexual abuse in the Church as well as from my conversations with therapists and others concerned with the problem in the USA and Canada.

The Assumptions Behind the Study of the Factors Specific to the Catholic Church Which Might Lead to Sexual Abuse by Clergy and Religious

Clergy and Religious
It is interesting to note that the use of the words “priests” and “priesthood” implies that deacons, both married and unmarried, are not included in the scope of the survey. An oversight which signifies what?

The incidence of sexual abuse involving married clergymen and clergywomen of other denominations suggests that deacons ought to have been included in the scope of the survey.

The Understanding of Causality
The survey questions assume that the personal backgrounds of priests and religious, the adult personal life and the context of priesthood and religious life are all relevant factors in trying to understand why some clergy and religious commit sexual abuse.

What is not made clear is the extent to which identified factors will be seen as **causal** in the sense that any identified factor or set of factors will be judged as being **necessary and sufficient** for abuse to occur.

If the factors to be identified are simply regarded as **indicators of the relative likelihood** of an individual’s being involved in sexual abuse, then this has consequences for what use can be made of the results of the survey. For example, screening of candidates involves

assessment of the likelihood of abusive behaviours rather than any certainty that a candidate will abuse.

The Distinction Between Perpetrators of the Sexual Abuse of Minors and of the Sexual Abuse of Adults
The survey clearly, by supplying two separate questionnaires, assumes that there are differences between the personal profiles of those who commit offences against minors, (distinguishing pre-pubescent children and post-pubescent young people), and those who offend against adults.

The available scientific and clinical evidence, as I understand it, suggests that the clinical profiles of abusers can vary widely. It may not be useful to use the age of victims as the primary factor in the classification of abusers if that classification is to be used both to attempt to understand the minds of the abusers and to make predictions about potential abusers.

The Contribution of the Church Context to the Phenomenon of Church Sexual Abuse
The survey explicitly assumes that the structures and practices of priesthood and religious life can contribute to the contexts within which sexual abuse can occur.

There are two general ways in which the Church context can contribute to the occurrence of sexual abuse by clergy and religious:

1. The context may make the detection of abuses being perpetrated more difficult or unlikely, thereby contributing to the continuance of already occurring abuse. Analysis of the context from this involves sociological and administrative frameworks.

2. The context may include factors which those individuals who are inclined to acts of abuse can more easily weave into their

rationalisations and self-justifications for their behaviour, and perhaps, use to elicit support when their abuse is detected. Psychological, sociological and administrative frameworks are relevant to the full analysis of this aspect of the context.

I think that the results of the survey could usefully embody the above distinction.

The Assumption of Individual Responsibility
The one thing that all perpetrators of sexual abuse have in common is that they have all perpetrated acts of sexual abuse. This may, in fact, be all they have in common. The category of “sexual abuser” may begin immediately to break down into a multitude of clinical sub-categories. I shall comment further later.

Every act of sexual abuse is perpetrated by an individual person who, at some level, **decides** to carry out that act and does in fact carry it out. Individual responsibility cannot be avoided.

This is not to say that there cannot be factors which diminish the subjective responsibility of the perpetrator but only in an instance of clear psychosis or insanity would there be a case to argue that there could be no subjective responsibility.

The stress on personal responsibility is important in the recovery of offenders who ultimately have to come to terms with the fact that the abusive acts are actions which they did - they were not visited upon them - and which they are **quite capable of doing again.** The recovery of offenders involves their putting into practice strategies which are clearly aimed at their avoiding situations which make the decision to perpetrate another act of abuse more likely.

The fact that acts of sexual abuse do have a necessary aspect of personal decision, even if that aspect is difficult to specify within

the total mysterious nature of human agency, has the following consequence which is not psychologically comfortable: **each of us has the potential to be a sexual abuser.**

I suspect that unconscious resistance to full acceptance of that potential has been a factor in the difficulty which individuals in positions of authority and power in the Church have experienced in attempting to effectively deal with the occurrence of sexual abuse in the Church. This resistance possibly has taken two forms:

1. Banishing perpetrators. “They are clearly different to us and so must have no part with us”

2. Denial. “ They are like us. We are not abusers. Hence they did not do it.”

The aspect of personal decision in acts of sexual abuse has another consequence which is of importance in the screening of candidates: there is no way to predict with absolute certainty who will commit acts of sexual abuse. Not entirely comforting for those who have to assess candidates. Judgements have to be made about the extent of risk.

The Illness or Pathology Models
Insights drawn from clinical psychiatry and psychology need to be combined with the above assumption of personal responsibility. Such insights which can be summarised under the headings of “illness” or “ pathology” models have their usefulness and their limitation. The usefulness is that it enables simple moralistic thinking about the psychology of the abuser to be avoided.

Simple moralistic thinking places the **total** explanation for the occurrence of the abuse in the decision of the perpetrator. It assumes that the behaviour can be changed by a simple act of will.

The problems which this approach brought the Church are well known.

The illness or pathology models enable understanding of the "givens" within the psychology of the individual perpetrator and give information about the "givens" which are typical of the various types of perpetrators.

Every human decision is made in the context of a number of internal psychological events such as wishes, desires, impulses, emotions, memories, past experience, intellectual judgement about the external reality, moral beliefs and so on.

The "givens" which are part of the psychology of perpetrators of sexual abuse are in some ways different to the internal experience of those who do not perpetrate abuse. These "givens" are the "illness" or "pathological" aspects in the internal dynamics. Understanding the field and intensity of psychological forces within which perpetrators make their decisions to place themselves in situations where they are likely to perform abusive acts and actually perform them is useful in the attempt to avoid simple moralistic thinking and makes compassion easier. Such understanding makes treatment of offenders more specific.

The limitation of the illness or pathology models is that they lend themselves to thinking that the **total** explanation of an act of sexual abuse is to be found in the forces acting in the psychology of the perpetrator at the time of the act of abuse. This logically leads to a denial of the element of personal responsibility in the action.

Total reliance on illness and pathology models which facilitate compassion towards offenders may influence the thinking and action of Religious Authorities as follows:

It may make sensitivity to the justice-to-victims dimension of sexual abuse more difficult to keep to the forefront of institutional considerations. Thoughts which push towards diminishing the imputation of responsibility to the offender tend to move away from the recognition of the injustice done to the victim.

It may contribute to the anguish of Religious Authorities, facing re-assignment decisions in relation to offenders who have received treatment. Their understanding of "illness" and pathology" may lead them to think in terms of "cures". Hence their confusion when a treatment institution or therapist says that a particular perpetrator of sexual abuse cannot be "cured" and that no guarantee that the person will not re-offend can be given.

Such advice is then likely to be interpreted as another offence must, or is extremely to, occur. Administrative action may be based on that assumption. Such action may not be just in the case of a particular offender who may be well on the way to rehabilitation.

It can also lead to a Religious Authority's believing that, because an individual abuser is in treatment, the "problem" has been taken care of and the Religious Authority has no immediate further responsibility until the treatment is completed. Such a belief shows little awareness of the importance the ongoing Church context plays in the occurrence of sexual abuse in the Church.

The Interactional Model

Interactional models such as are contained within systems theory can be quite useful in assisting the understanding of the process by which a person who at one point of time is at very low risk of committing sexual abuse changes into a person who is at very high risk of such abuse and may in fact actually perpetrate it.

Such interactional models assume that every human action occurs

within a societal context and can be viewed as part of an ongoing interaction with that context. Even an act performed in absolute solitude has reference to the societal context. " Why is the act in solitude not occurring in the presence of others?" is always a relevant and answerable question.

I believe that interactional and systemic type frameworks are not primary in the academic training of Catholic clergy and religious. Catholic teaching is very much framed in the language of "**is**". Baptism **is**... The Eucharist **is**... There is a certain static Platonic type quality about this way of thinking that makes it difficult to accommodate thought patterns which point to change as result of interaction such as "It was like X until it interacted with Y and now it is like X_1 and now Y is Y_1 and when X_l and Y_1 interacted they became X_2 and Y_2. Concepts of reciprocal influence do not appear to be fundamental in Catholic thinking.

The internal psychological dynamics of potential and actual sex abusers will place thoughts and desires into their consciousness. The history of their ongoing interaction with their Church context and their current perception of that context will be factors in their psychological field as they decide what they will do in response to the impulses they have felt more or less spontaneously. The quality of that interaction with the Church context over time may facilitate the resistance of the impulse to offend or may make the acting on the impulse more likely.

The general consequence of adopting this interactional framework is that Church Authorities have the responsibility to attempt to create a Church context which facilitates the resistance of potential sexual abusers to their destructive impulses, and which minimises the opportunities for offences where the potential offender has decided to act on the internal desires and impulses.

Typologies of Sexual Abusers
The survey seeks responses in terms of the differences between perpetrators of the sexual abuse of minors and the sexual abuse of adults.

The situations of the abuse of a minor and the abuse of an adult are legally different. Abuse of a minor will attract criminal charges as will sexual assault of an adult. Sexual abuse in the context of a pastoral relationship will in Australia not attract criminal charges.

The **clinical** profiles of those who sexually abuse are according to many clinicians not the same.

Abuse of Minors
Those who are at risk of sexually abusing minors fall under the category of **Paedophile** as listed in the DSM-IV. (The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.)

Clinicians seem to distinguish the following:

1. Adults who experience a sexual attraction to pre-pubescent children of one particular gender or both, (paedophiles).

2. Adults who experience a sexual attraction to post-pubescent minors of one particular gender or both. (ephebophiles).

Abusers and potential abusers in either category may only experience sexual attraction to individual minors within a particular grouping and feel no attraction to age appropriate partners. Such people would be termed "fixated". It would be assumed that their primary attraction would not alter.

Because of the suffering to victims and the Church which will follow any acting out of the above tendencies, people with the above

clinical diagnoses should be excluded from formation programmes and, if already professed or ordained excluded from any form of ministry which would place them in contact with members of their 'target" groups. Those therapists in treatment centres in the USA and Canada I spoke with said they had found very few fixated paedophiles in their treatment populations.

However, clinicians have also found among those who have abused minors clergy and religious who fall under the following categories.

1. Those who are primarily attracted to age appropriate partners but whose opportunities for sexual activity with such partners are limited by perceived and actual external constraints.

   Such offenders may abuse minors simply because sexual activity with them is for them easier to initiate and secrecy easier to maintain.

   For some in this category in certain circumstances literally any **body** will do to satisfy their sexual urges.

   Directly detecting potential abusers in this category might be very difficult. The circumstances where an age appropriate partner was not available for sexual activity may never have arisen. A past history of promiscuous or frequent sexual activity might be a clue as to the strength of the tendency to abuse in circumstances where age appropriate partners are not perceived to be available.

2. Those who are judged to be emotionally arrested at the same stage of adolescent development as those minors with whom they engage in sexual activity.

   Hence in an emotional sense such offenders are engaging with

   peers. They are still emotional adolescents themselves. These people might be relatively easy to detect in assessment for formation programmes as their general emotional maturity is assessed. Adults who are emotional adolescents are not good candidates for ministry as clergy or religious and should be excluded.

3. Those who under stress emotionally regress to adolescence. Their offences against minors have a "peer" type quality about them.

   Detecting in advance those with such tendencies to regress and then act out their sexual desires might be difficult.

   It would involve both an accurate assessment of their current emotional development and some kind of prediction of the stresses they will experience, as well as a prediction of the result of the interaction between the stress and their emotional development as it will be at the time of the stress.

In each of the categories there is potential for a pattern of **addictive** or **compulsive** acts of abuse to occur. Again these might be difficult to recognise in advance. The philosophical adage that "reasoning from actuality to potential is valid but reasoning from potential to actuality is not" is relevant here.

Clinicians also distinguish sex abusers who have organic brain damage or severe psychological disorders such as psychosis or psychopathy. Such people should be relatively easy to diagnose and clearly excluded from formation programmes and any form of official ministry.

Abuse of Adults

It would appear that research into the profiles of clergy and religious

who abuse adults is in its infancy. Nevertheless, some typologies have emerged which may be useful in distinguishing various profiles of abusers of adults.

One of the first typologies was that developed by Marie Fortune (1989) of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle.

She distinguished “predators” and “wanderers”.

Predators are those who have multiple victims. Some predators have several abusive relationships occurring simultaneously. Others have a series of abusive relationships. The use of the power of the clergy or religious in the pastoral relationship is central to the activity of the predator. The psychological profile of such abusers may well include aspects of “compulsivity” or “addiction” or even psychopathy. All predators are dangerous. It is unlikely that such people will be deterred from their abusive activity by any structures or process which a Church Authority could put in place.

Wanderers are those who, under certain circumstances of internal or external stress, find themselves using the pastoral relationship to meet their own personal needs, and hence exploit the vulnerability of some who come to them for pastoral care. The history of a wanderer may include episodes of abusive relationships, punctuated by periods of appropriate exercise of ministry.

Wanderers may well profit from treatment addressing both their sexual behaviour and other psychological problems and return to an appropriate ministry. On the other hand, some wanderers may realise that the struggle to maintain celibacy is a large part of their stress and elect to return to the ranks of the laity.

Another useful typology is that developed by Irons and Roberts

(1995). They refer to their categories as “archetypal”. The types are:

Naive Prince
These abusers are normally early in their ministerial careers, are aware of the power of their recently acquired position and feel personally invulnerable. They tend to become involved in “special relationships” with people who have difficult problems. The attempt to assist in situations which are beyond the competence of the clergyman or religious leads to a blurring of the professional boundaries and opportunities for sexual exploitation can occur and are sometimes taken.

Proper training for pastoral ministry, including the maintenance of appropriate professional boundaries, self-awareness in the pastoral relationship and supervisory structures and processes should radically reduce the likelihood of offences by Naive Princes and Princesses.

Wounded Warrior
These abusers, usually earlier in their career, are typically overwhelmed by the demands of ministry and put all of their time and energy into their work to the neglect of appropriate self care. This is because they obtain their self-validation from their role and position within the Church and they need the affirmation which comes from those they tirelessly help.

The seemingly endless drains on time and energy can open up wounds from the past, leading to more feelings of low self-worth and even more activity to compensate. Sexual activity can be an escape from the situation and be aimed at providing personal emotional nourishment. The attempt does not succeed because of the shame and guilt typically felt as well as the amount of energy which is spent trying to keep the sexual involvement from public view.

Again proper training including the development of self-awareness, a chance to really come to terms with the hurts of the past and appropriate use of supervision should assist potential Wounded Warriors to avoid becoming involved in the sexual exploitation of others.

Self-Serving Martyr
These abusers are typically in middle or late career and share with the Wounded Warriors total involvement in the work of ministry which they need for personal validation.

However, they may have an underlying resentment, anger and bitterness that their work is not appreciated or recognised. They may begin to believe that they deserve better, special rewards for their dedicated service. These rewards may include “entitlement” by some kind of special dispensation to engage in acts which are sexually abusive of others but are not defined as such by the Self Serving Martyrs, who may be predators (in the Fortune classification) who carefully groom those they abuse.

Training in self-care, self-awareness and in continuing to develop understanding of the normal stages of spiritual growth through the frustrations of life may assist potential Self Serving Martyrs to avoid moving on the path to sexual abuse.

False Lover
These abusers like the high drama of living on the edge. They enjoy the chase involved in the seduction of their victims. They are risk takers with a hunger for adventure and even notoriety. Their behaviour may have very compulsive-like dimensions. Once a conquest is made, another must be attempted. Other compulsive behaviours like alcohol consumption may occur. Denial of problems or of the abusive behaviours is common. These abusers are predators.

The underlying factors which lead to people becoming False Lovers may be such that the training mentioned as assisting the above mentioned other types to avoid abuse may not be as helpful to potential False Lovers. They may need specific therapy, undertaken with courage and honesty, to enable them to exercise control over their internal impulse and desires.

Practices and processes which authorities put in place to make abuse more difficult to occur and conceal may simply be extra challenges to False Lovers.

Dark King
These abusers are skilled in the exploitation of power for personal aggrandizement and gain. They are typically charming and charismatic but underneath have a pathological need to control and dominate. They are very manipulative and cunning. They can have superior intellectual gifts. They engage in predatory behaviour but, if exposed, are likely to deny and defend themselves with all the power at their disposal, sometimes including friends in high places.

Clearly potential and actual Dark Kings are dangerous. A considerable amount of psychopathology may be hidden behind a charming and convincing exterior. Probably potential Dark Kings should not have been admitted to formation programmes. Grandiosity and exaggerated self esteem are possibly signs of potential Dark Kings. Practices and processes which authorities put in place to make abuse more difficult to occur and conceal may simply be irrelevant to Dark Kings who may be tempted to imagine that they are somehow above such attempts to control and introduce accountability.

Wild Card
These abusers are erratic and unpredictable in personal and professional life. They usually will have a primary psychological

disorder. Sexual abuse in the case of Wild Cards can be associated with general lack of impulse control, cognitive distortions, dissociative states, psychotic thinking and dementia.
Again potential Wild Cards should be excluded from formation programmes which are no place for the severely psychologically disturbed.

I am not aware that the above typology has been subjected to rigorous scientific examination. Nevertheless, the Types are sufficiently distinct and make a degree of clinical sense such that it becomes clear that simply knowing that someone has sexually abused an adult (or even a minor) does not give us a great deal of knowledge about their clinical profile.

It also needs to be said that some abusers may have no abnormal clinical profile as such. These would be abusers who have abused in minor ways on a few occasions. Persons struggling with celibacy may have a sexual relationship with someone who cannot be defined as a recipient of pastoral care. These people may be unfaithful to their vows or promises but do not necessarily have a classifiable clinical problem.

Screening of Candidates
The possibility of perpetrating sexual abuse is a permanent dimension of being human. There are not two classes of people: those with the possibility of sexually abusing another and those with no possibility of abusing another. Church policies and procedures which are implicitly based on the assumption that sexual abusers are somehow fundamentally different to the rest of people and can be easily detected in advance are bound to have some inadequacies.

Even assuming that scientific research, based on the illness or pathology model, could establish typical profiles of clergy and

religious sex abusers - my understanding is that research is a long way from any degree of certainty in this area - it would still **not be possible to predict** through screening procedures which of those candidates who evidence profiles similar to those typical of abusers would actually abuse in the future.

The difficulties in prediction are founded in the following:

> It is possible to have a psychological profile similar to that of a type of abuser and not ever decide to perform an abusive act. The factor of personal decision is always relevant. Recovery programmes for sex abusers are based on the assumption that some abusers can learn to resist impulses and desires to perform abusive acts, once they have fundamentally decided that they do not want to perform abusive acts. A person with tendencies to perpetrate abusive acts does not necessarily have to act on those tendencies.
>
> The profiles of some abusers show that they have acted on their desires to perform abusive acts only after finding themselves in specific situations of personal stress over a period of time. Even if the Church sets up processes and structures which would be helpful in alleviating stress and hence providing a context where abuse by those under stress is less likely, there is no guarantee that any person will choose to make use of the support available.

Screening would at best discover those who could be judged at most risk of offending. Whatever the actual efficiency of the screening processes three classes of result will occur:

1. Those judged temporarily or permanently unsuitable for priesthood or religious life. Such candidates would be counselled appropriately and not permitted to enter formation programmes.

2. Those who would seem to have the potential qualities for the successful living of priesthood or religious life and who would be accepted into a formation programme without undue hesitation. There is, of course, no guarantee that such people will never offend. Offending is a permanent possibility for all.

3. Those who seem to have many of the potential qualities for the successful living of priesthood or religious life but who also have in their backgrounds or personalities factors which are shared by many who have sexually abused.

   Given that hardly anyone survives into adult years without some significant legacies from the past and that sexual abusers will almost inevitably evidence similar legacies, it may tum out that the majority of candidates may fall into this category.

   If such candidates are excluded, then there will be very few in formation programmes for priests and religious.

   The interactional framework suggests that the quality of the candidates' interaction with the church environment will be a significant factor in whether or not they are successful in living out their calling without falling into any form of sexual abuse (or indeed any form of self-destructive or other-abusing behaviour).

Screening would be effective if it could detect those who have already committed abusive acts or who fantasise about such actions. A thorough psycho-sexual history taken by a person skilled in taking such histories would be necessary. The maxim that past behaviour is the best (not infallible) predictor of future behaviour is extremely relevant. However, what is known about the psychology of perpetrators of sexual abuse implies that such screening would need to be very sophisticated.

A candidate who is aware that an admission of actual sexual offences against minors, or of fantasies about acts which would be classified as offences against minors, would automatically mean non-acceptance of candidature would no doubt attempt to conceal the relevant information. The ability of offenders to repress memories, rationalise or minimise the impact of their actions and straight out lie is well known.

In relation to possible offences against adults, admission by the candidate s/he had fantasies about sexual relations with age appropriate partners might be a sign of sexual heath rather than pathology. The relevant assessment would be in terms of what the candidate did in relation to those fantasies. A candidate who was currently sexually active or had only recently started to live celibately would not be a good candidate **at that point.** I would argue that a candidate who was struggling with habitual masturbation likewise would not be a good candidate at that time.

Again, a candidate who has difficulty living celibately and who knows that such an admission may mean non-acceptance of candidature has a powerful motivation for concealing the relevant information in assessment processes.

A recent Paper by Bishop David Richards et.al. (1997) suggests the following nine traits as being useful reference points in the assessing of candidates:

> "**Empathy**: a capacity for warmth generated by satisfactory relationships with parents and others of close and continuing association, reflecting a positive self image: the absence of prevailing anger and hostility generated by non acceptance and reflecting a low view of self.
>
> **Maturity**: balance and good judgment in which impulse life is

subordinated to one' s value system signifying the ability to defer gratification without frustration or conflict; the avoidance of being overly flexible or overly rigid thus reflecting significant personal insight.

Inner Control: Stability based on the inner resources to fall back on under stress.

Sensitivity to Emotions: the capacity to accept emotions in self and hence in others; the absence of tendencies to be cold, impersonal and unresponsive.

Balance of Reality with Fantasy: availability of imaginal resources with accurate perception thus reflecting an adequate tie to reality; the absence of being a dreamer but with no way for testing reality.

Ambition: a balanced and appropriate desire to succeed without evidence of a neurotic need to succeed in order to be recognised.

Personal Value System: evidence that values direct behaviour and an ability to articulate the reasons (ie the values involved) for doing what he/she does.

Sexual Understanding: comfort in one's own sexual orientation and awareness and freedom from tendencies to act out, flirt, deny the importance of sexuality and any forms of perversion.

Self-understanding: in touch with self; aware of changes of mood and feeling and accepting such changes; not dominated by depression; guilt; anger or artificial euphoria."

Given that candidates will generally be in the first half of their lives,

it would not be expected that they will have the personal integration and development of the above qualities that it would be hoped they would have at the end of life's journey. Assessment would need to estimate if they had travelled as far as would be expected of some-one of their chronological age.

Essential Elements of Formation and Development Programmes

Continuity
The logic of the word "formation" seems to imply some closure or finality. Clearly, there have to be defined stages in the journey to priesthood and religious life. However, to give people, or to allow people to have, the idea that they are now 'formed' is dangerous. The journey into the person God wishes that person to be in the fullness of life is a life-long task.

I suspect that in the past many priests and religious once they were through their initial "formation" years were pretty much left to their own devices as regards their ongoing faith, spiritual and personal development. There may have been an unconscious arrogance in this. " Our training is so good that nothing further is really required.'' "If others need ongoing support and opportunities for development, we as leaders might also need it".

Integration
Perhaps, one of the common characteristics of all priest and religious sex abusers is a well developed capacity for what psychologists call the defence of compartmentalisation. It is as if the abuser can file the experience of perpetrating abuse into one locked compartment of the brain and operate in other contexts as if that locked compartment does not exist. (This helps to explain how the abuses can go undetected for so long. There are no direct signs to others which would give rise to suspicion.)

It seems to me that the training for priesthood and religious life favours compartmentalisation. The academic and intellectual training seems to be completely separated from processes which are aimed at fostering personal and spiritual development. Even academic subjects can be so specialised that the connection between the insights of the various disciplines is lost. Ultimately, a priest or religious is one person with many facets. The journey to holiness is the movement towards the integration of those facets.

I have lived for the past twenty-one years in a parish which regularly has newly ordained priests assigned to it. One of my amazed observations is that some of these newly ordained priests (some quite young and others relatively late vocations) in their preaching show no sign of having been theologically educated in the post Vatican II era. Their preaching which is sincere comes from a part of their being which remains untouched by 4 to 7 years of theological education.

I can only assume that they were given no assistance to integrate their academic knowledge into their living of life. If they were given opportunities for such assistance and they resisted what does this say about the assessment of their suitability for ordination? Many of the younger priests, even at the present time, strike me and others in my parish as immature for their chronological age.

It seems to me someone in each formation and development programme should have the overall responsibility for instituting a process which **challenges** and assists those in training to integrate their learning from all subjects and disciplines and to live out of their increasing knowledge and understanding.

The integration of intellectual understanding and development in the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the human person does not happen automatically. Hence the need for challenge. The training

experiences must be such to provide the students with opportunities to **demonstrate** how they are integrating their academic learning with their emotional and spiritual development. The effectiveness of priests or religious in ministry is ultimately going to depend more on the quality of their being than on the excellence of their academic learning.

It is clearly a mistake to evaluate readiness for ordination and/or final religious profession solely in terms of academic achievement and external conformity to spiritual exercises. A deeper assessment of the actual lived quality of faith and emotional maturity is necessary.

All of the above discussion is underpinned by my belief that priesthood and religious life are not simply forms of professional life. In the secular professions it may be sufficient that people demonstrate the required competencies and skills to enter and maintain membership of a profession. Priesthood and religious life as ministries require that the ministers in their very being obviously reflect something of the nature of the God they represent and mediate.

The journey towards holiness and wholeness is not something which can ultimately be forced upon a person, requiring as it does their deeply willed co-operation with the life giving force of the Spirit. Nevertheless, the human community of the Church has the obligation to assist in facilitating that journey by giving support to those who struggle and by dealing appropriately with those who do not show evidence of sufficient struggle.

Emotional Development and Intimacy

My observations of priests and religious over the years leads me to conclude that their training experiences must not have placed a great deal of emphasis on self-knowledge, emotional development

and expression, and the capacity for intimate relationships.

Intimacy is not possible without self knowledge. You cannot bring consciously to another what you do not know of yourself. You cannot share your deepest thoughts and feelings with another if you do not know what they are and do not know how to express them.

My experience is that Australian clergy and male religious, in general, show all the typical characteristics of the Australian male culture. That culture does not value revelation of emotional states which do not fit the male image of strength and command of situation. (Anger is allowed because it is essentially directed at someone else who is to blame.) The culture precludes the sharing of experiences which promote true intimacy and thus provide emotional support.

Furthermore, living up to the image of the priest of being all things to all people at all times (being Christ when you are clearly not Christ) also results in priests not being able to express their inner feelings to others.

I have heard of discussions about **courses** for those in training for priesthood and religious life like self-development, intimacy and sexuality in the context of celibate commitment.

It is important that such courses have a large component of student participation and sharing, preferably including lay people of both genders in the groups. What has to be avoided at all costs is the intellectualising of the course content without their being any internal integration of that content leading to personal development.

Priests have a great ability to intellectualise. So easy to express self understanding in the language of theology, even the language of spirituality without saying anything truly personal. I am quite sure

that many of those who have been guilty of sexual abuse could pass courses in human development, sexuality intimacy, etc. Probably, some may even have taught such courses.

What is important is that students actually begin to live out what they are learning. To do this they have to experience a safe environment which gives them permission to explore their deeper being. Such an environment is not going to be provided by a lecturer/teacher/leader who implicitly models emotional closedness, personal distance, incapacity for intimacy and in practice exemplifies the opposite of what it is hoped the students learn.

In essence what I am saying is that the training experiences of those moving towards priesthood and religious life must include actual experience of deepening self knowledge and the communication of that newly known self within the context of appropriately intimate relationships.

Theology of Sexuality

As I see it the Church is really only at the beginning of its struggle to develop a positive and comprehensive theology of sexuality which speaks to the people of our time.

In the past, the theology of sexuality has been explained and experienced mainly in negative terms. A list of “Do’s and “Don’ts”, the rationale for which was either outdated or simply inadequate for our time. There has been a reaction against this negativeness in the form of attempts to present more positive teachings and to lessen the inappropriate guilt felt by many when they failed to live up to the Church’s teaching.

One result of this attempt to overcome the exaggerated teaching on sexuality and sexual sin is, in my view, a down playing of the serious consequences of sexual sin for the person and the human

community. Attempts to lessen inappropriate guilt are easily interpreted as messages that sexual sins are trivial or not important.

The Church has always had an implicit understanding that sexuality went right to the very depth of the human person's being, however inadequately the Church expressed that implicit understanding. Sexual sins were seen to be in a category of their own. What seems to have been lost recently is the insight that the Church's teaching was aimed at protecting people from the deep harm they can bring to themselves and others through sexual sin.

The suffering that victims of sexual abuse can experience is a reminder of the power of human sexuality and the depth of our vulnerabilities in this dimension of our being.

Much of the current thinking about sexual abuse correctly places a strong emphasis on the abuse of power and the violation of trust that is an essential part of the situation of sexual abuse. At the same time, I think that an abuse of power and a violation of trust are intrinsically more potentially wounding when the sexual being of the other is affected. The sense of abuse and the violation of trust is deeper precisely because it is a **sexual** abuse and violation.

It is worth recalling that the Church has always seen sexuality as fundamentally relational and involving trust. Sexual intercourse in marriage, the only legitimate full genital expression of sexuality, presupposes the total mutual trust given in the self gift of the marriage vows. Trust and sexuality are intrinsically linked.

It is highly likely that many priests are not fully committed to every aspect of the teaching of the Church on sexuality. This may be because they have not fully comprehended that teaching or, perhaps, because they have been influenced to accept other views.

Whilst not wanting to say that the Church has said the last word on the morality of human sexual behaviour, I believe that more effort has to be made to demonstrate, even to those in training for priesthood and religious life, the positive values the Church is trying to preserve by its teaching. Implicit messages that sexuality is not really important surely must influence commitment to total celibacy and provide a basis for rationalising that what others see as an act of abuse is not really so bad or, even worse, is in fact good.

Another possibility for the psychological rationalisation of abusive situations (although I have never heard of this being used yet) is adherence to a general moral theory which declares that there are no intrinsically immoral actions. One can imagine a perpetrator of abuse explicitly or implicitly constructing a moral rationale to show that these particular acts of his were on, general theoretical principles, legitimate.

Some may say that these last considerations are drawing a long bow. However, what is taught in theological courses is part of the general Church context within which abuse occurs. Content of some courses may implicitly imply that sexual abuse could in some circumstances be moral.

Code of Ethics

I understand that a Code of Ethics is to be introduced for Priests and Religious. My understanding of a professional code of ethics is that it regulates professional behaviour, by stating what is acceptable and what is unacceptable professional behaviour. Professional codes of ethics provide a structure for accountability of external behaviour.

At one level, it seems extraordinary that a code is necessary for people who have passed courses of moral theology and spirituality, and been instructed in the requirements of vows of chastity as

religious and promises of celibacy as priests. There is an implication that those who offended through sexual abuse were somehow ignorant of what was required of them. Such ignorance ought to have been very unlikely. The more likely scenario is that the offenders were able to convince themselves that their particular circumstances were such as to permit exceptions to the rules.

Codes of Ethics are not likely to influence the predatory type of sexual abuser. They may assist a person who is struggling to avoid becoming involved in a potentially abusive situation by placing external constraints in place which the person can use in the struggle.

What is prescribed and what is permitted by a professional code of ethics may be moral or immoral from within a particular moral system. For instance, it is not difficult to imagine a Code of Ethics for the medical professions which would allow practitioners to perform acts of so called mercy killing. A Code of Ethics for Counsellors may proscribe practitioners socialising with their clients - an action which is in no way intrinsically immoral in my view.

It would seem important that those who will be bound by the Code of Ethics understand the rationale and force of each of the clauses in the Code. I assume there will be the following types of clauses in relation to possible sexual abuse:

1. Those which articulate actions which are in fundamental contradiction to the requirements of a vow of chastity as a religious or of the celibacy required by clergy (priests and deacons, married and single). No exceptions to these would be allowed.

2. Those which articulate actions which objectively increase the risk for the occurrence of an incident of sexual abuse but which

do not involve abuse in themselves and do not necessarily lead to abuse e.g. counselling of teenagers in a secluded setting. Specific circumstances may permit exceptions but the Code may prescribe what must be done when an exception is made.

3. Those which articulate actions which are simply prudential in the current climate to reduce risks of misinterpretation or involvement in unnecessary police or legal action e.g. placing a child on a knee in a classroom situation may lead to suspicions of paedophilia. Again the Code may prescribe what has to be done if an exception has been made in a particular circumstance.

If everything in the Code is prescribed absolutely, normal human and pastoral action may be made impossible.

There is a danger that some priests and religious may simply regard the code as either another set of rules to be " bent" as the situation in their view requires, or else slavishly follow the code without any real understanding or internal commitment.

The main value of a Code of Ethics is that, by its publication, it could make potential perpetrators of abuse more easy to detect as others observe behaviours inconsistent with the Code.

It may help potential perpetrators recognise when they are moving towards situations where abuse is more likely - "beyond an arena of safety". The predatory or compulsive abuser will probably simply become smarter at avoiding detection, perhaps even using the code to advantage by, for example, reporting behaviour as a justifiable exception when it is part of an ongoing seduction.

Ultimately, a Code is only as good as its observance by those who are governed by it and by those whose task it is to apply its

sanctions in the case of violations.

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5.2 Personal Challenges of Providing Pastoral Care to People Who Have Been Sexually Abused by a Priest or Religious.

Showing the Face of Jesus

The overall theme of this conference, **Showing the Face of Jesus**, immediately appealed to me.

The Diocese in which I work, the Diocese of Parramatta in Metropolitan Sydney, came into existence in 1986. The now retired, first Bishop of Parramatta, Bede Heather, used the phrase “showing the face of Jesus” to sum up the mission of Parramatta Diocese. Hence the phrase resonates within me.

I’ve a long history of working with survivors of sexual abuse, and with survivors of sexual abuse perpetrated by a Catholic priest or religious. Showing the face of Jesus to these people is surely what we, as Church and as pastoral workers in the Church, are fundamentally trying to do.

I thought placing my reflections in the context of “showing the face of Jesus” would be reasonably easy. After some ten hours of work at the word processor, and being satisfied with very little of what I had produced, I decided that maybe it was not so easy.

It was then that I realised my mistake. I was trying to write about showing the face of Jesus **to survivors** without first placing that response within the context of how they had showed the face of Jesus **to me**. Once I had made the switch in my mind the task became a little easier.

The fundamental challenge that survivors present to all of us who work in any way with survivors of church related abuse is to **truly** see the face of Jesus in them and to **truly** hear what Jesus in them

is saying to us.

I have emphasised the word “truly” because it is not necessarily easy for us to truly see and hear what Jesus is calling us to, in His speaking through survivors. The temptation is to see and hear what we want to see and hear. The temptation is to **not** see, and **not** hear, what we do not want to see and hear. The temptation is for us to construct a **mask** of Jesus and to place that mask on the survivor’s face and then respond to the mask.

To not respond to the truth in the survivors is, of course, not to show the face of Jesus to them.

This presentation is about the thoughts, feelings, processes in ourselves, as pastoral workers, which can obscure the face of Jesus as survivors of church related sexual abuse look at us. The personal challenge for pastoral workers is to work on the issues within themselves which are preventing the face of Jesus being seen in them more clearly.

In the language of therapy we are going to consider some of the counter-transference issues which can arise for the pastoral worker who works, in any way, with survivors of Church related sexual abuse. The pastoral carer’s quest is for integrity.

Definitions

I had better say what I mean by some of the terms I use.

Integrity

Persons exemplify **integrity** when they

- are fundamentally committed to the search for truth in themselves, in others and in the world, wherever truth can be revealed.
- act with fidelity to the truth as they know it at any particular time.

There is no hypocrisy, no inauthentic role playing, no game playing in such people.

Total integrity is not achievable in this life.

Persons acting with integrity communicate as truthfully as they can. Their spoken and non-verbal communications are in accord as far as this is possible.

I should, perhaps, add that integrity does not mean a brutal honesty which pays no heed to the sensitivities of others.

Survivor

A person who has suffered sexual abuse perpetrated by a priest or religious, including female religious.

Of course there are wider definitions of survivor. But given that this presentation is only about a specific set of survivors I would like you all to understand that for the next hour survivor is shorthand for survivor of sexual abuse perpetrated by a priest or religious.

I don’t like any single word which refers to a person who was sexually abused. There is the danger that the whole identity of the person is summarised in the one word. All the sexually abused people I have met have an identity which is far richer than simply being a survivor of sexual abuse. But in a presentation like this shorthand is necessary.

The Catholic Church in Australia in its official documents refers to victims. I have decided not to follow that usage as many abused people prefer the word survivor to describe their relationship to their experience.

Pastoral care of a survivor
Any attempt by a person with an official role in the Church to play a part in bringing healing and justice to a survivor.

The word official indicates that the person is, in some way, acting in the name of the Church.

Hence the survivor can legitimately see the pastoral carer as representing the Church.

This definition of pastoral care thus encompasses a multitude of roles. The roles might be conveniently divided into two types.

- Those within the *Towards Healing* procedures for assessing and determining the validity of complaints of sexual abuse against priests, religious and church personnel.

- Those which are not within the *Towards Healing* procedures. They may or may not have linkages with the *Towards Healing* roles. (Not all survivors lodge formal complaints).

What I have to say no doubt applies to the exercise of every role in relation to survivors.

However, it is probably true that those who have the most direct and extensive contact with survivors will experience the challenges more keenly. I am thinking mainly of therapists, counsellors, spiritual directors, parish clergy, support persons, people whose roles place them in ongoing and deeper contact with survivors.

Now for a story which I think contains, implicitly or explicitly, all the issues we are going to explore.

Story of Jeff
Just after one Christmas in the early 1990's, a man, I will call Jeff, asked to see me in my role as Director of Centacare Parramatta. He said it was urgent.

I saw him, a man well into his fifties. He said he had come on behalf of himself and two friends. They had met in an orphanage about fifty years previously. They had remained in contact with each other all those years.

Jeff said they, all three, had suffered sexual abuse at the hands of some of the Brothers who staffed the orphanage.

Jeff outlined the story of his abuse and the effect it was still having on him. He was, from his account, still suffering intensely from it.

They had decided it was time to bring the matter to the attention of the superiors of the Order concerned. How would they go about it? Would I help them to take the necessary steps? This was in the days before the *Towards Healing* processes were put in place. There was not a standard way to proceed.

Throughout, Jeff was extremely anxious in my presence. Several times said he would have to leave immediately. I think it took me to the limit of my relational skills to influence him to remain.

I said I would attempt to assist them put their case to the Order.

Then Jeff said "You know what the Gospel says about serving two masters?".

I did. But I could not see what serving either God or money had to do with the situation I was in at that moment. I asked what he meant. He said "Are you on our side or the Church's?"

Now there's a personal challenge.

No one had ever asked me that before. But it was an issue I had thought about. My answer seemed to satisfy him. I said I hope to be on the side of truth.

I went with them to assist them to make their complaint. I do not know the outcome as they engaged a lawyer and my role with them finished. I certainly felt there was very likely to be considerable truth in their stories.

Reflection
I interpret Jeff's challenging question - Are you on our side or the Church's - as meaning: Are you going to treat us with integrity?

My answer - I hope to be on the side of truth- means I will try to bring as much integrity as I can to my work with you.

It is cautious phrase, I hope (will try...).

I could never, in truth, give a promise of absolute integrity. So I did not. Maybe that was partly what Jeff found OK in my reply.

Assumptions about Survivors Who Personally Approach the Church About Their Abusive Experiences
I make the following assumptions (until evidence in a particular case shows otherwise).

Let us see how many of them are instanced in Jeff's case.

Survivors:

- have experienced the sexual abuse as a violation of trust, as being exploited by an illegitimate exercise of power.

Although I do not know the outcome of the formal assessment I would be very surprised if his basic allegations were not found to be substantiated.

- are still hurting from the experience
  This was clearly the case with Jeff.

- and are looking to the Church for
  - Healing, (they want the pain to stop)
  - Justice, (they want some acknowledgement by the Church that a member of the Church has wronged them)
  - Reconciliation with the Church (which may include an expectation of some kind of restitution from the Church).

  Yes for Jeff on all three counts.

- have struggled for some time before taking the step to approach the Church.
  For Jeff many years. The abuse, he said, had occurred close to fifty years previously.

- are extremely ambivalent towards the Church and those who have official roles within it.
  Jeff's challenging question exemplifies this.

- are extremely sensitive to any sign, any hint of a lack of integrity in the Church person they are talking to. They are expert in detecting inauthenticity.
  I assume that Jeff's multiple expressions of an immediate need to leave the room followed, on each occasion, some thing in my communication which suggested to him that I was not being straight forward.

In short, the pastoral carer is meeting a person whose vulnerability was previously exploited. Previously exploited by a person in a role comparable to that of the pastoral carer.

> I once saw a woman sexually abused as a teenager by a priest, to whom she had turned for help.
>
> She told me of the wave of anxiety that went though her when I first closed the door of the counselling room.
>
> The abusive situation and the situation she had placed herself in with me had things in common.

It is fairly easy to see why relating to survivors from within an official Church position may be more difficult than relating to them in non Church contexts.

There is a sense in which the pastoral carer is the Church in action when the survivor and the carer are together.

The Church is the context of their abusive experience. How can we expect anything other than ambivalence and tentativeness when they approach us in pastoral care roles?

And that can bring very specific challenges for us as pastoral carers.

Relationship Context

The relationship between the pastoral carer and the survivor is the context within which the challenges to the pastoral carer occur. The relationship between survivor and carer moves simultaneously on a number of levels.

Words exchanged are really important but, perhaps, not as important as the emotions (and the attitudinal messages they

embody) which flow, at conscious and unconscious levels, between the carer and survivor.

Survivors have heard honeyed words before. They believed the words expressed truth. They were deceived. They were exploited and abused. They are now on the lookout for falsity. They want, they need integrity in the carer.

We cannot hide behind the mask of a pastoral role. We have to be ourselves within that role. Survivors know when we are faking it.

Issues Relating to The Church

One issue inevitably raised for pastoral carers is their relationship to the Church. Most survivors don't put the issue as clearly on the agenda as did Jeff. Our side or the Church's?

Now you have got your thoughts about the Church, your own personal theology of the Church. So have I.

We might even be willing to share *some* of these thoughts with our bosses in the Church!

Survivors of abuse come along to us in our pastoral roles and say, in effect,

> You represent the Church, the Church that harboured the person who abused me. The Church that abused me. I want to talk to you. Not primarily because you are you, but because you speak for that Church.

There is a part of me which responds to that by saying

> Hang on. I am not part of **that** Church. I am part of the non abusing Church. Don't put me in with that lot. I'm one of the

good guys.

None of us is going to be so crass as to say something like that. But there are ways to convey the message.

First way: **Defend the Church**. If you read the Catechism I think you'll find the Church is holy. The Church could not have abused you. Perhaps, it was your own fault that you got yourself into the situation you are talking about. Even if can be proved that you were abused, that just means a particular priest or religious behaved inappropriately with you. It really has nothing to do with the rest of us. (We are still the good guys. We are dealing with the really bad guys, when we are sure that they are really bad).

Maybe Jeff was testing to see how much of this attitude I embodied.

Second way: **Attack the Church**. Your experience is prophetic of every thing that is wrong with the church. The Church is full of power hungry male clerics. There are abuses of power everywhere. The culture actually fosters abuse. We would not have this problem if they changed the celibacy laws, if we had married priests, women priests. If only the Church had a healthy attitude to sexuality. You are a survivor of a more general oppression of the laity, of women. (We, the good guys, are trying to change the bad guys in power.)

These are obviously caricatures. But we have to look inward to see if any of the positions and attitudes expressed above too greatly colour our responses to survivors.

Whatever the merits or the truth of any of the positions and attitudes expressed above, they are not necessarily relevant to the experience of a particular survivor.

Now say a survivor has felt a small flickering hope that the Church, which was the context for their abusive experiences, might actually be wanting to repair or resume a relationship with them. Would such a survivor be encouraged in that hope by meeting attitudes similar to those above?

I doubt it. Surely, a reasonable response would be "They are still into power." Either defending it or wanting to get it because they haven't got it. Maybe I was stupid to think they are willing to give me a fair go, and to think they are really interested in me and my experience.

If this was a survivor's experience, the pastoral carer would be impeding the process of reconciliation.

There is a very real sense in which the approach of the survivor is a call to the Church to really be what it proclaims itself to be. I don't want my personal issues with the Church to impede the chance of the Church to be itself, to impede the survivor from experiencing the Church at its repentant and reconciling best.

The way I have attempted to solve the problem of being identified with the Church which is the one the survivor knows is to agree with the Church's self description as always being in need of reform.

Then because the truth is that I myself am always in need for reform (I don't like this truth very much but its unavoidable), I can identify with the survivor's hoped for Church. Maybe in a small way I can even exemplify it in its fundamental historical truth. Always in need of reform. I am, I hope, a trying-to-be-good-guy.

If I am really able to embrace this self-definition, then I am more likely to see the current truth of the Church and its members more clearly and more compassionately. I am better able to represent the

Church to the survivor.

If my task is to assist others in the Church to recognise the survivors' truth and its implications, I will have a more compassionate understanding of the resistance to truth which I may find at all levels of the Church.

If my task is to assist survivors to live more fully within their own truth, I will be modelling what it is like to be on that journey.

I allow the Jesus in the survivor to call forth His own face more clearly in me.

Being Seen as a Potential Abuser

The "always in need of reform" way of thinking is useful in dealing with another challenge - that of being seen as a potential, if not actual, abuser.

This challenge is more likely to be experienced when the pastoral carer is of the same gender as the abuser of a particular survivor.

The woman who felt anxious when I closed the door had at least a passing thought that I might be an abuser. Jeff surely saw me as partly, at least, identified with his male abusers in the Church.

I have to say that I don't find being thought of in that way very comforting or very flattering.

However, when I am working with survivors, I am aware that there may be a part of them which is on the lookout for any hint that I might abuse them, betray them, in some way.

Now if I am a pretending-to-myself-to-be-a-good-guy, I will say that there is no possibility of my somehow betraying them, somehow

abusing the power they have handed me.

If I really am a trying-to-be-a-good-guy, I am aware that I might somehow fail them. Hence I need to keep a close watch on myself.

I also finds it helps to remind myself that my own personal sinfulness has contributed to the Church's sinfulness which provided a context for abuse.

I was profoundly impressed and extremely challenged by the last paragraph in Stephen Rosetti's book *Slayer of the Soul; Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church* first published in 1990. I quote it

> This may be the hardest yet potentially the most liberating challenge the child molester places before us: to see within ourselves the seeds of this tragedy, and to recognise in the face of the perpetrator the features of our own countenance.

I think that, if we as pastoral carers, somehow acknowledge to ourselves our personal potential for being an abuser, the survivor experiences greater safety with us. We are living with an uncomfortable truth and guarding against the potential of it becoming real. Survivors can sense this about us.

Occasionally I have found it useful to state to a survivor my absolute commitment not to intentionally harm them in any way.

Issues Of Trust

All of us like to be trusted. We like to think of ourselves as trustworthy. We would like to think that the fact that we have been entrusted with a pastoral role would add to our trustworthiness in other people's eyes.

In fact, it may be that one of our sources of self-esteem is that, because we are in pastoral roles, we experience people giving us a trust they might not otherwise have given.

If so, we might find the experience of not being trusted somewhat uncomfortable.

Trust in a person in a pastoral role does not come easily for survivors. We just had a look at their fear that we may also be abusers.

But there can be other dimensions to their fear of trusting us.

One of the effects of being abused as child (and even being abused as an adult) can be the loss of a general sense of safety in the world.

Every child has a natural need and right to live in physical and psychological safety. I like to think of them living in a safety bubble. The abuser has burst that bubble. No longer is the world a safe place. The forces of life cannot be trusted. This is why intervention after abuse has the restoration of a sense of safety as one of its aims.

However, adult survivors of abuse in childhood, who approach pastoral carers, typically have not had that sense of safety restored.

Either their earlier attempts to disclose their abusive experience were discounted or ignored; or they had not ever disclosed to any one. Either way the restoration of a sense of psychological safety did not occur.

Sometimes perpetrators have told their victims that things will go very badly for them if they ever disclose their experience.

We have to appreciate how giant a step it is for some survivors to make a disclosure to us in the Church.
They are not coming from a position of psychological safety. Their burgeoning trust is very fragile. Many have felt in a zone of safety by keeping silent about their experiences for many years.

Think of Jeff. His ambivalence about safety was such that it almost lifted him out of the chair and toward the door of my room on many occasions.

Now we, pastoral carers, would like to have a stance of saying with open arms “You can trust me”. That is the comfortable stance for pastoral carers. But this message may be an exact repeat of the abuser’s message before the abuse.

I have found it better to say to the survivors who consult me for counselling or therapy:

> “You do not have to trust me. I am not asking you to trust me. I intend to act in trustworthy ways towards you but you will have to make up your mind about me. Don’t necessarily believe what I say. Make your decision of placing any trust or increasing trust in me by judging what I do, by judging how you find me to be”.

I think really accepting that I am a trying-to-be-good-guy, rather than a good guy, makes it easier to say such things truly and congruently.
“I am not really sure I can fully trust myself. I don’t see why I should ask that of you”.

Let’s say that the carer has been able to accept that the survivor will give only very limited trust at first.

Let’s further say that that the carer can remain unfazed, with self esteem intact, in the face of a multitude of messages that say “I am

not really sure about you. I don't fully trust you."

Does trust get easier for the survivors? Generally, I don't think it does.

As survivors disclose their inner experience at ever deeper levels, they are ever more deeply trusting. Each new revelation of the inner self is a step into the unknown.

Something like this may be in the mind of the survivor:

> This person has responded fine until now. But what if I say this. That might be it. The carer will say "Go away. That's too horrible for me to even think about. Too difficult for me to deal with. I really can't continue with you if you are really like that. No one could.

Each further disclosure is preceded by a decision to risk, to deepen trust.

Of course, survivors will sometimes arrange explicit tests of our ongoing commitment to them, our trustworthiness.

They will do this by being difficult. Those of you who work with survivors know what I mean.

My rule of thumb is simply that if I find a survivor being difficult, I see the difficult behaviour as a further test of my trustworthiness. I renew my commitment to act with integrity and to be patient.

I never take a survivor's trust for granted. To me it is very delicate and fragile gift they have given me. Because I know of the difficulty survivors have in trusting, I value their gift of finding me trustworthy. I directly thank a survivor who has entrusted me with a personal

revelation. Many of my counselling sessions with survivors end with my saying a simple but heartfelt thanks. I am aware of the personal affirmation they have given me.

Dealing with Anger

Most survivors, including Jeff, experience a degree of anger as they remember their abusive experiences and think about their consequences.

This anger can have two aspects:

- the thirst for justice – this will abate as they experience justice.

- the urge to harm the sources of their hurt – this is ultimately self destructive and the survivors' healing journey involves, in my view, the survivor being liberated from this kind of anger, which tends to eat away at their very souls. They must move towards liberation from destructive anger at their own pace.

Here I am talking about the destructive anger.

All of us experience anger in our own selves. However, the ways in which we were brought up influence our comfortableness in its presence, in ourselves or in others.

None of us really enjoy having anger directed straight at us. But if we work with survivors that will inevitably happen from time to time.

Anger seems to invite anger. When we are in the presence of anger, we can easily find ourselves experiencing anger as well. It is not useful to show anger towards survivors. There is a very large probability they will experience our anger as rejection.

There are at least three types of situations where I have experienced survivors expressing anger towards me:

- I have said something clumsily, insensitively. I should have known better in the circumstances;

  Here I am very willing to apologise, admit that the survivor's anger has justification. If I have really been trying to act with integrity, the apology is accepted and the relationship with the survivor is strengthened.

- The survivor has misunderstood me and is reacting angrily to the misunderstanding. This may be one of the unconscious tests of my trustworthiness I alluded to earlier.

  Here I just work patiently to clarify the misunderstanding. I accept the anger as understandable in the circumstances. I do not take it personally.

- The survivor is angry at me because I am in possession of the secret they have been guarding for so long. I have become a threat to the survivor's security.

  This kind of anger is initially more difficult to understand. The survivor is partly angry at himself or herself. They feel in revealing their secret they have let themselves down. They have again made themselves vulnerable. They angrily attack themselves.

  Anger has within it the movement to attack, to destroy. The anger towards me has a wish to destroy me. If that is achieved, the secret will be regained; the survivor will again be safe.

  The only way I have found to respond to this kind of anger is to renew my effort to behave in trustworthy ways, and to continue to relate as sensitively as I can to the survivor who has to renew trust in me.

It is important that we, who may have our own angers at the Church,

do not allow those angers to fan the flames of the survivor's anger so that their liberation from their destructive anger is retarded.

Forgiveness

The idea of forgiveness is fundamental to the Christian Church. Christ's coming to dwell among us and pass though His passion, death and resurrection has no relevance if sins are not forgiven.

Implied in my comments about liberation from destructive anger is my view on forgiveness.

I think that the survivor has to move towards forgiveness of the perpetrator. Not fundamentally because this is the Christian thing to do. But because if they are not moving towards forgiveness, not moving towards release from their anger and resentment, the survivors are allowing the perpetrators to continue to eat away at their souls.

The survivors need to forgive for their own psychological well being. I think our own understandings and experiences of forgiveness can influence, for better or worse, how we discuss the issue of forgiveness with survivors.

We may be harbouring hurts and resentments in our own lives, holding them close, not wanting to examine them, not willing to think about letting them go.

How can we, with integrity, engage with someone on the journey to forgiveness if we ourselves are not on it?

We might be inclined to keep the conversation with the survivor around the areas of expression of anger and resentment **longer** than that particular survivor requires.

If we have hurts and resentment similar or analogous to that of a

particular survivor we might subtly manipulate the conversation in a way that the survivor, in fact, is giving voice vicariously to our own hurts. This, of course, would be to use the survivor for our own unconscious ends.

Alternatively, we might unconsciously steer the conversation away from expressions of anger and resentment. That way we could protect ourselves from coming into contact with our own unresolved issues.

One way we could do this is to encourage the survivor to a too-early forgiveness, in the forgive-and-forget style. This is to subtly say to the survivor "If you can't get rid of those angry feelings, keep them out of sight, even out of your own sight."

Forgiveness involves remembering but remembering differently. Remembering in a way that does not destructively influence how we approach the future. It takes time to work through to such a point.

I do not think that we, as pastoral carers, need to have completed all our own journeys to forgiveness before we can journey with survivors with integrity.

We have to acknowledge to ourselves that we are on such a journey and, as best we can, make sure that we have not stalled. Then we can implicitly model being on the journey and can be compassionate with the survivors' struggle to move on that journey. We can somehow give some expression to Jesus' patience with their struggle to be free of their pain.

God and the Mystery of Suffering

Some survivors say they have no problem with God with whom they feel in a good relationship. These survivors just have a problem with

God's representatives on earth.

Other survivors do have a problem with God. There are, at least, two possible origins of such a problem.

- At the time of their abuse they were in a stage of faith development in which they identified God and their abuser. Psychologically, God **was** in their abuser. God was their abuser.

  In my youth, I certainly heard the phrase "The priest is another Christ". The teaching of the Church on the sacraments encourages us to see the sacramental actions of the priest as actions of Christ. It does this so that we, in faith, can be certain of the action of Christ, regardless of the priest's personal disposition. But you can see how a misunderstanding of the teaching might lead someone, particularly a child, to see **all** the actions of the priest as actions of Christ or God.

  Now, of course, rationally, survivors can distinguish God and the abuser. But, at deeper levels, their experience of God in faith may be very much coloured by the abuse experience.

- At the time of their abuse, they prayed to God with, from their point of view, no response.

  God, Jesus, the all powerful Person who can do every thing, did not hear their prayer, did not think it was worth responding to, even watched as this innocent child (or totally confused adult) was abused. Perhaps, God approved of the actions which, in fact, constituted the abuse. The abuser may have even said that God approved. Now hearing survivors talk about God (and Christ) in any of the above ways is certainly going to make us think about our images of God.

Now if our role with the survivor is one in which discussion about

God (or Christ, Jesus) is legitimately a part, we are faced with the task of how to guide the survivor to a more truthful understanding of God.

I think the major error to avoid is that of, implicitly or explicitly, advocating a particular image of God, our own image of God, our own theological view.

I understand God as a mysterious personal reality Who can be described in a multitude of different ways, each of them radically inadequate to do justice to that personal reality.

I further understand that God communicates, in a mysteriously unique way to each individual person. The task of the spiritual adviser or counsellor is to assist the survivor to discover how God is currently communicating to them.

Now, of course, one of the channels of communication which God is currently using is the very person of the pastoral carer who is, in truthfulness and integrity, showing the face of Jesus to the survivor.

A survivor, with a belief in a personal God, or perhaps seeking to recover a belief in a personal God, is almost inevitably going to think of God as gendered. And so probably are we.

Survivors, abused by a male, may have difficulty in thinking about God as male.
This may present a difficulty for a pastoral carer who has a strong image of God as male. That carer may have no language to use with such survivors in conversations about God.

Such carers are challenged to find a language and understanding of the feminine dimension of God if such language would be helpful to a particular survivor.

God is neither male nor female, even though female and male humans are made in the image of God. A language which points to the “feminine” in God is just as useful and just as inadequate, in my view, as language which points to the “masculine” in God.

Some survivors may have difficulty thinking about God as female.
A carer who personally finds it useful to think of God in language which points to the “feminine” in God may struggle if a particular survivor, for whatever reason, prefers to think of God in primarily “masculine” terms.

One reason a survivor might do this is that the survivor might want to re-establish a relationship with the God whom the survivor believed was somehow connected with the abuse. To relate to a differently “gendered” God may feel to a particular survivor as relating to a different God.

Some survivors find it easier to approach the mystery of God through the humanity of Jesus.

I have not met any survivors who have a problem with Jesus’ maleness. No doubt there are some. (Jesus is male and all males are alike) But the concrete historical maleness of Jesus two thousand years ago seems to make it easier for survivors to distinguish Jesus from the persons who abused them.

The challenge for us as pastoral carers is to be able to ever deepen our understanding and appreciation of the mysterious reality of God so that we can help discern with the survivor the particular “face” God is using to communicate with the survivor. The more “faces” of God we know the better our capacity to assist in the discernment. When survivors started to enter my counselling room many years ago, I just knew that if I was going to able to be of any assistance to

them I would have to attempt, in prayer, to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of God. Don't know how far I've got.

Like everyone else, I have not found a philosophical answer to the problem of evil, the suffering of the innocent. I think the only answer comes in the context of a deepening relationship with God and in surrendering to the mystery in faith.

I simply try to reassure survivors that their suffering is not a punishment from God.

Issues about Sexuality

Talking with survivors of sexual abuse certainly makes a carer think about sexuality. Many survivors have issues around their sexuality and /or their sexual identity.

Some survivors are not able to respond fully in a sexual way to their husband or wife. Some survivors behave promiscuously. Some, abused by a person of the same gender, wonder if they are gay. Others, abused by a person of the opposite gender, define themselves as gay.

The particular task of the pastoral carer may not involve deep discussion or counselling around these sexual issues. Nevertheless, if carers are not really comfortable with their own sexuality, this uncomfortableness will be communicated to the survivors.

Hence, carers are implicitly confronted by questions such as:

> Who am I as a sexual person?
> How sure am I of my own sexual identity?
> Do I have unresolved sexual issues?
> What does normal and healthy sexuality involve?
> What is my position on the morality of specific sexual actions?
> How do my actual moral beliefs relate to the Church's official teaching?

Again I do not believe it is necessary to have final answers to these questions. It is simply necessary to be on the journey. Carers on the journey will not signal to survivors that any discussion of sexuality is a "no go" area.

Staying within Role

The final challenge for carers is staying within role.

There can be something subtly ego boosting about working with survivors of Church-related sexual abuse. It is not a work which gains a lot of official kudos. The Church in general wishes such work was not necessary. Hence it tends to be ambivalent towards those who work with survivors.

Working with survivors can be very demanding. One of the ways in which we can boost our egos and get some affirmation is to say something like this to ourselves.

> Survivors can relate to us. We are different. We must be special. We are so much better, more caring, more understanding than others in the Church.

The temptation to think this way is subtle but real. If we succumb to it we are likely to contribute to the abuse of power which survivors have already experienced.

We are likely to subtly exploit the survivors to satisfy our own needs for an ego boost.

One way to combat the temptation to use survivors as means of boosting our own egos is to observe the limits of our role.

There are multiple roles whin the Church for attempting to respond to survivors.

The temptation is to go beyond role or competence, particularly when we form the view that the person who is performing another role is not doing it properly.

Then our ego can take over. **We** can do it better. Moving out of role rarely helps. Recognising that our role is part of a larger system is a matter of truth and of integrity.

Conclusion
I hope these reflections arising out of my journey to be truly present to survivors of sexual abuse perpetrated by a priest or religious have been useful to you as you reflect on your own particular work with these people.

My answers to the challenges will, of course, not necessarily be your answers. But no doubt you will share some of the challenges.

Let us pray that we all will continue to show the face of Jesus to those among us have been sexually abused within the Church.
Thank you.

5.3 Congregational healing – Assisting faith members when a pastor has been accused or found guilty of sexual abuse

Introduction
What I say to you today is drawn mainly from my 1996 Churchill Fellowship Report entitled *Pain – Hope – Healing: The Experience of Faith Community Members When a Church Leader is Guilty of Sexual Abuse.*

I am a Catholic and I have worked in Centacare agencies in Western Sydney for over 31 years in varying roles clinical and administrative. I have been counselling people who have been sexually abused for all of that time. I did not seek them out. They just arrived in my room. This was well before there were publications about people‟s experience of sexual abuse and its ongoing effects on them. Thus my initial training in this area came by listening to clients.

My interest in Congregational Healing began when I was asked by the local Bishop (my boss) to assist him to bring some healing to two parish communities whose priests had been accused (and ultimately found guilty) of sexual abuse, and being sentenced to gaol.

One of these priests was the second-in-charge of the Diocese as well as being a parish priest. He was guilty of offences against an adolescent many years previously.

In the other Parish, three priests of a religious Order (which had been founded in Western Sydney and which was accountable to the local Bishop) were ultimately found guilty of sexually assaulting members of the Order. The three priests included the founder of the Order, the current Senior Priest and a former Novice Master.

After these experiences, I decided that I (and my Church in Australia) need to know more about ways to assist to heal congregations suffering when their leaders are revealed not to be as they presented themselves and were seen (or imagined) to be. I applied for a Churchill Fellowship and was successful.

I spent ten weeks in the USA and Canada talking with people with experience in congregational healing and with experience in treating clerics and members of religious orders who had been guilty of sexual abuse.

It is useful to begin with some definitions.

Pastoral Relationship
A relationship between a member of the clergy or a member of a religious order and another person in which:

- the trust of the person in the clergyman or religious is fundamental to the establishment of the relationship, placing the person in a vulnerable position in relation to the clergyman or religious

- the already greater power of the clergyman or religious is increased by the other's vulnerability.

- the fundamental purpose of the relationship is the bringing of spiritual aid and comfort to the person. (Sacramental confession and pastoral counselling clearly fall under this heading).

and/or

- the fundamental purpose of the relationship is the education of the other person in spiritual and other matters. (Scripture study, formal schooling, youth work, supervision of church workers, including associate pastors, would fall under this heading).

Child Sexual Assault
Any sexual touching of, or other sexual contact with, a legal minor, that is defined in state or federal law in Australia as a criminal offence.

Sexual Assault
Any sexual touching of, or other sexual contact with, an adult without that person‟s consent that is defined in state or federal law in Australia as a criminal offence. This category includes contact with persons judged legally incompetent to consent.

Sexual Exploitation
A priest's or religious developing, or attempt to develop, a sexual relationship with a person who is in a pastoral relationship with that clergyman or religious.

Any consent of the individual who is receiving the pastoral care is irrelevant to the determination of sexual exploitation.

Any physical or verbal behaviour intended by the clergyman or religious to arouse erotic feelings in the recipient of pastoral care is exploitative.

Sexual Harassment
Any unwelcome sexual conduct by a clergyman or religious which unreasonably interferes with an individual's job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual Abuse
The general term which includes each of "child sexual assault", "sexual assault", "sexual exploitation" and "sexual harassment".

Each term refers to a situation in which the clergyman or religious has used power wrongfully. "Abuse" seems the appropriate word.

Sexual Misconduct
Sexual behaviour with another person by a clergyman or religious, where the behaviour

- is in violation of the clergyman's or religious leader's publicly professed sexual commitment (marriage, vowed chastity as single person, promised celibacy),

- contravenes the moral teachings of the Church,

- is not definable as sexual abuse.

The behaviour is likely to give scandal and may attract ecclesiastical sanctions but is of no interest to the criminal or civil law.

Primary Victim
A person who:

- Has been sexually assaulted as a child or adult

or

- Has been sexually exploited

or

- Has been sexually harassed by a church leader.

Associate Victim
A person who is closely related to the primary victim and has been personally wounded by the victimisation of the primary victim.

A parent of an abused child or adolescent is the clearest example. The spouse or lover of an exploited adult is another.

Secondary Victim
A person who experienced emotional pain on learning of an incident of sexual abuse. Secondary victims are usually in a relationship of some kind with the perpetrator of the abuse, personal, pastoral, collegial or supervisory.

Victims
The generic term used to describe persons who have suffered emotional pain as a consequence of the sexual abuse of themselves or of another.

Some General Observations
At the time of my interviewing the American and Canadian experts, the types of sexual abuse coming to notice were generally (not exclusively) different in Catholic and in other Christian Churches.

As is happening now, in the Catholic Church the majority of sexual abuse cases coming to notice involved sexual assault of legal minors which had occurred many years previously.

In the other Christian Churches, the majority of sexual abuse cases involved the sexual exploitation of local faith community adult members. In simple terms, the pastor was having a sexual relationship with a member of the local faith community.

Some cases involved a married pastor having an adulterous liaison with a non faith community member. Whilst such conduct is not normally definable as sexual abuse, the local faith community members are very likely to be wounded if such conduct comes to public knowledge.

There are, of course, instances of Catholic clergy and religious having sexual liaisons (adulterous and otherwise). These do not come to public notice nearly as much as in other Christian communities.

My hypothesis for this is that Catholic clergy and religious have greater freedom to physically move about than do married pastors in other Christian churches. These latter have to account, in some way, to their wives for their movements. Hence, they cannot have

frequent unexplained absences away from home. Their sexual partners are more likely to be local.

When instances of sexual exploitation of adults or of sexual misconduct by non-Catholic pastors come to public notice, the congregation is affected. A major reason is that the spouse (and children) are also members of the local faith community, have friendships with people in that community and people empathize with the spouse and families' pain.

Catholic clergy and religious seem to be far less accountable for their personal movements. Those who have sexual liaisons tend to choose partners who do not live in the local area. Hence, they can hide their activities more from public view. They may not even reveal to their sexual partners that they are priests. I heard once of a woman who had a casual affair with a man she met in a holiday beach setting. Some months later she was astounded to see him offering Mass in a church she was visiting. She had no idea he was a priest.

Given all the publicity and debate about Catholic priestly celibacy, many are likely to excuse a Catholic priest's sexual misconduct (or even sexual exploitation) because "he has human needs like the rest of us". Such comments are easier to make when the speaker does not know of anyone directly hurt as a result of the priest's sexual exploitation or misconduct.

If we are going to be involved in a congregational healing process, we have to anticipate the types of responses which faith community members can have when accusations of sexual abuse are credibly made against a pastor. We also can have such responses and, if so, we have to begin to process them within ourselves, before undertaking congregational healing tasks. Such responses include:

In relation to the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator

- **shock**. A temporary immobilising numbness and inability to think rationally. "I am struck dumb. I do not know what to think or feel".
- **total disbelief**. "There has to be some mistake". "I know our pastor would never do such a thing".
- **bewilderment**. "How could she do such a thing? How could anyone do such a thing?"
- **betrayal.** "I trusted him with some of my innermost secrets and now I find he is like this".
- **disillusionment**. "I thought he was so holy".
- **anger.** "I could scratch his eyes out".
- **rage.** "If I see him I am afraid I won't be able to restrain myself. I'll physically attack him".
- **feeling generally exploited**. "I can see now he took advantage of our good will in a number of non sexual ways. We were just used".
- **blame**. "All this mess is his fault".
- **shame.** "I can't tell anyone that he was my pastor".
- **desire to punish.** "I hope he goes to gaol and can never minister again".
- **wanting to forgive**. "It is our Christian duty to forgive the sinner and forget the sin".
- **wish to support**. "We have to support him".

- **desire to excuse**. “What he did was not really so bad and, besides, he was under a lot of pressure”.

- **delight**. “I am glad he is gone. I never liked him and he was hopeless pastor anyway”.

- **anxiety about the future**. “What will happen now?”

In relation to the victims
It must be remembered that, because of the need to protect victim’s privacy, we rarely know the identities of victims, the victim’s personal stories or any of the details of the alleged or substantiated abuse. We may not even know if the primary victims are in our faith community or belong to another faith community.

Nevertheless, ordinary faith community members can experience the following in relation to the victims, known or not.

- **empathy**. “I know what they are going through”.

- **thirst for justice**. “They have my support. The church must treat them justly”.

- **desire for more knowledge.** “Who are these people and what really happened?”

- **anger**. “How dare they come forward and make all this trouble”.

- **blame**. “It takes two to tango. Some women go out to seduce clergy”.

- **suspicion**. “They are just after money”.
- **bewilderment**. “Why did it take so long for them to come forward? Couldn’t they let sleeping dogs lie?”

- **incomprehension**. “Does the experience of being abused really affect people so much? Aren’t they just trying to get sympathy and play the victim role for all its worth?”

- **guilt**. “I had an idea that something was wrong but I did nothing”.

In relation to the church
- **betrayal of trust**. “The church has let me down. I had faith in the ministers and the leadership”.

- **security threatened.** “I always believed that the church was a place of refuge and safety for me and my children. Now you tell me this has gone on”.

- **loss of confidence in the teachings of the church.** “How can you believe what they tell you when they obviously do not believe it themselves?”

- **considering leaving.** “If that is what goes on I‟m out of here. Maybe I’m finished with any church, not just this one”.

- **anger at perceived hypocrisy.** “They lay down all these rules about sex and then we find out they don’t keep the rules themselves”.

- **anger at leadership.** “They must have known about this earlier. Why didn’t they do something? Why have they kept us in the dark until they were virtually forced to tell us?”

- **blaming of leadership.** “If they knew what they were doing, they would never make mistakes like appointing people like that”.

- **feeling abandoned.** “Where is the Bishop? The Bishop should be here with us. Don’t they care?”

- **anxiety.** “What will become of us now? Can we survive as a faith community, a Church?”

- **concern about sacraments.** “The priest was our marriage celebrant. Are we really married as far as the church is concerned?”

- **awareness of limitations.** “We are all human. Mistakes, even dreadful ones will be made”.

- **acceptance of pain.** “We will all hurt but we can survive and grow”.

- **hope.** “We can learn from this and we will have a stronger and better faith community”.

In relation to God

- **loss of faith**. “I cannot accept a God who would allow children to be abused by someone acting in the name of God and the church”.

- **loss of trust**. “I accepted Jesus as my personal saviour. I thought he was supposed to keep people from harm”.

- **sense of abandonment**. “I can’t get in touch with God any more. I can’t pray. It seems that God does not care about me and others”.

Personal issues and feelings

- **anxiety about potential victims**. “Were any of my children or my friends’ children victims and I don’t know about it? Did I unknowingly place my children or myself in a situation of potential danger?”

- **anxiety about explaining to children**. “How will I tell the children that the priest has gone? They loved him”.

- **depression**. “I’ve got no energy for anything since I learned about this”.

- **feeling of being stigmatised**. “People look at me strangely when they find out I go to this church”.

- **past hurts**. “I was abused in my past and this has brought it all up for me”.

- **a wish that it would all go away**. “Can’t we just put this behind and move on?”.

Behavioural Reactions

The above feelings may manifest themselves in the following ways:

- headaches
- obsessive rumination about the events
- stomach aches
- general emotional tension and irritability
- insomnia
- over reactions to minor provocations
- nightmares

Why Did Those Making Allegations Wait So Long Before Coming Forward?

If the abuse occurred many years ago, many faith community members will have questions about why the victims have taken so long to come forward with their allegations (to use a legal term). These experiences are more related to the experience of sexual assault.

The delay in coming forward is understandable when we know

something of the enduring experiences of victims. I will give a brief description of the types of internal experiences which victims can have. These reflections may also be of assistance if you are dealing with an individual victim in a therapeutic context.

- **Shame about themselves as persons**: “I have been ruined as a person. I feel dirty inside. No one ever could really like me.”.

  Not without reason have some authors referred to sexual abuse, particularly by clergy or religious as “soul murder”. There can be a deep and long-lasting spiritual effect. The wound is not just to the body and the psyche.

  Victims can feel that somehow the evil has penetrated into their very soul. They can feel permanently defiled. My analogy is how, in the past, the smoke from a club room might penetrate into the clothes of non-smokers who would leave the club smelling of cigarette smoke even if they had not touched a cigarette.

- **Shame about their own sexual and other conduct after the abuse**: “I have hardly behaved perfectly myself. I have been promiscuous, had plenty of casual sex, been unfaithful to my wife etc.”

  Sexual abuse of minors does enormous damage to the normal psychosexual development of the abused person. There can be left with:
  - great confusion about proper moral sexual behaviour,
  - a reduced or eliminated capacity for true emotional intimacy. They can even be extremely fearful of emotional intimacy.
  - a longing to be accepted and loved but believing it will never come to them. Hence they will give into the illusion of being

cared for which can come with casual sex.

  - only feeling emotionally safe with minors and children or with those over whom they have a position of power and authority and becoming abusers themselves. (Many perpetrators of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church have been abused in earlier life).

  Many turn to drugs and alcohol as a way of dealing with their ongoing painful experience.

- **Shame about Their Experience during the Abuse:** “I experienced sexual pleasure at the time. Some part of me must have wanted the sexual interaction. Father said that I led him on. I was the temptress. It was all my fault.”

  “I did not like the sex part. But he was the only person in my life that paid specific attention to me. He gave me plenty of gifts that I would not have otherwise received. I put up with the sex. It was simply the price I felt I had to pay. How pathetic is that?!”

  I suspect that most of us think of sexual abuse involving physical violence and physical pain. The perpetrator grabs the victim and forces himself or herself upon the victim, who experiences physical pain in the sexual violation. This type of sexual abuse by clergy or religious has occurred but does not seem to be typical.

  Much abuse occurs within the context of a cultivated relationship which if it did not involve sexual activity might be non-problematic and even good. Perpetrators seem to be able to pick out those who will be vulnerable to their approaches and begin to groom them. The sexual behaviour may not begin immediately but only when the potential victim, in a sense, is trapped in a

relationship which provides some emotional fulfilment for the potential victim.

Catholic Bishop Geoffrey Robinson says of child sexual assault by clergy "In almost every case, there is evidence of careful selection and grooming of a victim, of the planning of the circumstances, and of care taken to ensure that the victim does not speak to others of what has happened".[1]

I think that what victims have in common is a need for love, attention and affirmation. Many of their emotional needs are met within the non-sexual aspects of the relationship. They enjoy feeling "special". The abuser can tell them that the sexual activity is a way in which the "specialness" is expressed. I have known of instances where a victim only reported the abuse after the perpetrator had rejected him and began a relationship with a younger boy.

- **Not Wanting to Harm the Perpetrator:** "I know he did the wrong thing with me but overall, he was extremely good to me. In spite of the sex bit, I thought he really loved me. I don't want to get him into trouble".

The bond established in the period preceding and during the period of sexual abuse may still be felt by the victim years after the event. Such bonding is called traumatic bonding. It may still have enough strength to keep the victim silent.

[1] Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus (John Garratt, Mulgrave, Victoria, 2007), p 11.

- **Fear of Not Being Believed**: "I thought no one would believe me. The priest has such a high reputation. It would be his word against mine. I would be told I was lying or was suffering a delusion. That's why I told no one at the time. Later, I heard about what happened to some who made allegations. I did not want what happened to them to happen to me".

- **Fear of Being Harmed by the Perpetrator**. "He told that if I ever told anyone about what had happened, he would make sure my reputation was ruined." "He actually threatened to kill me".

- **Repressed Memory**: "I did not remember until recently". (Note repressed and other memories are not necessarily reliable. I recall a case in which all investigators were convinced that the victim had, as a minor, been abused by someone but the alleged perpetrator was able to conclusively prove that he was absent from Australia for a two year period which included the time when the offences were alleged to occur).

- **Fear of Punishment by God**: "I am really angry at God for letting this happen to me. I cannot really trust God anymore. I certainly cannot trust those who say they are His representatives. But, if I speak out, God will be really angry at me for daring to publicly denounce one of His specially chosen ones. I"ll be damned to hell just like the priest said I would be."

The fact that such thoughts and feelings are common (even to be expected) in victims of sexual abuse is probably very surprising to those who know nothing about the ongoing experience of victims. However, when we have an understanding of these kinds of experience, we can better understand why, in the past (and still even in the present), victims have been and are reluctant to make their experience of abuse known to the relevant authorities.

I think that if we are asked to assist in the initiation of a congregational healing process we have be aware of the sorts of experiences which I have outlined, so that when experiences and issues arise, or are referred to, in the healing process we can normalize the experiences, and make some useful comments to place them in a healing context

I will pause here. Have you any question or comments?

The Process of Congregational Healing

Before discussing congregational healing I want to say that healing in the final analysis is an individual and personalized process. Each person heals in a personalized and individualized way at the person's own pace. Congregational healing is about trying to ensure that the best possible faith community context for individual healing is established.

Having a pastor accused of sexual abuse is a traumatic experience for a congregation. The needs of the congregation in crisis are:

Needs of Traumatised Faith Communities

Members of a faith community where a church leader has been found guilty of sexual abuse, or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse, immediately need:

- leaders within the wider and local faith community who are not traumatised by the events.

- as much information about the findings and allegations as can be publicly revealed without infringing the privacy rights of primary victims and any legal rights of the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator.
- an opportunity to meet and have ongoing contact with the Religious Authority so that members have visible and tangible

evidence of the denominational leaderships real appreciation of their pain and willingness to journey with them.

- information about the procedures which the denomination normally follows in the situation where one of its leaders is accused of sexual abuse and how those procedures are being followed in relation to the primary victims and their own church leader.

- information about the civil and criminal laws which must be obeyed in the current situation and which may limit the information available to the congregation.

- information about the range of normal experiences which members of congregations experience in such situations. This may give those who need it both a language to name their pain and permission to express it.

- basic information about the effects of sexual abuse on primary victims.

- an awareness that healing for all is possible.

- opportunities to discuss with other members of the congregation their responses to the ongoing events and to process their feelings in a safe and accepting environment.

- awareness of counselling resources available within the church or the general community.

- opportunities for community prayer for all victims and the perpetrator.
- power to begin the planning of their own healing processes.

Composition of the Healing Team

Ideally the members of the congregational healing team will include:

- a senior religious authority (e.g. the local bishop) whose personal contact with them will be recognised by the faith community as a true sign of the denominational leaderships pastoral care for them. A token appearance by some representative of the senior religious authority is more likely to anger than console the faith community.

- a person who is knowledgeable in trauma and grief counselling.

- a person who is knowledgeable in crisis intervention with communities.

- a person who can provide the necessary information to the congregation about the applicable church and legal procedures.

- a person who is knowledgeable about the effects of sexual abuse on primary, associate and secondary victims.

- a person who has an understanding of faith community dynamics.

- (if available) a person from another congregation which has experienced healing following church leader sexual abuse. Such a person is a living sign of hope to the traumatised congregation. The Lutherans in Milwaukee call such a person a “sponsor”. It is vital that “sponsors” have worked through their own issues so as to be sufficiently objective about the newly traumatised congregation which may differ in significant aspects to their own.

- if faith communities are likely to include schools, a person who can provide consultancy to school staff who will have to

assist the children in the school process their feelings about the traumatic events, and who may have to answer parental enquiries about ways to talk with their distressed children.

- a person who can advise the faith community leadership on ways of handling media enquiries.

The above list outlines the range of knowledge and skill which should be available to the faith community. One person may have a combination of skills so that the actual number of persons available will depend on the personal skills of the members of the Crisis Response Team.

On the other hand, the size of a congregation may require two or more members of the Crisis Response Team to possess the same set of skills.

The leaders of Crisis Response Teams are normally psychologists or therapists who have skills in dealing with traumatised people and communities.

Two of my interviewees stressed from painful experience that there must be a **minimum** of two persons (preferably one of each gender) involved in attempts to heal congregations.

There is obviously a need to estimate the minimum of team members needed and plan accordingly. Most authorities on congregational healing advise equal numbers from each gender.

It is also probably wise to ensure that the lay members of Crisis Response Teams outnumber clergy members as a mistrust of clergy in general often is part of the experience of secondary victims in faith communities.

A failure to offer appropriate assistance to a traumatised faith community may be interpreted as a second betrayal by the church. Some congregational members can focus great anger on a religious leader whom they feel has abandoned them in their time of need. Such people can feel victimised by the religious leader.

The team members should be appointed by the senior religious authority and should ideally not be members of the local faith community which has been or will be traumatised.

"Has been" or "Will be"? Two Episcopalian women very experienced in congregational healing, Nancy Myer Hopkins (near Portland in Maine) and Chilton Knudsen (in Chicago) had different approaches to the initial revelation to the local faith community:

1. Letter to All Members of the Faith Community
This is the strategy favoured by Nancy Myer Hopkins. Her suggestion is that the letter:

- be sent several days before the weekly liturgical services so that members of the faith community can be prepared to deal with their shock collectively when they gather for worship.

- state the bare facts of the situation.

- invite people to a congregational meeting at which more information about the specific situation, and the general issues raised, will be available and at which there will be an opportunity to discuss their feelings together.

The advantage in this strategy is that it respects the need for faith community members to deal with any shock and grief in their own way and at their own pace. Their initial response is in private and they are free not to participate in public healing processes if they do

not so choose.

The disadvantage is that people will receive information at different times and possibly will place too much of their own construction on it, not having any immediate possibility of asking clarifying questions.

2. Calling a Faith Community Meeting Without Revealing its Purpose.

This is a strategy advanced by Chilton Knudsen.
Members of the faith community are contacted either by a phone tree or by mail and are invited to an urgent congregational meeting, preferably the next day. The invitation stresses the urgency but does not give any clue as to what has occasioned it. No doubt rumours abound.

This strategy has the advantage that all present at the meeting hear the appropriate information at the same time, can seek immediate clarification of the information, if necessary, and have an immediate chance to process it together within the context of the meeting.

The disadvantage of the strategy is that there is considerable implicit pressure on members of the faith community to begin to process their hurt in a public forum. This pressure may not be sufficiently respectful of individuals needs for private grief.

3. Revelation Within the Context of Worship
This is a strategy used by the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago when allegations of child sexual assault have been made against a priest who, subsequently, has been placed on administrative leave while a full investigation is conducted.

A prepared statement is read to the congregation at the beginning of the weekly worship service and the service proceeds as usual. It

includes prayer for all affected by the allegations - the complainant, the complainants family, the accused, the accused‟s family and the members of parish communities affected by the news of the allegations.

After the service, members of the Crisis Response Team, appropriately assisted by the parish leadership are available for private conversations with any members of the congregation who wish to discuss matters further.

This strategy clearly respects individuals' needs to choose their own initial method of dealing with the information presented to them. It needs to be combined with other strategies which address the process of healing on a group and community level.

Which strategy is best for a particular faith community will be decided by the crisis team leaders in conjunction with the local faith community leadership after consideration of all relevant current circumstances.

Meeting with the Leadership of the Traumatised Faith Community.

It is essential that the leaders of the Crisis Response Team meet with members of the leadership of the local faith community as soon as possible after the decision for public disclosure has been made. A number of meetings may be necessary over a short period of time for the following purposes:

- They provide a safe forum for leadership members to process their initial reactions and responses to the disclosure. The range of responses is potentially the same as in the wider faith community and the Crisis Response Team members may have to use their trauma counselling skills in the context of what, on the face of it, is a planning meeting.

I had a personal experience of this in a Catholic Parish where the parish priest had resigned and left ministry. He had not been living in a presbytery but had lived with a family in the parish and had done so for a number of years. Somehow it emerged that he was having a sexual relationship with the wife and DNA testing revealed that he, and not the husband, was the father of the two children in the family.

- They demonstrate that the Crisis Response Team sees itself as providing a resource to the local faith community, rather than coming in and disempowering its leadership and members.

  I had the impression that the first attempts at congregational healing in the USA did not give sufficient scope for local faith communities to organise and direct their own healing processes, drawing on outside assistance as required. The "outsiders", perhaps, had assumed an unconsciously "rescuing" stance, implicitly assuming that they knew in some detail what was best for the local faith community. Certainly, the need to listen to and empower the faith community was stressed to me by a number of interviewees.

- They enable the Crisis Response Team leaders to begin to form an assessment about how the leadership and the faith community functions. The strengths and weaknesses of the community are observed. A picture of the actual distribution and exercise of power and influence in the faith community may begin to emerge. The styles of relating will be in evidence. Any unspoken rules about conflict management will be operating. All this information is useful to the Crisis Response Team in planning its strategies for being a resource to the particular faith community.

- They begin the planning for the implementation of the public

healing processes. As far as possible, members of the leadership of the faith community should have roles at the very beginning of this public process. If they are to play a role in the facilitating of small group discussions within a larger faith community meeting, some training for this task will probably be necessary.

- However, it is possible, even likely, that some of the leaders may be so personally traumatised by what they have learned that they are psychologically incapable of playing a part in the initial public healing processes. Such members will need to be gently but authoritatively excluded from a public role at this stage.

The planning of the public healing processes needs to take account of the following:

- Whether or not there are identified victims within the local faith community. Allegations are often related to events in a previous assignment of the church leader. This does not mean there are no current victims and a context must be established which makes it easy for any such victims to come forward with appropriate privacy.

- If there are identified victims within the current faith community, plans to protect any requested privacy need to be put in place.

- Identified primary and associate victims may request to attend any public meeting of the faith community.

  Such people need to be cautioned that they cannot necessarily expect that all members of the faith community will be sympathetic to their suffering and some may turn on them with extreme anger. Even if their identities are not revealed they may hear many things which will wound them. Clearly they cannot be excluded from a faith community meeting and if they come it

should be with a support person.

- Whether or not there is a church school within the faith community. If there is, plans to assist school staff prepare for the responses of students and their parents need to be made.

- Whether or not a faith community meeting is likely to include a number of adolescents. If so, specific plans to assist them need to be put in place, particularly if the identified primary victims are adolescents.

- The need for support for the perpetrator, spouse and children. In more hierarchical churches this responsibility is more properly exercised by the level above the local faith community. In all cases the healing of the local faith community requires that perpetrators and their families are treated with truthful and compassionate justice.

- A decision must be made about the suitability of the spouse or any members of the perpetrators family being present at a faith community meeting. In most cases their presence is not advisable because they are either in total denial or are extremely angry at the perpetrator. It may be necessary to ask the spouse and family not to attend the faith community meeting at which the sexual abuse is first discussed. If so, the decision of the current leadership should be conveyed to them well beforehand.

First Meeting of the Crisis Response Team

The leaders of the Crisis Response Team need to meet with members of the team before they interact with the traumatised faith community. In such meetings:

- Team members will have an opportunity to process their own personal responses to the disclosure. No matter how experienced the team members are another incident of church

leader sexual abuse will evoke some personal reaction, particularly if the (alleged) perpetrator has a high public profile or is known personally to a team member.

- Team members are informed of the initial healing strategies decided upon in the meetings of the faith community leadership and the Crisis Response Team leaders. Roles and responsibilities in relation to those strategies are assigned.

- Team members learn of the leaders initial assessments of the faith community so that they have some idea of the specific context within which they will be working.

It is important that the external religious leader who will be present in the public healing processes attend the meeting of the Crisis Response Team so that the role which the external religious leader will play is integrated into the total healing effort.

The Religious Leader's Preparation for Meeting with the Faith Community.

A Religious Leader's first experience of being present to a faith community traumatised by church leader sexual abuse can be predicted to be like no previous experience of pastoral visitation to a faith community.

Normally a Religious Leader can expect to be greeted with warmth and affection, and certainly with deference and respect. Faith communities can feel honoured to have the Religious Leader with them.

A Religious Leader visiting a traumatised faith community is almost certainly going to be the focus of intense anger from some members of the faith community.

For some the Religious Leader may be the living symbol of an institution which they believe has betrayed their trust and failed to protect them. For others the Religious Leader may be the person who has deprived them of their beloved pastor. They can believe that the Religious Authority was too sympathetic to allegations made by people who either are grossly disturbed or maliciously out to destroy the reputation of the pastor.

Others may have deep and unspecified anger and the Religious Leader is a convenient dumping ground for such anger.
Thus the experience of meeting with such people is not one a Religious Leader can look forward to enjoying. It is essential that the Religious Leader be able to respond to such expressions of anger in an appropriately non-defensive way. This is not easy, particularly when all the anger feels like a direct personal attack and some of it is.

A Religious Authority may benefit from some "coaching" about specific ways to respond in public to intense expression of anger by faith community members.

This coaching could take the form of role plays in which the Religious Authority is presented with an anticipated situation and frames a response. The response is discussed and, if necessary, a better one devised, taking into account any legal considerations which impinge on the situation. However, a really safe response from a legal point of view may be pastorally disastrous, being perceived as defensive and seeking to "cover up".

The First Faith Community Meeting

Whatever the initial strategy for informing members about the sexual abuse situation involving one of their leaders it seems vital that there be an opportunity for the faith community to meet as a community and begin the process of healing, both community and

individual.

The following is model which such an initial meeting can follow.

The Venue
Some like Chilton Knudsen say that the meeting should be in the church, symbolising the church as a place for truth. Others like Nancy Myer Hopkins prefer the parish hall as the venue. The local leadership will know what is best once they understand what the process involves.

The following considerations are relevant:

- The feelings the members of the faith community may have about the expression of strong emotion and possible open conflicts within the physical building of the church.

- The setting must be such that small group discussions can occur with physical ease. Fixed pews in a church are hardly suitable for this purpose.

- The venue must be one which the faith community sees as symbolic of church. The auditorium of the local sporting club would not be suitable. The auditorium of a parish school may be.

- The place from which the faith community is addressed by various speakers should convey a message that the leaders of the meeting are there to be with them in their experience of pain and to facilitate the beginning of the healing journey. Speaking from a highly placed pulpit, or even from a stage, may convey a message of “speaking down” to the faith community which they are likely to resent.

Leadership of the Meeting
It is important that the leader or leaders are experienced in managing the process of such potentially volatile meetings. I was told of meetings where there was screaming and shouting, with some people storming out of the meeting. In one meeting supporters of an accused clergyman strategically placed themselves in positions in the parish hall from which they could disrupt the process of the meeting by a series of hostile questions.

Thus the leaders are normally members of the Crisis Response Team. The local leadership can welcome the Crisis Response Team and its leaders, making it clear that they are present at the invitation or, at least with the approval, of the local leadership.

The Religious Leader is not the person to lead the process, given that it can be anticipated that the Religious Leader will almost inevitably be drawn into emotion filled interactions with some members of the faith community. Nevertheless the Religious Leader has to be seen as participant in the process and not just a presider.

The Process of the Meeting

Local Leadership

1. Short opening prayer and/or scripture reading.

2. Welcome to all with special reference to the Religious Leader and individual members of the Crisis Response Team.

3. Outline of the step by step process the faith community will experience in the meeting, including introduction of the Crisis Response Team leader(s) who will lead the latter part of the meeting.

4. Request that members respect each others privacy, particularly

in regard to what may be said in small group discussion.

5. Inform members that information given by the Religious Leader and the local leadership is considered to be on the public record and can be discussed freely with anyone. Any exclusion of media personnel from the meeting is to protect the members privacy and is not aimed at maintaining inappropriate secrecy about the allegations.

6. Introduction of the Religious Authority.

Religious Authority

1. Makes reference to the pain many have experienced in learning of the allegations and the subsequent events.

2. Gives factual information:
   - when the allegations were made.
   - the general nature of the allegations e.g. sexual assault of a minor, male or female.
   - the number of people who made allegations.
   - the time of the alleged offences, recent or in a more remote past.
   - the procedures, making reference to the denominational policy and procedures, which have been followed in investigating the allegations including the informing of relevant civil authorities.
   - whether or not the matter is under criminal investigation and charges have been laid.
   - whether or not victims are pursuing a claim for damages in a civil action.
   - any determination made by the church about the truth of the allegations and/or the accused church leaders fitness to continue to minister in the current assignment.
   - the general nature of the assistance which the church has

offered to the primary victims, following denominational policy and procedures.
   - the general nature of the support which the church has offered to the accused church leader and any members of the accused's family.
   - reference to the civil and church laws which limit the amount of detail which can be shared with the faith community and a general acknowledgement that some will find it difficult to deal with the situation of less than full information.

3. Makes it clear that the church wishes to reach out to any person who has an allegation of sexual abuse against a church leader. The current meeting is not an appropriate context for making an allegation. Private appointments can be arranged and the allegation heard as soon as possible.

Crisis Response Team Leaders

1. Invite questions of clarification of the facts as told by the Religious Authority. It is made clear that responses to those facts are to be held until a later stage of the meeting. The clarifications are given by the Religious Authority.

   Questions seeking clarification may be asked with considerable feeling. It will be important to not only give the clarification but to also acknowledge the feeling which accompanies the question without entering into dialogue.

2. Present a brief overview of the possible emotional reactions members might have.

   The aim of this is three-fold:
   - to give a language which people can use to name aspects of their experience which may be feeling as one giant undifferentiated hurt.

- to give psychological permission for people to admit what they are feeling to themselves first, and possibly then to others, by defining any emotion as normal in the circumstances they find themselves in.

- to introduce the idea that different emotional responses are all to be respected and accepted as valid initial reactions, warning against the divisiveness that can enter a community if those with a particular set of emotional reactions form cliques and join in subtle or open conflict with those whose emotional responses are different.

3. Invite members to form small groups in which they can express their reactions and responses to each other. The aim is simply to listen to each other and take note of the feelings expressed. The feelings could be written down on paper for reporting back to the total meeting or for display on the walls of the room so that people can walk around during the break and read them.

   Members of the Crisis Response Team and local leaders can either monitor progress by moving among groups, assisting if a group is having difficulty, or be the designated facilitators of groups. A prior decision will need to be made based on the local leaderships understanding of what would best suit the style of the particular local congregation.

   Small groups of adolescents need a designated leader experienced in working with youth.

4. Break for Refreshments. Members are told that the Crisis Response Team and the Religious Authority will be available for private conversations during this break.

Crisis Response Team Leaders

1. Give brief summary of the major emotional themes which emerged from the small group discussions.

2. Give some information about the issues raised by church leader sexual abuse e.g:

- Abuse of power
- Types of power possessed by clergy and other church leaders.
- Effects of sexual abuse on primary victims, including explanations of why some do not disclose the abuse for many years.
- Reasons compelling respect for victim‟s privacy.
- Effects on faith communities.

The type and extent of information given depends on the reasons for the removal of the church leader. It would not be appropriate to discuss sexual exploitation if the issue at hand is one of child sexual assault.

The purpose of the information giving is simply to provide some concepts for people to begin to structure their understanding about the complex issues involved so that their total responses are not governed by their emotions.

The faith community is told that further intellectual exploration of issues can be arranged for another time.

3. Invites small group discussion on the following questions:
   - Where is God in all this? (a question challenging people to place the events in a spiritual context).
   - What do we as a faith community need to do to now? (a question challenging the faith community to plan for its healing).

A judgment will need to be made as to the amount of time to be allocated to this exercise. The processes of the meeting may have been so emotionally draining that a brief discussion and report back may be all that can be achieved. Another meeting to consider the questions in more detail can be scheduled.

4. Invite feed-back from the small group discussion and briefly summarise major ideas.

5. Inform meeting of the resources in the church and in the local community available to assist individuals e.g. the denominational social service agency, community based counsellors, in public agencies or in private practice, victim support and advocacy groups.. A handout listing these resources can be made available.

Local Leader

1. Stresses that this is the beginning of a healing process. Thanks all for attending. Mentions the Religious Leader and Crisis Response Team.

2. Invites the Religious Leader to lead the faith community in a closing prayer for all affected by the sexual abuse of the church leader.

Religious Authority

Leads the faith community in prayer.

Other Points

Crisis Counselling

It is important that at least one member of the Crisis Response Team is available to provide crisis assistance to any person whose memory of a personal history of sexual abuse is activated by the processes in the meeting. This counsellor should not have a major

responsibility for leadership in the meeting.

Availability of Denominational Policy and Procedures

Copies of the denominational policy and procedures for dealing with allegations of church leader sexual abuse are made available for perusal. Members of the faith community can check what has happened against the established policies and procedures.

Dealing with the Media

It seems that the usual practice is to exclude the media from attendance at the faith community meeting. As the facts the faith community has been told in the meeting become part of the public record, a press release is a way to ensure that the media does not have to obtain the story second-hand by talking to faith community members who were at the meeting.

It is advisable that only one official spokesperson, preferably from the denominational level above that of the local faith community, be appointed. If, however, a person is appointed from the local faith community that person may need advice about how to handle media enquiries.

Even if the church leadership advises members of the faith community against talking with media persons, as private citizens the members are free to do so.

Longer Term Healing Processes

Follow-up Meeting with Faith Community Leadership

The local faith community leadership and the Crisis Response Team leaders meet very soon after the first faith community meeting to emotionally de-brief, share insights and develop plans on what has emerged from the faith community meeting.. A number of suggested ways forward will have been advanced by members of the faith community.

Because the needs of particular faith communities will vary, it is impossible to be prescriptive about what is specifically required.

Strategies in Long-Term Healing

The following is a list of strategies which have proved useful for some faith communities. They can form a framework for discussing the ideas put forward by faith community members.

1. **Reaching Out to Individual Members of the Faith Community**
   Not all members of a faith community feel comfortable in being present at community meetings where the evidence of trauma is so clear. Such people may cease attending church services as well. They may be suffering alone but may well respond to private approaches.

   A team of out-reachers from the local faith community could be trained to visit those who seem to have withdrawn from faith community life and simply invite them to talk about their experience. The general observations of the team could be fed into the faith community planning processes. People in extreme distress would be identified and referred for specialised assistance.

2. **Small Group Healing Work**
   The faith community may have formal groups in existence. A regular bible study group would be an example. Such established groups may benefit by being led through a workshop which enables them to process their grief together. Groups also could be formed specifically for grief workshops. Small group work could occur in the context of larger faith community meetings as outlined earlier.

3. **Workshops Educating the Faith Community about the Effects of Sexual Abuse in a Church.**
   The experience of being in a faith community which has lost a leader following allegations of sexual abuse can be confusing and utterly bewildering. When the first shock and the first strong emotions have subsided a little, a workshop which helps members to name and understand some of the processes they find themselves plunged into can be helpful.

Family of Origin Exploration

Some faith community members may have a sense of personal identity which is very strongly bound up with their being a member of the particular faith community and perhaps with being very strongly associated with the perpetrator.

A series of workshops which enable such members to explore their own family history may help them to understand what it is in their own backgrounds which has pre-disposed them to invest so much of themselves in membership of the particular faith community and in the church leader in particular. Such people may be led to more personal autonomy and a sense of self-worth which is less dependent on a relationship to a leader or a faith community.

Other faith community members might find family of origin exploration useful as away of understanding their responses to the disclosure of sexual abuse by the church leader, as well as coming to appreciate better why some others have different responses to their own. Such understanding may assist indirectly in the resolution of conflicts on wider and more current issues.

Resource Material

A faith community may find the inclusion of resource material on sexual abuse and the church in their library quite valuable.

Religious Service
Some faith communities have found it useful to hold a religious service which has as its theme prayer and reflection for the healing of all who have suffered as a consequence of a church leaders sexual abuse, including the perpetrator.

Once the faith community has a plan for its healing processes the work of the Crisis Response Team is basically completed. However, the healing work has just begun and the faith community leadership will almost certainly require ongoing contact with a consultant over the next one to two years.

Ongoing Support
The new pastor, called by some the “after pastor”, will need special support. The general belief among congregational healing experts is that such a pastor should be appointed for a fixed period. The major task of the after-pastor is to assist the faith community to heal and recover from the trauma. At the appropriate time a more permanent pastor is appointed.

I will give you a list of difficulties which afterpastors have reported facing. Some of the difficulties are more likely to be experienced in denominations which are less hierarchical in structure. Not all afterpastors faced all difficulties but the list gives a good idea of what an afterpastor must be prepared to face. It will be clear why afterpastors require support from someone who understands the community and psychological processes which are likely to occur in a traumatised faith community.

Congregational Conflict
- members of the faith community withdrawing from other members.

- formation of cliques which are in open or covert conflict over

major and peripheral matters.

- total polarisation about the previous perpetrating pastor.

- battles within the faith community over the use of church property, the placement of church furniture, who can have keys to what, any matter on which there can be legitimate differences of opinion which would in normal circumstances be resolved easily.

- inability of some members of the faith community to express any negative judgment about the previous pastor.

- members having conflicting views about what forgiveness in relation to the perpetrator really means.

- hostility of faith community members to and conflict with known victims.

- hostility of one group of victims to another victim of the same perpetrator who was not of the same social class as the majority group of victims.

- blaming members of the Search Committee for poor choice of the previous pastor, of the current pastor.

- new members of faith community not really concerned about the past and wanting to “get on with it”.

- staff totally supportive of the previous perpetrating pastor.

- congregations being sued by victims in its midst.

- inability of some members of faith community, individually

and collectively, to reconcile their positive experience of the perpetrator's ministry with the revelation of sexual abuse.

- continuing conflicting rumours and conjecture about what "really happened".
- expressions of anger far out of proportion to the event which occasioned it.
- depression and loss of energy for faith community tasks.
- hopelessness about the faith community's future.
- paralysis in decision-making even over routine matters.
- hasty and ill considered decision-making.
- inability to take risks or make commitments at a faith community level.
- excessive concern for the perpetrator.
- lack of concern for victims.
- feeling of embarrassment and shame about belonging to the particular faith community, withdrawing from contact with the wider denominational life.
- excessive concentration on discussion of sexual matters in general.
- anxiety about faith community finances.
- resistance to any new idea which might change faith community life.

- a longing for the golden age of the past before the current troubles arose.
- lack of a final public resolution of the allegations surrounding the previous pastor preventing a process of closure for the local faith community.
- vandalisation of property and /or repeated acts of arson occurring.
- unresolved history of previous pastors and church leaders who are known to be sexual abusers or are suspected of being such.

Sources of Personal Stress for the Afterpastor

- all of the above.
- inappropriate anger and rage directed at the afterpastor.
- difficulty in separating out legitimate feedback from displaced anger at previous pastor.
- being forbidden by the local leadership to talk about the sexual abuse.
- a "honeymoon phase" of total acceptance followed by a phase of seemingly almost total rejection.
- being expected to provide a "quick fix without the faith community's going through the necessary processes of healing.
- general mistrust of the afterpastor.
- lack of requests for pastoral care.

- being continuously “tested out” by the faith community on even minute matters.
- being blamed for the current situation eg drop in faith community finances, inability to attract new members.
- faith community saying the afterpastor is not the right person for the job, is too inexperienced, too democratic, too authoritarian, too anything.
- being pressured to take sides in conflicts between faith community groups.
- being pressured to side with the perpetrating pastor against the primary and associate victims.
- being pressured to side with the primary and associate victims against the perpetrating pastor.
- not being able to find sufficient lay leaders in the faith community.
- rumours about being a perpetrator.
- doubt about calling to ministry.
- disruption of sermons.
- harassing phone calls.
- bomb threats to the afterpastor and family.
- threats against the lives of the afterpastor and family
- stress in marital and family relationships.

It is pretty clear why an afterpastor needs ongoing support and why the faith community may need further specialised support from time to time.

Conclusion

I hope that this quick survey of the experience of faith community members when their pastor is accused of sexual abuse and of the sorts of interventions which can assist healing at the congregational level will assist you if you are ever asked to lead or be part of a congregational healing team.

5.4 Adult victim consent in situations of sexual exploitation in pastoral relationships

Originally published in Australasian Catholic Record 76 (1999): 64-85. Reprinted with permission of the Editor.

Introduction

The fact that some clergy and religious have sexually exploited adults within the context of a pastoral relationship is now undeniable. Such abuse in this article will simply be called adult pastoral sexual exploitation. It is understood that such exploitation is a serious form of sex abuse.

My concern here is only with those instances of such exploitation which do not fall under a legal definition of assault, and which involve mutual sexual activity within a pastoral relationship between a clergyman[1] or religious and another adult person. This situation may or may not be the subject of criminal and civil laws.[2] Nevertheless even if in a particular jurisdiction there are no applicable laws, there is growing recognition that "elements of abuse of authority can be present and serious harm can be caused".[3]

Not all agree with describing sexual relations between a clergyman or religious and adult in a pastoral relationship as "abuse" or "exploitation". There is a view, expressed in discussions rather than in any current professional literature, that a clergyman or religious

[1] As this article is written within a Catholic context, all references to "clergy" assume them to be male persons, References to "religious" refer to persons of either gender.

[2] Some states in the USA have criminalised sexual relationships between professionals, (including clergy and religious) and their clients. See Jorgenson L.M., "Sexual Contact in Fiduciary Relationships: Legal Perspectives" in *Breach of Trust: Sexual Exploitation by Health Care Professionals and Clergy*, (Gonsiorek, J.C. ed.) Sage, Thousand Oaks, California, 1995, p 237-283.

involved in such sexual activity should not be subject to any action under criminal or civil law, under ecclesiastical law or discipline. The consent of the sexual partner to the activity is assumed to be such as to make the relationship non problematic from any legal perspective, whatever might be thought of the morality of the couple's behaviour.

The professional literature and many church protocols mention the consent of a person to sexual activity with a clergyman or religious within a pastoral relationship in terms of meaningfulness. The assumption is that the consent is not meaningful in an ethical and/or legal analysis of the behaviour of the clergyman or religious.[4]

The common assumption is that there is consent to sexual activity on the part of the sexual partner of the priest or religious. This article looks at the nature of such consent and explores some of its implications both for the pastoral care of victims of such exploitation and the formulation of ecclesiastical procedures dealing with adult pastoral sexual exploitation.

Pastoral Relationships

Not all relationships between clergymen or religious and other people are pastoral. For example, the relationship between a priest and his accountant which only ever touches on financial matters could hardly be called a pastoral relationship.

[3] See *Towards Healing: Principles and Procedures in Responding to Complaints of Sexual Abuse against Personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia*, Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Australian Conference of Religious Institutes, Canberra, 1996, Part 1, Par 3.

[4] For such an ethical analysis, see Fortune M.M., "Is Nothing Sacred: When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship" in *Breach of Trust*..., op.cit., p 29-40.

Here a pastoral relationship is defined as a relationship whose fundamental purpose is the benefit of a person through one or more of the following activities of a clergyman or religious : spiritual aid, provision of psychological help or comfort, and education in spiritual or related matters.

Such pastoral relationships depend upon the trust of the person in the clergyman or religious as an officially appointed minister of the Church, and invite vulnerability on the part of the person approaching the clergyman or religious.

Contexts for the Consideration of the Consent of the Victims

Three separate but related contexts can be distinguished in relation to the consent of persons to sexual activity with clergymen or religious who are exploiting them:

1. **Psychological**
   Considerations here are about the processes which were involved in the making of the consent, including the degree of personal freedom present, which can range from zero freedom to sufficient freedom to allow the imputation of full moral and/or legal responsibility for the consent.

2. **Moral**
   Considerations here include evaluations of the objective morality of the act consented to, and of the subjective responsibility of the person for the consent. The psychological factors present in the process of consent are clearly relevant to the imputation of moral responsibility. Persons can only be held morally responsible for an action in direct proportion to the amount of freedom present in the consent to the action.

3. **Legal (including church law and church protocols)**
   Considerations here include the placing of the consent in the

context of the laws generally covering the situation in question. Such laws may declare any consent of the victim to be irrelevant in the determination of whether or not a breach of the law has occurred, making victim consent unavailable as a legal defence. In other situations, the alleged victim's consent may be sufficient to demonstrate that no breach of a law has occurred. The degree of psychologically free consent may be the subject of exhaustive legal examination.

The degree of legal responsibility for consent does not have to relate to moral responsibility at all. A person may be found to be in breach of a legal provision, and subject to the prescribed penalties, even though there is no subjective moral responsibility for the action which constituted the breach.

The Psychological Structure of Consent

Before discussing the nature of victim consent in situations of adult pastoral sexual exploitation some brief remarks on the psychological structure of consent in general may prove helpful.

A phenomenological analysis of the processes of personal consent suggests the following essential elements:

1. The possibility of an action (or of refraining from an action) is presented to a person's consciousness.

   The possibility can be presented by a communication from another person, by a non-personal external stimulus, or simply without any apparent external stimulus. The possibility must be perceived as at least one of two possibilities. Otherwise the person is faced with a perceived necessity.

2. The person considers whether or not to actualise the possibility. This consideration occurs within a complex field of psychological factors, conscious and unconscious, of varying potential to

influence the final decision. The period of consideration may be long or short or even momentary (in this case giving the appearance of total spontaneity). The consideration may be full or even quite cursory.

The psychological factors include at least:

- an assessment, according to the person's capabilities and knowledge, of the perceived current reality.
- an assessment of the consequences of actualising or not actualising the possibility.
- the self-concept.
- general beliefs about the nature of reality.
- consciously held values, moral and otherwise.
- emotions evoked by the current circumstances.
- emotions evoked by memories stimulated by the current circumstances.
- needs aroused by the current circumstances.
- unconscious needs and wishes.

These factors can interact with each other and influence their relative strengths. For example, strong emotions can influence the assessment of the current reality and lead to the non perception or minimisation of factors which may be objectively vital in the determination of the actual consequences of the proposed action.

3. The person, using the will within that complex field of interacting psychological factors, decides to actualise the presented possibility (or to refrain from actualising it).

4. The person begins to do what is necessary to actualise the possibility (or to refrain from so doing).

5. A possibility can be actualised by actively doing something or by passively allowing something to be done.

The will is always subject to the influence of the factors in the psychological field. If the result of the interplay of all the factors in the psychological field is such that only one possibility can be perceived by the person then the consent given to that possibility can be said to be totally non-free. Note that external duress as well as internal forces can be such as to evoke a view that only one action is perceived as possible in the circumstances. In the moral sense, persons are not held accountable for non-free actions as such.

If the person is able to do something other than the proposed action, and yet still does it, the consent given to the proposed possibility, and the action to actualise it, are said to be free within the field of possibilities perceived as open to the person.

Because all consents are made within contexts of perceived possibilities there is a sense which no consent can be said to be totally free. In general, assessments of moral accountability and, if applicable, legal accountability have to take into account the degree of freedom present in the consent.

There are two general types of situation where limited consent is relevant in the assessment of responsibility for personal action.[5] Perhaps these are best illustrated in terms of counterfactual situations:

[5] For the sake of simplicity I do not discuss the situations where the factors which can limit the consent of the person are within the control of the person. These factors include voluntary ignorance and voluntary stimulation of strong emotions.

1. The person would have seriously considered doing something different if the person had had additional knowledge about the current situation, the proposed possibility, and the consequences of actualising it (or not actualising it). The person's horizon of understanding was limited in significant ways by cognitive factors. The freedom of the will was correspondingly limited.

   Thus a consent to surgical procedures, in the absence of an adequate explanation and understanding of what risks such procedures involve, is normally said to lack the freedom to make the consent legally valid.

2. The person would have seriously considered doing something different if the person's emotional state had not obscured the perceptions of the current situation, the proposed possibility and the consequences of actualising it (or not actualising it). Every other perceived possibility was judged as bringing less good or actual harm. The person's horizon of understanding was limited by emotional factors. The freedom of the will was correspondingly limited.

Thus a consent to a marriage which is based on a very deep fear of the consequences of not going through with the proposed marriage, eg. the "shotgun wedding", can so diminish the freedom in the consent that the marriage is invalid from a legal point of view.

The above analysis is highly theoretical. Determining what actually occurred during the actual process of a particular act of consent is not easy because the process is not directly observable. Inferences from what is observable have to be made.

Vulnerability and Consent of the Recipient of Pastoral Care

The situation of adult pastoral sexual exploitation will always involve some consent, in the sense discussed above, on the part of the

victim because the sexual activity is something in which the victim participates, sometimes over a considerable period of time.[6]

Let us take the following situation: a woman in some emotional distress approaches a priest for spiritual assistance and counselling. The pastoral relationship develops and in time becomes sexualised. The relationship continues for a number of months. At no time is the woman entirely comfortable with the sexualised situation but she continues to meet with the priest and to have sexual intercourse with him. Eventually she breaks free of the relationship, feeling guilty and abused. It would be difficult to argue that in no way was she consenting to the sexual activity, especially as she moves to a point where she clearly no longer consents.

In terms of the above general analysis of the process of consent, the following might be said: The possibility of sexual action with the priest was presented to her. She considered whether or not to go ahead. She decides to go ahead and does so. Finally she decides that she will no longer act sexually with him.

However, there may have been factors operating such that her consent was so limited that her moral responsibility for her own actions is diminished even to the point of her bearing no moral responsibility at all. Such factors could include among a multitude of factors:

[6] Victims of sexual assault by clergy or religious do not participate over time. Even if there are a number of assaults, each is a separate incident and the victim cannot be said to have any kind of free consent to the assaults. An assault is a behaviour clearly imposed with force or threat of force on the victim. Also an attempt by a clergyman or religious to sexualise a pastoral relationship, which fails as a result of the rejection by the other person of the sexual overture, is clearly exploitative but involves no consent on the part of the person who is truly a victim of sexual exploitation.

1. **Emotional Vulnerability**
   Her emotional state may have been such that her present emotional needs may have significantly impaired her judgement about the consequences of entering a sexual relationship with the priest. Her hunger to experience the seemingly undivided and caring attention she received from him in the non sexual aspects of their relationship may have led her to put considerations of future consequences to one side. Her need and hope for a long term relationship may have dominated any reality testing.

   The experience of such fulfilment of her emotional needs may have been such that she was unable, at certain points in the relationship, to countenance the foregoing of such emotional fulfilment the rejection of the sexual activity would entail.

   It is worth noting that the emotional vulnerability of the recipient of pastoral care is almost a necessary condition for exploitation of the type evidenced here. This is because those in less vulnerable emotional states are usually able to reject any sexual overtures, and the clergy or religious who are seeking consciously or unconsciously to sexualise pastoral relationships do not target emotionally strong people.

2. **Belief in the Nature of the Pastoral Relationship**
   She may have had a totally legitimate expectation that the priest would act solely and explicitly for her benefit. She may have expected and trusted him to provide professional care. Hence she may have been inclined to believe that whatever he suggested must have been for her benefit. She may even have given him extra credence simply because he is a male and she had somehow learned that males are more knowledgeable than she could ever be.

   It scarcely needs to be said that the pastoral relationship exists to serve the recipient of pastoral care. It does not exist to meet the clergyman's or religious' needs. Any broadening of the relationship so that it does in fact exist to meet the sexual needs of the clergyman or religious is to introduce exploitation into it.

3. **Belief in the Religious Authority of the Priest**
   She may have acknowledged the power inherent in the role of the priest in the pastoral relationship. She may have deferred to his expertise in spiritual, doctrinal and moral matters.

   The psychological force the role of ordained minister carries in the Catholic Church is made considerably greater by teaching that "the priest, by virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, *acts in persona Christi Capitis*" (italics in original).[7] Catholics are taught to make a psychological identification between the official ministerial acts of an ordained minister and the acts of Christ Himself.

   In paragraph 1550, the Catechism is careful to note that human weakness, (extending as far as sin), can limit the presence of Christ in the minister except in sacramental acts. However, if a member of the faithful believes that a clergyman in official ministry acts in the person of Christ, then that member is highly unlikely to distinguish between official sacramental ministry and other official ministries.

   Thus the woman's personal trust in the clergyman may well be equivalent to her personal trust in Christ. She may have believed

[7] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, St Pauls's Homebush, Sydney, 1994, Par 1548, p 387.

that he had the power to make judgments about her presumed moral status before God.[8] She may have relied on him to provide moral guidance about the sinfulness or otherwise of the sexual activity they were engaging in.

It is not unknown for clergy and religious who are sexually exploiting others to take advantage of the others' general moral confusion and inform them that such sexual activity is no longer considered sinful by the Church, thereby inducing more confusion.

4. **Impact of Low Self- Esteem**
   She may been flattered by the attention of a man in such a powerful position in the Church and society. Perhaps, doubting her own self worth and her sexual attractiveness, she may have felt her own sense of worth increase through her ability to attract a man who was generally thought to be unattainable. She may have been enjoying being associated with a socially powerful and respected person. The prospect and the reality of meeting some of these self-esteem needs on the psychological level may have been such as to cloud both her reality testing and moral judgement.

   One particularly insidious seductive move on the part of clergy or religious is to suggest that they need the sexual activity in order to continue effective ministry. Sexual involvement with them is a service to the Church and thus ultimately to God. Such suggestions have appeal to some victims whose moral and spiritual vision is impaired. They can see themselves as contributing to the life of the Church. It is not impossible that a minister suggest that the person even has an obligation to

[8] See Rutter, P, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*: When Men in Power - Therapists, Doctors, Teachers and Others - Betray Women's Trust, Fawcett Crest, New York, 1989, p 31.

engage in sexual activity with the minister.

5. **Past Experience of Abuse**
   Her past experience of sexual abuse may have been such that the priest's suggestion of sexual activity threw her into a state of actual powerlessness to refuse. This is likely to be the case if she had past experiences of sexual abuse which were coupled with acts of violence or threats of violence. Her reaction to the present may have been entirely determined by the emotions evoked by the memories of the past. Here there may have been a non-free consent, an inability to perceive any other alternative but to consent to the advances.

6. **Sexual Satisfaction**
   It may be that the sexual experience with the priest brought her a level of physical satisfaction that no previous sexual relationship had brought her. It is the nature of sexual satisfaction that it calls for more. She may have felt powerfully in the grip of the purely physical nature of the sexual experience. She may even have experienced this power in spite of her overall moral assessment that her sexual activity was sinful.

Thus the woman's consent, on each occasion of its exercise, may have been influenced by any or all of the above factors (and other factors not mentioned) which may have been interacting with each other in such a way as to limit, to a greater or lesser extent, the degree of freedom she brought to her acts within the sexual relationship with the priest.

Such considerations are relevant and meaningful for the assessment by victims themselves of any moral responsibility for their participation in the sexual activity with the clergyman or religious. Catholic Church teaching would say that the sexual activity was objectively immoral. The nature and quality of

the consent given is vital in the judgment of personal moral responsibility.

Self-Forgiveness and the Healing of Adult Victims of Sexual Exploitation

The experience of being a participant in a relationship which involves pastoral sexual exploitation is ultimately one of pain. The sexual relationship is not grounded in truth and involves fundamental betrayals, even if it is not felt to be so in the initial stages.

The typical experience of one who is breaking free (or has been broken free by the unilateral decision of the clergyman or religious) from a pastoral exploitative relationship can include the following: sense of betrayal by the sexual partner as sexual partner; sense of being abused, exploited, manipulated by the partner precisely as minister of the Church; sense of abandonment by the Church and God; anger; depression; guilt; shame; fear; anxiety; grief; self blame and confusion. These psychological experiences can be accompanied by bodily symptoms of stress.

Hence there is no doubt that such victims of pastoral sexual exploitation can justly demand from the Church pastoral care directed towards their healing. The complete response of the Church to such victims is multi-faceted and could include any or all of the following : therapy or counselling, support throughout formal legal and church proceedings relating to the exploitation, open recognition of the abuse which has been perpetrated, appropriate restitution of the victim to full membership of a particular parish community, direct spiritual assistance and financial compensation.

The journey to psychological and spiritual healing can be long and arduous, involving restoration of trust in the self, in other people, (particularly those in positions of power both within and

outside the Church) and in God. Integrating all the painful and confusing feelings evoked by the experience of being pastorally and sexually exploited is not easy and will normally require patient and understanding support from another person.

The healing journey is not complete until any wound dealt to the person by their own consent has been healed. The person must acknowledge the degree of their moral responsibility for their own actions and receive forgiveness from God and from themselves for any personal sin involved.[9]

Coming to this point of healing is a complex task. The starting point is somewhere on a continuum of the assigning of respective moral responsibilities for the perpetrator's actions and the victim's actions. At one pole the total moral responsibility for both persons' actions is assigned solely to the victim. At the other pole the total moral responsibility is assigned solely to the perpetrator.

Many in the community explicitly or implicitly assign the responsibility for a perpetrator's actions to the exploited person. An exploited person may make a similar judgement and be overwhelmed by inappropriate self blame.

It may take some time for such a person to assign the responsibility for the perpetrator's actions only to the perpetrator. Only then is the exploited person potentially able to come to a valid self-assessment of their moral responsibility for their actions within the relationship with the perpetrator of the abuse.

[9] It is worth noting that such considerations are not relevant for those whose moral theology would not describe the sexual activity under discussion as involving objective immorality per se.

On the other hand, an exploited person, by assigning to the perpetrator all moral responsibility for what occurred in their relationship, may be avoiding taking any moral responsibility for their own actions.

Nevertheless, if complete healing involves living in the truth, and if the truth is that there was some level of moral responsibility for participation in the sexual relationship, that truth must be faced. Then and only then can the self which gave whatever level of immoral consent was involved be forgiven and healed. Coming to this point may be a painful and slow process, as there is a natural reluctance to admit responsibility for things about which some shame is felt. It must also be remembered that the actual freedom of the consent, and hence the degree of moral responsibility, may be very limited and the valid self-assessment difficult.

It is a mistake for pastoral helpers to try to move the person to any moral self assessment too early. The person, possibly overwhelmed by hurting feelings, is likely to experience the helper as blaming, condemning and rejecting if early emphasis is placed on the possibility of the person's bearing some moral responsibility for what occurred. Only when the person has re-established a basic self acceptance can the question of moral responsibility be faced.

Likewise pastoral helpers, who confuse legal responsibility and true moral responsibility, can impede progress to complete healing by inferring, or trying to persuade the exploited person that any felt guilt and self scrutiny into the possible origin of that feeling of guilt is inappropriate. Such a suggestion may do violence to the inner conscience of the person which seeks truth and forgiveness for what responsible consent did exist for immoral action.

Church Protocols and the Consent of Victims of Pastoral Sexual Exploitation

The pastoral relationship by definition invites vulnerability and trust on the part of the recipient of pastoral care. The very seeking of pastoral care is an acknowledgment of some need. It is to expose a vulnerable part of the self to the gaze of the minister. The actual degree of vulnerability involved will vary from situation to situation but the formation of a pastoral relationship assumes the potential for very deep vulnerability, rather than the opposite. The consent of a victim is also **always** given in a context of personal vulnerability.

It ought not be assumed that, just because there has been only very formal contact within a pastoral relationship, there is no vulnerability on the part of the pastoral care recipients who may place great trust in the minister with whom they have not had any personal conversation. Thus, sexual approaches by clergymen or religious to such persons would still be sexual exploitation.

Hence, Church protocols which deal with occurrences of pastoral sexual exploitation ought to assume the vulnerability of the recipient of pastoral care, and make any level of consent of the exploited person irrelevant to the determination of whether or not pastoral sexual exploitation has occurred. Consent of the other person should not be allowed as a defence for the accused.

Normally, it is the absolute responsibility of clergy and religious to ensure that the integrity and the boundaries of pastoral relationships are maintained. This is because the vulnerability of the recipients is such that their capacity to freely consent to behaviour beyond the boundaries may be significantly impaired. The recipients have the right to expect that the giver of pastoral care will protect them from harm, especially when the recipients try to initiate action which will bring harm to themselves.

However, there is an argument to say that some instances of sexual relationships which involve consent on the part of the person other than the clergyman or religious should not be regarded as exploitative. These cases are those in which the pastoral relationship is such that the **actual vulnerability** of the recipient of pastoral care has not been great so that, although there is a difference in the formal power positions, there is normal personal equality in real personal terms. (Such equality cannot co-exist with a pastoral counselling relationship).

Take the instance of a priest and a single woman who work on the same parish team. He is clearly her pastor but there is no counselling or spiritual direction involved. Their friendship turns into a romance which involves sexual activity.[10] He voluntarily resigns his ministry and is laicised. They marry and the marriage is successful. The woman in this situation is not likely to have experienced herself as a victim of sexual exploitation, having acknowledged her free consent to the relationship from the beginning of its moving from a strictly pastoral one to a romantic and sexual one.

Yet if the criterion for the existence of sexual exploitation is simply the occurrence of sexual activity within a pastoral relationship, a woman in the above situation is a sexually exploited victim. Presumably if the marriage breaks down after, say, twenty years she will able to allege sexual exploitation all those years ago and seek some kind of redress through a church protocol.

[10] Clearly from a Catholic point of view many moral questions are involved, not the least being the possible scandal to parishioners from the public dishonouring of vows and promises of chastity. However, the point here is simply to determine if sexual exploitation is involved, not to comment on the sexual morality of the participants.

There is no reason to believe that the Catholic Church is now in a phase of its history such that there will be no more clergy or religious becoming involved in romantic or sexual relationships with those in their pastoral care. Hence situations like the one described above are going to occur and there ought to be protocols to cover them.

These protocols would outline what needs to be done when a pastoral relationship between two otherwise equal persons begins to move towards the romantic and sexual. At the very minimum such protocols would need to prescribe that the clergy or religious involved immediately declare their situation and immediately withdraw from ministry.

It might be also be wise to subject the growing relationship to some form of official assessment, involving the interviewing of both parties, to exclude the possibility that a breach of pastoral trust has occurred. The usual finding would be that there was no such breach. (Those involved in exploitative relationships are highly unlikely to put themselves forward for an assessment of their relationship). Such a finding would mean that no future case for sexual exploitation could be made, regardless of how the relationship develops.

The normal protocol for sexual exploitation complaints would be universally applied in other situations, the consent of the victim being irrelevant to the determination of the occurrence of sexual exploitation.

Sexual Relationships in Non Pastoral Relationships.
Not every sexual relationship between a clergyman or religious and another person occurs within the context of a pastoral relationship.

A sexual liaison between a clergyman, who has not revealed his ministerial role, and a person he has met at holiday resort can

hardly be said to have occurred within a pastoral relationship. Likewise sexual activity, between a person who has never been in a pastoral relationship with a priest sexual partner, and for whom the priesthood of the priest is a true irrelevancy, must be judged to be occurring in a non pastoral relationship.

Sexual relationships in non pastoral relationships must be assumed to involve no pastoral exploitation. Recourse to the criminal or civil courts would only be possible in the circumstances where such laws normally apply. Any ecclesiastical laws and procedures applicable to the clergyman or religious would apply but not in the context of adult pastoral sexual exploitation or abuse.

Hence persons approaching the Church complaining that they, as adults, had been sexually exploited by a clergyman or religious would be asked, under the church protocol for situations of sexual abuse and exploitation, to provide some evidence that the exploitation had occurred within the context of a pastoral relationship. Normally providing such evidence would not be difficult. If the existence of a pastoral relationship could not be established, the situation would need to be handled by the church authorities as one which did not involve pastoral exploitation.

This is not to say that non pastoral sexual relationships cannot involve abuse in a more general sense. Such relationships are as open to sexually and physically abusive behaviours as are any other sexual relationships. Clergymen and religious can be just as emotionally manipulative, just as untruthful, just as unfaithful to promises, just as violent as any other person.

People can be deeply hurt by abuse in such relationships. They can also suffer the normal agonies which accompany the unwanted breakdown of a sexual affair, with all the attendant anger and rage. Great violation of trust may be involved but it is not a violation of

pastoral trust.

The Church should extend its compassion and assistance to victims of non pastoral abuse, and to those who have been wounded within non pastoral sexual relationships with clergy or religious. However, it would need to be clear that the reaching out was not in response to an occurrence of pastoral exploitation. The journey to complete healing for such abused persons may be very similar to that of those who were pastorally exploited.

Clergy, who behave in ways which are quite contrary to their public commitments to chastity within clerical or religious life[11], must be brought to some account by the religious authorities and assisted to work through the personal issues which are associated with their infidelity to their commitments.

The credibility of a church which proclaims a very counter cultural sexual morality but seems to turn a blind eye to the sexual transgressions of its ministers is very low. Furthermore such clergy and religious are at great risk of moving into truly exploitative behaviours. It scarcely needs saying that those clergy and religious who behave in abusive ways in non pastoral sexual relationships compound the harm wrought by their infidelity to their public commitments of chastity.

Conclusion

It can be seen that the view that sexual activity within the context of a pastoral relationship should not be defined as exploitation, because those involved are consenting adults, is a very simplistic one. It does not do justice to the complexity of the consent which can be involved in such situations. Further, the assumptions that

[11] These commitments are to chastity as an unmarried person (for most priests and all religious) and to chastity as a married person (for married priests permitted ministry and married deacons).

the psychological consent, and the self imputation of any moral responsibility by a victim, are irrelevant to the healing process and are not ultimately helpful in assisting the person to come to the fullness of healing.

5.5 Being Married to a Woman Who was Sexually Abused in Childhood

Most men whose wives were sexually abused in childhood or adolescence find it very difficult to understand how the effects of such experiences can be so powerful years after the actual abuse and can influence the course of an otherwise loving marriage relationship.

The following may help those men better understand and more deeply love their wives.

What is sexual abuse in childhood
Sexual abuse of a child or adolescent is first and foremost touching of the child or adolescent in a way which is only acceptable, legal and moral (by general community standards) in a fully consensual adult sexual relationship. Such sexual touching is a criminal offence in Australia.

There can be non-touching forms of abuse e.g. forcing, or even encouraging, a child to watch pornographic videos or taking pictures of the child naked for obvious sexual motives.

Sexual abuse of young girls is perpetrated by men in the vast majority of cases but there are instances of young girls being abused by women.

In all cases, sexual abuse involves the perpetrator using their power and authority to get the young girl to somehow participate in the sexual activity, even if this participation is to simply allow the perpetrator to have his way.

The young girl cannot be held responsible in any way for the sexual activity. It is the total responsibility of the adult involved. The young

girl has a fundamental right not to be sexually abused and to expect that adults will protect her from such experiences.

The experience of sexual abuse in childhood

The thought of a young girl being sexually abused rightly fills us with horror and anger. It is so obviously an act which violates the innocence of the young girl. The first reaction of many men to hearing of their wives' abusive childhood experiences is outrage and a desire to physically attack the perpetrator and punch him out.

We automatically think that the abusive situation is one of the use of violent physical force with the perpetrator physically holding the young girl down and forcing himself upon her, rapes her in much the same way that a rapist assaults a woman unknown to him

The sexual abuse of children is rarely so obviously an act of simple violence alone and it is this fact that makes the experience so confusing for the victim of the abuse.

These are the aspects of the experience of being sexually abused which make it so confusing to the young girl.

1. **The abuser has a relationship with the young girl before the abuse**

   The abuser is someone known to her (her father, her elder brother, her uncle, her next door neighbor, her teacher, her swimming coach, her priest) who may give her special and unusual attention apart from the abusive situation. (If the perpetrator is not known to the young girl, the sexual activity is very hurtful but may not have all the effects of sexual activity with a previously known and trusted person.)

   In fact, singling out the young girl for such special attention is the way perpetrators who are not family members establish a relationship which makes it more likely that the young girl will be

at least compliant once the perpetrator begins his actual sexual activity.

This is the first aspect of the abusive experience which makes it so confusing for the young girl. **She can have an attachment, even a strong attachment, to the perpetrator.** This is most clearly seen when the perpetrator is her father.

She can also enjoy the special non-sexual attention which the perpetrator gives her apart from the actual sexual situation and even in the lead up to the sexual situation where the perpetrator's actions would be loving and kind if they were not leading to sexual activity.

Young girls who are otherwise starved of love and affection may come to believe that the affection which seems to come with the sexual activity is all the affection they are going to get. They naturally long for affection and love which they have a right and a need to receive.

The fact that they only seem to receive what they need in a relationship which includes sexual activity can lead them to think they actually wanted the sexual activity. Perpetrators often use the young girl's confusion to justify their actions. "You wanted it just as much as I did".

The young girl's confusion can lead to thinking like this:

I somehow wanted the sexual activity.
I know that what is happening is somehow not right, bad.
I wanted something bad.
I must be bad.
I am ashamed of myself and feel really guilty.
I am not really lovable.

No one ever will, ever could really love me.

Thus the young girl can think that she is partly, if not totally responsible for what happened, and that this is the proof that she really is bad in herself. This belief can last a life-time if the young girl/adult woman is not assisted to challenge it and see that it is a totally false belief.

2. **Experience of being contaminated, feeling dirty.**
   Even though the young girl has done nothing wrong in the sense of bearing any responsibility for the sexual activity, she can feel that she has been made dirty simply by being caught up in the experience. She has suffered violation and the wound seems to reach her very soul, her deepest inner self. An analogy is how a non-smoker forced to be in a locked room with many smoking people will have smoke in her hair and clothes, not to mention lungs even though she has not smoked a single cigarette.

   The young girl can have a sense of being deeply affected by being involved in something evil, which she thinks makes her evil.

3. **Experience of powerlessness and destruction of trust**
   The sexual abuse occurs in a context which is controlled by the perpetrator and in which the young girl feels that really she has no choice but to go along with what the perpetrator wants.

   Perpetrators can use the power of position ("I'm your father and you must do what I say"), the power of relationship ("You are really a very special girl and you are so special to me"), the power of authority ("I'm your priest. You know that I would never ask you to do something wrong."), and the power of creating fear ("If you tell anyone about this, no one would believe you and you'll be in big trouble.").

There is an aspect of utter helplessness in the experience of being abused in childhood. Perpetrators outside of immediate family seem to have a sixth sense regarding which children would not go along with them and would tell someone immediately about the attempt to involve them in sexual activity. They do not approach such children. They take advantage of a child's vulnerability in feeling insecure and unloved.

The abuse is carried out by a person whom the young girl had every right to trust and have confidence in. All children need to trust in order to feel safe. Sexually abusive experiences violate, can smash that fundamental sense of trust. The world can feel a very unsafe place to be. People are not to be trusted. A young girl who comes to this conclusion can come to feel very alone.

4. **Pleasurable sexual feeling can be experienced by the young girl in the abusive situation**
   The abuse is not necessarily violent as we normally understand violence. There may be no physical pain involved with the perpetrator being what would be described as "gentle" in other contexts. There is clearly a physical violation involved, as well as a psychological/ spiritual violation, but there may be no physical pain for the young girl.

   It is not impossible, in fact it is even likely, that the young girl experiences some physical pleasure during the sexual abuse. This is because the young's girl's body just naturally responds to certain types of stimulation. There is no choice about the response which may have physical pleasurable aspects (just as healthy people have no choice about experiencing pain if someone treads on their toes.) The young girl has no responsibility for any feeling of broadly sexual pleasure.

   However, any such experience can be quite confusing for the

young girl.

She will have some intuition that she should not be experiencing this kind of pleasure.

Quite aside from any explicitly moral considerations, the basis for her feeling that there is something wrong in experiencing some degree of pleasurable sexual arousal is that she as a developing person is not ready to cope with all the complex personal experiences which follow from sexual experiences. She is not mature enough for sexual experience and anyone who leads her into too early a sexual experience is violating her normal pathway to maturity.

The young girl may well have experienced that the part of her which experienced the pleasure pushed for the pleasure to continue. This is the nature of pleasure: it has a drive to go on and on. The young girl may interpret this push from the pleasure to continue as her *wanting* the pleasure and *wanting* it to continue.

Because something in her tells her that is not right to want this pleasure and she thinks she does want it, she can conclude that she must want something bad and therefore she must be bad in herself. A sense of guilt not only about seeming to want bad things but about being a bad person can develop.

Some young girls will conclude not only that sexual activity is always bad and that if a person feels any sexual desire that is a sign of badness. They feel guilty about experiencing good healthy sexual desire and may try to stop themselves from experiencing such desire.

Adult survivors of child sexual abuse often need to be helped

to free themselves from what is a false sense of guilt over the experience of some pleasure within the abusive situation. They can have great difficulty in talking about this aspect of their experience, as they assume that those who hear their story will not understand. The abusive experience is meant to be totally horrific and such a description rarely fits the total experience of the victim of abuse.

Such women need to understand that they had no choice about whether or not they felt any pleasurable sensations during the abusive experience.

5. **Experience of attractiveness and power**
   Despite the overwhelming feeling of powerlessness which the abused young girl experiences, there is also some awareness of the fact that she must be attractive in some way to the perpetrator. Otherwise he would not bother.

   It has to be a sexual attractiveness because it results in sexual activity. However, such thinking can lead the young girl to conclude that if she were not attractive in some sexual way the perpetrator would have no relationship of any significant meaning at all with her. She then can conclude “He just wants me for my body.” “He fakes caring for me just so he can have his way with me.” “My only attractiveness is a sexual attractiveness”. “I can only attract attention by being sexual”.

   Some attention, even if very inadequate and morally wrong, can be felt by some survivors of childhood abuse as better than no attention at all. Hence they may behave promiscuously to gain the only attention they see themselves getting.

   On the other hand, the young girl may realise that she does have some minimal power in the abusive situation. She may

have some realisation that how she responds to the perpetrator could possibly affect how much pleasure he experiences on a specific occasion. She may even have consciously varied her responsiveness on occasion and felt some power over the perpetrator in doing so. Note that she has no real choice and no responsibility about being in the abusive situation but within it she may have some small choices which she can make. She may be aware that choices she makes in the abusive situation could have benefits outside of that situation. She may get extra special presents, for example.

Thus, there can be the beginning of an awareness that she can use her sexuality to manipulate the perpetrator and other men to her advantage. Such an awareness gives at least some sense of power in the abusive situation. In later life, women with childhood sexual abusive experiences can use their sexuality to gain a feeling of power over men, to get a kind of revenge against their perpetrators by taking back power the women experienced as being taken from them in childhood.

Such women often feel guilty about finding such tendencies in themselves, and possibly acting on them, for two reasons. First, there is some realisation that they are misusing their sexual attractiveness – such behaviour does not bring the love they are really seeking. Secondly, behaving in such ways confirms the belief that the only attractiveness they have is sexual attractiveness because such manipulation is not likely to result in being loved by the man involved.

6. Experience of intimidation

Very often, perpetrators have intimidated their victims by threats. "No one will believe you. I'll deny it and you won't be able to prove anything", "If you tell anyone, I'll be arrested and put in gaol", "They'll take you away from the family even though they

won't be able to prove I did anything wrong", "Obviously, you won't be getting any more special gifts and treats", "I'll never forgive you for breaking our secret".

In the past, it was highly likely that children who spoke of their abusive experiences were dismissed as making it up, or if they were believed the seriousness of what happened was not recognised, leaving the child to conclude there was no point in telling anyone, and leaving the child with no support which they could use in trying to combat the thoughts and feelings which the experience left them with.

Some women have carried these experiences for many, many years without speaking to anyone about them. This means they have no opportunity to examine the judgements which they made about themselves then and to evaluate those judgements for their truth.

Aspects of the experience of a woman sexually abused in childhood which she brings to the experience of lovemaking with her husband

The diagram at the end of this paper indicates the types of feelings and thoughts which can be in the total experience of a woman who has been sexually abused in childhood as she enters into lovemaking with her husband.

At various times and for varying reasons one or more of these experiences may be in the forefront of her mind and feeling. Thus her experiences may not appear to be consistent. Her husband may find these changes in mood and willingness quite bewildering.

At times when the experiences associated with loving are in the foreground the woman may participate fully and enthusiastically in the lovemaking.

At other times, when doubt about her self-worth as a total person and feeling only valued for her body are in the forefront of her mind, she may not want to make love, feeling that the sexual activity will just be sex and not lovemaking. Her feeling of fear and intimidation, her feeling of obligation and her feeling of powerlessness may lead her to participate in the sexual activity but it will not be a full participation, not an experience of receiving and giving love.

These experiences are almost inevitably reminders of her childhood abusive experiences and increase the likelihood of the woman feeling the sorts of feelings which are associated with those experiences. She is very likely to withdraw from her husband.

This will particularly be the case when he puts explicit or implicit pressure on her to have sexual intercourse with him on a particular occasion. She can even experience genuine attempts to lead her to overcome her seeming hesitation as pressure. Her husband might simply see his behaviour as part of a normal seduction sexual game which both on occasion enjoy, and be quite confused by his wife's behaviour.

Some hints for husbands

1. Accept that the experience of being abused in childhood is a very hurtful and complex experience.

2. Attempt to talk with your wife about how her abusive experiences have affected her in herself and in her relationship with you.

3. Attempt to understand what she is feeling and do not attempt to argue her out of those feelings or tell her to simply put the past behind and get on with it. Hers is the kind of past it is very difficult to let go of immediately. She will feel misunderstood and criticised if you try to hurry her up. This is not something you and she can fix over night.

4. Realise that she must have come distance in the task of overcoming the past in having enough trust in you to be willing to marry you. She has some sense that you could understand her past experiences of abuse and certainly that you could and do love her even though she has the background she has.

5. You have seen the good and loving person who is behind the person who sometimes behaves in ways which sometimes confuse and anger you. You see her as more than a product of her history. Sometimes she has trouble seeing herself beyond that background and history. Find many ways to demonstrate how you value her love.

6. Do not only show physical affection when you are wanting to make sexual love. Show physical affection (plenty of it) at other times. She needs reassurance that you love her for much more than the pleasure you may take from her body. If you do not show physical affection apart from love-making and the lead up to it, you may be doing exactly what the abuser did and your wife's memories of those abusive experiences are likely to surface.

7. Be accepting if your wife is clear that she does not wish to make love on any particular occasion. Take "no" for an answer virtually immediately. Ask if there is something she needs to talk about, if she needs to be held and cuddled so that she can feel safe and loved.

8. Fight any feelings of rejection and frustration you might experience if your wife declines to make sexual love on a specific occasion. Find other non-physically sexual ways to make love on that occasion. The chances of future sexual lovemaking being deeper and more personally and emotionally intimate are thereby increased.

Aspects of the experience of a woman sexually abused in childhood which she brings to the experience of lovemaking with her husband

End of Book 1