

Befriending Our Shadows

On my refrigerator at home I have a magnet that says, "A friend is a person who understands your past, believes in your future and accepts you today the way you are." This is quite a challenge, is it not, to those of us who believe that we love our friends in an affirming, non-judgemental way? Can we really love them so unconditionally? Surely there is something about the way our friends behave that we do not understand, or that in extremis we may find unacceptable? And, horror of horrors, are there not times when we are 'short' with our friends, even impatient, unloving and unkind?

Those of us who have experienced a Myers-Briggs workshop and been 'typed' will understand that others will often behave in ways that we would not. We may also appreciate, however, that these differences flow from their preferences and need not be difficult at all; rather they are a positive and essential contribution to healthy dialogue and creative thinking. Differences are to be celebrated for the myriad of colourful insights, responses, behaviours, expressions and characteristics that they bring into our relationship with others.

So what happens when we are not able to appreciate these differences in a positive way? At times we might respond so badly that in retrospect we can hardly recognise ourselves, our behaviour is

so out-of-character. Well, hidden in every person's dominant pattern there are important indicators that reveal their inferior pattern, or their shadow side – areas of their personality that usually remain concealed. Our Shadow typically lies quietly within our unconscious, but occasionally an emotionally charged situation may hook out our inferior pattern and suddenly there it is, in our



conscious. These little used preferences are usually immature and can cause us a great deal of trouble, especially when they erupt as distorted responses or as rigid, uncompromising behaviour.

We might conclude from this that our shadow personality is unpleasant and blemishes our character, but this is only so when it emerges in an uncontrolled manner, like a petulant naughty child.

At these times its expression can be unnerving, even a little frightening, but we can and should befriend our shadow. For when it surfaces from the depths it brings with it 'not merely incompatible and rejected remnants of everyday life, or inconvenient and objectionable animal tendencies, but also germs of new life and vital possibilities for the future'.

Thus our shadows can provide fertile ground for spiritual input and personal development, but they need to be revealed and understood. It is our inferior function that is the key for it operates through our shadow side and when we use it we are at our weakest and most vulnerable. It is at these times that our relationship with God can develop more fully as we allow him to touch those areas of our lives that have been repressed and hidden from our consciousness. 'Everyone carries a shadow', wrote Jung, 'and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is.'

Embracing our shadow will help us to bring the darkest and most painful parts of ourselves into the light. Our spirituality radiates through the whole of us, both our conscious and our unconscious, and as we engage with those parts of us that have been hidden for so long we can only develop a deeper and more complete relationship with God. We may even discover that the deep wells of our unconscious are not quite so dark and that they are also a home for all that is beautiful and good.

**Linsi Simmons BA (Hons) Theol.
Certificate in Counselling,
MBTI Practitioner**

Life is a terminal condition!

This title was recently quoted in a discussion I was part of about the ethics of end-of-life care. I had been invited to contribute because I am a nurse working in a Specialist Palliative Care Unit.

So you could say that I care for dying people – except that all of us are dying, sooner or later. I prefer to think of my work as walking alongside people who are facing the challenge of knowing that they have an illness which is going to shorten their life. They know the reality of walking in the 'valley of the shadow of death'.

So why do I do what I do, and what can I offer in the way of insight into caring for people who are facing their own death.

Firstly, I do this because, for me, there is no greater privilege than being alongside the patients with whom I work. Their humour, sensitivity and courage in the face of an uncertain future is awe-inspiring. Nothing short of a miracle can change the ultimate outcome but by being there I know that I make a difference.

A doctor colleague once gave a definition of healing which I have found helpful: The presence of another human being, by intent, and as an act of mercy, is HEALING

Let's look at this quote. In the counselling world we talk about 'being with' people. Indeed, as we look at the Old Testament, we are reminded of Job's friends who sat with him in his despair. It's a concept we can all understand. However, as most of us will know, being alongside someone who is in pain is not easy. But it's what I'm called to do in my work and, as Christians, it's what we're all called to

do wherever we are. So deciding to stay with someone in pain, whether that be spiritual, emotional, psychological or physical pain, is something we have to do intentionally. Our natural response would be to run a mile! Our presence becomes the 'act of mercy' quoted – showing compassion and empathy to our fellow human beings.

And in the 'being with' there is healing. Not physical healing necessarily, but an opportunity to help someone towards wholeness. I cannot share my faith with my patients unless they ask specific questions but I seek to show Jesus' love in all that I am and do at work. However, I can pray for them, that God will meet them on their journey. So, for me, caring for the dying is being 'a companion on the road' of life – and I wouldn't be doing anything else.

**Liz Day - Specialist Palliative Care
Nurse, Prospect Hospice**

Introduction to Pastoral Counselling Course

Level 2 Training: Cost £160

ACC Level 2 Course in Christian Counselling (NOCN Introduction course)

This is a 10 week evening course plus 2 Saturdays which will commence in April 2006.

One Year Certificate Course in Integrative Christian Counselling

Level 3 Training: Cost £835

ACC Level 3 (NOCN Basic Practice Course)

The next course is planned to commence in September 2006 and will be held one day a week during term time plus three Topic Workshops.

Entrance criteria: Successful completion of a Level 1/2 Introduction Course.

Advanced Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling

Level 4: Cost £2,030

This two-year course meets the criteria of the Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB) is accredited by the Qualification Curriculum Authority (QCA) and recognised by ACC.

It is a two year day time course commencing September 2006 which will be held on Thursdays during term time, plus Saturday Topic Workshops. The course is open to those who have completed a Level 2 Certificate Course and 50 hours of supervised counselling practice.

Short Courses

Two four-week evening courses will be held in Spring and Summer 2006:

“Working with Loss, Bereavement and the Grief Process”

This will be held on Monday evenings 20th February to 13th March. The course trainer will be Grace Hempstock.

“Treating Trauma”

This will commence on Monday 8th May and run until 5th June. The course trainer will be Mike Fisher.

All the above courses will be held in Swindon

Saturday Topic Workshop Programme

Jointly organised with The Harnhill Centre of Christian Healing

Venue: The Harnhill Centre, Cirencester, Gloucester

Cost: £18 per Workshop (£50 for 3 Workshops booked together)

4th February

“The Role of the Brain and Body in Recovery from Trauma”

- Mike Fisher

11th March

“Autism and Aspergers Syndrome”

- Rebekah Little

13th May

“The Myers-Briggs Shadow Side - Our Crisis or God's Opportunity?”

- Linsi Simmons

10th June

“Ritual Abuse Awareness”

- Mike Fisher

For further details of the above courses, please contact Avril Fray, Training Manager at Willows

Tel: 01793 706646

E-mail: training@willowscounselling.org.uk

The Willows
COUNSELLING SERVICE



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Does the Church help or hinder survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse?

"What do survivors need from the church?" is a difficult question to answer because every survivor is a unique individual and so what helps one person might not help another. Having said that there are, I think, some things that most, if not all, people will have in common.

I originally thought of putting the need to be listened to first but actually it is quite a big leap to get to the point of even being able to try to tell someone what has happened or how you are feeling. Perhaps the first thing that is important is for the church to be a place that is seen



as safe, one where all people are respected whoever they are, where people's individuality is valued and where gossip does not happen and people's confidences are kept truly confidential.

One thing that many survivors can find difficult is when it comes to The Peace in a communion service. It can feel intrusive and frightening unless people are very sensitive and careful not to invade someone's personal space and comfort zone uninvited.

Much of the language of church can be difficult for survivors, especially if their abusers were members of their family. We need to be aware that 'family' is not a positive image for everyone and also that it can be good to find alternative images of God instead of always using Father, even though we know it is supposed to mean an ideal father. It can be very difficult for a survivor whose experience of Father is someone whispering in their ear 'I'm only doing this because I love you' as he does unspeakable things with them.

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The Significance of Primal Experience

Dr. Roger Moss Retired Consultant Psychiatrist writes:

When I tell people that they can get in touch with experiences they had as very young children, or at the time of their birth, or even before they were born, they are not usually as surprised now as they might have been 20-30 years ago.

If they have given birth to children, there is often a readiness to accept it. If they are doctors, they are mostly suspicious and want the evidence. Plenty of Christians have known of words of knowledge which bring facts to light they were not necessarily aware of before, but which play an important part in their healing. I am encouraged that there are now two significant international associations of scientists, therapists, mothers and people who have re-experienced aspects of their birth who believe there is more to life before birth than we yet fully understand.

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Stories or Stances?

As I read people's comments on the homosexual debate, human faces, male and female, flash across my memory like beautiful tropical fish in a muddy sea. It seems that the Christian world is pouring its energy into defining a 'stance' on homosexuality. For those who are keen, there are long theological papers creating an accepted evangelical line. For the consumers, there are summarised bullet points building the fences of sexual and relational holiness. This whole approach reminds me of watching my energetic children trying to run down an upwards escalator!

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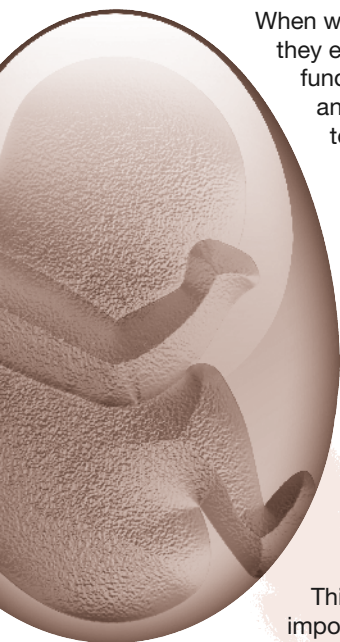
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The Significance of Primal Experience

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I personally found the experience of exploring my earliest moments interesting, strangely true and integrating, and certainly healing. I have accompanied scores of other people who have found that primal experiences somehow highlight primary truths about themselves which seem to satisfy longstanding searches for personal discovery. And I have had the unusual privilege of researching this whole area, and discovering that a proportion of people uncover personal facts not previously known to them, which they then confirm from records or witnesses present at the original events.



When we help people enter this early world, they encounter first impressions that shape fundamental aspects of their personality, and often set them up (sensitise them) to react to life's events more profoundly than others. It is not a weird or highly technical technique, and is best done within the security of a small group of supportive and praying people who are more or less in touch with their own early experiences. Because the experience is not exactly the same as recalling ordinary childhood memories, it is helpful to suspend judgement about what it means until we come out of the 'Child' mode and back into our 'Adult'. It is rather similar to waking up after a dream and trying to figure out what it meant.

This second phase of 'integration' is important to the wholeness of the healing that primal work may bring. It is where we may begin to see powerful, primordial feelings in a new setting and a new light. It is where we may discard bits of the experience because they don't seem to have the ring of truth for us, but take hold of other discoveries because they seem to explain truth we had not seen before for what it was.

When I am first getting to know a client, I often ask: "Do you know how things were for your parents before you were born? Have you been told anything about your birth?" Most people have some answer to these questions, and it is amazing how often they seem to be making a profound statement about their existence – if only they would hear their answer from the point of view of a defenceless, vulnerable little person unearthing for the first time what life could do to them. Most people offer their story in a matter-of-fact way, as if to say, 'but that happens to lots of people, and they don't seem the worse for it, so why should that bother me?'

Primal work is the chance to view what happened from the inside, while in the present the Adult is being supported by human love and encouragement, and by God's healing presence if we can but allow it. This can bring the facilitator face to face with issues as perplexing as 'Why did God allow all this suffering in the first place?' To know that on the cross, God was in an innocent, profoundly afflicted Christ reconciling himself to the world, may then be the only reassurance which gives us the sustaining power to stay alongside people in their most challenging hour, and thus allows them to work through to true healing and integration.

Stories or Stances

Cont'd from page 1

My confusion is how any 'line', any 'stance', any dogma can allow for the complexities of the human sexual condition. Dogmas and rules create alienation and inconsistency. Maybe more horrifying, is that the only alternative is relational.

What concerns me is how this debate allows us to dissect the intricacies of homosexual expression, whilst polishing the surface of the vast majority's heterosexual expression.

What about the many married couples who seldom or never have intercourse, and when they do, it certainly isn't the act of worship and celebration that God intended? What about the marriages where the husband is taking sexual gratification in an unequal manner, without concern for his wife? Ignorant of her sexual responses, he constantly reinforces her lack of pleasure until she becomes stuck in what our society has endearingly termed 'frigidity'. Listen to Shere Hite's latest report on female sexuality: the experience of 60% of women in our country, was that their male partners were "ill-informed about their wife's body" and that they were "lazy and unimaginative lovers, only interested in themselves". What about the lack of communication and effort to give human dignity and respect to the other, that this may reflect? Is this not as demeaning to a person's sexuality and humanity as some of the non-straight sexual sins the Church may be more public about?

I have known women who have chosen to change to lesbian sexual intimacy because they have found female partners know how to touch intimately, sensitively and passionately. If we are holding out for God's ideal, surely that has to be a holistic sexual ideal. I challenge those who talk as if heterosexuality itself is God's ideal, without thought to its quality.

And what about the gay person who has been repeatedly raped by the opposite sex as a child and is in horrendous fear of any touch that will remind them of this? Our dogmas will never enable us to hear their stories and bring the patient, healing love that is needed to give them even the freedom to get to the starting line and be able to choose their orientation.

What about the single Christian who masturbates without unfaithfulness to others and without addiction, as a celebration of their own feelings of sexual pleasure, believing this is an expression of the creational gift of God to them?



Why do we shy away from the truly relational path? Let's welcome fallen humanity into God's healing community, recognising we are all on a journey of salvation and redemption in all aspects of what it is to be human, including our sexuality. Could we not seek to journey together relationally in our sexuality, against the plumbline of Scripture? The work and struggles of the Evangelical Alliance and others to understand what this plumbline is, provides an invaluable aid on this journey, but can

never be the starting and ending point without discovering the human issues that lie between. These human issues will involve understanding a person's motivation and wishes, their fears and vulnerabilities, their story thus far. Let's not be naïve enough either to presume that all the work lies in the court of the gay person in the situation. A now lesbian friend received her first sexual encounter within church. She had never before considered homosexuality, but was searching for intimacy. Others suffer from the pressure of sexist stereotypes that have suffocated their created personality. The only model they understand to be male and sensitive, is to be gay; to be female and powerful, to be lesbian.



I don't believe that same-sex sexual intimacy is God's ideal, but I do believe we need space to hear people's stories and be free to journey in our sexuality towards intimacy and freedom with Jesus. And that applies to all of us.



Margaret Ellis is a qualified counsellor and Psychosexual Therapist

Does the Church help or hinder survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse?

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When someone actually takes the risk of opening up and sharing something of their story then it is really important that they are listened to. What all survivors need is to be heard and believed – they do not need to be told what they should do or how they should be reacting. They need to know that they are heard and accepted, that you don't turn away from them because of the 'shameful things they have done'. Survivors on one level know that the shame is not theirs but also most still *feel* that shame and are very sensitive to criticism or any hint that they are responsible for what happened to them.

It is important that confidentiality is kept. One of the worst ways that churches sometimes fail on this is when the recipient of 'the secret' goes to another member of the church and says 'I'm only telling you this for your prayers and before too long half the church knows the secret and the person who has struggled to take the risk of turning to someone else for support feels themselves re-abused as they feel exposed and vulnerable, with no control over who knows what about their life.

Another area that can be problematical is the whole issue of forgiveness. As a Christian I believe in the importance of forgiveness but it is not something to be demanded of anyone and is certainly not appropriate at the beginning of opening up to the reality of the abuse endured. For some it is very difficult to get in touch with any anger towards their abusers, finding it easier to see themselves as being to blame. Being told that they should forgive as soon as they begin to look at what happened can increase the feelings of guilt to intolerable levels. It is important that they are helped to accept that the abuse was not their fault, that they did not deserve it and that God is angry on their behalf (and perhaps another human being is too) and to experience genuine love and acceptance from another human being so that they can begin to allow themselves to recognise all their feelings and realise that no feeling is wrong. That may well lead eventually to wanting to forgive their abusers but being told to forgive too soon can hinder the healing process and make it so much more difficult to accept themselves or realise God's love for them.

Abuse distorts the way people see themselves and the memories can be very disturbing and intrusive at times, resulting in changes of mood and perplexing behaviour that others can find difficult to understand. It is immensely healing when someone is able to be gentle and supportive even when they are feeling out of sorts with themselves or overreacting, to know that there is someone who will still be there for them – someone who will remain consistent and reliable without judging is a tremendous blessing.

Sometimes the hardest thing can be to stand alongside someone, to be truly with them and hear their pain, without trying to find answers or even to take the pain away. Feeling the support of someone doing that for you is a very powerful experience and makes a tremendous difference in the journey towards self acceptance and wholeness.

The Christian understanding of God – a God of love who valued human physicality so much that he actually became a human being, means that the Christian church has the potential to be a very healing community. But it is only as we begin to truly accept our own humanity and realise that spirit and body are not divided but are inextricably entwined, that potential can begin to be realised. It is as we accept ourselves that we are able to help others to accept themselves.

Survivors are not just needy people with great difficulties – they have a great deal to bring to the Church. The very term 'survivor' is a reminder that they have greater strengths than they tend to think they have and their experiences of life can give them a depth of understanding towards others. Many survivors have grappled with the reality of evil and discovered God is there even in the worst imaginable circumstances.

Rev Carolyn Waters B.A. - Assistant Curate of St. Peter's Church Penhill

Addiction

The nature of the problem

Addiction is often associated with chemicals, for example, alcohol, tobacco, heroin, etc, but need not be, as in the case of gambling, sex, or even shopping. The thing that connects all these potentially addictive substances or activities is that they provide a mood-change.

The type of mood-change can vary. Some people may self-medicate with alcohol to obtain relief from anxiety, insecurity or guilt. In such cases the addiction may take some years to develop to the point where continued use has become physically necessary for someone to feel "normal". Alternatively, the "recreational" use of other drugs can quickly become an all-consuming craving for a euphoric state (e.g., heroin) or for the rush of excitement (gambling, sex or shopping). The addictive nature of a substance or activity can be gauged by the power it has to create or maintain the preferred mood-change for the individual concerned.

Modern research shows that different people have different responses to mood-changing chemicals or behaviour. Some people are risk-takers, seeking a "buzz" or "high" while others just want to "chill-out" or to find oblivion. The genetic factors causing this are still unclear, but do indicate that overcoming addiction is often more complicated than just using will-power.



There are two main types of intervention for those wanting help. One is harm minimisation, like "controlled drinking". The other is abstinence. The appropriateness of either will depend upon the nature and severity of the addiction; for example, it is now generally recognised that controlled drinking is unsuitable or irrelevant after continual failure by someone severely alcohol dependent, and abstinence becomes the only applicable intervention. In such cases, the person has repeatedly demonstrated the loss of any ability to control their drinking, once they have had just one drink.

When counselling someone with an addiction, one of the major issues is that of motivation. There is often ambivalence about giving up a substance or activity that, while destructive, has done something for them. There may be a recognition that the addictive behaviour has caused many losses - of relationships, jobs, home, health, prospects, etc. However, the addiction has often met deep psychological needs for the person, providing a mood-change that has enabled them to cope with a world that may have felt alien, hostile, uncaring or frightening. For many, the choice to abandon the once-dependable addiction

is a very fine balance, with the person's will constantly changing, rationalising behaviour and glorifying the "good times" in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Rev David Day - Manager, Addictions Rehabilitation Centre, Gloucester House, Highworth

Facing an Unplanned Pregnancy

The impact of an unplanned pregnancy can affect women in many different ways. For some, it may come as a pleasant surprise. But, for others it may be a huge shock, causing them to feel scared or panic, not knowing what to do or who to turn to. It is vital that a woman gets support at this crucial time. Some women may have partners, families or friends who are supportive and able to help. Other women need somebody impartial to help them find their way through confusing and probably conflicting advice and opinions.

The Pregnancy Crisis Centre is a Christian charity based in Milton Road, Swindon. Our aim is to offer women and their families a safe environment and unbiased advice. The advisors are all trained and are seeking to help women and men explore the facts relating to the options for parenting, adoption and abortion in a caring, non-directive and non-judgemental way.

We want to empower women by helping them to realize that they do have a choice about what happens to the pregnancy. Despite the pressure of their personal circumstances, a rushed decision may often lead to regret later on when they will be powerless to change the past.



An advisor will help a woman explore the implications to herself and her family of keeping the baby, including what support would be necessary and available for her.

Some women may initially react suspiciously to the adoption option, but for those who find abortion unacceptable and parenting too difficult a decision, fostering/adoption can be a very real alternative. It gives the woman time to work out the practicalities.

Abortion is often seen as the simplest way of solving unplanned pregnancies. However, for many women this means they exchange one set of problems for another. The advisor will work with genuine sensitivity to help the woman explore her deepest feelings. At the same time, she will be helped to understand that the decision is irreversible and could have repercussions for her future well-being.

An advisor will spend time with the woman encouraging her to consider the gains and the losses of each option, giving her relevant information to help her reach her own considered informed decision. We recognise that for the woman there will be no easy option. Our aim is to help the woman reach the right decision for her and not to feel pressurised therefore enabling her to feel positive about the future.

**Hazel Furze and Maggie Hartridge
Swindon Pregnancy Crisis
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