

The Cost of a Blame and Retribution Society (Continued from page 2)

In my view a society, in which blame and retribution are dominant ways of reacting, is far from healthy and is often very costly.

Around two years ago I was contacted by a local paper and asked to comment on the decision of a particular Primary Care Trust to prescribe the 'morning after' pill to 12 year olds. As I contemplated what I would say in two paragraphs, I envisaged the headlines the reporter may have had in mind. In the event, my e-mail reply invited the reporter to focus on our problems as a society around 'teenage pregnancy' rather than the Trust's or Church's response. How are we collectively failing young girls so that they get pregnant when they are hardly out of junior school? This was not about 'blaming' either the Primary Care Trust or sexually active 12 year olds, but asking questions about our collective responsibility – for parenting, for education, for relationships, for sexual activity.

Our culture of blame fixes on individuals, groups or institutions, rather than trying to understand the corporate nature of failings in our society. By finding someone to 'name and shame' we effectively protect ourselves from involvement in bigger and more complex issues and questions. If, for example, an air crash is found to be caused by poor maintenance, the crew or an individual could be blamed. However, it may also be that pressure to keep air-fares low caused the directors of the airline to under-resource this vital maintenance activity – and that is a pressure which we, as a society, exert. All of us carry a share of this responsibility and there must be some acknowledgement of collective blame.

It is a feature of the human condition to want to scapegoat – that is, to find something or someone who will take the blame and bear our guilt. At the time of literal scapegoats as described in the Hebrew Scriptures, (eg Leviticus 16: 20-22) finding something to blame (the goat) was done consciously; in our blame culture it is largely unconscious. Finding someone to blame reduces the level of communal anxiety and, according to the French theologian Rene Girard, channels feelings of aggression and violence away from ourselves.

However, in blaming and scapegoating others we are in danger of dehumanising and demonising them.

This is arguably most evident in the way paedophiles are regarded. The scenes we have witnessed when the whereabouts of a potential paedophile becomes known are reminiscent of the lynch-mobs of earlier centuries.



One of the consequences of this extreme reaction is a climate of fear which can deter potential or actual paedophiles from coming forward and this works against possible rehabilitation within supportive, yet wise and vigilant, communities. When a person is demonised by others the opportunities for a change of will and behaviour (repentance) and a fresh beginning (redemption) are curtailed: the motivation for change is reduced, the energy needed for survival is far greater, and the possibility of success too remote.

A culture of blame limits the possibilities for redemption because, as a society we can psychologically evade taking responsibility through staying in a state of denial rather than accepting responsibility for our actions.

Retribution, as in the exacting of a penalty or administering of punishment, has little connection with the restoration of relationship or the rehabilitation of someone who has deliberately offended or made an error of judgment. A society or justice system which is driven by a desire for retribution will tend to dehumanize individuals and not have much interest in restoring them to communities or seeing them take their place as active citizens.

As Christians we understand that humans are fallible and fallen but individually we are both precious to God and redeemable. We are relational beings made for mutual sharing and correction and with this in mind must resist a culture of blame and retribution. When we are aware of our own failings and need of redemption we know we cannot throw the first or any other stone (John 8: 1-11). We must also be aware of Jesus' response to Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-10) and to the criminal crucified together with him (Luke 23: 33-43) placing our emphasis on repentance, redemption and restoration. The cost may be considerable but it is the only way to create a healthy society.

My Diploma Journey of Growth by Philippa Dryland

New CPCAB Diploma Graduate and Willows Counsellor Philippa Dryland reflects on how two years of study have brought her closer to God, others and herself.

I joined the Diploma course wanting to increase my counselling skills level and desiring personal growth, but from where I am now, reflecting back on it, I didn't really know what 'growth' meant and I certainly didn't understand how I would achieve it.



As I look now at the shelf behind me, at 5 files and 76 weeks of study, it is easy to forget quite how much I have learnt as I am using much of it now in a more natural and unconscious way as I counsel others. I know that I have definitely increased my skills level and although it took me a long time to 'get it', I now know what it means to work in an integrative way by being able to draw on the three main approaches to counselling work.

Completing the Diploma has given me a greater understanding of who I am, how my background, my life experiences and my personality have all played a part in shaping who I am today.

I also understand more clearly how increasing my own self-awareness has given me greater choice in how to respond to others.

All of this study and learning has helped bring about real growth for me. However, if I reflect on what I have gained the most from the past two years, it is undoubtedly personal and spiritual growth. As a counsellor I have learnt how important it is to be committed to personal growth and am now aware that this ongoing process is best achieved by sitting with others who want positive change and growth in their own lives too. At best growth is uncomfortable and at worst can be both painful and challenging, but in daring to take the 'risks' that go with growth I have found an increased capacity to accept myself, to extend myself for others, and to embrace the power of my humanity in helping bring resolution and healing in the counselling room.

My most significant learning has been that the more deeply I felt able to take risks in order to recognize aspects of my true self and face my own vulnerabilities, the more deeply and intimately I was able to connect with others and with God.

I had not anticipated that Thursdays would come to represent 'church' for me at its most beautiful level.

As a group we learned to take risks and trust each other with our 'true' selves and as we became more open and honest with each other and learned to embrace and respect diversity, we drew both closer to one another and to God.

When I started this journey two years ago I had not realised that the academic learning was only a part of the course. The greatest learning and growth has come from journeying deeply into myself and it is this that has better equipped me to enable and encourage others in the same process.

Training Event Organised By Willows – 2008/9

Introduction to Pastoral Counselling

The Initial Course of the ACC Recognised Programme "The Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes Framework for Counselling" - Level 2 This is a 10 week course which will run on Monday evenings plus two Saturdays. It will commence 2nd February 2009. The cost of the course is £175

Saturday Topic Workshops

Venue: The Hamhill Centre of Christian Healing, Cirencester, Gloucestershire

Cost: £25 per Workshop (£70 for 3 workshops booked together)

The 2008/09 programme is as follows:

8th November "Raising awareness of non ritual abuse cults" Gillie Jenkinson

14th February "Introduction to working with addictions" David Day and Susan Tollington

14th March "Rebuilding the 'Self' after trauma" Nel Walker

9th May "Using CBT to help individuals suffering from low self esteem" Paul Hebblethwaite

30 May "Creating connections: The mind-brain relationship, counselling and psychotherapy" Margaret Wilkinson

4th July "Working with Shock and Trauma" Mike Fisher

For further details please contact Avril Fray, Training Manager at Willows 01793 706646 E-mail: training@willowscounselling.org.uk

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Willows have an exciting possibility of new premises



We have made an offer to purchase Olive House in Old Town, presently owned by Swindon Borough Council. This would give us 5 counselling rooms, training facilities, office space and sufficient parking. Negotiations are in progress so watch this space and please pray.

Congratulations!



Two years ago interviews were held for prospective students for our first CPCAB Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling Course. It was a new venture for Willows, as well as the students. It has been challenging and demanding and I congratulate you all for 'staying with it' You are well deserving of the Diploma that you have achieved.



Congratulations also go to all those who successfully completed the one year Level 3 Certificate Course.

Well done all of you. I wish you well in the future.

Avril Fray, Training Manager

Renewing of the Mind with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

By Dr Paul Hebblethwaite

In this article, Dr Hebblethwaite explains the nature of CBT and how it can be incorporated into a Christian framework.

Developed as a system of psychotherapy in the mid 1980s CBT is a relatively new science. However, over the last two decades there has been a substantial worldwide increase in the use of CBT for a wide range of emotional problem situations.

But what is CBT and how can it be integrated into a Christian framework?

Cognitive and behavioural psychotherapies are psychological approaches to emotional problems based on scientific principles and cognitive (thinking) theory. These approaches have been shown to be effective in helping individuals with a wide range of issues.

A simple explanation of CBT is that it looks at how an individual's thinking and beliefs about life circumstances affects mood, behaviour and physiology.

Individuals who experience feelings (mood) or behaviour that are causing difficulty will nearly always have dysfunctional or unbalanced thinking. This thinking may also impact into their physical health.

To understand CBT it is useful to know something about the three levels at which thinking occurs.

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The Cost of a Blame and Retribution Society

Bishop Lee reminds us of the dangers in adopting a blame and retribution attitude towards individuals and organisations. We must accept a degree of collective responsibility and move offenders towards repentance and restoration to society.

An airplane crashes, a health service data disk goes missing, a town floods, a schizophrenic randomly attacks someone, a fraud trial collapses, fuel prices rocket, a child goes missing, a company delivers lower than expected dividends, a football team is knocked out of the cup. Some of these incidents are of great seriousness, others less so. Yet in each and all of them there is a similar response: "Whose fault was this? Who is to blame?" In the UK we live in a society where both apportioning blame and looking for someone to punish are almost a national obsession. It is criticism and blame not celebration that form the media keynotes.

When there has been a tragic accident, a public scandal or a crime, it is appropriate that serious questions are asked and responsibility uncovered and owned. If processes and procedures are slack or wanting, and if people are misled or harmed something must be said and action must be taken.



*Bishop Lee Rayfield,
Bishop of Swindon*

Those who have been reckless or negligent have to confront the reality of what they have done to the extent that on occasion, violent criminals need to remain in prison for the remainder of their lives. However, in recognising the importance of attributing responsibility and facing consequences, I am disquieted by the direction our society is taking.

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On the Edge of Life, Part Two - Living One Day at a Time

by Gilly Price

In the May edition of PCN Willows Counselling Service Manager and Counsellor Gilly outlined the main factors in life that may lead someone to experiencing suicidal thoughts. Here, she looks at ways we can offer help.

When someone expresses feelings of extreme pain, enough for them to want to die, this does not necessarily mean that a person means to end their life. However, at this point it is important that they are taken seriously.

When faced with someone who is feeling like this, what can we do? Sitting and listening to someone who expresses such deep pain, enough to consider ending their life, can be very difficult especially for family members. We can show compassion if we consider some important points.

Firstly we should not:

- Judge them, they already have a low opinion of themselves and life in general and in certain circumstances this could happen to anyone of us.
- Minimise their feelings or tell them that life is what you make it.
- Give them your opinion. "If I were you I would ..."
- Make them feel guilty for how they are feeling by saying, for example, "There are so many people who love you".
- Assume that they want you to help. Ask them?
- Disempower them by taking away their choices.



On the Edge of Life, Part Two Living One Day at a Time

(Continued from page 2)

Instead we should:

- Listen to them. They need to be heard and to tell it 'like it is'.
- Let them talk.
- Show care. Ask, "How can I help"? What can I do to support you?
- Build up a relationship of trust.
- Give them the time to change their thought patterns and behaviour.
- Involve them in decisions concerning their life
- Try to establish what has brought them to this particular point in their life e.g. a recent bereavement
- Talk about what plans they have made to commit suicide as this will indicate whether this is a suicidal gesture or if it is more intentional.
- Enquire if they have access to the means to harm themselves. Medication, knife, a gun.
- Establish if they have seen their Doctor or if they are taking any medication.

And for those who are helping someone contemplating suicide:

- Be aware of your limitations. You are neither responsible for how the person is feeling or for a solution.
- Try to find help and support for the person and for yourself in the situation.
- Be clear about your boundaries concerning what you are able and not able to do to support the person.

What can the suicidal person do to help themselves?

When a person is 'in the moment' of feeling suicidal, painful emotions are just too big and internal coping resources are not enough. Emotions are dominant and the rational, thinking part of our brain is more difficult to access. New internal resources will be needed to regulate the emotional part of the brain. To achieve this, it is useful to build up a written list of 'Things to Do' in a time of crisis. Firstly however, a 'contract' may be established with someone whereby a promise is made not to commit suicide and to carry out the tasks on the 'Crisis List'

Although the 'Crisis List' will vary for each individual, the following may be useful:

1. Try to 'step back' from the feeling. You need space and time to build inner resources.
2. Deep breathing and relaxation techniques can help.
3. Try distraction techniques such as having a bath, clearing out some paperwork, doing a jigsaw.
4. Try to create a 'safe place'. Somewhere to go to when things get too much. This can be real or imaginary.

*So suicide, I cannot comply with your comforting
offer - to simply die*

*For though I am tempted and torn through and
through*

I have to choose life and turn my back on you

I have family you see ones who love me

And a Saviour God who gave his all on a tree

So I may have life and hope for all time

So you see Suicide you cannot be mine

So suicide - go jump go hang go cut, go bang

Take pills take wine but did you hear what I said

YOU AIN'T MINE and I ain't yours

I'm leaping once again from the grip of your jaws

"I chose life" do you all hear what I say

"Even at hard times I choose to stay"

Quick get the contract I'll sign the dotted line

Gather some witnesses before I change my mind

*But please please stand by me as you have done
before*

When big 'Mr S' comes knocking my door

When big 'Mr S' comes knocking my door

by Liz

5. Notice and be 'mindful' of how feelings change. Learn from this.
6. In time, draw on past experiences of when 'bad' feelings changed and how internal resources were increased to manage them.
7. Ask for help. Identify three or four people who have agreed that you can call them when in crisis. Let them have a copy of your 'Crisis List'.

When recurrent suicidal thoughts happen and you are in a depressed mood it is helpful to talk to someone outside who will reflect on your thoughts and encourage you. An experienced counsellor can help you to look beyond your feelings to the reasons behind them. Understanding yourself in this way will enable you to recreate a more optimistic, meaningful and fulfilled future as is the case for the author of the poem, part 2 of which is shown above.

Further sources of help:

Book - *Getting through the Day* - Nancy Napier

www.mind.org.uk MIND booklet - *How to help someone who is suicidal*

www.metanoia.org.uk/suicide - help with suicidal feelings.

www.samaritans.org.uk

www.maytree.org.uk - short respite centre

www.papyrus-uk.org (for young people)

www.sobs.damin.care4free.net/index (survivors of bereavement by suicide).

Renewing of the mind with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

(Continued from page 1)

Level 1: Surface automatic thinking.

Each day, most of us have hundreds of unplanned moment-to-moment easily articulated thoughts, images and memories. When negative, these can bring about rapid emotional changes including a depression of mood. However, such thoughts can be fairly easily challenged and changed to restore our mood to equilibrium. Techniques such as thought records are often used to help individuals with their thinking at this level. I have produced a DVD on this technique. (see below).*



Dr Hebblethwaite with his grandson

Level 2: Rules we make for living or underlying assumptions.

At this level our thoughts are deeper and we often have difficulty identifying them. However, they govern and direct our lives in relation to actions and expectations. These thoughts are developed in childhood by the interaction between our personality and our environment. For instance

a sensitive personality compounded by a negative childhood environment is likely to develop negative rules for living. These rules are often epitomised by conditional beliefs and must/should statements. e.g. 'If someone criticises my work then I am no good and they will not respect me.' 'I must avoid conflict.' Individuals with these rules will therefore avoid conflict and criticism, show perfectionist traits and try to be a peacemaker. Identifying and testing the validity of these rules, is a useful intervention that can be used to overcome such negative thinking.

Level 3: Deep core beliefs.

This level of beliefs, held deeply within the subconscious mind is known as either 'core beliefs' or 'schema.' These encompass how we perceive our self, others, the future and the world.

Our self: 'I'm good/worthwhile or bad/worthless'.

Others: 'I can or cannot trust others.'

The future and the world: 'It's scary or safe.'

These level 3 beliefs have no areas of grey and are both absolute and dichotomous. (all or nothing) They are deeply entrenched dictating the rules we have for living (Level 2 thoughts). Positive data and core belief logs are used to help individuals address Level 3 deep core negative beliefs.

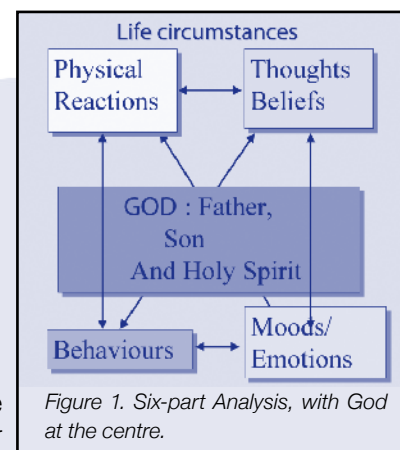
Cognitive Behavioural Therapists try to work with individuals to challenge negative beliefs at all three levels to produce more truthful and balanced thinking.

CBT is not about positive thinking but balanced or truthful thinking.

The Bible provides many examples of how Christian thinking is linked to CBT. Much of Jesus' ministry teaches that to change

our lives we need to change the way we think and behave. Furthermore, all behaviour is motivated by a belief, and every action prompted by an attitude.

Figure 1 shows how CBT and Christian thinking can be modelled to include God. This figure illustrates how life circumstances, thoughts, moods, behaviour and physical reactions are all interrelated. Because God is at the centre, He has a powerful influence on all aspects of our lives.



In CBT, specific treatment protocols are used for different problems including depression and anxiety. A Christian individual and therapist can work together to identify and understand problem situations in terms of the above components. The focus is on thoughts because thoughts play the major role in maintaining negative

moods and behaviour. However every emotional state is linked to characteristic patterns of thinking. For example, anger is linked to thoughts of unfairness and violation of domain, (everything a person holds dear) anxiety to thoughts of vulnerability and danger or threat of domain.

Although historical information and personality traits are used for diagnosing and understanding problem thinking, treatment usually focuses on the here-and-now, relying on a shared view by therapist and individual alike in order to identify, evaluate, and change dysfunctional patterns of thinking to ensure that sustained positive mood and behaviour can happen. A time based strategy and goal, which is continually monitored is also agreed. In their description of CBT, Kendall and Bemis emphasise the essential collaborative relationship involved in changing patterns of thinking.

The task of the cognitive behavioural therapist is to act as diagnostician, educator, and technical consultant who assesses maladaptive cognitive processes and works with the client to design learning experiences that may remediate these dysfunctional cognitions.

CBT is a powerful model and can be integrated into other models including those based on Christian principles. In my opinion it is also the most Biblical of all models thus presenting increasing opportunities for Christians to benefit both as counsellors and as those seeking help.

*The DVD on thought records can be obtained from Paul Hebblethwaite by sending a cheque for £10 to Gwelfor Barn, Plas Newydd Farm, Llanggoed, Isle of Anglesey, LL58 8ST (all profits donated to ACC).